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THE UNITED STATES AND THE RESTORATION OF COSTA RICAN DEMOCRACY

BY

RICHARD JEFFERY JUNKINS
B.A., B.S., Florida Technological University, 1972

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Master of Arts degree in History
in the Graduate Studies Program of the College of Arts and Sciences
University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Summer Term
1983

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INTRODUCTION

The small, mountainous nation of Costa Rica enjoys a reputation as a uniquely peaceful democracy which stands apart from its neighbors in violent Central America. Modern Costa Rica enjoys a high standard of living, and its extensive social welfare system has created a tranquil and patriotic citizenry which proudly participates in the political process. Visitors to Costa Rica never cease to be amazed by the extent of popular participation in Latin America's showcase democracy.

The reasons for contemporary Costa Rica's unique status derive from a combination of geographical, historical and political factors. The first Spanish conquistadors to explore the uncharted region were confronted with dense jungles and steep mountains which hindered colonization. The location of Costa Rica, at the southernmost portion of a province with colonial headquarters in Guatemala, resulted in lengthy delays in transportation and communication. Several weeks of hard travel to reach the nearest point of civilization discouraged the rapid development of Costa Rica, as settlers first colonized the areas closest to the Capitancy-General in Guatemala.

The lack of a large indigenous population forced the Spaniards in Costa Rica to work individually at their agricultural pursuits, and deprived them of the serf class which existed in the other colonies. Without slave labor, farming was limited to small family farms rather than the large feudal estates that developed in Costa Rica's neighbors.

The small farms produced neither large incomes nor royalties for the Crown, which led to a relationship with Mother Spain best characterized as benign neglect. Isolated Costa Rica received little aid or attention from colonial authorities, and the colony was forced to develop independently.

As the nation of small independent farmers entered the era of colonial independence, it was only natural for Costa Ricans to favor separation from Spain, whose long distance rule had played little part in national development. In the nation's first domestic political crisis, as in another which occurred 120 years later, a hero emerged to guide the nation on a democratic course. Later leaders vacillated between representative government and authoritarianism as the nation drifted aimlessly. Personalist politics dominated Costa Rican history, as a succession of politicians and caudillos came and went. Regardless of the leader of the moment, however, an independent and democratic spirit remained at the heart of national political developments. Several presidents contributed greatly to Costa Rican democracy, and the tradition of nonviolent political succession became ingrained in the national consciousness.

During the 1940's Costa Rica underwent the most dramatic social change in its history, with the establishment of President Rafael Angel Calderón Guardia's extensive social welfare program. The president, in concert with the Costa Rican Communist Party and the Church, dominated the domestic political scene for eight years. When Calderón Guardia attempted to return to power through fraudulent means, opponents of the government precipitated the 1948 Civil War.

The complex blend of domestic and international politics which led to the Civil War was further complicated by the involvement of the United States in the conflict. The United States acted decisively when faced with the prospect of a Costa Rican government which included communist participation, as it began to exhibit the first symptoms of Cold War anti-communist paranoia. Washington assisted in the victory of the rebels in the Civil War due to concern about Communism in Costa Rica.

The American intervention in Costa Rica produced a more important result than merely the defeat of Calderon Guardia and his communist allies. By installing José Figueres' forces in power the United States obtained quite a bargain, since this intellectual visionary was determined to institutionalize democracy in Costa Rica. As head of a ruling Junta, Figueres abolished Costa Rica's army, promulgated a new reformist Constitution and oversaw the installation of a democratic government eighteen months after his Civil War victory. Figueres travelled widely while out of office and acquired an international reputation as a progressive democrat. He offered liberals throughout the hemisphere an alternative to authoritarian dictators in the fight against Communism, and he criticized the United States for its Cold War foreign policy in Latin America.

Figueres returned to Costa Rica to serve two terms as the presidential candidate of the new Partido Liberación Nacional, the first western-style political party in Costa Rica. The establishment of Partido Liberación Nacional as an organization devoted to a particular philosophy, Social Democracy, distinguished it from its predecessors in

Costa Rica, which tended to revolve around the personality of a particular individual rather than ideas or issues. The elimination of personalism from national politics marked the institutionalization of democracy in Costa Rica.

The purpose of this thesis is to trace the development of modern Costa Rica's unique status as an exemplary democracy in a region where democratic traditions are not known to flourish. The effect of the American diplomatic intervention which determined the outcome of the 1948 Civil War, and which led to the restoration and institutionalization of democracy in this small Central American nation, will also be examined.

CHAPTER I

COSTA RICA: A DIFFERENT COLONY

The Spaniards who came to colonize Costa Rica in the early sixteenth century were confronted from the outset by the nation's unforgiving topography. The physical characteristics of the country include two high mountain ranges, the Cordillera de Tilarán and the Cordillera de Talamanca, which run north and south and divide Costa Rica. The mountains are principally volcanic in origin and range as high as thirteen thousand feet. Volcanic eruptions occur periodically and have plagued the nation throughout recorded history. The volcanic slopes are covered with dense jungle which also has proven to be an implacable foe of development. The width of Costa Rica ranges from a narrow 75 miles in the south along her border with Panama to 175 miles in the north and the Nicaraguan border. The length of the country is 300 miles and at 19,653 square miles Costa Rica is the second smallest nation in Central America (El Salvador is the smallest, with 8,260 square miles). The eastern boundary is the Caribbean Sea and the western boundary is the Pacific Ocean, with countless rivers on both coasts flowing down out of the rugged interior. By the end of the seventeenth century, population growth was largely confined to a large plateau of approximately three hundred square miles in size, located in the central portion of the nation. The plateau, or Meseta Central,

ranges in altitude from 2500 to 4000 feet, with a temperate climate well-suited to European colonization.¹

The initial settlement of the nation took place upon coastal beaches and easily-accessible river mouths, which afforded shelter from the sea without the rigors and dangers of a journey into the forbidding interior. As the colonists set their sights upon the task of exploring Costa Rica, the problems before them must have appeared insurmountable. Looking towards the distant cordilleras, the Spaniards saw only countless forested ridges, each higher than the previous, rising steeply out of the sea as they marched off to the horizon. As the most physically inaccessible nation of New Spain, Costa Rica demanded a special fortitude and determination from those who challenged her.²

The first European to come into contact with Costa Rica was the renowned explorer, Cristóbal Colón. On his second voyage to the New World in 1502, he proceeded south along the Caribbean coast of Central America in search of a passage to the Ganges river. A tropical storm suddenly arose and forced Colón to seek shelter behind islands in the Rio San Juan, the modern boundary between Costa Rica and Nicaragua. The expedition later spent a few day in Cariay, a small village further south along the coast. Colón's reports of natives of Costa Rica were well received in Spain and stimulated further interest in the exploration of the region, primarily to search for gold and convert peaceful natives to Christianity.³

The closest Spanish outpost to the new territory was León, in Nicaragua, and its governor dispatched an expedition to undertake the first extensive exploration of Costa Rica. Captain Gil González Dávila began his journey in Panama and sailed northward along the Pacific coast of Costa Rica. Not long into the voyage, González Dávila "was forced to beach three of his vessels to save them from the worms, while the fourth returned to Panama for pitch and other articles of repairs."⁴ Torrential rains and flooding on the beach forced González Dávila to break camp and leave behind a small group to guard the ships while the main party of one hundred men made its way inland.

After a journey of several hundred miles, the explorers arrived at their planned destination, the village of the cacique Nicoya. Provisions were obtained and treaties of peace and friendship were concluded, as González Dávila set about converting the various local tribes to Christianity. The Spaniards encountered little hostility and were well-received by the Indians, which made the mission a great success. As American historian Hubert H. Bancroft writes: González Dávila distinguished himself ". . . because the sword remained sheathed, and it was found profitable as well as humane to keep it so . . ." ⁵ Costa Rican historian Ricardo Fernández Guardia also speaks well of the first Spaniard to explore Costa Rica, writing:

Gil González Dávila merece lugar prominente en la galería de los grandes aventureros españoles. La construcción de sus navíos, su marcha de 224 leguas con un puñado de hombres por entre numerosas tribus guerreras, su lucha contra los obstáculos de la Naturaleza, más parecen fabulas que obras humanas. Sin embargo, su nombre no brilla en las historias como lo merece, tal vez por no

estar asociado a esos grandes crímenes que han dado al de otros tanta fama. Gran cazador de oro, pero humano, tal vez por no estar asociado supo llegar a sus fines sin cometer exacciones ni crueldades.

González Dávila's humane treatment of Costa Rica's natives and the good will they showed him encouraged further contacts between Europeans and the Indians. It came to pass that those explorers who accomplished the most in sixteenth century Costa Rica followed the example of González Dávila and dealt humanely with the native Indians. Logically, an approach to Spanish colonization of Costa Rica which employed the least hostile methods would obviously win more native converts than the tactics of men such as Pizarro, who favored the mass destruction of the native culture. Convinced of the sincerity of the colonists, Costa Rica's Indians integrated more rapidly into the European culture.

An example of the benevolent variety of conquistador was Costa Rica's first provincial governor, Juan Vásquez de Coronado, who is generally credited with the actual settlement and exploration of the region. In December 1562, the governor of León appointed Coronado alcalde mayor of Nicaragua and urged him to immediately begin a voyage to Costa Rica. The appointment was welcomed by Coronado, who was determined to make a name for himself in New Spain. As Costa Rican historian Victoria Urbano writes, for Coronado "América fue la meta, la ambición, el sueño, el poderío, la reencarnación misma de la gloria. América fue sinónimo de oro y fortuna, de tierra propia, de horizonte abierto."⁷

Coronado began his explorations 6 September 1562 and used as a starting point the village of the cacique Nicoya. The natives responded quite favorably to Coronado's honest and moral approach to colonization

and conquest, and the Spaniard succeeded in making many conversions while mapping the vast territory. At each contact with natives, Coronado stressed the peaceful nature of his mission and treated the tribesmen with respect and dignity. As Fernández Guardia writes:

. . . porque debe decirse en honor suyo que no hay quizás en toda la historia de la conquista de América memoria de un capitán más humanitario y menos codicioso. Entre numerosos hechos puede citarse el de haber mandado enterrar la única cadena que llevaban sus soldados para prisión de los caciques.

Costa Rican historian Victoria Urbano concurs with Fernandez Guardia, and writes: "La obra realizada por Vázquez de Coronado es digna en todo encomio, no sólo por la audacia y energía desplegadas por este caudillo, que pudo vencer obstáculos que aún hoy, con mayores facilidades, parecen insuperables, sino por la manera supo llevarla a cabo."⁹

Coronado founded or reestablished settlements at Quepo(s) on the Pacific coast, near the site of present-day Cartago in the interior, and at various points throughout Costa Rica.¹⁰ When Coronado's expedition found sizeable gold deposits in the Valle de Talamanca, the Spaniards justified the optimistic name given the nation years before.¹¹ As a devout Christian and a responsible conquistador, Coronado left his mark on the fledgling nation and is considered the founder of modern Costa Rica. As Urbano points out, "Vale la pena que notemos la sinceridad con que Vázquez de Coronado confió en la ayuda divina, manifestando de una forma espontánea su más honda convicción cristiana y la bondad de su conducta para con el indio."¹²

Several of the successors of Coronado played roles in Costa Rica's development but the principal noteworthy individual was Governor Rodrigo Arias Maldonado, who was appointed in 1660.¹³ Maldonado became the first Spaniard to establish settlements in the Talamanca region and succeeded in the conversion of large numbers of primitive Indians. Colonial outposts were founded at a variety of previously hostile native villages, and many Indians adopted Spanish social customs and manners.¹⁴ When Governor Maldonado retired, colonial relations with the Indians received a major setback. For the rest of the seventeenth and most of the eighteenth centuries, the Talamanca region remained beyond Spanish jurisdiction, host to a variety of hostile tribes.¹⁵ Internal warfare, and the ravages of nature and foreign disease served to depopulate and neutralize the Indians and accelerate their integration into Spanish colonial society. By 1800, most of Costa Rica's Indians were considered citizens rather than indios.¹⁶

After a few generations, the distinction between the native Costa Ricans and Spanish immigrants virtually disappeared, as the natives abandoned their former traditions and began to emulate those of the colonists. The nation developed into a classless society of small and poor farmers, as Indians, colonists and Spanish officials alike were forced to work their own plots of land. The lack of a large, impoverished native underclass deprived the colonists of Costa Rica of a reservoir of serfs upon which to base their agricultural growth. Unlike Costa Rica, other nations of colonial Latin America developed vast plantation economies which utilized Indian laborers under

conditions which approximated slavery. Forced to depend entirely upon their own backbreaking labor to extract a living from the soil, Costa Rican farmers limited the size of their farms. As the Biesanz write in their outstanding study of a nation and its culture, The Costa Ricans:

Indians in many Spanish colonies were obligated to work as serfs for the colonists a certain number of days a year, or pay taxes. The colonists in turn offered to protect and Christianize them. The system did not work well in Costa Rica, where so many Indians fled into the forests that by the middle of the seventeenth century the colonists, sometimes including the governor himself, had to work the soil with their own hands. With the failure of the feudal system, a pattern of family farms became the norm.¹⁷

Without a slave class, Costa Rica developed more slowly than her Central American sister provinces. Guatemala was the colonial headquarters for the entire region north of Panama and held principal importance for the Crown. The large estates which arose in Guatemala, using native Indian labor, paid substantial amounts to taxes to Spain, while the small and poor farms of Costa Rica were ignored. A weak tax base and geographic isolation explains the two hundred years of neglect which characterized Costa Rica's relationship with Spain. Left to their own devices, European settlers adapted as best they could to an alien environment with myriad obstacles. While their counterparts in Guatemala lived under the constant and obtrusive supervision of Spanish colonial authorities, the colonists in Costa Rica survived (but hardly flourished) independently, without the help or hindrance of the Spanish.

The principal cities of colonial Costa Rica were Cartago, founded by Coronado 12 June 1563 and Heredia, founded in the early eighteenth century. Both cities tended to be politically conservative and had populations which considered themselves to be the "aristocracy" of Costa Rica, despite lack of claims to royal titles. By dint of their prominence in Costa Rica's colonial development, these cities felt obligated to perpetuate the mythical "noble line" of a few of the wealthier families to give Costa Rica the aristocracy any "modern" nation required. The contrast between the elite image held by Cartago and Heredia, and the foundation of the cities of San José and Alajuela is dramatic.

The latter cities proudly trace their historic roots to the rise of smuggling and the creation of contrabandistas in Costa Rica. The route from Guatemala City to Cartago, the principal avenue of trade, passed through the village of Esparza (Esparta) and crossed the Río Grande near La Garita before climbing the continental divide near Ochomogo and descending into Cartago. A customs house was established at Ochomogo, about six miles west of Cartago, and to avoid paying taxes on merchandise from the north, a village of smugglers was founded just west of the customs post. The village, which grew rapidly as a liberal and lawless enclave, was the town of San José.

Alajuela's development paralleled that of San José, and began once San José had grown into a successful city which no longer sought to avoid the payment of duties. With the support of San José, the authorities sponsored the construction of a new customs house on the

western end of the Meseta Central, on the eastern bank of the Río Grande. The intent was to eliminate the lucrative business of smuggling, now that people of San José considered themselves citizens of Costa Rica and not outlaws any longer. To avoid the new customs house, another small village developed along a route which bypassed the tax collectors, just as San José had formed two decades earlier. The new village, located on the Río Segundo, grew to become the town of Alajuela. The citizens of Alajuela were predominantly contrabandistas, tended to be political liberals, and developed into middle class merchants whose livelihood was derived from the purchase and sale of illegal merchandise. The development of San José and Alajuela as liberal, middle class mercantile centers proved to be a constant source of friction between these cities and the conservative, agrarian centers of Heredia and Cartago, with their pseudo-aristocrats.¹⁸

The nineteenth century was a productive and critical period in the development of Costa Rica's democracy. The placid and remote life of Costa Rica's citizens underwent the most dramatic changes since the landing of Colón in Cariay in 1502, as events in Europe ushered in the industrial age. Although the liberal philosophical movements of the Old World arrived nearly one quarter century later in the New World, all of Latin America, including isolated Costa Rica, became embroiled in the fervor of revolutionary spirit.

The clarion call for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity raised by the French Revolution and the principles of liberal democracy embodied within the American Declaration of Independence inspired a plethora of

Latin American nationalists. Revolutionary consciousness in Latin America arose out of the 1794 publication of a Spanish translation of the French Declaration of the Rights of Man by Antonio Nariño in Bogotá, Colombia. A large new group of receptive listeners were thus exposed to the new philosophies of distant Europe.¹⁹

In remote and isolated Costa Rica, the passion for independence and revolution did produce important political changes, but was not nearly as important for the lives of its citizens as in the other nations in Latin America. Unlike the other nations of the Spanish empire, the citizens of Costa Rica were accustomed to a greater degree of freedom and self determination simply due to imperial neglect. As previously mentioned, the small landowners of Spain's most forgotten colony were forced to make the best of things without supervision, interference or assistance from Mother Spain. The individuals responsible for colonial development tended to take matters into their own hands, thus establishing the precedent of self reliance and independence at an early stage of growth. When the nations of Central America received their long sought-after independence from Spain, the lives of the citizens of each nation underwent a dramatic change - except in Costa Rica. Little changed for the small nation of farmers.²⁰ Although neglected Costa Rica had for some time established a system of town meetings to discuss important community problems, the resignation of the Spanish governor in 1821 resulted in the first

national rather than local assemblage. The representatives of the individual town Juntas met to create the Junta Superior Gubernativa Interina, also referred to as the first Junta de Legados. Upon learning of Guatemalan and Nicaraguan declarations of independence from Spain, the delegates of the Junta de Legados followed suit, and proclaimed Costa Rica's independence from Spain 12 November 1821. The Junta de Legados met continuously throughout November, and by December had created the first constitution of newly-independent Costa Rica.²¹

Costa Rica's first constitution was called El Pacto Social Fundamental de Costa Rica, or the Pacto de Concordia. The latter title suggests that multiple questions addressed by the document, which dealt with independence from Spain, the direction of the nation's political future and the perennial problem of the site of Costa Rica's capital, previously Cartago.²² The positions and sympathies of diverse factions were taken into consideration in drawing up the new constitution but significantly divergent viewpoints remained. The more liberal cities, Alajuela and San José, favored unconditional independence and the establishment of an independent republic. Conservative, agrarian-oriented Cartago and Heredia preferred the more cautious approach of independence from Spain and an alliance with Iturbide's empire, Gaínza's federation or regional movements in Santa Marta or León. Although the major goal of the Pacto de Concordia was to heal factional differences and enter into a mutually acceptable compromise, continued intransigence by conservative Cartago prevented reconciliation and foreshadowed two decades of intercity rivalry.²³

It is apparent the principal point of contention was not the philosophical schism between annexation and separatism, as might be expected, but rather simple jealousy. The article of the Pacto de Concordia which dealt with the site of the nation's capital called for periodic rotation among the four principal towns rather than maintaining the center of government in Cartago. The representatives and the chief executive would sleep in a variety of homes in different towns rather than having one presidential residence in Cartago. The conservative nobleza of Costa Rica's oldest town, the historic, social and political capital of the country, were unable to contain their hatred for the other towns. In particular, the rapidly growing liberal stronghold of San José was viewed as the thief of Cartago's proud heritage.²⁴

Political tensions increased during 1821, and when the Junta met 13 January 1822 an air of uncertainty prevailed. Daily sessions were marred by acrimonious name calling while the pressing question of Costa Rica's political future went unattended.²⁵ Fraternal bitterness was abruptly forgotten when a powerful earthquake struck in the dawn of 7 May 1822. The earthquake of San Estanislao inflicted tremendous destruction upon all of Central America; Cartago was the hardest hit in Costa Rica. Nature accomplished that which political debate could not, as the earthquake brought former enemies together in a massive reconstruction effort which involved citizens throughout the nation. As Fernández Guardia writes: "No hay mal que por bien no venga, . . . y así sucedió con el terremoto de San Estanislao. Consternados cartagineses y josefinos, imperialistas y republicanos, resolvieron

poner punto final a sus disputas y querellas."²⁶ On the 8th and 9th of May the councils of Cartago and San José agreed not to discuss the issue of the nation's political direction until after repair efforts were completed, and the remainder of 1822 was spent in peace as Costa Rica rebuilt.

The respite from politics endured until the meeting of the second Junta in Cartago 1 January 1823. Once again, hostile debate surrounded the refusal of the imperialists of Cartago and Heredia to compromise with the Republicans. During the spring of 1823 the rhetoric was replaced by intimidation and threats, as the imperialists increased the level of tension. Their courage was bolstered by correspondence with imperialist politicians in El Salvador, who assured the Costa Ricans a large relief expedition was coming to aid them and force the submission of San José and Alajuela.²⁷

As tensions reached a breaking point, war became inevitable. When arms from the garrison in Cartago were stolen, apparently intended for use against San José, the first Civil War in Costa Rica began. Alajuela and San José united and their combined forces engaged in several indecisive battles against the imperialists. The tide turned on 5 April 1823 due to the resourceful strategy of the military commander of the government forces, General Gregorio José Ramírez. Following a bloody victory at Ochomogo which involved over two thousand combatants, Ramírez chased the defeated opposition down the mountain into Cartago and forced the cities' submission.²⁸

Gregorio José Ramírez of Alajuela must be considered the most important figure in nineteenth century Costa Rican history. The

military victory at Ochomogo was important, but the role played by Ramírez in the period immediately following the capitulation of the imperialists dramatically determined the future of his newly independent nation. In the same vein as González Dávila and Vásquez de Coronado, Ramírez is truly one of the "founding fathers" of Costa Rican democracy. Following the 29 March 1823 defeat of Cartago and Heredia, the disoriented nation found itself without a government or any idea of its political future. Confused Costa Ricans turned to Ramírez for leadership and the unwilling general temporarily became the nation's first dictator. "Para salvarla de la anarquía y restablecer el orden legal, don Gregorio José Ramírez tuvo que asumir la dictadura; pero tan sólo la ejerció durante el tiempo estrictamente necesario para llevar a buen término la patriótica misión que se había impuesto."²⁹

For ten short days Ramírez grudgingly assumed supreme command over the destiny of Costa Rica while searching for a solution to domestic strife. Despite widespread popular support for a permanent dictatorship similar to that of other nations of the region, Ramírez made it clear from the outset the temporary diversion from democratic rule would endure only until an alternative could be chosen. During the time Ramírez was in charge, arrangements were made for a reunion of another Junta de Legados to meet in San José 10 May 1823, and when the delegates assembled Ramírez announced his return to Alajuela. Republican politicians urged Ramírez to remain in power, as did a number of citizens, but Ramírez was adamant in demanding a return to democratic government and preferred retirement over a public career.

As Fernández Guardia writes:

Ramírez era realmente un demócrata de corazón y un buen ciudadano, como lo prueba la circunstancia de no haber querido quedarse con la dictadura después de la jornada de Ochomogo y de la rendición de los imperialistas. Al contrario se apresuro a restablecer el orden legal, convocando a la Asamblea a fin de que ésta reorganizase el Gobierno de la provincia, como en efecto lo hizo. . . Gregorio José Ramírez es acreedor al respeto y la gratitud de sus conciudadanos, por sus virtudes cívicas, su acendrado amor a la patria, al pueblo y a la libertad, así como por el eminente servicio que les prestó en una hora de gran peligro.³⁰

Age and the rigors of battle took their toll on the hero of Costa Rica's first Civil War. During the summer of 1823 a grateful Asamblea awarded the infirm general a lifetime pension and the title of Benemerito Hijo de la Patria. Upon notice of Ramirez' death in November 1823 a national day of mourning was accompanied by the widespread show of grief and sympathy of most of Costa Rica's citizens. When the ceremonies in Cartago, the imperialist stronghold, began to take on a festive air, troops were called out and several protesters were arrested, but, in general, the people of Costa Rica felt a sense of profound loss.³¹ The ten day dictatorship of Ramirez served as a bridge between the Pacto de Concordia and the election of Costa Rica's first president in 1824 and undeniably forced Costa Rica to stay on the road to democracy rather than accept anarchy or authoritarianism.

The dictatorship of Gregorio Jose Ramirez provided an invaluable service to the nation's fledgling democracy; the debt owed by Costa Rica to Ramirez is priceless. The three short years of Independence from Spain marked the decline in power of Cartago and Heredia, and the

ascendancy of San José to national preeminence. The role of Ramírez was to usher in an age of relative tranquility, during which the nation could develop and prosper. Just as Ramírez forced Costa Rica to remain on a democratic course, another national hero would come along 120 years later and again save the nation from tyranny. That man was José Figueres.

NOTES

¹Harry Robinson, Latin America: A Geographical Survey (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961), p. 168.

²John Gunther, Inside Latin America (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941), pp. 131-32.

³Hubert Howe Bancroft, The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft, Vol. VI: The History of Central America, Vol. I, 1501-1530 (San Francisco: The History Company, 1886), p. 214; see also, Academia de Geografía e Historia de Costa Rica, "Colección de Documentos para la Historia de Costa Rica Relativos al Cuarto y Ultimo Viaje de Cristóbal Colón" (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta y Librería Atenea, 1952), passim.

⁴Bancroft, History of Central America, I, 484.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ricardo Fernández Guardia, El descubrimiento y la conquista (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Costa Rica, 1975), p. 52.

⁷Victoria Urbano, Juan Vázquez de Coronado y su ética en la conquista de Costa Rica (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispanica, 1968), p. 93.

⁸Fernández Guardia, El descubrimiento, p. 124.

⁹Urbano, Vasquez de Coronado, p. 125.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 165-81.

¹¹Bancroft, The History of Central America, I, 431; see, Ricardo Fernández Guardia, Cartas de Juan Vázquez de Coronado: Conquistador de Costa Rica (Barcelona: Imprenta de la Vda. de Luis Tasso, 1908), passim.

¹²Urbano, Vásquez de Coronado, p. 431.

¹³Hubert Howe Bancroft, The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft, Vol. VII: The History of Central America, Vol. II, 1530-1800 (San Francisco: The History Company, 1886), p. 447.

¹⁴Fernández Guardia, El descubrimiento, p. 182.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 193-94.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 193-200; see, Bancroft, The History of Central America, II, 446-50.

¹⁷Mavis Hiltunen Biesanz, Richard Biesanz and Karen Zubris Biesanz, The Costa Ricans (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1982), p. 17; see, Francis Merriman Stranger, "National Origins in Central America," Hispanic American Historical Review, XII (1932), 18-45; and, James L. Busey, Notes on Costa Rican Democracy (Boulder, Colo.: University of Colorado Press, 1962), pp. 53-59.

¹⁸Charles D. Ameringer, Democracy in Costa Rica, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982), pp. 18-19.

¹⁹Helen Miller Bailey and Abraham P. Nasatir, Latin America: The Development of its Civilization, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1973), p. 280.

²⁰Biesanz, Costa Ricans, pp. 17-18.

²¹Ibid., pp. 17-19 "El Pacto constaba de siete capítulos y 58 artículos. Sus disposiciones fundamentales eran éstas: la provincia de Costa Rica estaba en absoluta libertad y posesión exclusiva de sus derechos para constituirse en nueva forma de gobierno; dependería de la nación a que le conviniese adherirse, bajo el sistema de absoluta independencia del Gobierno español y de cualquier otro que no fuese americano; la religión católica era y sería siempre la de la provincia, con exclusión de cualquiera otra; todos los hombres libres naturales de la provincia, o avencindados en ella con cinco años de residencia, gozarían del derecho de ciudadanía, siempre que hubiesen jurado la independencia absoluta del Gobierno español; . . . la junta gobernaría hasta que se promulgase la Constitución del Estado a que se anexara la provincia, debiendo residir alternativamente durante tres meses consecutivos en Cartago, San José, Heredia y Alajuela; . . . "

²³Fernández Guardia, Cartilla, p. 73.

²⁴Fernández Guardia, La Independencia, p. 27; Hernan G. Peralta, Agustín de Iturbide y Costa Rica (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Costa Rica, 1968), pp. 159-160; 179-181.

²⁵Fernández Guardia, La Independencia, p. 23.

²⁶Ibid., p. 32.

²⁷Ibid., p. 65.

²⁸Peralta, Agustín de Iturbide, pp. 301-304.

²⁹Fernández Guardia, La Independencia, p. 89. In an interview with former Ministro de Educacion Uladislao Gamez, the importance of Gregorio José Ramírez to modern Costa Rican democracy was put in proper perspective. Interview with Uladislao Gamez at his home in Heredia, Costa Rica, 2 May 1983.

³⁰Rafael Obregon Loría, Costa Rica en la Independencia y en la Federacion (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Costa Rica, 1977), pp. 110-22; Biesanz, Costa Ricans, p. 18.

³¹Fernández Guardia, La Independencia, p. 115.

CHAPTER II

A NATION IN SEARCH OF DIRECTION

The actions of Gregorio José Ramírez ensured a continuation of representative government, and culminated in a national reunion of citizens to select a president. When the group assembled on 6 September 1824 they selected as the first Costa Rican chief executive ". . . el ilustre, modesto y virtuoso ciudadano don Juan Mora Fernández, natural de San José, uno de los hombres que más se habían distinguido por su patriotismo en los momentos difíciles de la emancipación."¹ The nation was once again blessed with a man of exceptional leadership capabilities. During two highly successful terms of office Mora distinguished himself with undiminished drive and a clear vision of the nation's future which finally allowed the region's forgotten stepchild, Costa Rica, to progress and prosper, surpassing such neighbors as Honduras and Nicaragua in capital growth and social development.

One of the first acts of Mora's tenure was to accept the petition of the citizens of Nicoya and annex Guanacaste as Costa Rican territory despite the protests of Nicaragua. Since 9 December 1825 this large portion of Nicaragua has become an accepted part of her southern neighbor.² Other accomplishments of the Mora years include great gains in public education, the development of new ports and principal highways - the victims of decades of neglect - and the establishment of the nation's first industries. Bancroft writes: "Costa Rica had

made great progress from both the material and intellectual points of view."³ And by the end of Mora's progressive administration, "The State at this time was enjoying liberty and perfect freedom of the press. It was the asylum of the exiles from other Central and South American states."⁴ Upon termination of his first term, Mora was unanimously reelected as chief executive and served until 1833, "siempre con el mismo tino, honradez y prudencia, que le valieron el respeto y admiración de sus conciudadanos y toda la América Central."⁵

As the popular Mora left office the Asamblea selected José Rafael Gallegos as his successor. Ten years of relative tranquility were shattered, however, by a return to the partisanship that existed at the time of the Civil War. From the first day in office Gallegos was the victim of violent opposition, largely based upon the provincial espíritu lugareño of San José's jealous rivals.⁶ In an attempt to compromise, Gallegos proposed legislation which revived the policy of rotating the capital between the four major cities. The Ley de ambulancia provided for a term of one year for each city to become the nation's capital. Unsatisfied with anything less than a permanent home in Cartago, the opposition continued to press Gallegos and harassed him until the beleaguered chief executive resigned his post. The Asemblea chose Costa Rica's leading Republican, Braulio Carrillo, as Gallego's replacement.⁷

Carrillo quickly proved himself to be a strong and patriotic leader during his first year in office. Political hostility increased during the year, and when the capital was returned on a permanent basis to San José at Carrillo's direction, Costa Rica's Second Civil War erupted.⁸

The government skirmished with armies made up of citizens of the other three cities along the banks of the Río Virilla in battles which involved five thousand men. Carrillo's forces eventually prevailed and established a legacy for the chief executive as the democratic protector of unity and the rule of law. Although jealousies exist even today, the victory of San José in 1836 marked the end of violence between the cities and Carrillo receives the credit.⁹

After Carrillo's legitimate term of office expired, he seized power and returned to office through the force of arms. In Costa Rica's first military coup, Carrillo overthrew Manuel Aguilar after the latter had served but one year of his term. Carrillo was a popular dictator and must be credited with a number of important contributions to the development of the nation.¹⁰ Among the accomplishments of Carrillo are the creation of a new system for laws replacing:

anachronistic Spanish laws. . . and the establishment of an orderly public administration without lining his own pockets. His other great accomplishment, which had lasting repercussions on the nation's economic, social and political history, was to promote coffee.¹¹

Carrillo encouraged the development of Costa Rica's infant coffee industry but he is remembered more importantly as the man who insulted Francisco Morazán, the former president of the United Provinces of Central America. Morazán, a Honduran, had succeeded the first president, José Arce after a series of revolts in 1826-1827 culminated in a military coup. The legacy of Morazán is that of a frustrated dreamer unable to unite the disparate factions of Central American politics, whose liberal and progressive programs were ahead of their time. Among the laws proposed by Morazan were those which abolished the

ecclesiastical courts, dissolved religious orders, seized unproductive Church properties, and introduced civil marriage, jury trials and religious tolerance. Unfortunately, most of Morazán's proposals were rejected by the respective national presidents or assemblies of the Central American nations.¹² The previously mentioned incident occurred during Morazán's exile.¹³

En route to an eventual asylum in Peru, Morazán's contingent stopped at Puntarenas, Costa Rica and requested provisions and an audience with President Carrillo. Carrillo allowed the crew to make their purchases and permitted a few members of the party to remain in Costa Rica, but he refused to meet with Morazán and denied the proud exile permission to disembark. In two years, Morazan returned to Costa Rica intent upon the overthrow of Carrillo with the help of a large group of domestic opponents of the dictator. With a force of five hundred men, Morazán landed at Caldera and began marching towards San Jose. En route he encountered the Costa Rican army and its leader, General Vicente Villaseñor, one of his former lieutenants. At El Jocote, near La Garita de Alajuela, Villaseñor turned over his army to Morazán without a shot being fired and agreed to support the presidency of Morazán and the exile of Carrillo. The treacherous Pacto del Jocote led within five months to a popular uprising against Morazán, who was captured and shot. At his side was the traitor Villaseñor, providing evidence the Costa Ricans could tolerate a criollo dictator but would just as soon do without the usurpation of the patria by a Honduran.¹⁴

A series of presidents during the rest of the 1840's led to one of the most highly respected and beloved of Costa Rican presidents, Juan Rafael Mora, the hero of the Campana Nacional. In Costa Rican childrens' history texts the most significant event in the century following independence is the Campana Nacional, in which an invasion force led by American filibuster William Walker was routed by heroic patriots. The importance of the event to the national psyche is immeasurable; Costa Ricans have had few historical opportunities to test their mettle in combat against foreigners. The creation of a national enemy, Walker, united the populace in 1855 and his defeat greatly inflated national pride. The details of the campaign against Walker are somewhat less flattering than nationalistic historians might concede, but the fact of Costa Rica's overwhelming success is undeniable. An army led by General José Joaquín Mora, the president's brother, defeated part of Walker's force at Santa Rosa in northern Costa Rica and chased the remaining troops to Rivas, Nicaragua. Costa Ricans were responsible for the eventual departure of Walker from Central America in 1857 and are justifiably proud of their role.¹⁵

The truth about Walker's brief sojourn in Nicaragua is complex and requires an understanding of 1850 American politics. Sentiment in the southern states favored the annexation of Central American or Caribbean nations as sources of new land and labor, as slavery in the United States entered its twilight era. While the United States grew rapidly in population and social progress, the nations to its south languished in chaos and stagnated politically due to continuous unrest.

The lack of strong leadership was cited most often as the cause of Latin America's malaise and Walker saw his mission as bringing American virtues and progress to the region. Once petty internal rivalries were put aside each nation could finally proceed with its development.¹⁶

Costa Rican President Mora is portrayed as hero in modern Latin American historiography because he declared war on the filibusters and his small nation's forces defeated the armies of the American. In reality, General Mora's force of nearly three thousand men faced only three hundred unseasoned mercenaries led by an inexperienced German, Schlessinger, while Walker and the main body of troops remained in Nicaragua. On 20 March 1856 General Mora's men defeated Schlessinger and followed the retreating remnants to Rivas.¹⁷ In the battle which followed on 11 April 1856 Walker's combined forces were again defeated by the Costa Ricans.¹⁸ Rather than pursue his vanquished foe to Granada, General Mora returned to a hero's welcome in San José, taking with him a deadly gift from Walker, cholera. The disease proved far more effective than Walker's bullets in decimating the ranks of the Costa Rican army and causing widespread suffering within Costa Rica.¹⁹

Walker rested in Granada and regrouped his men to begin an assault upon Managua. After declaring himself president of Nicaragua, Walker seized Managua and entered into negotiations with American tycoon Cornelius Vanderbilt concerning the concession of transit rights between the Atlantic and the Pacific via the Río San Juan. Vanderbilt envisioned the dramatic shortening of the voyage from America's Atlantic to Pacific coasts and the profit commiserate with a transit across Nicaragua. Vanderbilt held the concession prior to Walker's arrival and

actively opposed him in his quest to unify the Nicaraguans, aware that dealing with a minor local faction was infinitely less complicated than making an agreement with a unified government under Walker. Walker, on the other hand, saw the transit concession as an excellent source of revenue for his impoverished Nicaragua, and planned to present a united Nicaragua and transit agreement to President Millard Fillmore in hopes of securing American aid and support.²⁰ In an attempt to bolster his standing among politicians in the United States, Walker made the biggest mistake of his blighted career, and endorsed the institution of slavery in Central America.²¹

Outraged Latin democrats condemned Walker's slavery position and assembled an expeditionary force to invade Nicaragua from El Salvador. In Costa Rica, President Mora again issued a call for volunteers, and sent an army of several thousand north to engage Walker. The combined forces of the opposition soundly defeated Walker at Rivas, 11 April 1857 and accomplished the removal of the foreigner from Central American soil. Walker was granted safe conduct back to the United States, where he began to assemble another force to invade Nicaragua. After several attempts to return to Central America were thwarted by the American government, Walker succeeded in capturing the port of Trujillo, Honduras with a small force. Soon his supplies were exhausted, however, and expected reinforcements were detained by the United State Navy. Walker was convinced to surrender to Honduran authorities by the local British naval commander once he had received assurances of fair treatment for his men. Despite promises to the contrary by the deceitful British officer, the Hondurans promptly shot Walker.²²

As a result of Costa Rica's role in defeating Walker, diplomatic relations with Nicaragua improved dramatically and enmity surrounding the 1825 annexation of Guanacaste province subsided. The long standing dispute over the exact northern boundary was resolved after lengthy negotiations mediated by El Salvador. Generals José María Cañas and Máximo Jerez proposed a compromise which was accepted by both nations and signed into law 15 April 1858. The Treaty of Cañas-Jerez called for free access to the Río San Juan but placed the river entirely within Nicaragua, the southern river bank becoming the northern boundary of Costa Rica. In return, Nicaragua formally renounced her claims upon Guanacaste province. Although disputes have arisen at times over the question of territorial sovereignty between Costa Rica and Nicaragua, the Treaty of Cañas-Jerez remains in force today and has withstood the passage of time²³

Election results in 1859 returned President Mora to office for an unprecedented third term and reflected popular support for the hero of the Campana Nacional. When Mora enacted a series of liberal reforms, passed as a result of the president's popularity, conservative opponents began plotting against him. Dissension from the clergy prompted Mora to exile Archbishop Llorente and several of his supporters and, as a result, the president incurred the wrath of conservatives. Mora also alienated Costa Rica's wealthy oligarchy when he attempted to establish a national bank. Conservatives enlisted the aid of army commanders and overthrew Mora 14 August 1859 in an unpopular coup. Fernández Guardia writes: "La revolución de agosto de 1859 fué obra de unos pocos y es indudable que la gran mayoría del pueblo costarricense miró con

pesadumbre la caída de Mora, . . ."24 Mora was replaced by conservative José María Montealegre but vowed revenge from his exile in El Salvador and attempted to organize a popular uprising in Costa Rica.

In February, Montealegre was able to contain a minor revolt in Guanacaste but a more serious problem arose in September 1860. On 14 September the town of Esparza sided with Mora and on 16 September the exile arrived in Puntarenas with expectations of widespread popular support. President Montealegre sent General Máximo Blanco to engage the former president and after a series of very bloody battles, the government troops prevailed and captured Mora, who was executed several days later.²⁵

Montealegre and his successor, Jesús Jiménez, served Costa Rica until 1870 as president and dictator, vacillating between popular democracy and authoritarian rule. Although both men toyed with constituent government, neither was willing to accept dissent nor opposition and Costa Rica appeared to be heading in the direction of the rest of Central America, caudillismo.²⁶

A steady decline in democratic values followed the election of Mora to a third term and his subsequent overthrow. Costa Rica faced a critical historical juncture on 27 April 1870 when General Tomás Guardia, one of the military heroes of the Campana Nacional against Walker and the filibusters, seized the artillery barracks in San José and forced the resignation of President Jiménez. Guardia's coup merits consideration as the most significant event of the latter part of the century and surely ranks with the First Civil War and the Campana Nacional in relevance to Costa Rica's democratic development.

Paradoxically, it required the services of a career militarist to set Costa Rica on her course after a decade of divergence from democratic ideals. Guardia duplicated the end result of his predecessor, Gregorio José Ramírez fifty years earlier, but employed strikingly different means. Guardia preserved Costa Rica's democracy through force, censorship and exile, and dissent and opposition ceased to exist. The wealthy oligarchy, long an obstacle to liberalization and social progress, met their match in Guardia. Among the reforms introduced by the dictator were land redistribution, the construction of many schools and the improvement of public education, a revised military code ". . . y se hicieron otras muchas reformas dignas de caluroso aplauso."²⁷ Guardia sponsored the construction of railroads to the Pacific coast, telegraph lines connecting Costa Rica to the rest of Central America, and developed commercial markets in Europe, the United States, and South America. As Fernández Guardia writes: ". . . ninguna ha sido de transcendencia para Costa Rica como la del general Guardia, que transformó completamente el modo de ser del país. Su obra fué extensa y meritoria en muchas de sus partes, aunque también es acreedora de severa censuras."²⁸ The greatest defects of Guardia's tenure as dictator were increased corruption and the institution of a vast governmental bureaucracy filled with cronies of the general. Modern Costa Rica's economic crisis, arising out of an unmanageable public sector, traces its beginning to Guardia's creation of a large central government, with its costly bureaucracy.

In the years following the Guardia dictatorship the resort to military rule was abandoned, with one exception in 1917. Although

Guardia's immediate successor was a general, Próspero Fernández, the result of Guardia's assault upon the oligarchy was a liberalization of Costa Rican economic, social and political life. From 1882 until 1917 democratic reforms improved the average citizen's standing at the expense of Costa Rica's wealthy elite. A liberal "Generation of 1889" grew out of Guardia's dictatorship and became the political leaders of the twentieth century. The conservative factions in Costa Rica, which included clerics and the oligarchy, were gradually displaced from their disproportionately powerful positions of importance.²⁹

The most important economic benefit of the Guardia dictatorship was the completion of the Atlantic railroad. By 1882, construction of a national rail system from San José to the Pacific coast had been accomplished, and a section from Puerto Limón on the Caribbean to Carrillo in Costa Rica's interior left only a section of track from San José to Carrillo to be completed. Lack of funds forced the postponement of the project and the substitution of a highway in the unfinished section rather than rails. The Vía mixta al Atlántico was plagued by washouts and disasters during its brief existence, and plans were begun to reroute the railroad and complete its construction.³⁰ The American owner and genius behind the railroad was Minor Cooper Keith, a fascinating individual who later created the United Fruit Company after a career as engineer and entrepreneur.³¹ London financing allowed the completion of the railroad from San José to Puerto Limón, via Cartago and Turrialba, and Keith rode in the first engine which completed passage on 7 December 1890.³² Within ten years, thousands of acres of the eastern portion of Costa Rica were planted with bananas and a second

major export crop contributed to the nation's export earnings and development.³³

The wealthy coffee producers were unwilling to diversify into the new crop, which led to the first major investment in Costa Rica by foreigners. Although Keith's holdings were the largest, other foreign nationals capable of investing the vast sums necessary to start production began buying the properties of native Costa Ricans. As the Biesanzes wrote "The banana-producing areas of Limón Province, therefore, began as isolated enclaves under foreign control, and remained so for decades."³⁴ The presence of outsiders upset liberal Costa Ricans of the "Generation of 1889," and the campaign of President Ricardo Jiménez against the United Fruit Company in 1907, 1908, and 1909 "es uno de los grandes momentos del liberalismo costarricense," according to Eugenio Rodríguez Vega.³⁵

The age of liberalism in early twentieth century Costa Rica is summarized by the same author as follows:

En estos años hay en general un gran respeto a las libertades formales, apego a la legalidad, apoyo a la educación pública, oposición de algunos destacados liberales a los monopolios extranjeros, una campaña electoral ejemplar en 1909, la importante reforma constitucional que afirma el voto popular directo. . .³⁶

The presidencies of Cleto González Víquez (1906-1910) and Ricardo Jiménez Oreamino (1910-1914) marked the apogee of early twentieth century Costa Rican liberalism. The election of Jiménez, who received over ninety percent of the votes in an honest contest, was the first of his three terms as the nation's leader.³⁷

Three men divided the vote in 1914, which resulted in the selection of Alfredo González Flores, the Primer Designado, for the period

1914-1918. The choice of González Flores divided the country into personalist political factions and led to a military coup against the ineffective president, 27 January 1917. The Secretario de Guerra y Marina, Federico Alberto Tinoco Granados was the leader of the coup, and he declared himself president 1 April 1917. Costa Rica once again felt itself in the grips of an authoritarian dictator, but unlike the progressive Tomás Guardia, Tinoco was a tyrant who quickly alienated the populace. Fernández Guardia writes "Su temperamento despótico y su poca probidad alejaron pronto de su gobierno a la mayor parte de los que lo habían apoyado al principio."³⁸ After a series of violent uprisings against his regime, the dictator fled to Europe.³⁹

Costa Rica drifted to the political left during the 1920's, as the nation returned to her democratic course. In 1928, a wave of nationalism swept over Costa Rica, with the principal objects of criollo anger being the United Fruit Company, the Northern Railway Company (foreign-owned and operated) and various domestic electric companies owned by foreigners.⁴⁰ The first banana worker's union was organized and the progressive Liga Cívica began in that year. Among the provisions of the apolitical league's statement of purpose were articles which stated:

- d) Combatir los monopolios de todo género prohibidos por la constitución, y las concesiones que tiendan a constituir privilegios, por ser éstos manifestamente nocivos a la iniciativa particular y al libre desenvolvimiento del país.
- e) Ejercer sanción efectiva contra todos aquellos costarricenses o extranjeros que en alguna forma comprometan los derechos o ⁴¹los intereses de la nacionalidad costarricense.

The apolitical movement was given tremendous impetus by the arrival in Costa Rica of Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre. For three months the exiled Peruvian lived in Costa Rica, giving "muchas conferencias en la Escuela de Derecho, en la Escuela Normal de Heredia, en teatros y en cualquier otro lugar donde quiere oírsele."⁴¹ The popularity of the liberal movement dismayed the conservative oligarchy, who generally welcomed foreign investments and opposed the labor movement, which was branded "communistic." President Cleto González Víquez (1928-1932) succeeded in alienating both the progressives and the conservatives with his vacillation between the two factions, although his legacy improved considerably after his term of office. Ricardo Jiménez followed González Víquez as president, but election day shenanigans by losing candidate Manuel Castro Quesada marred the results. As Costa Rican historian Eduardo Oconotrillo writes:

Todo el país repudia el alzamiento . . . Un saldo trágico de 15 muertos y 36 heridos deja 'el Bellavistazo,' nombre que da la Historia a este capítulo absurdo y lamentable de esta campaña presidencial . . .

Manuel Castro Quesada pretendió con el cuartelazo que el país se levantara en armas contra don Cleto y desconociere el triunfo de Jiménez Oreamuno. Sucedió todo lo contrario, y al rendirse les dice a sus compañeros '. . . no se ha respondido al gesto heroico de ustedes y no podía seguir en lo que resultaría un gran sacrificio inútil.'⁴³

The administration of Jiménez, his third term as president of Costa Rica, was plagued by the worldwide economic depression of the 1930's and by domestic turmoil. Worker discontent in the banana zones, fueled by United Fruit Company's repression of unionization and the radicalism of labor leaders, led to massive strikes in 1934. The violence of the foreign corporation in reaction to labor protests galvanized

nationalistic sentiments within Costa Rica, and produced a number of dramatic changes in society. Legislation which not only permitted but encouraged the union movement was enacted and taxes levied upon banana producers were increased despite conservative protests.⁴⁴

The most significant result of the great banana strike of 1934, in which over 15,000 workers participated, was the foundation of the Costa Rican Communist Party and its rapid growth following the strike. The party had been founded 16 January 1931 by a group of intellectuals and workers, led by Manuel Mora Valverde, but languished outside the political mainstream of Costa Rican life until the strike. When United Fruit failed to construct a hospital in Siquirres and company stores in a number of other locations, as specified in the national contract with the government, the protest began.⁴⁵ With the support of the Communist Party, the workers prevailed. As Manuel Rojas Bolaños writes:

. . . los obreros salieron victoriosos, pues en el Contrato-Ley No. 30, del 10 de setiembre de 1934, se incorporaron la mayoría de sus peticiones, además de que se reconoció oficialmente la existencia de la Federación de Trabajadores Bananeros del Atlántico. Pero lo más importante fue el aprendizaje alcanzado en el campo de la lucha de clases por ese sector proletariado costarricense, desde entonces el de mayor conciencia de clase y por tanto el más combativo. La posición del Partido Comunista, como dirigente y portavoz de la clase obrera, indudablemente que se fortaleció.⁴⁶

One of the spiritual leaders of the strike was Carlos Luis Fallas, whose excellent Mamita Yunai, a condemnation of the banana worker's lot, is required reading in modern Costa Rican education. Fallas went on to distinguish himself as a labor leader, congressional deputy and fighting commander of government forces in the 1948 Civil War.⁴⁷

To avoid the anti-communist opposition of Costa Rican conservatives, the Communist Party changed its name to El Bloque de Obreros y Campesinos in 1934, thus distancing itself from the ultraleftist position of International Communism. In 1935, however, the VII Congress in Moscow changed its point of view to accept accommodation with non-communist democratic parties, and the Costa Ricans became fraternal members of the International movement. As Mora wrote in 1936, "Nos oponemos resueltamente al trasplante a nuestro país de fórmulas que no caben en nuestra estructura económica, social y política."⁴⁸ Although opposed to capitalism, the proletarian revolution was relegated to a secondary position in the fight against imperialism and Fascism.

The Costa Rican communists were prohibited from taking their seats in the 1938 Congress by conservative President León Cortés Castro, an implacable enemy of Communism and supporter of National Socialism. Cortés had won the election of 1936 by employing the dirtiest campaign tactics the nation had seen. As Oconotrillo writes:

En esta campaña León Cortés se convirtió en el 'campeón de anticomunismo'. Presentó al comunismo ante el electorado como una insidiosa y engañosa conspiración internacional que intentaba fomentar la revolución en todo el mundo. En Costa Rica representaba una amenaza contra lo más sagrado: la familia, la religión y las instituciones democráticas.⁴⁹

Partly as a result of the official suppression of the will of middle class voters, which had begun to support the communists, the power of Obreros Campesinos increased. By the 1940 presidential elections, the party received not only the vote of organized labor but also "el voto de sectores de la pequeña burguesía,

descontentos con la situación del país y con los partidos políticos tradicionales . . . "50 The popular discontent with the personalismo of Costa Rican politics accounts for the impressive success of the communists. Rojas Bolaños writes "En menos de diez años de existencia habían logrado casi duplicar su apoyo y se habían convertido en un importante movimiento político en el país."51 León Cortés, on the other hand, began to lose popularity almost upon being elected, as he changed from populist to friend of the oligarchy, and became, as Oconotrillo writes "el auténtico caudillo . . . "52

The best explanation for the popularity of Mora's party is found in John Patrick Bell's Crisis in Costa Rica-- The 1948 Revolution:

In part, Mora's prestige and that of other Communist leaders, notably Fallas, was a result of their dedication and personal integrity. Also of importance, however, was the domestic origin and orientation of the party. . . Even the staunchest opponents of the pre-1948 communism refer to it as comunismo criollo, thus distinguishing it from the less independent and clandestine party that operated subsequently. . . The party defended the electoral rights of all citizens, and in particular, attempted to safeguard the rights of labor and of the peasants. These causes along with the caliber of its leadership won it acceptance among respectable Costa Ricans.⁵³

American historian Charles D. Ameringer discusses Cortés' rapid decline in popularity as follows:

Cortés, although a civilian, enjoyed the title of caudillo, and he gave the oligarchy the tougher rule it wanted, revealing paternalism's sharp edges. He harassed the Communist Party and refused to permit Manuel Mora, elected as deputy from San José, to be seated in the national congress. Besides being stern, Cortés displayed marked pro-Nazi sentiments.⁵⁴

Thus the stage was set for the turbulent 1940's, in which Costa Rica's democratic course would again face obstacles. Although the

elections which followed Gregorio José Ramírez' heroism in 1823 were occasionally democratic, they often led to dictatorship, caudillismo or minority rule. Personalities continued to dominate in the twentieth century, as evidenced by the three presidential terms of Ricardo Jiménez. Although Costa Rican politics tended to represent popular will to a greater degree than her neighbors, thousands of illiterate peasants continued to live in abject poverty without access to health or educational facilities. It was this subclass of citizens, as well as the unionized agricultural workers, to whom the egalitarian political philosophy of Costa Rica's Communist Party appealed. Class conflict would only be averted by a dramatic improvement in the life of the campesino; in this way the message of the communists could be rendered less effective. In the 1940 presidential election, the candidate who offered to address the pressing social problems of the nation was Rafael Angel Calderón Guardia.

NOTES

- ¹Fernández Guardia, Cartilla, pp. 74-75.
- ²Máximo Soto Hall, Un vistazo sobre Costa Rica en siglo XIX (San Jose, Costa Rica: Tipografía Nacional, 1901), p. 81. Discusses the accomplishments of President Mora in detail.
- ³Hubert Howell Bancroft, The Works of Hubert Howell Bancroft, Vol. VIII: The History of Central America, Vol. III. 1801-1887 (San Francisco: The History Company, 1887), p. 180.
- ⁴Ibid., p. 181.
- ⁵Fernández Guardia, Cartilla, p. 75.
- ⁶Ibid., p. 76.
- ⁷Soto Hall, Un vistazo, pp. 83-85.
- ⁸Fernández Guardia, Cartilla, pp. 77-78.
- ⁹Biesanz, Costa Ricans, p. 18.
- ¹⁰Fernández Guardia, Cartilla, p. 79; Soto Hall, Un vistazo, pp. 89-97.
- ¹¹Biesanz, Costa Ricans, p. 18; see, Carolyn Hall, El café y el desarrollo histórico geográfico de Costa Rica, 3rd ed. (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Costa Rica, 1982), pp. 38-39. It was not until 1842 that the first large scale purchases were made by Europeans. An Englishman, William Lacheur, visited the port of Caldera and arranged to take a shipload of coffee to England on credit. Lacheur returned with British pounds sterling and made several successive voyages for coffee grower Santiago Fernández, both men profiting greatly.
- ¹²J. Fred Rippy, Latin America: A Modern History (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1958), pp. 220-21.
- ¹³Ibid., p. 221; Soto Hall, Un vistazo, pp. 98-105; Bancroft, History of Central America, III, 215-23.

¹⁴ Fernández Guardia, Cartilla, p. 82; Soto Hall, Un vistazo, p. 107. Villaseñor is remembered today as one of Costa Rica's great villains, according to the secretary of the Partido Renovación Alajuelense, Carlos Ramos Arias. Interview with Carlos Ramos Arias at his home in Alajuela, Costa Rica, 4 May 1983.

¹⁵ Fernández Guardia, Cartilla, pp. 88-95.

¹⁶ Robert E. May, The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire, 1854-1961 (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), *passim*.

¹⁷ Joaquín Bernardo Calvo Mora, La Campaña Nacional, Academia Costarricense de la Historia, "Comisión de Investigación Histórica de la Campaña de 1856-1857" (San José, Costa Rica: Tipografía Nacional, 1955), pp. 32-42.

¹⁸ Batalla de Rivas, Academia Costarricense de la Historia, "Comisión de Investigación Histórica de la Campaña de 1856-1857" (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Aurora Social Ltda., 1956), pp. 7-77; William O. Scroggs, Filibusters and Financiers: The Story of William Walker and his Associates (New York: Russell and Russell, 1916), pp. 184-90.

¹⁹ Calvo Mora, La Campaña, pp. 54-55; Scroggs, Filibusters, pp. 190-91; Albert Z. Carr, The World and William Walker (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), *passim*.

²⁰ Calvo Mora, La Campaña, pp. 66-74; Biesanz, Costa Ricans, pp. 19-21; Roscoe R. Hill, "The Nicaraguan Canal Idea to 1913," Hispanic American Historical Review, XXVIII (1948). 197-211.

²¹ Soto Hall, Un Vistazo, pp. 154-94; Fernández Guardia, Cartilla, pp. 88-95; Scroggs, Filibusters, p. 195; Rippey, Central America, pp. 223-24; James Ferguson King, "The Latin American Republics and the Suppression of the Slave Trade," Hispanic American Historical Review, XXIV (1944), 387-411.

²² Soto Hall, Un vistazo, pp. 155-94; Fernández Guardia, Cartilla, pp. 88-95; Scroggs, Filibusters, p. 195; Rippey, Central America, pp. 223-24; see, Richard W. Van Alstyne, "The Central American Policy of Lord Palmerston, 1846-1848," Hispanic American Historical Review XVI (1936), 339-59, Mary Wilhemine Williams, "Letters of E. George Squier to John M. Clayton, 1849-1850," Hispanic American Historical Review I (1918), 426-34.

²³ Soto Hall, Un vistazo, pp. 129-30; Fernández Guardia, Cartilla, p. 97.

²⁴ Soto Hall, Un vistazo. pp. 128-30; Fernández Guardia, Cartilla, p. 99.

- ²⁵ Fernández Guardia, Cartilla, p.99.
- ²⁶ Charles E. Chapman, "The Age of Caudillos: A Chapter in Hispanic American History," Hispanic American Historical Review, XXII (1932), 281-300.
- ²⁷ Soto Hall, Un vistazo, p. 136.
- ²⁸ Fernández Guardia, Cartilla, p. 103; Rippey, Central America, p. 225.
- ²⁹ Eugenio Rodríguez Vega, Siete ensayos políticos (San José, Costa Rica: Centro de Estudios Democraticos de America Latina, 1982), pp. 59-83; Ameringer, Democracy, pp. 20-21.
- ³⁰ Ameringer, Democracy, pp. 17-18; Biesanz, Costa Ricans, pp. 20-21; Fernández Guardia, Cartilla, p. 107; see, Watt Stewart. Keith and Costa Rica (Albuquerque, N. M: University of New Mexico Press, 1964), pp. 45-46.
- ³¹ Stewart. Keith, passim; Rodríguez Vega, Siete ensayos, pp. 41-47.
- ³² Stewart, Keith, p.97; Fernández Guardia, Cartilla, p.107.
- ³³ Stacy May and Galo Plaza, The United Fruit Company in Latin America (Washington: National Planning Association, 1958), pp. 6-11.
- ³⁴ Rodríguez Vega, Siete ensayos, p.82.
- ³⁵ Ibid., pp. 82-83.
- ³⁶ Ibid., p. 83.
- ³⁷ Eduardo Oconotrillo, Un siglo de politica costarricense (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 1982), pp. 52-57.
- ³⁸ Fernández Guardia, Cartilla, p. 124.
- ³⁹ Oconotrillo, Un siglo, pp. 71-74.
- ⁴⁰ Rodríguez Vega, Siete ensayos, p. 229.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 231-37.
- ⁴² Ibid., p.234.
- ⁴³ Oconotrillo, Un siglo, p.107.

⁴⁴John Patrick Bell, Crisis in Costa Rica: The 1948 Revolution (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1971), p. 12

⁴⁵Ameringer, Democracy, pp. 26-27.

⁴⁶Manuel Rojas Bolaños, Lucha social y guerra civil en Costa Rica (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Porvenir, 1980), p. 68.

⁴⁷Ameringer, Democracy, pp. 25-27; Carlos Luis Fallas, Mamita Yunai (San José, Costa Rica: Librería Lehmann, 1978), *passim*.

⁴⁸Rojas Bolaños, Lucha social, p. 71.

⁴⁹Oconotrillo, Un siglo, p. 117.

⁵⁰Rojas Bolaños, Lucha social, p. 73.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 72-73.

⁵²Oconotrillo, Un siglo, p. 118; Eugenio Rodríguez Vega, De Calderón a Figueres (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 1981), pp. 11-17.

⁵³Bell, Crisis, p. 50.

⁵⁴Ameringer, Democracy, p. 27.

CHAPTER III
THE TURBULENT 1940'S

The 1940 Costa Rican presidential election involved Partido Republicano Nacional candidate Rafael Angel Calderón Guardia, Manuel Mora Valverde of El Bloque de Obreros y Campesinos and Virgilio Salazar Leiva of the obscure Guanacaste Partido Confraternidad. Calderón Guardia was President Cortés' handpicked successor, but advocated a liberal Christian Democratic program of social reforms which distanced him from Cortés' legacy as caudillo and his conservative record. Calderón Guardia received over eighty percent of the vote in a landslide victory, with Mora a distant second.¹ The margin of Calderón Guardia's triumph has been interpreted as reflective of popular discontent with the harsh authoritarian rule of Cortés and support for Calderón Guardia's promised liberal social welfare program, which explained the massive turnout.

President Calderón Guardia was a devout Roman Catholic who was introduced to fundamental ideas of social justice while a medical student in Brussels, Belgium, and as a student at the Catholic University in Louvain, France "he had been influenced by the new social doctrine of the Catholic Church, as expressed in the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*."² Calderón Guardia's proposed social welfare reforms alienated his former supporters, the wealthy coffee planters. Costa Rica's oligarchy objected to the president's social legislation for two

principal reasons: they preferred to maintain the status quo in which a select few controlled the nation, and knew that Calderón Guardia's reforms would be expensive. The latter consideration was perhaps the most offensive to an elite which distinguished itself with its tightfistedness.³

Calderón Guardia's promise of relief for Costa Rica's masses made him one of the nation's most popular presidents. Widespread illness and poverty in rural areas assured the support of Costa Rica's campesinos for Calderón Guardia's social welfare program.⁴ But despite widespread popular support, the opposition of the oligarchy prevented the passage of reform legislation. The opponents of the president were unwittingly aided by Calderón Guardia himself as the major criticism of his administration appeared in 1941. Rumors of graft and corruption began to gain substance as the extent of the president's involvement became public knowledge. Ameringer writes "Calderón not only retained the spoil system but placed the most transparent sort of syncophants and hangers-on in public office."⁵ The president employed his brother Francisco as Ministro de Gobernación and awarded many public contracts to friends. Francisco earned the nickname "Paco a medias," because he was "rumored to demand a fifty percent cut from those receiving government favors."⁶ As one example of the corruption of the Calderón Guardia administration, there exists the case of the disposal of Axis properties during World War Two.

When a German submarine attacked a cargo vessel in Puerto Limón, national outrage against Axis nationals within Costa Rica erupted into violence, and as a patriotic gesture Calderón Guardia seized their many

properties. Public support for the president's action soon turned to anger, however, when it became known cronies of the president had taken possession of numerous properties for little or no payment.⁷

The U-boat attack on the moored banana freighter, the San Pablo, shocked the sheltered nation, and the loss of twenty four men trapped within the vessel provoked bitter anger.⁸ During the activities planned to commemorate the American Independence Day, patriotic rallies became focal points for popular hostility. After a series of inflammatory speeches by members of "anti-totalitarian organizations," mobs of Costa Rican citizens went on a looting and window breaking rampage in downtown San José. Among the speakers who provoked the violence were President Calderón Guardia and Manuel Mora. The discourse of Mora was the most incendiary, as he demanded arms and military preparation for citizen's militias.⁹ As The New York Times reported on 6 July 1942:

Thousands of San José residents moved through the streets last night, systematically wrecking Axis-owned properties. Hundreds of windows were shattered in scores of commercial houses. The . . . movement spread quickly into the provinces.¹⁰

The most significant result of the destruction which took place in Costa Rica on 4 July 1942 was the emergence of the future leader of contemporary Latin America's foremost democracy: José Figueres Ferrer.¹¹ San José merchants, although initially subdued and fearful of continued violence, began to protest the government's role in provoking the mob. Conservative opponents of Calderón also objected to the participation of Mora's communists in the violence. The businessmen took out advertisements in the nation's leading newspaper which

denounced ". . . la falta de previsión, la pasividad de la policía, el tono incendiario de los discursos, . . ." ¹²

The introduction of mob violence into Costa Rican politics was a new development which many citizens protested, but the loudest and most significant of the voices raised against Calderón Guardia was that of Figueres. In a radio discourse the evening of 8 July, which was cut short when the police interceded, Figueres condemned the administration for having permitted the rioting. The broadcast not only criticized the riots, but went so far as to issue a blanket condemnation of the government, the first such attack during the first two years of Calderón Guardia's wartime administration. Figueres attacked the government's economic mismanagement, corruption and the failure to enact the long-promised social reform legislation which Calderon Guardia has used as a vehicle for election in 1940. ¹³

The outraged President Calderón Guardia had Figueres arrested and threatened to charge him with treason under emergency war powers. Civil liberties had been suspended with the declaration of war, which meant a traitor faced lengthy incarceration regardless of guilt or innocence. Under threat of imprisonment, Figueres accepted the advice of his friend Jorge Hine and acceded to the recommendation of the government that he submit to voluntary exile. In so doing, Figueres became Costa Rica's only citizen exiled during the War. ¹⁴ With political neophyte Figueres thus eliminated, the president turned his attention to recapturing popular support.

Midterm elections in early 1942 dramatized the administration's faltering popularity, and President Calderón Guardia sought to regain

lost votes with a comprehensive program of social warfare, the Garantías Sociales, which he announced at the end of the year.¹⁵ In search of enhanced legislative power, the president decided to enlist the aid of Mora's Bloque de Obreros y Campesinos. The communists supported Calderón Guardia's social welfare program, a legislative program they had advocated since their foundation in 1931. And despite the communists' opposition to every administration since the party's inception, including Calderón Guardia's, it became obvious the program of Garantías Sociales was doomed to fail without the support of the communists. In addition, the enhanced political power which accrued to the communists by participation in the government gave them heretofore unheard-of respectability and prestige.¹⁶

With the aid of militants in the streets and legislative support in the Asemblea, the president succeeded in the passage of his long-awaited social code. Great advances were made in health care, education, labor rights, social security and retirement benefits. Modern Costa Rica's exemplary social welfare system traces its roots to Calderón Guardia's Garantías Sociales.¹⁷ As he rode a growing wave of popular support for his programs, the president sought to further enhance his administration's prestige with a shrewd political maneuver. Added respectability came with the open pronouncements of support for the Garantías Sociales by leading Church authorities, including the Archbishop of San José, Monseñor Víctor Manuel Sanabria.¹⁸ The alliance of the Catholic Church, the Partido Republicano Nacional and the communists became known as El Bloque de la Victoria.¹⁹

Opposition to the Calderón Guardia administration was widely scattered as Costa Rica approached the 1944 presidential elections and had little chance of success against the strength of the Bloque de la Victoria. The principal opponents were the conservative oligarchy and some rural poor, convinced of the "communistic" nature of the official alliance by the inflammatory campaign speeches of presidential candidate León Cortés.²⁰ Of greater importance to the nation's political future, however, was an ostensibly apolitical group of intellectual opponents of the Calderón Guardia administration, El Centro para el Estudio de los Problemas Nacionales.

The Centro was conceived as an intellectual organization, where national problems could be studied along with international philosophical solutions, in hope of formulating a distinctive, native political philosophy for Costa Rica. Membership was limited (by affinity rather than by design) to the vital and energetic generation of young Costa Ricans who were dedicated to egalitarianism with democracy. The mentor and spiritual leader of the young men of the Centro was the noted Costa Rican educator and poet, Roberto Brenes Mesén. Mesén had taught Spanish literature at Northwestern University for twenty years and returned to his homeland to advise a new generation of Costa Ricans "who felt a sense of destiny."²¹

The Centro's fundamental liberalism was tempered only by its militant anti-communism, one element of its political philosophy which attracted members of Costa Rica's disgruntled middle class.²² Among the influences upon Centro philosophy were the liberal movements in

Colombia, Uruguay, Mexico and the United States. Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal was very important, but perhaps the most profound contribution to Centro philosophy was the Aprista movement of Peru. As Eugenio Rodríguez Vega writes: "Pero nada los conmueve tanto como la vida y las ideas de Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, político, ideólogo y escritor, . . ." ²³ The philosophy of the Centro has been summarized by American political scientist Burt H. English as follows:

- a) Effective suffrage and honest elections;
- b) Reformist economics, with government intervention to regulate capital;
- c) Support for President Calderon's social reforms;
- d) The introduction of Aprista thought into Costa Rica; and,
- e) Strong support of the cooperative movement. ²⁴

Initially, the Centro was a philosophical "thinking man's club," unconcerned with active participation in the political process. As an apolitical group during the Second World War, the Centro attracted a broad spectrum of opponents to Calderon Guardia, especially after the president's formal alliance with Mora's communists in 1942. ²⁵ When the communists dissolved El Bloque de Obreros y Campesinos 13 June 1943 and formed a new party, Vanguardia Popular, Centro opposition to Communism intensified. ²⁶ The Centro remained apolitical during the 1944 presidential elections, which found official Partido Republicano Nacional candidate Teodoro Picado Michalski facing Partido Democrata candidate León Cortés. Former President Cortés found support from the

nation's conservative oligarchy but was considered too reactionary for liberals of the Centro.²⁷ After the election, considered by most observers to be the most fraudulent in national history, the Centro became directly involved in politics for the first time, primarily to restore democratic and open elections to Costa Rica.

It is difficult to understand the rationale behind the massive vote fraud of the 1944 presidential election. Perhaps, as the sympathetic Calderonista Diputado José Rafael Montoya explains, "the government's supporters felt duty-bound to preserve their hard fought social reforms. Cortés publicly repudiated much of Calderón Guardia's program of Garantías Sociales, and called for the repeal of social legislation."²⁸ While traveling throughout the countryside, Cortes made stump speeches wherever he encountered a pulpería, denouncing the "Communists which had seized control of Costa Rica's democracy."²⁸ He appealed to the rural poor to ". . . protect their way of life, their religion and their honor from the 'Red Hordes'."²⁹ As American historian John Patrick Bell writes: "(Cortés') tactics were almost identical to but more vociferous than those he employed against Octavio Beeche, also portrayed as a communist."³⁰

The rhetoric of official candidate Picado consisted of accusations that Cortés was pro-Axis and an enemy of Costa Rican social progress due to his public opposition to the Garantías Sociales. Cortés had expressed limited admiration for National Socialism prior to the War, and despite his professed support for the Allied positions after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the charge of Axis sympathizer was fatal.³¹ The election itself presented voters with a "cruel choice,"

as Ameringer writes: "Picado guaranteed the social legislation but represented a corrupt and arbitrary regime; Cortés defended the suffrage but stood for special interest and privilege. Manuel Mora declared for the first time in Costa Rica's history, social issues and not personalities were at stake."³²

Picado defeated Cortés by a significant margin but the opposition immediately claimed vote fraud had occurred. Rodríguez Vega writes:

La elección del 13 de febrero de 1944 es algo especial, pues en esta oportunidad no es que unas mesas, o por parte de un organismo electoral, se hayan desconocido los votos populares: ese día el fraude adquiere caracteres de verdadero escándalo y la presión oficial llega hasta asesinar a algunos que quieren impedirlo.³³

Although documented cases of government misconduct during the election seem to justify opposition claims of fraud, the more reasoned scholarly viewpoint holds that the margin of victory, but not the outcome was affected by official disfranchisement. Intimidation and acts of violence occurred but the popularity of El Bloque de la Victoria proved insurmountable for former President León Cortés.³⁴

Public indignation over the fraudulent election was galvanized by the 23 May 1944 return of José Figueres from exile. A populace still bitter towards Picado, Calderón Guardia and Mora perceived in Figueres a courageous victim of the government's injustice. Figueres emerged from a lifetime of anonymity to become a beacon for every opponent of the government (and the communists of the Vanguardia Popular). A groundswell of support slowly lifted Figueres' heroism to Olympic heights, as everything the former exile did or said was judged worthy of extensive journalistic attention. Figueres' activities were portrayed

as consistent with his patriotic, egalitarian, democratic and anti-communist political philosophy.³⁵

The principal beneficiary of Figueres' hero's welcome was the previously insignificant political party, Acción Demócrata, founded in June 1943. The party's newspaper, of the same name, began to urge mass support for a new "Second Republic," which promised a dramatic alternative to the inept and corrupt legacy of Calderón Guardia. A portion of the hostile rhetoric proposed to prepare traditionally passive Costa Ricans for an inevitable violent revolution to eliminate Calderonismo (and Communism) from political power.³⁶ The Centro, which had been persuaded to participate in national politics by the vote fraud in February 1944, agreed to a merger with Figueres' activist Partido Acción Demócrata on 10 March 1945.³⁷ The new political party was called Social Demócrata and combined the philosophy of the intellectual Centro with Figueres' penchant for action. The Partido Social Demócrata proved too tame for Figueres, however, and he left the party shortly after its creation to return to "conspiratorial matters." As Ameringer writes: "Figueres' counsels never ceased to have the smell of gunpowder."³⁸

Figueres received his introduction to politics when exiled to Mexico in 1942, since before that time he had occupied himself with his farm in the mountains southwest of San José. The farm, christened La lucha sin fin, was a textbook example of successful socialism: a cooperative venture between management and labor. As Costa Rican President Daniel Oduber observed years later, "Figueres was a socialist before it was fashionable to be one."³⁹ Two years of exile gave

Figueres an opportunity to further his political knowledge at National University in Mexico City, which he spent reading and meeting with a variety of fellow exiles from throughout the region. Exchanging with other political exiles broadened Figueres' vision and he began to dedicate himself to the overthrow of not merely Calderón Guardia but other Latin American dictators as well.⁴⁰ As Bell writes: "Figueres exchanged views, counsel, and promises of help with exiles from other nations also residing in Mexico; this interchange led him to a larger battle for hemispheric freedom."⁴¹

The development of Figueres' expanded plan for the democratization of the Caribbean nations arose out of conversations held in June 1943 with Nicaraguan exile Dr. Rosendo Argüello, hijo.⁴² The two men agreed the only way to deal with the region's hardened military dictatorships was with force, rather than resort to the ineffectual political process. It seemed logical to begin the regional revolution with the weakest of the dictatorships: Calderón Guardia's.⁴³ After the fall of Calderón Guardia, Figueres promised Argüello, the dictatorship of General Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua would be toppled. Upon returning to Costa Rica in 1944, Figueres spent most of his time in search of domestic support for the proposed Caribbean revolution.⁴⁴

Midterm elections in 1946 convinced Figueres once again of the lengths to which the government would go to maintain itself in power. Many of the cantones of Costa Rica witnessed officially-sanctioned voting fraud, although most of the blame was attributed to zealous Partido Vanguardia Popular militants who were determined to preserve hard-fought reforms. President Picado, considered to be fair and

honest, was incapable of preventing the disturbance. As Rodríguez Vega writes:

A pesar de las irregularidades en muchos lugares del país, es justo decir que los atropellos no alcanzan la magnitud de dos años atrás, y que el presidente de la República no ampara a los responsables y parece esforzarse sinceramente en presidir unas elecciones imparciales.⁴⁵

Opposition gains in the 1946 elections made the job of governing more difficult for Picado, who was incapable of healing the wounds of his bitter opponents. Of particular concern was an increase in acts of political violence and sabotage. Rightist militants, often in conjunction with supporters of Figueres, carried out a campaign of violence and intimidation against the government.⁴⁶ Street fights between youthful supporters and opponents of the government became nightly occurrences. The process of polarization which had begun with the fraudulent 1944 presidential election began to get out of control, encouraged by hostile rhetoric from both sides.

Tensions erupted into violence during the summer of 1947. An attack by rightist youths on a passing train during May Day celebrations led to a street battle in the provincial capital of Cartago. The city became the site of increasingly violent daily clashes as supporters of Picado were subjected to taunts, harassment and in some instances, physical violence.⁴⁷ An opposition protest march through Cartago's business district took an ugly turn when the crowd began to attack bystanders suspected of pro-communist leanings. Troops and police from neighboring towns arrived to replace the militiamen of Cartago when the latter's reluctance to restore order became evident. An unruly mob opened fire upon the newly-arrived troops and in the ensuing violence

several opposition leaders were assaulted. The ensuing melee may justifiably be considered the opening salvo of the 1948 Civil War.⁴⁸

Reports alleging brutalities and army overreaction disturbed both opponents and supporters of the government. The toll from the violence in Cartago reached two dead (both soldiers) and fifteen wounded, many of those seriously. In protest, government opponents called for a voluntary closure of San José businesses in solidarity with the wounded. When bank employees joined the protest many neutral commercial establishments were forced to shut down for lack of exchange facilities. The resultant immobilization of Costa Rica's economy brought about a swift government response. Army regulars and the police were called upon to reopen the banks and a number of shops. A few of the businesses owned by leading opponents of the government were vandalized and sporadic looting occurred. When business returned to normal 28 July, the protest entered its final phase.⁴⁹

In a repetition of a successful tactic utilized during protests in 1942, hundreds of Costa Rica's leading women marched on the president's palace. The women demanded an end to the violent political climate and waited several hours to see President Picado, to no avail. After nightfall, the crowd was dispersed when "unknown persons" fired volleys of warning shots over the frightened women's heads. The public outrage, which condemned acts of terrorism perpetrated against Costa Rican womanhood, proved decisive and forced Picado to come to immediate terms with opposition demands.⁵⁰ Conferences between the government, opposition leaders and the Church resulted in the signing of El Pacto del Honor, and brought a brief respite from a summer of continuous

violence. The agreement guaranteed free elections and turned control of the political process over to a (presumably) impartial Tribunal Electoral. A complete ban on political activities during the days preceding the elections was also part of the accord.⁵¹

The government's candidate to succeed Picado as president was former President Calderón Guardia, who faced an uphill struggle in his quest for another term. In addition to attacks in opposition media charging him with being a communist sympathizer, Calderón Guardia was still blamed for the fraudulent 1944 presidential election. Memories of his administration's pervasive corruption also plagued the former president's campaign. Perhaps the greatest obstacle to another government victory, however, was the new unity of the opposition and its choice to challenge Calderón Guardia: progressive newspaper publisher Otilio Ulate Blanco.⁵²

Ulate had been chosen at a massive February 1947 political rally from among the three leading opposition politicians, himself, Fernando Castro Cervantes and José Figueres, the leading opposition militant.⁵³ The choice of Ulate, in addition to unifying the opposition, presented Calderón Guardia with one major difficulty. Since 1940, the government merely had to label its opponents as being pro-Axis or an enemy of the campesinos to succeed, because of the opposition candidates' political stance vis-à-vis the Garantías Sociales. Ulate had a proven track record as a populist, however, and was outspoken in his support of social justice. "Ulate ha sido siempre un político progresista de amplio criterio" writes Rodríguez Vega.⁵⁴ The supporters of Calderón Guardia's candidacy were thus prevented from bringing out their standard

assortment of campaign slogans and conceded that in this presidential campaign, the tactics of the past were inappropriate.

Disturbed by an increase in anti-government terrorism and frustrated in their efforts to portray Ulate as a reactionary, the government sought a compromise with the opposition. Ulate himself welcomed the talks with the Calderonistas as a viable alternative to the increasing bitterness of Costa Rica's political atmosphere. President Picado also desired a return to the electoral calm enjoyed in earlier elections. Since all parties appeared amenable to a negotiated settlement of campaign tensions, Costa Rica's crisis should have been resolved pacifically, without the need to pursue a course of violence. The talks faltered, however, when several opposition militants sabotaged the discussions and refused to participate or negotiate with the government. Figueres, for example, would have nothing to do with the "communistic" Calderón Guardia and demanded a military solution "which represented heroism and purity." He urged Costa Ricans to arm themselves and to "abandon once and for all the idea of a simple political battle."⁵⁵ Attempts at a compromise fell apart as Ulatistas withdrew from the talks under pressure from militants.⁵⁶

The good intentions which produced El Pacto after the turbulent summer of 1947 provided the citizens of Costa Rica with a modicum of optimism. Although militant opponents of the government continued their campaign of terrorism, the new year opened peacefully and calm prevailed in the pre-election period.⁵⁷ Newsweek magazine was prompted to predict "the election will probably be decided by ballots, not bullets, following a year which had been exceptionally bitter."⁵⁸

Elections took place 8 February 1948 in an apprehensive atmosphere, yet little violence was reported and, in contrast to the two previous elections, there were no charges of governmentally inspired fraud. As returns started to be reported, opposition candidate Ulate took an early lead, and his margin grew throughout the night. Late Sunday evening the 8th, Calderón Guardia conceded defeat as the voter's choice became apparent. The next day the government's candidate withdrew his concession, however, claiming thousands of his supporters had been denied the vote by opposition militants.

President Picado's brother René, the Ministro de Seguridad Pública, declared that "it had been a crooked election, which did not represent the will of the people."⁵⁹ Before a recount could occur, a fire swept through an old schoolhouse in which the ballots were stored, awaiting Tribunal Electoral scrutiny. No one claimed responsibility for the act of sabotage, which further muddled an already controversial election.⁶⁰ Regardless of political affiliation, every Costa Rican felt a sense of foreboding as the nation awaited the decision of the Tribunal Electoral, which would certify one candidate or the other as president.

On 29 February a divided Tribunal Electoral announced its decision, which awarded the presidency to Ulate.⁶¹ The nation was stunned when President Picado disallowed the decision and declared he would remain in office until Costa Rica's partisan Asemblea Legislativa could determine which candidate had prevailed. Picado's rationale for denying Ulate's rightful victory was that Costa Rica's Constitution required a unanimous Tribunal Electoral verdict, although in fact, the president was mistaken.⁶²

When the Asemblea Legislativa met and voted along party lines, the decision which awarded Ulate victory was overturned. Contrary to Picado's wishes, however, Calderón Guardia was not selected as president, but instead new elections were ordered. Picado was to sit as lame duck president until the new chief executive was chosen in May.⁶³ Ulate and his supporters protested the decision of the Asemblea Legislativa and claimed once again a corrupt administration had denied Costa Ricans the vote. Tensions were heightened when Picado's secret police chief, the Cuban-born José Tavio, lay siege to houses in which Ulate was seeking refuge. Ulate's principal political advisor and confidant, Dr. Carlos Luis Valverde, was mortally wounded in the assault, amidst government claims which blamed the opposition for initiating the violence. Ulate vowed revenge, was jailed for a short time and then released after the Church and diplomatic personnel interceded in his behalf. Over 10,000 citizens joined the Valverde funeral procession in a dramatic show of opposition to Picado's controversial decisions as Costa Rica appeared headed once again towards violence.⁶⁴

Leaders on both sides of Costa Rica's polarized political system urged moderation and agreed to censor their own partisan communications media while a truce arranged 5 March remained in effect. The bankers and conservative businessmen who had the most to lose in a protracted internal conflict worked to restore the nation's traditional tranquility. Opposition moderates met on a daily basis with Picado, Mora, Archbishop Sanabria and members of the diplomatic community as confidence in a negotiated settlement replaced the fear of armed

confrontation.⁶⁵ Despite the good intentions of Costa Rican leaders, however, a truce became impossible as once again, just as in the talks preceding the February elections, militant opponents of the government prevented a compromise. Unlike the disruptive efforts of the militants in 1947, however, their actions of March 1948 consisted of a military assault on government forces which precipitated a Civil War.⁶⁶

Prior to a discussion of the six weeks of Civil War which wracked Costa Rica from March until late April 1948, it is necessary to examine another factor which further complicated the situation. Had the opponents of the Picado government operated in isolation, without outside assistance, it is doubtful they could have prevailed. This was not the case, however, as external forces came to bear upon Costa Rica which proved impossible for President Picado and his small armed forces to overcome. The principal obstacle which prevented a quick government victory in March 1948 was the participation of the United States of America in the conflict.

NOTES

¹Rodríguez Vega, De Calderón, p. 21.

²Jorge Mario Salazar Mora, Calderón Guardia (San José, Costa Rica: Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 1980), pp. 19-27.

³Bell, Crisis, pp. 19-40; Jorge Enrique Romero Pérez, La Social Democracia en Costa Rica (San José, Costa Rica: Eugenio Rodríguez, 1977), pp. 55-62.

⁴Charles D. Ameringer, Don Pepe: A Political Biography of José Figueres of Costa Rica (Albuquerque, N.M. University of New Mexico Press, 1978), p.10.

⁵Ibid., p.11

⁶Ibid., p. 12; Bell, Crisis, p. 63. "Calderón Guardia himself later admitted that some members of his government had been dishonest."

⁷Ameringer, Don Pepe, p. 11.

⁸The New York Times, 4 July 1942, p. 1.

⁹Rodríguez Vega, De Calderón, p. 53.

¹⁰The New York Times, 6 July 1942, p. 1.

¹¹José María Figueres Ferrer was born 25 September 1906 in San Ramon, Costa Rica. Figueres was the son of a physician and thereby entitled to a privileged youth. He emigrated to Boston at the age of seventeen and, denied admission to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology due to a deficient secondary education, called the Boston Public Library his alma mater. In 1928 Figueres returned to Costa Rica and busied himself with his hemp farm. Figueres possessed little interest in politics until the San Pablo incident of July 1942, and his motivation for boldly addressing the nation on the evening of 8 July 1942 remains a mystery today. See, Bell, Crisis, p. 89; Ameringer, Don Pepe, p. 20; Rodríguez Vega, De Calderón, p. 55.

¹²Rodríguez Vega, De Calderón, p. 53.

- ¹³ Ibid., pp. 55-56.
- ¹⁴ Ameringer, Don Pepe, p. 21.
- ¹⁵ Bell, Crisis, pp. 39-40.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 47-49; Rojas Bolaños, Lucha social, pp. 77-84.
- ¹⁷ Burt H. English, Liberación Nacional in Costa Rica: The Development of a Political Party in a Transitional Society (Gainesville, Fla.: University of Florida Press, 1971), pp. 14-25.
- ¹⁸ Rojas Bolaños, Lucha social, pp. 45-46 and 79-80; see, Salazar Mora, Calderón Guardia, p. 101. "Es interesante anotar que la actitud progresista, consciente y correcta de Monseñor Sanabria en favor de la legislación social, le valió el ser llamado comunista por los sectores conservadores y reaccionarios de la población. Definitivamente, Monseñor Sanabria nunca fue comunista, ni socialista; simplemente se limitó a poner en práctica los principios de justicia, amor, libertad y solidaridad entre los hombres emanados del cristianismo."
- ¹⁹ "The Block of Victory," which signified domestic unity in the fight against Axis Fascism.
- ²⁰ Oconotrillo, Un siglo, pp. 112-19.
- ²¹ Ameringer, Don Pepe, p. 14.
- ²² Romero Pérez, La Social Democracia, pp. 72-97; Rojas Bolaños, Lucha social, pp. 100-108.
- ²³ Rodríguez Vega, De Calderón, p. 25; Robert Edwards McNicoll, "Intellectual Origins of Aprismo," Hispanic American Historical Review XXIII (1943), 424-40.
- ²⁴ English, Liberación Nacional, pp. 126-29.
- ²⁵ Romero Pérez, La Social Democracia, pp. 82-86; English, Liberación Nacional, p. 129.
- ²⁶ Rojas Bolaños, Lucha social, pp. 104-13.
- ²⁷ Romero Pérez, La Social Democracia, pp. 87-89.
- ²⁸ Oconotrillo, Un siglo, pp. 133-41.
- ²⁹ Bell, Crisis, p. 44.
- ³⁰ Ibid., p. 45.

³¹Oscar Aguilar Bulgarelli, Costa Rica y sus hechos políticos de 1948 (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Costa Rica, 1978), pp. 131-45.

³²Ameringer, Don Pepe, p. 25.

³³Rodríguez Vega, De Calderón, p. 96.

³⁴On the conservative side in the question of government responsibility for acts of voter disfranchisement are: Ameringer, Don Pepe, p. 11; Rodríguez Vega, De Calderón, p. 96; Busey, Notes, p. 9; and, José Figueres, Estos diez años (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, 1958), pp. 20-21. The moderate and liberal viewpoints on the 1944 presidential elections include: Bell, Crisis, p. 112; Aguilar Bulgarelli, Costa Rica, p. 140; Rojas Bolaños, Lucha social, pp. 95-99; and, Salazar Mora, Calderón Guardia, pp. 146-54.

³⁵Bell, Crisis, p. 92.

³⁶Ibid., p. 94.

³⁷Ibid., p. 118; Romero Pérez, La Social Democracia, pp. 109-13.

³⁸Ameringer, Don Pepe, p. 9.

³⁹Ibid., p. 24.

⁴⁰Aguilar Bulgarelli, Costa Rica, pp. 298-302.

⁴¹Bell, Crisis, p. 91.

⁴²Aguilar Bulgarelli, Costa Rica, p. 299.

⁴³Ibid., p. 300.

⁴⁴Rodríguez Vega, De Calderón, pp. 99-102.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 135.

⁴⁶Interviews with Guillermo Villegas Hoffmeister, Guillermo Malavassi and Carlos Ramos Arias at the Asemblea Legislativa in San José, Costa Rica, 10-11 November 1982; Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. VIII: The Western Hemisphere, 1947 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), pp. 578-80.

⁴⁷Bell, Crisis, p.100.

⁴⁸Ameringer, Don Pepe, p. 35; Roberto Fernández Durán, La huelga de brazos caídos (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Liberación Nacional, 1953), *passim*. The strike which occurred during the summer of 1947 became known as "the strike of the folded arms:" La huelga de brazos caídos.

⁴⁹Ameringer, Don Pepe, p. 36.

⁵⁰English, Liberación Nacional, p. 40. "On August 2 several hundred women of various social classes, led by school teacher Emma Gamboa, staged a parade which culminated in a demonstration in San José's National Park across from the presidential palace." When the group demanded to see President Picado, and he failed to appear, the women remained in the park after sunset and the shots were fired.

⁵¹Newsweek, 4 August 1947, p. 34.

⁵²Oconotrillo, Un siglo, pp. 147-56.

⁵³Rodríguez Vega, De Calderón, pp. 147-48.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 150.

⁵⁵Ameringer, Don Pepe, pp. 31-32.

⁵⁶Bell, Crisis, p. 118; Romero Pérez, La Social Democracia, pp. 109-12.

⁵⁷Interviews with Oscar Aguilar Bulgarelli and Guillermo Villegas Hoffmeister at the Asemblea Legislativa in San José, Costa Rica, 10-16 November 1982.

⁵⁸Newsweek, 9 February 1948, p. 41.

⁵⁹The New York Times, 10 February 1948, p. 17(a).

⁶⁰The New York Times, 11 February 1948, p. 14. In an interview Oscar Aguilar Bulgarelli identified the man who set the fire which burned the uncounted ballots. At the request of Bulgarelli the man's anonymity must be maintained. Interview with Oscar Aguilar Bulgarelli at his office in San Jose, Costa Rica, 16 November 1982.

⁶¹Oconotrillo, Un siglo, pp. 155-56.

⁶²The New York Times, 29 February 1948, p. 9. For a different interpretation of Article 82 of the Costa Rican Constitution see the letter to the editor of The New York Times, 3 April 1948, p. 14.

⁶³Rojas Bolaños, Lucha social, p. 147.

⁶⁴Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. IX: The Western Hemisphere, 1948 (Washington: Department of State, 1972), pp. 488-91.

⁶⁵The New York Times, 5 March 1948, p. 2; Newsweek, 15 March 1948, p. 34.

⁶⁶Bell, Crisis, pp. 135-36; Aguilar Bulgarelli, Costa Rica, pp. 320-50. Contains an excellent brief account of the six weeks of fighting. See, Alberto F. Cañas, Los ocho años (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Liberación Nacional, 1955), *passim*; and Guillermo Villegas Hoffmeister, "Testimonios del '48," Excelsior (San José, Costa Rica), July-August 1977.

CHAPTER IV

THE UNITED STATES AND THE COSTA RICAN CIVIL WAR

The United States of America played a critical role in the 1948 Costa Rican Civil War. Careful analysis of diplomatic communications, internal embassy records, contemporary history and journalism provides extensive evidence of the American involvement. The extent of Washington's support for the rebels of José Figueres and its opposition to the government of President Teodoro Picado has never been a matter of common knowledge, but historical examination shows a pattern of deliberate intervention designed to eliminate the influence of Communism and preserve Costa Rica's democratic tradition.

America's Latin American policy underwent four major changes of direction during the twentieth century, from imperialistic "Gunboat" and "Dollar" diplomacies to ostensibly benevolent "Good Neighbor" and finally, Cold War "Enemy of Communism." Each policy reflected the predominant political thinking of its time with the principal consideration being the post-Monroe Doctrine American hegemony in the Western Hemisphere. The motivation behind American imperialism in the early part of the century is summarized by American political scientist J. Lloyd Mecham as follows: "We cannot overlook the fact that the existence of the United States created a bulwark against European imperialism in the Western Hemisphere. . . United States imperialism protected the hemisphere against Old World imperialistic powers."¹ America felt "certain standards of order and respect for property had to

be observed by all governments as members of a civilized community, and the United States represented civilization north of the Panama Canal."² President Woodrow Wilson represented "the most repugnant aspects of Yankee meddling" in Latin American minds. He had "inherited an empire and proceeded to expand it in a righteous spirit of missionary diplomacy."³ Wilson gradually refined American foreign policy into Dollar Diplomacy, but little changed from William Howard Taft to Herbert Hoover. As American historian Lester O. Langley writes of the Hoover era: "In the classical mold of industrial statesman, he looked to the monocultures to the south as suppliers of raw material for American industry."⁴

The election of Franklin D. Roosevelt as president brought about a change in direction for America's Latin American policy. Although perhaps not as liberal as some sympathizers might claim, the New Deal era did bring about changes in the region's perception of the United States. As one author writes of the new policy: ". . . it was formed in part from a half-remorseful reaction against earlier coercive policies of the United States. . . ."⁵ A critic of New Deal policy writes: "Where the Caribbean was concerned, Hull's program of economic liberalism aimed at achieving trade advantages for the U.S. so as to preserve American political and economic domination."⁶ While some scholars argue the "Good Neighbor" policy stands as a shining example of American potential to do the right thing as regards her southern neighbors, others hold Roosevelt's administration responsible for the harsh conditions of modern Latin America.⁷

The final change in America's Latin American policy took place after the Second World War. After two years of continued emphasis on becoming "Good Neighbors," the United States was confronted with a perceived threat of Russian designs on the free world. Events in postwar Europe caught American policymakers by surprise and led State Department analysts to reexamine relations with the nations of Latin America. As demonstrated by resolutions proposed by the United States at hemispheric conferences at Chapúltepec, Río de Janeiro and Bogotá, "the U.S. wanted an orderly hemisphere, loyal to its Cold War policies but undemanding of economic assistance."⁸

Relations between the United States and tiny Costa Rica follow the distinct shifts of America's Latin American policy. At the beginning of the century, America's role was that of a benevolent but firm big brother. Events within Costa Rica did not affect decision making in Washington, as demonstrated by a review of diplomatic communications during the first quarter of a century. As one of the region's few democracies, the United States was given no reason to involve itself in domestic affairs. Ironically, the moralistic Wilsonian non-recognition policy found one of its first tests in ostensibly democratic Costa Rica. This occurred when the United States refused to diplomatically recognize the 1917 Tinoco dictatorship.⁹ With the legitimate election of Tinoco's successor, Julio Acosta García in 1920, however, relations were normalized.¹⁰

In 1929, the United States intervened diplomatically during a dispute over Costa Rica's border with Panama, and helped to defuse tensions.¹¹ The United States closely monitored the domestic strife

which briefly erupted after the election of Ricardo Jimenez to his third term in 1932.¹² Otherwise, there is no evidence of American interest in Costa Rica: when internal conditions flowed smoothly the United States remained in the background.

America's New Deal policymakers were generally satisfied with Costa Rica's internal and external affairs. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Costa Rica became one of the first Latin American nations to declare war, preceding even the United States.¹³ During the War, Washington was grateful for Costa Rica's friendship, as military planners formed contingency plans to utilize Costa Rican airfields in the event of Axis attacks upon the Panama Canal.¹⁴ The State Department was pleased with Costa Rican support for Allied positions and tended to look away from the obvious corruption of the Calderón Guardia administration.

Robert M. Scotten was appointed Minister to Costa Rica 5 March 1942 and immediately became involved with domestic politics. In a memorandum to then-Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles, Scotten wrote:

From what I have been able to learn it appears that President Calderón is faced with a serious although perhaps not dangerous political situation due to the somewhat precarious financial situation of the Government but also to the widespread accusations of graft and mis-management which are being directed against him and especially against his brother, the Minister of the Interior. . . On the other hand President Calderón has as the Department is well aware, cooperated with us to the fullest extent as regards the international situation and is I believe a sincere friend of the United States.

I would suggest that this Government be granted financial assistance in whatever form and amount the Department decides to in order to tide over their immediate financial difficulties and keep President Calderón in a friendly frame of mind.¹⁵

Wartime considerations were paramount in the decision of the United States to provide financial assistance to the Calderón Guardia administration. A telegram from Welles to the chairman of the Export-Import Bank is illustrative of State Department policy: "The Department believes that every possible effort should be made by the Export-Import Bank to meet the request of the Government of Costa Rica in order assure economic and political stability in that country during this crucial period."¹⁶

Relations between Costa Rica and the United States proceeded without incident until 1945. During the war, debt payment on Costa Rica's Lend Lease obligations had fallen in arrears but more pressing concerns preoccupied the United States. When a reexamination of Costa Rica's economic problems was undertaken after the War, the only concern of State Department policymakers was to strengthen and reform internal fiscal policy. This required the enactment of a more conservative economic policy and a degree of belt tightening by the Costa Rican government. Demands for additional Export-Import Bank credits to see Costa Rica through hard times were "strictly opposed" by the Bank's managers.¹⁷

In a memorandum written by the Assistant Chief of the Division of Caribbean and Central American Affairs of the Department of State, the undesirability of the extension of further credit is made clear. William P. Cochran's 24 January 1945 note summarizes his opposition to further assistance:

I am opposed to this proposal for the following reasons:

1. It would be throwing good money after bad. . . Costa Rica has no credit and it would be a complete misnomer to term any such advance a loan.
2. It would encourage improvidence.
3. The influx of further large sums of money in dollar exchange would add to the already excess inflation.
4. There is no certainty that Costa Rica would adopt the necessary financial reforms even were the loan granted on the basis that it should do so.
5. The Export-Import Bank would, in my opinion, be both unable and unwilling to make such a loan.
6. I question whether the move would be effective. If the object is to maintain a democratic government in power, this is intervention.¹⁸

The record shows Ambassador Johnson concurred with Cochran's assessment. In a cable dated 11 April 1945, the ambassador informed Washington "that no loan should be made to Costa Rica until the projects of law and financial reform have been passed by Congress. . ."¹⁹ Johnson continued by adding "the Costa Rican Congress will have a stronger motivation to pass the financial reform laws if another loan has not been made or promised to Costa Rica before that action."²⁰ By holding back on the extension of additional credit, American officials sought to force internal fiscal reforms upon Costa Rica.

Collateral with the issue of economic assistance was the subject of Costa Rica's request for military aid and advisors. Military aid to Costa Rica in 1945 was a subject of intense intradepartmental debate. In 1947 and 1948 the subject would return to haunt the United States. Assistant Secretary of State Nelson A. Rockefeller participated in the discussions which concerned military aid and an increase in the size of

America's military mission to Costa Rica. Rockefeller appeared to be acutely aware of the danger involved in a military buildup in Costa Rica, a nation with no external enemies and a unique record of peaceful political transaction. On 25 July Rockefeller communicated his concerns to Ambassador Johnson:

The Department is also aware of the facts and traditions of Costa Rica's national life, which are identified with civilian control of the machinery of Government and minimum intervention therein by the military. It consequently feels that it would be undesirable to assign United States military officers to perform in Costa Rica functions which are normally fulfilled by civilians. There would appear to be no advantage to be gained by inaugurating in Costa Rica the practice of having military officers handle matters outside their direct field and so perhaps build²¹ up the custom of military operation of governmental functions.

When staff recommendations called for a renewal of arms shipments to Costa Rica, Ambassador Johnson protested the decision to Washington. Although the staff's decisions "appear to be sound, the political conditions in Costa Rica would make it unwise to supply more than the minimum military supplies requested."²² Johnson's principal concern was that American weapons might appear on election day to provide support for official vote fraud, giving the losers "the opportunity to allege that the results of the elections were decided by the potential use of guns coming from the United States."²³ Despite the pleas of Johnson and Rockefeller, arms were shipped once again to Costa Rica, albeit in smaller amounts than sought by President Picado. The two nations signed a limited arms agreement on 10 December 1945 in Washington which provided for Costa Rica's pledge to assist in hemispheric defense plans and America's promise to protect Costa Rica against external aggression. The agreement also called for a four year

"Military Mission. . . for the purpose of enhancing the efficiency of the Republic's army."²⁴

The satisfactory resolution of Costa Rica's requests for economic and military assistance in 1945 meant that once again relations with the United States were normal. Ambassador Johnson characterized the attitude of the Picado government to be "from the beginning one of complete cooperation."²⁵ Opposition complaints about the fraudulent 1944 presidential election were ignored by the embassy in an honest attempt to avoid the appearance of interference in the sovereign affairs of another nation. A review of Picado's first two years in office undertaken by Ambassador Johnson 20 February 1946 emphasized the president's loyalty to American foreign policy.²⁶ Of greater interest is a telegram from the ambassador to the Secretary of State dated 22 March 1946, entitled "Attitude of Costa Rica in the Event of Trouble between the United States and Russia." After confirming the loyalty of Picado's foreign minister, Julio Acosta, Johnson wrote of Picado: "... his friendship for the United States is so firm that no doubt exists as to the position he would take in case of such trouble. The same may be said for the other members of the Costa Rican Government."²⁷

Continuing, the ambassador wrote:

Moreover, the followers of Picado, of the Calderón Guardias, and of the opposition leaders would back up the Government solidly in any position it might take in favor of the United States against Russia. The leaders of the opposition are continually inveighing against Communism, both in and out of Costa Rica.

There remains the ex-Communist Vanguardia Popular Party, which according to available figures controls some 10 to 15% of those entitled to vote in Costa Rica. Manuel Mora, the leader of the party, is an opportunist and an admirer of the Soviets. He has, however, cooperated with American business interests and has stated

to me that he follows no 'line' than the betterment of the laboring classes . . . It is true that Trabajo, the weekly paper of Vanguardia Popular contains many articles attacking capitalism and a few criticizing the United States and its attitude toward Russia, but this paper does not necessarily represent the attitude of Mora, who after V-J Day organized a large pro-Allied demonstration which turned out to be mainly pro-United States.

In summary, it can be safely said that not only the Government but that a great majority of the Costa Rican people would be with us as opposed to Russia in any struggle between the two countries.²⁸

Ambassador Johnson cultivated a personal friendship with Mora, whom he came to know as a moral and honorable native son whose brand of Marxism had a distinctly criollo flavor. The memorandum which dealt with potential loyalties in the event of a conflict with the Soviet Union was the only mention of Communism during 1946.²⁹ The American decisions which involved economic and military aid to Costa Rica never considered the Vanguardia Popular party as a threat to American or Costa Rican interests, nor was its participation in Costa Rica's government an issue. There is little evidence that Cortes virulent anti-communist political rhetoric in the controversial 1944 presidential elections was considered significant by the American embassy or the State Department. The American hesitation to supply weapons or financial assistance was based upon strictly pragmatic consideration; Cold War era anti-communism did not enter into America's relations with Costa Rica until the following year. When Assistant Secretary of State Spruille Braden spoke individually with leading Costa Rican politicians 20 May 1946, his intent was to reduce the hostility between the government and its opponents to prevent a repetition of the violence in 1944. Braden conveyed to Otilio Ulate, Calderón Guardia and Costa Rican Ambassador to the United States, Francisco Gutiérrez, the resolve of the United

States to maintain Costa Rica's image as a stable democracy. As Braden wrote to Ambassador Johnson: "I expressed the hope that the candidate elected to the presidency in 1948 would represent the free choice of the people."³⁰

There is no mention in Braden's communication of Communism, which is unusual, considering his outspoken opposition to Communism both in public life and after his 1949 retirement.³¹ The reason for the omission was Washington's perception of Mora and the Vanguardia Popular party as no threat to American interests. Johnson's appraisal of the potential loyalty of Costa Rica's citizens convinced the State Department that in the event of any conflict with Russia, the United States could count upon Costa Rican support. It was not until 1947 that myopic vision dramatically altered America's relations with Costa Rica and paranoia replaced rationality.

The first victim of Washington's new concern was Ambassador Johnson, who was replaced in March 1947 by Walter J. Donnelly. The contrast between the two men helps to illustrate the changing policy of the State Department. Johnson, for example, was a personal friend of Calderón Guardia and Mora and a political liberal.³² Donnelly was a bitter opponent of Communism, whose inaugural press conference in San José attacked Russia and "discussed Communism as he saw it—a threat to all the peoples of America which it was necessary for all governments to combat."³³ The departure of Johnson was precipitated by a 9 January 1947 cable he sent to Braden in Washington. Johnson warned of potential chaos in Costa Rica if continued rightwing terrorism succeeded in

destabilizing the government, and requested a naval visit by an American destroyer to reduce tension. As the ambassador wrote, "I believe the mere presence of such a ship in Costa Rican waters would give pause to those who are possibly planning to bomb the San José water works and electric plants, to set fires in the city, and in the confusion take over the Government, perhaps by means of assassination of the President and his friends."³⁴ Johnson feared rightwing opposition violence and terrorism and sought to show support for Picado in an effort to avert conflict.

The State Department rejected the ambassador's request for a destroyer visit, citing the potential for bad publicity. As Braden wrote in his 3 February reply to Johnson, ". . . the consensus here is that it would be risky under present conditions and might result in allegations of intervention by groups unfriendly to us who are only too ready to take advantage of any opportunity to criticise."³⁵ Washington was caught between a desire to help Costa Rica's government by impressing opponents with its support for Picado, and an enhanced perception of the threat of Communism, which made any assistance to the governing coalition, with Vanguardia Popular participation, difficult if not impossible. By the spring of 1947, a conscious decision was made to ignore rightwing violence and concentrate on the threat posed by Vanguardia Popular, and Ambassador Johnson's return to the United States was the first step in the process.

Domestic strife during the summer of 1947 alarmed the American embassy but officials maintained a strictly neutral position in the face

of opposition protests. When a group of Ulatistas complained to Ambassador Donnelly that American weapons were responsible for injuring numerous Costa Rican citizens, the American rejected their charges and said: "I wanted to make it perfectly clear to them that this Embassy was wholly neutral and that I was confident they would understand our position."³⁶ Washington's principal concern was for the safety of American citizens and the security of American economic interests, and preferred to remain indifferent to the opposition's protests.

During the commercial strike of July, American-owned businesses were among those targeted for looting after being opened by police, and this prompted a firm reaction from the State Department. In a memorandum of a telephone conversation between the Assistant Chief of the Division of Central America and Panama Affairs and the embassy in San José, America's concern with the influence of Communism on Costa Rica's government is apparent. Murray M. Wise wrote of his conversation with Chargé John Willard Carrigan in San José:

[The Chargé] said that no effort was being made to curb the looters and that there had been two or three cases of damage to stores owned by U. S. citizens. He said the attitude of police and government was that the store owners were getting what they deserved. . . He said he could confirm the fact that the police had been instructed not to interfere with looters. . . I asked if there were any evidences of Communistic activities in the picture. He said there definitely were, because the Vanguardia partisans were participating in the looting. I asked Mr. Carrigan whether he expected this situation to continue, and he replied that in his opinion it would for some time.³⁷

Washington chose to make an informal and verbal protest with a statement "that unless American interests were protected from further damage by disorderly elements, the Government would have to present a formal

written protest."³⁸ Moderate elements in the State Department still supported loyal American ally Picado, but increased preoccupation with Communism began to color relations with Costa Rica. Chargé Carrigan, for example, went on record "as very deeply regretting the decision not to protest in writing." Among the reasons cited by the chargé "was that Vanguardia partisans were now apparently openly participating in the disorders."³⁹

President Picado was aware of American concern with Communism and attempted to make his personal loyalty to the United States a matter of public record. In a press release published by the Costa Rican daily La Tribuna, Picardo emphasized "the government over which I preside is not and never has been Communist, and said the ideology and spirit of this country is identified with the United States foreign policy and with the democratic doctrines of the bloc of the western nations as generally referred to."⁴⁰ On 16 September, Picado asked Ambassador Donnelly to call on him for the purpose of informing Donnelly "of his views of Communism and his loyalty to the United States."⁴¹

A report by Ambassador Donnelly to the Secretary of State, 9 October, contained an appraisal of the domestic political situation. After identifying the principals - Calderón Guardia, Ulate and Mora - the ambassador began his analysis with the role and influence of the Vanguardia Popular party:

Vanguardia follows the Communist line and its leaders are confirmed Communists. The present policy of the party is to support the candidacy of Calderón Guardia for President. . . . it is logical to assume that in supporting Calderón Guardia for President they will expect him to reward them with key positions in the Government, the

Social Security Department, and to endorse their legislative agenda.

The Vanguardia party has its Secretary-General Dr. Manuel Mora who is regarded as the most intelligent of the upper echelon of the Costa Rican Communist Party. . . While the party is not conducting an open campaign against the United States, it is not friendly to the United States. . .

As regards to the United States, it would be a mistake to proceed on any other premise than that Mora is anti-United States, anti-United States foreign policy and anti-United States business interests.

Present indications are that Rafael Angel Calderón Guardia, with the support of the Vanguardia party and the Communist leaders, will be elected President in February, 1948. While he has openly solicited their backing, he tries to allay the fears of anti-Communists by saying that he is doing so for political expediency and that he 'never has been, is not, and will never be a Communist'. The fact is, however, that he is aligned with them and in doing so has contributed to their standing and influence in Costa Rica. The situation is undeniably tense and anything can happen!⁴²

The embassy was aware that the perpetrators of Costa Rica's political violence were opposition militants through contacts with the American military attache and the public identification of most of the opposition terrorists by the daily La Tribuna.⁴³ Among the documented cases of right wing violence between August and December of 1947 are two attempts to assassinate Calderón Guardia, the sabotage of public utilities and the bombings of Mora's automobile and the home of La Tribuna's publisher.⁴⁴ The record shows that the primary concern of the American embassy was not rightist violence, however, but the influence of Vanguardia Popular and the potential threat posed to American security by the presence of communists in Costa Rica. Indicative of the heightened American concern was the recall of Ambassador Donnelly, whose gloomy assessment that "anything can happen" dramatized the embassy's lack of control over the deteriorating domestic crisis.⁴⁵

Donnelly was replaced in November by Nathaniel Davis, a career diplomat. The selection of Davis for the troubled San José assignment is interesting, due to the fact that he had been serving in Moscow prior to being called to Costa Rica and was dispatched in May 1949 to Hungary. As Bell writes, "Among the attentions that Costa Rica received from the United States during that period was the assignment of an ambassador expert in Communist affairs."⁴⁶ The significance of the assignment of Davis to Costa Rica is not lost upon contemporary authors whose sympathies lie with Picado, Mora and Calderón Guardia. Davis is cited as proof of America's preoccupation with Communism and opposition to the government of Costa Rica.⁴⁷

Concurrent with the appointment of Davis to Costa Rica was an increase in the hostile political rhetoric of the opposition press. Daily newspaper articles and advertisements drew attention to the issue of Communism and the threat it posed to Costa Rica. As Bell writes:

. . . the Diario de Costa Rica, property of the Opposition candidate Otilio Ulate, carried on an intense campaign to label Calderón Guardia 'Communist.' There were articles which told Costa Rica to take part in the crusade against Marxist 'infiltration' and photographs and articles which showed Calderón Guardia working with the vanguardistas in the period of his first administration. A political cartoon of April 3, 1947, showed a campesino speaking in dialect to a kindly Uncle Sam, revealing to him the truth that Costa Rica was in Communist hands.⁴⁸

Press attacks of this nature plagued President Picado and hindered the presidential campaign of Calderón Guardia. Groups of Costa Ricans in the United States mounted a constant publicity blitz which called American attention to the threat posed by Vanguardia Popular to the Panama Canal.⁴⁹ It is not unlikely newly-arrived and staunchly anti-communist Ambassador Davis agreed with the propaganda of the

opposition whether in fact the opposition believed it or not. As Bell writes, "The Cold War gave the distorted elements of the question precedence over the rational . . . Somehow, in some mysterious way, the Vanguardia Popular purportedly threatened the security of the whole hemisphere."⁵⁰

Ambassador Davis watched the election of February 1948 with great interest, and shared the nation's disappointment as the democratic process slowly disintegrated. When forces led by the secret police chief, the Cuban Colonel Tavio, killed Ulate's confidant, Dr. Valverde on 1 March, Davis and the diplomatic community assisted in negotiations with the government which guaranteed Ulate's safety and release from jail.⁵¹ The American ambassador disapproved of President Picado's actions, and in a cable dated 3 March wrote the Secretary of State "I found it rather disappointing that the President of the Republic should take such a negative attitude at this time [since] prevention of bloodshed now rests with [him]."⁵² Davis also felt little regard for Calderon Guardia, as indicated by his cable of 5 March:

. . . Calderon Guardia has in general demonstrated his unfitness for the post [of president of Costa Rica] and left little doubt his party's obligation to the Vanguardia Popular which is undoubtedly effectively accomplishing the purposes of its parent organization by stirring up dissension and conflict.⁵³

The "parent organization" referred to by the ambassador is, of course, International Communism, although contemporary history is devoid of any evidence of Russian involvement in Costa Rica's domestic strife. Despite evidence of the criollo nature of Communism in Costa Rica, the officials at the American embassy were out of touch with reality, and chose to ignore the simple fact that Vanguardia Popular could not pose

any threat to American interests.⁵⁴

When José Figueres' rebels attacked an army mobile unit at El Empalme, fifty kilometers southwest of the capital near the rugged Cerro de la Muerte, it was not a surprise to the embassy. A memorandum written by the Vice Consul, Alex A. Cohen provides extensive details concerning a revolutionary plot. In addition to the names of sympathetic pilots assembled in San Isidro del General who were awaiting instructions, Cohen described the strategy and proposed tactics of the revolutionaries. Since events turned out just as Cohen predicted, it is inconceivable the embassy was taken by surprise.⁵⁵ Among the details contained in the memorandum was the name of the leader of the conspirators, José Figueres.⁵⁶

Figueres' Costa Rican revolution was born with his exile to Mexico by President Calderón Guardia in 1942. His next six years were spent in the search for weapons, finances and recruits. Contacts made with other Caribbean exiles in Mexico City proved to be the key to Figueres' success. When an exiled Dominican millionaire, Juan Rodríguez García, enlisted the aid of Caribbean democrats in a plot against Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo, Figueres was contacted. The attempted revolution was named after its island staging area, the Cuban Cayo Confites. Under international pressure, Cuban President Ramon Grau San Martín seized the weapons and arrested the mercenaries in September 1947. Rodríguez García prevailed upon liberal Guatemalan President Juan José Arévalo to arrange for a transfer of the arms from Cuba to Guatemala, at which point a variety of exile groups began pleading with

Arévalo to convince him of the primacy of their revolutionary designs. Nicaraguans, Dominicans, Hondurans, Venezuelans and Figueres' Costa Ricans presented their respective cases to Guatemala's president and awaited his decision.⁵⁷

After giving consideration to each group's plans, Guatemala's president arrived at his decision. A unified revolutionary alliance was created, and formalized as the leaders of the different factions signed El Pacto del Caribe in Guatemala City, 17 December 1947. With Arévalo's blessing, the agreement was dedicated to "derribar las dictaduras imperantes . . . y restablecer en ellas la Libertad y la Democracia."⁵⁸ When the apparent election fraud occurred in February, Figueres' claims of a dictatorship in Costa Rica appeared sincere, and Arévalo prepared for the transfer of arms and the mercenaries of the Legión Caribe to Figueres' clandestine airfields.⁵⁹ Arévalo was motivated not merely by sympathy for the Costa Rican rebels' cause, however, but also by his bitter hatred for Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza. Figueres promised Costa Rican support for a future invasion of Nicaragua by the Legión Caribe, after first ridding Costa Rica of the "communistic" Calderón Guardia dictatorship.⁶⁰

Additional research is necessary to determine the extent of Washington's knowledge of or participation in the plans of Arevalo, Figueres or the Legión Caribe. A more concrete history of American participation in later Caribbean liberal movements is available, and shows the support of American intelligence agencies during the 1950's for such regional democrats as Rómulo Betancourt, Juan Bosch and

Figueres, as democratic alternatives to either communistic or authoritarian dictatorships.⁶¹

In the months preceding Figueres' ambush of government forces on 12 March 1948, American concern lay in determining the influence and importance of Communism in Costa Rica. For example, an 8 January memorandum by Chargé Carrigan discussed the communists at length and predicted "that the Communist nucleus in Congress may again hold a balance of power in that body when the new Congress meets in May."⁶² On 10 February Ambassador Davis complained "Vanguardia Popular [is] equally to blame for [the] election problem."⁶³ And on 13 February Davis wrote "Pro-Calderón street demonstrations [which have occurred] since [the] election [are] described by Calderón press and radio as spontaneous. This is absurd!"⁶⁴ Davis attributed much of the blame for increased tensions to the Vanguardia Popular.

Washington shared the sympathies of the embassy in San José. In a 10 March memorandum, the Director of American Republic Affairs, Paul C. Daniels, relates his discussion with Costa Rican Ambassador Gutiérrez concerning Communism:

Mr. Daniels then inquired as to the importance of Communism in the recent election. Mora told Ambassador Francisco de P. Gutiérrez he would side with the U. S. in a conflict between Russia and the U. S. "if the latter were right." Ambassador Gutiérrez gave the impression that he was trying to indicate that Mora and the Vanguardia Popular were not Communistic,⁶⁵ while he perhaps questioned Mora's real position himself.

The preoccupation with Communism was apparent at the highest levels of the State Department as shown by a telegram from Secretary of State George Marshall to the embassy dated 12 March. Marshall expressed the

Department's concern "over recent political trends in Costa Rica and [the] possibility of further deterioration into bloodshed which might develop into armed struggle."⁶⁶ The Secretary of State urged Davis to make America's feelings known to Picado and explain that the United States ". . . has long admired Costa Rica's democratic tradition and considers it important that it be maintained in this critical world period."⁶⁷ The "critical world period," an examination of history shows, was the commencement of the Cold War.

Analysis shows the embassy's disapproval of Picado's administration and his handling of the political crisis. A memorandum by Vice Consul Cohen 12 March repeats the 3 March assessment of Picado made by Ambassador Davis. Cohen wrote, "The situation of President Picado in the picture has not been a happy or attractive one. Ever since the elections, he has failed to exert himself as Chief Executive to such an extent that he is being looked upon today with pity more than anything else."⁶⁸ The First Secretary of the embassy, Andrew J. Donovan III, conveyed his impressions of the political situation in a memorandum on 12 March:

. . . the administration as such has shown its extreme weakness and, at least to a certain measure, control of the police power of the country has undoubtedly been taken over by Calderón Guardia and his Vanguardia Popular supporters.

It is believed that they constitute perhaps the most important single factor in the situation and may profit from this position to obtain further advantages not now apparent
 . . .

A comparison of the thoughts of Ambassador Davis, Vice Consul Cohen and First Secretary Donovan shows the extent of the consensus at the

embassy. Any political scheme which involved a return of Calderon Guardia to the presidency would perforce increase the influence and power of Vanguardia Popular and open the door for a possible Russian influence in America's hemisphere. The dilemma which the United States faced was to avoid a solution which would lead to a dictatorship of the left, while preserving Costa Rica's democratic tradition. The answer to America's problem appeared in the form of José Figueres.

After one week of fighting, embassy officials had come to certain conclusions about the chances of a Figueres victory. Vice Consul Cohen's memorandum reflects the political officer's intelligence analysis:

. . . Since the final solution of the political problem now is dependent, to a considerable extent, upon that of the military one, it would not appear far-fetched to assert that the key to any final solution now may well depend on the extent of purely military aid which both sides may be able to secure from without.

Since victory would be afforded the side which could procure outside aid, the United States sought to internalize the conflict. Washington intervened against Nicaragua and Guatemala to prevent them from assisting their allies in Costa Rica. The fear of open warfare in Central America added to the urgency with which the United States acted.

As mentioned earlier, Guatemalan President Arévalo supported Figueres. Cargo flights between his nation and Costa Rica carried weapons and mercenaries of the Legión Caribe to begin Figueres' revolution. Arévalo's enemy, "Tacho" Somoza of Nicaragua, aided the Costa Rican government of President Picado. Somoza's support was based

upon his fear of Arévalo and the Legión Caribe, and his friendship with former President Calderón Guardia. Time magazine explained Nicaraguan aid to Costa Rica as the result of a lucrative and illegal cattle trade business operated as a partnership between Somoza and Calderón Guardia.⁷¹ In response to the outside aid to the parties fighting within Costa Rica, Washington demanded the immediate withdrawal of Nicaraguan and Guatemalan aid. In a telegram 19 March the American ambassador in Guatemala was told to "seek an early interview with President Arévalo, to convey the deep concern of the United States."⁷² Identical instructions were sent to the American Chargé in Managua, Bernbaum.⁷³ The Chargé was instructed to "inform Somoza unofficially [of] our deep concern over intervention of any foreign government in Costa Rican internal affairs."⁷⁴

The response to American pressure came literally overnight. Arévalo promised American Ambassador Kyle in Guatemala "his government's policy was that of neutrality and nonintervention," and assured the United States aid to Figueres would cease.⁷⁵ Señor Sevilla Sacasa, the Nicaraguan representative in Washington, spoke for Somoza when he stated "in view of the position of the United States Government, which has been brought informally to my attention, Nicaragua would follow a 'hands off' policy, despite the official request of President Picado."⁷⁶ By the time of the promises made by Nicaragua and Guatemala, the latter's aid to Figueres was nearly complete; at least fifteen clandestine DC-3 flights had brought weapons and supplies to Costa Rica.⁷⁷ When Nicaragua withdrew its aid to Calderón Guardia and Picado, the parity between the opposing sides in Costa Rica no longer

existed, the tactical superiority having gone to the rebels. The United States' diplomatic intervention which forced the withdrawal of Nicaraguan and Guatemalan aid swung the military balance in Figueres' favor, regardless of the apparent benevolence of the American action.

Other American actions were more obviously biased toward helping Figueres, as the record shows. Before hostilities broke out on 12 March, Figueres' rebels stored weapons at highway construction facilities run by the United States at Villa Mills (Millsville) southwest of San José. Acting with covert American support, the rebels used the storage depot to accumulate material just a few kilometers from Figueres' farm.⁷⁸ After fighting began, American military attaché Lt. Colonel James R. Hughes and his Costa Rican aide, Jorge Woodbridge, passed through government lines under a flag of truce on purportedly-diplomatic missions to rebel encampments. In reality, the American utilized the opportunity to make reports to rebel leaders concerning government positions and troop deployment. This critical covert assistance in the initial stages of the Civil War proved invaluable in the capture of San Isidro del General and enabled the rebels to gain momentum. As the Costa Rican rebel military strategist, Colonel Frank Marshall Steinvorth confessed, "the help provided by the military attache prevented a quick victory by government forces."⁷⁹ Additional evidence of overt American assistance to the rebels has been difficult to discover, despite the conviction of the Calderonistas that such aid was provided to Figueres.⁸⁰ A cryptic telegram from American Ambassador Hall in Panama to the State Department dated 29 February 1948 may suggest some American involvement in aid to Figueres. Hall wrote:

[The] Costa Rican Ambassador and [his] son had interviews with [General] Crittenberger [Commander in Chief, Southern Command]. . . They told [him] that they had news of arms smuggling from David [Panama] to Costa Rica in which [an] U.S. Army Sgt. was involved . . . Crittenberger replied very correctly . . . that since U.S. troops had been withdrawn to the Canal Zone what happened⁸¹ in other parts of Panamanian territory was not our direct concern.

While the existence of an American military effort to covertly assist Figueres from Panama has not yet been documented, Ambassador Hall's description of General Crittenberger ingenuous reply presents a number of questions. While the participation of an American citizen in activities designed to help rebels overthrow the Costa Rican government may technically be beyond the purview of the United States as a matter of international law, the similar participation of a member of the armed forces certainly would fall within Crittenberger's jurisdiction. The telegram raises more problems than it resolves.

When Nicaraguan aid was withdrawn from the beleaguered Picado government, the United States knew that without outside help the rebels would prevail. A confidential memorandum written by military attache Hughes 30 March for the State Department contained his assessment of the situation, which included a lengthy analysis of Vanguardia Popular. Hughes took the position that the only result of a Calderon Guardia victory would be enhanced prestige for the communists.⁸² On 1 April Vice Consul Cohen wrote a memorandum which detailed the growth of Vanguardia Popular and concurred with the military attache that the chief beneficiaries of a government victory would be Mora and the communists.⁸³

The State Department had come to the same conclusions concerning the results of a victory by the government. A memorandum written by

William Tapley Bennett, Jr., of the Division of Central American and Panama Affairs, summarizes the information received from the embassy concerning Vanguardia Popular. The 26 March analysis stated:

Communism in Costa Rica, operating under the name of Vanguardia Popular since the 1943 Comintern dissolution, today occupies a position of importance far out of proportion to its numerical strength. With an estimated 7,000 militant members, representing less than 1 percent of the total population of the country, Vanguardia was successful during the recent political campaign in increasing its representation in Costa Rica's unicameral Congress to at least 6 and possibly 8 seats out of a total of 54. Since the other two parties are evenly matched with about 23 seats each, the communists have thus been successful in obtaining an effective balance of power in the Congress.

Vanguardia's influence on the National Republican [administration] party is paramount. It constitutes the bulk of the Government's support today. The Embassy describes Vanguardia as being both directly and indirectly responsible for the present state of chaos and uncertainty in Costa Rica. . .

The Embassy states that the situation of uncertainty and insecurity which now exists in Costa Rica is in many respects similar to that prevailing today in Eastern Europe. While this estimate may be a bit overdrawn, it is perhaps worthwhile to recall that Haya de la Torre of Peru, in a recent statement to United Press, described Costa Rica as the 'Czechoslovakia of the Western Hemisphere.'⁸⁴

The issue of Communism was critical enough to prompt Bennett to call in Costa Rican Ambassador Gutiérrez 30 March to discuss the question of communist influence in the Ambassador's country.⁸⁵

The United States knew that by preventing the Picado government from receiving outside help or gaining access to military supplies it was inevitable the rebels would prevail. Ambassador Gutiérrez received a harsh introduction to America's plans on 19 March, when he met with Paul C. Daniels, Director of American Republic Affairs, and Robert Newbegin, Chief of the Division of Central America and Panama Affairs. After complaining to the Americans about evidence of Guatemalan aid to

Figueres, Gutiérrez "defended with some heat the action of the Nicaraguan Government. . . He pointed out that under the Habana Convention Guatemala was obliged not to assist the opposition group, while the same Convention permitted aid to a legitimate government."⁸⁶

Newbegin continued:

Ambassador Gutiérrez then inquired what the position of the U.S. would be if the Costa Rican government asked us for military support. Mr. Daniels parried this question as being hypothetical and expressed the hope that he would not be given any more problems.⁸⁷

American actions to prevent Costa Rica's government from securing arms went beyond Daniels' curt response to Ambassador Gutiérrez. In fact, every diplomatic and private action of the United States was designed to deny the weapons Costa Rica so desperately needed to defeat Figueres' rebels.

Since he was denied access to American military channels, President Picado sought to deal directly with the Thompson machinegun factory to purchase weapons. American officials in Washington intervened, however, and refused to grant required export permits, forcing the cancellation of the sale. Picado's questions about the American denial went unanswered by government officials.⁸⁸ In another instance of direct American action to prevent arms from reaching Costa Rica's government, a shipment of arms purchased in Mexico was seized by Mexican security officials who had acted on a tip from the American embassy.

Ambassador Gutiérrez confronted Newbegin in Washington and demanded an explanation for the American action. President Picado, Gutiérrez complained, "was broken hearted because of actions undertaken by the

United States which prevented him from obtaining arms for his government."⁸⁹ In direct response, Newbegin informed Gutiérrez that on no occasion "had this government specifically requested any other American government to refrain from supplying arms to Costa Rica."⁹⁰ Newbegin lied to the Costa Rican, according to American records. Through covert informants in San José, the American embassy learned that Ministro de Seguridad René Picado had arranged to purchase arms in Mexico, and notified Ambassador Walter Thurston in Mexico City. Mexican security forces were advised and the shipment was seized just prior to takeoff for San José.⁹¹

American efforts to prevent other nations from responding to Picado's request for help proved successful. Aid which had been tentatively promised the Costa Rican government by sister states in Latin America was never forthcoming, probably as a result of American pressure. A circular telegram from Secretary of State Marshall to American embassies in the region put everyone on notice of Washington's "deep concern over intervention by any foreign government in Costa Rican internal affairs and our feeling that such intervention is particularly regrettable on [the] eve [of the] Bogotá Conference."⁹² On 5 April Costa Rica's Foreign Minister, "speaking in [the] name of President Picado expressed bewilderment at [the] U.S. attitude which inexplicably appears [to be] unfriendly to [the] government [of] Costa Rica."⁹³ After once again stating Costa Rican loyalty lay with American interests, the Minister listed incidents of Costa Rican support for the United States and the State Department during the War. "When [the] government which did [the] U.S. this favor now desperately needs arms,

[it] finds [that the] U.S. blocks [Costa Rica's] efforts at every turn."⁹⁴ The conclusion reached by Ambassador Davis was as follows:

"[I] believe [the] foregoing points to [a] realization by [the] government [of Costa Rica that the] situation [is] desperate unless outside supplies [of weapons are made] available."⁹⁵ Davis confirmed the serious situation which the government faced if they were unable to procure weapons. The effect of continued denials of support by the United States ensured the defeat of Costa Rica's army and its allies, the fighting mariachis of the Vanguardia Popular.⁹⁶

Additional insight into the American position is revealed by a memorandum written 22 March by Ambassador Davis, entitled "Some Thoughts on the Political Situation:"

In the foregoing comments I have not touched on the question of where the United States interests lie. Obviously, the most desirable solution from our point of view would be a constitutional succession acceptable to a majority of the people and involving the elimination of communist influence in or on the government and suppression of all private political armies. The election of Ulate was a step toward this goal, soon obliterated by the annulment of that election. To seat him by force of arms also would serve our interests to a point although the resort to extra-constitutional means would more than over balance the desirable effects--both within Costa Rica and abroad--of such action. On the other hand, a government military victory, if followed by the selection of a First Designate unacceptable to the opposition--Dr. Calderón Guardia would be an extreme case--probably would tend toward a strengthening⁹⁷ of communist influence which would not be in our interests.

The best solution is Davis' mind was one which eliminated the communists from Costa Rica, and the most efficacious method for doing so was the denial of military assistance to Picado's government.

While the State Department prevented outside help from reaching Picado, Ambassador Davis applied pressure in San José. The ambassador

pressed Picado to resign and urged him to exile Calderón Guardia and Mora to relieve tensions. The anti-communist political propaganda which appeared daily in opposition media, as mentioned in the previous chapter, was joined by the international press. Correspondents from American newspapers, such as The New York Times, adopted the rhetoric and distortions which the domestic media carried.⁹⁸ A few examples are illustrative:

- 22 March It is believed that the Picado's now realize that they have created a Frankenstein monster in accepting the support of the Communists . . . No Communists are at the front, all, including the shock troops, are in the capital;
- 23 March Communist strategy appears to be to allow the Figueres rebels and government troops to exhaust each other before moving in and taking over, meanwhile strutting around San José, armed to the teeth;
- 24 March Twenty seven men and women of the Costa Rican League Against Communist Domination picketed yesterday the Russian Consulate . . . 'The Communist coup in Costa Rica,' Señor Facio said, 'is the first Russian invasion of the American continent and is in reality preparation for gaining Red control of the Panama Canal;'
- 31 March The Costa Rican Communists, meanwhile, are believed to be gathering their strength, convinced that they will come out on top after the Government and the rebels have exhausted one another;
- 7 April Armed bands are now looting and killing defenseless farmers and anyone suspected of belonging to the opposition. Several persons were dragged from their homes and shot. That a few were beheaded has been established;

- 15 April Costa Rica's Civil War appears to have reached a point where the Picado Government has virtually eliminated and Manuel Mora, leader of the communistic Popular Vanguard party is fighting to keep Col. José Figueres out of the capital;
- 18 April Communist Popular Vanguard troops have knocked out the teeth and bloodied the face of Gen. René Picado. . . If true, it shows there is a break between the Vanguard and the Government, and that the former is in control;
- 19 April Meanwhile, it was reported Vanguardia troops were making wholesale arrests and were looting and burning houses in San José; and,
- 21 April All armed forces under the control of the Picado Government have been ordered to surrender to José Figueres, a civilian who outfought and outwitted Government forces with his guerillas despite the fact that the regime's troops were better armed and equipped and were aided by Nicaraguan and other mercenaries.⁹⁹

Without exception, every statement above and many others like them were devoid of factual basis.¹⁰⁰ This discrepancy raises the question: What was the source for so much misinformation? A possible answer is found in a memorandum entitled "Comment on Press Coverage of Political Crisis in Costa Rica," written by the Public Affairs Officer at the American embassy in San José. Albert E. Carter's 9 March dispatch to the Secretary of State was a response to Picado administration criticisms of American journalism. After listing several of the accredited journalists to Costa Rica and commenting favorable upon their work product, Carter wrote:

All of the correspondents mentioned have kept in close touch with the Embassy and have been helpful to the Embassy in its observance of developments. At the same time, the Embassy has done what it could to facilitate the work of the correspondents in order that they might present as true a picture of developments as possible for the American public.¹⁰¹

Given the difficulty involved in travel to the front in a guerrilla war such as Costa Rica's and the prevalent anti-communism of embassy officials it is not hard to imagine that much of the misinformation contained in the contemporary news reports began at the American embassy.¹⁰²

The effect of the constant anti-communist news articles was to increased pressure upon Picado to resign. Another, more sinister factor which turned public support against the government was the rumor of an American military intervention to aid Figueres. Despite protests of denial from the embassy, the rumors persisted, as did those of an imminent Vanguardia Popular takeover (as reported in the press). Secretary of State Marshall contributed to the tension with a statement made during the Bogota' Conference. As Ameringer writes: ". . . U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall, in reference to the Bogotazo and the events in Costa Rica, declared his intention to protect both flanks of the Panama Canal from a Communist takeover."¹⁰³ Bell writes that "Picado received information that a United States force had been organized in the Canal Zone . . . [to] end the hostilities now that the combatants had been clearly identified as Communists and seemed to be in control of San José."¹⁰⁴ Ambassador Davis, despite continuous denials, was responsible for military preparations in the Canal Zone to send aircraft to Costa Rica for the purpose of an evacuation of President Picado and his party. A document prepared by the office of the Commander in Chief of the Southern Military Command stated:

Ambassador Davis of Costa Rica is requesting this Headquarters to arrange the necessary aircraft to stand by in the Canal Zone for the evacuation of President Picado and [his] entourage. . . and further recommends a fighter aircraft escort.¹⁰⁵

One of the reasons for Davis' request for a fighter escort was elementary. Davis knew Costa Rica's airport at La Sabana was held by Vanguardia Popular partisans, and without an agreement with Calderón Guardia or Mora these troops might impede the departure of Picado.¹⁰⁶ The military intervention by American forces was made unnecessary by events within Costa Rica, however, as Ambassador Davis pressed Picado for a truce.

Negotiations were conducted with the government and representatives of Figueres present, and were presided over by Davis and the Papal Nuncio, Monseñor Centoz, with the help of the diplomatic community. Excellent summaries of the American ambassador's role may be found in Davis' personal diary, which gives a daily breakdown of the negotiating process from 11 April to 20 April 1948. Ambassador Davis made ten round trips between San José and the enemy positions near Cartago, each time crossing between government and rebel lines without incident. During the peace negotiations, a threat arose to once again expand the conflict beyond Costa Rica's national boundaries. General Somoza of Nicaragua entered into a secret agreement with Calderón Guardia and Picado during a hurried reunion in Puntarenas. The Costa Ricans agreed to the terms of a military assistance plan formulated by Somoza and Francisco Calderón in Managua, in which Nicaragua would provide troops and weapons for the capture of Guanacaste province in northern Costa Rica. President Picado and Calderón Guardia would withdraw from San José and establish their capital in Liberia, from whence a unified Nicaraguan/Costa Rican force would launch an assault on the Figueres forces.¹⁰⁷

The desperation alliance between Picado and Somoza fell apart when the American chargé in Managua learned the details of the accord and advised Ambassador Davis in San José. The ambassador made the agreement between Nicaragua and the Costa Rican government known to the diplomatic community and used his secret knowledge of the pact to bring about Picado's resignation. In a 21 April memorandum entitled "Mediation of the Costa Rican Revolt," Davis reveals that his diplomatic colleagues "agreed to say nothing about the matter until the entire group was assembled."¹⁰⁸ When Mora, Calderón Guardia and President Picado were present, the ambassador sprung his trap:

I then asked the Mexican Ambassador to read that portion of Mr. Bernbaum's telegram consisting of verbatim quotations of General Somoza's note. When my colleague read the statement that Nicaraguan troops were already in Costa Rica at the request of the Government, Manuel Mora started violently. Because I knew Dr. Calderón at least and probably the President were aware of the activities of Mr. Francisco Calderón in Managua, I watched them particularly, Dr. Calderón exhibited no sign whatsoever of emotion; the President flushed deeply. After a pause during which all present maintained a dead silence, I stated that this information changed completely the complexion of the local problem . . . All of the American Republics would take a most serious view of the invasion of one American country by another. Without even having time to consult our governments we could state with certainty that none of the American Governments would permit such a breach of peace and that they would know how to punish those responsible for it.

As described in detail in the enclosed extract from my diary of April 18, a somewhat angry scene ensued and the President attempted to evade a direct reply to our question as to whether or not Somoza's statements were true that: (a) his troops were already in the country; and, (b) that they were there at the request of the government of Costa Rica. The President suddenly arose and stalked from the room saying he would have to consult. The Mexican Ambassador told me subsequently that when he followed him into the hall the President put his arms around him and said 'save me, save me.'¹⁰⁹

Davis' harsh threat was unmistakable to Picado, who signed a formal treaty of peace the next day. President Picado and his entourage fled

to exile in Nicaragua immediately upon signing the document, but the pitiable specter of the cornered president certainly leaves little doubt as to the ability of the United States to influence events in tiny Costa Rica.¹¹⁰

José Figueres' triumphant entry into San José occurred April 24. Leading a jubilant army of thousands, Figueres marked the end of the Calderón Era and the beginning of the Second Republic. By late May Figueres had substituted himself for Provisional President Santos León Herrera and proclaimed a ruling Junta, invoking emergency powers and suspending the Constitution. The Civil War had ended.

NOTES

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³Lester O. Langley, The U. S. and the Caribbean 1900-1970 (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1972), p. 63.

⁴Ibid., p. 127.

⁵Wood, Latin American Wars, p. 360.

⁶Langley, The U. S. and the Caribbean, p. 147.

⁷Opponents of Roosevelt's Latin American policy include: David Green, The Containment of Latin America (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), pp. 291-94; Robert N. Burr, Our Troubled Hemisphere (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1967), pp. 13-23; Cole Blaiser, The Hovering Giant: U. S. Responses to Revolutionary Change in Latin America (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburg Press, 1976), passim; Mecham, Latin American Relations, pp. 187-206; Lynn-Darrell Bender, Cuba vs. The United States: The Politics of Hostility (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Inter American University Press, 1981), pp. 1-5; and , Walter La Feber, The Panama Canal: The Crisis in Historical Perspective (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), passim. Supporters of the Good Neighbor policy include: Paul Blanshard, Democracy and Empire in the Caribbean (New York: McMillan Company, 1947), passim; Spruille Braden, Diplomats and Demagogues: The Memoirs of Spruille Braden (New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1971), passim; John Martz, Central America (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), passim; Rippy, Latin America, pp. 525-26.

⁸Langley, The U. S. and the Caribbean, p. 187; An excellent analysis of America's reaction to events in Europe in 1947 is contained in Louis J. Halle, The Cold War as History (New York: Harper and Row, 1967); The American Joint Chiefs of Staff perceived a problem of Russian penetration of the Western Hemisphere as early as 1946. Military agreements at Rio de Janeiro and Chapultepec were designed to prepare the region for a military attack by Russia. See, James F. Schabel, "The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, Vol. I, 1945-47," in The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Records of the

Joint Chiefs of Staff, Record Group 218, National Archives, Washington, D.C; U.S., Congress, Senate, Review of United States Government Operations in Latin America, S. Doc. 18, 90th Cong., 1st sess., 1967, pp.466-67.

⁹Selig Adler, "Bryan and Wilsonian Caribbean Penetration," Hispanic American Historical Review, XX (1940), 198-226; Dana G. Munro, The U.S. and the Caribbean Republics 1921-1933 (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 146.

¹⁰Harold Eugene Davis, Latin American Diplomatic History (Baton Rouge, La: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), pp. 164-65; Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. I: 1920 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), pp. 833-37.

¹¹Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. I: 1925 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), p. 471; Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. I: 1929 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), pp. 939-42.

¹²Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. V: The American Republics, 1933 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), pp. 266-69.

¹³Aguilar Bulgarelli, Costa Rica, pp. 36-38.

¹⁴Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. VII; 1942 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), pp. 235-51.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 242-44.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 244.

¹⁷Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. IX: The Western Hemisphere, 1945 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), p. 887.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 887-88.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 889.

²⁰Ibid., p. 890.

²¹Ibid., p. 883.

²²Ibid., p. 884.

²³Ibid., p. 885.

²⁴Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. XI: The Americas, 1946 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), p. 692.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 693-94.

²⁷Ibid., p. 694.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 693-94.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 696-97. An examination of the F.R.U.S. for 1946 shows no other reference to the question of Communism in Costa Rica.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Braden, Memoirs, passim.

³²Jacobo Schifter, Costa Rica 1948 (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana, 1982), pp. 135-45.

³³Bell, Crisis, p. 54.

³⁴F.R.U.S., Vol: VIII, The Western Hemisphere, 1947, p. 579.

³⁵Ibid., p. 580.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 580-581.

³⁸Ibid., p. 582.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 582-83.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 586-87.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 589-91.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 590-91.

⁴³Bell, Crisis, p. 80.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Schifter, Costa Rica, pp. 144-45; Interview with Guillermo Villegas Hoffmeister in San José, Costa Rica, 11 November 1982; an examination of the 1947 Foreign Relations of the United States series provides evidence of America's preoccupation with Communism in Costa Rica.

⁴⁶Bell, Crisis, p. 105; Schifter, Costa Rica, pp. 144-48.

⁴⁷Schifter, Costa Rica, pp. 144-45; Rojas Bolaños, Lucha social, p. 144; Salazar Mora, Calderon Guardia, pp. 129-31 and others.

⁴⁸Bell, Crisis, p. 84.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 84-85.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 85.

⁵¹F.R.U.S., Vol: IX, The Western Hemisphere, 1948, pp. 488-91. Ambassador Davis wrote a letter to his friend, F. Henry Norweb, Ambassador in Havana, in which he requested information about the chief of Costa Rica's secret police, Colonel Juan Jose Tavio y Silva. Davis wrote "I am curious to know whether he has ever visited Moscow or any of the suburbs thereof which seem to be scattered about the world". Nathaniel P. Davis, Personal letter to F. Henry Norweb, Havana, Cuba, 11 March 1948. U. S., Department of State, Records of Foreign Posts, Record Group 84, 800 CR, Vol. II (March 1948), National Archives, Suitland, Md. (Hereinafter cited as Record Group 84).

⁵²Nathaniel P. Davis, Telegram to the Secretary of State, 3 March 1948. Record Group 84, 800 CR, Vol. II (March 1948).

⁵³Nathaniel P. Davis, Telegram to the Secretary of State, 5 March 1948, Record Group 84, 800 CR, Vol. II (March 1948).

⁵⁴A survey of contemporary history and literature shows no evidence of Russian designs upon Costa Rica or the hemisphere in 1948.

⁵⁵Alex A Cohen, Confidential Memorandum of Conversation, 7 March 1948, Record Group 84, 800 CR, Vol. II (March 1948).

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ameringer, Don Pepe, p. 39; Charles D. Ameringer, The Democratic Left in Exile (Miami: University of Miami Press, 1974), pp. 64-71.

⁵⁸Aguilar Bulgarelli, Costa Rica, p. 307; Interview with José Figueres at his office in San José, Costa Rica, 15 November 1982.

⁵⁹Ameringer, Don Pepe, pp. 39-40. The Legión Caribe was a paramilitary group of exiled Caribbean democrats, intent upon the overthrow of dictatorships in their homelands. As such, they were "mercenaries with a cause". Members of the Legión Caribe were seasoned combat professionals, veterans of revolutions in their native lands. The group was informal and united through commonality of purpose, but the formal signing of the Pacto del Caribe began a new chapter in the group's development. Every source referred to in this paper agreed the role of the Legión Caribe in the 1948 Civil War, as trainers and strategists as well as fighters, more than compensated for the inexperience of the Costa Rican rebels. Despite the claim of Costa Rican leader José Figueres that the Legión Caribe never existed, and was merely the journalistic creation of Jerry Hanafin of Time magazine, the record shows otherwise. See, Ameringer, Democratic Left.

⁶⁰Ameringer, Don Pepe, pp. 39-41.

⁶¹Ameringer, Democracy, pp. 85-86; Stephen Schlessinger and Stephen Kinzer, Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday and Company, 1982), pp. 25-129.

⁶²John Willard Carrigan, Memorandum to the ambassador, 8 January 1948. U. S., Department of State, Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, 818 CR, Vol. I (January 1948), National Archives, Washington, D.C. (Hereinafter cited as record group 59).

⁶³Nathaniel P. Davis, Telegram to the Secretary of State, 10 February 1948. Record Group 59, 818 CR, Vol. I (February 1948).

⁶⁴Nathaniel P. Davis, Telegram to the Secretary of State, 13 February 1948. Record Group 59, 818 CR, Vol. I (February 1948).

⁶⁵F.R.U.S., Vol. IX, The Western Hemisphere, 1948, p. 494.

⁶⁶F.R.U.S., Vol. IX: The Western Hemisphere, 1948, pp. 492-93; a cablegram sent to President Truman by Otilio Ulate states: "I have the honor to inform you that the recent actions of His Excellency United States Ambassador Davis, have won the gratitude of Costa Ricans and I avail myself of this opportunity to request you to consider the fact that arms furnished by the United State Government for continental defense are being used to kill Costa Ricans as they have been placed in the hands of the communist party as a result of a coup d' etat staged by the majority of Congress against the will of the people expressed in the elections of the eight of February. Said majority is composed of the official political party and the communists. With sentiments of high consideration, I am, sincerely yours, Otilio Ulate, President-elect of Costa Rica."

⁶⁷F.R.U.S., Vol. IX: The Western Hemisphere, 1948, pp. 492-93.

⁶⁸Alex A. Cohen, Memorandum, 12 March 1948. Record Group 59, 818 CR, Vol. II (March 1948).

⁶⁹Andrew J. Donovan, Memorandum to the ambassador, 12 March 1948. Record Group 59, 818 CR, Vol. II (March 1948).

⁷⁰Alex A. Cohen, Memorandum to the Secretary of State, 19 March 1948. Record Group 84, 800 CR, Vol. II (March 1948).

⁷¹Time, 27 March 1948, p. 42.

⁷²F.R.U.S., Vol. IX: The Western Hemisphere, 1948, p. 497.

⁷³F.R.U.S., Vol. IX: The Western Hemisphere, 1948, p. 494; "It should be understood of course by Somoza that this Government cannot take any official position vis a vis de facto Nicaraguan Government on question of latter's assistance to Costa Rican Government." The Charge in Nicaragua (Bernbaum) reported that General Somoza appeared genuinely alarmed over threat to self from successful Costa Rican revolt and anxious to aid the Government but fearful that intervention would jeopardize Nicaraguan recognition prospects. For documentation on the question of Nicaraguan recognition, see pp. 99ff.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 499.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 500.

⁷⁷Ameringer, Don Pepe, p. 45.

⁷⁸F.R.U.S., Vol. IX: The Western Hemisphere 1948, pp. 493-94. Orion Solera, Letter to the ambassador, 11 March 1948. Record Group 84, 800 CR, Vol. II (March 1948). This is an interesting letter written by an employee of the American interamerican highway project. Solera criticizes the Costa Rican government as "communistic" and urges embassy support for Figures and the "patriotic" rebels.

⁷⁹Interview with Colonel Frank Marshall Steinworth at his office in San José, Costa Rica, 5 May 1983.

⁸⁰Interviews with Guillermo Malavassi and José Rafael Montoya Saenz at the Asemblea Legislativa in San José, Costa Rica, 10-11 November 1982.

⁸¹ John M. Hall, Telegram to the embassy in San José, Costa Rica, 29 February 1948. Record Group 59, 819 Pan, Vol. I (February 1948).

⁸² James R. Hughes, Memorandum for the Secretary of State, 30 March 1948. Record Group 84, 800 CR, Vol. II (March 1948).

⁸³ Alex A. Cohen, Memorandum, 1 April 1948. Record Group 84, 800 CR, Vol. III (April 1948).

⁸⁴ F.R.U.S., Vol. IX: The Western Hemisphere, 1948, pp. 502-503.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 503.

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 496-97.

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 525-26.

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 508-510.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 510.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 499.

⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 504-505.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Nathaniel P. Davis, "Some Thoughts on the Political Situation," Letter to the Secretary of State, 22 March 1948. Record Group 84, 800 CR, Vol. II (March 1948).

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ The term "mariachi" refers to workers brought by communist leaders from the tropical lowlands to the Meseta Central to help the government in its fight against the rebels. The workers were unaccustomed to the cool evenings of the highlands and wrapped themselves in blankets at night. Their appearance thus looked something like the mariachis of Mexico, covered with a blanket. To this day, "mariachi" is less an epithet than a badge of honor worn by partisans of Calderón Guardia. To be called a "mariachi" is to be referred to as a Calderonista.

⁹⁷ Davis, "Some Thoughts on the Political Situation," 22 March 1948.

⁹⁸ Bell, Crisis, pp. 98-102.

⁹⁹ New York Times, dates cited.

¹⁰⁰ An examination of contemporary scholarship gives proof of the inaccuracy of the above journalistic reporting, which is representative of the biased coverage of the Civil War.

¹⁰¹ Albert E. Carter, "Comment on Press Coverage of Political Crisis in Costa Rica," Letter to the Secretary of State, 9 March 1948. Record Group 84, 800 CR, Vol. II (March 1948).

¹⁰² Interviews with José Figueres, Guillermo Malavassi and Oscar Aguilar Bulgarelli. Interview with José Figueres at his office in San José, Costa Rica, 15 November 1983. Interviews with Guillermo Malavassi and Oscar Aguilar Bulgarelli 10 and 16 November, 1982 at the Asemblea Legislativa, in San José, Costa Rica, 10 November 1982.

¹⁰³ Ameringer, Don Pepe, p. 40.

¹⁰⁴ Bell, Crisis, p. 100.

¹⁰⁵ "Disturbances," Memorandum, 19 April 1948. U. S., Army, Records of the Army Staff, Record Group 319, 091 LA (Operations and Plans), April 1948, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁰⁶ Hughes, Memorandum for the Secretary of State, 30 March 1948; Alex A. Cohen, Letter to the Secretary of State, 19 March 1948. Record Group 84, 800 CR, Vol. II (March 1948).

¹⁰⁷ Nathaniel P. Davis, "Events Leading to the Termination of Revolutionary Movement," Letter to the Secretary of State, 23 April 1948. Record Group 84, 800 CR, Vol. III (April 1948).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Schifter, Costa Rica, pp. 175-90.

CHAPTER V

THE AFTERMATH OF THE CIVIL WAR

The most significant result of the American intervention to eliminate the communist influence in Costa Rica was the restoration and institutionalization of democracy in the small Central American nation. The process did not occur overnight, however, but was the result of months of factionalism and discord which followed the 1948 Civil War. The principal short term beneficiary of the United States; policy was rebel leader José Figueres, but the long term result contributed to Costa Rica uniqueness.

Figueres entered into a pact with Otilio Ulate which called for eighteen months of Junta rule, to be followed by Ulate's appointment as president. A broad spectrum of the nation's leading citizens was offered Junta membership in an honest effort to forge an impartial coalition. Despite a dedication to prevent retribution against the vanquished Calderonistas and communists, errors were committed in the early stages of Junta rule. A number of former officials were the victims of Junta punishment and incarcerations, but the greatest mistake was the alienation of one of the Junta's initial supporters, Costa Rica's small but influential oligarchy. Laws which imposed a ten percent income tax and nationalized the banking system were anathema to

conservatives, who quickly made their opposition known.¹ A decline in popular support was occasioned by a campaign of public criticism mounted by the opposition controlled mass media.

The international image of Costa Rica was tarnished by the continued presence of Legión Caribe mercenaries within the country.² The promised assault upon Somoza's dictatorship in Nicaragua was a poorly kept secret, and Figueres' adherence to his promise to Arévalo and the Pacto del Caribe prompted foreign criticism. Figueres was a man of honor and principle, to the point of obstinance, and refused to bow to international pressure until the matter was taken out of his hands by the end of 1948. In October, dissent within the exile's ranks led to a split between the Nicaraguan Argüello and the Dominican, Rodríguez. The latter departed with the bulk of the fighters to attempt yet another assault upon Trujillo, while Argüello's small group remained behind to complete its unfinished business with Somoza.³

A force of Calderonistas and Nicaraguan soldiers invaded Costa Rica in December and attempted the overthrow of the Junta. General Somoza of Nicaragua had waited to launch his attack until Rodríguez' fighters departed for Guatemala and the mercenary force was reduced. Junta President Figueres refused to launch a counterattack, as urged by thousands of Costa Rican volunteers, but rather sought a diplomatic solution via the untested pacification provisions of the Charter of the Organization of American States. This was the first indication of the internationalist facet of José Figueres' personality which became his trademark.⁴

On Christmas Eve, 1948, the report of the Organization of American States fact-finding commission was issued, and it condemned both nations for their respective support of exile groups intent upon the attack and subversion of a sister republic. "The Council asked both countries to refrain from hostile acts, and promised to maintain an observer force along the border to ensure continued peace between the two nations."⁵ Among the conditions demanded of Figueres and Costa Rica was the unconditional eviction of the fragmented Legión Caribe, to which Figueres reluctantly agreed. By February 1949, Organization of American States observers were satisfied by Figueres prompt action and certified Costa Rica as being in compliance with the demands placed upon her.⁶

Two weeks prior to the abortive Nicaraguan invasion, elections were held to choose representatives for Costa Rica's constituent assembly. One aspect of the campaigning for seats was the appearance of a split in the ranks of the formerly unified Junta. Disappointment with the lack of progress towards democratization and, perhaps most importantly, personality conflicts led Otilio Ulate to publicly break with Figueres. Ulate's Partido Unión Nacional overwhelmed Figueres' Partido Social Demócrata in the voting, primarily because of Figueres' fatal political "naivete, by which he tried to place himself above politics, believing that honest work would be rewarded with popular support."⁷

While his opponents, which now included Ulatistas as well as Calderonistas, maintained a constant attack upon the activities of Figueres and the Junta, the president placed himself above the degradation of a political campaign. One result of Figueres' tactics

was the opposition's attainment of a legislative majority capable of blocking the passage of any Junta measures. An example of the power of the opposition is found in the final version of the 1949 Constitution. This and other Junta projects were defeated or reduced in effect by the Asemblea Legislativa, whose principal objective was a reduction of the economic and social pressure upon Costa Rica's small oligarchy.⁸

During the summer of 1949, the Junta was plagued with a series of crises; as soon as one problem was resolved another would arise. The most serious problem faced by the Junta was a communist-inspired labor conflict which began in the Quepos banana plantations. President Figueres flew into the strike zone to reduce tensions, and offered the workers a "settlement formula" which conceded most of the striker's demands.⁹ The visit to the banana region, and the intransigence of the giant United Fruit Company in the face of nationalistic support for the workers' position, convinced Figueres that relations between Costa Rica and the company required adjustment. Figueres' perception of national sovereignty vis-à-vis foreign corporations reflected his liberal and progressive political philosophy. His principal consideration was that any relationship must exhibit fairness for all parties, not just the wealthy foreign corporations. In later years, Figueres' theme, the necessity for a fair and equitable interchange between producer and consumer, was repeated in a variety of international forums.

The one-sidedness of the relationship between the United Fruit Company and Costa Rica bothered President Figueres, who recognized the

potential for conflict between the nation's classes over the issue of foreign corporations. The possibility of an economic crisis, arising out of another labor conflict, could only serve to benefit the disgraced Communist Party. Therefore, Figueres sought to stave off revolutionary and nationalistic impulses through the enactment of reform legislation. The principal Junta reforms were contained in the 1949 Constitution.

The Junta Constitution attempted to give permanence to Costa Rica's existent social legislation, the Garantías Sociales of Calderon Guardia's administration. In addition, the principle of public regulation of private property and enterprise was established and "empowered the state to direct and stimulate production . . ." ¹⁰ The primary goal of the Junta, as stated, was "to ensure the widest distribution of wealth possible." ¹¹ Despite opposition from conservatives and the Church, the Junta was able to create autonomous government organizations to administer social welfare programs which were outside the control or administration of the Executive; Figueres was determined to prevent any change in Costa Rica's social welfare programs by future conservative presidents. In addition, women were given the right to vote, which was considered progressive for Latin America in 1949. ¹² The final Constitution was declared effective 7 November 1949, and Otilio Ulate assumed the office of president as planned.

Ulate soon found himself burdened by a hostile Congress, as had the Junta before him. While Ulate spent the next four years in attempts at compromise and reconciliation, Figueres became an international

traveler. In a series of trips abroad, private citizen Figueres spoke with candor to groups of receptive audiences. In May 1950, he established his reputation as a leader of the Democratic Left at a conference of democratic leaders in Havana.¹³ No longer preoccupied with domestic turmoil, Figueres spoke out in favor of forceful American leadership in the region. He "criticized United States policy, but in the spirit of a reformer who foresaw the great good it could do if it would side with Latin America's liberals."¹⁴

The only solution to the threat of Communism was "the development of Latin America."¹⁵ Not traditional development, with the foreign investor dictating to the host nation, but rather "economic independence" for Latin America. "He insisted that maintaining low wages to keep the prices of Latin American products low for North American consumers was one of the most serious barriers to hemispheric unity."¹⁶ If better prices were paid for third world products, Figueres concluded, the United States could refrain from giving foreign aid, which belittles the recipient and discourages self help.

As Ameringer writes:

Don Pepe was ahead of his time in advancing the notion that foreign aid was unnecessary if the industrialized nations would pay better prices for the agricultural products of the less developed countries . . . the best economic aid Latin America could receive was adequate payment for its labor.

Two further examples illustrate Figueres' vision of the ideal relationship between the United States and Latin America. In July 1951, in a speech at the Stanford University Conference on Latin America, Figueres said, "With a fair price for its products Latin America could

undertake its own development."¹⁸ Citing his own example of Costa Rica, he urged American support for the creation of autonomous institutions in the various nations. He termed it "a mistake . . . to turn private enterprise loose in our feudalistic economy, and recommended instead aid to state owned enterprise."¹⁹ On February 1952, in what was termed the "most dynamic" speech of the day, a captivated twenty-fifth annual Rollins College Animated Magazine audience heard "a clarion call for moral leadership from the United States of America."²⁰ The address given by Figueres was entitled "What We Want From the U.S.," and began by thanking the United States for its "technical assistance." He continued:

More than that, we want something of the spirit. Communism stands definitely and strongly for something, our Latin American dictatorships, which happily for the people are crumbling, stand for something; we want the United States to stand for something equally strongly and definitely, and something that it practices in its relations with us.

We appreciate the spirit behind the Point Four program, but more than that we would appreciate a fair price for our products and raw materials in free exchange between our nations. That enables us to help ourselves.

Your housecleaning of whatever degree of graft and corruption there may be in your government is setting an example for us to follow.²¹

Figueres travelled widely during Ulate's presidency as he sought to bring about positive changes in Latin America, the most important being Washington's perception of its neighbors. Within Costa Rica, Figueres' Partido Social Demócrata partisans sought to translate their party chief's internationalist progressivism into domestic results. The disastrous political defeat at the polls in 1949 convinced party leaders of the necessity to campaign aggressively, despite Figueres' disdain for such activities.

The veterans of the rebel victory in 1948 had called themselves the Army of National Liberation during and after the conflict, which led the Partido Social Demócrata to change its name to Partido Liberación Nacional to increase public recognition and support. The Fundamental Charter of the new party was signed at the ranch of Francisco Orlich on October 1951 and marked the beginning of institutionalized democracy in Costa Rica. Although the party supported Figueres for president in 1954, it went beyond stereotypical Latin American personalismo and represented the introduction of party politics to Costa Rica.²² As Ameringer writes:

Thus although Don Pepe was the dominant personality, the principal founders of the PLN did not idolize him as infallible or indispensable. In their minds they did not create a vehicle for electing José Figueres president of Costa Rica: they organized a political party with a permanent structure and ideology.²³

Figueres' popularity as the hero of the Civil War provided Partido Liberación Nacional with the vehicle to elective office and the opportunity to change Costa Rica's social and economic structure. When Figueres campaigned for president in 1953, "he appealed to a wide stratum of the population. His personal charisma cut across class, occupational and business lines. Also, lack of a well-defined opposition that year helped insure the randomness of his support."²⁴ Figueres won a landslide victory over Partido Demócrata candidate Fernando Castro Cervantes which established Partido Liberación Nacional as the dominant force in Costa Rican politics.²⁵

As Ameringer writes in his latest work, Democracy in Costa Rica:

The PLN was the first political party worthy of the name in Costa Rican history. It had a defined political program, with a

permanent organization and structure that gave it a life of its own. The party embraced representative democracy and called for the broadest possible action of government, in order to provide for social justice and economic opportunity, without excluding the right of private property. It followed the concepts of a mixed economy and multi-class society, although it gave priority to the authority of the state in seeking the greatest good for the greatest number.²⁶

As an example of the permanence of Partido Liberación Nacional and its profound effect upon Costa Rican society, Ameringer cites the fact

"... the welfare state the PLN created was not dismantled during the times that its leaders did not occupy the president's chair . . . In fact, from the time that Figueres was first elected president in 1953 until the present, on only one occasion (1974) did the PLN succeed itself in office."²⁷

In his excellent analysis of the origins and importance of Partido Liberación Nacional, Burt H. English of the University of Florida writes:

By 1951, the year the National Liberation Party was founded, the precedents for a fairly coherent and inclusive political and economic program had been established. Those precedents drew upon a variety of sources including the revisionist doctrines of European socialism and the domestic oriented approach of the Latin American Apristas, tempered by the pragmatism of the New Deal and twentieth-century regulatory liberalism. The democratic process was emphasized above all, and a higher standard of living was deemed most important in order to make the process work.²⁸

With the establishment of Partido Liberación Nacional in Costa Rica, the era of personalist politics was brought to a close. The first western-style political party in Costa Rica ensured that democracy would be the basis for national political, economic and social life. The abolition of Costa Rica's army by Junta President Figueres in 1948 contributed to domestic tranquility as well. With a viable and permanent party such as Partido Liberación Nacional, the country became

assured of a loyal opposition and resultant peaceful political transition. Elections from 1952 until 1980 have been conducted in a legal and open manner with high voter turnout and popular participation in the electoral process. The institutionalization of Costa Rican politics has created a nation which is unique in modern Latin America.

NOTES

¹Ameringer, Don Pepe, pp. 70-71; Aguilar Bulgarelli, Costa Rica, p. 469. "En materia económica, el único cambio fundamental y que si tiene las características de revolución, es la Nacionalización Bancaria . . ."

²Ameringer, Democratic Left, pp. 80-84.

³Ibid., pp. 87-98.

⁴John F. Wolff, "José Figueres of Costa Rica: His Theory and Politics as a Model for Latin American Development and Security" (Gainesville, FL: Master of Arts Thesis, 1962), pp. 128-32; Ameringer, Don Pepe, p. 80.

⁵Juan Andrés Peterson, The Nation, 15 January 1949, pp. 63-66; Newsweek, 15 January 1949, p. 18.

⁶Peterson, The Nation, p. 661

⁷Ameringer, Don Pepe, p. 75; English, Liberación Nacional, pp. 46-47.

⁸Busey, Notes, p. 10. "Social and educational clauses were of a more advanced order than those of the former document; economic provisions did not meet the expectations of the junta fundadora; and while numerous new political clauses reflected some of junta thinking they did not go to extremes which the junta proposed."

⁹The New York Times, 1 September 1949, p. 7. "Junta President Figueres told a press conference tonight that settlement of the strike, which now involves four to five thousand banana workers, appeared to depend on whether the company was willing to concede the wage rises demanded by the workers in compensation for recent increases in prices of goods in the company's commissaries."

¹⁰Biesanz, Costa Ricans, pp. 270-29; Busey, Notes, pp. 9-10; Ameringer, Democracy, pp. 37-44.

¹¹Busey, Notes, pp. 9-10; English, Liberación Nacional, p. 43.

¹²Biesanz, Costa Rica, pp. 27-29; see, Harry B Murkland. "Costa Rica: Fortunate Society," Current History XXII (March 1952), 141-44. The author criticizes Figueres and the Junta, writing "Figueres showed a tendency to experiment with some not too carefully considered socialistic measures such as nationalization of the banks and a ten percent capital levy. The result was a marked decline in Costa Rican prosperity."

¹³Ameringer, Don Pepe, p. 95.

¹⁴Ibid.; Wolff, "José Figueres," p. 92.

¹⁵Ameringer, Don Pepe, pp. 95-96.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 96-98; Wolff, "José Figueres," pp. 92-94.

¹⁸Ameringer, Don Pepe, pp. 97-98.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 97-98.

²⁰Orlando Morning Sentinel, 25 February 1952, p. 3. Rollings College in Winter Park, Florida, contains a brief file on former Visiting Professor of Diplomatic History and Interamerican Relations José Figueres, with interesting original materials and correspondence from the 1950's. (File 45G, DC, Rollins College Archives). Figueres was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree on 25 February 1952.

²¹Orlando Morning Sentinel, 25 February 1952, p. 3.

²²Romero Pérez, La Social Democracia, pp. 118-20.

²³Ameringer, Don Pepe, pp. 99-103.

²⁴English, Liberación Nacional, p. 116.

²⁵Oconotrillo, Un siglo, pp. 161-66; The New York Times, 27 July 1953, p. 3.

²⁶Ameringer, Democracy, p. 34.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 34-35.

²⁸English, Liberación Nacional, p. 129; see, José Figueres, "The Problems of Democracy in Costa Rica," Journal of International Affairs IX (1955), 11-23.

CONCLUSION

As a result of Costa Rica's natural ruggedness and geographic location, its development was very slow compared to its Central American neighbors. A lack of natives to serve as slaves meant that Costa Rican farms were limited in size, as the colonists were forced to work the land themselves. As the years passed the citizens of Costa Rica, isolated from the other areas of the region, became tough and independent small farmers. The fervor of revolution that swept the rest of Latin America barely affected the Costa Ricans.

In the years following independence from Spain, the nation drifted on a political course which never managed to achieve permanence. Heroes and tyrants took their places in Costa Rican history, with the net effect being a lack of direction. Despite the independent and democratic spirit of the nation's citizens, individuals who became the leaders of Costa Rica often placed their own interests above those of the country.

Although contributions to national development came from a few patriotic and enlightened presidents during the twentieth century, the Costa Rica of the 1940's found itself on the brink of social conflict. When Calderón Guardia attempted to return to power illegally, opponents began the 1948 Civil War.

American intervention was critical in the conflict. Even before the rebels of José Figueres began their assault on government forces in the mountains southwest of San José, the American embassy was aware of their plans. The names of pilots and rebel leaders were known to American officials, as was the military strategy of the conspirators. American Military Attaché Lt. Col. James R. Hughes provided strategic assistance to the revolutionaries when fighting broke out. After only one week of fighting, the conclusion of officials at the embassy was that without outside sources of supplies and aid, the government would be defeated. When this information reached the State Department, every effort of Picado's government to obtain outside help was thwarted by American intervention. Military purchases, crucial to the survival of the Picado regime, were denied. Diplomatic intervention by Washington prevented Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza from complying with the Costa Rican government's request for aid. While the embassy in San José maintained a public posture of diplomatically correct neutrality, American policy was formulated to ensure the defeat of President Picado and the elimination of Communism from Costa Rica.

The rebel victory in the Civil War by José Figueres' Army of National Liberation resulted in the introduction of a new, intellectual generation of Costa Ricans to the task of governing the nation. Descendants of the liberal philosophy of the Centro embarked on a democratic course designed to elevate the standard of living of the nation's impoverished campesinos while involving them in political

participation. For the first time in Costa Rican history, a political party was created which placed philosophical considerations above personalities.

The American intervention to combat the influence of Communism in Costa Rica had the effect of institutionalizing democracy in the small Central American nation. Regardless of the immediate designs of America's policy, the result proved itself with the passage of time. The actions of the United States of America in 1948 served the dual purpose of eliminating the small Partido Vanguardia Popular from its position of influence in Costa Rican politics while ensuring the permanent establishment of democracy.

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