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THE PARTIDO LIBERACION NACIONAL OF COSTA RICA: A CASE STUDY ON POLITICAL MYTH AND POLITICAL CULTURE.

THE LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL COL., PH.D., 1979

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THE PARTIDO LIBERACION NACIONAL OF COSTA RICA: A CASE STUDY
ON POLITICAL MYTH AND POLITICAL CULTURE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
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in

The Department of Political Science

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the political mythology of the Partido Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Party) of Costa Rica. The principal objectives are to show (1) that political myths provide a useful perspective in the study of political culture, and (2) that specific political myths provide new insights into Costa Rican political values.

Beyond general agreement that political culture is a useful concept, students of comparative politics disagree on its meaning when applied to specific research problems. All would agree that the political culture of a country is a highly complex congeries of psychological, normative, and perceptual properties. How best to meld this potentially enormous wealth of information into a coherent and accurate characterization of a nation continues to divide specialists in comparative politics. One approach is to focus on a specific group within a specific society and to identify cultural aspects peculiar to the group. Another is to concentrate on a specific cultural phenomenon within a selected society. This study combines both approaches by examining a particular culture phenomenon of a specific group in a selected society.

Simply defined, myths are the dramatic expressions of the way a group perceives and interprets its existence and its experiences. Myths exemplify a group's norms and mores and explain the group's
activities and affairs in terms of its values and beliefs. The political myth in this study concerns the political experiences of the group; it is a group's preferred history. Defining political myth in this fashion narrows the scope of investigation to manageable proportions. Thus defined, political myths contribute to the understanding of political culture, i.e., the attitudes, beliefs, and values by which political actors give meaning to their actions.

This study is divided into three parts. In the first part, the concept of political myth and its relation to political culture are discussed. The second part is a description of selected aspects of Costa Rica's political culture, including observations on values, traits, and especially three ideas peculiar to Costa Rica -- la leyenda blanca (the White Legend), la mística, and la generación. The third part is an analysis of the political mythology of the Partido Liberación Nacional that recounts the founding of the party, referred to in this study as the Myth of the Revolution of 1948. The mythic version and alternate versions of the events of the revolution are contrasted.

The Myth of the Revolution is more than simply the preferred history of a political party. What Liberacionistas have chosen to emphasize, omit, and distort among the events and activities leading to, during, and in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1948 present a particular image of Liberación as a political party. The rejection of violence as an acceptable political technique, a commitment to electoral politics, and the peaceful transferal of political power are Costa Rican values that are affirmed in Liberación myths. The
party myths also conceal some of the less attractive traits that Costa Ricans are reputed to have, including a tendency to be politically apathetic and a susceptibility to personalistic politics.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The field of comparative politics is relatively young. The rapid increase of nation-states after World War II forced political scientists to reconsider the legalistic-structural approach in comparing the political forms of one nation to another. As the substantive focus expanded to include new nations, comparativists reappraised old assumptions about political behavior and institutions in general and recognized that many conclusions about the long-studied nations of Europe and North America did not apply to the emerging nations of Asia and Africa. Indeed, comparativists began to take a fresh look at Europe and the United States as well. At the same time, new research techniques and analytical tools such as psychoanalysis, survey research, and statistical tests became available causing new concepts and approaches to be devised.

An important obstacle in comparative analysis was the lack of a general concept that would conjoin psychological and normative dimensions of political society in linking new methods of analysis to the vastly expanded range of data from new and old sources. Such concepts as ideology, public opinion, and national character seemed to be either too vague, too specific, or too encumbered with ethnocentric baggage
to be of good use in the rapidly changing, resurgent field of comparative political analysis.¹

Gabriel Almond can be largely credited for the conceptualization of political culture as an analytical connective especially suited for taking advantage of new data and research techniques.² Although the concept of political culture will be explored in detail later, suffice it for now to say that the question addressed by Almond was, what makes one nation unique even though it may share any number of similarities with another?

Costa Rica provides a good example for analysis. This Central American nation differs significantly from other Latin American countries. Many observers of Latin American politics have commented on the stability and peacefulness of Costa Rican politics in a region noted for violence and political instability. Textbooks on Latin American politics and government reflect this attitude with such chapter headings as "Costa Rica: A Progressing Democracy" and "Costa Rica: A Meaningful Democracy."³ Visits to Central America uncover an intriguing difference in atmosphere in Costa Rica that is absent in neighboring countries. Election day in Costa Rica impresses one


with the earnestness, lightened by gaiety, with which the Ticos go about selecting their public officials.4

Beyond general agreement that political culture is a useful concept, students of comparative politics continue to disagree on its meaning when applied to specific research problems. For example, no consensus exists on the meaning of the term when referring to an internal political system. All would agree that the political culture of country X is a highly complex conglomery of psychological, normative, and perceptual properties. How best to meld this potentially enormous wealth of information into a coherent and accurate characterization of country X continues to divide specialists in comparative politics. The difficulty is compounded at times by the need for better information on a specific aspect of a particular culture than is available. Lucian Pye suggests that the ultimate goal in defining the concept of political culture is to find "more effective ways of describing total systems," thereby enhancing "our ability to understand and in a limited sense 'predict' system performance."5 He concedes that, as yet, the state of the art has not advanced that far.

Whether or not grand theory bridging the micro-analysis to macro-analysis gap is premature, research and analysis show progress on phenomena of a size and complexity within reach.6 We are still at the

4The term Tico is a nickname for Costa Ricans used by the Costa Ricans themselves and other Central Americans. The word is not pejorative but stems from the propensity of Costa Ricans to add tico to words to make a diminutive, e.g., poquitico from poco meaning a little bit.

5Pye, "Culture and Political Science," p. 296.

6Ibid., pp. 288-290.
stage of gathering evidence on the less researched areas such as politics in Central America. What is needed are ways of operationalizing political culture to facilitate data gathering and reduce the scope of analysis to manageable levels. One way is to focus on a specific group within a specific society and to identify cultural aspects peculiar to the group. Another line of attack is to focus on a specific cultural phenomenon within a selected society. This study combines the two approaches. That is, it examines a particular cultural phenomenon of a specific group in a selected society—the political mythology of the Partido Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Party) of Costa Rica.

The purpose is two-fold: (1) to show that political myths provide a useful perspective in the study of political culture, and (2) to use specific political myths to gain new insights into the Costa Rican political culture. The study of politics lends itself to continuous experimenting with new concepts and approaches to political questions. Political culture is as much a search for fresh ways of confronting age-old problems as it is a descriptive term for observable phenomena. Political scientists have been working with the concept of political culture since the early 1950's, and the idea of political myth has an even longer history. This study illustrates the utility of linking the two concepts. The conventional wisdom about Costa Rican politics contains many untested assumptions which have led to equally unfounded conclusions. The second objective is to examine those comfortable assumptions and conclusions about specific political matters in the light of new information and techniques.
This introductory chapter examines the concept of political culture, conceptual and operational problems, and the place of political myth in the overall conceptual framework of the term. A discussion of political culture in the study of Latin American politics is followed by an explanation of the approach used. A brief overview of Costa Rican history and geography highlights those aspects of special relevance to this study. An outline of the following chapters concludes the introduction.

POLITICAL CULTURE

In 1972 a group of scholars spent several days discussing political culture and how it might be employed in the study of communist political systems and concluded that, although everyone agreed on the utility and importance of the concept, they had not reached a consensus on exactly what political culture means. This lack of consensus illustrates the difficulty of managing an elusive concept, yet the intellectual richness that concepts like political culture can bring to comparative analysis.

Almond's use of the anthropological concept of culture in the study of politics marks the beginning of the conceptual debate on political culture. What forces link together enormously diverse individuals into groups that are immediately recognizable by the members and outsiders as social entities? The idea of culture conjures up images of clothing, speech, amusements, and a myriad of other details.

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that enable one to place himself and others in definable social categories such as family, tribe, and nationality. When we visit another country we know that the inhabitants are as foreign to us as we are to them. It is this sense of distinctness that the idea of culture addresses. The cultural distinctness of societies applies equally to the area of politics.

When Almond linked culture to politics, he was trying to create an analytical tool that would incorporate the insights into individual behavior achieved by psychoanalysis and the new research techniques of surveys and quantitative analysis. In defining political culture Almond has emphasized the psychological dimension of political activity. Political culture has been defined as "a particular pattern of orientations to political action," "a set of attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments," and a "... system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols, and values which defines the situations in which political action takes place." Two commonalities among the various definitions stand out: 1) the emphasis on social psychological dimensions such as belief, orientation, and values, and 2) the explicit assumption that such psychological traits form relatively persistent and identifiable patterns that can be used to differentiate and compare among political systems. At this level of generality one finds little scholarly disagreement; deciding what data to include and exclude from consideration when operationalizing

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the concept in specific research projects raises a number of methodological contentions. Of all the attitudes, orientations, beliefs, and values people have vis-a-vis politics, which are the important ones? How are social psychological dimensions linked to action? What sources of data are most reliable? The questions that can be asked about political culture as an analytical device seem nearly as numerous as the questions that can be asked about culture itself.

Several ways of avoiding the more problematic theoretical concerns of political culture can be found in the literature, with the main concern being to get on with the business of research, leaving the perplexities of theory to be worked out in time.

Sidney Verba, for example, gets around theoretical difficulties by presenting political culture as an approach to comparative analysis. In his concluding essay to a collection of studies of ten different nations, he tries to set forth some significant dimensions of political culture and "... some propositions as to the relationship among them rather than attempting an integrated theory of the concept." The utility of the political culture approach is that it aids us in separating "the cultural aspect of politics from other aspects," such as structure and behavior. The focus is on "beliefs about patterns of political interaction and political institutions." The basic assumption is that what men believe about politics has an effect on how they act politically.10

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10 Ibid., pp. 514-516.
Considering the problems of definition, much less the exigencies of theory building, Verba's contribution seems eminently practical. Rather than getting entangled in conceptual and theoretical concerns that may be unresolvable at this time, he advocates moving ahead with research into questions of current relevance. Particularly important is the observation that several analytical distinctions with regard to the object of research have to be made. One can distinguish between what men do and what they say about their actions for purposes of analysis; the distinction may not be as clear in the minds of the subjects.\textsuperscript{11} The distinction between political culture and the general culture of a society is also analytical. Again the distinction may not be so clear to the political actor.\textsuperscript{12} The researcher of course must also endeavor to keep his own political presuppositions from influencing the interpretation of the data.

Pye circumvents the conceptual debate by proposing that the study of political culture proceed from a series of hypotheses based on observations of the behavior of a society. Those characteristic behavioral traits that appear to make a society unique are used to formulate hypotheses about what "values, sentiments, and orientations" are "critical in giving the collectivity its distinctive character."\textsuperscript{13} The danger here is that one's own political orientations and beliefs may lead one to make logical conclusions at variance with the actual psychological dimensions of the object society. Pye points up a

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., pp. 522-523.
\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., pp. 521-522.
\textsuperscript{13}Pye, "Culture and Political Science," p. 293.
dilemma in the study of political culture at the heart of the utility of the concept. Where does one begin? The concept was originated, in part, to link "individual psychology to the performance of collective entities," or to close "the gap between micro-analysis and macro-analysis," to use more esoteric language. Unfortunately, individuals persist in holding more thoughts and opinions about political matters than they are willing to transform into significant political actions. Determining exactly which thoughts or orientations stimulate which actions is often exceedingly difficult.\textsuperscript{14}

Another potentially fruitful approach limits investigation to "... those human situations and contexts in which the observers can more directly observe cultural operation going on." Culture is defined in this case as the process by which complex human phenomena are rendered communicable. This assumes "... that there is some sort of orderly significance in all human phenomena." Communication proceeds on three levels--meaning is conceived by those involved in the phenomena (perceptions and cognition), transmitted to the "indigenous novice" (socialization), and derived by the observer (analysis). Cultural operation is defined as "a succinct and orderly conjunction of elements," selected by the observer or the actor from the more complex and diverse totality of experience for the purpose of deriving meaning from phenomena experienced. Series of operations readily observable are denominated "privileged operational zones of culture."\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., pp. 288-290.

This approach offers several advantages. By stressing culture as the communication of meaning, the observer is constantly aware that the "raw data" of cultural research "... are not objective facts of observable behavior, but imperfect communications between sender and receiver." The observer must keep in mind that two levels of meaning are at work in any cultural operation observed. First, the actors themselves derive meaning from the cultural operation according to the place that that particular operation has in their cultural construction. Second, the observer attaches meaning to the operation in terms of his own analytical concerns. The myth is a good example of this dichotomy of meaning. To those who believe in a myth, the narrative will be an expression of truth. The observer, who does not believe in the mythic narrative, may attach a wholly different meaning in terms of some separate theoretical and analytical scheme. As communication both meanings are valid; the phenomenon is merely being viewed from two separate positions.

Considering culture as communication also reminds the observer that the intensity of any particular zone of cultural operation may vary considerably among the actors involved. One can be misled into attaching deeper meaning or more intensely felt meaning than the actors actually experience. As Boon so aptly puts it:

Doubtless anthropologists [or political scientists] want "culture" as conveyed by symbols to be pregnant with meaning and vital to its actors. ... This is understandable, since it is more difficult to explain patterns of culture steeped in an ethos of "I can take it or leave it" rather than "do or die."17

16 Ibid., p. 248.
17 Ibid., p. 242.
The routinization of a ritual or some other cultural operation also may appear more significant to the observer than the operation itself. What is being examined will, of course, determine that question.

The problem of appropriate sources of information on political culture has generated as much controversy as the arguments over conceptualization. This is not surprising since content is intimately linked with the concept, the latter often being defined in terms of the former. For example, a general treatment of political culture such as Rosenbaum's introductory text *Political Culture* is weakened by the emphasis on survey data. Rosenbaum states that "The basic tool of contemporary political culture study is the survey research method."\(^{18}\) His listing of the "core components" of political culture reveals a preoccupation with the use of questionnaires. Other methods such as content analysis are considered only useful "adjuncts" to survey research, but "unsatisfactory" for "primary information gathering."\(^{19}\) Rosenbaum admits survey research must confront the difficult problems of equivalent meanings of language, valid indicators of measurement, and the reliability of the responses gathered, especially in cross-national research, but he views these as methodological problems that careful questionnaire construction and sampling will overcome. This study suggests the converse, that survey data should be used as an adjunct to cultural research that begins with other sources.

Comparative research on political culture implies a search for touchstones of comparison and contrast among diverse cultural systems.

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\(^{19}\) Ibid., pp. 22-29.
One can, however, be misled by devising theoretical patterns of such cultural components as attitudes and beliefs that are based unconsciously on presuppositions inculcated by one's own culture. A way of avoiding the pitfall of ethnocentric bias is to begin with what the object culture itself considers important. Cultures manifest ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and orientations considered of importance to the group in various ways. A primary source of such cultural information is the myths of the object society.

The mythology of a group comprises the dramatic representations and explanations of situations, events, and aspirations considered important to its members. Myths, in a sense, are the preferred history of the group; that is to say, preferred by the group because it portrays group activity as conforming to group values, ideals, and mores. The political myth is the component of the larger mythology that treats of political matters. Thus the political myth expresses salient aspects of the "orientations toward politics" that influence the political behavior of the group.

While general orientations toward politics may be shared throughout the society, different groups within the society may manifest those shared orientations in a variety of ways. Because subculture has been given a different connotation elsewhere in the literature, cultural variations in this study will be called cultural subgroups.  

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20 The concept of myth is discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

21 Rosenbaum, Political Culture, p. 151. "A social group called a political subculture is distinguished by relatively large membership, by important differences in outlook from the national majority, and by a strong group consciousness of its difference—a difference the larger society often regards with considerable unease, if not hostility."
The advantage to concentrating on cultural subgroups is chiefly that the scope of the study is more manageable. First, the amount of information and the number of subjects is more limited. Second, the homogeneity of beliefs is assumed to increase as the size of the studied group decreases. On the other hand, care must be taken not to extrapolate indiscriminately from the subgroup to the culture at large. The subgroup may also be useful in assessing common but untested presuppositions about a general culture that should apply equally to the subgroup. Another assumption is that any major political subgroup may be used as a source for political culture research. Some subgroups, such as political parties, may be more amenable to cultural research because they usually self-consciously deal in the expression of political beliefs and ideas. Ingenuity on the part of the observer should enable one to examine political institutions such as bureaucracies and interest groups in a similar manner. The members of these groups, too, are inculcated with the political culture of the society, and if the concept of political culture is valid, the behavior of bureaucrats and members of interest groups will be shaped by cultural factors although perhaps in ways different from more overtly political institutions. The political party, though, is likely to be a more efficacious source of cultural information, since the party (at least where it relies on open elections to gain or stay in power) must constantly convince supporters to remain loyal. A primary function of party myths is to promote such loyalty. Consequently, the political party is the cultural subgroup examined in this study.
POLITICAL CULTURE IN LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

Reference to culture in the study of Latin American politics has a long and distinguished, if varied, tradition. Most studies of Latin American politics at some point consider the impact of various cultural factors on the development of Latin American political institutions and behavior. Of the many different ways culture has figured in Latin American studies, three general topics appear to predominate.

The first is essentially a methodological dilemma: should Latin America be considered a cultural unit, bound more by commonalities than divided by differences? Or does the unitary approach conceal fundamental distinctions among the twenty nations thereby obscuring the richness of cultural diversity inherent in a region that comprises twenty different, intricate blends of ethnic and racial ingredients.

The debate, at least among scholars, has generally been friendly. Those who choose to emphasize common traditions, traits, values, and attributes usually include a disclaimer such as:

We are aware of the danger of generalizing about twenty countries peopled by nearly 250 million who are diverse in race, language, class, politics, and education.22

Studies that stress the diversity of the national culture generally concede that the single cultural entity approach is also valid.23

The debate, though perhaps insoluble, is more important than simply a disagreement on approaches or points of view. Considering Latin America as a cultural unit has on occasion led to facile


oversimplification about the nature and the course of Latin American politics. For example, legislatures have often been dismissed summarily in texts on Latin American politics. Yet it can be argued that Latin American legislatures do play important roles in a number of countries, but their performance must be measured in Latin American terms, not in terms of the way the United States Congress operates (often the standard implicitly used). On the other hand, such shared experiences as language, colonial experiences, and economic problems suggest that the search for cultural commonalities can be useful. The debate on cultural unity can sensitize the observer to the pitfalls and the strengths of each approach.

A second theme of studies on Latin American political culture casts culture as the independent variable most important in shaping particular political configurations. Often culture has meant the Spanish colonial heritage (or Portuguese in the case of Brazil) which is used to explain a wide range of institutions and political issues. The colonial heritage is cited as a cause for the persistence of the latifundia (landed estate), caudillismo (political authority centered in a strong-man), and excessive individualism. To a lesser degree the influence of the Indian cultures is also considered in theories of Latin American politics, generally to explain the quiescence of the peasantry. In the last decade or so hypotheses about the interaction of culture and political arrangements have become more sophisticated and factors other than the colonial heritage notion have been given greater weight.

A third line of consideration that links culture to politics has come primarily from Latin Americans themselves. Since about the end of World War I, Latin American political thinkers at various times and in several different locales have developed ideologies designed to encompass indigenous values, problems, and patterns of action. The specific goal has been to fit the ideology to the culture and not the culture to some foreign ideological principles. Aprismo, which originated in Peru, is the primary example of the search for a Latin American ideology, but examples of a similar concern for indigenous solutions to national problems can be found in other countries. Mexican thinkers such as José Vasconcelos have emphasized the influence of the Indian culture in the development of the Mexican political style. In Costa Rica a basic principle of the Partido Liberación Nacional is that Costa Ricans should devise Costa Rican solutions to national problems, rather than rely on foreign ideologies. Latin Americans are no longer as enamored with the social, economic, and political philosophies of Europe and the United States that were in vogue in the last century.

Although the idea of culture has been prominent in analysis of and speculation on Latin American politics, studies proceeding from a careful operationalization of the concept have been comparatively few. Mexico was one of the countries included in the Civic Culture study by Almond and Verba, but other than an article by Robert Scott, Aprismo refers to the ideology of the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (American Popular Revolutionary Alliance) organized by Victor Haya de la Torre in Peru in the 1920's and based, in part, on the political thought of José Carlos Mariategue.
the results have figured little in the literature on Mexico. Even fewer are studies that explicitly explore the interaction of political culture and the organization and functioning of political subgroups and institutions.

There have been some attempts to study specific aspects of Costa Rican political culture; the most detailed of these have been dissertations. To date no one has attempted to collate the several studies into a comprehensive overview of Costa Rican political culture. The latest published general treatment of Costa Rican politics barely mentions cultural factors. An early monograph on Costa Rican politics as a whole relies more on intuitive interpretation than on empirical verification. Here too, the field is replete with opportunities for research.


27 An excellent analysis that examines such connections is found in L. Vincent Padgett, The Mexican Political System, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976), pp. 1-117.


29 Charles F. Denton, Patterns of Costa Rican Politics (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1971).

METHOD

The procedure followed in this study is divided into three stages. In the first stage the concept of political myth and its relation to political culture are discussed. The attributes of the political myth are delineated and the functions of the myth in political matters are examined. The relationship between political myths and the development of political parties as a subgroup is also explored.

The second stage is a discussion of selected aspects of Costa Rica's political culture. The few studies of Costa Rican political culture that exist provide an incomplete picture of the subject. Either the focus is society-wide, offering broad generalizations with little empirical verification, or the investigation is limited to specific groups and narrow considerations. A comprehensive survey of the entire range of the Costa Rican political culture is beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, some observations can be made about Costa Rican political values, traits, and concepts.

The third stage is a recounting of the Liberación version of the events that led to the founding of the party (i.e., the Myth of the Revolution) and a critical evaluation of the historical accuracy of that account. Attention is directed to those aspects of the story that display mythic qualities. The story described here is a composite based on the events and interpretations most heavily stressed.

\[31\] It is customary in Latin American studies to refer to political parties by their initials, e.g., PLN for Partido Liberación Nacional. Costa Ricans do not use the initials but prefer to shorten the title to Liberación. That is the short form used in this study.

\[32\] When capitalized, Revolution refers to the Revolution of 1948.
in the Liberación literature. Quotations are used to illustrate the language employed and as a reflection of the attitudes toward the events and the characters involved. Of particular concern is the information that the Myth of the Revolution omits or disguises. Alternative explanations of the main events are offered when appropriate. The contention is that what a group leaves out of its myths may reveal as much about the group's values and ideals as the information that it includes. Also underscored are the ways in which the Myth distorts events, situations, and character portrayals to create a particular impression and to enhance a particular image of Liberación and its leaders.

This study is based on eight months of field research in Costa Rica, which included personal interviews, mail questionnaires, and research at the Biblioteca Nacional (National Library) in San José. The Myth of the Revolution is derived from books and pamphlets by Costa Ricans which display an unmistakably partisan bias, and on Liberación propaganda. Statements from interviews, both personal and from the questionnaires, are used to support the information gleaned from the printed sources. Party propaganda and party sanctioned treatises are considered to be primary sources because these provide excellent examples of how myths are made. The historical evaluation is based on a number of relatively recent studies, including articles, books, and dissertations, that provide either more objective treatments or alternative explanations.

\[^{33}\text{See Appendix A.}\]
GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Costa Rica is a small, mountainous country some 380 kilometers long by 270 kilometers at its widest point and 120 kilometers at the narrowest, which lies along a generally northwestern to southeastern axis. Nicaragua borders it on the north and Panama on the south. A series of mountain ranges split the country from the northwestern corner to the middle of the Panamanian border. Three basic types of terrain prevail—relatively flat plains in the northwest, and north, and in the southeast; rugged mountain with fertile valleys through the center; and dense jungle, cut with many rivers and streams along the Atlantic side.

Three types of climate predominate. The central highlands are cool, ranging in temperature from 14 degrees centigrade at night to 22 degrees during the day. The temperatures usually tend to be lower during the rainy season which lasts from about June to mid-November. During the rainy season precipitation is usually limited to two or three hard showers in the afternoon; in the dry season days are hot with virtually no rain. The Atlantic side of the mountains is hot, between 22 and 28 degrees centigrade and very humid with heavy rainfall most of the year. The Pacific side is also hot in the lowlands, but tends to receive less rain and is less humid.\(^{34}\)

According to the 1973 census, the population of Costa Rica exceeds 1.8 million. Approximately 55 percent live in the Meseta Central, a long plateau which extends about 70 kilometers from the city of Cartago due west to a ridge of mountains that forms its eastern boundary. The Meseta is bounded on the north and the south by mountain ranges. Traditionally the population has been concentrated in the Meseta Central with San José in the center and the three next largest cities no more than twenty kilometers distant from the capital city. The traditional demographic pattern appears to be changing with Puntarenas, the Pacific port, now the third largest city. The population of Puerto Limón on the Atlantic is gaining in relation to the cities of the Meseta as well.\textsuperscript{35}

Costa Rica's economy is based on agriculture with bananas now the principal export crop, and coffee a close second. Until the early 1970's coffee had been the leading export commodity for over 100 years, but the expansion of bananas in the southeastern, Pacific coast region and the reintroduction of bananas on the Atlantic coast have increased production to the point that bananas have become the leading export product. Since the production and exportation of bananas is controlled by foreign companies, coffee is still the major Costa Rican-controlled industry. In recent years Costa Ricans have tried to diversify their economy by promoting light industry and cattle production.

In 1502 Columbus, on his second voyage to the New World, anchored in a bay that was subsequently to become the port of Limón. Because

\textsuperscript{35}Costa Rica, Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, Censos Nacionales de 1973, agropecuario. My compilations are based on data from pages 40-45.
he encountered Indians of the region wearing ornaments of gold, he believed he had at last found the riches for which he had been searching. He named the area Costa Rica--Rich Coast. Nearly two and a half centuries passed before those who colonized Costa Rica began to realize the potential for riches the rugged but fertile land had to offer.

Although the Spanish first made contact with Costa Rica on the Atlantic side, the first settlements were located on the Pacific Coast which presented a more hospitable environment and better harbors. Moving down from Nicaragua to a point near the present-day Pacific port of Puntarenas, expeditions established two small settlements in 1561. The early colonists soon discovered that the highlands provided much more comfortable living conditions and in 1564 Cartago at the east end of the Meseta Central was founded. Costa Rican development as a nation has centered in that general region ever since.

As a Spanish colony, Costa Rica came under the jurisdiction of the Captaincy General of Guatemala, a subdivision of the Viceroyalty of Mexico. Life in colonial Costa Rica was precarious. During the next 200 years the Costa Ricans suffered from attacks by pirates and Indians. A promising cocoa industry in the Atlantic side never developed fully due to the depredations of the Mosquito Indians, based in Nicaragua and urged on by the English. Little capital was available. The gold Columbus had seen had been obtained by the Indians of the region through trade. There being no mines, the supply of gold ornaments was soon exhausted. Although there were
social classes in colonial Costa Rica, lack of capital and lucrative cash crops meant that everyone shared the labor and the meager standard of living.

Independence came to the Costa Ricans by default. After Mexico had successfully broken with Spain, the Captaincy General of Guatemala followed suit in September of 1821. Spain offered no resistance. It was October before news reached Costa Rica that it was independent. Costa Rica remained a part of the United Provinces of Central America until the formal dissolution of the federation in 1848.

Costa Rican history during the 1800's is marked by four high points. The first was the introduction of coffee around 1810. By the 1820's the Ticos realized that coffee could be a tremendous agricultural resource and began expanding production. When through the efforts of a British sea captain, William Le Lacheur, direct trade with Great Britain was established, coffee became king. Production and profits rose rapidly and the large coffee producers began to dominate the economy and politics.

Costa Rican nationalism received a stimulus in the 1850's, when Costa Rica sent its army to fight William Walker and his filibusters in Nicaragua. The war was a relatively minor incident in which more casualties resulted from disease than combat, but Costa Rica's national hero, Juan Santamaria, performed the heroic deed that made him the nation's premier martyr. Costa Ricans take great pride in the lineage of the family of Juan Vásquez de Coronado, so-called conquistador of Costa Rica. This family and a few others have composed the upper class of Costa Rica since its beginning.

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36 Samuel Stone, La dinastía de los conquistadores (San José, Costa Rica: EDUCA, Centroamericano, 1975). Stone has traced the lineage of the family of Juan Vásquez de Coronado, so-called conquistador of Costa Rica. This family and a few others have composed the upper class of Costa Rica since its beginning.
in their part in the filibuster war. This was one of the first genuinely national endeavors.

The third high point, although many Costa Ricans probably would disagree, was the rule by the dictator Tomás Guardia, 1870-1882. He expanded the education system, promoted trade, and started the construction of the nation's first railway system. His period of power was a time of national economic progress and consolidation.

The fourth high point was the expansion of suffrage and the institution of direct elections that occurred in 1889. Costa Rica did not suddenly become a participatory democracy, free of presidential interference or of electoral manipulation. The year 1889 marked the beginning of a trend toward free elections, and thus began a period of relatively peaceful and usually stable government that lasted until the 1940's, interrupted only in 1917 by the seizure of government by Frederico Tinoco who himself was deposed two years later.37

The period from 1900 to 1940 was relatively uneventful, excepting the Tinoco incident. Probably the most important development was the founding of the Communist party by a young lawyer, Manuel Mora Valverde in 1929. The Communists began to organize the banana workers into unions during the 1930's with only moderate success. The Communists played a much more important role in the turbulent years of the 1940's.

The decade of the 1940's was one of the most difficult in Costa Rica's history. Almost from the time Dr. Rafael Calderón Guardia took office in 1940, bitter opposition to his administration divided the country. It was a period of violent conflict and sweeping socio-economic reform. Calderón was succeeded by his close supporter Teodoro Picado in 1944. The Calderón era ended in 1948 with his overthrow by force. The precipitating event was the election of Otilio Ulate, a prominent newspaper publisher. When Calderón refused to accept the election results, a revolt led by José Figueres Ferrer forced Calderón and his supporters into exile. Figueres governed at the head of a junta for eighteen months then turned the government over to Ulate in 1949. Those events are the substance of the Myth of the Revolution.

Since Ulate's term as president from 1949-1953, there have been seven elections. In each instance the elections have been open, hotly contested, and the results have been accepted by all parties even though the incumbent party was defeated in all but the 1974 election.

The national government of Costa Rica is organized into three separate branches--executive, legislative, and judicial. The president is chosen by direct election for a term of four years and may not be reelected. Although the executive is strong, the president is restricted by several constitutional provisions such as very limited powers to suspend civil rights. The legislature is unicameral, elected by direct vote on party lists according to a proportional system of allocation by province. This term is for four years and
the deputies must wait a full term before being eligible for re-election. The judiciary is independent of the other two branches. The Supreme Court appoints and supervises the lower courts. The members of the Supreme Court are selected by the Legislative Assembly, but their eight-year terms extend over at least two four-year legislative terms.

Costa Rica is divided into seven provinces for certain administrative purposes such as apportioning the memberships of the Legislative Assembly. Local government is vested in the cantons (roughly equivalent to county), each of which is governed to a limited degree by a municipal council elected by the residents of each canton. At present there are 79 cantons. The autonomy of the municipal council is severely limited by a restricted tax base and national government control over most services. Municipal elections take place simultaneously with those for the Legislative Assembly and president.

Elections and electoral campaigns are administered and regulated by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, an independent body whose members are appointed by the Supreme Court. The Tribunal is also responsible for maintaining the files of voter registration through supervision of the Civil Registry.

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39 Denton, Patterns of Politics, pp. 34-44. Denton provides an adequate if brief summary of the Costa Rican government. See also, Busey, Notes, Chapters I, II, IV, and V.
ORGANIZATION

The organization of the chapters follows the procedure outlined on method above. Chapter Two is a discussion of the concept of political myth and how it relates to the study of political culture. Chapter Three contains observations about the political culture of Costa Rica that have been made by Costa Ricans and others. In Chapter Four the examination of the Myth of the Revolution begins with a description of the dramatic qualities of the narrative using several main characters as illustrations. Chapter Five is an analysis of the mythic version and alternative versions isolating distortions and omissions that conform to identifiable patterns. Chapter Six is an analysis of how the Myth is reflected in the organization and operation of Liberación as a political party. Chapter Seven concludes the study with observations on the links between the Myth and attributes of Costa Rican political culture.
Political scientists, like most people, tend to use myth as a pejorative term or as a synonym for fallacy. Because myth has strong emotional overtones it is a more powerful word than misconception, which implies that one merely does not have his facts straight, or illusion which means one is simply fooling oneself. When calling someone's ideas or beliefs a myth, one insinuates that not only are the ideas wrong but that anyone holding such foolish beliefs is therefore foolish himself. Authors at times contrast myth with reality in their titles to indicate that they are correcting widely accepted misconceptions about a particular subject. For example see: Theodore Draper, Castro's Revolution: Myth and Realities; and Peter R. Nehemkis, Latin America: Myth and Reality.¹ Neither author defines myth explicitly (although Draper uses myth in much the same way as it is used in this study), but by using myth this way, the authors emphasize the importance of the material they are presenting. "Latin America" Misconceptions and Correct Conceptions" lacks the impact of Latin America: Myth and Reality. Myth as commonly used is a potent word, but as a

concept useful in analysis it needs a more specific definition. Since myths are emotionally charged, the concept should be purged of its pejorative connotations.

Consequently political myth to be a useful concept needs to be carefully defined. To that end we will (1) define political myth, and survey briefly some of the attempts to use myth analytically, (2) discuss the larger concept of myth, and (3) relate the study of political myth to political culture. We will show that by studying the political myths of a society we enrich our understanding of that society's political culture.

POLITICAL MYTH

Simply defined, myths are the dramatic expressions of the way a group perceives and interprets its existence. Myths exemplify group norms and mores and explain the group's activities and affairs in terms of its values and beliefs. The political myth concerns the political experience of the group; it is a group's preferred history. Defining political myth in this way narrows the scope of investigation to manageable proportions, i.e., the stories and accounts of political affairs important to a group. We recognize that this definition may be too limited for some research concerns, but believe that the limits we have imposed do not violate generally accepted notions current in the field of mythology.

Although political myth as a useful concept is largely ignored in contemporary analysis, writers in the past have given myths a prominent position in their works. Myth or something like myth is an integral part of the work of the elitist theorists Mosca and Pareto.
Mosca's "political formula" and Pareto's "derivations," contain elements of the myth. Both authors addressed the problem of linking belief systems to societal behavior, and concluded that man, in addition to the satisfaction of material needs, demands that he be governed on the basis of moral as well as material principles. More often than not expression of a society's guiding principles are more effective when couched in emotional language. Neither Mosca nor Pareto was particularly interested in the myth per se, but they were concerned with how belief systems like myth are used for social control.

Sorel, in his Reflections on Violence, considers the concept of myth useful in explaining the motivation of revolutionaries. Sorel was interested in the motivation of individuals who performed acts requiring enormous sacrifice and great personal courage which could not be explained on strictly pragmatic grounds. For example, how does one justify, in terms of simple self-interest, that a wealthy individual risk his life and dedicate his possessions to a cause contrary to his former way of life? More to the point, how is self-interest satisfied when the individual can have no reasonable expectation of enjoying the fruits of a successful revolution? Sorel concluded that the proponents of violent change were driven by the motive force of a great myth. The myth is cast in an

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apocalyptic mold, with present struggles depicted as a prelude to the final great battle in which all conflicts would be resolved. The mythic vision serves several purposes. By casting the present battle in apocalyptic terms, the players are clearly identified. One can instantly and definitively tell the good from the bad, the righteous from the wicked. Contradictions and irregularities are immediately resolved, allowing action unhindered by reflection. Victory is assured, perhaps not in one's lifetime but assuredly at a given (often stated) time in the future. One cannot fail because one's actions contribute to the final victory. Sorel's view of myth is not substantially different from the definition used in this study, with the exception that he is concerned only with myths that express eschatological concerns. Effective myths are those "... which enclose with them, all the strongest inclinations which recur to the mind with the insistence of instincts in all the circumstances of life; and which give an aspect of complete reality to the hopes of immediate action. . ." To Sorel, the myth offered a raison d'être, not a model for action. As such, his concept of the myth is too narrow for general application. Nevertheless, Sorel did illustrate the utility of looking to the myths of a group for indications as to the motive force of its endeavors.

Delaisi relates the notion of myth as a raison d'être for violent activity to the idea that myths are the primary source of authority for

4Ibid., pp. 41-42.
5Ibid., pp. 49-50, 123.
6Ibid., pp. 41-42.
7Ibid., p. 125.
society as a whole. The myth, far from being obsolete in modern society, is still vital in the increasing complexity of contemporary life. "Take a peasant, an artisan, an ignorant member of society,"

Delaisi suggests:

Periodically the group is going to encroach upon his time (prestations, statute labor, military service, etc.) or upon his income (taxation). It will be constantly imposing upon him a number of restraints such as police regulations, municipal decrees, etc. He will be compelled to obey a number of people whom he does not know--such as policemen, judges and tax collectors--by virtue of regulations of which he is generally unaware. Were he to be partly or totally deprived by these strangers of his belongings or of his liberty (fine or imprisonment), the law would expect him to submit without resistance. How are these sacrifices to be voluntarily obtained from him?8

The key word is in the last line, "voluntarily." Force is an option available to society, but the negative effects may be greater than the benefits to be gained by coercion. Willing obedience by the members is far more efficacious, and the generation of willing obedience, then, is the primary function of the myth.

Delaisi makes no clear demarcation between mythical narrative and other forms of expression. In essence, myth becomes a "representation of reality," the "conventional idea" held by the masses about the "actual facts of human society."9 Delaisi appears to refer to the political culture of a society, at least as myth may relate to mass man. Myths provide simple explanations of complex phenomena, and link the individual to the group by providing shared conceptions of society and one's place in it.10

9Ibid., p. 4.
10Ibid., pp. 3-4.
The major portion of Delaisi's work is devoted to an analysis of the great political myths in operation at the time of his writing in the 1920's. Two points that he makes are of special interest to the conceptual development of political myth. Myths are an integral part of all societies (a functional requisite if you will), and myths are essentially conservative. The second point needs greater clarification.

Among the various types of political myths one finds revolutionary myths and other myths pertaining to change. A group may be totally dedicated to change and its myths will reflect that determination. As far as the outside world is concerned, the myths may be quite radical, emphasizing the absolute certainty that change is imminent. Change in any of the myths themselves, cannot be admitted, for that would call into question the legitimacy of the entire mythic structure. When such a group gains ascendancy in a society, its myths are likely to become "... a mere formula, a cliche and can no longer be modified without losing something of its efficacy as an instrument of spiritual dominion." 12

One of the more ambitious attempts to incorporate myth into a theoretical scheme is found in MacIver's *The Web of Government.* The linch-pin of MacIver's theory of government is what he calls the central myth, a "... scheme of values [that] determines the social order," i.e., "the myth of authority." This myth sanctifies the

11 Ibid., pp. 36-41, 66-69.
12 Ibid., p. 66.
Institutions of authority and the individuals who hold positions in that structure. MacIver defines myth as "the value-impregnated beliefs and notions that men hold, that they live by or live for." He considers almost all types of beliefs and patterns of belief mythic, differentiating little among them. This makes his concept difficult to operationalize. MacIver's "myth" is closer to the contemporary concept of political culture than to current ideas about myth.

A recent and intriguing investigation of myths and politics is Political Myth and Epic in which Cuthbertson proposes a theory of myth as one "mechanism of political dynamics." His principal concern is the relation of epic literature to political activity. He lists three main characteristics: "Myth is an articulation of symbols or a communication; it contains an essential truth value; and it is co-organic." By co-organic, he means that myths are simultaneously a product of societal experience and a determining factor in the shape the society takes. A myth can neither be understood apart from its society nor can a society be understood without reference to its myths. Cuthbertson's study demonstrates the utility of epic literature as a source of information on the political cohesions and drives which enable a society to function. For instance, Cuthbertson illustrates with many examples how certain recurring themes in a society's myths

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14 Ibid., pp. 42-43. "Part One" is devoted to a discussion of myth and society, pp. 3-58.

15 Ibid., p. 4.


17 Ibid., p. 4.

18 Ibid., pp. 12-48, 221-224.
reflect cultural tendencies, such as Teutonic and Anglo-Saxon fatalism. 19

Although societies are bound together to some degree by their myths, not everyone will believe every myth. In some cases a number of conflicting interpretations may be subsumed under a central theme. For example, while the North and the South in the United States share the same general myths about the origin and development of the nation, on the question of the Civil War, the regional myths vary considerably. The difference is typified by the southern persistence in calling the conflict the "War Between the States" and the "War of Secession" rather than the "Civil War," which would call into question the Southern rationale for the war. Groups may espouse a series of myths about their own experience which are at complete variance from those of the society at large. 20 That conflicting myths occur within the same group of society does not make them any less vital an aspect of political dynamics. Sorting out the complexities of the various myths is the task of the student, not the myth adherent. 21

One final note on political myth should be added. At the operational level as well as at the conceptual level, political myths may be confused with ideology. Both terms involve explanation, world

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19 Ibid., p. 208.


views, plans for action, and guidelines for behavior. Both terms carry pejorative overtones, implying dogmatism in their adherents. Defining them has generated considerable disagreement among scholars. In the abstract, myth and ideology may resemble one another closely, but as political phenomena, they are not the same. When studying ideologies that actually exist, we usually find ourselves concerned with Marxism, socialism, fascism, etc.--more or less consistent bodies of thought, often linked to the work of specific people. An ideology makes its claim to validity as an irrefutable argument based on sound logical explications. Ideologies are usually couched in dry, matter of fact language. Myths, on the other hand, are stories; the language is dramatic, sensate, emotional. Myths may be mistaken for ideology because they draw on such a wide range of sources and are based on a variety of beliefs, including ideologies. Myths may be employed in attempts to gain adherents to a particular ideology, to transform ideology into action as a call to arms, or to justify certain actions according to some ideological principle. Ideology seeks to convince by argument; myths simply require belief.22

Regardless of source, myths can be identified by two characteristics--dramatic narrative form and unquestioning acceptance. These two characteristics will be discussed more fully below.

MYTH

Before linking political myth to political culture, the broader concept of myth needs further explication. The definition of political myth used in this study derives from a survey of the literature on myths and mythology. In this section, we will examine the salient characteristics of myths. In particular, we will look closely at form, the most readily identifiable aspect of myths; belief which is the essence of the living myth; and the content, origins, and functions of myths.

Form distinguishes mythic statements from other types of value-laden societal communications. Mythic style is dramatic, sensate, bigger than life. "Myth is always a story, a narrative of events in dramatic form. It has a protagonist, and it has a plot with a beginning, middle and an end." According to Murray:

... myth belongs in the domain of art in the broadest sense, that is, belongs with what art is to children, to primitives, to the multitude, to professional critics, or to the artist, whether or not it serves the aims of religion, morals, politics, or commerce. Its concrete, "sensible" (graphic, figurative, visualizable) representations distinguish it from the general, conceptually-abstract, imageless, and emotionally-uninvolving diction of science and philosophy, as well as of much ordinary thought and speech.24

Events are depicted in vivid, stirring language; characters are portrayed in heroic dimensions. This applies equally to enemies. Just as the protagonists in a myth rise above ordinary people in virtue, intelligence and ability, so the foes descend below petty misdemeanor

23 Tudor, Political Myth, p. 137.

to downright evil. It is as if the worse the opponent is, the greater the victory for the group. The dramatic qualities of the myth as narrative require a cast of larger than life figures, or at least ordinary characters who transcend their mundaneness to perform heroic acts.

Guevara's Guerrilla Warfare is an example of mythic writing. He purports to have constructed a primer on the conduct of peasant guerrilla warfare based on his experiences in the Cuban Revolution. Guevara's interpretation of the Cuban Revolution has been challenged on many points and can be considered an exercise in mythmaking itself, particularly when myth is defined as preferred history. The key to his theory of guerrilla warfare is a mythical creature patterned after an idealized conception of the Cuban revolutionary. The individual he describes is a person of heroic self-sacrifice, intelligence, and cooperativeness. Guevara's revolutionary men are almost superhuman; they are of mythic stature. Guevara also apparently had an idealized view of peasants, for this was the group from which the new revolutionary men were to be recruited. Had the peasants of Bolivia accepted Guevara's conception of the peasant, his myth might have come alive and provided the driving force for revolution in Bolivia. Unfortunately the Bolivian peasants rejected both Guevara and his vision, so his attempt to put his theories into practice failed.


After his death, "Che" himself was mythicized by leftist students and revolutionary groups who considered him the embodiment of his own revolutionary man.27

Although dramatic narrative is the basic form by which myths are expressed—myths are essentially stories—transmission of the ideas, values, even the story-line of myths often employ other mechanisms such as symbols, art, music, and rituals. The narrative provides a framework for understanding each specific expression in another medium.28 Dramatic language or form is one of the few aspects of myths about which one finds considerable agreement in the literature.

Dramatic form, while the most easily discernible attribute, is not the sole determinant of a myth. What distinguishes a myth from other dramatic exposition is that myths are held to be true. This is another point on which mythologists agree. To be a myth, at least to be a living myth, the narrative must be accepted as a true account. When a myth is no longer believed, it loses its efficacy. It ceases to be a vital living myth and loses the ability to direct actions, i.e., "... the power to invoke belief, kindle the heart and orient endeavors."29 To the non-believer, a myth may contain incredible


29 Murray, "Mythology to Come," p. 306. Murray calls myths that have been forsaken "inert" myths.
ideas and arguments apparently devoid of logic. Myths are clung to in the face of seemingly overwhelming evidence to the contrary. If the believer accepts the basic assumptions of his myth, no amount of brilliant argumentation will sway him from his commitment.

The myth, therefore, held above rational review, appeals directly to the emotions, although modern myths may incorporate scientific evidence and reasoned debate. No distinction is made by the believer between the myth as an interpretation or perception and some independent reality—the myth is reality, accepted as a given. Objective evaluation by a believer is excluded. Intense, unquestioning acceptance, then, is the essence of myth.

Since belief is a requisite of myth, the substance of a myth must at some point touch on the lives of those who believe in it; that is, specific myths are always linked to specific groups. From the perspective of the group, the believers of a myth, there are several referents. Myths are neither mere flights of fancy nor simply imaginative contrivances. Myths relate to the experiences of a group. The content of a particular myth or set of myths may center on an individual or a particular event, but the phenomenon being explained always relates to a group. For example the stories about cowboys would lose their

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31 Tudor, Political Myth, p. 139. See also, Ernst Cassirer, The Myth of the State (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946), p. 47. Most mythologists leave this feature of myths implied or present it as a given, e.g., Karen McCarthy Brown, Myth and Mythmakers (Kbenhavn, Kbenhavns Universitets Fond til Tilvejebringelse af Lremidier, 1969).
meaning if taken out of the context of United States history. Although
the "Western" is popular abroad, the cowboy remains a peculiarly
American phenomenon, who continues to fulfill some deep-seated need
in the American psyche.\textsuperscript{32} The same applies to political "strongmen"
such as Hitler or Peter the Great. Myths arose about these individuals,
both within and outside their societies, because their activities were
relevant to those who believed the stories in which these strongmen
play a central role. This is not to say that imagination plays no
part in mythmaking; clearly it does. But myths are not created about
inconsequential matters or questions that are of no importance to
the believers. For example, Guevara did not imagine the Cuban Revolu­
tion nor the people who fought, but he based his theory of guerrilla
warfare on an idealized (mythical) interpretation of his experiences
in Cuba.\textsuperscript{33} Imagination only embellishes myths; it does not create
the basic theme. The telling of a myth may (and probably does) employ
trivial details, but the central theme always revolves around important
questions, such as origins, environmental change, and survival, issues
at the heart of the group's existence and functioning. One clue to
the centrality of myth to group consciousness is the intensity with
which the group embraces the mythic version of an event.

\textsuperscript{32} David Brion Davis, "Ten-Gallon Hero," in Myth and the American

\textsuperscript{33} Whether or not an individual can properly be said to create and
adhere to an individual myth is beyond the scope of this study. Since
we are concerned here with the political, which implies numbers, the
omission seems justified. Harry Lewis comments on this question in his
Turning now to the content of myths, several questions require consideration if not resolution. First, when we study myth at what level of abstraction should we direct our attention? In this study we have defined myth as narrative within which are embedded attitudes, values, and beliefs by which specific phenomena are explained. Others define myth more broadly. Cassirer, for instance, considers myth a unique mode of thought, one of four distinct ways in which man finds order in a naturally chaotic world. Cassirer provides some stimulating insights into the nature of mythic perception, but his definition of myth is too general to be of use in examining specific myths.

Lasswell and Kaplan define myth as a pattern of symbols that shape the basic perspectives of the members of a society. Since the authors define symbol as "... whatever has meaning or significance in any sense," their definition of myth lacks the specificity that we would prefer to give the term.

The other three modes are science, language, and art. Whether or not one accepts Cassirer's particular categories, the idea of separate modes of thought helps to explain some of the variation in human behavior, i.e., why at different times the same individuals appear to act logically and at other times illogically. It may be that the modes of perception vary in domination and subordination. See Ernst Cassirer, Language and Myth, trans. Susanne K. Langer (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946), pp. 1-17, 23-41; and Cassirer, Myth of the State, pp. 3-49. For an excellent discussion of Cassirer's contribution to mythology, see Brown, Mythmakers, pp. 52-60, 81-83.

This is an extension of the authors' definition of political myth. Harold D. Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan, Power and Society: A Framework for Political Inquiry (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952), pp. 116-117.

Ibid., p. 10.
Lasswell and Kaplan do raise an important question, however. Given that myths express ideas, values, and attitudes, should myth then be defined as the idea or the expression of the idea? For example, is the idea of racial superiority myth or does myth mean only the stories which illustrate the principle that one race is superior to another? Myth can be used in either way depending upon the object of analysis. Henry Hatfield treats myth as a unified set of "motifs, beliefs, [and] archetypes," in his analysis of Nazism.\(^{37}\) Other analyses of specific myths concentrate on mythic narratives.\(^{38}\)

The content of myths has several important features. One of these is efficacy. Since a myth explains something the group wants to understand, it must be in language and in concepts the group can comprehend. Commenting on this point, Bidney says, "Mythical symbolism leads to an objectification of feelings, myth objectifies and organizes human hopes and fears and metamorphosizes them into persistent and durable works."\(^{39}\) Mythmaking involves the recasting of information, whether experiential or ideational, into terms understandable and useful to the average person. In part, efficacy depends upon congruence of the myth with the common experiences of the group, and in part it stems from the utility of the myth in justifying the group's existence or various activities the group


wants to perform. The intensity with which a myth is held varies directly with the degree to which actions of a group conflict with their values.

To be practical the myth must simplify. Those particulars that do not fit into the mythic theme or that contradict the prevailing interpretation are discarded. Information that cannot be ignored is somehow worked into the account in such a way that the mythic theme is undisturbed. Consider the myths of Negro inferiority. Blacks were suited by nature for slavery because they were just one step up the evolutionary ladder from apes. White supremacists, particularly those professing fundamentalist Christianity, cited the story of Ham, son of Noah, as biblical justification for discrimination against blacks. Despite there being no mention of skin color in the passage from Genesis, the mention of slavery apparently was sufficient to reconcile slavery and later Jim Crow with Christian principles.

The mere fact that myth involves simplification means that reconciliation of conflicting impressions will necessitate distortion. That distortion is endemic to myths does not mean that myths are therefore lies. The operationalization of the most scientific theory requires some distortion. In myths, distortion ranges from omission of incongruities, through twisting interpretation, to outright

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40 Tudor, Political Myth, pp. 127-132.


42 It can be argued that all thought involves distortion. See Cassirer, Language and Myth, pp. 6-7.
lies. Myths may also be almost completely natural. The degree to which a particular myth distorts is an empirical question.

The particular aspect of myths that makes them useful in cultural analysis is that their content is patterned. Myths are not collections of random imaginings. The exposition of a myth may contain material apparently extraneous but "... it must include its 'essential features,' that is, it must set forth concrete, sensible exemplifications of its complete theme (thematic pattern)." The thematic patterns reflect the "... emotions, wants, and actions, which are present in virtually all men and women of all societies and times ... ." The limits of acceptability are set by the values, mores, and norms of the group. Using Nazi myths as an example, a fundamental principle of Nazism was virulent anti-Semitism. This feature of Nazism drove out or destroyed many of the best scientific minds of Germany, despite the desperate need the Germans had for those minds for military development. In the long run, Nazi anti-Semitic programs were counter-productive, but they conformed to a basic group value.

In modern myths one way of identifying the conformity of myths to cultural limits is by examining the historical accuracy of the mythic narrative. The observer does not have to determine some totally objective reality to identify the variation of a mythic commentary from the records. The patterns detected provide clues to the values, and the priority of values and other elements of the culture being studied.

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Another consideration about myths is their origin. Who creates them? Probably no other issue divides students of mythology more than how and why myths came about. Explanations range from the psychological to the philosophical, and have generated considerable disagreement. To date, no single theory dominates the field of mythology. 44

Unraveling the development of a myth is complicated because usually no single source can be identified. Myths just seem to grow. In one sense, all the believers of a myth are mythmakers, for their faith and the individual repetition of the mythic narrative give the myth vitality, and they contribute to its existence. Mythmakers in non-literate societies were usually priests, leaders, and storytellers, but embellishments could be added by the ordinary believer who experienced, or imagined, a new perspective or theme. Modern mythmakers may include a group's leaders, official historians, public relations people, and propagandists. At times, the leaders of a group may try to achieve certain ends by purposefully manipulating mythic symbols, and by reinforcing mythic predispositions through deliberate distortion. In other instances, the transformation of information into myth is the product of group consciousness working new data into old molds. It has been suggested that myths may be the products of "creative imaginations" belonging to those individuals, often the "alienated and withdrawn," who somehow feel the critical situations confronting mankind at large or their own group at a deeper

44 For a thorough and excellent discussion of the various schools of mythology, see Brown, Mythmakers. See also, Richard V. Chose, Quest for Myth (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969); Cassirer, Myth of the State; Levin, "Some Meanings of Myth," pp. 103-114; and Tudor, Political Myth.
level than most, and who articulate these feelings in ways meaningful to the group.\textsuperscript{45} At the present state of mythology, no one has derived a completely acceptable answer to the question of origin. We can accept as given that myths do exist, can be identified, and if examined carefully will tell us much about the societies to which they appertain.

A note on the historian as a mythmaker should be added. As Tudor has pointed out, "... much that passes for history is properly speaking myth or is shot through with mythical ways of thought."\textsuperscript{46} Myth is not history (in the academic sense), although mythical narratives usually share the same subject matter as historical accounts. The basis for acceptance of an historical account is the historian's adherence to acceptable research methods. The historian presents what he considers the most cogent, logical description of, and conclusions about events that available evidence will support. No claim to infallibility is made. The mythmaker may use the same evidence, but only that which will substantiate his version of the events and his conclusions. The inclusion (or exclusion) of evidence depends upon the degree to which the information coincides with what is believed ought to have happened and to its consistency with the drama, \textit{in toto}.

But historians sometimes fail to follow the dictates of historical study. No one has all the facts about every event, and presuppositions may color interpretations of the evidence available. Also, new information on old topics is frequently discovered. Conscientious

\textsuperscript{45}Murray, "Mythology to Come," p. 345.

\textsuperscript{46}Tudor, \textit{Political Myth}, p. 123.
historical (or political or sociological) analysis that is later proved wrong is not mythmaking. Mythmaking involves the purposeful distortion of evidence for specific ends, "... to advocate a certain course of action or to justify acceptance of an existing state of affairs." The historian is especially susceptible to the latter goal. Evidence which conflicts with the prevailing ethos can be dismissed as inconclusive, irrelevant or aberrant. In modern society the historian provides much of the substance of the prevailing mythology. The historian should not be held accountable for the uses to which his endeavors are put. When he intentionally contributes to the perpetration of myth as history, he may properly be considered a mythmaker, not an historian.

The final aspect of myths to be considered here is the function of myths in society. Myths affect societies (or groups) in a number of ways. Malinowski believes that myths are "a vital ingredient" of society. Myth "... expresses, enhances, and codifies belief, it safeguards and enforces morality ... and contains practical rules for the guidance of man." Murray lists five classes of mythic function or effects. These are cynosural (emotional), convictional (intellectual), evolutional (propagational), conational (educible and deterrent), and integrational.

Most writers on mythic function present the effects of myth as benign. Most agree that myths facilitate coordinated action and that


they promote integration. In Brown's words, "... myth is the thread that helps weave the fabric of society closer and more firmly around the people."^50 It must be added that the effects of myths are not always positive. While contributing to solidarity, myths may seduce the group to acts that have serious consequences.\(^51\) For example, myths of racial and cultural superiority, in part, led the Germans to attempt military adventures beyond their capabilities in World War II. If we confine our attention to intragroup dynamics, myths appear to be generally beneficial.

A quotation from Merriam's Political Power serves as a summary for this discussion of myth. Although he does not use the term myth specifically, his words capture the essence of myth as an essential part of a society's culture.

> The well-nigh magical influence of stories upon children and adults as well opens an important avenue to the celebration of power, either directly or, perhaps more effectively, in indirect fashion. They listen even when they do not fully understand. For in this mood of relative approachability, . . . thrown off guard by the scientific mask of the historian, the subject may be readily indoctrinated with whatever the situation demands. . . For if the story is really good, what matter whether it be really true. If it does not embody the literal truth, it may express the ambitions of the group and its clear picture of itself in its best moments.\(^52\)

Now having discussed the distinguishing characteristics of myth, it remains to consider the place of political myth in the wider concept of political culture.

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^50 Brown, Mythmakers, p. 34.

^51 Sidney in particular advances this thesis in his essay, "Myths, Symbolism and Truth."

POLITICAL MYTHS AND POLITICAL CULTURE

Myths present idealized representations of a group's self-image, its creation, and its history. From the standpoint of political research, then, the political myth would appear to be subsumed most appropriately under the rubric of political culture, the "... ordered subjective realm of politics which gives meaning to the polity, discipline to institutions, and social relevance to individual acts."53

The concept of political culture, as an approach to the comparative study of political societies, links the behavior of individuals to the operation of institutions and groups. Broadly defined, political culture refers to "... the system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols, and values which defines the situation in which political action takes place."54 For comparative purposes, political culture assumes that attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and orientations held by members of a society form identifiable, reasonably coherent patterns which they share. Pye and Verba believe that such patterns, once identified and elaborated, can provide important clues to the variations and parallels among the diverse and numerous political societies of the world.55 As expressed by Verba, political culture refers "... not to what is happening in the world of politics, but what people believe about those happenings."56


55 Pye, "Introduction," pp. 4-10.

The ubiquity of myths and the variation of mythic narrative and symbols give rise to a number of interesting questions. Do myths perform the same functions in all societies? Can variations in myth explain variations in behavior? What do the political myths of a particular polity tell us about that society's political culture? What insights into specific political behavior do specific political myths give? Are some societies more susceptible to the influence of myths than others? The problem at this stage in the study of political myth is not the generation of questions, but the selection of which questions to pursue first.

Political myth fits the definition of a "privileged operational zone of culture," i.e., a process of communication in a society that is readily identifiable by a disinterested observer. This emphasizes the communicative aspect of cultural entities such as myths. Myths, after all, are a basic mechanism for communicating values, opinions, orientations and often simply information. Political myth as defined in this study, then, contributes to the understanding of political culture. The question is, what information can be gleaned from the study of political myths? Verba suggests that political crises play a vital role in the formation and shaping of a political culture. Crises provide the stimulus for myths to grow.

Two broad approaches to the study of political myth suggest themselves. One can continue what seems to be the most common line of inquiry followed by mythologists in other fields: that is developing

general theories of myth, its origins, and functions in society. The other approach is to apply conceptual and theoretical work already accomplished to specific cases. The object of the latter approach is to expand the substantive base of mythological research and to derive new insights into particular societies. The second approach is the option chosen in this study.

Political myths linked as they are to political experience, cover a wide range of activity. Conceivably, any or all of the political history of a group can be mythicized. As in history, not every occurrence is of equal value to the observer. And like reality, not every event is significant enough to warrant being transformed into myth. For some purposes it may be useful to aggregate experiential minutia, but the study of myths would seem to command attention to the great events, the crises, and the dominant issues in the political life of a group, for these are the phenomena most likely to be mythicized.®®

The myths of a society may be divided into the variations concomitant to its political subdivisions. There is no necessary prohibition to any political subdivision possessing myths, but some types of political groupings may be more prone to mythicize their experience than others. In modern politics, the political party since it self-consciously aims at garnering and maintaining support, is likely to be a primary mythmaking body. Also parties and myths alike are often the product of political crises.

®® Cassirer, Myth of the State, pp. 285-286.
That political parties develop as a response to political crises is discussed by LaPalombara and Weiner in their *Political Parties and Political Development*. They add that the history of all societies is marked by events that strain existing procedures and arrangements for coping with systemic challenges. Such challenges include, "... wars, inflation, depressions, mass population movements, a demographic explosion; or less dramatic changes in the educational system, occupational patterns, agricultural or industrial development." Sometimes a society will weather these crises with its institutions virtually intact. At other times, new institutions or other behavioral patterns are developed to cope with the problem. An institution that has developed in response to certain crises is the political party.

LaPalombara and Weiner have identified three types of crises that are conducive to the creation of parties: legitimacy, integration, and participation. Briefly, a crisis of legitimacy occurs when the structure of authority in a society breaks down and new sources of authority are established. It is suggested that political parties are among these new sources. On the other hand, closely tied to a crisis of legitimacy is the crisis of participation. The demand for political participation by new groups (or formerly excluded groups) frequently is the catalyst for change. Parties are one mechanism for channeling demands into effective action. And while a crisis


60 Ibid., p. 14.
of integration may originate in territorial or ethnic cleavages, political parties may facilitate the union of territorial and ethnic divisions.

Once formed, political parties have sometimes continued to operate long after the resolution of the crisis that prompted their formation. Such is the case of the Partido Liberación Nacional in Costa Rica. Memories of crises in the minds of those who took part in the party formation, or who were affected by the crucial events, often persist and continue to affect the subsequent development and operation of the party. The memories of which LaPalombara and Weiner speak are often the substance of party myths.

Just as the political mythology of a society is a dramatic representation of its political culture, so the myths of a political party illuminate essential attitudes, values, and beliefs of the party as a cultural subgroup. A party's myths may explain the circumstances of the party's origin, momentous events in the party's evolution, its successes and failures. In the case of a party formed for specific objectives, such as gaining national independence, the party myths will help to rationalize the continuing existence of an organization whose initial reasons for being have been satisfied. One of the most important functions of the party mythology is to act as a mechanism for group integration. The myth resolves conflicts between the party's specific goals and actions, and those goals and actions sanctioned by the societal culture. The party myths help to reconcile actions of the party member with values and attitudes that

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61 Ibid.
may have been inculcated in him as a member of the larger society, but which may appear to conflict with the attitudes and values of his subgroup. For example, revolt, which presupposes rejection of certain political values, may be justified on the grounds of higher values also held by the society. The Myth of the Revolution in Costa Rica is a case in point.

The identifying characteristics of a party's myths are essentially those of any myth--dramatic presentation, acceptance based on faith not reason, simplistic explanations of complex issues, and reference to the experience of a particular group. The myths will explain events, actions, and situations of importance to the party. In the following chapters we will look at an example of the myths of a particular subgroup--the Myth of the Revolution of 1948, the founding myth of the Partido Liberación Nacional of Costa Rica.
CHAPTER THREE

ASPECTS OF COSTA RICAN
POLITICAL CULTURE

The political culture of Costa Rica is a multi-leveled mosaic of beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and thoughts. As yet, no one has completed a comprehensive study of Costa Rican culture, although certain aspects such as attitudes among selected groups have been examined. Gradually, as more cultural pieces are identified and described, a clearer picture of the Costa Rican mosaic will emerge.

One of the components of culture is the myth. As a form of expression, myths reflect the culture to which they belong. Myths will vary according to societal divisions in the same way that other cultural expressions will vary. Each group within a society will have its own myths about its experiences and its place in the society. These myths do not develop independently of the general culture. The culture at large will normally affect the shaping of the group's myths, which in turn will echo dominant societal themes and ideas. This is certainly true in the case of Liberación.

In this chapter, we examine some of the ideas Costa Ricans and others have expressed about Costa Rican political culture. The first part is a general discussion of some Costa Rican traits as they affect the political process. The second part examines three specific Costa Rican concepts that have notably influenced Liberación myths. These are la leyenda blanca, the concept of la generación, and the concept of la mística. The chapter concludes with suggestions about Costa Rican political values.

COSTA RICAN CULTURE

Detailed, empirical research on Costa Rican culture is lacking, but there are Costa Rican scholars who have tried to understand and define what it means to be Costa Rican. The chief form of cultural introspection has been the essay. Two such essays seem particularly applicable to a discussion of Costa Rican political culture, although each work treats broader concerns than the political.

Probably the first attempt to analyze Costa Rican culture from a sociological perspective was accomplished by Eugenio Rodríguez Vega. We know of no study that effectively supersedes his Apuntes para una sociología costarricense (Notes for a Costa Rican Sociology) either in scope or perspicacity. He described a number of signal sociological and psychological traits of his people and tried to trace their origins.

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3 Eugenio Rodríguez Vega, Apuntes para una sociología costarricense (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universitaria, 1953).
The cardinal national trait, according to Rodríguez, is an extreme individualism. Underlying many of the more prominent characteristics of the Tico is his tendency to avoid social contact, and to depend upon himself (and his family) for social, economic, and psychological sustenance. This tendency is heightened by a distrust of others. Costa Rican individualism has been manifested in four distinct, though interconnected ways: psychologically, in timidity; artistically, in the absence of a true popular art; politically, in personalism and the absence of permanent political parties; and socially, in a reaction against unions and cooperatives. The latter two characteristics are most pertinent here.

Nominally, Costa Rica has been a democracy, with regular and generally respected elections since at least the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, the government has been dominated by a succession of strongmen, caudillos. These men may have been duly elected, but they achieved their political success through the force of personality and will. Some may have espoused various philosophical ideals or ideological principles; but their political power was based on personal appeal. Without their presence whatever organized following attached to them dissolved. These were not, with a very few exceptions, dictators in the absolute sense. Generally speaking, their rule was benevolent, and in some cases quite enlightened. For the most part, they intervened minimally in the average citizen's affairs. Civil liberties, and other political

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rights were respected. Parties based on ideas (except for the miniscule Communist Party) were nonexistent. Government was paternalistic and unobtrusive. Whatever benefits accrued to the populace depended upon the abilities and goodwill of the leader-president.⁵

Rodríguez based his comments on how the system appeared to him in 1952. Even then he intimated that personalism might be changing to a more ideologically or organizationally oriented system. When he wrote Apuntes, the National Liberation party had just been formed, and he alluded to certain unspecified attempts to modernize Costa Rican politics going on at that time. Liberación comes the closest to being a modern institutionalized, ideological party of any in Costa Rica. Personalism is very evident in Liberación, a point that will be developed further in the next chapter. All of the other parties, despite their disclaimers, are tied to personalities. Even the old Communist Party, now divided into two splinter groups, is dominated by personality. The change that Rodríguez anticipated has occurred, but only to a limited degree. Costa Ricans still tend to prefer to give allegiance to an individual rather than to an idea or an organization.

Individualism has been a major obstacle to the growth of a labor movement. In the 1940's, at the instigation of communists and socialists, and actively supported by the Calderón Guardia administration, a surge of labor organization and activity took place. Between 1942 and 1951, some 372 unions were established. Also during those eight years 168 unions were dissolved. Of the 138 unions existent in

⁵Ibid., pp. 42-47.
1951, only 72 were fully operative and discharging their prescribed functions. Similar figures were given for cooperatives. A study of Costa Rican labor, conducted a decade later found the unions to be in even worse straits. The author attributed much of the difficulty to the "conservative and moderate character of the Costa Rican people." Suspicious of unionism in principle, the Costa Rican public has been unwilling to support the growth of a strong labor movement; social reticence inherent in Costa Rican workers hinders the formation of the unions themselves.

Writing in the late 1960's, Luis Barahona Jiménez made similar observations. Barahona identified three principal qualities of the Costa Rican character: conformism, tolerance, and individualism, the origins of which he also traced to the colonial experience. By conformism, Barahona meant a quasi-fatalism, a tendency to accept matters as they existed, and a general lack of initiative. In political affairs this manifested itself in a "self-marginalization within the democratic process." In times of crisis, the Costa Rican will rally around capable and forceful leaders, but usually he tends to be apathetic regarding community and national interests.

6 Ibid., pp. 49-52.
9 Ibid., p. 298.
Tolerance in the Costa Rican is closely akin to the apathy mentioned above. That is, the Tico is suspicious of and avoids extremism, preferring to take a middle course in social, economic, and political affairs. Even the hostility felt toward extremists does not, "... culminate in a destructive furor, in cold calculated vengeance or in political crime."\(^{10}\) It may be simply apathy or it may indicate a politically mature people who have faith in their institutions and believe that a free, democratic society is the best system for achieving social, economic, political, and cultural goals. Ideologically, this is translated into a commitment to democratic liberalism, based on the belief in the natural equality of man, protected by law.\(^ {11}\) The Costa Rican constitution established the basic freedoms and rights attendant to the principle of equality.

Finally, Barahona discusses the excessive individualism of the Costa Ricans. An ostensible commitment to democratic forms and procedures obscures the tendency to relinquish the decision-making potential of such procedures to political "... figurones (pretentious nobodies), inflated with the power conferred upon them by triumphs at the polls, and who are generally devoid of personal values."\(^ {12}\) Barahona too attributed the inability of the Costa Rican political system to sustain nonpersonalistic political parties to the excessive individualism of the average Costa Rican.\(^{13}\)

\(^{10}\)Ibid., p. 303.
\(^{11}\)Ibid., pp. 301-304.
\(^{12}\)Ibid., p. 309.
\(^{13}\)Ibid., pp. 304-310.
La Leyenda Blanca

Theodore Creedman coined the phrase *la leyenda blanca* referring to a commonly held (by Ticos and many North Americans) perception of Costa Rica as an oasis of democracy in a region of violence and dictatorship. Costa Rica, according to the legend (myth?), offers the best of all possible climates, in which the people live comfortably, if simply, enjoying a near perfect democracy with complete freedom of expression. Costa Rica's history, the legend continues, has never suffered from the abuses of latifundias and bloody military dictatorships. Since independence, the nation has steadily progressed toward the economic and social betterment of all its people. Education has always been honored and promoted more than military affairs. Although Costa Rica, of course, still enjoys these special benefits, the "golden age" of democracy occurred from the 1900's to the 1940's under the remarkable guidance of two men, Ricardo Jiménez Oreamuno (Don Ricardo) and Cleto González Víquez (Don Cleto). Under these two men the democratic government that had been developing during the nineteenth century finally bloomed. Costa Ricans believe themselves uniquely blessed in Central America, and a cut above most of South America as well.14

Costa Rica's unique position according to the legend resulted from three main elements: racial homogeneity, the yeoman citizen, racial homogeneity, the yeoman citizen,

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and the lack of a military tradition. Of these only the last item is not exaggerated. Supposedly the great majority of Costa Ricans are direct descendants of Spanish colonists, with periodic infusions of new blood, mostly from Europe. Costa Ricans point with pride to the abundance of blond hair and blue eyes seen in their population. Costa Rica never had a large Indian population that could be exploited by latifundistas. The legend holds that homogeneity spared the Costa Ricans from racial cleavages and conflicts. Although economic divisions became more distinct and divergent, particularly after mid-nineteenth century, social and economic distinctions were free of racial or ethnic enmities.  

Costa Rica's alleged racial homogeneity may be more mythical than real. To date, there is no comprehensive study of the racial or ethnic composition of Costa Rica. Samuel Stone, in his study on the genealogy of the upper class, offers an interesting piece of information on the early racial makeup of Costa Rica, as a whole. Evidently during the latter part of the eighteenth century, the proportion of Indians and Spaniards decreased radically in relation to the number of mestizos (Spanish and Indian mixture). By 1801, there were 1,942 Spanish, only 8,281 Indians, and 30,413 mestizos. Costa Rica experienced no massive influx of Europeans in the nineteenth century as did Argentina. From where did all those people of pure European descent that make up Costa Rica's populace come? It may be


that Costa Rica is relatively homogeneous in its racial composition, but it is most probably a homogeneity of mestizos, not Europeans. Just how far the idea of Costa Rica's racial purity is carried unchallenged can be seen in the following quote from a text on Latin American history: "The people living on its high central plateau and around and in its two small cities of San Jose and Cartago, are almost all of pure European stock, descendants of farmers who came from Spain in colonial times." The only group that can make that claim with any assurance is the upper class.

The yeoman farmer, tilling his own plot of land, fiercely independent, and devoted to democracy, the backbone of Costa Rican stability and tranquility, is also a misconception. At one time, class differences were minimal. The aristocracy lived much the same as the small landowner. The introduction of coffee as a profitable cash crop changed those arrangements. Individual land ownership is and has been widespread, but most of the farms have been small and barely economically viable, much less profitable. As the market for Costa Rican coffee grew in the 1800's, the cafetaleros (the large producers) began controlling more and more land. The land they did not own they effectively dominated by controlling the processing and exportation of coffee. Many of those small owners who retained their land became dependent on the cafetaleros to buy and export their crops. Often they had to work the plantations to supplement their meager

earnings. In his study on "The Peasant and Agrarian Capitalism in Costa Rica," Seligson paints an even grimmer picture. He finds that in 1967, of those actively working in agriculture, only 22 percent owned their own land. He quotes another study based on a 1960 census as saying, "Costa Rica has a higher percent of landless rural dwellers than any other country [in Central America] and nearly twice the mean percent of all five countries." Seligson concludes that the small landholder is becoming anachronistic and eventually will disappear. Whether one accepts Seligson's prediction or not, he does challenge, with convincing evidence, the assumption that the yeoman citizenry is a bulwark of Costa Rican politics. His data on land tenure, together with Stone's findings, impugn the theory that the small independent landholder ever played a very influential political role.

The assertion that Costa Rica lacks a tradition of militarism has greater validity, for Costa Rica never had a large or well-equipped army. Here too, one must be careful in assuming more than the facts support. Costa Rica abolished her military forces in 1949, but it can be argued that the Civil Guard and the police units that replaced the army are better trained and better equipped than the army ever was. Panama too has no army, but Panama is dominated by its National Guard. The possibility exists that the Costa Rican Civil Guard may become too efficient and effective also.

18 Stone, La dinastía, pp. 93, 103-104.
20 Ibid., pp. 243-246.
Anti-militarism may be a Costa Rican cultural trait. Unlike their neighbors, so the legend goes, the Ticos have suffered little political violence. Normally their elections have been peaceful and violent opposition to the government has been infrequent. Compared to the other Central American countries, Costa Rica has experienced less violence. But Costa Rica has not been completely harmonious. Governments in Costa Rica have been overthrown by force, and political dissent has, on occasion, been violently suppressed. Perhaps the greatest difference between Costa Rica and the rest of Central America is that violence has not been considered quite acceptable as a mechanism of change in Costa Rica.

An indication of the intensity with which la leyenda blanca is held by some can be seen in the response to a mildly critical letter, which was published in a Latin American periodical, written by two North Americans who had done research in Costa Rica. The letters from Costa Ricans were vitriolic, ignoring the point of the original criticism and attacking the authors as tourists and "little gringos." 

22 James L. Busey, "The Presidents of Costa Rica," The Americas 18 (July 1961), pp. 55-70. Busey lists all of the major violent disturbances attendant to presidential succession. The number is higher than most Latin Americanists would expect. See page 60.

23 Carlos Luis Fallas, Mamita Yunai (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Soley y Valverde, 1941). This is an autobiographical novel of Fallas' experiences as a political organizer in the banana regions controlled by United Fruit Company (Mamita Yunai) in the 1930's. Fallas paints a fascinating picture of political suppression through intimidation by a foreign corporation aided by the government.

Regardless of the historical accuracy of *la leyenda blanca*, Costa Ricans believe in their racial homogeneity, their yeoman farmer, and their anti-militarism. The problem lies in how many believe in the legend. Presumably those who espouse it, such as Pacheco (see footnote 15 above) accept the picture that the legend presents. Probably those enjoying the benefits of modern urban life share the same vision. How deeply imbedded the legend is in the campesino mind, or in attitudes of the laborers on the banana plantations is another matter. The banana workers at least have shown a willingness to organize on their own behalf. In the 1930's and 1940's, they supplied the rank and file of the Communist Party, as well as the backbone of the unions. The campesino and small landowner are reputed to be adamant anti-communists, which may indicate a strong acceptance of the *leyenda*. What the mass of Costa Ricans believe and feel about their history and political system awaits detailed survey research.

25 One of the few attitudinal studies on Costa Rican political culture available deals with orientations of upper income high school students. The author found strong positive support for the political system and for Costa Rican politicians as a group. Responses to specific questions on political rights, such as freedom of speech, revealed a strong commitment to democratic principles. Similar studies conducted in the public schools would measure attitudes of lower and middle class students. See Daniel Goldrich, *Sons of the Establishment* (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1966), pp. 103-126.

26 One author concludes that the campesino has become convinced by liberal propaganda that, "... we have a model democratic regime, cemented onto bases of justice, with well-distributed property ... etc." This contrasts dramatically with the life of the Costa Rican peasant that the author depicts. See Luis Barahona, "Visión interna del campesino costarricense," *Revista Conservadora del Pensamiento Centroamericano* 86 (noviembre 1967), p. 5.
La Generación

La generación has a special meaning in Costa Rican political thought. Hugo Navarro Bolandi defines la generación as a group of intellectuals who conjoin their mental capacities for the purpose of analyzing the country, each from the standpoint of his own speciality or profession. From this group emanates a common ideology, a program of action and proselytizing. Their goal is to gain political power, then to implement their policies for political and socio-economic change. 27

Rodríguez lists five "existential constants" that define the true generacion: (1) the philosophical constant, a common way of confronting philosophical problems and a similarity in the direction the answers to those problems take; (2) the sociological constant, a shared interpretation of national existence and how they should integrate themselves into it; (3) the historical constant, a common historical identity; (4) the psychological constant, a sense of psychological differentiation from other, foreign generational ambits; and (5) the literary-linguistic constant, similarities in the formal use of language as an instrument of expression. 28

This is an ideal type; in reality, specific groups will only approximate the criteria. There is a sense of continuity in the true generation. Chronologically and existentially, the generation passes through three stages; a formative stage (age 15-30), a creative


stage (30-45), and a consolidative and protective stage (45-60).
Before age 15 and over age 60, a generation as such does not exist.
Ideally, a generation is in conflict with two other generations, the
one it is replacing and the one replacing it.\textsuperscript{29}

Costa Rica claims only two generaciones as defined here—el
\textsuperscript{[18]} 89 and el \textsuperscript{[19]} 48. With nearly sixty years intervening, the idea
of continuity hardly applies. There was no generación of the 1910's
or 1920's or 1930's. The question of what makes a true generation is
important here because Liberacionistas self-consciously identify the
founding fathers of the party as la generación del 48. Consequently
the historical embodiment of the concept deserves closer attention.

According to tradition, the golden age of Costa Rican democracy
(about 1906-1940) was the product of a group of remarkable young men,
"El Olimpo," or La Generación de 1889. Cañas describes the Olimpian
as:

\begin{quote}
    a pleiad of brilliant young men, hardly beyond 30 years of age.
    . . . above all, intellectuals who have a clear conception, a
    liberal conception of things. . . . They have travelled, studied,
    seen the world and are well read. And they believe that tranquil
    Costa Rica is a good terrain for the planting of the seed of
    authentic democracy.\textsuperscript{30}
\end{quote}

Liberal (anti-clerics and promoters of the extension of education)
and positivist (advocating scientific analysis of national problems),
the Generation of 89 entered the political life of Costa Rica with
enthusiasm. Their first and most profound accomplishment was to
institute direct popular elections. They also were responsible for

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{29} Serrano, "Las generaciones," pp. 12-13.
    \item \textsuperscript{30} Alberto F. Cañas, Los ocho años (San José, Costa Rica:
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
the expulsion of the Jesuits, the development of partisan journalism (political debate via long columns in the daily newspapers), and the expansion of education to the lower classes. The two foremost members of the Generation, Cleto González Víquez (Don Cleto) and Ricardo Jiménez (Don Ricardo), epitomized the old Latin American custom of continuismo by passing the presidency back and forth between them from 1905 to 1936, with the exception of the ten years between 1914 to 1924.31

Cañas admits that the edad de oro (golden age) was also an age of plutocratic domination. He writes:

Formal democracy reaches its splendor. But this epoch, longed for by many, has a certain unmistakable plutocratic flavor, a patriarchal flavor. The liberal generation can govern in peace because it counts on the help of the plutocracy. . . . this is so because there is no conflict, at the highest levels, between the clearest and most exemplary ideas of the liberals and the incipient interests of the plutocracy. From the pleiad of brilliant men, it is the rich who choose.32

That Costa Ricans consider this period the epitome of democracy reveals a preoccupation with formal processes and not necessarily a notion of representative or responsible government. Peaceful, if controlled elections, civil liberties, and a paternalistic government that if it accomplished little also made few demands were evidently the Costa Rican definition of democracy.

To Navarro, the Generation of 89 was not a "true generation."

Brilliant though the Olimpos were, they lacked a coherent ideology and never really translated their ideas into a positive plan of action.

31Stone, La dinastía, pp. 268-269. Between 1914-1924, five other men served as president--three popularly elected, one who seized power and was himself deposed and supplanted by the elected 1st presidential designate.

32Cañas, Los ocho años, p. 11.
Navarro stresses the shortcomings of the Generation of 89 as a contrast to what he calls the Generación del 48. He provides an intellectual justification for Liberación. What set the 48 apart from all other so-called generaciones was conscientious self-awareness of being a generación—and its action to become so. The action to which Navarro refers was the creation of the Centro para el Estudio de Problemas Nacionales (Center for the Study of National Problems). The young men who composed the Center, mostly students in law and agriculture, considered themselves the direct heirs of the intellectual traditions of el 89. They dedicated themselves to scientific analysis of the deficiencies of contemporary Costa Rican society, its government and economy, and to formulation of policy alternatives to those of the government (which they considered inadequate and unscientific).  

Initially the Center intended to remain aloof from the turmoil of politics. Only after intensive study would it offer advice on solving the problems confronting the state. Gradually the Center was drawn more and more into politics. The government, it realized, was not waiting for its advice, but plunging ahead willy-nilly with social and economic reforms. In 1945, the Center merged with the newly organized Partido Acción Demócrata led by José Figueres. The Center had been advocating the formation of an ideological party to lead the nation in social progress but had rejected that role for its members. The elections of 1944, rife with fraud and scandal, convinced it to join with the activist Acción Demócrata as the only way to insure

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progress and prevent the further adulteration of Costa Rican democracy. The new party, Social Demócrata, ultimately became Liberación. 34

The sense of being a special group, the intellectual elite, carried over into the myths of Liberación which sees itself as the fulfillment of the Center's aspirations. The "Preamble" to the revised Carta Fundamental of Liberación, promulgated in 1969 states:

We are the consequence of the great movement initiated in 1940 by the Center for the Study of National Problems, that proclaimed, in the name of a new generation, the necessity of initiating a peaceful revolution in Costa Rica, and that based its postulates on an objective study of the national reality, pledged to give to these problems, solutions strictly Costa Rican. 35

The essence of the concept of la generación is revealed in the last phrase of that quotation—solutions strictly Costa Rican. Any reasonable idea, or proposal or theory should be considered, but blind acceptance of foreign solutions (particularly Marxist) is intolerable. Costa Ricans can and must work out their own solutions taking whatever technical or intellectual help seems appropriate but always shaping their policies to fit Costa Rican needs.

Denominating the leadership of the Revolution and the founders of Liberación a generación serves several purposes. First, it underscores the proposition that the Revolution was Costa Rican in origin, philosophy, and expectations, not the result of alien agitators and ideologues. Second, it links the protagonists of the Revolution to an historical precedent, the Generación del 89. Third, it substantiates


the rejection of personalistic politics by diffusing responsibility for the revolt among a larger group than the coterie of Figueres' supporters.

To an extent, the so-called Generación del 48 conformed to the criteria outlined by Rodríguez, particularly the members of the Centro in the early 1940's. The young men who made up the Centro shared common philosophical and ideological perspectives, i.e., an affinity for social democratic solutions to national problems. Although there may have been exceptions, the young men of the Centro were from middle and upper class families and were well-educated (beyond the secondary level). The members of the Centro stressed that they viewed the nation's problems from a strictly Costa Rican perspective. Primarily this meant the rejection of Marxist analysis, but fascist solutions were also excluded. They clearly and self-consciously perceived themselves as the historical inheritors of the Generación del 89. Finally, the literary-linguistic criterion was fulfilled by the primary activity of the Centro, the publishing of the journal Surco and later the managing of the newspaper Diario.36 The Centro also fit Navarro's description of a generación. They were intellectuals who worked together to analyze social, economic, and political conditions in Costa Rica. Each was to contribute, according to his own background and training, to the formation of an ideology and a program of action uniquely suited to Costa Rican problems and traditions.

36 In protest over alleged government censorship, Otilio Ulate, the owner of Diario de Costa Rica, refused to publish his newspaper. To keep his vow, yet prevent financial ruin, Ulate turned publication of Diario over to the Centro. English, Liberación, p. 22.
The members of the Centro certainly tried to fulfill the requirements of a generación, but gradually direct political activities overshadowed their intellectual pursuits. By the time the Revolution occurred in 1948, the date by which they are known, the appellation no longer applied. Analysis and recommendation had been supplanted by action.

Rodríguez, writing in 1953, doubted that a Generación del 48 really existed. The Centro Para el Estudio de Problemas Nacionales did not resume after the Revolution, and Liberación Nacional had not yet proven its political efficacy. Although he believed in the actions and the motives of the National Liberation Movement, he expressed concern that the revitalizing of the nation would be left half-done. "But today, having completed the heroic part of the task, the young people have returned to their stupor, to their isolation, to their Costa Ricanism." Rodríguez feared that Costa Ricans would slide back into their usual complacency and allow a return of the abuses of government they had recently fought to end.

Rodríguez may have been right. When the Centro combined with Acción Demócrata in 1944 to form the Partido Social Demócrata, the members of the Centro began losing their position as intellectual leaders of the opposition. By 1948, Figueres and his supporters, who were drawn from both factions, were clearly the leading activists in the opposition. Victory in the revolt made Figueres and his closest advisors preeminent in Costa Rican politics. Only three members of

37 Rodríguez, Apuntes, p. 88.
the Junta Fundadora were former Centro members. Since the return of constitutional government in 1949, few Centro members have participated actively in government. Out of 121 Centro members listed by Stone, only eight have served as cabinet members for a Liberacionista president, none for an opposition administration. Only seventeen have been elected to the Legislative Assembly. Whether through disenchantment with Liberación, politics in general, or personal reasons, most of the young men of the Centro apparently have avoided politics in the post-Revolution years. The contribution of the Centro to the formation and operation of Liberación Nacional may have been more symbolic than substantive. Nonetheless, Liberación has tried to capitalize on the idea of institutionalizing the generational aspects of the movement that led to the Revolution.

La Mística

Costa Rican politicians frequently speak of la mística in their campaign speeches. La mística is one of those idiomatic words that do not translate well into another language. The phrase that comes closest to expressing its meaning is another foreign phrase, esprit de corps. A Costa Rican sociologist defines la mística as a feeling of

They were Gonzalo Facio Sagreda, Alberto Martén Chavarría, and Bruce Masías Dibiassi. Daniel Oduber Quirós, an important member of the Centro, acted as secretary to the Junta, but did not sit on the Junta proper. He subsequently became one of the most important figures in Liberación. The membership of the Junta is found in Castro, Figueres, pp. 159-160. The membership of Centro is listed in Stone, La dinastía, pp. 585-597.

Stone, La dinastía, pp. 520-559. The cabinets are found in the International Year Book and Statesmen's Who's Who's, s.v., by year.
belonging, a consciousness of kind that inculcates cohesiveness among the members and stimulates a group dynamic.  

Rodrigo Carazo, a leading politician in one of the current opposition parties, defines la mística as a rationale for political actions, the motivating force behind a political movement. The true mística of a political movement springs from the historical impulse to be a nation. "La mística is achieved when there are goals and there exists the design for achieving them." The nation that drifts without a clear conception of its destination, leaders who are content just passing the days, the political party that wants only to be in power, do not have mística. La mística inspires the responsibility to work. It implies duty, but complemented by the satisfaction of accomplishment. Duty is fulfilled because one wants to comply, not because compliance is compelled. "La mística is that which brings an individual, a party, a country to fight with enthusiasm to achieve its goals." 

Perhaps what really makes Liberacionistas feel different from other Costa Rican parties and organizations is expressed by Baeza, describing a political rally for Figueres in 1968:

Liberación had grown, but had never lost its sense of the mística of human liberty, of social justice, of economic justice, of all devotion to culture and education for all.

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40 Conversation with Dr. Eugenio Fonseca Tortós in his office at the Universidad de Costa Rica, April 1974.

41 Interview with Lic. Rodrigo Carazo Odio in his office in San José, Costa Rica, July 1975.

This sentiment is still expressed by Liberacionistas. In 1974, when asked why he joined Liberación, a municipal councilman from a rural canton on the Atlantic zone responded, "Liberación is the only party that makes an economic and social study of the country."
"Liberación is the most responsible party, and the best organized. We who want democracy will always be with Liberación Nacional." Another municipal councilman believed that Liberación has maintained its political strength, "... because for twenty-five years the Party has known how to reduce gradually the social breach so notorious before 1948, all based on the social democracy that sustains our ideals." The most poignant statement of the Liberación appeal came from a man who had worked his way up from peón agrícola (farm hand) to Jefe de Planta (Chief of an industrial plant). He said:

When Liberación was born, its proclamations, its ideals, all sought the improvement of the peasant and the worker. Its actions carried forward reforms in the life of the country, without fears, without demagogy, [which] made me think that here was a political party that merited the respect of the people. Being very young, seventeen years of age and not of a Liberacionista home, I gave my affiliation and from then I served in its ranks.

A local Liberación leader added this statement to a questionnaire on party affairs: "I consider Liberación Nacional to be a party of democratic inspiration with some mística among its members regarding

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43 "Response to a questionnaire prepared by the author and distributed to Liberación officials in July 1975. Respondent's name to remain anonymous as stipulated on the questionnaire. Hereafter, all quotations from other respondents to these questionnaires will be cited as "Questionnaire Response." See Appendix A.

44 "Questionnaire Response."

45 "Questionnaire Response."
the perfecting of many of its parts."\(^{46}\) Another example is found in a comment on the defeat of Daniel Oduber in the presidential elections of 1966. The author writes, "The defeat of Liberación in 1966, among other things, was due to the loss of la mística of the Party."\(^{47}\) Costa Ricans, despite a certain reputation for stolidity, apparently need spiritual and emotional stimulation as well as pragmatic rewards.

COSTA RICAN POLITICAL VALUES

Consolidating the available information on Costa Rican political culture reveals some serious lacunae. Any profile of the Tico as a political being at this stage will be tentative at best. Much of the material is dated and therefore does not take into account social, political, and economic changes that have occurred in the last two decades. Also there is practically nothing on possible variations in political orientations according to such social division as socio-economic status. Much is assumed about Costa Rican political values, orientations, and beliefs, but little has been verified empirically. Nevertheless, some comments can be made about the Costa Rican political culture.

The most striking aspect of the literature on Costa Rican political culture is the contrast between the image presented by such writers as Barahona and Rodríguez and the image prevalent in much of the North American literature, especially in textbooks.

\(^{46}\) "Questionnaire Response."

\(^{47}\) Baeza, La lucha, p. 418. The author evidently means that Liberación failed to get across an effective image of the party for the voters during the campaign.
The characteristic that comes through strongest in the writings of the former is apathy. One gets the impression that the commitment to democratic institutions, the peaceful exercise of political power, and civil liberties may stem from a fundamental lack of interest, an inability for passionate commitment, an absorption with self and family that precludes effective organization and dynamic political activity. Yet Costa Rica's history is remarkably free of violence. With only a few exceptions, election results have been honored since the late 1800's, turnout at the polls has generally been very high, and such political functions as rallies, parades, and public speeches have usually been well-attended. Superficially, there seems to be a firm commitment to democratic procedures and institutions.

Although current information does not allow a fully detailed profile of Costa Rican political culture, both Costa Rica's history and available analyses of Costa Rica's society and political system do support some general observations regarding those political values that appear to be most prominent.

Three principles of democratic government stand out as nuclei for Costa Rican political values: transferral of political power by elections, political tranquility (the eschewal of violence), and civil rights.

Election of the president by direct vote and universal male suffrage began in 1913, but Costa Ricans had been selecting their leaders by indirect elections (electors selected by the citizens) since the founding of the Republic in 1848. If not always followed scrupulously, the principle of electoral government was well established by the 1940's. Not all of Costa Rica's presidents were selected by
open, competitive elections. Prior to 1890, fraud and force were com-
mon determinants of the national leadership. Since 1890, a definite
trend toward competitive elections developed, until now, Costa Rica's
elections are noted for being honest and competitive.

There are only two instances in which a majority of the popu-
lace was sufficiently motivated to join in a common effort. The
first was the 1850's in the campaign against the Yankee filibusters
in Nicaragua; the second was the Revolution of 1948. The former
was seen as a defense against a foreign invader; the latter allegedly
was caused by a blatant tampering with an election. Elections may
well be the most revered of sacred cows in Costa Rica. We will look
closer at the question of electoral meddling and popular uprising in
subsequent chapters. Suffice for now to note that electoral campaigns
are followed closely throughout the country and election day is treated
as a national fiesta.

In the section on la leyenda blanca it was noted that Costa
Rica has suffered more political violence than Costa Ricans normally
admit. The point to be stressed here is that the frequency and the
intensity of violent political actions has been significantly less
in Costa Rica than in any of her neighbors. One is hard put to find
another country whose history is as free of violence. Rather than
consider domestic tranquility a reflection of a commitment to non-
violence, a positive political value, it may be more accurate to
speak of a Costa Rican preference for peaceful political operations.
The use of violent methods (secret societies, barrack revolts,
assassinations, etc.) have not attained acceptance as legitimate
political activity. When violence has occurred, it has tended to be anomalous and incidental. With the exception of the 1940's, Costa Rica has avoided sustained periods of political unrest accompanied by violent acts. Nor has the military ever created a privileged and dominant caste. The only strictly military heroes in Costa Rican history were part of the anti-filibuster campaigns, the quintessential hero being Juan Santamaría, a young footsoldier. Costa Rican boasts of no Santa Anna or Simón Bolívar. Value, preference, or tendency, however it is termed, nonviolence is a central attribute of Costa Rican politics.

Contemporary Costa Rica is noted for its respect for civil liberties. A concern for individual rights dates at least to 1871, when a series of fundamental rights was incorporated into the Constitution of the Republic adopted that year.\textsuperscript{48} Included in the provisions for individual rights are habeas corpus, prohibitions of ex post facto laws and bills of attainder, and protection of freedom of assembly.\textsuperscript{49} These rights were reiterated and expanded in the Constitution of 1949. How carefully the constitutional guarantees have been honored in practice is difficult to judge. Since the end of the revolutionary period in 1949, violation of civil rights have been few. The questions of civil rights in the Calderón Guardia years, the Revolution of 1948, and the period of rule by junta will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Civil rights in the pre-Calderón period are even harder to assess. Other than reputation, there is little evidence available

\textsuperscript{48}Costa Rica, Constitución Política de 1871 (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, 1944).

\textsuperscript{49}Ibid., Título III, Sección Segunda, "de las garantías individuales."
one way or the other, although certain groups, such as organized labor, endured some repression in the 1930's. If we rely on reputation, Costa Rica was a paragon of civil liberties. Undoubtedly the Golden Age of Don Cleto and Don Ricardo was flawed, but again relative to its neighbors, Costa Rica has maintained a remarkable record. In the absence of contrary evidence, it seems reasonable to assume that Costa Ricans consider civil rights to be a valuable aspect of their political life.

If elections, political tranquility, and civil rights are political values in the Costa Rican culture, presumably Costa Ricans would be willing to sacrifice much to retain them. What and how much they would sacrifice is a measure of how dear those values are.

The Myth of the Revolution centers on the alleged loss of these values. Indeed, according to Liberacionista writers, the Revolution was caused by the violations of those principles and it was fought to restore them. In the following chapters, the ways in which Liberación Nacional incorporated the violation of political values into its rationale for revolt and seizure of power are explored and the validity of that rationale is assessed.
CHAPTER FOUR

MYTHIC QUALITIES IN THE LIBERACION VERSION OF THE REVOLUTION

Great events shape the history of every nation. Affairs may be of such momentous importance that they come to represent historical dividing lines in a nation's experience. Two events signaled consummate changes in the development of Costa Rica as a nation. The introduction of coffee as a cash crop in the 1820's ended the cruel irony in Costa Rica's name (Rich Coast). The social and economic effects of coffee production are still being assessed but el café changed Costa Rican society even more than its independence from Spain. The revolution of 1948 was the second great turning point in Costa Rica's national progress, for this marked the emergence of Costa Rica as a modern state.

That a revolution should be a landmark in Costa Rica's history would appear anomalous, given the description of Costa Rican political culture and values contained in the last chapter. How did it happen that the violent overthrow of a duly established government occurred in a society noted for its passivity and a tradition of nonviolence in political affairs? The explanation depends upon one's perspective.

Such an event is almost certain to be the source of political myths, and there should be at least two conflicting accounts: that
of the revolutionaries, and that of the regime overthrown. Other national groups or outsiders may provide additional interpretations, but assuredly the two principals will espouse discrepant versions.

Interpretations of the Revolution follow three main lines: the Revolution was little more than a golpe de estado in which one group of opportunists replaced another; the Revolution culminated a decade-long competition between two groups--the Communists and the Social Democrats--vying to be the vanguard of modernization in Costa Rica; and the Revolution was the inspired work of a group of dedicated Social Democrats, committed to prevent the subversion of Costa Rican democracy by a corrupt, communist-infested government, and who were destined to lead the social and economic progress of the nation within traditional Costa Rican ideals. The latter interpretation is espoused by the Partido Liberación Nacional.

The Liberación account of the Revolution (and the formation of Liberación) must fulfill certain criteria if it is to be considered a political myth. It must tell a story in dramatic language that explains, in a simplified form, political phenomena believed important by a particular group. It must eliminate ambiguity in complex situations, thereby facilitating decisive actions. As a myth it should also provide a rationale for actions taken by the group, especially when such actions violate cultural values held by the group's members. The leading characters in the account will be extraordinary, either


in virtue or in vice. The story should impart a sense of identity to the believers by stressing the unique qualities of the group vis-a-vis other groups. The perspective of the group regarding what information is included or excluded from the narrative will prevail. Finally, alternative explanations or versions of the same phenomena will be rejected; the unity of the account is thereby preserved.

If the Liberación account of the Revolution is mythic, it will not only fulfill the above criteria but will reflect the Costa Rican culture. Since revolutions normally require considerable effort and coordinated action, the myth will have to explain how a people reputed to be inactive and individualistic came to accomplish a successful revolt. Even more important will be the rationale for the violent overthrow of a legitimate government in a culture that ostensibly values nonviolence and electoral integrity. Incorporation of the idea of la generación and la mística might also be expected. The Liberación Myth of the Revolution complies with all of these requirements.

The Liberación version of the political events of 1940-1951 can be stated very simply. Tyrannical political elements threatened the tranquil, democratic traditions of Costa Rica. The Costa Rican people rose up in response to the mortal threat to their way of life, defeating the enemy in open combat. To prevent the recurrence of such a threat, a political party was founded based on joining modern theories of social justice and economic progress to Costa Rican ideals of freedom and democratic government. In conceptual terms, the foregoing is the theme of the Myth of the Revolution.
Although there is no single official version of the Revolution, several accounts do exist, some published by Liberación itself. The myth of the party is drawn from three primary sources: interviews with party members, the words of party spokesmen, and party propaganda. This study relies on the latter two sources, although information from interviews is also included. Little on the Revolution has been written by Costa Ricans. Although many authors take a decidedly partisan stand, most favor the Liberación version. On the other hand, partisan commentaries are an excellent source of party myths. While there is no evidence that the authors were commissioned specifically to create Liberación myths, the dramatic language they employ and the utterly one-sided versions they proffer make them mythmakers of the first order.3

In this chapter we concentrate on specific features of the Liberación account that make it mythic. To avoid redundancy, we have used the main characters in the Myth to illustrate how the Liberación version fits the criteria for myths elaborated in Chapter Two. The events of the Revolution itself will be discussed in subsequent chapters on the Myth and political values. Particular attention is directed here toward the distortion employed by the mythmakers that elevates the main characters to heroic status. Considerable material

3 Excellent examples of mythic description fitting the criteria listed above are found in the following works on the Revolution. Consequently, much of the illustrative material is drawn from these authors. Alberto F. Cañas, Los ocho años (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Liberación Nacional, 1955); Alberto Baeza Flores, La lucha sin fin (México, D.F.: B. Costa-Amic, 1969); Arturo Castro Esquivel, José Figueres: el hombre y su obra (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Tormo, 1955).
is quoted to exemplify the dramatic quality of the language used by the mythmakers. This discussion is divided into two parts. The first delineates the mythic treatment of six major figures--José Figueres, León Cortés, and Otilio Ulate on the heroic side, and Rafael Calderón Guardia, Teodoro Picado, and Manuel Mora on the iniquitous side. The second part examines those characteristics in light of other evidence from sources not in the Liberación camp.

MAIN CHARACTERS IN THE MYTH

Because myth is drama, it is appropriate to view the central figures in a myth as dramatic characters. The myth itself will cast its protagonists as heroes and villains. The consummate hero in the Myth of the Revolution is José Figueres, the leader of the military forces of the Revolution, and the principal organizer of Liberación. Two other heroes worthy of note and who will be discussed also are León Cortés and Otilio Ulate. Just as Figueres has been exalted as the savior of Costa Rican democracy, so has Rafael Calderón Guardia been portrayed as an arch villain, an adversary of a magnitude suitable for a hero to engage. Calderón's chief henchmen, Teodoro Picado Michalski and Manuel Mora Valverde are cast in an appropriately malignant light. Here the Liberación portraits of these central figures are detailed. The portrayals are stereotypical; the language is mythic.
Heroes

The first full-length biography of Figueres begins with these words:

It was one of these things that Destiny arranges . . . this time for the glory and the good fortune of our country: José Figueres Ferrer was born in San Ramón . . . .

The Castro Esquivel biography provides the best example of heroic treatment of Figueres. The book reads like an adventure story, full of daring deeds and acts of great sacrifice. Exile in Mexico is described thus:

His life in Mexico was intensely active. All his thoughts, all his energy was dedicated to the great work, to liberate Costa Rica from its evil rulers.

His return to Costa Rica in 1944 was that of a conquering hero, "a symbol, the only hope of the fight and of the solution against the evils that afflicted Costa Rica." The airport was packed with thousands awaiting the hero. The streets were lined with those hoping for a glimpse of Don Pepe. With a speech upon his arrival, Don Pepe launched his political career.

The letters and speeches Figueres made demonstrated his political ability and intellectual power.

Then it was that José Figueres directed himself anew to the people, to the oppositionist group to which he belonged, to open their eyes, to describe for them the enemy trap, and he propounded by radio his transcendental speech . . . a brilliant piece of sagacious and valiant analysis of the political

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4 Castro, Figueres, p. 13.
5 Ibid., p. 43.
6 Ibid., pp. 62-63. Pepe is a diminutive of José. Its use is usually a sign of affection.
situación of the present in relation to the painful past, and an inspiring and virile exhortation for the future in whose heavens he already saw threatening black clouds.\(^7\)

Once the inevitable war broke out, new facets to Figueres' abilities were discovered. He was not only:

... the intellectual leader of the movement but also its military commander. Uniquely, he gave a worthy example to all his collaborators, maintaining a very high level of morale among his men that never for a moment faltered, not even in instances of great danger.\(^8\)

Castro's entire work is written in that vein. But he is not alone in his adulation of Figueres.

Luis Alberto Monge, a high-ranking official in Liberación writes in the prologue to *La lucha sin fin* (a more detailed and sophisticated, but no less biased, biography of Figueres), "The Revolution triumphed with Figueres."\(^9\) The title of the book, *The Fight Without End*, symbolizes both Figueres' life and his attitude toward life, which is presented as a series of struggles destined to be overcome. Again Figueres is depicted one-dimensionally. Of the man himself only virtues are revealed; character analysis is not necessary. Typical of direct references to Figueres is the following:

He was Chief of the action and had the immense prestige of his valor united to the physical resolve of the combatant, but all of this rested on his character as an intellectual, as an ideological and pragmatic man... Little by little this engineer and social philosopher, expert in economy, had been converted into a contrabandist of arms for liberation. The

\(^7\)Ibid., p. 73.

\(^8\)Ibid., p. 112.

reader of Whitman, Spencer, Kant, Shakespeare and the Greek and Roman classics was transformed into a trainer of guerrillas.10

As the leader of a successful revolutionary movement, Figueres had to redirect the force of arms into a force for power and progress. Figueres understood that his mission . . . was to prepare the country, so that it would not retrogress to 1940, [and] that it be guaranteed that a situation such as had pushed the country into the civil war just ended, would not be possible.11

Presumably to give some insight into Figueres' character, Baeza compares him to a variety of famous men, in particular, the outstanding political leaders in Latin America who were Figueres' contemporaries, e.g., Víctor Haya de le Torre, Rómulo Betancourt, Luis Muños Marín, and Víctor Paz Estenssoro. The allusions are not always clear since names pop up in the narrative with minimal linking to the general text. For example:

The parents of José Figueres--as those of John F. Kennedy--are Catholic and [they] resolved that José should be educated in the Seminary College.12

Recalling Figueres' predilection for calling himself a simple farmer, Baeza writes, "I am reminded of another 'farmer,' [a] man great in his simplicity, and in his immense talent, William Faulkner," who when required to list his profession would put farmer, not writer.13

Enigmatic allusions aside, the Figueres of La lucha sin fin literally has no faults. The Revolution could not have succeeded without him.

10 Baeza, La lucha, p. 225.
11 Ibid., p. 286.
12 Ibid., p. 48.
13 Ibid., p. 370.
Other Liberacionistas followed the same line as the above passages illustrate, but in less graphic language possibly because they emphasize other aspects of the Myth. Araya refers to Figueres as "its [the Center's] most distinguished thinker." Cañas, whose pamphlet Los ocho años provides a rationale for the Revolution, pictures Figueres as the skillful guerrilla leader who anticipated the Calderón reaction to electoral defeat and quickly eluded all attempts to restrict his actions while he prepared for war.

In the Liberación portrayal of Figueres the mythic overtones are manifest. Brilliant thinker, prescient rebel, consummate guerrilla leader and dedicated democrat, Figueres epitomizes the epic hero.

Cortés and Otilio Ulate play prominent roles in the Revolutionary Myth; Cortés as a symbol of the old liberal democracy and Ulate as a symbol of the forces of reactionary democracy. Both provide foils for the exaltation of Figueres and Liberacion as the symbols of modern progressive democracy.

Cortés embodied the best traditions that Costa Rican democracy produced according to la leyenda blanca. Of the highest personal integrity, he instituted honesty and efficiency in government. Cortés provided an important contrast between his sound principles of effective government and the not only corrupt but incompetent


15 Cañas, Los ocho años, p. 115.
administration of Calderón. Cañas is the best source for this aspect of the Myth. He describes Cortés as a "strong character [with] an enormous capacity for work." Applying this great capacity to the governing of Costa Rica, Cortés imbued his administration with:

... the central proposition of progress and efficacy: the labor of public works that had no comparable antecedents; the valour with which he attacked banking reform that gave a scientific basis for the national bank; the vitalization of public health and, above all and before all, the accentuated, accelerated, enthusiastic rhythm with which he attacked his work, the sensation he managed to give people that the government is preoccupied with doing something for it.16

The rigors of a vicious political campaign finally ended the life of this great patriot. The ridicule heaped upon him by the Calderón government in the campaign of 1943-44 had an obverse effect to that intended. By stealing the election from this great man, the Calderónistas showed themselves to the Costa Rican people for the unscrupulous demagogues they were.17 The contrast between the virtuous Cortés and the venal Calderón, his one-time protégé, supports the Liberación assertion that only revolution would rid the nation from Calderonista control.

Otilio Ulate plays a similar role but as a counterpoint to Figueres. Liberación literature neglects Ulate although he was a central figure in all the events leading to and following the Revolution. In one sense the civil war was fought in his name, a point that Figueristas stressed in later campaign literature. After all, the election of Ulate was the event that precipitated the fighting.

16Ibid., p. 75.

17Ibid., pp. 73-76.
However, Ulate posed a dilemma for the Liberacionistas. He had built up his newspaper *El Diario* into the most popular one in the country by the 1940's. *El Diario* became the leading critic of the government, providing a forum for criticism by the Center. He was also the heir to Cortés as leader of the united opposition. As such he could not be denigrated as the outright enemy of Liberación that he came to be. The Revolution was justified on the grounds that Ulate had won the presidency in an honest election and had been denied office by the usurpacious Calderón. That made Ulate the people's choice in 1948. Consequently, Ulate had to be dealt with carefully.

Of the Liberacionista writers only Baeza devotes more than an absolute minimum of space to Ulate. Ulate is first mentioned as the owner of *El Diario* dedicated to fighting fascism and nazism.\(^{18}\) Later, Ulate is discussed as a leading opponent of Calderón. A discussion of Ulate as an individual comes after the Revolution has been dealt with. The tone changes and Ulate is revealed as a vain and manipulable man. Baeza considers him "... psychologically the figure who would be converted by the economic oligarchy into an obstacle to the Revolution, into an opponent of revolutionary changes."\(^{19}\) Baeza stresses the excessive vanity in Ulate's character, coupled with a guilt complex from being a minor figure in the uprising. Quite simply, Ulate was jealous of Figueres.

Figueres was the valourous figure of the armed revolutionary movement. He had been, in that difficult hour, all that Ulate should

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\(^{18}\) Baeza, *La lucha*, p. 192.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., p. 307.
have been but could not, nor wanted to be, because Ulate was not a man of revolutionary composition nor of temperament. He was an excellent combative journalist, a democrat, an enemy of the abuses of Calderón Guardia and Picado, but no more.  

Cañas makes a similar statement in one of the few references to Ulate in Los ocho años:

And now the hour [of the Revolution] has arrived. No one waits for Ulate to act. He was elected because he was virtuous, because he was militant, because he had an enormous, an undeniable talent, because he had a politically clean life, without discredit . . . and because his ideological position . . . was democratic, was correct. But not because he would be a great leader or a man of immense capacity for work.  

The oligarchy turned to Ulate to lead the counter-revolution. In time, Ulate and the conservative rich accepted Calderón Guardia himself to oppose Figueres. Ulate was not exactly censured; he just was not the man nor the leader Costa Rica found in Figueres.

Villains

The mythic hero requires an enemy of comparable stature. The Calderón Guardia of Liberación mythology filled that requirement in every way. Calderón was corrupt, despotic, he made deals with the Communists. To Cañas, Calderón was "a mediocre doctor," "intellectually inferior to all his predecessors," "the smiling doctor," "the unscrupulous Dr. Calderón." Baeza compares Calderón with Figueres to illustrate the vast differences in the two leaders. Calderón was "a man of the privileged class," Figueres was the "son of an immigrant;" Calderón's father was "a doctor of quality," Figueres was the "son of a rural doctor." Calderón enjoyed all "the facilities of his class

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20 Ibid., pp. 307-308.
21 Cañas, Los ocho años, p. 41.
22 Ibid., pp. 17, 21.
and social rank" and "was educated in the aristocratic University of Louvain;" Figueres had to "work by day in order to study by night." Baeza implies that because his life had been easy Calderón had no sense of justice, that he could brook no opposition. Figueres, whose life had been a continuous struggle (*la lucha sin fin*), had been tempered by the fires of adversity. For Baeza, the ultimate proof of Calderón's lack of character was his willingness to ally with Communists to preserve his own career.

All in all, Calderón is represented as a thoroughly despicable character. Even a peace-loving nation like Costa Rica could not tolerate a man of his ilk.

Calderón's two chief henchmen, Teodoro Picado and Manual Mora, also receive attention in Liberación mythology; Picado because he served as Calderón's stooge in the presidency, and Mora because he led the Communist Party allied with Calderón.

Picado, as described by the Liberacionistas, was virtually incapable of action or thought independent of Calderón. He was picked by Calderón to occupy the presidency during the one term interim required by the constitution before Calderón could resume office. Completely lacking the will to govern, he is a man of memorizations but without a single creative capacity, completely devoid of social or historical vision, who finding himself in the presidential seat, has to ask himself why he is there, since he has no program, no plan, no proposal . . . he is simply an individual to carry out the function that Calderón wanted: that of a puppet.25

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23 Baeza, *La lucha*, p. 89.
25 Ibid., p. 67.
Castro describes Picado similarly as "[A] young member of the national Forum (national legislative assembly) and a close adherent to the regime of Calderón, [he] was the candidate of the Government;" who was chosen by Calderón and the Communists because of his "weak character and his inability to understand the situation." 26

Baeza easily dismisses Picado as the candidate chosen by Calderón "to succeed him and guard his back: licenciado Teodoro Picado, a politician with the complete confidence of Dr. Calderon. . . ." 27 Picado, from then on, is only mentioned in connection with Calderon's nomination, never as an individual in his own right.

Mora, a central character in the Calderón administration, is easy to vilify. Mora was the leader of the Communist Party of Costa Rica. Need anything more be said? Cañas considers Mora a picturesque demagogue, who brought to Costa Rican politics a new element, violence. Baeza, whose work on Figueres is as much an anti-Communist diatribe as a biography, pays considerable attention to Mora. Of Mora the man, Baeza offers nothing; of Mora's activities as the Communist leader much is recounted. The sole purpose of Mora's affiliation with Calderón was to carry out the master plan of international Communism. For Mora to speak of himself as a Tico showed him to be completely hypocritical. His soul belonged to Moscow, not Costa Rica. 28

Thus the Calderonistas epitomized ruthless, power-hungry politics. Calderón wanted only to aggrandize his own position, to

26 Castro, Figueres, p. 57.
27 Baeza, La lucha, p. 166.
28 Ibid., pp. 140-141, 158-159.
create his petty dictatorship by any means. Picado was his willing tool. Mora and the Communists, of course, were using Calderón to establish their own tyranny, the tyranny of Moscow. Obviously, the freedom-loving Costa Ricans had no alternative but to throw that bunch out of office, and to do that they had to use force.

OTHER VIEWS OF THE MAIN CHARACTERS

Heroes?

The Myth correctly places Don Pepe at the center of the anti-Calderonista revolt. The Revolution of 1948 was largely planned and instigated by Figueres; the subsequent establishment of the Partido Liberación Nacional can be credited largely to his desire to insure the continuation of the Junta's policies. In the exhaltation of Figueres' virtues and the emphasis on his role in the opposition movement, the Myth glosses over a number of questionable points. Figueres is a much more complex man than the Myth portrays. His role in the political history of Costa Rica was also more problematic than the Liberación mythmakers would have us believe. To date no one has written a thorough, objective biography of Figueres. Consequently, many of the most intriguing questions about his career and his character cannot be answered. Several principal assertions about the mythical Figueres can be challenged, even if definitive statements must await more complete evidence. Three such assertions are discussed below.

The first question concerns the entry of Figueres into Costa Rican politics (i.e., his famous speech and subsequent exile in 1942). According to the Myth, Figueres, outraged by the "San Pablo"
riots, denounced the government for not protecting innocent citizens from the deprivations of its communist allies, to which the government responded by exiling Figueres on the ludicrous charge that he was a neo-fascist subversive. On the surface the Myth would seem to be correct. Figueres did make a vehemently anti-government speech which was interrupted by his arrest. The government then forced him to leave the country. The government's accusation may not seem so ludicrous when one considers that Figueres was the only person exiled despite the fact that other opponents to Calderón, such as Ulante, León Cortés, and members of the Center for the Study of National Problems, had been pouring out criticisms as vitriolic as Figueres' speech, if not more so. Why was it necessary to exile only Figueres?

The government explained that Figueres was exiled at the request of the United States Embassy. Statements about the installation of a North American military base at Puerto Limón made by Figueres in his radio speech were cited as the stimulus for the Embassy's request. Supposedly Figueres was to be sent to a concentration camp in the United States for nazi-sympathizers. Appeals by his friends allegedly commuted the sentence to exile. Fortunately this explanation is not supported by substantial evidence.

29 The San Pablo, a ship loading in Puerto Limón (Costa Rica's Atlantic port), was torpedoed and sank on 2 July 1942. A memorial and demonstration in San José two days later degenerated into riots, allegedly instigated by communists. On 8 July, Figueres made a vitriolic speech condemning the government for failing to prevent the violence.

30 In his biography of Figueres, Castro Esquivel reproduces the famous radio speech, but no statements about military bases are included. Castro, Figueres, pp. 27-35.

Although not conclusive, certain evidence provided by other sources lends credence to the possibility of a Figueres-German connection as the reason for his exile. During the 1930's Germany became a major client for Costa Rican exports. German businessman married into the cafetalero families and began exercising considerable influence in the country's political and economic affairs. German culture and ideas became fashionable. German technology and skills were extolled to the point that "German" meant excellent. After a visit to Costa Rica, John Gunther reported, "that some of the buildings housing German companies have Nazi insignia painted on their roofs," and Germans wearing swastikas paraded openly.  

The declaration of war by the United States against the Axis powers created a serious problem for Calderón. The United States pressured him to arrest German, Italian, and Japanese citizens residing in Costa Rica, but these included many economically powerful and socially well-connected people. Calderón complied with the demands of the United States, but the political cost was great as his actions further alienated the cafetaleros.  

Calderonistas believed that Figueres was trying to aid German friends in avoiding incarceration and confiscation of their Costa Rican properties. Although no source cited convincing evidence, a piece of interesting circumstantial evidence indicates a certain sympathy by Figueres for the German plight. One of his first acts

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33 Acuña, El 48, pp. 46-49.
as head of the Junta was to restore confiscated property to Frederico Reimers, a German whose name was linked to Figueres prior to the exile in 1942.\(^{34}\)

The only certainty about the exiling of Figueres is that Calderón made a serious mistake. One can speculate about what would have happened had the government just ignored Figueres or been content to ridicule him as a country bumpkin of no importance. Exile made Figueres a *cause célèbre*. Exile in Mexico brought Figueres into contact with other political refugees who convinced him of the efficacy and the necessity of armed revolt. As Costa Rica's only exile (there are no reports of any political prisoners), he gained instant notoriety which the opposition press neither delayed nor stinted in propagandizing widely. The only explanation given by a Calderonista leader as to why this mistake was made came from Manuel Mora, who repeated the claim that the United States requested the action. Until further evidence is uncovered, any underlying motive must remain unknown. The suspicion lingers that Figueres had already involved himself in national politics. The "San Pablo" incident brought him fame.

Central to the mythic theme is Figueres as the leader of the opposition. Figueres is pictured as a Costa Rican messiah behind whom the Costa Rican people rallied to throw off the oppressive yoke of Calderón domination. This aspect of the Myth obscures the deep cleavages existing among the groups opposing Calderón. Until the fighting broke out in 1948, the largest segment of the opposition considered Ulate to be the opposition leader. He had decisively

\(^{34}\) *Bell, Crisis*, pp. 88-89.
defeated Figueres at the convention which selected the opposition candidate for the presidential election of 1948.\textsuperscript{35} When serious opposition to Calderón first developed in the early 1940's, León Cortés had been the generally accepted leader. After his death in 1946, Ulate took his place.

The segment that Figueres commanded was the relatively small group of "hot heads" who advocated armed rebellion. The activist group, mostly young men, did not represent the main stream of opposition to Calderón, though Ulate and the other opposition leaders refused to criticize the activists even when they employed the same tactics of violence the opposition so roundly condemned the government for using. Figueres was the logical choice to head those desirous of violent activity. He had proved his courage by publicly speaking out against Calderonista outrages. His discourse on Costa Rican problems established his intellectual credentials.\textsuperscript{36} He had good connections with revolutionaries from other Central American countries which meant valuable contacts in the gun running business and the availability of assistance from experienced fighters. Most important, Figueres' boundless energy and single-minded drive provided a motive force for the most impatient elements in the opposition. He began planning and preparing for armed revolt while in Mexico in

\textsuperscript{35}Cañas, \textit{Los ocho años}, p. 85.

\textsuperscript{36}While in exile and after his return to Costa Rica, Figueres made numerous speeches and published essays and critiques of the government and Costa Rican problems. A number of excerpts of Figueres' speeches can be found in Castro, Figueres. The best known of Figueres' early publications is \textit{Palabras gastadas} (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Española, 1943).
1943-44, then directed the organization of revolt in Costa Rica after his return. He became the head of the opposition in 1948 by leading the successful armed uprising.

The conservative and the Ulate (moderate) branches of the opposition never felt completely comfortable with Figueres and the activists. Several attempts were made by the opposition to compromise with the Calderonistas during Picado's administration. Cortés in 1946, just prior to his death, had made overtures to the Picado government.\textsuperscript{37} Ulate tried to reach an accord with Picado in the same year, but failed. The Figueres faction accused him of entering into "illegitimate conversations with the Government that the people would never have accepted."\textsuperscript{38} Even after the election in 1948, Ulate and his supporters kept trying to avoid a violent confrontation with the government.\textsuperscript{39} The advent of armed revolt under Figueres pushed Ulate into a tertiary role from which he did not emerge until the presidency was turned over to him by Figueres in 1949. His position as leader of the moderates in the opposition never abated. During the period of government by the Junta, he became the chief spokesman for the conservative forces as well, a position he held until his death in 1973.

\textsuperscript{37}Bell, \textit{Crisis}, p. 117.
\textsuperscript{38}Cañas, \textit{Los ocho años}, pp. 78-79.
Figueres did enjoy widespread acclaim among the Costa Rican populace as the successful leader of the Revolution. Except for the fighting itself, the Liberación claim that he led the opposition to Calderón is an exaggeration.

Another questionable assertion made in the Myth cast Figueres as a brilliant military leader. Figueres supposedly conceived of the overall strategy for defeating the government forces and courageously led his men into battle. The most detailed account of the combat phase of the Revolution gave much of the credit for the military victories to others; Figueres was not listed as the field commander in any specific battle. Figueres, according to this account, appeared to act as the nominal leader, the coordinator and morale builder, not as a military genius. Acuña concludes that Miguel Angel Ramírez was the real military leader of the Revolution and quotes a member of the Liberation army as saying "when Ramírez arrived, one could say that the Revolution had a true Chief and an authentic soldier." Acuña may not have been entirely fair in his treatment of Figueres as a combatant; he does offer evidence that not everyone who fought with Figueres considered Don Pepe's contribution as a soldier absolutely vital.

Clearly Figueres played the central role in the events surrounding the Revolution, but the character portrayed in the Myth exaggerates

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40 Figueres' popular appeal is attested to by the overwhelming majority of votes he received in the 1953 elections, and the still considerable majority he won in the 1970 elections.


42 Ibid., p. 196.
his contribution on at least three points. The definitive biography, if it is ever accomplished, will undoubtedly reveal other inconsistencies between Figueres the mythic hero and Figueres the man.

The representations of León Cortés and Otilio Ulate in the Myth are as distorted as the characterization of Figueres. The Myth fosters the image of Cortés as a model of governmental propriety such that the improprieties of Calderón appear so extreme that revolution was justified. The Myth describes Ulate as an honest but uninspired politician, inadequate for the challenges of governing in the modern world. Depicting Ulate as ineffectual enhances the image of Figueres as a forceful, capable leader.

The administration of León Cortés from 1936-1940 was touted as the epitome of honesty and efficiency in contrast to Calderón's venal administration. It is true that Cortés left a surplus in the treasury when he turned the presidency over to Calderón. He was able to do so because his government had exemplified what the cafetaleros considered good government, i.e., minimal government. Cortés, in effect, did little to advance the country, economically or socially. Nor was Cortés reluctant to use force if challenged. In 1938 he dismissed the entire National Electoral Council (a government body that administered elections) for refusing to annul the election of a communist deputy. Elections in general were manipulated by the incumbent government. Government employees were expected to work for the candidates in the congressional elections and the police acted as government spies against the opposition. Cortés never tried to institute economic or social reform that would have antagonized his
wealthy supporters. Therein lay his acceptability. Perhaps because he did not cause the cafetaleros any discomfort, they considered him a great president. 43

Cortés may have played a far more crucial role than the Myth assigned to him. Opposition to Calderón may have begun as a feud between Calderón and Cortés. Evidently Cortés viewed Calderón as a stand-in for him until the obligatory interim term ended in 1944, when Cortés intended to run again for president. Calderón had definite ideas of his own about who should govern Costa Rica and he had an ambitious program of reform to institute. In addition, Calderón immediately began dismissing Cortés' supporters from their government positions. Once Calderón began sponsoring such reforms as social security and labor rights, the alarmed conservatives, whose prerogatives were directly threatened, turned to Cortés and found a willing ally. Cortés made a perfect leader for the opposition in its attack on Calderón's wasteful, expensive, disruptive policies. His efficiency and fiscal propriety were constrained to Calderón's incompetence and extravagance. 44 Until his death in 1946, Cortés led the opposition to Calderón. At that time the mantle of leadership was transferred to Ulate.

The ambiguity of the mythic treatment of Ulate was discussed above. To justify the Junta, and later Liberación, Ulate had to


be depicted as incompetent and opposed to social reform. This meant he had to be relegated to a minor position in the Revolution. As the political heir to Cortés, Ulate was far more important in the events leading to the Revolution than the Myth admits. Further, he did not agree completely with armed revolt as the solution to the election annulment in 1948. Even after the fighting had begun, Ulate apparently hoped that a peaceful settlement could be reached.45

The Liberación claim that Ulate turned on the Movement after victory had been achieved is also an exaggeration. Ulate had never fully supported Figueres in the first place. Second, he justifiably expected to receive the presidency once Calderón was defeated. After all, Ulate had been duly elected. Had not the Revolution been fought to preserve electoral integrity? Ulate, and particularly his conservative supporters, felt betrayed. They had given Figueres moral support and some financial assistance to rid themselves of one social reformer, only to find another in his place. When asked why he signed the Pact accepting the creation of the Junta Fundadora, Ulate replied:

I understood that these people who wanted [me to sign] held power; then I thought to myself: I am the President by the will of the people, but these [people] have the guns. What would happen if I did not sign? Another civil war? Summing up these thoughts, I came to the following conclusions: Whatever concession I made would be less evil than [losing] the lives of Costa Ricans. I signed.46

Ulate and his supporters had only the word of Figueres that Ulate would receive the presidency at the end of the agreed time. When Figueres began making changes by fiat, the new opposition was formed, this time anti-Figuerista.

45Acuña, El 48, p. 185.
46Ibid., p. 352.
Rafael Calderón Guardia, the arch villain of the Myth of the Revolution, made many serious mistakes during his term in office and in the campaign for reelection in 1947-1948. Yet he was not the totally unscrupulous, utterly corrupt despot portrayed by the Myth. Some of the specific charges of corruption and violence made against his administration are considered in the next two chapters. In this section some general observations regarding Calderón will mitigate the terrible image presented by the Myth.

Calderón took office with a strong desire to make desperately needed social and economic changes. While a student in Belgium, Calderón was deeply affected by the social theories of Cardinal Mercier and the Papal Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. He became firmly committed to the alleviation of poverty and economic stagnation through the extension and expansion of government services. Calderón instituted a system of social security, began the construction of low cost housing, established a code of labor rights, and tried in various other ways to improve the lives of the lower class. Calderón's talents lay primarily in starting projects; his administrative abilities were considerably less developed.

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Concerned with initiating the reforms he believed necessary, Calderón neglected to supervise his subordinates adequately. As he himself later admitted some of his assistants, particularly those handling government contracts, enriched themselves at public expense. Rather than develop a coordinated plan of management, Calderón concentrated on dealing with specific problems. As a consequence he built a new governmental bureaucracy based on the antiquated foundation of the old institutions. Further he plunged ahead with reform before preparing the groups most negatively affected. He made no attempt to convince the middle and upper income groups to accept the increased cost or to show them the benefits that they would accrue from raising the standard of living for all.

The charge that Calderón wanted to set up a dictatorship on the lines of Trujillo in the Dominican Republic or Somoza in Nicaragua, cannot be supported by the evidence proffered by the Liberacionistas. Calderón was determined to successfully implement his program of change. When he began to lose support, he also seemed to lose perspective as he permitted abuses by his followers that opened him to charges of corruption and fraud.48

The Myth dealt just as harshly with Manuel Mora and Teodoro Picado. The fact that Mora was the head of the Communist Party of Costa Rica doomed him to accusations of the wildest sort. Mora was denounced as the jefe of the thugs, the bully boys, the mariachis

48Ibid., pp. 35-84; Aguilar, Sus hechos, pp. 23-90; Creedman in particular defends Calderón strongly in his "Political Development."
used by Calderón to intimidate his opponents. And it is true that Mora's followers were willing to go into the streets to defend their interests. When Calderón took them as allies they did much of the dirty work for him. As the head of the Communist Party, Mora must share part of the blame for the excesses of the Calderón government.

Tactics of intimidation were not intrinsic to the Communist Party of Costa Rica. While trying to organize the labor movement in the 1930's Mora learned about violence and intimidation at the hands of the United Fruit Company and Cortés' police. Mora himself and his family were nearly killed in 1946 when his home was dynamited, and in the next year another attempt was made to assassinate him. Little wonder he did not prevent his followers from committing violent acts of their own.

Mora's actions in the Calderón deliberations after the 1948 elections and later in negotiations to end the fighting belie the Liberación image of an unprincipled terrorist. Mora argued vigorously against annulling the elections on the grounds that the Calderonistas had much to lose and little to gain by such action. In an interview Mora explained his position regarding the best possible course for the Calderonistas:

We [the communists] said that effectively there had been fraud, but the declaration [in favor of Ulate] by the Tribunal of Elections created a very dangerous and complicated situation

49 Creedman, "Political Development," pp. 74-76. See also Carlos Luis Fallas, Mamita Yunai (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Soley y Valverde, 1941).

50 Bell, Crisis, pp. 99, 104.
for us, because we knew the legalistic mentality of the people of Costa Rica.\textsuperscript{51}

He believed that the majority of the people would consider the decision of the Tribunal inviolable. To refuse to accept that decision would be to risk civil war. Consequently, he counseled letting Ulate have the presidency. Once the decision to annul the elections had been made and his party had decided to go along with Calderón, Mora steadfastly supported his party and the government.

In the finals days of the Revolution when the government was about to collapse, Mora still had an effective fighting force that could have carried on the fight without government support. Many of Mora's supporters urged him to make a last ditch stand in San José. This would have been enormously costly in lives, not to mention property. Mora chose to negotiate with Figueres to insure the continuance of the reform program started by Calderón. Although he had resorted to violence when he thought it necessary, Mora's principal concern was improving the lot of the workers and the peasant. His almost unilateral action at the end of the civil war showed a willingness to sacrifice his own position for social reform.\textsuperscript{52}

If any leading character in this turbulent period can be considered a tragic figure, it is Teodoro Picado. The Myth portrayed him as a simple stooge for Calderón, unable or unwilling to take a step without his jefe's permission. Picado was not a mere puppet of...


\textsuperscript{52} For Mora's part in the negotiations, see Acuña, \textit{El 48}, pp. 299-302; for Mora's version of the events surrounding the Revolution, see Aguilar, pp. 311-324, 341-366.
of Calderón. It is true he carried on the policies initiated by Calderón, but his actions as President indicate that he too was committed to socio-economic reform.

Picado accomplished much during his administration. The primary task he undertook was to straighten out the confused and inefficient manner in which the reforms already promulgated were administered. The country was in a serious financial position, with a huge deficit caused by reduced exports and increased imports due in part to the Second World War and to the greatly expanded budget created by Calderón. Picado initiated a series of fiscal reforms known as the Leyes de Ordenamiento Fiscal (Laws of Fiscal Order) that included the creation of a comptroller's office to oversee all fiscal affairs, establishment of an office for drawing up the budget based on carefully planned guidelines, and centralization of the receipt of revenues in a department of the treasury. To increase revenues, an income tax was finally passed under his direction. 53

Electoral fraud posed another grave threat which he handled effectively. Picado's election had been sullied by fraud and other governmental misconduct. Soon after taking office he proposed the establishment of an electoral tribunal to administer future elections. In 1946 the new Electoral Code was passed which established an Electoral Tribunal to supervise all phases of the elections and an Election Registry responsible for questions of voting eligibility. The elections that took place under Picado's administration (the 1946 Congressional elections and the 1948 general elections) were

53 Aguilar, Sus hechos, pp. 14-111; Bell, Crisis, pp. 73-80.
probably as honest as any in Costa Rica's history to that time. Unfortunately for Picado and Calderón, the Electoral Tribunal had a fatal flaw. It still was not entirely free of partisan influence. The members were appointed by the three branches of government—the President, the Congress, and the Supreme Court. By law the decision of the Tribunal regarding the presidency was subject to confirmation by the Congress. This arrangement contained just enough ambiguity that both sides in 1948 could interpret the law to suit their own ends. Flaws notwithstanding, Picado deserves much of the credit for bringing electoral honesty and fairness to Costa Rican politics.54

Picado should also be credited for his efforts to minimize the incidence of violence during his administration and especially during the Revolution. Picado considered the Alma Ticazo—an armed attempt to seize the government—a mere "boys prank." He responded by personally releasing from prison all those captured by the police.55
The press attacks on nearly everything he attempted were extremely vitriolic. Not once was any newspaper closed down nor any radio stations forced off the air. Throughout his administration the Figueristas carried on a terrorist campaign of bombings and disruption. No secret police protected the government by midnight raids, the prisons were not filled with political prisoners, no one was executed. Violent confrontations occurred between the

54 Aguilar, Sus hechos, pp. 112-116; Bell, Crisis, pp. 115-121.
55 The golpe de estado attempted on the night of 24 June 1946 is called the Alma Ticazo after the radio station Alma Tica which was to have been the central rallying point for the rebels. See Bell, Crisis, pp. 96-97.
government supporters and members of the opposition, but the government did not direct a coordinated plan of harassment. A free press and compassionate consideration for "misguided youth" are strange tactics for a dictator to use. 56

Picado seemed unable to believe that Costa Ricans were really capable of revolution. Until the Revolution was firmly under way in April of 1948, Picado maintained his faith in the tranquil nature of the Ticos and the peaceful traditions of Costa Rican politics.

Picado was the first of the government officials to admit that the rebels were winning, that the poorly trained and poorly led forces of the government could not cope with the growing Figuerista army. He began negotiations with the Liberation Army to end the fighting. Picado made clear his intention to resign in a letter to Mora and Calderón saying, "We do not have the right to continue sacrificing our people, I have decided to sacrifice myself." 57 Father Benjamin Nuñez Vargas, the negotiator for Figueres, attested to the concern Picado had for ending the bloodshed, saying in an interview:

I believe that in the last days Teodoro Picado tried to act, not as the politician who had stayed in the service of a clique, but as a patriot. I hope to write this publicly one day, to pay homage to Teodoro Picado. 58

Nuñez' comment is not mentioned in Liberacionista writings.

56 Acuña, El 48, pp. 103-112; Bell, Crisis, pp. 96-100.


58 Aguilar, Sus hechos, p. 396.
Picado, as did Calderón, made many mistakes. Aguilar concluded that Picado’s greatest mistake was to allow himself to be used by his friends and his enemies. To deal effectively with the worst of the opposition, Picado would have had to become what the opposition accused him and Calderón of being, a dictator. This he refused to be. The opposition, especially the revolution-bent Figueristas, never gave him the chance to be as effective a president as his abilities and his desires could have produced.

CONCLUSIONS

The principal figures in the Revolution, as portrayed in the Liberación account, are mythic. The description of each character supports the basic mythic theme—the liberation of Costa Rica from corruption, tyranny, and archaic governmental institutions. The line between good and evil is clearly drawn. The leaders of the oppressive regime—Calderón, Picado, and Mora—have no redeeming qualities; the leaders of the opposition—Figueroes and Cortés—have no faults. Ulate, the other opposition leader, is flawed, but his presumed weaknesses—lack of decisiveness, reluctance to change, economic conservatism—enhance the stature of Figueroes and justify the eighteen month rule by junta. The language is hyperbolic and dramatic. The stereotypical treatment of these six protagonists epitomizes the mythopoelia in the Liberación account.

The portrayal of Figueroes highlights two particular aspects of the Costa Rican political culture. The Movement for National Liberation was supposed to be a spontaneous reaction to the excesses of the Calderonistas. Liberación Nacional is ostensibly a modern institutionalized political party. Yet Figueroes dominated both the Movement
and the Party in the Myth as well as in reality. The susceptibility of Costa Ricans for personalistic politics is reflected in the Myth despite Liberación disclaimers that Liberación has moved beyond the politics of personality.

The particular attributes and actions of Figueres that the Myth emphasizes are those that conform to Costa Rican political values. Figueres entered politics, according to the Myth, not for personal gain but because he was outraged at the misconduct of the Calderonistas. His goals were to restore respect for election, honest government, and to end political violence. Except for the Revolution itself, his contraventions of those ideals are ignored. The mythical Figueres is the archetypical Costa Rican citizen. The Myth portrays him as a self-made man who has stayed aloof from politics until a national crisis moves him to enter the political arena. Although slow to start, the Costa Rican citizen warrior, as embodied in Figueres, knows how to and does take the necessary measures to restore national values. At the same time, the Myth must show Figueres as a man of vision because he was instrumental in founding a self-consciously ideological political party, a departure from the personalistic party usual in Costa Rica up to that time. The following chapter examines the ways in which the myth incorporates Costa Rican values examining the formation of Liberación Nacional.
Myths, by nature, distort as they explain events and situations to the group that believes them. Distortion ranges from omitting evidence contrary to the mythic theme, to interpreting generally known events in a favorable way, to outright lying. The degree of distortion in a myth depends upon how far the mythic theme diverges from reality. That is to say, distortion varies according to the need to convince the group that the myth is valid. When the group is called upon to act in ways that contradict cherished ideals, a considerable amount of distortion is required to reconcile action with belief. Such reconciliations are a primary function of myths.

The distortions in political myths follow discernible patterns. Myths are not collectivities of random fantasies. The central pattern to which a myth conforms can also be called the mythic theme. Whatever is included in the mythic narrative will enhance the theme; that which would detract from or call into question the theme is excluded. A mythic theme is a distillation of mythic narrative to a simple statement of essential elements, e.g., trust, betrayal, revenge; rise, triumph, fall; sin, punishment, redemption. One of the questions mythologists have struggled with is whether or not there
exists a basic set of mythic themes common to all societies. Of greater salience here is how a culture fleshes out a simple mythic theme in ways that reflect cultural norms, bias, and values. The mythic theme provides a line of reasoning; cultural idiosyncrasies determine what embellishments the culture considers logical. Both the theme and the supporting narrative conform to cultural expectations. Values are one attribute that affect the conformation of myths—political values in the case of political myths.

The theme of the Myth of the Revolution is readily discernible in the Carta Fundamental (Founding Charter) of Liberación Nacional, i.e., threat-reaction-resolution. There is a dialectic at work in the Liberation theme. An incumbent regime threatens to destroy the traditional Costa Rican values, thereby creating a counterforce that restores the lost values through armed revolt, culminating in the establishment of a new political party which will guarantee the preservation of Costa Rican democracy.

Liberación mythology itself links the mythic theme and the aspect of political culture at question here, i.e., political values. The "Preamble" to the Carta Fundamental proclaims that:

This Epic [Revolution of 1948] constituted the great sacrifice of the Costa Rican people in their fight to reconquer national values [which had been] gradually lost. . . .1

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1Partido Liberación Nacional, "Carta Fundamental de 1951," in Carta Fundamental (San José, Costa Rica: Primer Congreso Ideológico, 1969), p. 39. This is a pamphlet published by Liberación which also contains the "Carta Fundamental Numero Dos de 1969," and the "Segunda Proclama de Santa María de Dota" (a statement of objectives of the Army of National Liberation made in 1948). Hereafter the two charters will be referred to as the Carta Fundamental and the Carta Fundamental Numero Dos; page numbers will be those of the pamphlet.
The Carta Fundamental contains no list of national values supposedly lost, but Liberacionistas, in their account of the Revolution, make very clear what they consider to be the basic political values of Costa Rica that the Calderón regime was destroying. The values that predominate in the Myth parallel those discussed in the previous chapter, i.e., respect for elections, protection of civil rights, nonviolence, and honest government. The Myth of the Revolution espoused by Liberación Nacional rationalizes two great contradictions for the Liberación partidarios. The Myth justifies the violent overthrow of the government in a country that takes pride in rejecting violence as an acceptable political method. Second, the Myth explains why the group that threw out one government for being dictatorial took over as a governing body that ruled by fiat. The Myth also establishes the legitimacy of Liberación Nacional as the heir to Costa Rican aspirations expressed in the Revolution.

The first two functions, which are simply rationales for past actions, required considerable distortion. To justify armed revolt, the incumbent government had to be presented in the worst possible light; the Liberation Movement, on the contrary, had to exemplify all the best qualities of Costa Rican democracy. The Liberación version of the causes and conduct of the Revolution distorts most by omission. Pertinent evidence that mitigates action taken by the government was excluded; only the information supporting Liberación interpretations was included. The published accounts that advance Liberación explanations share a proclivity for categorical assertions without supporting data.
The narrative covers political events of about ten years, from the first electoral challenge to the Calderonistas in 1942 to the foundation of Liberación Nacional in 1951. Perusal of Liberación literature reveals that the selection (and exclusion) of information conforms to the political values mentioned above. In addition, great emphasis is placed by Liberacionistas on the Costa Ricaness (for lack of a better term) of the Liberation Movement. This is especially applicable to the Liberación attack on the communist supporters of Calderón and to their own ideological pretensions.

In this chapter, Liberación literature is examined in terms of the political values that exert the greatest influence on the conformation of the mythic narrative. These are: electoral integrity, honest government, civil rights, and nonviolence. In each section, first the Liberación version of the events that stress the violation (or redemption) of the values is related. Then alternative explanations drawn from non-Liberación sources are offered in contrast.

Liberacionista mythmakers did not fabricate the occurrences of 1940-1948; nor did they imagine the excesses and reprehensible behavior of many Calderonistas. They did omit any mention of activities of their own that might detract from the image of the Liberation Movement as the savior of Costa Rican democracy. The interpretations the mythmakers gave to the actions of the Calderón government are severely skewed to justify the undemocratic way in which Liberación originally came to power.
HONEST GOVERNMENT

Latin American governments have been notorious for corruption of all types. Bribery, graft, and peculation often have been the norm; honesty among government officials has been the exception. Costa Rica, on the other hand, has enjoyed an extraordinary reputation for governmental virtue. Whether or not this reputation is deserved is of less concern here than that the groups opposed to the Calderón Guardia regime made charges of corruption their first line of attack.

Calderón Guardia took office in 1940 after winning a virtually unopposed national election.² By the time the midterm congressional election took place, opposition to Calderón Guardia was growing. According to the Liberacionistas, the increasing awareness of corruption and nepotism turned supporters against Calderón. Cañas cites "nepotism raised to uncalculable extremes," the most nefarious example being the appointment of "a brother of the President, an obscure bank cashier until that year, [as] Secretary of Government and Third Designate to the Presidency."³ Even worse, these "incompetent and inept" relatives used their positions to secure lucrative contracts and promote their own business interests. Abetted by a puppet Congress, the Calderón government managed to incur the first national deficit since 1929. Calderón mobilized all the power of the state to secure satisfactory results in the 1942 congressional

elections, but the people, recognizing the fraudulent nature of the
government, began to reject calderonismo. Calderón, incapable of
self-criticism or of altering his methods, had to find a new source
of support. Who would be willing to support a corrupt and fraudulent
government? "Of course! The Communists!"4

Baeza concentrates on the Communist participation in the
Calderón government. He quotes the public criticisms made by the
Costa Rican Communist Party to illustrate the perfidy of the Calderonistas. After two years of vilifying the Calderón government, changes
in policy dictated by Moscow required the Communists to attempt
rapprochement with governments opposing Hitler. This change coin-
cided with Calderón's need for support. What more fitting political
combination could there be than the joining of a venal, incipient
dictatorship with the insidious Communists? The Communists injected
a new element into Costa Rican politics--the willingness and the
ability to use violence.5

Liberacionistas considered the alliance between Calderón and
the Communist Party an act that proved beyond doubt Calderón's im-
morality. To them, communism represented alien beliefs utterly
opposed to Costa Rican traditions and values. There is no doubt that
Manuel Mora and other Communists were influential in Calderón's
administration; the Communist Party under the name Vanguardia Popular
(Popular Vanguard) worked actively with the Calderonistas. Whether

4 Ibid., pp. 18-23.
5 Alberto Baeza Flores, La lucha sin fin (México, D.F.: B. Costa-
one believes that Mora and the Vanguardia were working to improve the lot of the working class, or that they were only using Calderón to seize power for themselves depends more on one's philosophical and ideological disposition than on evidence. Communism was a political issue for the Costa Ricans in the 1940's and has remained so, even though Mora and his colleagues continue to take part in political affairs.6

Other questions of corruption offer good examples of mythic distortion. The opposition seized three particular aspects of the fiscal difficulties experienced by the Calderón government as proof of his unworthiness to lead the country—deficits, financial impropriety, and mismanagement.

Calderón's social and economic policies incurred deficits far in excess of any previous administration. Much of the excess was an inevitable result of expanded government services. To many Costa Ricans this alone was sufficient proof of corruption, for how else could overexpenditures be explained? Many of the expenditures themselves, such as sending representatives to meetings and conferences, even raising salaries for permanent employees were considered signs of corruption. Thus, the actual instances of public officials using their offices to make profitable business deals merely proved the suspicions that corruption was rampant. Exacerbating all the normal problems attendant to expanding a traditional government with archaic institutions and procedures, were the exigencies of a

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6For an excellent discussion of the issue of communism in Costa Rica during the 1940's see Bell, Crisis, Chapter 3, "The Issue of Communism," pp. 41-61.
wartime world market. Calderón was guilty of fiscal mismanagement and, as he admitted during the election campaign of 1948, some of his subordinates did benefit financially from office. The Myth makes no distinction between mismanagement and corruption, nor does it mention that subsequent governments, including Liberación, have committed many of the same errors.\textsuperscript{7}

The opposition charged Calderón with nepotism, but in this regard he was little worse than his predecessors. For example, Creedman lists the following relatives of Cortés who held office in his administration: Otto Cortés Fernández, President of Congress (son); Javier Cortés Fernández, Commander of Alajuela barracks (son); Claudio Cortés Castro, Administrator of the Pacific Railroad (brother); Luis Fernández, Minister of the Interior (brother-in-law); Arturo Fernández, Consul of Washington (brother-in-law).\textsuperscript{8}

CIVIL RIGHTS

According to the Myth, Calderón began his "adulteración" of Costa Rican democracy by suspending certain individual rights, including peaceful assembly, freedom of speech, protection from unreasonable search and seizure, and habeas corpus. The government claimed the curtailment of these rights was a necessary part of the preparations for defense. Costa Rica had just declared war on the Axis powers and was vulnerable to invasion. Furthermore, the large

\textsuperscript{7}The best discussion of corruption in the Calderón government I have seen is in Bell, Crisis, Chapter 4, "Fiscal Corruption and Mismanagement," pp. 62-80.

German community, so economically powerful, posed a menace from within. The government had to have the power to deal effectively with any threat. Liberacionistas interpreted these wartime measures differently.  

To satisfy his new allies, "the Children of Moscow," Calderón initiated a series of "Social Guarantees." "The New Policy" would take the place of the "Individual Rights" which had been suspended due to the war with the Axis. The New Policy would establish "the right to strike, the right to a minimum wage, and other necessary measures;" but it would liquidate the others, "the ancient ones, known as 'the Rights of Man.'"  

This was all according to the communist master plan for gaining absolute control over Costa Rica.  

Liberacionistas offer little evidence that the suspension of constitutional guarantees was other than a wartime procedure designed to facilitate the control of German, Italian, and Japanese living in Costa Rica. Only a few examples of the violation of civil rights by the Calderonistas can be found in the Liberación literature. One is the sacking of an opposition radio station in July of 1943. Baeza claims that the attack was the opening move of the Picado campaign for president in the election of 1944. He writes that, "... bodyguards of Picado--with the impunity of the government--assaulted 'Radio Titania' in order to silence the voice of the opposition to

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9 Juan Francisco Rojas Suárez, Costa Rica en la segunda guerra mundial (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, 1943), pp. 10-11. For the debate in the legislative assembly on the suspension of constitutional guarantees, see pp. 12-29.

10 Cañas, Los ocho años, p. 25.
the government of Calderón Guardia. The guilty parties were arrested and punished for the deed, but the opposition continued to use this occurrence as an example of Calderón's dictatorial policies.

The most important violation of individual rights reported in the Myth is the exile of Figueres. The Mythic account goes as follows.

On July 8, 1942, following the San Pablo riots a notice appeared in the morning papers which announced that Don José Figueres would tell the true story about the organization dedicated to undermining the Republic by sabotage. At the appointed hour, Figueres began his exposition on the outrages committed by the government and the Communists. His arguments were irrefutable, his speech magnificent. Before he could complete his discourse the transmission was interrupted. The silence continued, then Figueres' voice was heard again; the Government had ordered the transmission stopped. Figueres managed a few last words, "What the government should do is to get out!" Charging Figueres with subversion, the Government sent him into exile. The government made a serious mistake, for this speech marked the introduction of Figueres to politics. In exile he began his training and planning for the overthrow of Calderón.

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11 Baeza, La lucha, p. 166.
14 Essentially this same version is related by Cañas, Baeza, and Castro.
On the subject of the violation of civil rights, it is much more interesting to look at what Liberacionista mythmakers omit. The eighteen months of rule by the Junta Fundadora are an integral part of the Myth of the Revolution, and Liberacionistas make much of the social, economic, and political changes that the Junta attempted. No mention is made of the Junta's own record on civil rights. An examination of the record suggests why the Liberacionistas are reluctant to review some aspects of the Junta's rule.

The Pact of the Mexican Embassy served as a peace treaty for the Revolution. Certain guarantees were made to Picado regarding the protection of his supporters in return for his resignation and the surrender of the government forces. In addition, the so-called Pact of Ochomogo between Figueres and Manual Mora specifically guaranteed the protection of labor and implied the protection of Mora's supporters. Figueres later denied making any agreement with Mora. No document was signed at the meeting on the heights of Ochomogo, but an addendum to the Pact of the Mexican Embassy made substantially the same promises. Before discussing the treatment of the Calderonistas by the Junta the following provisions of the agreement are quoted to show why the Calderonistas claim they were deceived.

The fifth provision of the Pact of the Mexican Embassy reads:

Guarantees are granted for the lives and property of all citizens who directly or indirectly were compromised in the conflict. Guaranteed in a special way are the life, property and rights granted to all the military functionaries and employees who have served the government of Lic. Teodoro Picado. The families of all the victims of the civil war and the incapacitated victims, without distinction by political party, are guaranteed adequate
indemnifications. It is established that no reprisals of any sort will be exercised and that a general amnesty will be decreed.15

The sixth provision guaranteed the rights of workers gained under Calderón and Picado, but more important it cited specifically an agreement with the Vanguardia Popular:

Everything relating to the guarantees for the promotion of social and economic wellbeing of the working classes has been contemplated in a special document that the "Army of National Liberation" will present to the Head of the Popular Vanguard Party.16

The document sent to Manuel Mora, Secretary General of the Vanguardia Popular, contained several specific guarantees, including the affirmation of the Labor Code, continuation of cheap housing programs, and the minimum wage. Of interest here are the political guarantees listed below:

3. We observe the principle of freedom of organization for the working class, the existence and activities of the Trade Union Centers existing in the country will be respected and will be guaranteed. The Rerum-Novarum and CTRC (Confederation of Workers of Costa Rica). The government will guarantee economic and moral help without preference to either of them.

7. The democratic republican system will be observed, assuring and respecting the freedom of thought, of conscience, of word, of meeting, and of organization of all political parties that exist or can be established in the country.

10. The families of all the victims of the civil war and the incapacitated victims will receive adequate indemnifications without distinction of political party. The Government will take the necessary steps so that all workers who participated in the war, without distinctions of political party can return to their jobs without the respective work contracts being considered broken.17

16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., pp. 246-247.
Father Núñez, who signed the document, was complying with "instructions from señor Figueres." Consequently, the Figuerista claim that no document was signed at Ochomogo is irrelevant, since the basic concerns that Mora had expressed at Ochomogo were later satisfied by the letter to him, quoted in part above. Unfortunately for the Calderonistas and Mora's followers, the Junta did not consider itself obliged to comply with the agreement.

Liberación mythology makes no mention of the Junta's harassment of its defeated opponents. Whether they deserved it, the supporters of the deposed government were treated badly in direct violation of the promises made regarding their safety. The worst treatment came from individuals seeking personal vengeance, but the Junta carried on a deliberate program of persecution which contrasts vividly with the image of enlightened government Liberación prefers to project.

One of the first measures the Junta took against its opponents was to fire all those government workers employed by Picado. Decree-law Number 7 stated that:

The employees of whatever Power or Dependency of the State and the public institutions and corporations who received salaries, payments, or fees during all or part of the period of government between 8 May 1944 and 8 May 1948, can be dismissed without the State incurring any responsibility.\(^{19}\)

The decree included transportation and all other public service employees. No prior notice, severance pay, or any other type of severance benefit had to be paid by the state. Traditionally, the higher ranking positions were considered patronage posts and the officials

\(^{18}\)Ibid., p. 246.

changed with the administration. The lower positions were usually left alone. Wholesale dismissals were new to Costa Rica. The Junta claimed that the corruption of Calderón had tainted everyone in the government; to have clean government, the contaminated had to go. Their malfeasance relieved the new government of any responsibility to them.20

It is doubtful that supporters of the defeated government ever expected to receive any of the reparations promised in the Pact of the Mexican Embassy. The Junta soon disabused any Calderonistas foolish enough to believe they might be so fortunate. Article two of Decree-law Number 33 "Fixing Reparations of War in Favor of the Victims of Only the Triumphant Parties," excluded "all those persons and entities who in one form or another opposed the revolutionary movement."21 Not only were nearly all positions in the bureaucracy affected, but the entire judiciary was replaced by oppositionists, even though most of the former judges had been apolitical as members of the courts.22

Decree-law Number 77 settled the whole question of the rights of the vanquished by declaring "resolved" the Pact of the Mexican Embassy. Article eight stated that "the Founding Junta of the Second Republic desires to withdraw the promises made by Father Nuñez in the name of the Army of National Liberation."23

20Ibid., pp. 33-34.
21Ibid., p. 39.
23Zeledón, Constitucional, p. 35.
Replacing government employees with one's own supporters and excluding opponents from war reparations were measures that might reasonably be expected of a victorious political movement. Unexpected, and the source of much bitterness, was the creation of two special courts to try Calderonistas for war crimes and dereliction of duty. Father Nuñez excused the Tribunals as necessary to prevent those abused by the Calderonistas from taking vengeance on their former oppressors.24 Aguilar, on the other hand, believes that the special courts "... did no more than increase turmoil that went on in the country in those days. To deepen the wounds of the Costa Rican people and to make more difficult their reconciliation."25

Decree-law Number 16, dated May 19, 1948, created the Tribunal de Sanciones Inmediatas to try charges of criminal misconduct against "the functionaries and employees of the Calderón Guardia-Picado Michalsky administrations."26 Decree-law Number 41, dated June 2, established the Tribunal de Probidad ("Probity") to recover for the state funds, properties, and other resources taken fraudulently by individuals during the Calderón-Picado years.27 The two tribunals had three characteristics in common, (1) each case was adjudicated by a panel of five judges, (2) defendants were tried in absentia, and (3) there was no appeal. The special courts contravened both the

26 Zeledón, Constitucional, p. 37.
27 Ibid., pp. 40-49.
Constitution and Costa Rican custom. The Junta settled the constitutional question by declaring the Constitution of 1871 void. As for custom, the Junta considered itself a mechanism for change and therefore justified in taking drastic measures.

The Tribunal de Sanciones Inmediatas deserves some credit for the manner in which it conducted its business. The judges on the Tribunal considered themselves to be a court of law and took great care in following the appropriate procedures to ensure that the accused received fair hearings. Only cases involving charges of criminal conduct such as looting and assault were brought before it. The Tribunal was authorized to punish individuals for false accusation if in its judgment the case was unfounded. Although no accusor was punished, the Tribunal did refuse a number of cases for lack of evidence and reprimanded the accusors.

The Tribunal de Sanciones Inmediatas tried over 350 cases covering charges of marauding, arson, and extortion to political malefaction. The accused were evidently given scrupulously fair trials. Of the 352 cases recorded, 230 resulted in acquittal and 152 in convictions. Most were tried for clearly criminal behavior. Political crimes accounted for a small portion of the total. For example, five individuals were convicted of political harassment; only seven were convicted of interference with elections; of twenty-eight charged with abuse of authority, only twelve were convicted.

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28 Costa Rica, Constitución Política de Costa Rica de 1971 (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, 1944), p. 11; Title III, Second Section, Article 38 specifically forbade the creation of "commissions, tribunals, or judges for specific processes."

29 Ibid., p. 23. Decree-law Number 2.
Except for Carlos Luis Fallas and Aureo Morales none of the leading Calderonistas was tried. The criminal cases probably would have had the same results in the regular courts. 30

Despite its careful attention to fairness and justice the Tribunal de Sanciones Inmediatas was a political instrument. Most of the victims who brought charges before the Tribunal were oppositionists; the accused were usually Calderonistas or Communists. Eventually a pardon or amnesty was granted to those convicted by the Tribunal de Sanciones Inmediatas.

The Tribunal de Probidad was a blantant instrument of political coercion. The state rather than individuals made the charges which were civil, not criminal. No jail sentences were meted out, but in some cases fines were levied. The Tribunal de Probidad adjudicated only charges of fraud or gain at the expense of the state made against former officials of the Calderón and Picado governments. Those charged were presumed guilty and all their financial resources were automatically "intervened" (seized by the state). The accused himself had to initiate the adjudication of his case and prove the acquisition of his property and wealth had been legal and honest. The Tribunal published a list of individuals (legal persons such as corporations were included) whose property and capital had been intervened as of June 4, 1948. Those on the list were granted four months to

30 Gardner, "Junta," pp. 398-404. Morales was a special case. He had been a local official in the Pacific banana region and had a reputation for vicious behavior. He was tried and convicted in absentia for arranging the execution of eight oppositionists. Morales is the only one convicted by the Tribunal who was not later pardoned or granted amnesty.
prove their innocence otherwise the Tribunal would declare that "the intervened goods were acquired by fraud." A side effect of the interventions was the establishment of de facto censorship. Interventions of La Tribuna, the Calderonista paper, Ultima Hora, the communist paper, and La Voz de la Victor, a Calderonista radio station, effectively stifled the anti-Junta press.

Undoubtedly some Calderonistas had enriched themselves at the expense of the state during their time in office. The Junta had the right to try to recover what it could of the defrauded state funds and property, but the Tribunal de Probidad was an ill-advised method of accomplishing that goal. The intervention of goods and property caused great hardship for the accused. The state allowed them a stipend for living expenses out of which they also had to pay a fee for the administration of their own property. They also had to pay all their legal fees out of the stipend. In addition, because the list was made public, the persons named were subject to harassment and ostracism until they had cleared themselves. All of this amounted to punishment before being proven guilty. The primary targets of the Tribunal de Probidad were the leading Calderonistas and all the highest ranking members of the deposed regime suffered intervention. Further evidence of the partisan nature of the Tribunal was that any Calderonista who had joined the opposition was exempted from the list.

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31 Zeledón, Constitucional, pp. 40-49.
32 Ibid., p. 8; see also Gardner, "Junta," p. 392.
33 Gardner, "Junta," pp. 405-419.
34 Bell, Crisis, p. 158, n. 8.
The patent injustice of the Tribunal de Probidad was recognized by later administrations. Most of the judgments were set aside by 1959. By the middle 1960's, nearly all defendants had been pardoned or exonerated. Many eventually regained their lost property and finances. 35

Overall, the two special courts were probably the Junta's biggest mistakes. Since the regular courts had been completely packed with oppositionists, the criminal cases could have been handled through normal channels. Despite its name, the Tribunal de Sanciones Inmediatas moved slowly, probably more carefully than the regular courts would have operated. If speedy trial was its purpose, the criminal Tribunal failed.

Perhaps a special court was the only way to deal effectively with the Calderonista fraud and profiteering. The Tribunal de Probidad ultimately succeeded only in exacerbating political sensitivities and in making the Junta appear arbitrary and vindictive.

A final comment with respect to the probity of the Junta itself should be made. Regardless of how the Junta later rationalized its supression of the Vanguardia Popular, Figuères and Nunez had pledged themselves to honor the political rights of the Vanguardia. Article seven of the letter to Mora had stated explicitly that "... the freedom of thought, of conscience, of word, of assembly and of organization of all political parties that exist or could be established in the country" would be guaranteed. 36

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36 Aguilar, Sus hechos, p. 247. Italics mine.
over, the Junta outlawed the old unions in the banana areas, which allowed United Fruit to fire the troublesome union organizers and leaders. The Junta claimed that the Labor Code and Rerum Novarum were safeguards enough for labor. On the 17th of July, 1948 the Junta "... prohibited the establishment in Costa Rica of any political party whose ideology threatened democratic government." The Junta considered Marxism a threat to democracy, so the edict meant the proscription of the Vanguardia Popular. Neither the Communists nor the labor movement has recovered from the blow the Junta gave them in the summer of 1948.

Since the Junta turned over the government to Otilio Ulate in 1949, Costa Ricans have enjoyed the full range of individual rights guaranteed them by the Constitution of 1949. Partisan rhetoric not withstanding, neither Liberación nor their opponents when in office have threatened to abrogate those rights. Liberacionistas have stressed the role of the Junta in achieving the goals of the Revolution. The absence of any mention of the more dictatorial policies of the Junta suggests that the treatment of Calderonistas exceeded societal norms. Calderón's violation of civil rights was cause for condemnation; similar acts by Liberacionistas had to be excluded from the Myth, an omission that implies a strong commitment to civil rights as a political value.

38 Aguilar, Sus hechos, p. 282.
VIOLENCE

Severe political strife plagued the governments of Calderón and Picado. The Myth maintains that, except for isolated incidents, violence and fraud were the instruments used by a corrupt and immoral government to deprive the Costa Ricans of their traditional rights as free and democratic citizens. Calderón must bear much of the blame for the frenetic politics of the 1940's because he allowed, perhaps ordered, his followers to intimidate the opposition in the 1944 elections. His enemies, especially the Figueristas are equally guilty because they made certain that ultimately no alternative to civil war would be possible.

In the Myth, the first act of serious government-sanctioned violence was the "San Pablo" incident in 1942. Mora and his communist brigadas de choque (shock brigades) had given their support to Calderón. But how could they demonstrate their ability to help?

The explosion on board a United Fruit vessel anchored in Puerto Limón (the Atlantic port for Costa Rica) provided the Communists with an ideal opportunity to show Calderón their capabilities. A public memorial service and parade degenerated into a vicious mob, attacking and destroying businesses owned by alleged supporters of the Axis powers. The mob was incited to violence and led by the Communist leaders. Calderón's police did not "move a finger to stop them." The Communists following their orders from Moscow shouted their own patriotism and demanded the incarceration of all Costa Ricans with German connections, either by birth or in any other way.39

39Baeza, La lucha, pp. 104-116.
Covering acts of violence with the flag of patriotism did not fool the real Costa Rican patriots.

The election of 1944, according to the Myth, exposed Calderón's true colors. The fraud and violence that attended the campaign and election of Picado convinced the many in the opposition that only force could remove the Calderón-Communist plague.

The violence came from both the Communists and the police. Cortesista parades were fired upon, several people killed and many wounded. Rallies were attacked and disrupted by Communist brigands, "armed with their usual cudgels." An opposition radio station, already sacked once by Calderonista thugs, remained stifled during the campaign, afraid to broadcast the truth. The police joined in the harassment of Cortesistas by breaking up rallies and meetings. The radio stations of the Communists and the government party poured out "fantastic" propaganda about the "Cortesista barbarity" and the "hordes of Cortés."

As if the campaign had not been bloody enough, the election day was worse. In his chapter "El 13 de Febrero," Cañas lists the most blatant acts of the Calderonistas. Two atrocities in particular came to epitomize the fraudulence of the election. "In Sabanilla de Alajuela Cortés had won the election." As the results were being

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40 León Cortés was the opposition candidate.
41 Cañas, Los ocho años, pp. 53-54.
42 Ibid., pp. 40-41, 55.
43 Ibid., pp. 54-55; Baeza, La lucha, pp. 168-170.
transported to the provincial capital, government officials stopped
the vehicle, demanded the ballot boxes, then opened fire without
warning, killing one man and wounding others. The ballot boxes were
saved through the courageous efforts of an unnamed man. Llano
Grande de Cartago witnessed an even worse crime. When the citizens
of the village tried to prevent outsiders from voting illegally,
they were attacked by agents of the police and the military. Several
were killed and many were wounded. Cañas concludes his narrative
with:

The "elections," at least in Llano Grande, had ended. And when
the day dies, Teodoro Picado is the President Elect, although
he was not elected in Sabanilla nor in Llano Grande.44

Calderón had won for the time being, but he planted the seeds of his
own destruction. The opposition began to put aside their differences.
All that was needed was a true leader.

Picado as President continued the policies and activities of
his jefe, Calderón. In Liberación mythology, this period was
important as it was the time for consolidation of the opposition.
According to Cañas, "While the government of Picado proceeded to
install itself and to continue straight on with corruption, the
opposition forces tried to come to an understanding."45

During the Picado years several telling events transpired.
An abortive armed uprising in 1946 convinced the action-prone segment
of the opposition that more preparation and the right circumstances

44 Cañas, Los ocho años, pp. 60-61; these incidents were also
described in Baeza, La lucha, p. 170.
45 Cañas, Los ocho años, p. 69.
were needed. The congressional election of 1946 revealed further erosion of support for the Calderón-Pacado-communist clique. Finally, the Huelga de Brazos Caídos (sit down strike) in 1947 displayed the depth of support for the opposition among the people.

The only mention of violence committed by anti-Calderón forces prior to the Revolution itself was conducted by a group not directly connected with Figueres.

A few months after the elections, members of the opposition attempted an armed uprising. On the night of June 24, 1946, a group of young men armed themselves and tried to seize San José. The radio station, "Alma Tica," was to be the rallying point (hence the name Alma Ticazo to describe this event). In Cañas' opinion, the attempt had to fail, "because it was an infantile project," poorly planned and executed. The attempt, ineffectual as it had been, proved that there were "... young men who lost the fear of arms and bullets; who took pleasure in heroism. ..." Figueres would find them useful when the time was right. El "Alma Ticazo" also proved the need for detailed planning and the right conditions for a successful revolt.

The incident which convinced the activists that the people supported the opposition began in Cartago. The opposition had put aside their differences to combine forces under the banner of the Partido Unión Nacional, with Ulate as its candidate. In typical

46Ibid., p. 79. Neither Baeza nor Castro mentioned this incident.
fashion the Calderonista-Communists continued their tactics of violence and disruption. On Sunday evening, the 20th of July 1947, "... the city of Cartago, ancient capital of Costa Rica, was subjected to terror." 47 As was customary, people had left the movie theaters and other places to congregate in the Central Avenue for the traditional paseo (walk around the square). The police attacked with tear gas and machine gun fire. 48 Castro's account is slightly different, giving a clue to why the police attacked:

An immense Oppositionist rally was dispersed by the police with shots, blackjacks, trampling and tear gas. There were dead and wounded among the Opposition. 49

The "true" account was set down by Fernandez Duran in his pamphlet, La huelga de brazos caídos. 50 The police attacked an oppositionist demonstration. Some of the young men who fled took shelter in a movie theater which was then tear gassed. Some of those who fled the theater were machine gunned. Tear gas even pervaded the operating rooms of the local hospital causing great distress among the sick. The people refused to tolerate such reprehensible actions. A strike was called. Banks, professionals, even transportation companies, joined the strike. Everything came to a halt. The government responded by arming 3000 Communists and thugs brought up from the

47 Baeza, La lucha, p. 198.
48 Cañas, Los ocho años, p. 94.
49 Castro, Figueres, p. 88.
50 Roberto Fernández Durán, La huelga de brazos caídos (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Liberación Nacional, 1953). Note the publisher.
coast. These attacked and destroyed businesses that supported the strike. The government realized its impotence before the wrath of the people. The opposition leaders forced the government to agree that the National Electoral Tribunal would supervise completely the upcoming elections.

The Myth stresses the violent depredations perpetrated on a normally peaceful citizenry by a vicious Communist-infested dictatorship. The Revolution supposedly expressed the bitter resentment of a people too long abused by unscrupulous politicians and their Communist bully boy henchmen. Calderón did employ force, especially during the 1944 election campaign; but the Myth exaggerates the extent of government violence and completely ignores the violent activities of the opposition during the six years leading to the Revolution. Figueres called these years a period of "gestation" in which he and his followers prepared for the war they believed inevitable. An element of self-fulfilling prophecy is manifest in Figueres' statement because the Figueristas not only believed revolution inevitable, they worked hard to insure its arrival.

The Myth relies on sweeping statements in lieu of fact, citing few specific examples of the official violence. Several incidents taken up as battle cries by the opposition forces became watchwords of governmental atrocity in the Myth. Evidence from other sources suggests that the Myth leaves out significant details.

51 Castro, Figueres, p. 196.
The deaths of citizens at the hands of the police in La Sabanilla and Llano Grande on election day, February 13, 1944, became symbolic of Calderonista violence. The Calderonista version of the violence in Llano Grande exculpated the police who claimed they had been attacked by Cortesistas trying to stuff the ballot box. At La Sabanilla de Alajuela the police were allegedly trying to prevent the ballot box from being taken to Cortés headquarters. Both incidents were probably situations in which the police lost control and overreacted. None of the sources offers evidence that the tragedies were part of a coordinated government plan. The opposition made martyrs of the fallen Cortesistas and vilified the government at every opportunity for those deaths.

The election campaign of 1944 marked a significant change in Costa Rican politics. Regardless of which side initiated the attacks on their opponents, the level of violence exceeded any experienced since the nineteenth century. The opposition press, led by Ulate's _Diario_, took every opportunity to remind the Costa Ricans, in vivid language, of the outrages allegedly committed by the government. Picado struggled throughout his term to rectify the worst of the abuses perpetrated by his predecessor, but the opposition refused to abate its attacks on his administration.

A new element, terrorism, had indeed been added to Costa Rican politics, but not by Picado. A carefully planned program of harassment

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52 Creedman, "Political Development," p. 159. Acuña concluded that the police were at fault, but had acted out of an excess of zeal heightened by nervousness at the threatening townspeople. Miguel Acuña V. El 48 (San José, Costa Rica: Librería, Imprenta y Litografía Lehman, 1974), pp. 90-94.
and petty sabotage was conducted by the Figueristas, beginning in earnest after the death of Cortés in 1946. One group actually attempted a golpe de estado; Picado released the culprits almost immediately after they had been captured. At least two attempts were made on Calderón's life, public facilities such as water lines and electrical facilities were sabotaged, the Calderonista newspaper La Tribuna was bombed, and many other disruptive acts were committed. Fights between groups of Calderonistas and oppositionists flared. Police were baited and sometimes attacked by gangs of young members of the opposition. 53 The Myth omits any reference to the Figuerista campaign of violence.

The famous Huelga de Brazos Caídos is an excellent example of mythic distortion. The Myth pictures La Huelga as a spontaneous uprising of the people outraged by the brutal suppression of the citizens of Cartago. The Myth ignores the fact that Cartago had been a center of opposition activity and the scene of frequent attacks on Calderonistas. Gangs of young oppositionists had been roaming the streets beating workers and other supporters of the government. When the government reinforced the beleaguered authorities in Cartago, the opposition made the matter a point of local pride. Eventually the police resorted to tear gas and threatened to fire on the unruly crowds. Rioting ensued with several deaths and mounting numbers of wounded. The opposition then declared a strike, hoping that a general

strike would result. The dictatorship of Maximiliano Hernández Martínez in El Salvador had been overthrown by a general strike in 1944; Figueres believed the same would occur in Costa Rica if support were sufficiently widespread. Banks and businesses closed, creating some hardship, especially among the poor. Eventually the government was forced to compromise with the opposition, conceding to demands for guarantees that the upcoming elections would be run exclusively by the new Electoral Tribunal.

The opposition proclaimed la Huelga a great victory. In a sense it was, because the government had been maneuvered into agreeing that the decision of the Tribunal would be final, even though by law the Congress had the tacit right of review. This accession severely limited Picado's flexibility in confronting the confused events of the election when it took place seven months later. As a means of bringing down the government directly, the Huelga failed. The most important aspect of the Huelga, with respect to the Myth, is that the strike was not spontaneous but planned. Figueres hoped that a general strike would be sufficient in itself to defeat Calderón. When his hopes did not materialize, he and his followers had to wait for a more opportune time. As mentioned above, the annulment of the election of 1948 presented an ideal opportunity—one that Figueres took without delay.

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54 Bell, Crisis, pp. 101-104.
55 Acuña, El 48, pp. 110-113; Aguilar, Sus hechos, pp. 135-155; Bell, Crisis, pp. 99-104.
The military phase of the Revolution would seem to be one part of the Myth in which violence would be exalted. After all, an incumbent government, supported by the nation's armed forces, was defeated in battle and forced to flee the country by a group of amateur soldiers, apparently hastily organized and ill-armed. Yet the portion of the Myth devoted to military exploits is relatively small. Lliberacionista mythmakers have chosen to stress political, social, and economic achievements over martial triumphs.

The Myth presents the military operations as a last resort, forced on the Costa Rican people by Calderón's illegal and immoral refusal to submit to the popular will expressed in the 1948 election. The Myth stresses three points: that the Army of National Liberation was a citizen army, not professional soldiers; that the Army of National Liberation, unlike the government which relied on communists and foreigners (Nicaraguans), was a Costa Rican force; and that the brilliant leadership of Figueres was the deciding factor in the victory of the Revolutionaries. The Mythic version of the war is as follows.

As might be expected, the first shots in the combat phase were fired by the government. The very day that Calderón's puppet Congress illegally annulled the election, police surrounded the home of Dr. Carlos Luis Valverde. When he came to the door to inquire what was wanted, the police gunned him down. Dr. Valverde died, the first martyr of the War of National Liberation. 56

56 Cañas, Los ocho años, p. 119; Baeza, La lucha, p. 217; Castro, Figueres, p. 103. All three lay the full blame on the government. Valverde was a well-to-do doctor who had supported the violent overthrow of Calderón for several years. He was allegedly one of the leaders of the Alma Ticazo.
Figueres directed the military operations, but not as a field marshall sitting safely behind the lines. Figueres led his men personally, sharing their dangers and hardships. "his authority, born of sober and austere discipline, was enforced by his energetic yet simple presence." Emulating Céspedes of Cuba, Sandino of Nicaragua, and the Chilean Rodríguez, Figueres conceived, planned and executed a brilliant guerrilla campaign. He knew his poorly armed, untrained civilians could not defeat a conventional army in open combat. The hit and run tactics of the guerrilla fighter would be his method.

His years of hard labor as a farmer had given him "an extraordinary physical resistance," which enabled him to march "at the head of his soldiers without showing fatigue and with his spirit always disposed to continue the forced marches." Day or night, in the heat or the cold, "with such a Chief, who avoided no personal sacrifice and each day appeared stronger," who always maintained a steadfast faith in victory, the army "...achieved in only a few days an incredible campaign... equal to an army of hardened veterans, tested in the fire of a hundred campaigns."

Indeed "only such a man" could triumph, for the odds against success seemed overwhelming at first. The government had forces armed with jeeps, "Tommy" guns, armored cars, modern machine guns, and airplanes. The army was not large but could be augmented by the police,

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57 Baeza, La lucha, p. 225.
58 Ibid., pp. 220-225.
the communist brigadas de choque (shock brigades), and the mariachis from the coastal zones. Figueres "... only counted on reduced and weak armaments that he had been able to import clandestinely," and a few weapons in Guatemala that had yet to be brought in. In the urban areas there was only "an 'army' without arms, ... the civilian population."60

Through skillful tactics and hard, rapid attacks, the Army of Liberation gained more recruits and more weapons. By capturing the airfield at San Isidro del General, Figueres gained several airplanes and a landing spot for the needed arms from Guatemala.

Figueres counted on three "allies." The first and most important would be his intimate knowledge of the terrain. The second had to be speed and mobility. The third would be "... the will to action--the duty, the morality, the enthusiasm, the fervor, the sacrifice--of groups who were not professional combatants, who had never made war, nor participated in insurrectionary movements." They were of varied backgrounds and experiences: "from the University, the liberal professions. ... civic institutions, non-Communist unions, artisans, and especially peasants." Brothers in arms, intellectuals and peasants, churchmen and freethinkers fought together. "It was a multi-class army and it would be the roots of the future Liberación Nacional."61

The main body of revolutionaries was, of course, Costa Rican, but the Army of National Liberation did receive valuable assistance

60Baeza, La Iucha, pp. 219, 220.
61Ibid., p. 224.
from certain foreign allies. While in exile in Mexico City, Figueres had met other freedom fighters, democrats who had been driven from their homes as he had been. These men, experienced in dealing with dictators, convinced Figueres that only revolution would end the threat to Costa Rican democracy. He learned tactics, strategy and logistics from these expert freedom fighters, and gradually began acquiring an arsenal. When the right time came for action, Figueres would be ready. 62

Figueres, recognizing the value of having trained, experienced men fighting beside his inexperienced civilians, signed el Pacto del Caribe (the Pact of the Caribbean) in December of 1947, which pledged mutual support between the revolutionaries of Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, and Costa Rica. This pact pledged the commitment of the signatories to fight for the destruction of "the ruling dictators in their countries and to reestablish in them Liberty and Democracy." 63

The Costa Ricans, supported by these "bravísimos foreign legionnaires," "fought as lions, as virtual wild beasts, demonstrating a combative-ness and a contempt of their lives truly heroic." 64 Winning battle after battle, the Figueristas triumphed over the inept and poorly-led Calderonistas in only forty days.

The 28th of April 1948 was el "Día de la Victoria," celebrated in a great parade by the victors, attended by thousands of happy, destive Costa Ricans. "It was a day of joy, of applause and vivas

63 Baeza, La lucha, p. 205.
64 Castro, Figueres, p. 114. Chapter XII, from which this quote was taken, is a most lyrical description of the Revolution.
to Figueres, to his troops and their leaders, that would never be forgotten. A true apotheosis. 65

The Revolution, despite the Myth, was not considered a blessing by all Costa Ricans. Much of the bitterness that still affects Costa Rican politics derives from the conduct of the civil war and the actions of the Junta. The Myth conceals aspects of the military phase that denigrate the Liberación image. Through a combination of good fortune, good leadership, and an inept opponent, the Army of National Liberation managed to achieve victory in only six weeks. The Myth naturally stresses the second feature, good leadership, giving most of the credit to Figueres. Other accounts emphasize the good luck attending the Liberation Movement and the incompetence of the government forces. The claim that the Liberation forces were brilliantly led is hard to answer since the military abilities of the Liberation leadership were never critically put to the test. Regarding Figueres' part in the fighting, his contributions apparently were more political and symbolic than military. According to Acuña, Rafael Angel Ramírez, a Dominican who acted as Chief of Staff, provided the crucial military planning. Tactically subordinates such as Frank Marshall and Horacio Ornes contributed significantly in specific battles. Marshall in particular possessed exceptional abilities in leading men under fire. 66

The Mythic account of the combat phases of the revolt can be challenged on a number of points. For example, the revolutionaries accused the government of opening the hostilities when the police

65Ibid., p. 143.

66Acuña, El 48, pp. 195, 213-229, 231-234, 244.
killed Dr. Carlos Luis Valverde. The government report, to the contrary, claimed that shots from the Valverde house killed two policemen first, prompting a return fusillade that killed Valverde. The police had acted on information from an informer to the effect that a large cache of arms was concealed in the house. The authorities had not intended that anyone be harmed, but the overzealous commander of the police detachment tried to move in before the situation had been clarified. Given the lack of unbiased testimony, overreaction and incompetent leadership on both sides were probably the causes of the deaths of the policemen and Dr. Valverde.

From the government's point of view the Revolution began when a squad of police commanded by Rigoberto Pacheco Tinoco was ambushed near La Lucha, Figueres' farm that served as the Revolutionary headquarters. The government detachment was investigating rumors that Figueres was organizing an insurrection when the ambush took the lives of Pacheco and two other men. This occurred on March 12, 1948, actually the day after the rebels had taken San Isidro del General, the first military operation conducted by the rebels. Carlos Rechnitz, a Figuerista commander, made an interesting observation about this incident:

In Costa Rica no scandal lasted more than a week and by the 12th of March the people began to be annoyed with so much shooting or to forget the abuses of March 1st. If the government had not committed the error of sending to his death a soldier of great prestige, all would have been different, because no one would have had confidence in Figueres.

67 See note 56 above.
68 Acuña, El 48, pp. 149-154.
69 Ibid., p. 158.
By daring to attack and kill Pacheco, known to be close to Calderón, Figueres demonstrated his audacity and his commitment to revolution. He began receiving converts shortly thereafter.

The myth makes much of the disparity between the two opposing forces. Figueres' handful of poorly armed men supposedly faced a trained, well-equipped army of 1,500 troops, supported by several thousand laborers under communist leaders. Unfortunately, no detailed inventory of men and equipment is available. Such information as can be gleaned from various reports indicates that Figueres enjoyed a much better position than the Myth implies.

The Army of Costa Rica was neither modern nor well-equipped. One report lists "14 jeeps, 24 tommy guns, six machine guns, two armored trucks, 200 tear gas bombs." According to Picado the army comprised only about 300 men with no combat experience and little training. The officers in most cases were even worse, their commissions being political appointments for services or loyalty to the administration. The tactical errors made by the Army attested to the general incompetence of its field commanders; the failure to develop a successful strategy proved the ineptitude of its general staff.

Several other factors hampered the government counter-measures against the rebels. Picado and his military advisors overestimated their military strength and underestimated the capabilities of their

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opponents. Calderón procrastinated until the twelfth of April before he called on his followers to join in defending the government.\textsuperscript{72} By then the Figueristas were receiving a steady flow of arms and ammunition from Guatemala and had consolidated their positions in the mountains south of Cartago. Supposedly the government forces were reinforced by several thousand Communists and workers from the banana regions. It is doubtful that these reinforcements added effectively to the military strength of the government since the Minister of Security, General Rene Picado, refused to arm them fully.\textsuperscript{73} After the initial battles, General Picado had great difficulty in resupplying his troops. Inexperienced and poorly led, the government forces rapidly expended their ammunition, then had to retreat for lack of resupplies. Throughout the conflict, President Teodoro Picado sought military assistance from several international sources, including the United States. Only Nicaragua granted any useful aid and then primarily by lending troops, not materiel.\textsuperscript{74} The United States prevented a purchase of vitally needed arms and may have assisted the

\textsuperscript{72}Aguilar, Sus hechos, p. 209.

\textsuperscript{73}Ibid. Large quantities of rifles, still in their cases, were reportedly found by the Liberation Army when it took over the army barracks in San José.

\textsuperscript{74}The matter of Nicaraguan assistance to Picado is extremely confused. Somoza did send "volunteers" to augment the Costa Rican army, but there is no exact number or even an accurate estimate of the Nicaraguan complement. The New York Times reported large numbers of Nicaraguan soldiers taking part in the conflict, but some of the reports were so erroneous that the Times cannot be considered a reliable source on this issue.
rebels. Figueres had convinced his fellow exiles in Mexico that Calderón would be the easiest "strongman" to topple. The poor showing the government forces made in meeting the revolutionary challenge proved him right.

Figueres probably had no more than a few dozen men with him at La Lucha when he raised the standard of revolt on March 11, 1948. Undoubtedly he had lists of potential combatants compiled during the years of revolutionary "gestation," upon whom he could depend to augment his forces rapidly once he openly declared the revolt.

Figueres and his supporters had been busy for several years trying to amass arms in Costa Rica with relatively little success. Fortunately for Figueres, abundant war material stockpiled in Guatemala awaited his requisition. Consequently, the first and most important maneuver was the seizing of an airfield and planes to allow the transferal of arms to Costa Rica. The capture of San Isidro del General and its airstrip on the night of March 11, 1948, established the required resupply point that the rebels held almost uninterrupted for the duration of the conflict. From that point on Figueres and his forces never lacked for ammunition and other vital war material.

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75 Bell, Crisis, p. 142, n. 30. The United States involvement is another unanswered question in the Revolution. Evidence given in the footnote cited above indicates that certain members of the U.S. Embassy may have aided the rebels. Certainly the international climate could have prompted U.S. disapproval of Calderón because of his connections with Mora and the Communists. Masaryk of Czechoslovakia had just died under mysterious circumstances, Czechoslovakia had become communist, and relations with the Soviet Union were deteriorating. The setting was right for U.S. intervention; the evidence that it occurred has not yet been revealed.
By the end of the conflict the Army of National Liberation possessed weapons equal to if not superior to those at the disposal of the government.

The leadership of the Liberation forces undoubtedly surpassed that of the government. Virtually all of the officers were excellent field commanders. Much of the superior military guidance came from a number of foreign combatants—leaders of the so-called Caribbean Legion. Ramírez has already been mentioned; others included the Hondurans, Jorge Rivas Montes, Mario Sossa Navarro, and Francisco Sanchez ("El Indio"), and the Nicaraguans, José María Tercero and Adolfo Baeza Bone. Without the certain and plentiful flow of arms from Guatemala, Figueres would not have been able to expand and sustain the conflict so successfully; without the experience and ability of the foreign soldiers, he probably would not have been able to inflict such decisive defeats on his opponents. Costa Rica provided most of the troops, but Honduras, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic contributed much of the leadership.

One of the most effective stratagems used by the rebels was the constant dissemination of false information. The government never established an effective intelligence network. The rebels played on the need for accurate information by operating clandestine radio stations that passed out reports of non-existent troop movements,

76 Acuña, El 48, pp. 163, 218.

spread rumors and generally added to the confusion of the authorities. With the advantage of hindsight, a review of *New York Times* reports on the conflict illustrates the effectiveness of this tactic. One report, based on "reliable witnesses," had a troop of several hundred Nicaraguans moving "overland" from the San Juan River to a railhead through territory that is almost impenetrable jungle. These newspaper reports exhibit a tendency to repeat any news unfavorable to the government and to treat Figueres with considerable respect. Picado's claim that he operated at a disadvantage with respect to the international community appears to be justified.

In light of the bad press the Calderonistas received from the *New York Times* and the ruthless image conveyed upon them by the Myth, it is appropriate to mention a few accounts of the ruthlessness of the Figueristas. The disparity in casualties between the Army of National Liberation and the government forces raises doubts about the manner in which the Figueristas conducted the war. The rebels claimed only 67 dead; estimates of the government numbered over 1,500. In one battle alone, at El Tejar, the government allegedly lost 190 men to the revolutionaries' loss of 14.

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81 Bell, *Crisis*, p. 148.
Given the absence of heavy artillery and aerial bombardment, one can only speculate about the reasons for such extreme differences in casualty rates. The battle at El Tejar apparently included an especially brutal piece of work by some of the Figueristas. Acuña reported that some eighteen government troops fleeing the battle were captured and machine-gunned in the nearby village of Quebradilla. Another incident mentioned by Acuña was the shooting of Celimo Barrientos in Empalme. A campesino of the town accused him of being a spy whereupon his captors dispatched him without benefit of trial. Neither does the ambush of Colonel Rigoberto, the first rebel attack, reflect well on the image that Liberación has tried to maintain. Throughout the conflict, the Figueristas showed themselves quite willing to take any steps they thought necessary to obtain victory. The government by contrast appeared almost feeble. Despite the hundreds of political prisoners interned in the capital during the fighting, Liberación itself listed only two of its followers as having been killed in San José.

By all accounts, the Communists led by Manual Mora were the most dedicated of the forces supporting the government. As mentioned in Chapter Four, the Communists intended to make the battle for San José a house to house last ditch stand. Mora, to avoid the extreme loss of life such fighting would entail, arranged a meeting with Figueres in the no-man's land separating the opposing armies at

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82 Acuña, El 48, pp. 262-264.
83 Ibid., p. 220.
84 Bell, Crisis, p. 152.
Ochomogo on the road to Cartago. The meeting resulted in the so-called Pact of Ochomogo, by which Mora agreed not to continue the fight in return for Figueres' pledge to perpetuate the social legislation of Calderón and promise not to persecute the workers who had supported the government. Figueres later regretted the agreement and Liberación myths conveniently disregard the fact that Figueres complied with only the first part of the bargain, the pledge to continue social reform. He largely ignored the stipulation not to punish his opponents.

Although quite bloody by Costa Rican standards, the Civil War of 1948 was moderate compared to similar revolts in Central and South America. The War of National Liberation comported with Costa Rica's history of moderation. The Liberation army committed outrages but not wantonly; public works were sabotaged but not hotels and restaurants; some prisoners were mistreated, even killed, but not many; property was damaged, but not excessively; and the whole affair lasted only 40 days.

ELECTORAL INTEGRITY

Elections are the pivotal events around which the action in the Myth revolves. The election of 1942 prompted Calderón to seek support from the Communists. Most of the violence attributed to the

85Acuña, El 48, pp. 296-301. For the account of this meeting by Father Benjamín Núñez Vargas who set up the meeting, see Aguilar, Sus hechos, pp. 388-394.

86Figueres' noncompliance with the agreement is discussed in the section on Civil Rights, above.
Calderonistas--Llano Grande, La Sabanilla, la Huelga de Brazos
Caidos--were connected with political campaigns. The act that most justified the armed revolt was the setting aside of the election results in 1948. Consequently, the issue of electoral integrity is crucial to the mythic theme.

The election of 1944 provided Liberacionista mythmakers with ample material for attack on the Calderón regime. Even leaving aside the government sanctioned (if not planned) violence, the election of Picado was clearly fraudulent. The extent of government manipulation of the vote will probably never be ascertained. Acuña considers the government intervention merely a continuation of accepted policy--Cortés had done the same for Calderón in 1940, so why should not Calderón similarly assist his successor?  

The opposition considered the elections of 1946 a great victory; they had won nearly half of the seats in the Congress. Pressure on Picado insured that the elections would be relatively peaceful and honest, although, "of course there were isolated skirmishes, outrages here and there, violent interventions by the authorities in one place or another but nothing to the extent of 1944." The elections showed

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87 Acuña, El 48, pp. 87-89; Aguilar also concludes that both parties had committed numerous frauds but that the government, being responsible for supervising the election, had a decided advantage. The lopsided official results--82,173 for Picado to 44,435 for Cortés--substantiates Aguilar's conclusion. Aguilar, Sus hechos, pp. 96-98.

88 Cañas, Los ocho años, p. 71.
that, when left alone, the people rejected Calderón-communism. 89

The elections of 1946, however, were reasonably honest. Picado scrupulously followed the guidelines set down in the new Electoral Code, even though the Code had not yet been enacted. 90

Of particular importance in the Myth is the election of 1948. It ended the odious career of the Calderón-communists. First, Calderón was defeated at the ballot box; later the forces of National Liberation would triumph over him in battle. Election day itself resembled the previous one; the Calderón forces once again employed their tactics of intimidation and fraud. But the election was monitored by the new Electoral Tribunal. Canas describes election night as follows:

Through the night, the radios furnish the good news, the hoped for news that nobody served the oppressor, that fraud was defeated. And the night of February 8, the majority of Costa Ricans go to bed smiling, peaceful for the first time in a long time, with a feeling that is glorious but indefinable. They have won. 91

Calderón and his Communist henchmen were not yet ready to give up their ill-gotten power. They initiated a new kind of golpe de estado. First, Calderón denied his defeat. Second, the Communists organized demonstrations to challenge the electoral figures and to intimidate the Tribunal in its determination of the electoral results. Third, the Calderonistas pressured the Tribunal directly by sending

89 Baeza barely mentioned the elections of 1946, and then only to point out that the Communists were concerned with retaining control over the Congress. Baeza, La lucha, pp. 188-189; Castro Esquivel considered the elections obviously fraudulent because the opposition did not win a majority. Castro, Figueres, pp. 71-72.

90 Bell, Crisis, pp. 115-116.

91 Canas, Los ocho años, p. 112.
individuals, such as Manuel Mora, to talk to them. Next the Communists tried to prepare the nation psychologically for the golpe by vilifying Ulate and questioning the legality of the election. Finally, the Calderón-controlled Congress annulled the elections, citing irregularities. Calderón had accomplished his golpe de estado, but "... the annulment of the elections had been made in an atmosphere of violence and the vote of the Calderonistas and Communists was sealed with blood."  

Finally, Liberacionistas had to justify their own rejection of the election. Just as the revolt was deemed a last resort, so the Junta Fundadora was an extreme measure forced on the Figueristas in order to insure the success of the Revolution.

During the first chaotic days after the fall of the Calderonistas, Santos León Herrera served as interim president until the victorious revolutionaries could decide what to do. On the first of May 1948, Ulate and Figueres signed a pact establishing a junta headed by Figueres to govern with a legislative body for eighteen months. Had Costa Rica driven out one dictator only to be seized by another?

The immediate aftermath of the combat phase of the Revolution was the most difficult, dangerous period. Calderón and Picado had fled to Nicaragua, taking much equipment and many weapons with them. Somoza, the President of Nicaragua and Calderón's close friend, had his army poised to invade Costa Rica and reclaim it for his friend.

92Baeza, La lucha, pp. 209-218; the quote is from p. 218.
Many of the young men who had fought hard and risked their lives to save the presidency for Ulate, opposed turning the nation over to a man "... who had remained hidden in the Archbishop's Palace." A "psychosis of war" had been created by the fighting; a strong respected hand at the helm of state was essential. Ulate realized that for the good of the nation, he should delay taking office. He agreed to the formation of the junta which could and would provide the leadership and strength needed.

That electoral fraud is central to the theme of the Myth is ironic because the evidence available today lends credence to the Calderonista claim that the opposition deprived Calderón of the presidency by fraud. This evidence is insufficient to make a definitive assessment of guilt, but the Calderonistas did have evidence to support the claim that they had been cheated.

The Calderonistas based their charge on the unusually low turnout at the polls. The total vote (99,541) was the lowest for a presidential election since 1936 (88,324)--down 27,000 from 1944--despite an increase in population of over 160,000 in the intervening twelve years. Calderón had been disposed to concede the elections to

\[93\] Ibid., p. 286.

\[94\] Ibid., p. 287. Castro, Figueres, pp. 151-152. The terms of the Ulate-Figueres Pact are listed on pp. 152-153.

\[95\] The figure for the 1948 election was taken from Acuña, El 48, p. 118; the other figures were taken from Samuel Stone, La dinastía de los conquistadores (San José, Costa Rica: EDUCA, Centroamericana, 1975), pp. 567, 577, 579. Aguilar believed that the Calderonistas should share the blame for the registration discrepancies since they had tried to enroll ineligible people and false names. Aguilar, Sus hechos, pp. 160-166.
Ulate until reports began pouring in from Calderonistas in the outlying regions that thousands of Calderón supporters had been prevented from voting. Incorrect cedulas ("voter registration cards"), faulty registration lists, and polling stations crowded with Ulatistas who slowed the voting process were cited as tactics of the opposition. When Benjamin Odio, the head of the Electoral Registry and a known Figuerista, left San José to join Figueres in the mountains, the Calderonistas were certain they had been cheated.  

The Electoral Tribunal itself contributed to the Calderonista refusal to admit defeat. The antiquated, inadequate procedures and facilities for verifying the vote prevented the Tribunal from completing its task within the stipulated time. Not only did the Tribunal have to cope with the incessant and numerous complaints of fraud, but a mysterious fire destroyed many of the ballots. Instead of admitting being incapable of satisfactorily fulfilling its duties, the Tribunal, over the opposition of one of its three members, decided to award the presidency to Ulate, subject to confirmation by the Congress.  

The Calderonistas interpreted the Tribunal's decision to mean that the Congress could make the final determination; to the opposition, the Tribunal's decision meant victory. The Calderonistas insisted that first they had been cheated at the polls, then they

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96 Bell, Crisis, p. 125. Odio became an officer in the Army of National Liberation and subsequently held the post of foreign minister on the Junta. The Calderonistas had good reason to doubt his impartiality as head of the Electoral Registry.

97 Aguilar, Sus hechos, pp. 166-174.
had been denied a fair hearing by the Tribunal. They argued that since the Congress had the duty to confirm the Tribunal decision it also had the right to nullify that decision. Unfortunately, the Calderonistas ruined their own argument when they took the process of nullification a step farther. Had they merely set the decision aside and called for a new election as stipulated by law, they would have been within their constitutional rights. Instead, the Congress named Calderón president, giving the Figueristas an ideal justification for revolt.

The Liberación Myth of the Revolution of 1948 blends fact and fiction, accuracy and distortion, details and omissions in a dramatic story of threat, reaction, and resolution. The Myth emphasizes the threat to Costa Rican values and traditions emanating from the Calderonista domination of the government. The issue is clear-cut: overthrow Calderón or suffer under a Communist dominated dictatorship. The events leading to and during the Revolution serve only to substantiate Liberación claims. La Sabanilla, la Huelga and the other episodes highlighted in the Myth all occurred, but not necessarily in the manner in which Liberacionistas have described them. Although Calderón and his supporters no doubt resorted to violence, were at times corrupt, and committed electoral fraud, the Liberacionistas also used violence and may have tampered with election returns. For this study, what is important is that the emphasis, the omissions, and

98 According to Acuña, the Calderonistas claimed that since Cortés had demanded the Congress nullify the 1944 elections the opposition had set a precedent for nullification. The Congress, being controlled by Calderonistas in 1944, refused Cortés' demand. Acuña, El 48, p. 134.
the distortions are patterned. The pattern that emerges from analysis fits closely the image presented in *la leyenda blanca*--the picture of Costa Rica as a non-violent, democratic country.

In the next chapter, we will look at how the Myth has been incorporated into the operations of the Liberación Nacional as a political party.
CHAPTER SIX

THE MYTH AND LIBERACION NACIONAL

The Myth of the Revolution is a founding myth; it explains and justifies the origin of a political party—Liberación Nacional. Although Liberación was not officially inaugurated until 1951, its principles, its leadership, and its goals were forged in the turbulent years of the 1940's. The same men who planned and executed the Revolution, who ruled the country by a junta for eighteen months, were the founders of Liberación Nacional. According to the Myth, they created Liberación Nacional for the same reasons they had led the Revolution and had governed by fiat: "... to create for the Costa Rican Man conditions that would permit him to realize his full development through the proper use of the material and spiritual resources of our Nation."¹ The name the group chose for itself during the Revolution—Movement of National Liberation—had a double meaning. Not only would Costa Rica be liberated from the clutches of the Calderón-Communists, but the nation would be liberated from the fetters of archaic economic and social structures. The Liberation Movement thwarted the threat to Costa Rican democracy by

overthrowing Calderón; the Junta began the process of modernization by consolidating the Revolution and initiating vitally needed reforms; Liberación Nacional would lead the nation to the fruition of its economic and social aspirations.

The founding of Liberación Nacional composes the third or the resolution phase of the Myth of the Revolution. The party is presented as the essential and natural culmination of the revolutionary struggle. As mythicized, the creation of Liberación fulfills the mythic theme and conforms to the cultural limits that shaped the other parts of the story of the Revolution.

The creation of an activist, well-organized political party whose ideology demanded socio-economic change, interjected a new, potentially threatening element into the traditionally tranquil Costa Rican politics. The Communist Party, whose threat was part of the rationale for overthrowing Calderón, was also activist and committed to change. Liberación could not expect acceptance by the average Costa Rican if it only copied its defeated enemies. To overcome the apparent paradox of being an instrument of change, yet remaining the protector of Costa Rican political values, Liberación had to be careful to project the proper image, both in its organization and in its operation. This chapter examines how Liberación has carried forward the mythic theme to its resolution, the founding of the party. The first section sets out the mythic version of the creation of Liberación. The second section delineates the image Liberación has tried to cultivate and assesses how closely it fits the more objective descriptions of the party. The final
section is a brief look at how Liberación has used the Myth for specific purposes, such as in election campaigns.

THE FOUNDING OF LIBERACION NACIONAL

With the return of constitutional government (Figueres disbanded the Junta and turned over the government to Ulate and the new Legislative Assembly in November 1949), Figueres and his supporters from the National Liberation Movement knew that if the achievements of the Revolution were not to be dissipated by the conservative Ulatistas, their energy and political skills would have to be channelled into a new political organization. Although they had accomplished much, Figueres and the Junta Fundadora made one serious tactical error. Relying on the goodwill and good faith of their oppositionist allies, they overlooked the need for good publicity. The Revolutionary leaders concentrated on rebuilding the Calderón-damaged nation and preparing for economic and social advances. While they were engaged in these fruitful labors, the plutocrats began to denigrate the policies and actions of the Junta. Ulate, envious of the acclaim given Figueres and conscious of his own meager contribution to the Revolution, became the tool of the oligarchy, pouring out the most vicious, slanderous propaganda against Figueres.\(^2\) The campaign of vilification resulted in the conservatives' gaining a majority in the Constitutional Convention. The Constitution of the Second Republic, so laboriously worked out

by the Junta, was rejected. Even so, the constitution finally agreed upon included many of the important provisions proposed by the Junta. This very failure illustrated the caliber of men which comprised the Junta, for what other victorious revolutionaries would have accepted the defeat of a cherished goal rather than resort to force in violation of their deepest principles?³

The constitutional crisis taught the Figueristas a severe lesson. If the Revolution were to fulfill its potential, the Movimiento Liberación Nacional would have to reappraise its situation. From this reappraisal came a new political party, Liberación Nacional—a modern, multi-class, well-organized institution based on a coherent ideology which would embody the ideals of democracy and social justice. The defeat on the constitution, and later the poor showing made by the Partido Social Demócrata (the Figueristas had reverted to the pre-war appelation) in the elections for the new legislative assembly, made clear the absolute necessity for a new party. Evidently, the voters confused Social Demócrata with the old ally, Unión Nacional, for its representation in the Assembly was minimal. On October 12, 1951, the new party was founded with a name that would recall those glorious days of the Revolution—Partido Liberación Nacional.

The Carta Fundamental of the Partido Liberación Nacional expressed the aspirations of the Costa Ricans who had supported the war against Calderón-communism. The "Preamble" explicated the

historical, intellectual, and spiritual roots of Liberación. It is worth repeating here:

From the origins of our History, there has existed the necessity of creating favorable conditions that would allow the Costa Rican man to realize his full development through the proper use of the material and spiritual resources of our nation.

The campaign of National Opposition was the vigorous manifestation of these forces and their aspirations, that culminated in the glorious War of National Liberation of March and April 1948. This Epic constituted the great sacrifice of the Costa Rican people in their fight to reconquer national values which had been gradually lost, and made possible the realization of their constant yearnings. To the Founding Junta of the Second Republic belonged the task of channeling these aspirations and setting down the basis for their realization.

That sacrifice demands the creation of a permanent social movement that assumes the responsibility of carrying out this task. To all those aspirations, imbedded within the exigencies and ideas about human dignity that civilization has come to accept, we want to give expression in the following principles that constitute the Fundamental Charter of the National Liberation Movement.4

In 1969, Liberación held its first Ideological Congress in accordance with the newly promulgated Party Statutes of 1965. The Congress drew up a new Carta Fundamental, setting out the goals and principles of the Party in greater detail than in the first charter. The "Preamble" to the second charter contained the same message.

We are the consequence of the great movement initiated in 1940 by the Center for the Study of National Problems, that proclaimed, in the name of a new generation, the necessity of initiating a peaceful Revolution in Costa Rica, and that based its postulates on the objective study of the national reality, pledged to find strictly Costa Rican solutions to the problems.5

4 Liberación, Carta Fundamental, p. 49.
5 Ibid., Carta Fundamental Numero Dos, p. 8.
Liberación is the direct heir to the Partido Social Demócrata, the first political organization in Costa Rica to base its programs and activities on thorough social and economic analysis. The Preamble to the revised Carta Fundamental reaffirmed the spiritual and emotional source of Liberación, the "armed uprising of the Costa Rican people," who by the medium of revolutionary warfare signalled "the democratic will of our nationality." The stated objectives of the War of National Liberation—the respect for suffrage, the well-being of the greatest number, and honesty in public administration—continue being the key to our national trajectory and to our aspirations.6

As the political heir to the Revolution, Liberación considered itself the protector of Costa Rican democracy. The Carta Fundamental reflected the Liberación concern for individual rights which included not only civil liberties and open elections, but the right to "... the maximum possible satisfaction of the necessities of food, housing, clothing, health and education."7 Civil liberties and honest elections mean little to the man whose family lacks the requisites of life. To insure the proper functioning of a democratic society in the modern world, the government must attend to economic progress and to the proper distribution of the national wealth. Only a modern, permanent and ideologically oriented political party could provide

6Ibid.

7Ibid., Carta Fundamental, p. 41.
the leadership necessary to properly direct the nation’s course. Only Liberación offered that kind of leadership.8

Two aspects of Liberación made it the party of progress. Liberación established a permanent organization at all levels of Costa Rican society and in all parts of the country. That organization has continued to provide local leadership and to keep national leaders in touch with local problems. Second, Liberación was the first party to direct its activities according to the guidelines of a democratic socialist ideology.

To fulfill the promises of its Carta Fundamental, Liberación conceived and implemented many programs and policies. Among the more outstanding were the installation of an autonomous, disinterested Electoral Tribunal that would insure open and honest elections; the creation of a genuine civil service based on merit to preclude corruption and nepotism in government; the renegotiation of the contract with United Fruit Company, which gave Costa Rica a larger share of the profits and increased the salaries and benefits of the workers; the establishment of the Instituto Nacional de Vivienda y Urbanismo (National Institute of Housing and Urbanism) provided low cost, decent housing to the poor; and the implementation of agrarian reform through the operation of the Instituto de Tierras y Colonización (Institute of Lands

8Ibid., Carta Fundamental Numero Dos, pp. 9, 11-13.
and Colonization). Liberación achieved many more successes, and suffered some setbacks.

Through all the difficulties of transforming Costa Rica into a modern nation, meeting the challenge of Calderonista subversion (and an attempted invasion by Calderón from Nicaragua in 1955), overcoming the obstacles to change thrown up by the conservatives, Liberación Nacional maintained a steadfast commitment to democratic processes and institutions. Above all, the abiding respect for Costa Rican traditions of domestic tranquility, honesty in government and electoral integrity, has guided the actions of Liberación, even at the expense of vital programs and policies. Liberación has endeavored to fulfill its responsibility: "... to interpret and to improve this tradition... in order to guarantee most efficaciously the rights of Costa Ricans and to provide to them better conditions of life."¹⁰

MYTH AND IMAGE

Liberación's concern for its place in the historical development of Costa Rica is reflected in the image the party has tried to cultivate. Liberación views itself as the driving force behind social and economic change in Costa Rica. In mythic terms it is the organizational

⁹Carlos Araya Pochet, Historia de los partidos políticos: Liberación Nacional (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Antonio Lehman, 1968, Chapter III, "The Development of Costa Rica during the Governments of Liberación Nacional," is a summation of the programs and policies Liberación considers its major achievements. The above examples are taken from that chapter, pp. 97-151.

¹⁰Liberación, Carta Fundamental Numero Dos, p. 7.
manifestation of a movement that sprang up from the unfocused but powerful yearnings of the Costa Rican people to fully develop the economic potential of the country and to share the rewards of economic progress with all.

The Liberación image, on the one hand, stresses that the party represents a break with the archaic forms and policies of the pre-Revolution politics. On the other hand, the socio-economic changes, so crucial to the continued development of Costa Rica, had to be effected within the limitations of valid Costa Rican traditions. Change did not justify dictatorship, the violation of the principles of open, competitive elections, and individual rights. Improving the lot of the peasant and the laborer would mean raising the national economy as a whole, not simply taking from the rich for the benefit of the poor. The first change on the agenda had to be the creation of a political mechanism new to Costa Rica—the modern political party. By modern, Liberacionistas meant a permanently organized body, independent of personalities, that would function continuously. A modern party suitable for Costa Rica would be democratic in its approach to national politics and in its internal affairs as well. A modern party would seek solutions to national problems within a strong, carefully devised ideological framework that would establish a clear set of goals and would designate the appropriate means to achieve them. Consequently, the party particularly emphasizes that Liberación is ideologically oriented, organized on a permanent basis, and fully democratic in its operation. The party affirms its conscious and explicit rejection of politics based on personality
and faction that had characterized Costa Rican politics (and especially the politics of Calderón) until the Revolution of 1948. The founding of Liberación in 1951 represents a dramatic change, but Liberación mythology also stresses that the break was the culmination of a growing political movement concerned with redirecting and revitalizing Costa Rican politics. A sense of continuity ties the party to its historical antecedents—the activist branch of the anti-Calderón Opposition. The essential characteristics of Liberación are best expressed in its founding documents—the Carta Fundamental de 1951 and the Carta Fundamental Numero Dos de 1969.

The image Liberación wants to project is made clear in the first chapter of the Carta Fundamental Numero Dos. Liberación is a "permanent and effective instrument of participation in political life." It is governed by "democratic procedures" and strives to balance the power of the diverse groups that belong to the party. The party structure is democratic and capable of being adapted to the changing contingencies of national conditions. Selection of candidates for public office is open and made only with the "consultation of the greatest number of the party members." Positions within the party are filled on the basis of "merit, suitability, ethics, and identity with the highest ideals of the Party." The party imposes sanctions on those "who act contrary to the ideological principles of our movement." Those who defend or benefit from interests that "conflict with the principles of the Party or with the national interest" are "incompatible with leadership in the Party."11

11Ibid., pp. 12, 13.
Liberación, then, stresses its open and democratic organization and its commitment to conduct itself with honesty and attention to its ideological principles.

Liberación makes much of its ideological orientation. Araya, for example, states that Liberación, "constitutes the first force in Costa Rican politics to establish a democratic party, both ideological and permanent." The basic tenets of liberacionismo are listed in the Carta Fundamental, but the revised charter of 1969 contains a more succinct statement. The basic goal is:

The creation of new social order, based on justice, the law and the common good, making possible the full realization of human potential. This order guarantees to each and every one of its members human dignity and the security of food, clothing, housing, access to the land, health, education, satisfaction of creative opportunities, work and just incomes.

Only the effective participation of the citizenry can bring this goal of fruition. Consequently Liberación believes in:

... the democracy of representation and participation, that is to say, in the free play of ideas, in the law, the respect of minorities, public opinion, free political organizations, electoral liberty, the real quality of opportunity, the effective distribution of wealth and power, the public control of government activity, the protection of human rights and in general all that is contained in the social democratic tradition.

Government, as Liberación sees it, should be the primary force behind social and economic change. In fact, in the original Carta, "government" or the "State" is used synonymously to identify

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13Liberación, Carta Fundamental Numero Dos, p. 15.

14Ibid.
with the State, with no clear distinction between the State and the party being made. Undoubtedly, this is partly due to the Liberación commitment to government leadership in economic and social planning and policy implementation. It may be that Liberacionistas had in mind the establishment of a one-party dominant system like the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) in Mexico. Although Liberación has had greater success at the polls than any other Costa Rican party (four out of seven presidential elections and a majority in the Legislative Assembly until 1974), it has never approximated the political control PRI has exercised in Mexico. And at least in principle, Liberación adheres to the separation of powers built into their constitution: "We seek the autonomous functioning of the powers of State within their own orbits," keeping in mind the need for "adequate coordination" among the three branches. Presumably the party provides the necessary coordination, but that is not stated explicitly.

Liberación considers itself a multi-class party. Much of its effort is devoted to the protection and betterment of the poor. Since Liberación rejects the principle of class conflict per se, democracy means "... that the political system is structured in such a way that different social sectors can participate constantly and effectively in decision-making organs at all levels." The party, then, works at all levels, and especially with the campesinos and the

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15 Ibid., p. 16.
16 Ibid., p. 25.
workers, to insure that they are adequately represented in the political life of the society.

Finally, Liberación claims to be different because it has rejected the old politics of personality and special interest. Araya, surveying the history of Costa Rican political parties, says:

We can affirm that there were ideologies, but these were not channelled in an adequately structured way that would permit them to keep the ideological aspects clear and pure, above personalistic leadership.  

Liberación, to the contrary, is based on principles, programs, and theories developed through careful analysis and constant study. The Center for the Study of National Problems provided the intellectual foundations for the creation of an ideological party. Social Demócrata gave the future leaders of Liberación political experience. The Revolution tested the mettle of the future political leaders, and the Junta furnished an opportunity to begin the implementation of the theories developed by the incipient Liberacionistas. Through this period of political gestation the emphasis was placed on ideas, programs, and policies, not personalities. Liberación, according to the Myth, has always been a party dedicated to the fulfillment of ideological goals through democratic procedures. The party, therefore identifies with no single individual as have other parties such as Republicano Nacional (Calderón).

Liberación claims to be permanent, democratic, and ideological. It is all three, but these terms have special meanings when operationalized by Liberación as a functioning political party. Opponents

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17 Araya, Liberación, p. 188.
consider the Liberación image to be a facade that hides the machina-
tions of power-hungry scoundrels; Liberacionistas believe that the
image reflects the reality of a modern political party striving to
achieve its goals for the national interest. The operational reality
of Liberación differs somewhat from the image projected by the Myth.
If Liberación is not merely a vehicle for the self-aggrandizement
of its leaders, neither does it epitomize participatory democracy.
Nevertheless, a political myth, if it is to be believed, must not
diverge too radically from the experience of the group to which it
pertain. An examination of two important party attributes, organi-
zational permanence and democratic operation, shows that the appear-
ance of conformity to the mythic image is extant in the way Libera-
ción conducts itself as a political party.

Partido Liberación Nacional is primarily an electoral organiza-
tion; its main objective is to secure election of the candidates it
offers for public office. Despite Liberación pretensions to being
the vanguard of social and economic change, basically it is oriented
toward the conduct of election campaigns. This goes directly to the
question of permanence as a political organization.

Organizational permanence in Liberación is maintained in two
ways. The small, continuously functioning national office in San
José conducts most of the party's business between campaigns. Second,
a measure of organizational continuity is maintained by the relative
stability of the party membership, the leadership in particular.

The party statutes do not specify how often the various organs
of the party are to meet—with the exception of the National Assembly,
which "must meet at least once a year." According to an official at the Liberación national office, the cantonal bodies—cantonal assemblies and executive committees—for all practical purposes do not exist between election campaigns. The municipal fraction (Liberación members on the municipal councils) is the official representative of the party in the cantons in non-campaign years. The National Political Committee and the Tribunal of Honor are also inactive during non-campaign years. The ostensibly permanent organs of the party are geared to campaign activity, not continuous operation. This is not to say that the party is completely dormant in non-campaign years, but that the activity that does occur is ad hoc and informal. Regular functioning of the elaborate apparatus set forth in the party statutes apparently happens only for the purpose of winning elections.

This observation is not new. English found much the same situation in 1966, when he conducted a series of interviews with party leaders at the local level. When asked about party sponsored activities in non-election years, only 23.6 percent said that such activities took place in their cantons. To a lesser degree the same was true of the national organization. English found that the national organs such as the National Executive Committee met regularly


only during campaigns. Nearly ten years later the situation was the same, with a small group of permanent party officials and employees carrying on most of the party work.

Nevertheless, a new party does not simply appear every four years. There is a strong measure of continuity in the leadership of the party. For example, English notes that 26.9 percent of his sample of local leaders had occupied the same party offices for at least two campaigns. Undoubtedly an even greater number had held a variety of positions that were not accounted for in his figure which did not measure movement among positions. In 1975, I found that 85 percent of the local leaders who responded to my questionnaires had held at least one other party office, and 62 percent had held two or more. The minimum time of membership in the party for the entire sample was six years (at least one campaign), and over 50 percent had been in the party for more than twenty years. A more or less stable network of individuals, experienced in party affairs and campaigns, is ready to bring the party to full operational status every four years.

The Liberación claim to permanence is, therefore, valid if one keeps in mind the special meaning which attaches to the term. There is little evidence that Liberación expends much energy in

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21Ibid., p. 69.

22Señor Arias, the party official cited above, said that even the Political Committee would not be formed until the year before the election, and consequently he could not provide a list of its current members.

23English, Liberación, p. 81.
political proselytism or membership recruitment per se. Nor does the party appear to act as a conduit for political demands. Those seeking the satisfaction of specific demands generally go directly to the government officials concerned, not to the party. Since the party apparatus is evidently used to win elections, other functions appear to be tangential.

What does democracy mean in the context of Liberación party politics? The party statutes establish procedures for the selection of party officials that should satisfy most definitions of democracy. From the lowest levels of party activity to the highest leadership positions, the avowed principle of competitive elections is the basis for party organization. Yet also found in the statutes are the means by which a few individuals occupying pivotal positions can effectively control the party. Liberación has in fact been dominated by the same small group of men since its founding. The divergence of the operational structure from the formal structure is best seen in the party recruitment patterns.

There are usually two types of recruitment in a political party where there are competitive elections for public office. Perhaps the distinguishing attribute of political parties is that they offer candidates for election. The process by which a party selects the individuals it sponsors in an election is called recruitment. For our purposes this process will be called candidate recruitment. The party must also fill positions in its own hierarchy. To distinguish this process from the selection of candidates, we will refer to selection of party officials as party recruitment. The two procedures are not necessarily the same, although in the case of Liberación both types of recruitment share an important common trait, control from above.

Taking candidate recruitment first, it is clear that the highest officials in Liberación exert considerable control over the selection of candidates to fill the party slates. The presidential elections can be dealt with easily. The question of democratic procedures in the selection of presidential candidates is almost moot, despite the rather extensive attention paid to that action in the party statutes. To date, only four different men have run for president on the Liberación slate in the seven elections that have been held since the Revolution. Figueres ran twice in 1953 and 1970, and won both times. Orlich was defeated in 1958 and won in 1970. Luis Alberto Monge won a primary election for the presidential nomination on March 15, 1977. Monge is the Secretary General of the party which indicates that the pattern of national dominance over the recruitment of presidential candidates is still in effect.
1962. Oduber repeated Orlich's performance by losing in 1966 and winning in 1974. Figueres, Orlich, and Oduber were known as the *tres grandes* in Liberación until Orlich's death in 1969. The election of 1978 was the first in the party's history that one of these three men was not the party's candidate. Luis Alberto Monge headed the Liberación ticket and was defeated.

The selection process for the candidates to make up the party list for the Legislative Assembly is controlled by the national leadership. A study of the 1970 National Convention revealed that the decisions on the composition of the party slate for each province were made by the top officials, Oduber and Figueres in particular. In almost every case the National Convention merely affirmed the decisions as to who would be on the list and what position on the list each nominee would take. Most of the disagreements about specific nominations that arose were conflicts between Oduber and Figueres and were resolved by compromise. The delegates to the Convention took part primarily as indicators of strength between two grandes. In one instance, an initially successful delegate revolt regarding the candidates on the Puntarenas ballot was

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27 An interesting occurrence in the summer of 1976 indicates a waning of Figueres' power in the party. He tried to have the Legislative Assembly amend the Constitution to allow him to run for president again. Within the Liberación delegation itself his proposal was defeated by a vote of 22 to 4. *La Nación* (Costa Rica), 8 July 1976, p. 12A.

28 Cullinan, "Candidate Recruitment."
ultimately overturned due to pressure that Oduber exerted on the candidate concerned.

The power of the national leaders is not absolute. Oduber exercised his authority through control over the party apparatus which he was instrumental in changing in order to consolidate power in his hands. Figueres derived his power from his status as founder of the party, his popularity with the voters, and his control over party finances. Lower ranking members have on occasion challenged the decisions of Oduber and Figueres with no serious repercussions. To make their decisions acceptable in the face of opposition, the party leaders often have had to use considerable skill in cajoling and convincing their followers to comply. Although at times outright coercion has been used, the leadership of Liberación is not dictatorial. But neither do the lower level functionaries have much direct influence on the candidate recruitment process. Cullinan concludes that the hierarchy of assemblies

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29 Ibid., p. 71. Following the defeat of Oduber in 1966, the party underwent extensive reorganization to make its operations more efficient and better coordinated. The most important change was the creation of the cantonal coordinator (one per canton) who would be responsible for conducting all activities within his jurisdiction and who would be responsible directly to the national headquarters. From 1966 until at least 1970, Oduber decided on the appointments (and removals) of all cantonal coordinators.

30 Ibid., pp. 220-221. Apparently Figueres gained control over the party finances by investing party bonds (which are sold in anticipation of government campaign reimbursements) in Miami, the disposition of which only he could effect.

31 Ibid., pp. 168-169. Cullinan relates a fascinating conversation he had with a party official who admitted threatening an influential local party leader with physical violence to stop the man from opposing a particular party decision. Such incidents are relatively uncommon.
that do go through the whole process of electing delegates to the higher assemblies is primarily a legitimizing mechanism that gives the lower levels a sense of participation in the selection of party candidates.\textsuperscript{32}

The national leadership undoubtedly still dominates party affairs, but that dominance may be shifting from personalism to institutionalization. In response to the question on my questionnaire, "Who do you believe has power in Liberación?" 61 percent of those local leaders who answered the question listed specific party position, while only 39 percent named specific individuals. Thirty-three percent gave no answer. Although this evidence is insufficient to verify the institutionalization of power, that the party Secretary General Luis Alberto Monge has achieved a position of prominence in the party second only to Oduber and Figures indicates that control over the party apparatus may now be a function of party position. A ranking of party officials in 1966 listed Monge as thirteenth.\textsuperscript{33} Hernan Garrón held the twelfth position. Monge became the Secretary General in 1970; by 1977 his strength in the party was such that he defeated Garrón in a primary election for the presidential nomination by a vote of two to one.\textsuperscript{34} Monge's success has been attributed to his influence over the party apparatus.\textsuperscript{35} He is part of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{32}Ibid., p. 203.
\item \textsuperscript{33}English, \textit{Liberación}, p. 164.
\item \textsuperscript{34}\textit{La Nación} (Costa Rica), 15 March 1977, p. 1A.
\item \textsuperscript{35}Personal interview with an official of the Costa Rican Embassy in Washington, D.C., 20 September 1976.
\end{itemize}
generation who fought in the Revolution and founded Liberación, so his rise in the party may not be especially significant. Figueres, Oduber and other founding fathers will have to pass from the scene before institutionalization of the party is really tested.

Party recruitment operates in a similar fashion. At the highest levels, the leadership has remained virtually unchanged since the founding of the party. How the top positions will be filled as the present generation of leaders leaves the party is a matter of conjecture. Recruitment for lower level positions is also controlled by the national leadership. According to Juan Carlos Fernández (National Executive Secretary at the time he was interviewed, Secretary of Organization now), the national office decided the composition of every committee down to the district level. Suggestions and recommendations by the local leaders were considered, but the final decision belonged to the national leaders, usually Fernández himself.36 A Liberación deputy, commenting on the party organization in 1975, said:

For me, this is the failure of the present structure, it is not functional. It is a structure that goes from the top down and does not come from the grassroots that really give sustenance and nourishment to all the structure.37

A young local leader (the head of a municipal fraction) complained that the most powerful members of the party, who "have occupied the

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36 Cullinan, "Recruitment," p. 143.

37 Personal interview at the Legislative Assembly building, San José, Costa Rica, July 1975.
key positions for years," should be removed from office to allow "the young leaders" their chance. 38

It is not only outsiders and a few disgruntled Liberacionistas who have raised the question of democracy in the party. On two occasions the party has suffered the defection of substantial numbers amid charges that the top leadership was perverting the democratic principles of the party. In both instances the catalytic issue was the selection of the party's candidate for the presidency. Jorge Rossi led a break from the party in 1958 after he lost the party nomination to the long-time friend of Figueres, Francisco Orlich (also known as one of the tres grandes). Rossi claimed that he left Liberación to form his own Partido Independiente because he had been denied equal opportunity to gain the Liberación candidacy. 39 Both Liberación and Rossi's party lost that election. Since the Partido Independiente and its leaders rejoined the Liberación fold in the next election, the dissidents evidently decided the question of democracy in the party was not as important as winning elections. 40

The second defection has had a more lasting effect. When Figueres decided to run for a second term in 1970 (at the time a

38 From questionnaire, "Porqué tienen el poder?" referring to those who have more power than others in the party.


40 Since the combined vote of Liberación and Independiente (118,000) was greater than that of the opposition party (102,000) it is generally conceded that Liberación would have won had there not been a break in the ranks.
second term was allowable), Rodrigo Carazo, the head of the Legislative Fraction and a protégé of Figueres, announced he would challenge Figueres in the primary election. After being soundly defeated, Carazo charged that the election had been fraudulent and left the party. He and his supporters subsequently formed their own party, Renovación Democrática, on whose ticket he ran for president in 1974. Renovación Democrática claims to be devoted to participatory democracy and is dedicated to the renovation of Costa Rican politics as a whole. Although Liberacionistas consider Carazo an opportunist whose indictment of Liberación is just sour grapes, Carazo has continued to campaign on a platform of political reform and honesty in government. The real test of his sincerity will come when he actually takes office. Clearly Liberación has been challenged by its own members for not conforming to its own democratic ethos.

On the other hand, most of the rank and file Liberacionistas appear to be content with the operation of the party. It has been observed that the lower ranking party officials have more positive

41 The party statutes of Renovación Democrática emphasize the equal participation of the party members at all levels. The basic unit is called a nucleus, a small group of individuals who feel a certain affinity for each other (work, philosophy, neighborhood, etc.) and who want to work for the party as a unit. Equality among nuclei and between the nuclei and any other level of the party organization is guaranteed. All members can express themselves freely without fear of censure. Whether or not Renovación does in fact function this way is another matter. Partido Renovación Democrática, "Estatutos," mimeographed (San José, Costa Rica: Partido Renovación Democrática, n.d.), Interview with Lic. Rodrigo Carazo Odio in his office in San José, Costa Rica, July 1975.
attitudes toward democracy in the party than do the national leaders. For example, English found that the local leaders tended to consider the party more open and less factionalized than did the national leaders. A study of political attitudes in Costa Rica concluded that, in general, followers were more supportive of the political system than leaders, and that there were no discernible differences (other than party preference) between Liberación followers and the followers of the opposition parties. One observer commented that the apparent discrepancy between party operations and the perceptions of the lower ranking party functionaries is due to the way in which they define democracy. Party concern for the little man and economic reform convinces lower ranking officials that Liberación is in fact democratic. Participation by the lower levels in decision-making is not considered especially important. The elaborate process of ratification of candidate selection may give the partidario a sense of being an active participant, thereby reinforcing his perception of Liberación as a democratic party.

A final observation on Liberación democracy should be made. The party considers itself to be a multi-class and multi-region party. In terms of the vote in the national elections, support for Liberación apparently does cut across class and regional lines. Two separate

42 English, Liberación, p. 86.


44 Cullinan, "Recruitment," p. 205.
voting studies using aggregate data offer similar findings. One study concludes that the links between the vote and such variables as urbanization and economic development are not statistically significant. The author proposes that elections are largely symbolic outputs of an elite dominated government. This conclusion may be a bit strong for the analysis he proffers but his data support the contention that voting in Costa Rica does not follow readily discernible patterns of socio-economic characteristics. The other study avowedly tries to refute the Trudeau conclusions, but the significant correlations cited give little more understanding of Costa Rican voting than did Trudeau's statistics. The author "proves" that the wealthiest cantons tend to vote for the conservative party, the poorer the canton the higher the vote for the Calderonista party, and those in between tend to vote for Liberación, none of which are new insights. Liberación draws votes from all segments of society; in this sense it is multi-class.

The multi-class image breaks down when the party organization is examined. The data English compiled in 1966 on the socio-economic characteristics of the party organization indicates that Liberación's leadership is drawn from a more restricted group than the party admits. Twelve (11.7%) of the 103 persons English

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Interviewed had only a primary school education and three (2.9%) had gone to trade school. This means that 85.4 percent had at least some schooling at the secondary level. At the time he conducted his research only about twenty percent of those eligible attended secondary school. Anyone who goes beyond primary school is part of a select group. Another indicator of class is occupation. Only 10.7 percent of the leadership worked in occupations that could be called proletarian (laborers, servants, and artisan); 5.94 percent had upperclass occupations (university professors, lawyers, physicians, other professionals, businessmen, landowners, merchants, and university students). Another 21.2 percent held white collar jobs (teachers, office workers, and public employees). One occupation—the small farmer, who supposedly is the backbone of Costa Rican democracy—was completely unrepresented in the party hierarchy. The party leaders English interviewed tended to be relatively well-educated with backgrounds in white collar or high status professional occupations. Although it has not been demonstrated empirically, our impression of occupational status is that white collar workers feel that they have more in common with the higher status occupations than they do with blue collar workers.

47 English, Liberación, p. 169.

48 Gerald Fry, "Educational Problems Related to the Economic Development of Costa Rica," Public and International Affairs, 4 (Spring 1966), p. 76. That figure has not changed significantly since 1966; in 1972, the percentage of eligibles enrolled in secondary schools was 22 percent. UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1974, p. 135.

49 English, Liberación, p. 58.
In 1975 the situation appeared to be much the same. Of those party leaders who answered my questionnaires, 71 percent had attended secondary schools and 42 percent had received at least a few years of education at the university level. In terms of occupations, again the higher status jobs predominated, with 60 percent either professionals, administrators (the majority were headmasters of schools), or businessmen. Adding those engaged in agriculture brings the figure to 71 percent. Only two respondents listed blue collar occupations, a truck driver and a plant boss (a self-made man of humble beginnings). The party may defend the interests and concerns of the campesino and the laborer, but the lower class is seldom recruited for the party hierarchy.

The operational reality of Liberación Nacional falls somewhere between the disparagement of its enemies and the encomium of its supporters. The accusation that Liberación is the political tool of a coterie of opportunists may be too strong, but the evidence refutes the Liberación claim to be a paragon of participatory democracy.

As already observed, the party is essentially a mechanism for winning elections. Once the campaign is over, the party

50 Of the four respondents who listed agriculture as their primary occupation, two had finished secondary school and two had completed primary school. None mentioned the size of their agricultural operation, but considering their education it is doubtful they could be considered campesinos, or even of the so-called yeoman farm group.

51 This situation may not be entirely the fault of the party organization. Being a politician takes time and usually some financial resources, commodities that campesinos and laborers rarely enjoy.
organization is virtually dormant for three years, then it begins
to gear up for the next campaign. Such functions as interest articu-
lation and aggregation and political socialization are performed only
intermittently, if at all. The socio-economic composition of the
party leadership has included few laborers, small farmers, rural
laborers, or other lower class persons. At the same time, electoral
support for the party has cut across class and region to a far
greater extent than the socio-economic profile of the Liberación
party leadership reflects.

Given the party emphasis on election, the recruitment pro-
cess is of particular importance. Contrary to party mythology,
the grassroots of the party hierarchy play a more symbolic role
than an influential one in the recruitment process. Recruitment
of candidates and recruitment within the party hierarchy is con-
trolled by the top leadership. Part of the reason for that control
derives from the continuance in power of the founders of the party,
especially José Figueres and Daniel Oduber. The formal structure
established by the party statutes reinforces their control by con-
centrating decision-making authority in the National Executive
Committee, on which Figueres and Oduber have served since the be-
inning of the party. Still, the national leaders apparently try
to consider local concerns and to give local leaders some autonomy
in local matters. As the present leaders, Figueres in particular,
pass from the political scene, perhaps the party will move closer
to the ideal of participatory democracy it has espoused. Neverthe-
less, although operational reality does diverge from mythical image,
Liberación seems to be a permanent, relatively democratic party.
USE OF THE MYTH BY LIBERACION

The Revolution of 1948 involved Costa Rica as a whole; the Myth of the Revolution is the preferred history of only one part of the society. Since Liberación competes with other political parties for electoral support, it has a vested interest in having its version of the shared experiences of that period accepted as the correct one.

Evidently Liberación believes that the Myth has some political utility, for on occasion it has used references to the Revolution in its campaigns. A survey of campaign advertisements in two leading Costa Rican newspapers revealed some interesting examples of the Myth as a campaign device. Only during the 1962 campaign were frequent references made to the Revolution. The use of the Myth appears to depend upon who opposes Liberación for the presidency. In 1962 Calderón Guardia was the leading opposition candidate. Liberación printed photos of armed gangs roaming the streets of San José, reminding the voters that Calderón had once been a great threat to Costa Rican democracy, thwarted only by the valiant efforts of the Liberacionistas. The party broadcast "Glories and Tragedies of the Country," ... a series of radio programs about some notable events of the recent history of Costa Rica."  

52 La Nación and La República were selected. Since the purpose of this exercise is illustrative only, the survey was restricted to the month of January (the last month before the election when campaigning is most intense) for the election years of 1962, 1966, and 1968. La Nación was also surveyed for January 1958.

53 La República, 7 January 1962, p. 7. A political advertisement. There were five programs in the series, covering such events as Llano Grande and a large demonstration of women on 2 August 1947.
Anti-calderonismo was the basic theme of the newspaper advertisements during that campaign. Calderón himself ran only in 1962. In 1958, 1966, and 1970 other themes predominated; little reference was made to the Revolution. In fact, in 1970 Liberación tried to appeal to Calderonistas by publishing public statements that disparaged Calderón which were made in the 1940's by the Unificación candidate. A particularly interesting use of the Myth was made by the Partido Independiente, a Liberación splinter party in the 1958 elections. Independiente castigated Liberación for betraying the ideals of the Revolution while in office under Figueres.  

Thus it seems that Liberación limits use of the Myth in political campaigns to specific purposes. The Revolution is not necessarily a symbolic weapon to be wielded indiscriminately in every instance without regard to utility.

Another example of the use of the Myth in Costa Rican politics can be found in the annual presidential message to the Legislative Assembly. Reporting on his first term as president, Figueres reaffirmed the goals and ideals of the Revolution. He recalled the "glorious labor" of the men and women of the National Liberation Movement and reminded the diputados of the "corruption of our customs" under the venal former government. During his speech he


55 This conclusion is based on a limited survey of only one type of campaign literature. A broader study, including pamphlets, radio programs, public speeches, and other campaign matter, might reveal a greater reliance on the Myth than newspaper advertisements indicate.
reiterated the justification for the revolt and catalogued the benefits of the Liberación regime. Three years later, Figueres once again used the Myth to justify his administration.  

We are scarcely ten years from a civil war that cost two thousand lives, given almost exclusively in the defense of electoral rights and administrative honesty.

Figueres then reminded his opponents that twice he and Liberación had given up power despite the dire and grossly unfair accusations of incipient dictatorship being made against them. The two interim presidential messages (1956 and 1957) contain no mention of the Revolution.

Again it appears that the Myth is invoked in certain instances but has not become a universally applicable campaign tool. Extending the review of presidential messages to the other Liberación presidents, Orlich and Oduber, may uncover similar symbolic employment of the Myth. One could also examine presidential proclamations, speeches, and ceremonial orations. What kinds of activities are justified by reference to the Revolution? Are revolutionary traditions and principles, used to gain support for certain activities

56 José Figueres, **Mensaje del señor Presidente de la República don José Figueres y contestación del señor Presidente de la Asamblea Legislativa Lic. don Gonzalo J. Facio** (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, 1955).

57 José Figueres, **Mensaje del señor Presidente de la República don José Figueres y contestación del señor Presidente de la Asamblea Legislativa Dr. don Alvaro Montero Padilla** (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, 1958), p. 8.

58 In 1949, the Junta turned over the presidency to Ulate and in 1958, at the time of this speech, Liberación was relinquishing the office to Mario Echandi and the Partido Unión Nacional.
or to excuse lack of attention to other problems? The legislative branch may be studied in the same way. Baker has shown that partisan considerations are extremely important in the Legislative Assembly, particularly with respect to Liberación. Is the Myth ever used to elicit party support and if so in what ways and for what specific types of legislation?

The Myth of the Revolution is definitely a part of Costa Rica's political consciousness. Liberación has tried to keep its version alive. Establishing the importance of the Myth today to Liberación as a weapon in its political arsenal will require a great deal of further research.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

The objective of this study has been to find some new insights into Costa Rican political culture. Part of the study concentrated on the Myth of the Revolution qua myth to document the existence and composition of the Myth. It was necessary to show that the Liberación version of the Revolution of 1948 is not only mythic in form (dramatic), but mythic in substance (patterned) as well. The latter aspect required comparing the Liberación treatment of events with other historical accounts. Attention was also paid to manifestations of the Myth in the organization and operation of Liberación as a political party. That the Liberación version of the Revolution constituted a myth as defined is clear. The leading characters are depicted in heroic dimensions, the narrative is dramatic, and historical accuracy is subordinated to the mythic theme. Does the Myth of the Revolution tell us anything about the political culture of Costa Rica?

The Myth of the Revolution is more than simply the preferred history of Liberación Nacional. The political myths of Liberación reveal much about the values and ideals of the party as a political subgroup. What Liberacionistas have chosen to emphasize, omit, and distort among the events and activities leading to, during, and in the aftermath of the Revolution presents a particular image of
Liberación as a political party. Not coincidentally, the values and ideals imbedded in the Myth, which are those held by Liberacionistas, correspond to political values attributed to Costa Ricans in general. There are no substantial conflicts between the societal image embodied in la leyenda blanca and the party image embodied in the Myth of the Revolution. The latter substantiates the former.

THE MYTH AND THE COSTA RICAN POLITICAL CULTURE

The political ambience one feels in Costa Rica differs from that sensed in neighboring countries. The most tangible difference is the absence of armed soldiers who are so unavoidably noticeable in public places in other Central American countries. Kidnappings and assassinations, so prevalent in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, are not a part of Costa Rica's daily life, nor does one feel the ominous presence of a dominant army as in Somoza's Nicaragua.

Costa Rica is no oasis of tranquility and prosperity. The problems attendant to any nation struggling to make its way in the contemporary world—crime, poverty, economic growth—occur in Costa Rica. Costa Rica's government under both Liberación and other administrations has suffered instances of fraud and scandal. Costa Rica is far from finding the answers to all its problems. Nevertheless, there are at least three relative certainties in post-Revolution

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1 The most recent instance of political violence in San José occurred in June 1977 when G.W. Villalobos, a would-be presidential candidate, fired on the villa of Robert Vesco, a wealthy financier who was trying to establish residence in Costa Rica to avoid being extradited to the United States for trial. Villalobos accused Vesco of being a corruptive influence in Costa Rican politics. Washington Post, 10 June 1977, p. A 28.
Costa Rican politics. The use of violence for political ends is minimal; elections take place on schedule every four years; and the transfer of power from the electorally vanquished to the electoral victors proceeds without difficulty. If behavior reflects values, as the concept of political culture proposes, then nonviolence in politics, electoral politics, and the peaceful transfer of power are significant political values in the political culture of Costa Rica. To the list one can add a commitment to civil rights, especially freedom of speech. These values come through clearly in the emphasis and omissions of the Myth.

The Myth of the Revolution is about violent deeds: a government was overthrown by force and people died in the enterprise. The revolt violated the principles of nonviolence, elections, and peaceful succession simultaneously. The care with which Liberacionista mythmakers have exaggerated the use of violence by the Calderonistas and expunged any reference to similar actions by Figueristas indicates that violence is considered an unacceptable political action. According to the Myth, the Figueristas turned to violence only when all other options, except surrendering to dictatorship, were closed. Once the threat of dictatorship was removed, Figueres proved the Liberación commitment to nonviolence by disbanding the army. The violent anti-government campaign carried on by the Figueristas prior to the Revolution is ignored rather than justified in Liberacionista literature. The Myth devotes far more attention to why the Figueristas believed revolt necessary and to the benefits that Costa Rica has reaped because of the Liberación victory

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than to glorifying the actual fighting. Given the value Costa Ricans
allegedly place on nonviolence, this approach is sensible for it
justified the rejection of Calderón and at the same time deflects
attention from Liberacionista delinquencies. The dichotomy between
the violent Calderonistas and the peace-loving Figueristas could
hardly be more clearly drawn. The violence-prone Calderonistas
epitomize evil; the Liberacionistas who had to be pushed to the
extreme before resorting to arms stand for the best in the Costa
Rican tradition. By identifying themselves so self-consciously with
Costa Rican traditions and emphasizing so strongly this contrast,
the Liberacionistas affirm the depth of the emotional attachment
to the principle, if not always the fact, of nonviolence.

According to the Myth, the reason for the revolt was the annul-
ment of the 1948 election. Since Figueres had been planning to revolt
for some time, catalyst might be a more accurate word. The evidence
indicates that Figueres had only been waiting for the right moment
to act. But the Myth does not treat the nullification of the election
as a catalyst; it is the raison d'être. The government had weathered
several crises, most notably the Huelga de Brazos Caídos, but annulling
the election created a crisis the government could not ride out. This
was one governmental action that Figueres knew would alienate most
Costa Ricans. Apparently, the alienation was severe enough to allow
Figueres to lead a successful revolt. The war was over too quickly
to provide an accurate measure of the extent to which Figueres was
supported, but the relative ease with which the Junta took charge after
the Calderonista defeat suggests that many Costa Ricans supported the
ouster of Calderón and his supporters. Perhaps Figueres could have
led a successful revolt at another time for a different rationale. The Liberacionista mythmakers make clear that they consider the nullification of the election to be a just and sufficient cause. Figueres had correctly judged the fervour of the Costa Ricans' regard for the electoral process. The Liberacionistas mythmakers reaffirm that fervour by making the desecration of elections the heart of the revolutionary rationale.

An essential goal of electoral politics is the peaceful transferal of power. The Myth is about a transferal of power through violence, but it stresses that the event was an anomaly in Costa Rican politics, brought about by extreme and unusual circumstances. One of the primary objectives of Liberación has been to prevent the recurrence of such events. Since the Revolution, no defeated incumbent party has refused to relinquish the government to its opponents.

The most questionable action of the Liberacionistas, given the rationale proffered by the Myth, was the rule by Junta. The revolt was justified by refusal of the Calderonistas to relinquish power. How then could Liberacionistas explain the refusal to turn the government over to the elected choice, Ulate? The Myth presents the decision to allow the Junta to rule for eighteen months as a joint agreement between Figueres and Ulate for the good of the nation and stresses the mutuality of the decision. To do otherwise would imply that Figueres had seized power illegally. Consequently, any misgivings Ulate may have had are omitted. The principle of peaceful transferal of power remains inviolate.

The question of the commitment to civil rights deserves some comment. The Constitution of 1871 and the Constitution of 1949 both
contain an extensive list of individual rights. One of these rights is the protection from ex post facto laws and special courts. The special courts established by the Junta violated this prohibition. The Junta argued that the old constitution was no longer in force and the threat of counter-revolution required extreme measures. This argument has merit since the Calderonistas, supported by Nicaragua, did invade Costa Rica late in 1948, and there were just claims against former government officials. If one accepts the Myth as the full account, the special courts never existed because there is no reference to them in the Liberación literature. This omission implies a desire to avoid having to justify the violations of rights guaranteed by Costa Rican constitutional traditions.

Liberacionista mythmakers could have chosen to glorify the military aspects of the Revolution. The achievements of the Army of National Liberation were impressive. If the casualty figures are correct, the victory of National Liberation was almost miraculous. The terrorist campaign also was well conducted and in some cultures might be considered a source of pride. That the Myth plays down the violent activities of the Liberation Movement and emphasizes the commitment of Liberación to democracy underlines the values and ideals Liberacionistas most esteem.

Analysis of the Myth also corroborates observations that have been made about some of the traits of the Costa Rican culture. The Myth as the party's "clear picture of itself in its best moments" conceals more than just Liberación violations of political values. Costa Ricans are said to be politically apathetic, and susceptible to
personalistic politics. So long as democratic procedures appear to be followed, Costa Ricans appear relatively unconcerned with substantive output by the government. The Myth glosses over the appearance of those traits in Liberacionistas and in the society at large during the three phases of the Revolution.

Rodríguez and Barahona have asserted that Costa Ricans are politically apathetic. Their observation conflicts with the Liberacionista claim that the Revolution was "the armed uprising of the Costa Rican people." The evidence indicates that relatively small numbers of Costa Ricans were actively involved in the revolt and certainly the fighting was confined almost exclusively to the region along the Pan American highway between Cartago and San Isidro del General. Apparently most of the populace remained passive. The defeated Calderonistas suffered few physical reprisals and those who lost property and capital due to the Junta tribunals ultimately regained most of their lost possessions. The passions aroused by the Revolution seemed to have dissipated rapidly. Since the Revolution, political activity by the mass of Costa Ricans has generally been limited to the election

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3 See Chapter Three.


5 Carta Fundamental Numero Dos, p. 8.

6 Calderón and his followers, supported by Somoza of Nicaragua, did try to overthrow the Liberacionistas--once in 1949 and again in 1955--but the attempts were half-hearted and quickly failed. No guerilla movement developed nor did the Calderonistas conduct a terrorist campaign. By 1962, they were once more a legitimate part of the Costa Rican political milieu.
campaigns every four years. Examination of Liberación as a party reveals a similar practice; most of the party's organs are dormant in noncampaign years and few party-related activities are repeated by Liberacionistas except during election years. Many people participate in campaign activities such as public rallies and party parades, and most citizens vote (usually around 80 percent of the electorate). But these activities seem to be more a form of entertainment than an expression of political demand. The leading candidates in each election since the Revolution have been moderates; radical candidates of either the left or the right do not do well in Costa Rican elections.

Rodríguez claims that the apathetic nature of Costa Ricans has resulted in a susceptibility to personalism in the Costa Rican citizen. Liberacionista claims notwithstanding, the Revolution was as much the personal triumph of José Figueres as it was an expression of antipathy for Calderón Guardia. Figueres dominated every phase of the revolt, from the actual opposition to the founding of Liberación Nacional. Further he has dominated the party until only recently. The party also has been most successful at the polls when Figueres was its candidate for the presidency. Out of seven elections Liberación has received at least 50 percent four times, but in each election the percentage for Liberación has declined. Only Figueres has won

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8In 1958 Liberación lost by 41% to 46% but only because a faction that broke from the party in disagreement to the Orlich candidacy carried about 10% of the vote with it.
substantial majorities. Now that he can no longer be a presidential candidate, Liberación may have trouble surviving. The opposition parties have usually been organized around individuals. So far none has achieved the organizational stability of Liberación. With Liberación apparently on the decline, the next four years will be crucial in the development of the party system in Costa Rica.

Finally, although the Myth describes its partisans and their countrymen as committed democrats, the rank and file Liberacionistas as well as the average citizen seem to be satisfied with form rather than substance in the exercise of their political rights. Liberación is and has been controlled by its leadership. To date, no faction opposed to the national leadership has been successful in taking control of the party apparatus. Party revolts have resulted either in capitulation or the splitting of the faction from the party. The major reorganization of Liberación accomplished in the mid-1960's was planned and directed largely by Daniel Oduber, one of the so-called triumvirate. Input into the decision-making process of the party by the lower level for candidate selection and party policy formulation appears to be limited strictly to local issues that do not concern the national leadership. Yet an attitudinal study comparing officials with the rank and file found the lower levels more content with the

9The election of 1970 is an exception to the general decline in the Liberación vote. Figueres was allowed to run for a second term and won with about 54%. The Constitution has been changed to preclude any second presidential terms.
So long as certain forms are followed, most notably elections free from overt manipulation, the Liberacionista and his opposition counterparts evidently are satisfied that Costa Rica is indeed the model of democracy for Central America.

SUGGESTIONS FOR RESEARCH ON COSTA RICAN POLITICAL CULTURE

Costa Rican political culture as a field of inquiry has hardly been touched. The few studies of attitudes and political orientations that have been completed are a beginning, but many detailed investigations on a variety of questions need to be accomplished before we can approximate an understanding of the Costa Rican political mind. A study on the elite political culture in Costa Rica found a sense of complacency extant in many leaders regarding the durability of the political status quo. A similar complacency is manifest in the conventional wisdom on Costa Rica expressed in most of the literature published in the United States. The blindness of the Calderonistas to the potential for revolt in their countrymen led to tragic consequences. Many, perhaps most, of the assumptions about the Costa Rican political culture so casually expressed in the literature may be valid. For the most part, however, they remain untested.

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The effects of the Revolution of 1948 on Costa Rican politics were obviously profound. The effects have been more pervasive than simply realigning political cleavages. According to Stetson, "One of the most important agents of socialization in Costa Rica was a 'great event,' the Revolution or Civil War of 1948." She found a high correlation between the strength of partisan affiliations and experience with the Revolution. This is a factor that has largely been ignored in studies on Costa Rican voting patterns. Stetson's findings point up the centrality of the Revolution to political research in Costa Rica.

First, much remains to be done on the mythology of the Revolution. This study recounts only the Liberación version. Undoubtedly the Calderonistas, the Ulatistas, and other anti-Liberación groups see the Revolution in a different light. Similar studies could be conducted from a variety of perspectives. Attitudinal surveys would provide vital information on the depth and breadth of acceptance of the myths of the various parties. Such surveys should include partisan and nonpartisan respondents. Comparisons of the penetration of mythic adherence might reveal patterns of attitudes that correspond to other significant political patterns such as voting results. Inter-generational correlates among and across partisan lines would measure the effects of political trauma as the process of socialization. Vertical differentiation among and across partisan lines might also be examined. Another variable worth examining is the content of mythic narrative that may vary considerably by social, educational, or

occupational level. An objective of such research would be to isolate values, attitudes, and orientations of Costa Ricans as Costa Ricans express them.

A broader research subject is la leyenda blanca. If it is a valid characterization of the Costa Ricans' self-image, the White Legend lies at the core of the political culture of Costa Rica. John Riismandel has already initiated the research on one part of the legend--the yeoman farmer and land tenure. Other research might pursue the questions of racial homogeneity, educational opportunity, and the standard of living as compared with other Central American countries. One approach might be to compare and contrast the Costa Rican self-image with a set of socio-economic indicators to measure how closely image approximates reality. Replicative studies conducted in such countries as Uruguay might lead to hypotheses about directions of political change or stability in countries of similar reputation. Do changes in self-image precede structural change, does the converse more accurately describe the relationship, or are self-image and structure bound in a mutually reinforcing process?

To conclude, I wish to point out that Costa Rica is ideal for research on political culture. First, the country is small and most areas are now accessible by road, at least in the dry season. Second, Costa Rica appears to enjoy a relatively homogeneous culture. Except for the Blacks concentrated on the Atlantic coast, there seem to be no major cultural divisions. Third, the country is remarkably open.

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People do not seem to be afraid of speaking their minds, even to strangers. The several investigations cited in this study indicate that Costa Ricans may be fairly receptive to survey research. The Ticos are a source of cultural research that should be used to the fullest.
SOURCES CONSULTED

SOURCES ON COSTA RICA

Articles


Books


Dissertations and Theses


Miscellaneous


Visión (Mexico), 10 abril, 8, 22 mayo 1970.

GENERAL SOURCES


The questionnaire from which some of the information used in this study was taken was designed and administered with another research project in mind. Consequently, only data and statements that bore on this study are used.

Originally, I had intended to conduct all the interviews in person, but I encountered serious difficulties in obtaining a list of the Liberación officials that I wanted to interview. By the time I managed to obtain the list, time and finances dictated my changing the interview schedule to one suitable for mailing. Because the mail questionnaire is relatively uncommon in Costa Rica, I tried to structure the questions as much as possible. In some cases I am certain that the questions were misunderstood. I sent out 108 questionnaires and received 36 responses. Although I considered the number of responses and the data collected insufficient for the original research project, I was able to glean information from the mail questionnaires that illustrates a number of points in the present analysis and supports some of my assertions.

An English translation of the questionnaire in its entirety follows.

Questionnaire

Everything that you say is confidential and will be used for academic purposes only.

1. How old are you?

2. What is the last school you attended?
   a. How many years did you attend the school?
   b. Did you receive a degree? What is it?

3. What is your occupation?

4. What was your occupation before joining the party? (If it is different, why did you change jobs?)

5. Are (or were) your parents Liberationists?

6. If you have children, is it important to you that they be Liberationists?
   a. I have no children.
   b. Yes.
   c. No.

7. When did you join Liberación?
8. Why did you join the party? (Mark the reason most important to you.)
   a. I wanted to get ahead in politics and Liberación offers the best opportunity for this.
   b. Liberación is the best party for the Country.
   c. Liberación goals and ideals best reflect my own.
   d. My parents are (or were) Liberationists.
   e. I don't know.
   f. Other (explain).

9. Your present position in the party is ________. How did you achieve this position?
   a. Appointed.
   b. Elected.

10. Why do you believe you were appointed/elected? (Mark the factor most important.)
    a. I have worked hard for the party.
    b. I have many supporters in the party.
    c. I have much influence in the community.
    d. I have much influence with the leaders of the party.
    e. I was the best qualified person.
    f. I don't know.
    g. Other (explain).

11. Have you held other positions in the party? No, Yes (If yes, on the list below mark the positions you have held, the order, and the time in office.)
    a. Cantonal  Order/Time in Office
       1. Assembly.
       2. Executive Committee.
          President.
          Treasurer.
          Secretary General.
       3. Executive Committee of the Youth.
       4. Coordinator.
    b. Provincial.
       1. Assembly.
       2. Executive Committee.
       3. Youth.
    c. National.
       1. Assembly.
       2. Tribunal of Honor.
       3. Executive Director.
       4. Youth.
    d. Other (explain).

12. What are the most important duties of your office?
13. (For the Cantons) Do you make contact with the other cantonal bodies of the party?
   a. Often.
   b. At times, but not often.
   c. Only during the campaign.
   d. Rarely.
   e. Never.

14. Can you perform your duties as you wish or do you receive explicit instructions from your leaders?
   a. As I wish.
   b. I receive explicit instructions.
   c. Other (explain).

15. What would happen if you disagreed with your instructions?
   a. I always obey my instructions.
   b. I would refuse to comply.
   c. I would request a meeting with my leaders.
   d. I would take the matter to a higher level.
   e. I don't know.
   f. Other (explain).

16. What would happen if you ignored your instructions or refused to obey them?
   a. Nothing would happen.
   b. I would receive a reprimand.
   c. I would receive a sanction from the party.
   d. The matter would be referred to the Tribunal of Honor.
   e. Other (explain).

17. What would you do if a subordinate disagreed with your instructions?
   a. I would ask for a meeting with him.
   b. I would refer the matter to a higher level.
   c. I would demand that he obey my instructions.
   d. Nothing.
   e. Other (explain).

18. What would you do if he ignored or disobeyed your instructions?
   a. I could do nothing.
   b. I would refer the matter to my leaders.
   c. I would refer the matter to the Tribunal of Honor.
   d. I would punish the subordinate.
   e. Other (explain).

19. How much time per month do you usually work for the party?

20. Have you achieved your goals and interests as a member of Liberación?
   a. Yes.
   b. More or less.
   c. No.

21. Do you want to hold higher posts in the party?
22. How often does your organization of the party usually meet?

23. What happens during a typical meeting? For example:
   a. Who usually attends the meetings?
   b. What topics are discussed?
   c. Who participates in the discussions?
   d. How are decisions made?

24. In many organizations, some have more power than others. Who do you believe has power in Liberación?
   a. At the national level.
   b. At the local level.

25. Why do they have power?

26. In many parties around the world, one party function is to transmit to the government the problems and necessities of the people, or at least those of the party members. Does Liberación function in this manner?
   a. No.
   b. At times but it is not very important.
   c. It is a very important function.
   d. I don't know.
VITA

John Charles Morgan was born at Charlotte, North Carolina on November 26, 1942. He attended Fayetteville Senior High School in Fayetteville, North Carolina until his senior year when he moved to Miami, Florida, where he graduated from Miami Senior High School in 1961. Morgan entered the University of Florida in September 1961, where he majored in History, receiving his B.A. in 1965. In January 1966, he went on active duty with the U.S. Army Transportation Corps as a 2nd lieutenant. After serving for two and a half years in Germany and the Netherlands, he was discharged with the rank of captain in 1968. Morgan then entered the Department of International Studies at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, South Carolina in 1969, where he was a graduate assistant. He earned an M.A. in August 1970. Morgan transferred to the Political Science Department at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in September 1970, where he was a graduate assistant. He earned the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in August 1979. This dissertation was completed in May 1979.
EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: John Charles Morgan

Major Field: Political Science

Title of Thesis: The Partido Liberación Nacional of Costa Rica: A Case Study On Political Myth and Political Culture

Approved:

[Signatures]

Major Professor and Chairman
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Date of Examination:

April 17, 1979