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Jose Figueres (1906-): A Study in Latin American Politics

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A STUDY IN LATIN AMERICAN POLITICS

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INTRODUCTION

The nations of Latin America secured their independence from Spain in the early nineteenth century, but this was only the beginning of the journey on the long road to political stability and economic self-sufficiency. The chaos which ensued after the wars of independence contributed to the rise of military caudillos, who established an order of sorts and erected national governments upon the old Spanish-Colonial legal, social, and economic substructure. The old-type caudillos gave way in the later nineteenth century to a more liberal, enlightened form of government; but power was still in the hands of the few, who imposed their decisions upon the many. This was a period of growth, expansion, and prosperity for most of the nations, during which liberal ideals prevailed. Trade and industry were fostered, natural resources exploited, and governmental institutions established. Culture flourished among the privileged, and commercial and intellectual exchange with Europe took place.

The evils of the system were allowed to pass unremedied so long as prosperity prevailed. The ever-increasing number of industrial workers were still held

in economic bondage. Rural conditions remained feudalistic, and the peasants landless. National wealth was concentrated in the hands of a small oligarchy and foreign investors.

The crisis of the First World War shook the world at the beginning of the twentieth century, weakening the old nineteenth century economic system and political traditions. New groups in society had to be reackoned with. Society had begun to shift from rural and agricultural to urban and industrial with a consequent increase in importance and influence of the growing middle class of industrialists and professionals. The masses of workers began to clamor for reforms in working and living conditions. New ideologies from Europe, such as fascism, communism, and socialism, found ready acceptance among the restless, dissatisfied groups.

World War II increased the political and social pressures and ushered in a period of intense political development. Poverty of the lower classes and political oppression prevailed. All of the underprivileged groups in society were seeking basic rights: economic betterment; social dignity; and participation in government. The obsolete system of government, left behind in the careening

course of modern events, could not adapt to the crisis and was forced to change. The change was effected by various groups in society: by the intellectuals who sought a new, original, idealistic solution for the Latin American peoples; by the urban masses, testing their newly-awakened strength; by the landless peasants, struggling for just distribution of land; by the displaced middle class, foe of both the aristocratic oligarchy and the undisciplined proletariat; by the military, possessing the necessary power and seeking the solution most beneficial to their own ambitions; or by any combination of these forces. In some countries the situation was further complicated by the presence of heterogenous population groups--the exploited Indian and the maligned Negro. Existing political and constitutional means of releasing these pressures were too slow and ineffective; therefore violent overthrow, or revolution, became the means of effecting the change. Sometimes the revolution did not realize idealistic intentions, but became a game of <u>politiqueros</u>. Thus Latin American revolutions might either change only the people running the government, or become a popularly supported movement reaching the very base of the social structure.

In recent times, Latin America has been repeatedly shaken by revolutions. Most of the major countries have been affected, some repeatedly. Some of these disturbances have been only palace revolts; others have had the characteristics of social revolutions. Usually the pattern is very complex. A movement which begins as a palace coup may produce basic, far-reaching changes; and one which promises to bring about needed reforms and to benefit the people may become dominated by a dictator. All of the countries have undergone basic changes in the twentieth century, some by evolution and some by revolution. All are afflicted by the general maladies of economic backwardness, social inequality, and political immaturity. All are struggling to shake off their political, economic, and cultural retardation.

These struggles have produced a new group of leaders. Among the prominent political figures of the times are cruel, despotic military dictators, such as Odría of Peru, Batista of Cuba, and Trujillo of the Dominican Republic. Others are persuasive demagogues, adored by the dazzled masses, among them Perón of Argentina and Vargas of Brazil. Others are far-seeing idealists who propound new political and social philosophies, for example: Haya

de la Torre of the Peruvian Apristas; Rómulo Betancourt of the Venezuelan Acción Democrática party; and Víctor Paz Estenssoro of the Bolivian Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario. Some of these leaders had only momentary importance, giving way to successors and leaving no lasting mark upon history. Others degenerated into cruel tyrants and their later actions negated their original high-sounding promises and courageous deeds. Some, however, have made permanent contributions to the establishment of peace, social reform, democratic institutions, and the realization of a humanitarian philosophy.

Of the latter category is José Figueres of Costa Rica. Not even this placid, democratic country was spared political upheaval. Figueres bore the banner of patriotic revolution, but his revolution was not only one of guns, but of ideas as well--ideas which he proceeded to transform into tangible results, such as laws, institutions, and dollars.

It is the purpose of this study to examine this modern Latin American leader, investigating the conditions which produced the man and his movement, the cause which motivated him, his ideals, methods, actions and achievements. Finally, an attempt will be made to determine the significance of his thought and his contributions--in his own country and in

international affairs--and to place him in the recent history of Latin America.

PART I

COSTA RICA: NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Costa Rica, fourth in the chain of the five countries of Central America, is rather unique among the Latin American nations. Small by North American standards, and in relation to many of her sister republics, Costa Rica has an area of 19,647 square miles and a population of 1,055,000 inhabitants.[1] In spite of her size, Costa Rica is well-known for her strong sense of national identity and the stability and democracy of her government. In an area whose history has been characterized by frequent and violent political upheavals and successions of ruthless dictators, these attributes of Costa Rica merit a closer look.

Costa Rica has been fortunate in history and geography. Although located entirely in the tropics (between 8° N. and 12° N. latitude), most of the population is concentrated on the high, temperate Central Plateau. The fertile soil of this upland region supports a dense rural population, and is one of the four parts of the Latin

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[1] New International Yearbook, 1958.

American mainland where settlement expansion is taking place without decreasing the nucleus of population at the center.[2] The population centers, San José, Cartago, Alajuela, Heredia, are not separated by geographical barriers, a factor which has contributed to the coherence of the national life. In addition, Costa Rica has seacoast on both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and good ports, which have made possible trade with the rest of the world and a thriving fishing industry.

When the Spaniards arrived in the 16th century, they discovered that the land lacked the two things which, in their eyes, constituted wealth: a dense Indian population and abundant mineral resources. Therefore, it was not suited to the latifundia system of agriculture, which required large numbers of slaves, nor to extensive mining operations. Consequently the colony was neglected by the Spanish authorities and came to be settled by a breed of hardy, self-reliant Spanish immigrants, thought to be of Basque, Galician, and Aragonese stock. These industrious settlers maintained themselves, often with difficulty, on small, individual farms. Everyone, including the governor, had to work to subsist, and common poverty, by a process

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[2]Preston E. James, Latin America (New York: Odyssey Press, 1942), p. 650.

of "nivelación por lo bajo,"[3] served to prevent the evils of wide discrepancies in wealth and the rise of a powerful oligarchy. The scarcity of Indians and slaves meant that the Costa Ricans were not faced with the troublesome problem of incorporating heterogeneous racial groups into the population; up to the present time the population of the country, in the effective national territory, has remained predominately white.

The trend of political, social, and economic development established during colonial times was little altered upon entrance into the national period. Liberated from Spain as part of the Captaincy General of Guatemala in 1821, and briefly a part of the United Provinces of Central America, Costa Rica's national history began with the disbandment of this ill-fated union in 1838. Thus Costa Rica was spared the disruptive battles and bitter aftermath of the wars of Independence and severed her tie with Spain in a relatively peaceful manner.

The early pattern of the economy based on small, self-sufficient, isolated _fincas_ was to be radically altered with the introduction of coffee in the early nineteenth

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[3]Eugenio Rodríguez Vega, _Apuntes para una sociología costarricense_ (San José: Editorial Universitaria, 1953), p.19.

century. Costa Rica was among the first to develop the cultivation of this new crop and to capitalize on its commercial value. For Costa Rica, which up to that time had produced only for her own rather frugal needs, coffee was a boon. It did not replace any economic item, but instead filled a vacancy and opened the "first wide window to the exterior."[4] At last Costa Rica had something which the rest of the world wanted. Coffee soon became king, but proved to be not an entirely benevolent monarch. It brought wealth and importance to Costa Rica, but with it came also evils which Costa Rica had never known before. Society became stratified into classes based on the wealth originating from coffee. This new social structure was dominated by a "coffee oligarchy" of "coffee barons." Although the agricultural resources of the nation were rich and the land capable of supplying the country's needs, cultivation of essential food products was neglected and Costa Rica became dependent upon imported foodstuffs to sustain her rapidly expanding population.

The Costa Rican, or "tico," as he is called because of his fondness for frequent use of the diminutive form,

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[4]William Krehm, Democracia y tiranías en el Caribe (Mexico, D.F.: Unión Democrática Centroamericana, 1949), p. 185.

has developed a distinctive national character. The early settlers, so poor and isolated, avoided social contacts and set great store by their own privacy and liberty of action. Group activities won little support on the part of the "tico," sho preferred to go his own way and indicated little propensity for united effort. He possessed a deeply-instilled dedication to democratic traditions, however, and when his liberty was threatened he could be aroused from his withdrawal and "rugged individualism" to work or fight for la patria. The crisis passed, he would again resign from the group and become an independent agent. These tendencies, manifested in early times, persist in the national character of the Costa Rican of today. Politically, the "tico" is conservative. "He is firmly bound to his traditional way of life, provincial and tranquil."[5] He is willing to change when circumstances demand, but the change must be gradual. He has always preferred to maintain peace and stability and defend the status quo rather than provoke violence. Usually the "tico" is governed by common sense and not easily influenced by radical, unproven schemes. "Common sense

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[5]Rodríguez Vega, op. cit., p. 68.

is the angular substance of the psychology of our people."[6]

Although social distinctions did exist, as we have seen, the social classes in Costa Rica were not a cause of conflict. The historical circumstances which we have briefly traced led to the formation of an open social structure. Classes were based on economic factors and were not hereditary, rigid, or strictly demarcated. The middle-class element was most predominant. Rodríguez Vega says: " . . . the Costa Rican populace is formed by a large middle class which constitutes the nucleus of the nationality, having at its extremes the worker and peasant groups--on the one hand--and a small sector of wealthy on the other."[7]

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[6]Hugo Navarro Bolandi, La Generación del 48 (México, D.F.: Ediciones Humanismo, 1957), p. 72.

[7]Rodríguez Vega, op. cit., p. 104.

CHAPTER II

POLITICAL HISTORY

Costa Rica's national development from the time of the formation of the Republic until recent times was steady and peaceful. Her leaders were enlightened and her internal affairs were conducted in a civilized manner. With regard to external matters she minded her own business, plied her coffee trade, and won the respect of her neighbors. She was fortunate in the quality of her leaders. An early president who did much to form the national history was Tomás Guardia, who exercised great influence from 1870 to 1882. His administration saw the promulgation of the Constitution of 1871, a sound, liberal document which was Costa Rica's basic law until 1948. It followed the prevailing liberal pattern popular in Latin America at this time, providing for a highly centralized government and strong executive. Internal development was given impetus by the construction of a railroad from the capital, San José, to the Atlantic, and by the introduction of banana cultivation, which was to become

second in importance among Costa Rica's exports.

Beginning with the administration of don Bernardo Soto in 1889, Costa Rica was governed by a series of able, respected presidents who belonged to a self-styled ruling generation. These men were representatives of the coffee plutocracy, educated in Europe, and instilled with the ideals of nineteenth century Liberalism. They governed the country from above, benevolently and paternalistically, in the manner of "civil-caudillos."[8] Political parties had little meaning or function, as the incumbent president chose his successor from among this select group and campaigns centered on personalities rather than ideologies. Voting was observed as a formality, and other democratic traditions were respected. Therefore little dissension developed on the part of the people, and most of the presidents enjoyed great popular support, in some cases almost adulation. Occasional political crises, such as the short-lived Tinoco dictatorship in 1917, and sporadic agitations for reform arose from time to time to ripple the placid political waters; but no serious threat or coherent reform movement developed and the ship of state retained its equilibrium. The prevailing "liberalism

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[8]Navarro Bolandi, op. cit., p. 86.

of suave manners which fused the power of money with the power of State"[9] enjoyed an era of peace and concord.

After the turn of the century, the paradise continued, but it was an artificial paradise. World War I had threatened traditional values and institutions, which could no longer cope with the new social pressures and economic chaos. New ideologies were revolutionizing political thought and the Great Depression following the war had dealt the death blow to the old liberal, laissez-faire economy. The suppressed, disillusioned, dissatisfied elements of society were seeking new values, new freedom, and greater material welfare.

Latin America felt the repercussions of the events in postwar Europe and was sucked into the current of the critical times. Even Costa Rica, stronghold of liberal democracy and traditionalism, faced the inevitability of adapting to a changing world order. The cry for reform went up from all levels of society: from young students educated abroad; from the growing middle class who wanted to take power out of the hands of the oligarchy without giving it to the proletariat; from capitalists influenced by European trends; and from the lower classes, who had been disappointed by previous abortive

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[9]Navarro Bolandi, op. cit., p. 23.

reform movements and now harked to the siren's song of Communism.

The last two great liberal presidents, don Cleto González Víquez (1906-1910, 1928-1932), and don Ricardo Jiménez Oreamuno (1910-1914, 1924-1928, 1932-1936), were talented statesmen, adept in the art of governing. By virtue of the confidence, respect, admiration, and affection they commanded and the weight of the tradition they represented, they managed to maintain the shaky supremacy of the oligarchy until 1936. With the passing of these venerable statesmen, Costa Rica became a "political orphan."[10]

In 1936 the reins of government were passed to don León Cortés Castro, an honest, popular candidate who served creditably until 1940. He was succeeded by Dr. Rafael Calderón Guardia, a popular physician of a prominent family, who was hailed as a reformer and benefactor by many Costa Ricans. A representative of the large landholders and traditional politicians, he also had the support of the Church and workers because of his sympathy for the "common man." Calderón Guardia initiated a series of social reforms, including labor legislation, social security measures,

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[10]Navarro Bolandi, José Figueres en la evolución de Costa Rica (México, D.F.: Imprenta Quirós, 1953), p. 13.

agricultural assistance, and industrial promotion. These social policies coincided with the Communist party line, and the vigorous leader of the Communists, Manuel Mora, openly collaborated with the President. The Church, under Archbishop Sanabria, approved of the promises of Calderón to improve social conditions and lent unofficial support. Calderón's National Republican Party controlled Congress, and the Communists continued to gain strength. In 1944 Attorney Teodoro Picado Michalski, well-intentioned by malleable, was chosen to succeed Calderón Guardia. He won the election easily with the backing of the Communists (camouflaged as the Partido Vanguardia Popular), the Catholic workers, and the Calderón Guardia government machine. The opposition ran former president Cortés Castro, but his death shortly before the election weakened the opposition, who failed to unify behind another candidate in time to win the election. Picado pledged to continue the liberal-social policies of the previous administration, but had little to say about the course of events as he was dominated by Calderón Guardia and the ever-increasing influence of Mora and his party. It was in reality a continuation of the Calderón Guardia regime, a violation of the long-respected Costa Rican tradition of

alternation of presidents. In addition, dictator Anastasio Somoza of nearby Nicaragua, whose feudal-lord manner of governing was distasteful to most Costa Ricans, lent his support and encouragement to his old friend Calderón Guardia. The plans of the incumbent regime seemed to go well--the common man was extolled, industries and trades were organized, agriculture was aided, and social reforms were pushed. The incongruent, almost grotesque, coalition of reactionary and radical factions was rapidly leading Costa Rica in a left-ward direction. The political pendulum had swung away from obsolete, nineteenth century traditionalism, but was now going to dangerous extremes in the opposite direction. Many Costa Ricans, middle class and conservative at heart, were alarmed and began to seek a stabilizing force which would be able to avert the threat to democracy and pull Costa Rica back to a middle position.

PART II

THE MOVEMENT OF 1948

CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND OF THE MOVEMENT OF 1948

A significant stabilizing force, soon to exert itself upon the course of Costa Rican history, had already begun to take shape. A third ideological group, a Democratic Action movement of students, professors, and middle-class businessmen, favoring neither vested interests nor class warfare, had formed a Center for the Study of National Problems during the administration of León Cortés. This group of democratic idealists formed the nucleus of the Partido Social Demócrata, which was created in 1945 and proposed to develop a truly ideological party, dedicated to preserving the nation from the threat of communism and dictatorship and to modernizing her social and political institutions. It sought to meet the exigencies of the twentieth century and to offer a means of incorporating Costa Rica into the current of world affairs which would retain the basic democratic precepts held by the Free World. This was Costa Rica's version of the broadly-based, ideolog-

ically-inspired political party which had been developing in various parts of Latin America.

Unrest was increasing, and opposition-led movements of protest to the Calderón-Picado policies began to occur more and more frequently. One of the most serious was the strike of "brazos caídos" in 1947, called by followers of opposition leader, Otilio Ulate , which paralyzed the country and caused riots. The usual break between the former president and his protegé had not occurred in the case of Calderón and Picado, and it appeared that Calderón planned to try to maintain his strangle-hold on the country.

CHAPTER II

REVOLUTION

The crisis which precipitated open conflict occurred in 1948. This was election year. Former president Calderón Guardia "reluctantly" agreed to run for the party in power, the National Republican Party. He was backed also by the Partido Vanguardia Popular (PVP). The opposition united behind Otilio Ulate Blanco, prominent newspaperman, owner of the respected Diario de Costa Rica. Competition was keen. Calderón Guardia controlled government machinery, but Ulate gained popular support. Tensely the country awaited the results of the election. When Ulate's lead appeared decisive, Picado and Calderón Guardia charged that the election had been fraudulent and tried to have it annulled. The National Electoral Tribunal, called in to decide the dispute, upheld Ulate; but Congress, under the control of Picado, Calderón Guardia, and the PVP, declared the election invalid. In the midst of this deadlock arose a rebel cry, which called itself the "voice of freedom," protesting the violation of the election and decrying the

alliance with the Communists and dictator-dominated Nicaragua.

This "voice of freedom" originated in the mountains near Cartago and belonged to an outspoken and energetic young farmer-turned-revolutionist, José Figueres, known to his intimates as "Don Pepe." He had been preparing for this occasion. Leading a tough, quick-moving band of mountain-trained guerrillas, whose ranks included political exiles from other Latin American countries, he gathered popular support and volunteers along the way. Using effective strategy, the rebels launched a many-sided attack, capturing the Atlantic and Pacific ports and moving in from the north and south with the capital as their objective. Finally they held the important city of Cartago, and were threatening San José. The Church tried to mediate. Archbishop Sanabria of San José, alarmed at the prospect of a devastating civil war, urged a truce. Picado, also reluctant to carry the issue to violent extremes, agreed to seek peaceful settlement. Calderón Guardia and the militant Mora refused, proceeding to mobilize the national army and to enlist aid from Nicaragua and the Cuban communists. When the rebel threat to San José became serious, however, peace

talks were begun. Mora continued to resist, even after Picado had agreed to sign an "unconditional surrender." Figueres, while preferring a peaceful solution, prepared to launch an all-out attack on the capital and force the capitulation of the Communists. On April 19, 1948, Picado ceded to the rebel forces and left the country for exile in Nicaragua. Calderón, Mora, and their retainers fled to Mexico. Figueres and his followers, now consolidated into the Army of Liberation, triumphantly entered San José, and the most bloody war in the history of Costa Rica had ended. Picado's third vice-president, León Herrera, acted as a compromise temporary president. Figueres was made acting Foreign Minister, Minister of Justice, and effective head of the government. He planned to form a Junta to restore order and carry out his program of material and spiritual reform for Costa Rica. The new ideological movement, denominated by its adherents as the National Liberation Movement, was now in command.

CHAPTER III

THE MAN, FIGUERES

Let us stop for a look at the man Figueres, who, from a position of relative obscurity had suddenly acquired national importance as a dynamic leader, victorious revolutionist, and head of the country. The physical traits of this young político were soon well-known to the people of Costa Rica. Small and unprepossessing in appearance, but wiry and energetic, he had a ready smile and genial mannerisms. His inner qualities soon became known as well: a keen, analytical mind settly determination; integrity of character; and loyalty to his ideals. He was forceful and straightforward in his actions and expressed himself simply and carefully, explaining his ideas with restraint and conviction. His ability to combine thought with action won him the respect and confidence of his friends and an ever-increasing group of supporters.

Figueres was born on September 30, 1906, in San Ramón, Costa Rica, of a family of Catalan background. His father, an immigrant physician, sent the 17-year-old José to the

United States to study. Here young Figueres lived in Boston and studied engineering at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His education gave him a practical, engineer's point-of-view and an intimate knowledge of American ways and culture. Both influences were to play a part in shaping his future thinking. During his stay in the United States he met his first wife, Henrietta Boggs. His second wife, Karen Olsen, whom he married in 1954, was also an American.

Upon his return to Costa Rica in 1928, Figueres bought land and devoted himself to coffee-raising. First as an adjunct to coffee, and later as a profitable source of income in its own right, he turned to the cultivation of cabuya, a fiber-yielding plant from which rope and coffee bags are made. He began to manufacture his own coffee bags, at a considerable saving over those purchased elsewhere, and subsequently expanded operations to include bag and rope factories which produced surplus products for sale. The workers engaged in this enterprise numbered about 1,000. Figueres dealt with his workers on a cooperative, collective-farming basis, providing good living conditions and fair wages. He gave the growers the option of selling their crops where they could get the best price, not necessarily to him. The system elicited the enthusiasm and cooperation

of the workers and proved to be very successful. The finca developed into a prosperous community enterprise which was to be the proving ground for some of Figueres' economic and social ideas.

Figueres was not a politician, but he had kept abreast of national events and was deeply concerned about the situation of his country. Associated with the Center for the Study of National Problems, he became a spokesman for the democratic-liberal group. In 1942, during a radio broadcast in which he advised the incumbent government to "get out," for its own and Costa Rica's good, he was snatched from the microphone and packed off to exile in Mexico. There he observed Mexican politics and acquired a great admiration for Mexican political, social, and economic achievements. Watching the scene in his own country, he became increasingly indignant at the Calderón Guardia regime for its corruption and mismanagement of governmental affairs. He returned to Costa Rica in 1944, in time to see Picado installed as President, which meant the continuation of the status quo, and viewed with alarm the increasing seriousness of the communist infiltration. He participated in the activities of the Democratic Socialist

Party and served on its executive committee, his first real political role. His efforts earned him the enthusiastic devotion of the students and young intellectuals with whom he associated. Smoldering, he watched Calderón Guardia manipulate his puppet Picado and openly collaborate with Mora. When it became evident that Calderón would try to continue in power, by violation of the electoral procedure if necessary, the leaders of the Social-Democratic group felt that the time had come to act. Figueres, as we have seen, was instrumental in carrying the movement to a successful climax. Not a professional military man, having, in fact, no formal military training, he had demonstrated his ability to command the loyalty and cooperation of his workers in his peace-time role as employer of a large force of farm and factory workers. This ability served him well as he recruited, trained, and led the Army of Liberation. Terming himself a "farmer general," Figueres remained civilian in his attitudes and adamant in his distaste for militarism.

PART III

THE ERA OF FIGUERES

CHAPTER I

GOVERNMENT BY JUNTA

San José welcomed the Army of Liberation with enthusiasm, but more thoughtful citizens waited expectantly and with some apprehension, to see what Figueres would do next. He soon made his position clear. There was to be no military dictatorship; the victorious army made no pretense to a "monopoly of common sense or administrative ability."[11] Nor was the movement "capitalist and reactionary" on the one hand, or "Marxist on the other." It was, proclaimed Figueres, "really a revolution of the middle class."[12] The National Liberation Movement was in power, and the "revolution" was just beginning. Figueres turned from military matters to the job of statesman. The ideals which governed him were: political transformation and material progress. These ideals were to be molded into reality by a four-point program comprising four aspects of democracy: (1) political, erecting the bases for democracy

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[11] New York Times, April 24, 1948, p. 4.

[12] "Middle Class Reformer," Time, 62 (August 10, 1953), p. 35.

and building a democratic society; (2) economic, increasing national production, the source of wealth; (3) social, equalizing the distribution of wealth among all the people; (4) international, achieving solidarity with the other nations of the world.

In May of 1948 the Junta Fundadora de la Segunda República was installed. This eleven-man body, headed by Figueres, was to serve a temporary, transitional function. Its first obligation was to maintain internal order and restore the damage occasioned by the civil war. It also served to fill the juridical vacuum caused by the break in constitutional continuity after the successful revolution and to effect the transition from the old First Republic to the new Second Republic, which was to be the realization of the National Liberation Movement's objectives. Ulate, the president-elect, refused to join the Junta, but preferred to let the revolutionary forces finish the task they had started. A pact was drawn up between Ulate and Figueres which stipulated that the Junta would remain in power for eighteen months, with an extension of six additional months if necessary. During this time a constitution would be drafted and a constituent assembly elected to adopt a new legal order for the Second Republic.

At the end of this period, the Junta would retire in favor of President Ulate, who would then serve the term for which he had been elected in 1948.

The Junta was faced with the immediate problems of restoring order and reconstructing national life, which had been disrupted by the civil war. Also, the new government had inherited a legacy of corruption and mismanagement from the preceding administration and had to set the government house in order. Acting arbitrarily out of necessity, Figueres suspended constitutional rights for thirty days in order to forestall counter-revolutionary activity. To meet pressing financial demands, a ten per cent levy was imposed on private capital, banks were placed under government control, imports were strictly regulated, and the government assumed control of the production of essential commodities and public utilities. As an economic stimulus, wages were raised and labor demands recognized. The Popular Vanguard Party, considered a threat to democratic way of life, was outlawed. To avert the danger of militarism and reduce government costs, the army was disbanded. "Costa Rica is not a military country," declared Figueres, "she doesn't need an army."[13] The new government

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[13]"Farewell to Arms," Newsweek, 32 (December 13, 1948) p. 42.

also defined its international position. An anti-Russian policy was announced; relations were severed with dictatorial Dominican Republic; and support was pledged to the United States.

CHAPTER II

BUILDING THE SECOND REPUBLIC

In accordance with the original plan, elections were held for the Constituent Assembly on December 8, 1948. Forty-five delegates were selected, representing the several political groups: the National Union Party of Otilio Ulate; the Constitutional Party of Calderón Guardia and Picado; the Social Democratic Party of Figueres; and a minor group which called itself the National Co-Fraternal Party. Ulate's group showed the most strength and captured 33 of the seats. The Assembly met on January 14, 1949. Figueres, in his opening speech to the Assembly, commented on the recent political events leading up to the revolution, which was necessary to vindicate a political wrong and to defend the votes of the citizens. He emphasized the determination of the National Liberation Movement to form a new and better Costa Rica. "Military victories in themselves are worth little. That which is built upon them is what matters."[14]

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[14]José Figueres, Mensaje Presidencial a la Asamblea Nacional Constituyente . . . 16 de enero de 1949 (San José: Imprenta Atenea, 1949), p. 12.

The abuelos, or older, more conservative delegates, wanted to base the new document on the long-standing Constitution of 1871, which had served Costa Rica since the time of Tomás Guardia. Figueres, however, insisted that the new charter must be a "true transformation of facts, of values, and of organizations."[15] If the new basic law was not in keeping with the aims of the new government, another war might be necessary to continue the revolutionary process. After long and careful debate, the Constitution of 1949 was adopted. Costa Rica was once more a constitutional democracy and the Second Republic had become a reality.

The Second Republic was not a complete renunciation of the first, but rather an attempt to save what was still useful and valuable in the old legal order, and to preserve, expand, and reinforce Costa Rican democracy. Retaining many of the constitutional provisions of 1871, the new document also incorporated some important changes, largely due to the efforts of Figueres. These measures were designed to correct the weaknesses of the former constitution by taking steps to prevent dictatorial tendencies on the part of the President,

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[15]Rubén Hernández Póveda, Desde la barra; como se discutió y emitió la Constitución Política de 1949 (San José: Editorial Borrase, 1953), 118.

lawmakers, or influential groups such as the military and the Church; to eliminate graft and corruption in government; to make the government more responsive and accessible to the public will by broadening the bases of democracy; and to achieve social justice. An examination and comparison of the new Constitution with its predecessor will illustrate the trends toward decentralization, statism, governmental responsibility, and essential democracy.

In the section on "The Republic" the first sentence is, perhaps, the key to the new orientation. Article 1 inserts the word "democratic," to give added force to the opening statement, making it read: "Costa Rica is a free and independent democratic Republic." Nationalism asserts itself in the defining of the territorial limits of the country. Coco Island is declared to be part of the national territory, and claim is laid to the continental shelf. Division of the powers of government is specified, with the addition that "the government is popular, representative, alternative and responsible" (Article 9). The army as a permanent institution is proscribed, and public order is made the responsibility of national police forces (Article 12).

Under "Individual Rights and Guarantees" the new Constitution retains the former charter's provision for the right

to associate for lawful purposes, but adds that "No one may be compelled to form a part of any association whatever" (Article 25), a preventative measure against communism's obligatory party affiliation. Another interesting new provision was Article 31, which states that "The territory of Costa Rica shall be an asylum for all who are persecuted for political reasons . . ." This showed Costa Rica's sympathy for revolutionary movements against non-democratic governments and her desire to aid political exiles from such governments. To encourage the development of national creativeness and cultural achievement, an article providing for copyrights and patents was included (Article 47).

The family, "natural element and basis of society" (Article 51), received greater attention in the new Constitution. Article 53 specified that: "Parents have the same obligations toward children born out of wedlock as those born within it," and that: "Everyone is entitled to know who his parents are according to law." Article 55 set up the Patronato Nacional, an autonomous institution for the protection of women and children.

The Social Rights and Guarantees, introduced under Calderón Guardia in 1943, were left essentially intact. Regulations of education, however, were enlarged upon consider-

ably. An integrated progression was planned from pre-school through primary and secondary. These three levels were declared to be free and supported by the State. Freedom in teaching was guaranteed. The office of Minister of Education was created to administer public education. Provision was made for adult education "to combat illiteracy and to provide cultural opportunities for those who desire to improve their intellectual, social, and economic position" (Article 83). The University of Costa Rica was to be independent, and freedom of teaching on the university level was considered a "fundamental principle of university instruction" (Article 87). Teacher training was to be carried on in specialized institutions and in the University. Article 89 referred to the cultural aims of the Republic, and included: improvement of natural beauty; preservation and development of historical and artistic patrimony; and support to private initiative in scientific and artistic progress.

Suffrage, the watchword of the new Republic, was specifically regulated in the new Constitution. All citizens were given the right to join parties "in order to participate in national politics" (Article 98). The government reserved the right, however, to outlaw harmful parties, another anti-communist measure. A separate chapter was devoted to the

Supreme Electoral Tribunal and its duties. This new body was a branch of the Judiciary whose function was the "organization, direction, and supervision of the acts pertaining to suffrage" (Article 99). A subordinate agency, the Civil Registry, was charged with drawing up the list of voters.

Some changes were also introduced with respect to the Legislative Power. Deputies might not be reelected to a succeeding term, whereas formerly they were capable of being reelected indefinitely. The property clause, setting a minimum value for property owned and income of the candidate for deputy, was deleted. Military personnel and managers of the autonomous institutions were considered ineligible. As in the Constitution of 1871, a quorum was required in order to convene a session of the Assembly, but attendance of the necessary number of deputies could be enforced. The new Constitution specified in addition that meetings at least once a year were obligatory. It was the duty of the Legislative Assembly to appoint the Comptroller and Assistant Comptroller General of the Republic, two of the newly created offices.

Important changes were also made in the Executive Power. As for deputies, no property requirement was demanded of candidates for President. The non-reelection clause was

reaffirmed, but the specification that the President could not leave the country during office was removed. Provision was made for two Vice Presidents, who were elected simultaneously with the President from a single list, instead of being appointed by the President. The Vice Presidents were to replace the President in the event of his permanent absence in the order of their nomination. In case of temporary absence, the President was to designate one to replace him. The President was to be elected by a plurality of votes, forty per cent of the total number cast. If two presidential candidates should receive, simultaneously, an equal plurality, the oldest candidate was to be considered elected. The President, Ministers, and Magistrates were required to be laymen.

The Council of Government, part of the Executive Power and formed of the Ministers and the President, was given specific duties, which tended to expand its function from a purely advisory body to a sort of imperfect parliamentary system. The duties of the Council were: to organize an army in case of need; to grant pardons; to appoint diplomatic representatives; to appoint the directors of the autonomous institutions; and to pass upon business submitted by the President. The President had the right to open the session of the Council to outside members which he might choose to invite to participate in the deliberations of the body.

The Judicial Power was strengthened to insure its independence and to enable it to act as a counter-balance to the power of the Executive. The number of Magistrates to be elected by the Assembly was set at seventeen, whereas the previous constitution specified no definite number. Terms of Magistrates were lengthened from four to eight years, a Magistrate was required to be thirty-five years old (formerly thirty), and residency required previous to election was lengthened from four to ten years and years of law practice from five to ten. The President of the Supreme Court was required to be a citizen by birth. Magistrates were made to give bond as provided by law upon assuming office.

The section dealing with Municipal Government was made more extensive. The office of Provincial Governor, an agent of the Executive and appointed by him under the old Constitution, was not included in the new document. Municipal corporations were declared to be autonomous.

The section on Public Revenues was stiffened as a deterrent to corrupt use of public funds and for greater efficiency in the collecting and spending of revenue. The office of Comptroller General was created (Article 183) to supervise public revenue. An auxiliary of the Legislative Assembly,

the Comptroller had functional and administrative independence. The duties delegated to this agency included: administration of the national budget, approval of budgets of municipalities; and approval of the budgets of the autonomous institutions. The National Treasury was set up as the center of operations for all national revenue offices, and was the only authorized paying and receiving agency. In charge of the Treasury were the National Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer, who functioned independently in the exercise of their duties.

One of the most important provisions of the Constitution of 1949 was the creation of the Autonomous Institutions. In line with the Second Republic's tendency to participate in national affairs and to regulate essential industries and services, these institutions were to "enjoy independence in matters of government and administration" (Article 188). These institutions were under directors, appointed, as we have seen, by the Council of Government. Two institutions were specificly created by the Constitution: the State Banks and the State Insurance Institutions. Other agencies were to be created by the Legislative Assembly as the need arose.

Another new section was devoted to the Civil Service. In order to guarantee efficiency in administration, public

employees were to be "appointed on the basis of proven ability" (Article 192). An additional measure required that the President and Ministers, as well as fiscal officials, must declare their property.

CHAPTER III

THE ULATE INTERLUDE

On November 8, 1949, Otilio Ulate Blanco was sworn in as President and the Constitution of 1949 went into effect. Ulate, prominent journalist and owner of the influential newspaper, El Diario de Costa Rica, had tremendous popular support. José Figueres, in his farewell speech as President of the Junta, declared: "The Junta is pleased to be able to give a lofty example of democracy in America, constituted by the fact that a revolutionary junta, installed by force of arms, delivers the power, peacefully, to the constitutionally elected president."[16]

In general, Ulate followed Figueres' moderately socialistic policies, but introduced some ideas of his own as well. Careful and astute, he was temperamentally the complement of the bold, decisive Figueres. Ulate's immediate concern was the recovery of the nation's economic stability; and he took significant steps to cut government spending, to reduce public debt, and to develop agriculture and industry.

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[16] Hispanoamérica, XVI (November 18, 1949), p. 9.

He cut salaries of government officials, including his own; reduced Figueres' generous budget; and promoted the construction of highways, airports, and hydro-electric plants. Mining was encouraged and oil leases granted to United States companies. Social reforms were implemented, schools constructed, and peaceful relations sought with neighboring countries. Ulate could claim a constructive administration characterized by peace and prosperity. A typical statement of praise for his policies was made by the New York Times: "Costa Rica's orderly regime under Ulate proves that dictatorial governments are not essential for order in Latin America."[17] Ulate's program soon began to diverge markedly from that of Figueres and signs of friction between the two leaders were noted. Ulate's trend was toward conservative spending and he tended to favor the commercial class, planters, and foreign investors. He slowed the process of reforms advocated by Figueres.

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[17] New York Times, January 7, 1953.

CHAPTER IV

THE ELECTION OF 1953

In 1952 Figueres announced his intention to run for president in the 1953 elections. He represented the National Liberation Party, an outgrowth of the revolution based on the old Social Democratic Party, which was the second political party in Costa Rica to be based on an ideology and to present a definite program oriented to that ideology. The first had been the Communist Party. Dedicated to the "elimination of communism through attainment of social and economic reforms,"[18] some of the specific aims of the National Liberation platform relating to internal affairs were: a stronger democracy; increased production; stimulation of private ownership; state ownership of economic and social services which would lend themselves to monopoly; settlement of unused land; fairer taxation; creation of new economic enterprises; and greater attention to education. The proposed external policy was an extension of these internal measures: respect for the prin-

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[18] Hispanic American Report, VI (April, 1953), pp. 12-13.

ciple of non-intervention; support for other democracies; participation in the United Nations; use of the Organization of American States as an instrument of freedom and peaceful settlement of disputes; respect for the Rights of Man in the Western Hemisphere; economic cooperation with other nations of the hemisphere through the establishment of fair and stable international prices.

The other parties represented in the election of 1953 presented no such well-defined programs. The Partido Demócrata was united mainly by anti-Figueres sentiment. The Partido Unión Nacional centered around Otilio Ulate and finally settled on Fernando Castro Cervantes as its candidate. The Partido Republicano Nacional Independiente, comprised of followers of Calderón Guardia, supported Castro Cervantes also. Another party, the Partido Progresista Independiente, lost its registration before the election because of its communist tendencies.

Campaigning was lively and carried on through the usual media of literature, radio, and public appearances. The press was active and vociferous, but "had little role in swaying public opinion."[19] Each party had one or several newspapers as its mouthpiece. Castro Cervantes was backed by Ulate's

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[19]Harry Kantor, The Costa Rican Election of 1953 (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1958), p. 59.

El Diario de Costa Rica and La Hora, and by another paper, La Nación. Figueres had an interest in La República and La Prensa Libre. Each had partisan reporters who spoke only good of their favorite and bad of the others. Articles published were calculated for effect rather than accurate coverage of events and issues. Much repetition of slogans, sensational pictures, and long lists of names of supporters or "adhesions" were used. All engaged in open partisanship and petty polemics.

Every precaution was taken by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal in its first major assignment to insure a fair and orderly election. The complicated voting procedure was closely supervised, polls patrolled, and prohibition of the sale of liquor strictly enforced. A record number of citizens reported to the polls, including women, who were permitted to vote for the first time. Figueres was elected by an overwhelming majority and his party won thirty of the forty-five seats in the Legislative Assembly. The populace had freely and enthusiastically chosen Figueres and endorsed his socialist-inclined program, thus demonstrating their rejection of traditionalism and communism, and their confidence in a new and better future for Costa Rica.

CHAPTER V

FIGUERES AS PRESIDENT

Domestic Political Measures

Figueres once more emphasized his principle "to establish a regime of equal treatment for all, a regime for all Costa Ricans and not alone for a party."[20] He reiterated his plans for improved education, greater social welfare, better living standards, and increased economic independence. Of international import was his reaffirmation of his alignment with the Free World and his openly pro-United States position. "In the present struggle that divides the world into two groups of rival states, we are on the side of the Western countries which uphold our democratic and Christian civilization, and we give our backing to the leadership of the United States of North America."[21]

Regarded as a "self-styled socialist" and an "aggressive

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[20] New York Times, July 28, 1953, p. 13.

[21] Ibid., November 9, 1953, p. 15.

liberal with a strong sense of . . . national dignity,"[22] this unique and energetic político had won the consent and support of the Costa Rican people for his bold program of national betterment. At this point he stood at the outset of the most difficult task of his career, and he was ready to undertake the difficult mission with which he had been entrusted. His actions as president would testify to the sincerity of his beliefs and the validity of his intentions.

Although most of the principles of the National Liberation Movement had been outlined in 1948 under the temporary government of the Junta, and many of them were incorporated into the new Constitution, the program had not yet come to fruition. The Junta had been able to do little to initiate the reforms it advocated because of the demands of reconstruction and suppression of counter-revolutionary activities. Ulate, the first president to serve under the new law, had been mainly concerned with the restoration of economic stability. It remained for Figueres to realize the possibilities of the Constitution of 1949 to their fullest extent. He proceeded to put its provisions into effect and to interpret and apply it in his own, individual manner.

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[22] New York Times, July 27, 1953, p. 13.

Realizing that inadequacy of governmental machinery contributed to corruption and inefficiency, he proposed to "erect the bases of a magnificent institutional system"[23] and to develop a "technique of government." In this effort he stressed respect for established institutions and increased efficiency in the operation of government.

The tendency was to decentralize the executive power. The president was no longer to be a sort of king, personally responsible for all aspects of government. His power was limited by the clause forbidding immediate reelection and by the strengthening of other agencies of government which shared his power. The two vice presidents, elected rather than appointed, had a more important role in the activities of the Executive Branch of government. They were assigned more specific duties, such as participation in meetings to keep abreast of current developments, acting in an advisory capacity to the President, and performing administrative tasks in order to lighten the President's burden.

Figueres made practical use of his vice presidents. In 1955 he took a leave of absence (possible since the pro-

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[23]Figueres, Cartas a un ciudadano (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1956), p. 261.

mulgation of the new Constitution) and went on a trip to Europe to rest, study, write, and observe Western European governmental systems. Vice President Blanco Cervantes was left in charge in San José. Figueres hoped to establish the precedent of vacations for hard-working presidents and to demonstrate to the people the importance of the Vice Presidents.

More emphasis was placed on the functions of the Council of Government as well. Their powers enhanced by the Constitution, the councilors comprised a more integral part of the government. The president was urged to submit questions to this body for consideration, and to avail himself of their counsel before making major decisions.

The real purpose of the chief executive, Figueres felt, was to "govern" the country, or "orient it in the direction of welfare, culture, and morality."[24] Administrative duties, or those concerned with "daily direction of the function of public organisms"[25] should be carried out by the conscientious performance of individualally assigned duties on the part of each official. For more representative and efficient govern-

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[24]Figueres, Cartas a un ciudadano, p. 17.

[25]Loc. cit.

ment, he advocated the delegation of responsibility to the various echelons of subordinates in the governmental organization: advisers, lawmakers, civil servants, and the citizens themselves. Governmental affairs, he insisted, should be carried out through the proper channels. The citizen should avail himself of the agency established to handle the matter in question, and should proceed from minor officials up through the levels of the "hierarchic order" in order to achieve his purpose. The President, at the top of the "order," would then be free to make major decisions and formulate long-range plans. This was a new concept for the Costa Ricans, who were accustomed to the belief that the higher the official to whom they appealed, the more effective the action.

In order to develop the necessary changes in popular concepts to fit his new theories of government, Figueres recognized the need for an educative mission. He held the belief that "to govern is, fundamentally, to educate."[26] He regarded government as a technique, and attempted to extend this concept to the level of the common citizen by undertaking the task of giving the public a lesson in civic behavior. Democratic government, he told the people, is a cooperative

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[26]Figueres, Las elecciones de 1958 (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1958), p. 23.

effort on the part of all citizens, and each individual has a great responsibility for its success. Since a democratic government is the reflection of the public will, the citizens have an important civic duty to perform in seeing that their will is freely expressed and justly executed. This includes the right to criticize the government, which provides an important moderative force; but constructive criticism also entails a willingness to assume other civic obligations. The successful functioning of a democratic government requires a high standard of civic behavior on the part of its citizens. Figueres set forth these principles in a simply-written, comprehensive book entitled Cartas a un ciudadano, which attempted to define and explain his ideas on the operation of government to "Joe Citizen." The book was presented in the form of a series of letters and contained numerous and simplified explanations and examples.

Figueres regarded the corps of personnel engaged in the business of government as a team. Therefore, the quality and dedication of each individual in the organization was of extreme importance. Corruption in government had long plagued Costa Rica. The institution of hermanismo, or the "exercise of authority because of family ties, without assuming responsibility," and the "tendency to convert the

government into a family business,"[27] was firmly entrenched. During the Calderón Guardia-Picado regime these abuses had become particularly virulent. To eliminate nepotism, establish a code of qualifications for public servants, and provide stimulus for study and improvement among those in the service or hoping to qualify for it, Figueres strongly implemented the Civil Service Code of the Constitution of 1949. This provision required the selection of public employees on the basis of merit. Figueres also indicated the need for applying this code to the diplomatic corps, for he felt that the poor morale of those in the diplomatic service was due to lack of career training. He maintained that official missions in the exterior should be elevated to professional status. In line with improving the quality of public employees and that of the services they performed, he advocated better training and better pay for all those engaged in government occupations. He also wanted to introduce salaries for municipal officials, who served without compensation. Adequate remuneration would attract more worthy people into the service and would act as a stimulus for conscientious and productive effort.

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[27] Figueres, Cartas a un ciudadano, p. 257.

With regard to Law, Figueres believed that it formed the basis for the political order and should be inviolable as interpreted by the courts, but not inflexible. It should be subject to change by freely-elected legislators when circumstances should so demand. Laws and constitutions, being human creations, were necessarily imperfect and often contained conflicting or ambiguous provisions, or failed to adequately provide for the nation's needs. The Law, while in effect, should be scrupulously observed; but out-dated, no longer useful laws should be changed through proper channels. "The law ought to serve society, not tie its hands. The citizens dictate the law through means of the appropriate mechanism--the Legislative Assembly."

A law which Figueres felt to be out-of-date and no longer in keeping with the modern Costa Rica was the provision which forbade the President from expressing political views. The Constitution retained this clause, while at the same time upholding the establishment of political parties and requiring candidates and functionaries to remain loyal to party doctrine. Figueres ran athwart of this law in 1957. Outspoken as always, he was charged with expressing political views by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal. Ceding

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[28]Figueres, La imparcialidad del presidente (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1957), p. 8.

to the decision of the Tribunal, and recognizing that they had correctly interpreted the existing law, he nevertheless protested that the law was self-contradictory and no longer necessary because of Costa Rica's higher level of political maturity.

Constitutional changes, however, should be avoided as much as possible, he felt. Once a satisfactory constitutional order had been established, every effort should be made to preserve it. Changes should be introduced only after careful consideration, and through the proper means. Any disruption of constitutional continuity meant a political crisis for the country. Having recently gone through such a crisis, Figueres sought to avoid another and devoutly expressed this belief with the words: "May God spare Costa Rica from new disturbances of the constitutional order."[29]

The crux of Figueres' political theory was the inviolability of respect for popular suffrage. He firmly believed that the final authority and ultimate power of government rested in the hands of the people, who exercised their power through their votes. Protest against Calderón Guardia's flagrant disregard for electoral honesty and triggered the Revolution of 1948, and the National Liberation Movement

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[29]Figueres, Las elecciones de 1958, p. 19.

felt itself "bound by a tie of blood,"[30] to the defense of the right of suffrage. To Figueres, liberty of suffrage was the only way to keep Costa Rica abreast of the democratic and social currents of the times and to continue the revolutionary process. To this end he instituted the Supreme Electoral Tribunal as a branch of the Judiciary to act as arbiter of political contention and safeguard of electoral procedure, for, said Figueres, ". . . the people must always have in their hands the possibility of changing the regime, through the electoral process. While the right of suffrage is respected, there can be no lasting evil . . ."[31]

Another important aspect of a functioning democracy, according to Figueres, were permanent political parties. They acted as a means of influencing public opinion and expressing popular will, as well as serving to preserve the continuity of an ideology beyond the span of one man's influence. Taking as his model the more advanced countries--Denmark, Great Britain, and the United States--which employed permanent parties as political vehicles, Figueres wished to develop a system of such parties for Costa Rica

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[30]Figueres, Cartas a un ciudadano, p. 39.

[31]Ibid., p. 199.

which would require elected officials "to fulfill their programs, maintain their political affiliation while they exercise their mandate, to diffuse their doctrine as much as possible, and to assure by legitimate means that that doctrine will continue to benefit the country."[32] The permanent political party, during periods when it was not in power, would constitute a "responsible opposition," which, Figueres felt, should be an integral part of the government. The development of this attitude was as much a part of his aims as that of creating responsible government. If a president was to carry out the program of his party, he should be allowed to maintain his loyalty to his party while serving. Hence Figueres' opposition to the provision of the Constitution requiring presidents to be apolitical, which was mentioned previously. The president, as a politically elected functionary, should not be expected to be neutral, or without opinions, but rather impartial, which would mean treating all factions equally and honorably, without denouncing his own ideals.

An important adjunct of enlightened public opinion and permanent ideological parties was an adequate means of

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[32] Figueres, Los deberes de mi destino (San José: Imprenta Vargas, 1957), p. 3.

disseminating information, the function fulfilled by an accurate and effective radio and press in politically advanced countries. Figueres realized that these organs of expression were sadly deficient in Costa Rica, although perhaps to a lesser extent than in many other Latin American countries, and must be developed if the nation was to enjoy a fully effective democracy.

International Politics

Political developments in Costa Rica had significance not only for Costa Rica, but for the other nations in the immediate area. The repercussions of Figueres' "new deal" were felt throughout the rest of Latin America as well. The attack on Calderón's government had involved his allies, particularly Somoza of Nicaragua. Figueres' open and active opposition to all anti-democratic governments posed a threat to the existing dictators; and his energetic actions and outspoken declarations against the heads of such governments caused him to be feared and hated among them. Somoza took Calderón Guardia and Picado in after their expulsion from Costa Rica in 1948, and permitted Nicaragua to serve as a base for Calderón Guardia's retaliatory efforts. Calderón invaded Costa Rica from Nicaragua in December of 1948, in an attempt to "restore the state of things destroyed

by the insensate Figueres."[33] The situation took on a serious aspect as Costa Rica accused Nicaragua of using the exiles as a front for armed aggression. Guatemala, under liberal-minded Arévalo, pledged support to Figueres. Personal bitterness of long standing between the antagonistic leaders, Figueres and Somoza, threatened to involve their countries in open warfare. Costa Rica's army, so recently and optimistically disbanded, was remobilized. Figueres was faced with a critical situation which could destroy, or at best seriously retard, his program. Seeking peaceful settlement, he appealed to the Organization of American States to invoke the Treaty of Rio of 1947, providing for defense of any signatory nation attacked from the outside. The treaty had recently been put into effect by Costa Rica herself as the fourteenth signer. The O.A.S. discharged its first mission successfully, by sending a commission to investigate the claims of both Costa Rica and Nicaragua. The Commission ordered the two powers to refrain from hostile acts. Costa Rica was warned to keep close watch for subversive movements operating in her territory. The Nicaraguan government, cleared of the charge of aggression, was repri-

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[33] New York Times, December 12, 1948, p. 13.

manded for not forestalling the invasion, which originated in her territory and of whose existence she was fully aware.

The "diplomatic triumph"[34] of the O.A.S. restored peace for the time being, and Costa Rica and Nicaragua signed an amity pact in February of 1949. The underlying cause of the disturbance, however, the existence of two conflicting systems of government in Central America, had not yet been eliminated. In 1955 invasion from Nicaragua was again threatened. Figueres and Somoza, although personally antagonistic it is true, were not merely carrying on a personal quarrel. There were larger principles involved. Figueres' ideals were shared by other progressive leaders of Latin America, including Rómulo Betancourt of Venezuela, Arnulfo Arías of Panama, and Juan José Arévalo of Guatemala. Somoza's clan was composed of totalitarian and reactionary dictators, among them Pérez Jiménez of Venezuela, Trujillo of the Dominican Republic, Batista of Cuba, and would-be dictator Calderón Guardia.

Figueres saw the conflict as "simply part of the long struggle between democracy and dictatorships. . ." and he

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[34] New York Times, December 16, 1948, p. 1.

again appealed to the O.A.S. to settle the dispute "once and for all."[35] A commission from the O.A.S. was duly dispatched to investigate. Meanwhile, the rebel forces, led by Picado's son, were bitterly resisted by Costa Rican forces under the personal command of Figueres. Nicaragua denied that she was supporting the movement, calling it "internal trouble" in Costa Rica. The indignant Figueres urged the O.A.S. to stop the "political vandalism"[36] of Nicaragua and to use its powers to bring the hostile nations under the law. The O.A.S. Commission, deciding that Costa Rica had a legitimate claim against Nicaragua, invoked the Rio Pact of Military Assistance, and provided arms to Costa Rica in the form of four United States planes, sold to her at a token price. The tide was turned in favor of Costa Rica. Although the O.A.S. could not invoke sanctions because an aggressor was not definitely identified, the Council made the following recommendations: (1) that Costa Rica and Nicaragua observe and strengthen the pact of 1949; (2) that a new "Pact of Amity" be formed under the consultation of the O.A.S. Council; (3) that cross-border traffic

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[35] New York Times, January 10, 1955, p. 1.

[36] Ibid., January 21, 1955, p. 7.

in arms and munitions be strictly controlled.[37] Figueres termed the outcome of the incident as "less a military triumph than a victory for the democracies of the Western Hemisphere." The successful intervention of the O.A.S. had shown that "this hemisphere was determined to live democratically under an international juridical system."[38]

Thus it can be seen that Figueres' democratic ambitions were not limited to Costa Rica, but expanded to embrace all the Latin American countries, and the hemisphere as a whole. His sympathies for anti-dictatorial revolutionary movements became well-known. His name had been linked with a nebulous army of soldiers-of-fortune dedicated to overthrowing all dictators. This legendary "Caribbean Legion" was rumored to have its headquarters in San José under the auspices of Figueres. Somoza accused this group of engaging in subversive activities during the incidents of 1948 and 1955. Its existence has never been definitely established, but its purported aims coincide with Figueres' zealous anti-dictator crusade. Figueres,

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[37]Pan American Union, Applications of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, 1948-1956 (Washington, D.C.: Pan American Union, 1957), pp. 188-189.

[38]New York Times, January 21, 1955, p. 7.

however, has consistently preferred the more statesmanlike and peaceful means of solving disputes and combatting totalitarianism by exploiting the diplomatic channels of international cooperation. He upheld international organizations as vital instruments in the attainment of peaceful coexistence and cooperation of the nations of the world, which is the only way to secure peace and the exchange of goods and ideas, necessary conditions for each nation to develop to its fullest potentialities. The highest of the international organizations is, of course, the United Nations. Second only to this is the Organization of American States, uniting the nations of the New World. In his inaugural address at the beginning of his presidential term in 1953, Figueres stated:

> We favour the tendency towards integration of the peoples of the world, which characterizes our time. We declare our solidarity with the United Nations, and we reaffirm our faith in the principles that inspired its organization. We offer our collaboration in the activities of its specialized bodies. We shall support the Organization of American States, as a paramount organ in the relations of the twenty-one republics of the New World. We pledge ourselves to the mutual respect of all nations and to the juridical solution of conflicts among States. We adhere to the international democratic labour movement.[39]

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[39]Figueres, Inaugural Address, November 8, 1953 (San José: Editorial "La República," 1953), p. 10.

The large organizations, Figueres felt, should handle the broader, more important and far-reaching matters, leaving less urgent and more local matters, especially those of a cultural and social nature, to regional organizations. Central America and Latin America, being important geographical and cultural units, should maintain their solidarity through regional cooperation. Figueres made specific mention of these regional groups in the Inaugural Address:

> We support the various schemes now being elaborated for Central American union: the plans of economic integration of ECLA (Economic Commission of Latin America); the bilateral commercial treaties which are steps towards a general understanding; unification of elementary and higher education; agricultural coordination; the strengthening of ODECA as a regional organization; and in general any plan which tends to fuse into one people the countries of the Isthmus. We maintain the permanent invitation we have extended to the Republics of Guatemala and Panama, to enter all Central American organizations.[40]

ODECA (Organización de Estados Centro Americanos) was founded in 1951 and held its first meeting in 1955. It proposed to "seek social, economic, and cultural unity of the five republics of the old Central American Federation,"[41] e.g. Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. In 1951 Figueres, Betancourt, Arévalo, and others

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[40]Figueres, Inaugural Address, November 8, 1953, p. 10.

[41]Eduardo Cárdenas (ed.), Almanaque Mundial (New York: Editors Press Service, 1959), p. 273.

joined in founding an Inter-American Association for Democracy and Freedom, which was an organization of democratic governments and opposition parties in exile whose aim was to bring about a uniform system of representative and democratic governments in the Americas, in accordance with the ideals of the O.A.S. and the United Nations.

Figueres proved himself an avowed foe of communism. Recalling the pre-revolution period, he stated: "We suffered the outrages of communism and we can testify that communism is an attempt to destroy democratic institutions."[42] He recognized communism as perhaps the most serious and immediate threat facing all the Americas, and therefore supported inter-American action for democracy and a unified hemispheric front against Russian aggression. He advocated a positive program of combatting communism by strengthening the material and spiritual bases of democracy, thus eliminating the conditions under which communism thrives--poverty, ignorance, and oppression. "In the Western World . . . communism is the recourse of the desperate . . ."[43]

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[42]"Stay-away vote," Time, 63 (April 5, 1954), p. 40.

[43]Navarro Bolandi, La Generación del 48, p. 225.

An example of the degree to which Figueres remained loyal to his convictions can be cited in his refusal to participate in the Caracas Conference of 1954. Though long a proponent of this sort of reunion of representatives of the American nations to discuss their common problems, he boycotted the Caracas Conference because of the suppression of human rights which existed in Venezuela at that time. He did not think it fitting to discuss human rights "over dungeons where the tortured were wailing."[44] Costa Rica had a right to protest, for she had born arms against communism "for the first time in the Americas"[45] during the civil war of 1948. Figueres approved of the good intentions motivating the conference and promised to adhere to any resolutions which might be taken there for the betterment of democracy and defense. His abstention was intended to be "an eloquent cry, calling attention to the long-abandoned problem of internal democracy of Latin America."[46]

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[44]Figueres, "No se puede escupir en una política," Combate, I (Julio-Agosto, 1958), p. 65.

[45]New York Times, February 26, 1954, p. 5.

[46]Loc. cit.

In his relations with the other nations of the Western Hemisphere, Figueres stressed the importance of hemispheric solidarity. This solidarity, if achieved, would make the Americas an almost invincible world power. In his own words:

> This geographic unit, composed of Canada, the United States and Latin America, economically developed and spiritually united, could live and grow by itself, and preserve for humankind the cultural store of the West, if the world should fall into the power of nations with a different philosophy of life.[47]

The preponderant role of the United States in this union could not be overlooked. The Latin Americans, geographically and ethnologically part of the Western Hemisphere, were also politically western, and bound to the United States by geographical, historical, constitutional, juridical, and institutional ties. Although Figueres had a deep faith in Latin America's preparedness for democracy and her ability to achieve it, he saw that this could come about only as a result of a larger, united effort on the part of all American nations. The United States was in demand as a leader, because of her superior political genius and advanced production methods. Admiring the United States, while remaining fully aware of her shortcomings, Figueres recognized in the

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[47]Navarro Bolandi, La generación del 48, p. 201.

mighty northern nation a completely new concept of human society:

> I do not seek the Coca-colonization of Latin America, or a servile imitation of the superficialities of North America, or a ruinous abandon of the cultures, languages and spiritual riches which constitute the soul of Mexico, the Antilles, Central and South America. But I believe that a rapid improvement of the living conditions in Latin America, under any plan which does not include the United States, is impossible.[48]

He was also fully aware of the perplexing situation of the United States, who was expected to "assist without intervening and cooperate without offending."[49] Latin American resentment of the United States, Figueres believed, was largely due to disappointment. In the eyes of the latinos the United States had fallen short in assuming her responsibility to the other American nations and had failed to take a sufficiently definite stand in her reproval of totalitarian regimes or to lend sufficient moral support to struggling nascent democracies. Figueres strongly urged that the United States should assume and fulfill the position of hemispheric leader positively and fairly, for " . . . the weight of the United States is so great, her intervention

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[48]Navarro Bolandi, La Generación del 48, p. 201.

[49]Ibid., p. 204.

so omnipotent by commission or omision, that it is impossible for them not to influence the course of events in one way or another."[50]

Social and Economic Policies

Figueres' "revolution," or "renaissance"[51] as Navarro Bolandi terms it, was not only political, but social and economic as well. To Figueres, democracy is not solely a doctrine, but a political system whose realization depends upon the solid basis of economic and social welfare. Tracing the causality of the actual political situation, he reasoned that political instability results from social problems, which in turn are due to economic causes. "Political instability is due to low education, which is due to low national income. Low income prevents the formation of capital and creates a stagnant economy."[52] The advanced, industrialized countries have progressed rapidly, and the less advanced have been left behind. "Centripetal force" acts to concentrate wealth in a small area at the center,

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[50]Navarro Bolandi, La Generación del 48, p. 204.

[51]Ibid., p. 165.

[52]Figueres, "Problems of Democracy in Latin America," Journal of International Affairs, 9 (1955), p. 13.

and to spread it thin over the large area at the edges. Low income countries cannot increase their wealth without improving their technology, which requires better education, which is expensive. Thus, pointed out Figueres, "Economic progress is at once the result and cause of cultural progress."[53] Therefore "economics and culture are a cause and an effect which mutually reinforce each other"[54] and must be treated as two aspects of the same social phenomenon. Economic welfare poses a challenge to the survival of all nations of the world. Communism offers one solution to this challenge. Democracy, which refutes the communistic solution, must present its own solution to successfully meet the challenge or "fall into disrepute,"[55] as Figueres expressed it.

Figueres took a practical approach to economic development and rejected pure capitalism as well as pure socialism, advocating instead a "realistic" kind of economic planning

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[53]Figueres, "Problems of Democracy in Latin America," p. 19.

[54]Figueres, Problems of Peace (Washington: Statistical Census Office, 1956), p. 6.

[55]Figueres, "Problems of Democracy in Latin America," p. 18.

which would meet the exigencies of the critical economic situation facing the Latin American communities. Realizing that the lives of these communities "can not be held back in order to make way for a noble doctrine"[56] Figueres proposed measures which would be immediately effective, but far-sighted as well.

Looking to Great Britain and the United States as models of the most successful political, economic, and social systems the world had to offer, Figueres admired the economic philosophies of John Maynard Keynes and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Figueres saw that after the Great Depression the old laissez-faire economic system was obsolete, and a new approach must be found. In the United States, he observed, "Democracy, adopting a system of state economic planning which respects liberty and stimulates iniciative, checked the crisis."[57] This is in line with Keynes' system of "modified capitalism, based on judicious and limited interference by public authority . . . to provide both

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[56]A. Curtis Wilgus, (ed.), The Caribbean: Contemporary Trends, Series 1, Volume III (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1953), p. 157.

[57]Figueres, Cartas a un ciudadano, p. 134-135.

political freedom and economic security."[58] Other influences of Keynes' thought upon Figueres are evident in a fiscal policy of stabilized and sustained spending, maintenance of demand, control of monetary transactions, control of international prices and rates of exchange, and increased spending in times of recession.

For examples of successful application of these principles, Figueres looked to the United States, especially during the Roosevelt era; to Denmark and her middle-of-the-road socialism; to Mexico under the Partido Revolucionario Institucional; and to Great Britain. Using the terms "capitalism" and "socialism" in the economic rather than the political sense, Figueres pointed out that neither system had ever worked in any nation in pure form. He set forth the idea of a "mixed economy," which he defined as "a combination of the two systems . . . which attempts to unite the advantages of both and reduce the disadvantages of each."[59] Capitalism would contribute the advantages of greater administrative efficiency, initiative, and exercise of prop-

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[58]Seymour E. Harris, John Maynard Keynes: Economist and Policy Maker (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. ix.

[59]Figueres, Cartas a un ciudadano, p. 114.

erty. Socialism, on the other hand, had the advantages of planning for general efficiency, just remuneration for labor and produce, and a spirit of service and social responsibility.

These ideas earned Figueres the reputation of being a socialist, but he persisted in his plan to adapt his philosophy to conform to universal experience and Costa Rican reality. He visualized the State as a directive, moderative force, whose function it was to regulate private initiative in the interests of maximum national production for the benefit of both the individual and society. According to a Latin American concept which is gaining greater and greater favor among the Latin American nations, private property is subject to the demands of the common good. Figueres, who holds this concept, outlined his socio-capitalist system as follows:

> Private property with social function and responsibility. Distribution of wealth with adherence to a scientific criterion of social justice. Private initiative with full freedom of enterprise, under the technical direction of the State through its specialized autonomous organizations. Equal opportunities for all with a practicable equality of access to credit. Not the proprietor or patron State, but rather the only banker, distributor of national credit among all the citizens.[60]

The Autonomous Institutions were an important part of Figueres' economic plan. Following the trend to decentralize

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[60]Navarro Bolandi, La Generación del 48, p. 230.

the government, they were to act independently and autonomously, free from the domination of political trends. In addition, they would provide more efficient services than those administered by private entities concerned with competition and profit. Figueres explained these institutions and their role in the government in the following words:

> In a political system such as ours where there is periodic change of government, the autonomous institutions supply the permanence and stability necessary in public administration. They are the framework of the economy, within which function, with the greatest possible protection, the numerous private enterprises of the country. In addition, the autonomous entities afford a field of activity to those citizens whose lives are inspired by the spirit of service and who prefer to contribute to the general well being rather than dedicate themselves to private business.[61]

These agencies sought to stimulate agricultural and industrial production, promote business and commerce of all types, prevent speculation and encourage investment and savings. Methods used to this end were price control, a reserve system for food and raw materials, and credit arrangements .

The most important of these Autonomous Institutions was the Sistema Bancario Nacional, or the National Banks. Since monetary functions performed a public service, "pub-

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[61]Figueres, Inaugural Address, p. 9.

lic should be the property of the Institutions which manage it."[62] Subsidiaries of this National Banking System were the other Institutions: the National Production Council; the Costa Rican Institute of Electricity; the Institute of Housing and Urbanization; the Social Security Fund; the State Insurance Institutions; and the Electric Railroad to the Pacific.

Observing that economically progressive countries were those with a predominant middle class, Figueres sought to equalize the levels of society, not by lowering the higher strata, but by raising those that were lower. Taking, as usual, the moderate point of view, he envisaged the fusion of all social classes into a "great middle class which will enjoy abundantly the commodities and cultural opportunities of the epoc."[63] The middle class, he believed, would act as the cohesive force of the new Costa Rica.

Backing up his theories with positive actions, Figueres planned an extensive economic program. His first concern was to "capitalize" the economy, to build up reserves to be used for development. Convinced that "the economic future of

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[62]Navarro Bolandi, La Generación del 48, p. 136.

[63]Navarro Bolandi, José Figueres en la evolución de Costa Rica, p. 90.

Latin American countries lies in their own savings,"[64] he took steps to accumulate capital. Tariffs were raised to conserve dollar reserves and encourage private and public savings. The tax system was overhauled. Retroactive income taxes were introduced, with the contention that: "Tax on Income is perhaps the means which most effectively puts an end to the controversy between socialism and capitalism. Private property is conserved, but a great part of the produce is destined to satisfy the needs of the whole population."[65] A tax was also imposed on capital, and a gradual shift from custom duties to income taxes to supply national revenues was to be effected in the future. Loans were to be arranged through the National Bank to encourage private investment in both farms and light industry.

Recognizing as the greatest economic evil the low national income, Figueres set about to increase production. "Social needs cannot be filled without realizing economic programs; without raising the level of education, of preparation, of efficiency; without adopting better methods of

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[64] Figueres, "Point Four, a Latin American View," Central America and Mexico, 1 (April, 1953), p. 8.

[65] Figueres, Cartas a un ciudadano, p. 176.

acquiring more machinery; in a word, without improving productivity which is the result of labor and capital."[66] He endeavored to create a favorable environment for business, inviting foreign capital, which had come to form an integral part of Costa Rican economy and national life. At the same time, he promoted native industry and hoped to bring about a greater degree of economic independence. The adoption of better production methods, like those of the United States, was encouraged. Wages were raised to increase buying power of the workers, a measure which would simultaneously raise the standard of living and expand the market. Figueres felt that: "The policy of low prices, which are profitable to no producer, and of poor salaries and wages, which are inadequate for the worker and the employee, is a policy of poverty for all . . ."[67] Another phase of his domestic-economy plan was diversification of production. An economy overly dependent on one or a few commodities was disadvantageous and often disastrous, and was at fault for many of Latin America's economic difficulties. Figueres tried to develop Costa Rica's petroleum industry, meat packing, textile manufacturing,

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[66]Figueres, Cartas a un ciudadano, p. 85.

[67]Navarro Bolandi, José Figueres en la evolución de Costa Rica, p. 39.

fishing, and tourism. To aid the new industries and to improve those already established, the program of construction of transportation and communication facilities was speeded up. To combat unemployment and to construct needed internal improvements, a series of public works projects was inaugurated, including housing developments, the Pan-American Highway, and airports.

Costa Rica is predominately an agricultural country, two thirds of her income comes from agricultural products and two thirds of her labor force are engaged in agricultural occupations.[68] Therefore the farm program was a major consideration in planning the new economy. Coffee, the mainstay of the economy and a well-established and profitable enterprise, was to be expanded and improved. The money raised from it was to be used to promote education, train technicians, and introduce modern production methods. A Coffee-Growers Federation was set up to enforce price supports.

The National Production Council, created as a planning section of the National Bank System, had an active role in enforcing price control. This agency calculated the minimum

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[68]Stacy May and Others, Costa Rica: a Study in Economic Development (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, 1953), p.38.

farm price and maximum retail price and announced them for a twelve-month period. To stabilize prices and insure just distribution of surplus, it maintained warehouses and refrigeration plants to store goods accumulated by its buying and selling agency. These goods would then be released at the proper time. The National Bank also administered agricultural credit through the Minister of Agriculture and Industry. Rural Juntas of Credit were set up in rural areas to take credit to the most isolated farmers, for Figueres believed that: "Where the telegraph, the school, and the social services of the State extend, should also extend credit as a new and fundamental service."[69]

Included in the program to stimulate agricultural production and attain fairer land distribution was a land reform policy. This was intended to reduce the size of large land holdings in order to create more private small owners. With deep appreciation for Costa Rica's rural heritage, Figueres wished to preserve it and adapt it to modern needs.

> Traditionally Costa Rica has been a country of well distributed land. Probably the stability of our republican life is due to the existence of a numerous class of small farmers. It will be the function of the specialized institute that we are creating, to reaffirm our favourable

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[69]Navarro Bolandi, José Figueres en la evolución de Costa Rica, pp. 34-35.

> agrarian conditions. Without taking away the land legitimately possessed, we shall find the means to establish the small farmers who want to own a piece of soil and till it.[70]

The institute to which he referred was the Land and Colonization Institute designed for the purpose of settling unused lands.

Diversification of agriculture was encouraged with a shift from emphasis on the three mainstays--coffee, bananas, and cacao--to the introduction of livestock, cotton, and foodstuffs. Technical advances were made through such agencies as the Servicio Técnico Interamericano de Cooperación Agrícola (STICA), financed jointly by Costa Rica and the United States under the Institute of Inter-American Affairs to teach better farming methods. Scientific research was carried on at the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences at Turrialba.

Efforts were also made to combat agricultural unemployment and to improve rural living conditions. Figueres attempted to apply on a national scale the techniques which had been so successful on his own finca--social and economic cooperation which meant greater welfare and prosperity for

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[70]Figueres, Inaugural Address, p. 4.

the workers, more profits for the owner, and more capital to be invested for further expansion and improvements.

The ultimate aim of Figueres' economic efforts was not the accumulation of wealth for its own sake, but for its contribution to human welfare. Man is the most important resource and product of a nation. According to Figueres' principle that economic activity is a social function, a nation, in striving to attain a high level of technology and production, cannot overlook the human element. However, said Figueres, "Technological advance does not mean simply mechanization, but must be accompanied by a series of non-material innovations."[71] In creating a better democracy, it must be kept in mind that: "The democratic society exists precisely to protect the life of each individual, and to secure his welfare and tranquility."[72] Expounding these principles, Figueres busied himself with the social aspect of government, that of insuring the fair distribution of wealth among all the citizens.

Figueres considered education the key to social betterment. "A high level of education brings with it a high

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[71]Figueres, Cartas a un ciudadano, p. 240.

[72]Ibid., p. 133.

economic and social level."[73] Costa Rica, justly proud of her high level of literacy and her claim to "more teachers than soldiers," still had a very inadequate school system--inadequate facilities, poorly-paid teachers, and inequality of educational opportunity. The fruits of economic advancement must go to attain a higher social development, through the instrument of an educational system which would be fully as modern as the political and economic systems. "In reality," maintained Figueres, "the abundance of educational, or cultural, or normative facilities should be the final objective of economic development; and equality of opportunity for individual improvement should be the principal motive of social struggles."[74] Education also served as the guardian of democracy, charged with the preservation of its citizens for democratic life.

> If we wave as our national emblem the banner of democracy, we must make our schools, and our centers of fundamental education, the molds in which democracy is cast. The builders of democracy must be our teachers. The mysticism of democracy must inspire the life of our children. Democracy and education must go hand in hand, in the classrooms as well as in the communal centers of Costa Rica.[75]

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[73]Figueres, Inaugural Address, p. 6.

[74]Figueres, Cartas a un ciudadano, p. 271.

[75]Figueres, Inaugural Address, p. 6.

To achieve these educative aims schools were established, especially technical and vocational schools; programs for adult education, as provided for in the Constitution, were begun; and the most up-to-date pedagogical thought was studied and applied. Under the Constitution of 1948 education was declared to be a function of the State and teachers were considered public servants. Efforts were made to increase their salaries, improve teacher-training programs, and raise qualifications for educators. Professional organizations were encouraged, and teachers were affiliated in the Asociación Nacional de Educadores (ANDE). The premise of freedom in teaching at all levels was firmly upheld. Figueres hoped that, through educational progress, the hard-won victories of the National Liberation Movement would achieve permanence and continue to benefit future generations.

Figueres felt that schools, important as they were, formed only a part of the educative process. All education does not take place in formal institutions of learning. "There are few things of such great educational effect, which have such a great influence over several generations at one time, as the house in which one lives."[76] Improved

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[76]Figueres, Cartas a un ciudadano, p. 272.

housing, then, served both a material and a spiritual need. The Instituto Nacional de Vivienda y Urbanismo (INVU), one of the autonomous institutions, undertood a low-cost housing construction program. This served to expand urban areas; provided employment; and performed a valuable service in helping to reconstruct homes destroyed by disastrous floods in 1954.

Labor's part in society was also recognized. The advanced Labor Code, adopted in 1943, was retained by the new government. In his Inaugural Address in 1953, Figueres promised Labor:

> The democratic labour movement will receive our cooperation, so that the struggle for the improvement of the condition of the working man will be carried out in an organized manner. Reforms to labour legislation will be proposed where necessary, so that unions will operate effectively, and fulfill their mission, ministering to a need which is felt in all countries.[77]

The labor organization which came nearest to fulfilling the mission of unions, as Figueres visualized it, was the Catholic Workers Union Rerum Novarum. It had opposed the communist-infiltrated Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina (CTAL), and its Costa Rican branch, the Confederación de Trabajadores de Costa Rica. The leader

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[77]Figueres, Inaugural Address, p. 7.

of Rerum Novarum, Father Benjamín Núñez, had long been an ally of Figueres and served as his Minister of Labor.

Other social needs were administered by various agencies. The Social Security Insurance Fund provided for workmen's compensation, health and maternity benefits, and old age, invalidity, and survivor payments. The Health Department, set up under the Sanitary Code and supervised by the Minister of Health, carried on services having to do with public health and medical and social work. The Inter-American Technical Service of Agricultural Cooperation (STICA) promoted better nutrition and environmental sanitation.

Figueres regretted that the urgency of economic problems had caused spiritual and esthetic aspects of Costa Rican life to be neglected. He stressed the importance of the higher form of cultural expression--national music, art, literature, and philosophy. "The formation of man, and of the people, should be integral. Many human aptitudes flourish spontaneously, but they need cultivation, stimulation, and environment in order to reach their fulness."[78]

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[78]Figueres, Cartas a un ciudadano, p. 275.

International Economy

Figueres, like many of the other democratic Latin American leaders, was a strong exponent of economic independence. He realized, however, that Costa Rica did not have sufficient capital or technical know-how of her own to carry out the rapid development program which he considered to be necessary. Therefore he did not adopt a policy of extreme nationalism, but outlined a solution in which nationally-owned companies were created to compete and cooperate with foreign-owned ones. He intended that, eventually, with the encouragement and backing of the government, the national entities would gain supremacy over the foreign interests and force them out. Foreign and national businesses could peacefully and profitably co-exist. Foreign capital would serve to foster new industry, provide employment opportunities, and develop the country's resources. It must, however, operate in such a fashion as to serve the best interests of the host country, by returning a fair share of the profits to the national treasury, and by eliminating discriminatory practices. Concessions to other nations would be considered "temporary," for Figueres

felt that: "The right of property, exercised permanently by residents of one country over an important sector of the economy of another is inconvenient for both countries."[79] Considering carefully the actual state of the economy, and Costa Rica's industrial immaturity, he saw that it would be disastrous to eject all foreign enterprises suddenly and completely. He thought it wiser to benefit from the available foreign capital and retain the good will of the investor nations. "We are not trying to kill the goose of the golden eggs, but we are trying to get her to lay the eggs in our nest,"[80] quipped Figueres.

Guided by these principles, Figueres set about to deal with Costa Rica's knotty problem of dominant foreign commercial enterprises. The United Fruit Company, which had long controlled much of the banana industry, was not expropriated. Figueres felt that it acted as a stabilizing agency and preferred to negotiate a new contract with the Company, which would serve as "an example of cooperation between United States capital and under-developed countries."[81]

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[79]Navarro Bolandi, José Figueres en la evolución de Costa Rica, p. 52.

[80]Figueres, Estos diez años (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1958), p. 11.

[81]New York Times, June 29, 1953, p. 7.

An agreement was finally reached whereby the Company was to pay a thirty per cent income tax (double the previous rate) and twelve per cent additional taxes. The Costa Rican government took over the social services formerly administered by the Company. The power of the Company was further circumscribed by the creation of a national banana company, BANARICA, and a concession granted to a rival company, the Standard Fruit Company.

Figueres strongly felt that public utilities, whenever possible, should belong to the nation. "Public services are a major part of economic sovereignty."[82] Because of the extreme power shortage, however, he did not expel the American-owned Compañía Nacional de Fuerza y Luz, but created an autonomous institution, the Costa Rican Institute of Electricity, to cooperate with the American company until the time when it could adequately replace it and supply sufficient power for all of Costa Rica's needs.

Both Ulate and Figueres negotiated loans from the International Bank, Export-Import Bank, and World Bank

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[82]Figueres, "Point Four, a Latin American View," p. 9.

for reconstruction and development projects, such as highways, airports, hydro-electric plants, and other essential developments. Figueres praised international credit agencies as a constructive form of international cooperation, but did not consider loans as un-mixed blessings or a perfect panacea for economic ills. He feared that they would lead to overdependency on the part of the debtor nations and aggravate conditions which might lead to economic imperialism on the part of the creditor nations. He felt strongly that Latin America must learn to depend on its own resources and efforts.

The Point Four plan of economic aid proposed by President Truman was a step in the right direction, Figueres believed, for the idea of technical cooperation to assist the under-developed countries in realizing their own possibilities, was welcome in Latin America. He regarded the program with some reservations, however, for he felt that technological advancement must be accompanied by moral considerations. "It is too often assumed that the development of Latin America is merely a question of technology and capital investment. This assumption overlooks what is probably the fundamental issue in the

moral issue."[83] He specified clearly what Latin America did not want in the way of aid or investment from other countries: colonialism; private investment in public utilities; so-called "philanthropic" enterprises which are, in reality, profit-seeking. Latin Americans do want, stated Figueres, fair prices for their products, a solution to the problem of unfair distribution, and a national income sufficient to support a reasonable standard of living for the whole population. There must be a "cultural investment" to accompany capital investment and technological advances.

With regard to international trade, Figueres blasted the "myth" of "free enterprise." "There is nothing as venerable as 'free competition,' when the buyers are the rich and the sellers the poor!"[84] In actuality the traditional United States trade policy of the "free market" was, in effect, a "U. S. controlled market." He believed that the continuation of the antiquated policy was erroneous thinking on the part of the United States, and a form of "economic suicide." He pleaded his case for

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[83]Figueres, "Point Four, a Latin American View," p. 9.

[84]Figueres, "No se puede escupir en una política," p. 67.

economic recognition of Latin America in these words:

> We are not asking for gifts, except in some emergency . . . What we want is that we be paid justly for the sweat of our people, the essence of our soil, when we provide for some other country's needs. With this we would have enough to live, and to raise our own capital, and to develop ourselves.
>
> But while it is permitted that the weight of the large economies tip the balance of prices in our disfavor so that we continue to sell cheap and buy dear, we shall continue to be poor, and you, the industrial countries, will not benefit from a growing market in Latin America.[85]

Therefore, it was evident to Figueres that the American nations, so commercially interdependent, should increase their wealth by sharing. In this way the Western nations could develop as an entity, through integration rather than competition. The dual economic standard between the Americas of the North and South should be abandoned, for "Friendship flourishes lastingly only among equals."[86] Figueres urged the application to international trade of the principles that had been proved successful in the internal economy of the United States and other nations and which he was trying to establish in Costa Rica: better prices, resulting in broader markets, which in turn bring about greater prosperity and expansion. The hemisphere

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[85]Figueres, "No se puede escupir en una política," pp. 66-67.

[86]Figueres, "Problems of Democracy in Latin America," pp. 19-20.

as a whole--Canada, the United States, and Latin America--should formulate and participate in a great economic plan. This plan would include such measures as: price stabilization for dependable income and sound market; liberal tax policies on foreign businesses for increased income to be devoted to domestic development; low U. S. tariffs to encourage light industry in less-developed countries. Another feature of the proposed plan was the allocation of activities so that the nations' economies would complement each other rather than conflict. Heavy industry could be concentrated in the United States and Canada, and light industry left to less-industrialized countries. Furthermore, the hemisphere should join its efforts to participate on a world scale, perhaps through the establishment of a common market, such as that being tried in Central America, and through a system of world food reserves administered by the United Nations. This would be a stabilizing, distributing agency on the order of the National Production Council of Costa Rica. Figueres approved heartily of the steps already taken in this direction, such as the creation of the International Coffee Office.

In economic matters, as in politics, the position of the United States was undeniably preponderant. Her leadership in technology and economic thought were in great demand. It was her "noblesse oblige" to exercise this leadership in the interests of the Free World. In the words of Figueres, speaking for all of Latin America:

> . . . if the United States has an interest in hemispheric unity, it has to assume for itself the leadership of the strong, of the privileged, of the generous, in order that there may spring forth an effective solidarity among the Americas of today.[87]

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[87] José Figueres, "La América de Hoy," Combate, II, No. 7 (Julio-Agosto, 1959), p. 11.

CHAPTER VI

THE ELECTION OF 1958

At the height of Figueres' administration, several factors arose to impede the realization of his ambitious program. Severe floods in 1954 and 1955 made it imperative to divert funds from new projects to rebuild devastated areas. Though basically sound, the economy suffered a slight recession and the administration was criticized for economic instability and extravagant spending. The unfinished airports and highways made a stronger impression on the public than the rows of comfortable new houses and the statistics compiled by the Central Bank, which showed all-over economic gains.

The first rush of revolutionary enthusiasm had passed and Figueres' popularity was no longer unquestioned. The political situation began to grow complicated as the various layers of public opinion began to split apart. Many of the lower-class elements were disappointed because all their grievances had not been immediately and miraculously elim-

inated. They chafed at enduring temporary inconveniences for the sake of remote long-range goals. Business opposed the high tariff, the nationalization policies, and wanted to reinstate the profitable import business and lucrative private banking and public utility enterprises. The large property owners objected to the tax load on their assets and income. The opposition began to stress these issues of discontent, blaming Figueres for the economic slump, accusing him of showing partiality to the National Liberation Party's candidate, and condemning his radical socialism.

Figueres' opposition represented the traditional political groups: irate businessmen; disgruntled labor; unemployed farm workers; vengeful communists; and all those who felt they had been slighted by the National Liberation Movement. These ill-assorted components united in Ulate's old National Union Party and selected Mario Echandi as their candidate for the 1958 election. Echandi was a more typical, traditional Costa Rican politician, having an established, well-to-do family background and a long political career. He had served as Embassador to the United States under Ulate, and as a cabinet minister. Exiled as a result of his pro-Calderón Guardia sympathies in 1955, Echandi had recently been re-admitted to the country. The main platform of

Ulate-Echandismo was to slow down and reverse Figueres' liberal-social program. They advocated lower tariffs, a reduced national budget, and private and foreign banks.

Calderón Guardia, whose inextinguishable glamour still had a fascination, enhanced now by a tinge of martyrdom, rallied his loyal followers and enlisted new ones to make a political comeback. His supporters called themselves the Republican Party, but named no candidate. Most of their votes went to Echandi.

In the face of this stiff opposition, the National Liberation Party failed to present a united front. A split had developed in Figueres' party in 1955. This split was not occasioned by a disagreement over basic tenets, but over the manner of carrying out the party's aims. Minister of Public Works, Francisco Orlich, represented the continuation of Figueres' program of rapid nationalization of power, housing development projects, social security measures, and land reform. He was considered to be the favorite candidate of the National Liberation Party. The dissenting group, led by Minister of Finance Jorge Rossi, wanted to slow the process of reform and keep it geared to the country's economic capabilities.

Campaigning was lively. Figueres battled the conservative sentiment which prevailed among the opposition by recalling the economic advances made, stressing the respect for electoral authority, improved government efficiency, and hard-won peaceful relations with neighboring countries. He earnestly urged support for the continuation and fulfillment of the National Liberation Movement.

The competition promised to be keen. Figueres affirmed that the elections of 1958 would be the "cleanest elections ever."[88] All voting, of course, was to be conducted by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal. In addition, as an added precaution, Figueres requested that the United Nations send a team of neutral observers to be present during the election, to have free access to the polls, and to be allowed to probe into the machinery of voting and inspect all phases of the election. The United Nations Secretary General granted the request. A list of forty candidates was presented, each of the major Costa Rican political parties was to pick one, making a total of three observers on the committee. The team finally selected consisted of representatives from

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[88] New York Times, January 17, 1958, p. 16.

Canada, Sweden, and Uruguay. This team was to submit a report of the election, based on their honest reaction to their observations, to Figueres, who would then release it to the public. Dr. Horace E. Read of Halifax, Nova Scotia, was to study critically the election procedures and make suggestions for the improvement of the unwieldy Costa Rican voting machinery. This action of Figueres set a precedent, as it was the first time in Latin America that foreign experts had been invited to observe a private, domestic function. As might be expected, it created much controversial discussion. The opposition objected that it might be interpreted by outsiders as a "reflection of the country's ability to conduct free elections."[89] Figueres admitted that only a politically immature nation would take such pride in demonstrating that the elections were honest, something which would be taken for granted in such "civilized" countries as Sweden, Canada, and Uruguay. "I felt a certain regret that we should show them a normal election as if it were something extraordinary,"[90] confessed Figueres.

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[89] New York Times, January 17, 1958, p. 16.

[90] Figueres, Las elecciones de 1958 . . . , p. 3.

His intention was, however, to guarantee absolute honesty so that his victory, or defeat, would be above reproach, and to demonstrate his good faith to the outside world. He justified his action thusly: ". . . we took one more precaution, as an additional guarantee for the opposing forces, and for the public opinion of America: my Government requested, and obtained, a commission of observers from the United Nations."[91]

The voting proceeded in an orderly, almost gay, fashion. When it was announced that the National Union candidate, Mario Echandi, was victorious, Figueres accepted the defeat in good grace. Adhering to his principle of respect for suffrage, he unhesitatingly ceded the presidency to his fairly-elected successor. "I consider our defeat as a contribution to democracy," declared Figueres, "It is not customary for a party in power to lose an election."[92] An honest election, like the one which had just been carried out, was what he and his Movement had been fighting for, and he expressed his desire to comply with the popular will:

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[91]Figueres, "La revolución en Latinoamérica," Combate, I, No. 5, Suplemento (Mayo, 1959), p. 5.

[92]New York Times, February 6, 1958, p. 10.

"Let those of us who have taken the government with arms, be ever ready to allow it to be taken from us with votes."[93] He extolled the honesty of the elections and congratulated Echandi on his victory.

Now Figueres' duty, as he saw it, was to retire and become a "responsible opposition," which, to him, was just as much a part of democracy as a responsible government. He spoke for himself and his supporters by saying: "We had the honor of losing the Presidency of the Republic."[94] A party, felt Figueres, also had an important function to fulfill out of power. "Woe to the revolutionary party which goes so far as to think that continuing in the government is indispensable for the development of its program! This is the illusion of totalitarian regimes."[95] Although he would have preferred to retire from public life, he declared his intention to "remain in the militant ranks of the National Liberation Movement."[96] He was confident that: ". . . the revolution will continue, no matter what the alternatives, because it is an educative revolution, because

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[93]Figueres, "La revolución en Latinoamérica," p. 4.

[94]Ibid., p. 5.

[95]Ibid., p. 4.

[96]Figueres, Las elecciones de 1958 . . . , p. 16.

it is based on logical execution, on study, on the creation of organisms, and on the difusion of ideas."[97]

The Costa Rican election of 1958 was a landmark in the history of Costa Rica and of Latin America. It set the precedent for inviting neutral observers from an international organization to review an election. It was also unique in another respect. The party in power, which owed its existence to a revolutionary movement and had overthrown the previous government by force of arms, respected the institutions it had established, complied by the results of a free election, and thereby lived up to the democratic ideals it professed. Figueres' defeat did not represent a bitter denouncement of the man or his party. It was a natural manifestation of the complicated national consciousness. The National Liberation Movement had antagonized both the extreme Right and Left. The period of intense national development had denounced the leftist influence and avoided its pitfalls. It had, however, presented too many new concepts and had proceeded too rapidly for those at the right-of-center position. The conservative tendencies of the

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[97]Figueres, "La revolución en Latinoamérica," p. 5.

Costa Ricans, mistrustful of radical, rapid change, had once more been asserted. Another contributing factor was the split in the National Liberation Party, which greatly decreased its strength.

CHAPTER VII

FIGUERES AS WORLD STATESMAN

Figueres, free from presidential responsibilities, could turn his attention to larger problems, and devoted more of his energies to international affairs. He exerted his influence in three main areas: political and economic recognition for Latin America; elimination of dictators and communism in the Western Hemisphere; and hemispheric solidarity.

Urging that the Latin American nations should no longer be considered the step-children of the hemisphere, he maintained that they were fully ready to be recognized as political entities, and completely capable of managing their internal affairs in orderly, democratic fashion if given the opportunity and the encouragement to do so. "The Latin American peoples are ripe for democracy. They have heard so much for such a long time about representative government, free elections, respect for the dignity of man, division of governmental powers, and all that goes with democratic creed, that you could no more erase those political aspirations

than you could eradicate the Christian faith."[98] The Latin Americans have demonstrated their desire and readiness for democracy by the fact that they have ". . . never ceased to fight for their liberties."[99] They consider themselves western in tradition and ideology, and are ready and anxious to take their place on the side of the free nations of the world. To do this, they must attain political and economic stability according to the example set by the successful democracies, such as Great Britain and the United States. For their part, the relatively underdeveloped countries of Latin America, with their "natural and human resources, constitute the great reserve of the New World. The American hemisphere as a whole offers an appropriate habitat to Twentieth Century Man."[100] Thus these countries would contribute their strength and resources to the common effort. The family of nations can survive only if all the members are accepted on equal terms, each one sovereign both politically and economically. "We live in an epoc of world inte-

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[98]Figueres, "Problems of Democracy in Latin America," p. 3.

[99]Ibid., p. 4.

[100]Ibid., p. 7.

gration. The great differences among poor countries and rich countries should disappear. Peace and brotherhood can only be firm among equals."[101] Figueres has intensified his efforts to achieve recognition for Latin America through the establishment of democratic institutions and economic progress. He has cooperated with international groups created for these same purposes, such as the Central American Coffee Federation, which tries to establish fair and stable prices for this important commodity; the Central American Common Market, whose purpose is to eliminate trade barriers and encourage mutually beneficial trade among member nations--El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica--by setting up uniform import duties and export taxes; and the Inter-American Press Association, dedicated to furthering freedom of expression and better communication among all the American nations. In another attempt at cooperation, Figueres convened a meeting of political and organized labor leaders at his _finca_, "La Lucha," in 1959. He shares his ideas and represents his party and his country by giving lectures in the United

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[100] Figueres, "Problems of Democracy," p. 7.

[101] Figueres, _Estos diez años_, p. 13.

States at universities and conventions, and by writing for publications, such as the periodical Combate, organ of the Instituto Internacional de Estudios Político-Sociales of San José, which he co-edits with other prominent political and social leaders of Latin America, among them Rómulo Betancourt, President of Venezuela; Haya de la Torre, leader of the Peruvian Apristas; and Luis Alberto Monge of Costa Rica.

Figueres has been engaged for most of his public life in the struggle to eradicate communism and dictatorships in Latin America. His views are the same as those of the leaders of other democratic ideological groups in Latin America: Betancourt of Acción Democrática of Venezuela; Haya de la Torree of APRA of Peru; the Partido Revolucionario of Guatemala; the Partido Liberal of Honduras; and their counterparts in the other countries. These democratic parties of the Left have aligned themselves to combat totalitarianism, whether it be of an individual or an international party. Recently (December, 1959) a conference of representatives of these parties was convened at Figueres' home, "La Lucha," to found a Centro Interamericano de Capacitación Política for the defense of democracy and the struggle against dictators in the Western Hemisphere. One object of this con-

ference was to establish an Instituto de Educación Política to prepare enlightened democratic leaders and citizens.

Waging the battle on an active as well as on an ideological plane, Costa Rica has been involved on various occasions in disputes with dictatorial powers that have come dangerously near to open warfare. Figueres' implacable crusade has earned him the reputation of being "aggressively democratic." He makes no attempt to hide his contempt for the dictatorial regimes of Somoza, Stroessner, Trujillo, and their ilk, and urges united action against them on the part of all the democratic nations. He approves of revolutionary means to overthrow dictators, for he affirms that if a government is "ignorant, corrupt, and illegitimate," it is the duty of the citizens to change it. However, he considers revolutions, like that of 1948, justified "only when the doors of suffrage have been closed to the people,"[102] and feels that "so long as it is legitimately elected, a bad Government is better than a good revolution."[103] The best, most civilized means of settling disputes is through

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[102]Figueres and Gonzalo J. Facio, Mensaje . . . ante la Asamblea Legislativa (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1955), p. 13.

[103]New York Times, April 29, 1959, p. 6.

international cooperation, utilizing the organizations set up for that purpose among nations. He proposes that the Organization of American States take discriminatory action against dictatorships, such as Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic, by expelling them from the organization. He hailed the Cuban revolution of 1959 enthusiastically as a victory for democracy, but later expressed his disappointment as Castro began to show tendencies of becoming a rabble-supported demagogue instead of a popularly-supported president. He disapproved of Castro's dealings with the Communists and his refusal to whole-heartedly support the cause of the Western Nations.

Figueres sincerely feels that if the Free World is to survive the threat of communism and totalitarianism, it must present a united front against these foes. He, like the other Latin American liberal leaders, believes that the Western Hemisphere is a unit--geographically, politically, culturally--and that fragmentation would be disastrous. "Hemispheric unity requires a uniform political philosophy, adhered to in fact as well as in principle, by all the member nations of the family."[104] The family of nations must have

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[104] New York Times, October 18, 1959.

a strong leader, and the United States is the logical choice for this position. "We want the United States to appear as the leader of the democracies, a leader of a certain political creed, and to encourage free elections everywhere, freedom of the press, respect for judiciary, separation of powers and honesty in government."[105] Undisputed leader in commerce and industry, the other American nations look to the United States to provide leadership in moral, political, cultural, and philosophical aspects as well. Whatever Latin America's grievances against the United States might be, they must admit her superior position and contributions to the modern world, and accept her as their standard bearer. This view of Figueres is not altruistic, but realistic. He is among the first to recognize the failure of the United States to live up to its reputation and responsibilities, and often chides it in a friendly but deadly serious fashion.

> You feared being accused of intervention. Actually the non-intervention policy was a 'conquest' of Latin America at the proper time. It is your unavoidable lot to always be accused of something. As a friend of the U. S. I would rather see you accused of doing something, if it be a noble something, than of doing nothing.[106]

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[105] New York Times, May 30, 1959.

[106] Ibid., October 18, 1959.

His main criticism is that the United States has failed to give firm and open support to democratic governments and to exert sufficient moral influence through the O.A.S. It is not using its most powerful weapon, freedom, to fight ideology with ideology. The crusade should be positive, for freedom, as well as negative, against totalitarianism.

Solidarity of nations can best be expressed through their organization for cooperation. Figueres' theme of the importance of active participation of all American nations in the combined effort realized by the O.A.S. and the U.N. recurs again and again. Only by their constant use and improvement can the world and hemispheric organizations, so nobly and optimistically instituted, realize the ideals for which they were conceived and created. If not guarded and cultivated, they will become meaningless and atrophied formalities. Figueres has supplied examples of how these organizations can be used to perform vital functions on various occasions. In 1948 and 1955 he used the mediating power of the O.A.S. to avert war with Nicaragua. In 1958 he requested a team of neutral monitors from the U.N. to observe the Costa Rican election. Recently he has proposed that the sorrowful plight of the Dominican Republic be

solved by placing it under a mandate of the United Nations in order "to restore the civic health of that country, suppressed by the most pathological of tropical dictatorships."[107] Another of his proposals was to create a District of the Americas in the Canal Zone as the seat of the O.A.S., which would serve to unite and defend the hemisphere.

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[107] Figueres, "Mandato de las Naciones Unidas en la República Dominicana," Combate, I, No. 2 (Septiembre-Octubre, 1958), p. 69.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND EVALUATION

Figueres belongs to the generation of Latin American liberal-democratic idealists who have formed parties dedicated to ideologies which they propose to transform into reality by means of formally-stated programs. These programs are democratically oriented in the political sense and socialistically oriented in the economic sense. They seek freedom of expression, civil rights, responsible government, permanent political parties, and other political reforms. They also strive for an adequate standard of living, respect for human dignity, universal education, and economic independence. All agree that Latin America must discover her own method of organization and direct her own destiny.

Figueres' precepts, therefore, are not original with him, having been first enunciated by earlier leaders. One of the earliest and most influential of these, the inspiration and model of similar movements which were to appear later, is Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, leader of the Alianza

Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA) of Peru. This movement began in 1924 and set forth a program of education, agrarian reform, nationalization, and inter-American cooperation. It sought to create a new political order for Peru which would accommodate both the indigenous and European cultures. The Apristas renounced warfare and violence and instead tried to establish their movement by peaceful and educative means, converting people to their cause by convincing them of its merits. Other parties which followed the leadership of the Apristas and adopted many of their tenets were Acción Democrática of Venezuela, the Partido Febrerista of Paraguay, the Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario (MNR) of Bolivia, the Auténticos of Cuba, Acción Revolucionaria of Guatemala, the Partido Liberal of Honduras, and Figueres' Partido Liberación Nacional of Costa Rica. Upon the occasion of the inauguration of Rómulo Betancourt, leader of Acción Democrática, to the presidency of Venezuela in 1959, the leaders of these parties enunciated the "Declaration of Caracas." This was a statement of their common principles: (1) Faith in democracy; (2) repudiation of dictatorial or totalitarian regimes; (3) condemnation of the governments of the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and Paraguay; (4) exclusion of dictator-

ships from the O.A.S.; (5) strengthening of integration and unity of Latin American nations; (6) recognition of and cooperation with the United States.[108]

Basically Figueres follows the ideas he shares with his fellow leaders--Haya de la Torre, Betancourt, Paz Estenssoro, and the others--but his plan for Costa Rica has varied somewhat. He deplored the necessity of war as a means for effecting political change, but admitted its justification to defend the right of suffrage. He tempered his nationalist feelings with a desire to cooperate and achieve mutually beneficial solutions with other nations and to accede to decisions made through international organizations. Costa Rica did not face the problem of incorporating Indians or other racial groups into the national life, as did countries like Peru, Bolivia, Mexico, and Guatemala.

Although Figueres did not originate his main political and economic philosophies, he gave them an original interpretation. Espousing the tenets of both socialism and democracy, he demonstrated that the two can be reconciled

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[108]"Declaración de Caracas," Combate, I, No. 4 (Enero-Febrero, 1959), p. 2.

and incorporated into the same national structure. He differentiated between the functions each was to serve, however, using the term "democracy" to refer to the political system and "socialism" to the economic system. Democracy he defines as follows: "Democracy is a society in which each individual has clear understanding of what the group is doing; it is the collaboration of all in the direction of that which belongs to all; collaboration which is manifested in an ordered and rational form, whether it be by casting a vote to elect a public official, or by contributing publicly to the solution of a difficulty, or by censuring harmful procedures, or simply by approving with silence the actions of those who execute the general will."[109] With regard to Socialism, he believes that: "Socialism is the aspiration toward an economic order in which each gives the maximum of his capacities in the organized production of essential commodities in exchange for standards of living which are as elevated as the accumulated wealth and the daily production of the general effort will permit."[110]

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[109]Figueres, Palabras gastadas . . . (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1955), p. 11.

[110]Ibid., p. 20.

The revolution of José Figueres, due to the unique qualities of the man and the country, did not exactly follow the pattern of any preceding revolution. The military element played a minor role throughout. The Movement was put in power by a civilian army, led by a civilian "general," and promptly faded from the picture once victory had been achieved. One of the first acts of the new political order was to renounce militarism and proscribe the army as a permanent institution. The transition from revolutionary government to constitutional government was successfully and expeditiously accomplished, demonstrating Figueres' ability to administrate liberty as well as to fight for it--to "live" liberty as well as to be willing to die for it.

The work of the National Liberation Movement, as summed up by a contemporary Costa Rican, Hugo Navarro Bolandi, was: ". . . to save all that is good and beneficial from the traditional past . . . to modernize it, to make it fruitful and useful, and above all, to give it an ideological content in harmony with universal currents."[111] Thus Figueres' contributions were those of preservation and synthesis. He

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[111]Navarro Bolandi, La Generación del 48, p. 132.

sought neither to destroy nor vindicate past political wrongs, as demonstrated by his retention of many of the established laws and by his amnesty to his political enemies, particularly Calderón Guardia and Mario Echandi, both of whom were permitted to return to Costa Rica and to hold office in the country. He attempted to change only provisions which were obsolete or harmful. He established democratic institutions, and respected them when they applied to him. His chief contributions to Costa Rican institutional life were: electoral honesty, reinforced by adequate legal measures; increased governmental flexibility and responsibility; elimination of corruption in government and a greater efficiency in its operation; a broader base for democracy through universal suffrage, encouragement of a party system for political expression, and a greater political maturity on the part of the citizens.

Figueres equates democracy with economic advancement. He attributes political stability largely to economic and social causes and realizes that democracy cannot exist and flourish under unhealthy economic and social conditions. He made constructive efforts to modernize Costa Rica's

economy as a basis for her democratic development. Among his principal economic considerations were: an expanded market, to increase wealth by sharing it, both on the national and international levels; insistence upon the development of human resources along with technological development; the device of autonomous institutions as a form of state control of essential services and commodities, acting in the public good, but independent of the government; integration of foreign enterprises and local businesses as a practical economic measure and an example of international cooperation. In economic matters, Figueres has shown himself to be hard-headed, practical, and moderate, as well as philosophic and idealistic.

Internationally, Figueres has made Costa Rica's cause the cause of all Latin America. A long-time spokesman for the struggle against militarism and totalitarianism, he advocates attaining their extinction through withholding of diplomatic recognition, and encouragement for democratic movements. Nations should deal with each other on the basis of peaceful negotiations and economic and cultural cooperation. They should uphold international organizations, whether regional or universal, as the instruments through

which all nations can contribute to world unity and progress. Even though anti-U.S. feeling in Latin America has reached such a pitch that any identification with the United States becomes a handicap for the Latin American politician who dares to support U. S. policies, Figueres has not renounced his long-standing friendship with the United States, although he admits that: "A Latin American official who declares himself a friend of the United States, needs courage and political sacrifice."[112] He firmly believes that the hope for the future of Latin America lies in cooperation with the United States, which is the ". . . spokesman of the West in the world conflict . . ."[113]

Figueres is an ardent foe of communism, and is adamantly opposed to its principle of international organization which demands loyalty which takes supremacy over national loyalty and its contradiction of the basic beliefs of Western Christian nations. He proposes to fight it sensibly, however. "Some methods of combatting communism have been more destructive than communism itself. We are combatting communism

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[112] Figueres, "La América de Hoy," p. 11.

[113] Ibid., p. 10.

by discovering its roots and then tearing it out intelligently."[114] He has a good understanding of communist theory, and appreciates its ideological appeal: "Communism is more than just so many economic and scientific theories, subject to rectification. Communism is, for those of us who do not feel it, a passion; for those who adopt it, a religion, a central idea."[115] He sees no need for hysterical fear on the part of the Latin American nations, for communist philosophy is not easily accepted among American peoples. Precautions should be taken, however, to avoid conditions which contribute to its infiltration--social injustice and economic poverty, subversive revolutionary activities, and lack of effective opposition on an international scale.

Throughout his career, Figueres has been motivated by his high ideals, which are to create a political system which will realize the aspirations of the people to "enjoy civil, political, and spiritual rights;and to satisfy as much as possible the necessities of food, lodging, clothing, health, and education."[116] His vision of the Costa Rica of

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[114] New York Times, November 18, 1955, p. 3.

[115] Figueres, "La América de Hoy," p. 9.

[116] Figueres, Estos diez años, p. 7.

the future is:

> A country full of small, clean, comfortable houses, modest but self-owned. . . A country where each farmer who wishes land of his own may have it and cultivate it. . . A country with electricity and telephones, and radios and television within reach of all. A country with credit facilities, stable prices, and just wages. A country which does not have to give away to the exterior the national products, like coffee until a few years ago, and like cacao up to this moment. A country with elementary and secondary schools and health and recreation centers for all, although a privileged few may not have cheap and submissive servants and squander freely the product of the enterprises, which in reality are part of the national wealth, no matter who their proprietors or administrators may have been. A Costa Rica of the future without misery, composed of conscientious citizens, living in order, liberty, and social justice.[117]

All of his efforts were directed towards realizing this comprehensive, far-seeing goal. He visualized Costa Rica as a nation democratic in its political functions, socially conscious in its economic activities, and spiritually and intellectually free. "The human mind is the zenith of creation, and liberty is its favorite attribute,"[118] declared Figueres, and added that "while intelligence reigns, there is liberty."[119]

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[117] Figueres, Los deberes de mi destino (San José: Imprenta Vargas, 1947), pp. 8-9.

[118] Figueres, Palabras gastadas, p. 35.

[119] Ibid., p. 32.

With profound faith in the ability of the Costa Rican people to achieve these ideals, Figueres attested: "I can answer for an American country where the soil is already prepared, and there is seed, and there is the appropriate atmosphere, so that the ever-verdant tree of democratic life may grow freely and richly and shelter in its branches the purple guaria of Costa Rica."[120]

Figueres has been considered by some to be a bit too idealistic. The return to more conservative government in 1958 indicates that a majority of Costa Ricans held this view. The country no longer felt the urgency of reform and expressed its preference for slower, less radical progress. Figueres is an idealist, to be sure. He is a philosopher and theorist who is "ahead of the times," and like others of this far-sighted and largely misunderstood breed who cannot change the world to fit their ideals, and who will not abandon their ideals in order to fit into the world as it is, he has seen many of his schemes miscarried or rejected by his contemporaries. Navarro Bolandi defends Figueres' idealism: "Figueres in his doctrine never transcends the

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[120]Figueres, Palabras gastadas, p. 35.

limits of nature."[121] Figueres himself denies that his ideas are out of step with the times and the capabilities of his country. He cites the success of his plan for Costa Rica: "Costa Rica is one of the countries which is realizing in our times the difficult experiment of combining order with liberty, and planned development with democratic government."[122] José Figueres has fought to make his tiny republic an active and respected member of the family of nations, and has demonstrated that a small country can contribute with moral example to the cause of structural betterment of human societies.

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[121] Navarro Bolandi, La Generación del 48, p. 186.

[122] Figueres, Estos diez años, p. 21.

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