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Source: *Caribbean Studies*, Oct., 1970, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Oct., 1970), pp. 49-96

Published by: Institute of Caribbean Studies, UPR, Rio Piedras Campus

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25612325>

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THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC IDEOLOGY IN LATIN AMERICA:  
THE CASE OF COSTA RICA'S PARTIDO LIBERACION NACIONAL

*Susanne Bodenheimer* \*

Since ideology has been the subject of considerable controversy in the social sciences, we must preface this study with a very brief note on our conceptualization of it. As a system of ideas and beliefs, ideology differs from philosophy in that its significance can be understood only in relation to a specific historical context and to specific social collectivities or groups.<sup>1</sup> Given this relation, which was of particular concern to Mannheim,<sup>2</sup> Marx, and many others, and specifically the notion that the substantive content of an ideology reflects concrete interests of a particular social class or group, it is no longer sufficient to accept that system of ideas at face value. Rather it must be seen as an instrument in the hands of that social class, which seeks to change or to maintain its own position relative to that of other classes in a particular historical situation. An understanding of the meaning of ideology at this level requires thorough analysis of the historical and the socio-economic structure of the society within which it is rooted, and of the position of its proponents within that social structure. It raises the question of hidden agendas underlying the public ideological statements. It implies the particularity of any ideological formulation in a society of clashing interests, despite any claims for universality. It implies the need to examine not only the ideational component of ideology, but also its situational context and its translation into concrete programs and policies which, particularly when the ideology has been institutionalized as a political party and subsequently as a government, have definite socio-economic consequences for the larger society.

It is at this point that the question of the truth or falsity of the ideology must be raised, and with it the issue of ideology as "false consciousness." The empirical truth claims of ideology require that it be subjected to at least partial verification.<sup>3</sup> Although its truth is much more difficult to establish, ideology may be viewed as creating "false consciousness," according to Mannheim,

"(when it is used) to conceal the actual meaning of conduct rather than (to reveal) it, ...(when) persons try to cover up their 'real' relations to themselves and to the world and falsify to themselves the elementary facts of human existence by dignifying, romanticizing, or idealizing them, ...(and when knowledge) fails to take account of the new realities applying to a situation..."<sup>4</sup>

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From a Marxist perspective, all ideology necessarily creates false consciousness, insofar as particular hegemonic social groups project their interests as representing universal interests of the whole society; through this process of "idealization," or the identification of the particular as the universal, a ruling class, using political parties as its instrumentalities, maintains its hegemony over the masses by obscuring the real interests of the latter.<sup>5</sup> Without entering into the larger theoretical issue of whether this is necessarily the case in every capitalist society and for all political parties, we shall attempt to judge the extent to which a particular party, Partido Liberación Nacional (PLN) of Costa Rica, projects a "true" picture of national reality, and the extent to which it has perpetuated false consciousness among its adherents and for Costa Rica as a whole. Using this perspective, perhaps we shall be able to offer an analysis of PLN's ideology and practice which goes beyond the somewhat superficial descriptions (or apologetics) of those who accept it at face value.<sup>6</sup>

#### I. THE IDEOLOGY OF THE PARTIDO LIBERACION NACIONAL, ITS HISTORICAL ROOTS, AND ITS MYTH

"Modern liberal thought... is of a peculiar texture, highly elevated, a creation of the imagination... Socially this intellectualistic outlook had its basis in a middle stratum, in the bourgeoisie and in the intellectual class. This outlook, in accordance with the structural relationship of the groups representing it, pursued a dynamic middle course between the vitality, ecstasy, and vindictiveness of oppressed strata and the immediate concreteness of a feudal ruling class... Bourgeois liberalism was too much pre-occupied with norms to concern itself with the actual situation as it really existed. Hence it necessarily constructed for itself its own ideal world... (Its) over-emphasis on form... corresponds to this middle position and to the lack of concreteness of all its ideas... With the liberal humanitarian idea, the utopian element... is the culminating point of historical evolution... (It) signifies a relative toning down of the notion of sudden historical change... (and) becomes increasingly bound up with the process of becoming... (It) becomes a norm which, applied to details, effects gradual improvement... (Its force) lay in the fact that it appealed to the free will and kept alive the feeling of being indeterminate and unconditioned..."<sup>7</sup>

We begin with Mannheim's characterization of the liberal mentality because in many respects the Social Democratic movement in Costa Rica (and generally in Latin America) is the heir of that tradition. Substantively the PLN ideology is an eclectic amalgam, a blending of the Liberal, unscientific Socialist, and Social Christian traditions; but its mentality, its spirit, and its style are those of Liberalism.

At the heart of the PLN ideology lies an almost Lockean view of man and his place in society, modified somewhat to correspond to the

social necessities of the 20th century. The starting-point is individual man, endowed with a "non-transferrable personal destiny which is to be realized by his own determination," with an intrinsic "dignity," and with certain "inalienable rights," including the satisfaction of his social and economic needs as well as political-legal guarantees.<sup>8</sup> These universal human attributes are far more essential than any artificial social stratifications or classes. Society is "the means by which the individual attains his own ends" and the "common good" is realized.<sup>9</sup> Since the "common good" is perfectly compatible with, and in fact "guarantees" individual liberties and rights, any possible contradictions between individual and social welfare are screened out by definition.

Accordingly, the economic system must be neither capitalist nor socialist, but must find the appropriate middle course:

"We recognize private property and proclaim its social function, the exercise of which ought to be inspired in the well-being of all. We consider it necessary to establish property as a generalized social fact and to avoid its swollen concentration. Those forms of property should be reserved to the state which know a power of dominion so great that they cannot be left without danger in private hands. There ought not to exist inactive property or means of production... To the extent that it advances the acknowledgement of the social character of the economic function, the profit incentive should be complemented and ennobled by the spirit of service..."<sup>10</sup>

The model of the mixed economy is taken, in the words of José Figueres, PLN's main leader since its founding, from Keynesian theory, and concretely from the post-1930's "welfare state" of the U.S.:<sup>11</sup> private ownership of property as the norm, within a general framework of state planning and regulation, and with state control in those areas which would otherwise tend toward a "natural" monopoly. There is no need for total restructuring of economic institutions: the common good, which implies increasing productivity as well as redistribution of wealth,<sup>12</sup> may be fulfilled by "spreading the benefits of economic growth rather than (by) redistributing existing wealth."<sup>13</sup>

Within this general economic and social context, the state exists "to realize... all of those functions in which its intervention is justified for motives of the general welfare," insofar as such intervention does not violate "the fundamental attributes of human dignity" or individual rights.<sup>14</sup> The democratic state, being "the best medium for the full realization of our ideals,"<sup>15</sup> and resting on the twin pillars of individual dignity and popular sovereignty,<sup>16</sup> must be maintained through the rule of law and formal electoral institutions and through the "alternation" of competing political groups.<sup>17</sup> Only with the elimination of corruption and electoral manipulation, and with the free functioning of opposition movements, can the stability and order essential to democracy be

preserved. Given this characterization of democracy, Communism must be defined as a threat: the central ideas of Communism, and particularly its materialism and its focus on class struggle, do not “fit” with the basic concepts of Christianity and Liberty.<sup>18</sup> Because of their resort to force and “barbarous methods,” their betrayal of their own principles,<sup>19</sup> and their propensity for totalitarianism, Communists are too dangerous to be permitted to participate in the democratic process.

In order to move from an abstract to a more concrete understanding of PLN ideology, and in order to go beyond a simple acceptance of it at face value, we must indicate briefly the historical context and roots of PLN as an ideological movement and party.<sup>20</sup> The Liberacionista movement was the outgrowth of three nuclear groups during the 1940’s: the Centro para el Estudio de Problemas Nacionales, founded in 1940 by a group of students and professors in the national University; Acción Demócrata, a political group; and Rerum Novarum, a labor organization. The Centro, many of whose founders later became main PLN leaders and ideologues, is best described by one of those founders, Alberto Cañas:

“The first thing which distinguished the youths of the Center was the consciousness of being a *generation* in the strictest sense of the word, ...in a sense which Costa Rica has not known since the generation of 1889, of which this group was the direct heir. They threw themselves into one concrete task: that of studying the situation of the country from all possible angles, with the objective of diagnosing the ills and proposing solutions and remedies. Unlike many similar groups around the world, the youths of the Center decided from the beginning to avoid the pitfall into which many youths had fallen and to show themselves skillfully, militantly anti-communist.”<sup>21</sup>

Although initiated as a study group, the Centro issued in May, 1943, a Manifesto declaring its intention to form an “authentically democratic doctrinary party,”<sup>22</sup> and thereafter became an active political force in Costa Rica.

Meanwhile, within the Partido Demócrata, organized in 1942 to back ex-President León Cortés against the candidate of the ruling Partido Republicano of President Rafael Calderón Guardia for the 1944 election, a smaller core known as Acción Demócrata (AD) was formed. Chief among the founders of AD were José Figueres and Francisco Orlich, who later became pivotal PLN leaders. AD and Figueres in particular rose to national prominence in 1942. In July of that year a Nazi submarine sunk a ship of the United Fruit Co. in Limón harbor, killing a number of Costa Rican workers guarding the ship; the indignant residents of San José, led by the Communists and apparently with government sanction, responded by rioting, their violence being directed chiefly against merchants of Germán, Italian, and Swiss origin. Figueres (who himself had done business with Germán nationals)<sup>23</sup>

took this opportunity to make a radio speech sharply condemning the Calderón government for its corruption, collaboration with the Communists, and incompetence. His speech was interrupted by government officials, who jailed and subsequently deported him. Figueres returned from his exile in Mexico in 1944 to lead AD and eventually the merged AD-Centro movement.

The third source of support for the movement was the Catholic labor organization, *Rerum Novarum* (RN), whose main ideological contribution was made through its founder, Father Benjamín Núñez. During the early years of the Calderón regime, the Catholic Church, in the person of Archbishop Sanabria, had supported the government and had even been accused of abetting the growth of Communism because of his public statements that it was not inconsistent for a Catholic to be affiliated with the Communist labor movement (at the time the only one in Costa Rica) or with the Communist Party.<sup>24</sup> In 1943, however, following an incident in which Sanabria felt that he had been tricked into making a public appearance with Calderón and Communist leaders, and eager that the Communists should not increase their following as a result of the new Labor Code, he urged his American-educated protege, Núñez, to organize the anti-communist labor confederation RN.<sup>25</sup> In the following years Núñez joined forces with the social democrats opposing the Calderón regime, and the rank and file of the confederation supplied much of the manpower for the *Liberación* army in 1948. Núñez himself became one of PLN's principal ideologues.

In 1945 the Centro and AD merged to form the reformist *Partido Social Demócrata* (PSD). What united them was, beyond all else, a fierce opposition to the regimes of Calderón and his hand-picked successor, Teodoro Picado. Specifically, their main targets of criticism were: the government's corruption, its manipulation of elections for the purpose of maintaining itself in power, and its curtailment of some civil liberties during World War II; the open alliance of the Calderonistas with the Communist Party (Figueres maintains that Costa Rica was "the first American victim of the world Communist Revolution, from 1940 to 1948"<sup>26</sup>); and the government's alleged catering to the interests of the Costa Rican oligarchy. The new party pursued two courses simultaneously. On the one hand, it joined together with other groups opposed to the Calderonista government — conservative groups opposed to the Calderonista government — conservative groups with which it had little else in common, — to back a candidate for the 1948 election. When their own Figueres failed to obtain sufficient support, the PSD leaders agreed to support Otilio Ulate, the conservative publisher of *Diario de Costa Rica*. On the other hand, they began to prepare and to collect arms for the revolution which Figueres had judged to be inevitable since 1942.<sup>27</sup> Under the direction of Daniel Oduber, the

offices of the government newspaper were burned and attempts were made on the lives of Calderón and Communist chief Manuel Mora.<sup>28</sup> In 1947 the united opposition organized a general strike which paralyzed the country for several days; although the strike was harshly suppressed by the Picado government, it succeeded in forcing the government to guarantee an honest 1948 election.<sup>29</sup> But when the election was held in 1948 and Ulate was declared the victor by the Electoral Tribunal, the Calderonista-dominated Legislative Assembly voted to annul the election. Figueres, who had all along anticipated some such maneuver, promptly declared a revolution, which he led from his *finca* and which, after six weeks of bitter civil war (the Communists providing most of the manpower for the other side), he won. For the next 18 months Figueres ruled Costa Rica in a Junta or “caretaker” government. In November, 1949, as promised, he turned the government over to Ulate, who had won the 1948 election. During the Ulate regime, the leaders of the PSD devoted themselves to the task of forming a new political party, PLN.

From this brief historical sketch we may note a few factors which were essential for the future development of PLN:

- (a) This ideological movement originated as one of opposition to an existing situation, and specifically to a two-pronged alliance generally referred to as Caldero-Comunismo. As a result, many of its positive principles came to be defined in reaction and opposition to those which were seen to characterize its enemies — a circumstance which left a deep imprint on the ideology itself.
- (b) The founders of the movement perceived themselves as a generation — more precisely, as the “vanguard” of a generation,<sup>30</sup> — rather than as a specific social class. It was, in their view, a generation united not only by age or a particular “style,” but also by a certain set of ideas. Whether or not this self-identification in terms of a generation rather than a class, motivated by ideas rather than interests, is accurate — a point to be discussed below, — it is an essential feature of their ideology.
- (c) Unlike many of the older social democratic movement in Latin America, PLN was minimally influenced, even at the outset, by Marxist thought. Although PLN traces its ideological orientation at least in part to a Socialist tradition, even its Socialism is more Social Christian and European Social Democratic than “scientific;” in any case the liberal strain is much more pronounced than the socialist. Thus, for

example, the fundamentally idealistic, even moralistic tone of the Liberación ideology, and its relative lack of attention to such themes as imperialism, stand in direct contrast to the materialism, and the great emphasis on foreign domination, of Marxist ideologies.

- (d) Again unlike other social democratic parties in Latin America, PLN could draw upon no indigenous (Indian) culture as a source for its ideology (because Costa Rica had no sizeable Indian population). The absence of the racial-cultural element which was so strong in the Peruvian and Mexican populist ideologies gave to Liberación ideological principles a certain one-dimensional quality. In order to base those principles in a more evocative sub-stratum, to provide a basis upon which a popular following could identify emotionally with those substantive principles, the Liberacionista movement developed a substitute for the racial-cultural tradition: an historical myth.\*

PLN's mythology grows primarily out of the Revolution of 1948 and the events leading up to it. One of the basic norms professed by PLN is non-violence: in Figueres' words,

"Let the struggle of ideas, the struggle of classes, and the social revolution be contests among rational beings in a democratic battlefield, where each brain is a cannon, where each enemy is a friend..."<sup>32</sup>

Given its strong indictment of the Communists for their willingness to use force and its emphasis on democratic stability and peaceful change, it would at first glance appear strange that PLN deliberately depicts the violent civil war of 1948 as an heroic struggle. (Propaganda for the 1966 Presidential campaign of Daniel Oduber, for example, glorified his heroic role as director of sabotage operations against the Calderón regime long before the Revolution broke out.<sup>33</sup>) In order to reconcile its generally professed abhorrence of violence with its resort to war

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\* To neglect the myth in ideology is to miss the essence of its mobilizing power. Insofar as one of the functions of ideology is to unify or create solidarity, it must provide not only explanations but also certain legitimating myths about national history and reality.<sup>31</sup> By referring to the myth component of ideology, we do not assume *a priori* that the myth is true or false; rather we suggest that every ideology (and the actions to which it gives rise) must be legitimated to a greater or lesser extent by a certain interpretation of historical events. The truth or falsity of the myth is a matter to be decided *a posteriori* on the basis of its correspondence with historical reality.



during the 1940's, and to legitimate the latter, PLN came to rely upon a special interpretation of Costa Rican history and social development, within the context of which the Revolution was justified and necessary.

Without going into all the details of Costa Rican history here, we may extract certain themes which are essential to the myth created by Liberacionistas and their sympathizers.

- (a) The absence of an Indian population and of fabulous riches in Costa Rica excluded the possibility of a slave-owning economy and forced the Spanish themselves to work the land.<sup>34</sup>
- (b) Thus there emerged a nation of small land-owners with an individualistic, conservative, yet fiercely independent, egalitarian, and libertarian mentality.<sup>35</sup>
- (c) Further historical circumstances prevented the development of a greatly skewed pattern of land tenure.\* This economic factor hindered the rise of a social class structure polarized between a landed feudal oligarchy and the impoverished, landless masses, and gave rise instead to a relatively flexible class structure.<sup>37</sup> To be sure, a coffee-growing and merchant elite did rise to power over the last century and became the bastion of reaction in Costa Rica;<sup>38</sup> but this oligarchy appeared too late to have any significant effect upon the national character (or even upon social structure).<sup>39</sup>
- (d) The inherently democratic attitudes of this nation of small land-owners were reinforced by a preoccupation with widespread education;<sup>40</sup> despite their poverty, Costa Ricans have always displayed "a more alert public opinion."<sup>41</sup>
- (e) With the elimination of the military as a factor in politics, stable democratic government flourished almost uninterruptedly from 1889 to 1940.<sup>42</sup>

And so the idealization reaches its climax: Costa Rica is projected as "a democracy of coffee-growers and school-teachers..."<sup>43</sup> "unique among the Central American States" in that "for 80 years with few interludes, political life has been tranquil and elections... exemplary."<sup>44</sup> Costa Rican egalitarianism, "education, excellent leadership..., social

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\* In his history of Costa Rica, Juan Bosch goes so far as to maintain that the destruction of the cacao crop at the end of the 18th century by mosquitoes and European pirates prevented Costa Rica from developing a plantation, slave-based economy; thus Costa Ricans should "build a monument of thanks" to the forces which destroyed the incipient cacao economy.<sup>36</sup>

fluidity, and the like" result from "the peculiar conditions of distributed proprietorship."<sup>45</sup> Thus it is "a modern state, the home of a prosperous, happy, and educated people,"<sup>46</sup> with a long democratic heritage to preserve.

It is within the context of this idealization of Costa Rican history and social reality that the Liberación interpretation of the Calderonista regimes of the 1940's and the resort to war in 1948 may be understood. Like any other heroic myth, that of PLN must have its demons. To those who accepted the myth of the Costa Rican democratic tradition, the events of the 1940's were an aberration, a rupturing of the tradition — and Calderón-Comunismo was the obvious demon. Calderón himself was seen as having risen to power with the aid of and as representing the interests of the land-owning and commercial oligarchy;<sup>47</sup> he was "a tool of the bankers and the Church." Insofar as he had any popular base, it lay with the most traditional peasant and Church groups.<sup>48</sup> When his dictatorial and corrupt regime was in danger of losing all popular support, Calderón turned to the Communists, who willingly collaborated in order to increase their own power.<sup>49</sup> Moreover the *national* integrity of Costa Rica had been violated by these enemies, insofar as both were controlled from abroad: the Communists were obviously taking orders from Moscow, and Calderón had close ties to the great dictators of Central America, such as Nicaragua's Somoza. Thus, having identified the dual enemy in the form of the Calderonista-Communist alliance, PLN claimed to represent the national aspirations of the vast majority of Costa Ricans. In addition to its mythical devils, the Liberación movement also had its somewhat-martyred heroes in Figueres and other leaders who had been jailed and/or exiled during the 1940's. The special "suffering" of the principal leaders was only an extension of the great "sacrifice" made by the entire "Generation of 48" in laying aside their studies and their comfortable lives to save the nation.<sup>50</sup>

Thus the Revolution of 1948 became an heroic act of national service, of restoring the nation to its rightful and glorious democratic tradition, rather than an act of disruption or unwarranted violence. There was not a revolution but a restoration of traditional values,<sup>51</sup> a "democratic rehabilitation,"<sup>52</sup> a "renovation."<sup>53</sup> Thus not only the Revolution, but also the Party which carried on its tradition, were endowed with a certain legitimacy, and its leaders became national saviors; in fact their accounts of the era often seem to suggest that this "Generation of 48" was a kind of chosen people, destined to "recover the Republic for democracy."<sup>54</sup> Being progressive reformers as well, the Liberacionistas had not only rescued the nation, but also carried it forward, by integrating the traditional ideal of political democracy with 20th century notions of mass social and economic welfare. Clearly theirs seemed the

cause of the nation as a whole (minus the “demons,”) and not merely of any particular class. The myth has been summarized in PLN’s 1951 “Carta Fundamental” and in its March 1969 restatement of basic principles, as the rationale for the founding of the Party:

“We, the Costa Ricans, are the heirs of a tradition and of achievements molded in the long run from our history, whose result is the democratic system in which we live... With profound respect for our national history, we understand it as a constant building of democracy... We are the consequence of a great movement initiated in 1940 by the Center for the Study of National Problems... (and of the) PSD... We see in the armed uprising of the Costa Rican people... of 1948 the immediate roots of our existence as a political party, because this action is the sign of the democratic will of our nationality, and because its proclaimed objectives — respect for suffrage, well-being of the greatest number, and honesty in public administration — continue to be the key of our course and aspirations.”<sup>55</sup>

“The Epic (of 1948) constituted a grand sacrifice of the Costa Rican people in their struggle to reconquer national values lost slowly... This sacrifice demands the creation of a permanent social movement which assumes the responsibility of carrying out the complete accomplishment of this task...”<sup>56</sup>

These are the outlines of PLN’s ideology and legitimating myth. It is not our intention here to “refute” it in detail; indeed it would be difficult to do so, because virtually all accounts of Costa Rican history have been written by Liberacionistas or their admirers in the U.S.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, to the extent that we are concerned with the veracity of the ideology and its myth, and with its relevance to the needs and aspirations of concrete social groups, we must raise a few questions about the widely accepted PLN version of Costa Rican reality.

First, we must very briefly examine certain aspects of Costa Rican historical and social development which challenge the PLN notion of the Costa Rican “tradition.” The commonly presented image of a nation characterized by less rigid class boundaries and the absence of an oligarchy, which in turn created an egalitarian ethos and social structure,<sup>58</sup> does not hold up under close scrutiny. It greatly underestimates the importance of the coffee-growing and commercial elites which made their appearance during the 19th century and which, regardless of the Jeffersonian independent yeoman farmer spirit so often attributed to the Costa Rican peasant masses, have continued to dominate Costa Rican political and socio-economic life to this day. Even if this oligarchy is not “feudal” and only arose during the last century, to discount its hegemony on the grounds that it appeared only after the democratic, egalitarian mentality had been consolidated, is to neglect the impact of changing socio-economic conditions upon political and cultural life and to project an image of “arrested” political-cultural development. To maintain or imply that the sentiment of

equality "impeded the formation of aristocratic groups and the existence of social differences"<sup>59</sup> is to accept a grossly oversimplified interpretation of the Costa Rican "spirit" and its relation to social class formation.

Moreover, close examination of the pattern of land tenure seriously discredits Costa Rica's "rural Eden" image. According to a 1962 study by a prominent Costa Rican economist and former director of the land reform agency, 59.3% of the farms cover only 6.7% of the land and 94.5% of the farms cover 38.8% of the land; meanwhile, 2.6% of the farms (average size of 1,087 manzanas) cover well over half of the land,<sup>60</sup> and, according to FAO figures, that .5% of the farms which constitute large haciendas covers 36.1% of the land.<sup>61</sup> Thus, while it may be the case that most peasants own some land, the vast majority of these holdings are minifundia, or barely subsistence level holdings; meanwhile production, particularly of the crucial exports, for the market is concentrated in the hands of a very small group (e.g., 1.8% of coffee producers have accounted for 58% of the total annual crop in recent years<sup>62</sup>). For cash crops such as coffee and some dairy products, the trend has been toward greater concentration and increasing reliance on the labor of landless salaried peasants.<sup>63</sup> And this is to say nothing of foreign holdings: the United Fruit Co., for example, the largest landowner in Costa Rica, by itself owns 7.5% of the land registered in farms (of which it was cultivating only 14% in 1961).<sup>64</sup> We have dwelt on the land tenure pattern of Costa Rica as only one example — perhaps the most important — of the distortions implicit within the PLN myth. Similarly, the idealization of Costa Rica as a land of peaceful, stable democracy breaks down in the light of the various coups, civil wars, attempted invasions, and suspensions of civil liberties which have punctuated the nation's history.

Secondly, we must take a closer look at the Calderón regime of the 1940's, whose alleged aberrations from Costa Rica's democratic tradition provided the justification for the Revolution and for the existence of PLN. Calderón is generally pictured as the pet of the oligarchy and the more "traditional" or conservative sectors of Costa Rican society — and, by way of his alliance with them, of the Communists. Nevertheless it was precisely during his regime and that of his hand-picked successor that much social legislation was adopted: the first social security law, a Labor Code granting workers the rights to organize, strike, and bargain collectively, a minimum wage law, paid vacations for workers, free health clinics, unemployment insurance, an income tax, and some land redistribution. To be sure, these were not revolutionary measures, nor did they alter Costa Rica's socio-economic structure in any basic way. Nevertheless, they were at least as important as most reforms made by PLN governments, and laid the basis for the latter. In fact, as one observer has noted, "The radical quality of the

(Calderón) administration frightened many who had supported its rise to power" (i.e. among the oligarchy).<sup>65</sup> Moreover, Calderón had a substantial popular following among the poor; and, largely as a result of the welfare measures initiated by his government, he has retained considerable support from the working class, Costa Rica's equivalent of a "proletariat." It was the growing middle class rather than the lower classes which went unrepresented during the Calderonista regimes.<sup>66</sup> Thus the Revolution of 1948 was the culmination of a ferment of opposition to Calderón's political corruption and collaboration with the Communists, rather than to the "oligarchical" nature of his regime.

This becomes clearer if we examine, thirdly, the "revolutionaries" themselves. A self-made man, educated in the U.S., Figueres had become by the 1940's a wealthy industrialist and *finquero*, well connected with Costa Rica's bankers and merchants.<sup>67</sup> Another prominent leader of the Liberación movement, Francisco Orlich, was a very wealthy businessman. In fact almost all of the Liberación leaders were professionals and/or men of property. Moreover, in their movement of opposition to Calderón, the future Liberacionistas of the Centro and Acción Demócrata joined forces with several well-known conservatives and their followings: León Cortés, who, as President of Costa Rica during the 1930's, had represented the commercial elite and the "plutocrats,"<sup>68</sup> and whom the Liberacionistas supported for President in 1944; Fernando Castro, a wealthy, conservative *latifundista*, businessman, and financier, with ties to the United Fruit Co.;<sup>69</sup> Otilio Ulate, the powerful publisher of *Diario de Costa Rica*, leader of the conservative opposition to Calderón (and to his reform programs),<sup>70</sup> and the Liberación-backed candidate for President in 1948; and even Mario Echandi, the conservative lawyer, who in 1958 was elected President against the PLN candidate.<sup>71</sup> Significantly, Castro, Ulate, and Echandi broke with Figueres soon after the Revolution and became three of his harshest conservative critics.

While collaborating with many of the least progressive figures in Costa Rican political life, the Liberacionistas seemed incapable of perceiving the interests and ideas they shared with their "enemies." For it has been seen that the Calderón regimes were at least moderately progressive (by the standards of the 1940's) in passing some of the reform measures which Liberacionistas themselves agreed were necessary; yet what mattered to them far more than the new social rights guaranteed by Calderón was his violation of the ancient "derechos del hombre" (human rights).<sup>72</sup> Similarly, with respect to the Communists, Liberación appeared to place more importance upon their lip service to the Marxist notion of elections as a "bourgeois institution"<sup>73</sup> (while in fact participating in and enjoying the benefits of the electoral system)

than upon their militant advocacy of social-economic reforms. The willingness of the Liberacionistas to work with representatives of the national elite, while bitterly (and finally violently) attacking groups which implemented their own professed reform objectives, leaves little doubt that the Revolution of 1948 was in no sense a social revolution; rather it was a battle over the functioning of political institutions and, even more important, over who should control the political apparatus. In the end it was Calderón's manipulation of the elections in 1944 and 1948 which aroused the Liberacionistas to action and finally to revolution.

Thus the 1948 Revolution signified above all a crisis of political access; as one outsider noted,

"(These) revolutionists did not through their action ratify a new power structure. Rather they left the political system much as it had been before the 'revolution,' *although now they were included within it.*"<sup>74</sup>

More specifically, it was a struggle for access forged by and on behalf of a particular class. To be sure, it drew support from various elements of the lower classes; but in its essence, as one of Liberación's own writers acknowledges, it represented the aspirations of a rising, educated, politically aware middle class which had felt itself to be excluded from political power under Calderón.<sup>75</sup>

The fact that the Revolution of 1948 and the movement which initiated it were very much class-based, and that the unity of ideas which brought the various social democratic leaders together rested upon a firm basis of common interest, throws a new light on the Liberación ideology. In its own ideological statements PLN has consistently avoided, whether or not by intention, any serious class analysis. Having identified and isolated its "enemies," it speaks in the name of all other Costa Ricans. Thus, in their very definition of democracy, for example, two of PLN's leading ideologues are left with "the classic definition of Lincoln: government of the people, by the people, for the people."<sup>76</sup> In fact, as will be seen, PLN has produced governments of, by, and for certain sectors of the middle class. The Liberacionista tendency to present its ideology and myths as "expressions of the collective national soul"<sup>77</sup> casts an aura of universalism which legitimates, precisely because it masks, its representation of certain particular interests. Unlike Marxists, who concede from the outset that the battle on behalf of the interests of the working class must be won at the expense of the interests and well-being of the capitalists, social democratic or liberal reform movements such as PLN refuse to acknowledge their particularistic (class) bases. In place of class struggle Liberacionistas stress consensus and the harmonization of various class

interests for the well-being of the nation as a whole. Yet even their nationalism universalizes their particular interests: while elevating to the status of "national enemies" those who pose any threat to the interests which they directly represent (e.g., the Somozas in Nicaragua), it leaves nearly intact those foreign interests which do not pose such a threat (e.g., foreign investors and even the United Fruit Co.). The approach of liberal reform movements like PLN has been well summarized by Anderson:

"Their prime appeal is to something that can only be described as a notion of the 'national interest'... Their approach to change is... one of seeking the terms of compatibility of the various interests and demands in the society under the general rubric of development. The style is essentially aggregative. There is a faith that all sectors of society have a role to play in the development effort... (This approach) appears 'opportunistic' to political opponents, an attempt to monopolize political support. The political ideology of economic development is a way of promising everything to everybody, a remarkable political tool... No one need be hurt, no one need be deprived... In this approach, ...there is of course a thin and fuzzy line separating the effort to enhance a sense of common endeavor... and the effort to aggregate support for (their own) specific political movement..."<sup>78</sup>

A further characteristic of Liberacionista "universalism" is its enunciation of principles ("democracy," "individual dignity," the "common good") as valid for all ages, or at least for the indefinite past and future of the modern era. As we turn now toward an examination of PLN's social base and its concrete programs and policies, we shall attempt to determine, among other things, whether the general PLN principles have been formulated in such a way as to permit their translation into programs appropriate not only for the 1940's but also for the 1960's and beyond. Before considering the institutionalization of the ideology as PLN party program and government policy, however, we must discuss briefly certain aspects of the Party itself.

## II. PLN AS A POLITICAL PARTY: ITS SOCIAL BASE, THE INTERNAL DEMOCRACY ISSUE, AND PARTY FACTIONS

It has been seen above (and was confirmed in interviews) that the principal PLN leaders and ideologues are almost all middle or upper-middle class professionals, businessmen, or *finqueros*. A less visible but very powerful element in the top ranks of the Party are its financiers, such as ex-President Orlich and Jaime Solera. Although PLN leaders claim that the bulk of the Party's financial contributions come from middle class sources,<sup>79</sup> the Party has its upper class patrons. And despite its current weakness among the wealthiest sectors (the majority of the powerful Coffeegrowers' Association, for example, does

not support PLN<sup>80</sup>), PLN has not abandoned all hopes of bringing them into the Party: as PLN Secretary-General Luis Alberto Monge noted,

"In order to avoid the constant flight of entrepreneurs of the upper middle class toward the ranks of the oligarchy, the Party ought to arrange a program to retain them. This program should include either the penetration of ANFE (the National Association for Economic Development, a very conservative businessmen's association) to give it an orientation closer to the ideology of the Party, or the constitution of another organization which would satisfy this entrepreneurial sector and would at the same time not be a bridge of flight for Liberacionista elements linked to the running of enterprises."<sup>81</sup>

PLN's mass political base rests primarily upon the rural middle class (small and medium landowners), urban white collar workers, civil servants, small shopkeepers and businessmen, artisans, and other middle and lower middle class elements.<sup>82</sup> Although founded in part by intellectuals and students, PLN has suffered a slight decline among these sectors, resulting from general anti-party sentiments among students and from a growing defection to small pro-Castro movements by those who have become frustrated and impatient with PLN's slowness to move to the left and its insensitivity to their "inquietudes."<sup>83</sup> It is weakest among the urban industrial workers and the rural "proletariat" (mainly banana workers); they remain committed to Calderón, who was the first to guarantee their basic rights, or to the Communists, who were the first to organize labor.<sup>84</sup> This weakness is reinforced, according to Monge, by the "indifference" and even "hostility" which important PLN leaders have shown toward the labor movement.<sup>85</sup> These historical patterns were only slightly modified in the 1966 Presidential election, when PLN candidate Oduber lost some peasant support and made minor gains among urban workers.<sup>86</sup> Given the relative stability of the PLN constituency over the years, it may well be that a party with the particular appeals and limitations of PLN owes its continuing electoral success to the slow pace of industrialization in Costa Rica thus far and the consequently slow growth of an urban proletariat (as well as to the inability of anti-PLN factions to unite on any permanent basis).

No less important than the problem of extending its popular base is that of improving relations between PLN leadership and the base that it has. As a multi-class party at the base and a professional and entrepreneurial middle class party at the top, PLN must have channels for continuing contact between leadership and popular following. The leadership, however, has adopted a rather elitist, even condescending, attitude towards the Party rank and file. For example, it is an article of faith among most PLN leaders that PLN is prevented from taking more radical positions because of the conservatism of its mass base among the peasants. As one leader remarked in an interview, "It's like having



75% of the population with a mentality similar to that of the Middle-Western farmers in the U.S.” However, as was acknowledged by at least one leader, and subsequently confirmed in interviews with Party organizers in the provinces, the Party has done almost nothing in the way of political education to change the “conservative” attitudes of the peasants. In Monge’s words, “Those who say that the peasants are the conservatives in PLN are just soothing their own consciences. If the peasants are conservative, this is the result of what (the Party elite) has taught them.” This is only one aspect of the general gap between PLN leadership and its following, and the failure of the leadership in San José to maintain contact with its base in the provinces except during election years. As Monge noted,

“PLN has formulated magnificent theoretical declarations with respect to the aspirations of the rural and urban middle classes and of the salaried manual workers and intellectuals. But often our leaders have acted in contradiction to those declarations.”<sup>87</sup>

In short, in its actions, PLN is hardly a “grass roots” party. It may be suggested that PLN fits a pattern rather common among social democratic middle class-based parties in Latin America: having risen to power as a coalition between the professional and entrepreneurial middle class and various sectors of the lower middle and/or lower classes, the Party came to bear the stamp of the political hegemony of the professional and economically secure middle class, as the social and economic status of that class was consolidated. In this sense, PLN no longer truly represents a considerable portion of its following.

If this is the case, why has PLN retained so large a following? Judging from the results of recent elections, it would seem that the electoral ties to and against PLN are based less on ideology or concrete programs than on loyalties established during the 1940’s and the Revolution. \* As a result of these historical loyalties to the Party, upper middle class hegemony within PLN has not for the most part been challenged and has not provoked any revolt at the base of the Party. Insofar as it has been raised at all, this issue has taken the form of a struggle to democratize Party decision-making, specifically regarding selection of Party candidates. \*\* Although, according to Secretary-

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\* It is partly for this reason that Oduber, who in 1966 ran a highly issue-oriented campaign designed in part to win over the Calderonistas, thus deemphasizing the historical PLN-Calderonista enmity, lost more Liberacionista votes than he gained from traditionally anti-PLN sectors, and hence lost the election.<sup>88</sup> Conversely, it is largely for this reason that Figueres, the personification of the Revolution and of the antagonism to Calderón, doubtless appealing to historical and emotional loyalties to PLN and to his own personal “mystique,” won the 1970 Presidential election.

\*\* Internal Party democracy first became an issue in 1957 with regard to the lack of rank and file participation in the selection of a presidential

General Monge, Party structure has been reformed to provide a greater voice for the rank and file in selecting candidates for national positions, \* these modifications do not touch the heart of the problem. Indeed it is surprising that throughout the battle over Party democracy, the issue has been handled purely as one of Party structure, rather than as one of ideology. The extent to which this issue cuts across ideological lines is evidenced by the elitism of many of the most "progressive" leaders. There have been challenges to the hegemony of the "tres grandes," (three great leaders) Figueres, Orlich, and Oduber (who despite ideological differences, have maintained a working agreement on running the Party), and generally of the small circle of their friends who have held most of the important positions in PLN since its founding. But even if structural mechanisms to reduce their dominance are gradually being introduced, these have not affected areas of decision- or policy-making beyond selection of candidates. The less obvious but consistently strong influence of the industrialists has not been challenged. The elitist outlook of the leaders has not been altered. \*\*

Furthermore, no attempt has been made to increase mass participation in decision-making nor even to maintain regular contact with the masses in non-election years. Similarly, there has been slight concern to organize PLN constituencies in such a way that they would be able to act independently on their own behalf: as Monge acknowledges, while "speaking in the name of the thousands of medium and small producers," PLN has not concerned itself with organizing them for the self-defense of their own interests.<sup>93</sup> It is rarely if ever suggested that

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candidate for the 1958 election. Charging that they had been given no voice in running the Party or selecting candidates, a group led by Jorge Rossi, Figueres' Minister of the Economy, left PLN to form the Partido Independiente. This split was eventually healed — but not until after PLN candidate Orlich lost the 1958 election because 11% of the electorate which would have supported him voted for Rossi instead.<sup>89</sup> The issue of Party democracy was raised again in the 1966 PLN National Assembly, this time primarily by the Juventud Liberacionista (objecting to the selection of its own directorate by national PLN leaders) and by Monge, who sharply indicted the elitism of the top leadership and the tight control of the Party executive by businessmen and their proteges. Although the "rebels" won a qualified victory, the issue was by no means resolved and cropped up again in slightly different form in the summer of 1966.<sup>90</sup>

\* Figueres was chosen as 1970 Presidential candidate by a national Party convention of 5000 delegates.

\*\* In an interview with one writer Figueres acknowledged that PLN is run by an elite clique, but maintained "that the general rank and file does not have enough political consciousness, responsibility, or civic education, and that choices made by more democratic means have often been far worse than appointments by top Party leaders."<sup>91</sup> As late as 1966 the "tres grandes" presented the Party Assembly with a list of people whom they had selected for the Party executive for the coming year, and for whom they expected rubber-stamp approval.<sup>92</sup>

real "democracy" must be participatory as well as representative, that policies issued paternalistically from the top down are no substitute for independent power at the base. Perhaps these tendencies ought not to be overly stressed if, as Michels suggests, the movement toward "oligarchy" and control from the top is inevitable in any party organization.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, for a party whose ideological *raison d'être* is national democracy, PLN seems to have forgotten that "Democracy begins at home."

Despite all of the above, PLN has managed to preserve a remarkable degree of cohesion over the years. The only split thus far which was serious enough to affect PLN's electoral success was that of 1958. There has been a gradual exodus of radicalized Liberacionistas, mainly disaffected students and some workers and peasants, toward fledgling pro-Castro movements. Unlike other social democratic parties in Latin America, which have either moved to the left as a whole (e.g., Bosch's Partido Revolucionario Dominicano) or, refusing to do so, have suffered serious splits and defections to the left (e.g., Acción Democrática in Venezuela and APRA in Peru), however, PLN has been remarkably resistant to such pressures.

To a certain extent PLN cohesion is maintained by its ideological myths. At the level of the Party's mass base, historical loyalties, memories, and myths have retained their force. For the politicians at the top, these loyalties and shared historical experiences are also important, but there are additional factors as well. One, of course, is the electoral strength of PLN in the past and the continuing likelihood of success at the ballot box: the stakes are too high to indulge in splinter tactics, even over substantial disagreements. Secondly, a conscious effort is made by those at the top to conciliate internal differences.\* Whatever the issue, there seems to be a strong ethic of fighting it out within the Party.

Nevertheless, there are significant divisions within the Party, along several lines. The issue of Party democracy is a continuing source of dissatisfaction, but has had little ideological content. PLN also has several "personalist" factions, grouped primarily around each of the "tres grandes;" but with the exception of Orlich's faction, which consists almost entirely of the most conservative elements in PLN, these followings are more a matter of style, personality, and tradition than

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\* In 1958, for example, Figueres personally intervened — on that occasion unsuccessfully — in an attempt to heal the split between the Rossi and Orlich factions.<sup>95</sup> In late 1968 Oduber voluntarily withdrew from the Presidential nomination race in favor of Figueres, to preserve unity.

of ideology.<sup>96</sup> The generational cleavages are more ideological,\* but here again ideological splits over specific issues cut across generational lines.

Although often obscured by other divisions, there are certain purely ideological cleavages. Ideologically, as well as in practice, the conservative wing remains extremely powerful within the Party. PLN strategy has been to accommodate the more complacent, more pro-American, less social reform-minded, and even anti-labor element within the Party, with hopes of making it more progressive under Liberacionista influence, rather than to purge it. The outcome of this strategy has been to maintain a strong conservative influence on Party policies, rather than to liberalize the conservatives, and to push the Party's ideological center of gravity farther to the right. (There is heated internal debate, for example, as to whether PLN should favor freezing wages or raising minimum wage levels progressively with increases in productivity and the cost of living). To the extent that the conservative line has been incorporated into the Party line, the leftist factions are put into the position of being the "dissidents." Leftist dissent has come from some in the middle and older generations as well as the Juventud (youth wing). In 1968 a group of left-wing intellectuals in PLN, including Father Núñez and other founders of the Party, drew up a *Manifiesto* to be considered at the 1969 Ideological Congress of PLN. While not explicitly attacking Party policies, since it was drawn up in the form of a positive program rather than as a statement about the Party, the document was implicitly critical, by proposing policies considerably to the left of those of the Party.\*\* The

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\* According to Oduber's analysis (in interviews), the founding generation, represented mainly by Figueres and Orlich, is heavily conditioned by the "coffeegrowers' mentality," and has become rather conservative; the middle generation, of technicians and university-trained politicians, represented by himself and many second-level Party leaders, is the center-left, anti-oligarchical wing; and the new generation, primarily the leaders of the Juventud, free of the Party's traditional anti-communism, is the most radical element, the most strongly anti-oligarchical and anti-imperialist.

\*\* We can obtain a general idea of the differences between the Party's mainstream and its left wing by comparing the *Manifiesto* with the *Carta Fundamental* finally adopted by the Ideological Congress on a few issues. While the *Manifiesto* attempts to deal throughout with those factors which have prevented fulfillment of PLN goals ("great vested interests,") the *Carta* makes no reference to these factors and is much more complacent in tone. The *Manifiesto* is much more specific and far-reaching than the *Carta* on agrarian reform: while the *Carta* merely states that unused lands should be expropriated (and devotes more space to nutrition and education than to agrarian reform), the *Manifiesto* specifically states that the distribution of uncultivated and remote land is *not* true agrarian reform, which requires expropriation of good, accessible land. While the *Manifiesto* lays down numerous and restrictive conditions under which foreign investors should operate and raises the possibility of expropriation where necessary, the *Carta*

Juventud Liberacionista (which includes workers and peasants as well as university students) has also become a kind of gadfly within the Party, both on the issue of internal democracy and in attempting to push Party policies to the left. In assuming a more radical position on specific issues, Juventud leaders have been openly critical of the Party for not responding to the needs of the youth, for remaining blindly anti-communist, for not taking a harder line against privileged social-economic elites, and for being so dependent on the U.S. and actively supporting U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic. The youth leaders are quite concerned that because of its failure to move with the times, PLN is losing many of the university students.

This points up a more general problem for PLN. Thus far PLN has done remarkably well in holding its ranks together at both base and leadership levels, while making only minimum adjustments to changing conditions and needs. But one must wonder how long the myth and tradition of the Revolution will suffice to preserve unity, particularly as a post-Revolution generation comes of age, as industrialization (albeit slow) creates increasing pressures upon existing institutions, and as PLN governments, no less than the more conservative anti-PLN regimes, follow policies inadequate for the resolution of Costa Rica's social and economic problems.

### III. PLN IN PRACTICE: PARTY PROGRAMS AND GOVERNMENT POLICIES

To obtain a fuller understanding of PLN ideology, we turn now to a consideration of its translation into concrete party programs and government policies (under the Figueres Junta of 1948-9, the Figueres administration of 1953-8, and the Orlich administration of 1962-6).

1. *Economic Development*: PLN states the general principle underlying its policies as follows:

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proposes much weaker regulations. The *Manifiesto* is much stronger and more explicit about such issues as progressive taxation and encouragement of trade unionism and other forms of organization for the lower classes. The *Manifiesto* goes out of its way to guarantee the rights of all parties, "without any ideological restrictions, so long as their methods are non-violent" (an obvious reference to the Communist Party), while the *Carta* remains silent on this point. And finally the *Manifiesto* calls for a foreign policy independent of all individual nations or international blocs, and at various points notes the foreign pressures against national sovereignty, while the *Carta* proposes peaceful coexistence (with socialist nations), recognizing Costa Rica to be part of the "democratic international community" (the "Free World").<sup>97</sup>

“The state should formulate national plans of development. Thus there should exist organisms of planning and regulation which the central government effectively coordinates with autonomous institutions, cities, and private activities... We believe that in every stage of development and for every type of activity in the productive process there are some functions which the state performs better and others which are carried out more effectively by private enterprise...”<sup>98</sup>

Translated into concrete terms, this has meant state planning and regulation in basic sectors of the economy and the creation of several “autonomous” state agencies or public corporations (in insurance, housing, tourism, electricity, etc.), while leaving a large margin of freedom for private enterprise. Unquestionably the most significant achievement of PLN in the area of state regulation was the nationalization of the banking system during the Figueres Junta. This measure, which gave the state bank a monopoly over all deposits, was taken in order to assure:

- a) that sufficient credit would be available to peasants and workers who would be unable to secure credit from private banks; and
- b) that banking profits would be channelled into national economic development projects (industrial and agricultural diversification), rather than into the pockets of private bankers.

Having gained control over the administration of the total public credit system, the Central Bank has performed many of the functions of a development promotion corporation, such as stimulating private industrial investment, undertaking public investment, and serving as an agency of capitalization, planning, and control for other state enterprises.<sup>99</sup> By itself, however, the nationalization of the banking system was insufficient: in the absence of other structural changes which would eliminate the influence of private banks, the Central Bank is still under pressure from conservative, economic stability-minded business and financial interests, and more directly from some of its own directors who, according to one Liberacionista, retain “the mentality of private bankers.” In addition many Costa Ricans still have great difficulty obtaining credit because of credit shortages and inefficiencies of the Bank.<sup>100</sup> Finally, high-ranking Liberacionistas, including Figueres, have not satisfactorily answered charges of using the Bank for personal profit.

In addition to the nationalized bank, the Figueres Junta created several other state agencies, including a Production Council for price controls, commodity regulations, and so on, and a National Institute of

Electricity. This Institute of Electricity, which undertook construction of a power plant under Figueres' 1953-8 administration, was intended to increase Costa Rica's power capacity, previously supplied by one American company which had followed monopoly pricing practices and had kept production down. Rather than expropriating the American company, the government Institute entered into competition with it and was soon producing far more electricity than the company. The Orlich government established a National Planning Office which was designed to coordinate national development through long-range planning, but which has had very little practical effect on development. In order to stimulate national industry, the Figueres regimes imposed certain controls such as restrictions on the import of luxuries and high protective tariffs on imported goods which could be produced in Costa Rica, and granted some tax incentives to industrial enterprises. Here again, however, the stimulus to industrial development was "marginal."<sup>101</sup> Various efforts made in the direction of industrialization and diversification of agriculture have not thus far reduced Costa Rica's excessive dependence on one or two basic exports (coffee and bananas).

The problem of mobilizing resources to finance national development has been serious. Although the Junta imposed a 10% tax surcharge on private capital (mainly for "rehabilitation" after the civil war), and although tax rates in the top income brackets were doubled during Figueres' 1953-8 regime, no Costa Rican government has sought enactment of the far reaching progressive tax reforms which would be necessary to finance their extensive development and social welfare programs. (In 1967 enough PLN deputies in the National Assembly supported a government-initiated regressive sales tax to push the bill through.) Failing to take the necessary measures to secure domestic funds, Liberación governments beginning with the Figueres Junta have relied heavily on foreign loans from AID, EX-IM Bank, World Bank, Inter-american Development Bank, and International Monetary Fund. The Orlich government followed a policy of excessive short-term foreign borrowing, with the result that the external debt increased substantially.<sup>102</sup> As so often happens in Latin America, this strategy has not resolved Costa Rica's short-range budgetary or balance of payments difficulties; and it has created an almost unbreakable cycle of long-range economic problems. In any case, the practice of PLN governments belies the Party's basic principle that external financing should be used only "as a complement" to internal resources for development.<sup>103</sup>

2. *Social Welfare*: In accordance with its principle that "Every action of the state... should be intended to assure that all Costa Ricans come to have their material, social, and spiritual needs adequately satisfied,"<sup>104</sup> PLN has always placed high priority on social welfare

programs. Correspondingly, almost all PLN governments have devoted large-scale public expenditures to education, public housing, public health, social security, and the like. Insofar as much of the social welfare infrastructure had been established before the Revolution of 1948 however, these programs involved no radical innovations and did little to affect the basic socio-economic structure of the nation; rather, they represented a consolidation of the previously existing institutions. Moreover, coverage of these services has not been extended to large sectors of the population: by 1965, for example, medical insurance through social security had been extended to only 26.8% of the population.<sup>105</sup> Even more important, the impact of PLN's specific welfare measures has been lessened because they have not been undertaken within a broader context of thoroughgoing structural change and because, by themselves, without any attack on the privileges of the upper strata, they do not and cannot redistribute national resources.

3. *Agrarian Reform*: Considering that 66% of Costa Rica's population is rural,<sup>106</sup> and that PLN's constituency is largely among peasants, the Party has shown surprisingly little concern for agrarian reform. Although its recent "Carta Fundamental" eloquently declares that "the land should be effectively available to him who works it and should not be an object of monopoly,"<sup>107</sup> in practice PLN governments have been hesitant to undertake any land reform which would violate existing property holdings, even of unused lands. Both Figueres administrations focused exclusively on improving agricultural diversification, but took no steps toward a serious land redistribution. Although the 1961 "agrarian reform" law legally empowered the Orlich administration to expropriate unused lands, the agrarian reform agency under Orlich made very few expropriations and concentrated instead on "colonizing" government lands in sparsely populated areas.<sup>108</sup> Such a policy makes land reform less fruitful and much more costly, since large capital inputs are required to make these undeveloped and remote lands productive. In short, the agrarian reform program under Orlich posed small threat to private landowners; conversely, as the ex-director of the agrarian reform agency under Orlich is the first to point out, it was of minimal benefit to the many landless and *minifundista* peasants of Costa Rica.

4. *Labor*: Although PLN doctrine pays due tribute to the rights of workers to organize, the Party has always had a small following among labor — due partly to the indifference or hostility of some Party leaders to that class. Labor has been historically weak in Costa Rica, largely because political leaders of all parties (except the Communist), being entrepreneurs themselves, have preferred to grant the workers certain



concessions with respect to such grievances as wages, rather than encouraging labor to organize and demand those concessions. This political and state paternalism has apparently been accepted by many non-communist labor leaders, particularly those with close ties to political parties (to PLN). While coopting and paternalistically protecting workers, the state has, according to Alfonso Carro, Orlich's Minister of Labor, done nothing to prevent management persecution of active labor leaders.

PLN governments have been no exception to this general pattern. Both Figueres administrations and Orlich followed the Policy of raising minimum wages every two years in accordance with the degree of economic growth in the nation during that period.<sup>109</sup> Beyond this, new labor legislation has been nothing more than a slight modification of Calderón's 1943 Labor Code. In several respects PLN governments have followed anti-labor policies. For one thing, the Figueres Junta outlawed not only the Communist Party, but also the Communist labor confederation, which at the time was the only strong one. On many subsequent occasions, particularly with respect to banana workers, PLN's anti-communism became, whether or not by intention, anti-unionism.\* Insofar as they had to deal with unions at all, PLN governments have preferred to have "tame" leaders. Thus, throughout their tenure, the Figueres governments continued to give active political and financial support to the anti-communist social democratic union (*Rerum Novarum*);<sup>114</sup> presumably this arrangement not only strengthened RN against the Communists, but also gave it a certain stake in moderating its demands. And even outside the banana zone, PLN governments made no attempt to prevent harrassment of labor

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\* When the Communist banana workers' union called for a strike against the United Fruit Co. in the summer of 1955, the Figueres government first attempted to convince the anti-communist union not to support the strike, and eventually cooperated with the Company to achieve a settlement — on the Company's terms — without acceding to the Communist demand for a collective contract.<sup>110</sup> At the time of the strike it was observed that "the government and the Company have been trying to strengthen the anti-communist union in the hope of establishing it as the only bargaining agent of the banana workers..."<sup>111</sup> It later came out that the government had pushed for a settlement on the Company's terms largely because "the government (was) actively interested in the prosperity of the banana business."<sup>112</sup> During the Orlich regime banana workers were convinced to sign a contract under which, in exchange for improvements in working conditions, they would forfeit the right to strike for the next three years.<sup>113</sup> Orlich too, according to his Labor Minister, felt a responsibility to guarantee the United Fruit Company's property and was convinced that labor conflicts in the banana zone could be dangerous to the national economy; therefore he too attempted to prevent the rise of unions which might create such conflicts. When the Company refused to permit union meetings on its property, the government took no action against this violation of labor rights; in fact, according to Carro, national (government) police helped rid the Company of troublesome labor leaders.

leaders. Although many Liberacionista leaders are bothered by this utter discrepancy between principle and practice, PLN governments seem to have been too heavily influenced by anti-labor pressures to maintain even a semblance of pro-unionism.

5. *Foreign investment*: As on many other issues, PLN's position on foreign investment is a "balanced" one: investors are welcomed but must be prepared to submit to Costa Rican regulations which would "guarantee conditions of dignity and national advantage," to assure that "the internal effort for development is not undermined."<sup>115</sup> The 1966 campaign platform for the "leftist" candidate Oduber advocated "intense governmental effort to attract foreign capital which meets national development objectives," particularly in industry.<sup>116</sup> Although various PLN leaders, including Figueres, Oduber, and Monge, have written diatribes against the nation's "economic occupation,"<sup>117</sup> and "the existing economic system of international exploitation,"<sup>118</sup> their strong words have been belied by actions. In practice no PLN government has subjected foreign investors to restrictive regulations of any kind, and even today those investors enjoy all the special incentives granted to national enterprises. In order to attract more investment, the Figueres administration in 1955 made Costa Rica the second Latin American nation to sign an investment guarantee agreement with the U.S. (protecting U.S. investors against expropriation, inconvertibility, etc.)<sup>119</sup> Moreover both Figueres governments and that of Orlich signed contracts granting American firms (e.g. Pan American, which acquired a controlling share of the Costa Rican airline LACSA,<sup>120</sup> and Allied Chemical<sup>121</sup>) monopolistic rights to operate in Costa Rica.

Of special interest is PLN's policy toward the United Fruit Co., by far the largest foreign investor. Until 1948 the Company had operated freely without paying any taxes. Under the Figueres Junta the United Fruit contract was renegotiated, obliging the Company to pay a 15% tax on its profits; interestingly, the Constituent Assembly in 1949 opposed this new contract on the grounds that it "made excessive concessions harmful to the national interest,"<sup>122</sup> and insisted that its provisions be strengthened. At the beginning of his second administration, Figueres talked of buying out (not expropriating) the United Fruit banana operation;<sup>123</sup> when this idea met with strong opposition from the Company and other American firms, he soon settled for a renegotiation of the contract. \* When the U.S. Department of Justice filed a monopoly

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\* Under the new contract the Company would pay 30% taxes, grant slightly higher wages and benefits to workers, turn over some of its schools, hospitals, and other social facilities to the government, and pay import duties on its non-essential imports. According to some economists, however, the money the Company saves from customs exemptions on "essential" imports is far more than it pays in taxes.

suit against United Fruit in 1958, the Figueres government objected, stating that if a monopoly situation existed, this was because it was in the "public interest of Costa Rica."<sup>124</sup> Apparently Orlich agreed, for under his administration, no change was made in the Company's status.

6. *Anti-communism*: If PLN's practice has not measured up to its doctrine in many areas of domestic policy, this is not the case with its anti-communism. Immediately after taking power, the Figueres Junta arrested several hundred Communists and in July, 1948, banned the Communist Party. The Constituent Assembly, meeting in 1949 to draw up a new Constitution, adopted Article 98 (although some Liberacionistas opposed it<sup>125</sup>), prohibiting

"the formation and functioning of parties which, by their own ideological programs, methods of action, or international connections, tend to destroy the bases of democratic organization in Costa Rica, or which attack the national sovereignty..."<sup>126</sup>

Clearly this provision was directed against the Communist Party, Movimiento Vanguardia (MV), which to this day remains illegal. Various attempts by MV to attain legal status have been frustrated; thus it has attempted to participate in elections through front parties, but prior to the 1970 election those parties have also been proscribed (with the exception of a "Communist-sympathizing," but not Communist, party in the 1962 election<sup>127</sup>). For the 1966 election the PLN majority in the National Assembly took the initiative in removing such a front party from the ballot.<sup>128</sup> Though denied electoral status and suffering constant persecution of its labor leaders, MV has been permitted to publish a weekly newspaper.

The attitude of Liberacionistas toward the Communists in Costa Rica is not, however, monolithic: while some old-timers feel that, as one of them put it, "The only way to change a Communist is to kill him," a vocal minority within the Party, including Juventud leaders, is willing to smash Communism openly, through elections in which MV could run its own candidates (and would be badly beaten). According to one 1969 report, even Figueres was listed as supporting the repeal of Article 98.<sup>129</sup> Thus far, however, the Party as a whole has been unable to come to terms with its anti-communism or to deal in a realistic fashion with the implications of that position.\* Moreover its anti-

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\* Although MV published a pamphlet shortly after the 1966 election, stating clearly that it had supported PLN in the election and explaining the reasons why (e.g., the reactionary nature of PLN's opponent, the need to bury historical antagonisms, etc.),<sup>130</sup> high-ranking Liberacionistas continue to insist that the Communists had opposed PLN.

communism has led to certain gross inconsistencies in PLN's democratic doctrine. For it is in the name of anti-communism that PLN governments have justified their cooperation with management against unions, particularly in the banana zone. In addition the Orlich government tolerated the growth of the *Movimiento Costa Rica Libre*, a rightwing, proto-fascist vigilante group dedicated to rooting out Communists by violent means; in fact Orlich's Security Minister publicly praised the *Movimiento* for its vigilance and good intentions.<sup>131</sup> There is a certain paradox in the notion that electoral democracy is too precious and fragile to be granted to a dangerous group like MV. The final irony of the PLN position stems from the nature of MV itself: being a Moscow-oriented party, MV fully espouses the need for a "popular front," a multi-class alliance including even the "progressive" bourgeoisie, and opposes violent revolution as a means of effecting basic social change in Costa Rica.<sup>132</sup>

7. *Foreign Policy*: Conceiving the "foreign policy of our country as a logical projection of our domestic policy," PLN bases its foreign policy on certain general principles: anti-militarism; non-intervention; respect for human rights in all nations and self-determination of all peoples, and thus a strong aversion to dictatorships; loyalty to the "international democratic community" (the "free world,") but peaceful coexistence with socialist nations; and reduction of all inequalities between rich and poor nations.<sup>133</sup>

PLN has always professed a strong aversion to military establishments, both as an instrument for conducting foreign policy and as an influence in domestic life.\* But despite its lack of a formal army, and despite PLN's opposition to using Costa Rica as the seat of international military conferences,<sup>135</sup> PLN governments have used paramilitary forces in international affairs and have participated in meetings of the Central American Defense Council, CONDECA. (Ironically it was not PLN but the conservative anti-PLN Trejos government which pulled Costa Rica out of CONDECA.<sup>136</sup>) And even though Costa Rica has no official army, no PLN government has ever suggested that the American military mission be removed.

PLN states clearly its "repudiation of the intervention of one state or group of states in the internal affairs of another state with the objective of political or economic domination."<sup>137</sup> This principle was most grossly violated by the Orlich regime when it sent a Costa Rican

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\* It is quite likely that the second consideration is more important than the first. In dissolving the national army after his 1948 victory, Figueres may have been taking a preventive measure against having his Junta overthrown.<sup>134</sup>

“police” contingent to uphold the American intervention in the Dominican Republic. But the import of the non-intervention principle has been weakened not only in practice but also by another tenet of PLN doctrine: the promotion of “the respect of human rights through the recognition that persons are subjects of international law and that *the application of these guarantees is not the exclusive authority and interest of each state.*”<sup>138</sup> As interpreted by Liberacionista leaders, this implies that intervention, particularly collective, to assure the functioning of representative democracy in other nations, is not intervention “but juridical collective action.”<sup>139</sup> In practice this liberal construction of the non-intervention principle has been the basis for much of PLN’s activity (especially under Figueres) against Latin American dictators, particularly against the Somozas in Nicaragua. Just as the Calderonista forces received support from the Somozas for their various attempted invasions of Costa Rica (most notably in 1948, 1954, and 1955), so too exiles from Nicaragua and other countries in Latin America were aided by the Figueres regimes in their efforts to oust their local dictators.<sup>140</sup>

In other ways too PLN maintained its principled opposition to Latin dictatorships, at least for a time. When the 1954 Inter-American Conference was called in Caracas to consider the Communist “menace” of the Arbenz regime in Guatemala, Figueres refused to attend — not out of any special loyalty to Arbenz, but because he did not wish to participate in any conference hosted by a dictator like Venezuela’s Pérez Jiménez. And on numerous occasions PLN spokesmen have denounced the U.S. for its support of Latin America’s military and dictatorial regimes.<sup>141</sup> Nevertheless, the Liberacionistas eventually recognized the ineffectiveness of this one-nation crusade and reestablished relations with most of the previously boycotted regimes.\*

PLN policy toward that “dictatorship of the left,” Castro’s Cuba, has been less flexible. Figueres’ initial reaction to the Castro victory in 1959 was praise, and even justification of the executions of Batista aides.<sup>145</sup> The controversy between Figueres and Castro began apparently during the former’s March, 1959, visit to Cuba, when he alluded to “communist influences” in the new government.<sup>146</sup> PLN antagonism toward Cuba continued to grow\*\* — culminating in the discovery in May, 1964, that

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\* In April 1955, Figueres reestablished relations with the Trujillo regime in the Dominican Republic and with Pérez Jiménez in Venezuela.<sup>142</sup> By the time of the military overthrow of Brazil’s Goulart in 1964, the Orlich government decided that “there was not sufficient reason to break relations with Brazil,”<sup>143</sup> it subsequently recognized the Peralta military regime in Guatemala.<sup>144</sup>

\*\* After the Bay of Pigs, Figueres “lamented the failure of the rebel attack on Cuba.”<sup>147</sup> In 1962 spokesmen for Orlich called for “juridical” steps

one of two training bases for Cuban exiles in Costa Rica was the ranch of President Orlich's brother.<sup>150</sup> Given the PLN government's cooperation with the Nicaraguan government in training Cuban exiles,<sup>151</sup> and PLN's apparent failure to distinguish between pro-Batista and more "democratic" exiles, this policy is hardly consistent with PLN's "anti-dictatorial" principles.

PLN has always considered Costa Rica to be part of the "free world," and thus an ally of the U.S. Within this general framework of support for the U.S. and the principles of American life, however, Liberacionistas have been critical of the discrepancies between those principles and specific American policies. Soon after being inaugurated in 1953, Figueres pledged "unqualified" support for the U.S. struggle against international Communism,<sup>152</sup> but criticized U.S. support for Latin dictators. Liberacionistas frequently complained that the U.S. has shirked its responsibility to democracy: while Latin American Communists are well protected by their Soviet mentors, "democrats" have been ignored, denied visas, or treated like "agitators" by the U.S.<sup>153</sup> In the economic sphere PLN has deplored inequitable commercial relations between Latin America and the U.S.<sup>154</sup> and has pushed for such controls as an international coffee agreement. While criticizing the "imperialist" behavior of American companies in Latin America,<sup>155</sup> Liberacionistas always seem to imply that the problem could be resolved if only the U.S. government would desanctify the "holy" principle of private enterprise<sup>156</sup> and discipline American firms; in any case, they judge U.S. imperialism to be much less offensive than that of Russia.<sup>157</sup>

With the advent of Kennedy and the Alliance for Progress, PLN became much less ambiguously pro-American, for it seemed that this new leader would correct all the old defects of U.S. policy. \* PLN's blind adulation for the "new look" of American policy culminated in the dispatch of "peacekeeping" forces to the Dominican Republic in 1965. Since then some Liberación leaders have become bitter about the actual functioning of the Alliance for Progress. This bitterness stems in no small measure from their initial expectation that the U.S. would rely on them and their social democratic colleagues in Latin America to carry out the Alliance;<sup>162</sup> instead it has brought a new wave of military regimes, a strengthening of reactionary interests, and so on. Thus the

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to eliminate Castro, and Figueres even promised cooperation in forceful overthrow of the Castro regime.<sup>148</sup> Foreign Minister Oduber later pledged support for all but military measures.<sup>149</sup>

\* Figueres declared his "high hopes" for the Alliance,<sup>158</sup> and welcomed the U.S. into its third "war" for freedom.<sup>159</sup> The incoming Orlich administration pledged its support to the Alliance<sup>160</sup> and, even after Kennedy was killed, spoke of President Johnson as the new "champion" of the principles enunciated by Kennedy.<sup>161</sup>

experience of recent years has given rise to a certain anti-Americanism among Liberacionistas; but because theirs is the resentment of the rejected lover, it could be overcome by the slightest U.S. gesture of return to the "true" spirit and aims of the Alliance.

From the preceding sketch of PLN programs and policies, we must make several observations. First, it is clear that all PLN programs and governments have been moderate. The PLN approach has been one of "reform-mongering," of making certain advances where possible, but in such a way as to integrate rather than to challenge vested interests, to maintain the delicate balance between established interests and popular demands.<sup>163</sup> Certainly, as one observer points out, PLN's reforms have been no more radical than those of the Democratic Party in the U.S. since the 1930's.<sup>164</sup> And despite the great difference between the ideology of PLN and the ideology (or lack of it) of its conservative opponents, the difference in governments has been one of degree and emphasis rather than of kind. On the one hand, the conservative governments of Ulate, Echandi, and Trejos have been unable to reverse PLN achievements (such as the nationalized bank), and have themselves made moderate advances (e.g. in negotiating higher taxation of the United Fruit Co.,<sup>165</sup> in initiating an agrarian reform law, in nationalizing all power production<sup>166</sup>). On the other hand, PLN has at no time made great leaps forward; its achievements have been primarily those of consolidation rather than of radical innovation. Secondly, in practice PLN has evolved toward a less rather than more radical position; in this sense it has not adapted to the progressively more radical requirements for social and economic restructuring in Costa Rica. By far the most far-reaching action taken by any Liberación government was Figueres' 1948 nationalization of the banks. As others have noted, this growing conservatism, far from being peculiar to PLN, is a general characteristic of social democratic reformist movements.<sup>167</sup>

Thirdly, despite being an ideological party, PLN as a government has fallen short of its own ideological principles in significant ways — not surprisingly, since PLN politicians have always placed a high priority on accommodation to realities, on "the art of the possible."<sup>168</sup> Contrary to the principles in PLN's own "Carta Fundamental", *latifundias* and privately-owned foreign monopolies have been left intact. And even the basic principle of democracy has been imperfectly realized in practice, as evidenced by the Party's lack of internal democracy, by PLN governments' failure to uphold labor rights, and by their deliberate denial of electoral rights to the Communist Party. This last item raises a serious question about the nature of Costa Rican politics, whose "democratic" and "competitive" quality is generally assumed to be guaranteed by its two-party system:<sup>169</sup> If electoral democracy is limited to two opposing parties which, in practice if not in ideology, are

quite similar, excluding the only parties (Communist) which offer a real alternative, is not the substantive meaning and import of "democracy" significantly impoverished and diluted?

#### IV. PLN AS PART OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC INTERNATIONAL IN LATIN AMERICA

A final dimension for the consideration of PLN ideology and action is the international. This is particularly important in the case of PLN, since it is not only the prototype of a certain outlook in Latin America, but also its leaders have taken an active lead in internationalizing that outlook, in promoting various organizational channels for Latin American Social Democracy. The social democratic international in Latin America exists not only as an analytical category in the minds of social scientists, but also as a number of concrete hemispheric organizations whose activities are based on a self-conscious sense of solidarity and common purpose. Included within the international besides PLN are: Acción Democrática (AD) of Venezuela, APRA of Peru, Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD) of the Dominican Republic, Partido Popular Democrático (PPD) of Puerto Rico, Partido Revolucionario of Guatemala, Partido Liberal of Honduras, Partido Liberal Independiente of Nicaragua, Partido Febrerista of Paraguay, Partido Radical of Chile, Partido Colorado of Uruguay, Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) of Bolivia, several Cuban exile groups (and perhaps Mexico's Partido Revolucionario Institucional). To be sure, there are significant differences among them in historical origin and development, and consequently in some aspects of doctrine. \* But despite these variations, these parties have enough in common to be considered as a unit. \*\*

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\* Some (like APRA in Peru) date back to the 1920's, whereas others (such as PRD in the Dominican Republic) appeared only more recently. Some, like APRA, were initially influenced by Marxist thought, while others, like PLN, were not. In countries such as Peru and Mexico the social democratic current was shaped by an appeal to the indigenous (Indian) cultural tradition which was lacking in other countries such as Costa Rica, Chile, and Uruguay. Some have been very successful in obtaining government power (e.g., AD in Venezuela, PRI in Mexico, Partido Radical of Chile, and PLN), others have governed for only a short period of time, only to be overthrown by military coups (e.g., PRD in the Dominican Republic, Partido Liberal in Honduras, MNR in Bolivia), and still others have never been able to take power (Partido Liberal Independiente in Nicaragua, APRA in Peru). Finally, as a result of their varying experiences within their own countries, a few, most notably the Dominican PRD, have been radicalized, while others have maintained more or less the same position (PLN, AD), or shifted to the right (APRA).

\*\* In order to do full justice to the social democratic tradition in Latin America, it would be necessary to undertake a detailed comparative study (aside from a few sketchy articles, primarily by Latin American and American



One feature shared by these parties (alternatively referred to as “social democratic,” “popular,” “social revolutionary,” and “Aprista”) is a set of principles more or less similar to those of PLN: an almost obsessive commitment to the maintenance of the formal institutions of democracy and a corresponding aversion to rightist or leftist dictatorships; opposition to the “feudal” oligarchy; national economic planning and state regulation of some sectors of the economy, but without abolition of private property; strong emphasis on social welfare reforms in such areas as education, public health, public housing, and social security, but a weaker insistence (in practice at least) on structural transformations such as agrarian reform which would seriously threaten national or foreign vested interests; anti-communism as an absolute principle and, as a natural corollary, an intense hatred for Communist Cuba; \* a rather moderate anti-imperialism which acknowledges the “necessity” of foreign capital for development while deploring the excessive influence of foreign interests in national affairs; a strong identification as part of the Western (“free”) world and a generally pro-American attitude (particularly during the Kennedy era), tempered by some criticism of the U.S. for its insensitivity to Latin American trade problems, its absolute defense of private enterprise, and its collaboration with military dictatorships.

Aside from this generally shared set of principles, the social democratic parties are also rooted in a more or less similar social base. In their own self-perception they are based on an alliance of all progressive forces (workers, peasants, the new middle classes (including industrialists),<sup>172</sup> and progressive elements in the upper class),<sup>173</sup> and thus on an alliance of social classes. This emphasis on the need for a popular front stems from an analysis of Latin American development as a process of eliminating domination by “feudal” oligarchical interests to clear the way for political democracy and industrialization. There was, no doubt, a period in which such an analysis bore some relation to the socio-economic realities of Latin America; earlier in the 20th century these movements did struggle against a land-owning and commercial (but not “feudal”) oligarchy and its dictatorships. (Thus

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partisans of the social democratic outlook,<sup>170</sup> no such studies have been made; but since our purpose here is more modest — to deal with the international as an additional dimension of the ideology and practice of PLN, — we shall confine ourselves to a brief summary of the shared doctrine and characteristics of these parties and the activities of the international through its various organizations. (An expanded version of this section has been published as a separate article.)

\* This hatred is born largely out of a sense of betrayal, particularly on the part of those who in 1959 defended the Cuban revolution against Batista, thinking that Castro would establish a variant of the social democratic model in Cuba.<sup>171</sup>

most of the social democratic parties grew up as political opposition movements.) Today, however, that phase is over, and the process of industrialization is well under way in most countries. No longer can the landed oligarchy be identified as the main obstacle to development; and conversely, the industrial middle class or "national bourgeoisie" is no longer, to the extent that it ever was, in the "vanguard" of a national revolutionary movement: it has consolidated its socio-economic status and has acquired substantial interests to defend. Having originated as and remained the vehicle of the middle class, these parties reflect the changing interests of that class. As Anderson characterizes them,

"The middle-sector outlook of these parties becomes quite clear when one examines the policies and doctrines which they advance. One notes that when these parties first emerge as contenders for political power, their doctrinal statements deal almost exclusively with political themes... representative government, civil liberties, and administrative honesty. These are appeals of particular interest to the middle-sector political activists who will form the nuclear adherent group... Even the economic and social reforms proposed by these parties reflect middle-sector dominance in policy formulation... (and) are designed to demonstrate that a raising of the standard of living of the people as a whole can best be achieved through activities which are essentially the function of the middle sectors..."<sup>174</sup>

Thus, to the extent that social democratic parties maintain their political base in a multiclass alliance, they have become political expressions of the hegemony of the middle classes over their lower class "allies." It is for this reason that, while they may have originated as quasi-"revolutionary" movements, on the offensive for thoroughgoing change, they have in recent years assumed a defensive posture and pose little threat to older vested interests, which in many respects have become the interests of the bourgeoisie. Of course these parties would have long ago lost all significance as mass movements had they not retained their lower class followings; to this end they continue to push for certain reforms. Hence their task has become one of balancing the call for reform with a cautious regard for established interests.<sup>175</sup>

Given these general similarities in doctrine, social structure, and political role, it was natural that the social democratic parties should seek to formalize their affinities through international organizations. Added impetus toward an international movement came from the personal friendships among their leaders (particularly among Figueres, APRA's Haya de la Torre, AD's Betancourt, and to a lesser extent Bosch of PRD and Muñoz Marín of PPD), dating back to the 1940's when several of them were in exile together.<sup>176</sup>

One of the first expressions of the international movement was the Caribbean Legion, a semi-formal, semi-clandestine military brigade

made up primarily of social democratic exiles from various Caribbean nations, dedicated to the overthrow of their local dictators. The Legion was first formed in 1947 in (pre-Batista) Cuba and from there launched an abortive invasion of the Dominican Republic, then under the Trujillo dictatorship.<sup>177</sup> Subsequently Costa Rica became the base of operations: Figueres' own victory in the 1948 Revolution was largely due to military aid received from the Arevalo government in Guatemala and to the active participation of exiles from other countries (in the Legion) in his army.<sup>178</sup> After his victory, Figueres reorganized and continued to subsidize and train the Legion in Costa Rica.<sup>179</sup> The Legion rose to international attention in December, 1948, following an attempted invasion against the Figueres Revolutionary Junta by pro-Calderón elements from Nicaragua (allegedly with aid from the Somoza regime). When Costa Rica appealed to the OAS to halt Nicaraguan "interference" in Costa Rican affairs, the OAS resolved also that Costa Rica should disband the remaining elements of the Legion, which was plotting the overthrow of dictatorships in Honduras, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Venezuela.<sup>180</sup> Figueres had already announced in November, 1948 the dissolution of the Legion;<sup>181</sup> in any case the military training of the Legion in Costa Rica was discontinued after the OAS resolution (it subsequently operated out of Guatemala).<sup>182</sup> Nevertheless in 1948-9 and on repeated occasions thereafter as late as 1955, the Somoza regime in Nicaragua continued to charge that it was threatened by the Legion's revolutionary activities (assassination plots, etc.) based in Costa Rica.<sup>183</sup> Repeated denials by the Figueres governments failed to stifle speculation about the Legion: during the 1953 election, for example, it was rumored that the Legion was training in Guatemala for an intervention on Figueres' behalf if he lost the election.<sup>184</sup> Soon after Figueres took power in 1954, a plot to assassinate Somoza was discovered; Nicaraguan exiles trained in Costa Rica and even on Figueres' plantation were, according to one account, clearly implicated, and high-ranking officials in the Figueres government were well aware of the plot.<sup>185</sup> In June, 1955, Figueres was again forced to deny that he was the head of a revolutionary group of Latin American politicians,<sup>186</sup> after ex-President Ulate in a written exposé accused him of continuing to aid revolutionary exile movements and of having collaborated with the Arevalo and Arbenz regimes in Guatemala.<sup>187</sup> Even in 1959 there were reports that Cubans had been training for the Legion in the Costa Rican mountains.<sup>188</sup> Certainly the activities of the Legion were so shrouded in mystery that it is very difficult to know how active it was and how deeply Figueres was involved after 1949. But the attempts of Figueres' defenders to deny the existence of the Legion<sup>189</sup> are clearly useless: as the former President of the OAS Council (which investigated the matter) stated,

"It can be said then that the Caribbean Legion was no whimsical invention of the defenders of so-called strong governments in the Caribbean, but an actual movement, easily verified, that on the strength of an alleged right to self-defense, of democratic action defined in their own way by its members, has created a concrete threat against many republics..."<sup>190</sup>

Perhaps the experience of the Legion served as a precedent for the groups of anti-Castro Cuban exiles training in various Central American countries (including Costa Rica) for the "liberation" of their nation.

Another agency of international action closely related to Latin America's social democratic parties has been the Inter-American Regional Labor Organization (ORIT), the hemispheric arm of the AFL-CIO. ORIT was formed after World War II at the initiative of the AFL to bring together all non-communist labor unions in Latin America, to rival the already strong Communist network. In fact ORIT is no longer the only non-Communist organization, for it faces competition from a growing Social Christian labor movement. What distinguishes ORIT is the close tie between its labor confederations and the Latin American social democratic parties: thus Rerum Novarum has been closely associated with PLN in Costa Rica (two principal Liberacionistas, Father Núñez and Monge, were pivotal figures in the ORIT-RN movement); similarly, the ORIT-affiliated Peruvian Confederation of Labor has always been tied to APRA;<sup>191</sup> the National Confederation of Free Workers, CONATRAL, in the Dominican Republic began as the labor wing of PRD (although tensions between militant PRD labor leaders and the AFL-CIO-dominated CONATRAL led the latter to disaffiliate from PRD and eventually to oppose the Dominican Revolution initiated largely by PRD, and to support the American invasion).<sup>192</sup> The close identification of ORIT with the social democratic parties has weakened somewhat in recent years, as members of those parties became impatient with ORIT's "bread and butter" unionism, its overt cooperation with business interests, its weak commitment (and sometimes outright opposition) to basic social and economic reforms, and its open collaboration with dictatorships or military regimes supported by the U.S. government (e.g. in Cuba, Honduras, and Brazil). \* ORIT and many of its affiliates were further discredited when it became publicly known in 1967 that a number of them had been receiving CIA funds — in almost every case for specific activities directly related to U.S. government policies. The experience of the social democratic parties with ORIT points up a dilemma inherent in these organizations which have strong or dominant affiliates in the U.S.: given the

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\* In fact, PLN's Monge, who had been Secretary-General of ORIT, resigned from that position in 1958 partly because he objected to ORIT's continued support for a Cuban labor confederation which was" (along) with the Army one of the two pillars of the (Batista) dictatorship."<sup>193</sup>

willingness of the American government to support Latin dictatorships, the social democrats would eventually have to choose between compromising their anti-military, anti-dictatorial principles and loosening their ties to the U.S.-influenced international organizations.

The problem of ties to the U.S. has arisen with another of the principal organs of the social democratic international: the Escuela Interamericana de Educación Democrática (formerly the Instituto de Educación Política). This school was founded in 1959 by Figueres and his colleagues in Latin America to train young potential leaders for the social democratic parties (and Cuban exile groups and the U.S. Democratic Party) in academic, ideological, and practical political matters. The objective was to correct what was perceived as an insufficient "preparation" for the younger generation of social democrats, who would become the cadres to carry on the struggle against totalitarian forces on the right and on the left. Among the instructors at the school, which was located at La Catalina in Costa Rica, have been numerous Liberación officials and intellectuals, as well as leaders from the other social democratic parties and academics and politicians of the social democratic persuasion from the U.S. The Secretary-Treasurer of the school was Sacha Volman, a Rumanian who had fought against both Nazis and Communists in his own country and who, after being exiled and after involving himself in mysterious ventures around the world, eventually came to work with the Latin American social democrats through Norman Thomas' Institute of International Labor Research (IILR). It was this Institute which initially provided the financing for the school at La Catalina. At the end of 1962 these funds were suddenly cut off and the school closed down until 1964. It was not until 1967, however, that the full story became public. The school had been operating on CIA funds (to the tune of about \$100,000 annually<sup>194</sup>), channelled through the Kaplan Foundation (by now known as one of the principal CIA conduit foundations) and thence through Thomas' IILR and Volman. In 1962 Volman began to insist that the school comply with certain conditions (he called them "reforms"<sup>195</sup>); when other directors of the school refused to do so, their funds were cut off. The final irony was that when the school reopened in 1964, it again accepted funds from a CIA conduit, the Pan American Foundation of Florida. Although they are aware of this, La Catalina directors maintain that it makes no difference where the funds originate, so long as they are granted without political conditions.<sup>196</sup> \* Also

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\* The school at La Catalina was only one of a network of institutions set up by the IILR and Volman and receiving CIA funds — others being a planning institute in the Dominican Republic run by Volman, who was also one of Bosch's chief advisers during his brief Presidency, and a publishing house in Mexico which put out, among other things, the magazine *Panoramas*.

associated with La Catalina was the journal *Combate*, the leading organ of Latin American social democratic thought, which featured articles by many Latin American social democrats as well as their academic and political counterparts in the U.S. (e.g., Norman Thomas, Harry Kantor, Victor Alba, Robert Alexander, and Adolf Berle).

Another organism of the Inter-American social democratic international has been the Inter-American Association for Democracy and Freedom. An outgrowth of the 1940 Congress of Democratic and Popular Parties of America,<sup>197</sup> the Association was founded in 1950 to study and take action against the rise of neo-fascist and communist ideas in the hemisphere. \* The Association's news bulletin *Hemispherica* has served as a vehicle of the social democratic view. The Association's first conference in 1950 passed resolutions urging that aid and recognition be withheld from dictatorial regimes; but a Mexican-sponsored resolution criticizing the Catholic Church and American monopolies was rejected.<sup>198</sup> The second conference in April, 1960, condemned the rightist dictatorships in several countries but resisted pressure from Americans and early Cuban exiles to censure the Castro regime (which had not yet "gone Communist").<sup>199</sup> According to one account no resolution was passed against Castro because the conference was infiltrated by Communists invited by one of the Venezuelan host parties.<sup>200</sup> This experience apparently convinced some leaders of the need for a smaller, tighter organization; thus five of the core parties, including PLN, held another conference in August, 1960 which, among other things, declared a "boycott of tyrannies" and issued a veiled warning to Castro not to become an undemocratic or "divisive" factor within the "popular forces" of the continent.<sup>201</sup> Out of this group Figueres and Haya de la Torre took it upon themselves to mobilize support among social democratic parties for the "new attitude of the U.S." under Kennedy and the Alliance for Progress.<sup>202</sup>

From this brief overview of the Inter-American social democrats, several observations emerge. First, this is clearly more than a series of independent international groups; it is a cultural-political complex, a network of individuals and organizations self-consciously engaged in an inter-American mission, and committed to waging the battle for Social Democracy on all fronts — military, labor, cultural, and political.

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\* Officers and active members of the Association have included such prominent Latin Americans as Figueres, Betancourt, and Colombia's Lleras Restrepo, and Americans such as Serafino Romualdi, William Doherty, and Andrew McClellan (all associated with AFL-CIO and/or ORIT), Robert Alexander, John Plank, Russell Fitzgibbon, and Frank Tannenbaum (social democratic Latin Americanist scholars), Sen. Edward Kennedy, ex-State Dept. official Arturo Morales-Carrión (previously an aide to Muñoz Marín), and (until his recent death) the ubiquitous Norman Thomas.

Thus it is not so surprising that many individual Americans and Latin Americans have been involved simultaneously in several of these organizations, thereby further welding them into a cohesive movement. Secondly, the major thrust of the social democratic international changed over the years in response to changing conditions. Although there was always great concern about the spread of Communism in Latin America,<sup>203</sup> the major concern in the 1940's and 1950's had been on combatting rightist dictatorships; after the Cuban Revolution went Communist, the anti-communism of the movement became much more pronounced.

Thirdly, some questions must be raised regarding their very strong ties to liberal circles in the U.S., ranging from the Kennedy wing of the Democratic Party (although many of the Latin Americans were close to Humphrey as well) to independents such as Norman Thomas — all of whom share their social democratic principles and their fierce opposition to Communism. It is perhaps this latter aspect which has made these groups prime candidates for financial support from the CIA: for those in the American foreign policy establishment who are “enlightened” enough to understand that Communism is best combatted by a countervailing political infrastructure rather than by brute military force, the social democratic movement is clearly an effective instrument. But its very usefulness to private and official interests in the U.S. symbolizes its bankruptcy as a vehicle for the revolutionary changes that are necessary in Latin America today. Social Democracy has lost the initiative in Latin America and is left with precious little ground to stand on. Those who have not opted to move to the left have been forced by the logic of events and of social-economic conditions to the right — as was demonstrated most dramatically by the 1965 Dominican crisis and the reactions to it, \* and on a continuing basis by the failures of social democratic governments throughout Latin America.<sup>206</sup>

## V. CONCLUSION

As has been seen, PLN ideological principles are phrased in such general and sweeping language as to suggest their universality both

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\* The PLN government actively supported the U.S. invasion; John Bartlow Martin, who had been Kennedy's Ambassador to the Bosch regime, came on behalf of Pres. Johnson to explain to Bosch that the Revolution was falling into “Communist” hands, and to negotiate a junta government with the Dominican generals;<sup>204</sup> in the 1966 elections (held while the country was still occupied by over 8000 “peacekeeping” troops and in an atmosphere of terror) a commission of U.S. social democratic observers whitewashed the elections and the final defeat of Bosch.<sup>205</sup> Small wonder that Bosch is now calling for “popular dictatorships” in Latin America.

over time and for a broad spectrum of social classes. Upon closer examination of the programs and policies which have grown out of that ideology, we find, however, that they have not evolved with changing conditions in Costa Rica and have in fact remained fixated in the form in which they were first enunciated during the 1940's thus proving inadequate for the 1960's and beyond. Similarly we have seen that, despite its universalistic, classless rhetoric, PLN's ideology and practice reflects the interests of a particular class. Contrary to those who attribute these characteristics simply to the susceptibility of PLN *politicians* to the pressures for stability, or to their use of the Party to serve their own interests, we may suggest that these patterns are rather typical of Latin American social democratic parties and reflect certain limitations inherent within the very principles and social basis of Social Democracy. In short, the appropriateness of the social democratic ideology is very specific to a past era of history and to the needs and interests of an emerging middle class; today its policies reflect not the rising aspirations of the lower classes, but the increasing security and complacency of the middle class. To the extent that the movement retains a following among the lower classes, this must be construed as a form of "false consciousness." In the case of PLN, the Party's continuing strength among some sectors of the lower middle classes must be attributed less to its concrete programmatic appeal or substantive ideological principles than to the myth constructed around and interwoven with those principles and the historical experience on which that myth is based. This is not to suggest that PLN ideology contains no vision of the future; but the fact that its vision remains bound by a tradition of the past raises serious doubts about its capacity to meet the needs of the present and the future.

In another respect too the poor performance of past PLN governments is no accident but grows directly out of its underlying ideology. While the substance of PLN ideology is eclectic and aims "to find the common developmental component" within the unscientific Socialist, Social Christian, Liberal, and CEPAL tradition,<sup>207</sup> — as reflected in practice by PLN's attempt to be all things to all people, its unwillingness to take forceful measures against any social class, — nevertheless the spirit and style of that ideology remain very much in the Liberal tradition. Mannheim has observed that the liberal "is most in his element in the role of critic..."<sup>208</sup> Certainly this rings true for PLN. Rising as a movement of opposition and criticism during the 1940's, Liberación was infused with an heroic spirit, almost revolutionary in its own peculiar way, which it subsequently lost upon taking power. And since the 1940's, PLN has always been more constructive and innovative, more at ease with its own principles, when it was out of power. As an opposition, PLN can revive its "bandera de lucha;"



as government, it must compromise with and defend vested interests, thereby becoming incapable of implementing any structural transformation of Costa Rican society.

Thus we may conclude that any lasting contribution made by PLN (and more generally by the social democratic movements in Latin America) is likely to stem less from its achievements while in power than from its critical function while in opposition. Furthermore, it is only as critic that Social Democracy in Latin America may remain true to its own ideology; once in power it can no longer obscure behind a veil of rhetoric the fundamental and inherent contradictions of the ideology, which result from the refusal to acknowledge, and the simultaneous inability to overcome, its own class bases.

## VI. ADDENDUM ON THE NEW PLN GOVERNMENT

Since this article was originally written in the spring of 1969, it did not deal with the 1970 electoral campaign and triumph of PLN. On the basis of the limited information available to me, a few words should be added about these recent events. From both the campaign and the early pronouncements of the new government, it seems evident that the Figueres government will make no significant breaks with the past. Even during the campaign, observers noted that Figueres' platform differed little in substance from that of his conservative opponent, ex-President Echandi, and that the principal difference between the two major candidates stemmed from Figueres' reputation as a social reformer in the past. (Figueres also benefited from the split within the opposing coalition.)

Symbolic of the continuity between the Trejos and Figueres administrations (and possibly of Figueres' desire to win the confidence of the business community) is Figueres' decision to retain Oscar Barahona Streber, who had served as Trejos' Minister of Finance, in that same position. On several issues of tax and fiscal policy, Figueres supported the Trejos policies, although he has strongly criticized the high unemployment and the deflationary policies of the Central Bank under Trejos, and has stressed the need for an expansion of banking credit as a stimulus to investment and employment.

In his inaugural speech of May 8 and elsewhere, Figueres defined the main social problems as the high rate of unemployment and the persistence of the "submerged third" of the population which continues to live in poverty. In dealing with both problems, the primary emphasis (aside from programs to combat infant malnutrition, to expand social security coverage, etc.) will be on stimulating the private sector rather than on initiating massive public welfare programs. (One plan which

Figueres is working out with the Management and Employers' Assn., for example, is to sell "Bonds against Misery" to finance private business ventures in low-income neighborhoods.) On several occasions Figueres has stressed that a redistribution of the national wealth can be effected only through — and thus must follow rather than precede — increased productivity and the creation of new jobs. Given these priorities, the principal instrument of progress will be private enterprise. "Social democracy" has been redefined as "social capitalism;" in Figueres' words, "Social democracy is a political and economic system developed in our countries within a political framework of liberty and representative government, through private enterprise and state *assistance*" (as distinct from any form of state control).

Meanwhile, almost nothing has been said about basic structural reforms. Tax "reform" will be administered by Barahona — hardly an advocate of overhauling the tax structure, — and is essentially a euphemism for additional taxes, e.g. on consumers. No mention was made in the inaugural speech of agrarian reform; on the contrary, addressing himself to the problem of recent peasant invasions of *fincas*, Figueres warned peasants to "respect property and law," and counseled patience in the fulfilment of their desire for land. Labor was advised to work cooperatively and responsibly with business, to promote the "collaboration of classes." In short, some effort will be made to improve the lot of the poor, but always within the framework of existing institutions and without in any way challenging established interests of the rich.

If private investment lies at the heart of the Figueres development program, this includes foreign as well as domestic: the government will deal "without prejudice for or against international capital." A key element in the program, in fact, is the recently approved contract granting ALCOA the concession to develop and mine the estimated 150 million ton bauxite deposits for 25 years. Despite strong opposition and massive student demonstrations against the terms of the contract, which were seen as disadvantageous to Costa Rica (e.g., Costa Rica rather than ALCOA will be responsible for all infrastructure (roads, ports) required by the investment; the mine may well ruin the soil in the agricultural Valle del General), Figueres, both during the campaign and in office, has stood firmly behind the contract. As he put it, "To produce aluminum is not imperialism...; to offer an opinion on something we [the protesters] do not understand is not patriotism." Although some Liberacionistas were initially opposed to the contract, it was finally approved by the PLN-dominated Assembly with only 1 or 2 dissenting votes.

Politically Figueres has taken a firm position against rebels both within and outside the Party. During the campaign he threatened to

resign if his supporters were not approved as congressional candidates, rather than the leftist rebels (in his words, "hotheads") in PLN. In his inaugural speech (obviously referring at least in part to the unprecedented ALCOA demonstrations) Figueres came down hard on students and other protesters who are influenced by "international nonsense" and methods of protest in other countries:

"Since we have this small island of orderly liberty, we know how to protect it and to evolve socially without endangering it. Let us guard against those who speak of reforming society without knowing how... Demagogy and irresponsibility are tempting and contagious..."

Youth were admonished to stick to their studies and respect the "maturity" of their elders. Nevertheless, on one issue which has been the subject of heated debate within the Party, both PLN deputies in the Assembly and Figueres in his campaign refused to take the initiative in banning — and thus accepted — the electoral participation of the Partido de Acción Socialista, a leftist coalition including the communist MV.

In foreign policy as in other areas, the Figueres regime will make no radical new departures. As stated clearly by Figueres and his Foreign Minister, Gonzalo Facio, Costa Rica "is on the best terms with the U.S." and will remain clearly aligned with the West, while reserving the right to criticize its allies and expanding trade with the socialist countries. Costa Rica will not be permitted to become a "springboard" for international agitation or guerrilla activities (e.g. in Nicaragua). Central American integration must be carried forward and, partly toward that end, old hostilities, particularly with the Somozas in Nicaragua, must be buried. The principle of non-intervention must take precedence over any other; Costa Rica will no longer participate in "armed interventions, military pacts or secret alliances to fight regimes which do not please us" (i.e., there will be no revival of the Caribbean Legion or of other efforts to overthrow rightist dictatorships). As Facio stated, "It is not proper for Costa Rica to play the role of champion of democracy in any country except ours."

In short, as of May, 1970, all indications are that the Figueres government will continue along established lines and will be, if anything, more conservative than previous PLN governments. There remain more radical currents within the Party; but for the moment the centrist Figueres wing appears dominant. As Figueres interprets the spirit of PLN for the 1970's:

"We are not from the democratic left, nor do we call ourselves by that name; we are social democrats. We do not believe in words but in achievements. The business of left or right is foolishness..."

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- 200 Kantor, "La colaboración...", pp. 73-4.
- 201 "Declaración de Lima", in *Latinoamérica más allá de sus Fronteras*, pp. 109-119.
- 202 Kantor, "La colaboración...", pp. 74-5.
- 203 *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- 204 "An Encounter," accounts by Juan Bosch and John Bartlow Martin in *San Juan Review* (Aug. 1965): 8-12.
- 205 The Commission, headed by Norman Thomas, and including other prominent American social democrats, reported that "to the best of their knowledge the voting had been fair and without intimidation," Seldon Rodman, "Why Balaguer Won," *New Republic*, June 18, 1966; for conflicting reports by a team of Puerto Rican observers who (unlike those from the U.S.) spoke Spanish and observed the elections in the fraud-prone provinces, see "Were the Dominican Elections Honest?" interview with Puerto Rican observers, *San Juan Review* (July 1966): 12-16.
- 206 For more details and evidence substantiating these assertions, see Bodenheimer, "The Bankruptcy of the Social Democratic Movement in Latin America," *Estudios Internacionales*, 12 (Jan.-March 1970) and *New Politics*, 8, 1 (Winter 1969).
- 207 Anderson, *Politics and Economic Change*, p. 178; see also Anderson, "Politics and Development Policy in Central America," p. 547.
- 208 Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 220.