4 There Ain't No Buses from San Juan to the Bronx: Postwar Migration and Air Transportation

CHAPTER 4

There Ain't No Buses from San Juan to the Bronx

Postwar Migration and Air Transportation

PUERTO RICAN postwar migration is the first airborne migration in American history: this notion is a staple of most textbooks and studies dealing with Puerto Rican migration. Today, notions like *la guagua aérea* (the airbus) or the more scholarly concepts of the "commuter nation" or "the nation on the move" reflect the commonly accepted idea that moving by air from Puerto Rico to the United States is a common, safe, and affordable practice.[1] All indicate that air transportation allowed in the past and sustains today the massive movement of people between Puerto Rico and the United States. Although the study of the Puerto Rican experience in the United States has grown in quantity and quality during the last four decades, the issue of air transportation in the migration process has not been addressed. Even scholars focusing on Puerto Rican migration policy have paid no attention to the role played by the colonial state in this important policy area.

The increased regulation of air transportation, particularly to ensure greater flight safety, the entry of major airlines into the profitable Puerto Rican air space with scheduled flights, and the expansion and modernization of the air transportation infrastructure—including a modern international airport—were all areas where the Puerto Rican government intervened significantly to ensure the fastest and safest movement of people out of the island. That is, the modern, safe, and regular air transportation system that emerged in post-

war Puerto Rico needs to be linked to the migration process experienced by Puerto Ricans in that period, as well as to the government's migration policy.

The Puerto Rican government—including the prominent participation of Governor Muñoz Marín—became concerned with the issue of air transportation after it took a more active approach in the management of migration in late 1947. Providing stable and safe air transportation for the tens of thousands of Puerto Ricans who decided to migrate on their own or through government programs every year became an important policy issue for the government. Securing safe air transportation became part of the government's agenda after numerous air accidents took place in the late forties, most of them linked to the "non-scheduled" or "irregular" airlines that provided the bulk of air transportation at that time. Air transportation emerged as one of the domains where the Puerto Rican government assumed greater responsibilities.

But air transportation in Puerto Rico reflects the dilemmas of the government's relative autonomy in a colonial context. Air transportation in all of the U.S. territory is in the jurisdiction of the federal government; the Puerto Rican government had no legally binding jurisdiction on this matter. This is another area where the colonial government had to lobby the federal government to implement policies that would further facilitate the movement of people out of the island. If migration is understood as a mechanism to further social and economic stability in the territory, the government's intervention to expand air transportation infrastructure and services is one more example where the colonial state was furthering U.S. rule on the island. In those areas where the colonial government did not require the extensive intervention of the federal government, like the construction of the international airport, it took the initiative to advance this project on its own.

This chapter examines the actions of the Puerto Rican government to influence the regulation of air transportation in Puerto Rico and to provide a more efficient movement of migrant labor to the United States. It looks at the role played by the government in the air transportation of workers. The government intervened to reduce the high number of air crashes that were negatively affecting the public's notion of air travel, it took the initiative to construct a modern and efficient airport to handle the increasing number of flights and passenger cargo, and it strove to assure the safe travel of island migrants to the mainland. This chapter also questions and debunks the widely accepted idea that tourism was the factor propelling the modernization and expansion of the island's air transportation system and infrastructure in the postwar period.

By March 1949, the Puerto Rican Labor Department had established a set of requirements for the transportation of workers from Puerto Rico to the

United States. These included the care and handling of passengers, like the number of workers delivered per day, as specified by the labor contract and the employer; the services provided to passengers during flights or delays, including food and water; and the provision of flight insurance acceptable to the department. There were also guidelines for carrier service, including that all planes had to have approval of the federal air transportation regulatory agencies (like the Civil Aeronautics Board [CAB] and the Puerto Rico Transportation Authority [TA]) and adequate facilities for the transport of workers; that workers had to be delivered at the specific site determined by employers; and that the carrier company had to post a bond of at least $50,000 with the contractor.[2]

AIR TRANSPORTATION OF LABOR

In its seminal work on Puerto Rican migration, the Centro History Task Force's *Labor Migration under Capitalism* set the basis for future migration studies by defining Puerto Rican migration as a labor migration. However, this text was silent on the role played by the Puerto Rican government in this process. Furthermore, although the book called for the study of migration as a movement of labor from one underdeveloped region to a more advanced one, no attention was paid to how the actual movement of people was carried out. That is, neither Centro's nor any other later study of Puerto Rican migration has so far focused on the transportation of labor from Puerto Rico to the United States.

Air transportation became an essential issue in hiring Puerto Rican laborers in the United States, not only in terms of the overall costs for this labor force but also regarding their availability and reliability. Air transportation in general has reduced the costs involved in hiring workers from faraway places for employers in the advanced economies of the postwar period, as Button and Vega argue. They postulate that as air transportation becomes cheaper and more reliable, it lowers the costs for the movement of labor and increases its mobility.[3] Air transportation not only allowed Puerto Ricans to move to the United States relatively cheaply and quickly but also made the idea of migration itself more acceptable, including specific patterns of migration like return migration and circular migration so characteristic of—but not unique to—the Puerto Rican experience. What Button and Vega do not consider is the role played by the state in this process through its regulations and policies. The Puerto Rican government was instrumental in making air transportation cheaper, safer, and more reliable in order to satisfy the needs of U.S. employers and jobs for Puerto Rican workers.

In his study of the "economic aspects" of migration, Belton Fleisher tackles the question of why migration of Puerto Ricans increased dramatically after 1945 and not in the 1920s, when U.S. immigration quotas created a vast need for cheap labor in the United States, particularly in agriculture. He argues that Puerto Rican workers were worse off in 1945 than in the 1920s as a consequence of the decline of the sugar industry and a rapid population growth that increased the labor force, in conjunction with an increasing urbanization of the population. These factors increased the pool of people inclined to migrate, which corresponded with a growing need for labor in the United States. Fleisher adds a second determining factor in explaining why Puerto Ricans decided to migrate after 1945: the increasing availability of air transportation along with declining airfare costs. He contends that there was a bottleneck in transportation before 1945, when transportation out of the island was limited due to the war and the highly restricted air transportation system. After the war, surplus airplanes and pilots allowed the nonscheduled charter airlines to expand. This coupled with the entry of major airlines and lower airfares meant the number of people leaving the island by air increased dramatically. Fleisher also discusses the nature of the flow of air travelers on the island, whether it was mainly of mainland tourists or migrants. He concludes that the seasonal behavior of air transportation was related to migration flows and airfare costs. Fleisher points out two factors that influenced what he calls the migration "costs" for the prospective migrant: increased information regarding migration and cheaper transportation.[4] What Fleisher fails to mention is that these two variables used to explain the potential costs of migration for likely migrants were influenced and employed by the Puerto Rican government to promote migration.

In his 1953 article on the economic links between Puerto Rico and the United States, Walton Hamilton called upon the Puerto Rican government to focus on three significant policy issues: population control, migration, and industrial development. Migration was central to the other two: by reducing population pressure and the labor market, it allowed those staying on the island to have better jobs and incomes. For Hamilton, transportation was essential to the migration of Puerto Ricans to the United States: he explained, "If migration is to provide a safety valve, passage must be available, reliable, and cheap—and Puerto Rico must consciously strive to make it so." Hamilton saw "the movement of people" as an essential instrument of policy, an important "bridge" between Puerto Rico and the United States. "It is impossible to think of an item in the government's far-reaching and forward-looking program which for its realization does not demand access to adequate, inexpensive, reliable, and economical means of carriage," he wrote. Air transportation

became an indispensable tool in the movement of Puerto Ricans to the United States, the most efficient and effective means to achieve mass migration: "Between the island and mainland, the railroad does not run; automobiles, whether of modern design or ancient vintage, are not available; and as the Governor [Muñoz Marín] paraphrased Kipling, 'There ain't no buses running from the Bronx to Mayagüez.'" While ocean transportation was most desirable for the movement of goods, air transportation was the best and most reliable means of moving massive amounts of people. Hamilton acknowledged that "the government of Puerto Rico has been engaged in a struggle to secure to its people adequate and reliable air transport at rates they can afford to pay."[5]

In effect, the Puerto Rican government urged the federal government to implement measures to provide a greater air transportation system for Puerto Rico immediately after the end of World War II. In July 1948, Governor Piñero filed a complaint with the CAB demanding the expansion of air transportation in Puerto Rico. The complaint supported Eastern's petition to operate along the profitable New York–San Juan route; until then, Pan Am was the only major airline allowed to operate flights on that route. The Puerto Rican government argued that this situation was limiting the air transportation services on the island, curtailing competition and thus allowing Pan Am to maintain high-priced airfares. The complaint contended that Puerto Ricans had a right to cheap air transportation to the U.S. mainland, something equivalent to ground transportation between the continental states.[6]

In reaction to this complaint, the CAB held hearings in San Juan on the island's air transportation needs. In February 1949, Puerto Rico's governor and other top functionaries deposed before CAB representative William Madden. According to a news report, all government representatives agreed on three issues that required a greater and cheaper air transportation system: agriculture, migration, and industrialization. Muñoz Marín argued that although Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, Puerto Rico occupies a "precise position within the American federal system and the economy of the United States." The fact that the island is miles away from the U.S. mainland presents a "peculiar situation . . . a hurdle that must be overcome or defeated." Puerto Rico's situation is quite different from that of any other state in the continental United States, where land transportation can satisfy economic links. If Puerto Ricans were to be on an equal basis with other U.S. citizens, then their transportation needs had to be adequately addressed. For the governor, "the airplane provides the safe and cheap service that the train, buses, trucks, and passenger cars provide to other citizens of the United States." Air transportation was vital to the island's economic development and continued economic links with the United States, including migration. Muñoz Marín framed the

demand for air transportation services between the island and the U.S. mainland within the framework of the rights of Puerto Ricans as U.S. citizens: "What more natural thing that people move from where the jobs are scarce to where they abound? And Puerto Ricans have as much a right as citizens of any state in the Union to be able to move to places where there are new job opportunities." Referring to the nonscheduled air carriers, he pointed out that among Puerto Rico's air transportation needs was a good "second class" system that should be adequate "in matters of security"; in the previous year, the CAB had imposed stricter regulations on their flights to the island. Conscious of the security concerns with these air carriers, linked to several deadly accidents during that time, the governor asserted that these companies "have made in the past a valuable service to Puerto Rico." Although these carriers should comply with the same safety regulations as other airlines, their "pioneering work" in linking the island to the continental U.S. "should not be lost." He also insisted that the "first class" system of air transportation between the island and the mainland needed to be expanded, referring to the scheduled carrier service provided by the major airlines. For Muñoz Marín, new developments in air transportation should provide a more efficient linkage between Puerto Rico and the United States. "Puerto Rico's future rests heavily on the economy, efficiency, and breadth of facilities for air transportation."[7]

The CAB announced its response to the complaint by the Puerto Rican government later that year. Not only did the agency maintain restrictions of nonscheduled airlines flying to Puerto Rico but it also rejected Eastern's petition to fly the New York–San Juan route. In reaction to this action, the Puerto Rican government filed a petition with the CAB in May 1949 demanding reforms to improve the "highly inadequate" air transportation services between the island and the U.S. mainland. It demanded that "another certified airline besides Pan Am" be allowed to have regular direct flights between Puerto Rico and New York, Washington, and Baltimore; that Pan Am be allowed to have direct flights to Puerto Rico from the latter two cities; and that smaller airlines with cheaper airfares be allowed to fly between New York and San Juan. The government's petition claimed that Puerto Rico "is not getting from Pan Am the quality air service that is justified by the significance of the island's air traffic, nor the quality of the regular service that is required by Puerto Rico in view of its complete dependence on air service."[8]

In response to the Puerto Rican petition, the report by CAB's Madden in March 1950 sustained its previous conclusions. The government countered that Madden's recommendations "fail to provide a passenger service at low cost. Therefore, Puerto Rico would have no assurance of receiving low-cost air service for migrants and middle-income passengers, which according to

the same examiner is 'vital to the welfare of the island.'" The government's claim argued that the CAB should give Puerto Rico a different treatment than the rest of the nation, arguing that the island's insular condition was not the same as that of the states. The CAB opposed the government's petition for a low-airfare airline due to its implications in the American domestic market for the major regular airlines. Pan Am was strongly opposed to the Puerto Rican position. The Puerto Rican government argued that the proliferation of nonscheduled airlines in the Puerto Rican market was a reaction to Pan Am's inadequate service and high airfares.[9]

Muñoz Marín reiterated the same argument to the CAB chairman, Oswald Ryan, in August 1950. The transportation needs of Puerto Rico increased in the postwar period due to greater economic production, tourism, and, particularly, migration. The governor declared that "the whole economy of Puerto Rico, indeed the very continuance of its existence, is at the mercy of its external transportation facilities—sea and air." After recalling the German submarine blockade that almost starved Puerto Rico during the war years, he reminded Ryan that the circumstances had not changed dramatically in the Cold War era as a consequence of Puerto Rico's strategic position in the Caribbean:

> Of overwhelming importance is the air transportation link between the United States mainland and Puerto Rico in the carriage of people. . . . [I]t is in this field more than in any other that Puerto Rico can make its contribution to an integrated all-out American emergency effort.

The governor claimed that the island's surplus labor could satisfy U.S. labor needs in the face of the Korean War. For him, in an era of increased migration from the island, "air transportation is the only satisfactory method of effecting a movement of people between Puerto Rico and continental United States."[10]

One year earlier, Resident Commissioner Fernós-Isern pled before the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee for the CAB to expand the air and sea transportation system in Puerto Rico: "Low-cost air carriage and dependable and alert regular air carriage are indispensable to the people of Puerto Rico. And they have not, on a satisfactory basis had either the one of the other." He emphasized the importance of air transportation for Puerto Rican migration to the United States: "It is expected that this movement of people will continue for several years. If it does, it will have to be largely by airplane." He also pointed out that most air transportation of passengers at the time was done by nonscheduled airlines that provided cheap airfare but "operated with too few efforts at enforcement of proper safety precautions."[11] The

numbers provided by the resident commissioner on the flow of air passengers indicated the importance of air transportation for migration even then and predicted what was to come after 1950. Some 144,455 persons came to Puerto Rico by air from January 1945 to June 1948, while 231,542 departed by air in the same period.[12] The high number of departures indicated the rising importance of air travel for Puerto Rican migration. As Fernós-Isern stated in the *New York Times* in 1950: "The masses must move by air or they must stay at home unemployed."[13]

The CAB eventually accepted the wishes of the Puerto Rican government to improve air transportation services on the island, leading to an increase in the number of flights and to lower airfares.[14] All of this was in great measure made possible by the constant lobbying and efforts of the Puerto Rican government.

THE BATTLE FOR THE PUERTO RICAN SKY: REGULAR VERSUS NONSCHEDULED AIRLINES

The air transportation system in Puerto Rico before World War II was basically similar to what Dierikx describes as the modern means of connecting the colonial metropolis with its territories. He argues that during the 1930s, the airplane provided a more efficient and fast means of transportation for European colonial administrators, businessmen, military personnel, and tourists.[15] The same thing could be said about Puerto Rico; flying was limited to those categories mentioned above and the affluent on the island since very few Puerto Ricans could afford the cost of a plane ticket. To the overwhelming majority of Puerto Ricans, moving to the U.S. mainland implied going by sea transport. Pan Am's first flight to Puerto Rico from Miami was in 1929; by 1940, it had just four weekly flights on this route.[16]

The end of the war created a huge market for used warplanes; most of these were sold to independent companies that fueled the nonscheduled charter flights market. Many national governments created their own publicly owned airlines; others, like the United States, promoted and gave extensive benefits to their own major private airlines. After an end-of-war decrease in production, big airplane manufacturers like Boeing and McDonnell Douglas found a very profitable niche in selling modern airplanes to the major airlines providing regularly scheduled flights. Leading the pack of U.S. airlines expanding their services and fleets was Pan Am, which was extending its global reach with many international routes, including the Caribbean and Puerto Rico. The number of air passengers increased dramatically in the post-

war period, from 2.5 million in 1940 to 8.2 million in 1945, 27.3 million in 1950, and 68 million in 1955.[17]

In 1945 only nine scheduled airlines provided air service to Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. By 1955, eight scheduled airlines flew to Puerto Rico, including Pan Am, Eastern, Delta, Southern, Air France, and Iberia; five nonscheduled airlines also provided service to Puerto Rico at that time.[18] Pan Am and Eastern took the lion's share of the Puerto Rican market after 1950. Soon after, Puerto Rico became one of the most profitable routes for Eastern, and the New York–San Juan route became one of Pan Am's "busiest north-south routes." By 1952, Pan Am had seventy weekly flights on this route. In 1948, Pan Am had offered one of its first "tourist" rates worldwide in its New York–San Juan route, lowering the fare from $133 to $75.[19]

On July 1, 1946, Pan Am made its first nonstop flight from New York to San Juan. The four-engine DC-4 took some eight hours to make the route, and the lowest-priced ticket cost $130; this was also the first flight of Pan Am's daily schedule.[20] On March 27, 1950, Eastern made history in Puerto Rico's air transportation system with the first nonstop flight by jet from New York to San Juan. The plane, aptly named "The Puerto Rican," made the flight in five hours and forty-one minutes. Passengers included Vincent Impelliteri, mayor of New York City, who went to Puerto Rico to celebrate the historic event and to meet with the top echelons of the Puerto Rican government.[21] New York City became the most important destination for air travelers coming from Puerto Rico, which was no coincidence: its Puerto Rican settlement was the largest in the United States.

The *New York Times* declared 1950 as "the best year for the airlines" worldwide; the next year it claimed that 1951 was "the best year in their history" for U.S. commercial airlines.[22] Much of this success was attributed to the expansion of tourism after the war. Puerto Rico benefitted from the expansion of both winter and summer tourism to the Caribbean. Tourist traffic to Puerto Rico, for example, increased from 77,457 in 1949–50 to 85,954 in 1950–51.[23] Tourism was a factor in explaining the increase in air travel to and from Puerto Rico, no doubt. But I will argue in the following sections that the expansion of air travel in Puerto Rico, the increase in the number of airlines and flights to and from the island, the modernization of the airport, and the reduction in airfares was not due to an increase in tourism but to the dramatic rise in migration after the war.

The number of nonscheduled airlines increased after the war when the U.S. government sold its huge supply of warplanes to private investors and former war pilots. As the major U.S. airlines controlled regularly scheduled flights, including the lucrative overseas market, the nonscheduled airlines expanded

in the domestic market and the overseas territories. The nonscheduled airlines were not regulated as strictly as the regular scheduled airlines and were not included in international agreements regulating global air transportation. They were not allowed to cater to individual passengers like the major airlines, and they had to depend on flights chartered by specific groups or travel agencies.[24] The increase in the number of these airlines increased CAB oversight in their services. For example, in October 1947, the CAB suspended forty-two nonscheduled airlines in the United States, including some flying to Puerto Rico, for failure to comply with federal regulations.[25]

Nonscheduled airlines provided most of the air transportation after the war ended, just as thousands of Puerto Ricans began to move to the United States in search of jobs. According to a CAB report, these airlines came to the island after 1945 to serve "a large backlog of prospective passengers who were unable to obtain transportation whether by boat or by the regular service of Pan American. The demand for space was so great that these nonscheduled carriers had no difficulty filling their aircraft at the same rates charged by Pan American." The number of flights increased after these carriers began making flights to and from Puerto Rico.[26] Another observer described the status of air transportation in Puerto Rico around 1945 in the same terms, asserting that Puerto Rico "was badly served" by Pan Am: "Rates were very high, schedules were inconvenient and not lived up to; and accommodations were bad and hard to get. There was in Puerto Rico a backlog of passengers for whom it would have taken months to find seats." Nonscheduled carriers entered into the Puerto Rican market offering more flights and cheaper airfares. The Puerto Rican government intervened in 1946 to prevent the CAB from grounding these carriers in Puerto Rico. In 1948 it requested the CAB to certify several nonscheduled carriers so they could compete with Pan Am and provide cheaper fares and more flights out of the island.[27] By 1950, the rhetoric coming from Puerto Rican government officials began to change. That year, Fernós-Isern publicly criticized Pan Am's service and airfares in Puerto Rico. Writing after a spate of air crashes by nonscheduled airlines that shocked the Puerto Rican and American public, he argued that the entry and dominance of these carriers in the Puerto Rican market was due to Pan Am's resistance to providing a larger number of flights and cheaper fares.[28]

After 1947, major airlines like Pan Am and Eastern saw an opportunity to expand their markets in Puerto Rico. But their expansion came not because of their low fares and competitive advantage in free market competition with nonscheduled airlines, but in large part as a result of the intervention of the Puerto Rican government in its attempt to deal with one of its most pressing issues in one of its most important public policies: air security. The high

number of casualties caused by air crashes rocked public opinion in Puerto Rico, particularly when migration to the United States was on the rise. Safety in air transportation became a major issue of the Puerto Rican government's migration policy.

AIR CRASHES AND AIR TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

On July 13, 1947, a DC-3 carrying thirty-three passengers and a crew of three crashed in the vicinity of Melbourne, Florida, at 4:30 in the morning. Twenty-two Puerto Rican passengers were killed, thirteen survived; they were all living in the New York City area and were going back to visit or return to the island. The flight left from Newark to Miami, with a refueling stop in Augusta, Georgia, on its way to San Juan. A travel agency in New York catering to Puerto Ricans had chartered the nonscheduled flight. It was the deadliest air tragedy in Puerto Rico's history to that point. *El Imparcial* reported "shocking and moving scenes of grief" at the Isla Grande Airport in San Juan among the relatives waiting to pick up their loved ones that morning. Similar scenes of despair and grief were reported by the Puerto Rican daily from the relatives of the dead in New York.[29]

The grief caused by the accident in Puerto Rico turned into rage when news reached the island that the flight was overweight. Puerto Rico's Senate initiated an investigation of the accident, and Fernós-Isern went to Melbourne to learn more. The CAB and the Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) also began investigations. The arrival of the bodies in San Juan was described as the most "tragic and painful" event ever witnessed on the island. A riot erupted when the police tried in vain the prevent the relatives of the dead from seeing and identifying the remains of their loved ones.[30] *El Imparcial* questioned why there was no oversight on flights to and from Puerto Rico and called for an investigation of the nonscheduled airlines, particularly along the New York-San Juan route.[31] A federal investigation concluded that the causes for the accident were the overweight plane and overworked and unrested pilots. In addition, a U.S. Senate investigator concluded that the lax maintenance of the airplane was a threat to the security of the passengers.[32]

Six months after the Melbourne accident, another air crash perturbed the Puerto Rican public. On January 7, 1948, the day after the Three Kings Day celebration, another C-47 converted into a DC-3 crashed in the marshes of Savannah, Georgia, killing fifteen Puerto Ricans on their way to the island from Newark. As on the Melbourne flight, most of the Puerto Rican passengers were from the New York area. Out of the twenty-six passengers, seven-

teen died in the crash, including the pilot. This time, the airplane was owned by Coastal Airways, from Teterboro, New Jersey; most of the tickets had been sold by Manuel Casiano's travel agency in the Bronx, who had chartered the flight to Coastal. The CAA announced that it would undergo an investigation into the causes of the crash, as did a U.S. Senate subcommittee on air safety and regulation. An *El Mundo* editorial called on the Puerto Rican government to pressure the federal government to determine the specific causes of the crash and to enforce more strict regulation of nonscheduled chartered flights.[33]

The plane that crashed in Savannah was carrying five more passengers than regulations allowed. While *El Mundo*'s front page that day was dominated by the news of the crash, two other headlines announced that 300 workers were going to Lorain, Ohio, under the government's migration program and that Muñoz Marín was receiving Venezuela's consul in Puerto Rico to discuss migration plans to that country.[34] The CAB denounced Coastal Airways for numerous safety infractions and noted that the CAA had not acted on them, nor had it reported these infractions to the Puerto Rican government. The U.S. Senate investigator on air safety reported that irregular nonscheduled airlines did not have to go through the more stringent safety regulations that scheduled airlines faced.[35]

During the CAB's hearings on the accident, the copilot confirmed earlier reports by survivors that the two engines had stopped working before the airplane fell. He also mentioned that the Puerto Rican passengers did not understand the safety warnings given by the English-speaking crew, which could not speak Spanish. The president of Coastal Airlines admitted that he did not have any permits to fly into San Juan but that since he had never been stopped, he presumed that he could do it. He argued that any mechanical problem with the aircraft was the pilot's responsibility and that any extra passengers above those allowed by regulations were the responsibility of the travel agency that chartered the plane. Casiano replied that his responsibility was to take the passengers to the plane, and did not include the aircraft's safety; he acknowledged that he paid from $2,000 to $2,200 per charter plane (so, any extra passengers would add to his profit margin). The CAB stated that it had no idea why the two engines failed at the same time.[36]

The Savannah air crash was not the only accident in 1948 involving Puerto Rican passengers. There was a series of air accidents and crashes in that year. On May 28, 1948, a World Airways four-engine Boeing flying from San Juan to New York experienced a forced landing on the outskirts of the Baltimore airport due to the bad weather conditions.[37] Another close call happened on the night of October 4 on another nonscheduled flight from Teterboro,

New Jersey, to Miami en route to San Juan. The pilot, also the owner of New England Air Express Company, decided to emergency land the plane on a Bahamas beach near Nassau when he realized he was off course to the Miami airport. The plane, which carried "nineteen Puerto Rican farmhands, who were booked by Puerto Rico World Airways, a travel agency," was the company's only aircraft.[38]

The year 1948, which had begun in tragedy with the Savannah air crash, ended with another calamity. On the night of December 28, another DC-3 disappeared into the night as it emitted an emergency call at 4:13 a.m.; it had left the San Juan airport at 10 p.m. the night before. Like the ones involved in earlier crashes, this Airborne Transport airplane was on a nonscheduled flight from San Juan to New York via Miami. It carried thirty passengers, twenty-seven of them Puerto Ricans on their way back to the New York area after spending the Christmas holidays on the island. Thus began "one of the biggest air search operations since the end of the war," involving over fifty airplanes from the navy, the coast guard, and the air force, plus scores of smaller private planes. The search extended one thousand miles from Miami in all directions. The airline's representative on the island declared that the plane was inspected and authorized to fly by West Indies Air Service, a company of private mechanics used by nonscheduled airlines to certify their planes; he also asserted that the plane was making its first flight after spending two months under repairs.[39] The usually calm *El Mundo* requested an investigation by federal and local authorities on nonscheduled flights, noting that all except one of the recurring air tragedies in the last years were on these chartered planes. It claimed that Puerto Ricans were fed up with the claims by the island government that it was taking all possible measures to safeguard lives on flights from San Juan to New York.[40] On July 18, 1949, the CAB closed its investigation into the Airborne Transport tragedy, stating that it would reopen the case if the remains of the airplane were ever discovered; its final report indicated that the tragic flight did not fulfill the requirements to operate when it departed from San Juan.[41]

On the night of June 7, 1949, a C-46 airplane owned by Strato Freight crashed in Punta Salinas, in the municipality of Toa Baja, west of San Juan. The cargo aircraft converted into a passenger plane left the San Juan airport at 12:21 a.m. and sent a distress signal at 12:23 a.m. Of the eighty-one persons aboard, fifty-three—all of them Puerto Ricans—died in the accident, making it the worst air accident in Puerto Rican history to date. Passengers and crew members acknowledged that there were only sixty-five seats, so the nineteen children aboard had to sit on their parents' laps, and several adult passengers sat on boxes or stood up during the short flight. Crew members

later declared that there were not enough life vests for all the people aboard. The CAB reported that Strato Freight was allowed to fly from New York and Pennsylvania to San Juan and that no violations had been reported against the company; it was also allowed to fly both cargo and passengers using the same plane. As usual, the CAB announced its routine investigation into this air crash. It reported that the flight manifesto was false, understating its total weight.[42]

In Puerto Rico, Muñoz Marín ordered an exhaustive investigation of the tragedy to be led by the attorney general, also stating his direct involvement in the process. In Washington, Congressman Marcantonio requested an investigation of the crash on the House floor.[43] On June 10, Marcantonio made public a CAB secret report on the tragedy, which detailed the irregularities and federal violations incurred by Strato, including submitting a false report on the cargo and passenger weight. That same day, the governor ordered the TA to carry out exhaustive checks on any plane departing from Puerto Rico, while the Justice Department opened an investigation on the generalized practice by travel agencies of overselling plane tickets for a single flight. On June 16, the governor approved an insular regulation requiring all nonscheduled flights flying to and from the island to be approved by the TA.[44]

On July 14, the CAA "invoked its most dramatic authority to ground the airplanes of Strato Freight." It suspended the airline for thirty days and requested that the CAB put the company out of business permanently, stating that the plane that crashed on June 7 was overloaded and its flap was not working properly. Other charges included the use of overworked pilots, carrying passengers on planes certified only for cargo, and recording incorrect weights and balance data in the flight manifests for previous flights on the same route. The CAA stated that this company "manifests an attitude of indifference for the safety of others and a disregard of the civil air regulations."[45] During the CAB hearings on the Punta Salinas tragedy, the flight's copilot declared that the crew had been informed by West Indies Aviation Services that one of the engines was defective. The copilot also acknowledged what survivors had declared earlier, that smoke was coming from one of the engines even before the airplane took off. The CAB's final report on the Punta Salinas air crash declared engine failure and overload as the causes of the accident. The CAB charged Strato Freight with negligence and revoked its license to operate in October 1949.[46]

On June 9, *El Imparcial* published two editorials: one on the Punta Salinas tragedy and another on the problems facing Puerto Rican migrants in the United States. Its editorial the next day complained about the lack of regulations on travel agencies selling overbooked flights on charter airlines; these

agencies had been involved in all of the air crashes to that point.[47] It would take *El Imparcial* and many others in Puerto Rico one more tragedy to confirm the relationship between the recurring air crashes and the expanding volume of migration to the United States, and for the Puerto Rican government to take a more active role in the regulation of nonscheduled airlines. On June 5, 1950, a C-46 plane owned by the nonscheduled Westair Lines crashed on the Florida coast, killing twenty-eight passengers, all of them Puerto Ricans. The plane had been chartered by the Michigan Field Corporation, the Michigan sugar beet producers' association, taking sixty-one Puerto Rican farmworkers under a contract approved by the Puerto Rican government. (This incident will be discussed further in chapter 6.) The CAA had previously requested that the CAB suspend Westair from flying passengers, charging the airline with gross negligence on safety regulations. After the Florida accident, *El Imparcial* editorialized that the real cause of the accident was the government's migration policy. This time it was impossible to avoid making the connection between migration and the air crashes, as well as noting the role the Puerto Rican government played in this exodus of people. As a consequence of this accident, government officials—headed by Muñoz Marín—engaged in more active and aggressive lobbying of the federal air transportation agencies in advocating the entry of the two major regular-schedule airlines, Pan Am and Eastern, into the Puerto Rican market. A new era of air transportation in Puerto Rico had begun.

The expansion of the two major airlines into the Puerto Rican market did not eliminate the nonscheduled airlines' movement of Puerto Ricans to the United States. The Puerto Rican government allowed the continued service of nonscheduled companies in Puerto Rico in order to maintain cheap airfares and facilitate a greater movement of people to the U.S. mainland. Furthermore, the fact that the two regular-schedule airlines increased their share of the air transportation market in Puerto Rico did not eradicate air accidents. For example, on March 11, 1952, a Holy Friday, a Pan Am DC-4 carrying sixty-two passengers and five crew members crashed immediately after taking off in San Juan, killing fifty-two people, most of them Puerto Ricans returning to their homes in the New York area. Even though the pilot had requested emergency measures before landing the plane because of engine trouble, the aircraft was allowed to return to New York, having been certified by Pan Am mechanics. Two engines failed immediately after takeoff, causing the plane to crash in the outskirts of the San Juan harbor, where a shocked multitude watched the latest air tragedy in Puerto Rico. After announcing a routine investigation, a CAB representative declared that the agency had increased its manpower in San Juan due to the high number of accidents on the island. From July 1947

to the Pan Am crash in 1952, 204 persons died in airplane disasters in Puerto Rico.[48] From January 1 to April 15, 1952, there were five crashes by U.S. airlines worldwide, with 118 dead; Puerto Rico's Holy Friday crash was the deadliest of them all. All five planes were from major, scheduled U.S. airlines; during that period, ironically, no nonscheduled plane had crashed.[49] By 1956, of the twenty-seven air accidents with more than fifty dead in the world, two had happened in Puerto Rico.[50]

Puerto Rican migration might be the first airborne migration to the United States, but it came with a price. This is a lesson that should not be forgotten because this, too, is part of Puerto Rico's migration history.

AIRFARES

Cheap airfares became an important issue in the government's project of moving people away from the island to work in the United States. In his response to Pan Am's claim that its $75 "tourist" fare was the cheapest it could offer, Fernós-Isern insisted that "the great masses of people moved at present belong to income classes which cannot afford to pay this $75 rate. They must have cheaper transportation if they are to find work in the mainland."[51] The Puerto Rican government had to actively engage with federal regulators and airlines—both scheduled and nonscheduled—in the determination of airfares. Its officials argued that cheap airfares were fundamental in allowing the greatest number of people to move off the island to the United States, a process that had significant benefits for both the Puerto Rican and the American economies.

The Puerto Rican government became directly involved in the negotiation of agreements with airlines regarding schedules and airfares. Many of these agreements where overseen by BEM director Pagán de Colón, who coordinated the government's migration programs. For example, a 1949 letter from a Pan Am representative to Muñoz Marín stated that after a discussion with Pagán de Colón, the airline offered bigger planes for the San Juan to New York route and that these "will be made available" to the BEM "for their exclusive use on a charter basis." The total flight cost was $3,600, or approximately $57 per passenger.[52] Pagán de Colón was also in constant communication with the Puerto Rico's TA making sure nonscheduled carriers were checked for compliance with safety measures and government standards. In a June 1950 memo by Sierra Berdecía, she stated that this procedure was meant to show the measures taken by the BEM "to assure compliance by airlines with all safety regulations."[53] The governor was kept informed of issues regarding air

transportation for migrants and of negotiations with air carriers. For example, in a June 15, 1950, meeting he instructed Sierra Berdecía to get a better offer on airfares from Eastern or Pan Am and to try to procure additional air transportation with other nonscheduled carriers.[54]

In 1951, under intense pressure from the Puerto Rican government, the CAB allowed Eastern to expand its services to the island and compete with Pan Am. Eastern immediately offered a $64 airfare to Puerto Rico, forcing Pan Am to lower theirs. Even at these "lower" rates, the two airlines made huge profits in the Puerto Rican market. As economist Walton Hamilton argued, "the tourist services thus forced upon Pan American and Eastern by the Government of Puerto Rico have served the reluctant carriers well." The "tourist" airfare was nothing more than a euphemism for cheap airfares benefitting migrants. Hamilton concluded that the $64 airfare "is far more than the masses of the people can afford to pay, leaves huge layers of potential traffic untapped, and imposes a barrier against the migration of workers to the mainland and the creation of new jobs at home."[55]

The government of Puerto Rico, through the actions of the Department of Labor, was engaged in airfare negotiations with airlines, agricultural contractors, and federal agencies. Pagán de Colón devoted a long section in her review of the Farm Placement Program to the issue of air transportation of migrant workers. She described how already by 1949 the responsibility for the issue of air transportation had been assumed by the BEM as part of the implementation of Puerto Rico's migration law. By that date, the air transportation of workers to the United States was included in the labor contract that was required by the Puerto Rican government—that is, it was regulated by the BEM. The government also compelled all airlines flying Puerto Rican workers to the United States to be certified by Puerto Rico's TA and required that their airfares were the cheapest available if these were to be paid up front by the worker. By 1949, the Department of Labor was encouraging farmers interested in hiring Puerto Rican workers to group into associations that could enter into contract negotiations directly. The most controversial issue was air transportation, since these associations usually wanted to hire their own unscheduled airline, while Puerto Rican functionaries insisted on hiring one of the scheduled carriers.

In 1950, the Department of Labor signed a contract with the Michigan Field Corporation allowing the transportation of workers on an unscheduled airline, Westair. The first flight to Miami ended in a tragic accident with over fifty dead. After this incident, the Puerto Rican government allowed the transportation of workers only in flights by Pan Am and Eastern.[56] In June 1956, it reached an agreement with the major airlines, the CAB, and the Garden State

Service Cooperative Association to reduce airfare from $59.50 to $52.50 in travel from San Juan to the East Coast.[57] Two years later, in June 1958, Puerto Rico was involved in intense negotiations with the major airlines for airfare reduction. The airlines had reduced their regular airfare from $52.50 to $45 along the San Juan–New York route, and the government wanted the same rate for their charter flights with these airlines. When the airlines refused, the government stopped sending workers on charter flights, which reduced the number of workers moving to the United States.[58]

The Puerto Rican government also mediated with federal air transportation regulatory agencies in favor of the nonscheduled, or irregular, carriers. These carriers, which provided charter flights on their own or by contract with agricultural employers on the mainland, provided cheaper airfares to migrants. In December 1948, Governor Piñero asked the CAB to grant permission to World Airways to fly to Puerto Rico, arguing,

> More than 50,000 people moved into and out of Puerto Rico by nonscheduled carriers last year. This movement was in a very large measure a matter of economic life and death to job-seekers. This large movement could not have taken place at rates charged by scheduled airlines who have, until this month, ignored the island's glaring need for low-priced air service to the mainland.

He asserted also that the elimination of these carriers from Puerto Rican routes would lead to higher airfares from the major airlines. The CAB responded positively to the governor's request.[59]

In 1952, the government of Puerto Rico filed a motion to the CAB in support of a petition by Flying Tigers, a nonscheduled carrier, for authorization to fly farmworkers from Puerto Rico to the United States; both Pan Am and Eastern opposed this petition. The government's motion argued that there were eighteen thousand farmworkers ready to move to the United States, but that Pan Am and Eastern's refusal to lower their airfares made this uncertain; Flying Tigers proposed an airfare of $40 to $45, almost $20 below what the two major airlines had offered. The government argued that the CAB had previously established that a cheap air service was an "imperative" need for the Puerto Rican economy and that migrant workers could not afford the high airfares charged by Pan Am and Eastern.[60] In 1953, the CAB approved Eastern's request for lowering its Miami–San Juan airfare from $64 to $43, a petition supported by the Puerto Rican government.[61]

Puerto Rico's extensive dependence on irregular carriers to transport migrants to the United States became a policy issue. Some favored a ban on

these carriers, while others supported their continued use. O'Connor had endorsed the latter position as early as 1948, when he was working on matters related to airfares and the air transportation of migrants.[62] O'Connor argued that cheap transportation was necessary for Puerto Ricans to remain competitive on the mainland, and this meant resorting to the use of irregular carriers. He claimed that air safety "is a relative matter" and that no matter what precautionary measures are taken, "risks to life are inherent in speedy transportation," whether performed by the major airlines or the irregulars. O'Connor concluded that irregular carriers "should still have a place in our scheme of things."[63]

THE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

The rising exodus of people—which contributed to the increase in the number of flights to and from the U.S. mainland—justified the construction of a modern airport capable of sustaining the large volume of air passengers and the growing number of flights. The international airport, in turn, made it possible for more flights and more modern airplanes to fly to Puerto Rico and thus to facilitate the ever-increasing outflow of people. The Puerto Rican government played a central role in the construction of the international airport, a role that needs to be understood within the context of its migration program.

In May 1946, while celebrating the approval of Pan Am's direct route between San Juan and New York, *El Mundo* reported that the "rise of large proportions" in the island's air transportation system was due to the "unprecedented exodus" of Puerto Ricans going to New York City. The greatest limitation to the expansion of air transportation in Puerto Rico then was the very limited airport infrastructure on the island. The main facility, the Isla Grande Airport next to the San Juan Bay, was shared by civilian and military flights. The report concluded that "it was essential to construct a civilian airport" in San Juan that could be characterized as an "international airport." Later that year, *El Mundo* regretted the slow progress in the planning of the new airport that was to be constructed in the area of Isla Verde, in the municipality of Carolina, next to San Juan. This situation was due mostly to the opposition of the U.S. Navy to transferring the lands to Puerto Rico. The editorial also noted that Pan Am was threatening to reduce its flights from the United States because the existing airport at Isla Grande could not accommodate its newer and bigger airplanes.[64]

By 1948, the government of Puerto Rico and the CAA had agreed on a plan to build the new airport in Isla Verde. This plan was opposed by the

navy on the basis that it would interfere with a naval radar station near the projected construction area. Instead, the navy proposed that the new airport be built in Palo Seco, in the municipality of Cataño, also next to San Juan. The CAA refused to provide any funding for the construction until the opposition by the navy was resolved.[65] After failed negotiations with the navy, Governor Piñero requested that President Truman intervene. Truman sent Admiral William Leahy, the former governor of Puerto Rico, to assess the situation. Leahy sided with the Puerto Rican government and said that he saw no reason for the navy's position. On July 7, 1948, Truman ordered the secretaries of the interior and the navy to begin negotiations between the navy and the Puerto Rican government to transfer the navy's land in Isla Verde to Puerto Rico and land in Sabana Seca to the navy. Earlier that year, on June 1, the CAA had approved the construction of an international airport in Isla Verde. According to government officials, the construction of the airport at Isla Verde would cost $12,612,000, with federal funds amounting to just $5 million.[66] The Puerto Rican government was the main force behind the construction of the international airport.

Construction of the new airport began on August 17, 1949. Puerto Rico's TA was in charge of its construction and management. The cost for the first phase of construction was $3.5 million, coming mostly from local funds; by this time, the total cost of the project was estimated at $15 million.[67] Later that year, the journal *Aviation Operations* estimated that nine hundred thousand persons would fly to and from Puerto Rico in 1949. Among the causes for this rise in air traffic was "the strong migratory flow of Puerto Ricans to New York since the end of the war."[68] A 1949 study of Puerto Rico's future international airport indicated that passenger traffic to the United States would increase from 314,346 in 1949, to 665,000 in 1960, to 968,000 by 1970. It estimated that the biggest share of passenger traffic would be due to family visits to and from Puerto Rico, followed by permanent and temporary worker migration to the mainland.[69]

By mid-1951, the construction of the airport was already behind the initial plans. The Puerto Rican government complained that one reason for this situation was that the federal government was retracting from its original financial commitment. In August of that year, the CAA and the Puerto Rican government were able to convince Congress to advance the promised funding by emphasizing the military uses of the new airport. Federal appropriations increased for 1951 and 1952, but not to the levels promised initially by the federal government. In March 1952, TA director Salvador Caro announced the beginning of the second phase in the construction of the airport; up to that date, the Puerto Rican government had invested $3.83 million, while federal

funds amounted to $2.2 million. Caro restated the urgency of the new airport based on the unprecedented number of air travelers, claiming that 434,631 passengers used the Isla Grande Airport in 1951—104,292 more than in the previous year. He displayed the model for the new airport, showing its six-floor terminal with offices for federal and local government agencies, airlines, stores, and waiting areas.[70] When the airport was inaugurated in May 1955, the government reported that its original estimates for the airport's passenger traffic—508,000 travelers in 1955 and 665,000 in 1960—were already outdated. In 1953, 605,000 passengers used air transportation to and from Puerto Rico.[71]

In August 1952, Caro stated that of the estimated $15,062,848 final cost for the airport construction, the Puerto Rican government would provide $10.312 million, while the federal government would give only $4.75 million.[72] In early October 1952, Fernós-Isern requested from Congress the approval of the remaining $2.46 million of the funds promised to Puerto Rico in order to accelerate construction. He emphasized the increasing number of industries opened in Puerto Rico by U.S. investors in recent years, the increase in cargo trade with the United States, and the rising number of tourists coming from the U.S. mainland. Missing from the resident commissioner's account, as with other public pronouncements on the need for the new airport during this period, was migration.[73] Why?

Migration was presented as the main reason for new and modern air transportation facilities, including the airport, immediately after the end of the war. The shift in emphasis away from migration might be explained by the attitudes toward Puerto Rican migrants in the United States and the Puerto Rican government's migration policy. The "Puerto Rican problem" in New York City never went away; it surfaced repeatedly in the coming decades, and it also extended to other communities like Chicago, Hartford, and Philadelphia, where Puerto Ricans began to arrive in increasing numbers after 1948. The Puerto Rican government did not want to appear to be "encouraging" migration, the cornerstone of its public relations on this matter.

"VISITORS," TOURISM, AND AIR TRANSPORTATION

When the Isla Verde International Airport began its operations in May 1955, it was heralded as one of the biggest and most modern facilities in Latin America and the Caribbean, a symbol of Puerto Rico's modernization and economic development.[74] Already by this time, the idea that the modernization and expansion of the air transportation system and infrastructure was linked to tourism and the economic development program in Puerto Rico was

widely accepted and reproduced in the media.[75] This idea, actively promoted by the Puerto Rican government at the time, is still prevalent today, even in academic circles.[76] I argue here that the major force behind the expansion and modernization of the air transportation infrastructure actually was migration: the number of airlines and flights, airline regulations, airfares, the international airport—all of these elements were linked to the dramatic increase in the number of Puerto Ricans leaving the island for the United States to live or work and those returning to see relatives during the holidays.

I will examine briefly the role of tourism and tourist travel in Puerto Rico at that time so the ahistorical and misguided notion that tourism promoted the increase in air transportation on the island can finally be dispelled. In doing so, I will address only two issues regarding tourism in Puerto Rico during the late 1940s and 1950s that are relevant to this book. First, the impact of tourism on the expansion and modernization of the air transportation infrastructure in the early 1950s was not very significant. Second, the increase in tourism in Puerto Rico came *after* the expansion of the air transportation infrastructure (number of flights, airport, etc.) from 1948 to 1955 and, very importantly, after the 1959 revolution closed the U.S.-financed American tourism industry in Cuba. That is, tourism was not the cause in the expansion of the air transportation system in Puerto Rico but vice versa: it was only after this infrastructure was modernized and expanded that tourism in Puerto Rico began to expand significantly. Furthermore, by the late 1950s and early 1960s, an important segment of the "visitors" (the official designation of tourists) traveling to Puerto Rico were Puerto Ricans living in the United States who went back to see relatives and enjoy their holidays on the island.

Tourism in Puerto Rico was minimal before the Puerto Rican government began in 1947, as part of its economic development program, to promote the construction of new hotels through direct investments by Fomento or by giving incentives to U.S. investors.[77] Still, by the end of the 1940s, the number of tourists coming to Puerto Rico was insubstantial, so it does not explain the increasing number of air passengers leaving the island at that time. Furthermore, and very importantly, a considerable number of tourists coming to Puerto Rico were doing so by sea and not by air. When the resident commissioner gave a deposition to Congress in 1949 on the "transportation needs of Puerto Rico," he argued for more support not only for air transportation but also for sea transportation; the most important reason to expand sea transportation was its direct impact on the island's tourism.[78] A survey by Puerto Rico's Tourism Office in 1949 supported the resident commissioner's claim for tourists' preference for traveling by sea.[79]

TABLE 1
ARRIVALS TO AND DEPARTURES FROM PUERTO RICO, 1950–60

	1950–51	1955–56	1960–61
Total Arrivals	146,979	319,303	667,081
From the U.S.	92,956	230,585	500,641
Percentage	63.24%	72.22%	75%
Total Departures	188,898	380,950	680,843
To the U.S.	136,101	287,325	517,409
Percentage	72%	75.42%	76%

Source: Albors and López Mangual, *Selected Statistics,* selected data from pp. 2–5.

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF VISITORS TO PUERTO RICO, 1946–65

YEAR	1946–47	1950–51	1955–56	1960–61	1965–66
Number of Visitors	40,380	78,367	162,522	354,963	723,543
From the U.S.	32,405	65,636	147,219	232,343	613,641
Percentage	80.25%	83.75%	90.58%	65.46%	84.81%

Source: Albors and López Mangual, *Selected Statistics,* selected data from pp. 8–9.

As shown in table 1, the movement of people to and from Puerto Rico increased dramatically during the 1950s, increasing fourfold between 1950 and 1960. The overwhelming majority of travel to and from Puerto Rico was to the United States (by 1960 two-thirds of all departures and arrivals). Almost 98 percent of these passengers traveled by air. That is, between 1955—the year the international airport was inaugurated—and 1960, the air movement of passengers almost doubled. The government's yearly figures for passenger movement in Puerto Rico show that between 1950–51 and 1960–61, some 4,101,684 passengers arrived on the island, while 4,568,892 departed. Of this number, 2,982,750 arrived from the United States, while 3,442,772 departed to the United States. Based on this data, the net migration to the United States was 460,022 passengers.

Estimating the number of tourists is trickier since the government at this time used the category of "visitors." As shown in table 2, although the number of visitors to Puerto Rico increased from 1946–47 to 1955–56, the numbers more than doubled by 1960–61, and again by 1965–66. These figures indicate two important things: first, although the number of visitors rose steadily during the 1950s, this figure increased dramatically after 1960, and second, the

TABLE 3
HOTEL REGISTRATIONS IN SAN JUAN BY ORIGIN, 1950–65

YEAR	1950	1955	1960	1964–65
Total	54,832	99,478	217,035	387,287
Puerto Rico Residents	26,858	31,843	34,617	49,638
Percentage of Total	49%	32%	16%	13%
Nonresidents	27,994	67,635	182,418	337,649
Percentage of Total	51%	68%	84%	87%

Source: Albors and López Mangual, *Selected Statistics,* selected data from pp. 20–25.

overwhelming number of visitors came from the United States. From 1950–51 to 1960–61, there were 2,102,812 visitors in Puerto Rico, the vast majority (1,545,838) coming between 1955–56 and 1960–61. But from 1961–62 to 1965–66 alone, there were 2,714,809 visitors to the island.

Table 3 shows how the same pattern of growth is reflected in the number of hotel registrations in San Juan during the period, if this category can be used as a reflection of tourism. In 1950 there existed almost no difference between local and foreign tourism. By 1955, however, the numbers were different: hotel registrations in San Juan by "nonresidents" more than doubled those of "residents of Puerto Rico." The gap between local and foreign hotel registrations widened after that year, more than doubling in numbers between 1955 and 1960; the numbers almost doubled again between 1960 and 1965. An important reason for this, no doubt, was the dramatic jump in the total number of rooms available to visitors in tourist hotels, commercial hotels, and guest houses in Puerto Rico from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s: from a total of 1,730 in 1955, to 3,323 in 1960, to 6,777 in 1965.[80] But other factors need to be considered to explain more comprehensively the rise of "visitors" in this period.

The traditional discourse on the rise of the tourist industry in Puerto Rico focuses on the growth of the U.S. tourist market based on the expansion of hotels owned or managed by the United States following the collapse of the U.S.-financed tourist industry in Cuba after the revolution in 1959.[81] This perspective of the development of the Puerto Rican tourist industry is not wrong, but it is too limited. It fails to take into consideration how migration promoted the expansion and modernization of the air transportation infrastructure that made possible the growth of the traditional tourist industry in the 1960s ori-

TABLE 4
TOP EIGHT HOTEL REGISTRATIONS IN SAN JUAN, BY U.S. STATES ORIGIN, 1955–65

YEAR	1954–55	1960–61	1965–66
New York	16,474	75,395	149,857
Florida	4,547	12,611	16,375
Illinois	3,439	5,604	—
New Jersey	3,335	13,311	32,343
Pennsylvania	2,653	8,716	17,956
California	2,526	3,941	11,913
Ohio	2,173	3,454	7,298
Massachusetts	1,872	—	14,871
Connecticut	—	4,581	11,343

Source: Albors and López Mangual, *Selected Statistics,* selected data from pp. 27–28.

ented to U.S. tourism in U.S.-owned or U.S.-managed hotels. It also fails to acknowledge that, beginning in the 1950s, a very significant number of the "visitors" going to the island were Puerto Ricans living in the United States.

The pattern of tourism in Puerto Rico for decades to come was already established by 1955: the majority of tourists came from the United States. In 1954–55, 52,399 of a total of 94,316 hotel registrations were from the "U.S. mainland." The numbers for other years were 165,890 out of 219,058 in 1960–61 and 341,227 out of 433,341 in 1965–66. By 1955, another pattern of tourism in Puerto Rico was emerging: most hotel registrations in San Juan hotels were from states with a growing Puerto Rican population. Table 4 shows the top eight states with hotel registrations in San Juan from 1954–55 to 1965–66. By 1963, the three major U.S. airlines flying to Puerto Rico had established three main routes in flights to the island, all of them in cities with heavily populated Puerto Rican communities (or a major transfer airport, in the case of Miami): the Northeastern United States (New York, Newark, Philadelphia, etc.), with Pan Am having 1,815 flights, Eastern 1,256, and Trans-Caribbean Airways (TCA) 213; Chicago, with 200 Eastern flights; and Miami, with 463 flights by Pan Am and 498 by Eastern.[82] This pattern connecting Puerto Rico to major Puerto Rican communities in the United States remains the same to this day.

These numbers reflect another important factor of tourism in Puerto Rico that the literature on the subject usually neglects: a significant number of "vis-

itors" coming to the island were Puerto Ricans living in the United States.[83] A study of the tourism and travel industry in the 1960s concluded:

> The number of visitors arrivals is very large in Puerto Rico; in 1963 it was over half of the total population of the island. Perhaps an unexpectedly small proportion of these visitors comprise the most noticeable group, those who stay in the hotels and guests houses, about 18 percent. . . . Other visitors, staying in apartments with friends or relatives, or elsewhere, comprise a very important group (36 percent . . .).[84]

According to this study, the impact on the economy of these nontraditional tourists who did not stay in hotels and guest houses was greater than that of the more traditional tourists attracted by government publicity.[85] By the 1960s, the largest number of "visitors" traveling to the island were Puerto Ricans living and working in the United States who came to stay with friends or relatives. A significant number of those considered in official statistics as traditional "tourists" came from states with a large number of Puerto Rican residents, probably islanders vacationing in Puerto Rico.

During the fiscal year 1956–57, the Department of Labor began to publish more detailed information coming from its Bureau of Labor Statistics on migration and the number of air passengers moving to and from the United States. This data provides a more accurate perspective on the character of the movement of people and the kinds of passengers involved in Puerto Rico's air traffic. The department's annual report for this fiscal year indicated that 332,400 persons left the island and that 69 percent (97,800) of the nonresidents departing had stayed in private residences during their visit to the island, while only 26.1 percent stayed in hotels. The department's 1958–59 annual report begins to offer more detailed information on the travel of residents and nonresidents. As table 5 clearly shows, already by this time the pattern of air travel was clearly defined: two-thirds of all departures and three-fourths of all arrivals were from nonresidents. But contrary to the official discourse, most air travelers going to or leaving the island were Puerto Ricans living in the U.S. mainland, not foreign tourists. The most important reasons for residents of Puerto Rico to fly to the U.S. mainland were to look for jobs, to move there permanently, and to see or accompany friends and relatives there. The most important reasons for nonresidents to fly to the island were to see or accompany friends and relatives and tourism.

TABLE 5
AIR TRAFFIC MOVEMENT IN PUERTO RICO, 1956–61, BY CATEGORY

YEAR	1956–57	1958–59	1960–61
Departures	**332,400**	**281,300**	**368,200**
RESIDENTS OF PUERTO RICO	*N/A*	*38%*	*34.3%*
Reason for Departing			
To work or search for jobs	33.8%	29%	21.8%
To see relatives and friends	34.1%	15.9%	20.9%
To accompany friends or relatives	N/A	12.8%	13.9%
Moving to the U.S. permanently	N/A	25%	27.3%
NONRESIDENTS	*N/A*	*62%*	*65.7%*
Reason for Visit			
To work or search for jobs		—	—
To see relatives and friends		43%	38.4%
To accompany friends or relatives		7.4%	8.4%
Tourism		25.5%	28.4%
Business		8.5%	7.1%
Arrivals	**281,700**	**285,500**	**382,500**
RESIDENTS OF PUERTO RICO	*N/A*	*24.9%*	*22%*
Reason for Travel to U.S.			
To visit relatives and friends	45.7%	35%	40.6%
To work or search for work	16%	34.8%	27.5%
To accompany relatives	—	8.6%	—
Tourism	12.4%	7.9%	8.8%
Business	—	5.8%	9.4%
NONRESIDENTS	*N/A*	*75%*	*77.6%*
Reason for Visit			
To visit relatives and friends		34%	32.3%
Tourism		19%	25%
To accompany relatives		11%	11%
Business		—	6.4%

Sources: GPR, Comm. Labor, *Twenty-Third Annual Report 1956–57,* 74–75; *Twenty-Fifth Annual Report 1958–59,* 87–88; and *Twenty-Seventh Annual Report 1960–61,* 90–91. The Commissioner of Labor's annual reports for the years 1956–57, 1957–58, and 1958–59 were incorrectly numbered in the original documents. The numbers 23, 24, and 25 were repeated. To avoid further confusion, hereafter we will use both the number and the year of the report as reference for these documents.[86]

TRAVEL AID AND SAFETY

Providing aid to the migrants who left for the United States on their own was an issue that occupied the government for many years. By the mid fifties, those who migrated to the United States through the auspices of the Labor Department reached some fourteen thousand a year, while those who left on their own reached between forty to fifty thousand.[87] In January 1950, the BEM opened an office at the international airport to orient migrants in problems they could face in the United States.[88] Furthermore, in January 1954, Sierra Berdecía announced the opening of an office to provide travel aid to Puerto Ricans at Idlewild International Airport in New York City. He said the idea came from Muñoz Marín after hearing of the economic exploitation and problems faced by Puerto Ricans when they arrived in New York. Following its policy of not "duplicating services" offered by established agencies in the United States, the government decided to provide these services through the Travel Aid Society of New York. The airport office was staffed by two Spanish-speaking social workers reporting to the Migration Office. The staff provided information, among other things, to help migrants move to other areas of the mainland apart from New York City. The existence and function of the airport office was publicized in Puerto Rico by the BEM and by the Migration Office in New York.[89]

Perhaps the most troubling issue for the government regarding individual migrants was the "smuggling of workers." The Department of Labor, together with the Justice Department and the Public Service Commission (PSC), began a campaign in May 1952 against the illegal hiring of workers. Thousands of migrants went to the mainland through the mediation of travel agencies on the island working with contractors in the United States; many workers were scammed in the process. Other workers were hired on the island by contractors not regulated by the Department of Labor, a practice that violated Puerto Rico's migration law.[90] The legislature passed a law that required travel agencies to register with the PSC after May 1948; their licenses could be revoked if they were found guilty of illegal trafficking of workers. Nevertheless, many travel agencies still worked as intermediaries in recruiting workers for U.S. labor contractors and agricultural employers, placing ads in newspapers and redirecting workers to U.S. contractors and employers. This practice became common in the early 1950s in areas of the American South, particularly in Florida, after the government had prohibited the legal hiring of farmworkers in the region. Many working there would later ask the government for protection. According to Pagán de Colón, "the situation that had occurred in the north in 1947 was reproduced in the southern states," referring to the

"Puerto Rican problem" in New York years earlier. Sierra Berdecía requested *El Mundo* and *El Imparcial* not to publish ads used for illegal recruiting, a petition accepted by the two major dailies.[91] In March 1953, Sierra Berdecía denounced the "contraband of agricultural workers" by New Jersey's Garden State Cooperative Association, one of the biggest employers of island migrants; the association refused to accept the contract's medical insurance clause. Eastern Airlines was providing air transportation for these workers.[92]