

## FOUNDATIONS OF POLITICAL CONTRAST: COSTA RICA AND NICARAGUA\*

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**D**URING THE PAST FEW YEARS the scholarship performed in the field of comparative government and politics has come in for its fair share of criticism. It has been contended by academic critics that comparative government is often not comparative at all — that it is full of dry, nonsignificant description, without meaningful comparison or conclusion. It is argued that many of its materials are simply massive data, or quantitative research.

It is contended, furthermore, that much so-called comparative government study is too formalized, with a stress on constitutional phraseology rather than on political reality. Comparative government scholarship has also been criticized for its failure to examine causality, to at least hypothesize concerning basic reasons for the rather persistent presence or absence of various types of political phenomena — democracy or dictatorship, single-party or multi-party systems order or chaos, monarchism or republicanism, and so forth — in various parts of the world.

Finally, the study of comparative government has been charged with extreme parochialism, in that — in contrast to studies by historians, anthropologists, economists, humanists, and so forth — it stresses a few European governments and little else.<sup>1</sup>

On the matter of parochialism, it may be charged with some validity that much comparative government study not only confines itself to Europe alone, but within Europe stresses only those few countries which happen to be journalistically prominent. These are generally Great Britain, France, Germany, and the Soviet Union. In this case, it is the squeaky wheel that gets the academic grease.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For elaboration on these and other criticisms of the present condition of comparative government, see C. B. Macpherson, "World Trends in Political Science Research," *American Political Science Review*, XLVIII (June, 1954), 427 ff.; "Research in Comparative Politics," *American Political Science Review*, XLVII (September, 1953), 641 ff.; George T. McT. Kahin *et al.*, "Research in Comparative Politics," *American Political Science Review*, XLIX (December, 1955), 1024 ff.; and Roy C. Macridis, *The Study of Comparative Government* (New York: Random House Short Studies in Political Science, 1955).

<sup>2</sup> On this see any standard textbook, e.g., Gwendolen M. Carter *et al.*, *Major Foreign Powers* (3rd ed.; New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1957); Herman Finer, *Governments of Greater European Powers* (New York: Holt, 1956); Normal L. Hill *et al.*, *The Background of European Governments* (3rd ed.; New York: Rinehart, 1951); Lionel Laing *et al.*, *Source Book in European Government* (New York: Sloane, 1950); Robert G. Neumann, *European and Comparative Government* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955); James T. Shotwell *et al.*, *The Governments of Continental Europe* (rev. ed.;

It would be foolhardy indeed to contend that nothing of academic importance is to be learned about government or politics from such rarely studied European countries as Norway, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, Switzerland, Finland, or even Andorra. Indeed, it will be the burden of this paper to show that some quite significant causal hypotheses can be formulated by applying comparative method to the examination of government and politics in at least two "unimportant," even non-European, countries. The countries in this case will be Nicaragua and Costa Rica. The hypotheses will have to do with the causal factors underlying democracy or the lack of it in these two states.

#### MEANING OF TERMS

We need spend no time here wrestling over the "true" meaning of democracy. As was pointed out by an American reformer almost eighty years ago, "it makes little difference what name we give to things, if when we use the name we always keep in view the same things and no others."<sup>3</sup> In this paper, then, the following will be the meaning of the noun "democracy" or the adjective "democratic": *A political condition where the maximum possible numbers of people enjoy the maximum possible degree of freedom of choice, political and social participation, and security of the rule of law, during the maximum possible time.*

It will not be the contention here that any political condition can be called fully "democratic" or fully "undemocratic" by the above definition or by any other. There can be no doubt that some few democratic elements are to be found in even the most extreme dictatorship, as in the Soviet Union or in the late Nazi Germany; and that some few undemocratic elements are to be discovered in even the most "democratic" of political conditions, as in Sweden, Switzerland, or New Zealand.

In this matter of "democracy" or the lack of it, it is clear to almost all scholars that all is a world of shadows, that there are no sharp extremes. Harry B. Murkland expressed this well when he referred to distinctions between Costa Rica and her neighbors:

The contrast is so striking that there is a tendency to exaggerate it. Costa Rica has fewer political disorders and at wider intervals than the other Central American Republics. But it still has them. There are serious economic and political problems to be solved. This is not the Perfect State and it is doing the country no favor to so regard it. Its real accomplishments are great enough without building them up to an inevitable letdown.<sup>4</sup>

New York: Macmillan, 1952). Some slightly more exploratory texts would include William Bennett Munro and Morley Ayearst, *The Governments of Europe* (4th Ed.; New York: Macmillan, 1954), and Frederic A. Ogg and Harold Zink, *Modern Foreign Governments* (2nd ed.; New York: Macmillan, 1953). A book which really gets around a good part of the world is Fritz Morstein Marx, *Foreign Governments* (2d ed.; New York: Prentice Hall, 1952).

<sup>3</sup> Henry George, *Progress and Poverty* (1879) (75th Anniversary Edition; New York: Schalkenbach, 1955), p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> "Costa Rica: Fortunate Society," *Current History*, XXII (March, 1952), 141.

Nor is it suggested here that "democracy" is only a "political condition." It is also a social, economic, cultural, and psychological condition. It is a whole way of life. Confinement to the political aspects of "democracy" results only from an obvious need to limit the subject-matter of the paper and to decently adhere to the field of political science.

What will be contended herein is that political conditions can be arranged in some sort of spectrum, from the most "democratic" to the least "democratic";<sup>5</sup> that although no political condition can be put at either far extreme of the continuum, many can be placed somewhere near one end or the other; that the above definition can serve as a convenient and not entirely inaccurate device for determining which is to go where; that the Republic of Nicaragua can be placed somewhere near the "undemocratic" end of the spectrum; that Costa Rica can be located in somewhat closer proximity to the "democratic" end; that it is possible to hypothesize as to why these two neighbors are so different from each other; and that the results of such an examination can be significant, even though the states in question are not major European powers.

#### COSTA RICA, NICARAGUA, AND THEIR REPUTATIONS

It is understandable that no two sources appear to agree exactly regarding the areas and populations of Costa Rica and Nicaragua. The population of Costa Rica seems now to be a bit less than 1,000,000; that of Nicaragua something over 1,200,000. The area of Costa Rica is a little more than 19,600 square miles — about one-and-one-half times the size of The Netherlands; that of Nicaragua, just over 57,100 square miles — a few thousand square miles larger than Greece or Czechoslovakia.<sup>6</sup>

Both countries are in Central America, and they are adjacent to one another. Nicaragua is joined on her northwestern boundary by Honduras; Costa Rica is bounded on the southeast by Panama. Both have shores on the Pacific and on the Caribbean; both are mountainous and volcanic; both possess hot, damp, lowland areas, and in both are highlands where relief from the heat is available. Both are subject to frequent earthquakes. In both, Spanish is the official and widely spoken language, and both societies

<sup>5</sup>For more light on the arrangement of governments according to their "democratic" or "undemocratic" character, see Russell H. Fitzgibbon, "A Statistical Evaluation of Latin American Democracy," *Western Political Quarterly*, IX (September, 1956), 607-19; and J. L. Busey, "Political Terminologies Revised," *Social Studies*, XLVI (November, 1955), 257-59.

<sup>6</sup>Harry Hansen (ed.), *The World Almanac and Book of Facts for 1957* (New York: World-Telegram, 1957), pp. 404 and 430; Committee on Latin American Studies, University of California at Los Angeles, *Statistical Abstract of Latin America for 1956* (U.C.L.A., 1957), p. 4; and Walter H. Mallory (ed.), *Political Handbook of the World* (New York: Harper, for Council on Foreign Relations, 1957), pp. 44 and 142. This latter source indicates 32,000 square miles for the area of Costa Rica, which is obviously in error.

can be said to trace their origins to the days of the Spanish conquest and colonization.

In general outline, therefore, the two countries appear to be strikingly similar to each other. It is only when details are examined that bold contrasts appear. The macroscopic pictures are almost carbon copies of each other. A microscopic analysis, however, turns up differences so great in degree as to become distinctions in kind.

Of first importance for our purposes here, the two countries differ widely in terms of their political reputations. Costa Rica is commonly cited as being one of the more "democratic" of the countries of Latin America. It would be fruitless and cumbersome to attempt to quote all the statements which have been made in eulogy of its democratic attainments. Only limited citation is feasible.<sup>7</sup> Typical is the opinion of Marvin Alisky, a journalist:

... for most of the twentieth century, this tiny land has learned to accept a democratic way of life, based on free speech and a free press for its rank and file farmer citizens.<sup>8</sup>

Hubert Herring contends that:

Costa Rica, a little nation no larger than the state of West Virginia, and with a population of 875,000, shares honors with Uruguay as the most soundly democratic in faith and practice of all the Latin American states. . . . The few dictatorships in Costa Rican history have been short-lived. Political parties are free and active; political discussion is avid.<sup>9</sup>

No such claims are ordinarily made for Nicaragua, which is often described as exhibiting throughout its history some of the outstanding features of *caudillismo*, occasionally alternating with chaotic outbreaks of violence.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the contrasting reputations of these two adjoining countries, no intensive political science research has been devoted either to an evaluation

<sup>7</sup> For just a few references to Costa Rica's presumed attainment of a degree of "democracy" unusual for Latin America, see the following: Miguel Jorjín, *Political Instability in Latin America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1953), p. 9, and *Governments of Latin America* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1953), p. 265; John Gunther, "Costa Rica, A True Democracy," *Current History*, LII (December 24, 1940), p. 11; John and Mavis Biesanz, *Costa Rican Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), pp. 224-53; Fitzgibbon, *op. cit.*, and "The Pathology of Democracy in Latin America: A Political Scientist's Point of View," *American Political Science Review*, XLIV (March, 1950), 118-29; Austin F. MacDonald, *Latin American Politics and Government* (2d ed., New York: Crowell, 1954), p. 637; Murkland, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-44; Luis Alberto Sánchez, *Historia de América* (Santiago: Ediciones Ercilla, 1945), II, 395; and Tom B. Jones and W. Donald Beatty, *An Introduction to Hispanic American History* (New York: Harper, 1950), pp. 576 and 578.

<sup>8</sup> Marvin Alisky, "The Mass Media of Central America," *Journalism Quarterly*, XXXII (Fall, 1955), 480.

<sup>9</sup> Hubert Herring, "Problems Facing Democracy," in A. Curtis Wilgus (ed.), *The Caribbean: Its Political Problems* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1956), p. 254.

<sup>10</sup> See Whiting Williams, "Geographic Determinism in Nicaragua," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, CXXXII (July, 1927), 142-45; Charles Morrow Wilson, *Central America, Challenge and Opportunity* (New York: Holt, 1941), pp. 3-24 and 67-74; Fitzgibbon, "A Statistical Evaluation. . .," *loc. cit.*; Jorjín, *op. cit.*, pp. 260-61; and MacDonald, *op. cit.*, pp. 627-32.

of widespread assumptions regarding their political characteristics, or to development of data which might lead to the posing of explanatory hypotheses.<sup>11</sup> We may now turn to the more detailed tasks of evaluating the reputations of the two political patterns, hypothesizing regarding causal factors, and finally drawing whatever significant conclusions are possible at this rather elementary stage of investigation.

#### EVALUATION OF REPUTATIONS: PAST EVENTS

##### *Nicaragua*

Something of the nature of Nicaraguan political life was pointed up when, on September 29, 1956, President Anastasio Somoza was assassinated, and was succeeded in office by his son, Ing. Luis Anastasio Somoza Debayle, who was President of the Congress. Elections were held on February 3, 1957, and Luis Anastasio Somoza was given about 90 per cent of the vote, the remainder going to his opponent, Edmundo Amador. Meanwhile, the National Guard was revealed as being under the command of Anastasio Somoza, Jr., brother of the new President.

Events of this nature have almost been the rule rather than the exception in Nicaraguan political history. Nicaraguan development, since independence from the Central American federation in 1838, has been characterized by chaos alternating with dictatorship, foreign intervention, violence, and extreme tumult. It has been said that there are no Nicaraguans, just Conservatives and Liberals.<sup>12</sup> More accurately, it can be said that there have been Conservatives and Liberals, *Españoles* and *Costeños*, *Peninsulares* and *Criollos*, *Criollos* and *Mestizos*, and *Mestizos* and *Indios*.

Almost from the moment that she secured her independence as a separate republic, Nicaragua suffered from foreign intrusion. Struggle against British encroachment began in 1841 when Britain established the

<sup>11</sup> The dearth of political science research on Latin America in general and Central America in particular is well known. It might almost be said that no significant political science research at all has been done by United States scholars on either Nicaragua or Costa Rica. John and Mavis Biesanz, who are primarily sociologists, contributed some incidental political science materials in their *Costa Rican Life*, *loc. cit.* See also Wilson, *op. cit.*, and *Middle America* (New York: Norton, 1944), and Fitzgibbon, articles cited above, fn. 7. Numerous studies by Latin-American scholars of individual personalities or events have appeared, and might be listed as biographies or histories, but hardly as political science materials. Lists of unpublished materials reveal nothing on internal government and politics of either of these countries. See "Doctoral Dissertations in Political Science in American Universities," annual September issues of the *American Political Science Review*; and External List No. 12.1, Department of State, *Unpublished Research on American Republics (Excluding United States)*, *Completed and in Progress* (Washington, D.C., 1953), pp. 5-6, 14, and 20; for a bibliography of completed and published studies — which also reveals nothing in political science on either of these two countries — see External Research List No. 12.9, Department of State, *Research on American Republics* (Washington, D.C., October, 1957), p. 4. The same story is told by an examination of the quarterly *Revista Interamericana de Bibliografía* of the Pan American Union.

<sup>12</sup> Arthur Ruhl, *The Central Americans* (New York: Scribner's, 1928), p. 96.

so-called *Reino Mosquito* in the eastern parts of the country.<sup>13</sup> In 1848 the British seized the mouth of the San Juan River in the name of "his Mosquito Majesty," a puppet Indian chief. British intervention was halted only when the United States invaded Mexico and thereby became interested in the possibilities of a canal across Nicaragua.<sup>14</sup> This brought the United States into contest with British interests in the region. To avoid conflict, the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty was drawn up in 1850, in which the two parties agreed to neutralize the canal area, and provided that neither nation would "occupy, fortify, or colonize or assume or exercise any domination over Nicaragua, Costa Rica, the Mosquito Coast, or any part of Central America."<sup>15</sup>

By 1852 the Nicaraguan port of San Juan del Norte had been set up by British interests as the "Republic of San Juan del Norte," but was wiped out by Nicaraguan troops.<sup>16</sup>

Confusion resulting from foreign intervention was as nothing compared with the national chaos of Nicaraguan politics. Because of some experience with dictatorship during the Central American federation, the new Nicaraguan constitution of 1838 called for a weak executive, the *Supremo Director*, who was to hold office for two years only, and was not to have any control over the Army. A result of the two-year-term provision was an almost continuous election campaign, punctuated by civil strife and culminating in a revolution in 1854 which soon became the *guerra nacional* involving William Walker, Cornelius Vanderbilt and the Transit Company interests, and all of Central America.<sup>17</sup> During the 1838-54 period, a series of *jefes políticos* followed one another in bewildering succession. There was almost constant civil war, and occasional division of the government between two factions, one at León and the other at Granada.

The William Walker episode is one of the more bizarre events of Nicaraguan political history. Supported originally by the Vanderbilt interests as a means for securing transit across Nicaragua, the southern journalist William Walker and a band of "roughnecks" secured control of the Nicaraguan government in 1855. When the Vanderbilts withdrew their support, "El Presidente" William Walker fell from power in 1857, and fled the country. In 1860 he again attempted to stir up trouble in Central America, and was captured in Honduras and shot.

Compared with the preceding chaotic period, the years between 1855 and 1893 appear dull and uneventful. A new constitution of 1854 had

<sup>13</sup> Luis Alberto Cabrales, *Sinopsis de la República de Nicaragua* (Managua: Talleres Nacionales, 1937).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Mary Wilhelmine Williams, *The People and Politics of Latin America* (rev. ed.; New York: Ginn, 1945), p. 426.

<sup>16</sup> Cabrales, *op. cit.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

settled on a four-year term, and after Walker was out of the way, Nicaragua was governed by a succession of Conservative presidents, more or less according to constitutional provision. Aside from an 1875 German blockade of the Nicaraguan coast as a means for extorting \$30,000 for an alleged insult to a German consul, Nicaraguan history during this period was positively unexciting.<sup>18</sup>

This peaceful scene was abruptly broken when in 1893, as a result of heightened Liberal-Conservative conflict, General José Santos Zelaya, Liberal, was installed in the presidential office, where he remained as dictator for sixteen years. Zelaya kept Nicaragua in hot water with its Central American neighbors, unblushingly stole from the public treasury, and clamped a tight lid on political opposition. In 1909 he conceded to a British company the right to construct and exploit an interoceanic railroad. The United States withdrew recognition, a revolt was organized among Nicaraguan opponents of the dictator, and Zelaya was soon out of office.<sup>19</sup>

A new period of foreign intervention then opened in Nicaragua. The Conservative government which came to power after the fall of Zelaya wavered, and 2,600 United States marines were landed on Nicaraguan shores. These were replaced by the end of 1912 by a four hundred-man legion guard. Later the number was reduced to one hundred, and remained so for many years.<sup>20</sup>

During the United States military occupation, order was restored and a succession of Conservative presidents followed. In 1916 the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty was ratified, giving the United States exclusive right to build a Nicaraguan canal, a lease on the Corn Islands, and a site for naval bases in the Gulf of Fonseca. Three million dollars was paid to Nicaragua. Honduras and El Salvador, also located on the gulf, protested to the new Central American Court of Justice. The Court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs' contentions, Andrew Carnegie did not renew his grant of funds for its support, and the Court collapsed.

United States marines left Nicaragua during August of 1925. Violent strife almost immediately broke out between Liberal and Conservative forces, and American forces again landed, in the spring of 1926. By 1928 an election had been held, under the auspices of United States personnel, and a Liberal, General José María Moncada, was declared elected by a large majority.<sup>21</sup> It was then that General Augusto César Sandino emerged

<sup>18</sup> Some detail on the events of this period is to be found in a popular article, "Nicaragua, Largest of Central American Republics," *National Geographic Magazine*, LI (March, 1937), 370-78.

<sup>19</sup> Cabrales, *op. cit.*; and Mary Wilhelmine Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 439-40.

<sup>20</sup> Wilson, *Central America . . .*, p. 68. Also see Hubert Herring, *A History of Latin America* (New York: Knopf, 1956), pp. 447-49.

<sup>21</sup> Mary Wilhelmine Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 443.

in revolt against the American occupation and any government elected under it. He was eliminated six years later under a flag of truce by the Somoza-commanded *Guardia Nacional*.

The final withdrawal of American forces took place in 1933. In 1932 J. B. Sacasa, Liberal, had been elected in a second fair election conducted under United States supervision. It soon became clear, however, that the real power in Nicaragua was the *Guardia Nacional*, organized into an efficient military body during United States occupation and commanded by General Anastasio Somoza García. In 1936 General Somoza effected the overthrow of the Sacasa government, and in January of 1937 manipulated an election which installed him in the presidential chair.<sup>22</sup>

On March 22, 1939, a Somoza-picked Constituent Assembly promulgated a new constitution which in its transitory provisions placed Somoza in control of the presidency until May 1, 1947, and installed itself as a Congress until April 15, 1947.<sup>23</sup> After a 1947-50 period with one president who refused to be a puppet and another who died in office, a new constitution was promulgated November 1, 1950, wherein it was provided that Somoza would fill the presidential office until May 1, 1951, and then that the same Anastasio Somoza would occupy the office from May 1, 1951, to May 1, 1957, "as elected by the Nicaraguan people, according to credentials issued by the National Council on Elections, in accordance with the Legislative Decree of April 15, 1950."<sup>24</sup>

The physical contributions made to Nicaragua by Anastasio Somoza and his kinsmen are not here being evaluated, but rather the condition of political democracy in Nicaragua. It would seem to appear from the political history of Nicaragua, both pre- and post-Anastasio Somoza García, that there may be some reason for not placing that government at the democratic end of our political spectrum.<sup>25</sup>

### Costa Rica

Let us now turn to the political history of Costa Rica. There is a sharp difference between the circumstances surrounding accession to office of the present President of Nicaragua, Luis Anastasio Somoza Debayle, after the "elections" of February 3, 1957, and the current political developments in Costa Rica. On February 2, 1958 — almost exactly one year after the aforementioned Nicaraguan elections — Costa Rica held its presidential election.

<sup>22</sup> A succinct history of this period is provided by Herring, *A History . . .*, pp. 449-51.

<sup>23</sup> *Constitución de la República de Nicaragua*, 1939, Title XVI.

<sup>24</sup> *Constitution of the Republic of Nicaragua, 1950* (Washington, D.C.: Pan American Union, 1954), Article 336 (1) and (2). For details on the "election" which preceded, see Jorrín, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

<sup>25</sup> Quotations from Somoza himself would seem to confirm this view. See the quotation attributed to Somoza by Sydney Gruson in the *New York Times* of November 16, 1953, and partially reproduced by Herring, *A History . . .*, p. 450.



Francisco Orlich, of the National Liberation party of President José Figueres, secured 94,788 votes at last reported count. Jorge Rossi, an independent, received 23,910 votes. Mario Echandi, opposition candidate supported by editor and former President Otilio Ulate received 102,851 votes. Apparently some freedom of political choice did exist in Costa Rica during the elections of last February, and it would appear that there was considerable political participation by large numbers of people. That such conditions are not unusual for Costa Rica becomes clear upon a quick survey of her political history.

It is unfortunately true that the countries which have the longest chronological descriptions are primarily those which have the most tumultuous histories. Costa Rica is not one of these. Compared with the history of Nicaragua, that of Costa Rica is downright monotonous.

After the disintegration of the Central American federation in 1838, Costa Rica had its spate of dictators. The first was perhaps the most notorious. He was Braulio Carillo, and is said to have run his government at one end of the presidential palace while his wife ran a grocery store at the other. Carillo was unwittingly responsible for the death of the Honduran Liberal, Francisco Morazán, who had played an important role in the politics of the Central American federation. In 1842, at the behest of Costa Rican Liberals and opponents of dictatorship, Morazán led a revolt which overthrew the dictator. Many Costa Ricans, including some of his own followers as well as Conservatives, soon became suspicious that Morazán had ambitious designs on Costa Rica in particular and Central America in general, and had him shot in the same year he had arrived. It is said he gave the directions to fire, fell to the ground, raised his head and cried, "I still live!" at which another volley fell upon him and he finally collapsed into death.

After this rather inauspicious beginning, the Costa Ricans got off to a relatively stable political evolution under a series of Conservative presidents. Terms generally lasted for the constitutionally prescribed period of four years, and informal agreement among the principal families of the country determined who would next hold the office. What the republic lacked in full-blown democracy it at least gained in a sort of peaceful, pastoral order with very few of the more usual trappings of military dictatorship. Costa Rica became involved in the 1856 struggle of all Central America against William Walker, and in other disturbances of the region. Its general political evolution, however, was remarkably peaceful and undisturbed.<sup>26</sup>

Reports of the period all seem to agree that Costa Rica was somehow "different" from its neighboring states. An 1840 traveler reported that the

<sup>26</sup> See Luis Alberto Sánchez, *loc. cit.*; Herring, *A History . . .*, pp. 451-54; Mary Wilhelmine Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 428-30 and pp. 445-52; and Jones and Beatty, *op. cit.*, pp. 576-78.

Costa Ricans were simple, hospitable, businesslike, and better off than people in adjoining countries. No special official dignity was found. An 1846 report was also favorable. A German passing through the country in 1853-54 found Costa Rican life more stable than in most nearby places. In 1858 a traveling Frenchman reported that life in Costa Rica was very simple. He found all classes of people to be reasonably comfortable. There were few servants, and he described the area as a rural democracy. The fact that even high officials engaged in trade and even performed menial work surprised the French visitor, and he was favorably impressed by the country people.<sup>27</sup>

This idyllic scene was partially disrupted during the dictatorship of "strongman" Tomás Guardia, 1870-82, who ruled in the better known Central American tradition. However, President Guardia finally left office without violence. During his period the railroad was finally built to Puerto Limón from the capital and the modernization of the country was begun.

After Guardia, orderly succession to the presidential office was re-established, but without genuinely competitive election until 1889. In that year Costa Rica held its first fully free election, accompanied by freedom of expression, active opposition, and respect for the outcome of the vote.<sup>28</sup>

Since 1889 the democratic pattern then established has generally prevailed, with but three exceptional episodes. In 1917 Federico Tinoco seized the presidency on the pretext that President Adolfo González Flores was designing to perpetuate himself in office. The Tinoco dictatorship was able to govern the infuriated Costa Ricans only until 1919, when it was readily overthrown more by popular indignation than by violence. It is said that the end of Dictator Tinoco resulted directly from the anger he aroused when he personally doused some protesting students with water from a garden hose. An attempted revolt in 1932 was of little consequence. The 1948 uprising against the Picardo-Calderón Guardia clique, which was attempting to maintain itself in power despite an unfavorable popular vote, is significant in that it involved an unusual amount of violence for Costa Rica, and undoubtedly takes on a greater appearance of importance because of its recent date.<sup>29</sup>

During four years of the past seventy, it can be said that Costa Rica's democratic attainments have been under cloud. On the basis of the little political history that we have examined, it appears that just as there is perhaps good reason for questioning the democratic attainments of Nicaragua, so there is rather ample justification for placing Costa Rican government somewhere between the middle of our spectrum and the democratic end of it.

<sup>27</sup> C. L. Jones, *Costa Rica and Civilization in the Caribbean* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Studies in the Social Sciences and History, No. 23, 1941), pp. 112-17.

<sup>28</sup> Herring, *A History . . .*, p. 453.

<sup>29</sup> For details, see Herring, *A History . . .*, pp. 451-54; and Jones and Beatty, *loc. cit.*

## EVALUATION OF REPUTATIONS: STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

Though the present section must of necessity be sketchy, we can at least point up a few of the characteristic features of Nicaraguan and Costa Rican political structure and process which will throw light on our problem of reputation-evaluation. At this point of investigation, in most cases our data can be only suggestive rather than definitive.

A few criteria for determination of democratic achievements will be used. All but one of these, No. 3, are suggested by Professor Russell H. Fitzgibbon's study on the statistical evaluation of Latin-American democracy. The criteria<sup>30</sup> to be used here will be (1) freedom of expression; (2) free elections, honestly counted votes; (3) response of governmental change to election returns; (4) freedom of party organization and activity; and (5) independence of the judiciary.

*Freedom of Expression*

Marvin Alisky, in his article in *Journalism Quarterly*, claims that Costa Rica has the highest proportion of newspaper readers and radio listeners in Central America.<sup>31</sup> He makes the particular point that though Costa Rica has the smallest population in all Central America, its press circulation is larger than that of the more heavily populated countries.<sup>32</sup> An addition of the several individual circulations listed in the *Political Handbook of the World, 1957*, indicates a total newspaper circulation of 74,300 for Costa Rica and of 59,800 for Nicaragua.<sup>33</sup> This proves little, if anything, about the relative freedoms of the two countries, except that it might indicate that periodical reading in Costa Rica is at least active and interested, though possibly simply proportionate to the higher literacy of Costa Rica.

Wherever the Alisky study makes comparisons of press freedom as between Costa Rica and the rest of Central America, the whole theme is that such freedom is a more regular feature of Costa Rican journalism than of journalism in neighboring countries.

The Costa Rican press is free to print what it pleases, limited only by considerations of libel and good taste.

<sup>30</sup> Fitzgibbon, "A Statistical Evaluation . . .," *loc. cit.* To provide a complete picture, additional criteria would have to be used. Most of these have already been established by Professor Fitzgibbon, as follows: relative roles of executive and legislative branches; relationship between civilian and military sectors; effectiveness of local autonomy; relationship between Church and State, and others. An additional criterion, not listed specifically by Professor Fitzgibbon, might be correspondence between constitutional guarantees of individual rights, and their actuality. In this paper we will not take up all of these criteria, first, because it seems unnecessary to the main purpose of this section, which is to show that in a general way Costa Rica is more "democratic" than Nicaragua, and second, simply because insufficient investigation of the matter has thus far been undertaken.

<sup>31</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 479.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 481.

<sup>33</sup> Mallory, *op. cit.*

More than half of the Costa Rican newspapers oppose President Figueres in their editorials. The fact that they continue to appear attests to the real status of press freedom in this republic, despite statements of foreboding sent by publisher Ulate to United States friends.<sup>34</sup>

Otilio Ulate is the publisher of *Diario de Costa Rica*, and was President of the Republic, 1949–53. It was with the backing of the Ulate forces that Mario Echandi was recently elected to the presidency for the term beginning May 8, 1958.

Press freedom is not always perfect in Costa Rica any more than it is anywhere else. Alisky relates that during the early 1955 invasion from Nicaragua, President Figueres did try to stop press criticism of himself, but that the Inter-American Press Association had "ameliorated the press situation by April of 1955."<sup>35</sup>

Again relying on Alisky, we find that: "Nicaragua does not have the large linguistic problem [of much of Central America] impeding national integration, but political considerations deprive it of a free press and free radio, such as exist in Costa Rica and El Salvador."<sup>36</sup>

Nicaragua has not in recent years possessed a dictatorship as rigid, say, as that of the Dominican Republic, of the Soviet Union, or of the late Nazi Germany. Papers published by the opposition — i.e., the Independent Liberal party — do appear in Nicaragua, and include particularly *Flecha*, *La Noticia*, and *El Centro Americano*.<sup>37</sup>

However, the frequent arrests of newspaper editors, the moderate tone of their criticism, and the harassment of their publications in general, have been notorious through many years of Nicaraguan political life. Nothing like the exchange of opposing views in newspaper columns as reported by the Biesanz team from Costa Rica in 1944 is known to Nicaragua.<sup>38</sup> According to the Biesanz study, even the President would write letters to the editor defending himself against attacks made in the same columns against him. There is no evidence that things have changed much on this score in Costa Rica since the Biesanz investigation.

#### *Free Elections, Honestly Counted Votes*

Cases of election irregularities in Costa Rica are numerous, and were cited in some detail by the Biesanz study.<sup>39</sup> One of the most flagrant in Costa Rican history occurred later, in 1948, when a Congress controlled by the party which had been defeated in the presidential elections of that year invalidated the election returns. In this extreme case, in which the

<sup>34</sup> Alisky, *loc. cit.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 479.

<sup>37</sup> Mallory, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

<sup>38</sup> John and Mavis Biesanz, *op. cit.*, pp. 224, 239–40, and 243.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 236–37.

publisher Otilio Ulate had been elected, revolt was almost immediate. During a provisional term under José Figueres, leader of the uprising, a new Legislative Assembly was elected, the new constitution of 1949 was adopted, and Ulate was installed as President on November 8, 1949.<sup>40</sup>

Such extremes have by any standard been the exception rather than the rule in Costa Rica. That at each election there have been charges and counter-charges of selling of votes, juggling of watchers, breaking of seals by election officials, and so on, is certainly not to be denied. Since the events of 1948 — that is, in the contest between José Figueres and Fernando Castro in 1953, and that between Figueres-supported Francisco Orlich and Ulate-supported Mario Echandi in February of 1958, election irregularities seem to have diminished. In the 1953 election, it can hardly be said that the "opposition" to the Ulate government won the election, though it is perfectly true that the views of Castro were more to the taste of Ulate than were those of Figueres. Figueres had been the leader in the 1948 revolt which had restored constitutional order and permitted Ulate to take over, and only the most gross ingratitude would have permitted Ulate to oppose vigorously the election of Figueres in 1953. By 1958, the obvious political cleavage between the National Liberation followers of socialist-minded José Figueres and the National Union people attached to more conservative Ulate has become more obdurate than it was in 1953, and so the 1958 election was a fair test of Costa Rican democratic aspirations.

Regardless of numerous cases of election fraud, it seems clear that elections in Costa Rica are meaningful, that all parties do actively participate, and that public opinion during such periods is extremely vigorous on all sides of the contest. It would probably be correct to say that Costa Rican elections are "free," though not without cases of real or attempted fraud.

To evaluate Nicaraguan elections in terms of "honestly counted votes" would be about as realistic as to examine Soviet elections on the same grounds. Since the opposition has had little or no genuine opportunity to present either its candidates or its views, the manner in which votes are finally counted becomes entirely irrelevant. As a matter of fact, selections to legislative and executive office have as often as not occurred without any full election process at all. As was made clear earlier in this paper, General Anastasio Somoza García was never elected to office by a fully free exercise of the suffrage. The short 1937-39 provisional term was secured on the basis of a manipulated "election" after the constitutionally elected president, J. B. Sacasa, had been overthrown by force. The 1939-47 period was legalized by hand-picked members of a "Constituent Assembly." The 1950-57 term was based on the same process, preceded by a highly questionable "election." The so-called Conservative party of Nicaragua during the 1912-33

<sup>40</sup> For a quick summary of these events, see MacDonald, *op. cit.*, pp. 639-40.

period was in some part a stooge of American occupation forces and since the rise of the so-called "Liberal" Somozas, has been little more than another mouthpiece for the regime. Therefore the candidacy of Edmundo Amador, Conservative, who secured something like 10 per cent of the vote in the February, 1957, elections, can hardly be taken seriously as indicating the presence of "free" elections in Nicaragua. At the time, much of the effective leadership of the really vigorous opposition — i.e., of the Independent Liberal party, which is not legally registered — was either in exile, or under arrest for investigation in connection with the assassination of the late President Somoza, and so was unable to participate in any way in the elections.<sup>41</sup>

In summary, it can be generalized that Costa Rican elections are free and characterized from time to time by fraudulent practices on all sides; and that Nicaraguan elections either are not free or do not occur at all, and so the question of fraud is entirely beside the point in the case of that country.

#### *Response of Governmental Change to Election Returns*

It may be said with some accuracy that whereas in Costa Rica governments do change in response to election returns, in Nicaragua it would be a phenomenon for an election to indicate a desire for change. Much of this ground has already been incidentally covered in the section above. In the 1953 elections in Costa Rica, partly for the reasons which have already been indicated, the Otilio Ulate administration adopted a strict hands-off policy regarding the elections, and the victory of José Figueres was duly respected by the government. In the recent 1958 elections we have a much more clear-cut case of governmental change responding to election returns.

A quotation from José Figueres himself perhaps epitomizes a spirit which has at least been prominent in Costa Rican politics, and which has certainly been notably absent in the case of Nicaragua. Referring to the events of 1948-49, he is quoted as having stated: "The health of democracy in Latin America demands that men who have seized power by force go home when normalcy is restored. We restored normalcy and we went home."<sup>42</sup>

#### *Freedom of Party Organization and Activity*

The leading parties in Costa Rica are the National Liberation and National Union. National Liberation, the group surrounding José Figueres, is democratic socialist in orientation, and was narrowly defeated in the recent election. National Union is the party led by the publisher and ex-president

<sup>41</sup> These statements regarding the recent Nicaraguan political scene are based on the daily newspaper reports covering the period September 29, 1956-February 3, 1957.

<sup>42</sup> Harry Kantor, "The Struggle for Democracy in Costa Rica," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, LV (January, 1956), 16.

Otilio Ulate, is conservative in its views, and emerged victorious in the February, 1958, presidential election with candidate Mario Echandi.

Something of the role of parties in the politics of the two countries is revealed by their relative positions in legislative bodies. In Costa Rica, representation of parties in the Legislative Assembly depends entirely on election returns. During the 1953-58 period, the Costa Rican national legislative organ contained thirty-one members of the National Liberation party, and fourteen members of the opposition, and the representation was based upon results of the election of July 26, 1953.<sup>43</sup>

The Legislative Assembly elected February 2, 1958, for a term beginning April 30, according to newspaper accounts was divided about half-and-half between supporters of National Liberation and supporters of National Union. It is evident that in Costa Rica legislative representation depends upon election returns, and that political party activity is free and vigorous.

The situation in Nicaragua is made clear by the relevant clause of Article 127 of the 1950 constitution of that country:

In the Chamber of Deputies twenty-eight Representatives shall belong to the majority party and fourteen to the minority; in the Senate twelve Senators shall belong to the majority and four to the minority. With respect to the Senate, the law may change the ratio of the minority in order that this shall always be, as nearly as possible, one third of the total membership.

In other words, membership of the Nicaraguan Congress is determined arbitrarily in advance of elections, and is not intended to respond to the varying political fortunes of the participating parties. The fact that in the Senate, in addition to the sixteen "elected" Senators there are also some other distinguished individuals who regularly have seats, may suggest a unique arrangement, but in no way modifies the rigid concept of representation which prevails in Nicaragua.<sup>44</sup>

Even this inflexible representation system might perform some function for the expression of opposition views, were it not that the fourteen seats in the Chamber of Deputies and four in the Senate which are assigned to the minority, are occupied by the (Traditionalist) Conservative party. This is the "opposition" party which regularly works out understandings with the dominant Nationalist Liberal, or pro-Somozas, party, and never goes into vigorous, realistic opposition. Genuine opposition to the Somoza regimes has been centered in the Independent Liberal party, a faction of the old Liberal party from which General Somoza presumably emerged.

In Nicaragua, the Independent Liberal party is not even a legally registered party, for it has been unable to obtain the signatures of the minimum

<sup>43</sup> Mallory, *op. cit.*, pp. 44.

<sup>44</sup> *Constitution of the Republic of Nicaragua*, Article 127: "The Senate shall consist of the sixteen senators elected directly by the people and the presidential candidate of the political party that attained second place in the popular vote. The ex-Presidents of the Republic who held office by direct popular vote shall also be members of the Senate as Life Senators."

20,000 persons required by law to justify its registration.<sup>45</sup> A certain hesitance on the part of many to sign such a petition is perhaps understandable under the circumstances.

Our only conclusion from the above data must be that party organization and activities are more free, vigorous, and unhampered by governmental restriction in Costa Rica than they are in Nicaragua.

#### *Independence of the Judiciary*

Too little investigation of the role of the judiciary in Costa Rica has been undertaken to reveal sufficient data for the making of any generalizations on the subject. The most recent comment was provided by press accounts of a decision of the Supreme Court of Justice ordering President Figueres to remain strictly neutral in the Orlich-Echandi-Rossi campaign. President Figueres had aroused resentment by his open support of the Orlich candidacy; and it is reported in the newspapers that the court found his actions to be in violation of his constitutional position. This one incident, at least, suggests an independence of the judiciary from total executive control.

In Nicaragua, judges of the Supreme Court of Justice are elected by the Congress for six-year terms, with the proviso that they may be re-elected.<sup>46</sup> Their counterparts in Costa Rica are elected by the Legislative Assembly for eight-year terms, with the proviso that they shall be regarded as re-elected unless the Legislative Assembly decides otherwise by a vote of two-thirds of its membership.<sup>47</sup> The constitutional provisions, therefore, would seem to indicate terms and tenure in Costa Rica which can become more independent of executive interference than is the case in Nicaragua.

#### *Evaluation Summary.*

In the above examination of past events and of present processes and structures in Nicaragua and Costa Rica, we have by no means "proven," nor was it our intention to prove, that Costa Rica is "democratic" and that Nicaragua is "undemocratic." The only purpose here is to attempt to show that the reputations of the two countries — namely, that Costa Rica is more "democratic" than is Nicaragua — are based on actual fact, and are not contrary to the facts. In Costa Rica, to paraphrase our earlier definition, it is simply true that there are more people who enjoy freedom of choice, political participation, and security of the rule of law, than there are in Nicaragua. For our purposes here, this is all we are required to show.

No attempt has been made here at analyzing the constitutional documents of the two countries to turn up further evidence of their presumed

<sup>45</sup> See Mallory, *op. cit.*, p. 142, for exact numbers from each party in the Nicaraguan Congress and for summary of the political party membership and status in Nicaragua.

<sup>46</sup> *Constitution of the Republic of Nicaragua*, Article 223.

<sup>47</sup> *Constitution of the Republic of Costa Rica*, Article 158.



attainments in the realm of democracy. Constitutions are too often statements of aspiration rather than descriptions of fact to make such a survey very fruitful, though it is perfectly true that there are occasions where constitutional statements do reveal clear differences of concept between political regimes.<sup>48</sup>

Sketchy and incomplete though the above outline has been, we are perhaps justified at this point in stating without much equivocation that Costa Rica, by our definition, is more "democratic" than is Nicaragua, and has been such for a long time. What, then, are the causal factors behind this phenomenon?

#### CAUSAL FACTORS

An examination of the environments in which the political institutions of Nicaragua and Costa Rica have emerged shows certain basic characteristic elements in each country which have been conducive to political conditions therein.

Perhaps we can best present the environments of Costa Rican-Nicaraguan politics in two stages. First we shall describe the contemporary, or immediately observable, factors which have a direct influence on politics in the two countries. From there, we can move farther back to the second stage — to a consideration of the more basic factors which lie behind the kinds of conditions in which these political institutions have grown.

<sup>48</sup>The most readily available documents from the two countries are provided by the Pan American Union, and are in English. For comparison of the two constitutions, on significant points which relate to their democracy or the lack of it, see the following: On executive power over foreign policy, Costa Rica, Article 7, Nicaragua, Article 194 (6, 7, 8); on action respecting unconstitutional legislative or executive acts, Costa Rica, Article 10, Nicaragua, Articles 14, 57, and 229 (17); on the military, Costa Rica, Article 12, Nicaragua, Articles 9 and 314-22; on individual rights, which in Costa Rica are concisely stated without equivocation and in Nicaragua are hedged about with numerous qualifications and scattered throughout the document, see Costa Rica, Articles 20-49, and Nicaragua, Articles 36-126, 290-94, 139, and 195. Costa Rica's Articles 50-75 include social and labor rights, which are listed in the Nicaraguan document under the cited articles. On education, Nicaragua, Articles 77, 78, 98-109, and 106, Costa Rica, primarily Articles 78, 85, and 87. On protection of the suffrage, Nicaragua, Articles 35, 302, 303, 307, and 309, Costa Rica, Articles 95(3), 97, 99, 100, 101, and 103; on legislative power, as cited for Nicaragua, fn. 44, above, and Articles 334 and 152, among others; Costa Rica, Articles 106, 107, and 116. On legislative duties, Nicaragua, especially Articles 194 (6, 7, 8), 142, 150, 191(9), 166, and 169; and Costa Rica, Articles 121(6) and much of the rest of the same, plus Articles 122 and 123. On suspension of guarantees, sharp contrast is revealed by reviewing Nicaragua, Articles 191(10), 148(5, 6), 86, 196, 197, and 325, and Costa Rica, 121(7), 140(4), and 139, in that order. On executive power, among many others, the most striking would be Nicaragua, Article 191 (9, 10), and Costa Rica, Article 139. On local government, Nicaragua, Article 278, and Costa Rica, Articles 169 and 171; on finance, Nicaragua, Articles 240-270, especially 265, and Costa Rica, Articles 183 and 186; and on civil service protections, Nicaragua, Article 299, Costa Rica, Article 192. Organization of the Nicaraguan constitution is so haphazard that only a thorough reading of the entire document can suffice to reveal the profound difference in concept between the constitution of that country and the constitution of Costa Rica.

*Immediate factors*

A survey of the contemporary, or "immediate" factors which lie behind Nicaraguan and Costa Rican politics must necessarily be simply descriptive of the nonpolitical environments of the two countries.

*Integration.* A striking contrast between the social conditions of Costa Rica and those of Nicaragua lies in the general homogeneity of the former, and the heterogeneity of the latter. Without too much equivocation, the Costa Rican society may be described as *integrated*, the Nicaraguan as *dis-integrated*. There can be little doubt that the more democratic types of societies do not readily develop in conditions of deep and bitter cleavage, so this is a factor worth investigation.

Costa Rica is more geographically integrated than is Nicaragua. In Costa Rica three-fourths of the population is reported to be concentrated within the *meseta central*. All the principal interior towns are to be found in an area not greater than 770 square miles.<sup>49</sup> These are San José, Alajuela, Cartago, and Heredia. The other two leading towns of Costa Rica are Puntarenas, on the Pacific coast, and Puerto Limón, on the Caribbean. Both are readily accessible to the capital by rail. A sense of community has emerged in the highly concentrated Costa Rican ecumene which contrasts sharply with the scattering of Nicaraguans along a narrow strip one hundred miles in length which borders on Lakes Managua and Nicaragua, and in towns such as San Juan del Norte, Bluefields, and Puerto Cabezas, which have had no effective land communication with the rest of the country. In the thin settlement band along the lakes, León at one end has traditionally been the stronghold of the Liberals, and Granada at the other the bastion of the Conservatives. So great was their bitterness that the capital could only be put between them, at Managua.<sup>50</sup>

Not only this. Western settlement is effectively separated from the east coast population by mountains, swamps — called *ciénagas* — and rushing torrents. So effective is the geographical barrier between western and eastern Nicaragua that no railroad has even been built to connect the two. Nicaraguan uprisings have frequently originated on the east coast, outside of effective governmental control.<sup>51</sup> Before the airplane, it was not uncommon for Nicaraguan travelers to cross from one side to the other via San José, Costa Rica, or the Panama Canal.<sup>52</sup> Because many on the Caribbean side have been influenced by English and Jamaican culture patterns, it has

<sup>49</sup> John and Mavis Biesanz, *op. cit.*, p. 2. See also "The Population of Costa Rica," *Bulletin of the Pan American Union*, LXX (December, 1934), 67; Lawrence and Sylvia Martin, "Four Strong Men and a President," *Harper's*, CLXXXV (September, 1942), 425-26; and *Costa Rica* (Pan American Union, 1955), p. 5.

<sup>50</sup> Mary Wilhelmine Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 473.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 419.

<sup>52</sup> Whiting Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-45.

been common for the eastern *costeños* to refer to the western Nicaraguans as *españoles*. A bitter rivalry and cleavage has developed between the two sides which has left its undoubted mark on Nicaraguan political life.

Such physical barriers to national integration are relatively unknown in Costa Rica. Agreement on basic rules of the political game was not obstructed by geographical cleavage in that country.

Another sort of contrast in attainment of homogeneity may be found among the ethnic elements of the two countries, and this has often been noted. It is well-known among Latin Americanists that Costa Rica claims to be a "white" country, and in fact a very large proportion of Costa Rica's population appears to be of primarily European descent.

However, the point here must be one of ethnic integration, not of "whiteness," as bearing on the contrasting institutions of these two countries. It would be a foolhardy person indeed who would claim that all "white" countries are characterized by democracy, whereas all "non-white" systems are dictatorships. The question of ethnic assimilation is quite another thing. Just as physical gulfs can so divide a people as to make stable democracy impossible, so can ethnic cleavages serve as obstacles to the realization of any kind of free consensus.

On this matter, the differences between Nicaragua and Costa Rica are clear enough. In Costa Rica, the population of the central plateau is almost exclusively European in origin. About 0.3 per cent of the population are Indian, and some 1.9 per cent are Negro.<sup>53</sup> The very few Indians — not over three thousand in all — are to be found in the farthest reaches of the country. The Negroes live on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. The heart of Costa Rica is Spanish. A quick look at the government of Francisco Franco will reveal that a Spanish background is no guarantee of democratic attainment. The point is not that Costa Rica is Spanish, but that she is ethnically integrated. If combined with other favorable factors, this can facilitate political understanding.

The Nicaraguan ethnic picture is not nearly so clear-cut. The population may be said to be *Mestizo*, *European*, and *Negro*, in that order. Perhaps some 10 to 12 per cent of the population goes as "white," while something over half may be said to be mixed — with Negroes constituting perhaps 10 per cent and Indians 5 per cent of the total. The figure here must be quite inaccurate, for sources vary and are not kept up to date. Nor about such matters can an entirely accurate count be reasonably expected.<sup>54</sup> The east-west *costeño-español* cleavage has already been described.

<sup>53</sup> See Committee on Latin American Studies, *op. cit.*, p. 6; and *Costa Rica, op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>54</sup> Wilson, *Central America . . .*, p. 67; Henry Lester Smith and Harold Littell, *Education in Latin America* (New York: American Book, 1934), p. 357; and Lt. Col. Dan I. Sultan, "An Army Engineer Explores Nicaragua," *National Geographic Magazine*, LXI (May, 1932), pp. 592-627.

Thus, to the features of the physical landscape which have facilitated integration in Costa Rica and retarded it in Nicaragua, we must add the ethnic characteristics of the populations of the two countries. Nicaraguans may be said to be in part divided by their geography, while Costa Ricans are united by it. Whereas Nicaraguans are split ethnically, Costa Ricans are in the main united on this score.

In terms of literacy, it is a well-known fact that Costa Rica is one of the most literate places in the tropics. Nicaragua can claim no such reputation. Costa Ricans can communicate with one another more readily than can Nicaraguans. The figures on this point vary, but statistics for Costa Rica rate its literacy as between 77 and 88 per cent; those for Nicaragua do not usually claim more than 40 per cent as literate and generally much less.<sup>55</sup>

In discussing El Salvador, Alisky suggests the relatively favorable impression of Costa Rica from the standpoint of education: "When compared with Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, tiny El Salvador has a developing system of communications. Only when compared with Costa Rica does El Salvador seem lacking in literacy, total newspaper circulation, radio ownership and audience sizes."<sup>56</sup> Something, at least, of the *intent* of the two republics regarding their educational systems may be gleaned from their constitutions. The Nicaraguan document never is clear on state support for education, and even says that "the education of children is a primary duty of parents," though those without economic resources "will be assisted by the right to claim help from the State. . . ."<sup>57</sup>

The relevant provisions of the constitution of Costa Rica make it quite plain that education is compulsory; that it is to be supported at all but the highest levels by the state; and that even university education is to receive a wide range of state support.<sup>58</sup>

There seems to be no doubt that greater educational advances have been achieved in Costa Rica than in Nicaragua. To the other elements which can be divisive in a society, we must add the educational elements as being primarily divisive in Nicaragua, primarily integrative in Costa Rica. In the former country, communication is disrupted between large blocks of people; in the latter, these cleavages exist in only a limited way.

No one who has observed the bitterness of a Costa Rican political campaign would say that the country has achieved complete, harmonious political integration. However, as our earlier survey of the political histories of the two countries revealed, political differences are not so deep in Costa

<sup>55</sup> See MacDonald, *op. cit.*, p. 637; Alisky, *loc. cit.*; Murkland, *op. cit.*, p. 152; Committee on Latin American Studies, *op. cit.*, p. 8; Manuel F. Jiménez, "Coffee in Costa Rica," *Bulletin of the Pan American Union*, LXXIX (February, 1945), 88-89.

<sup>56</sup> Alisky, *op. cit.*, p. 482.

<sup>57</sup> *Constitution of the Republic of Nicaragua*, Articles 77, 78, and 98-109.

<sup>58</sup> *Constitution of the Republic of Costa Rica, 1949*, Articles 78, 85, and 87.

Rica as often to send men to the barricades, and in Nicaragua they are. The greater political bitterness characteristic of Nicaraguan public affairs should therefore be listed as another feature which — at least comparatively speaking — provides a lesser cleavage in Costa Rica than in Nicaragua. Here we have a case of prior politics forming a part of the environment of contemporary politics.

Neither Costa Rica nor Nicaragua can be said to be a classless society. However, there seems little doubt that the former is less divided by class cleavage than is the latter. In their 1944 study the Biesanz team contended that the class distinctions which did exist in Costa Rica were not harsh, and that actual class contempt was unknown. In his even earlier study, Jones revealed that though class consciousness was not marked, a rural upper class definitely existed in Costa Rica. Biesanz held that cultural attainment held first place as a basis for class distinction in Costa Rica, with family connections a poor fourth behind occupation and wealth.<sup>59</sup>

Similar studies for Costa Rica have not been made in recent years, and no effective study of Nicaraguan class structures has been forthcoming. All that can be stated is what is well known: that in Nicaragua a few families have managed to garner a very large proportion of the total wealth, with large retinues of servants, elaborate homes, and many properties, and that class hatreds run rampant. The immense holdings of these few stand in sharp contrast to the pitiful, abject conditions of the great mass of deprived *peones* of the country.

We have now indicated that Costa Rican society is basically the more harmonious of the two. Costa Rica is less divided geographically. She has fewer elements of ethnic cleavage. She is culturally more integrated. Her political memories are less bitter. Class and general social cleavage are less marked in Costa Rica than in Nicaragua. In short, in Costa Rica discussion of public issues is possible, though certainly heated. In Nicaragua, political discussion is not so possible, and force provides the obvious solution to uncompromising argumentation.

It is perhaps sad but true that democracy works best where there is the least to argue about. Where men regard each other as beasts, monsters, renegades, or criminals, agreement on the rules of the game becomes extraordinarily difficult, and stable democracy virtually impossible.

*Economics.* It would probably be a reasonable assumption that where the instruments of economic power and opportunity — namely, ownership — are concentrated in the hands of a tiny minority, the majority is so deprived of influence that it is unable to wield effective political or any other kind of power. Conversely, it may be hypothesized that where there is a wide distribution of such economic instruments of power and opportunity

<sup>59</sup> John and Mavis Biesanz, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-24; and Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

among a very large part of the population, the economic independence and prestige felt by many cannot help but make them influential in the total political process. The situation in Costa Rica on this score is quite clear, and that in Nicaragua must depend upon crude observation. There is little doubt that more people own more property in Costa Rica than in Nicaragua.

Murkland, no doubt depending on other sources, states that Costa Rica is typically a land of small proprietors, each owning and working his own land, and contends further that in Costa Rica some 80 per cent of the population shares in land ownership in some form. He cites a figure of 26,000 individually owned coffee farms.<sup>60</sup> This typical description of the Costa Rican economic scene comes from the same source: "Each man owns his own land and grows his own crop. He is a man of some education, interested in the affairs of his country and remarkably well informed. He makes a sound foundation for a solvent economy."<sup>61</sup>

John Gunther reported in 1940 that there were approximately 198,600 pieces of land held by 89,389 persons.<sup>62</sup> The Biesanz study claimed that 71.7 per cent of the family heads of the republic were listed as being proprietors of one kind or another, and Jones claimed that of 89,000 homes, 47,000 were owned by their occupants.<sup>63</sup> These figures, if roughly near the truth, would suggest a phenomenon for Latin America, and in fact in 1944 one popular writer claimed that more persons owned their land in Costa Rica than in any other Latin-American country, with the possible exception of Haiti.<sup>64</sup>

Costa Rica is often lumped together with Honduras and other Central American countries as being a "banana republic," and it is common to consider the little nation as being practically a province of the United Fruit Company. The Jones study revealed that not over 25 per cent of the banana lands were owned by the company, and that the remainder were at that time in individual plots, much as in the coffee-growing areas. The United Fruit served primarily as merchandiser, which gave it a powerful position, but not one of complete dominance.<sup>65</sup>

Though corresponding figures are not available for Nicaragua, and though in any case the figures for Costa Rica are somewhat outdated, certainly no similar claims of land distribution are made for Nicaragua. Every observation would seem to indicate that Nicaragua follows a more typical Latin-American pattern of large estates, dominated by a few wealthy in-

<sup>60</sup> Murkland, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Gunther, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>63</sup> John and Mavis Biesanz, *op. cit.*, p. 150; and Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

<sup>64</sup> Edward Tomlinson, "Costa Rica, First in War," *Colliers*, CXIV (August 19, 1944), pp. 65-66.

<sup>65</sup> Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-70.

terests, on which toil the masses of the Nicaraguan population. Although our research here is weak, no evidence has been suggested which would indicate any similarity between the Nicaraguan and the Costa Rican economic patterns insofar as land and general property ownership are concerned. As will be seen later, cotton and gold play a role in Nicaraguan economy, along with coffee, but are almost unknown to the Costa Rican production. Cotton lends itself to the big plantation type of mass cultivation, and gold has never been thought of as a great agent in the equalizing of opportunity.

In short, though the evidence on Nicaragua is insufficient, it at least appears that Costa Rica is in a rather remarkable situation in terms of its patterns of property-holding. In small or medium scale, a very large proportion of Costa Rican farmers are able to tell political authority "where to get off" without being fearful of loss of income. This is more than can be said for most of the population of Latin America, and suggests a foundation of distributed power which cannot help but be beneficial to the development of free institutions.

*Foreign Relations.* Though we have had occasion to describe the foreign relations of the two countries in our presentation of their respective political histories, let us again mention that subject, in order at least to show that it also belongs here. As has already been indicated, Nicaragua has been subject to frequent foreign interventions and invasions; in Costa Rica such events have been almost unknown. This means, simply, that Costa Rica could live in an environment of physical and psychological security which was absent from Nicaragua.

Costa Ricans have had little reason to develop a strong armed force. A good part of the history of Nicaragua has been devoted to the military emphasis which must naturally arise out of frequent foreign intervention. In Nicaragua, the invaders have been English, German, and North American. In Costa Rica, the most insistent danger has been Nicaragua herself.

The Nicaraguan National Guard became an efficient military unit during the United States occupation, and it was General Anastasio Somoza, trained under United States direction, who soon after the withdrawal of American troops became "strongman" of the country. The treasons, corruptions, and treacheries which accompany foreign invasion and occupation, and which later plague the politics of all concerned, have been almost completely absent from the Costa Rican political scene. Living in comparative isolation, secure from the most extreme threats of military invasion or occupation, the Costa Rican community could afford to be introverted and relatively undisturbed by dangers from abroad. The development of civilian government under such circumstances is to be thought of as a normal, anticipated result. The fact that in the face of constitutional proscription of an

Army there exists a very efficient Costa Rican national police unit, does not materially contradict or disprove the persistence of a strong civilian concept in Costa Rican government.<sup>66</sup>

What we have shown so far has been rather important for our explanation of political contrasts, but has still not really come to grips with fundamentals. We have indicated that Costa Rican society is better integrated than Nicaraguan, and there can be no doubt that physical integration results from basic geographical factors. Though the ethnic integration can safely be considered to be the result of lack of Indians, the whole historical development is not thereby fully explained. Certainly no basic factors behind the higher literacy or social integration have been clearly revealed. Thus it is that the phenomenon of societal assimilation on the one hand, or that of societal disintegration on the other, have been only partially explained.

Nor has anything been thus far adduced which would explain fully why the properties of Costa Rica are so much more widely distributed than are those of Nicaragua, nor, for that matter, why Costa Rica has been the safer from foreign intervention.

It remains, therefore, to get at a few "basic factors" — that is, those elements of the Costa Rican environment which help to explain the democratic underpinnings which have thus far been revealed.

#### *Basic Factors*

These can readily be divided into four categories, as follows: (1) topography; (2) climate; (3) resources; and (4) early demographic features.

*Topography.* The role of topography as a basic factor in the contrasting political experiences of the two countries has already been explored, in connection with the problem of physical integration. The matter is listed here again only to bring it into context as a very basic element in the political development of both Nicaragua and Costa Rica. It should be stressed that in Costa Rica the highland plateau is of renowned fertility, and a natural spot for the compact gathering of Costa Rican agrarian population. No such sizable and comfortable core area of fertility exists in Nicaragua, but rather the country is broken into (1) Caribbean lowlands, jungles, and swamps, extending inland fifty to one hundred miles; (2) a series of broken plateaus, comprised of a bewildering mass of hills and valleys; (3) rocky mountain ranges, from northwest to southeast along the east side of the lakes; (4) the lake region, beside which lives most of the population in very low valleys; (5) a series of volcanic peaks, none over 6,000 feet in altitude; and finally (6), the Pacific coastal strip itself.<sup>67</sup> It is easy to determine, from a very

<sup>66</sup> See *Constitution of the Republic of Costa Rica*, Article 12, which prohibits creation of an Army but permits development of proper police forces.

<sup>67</sup> Fred A. Carlson, *Geography of Latin America* (rev. ed.; New York: Prentice-Hall, 1946), pp. 386-90.



quick glance at the topographies of the two countries, why Costa Rican population has tended to be compacted into a relatively small highland spot, while Nicaraguan population, though primarily in the lake region, is still scattered rather widely over the landscape.

*Climate.* This may quickly be disposed of as a general factor which in some non-measurable way has undoubtedly played an important part in the politics of the two countries. Both Nicaragua and Costa Rica are in the tropics, roughly halfway between the Tropic of Cancer and the Equator; but Costa Rican population is generally located at higher altitudes than is the case in Nicaragua. Managua lies only 198 feet above sea level; San José, at 3,870 feet. At Managua the temperatures can and often do run over a muggy 90° F. Those at San José remain almost always in the neighborhood of 69° F. Costa Rican climate on the central plateau has been described as a sort of "eternal spring." No similar description of Nicaraguan temperatures is available.

Most of the population of Costa Rica is to be found on the *mesa central*, and altitudes of effective occupancy here range between 3,000 and 6,000 feet, though some cultivation on the sides of mountains such as the volcano Irazú may go up to 10,000 feet and over. Though some Nicaraguan highland towns are located as high as 2,000 feet — i.e., Matagalpa — and at least one, Jinotega, rests at a cool 3,900 feet, the strip of effective occupancy from León to Granada ranges from 133 feet at Chinandega and 210 at León to 195 at Granada. To the immediate west of Granada is Masaya, where one may "cool off" at a bracing 810 feet of altitude. Much farther south, at Rivas, the altitude is 158 feet, and the exceptional spot for this region is Jinotepe, at 2,489 feet.<sup>68</sup> Such altitudes, at between 11° and 13° N. Lat., can only be, and are, conducive to an oppressive, enervating, soggy Turkish-bath type of climate which does little to energize the population to maximum productivity or keen clear-headedness.

It would take us too far afield to make any detailed analysis of rainfall in the two countries. Suffice it to say that it is heavy in both, and ranges in the neighborhood of seventy inches per year both in the central plateau of Costa Rica and along the broken populated strip of Nicaragua. About the only thing that might be surmised here is that it may be more pleasant to receive such bucketfuls at the higher altitudes of Costa Rica.<sup>69</sup>

The effects of the cited temperature contrasts on the respective politics of the two countries can only be guessed, but it can hardly be doubted that in some vague way the politics of Costa Rica may have benefited and that of Nicaragua may have suffered from climatic factors.

<sup>68</sup> Cabrales, *loc. cit.*

<sup>69</sup> Carlson, *op. cit.*, p. 387.

*Resources.* Quite directly related to the elements of class integration, economic features, and foreign relations — and indirectly related to almost all the other features we have considered — is the matter of agricultural and mineral resources.

It was on Columbus' fourth journey to the Americas that he landed at Varagua, on the Atlantic coast of what is now Costa Rica. Because the Indians who greeted him were decorated with gold earrings and bracelets, the Spanish gave the name Costa Rica to the region. They soon found that as far as minerals were concerned they should have called it Costa Pobre, for precious metals were not found. Spanish indifference was soon the fortunate fate for Costa Rica. It appeared to be a land which could only be settled by agrarian colonists, and this was not the sort of place to interest the earliest *conquistadores*.<sup>70</sup>

Gold and other minerals were found in Nicaragua. It was partly for this reason that whereas colonization in Costa Rica did not begin until 1561, the founding of the city of Granada occurred as early as 1524. Gold production is still of some importance to the Nicaraguan economy, and of negligible significance in Costa Rica. The *Statistical Abstract of Latin America* indicates that Nicaragua was in 1955 the second producer of gold in Latin America. In that year, Mexico led with 11,909 kilograms produced; Nicaragua followed with 7,141; and for Costa Rica no figure is given at all.<sup>71</sup>

Employment figures taken from the same source confirm the impression that whereas mining in general is still of some importance in Nicaragua, it plays almost no part in the economy of Costa Rica. Costa Rica is listed as employing 148,000 in agriculture and only 800 in mining and quarrying of all types. Nicaragua is cited as having 223,400 persons in agriculture and 3,200 in mining and quarrying.<sup>72</sup> This is further confirmed in the pamphlet *Costa Rica*, published by the Pan American Union, which states that according to a 1950 census 54.7 per cent of Costa Rican people were employed in agriculture, 0.3 per cent in mining and quarrying.<sup>73</sup>

Export figures tell the same story. Costa Rica is described as having exported in 1955, \$37,356,000 in coffee, \$31,049,000 in bananas, and \$5,936,000 in cocoa.<sup>74</sup> This source gives no gold exports for Costa Rica, but the pamphlet *Costa Rica* states that in 1952, \$17,925 in gold bars were exported from that country.<sup>75</sup> The principal exports for Nicaragua, also cited by

<sup>70</sup> John and Mavis Biesanz, "Costa Rica Education and the National Culture," *Education*, LXXII (September, 1956), 57-62.

<sup>71</sup> Committee on Latin American Studies, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>73</sup> P. 5.

<sup>74</sup> Committee on Latin American Studies, *op. cit.*, Plate I, Foreign Trade.

<sup>75</sup> P. 19.

the *Statistical Abstract*, are \$24,097,000 in coffee, \$16,764,000 in cotton, and \$8,149,000 in gold.<sup>76</sup>

There can be no question that the nature of Nicaraguan and Costa Rican natural resources, in combination with the ethnic characteristics of the two countries, played a very large role in setting the stage for environmental elements which affected later political developments in the two countries. Without any doubt the absence of important mineral wealth in Costa Rica, and the presence of such wealth in Nicaragua, influence in a marked way the contrasting social structures, economic patterns, and foreign relations of the two countries. As has been shown, these in turn have all exercised their various influences on the contrasting political characteristics of Costa Rica and Nicaragua.

In brief, the presence of mineral riches in Nicaragua led to the development of a small, parasitic class of wealthy owners. This was not the case in the Costa Rican economy. The full impact of this resource-factor will only become entirely clear when we have examined the demographic origins of Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Let us now turn to that topic.

*Demography.* The figure of twenty-five thousand to thirty thousand is commonly stated as the maximum possible number of Indians present in Costa Rica at the time of Spanish settlement.<sup>77</sup>

One gets the impression from reading the history of the time that the paucity of mineral resources and lack of agricultural markets were such that the Spanish had little use for the Indians whom they found. It appears that many of those Indians who did not have the good fortune to flee into the less accessible parts of the region, were either massacred or shipped off to work in Panama or the mines of Peru, where their labor could bring a greater return to the Spanish. The remaining Indians were parceled out among the Spanish settlers, or else were so ferocious that they could not be subjugated readily, and had to be treated very gingerly. According to one source, at one time the Spanish king actually paid the Talamancans and other Indians eight hundred pesos annually to keep them at peace — rather in contrast to the more usual patterns of tribute in the Americas.<sup>78</sup>

Records seem to indicate that after settlement had been underway for some years, the few remaining Indians of the region who did live among the Europeans, were paid at least small amounts for their labor, were trained and much respected in skilled work, and became carpenters, iron masters,

<sup>76</sup> Plate I, Foreign Trade.

<sup>77</sup> José Francisco Trejos, *Origen y Desarrollo de la Democracia en Costa Rica* (San José: Editorial Trejos Hermanos, 1939), p. 11; and Biesanz, *Costa Rican Life*, p. 4. The common statement that there were very few Indians in Costa Rica upon arrival of the Spanish is not quite accurate, as even 25,000 was a sizeable population in those days. Rather, it appears more correct to say that there were very few Indians later, after slaughter, deportations, and assimilation.

<sup>78</sup> Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 15. Other data on this period are in Biesanz, *Costa Rican Life*, pp. 4-6.

tailors, and so forth. Much attention was apparently given to their needs in terms of education and child care.<sup>79</sup>

It is quite clear that after the original colonization had been concluded, there remained insufficient docile Indians to set up any complete system of bondage, even if such an arrangement had been feasible in the face of shortage of economic resources. The *mita* — a general obligation to provide labor for any number of masters — did not, according to José Francisco Trejos, exist in Costa Rica; slavery was virtually unknown, and by the time of independence had entirely disappeared.<sup>80</sup>

In such a situation, it was not long before most of the few remaining Indians had become entirely assimilated into the Costa Rican culture and chromosome-stream, with the result that the region became demographically assimilated, without the rancor which has marked nearby societies.

The record of Nicaraguan Indian-European relations is not so clear, but seems to have followed a path better known to much of Latin America — that is, peonization of the relatively large Indian population in the mines and in the new agricultural pursuits, and bitter conflicts between the Indians on the one hand and *criollos* and *mestizos* on the other.<sup>81</sup>

A Guatemalan example of Indian-Spanish relations throughout much of Central America was provided at the time of the break-up of the Central American Federation, when in 1838 priests stirred the Indians to a fever pitch by telling them that the Liberals were poisoning their wells and were about to destroy their homes and families. Indian mobs under an ignominious name named Rafael Carrera arose, shouting, "Long live religion and death to the foreigners!" They succeeded in 1839 in overthrowing the Liberal government of Francisco Morazán, and in assuring the destruction of Central American unity which in fact if not in theory had been accomplished in 1838.<sup>82</sup> Events of this kind were unknown to Costa Rica.

The very great significance of demographic backgrounds of the two countries becomes entirely clear only when we consider the early colonists who moved into Costa Rica, and into Nicaragua.

In Nicaragua there settled *peninsulares* from Spain, and it was not long before cleavages of a profound sort emerged between these and the younger American-born Spanish, or *criollos*.<sup>83</sup> In the demographic structure of Nicaragua, it was not many generations before the *mestizos* had become an appreciable part of the population, so that a constant four-way struggle for

<sup>79</sup> Trejos, *op. cit.*, pp. 24 and 27. Trejos generally gives a more benign picture of European-Indian relations than is to be found in other sources.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18 and 25-26.

<sup>81</sup> A good source here is Ricardo Levene, *Historia de América* (Buenos Aires: W. M. Jackson, 1940), VII, 99 ff.

<sup>82</sup> Mary Wilhelmine Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 424; and Herring, *A History . . .*, pp. 435-36.

<sup>83</sup> Levene, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

economic and political position, prestige, and opportunities, soon became the standard order of procedure in Nicaraguan life.

After the Spanish *conquistadores* found that Costa Rica was devoid of mineral riches and there were few Indians who could easily be exploited, the country was in 1509 officially put under the rule of the province of Castilla del Oro — Now Panamá — and was then forgotten for the next fifty years.<sup>84</sup>

The first actual occupation of Costa Rica by Europeans was begun in January of 1561. It was led by *Licenciado* don Juan de Cavallón and included ninety men who had been organized in Guatemala and Nicaragua. Among them was an unusual number of *criollos*. According to the reports, none had titles of nobility, and they financed the project out of their own private funds. What is even more sensational for Latin America, they were followed the very next year by wives and sweethearts, who came in a group from Guatamala under the guidance of Vázquez de Coronado.<sup>85</sup>

The group which came to Costa Rica during 1561 and 1562 was the only type which was appropriate to the country. There were no known minerals, and Indian exploitation would have been out of the question even if there had been. Only settlers, devoted to the object of agricultural production in the rich soil of a pastoral economy, could possibly adjust themselves to the unusual Costa Rican situation. Out of these facts emerged what was almost a social phenomenon for Latin America, and it is not difficult for us to put many contemporary factors such as ethnic, cultural, and social homogeneity, distribution of economic instruments, and fortunate foreign relations, into their places in the Costa Rican jigsaw puzzle.

In the Costa Rican economy, one settler simply could not keep a large tract in cultivation. Over one thousand acres were thus out of the question, and much smaller plots had to be the rule.<sup>86</sup> Absentee ownership was unknown in early Costa Rica, though prevalent throughout Latin America, including Nicaragua. As is pointed out by Carlos Pereyra, and noted by Trejos, absentee ownership in Latin America was made particularly vicious by the fact that overseers amassed fortunes for themselves as well as for the absent owners — thus making intolerable the lives of the toiling Indian agricultural workers.<sup>87</sup>

Such economic conditions would have been impossible in Costa Rica. In the first place, there were few or no Indian agricultural workers, and so the Spanish had to do the work themselves. The Spanish settler had to be-

<sup>84</sup> See Jones, *op. cit.*; and Biesanz, *Costa Rican Life*, pp. 1-8.

<sup>85</sup> Trejos, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-15.

<sup>86</sup> Leo Waibel, "White Settlement in Costa Rica," *Geographic Review*, XXIX (October, 1939), 529-60.

<sup>87</sup> Trejos, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

come self-supporting or perish. One Spaniard could not cultivate a large plot of ground.<sup>88</sup>

Secondly, the area was so isolated from normal channels of communication that no wealth could be expected from agricultural production — and of course mineral wealth did not exist. Out of a given plot, in short, there could not be produced more than enough to support the owner and his family, if that.

Under such circumstances, it was not hard for the colonists to prevail upon the officials to divide the land according to need, and one or more such partitions of the land did actually occur. Such apparently happened shortly after 1561, and again in 1770.<sup>89</sup> By the end of the sixteenth century, upon petition of the colonists, all had received parcels of land, and were farmers. To quote directly from Trejos:

En México, el Perú y otras partes muy pobladas de América, los conquistadores encontraron la recompensa de sus fatigas en las delicias de una vida holgada y la riqueza que les proporcionaba el trabajo de los indios. No así los españoles de Costa Rica, que por falta de minas y la gran escasez de población, se vieron reducidos a la mayor pobreza y a tener que cultivar la tierra con sus propias manos para no perecer de hambre Sembraban maíz, trigo y hortalizas, y criaban ganado vacuno, caballar y de cerda.<sup>90</sup>

In making a comparison with Venezuela, a writer cited by Trejos claims the colonial aristocracy had more property than coats-of-arms, and Trejos adds that Costa Rica had no aristocracy, either in property or in coats-of-arms. He contends that what little aristocracy was attempted never could succeed, and that the Costa Rican society could generally be described as a *civilismo igualitario*.

Trejos contends that because the settlers were primarily *criollos*, and that because the few Indians were soon assimilated, there was little social conflict, and an undisturbed psychological outlook prevailed in the colony. According to this same source, the only struggle of consequence occurred between the settlers and the Talamanca Indians.<sup>91</sup> As we have already seen, it is reported that the Talamancans were finally pacified by a payment of tribute to them by the Spanish.

This brings us to the end of our survey of basic factors behind the environment of Costa Rican and Nicaraguan politics — not forgetting in passing the peculiar location of Nicaragua which combined prospects of canal building with presence of minerals to make it particularly attractive to foreigners.

It is no doubt true, finally, that the whole contrast between Nicaraguan and Costa Rican political development has played its role in setting patterns

<sup>88</sup> On early land utilization in Costa Rica, see Edwin J. Foscue, "Land Utilization in Costa Rica," *Scientific Monthly*, LIII (November, 1941), 427-39; and Waibel, *loc. cit.*

<sup>89</sup> Trejos, *op. cit.*, pp. 16 ff.; and John H. Furbay, *Education in Costa Rica*, Bulletin No. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1946), chap. 1.

<sup>90</sup> Trejos, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

of further stability, chaos, or dictatorship, as the case may have been. Previous stability lays the ground for understanding which makes possible future stability; previous chaos and resultant hatreds arouse deep bitterness which makes more difficult the task of establishing stable, constitutional government. We have already noted how Costa Rican political development has been more characterized by relative stability than has Nicaraguan political development.

There are, of course, accidents of leadership which cannot help but influence the political evolutions of countries. However, these as well as previous political memories are intermediate factors which rest upon the basic element which have been described and they are actually a part of the total political scene which we are trying to explain.

#### SUMMARY

We can now summarize our findings. Costa Rica can accurately be described, according to our definition of democracy,<sup>92</sup> as being rather more "democratic" than Nicaragua. The contemporary factors in the environments of the two countries which help explain this phenomenon include (1) physical, ethnic, cultural, political and social integration or nonintegration; (2) economic characteristics; and (3) foreign relations.

The contrasting topographies of the two countries affected their physical integration. Their climates may have played some indirect role in affecting their respective energies, production, and harmony. Their resources were such that cultural, political, and social assimilation was possible in Costa Rica and unlikely in Nicaragua. Resources also influenced the economic structures which emerged. Lack of resources caused foreigners to be disinterested in Costa Rica, and presence of resources, plus location favorable for transit, caused outsiders to be highly attracted to Nicaragua. Differing demographic situations resulted in contrasting experiences in terms of human relationships, exploitation, and labor — in other words, contributed to characteristics in terms of integration and economic processes. Finally, each factor which has been listed has had its undoubted effect upon others, and the entire emerging social structure has in each case no doubt contributed to the character of each factor. For example, the more democratic tradition of Costa Rica has contributed to its more flexible social system, and the more flexible social system has influenced the Costa Rican political democracy.

To be entirely accurate, we cannot list these causal factors separately, but must throw them into a common kaleidoscope, jumble them up, and watch the pattern that emerges. No one operates independently of the others, but the basic, beginning causes are quite clear, and are to be sub-

<sup>92</sup> Cf. p. 628, above.

sumed under the headings of (1) topography; (2) climate; (3) resources and location; and (4) demography.

#### SIGNIFICANCE

If it were to be determined from all that has preceded that Nicaragua or any other country similarly situated is doomed to a fate determined by forces outside its control, there would be little of real significance that could be drawn from the above study.

*What is perhaps significant is that it was not the topography, climate, resources, location, and demography of Nicaragua which directly sealed its political fate. Rather, the political features of Nicaragua — and of Costa Rica — have been directly influenced by more immediate and controllable factors — that is, by the characteristics related to integration, economics, and foreign relations.*

Though it is perfectly true that these more immediate elements were first shaped by rather inflexible factors of geography and demography, it cannot be said that man is unable to bring force to bear to change them.

Let us glance for a moment at the matter of physical assimilation. We have seen that a lowland area of swamps, broken highlands, lakes, and mountains has effectively prevented full integration of Nicaraguan national life. It is equally clear that in 1958 such physical handicaps need not forever stand as a bar to national integration. Air travel is erasing former obstacles to communication. Even rail construction, under vigorous enterprise, is by now so far advanced that no feature of the Nicaraguan landscape need become a permanent obstacle to assimilation throughout the entire republic.

And so it goes with the other elements we have examined. Ethnic and cultural integration can readily be achieved by education if promoted by governments seized of a will to achieve the desired end. Social harmony must follow upon ethnic and cultural assimilation, and upon the more general distribution of property ownership which must be a part of economic reform. A conscious, articulate people need not in this day, even though few in number, suffer forever from the ravages of foreign intervention.

Finally, upon the emergence of a greater integration, upon solution of the problem of general property distribution, and upon relief from foreign threat, it can be expected that political harmony — an agreement to agree upon the rules of the game — must follow as night follows day.

Precisely because of better communications, improved education among at least a few, and a certain lessening of ethnic, cultural, and social tensions, as well as an enhanced security from foreign dangers, such countries as Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, Ecuador, Peru, and others — includ-



ing even Nicaragua herself — are at this very moment emerging from generations of chaos, *caudillismo*, and darkness into a new era of stability, peaceful production, and even of strengthened democratic processes. Much of the evolution to date has been unconscious, a sort of unwitting escape from physical and historical handicaps. What could be done by a conscious action born of knowledge of the factors essential for constitutional democracy excites the imagination with a thrill of anticipation.

There seems little doubt that it wouldn't take much to put all of Latin America squarely on the road to the fullest, most genuine type of political democracy. There is one factor which is constantly present in all parts of the Western Hemisphere, and which has not always been so notable throughout Eurasia. This is the widespread desire for liberty, for democratic growth, for individual freedom.

José Figueres of Costa Rica expressed what has been commented upon many times by others when he said:<sup>93</sup>

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 the democratic creed, that you could no more erase those political aspirations than you could eradicate the Christian faith. . . .

. . . Whoever feels discouraged because of the prevalence of dictatorships in Latin America should notice that the people have never ceased to fight for their liberties. From colonial times down to the present moment, Latin Americans have kept the hope of freedom alive at constant sacrifice. As I write this article, I have scores of personal friends in prison for political reasons, some of them for four years without trial. Intellectuals, professional men and women, and labor leaders are kept in dungeons and tortured or shot in the streets. Thousands are displaced, wasted, or in exile. Of course, this confirms the existence of tyranny. But it also confirms the willingness to fight it. For every hero who falls, a substitute volunteers.

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<sup>93</sup> "Problems and Progress in Latin America," *Journal of International Affairs*, IX (1955), 1.