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**The labor movement in Costa Rica from the Great Depression
to the Cold War**

Miller, Eugene David, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1992

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A

**The Labor Movement in Costa Rica
From the Great Depression to the Cold War**

by

Eugene David Miller

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
Faculty in History in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City
University of New York.

1992

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Eugene David Miller

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

The the Labor Movement in Costa Rica
From the Great Depression to the Cold War

by

Eugene David Miller

Advisor: Professor Laird W. Bergad

This work examines how the relationship between the state, the Communist Party (CPCR) and the church in Costa Rica influenced the country's labor movement. The large areas of examination are four-fold: (1) the juridical evolution of the labor movement in the country's political economy; (2) the continual expansion of the state into the worker-owner relationship; (3) the relationship between the labor movement and their political supporters; and (4) the impact of international events and institutions on the country's labor movement.

The work is divided into two parts. The first begins in 1932 and ends in 1940. Chapters I and II explore the legislative solutions to the country's social and economic crises and the early efforts toward labor unification under the CPCR-led confederation. In additions some of the country's major strikes are examined.

The second part of this work begins in 1940 with an in-depth examination of the tangible results of the efforts of the 1930s, and continues with a look at how the domestic and international alliances prompted by World War II caused

fundamental shifts in the balance of power inside the country. Chapter III explores those shifts from a single, overriding vantage point: how they facilitate labor's obtaining direct access to the centers of national power.

By 1945, adverse domestic and international political and economic conditions, caused the ruling alliance between the state, the church and the CPR to fragment. This fragmentation was exacerbated by the development of a Catholic labor confederation and the increasingly antagonistic relations experienced between it and the older CPR-led confederation. The deteriorating climate erupted into civil war in 1948 which destroyed the remnants of the wartime coalition, but did not roll back the labor gains of the past two decades. (Chapters IV and V.)

Chapter VI explores the international connections and affiliations of the country's two labor confederations to determine the extent to which Costa Rican labor developments were marked by domestic/evolutionary traditions or discontinuities imposed by foreign ideas.

Throughout the work, analytical references are made to the work force: its sexual, racial, ethnic, regional, and national composition; its standard of living; and working conditions.

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In Costa Rica, I owe much gratitude to the many individuals that encouraged this work. In particular, I want to thank Eldeberto Torres-Rivas, General Secretary of *Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales* (FLACSO), who welcomed my affiliation to his institution; Víctor Hugo Acuña and Mariellos Aguilar whose discussions and work helped me understand and question the uniqueness of the Costa Rican experience. Of the many individuals who allowed themselves to be subjected to my interviews, I want to especially thank Benjamín Núñez and, a truly remarkable individual, Manuel Mora. Many people gave graciously of their time and knowledge in the archives, in the U.S., Costa Rica and Mexico that I visited. I owe them all a deep debt of gratitude, as I do the people of Costa Rica.

In helping me to transform the data of research into the form of history, I want to thank my advisors Professors Laird Bergad, Jay Kinsbruner, Kenneth Erickson and Ronald

Hellman, and Professor Hobart Spalding for his questions and his encouragement. Nevertheless, I remain fully responsible for this work and its errors. Last, but certainly not least, I want to thank my family for their patience and inspiration.

To my uncle
Martin Miller

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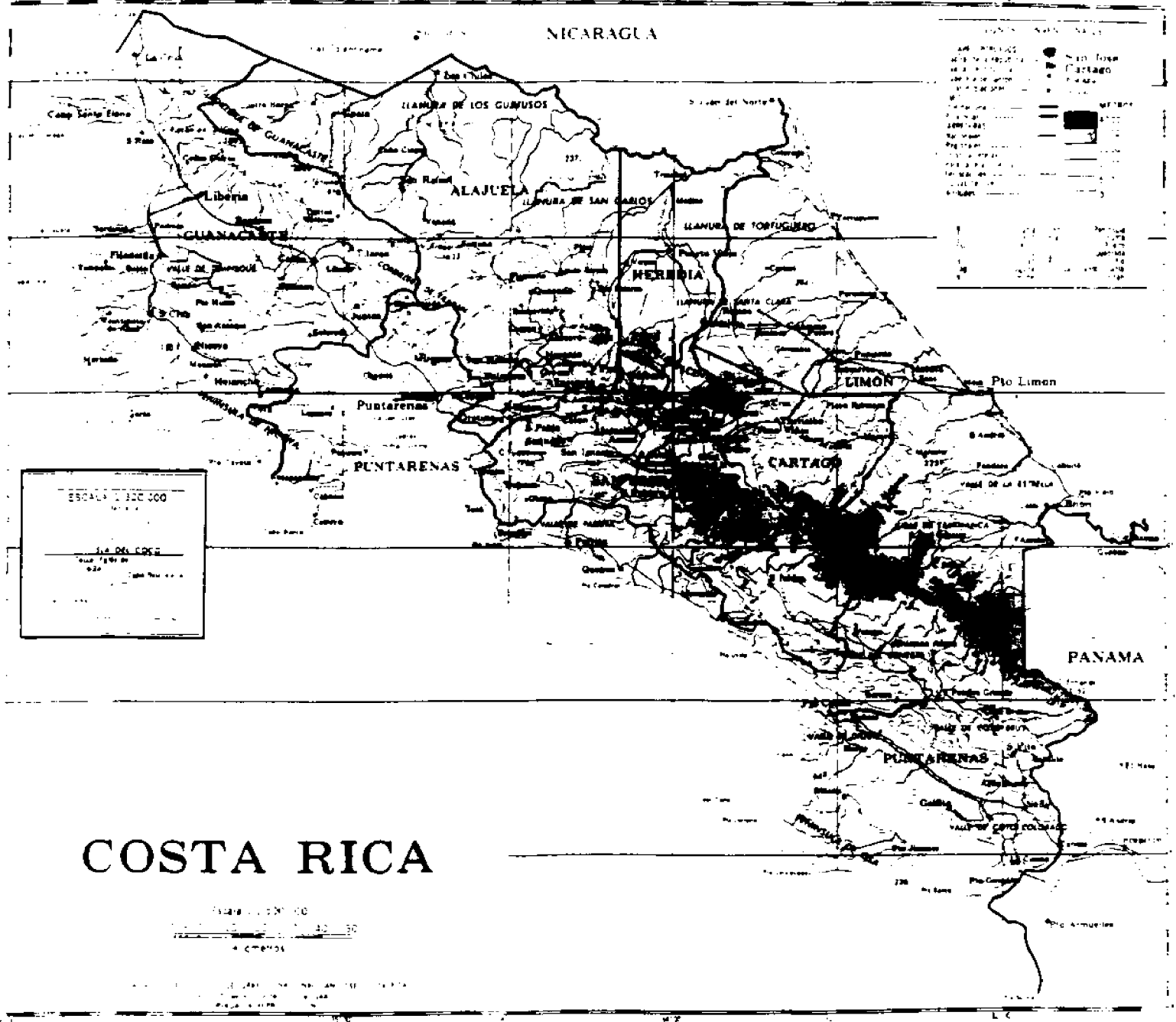
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List of Abbreviations for Archival Sources

- ACU Archives of the Catholic University of America
AJ *Archivo Judicial de Costa Rica*
- AN *Archivo Nacional de Costa Rica,*
Gobernación.
Junta de Custodia de la Propriedad Enemiga.
Protocolos
Sección Congreso.
Sección Legislativa.
Trabajo Y Seguridad Social, Sindicato.
- AUOM *Archivo de Universidad Obrera (en México)*
- AACR *Archivo de Curia Metropolitana de San José*
- NCWC Archives of the National Catholic Welfare Conference
- USNA National Archives the United States of America
(Roosevelt Library)
(Washington D.C.)



Introduction

Three fundamental questions have guided this work. First, was the development of the labor movement in Costa Rica marked by evolutionary change and a gradual acceptance of labor's position in the country's political economy, or was it characterized by disruption, dislocation, and attempts at revolutionary upheaval? If, as this work will argue, organized labor was directed towards legalistic solutions, two additional questions follow. Why did organized labor adopt this orientation and what were the implications for the development of the country's political and economic systems?

I *The Time Period*

Two watershed events frame this study: the Great Depression of the 1930s and the advent of the Cold War. In Costa Rica during these years organized labor experienced two distinct stages of development, from 1934 to 1943 and 1944 to 1948.

In the first stage, after three major strikes in 1934,¹ labor organizations increasingly influenced by the country's young Communist Party (CPCR),² focused their efforts on two objectives. The first was the forging of a unified, nationwide movement. This involved the construction of federative and confederative formations with a single bureaucratic

apparatus over what was essentially a locally based guild structure. The second involved an effort to obtain legislative solutions to the material problems confronting the working class. This legislative orientation reflected a fundamental acceptance of the country's democracy, and faith in the executive and judiciary branches' ability to enforce enacted legislation. This faith coupled with state responsiveness to workers' demands was the signal characteristic of Costa Rican labor development. The ultimate product of this legislative orientation was achieved in 1943 with the enactment of the Labor Code of Calderón Guardia.

Between 1943 and 1948 the second stage of Costa Rican labor's evolution unfolded with the public emergence of the Catholic church into the labor field. The church offered both an ideological and a practical alternative to the Communist-led labor unions. This development expanded the pool of workers willing to join labor unions but, at the same time, began to fracture the organizational unity the movement had achieved until 1943.

With the enactment of the 1943 Labor Code, supported by both the church and the CPR, labor's efforts were increasingly concentrated on expanding and forcing compliance with the pro-labor legislation. The issue of compliance placed labor initiatives squarely behind the extension and effective application of state authority. This

occurred at the same time that organized labor found itself increasingly divided into two camps.

Thus, the period 1943 to 1948 witnessed the emergence of a strong state sector and a labor movement that grew in numerical and bureaucratic strength, as it became ideologically fractured. By the end of this period, the consequence of these divergent patterns was ruinous for the autonomy of the labor movement. However, though the labor movement lost its vitality and its political coherency, the state kept and expanded the rights and protections previously won by the laboring class.

II *Scope and Objectives*

This work will analyze the relationship between organized labor and the Costa Rican working class by examining the interaction between Costa Rica's political institutions and the country's representatives in both unions and political parties. It also will explore the effect international developments and organizations had on the country's labor movement.

The subjects of this study are the workers in the country's mountainous Central Valley and (primarily) banana workers in the coastal lowlands. In the Central Valley, agricultural (coffee and sugar workers) and artisanal (shoemakers) laborers are examined. As a consequence of looking at the urban and rural labor forces, this study will

consider the ideological and structural links between the two.

Coastal workers are analyzed apart from those in the Central Valley for two reasons. First, they represented an enclave work force removed by distance and ethnicity from the national population as a whole.³ Second, the banana industry (as the rubber and abacá [hemp] industries and the railroad) was wholly owned and operated by foreigners. This difference had important consequences for the historical evolution of these work forces and their integration into the country's political economy.⁴

Since the period of the 1940s witnessed great reforms and political changes in Costa Rica, an examination of labor's development in the preceding decade became imperative in order to address questions of continuity. Little has been written about the 1930s that addresses labor other than as an extension of a particular political party or political leader. Nothing has been written regarding labor as an agent of legislative reform. This has left unexplored the important interrelationship between popular mobilization and governmental responsiveness. For this reason, This study spans a sufficient number of years to obtain a viable trajectory of the labor movement.

In assessing organized labor's role in the political economy of the country, two issues are of primary

importance. First, was labor's development characterized by vertical or horizontal patterns of organization and development? This question probes the internal dynamics of the labor movement, its independence from outside influences, and its ability to articulate and implement its own agenda. Another way of phrasing this question is: was the rank and file sufficiently politicized and cognizant of its own evolving interests to survive a beheading of the movement? The question became increasingly important as the political forces in the country grew polarized and antagonistic. At root, this question traces the persistence of paternalism in worker-union relationship, as well as worker-employer relations. What is being probed is not the depth of rights enjoyed by the working class, but labor's continuing ability to pressure for these rights, and when they were won, to ensure their enforcement. In this regard, it is important to remember that even at its height (1945) the unionized work force did not exceed 18 percent of the total economically active population.

The second issue, intimately related to the supervisory roles played by the CPR and the Catholic church was the international orientation of the labor movement. Historically, ideas of labor organization have crossed national boundaries, often to be greeted by political condemnation. Both wings of the Costa Rican labor movement were subjected to powerful international influences. This

was particularly true in the 1940s. This work will explore the interrelationship between domestic and international forces the labor movement and how outside events and organizations altered the course of the domestic movement .

International influence was particularly important for Costa Rican labor movement for three reasons. First, its small size and key geographic position north of the Panama Canal attracted disproportionate attention. This was particularly true after 1939. Second, surrounded by underdeveloped and repressive Central American regimes, Costa Rica was viewed by outside forces as uniquely stable. Third, the country's labor movement was under the direction of two organizations with developed international orientations: the Communist Party and the Catholic church. It is impossible to examine the labor movement of this time without coming to an understanding of the domestic nature and international orientation of both the CPR and the Catholic church. This work will do this keeping in mind the potential tension between national historical continuity and the penetration of "outside ideas" through the formation of labor organizations.

III *Statistical Evaluations*

The work presents a statistical description of the working class based on national demographics and examination of wage and price levels. This includes a

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sectoral/occupational analysis of the work-force, according to sex, race and nationality. This analysis addresses general questions of economic development, homogeneity of the work force, and regional peculiarities and tensions. Because statistical data exist for the beginning and the end of the period under examination, it is possible to trace large, aggregate changes in Costa Rica's economy; consequent changes in the nature of the labor force; and organized labor's responses to those changes. Wage scales have been reconstructed to give both a time-frozen and evolutionary look at the relative earnings for various occupations. Finally, cost-of-living data has been placed alongside wage scales to show the relative well-being of workers at selected moments in the sixteen year period under examination.

In addition to the above, export earnings and international trade flows have been monitored throughout this period. The country's labor movement was directly effected both by sharp drops in export revenues and changes in trade patterns. Attesting to this were the repeated crises throughout the 1930s and 1940s that fundamentally restructured both the orientation of the labor movement and the state's responses to it. These jolts have been followed in an effort to correlate them with fundamental shifts in the social fabric of the country and the resultant political alliances. This last point is particularly important because

despite all efforts, genuine or disingenuous, the impact of the labor movement cannot be understood or assessed separately from its involvement in the country's extremely partisan political environment.

IV *Justification for this Work and a Brief Overview of the Literature*

The justification for this work is straightforward. There are no studies that offer a comprehensive examination of Costa Rican labor during this sixteen-year period. There is an understandable fascination among both Costa Rican and U.S. scholars about the events of the 1940s. Their studies have focused on the two pivotal events of that decade: the social reforms of 1943 and the civil war in 1948.⁵ These works treat the labor movement tangentially, either as a vehicle for political manipulation or as a transparency through which the working class can be examined. Works that have dealt directly with the labor movement have examined either the church or Communist Party movement, avoiding an examination of the profound interrelationship between the two. Furthermore, these studies examined organized labor as an ideological extension of either the CPCR or the Catholic church, excluding either sectoral and/or occupational analysis. Finally, many of the studies bearing directly on the labor movement do not penetrate beyond the (useful) listing of Executive Councils and the restatement of confederation and party platforms.

The following discussion of the literature is divided into two sections: the first offers a brief overview of the works in English, written by U.S. scholars; the second examines Spanish studies written by Costa Rican social scientists.

Works in English have been primarily concerned with political developments. They have focused on events in the 1940s with the development of the "social welfare state" and the subsequent Figuerista uprising. Aside from Theodore Creedman's (1971) and Mitchell Seligson's (1980) work on the León Cortés Administration, U.S. scholars have almost exclusively focused on the political events of the 1940s. These include Ameringer (1974), Ameringer (1978), Bell (1971), Gardner (1970), McGovern (1966), Peeler (1985), Busey (1964), Gudmundson (1984), Booth (1989), and Lehoucq (1991). These works provide useful analyses and narratives of the events that transformed Costa Rica from a paternalistic society to a modern corporativist state.⁶ None of these studies explores the complex interrelationship between the emergence of a nationally organized labor body and the ideological and structural transformation of the Costa Rican state. It is precisely the examination of this interrelationship over two decades that is the core of this study.

A number of general works address the Costa Rican labor

situation within the overall context of Latin America. These works include: Troncoso and Burnett (1960), Alba (1968), Alexander (1968), Radosh (1969), Romualdi (1967), and Spalding (1973). All these are overviews and, with the exception of Spalding, all are dominated by a Cold War preoccupation with Communist influence in the Latin American labor movement. For Costa Rica this preoccupation distorts the fundamental national orientation of the CPR and seriously flaws the analysis.

The national vs. international allegiance of a Communist Party is a fundamental determinant in assessing its role within the society. Although the CPR adhered to the Comintern on matters of international policy,⁷ it followed its own evaluation regarding the needs of Costa Rica's political and economic evolution. The characterization of the CPR as a national-oriented party is borne out by two works, which examine the CPR's relationship to the Comintern: Caballero (1986) and Cerdas (1986).

The Figueres uprising was the pivotal event in 20th century Costa Rican history, and as such it has received wide scholarly attention. Histories of this period include Albertazzi Avendaño (1951), Cañas (1955), Castro Esquivel (1955), T. Picado (1949), Navarro Bolandi, (1957) Aguilar Bulgarelli (1970), Schifter (1979), Schifter, (1982), Rojas Bolaños, (1984), and Campos Vargas (1989). These works,

including the most recent, are all strongly partisan in nature, and their analyses are limited to political concerns. The labor movement is essentially viewed as a mass-based extension of the maneuverings of political parties and personages.

A number of works have examined the evolution of social and political forces in Costa Rica, principally but not exclusively during the tumultuous decade of the 1940s. The most prominent of these works include Stone (1975), Rojas Bolaños, (1984), Gamboa (1985), and Cerdas and Contreras (1988).

There are a number of important works in Spanish that specifically address the labor situation. For the church oriented movement Backer (1975) offers the most comprehensive political analysis. However, his almost exclusive reliance on the writings of Father Núñez, principally *"Informe: Sobre Las Relaciones Entre El Movimiento Obrero Católico Costarricense Y La Autoridad Eclesiástica"* (1956), leaves his account politically unbalanced and lacking demographic references. Also, his view of Archbishop Sanabria, the Catholic labor movement's progenitor, is restricted to domestic and church-related concerns. Important international and church-*Partido Vanguardia Popular* (PVP) issues are marginally addressed. This is a general shortcoming of other works that explore church-state relations. M. Picado (1989) provides a long

overview of the changing, often bitter relations between the Costa Rican Church and State. His work is useful for its historical and contextual treatment of church-state issues and church involvement in the labor field. Works by Blanco Segura (1962) and Arrieta Quesada (1977) offer in-depth examinations of the social and political thought of the archbishop, while Cabanillas (1985) offers an interesting account of anti-Communism in the Costa Rican Church from 1931-1935. Finally, Cerdas (n.d.) contributes a useful analysis of the impact of the Cold War on the labor movement and spends much time examining the church-led movement as a vehicle through which anti-Communism was expressed. His almost exclusive reliance on the works of Backer and Schifter limits the originality of his contribution. He, does, however, provide an in-depth synthesis of the developments of the 1940s, one whose general contours fit with those of this study.

Many works deal, broadly speaking, with the political party-labor movement relationship. Primarily but not exclusively the nexus of this discussion is the CPRC-labor relationship. Botey and Cisneros (1984) examine the interrelationship between the Great Depression and the formation of the CPRC in 1931. They convincingly present the domestic roots and logic of the party's emergence. Cerdas and Contreras's (1988) work is a highly useful juxtaposition of the party positions alongside shifting national events

and political alliances throughout the 1930s and 1940s.

Aguilar Hernández (1983) examines the labor movement through the life of one of the movement's principal leaders, Carlos Luís Fallas. Her later work, [Aguilar Hernández (1987)], is a broader based examination of labor conditions and militancy from 1943 to the present. It is, however, devoted primarily to a critical analysis of the weakness of the labor movement in the post-1948 period. Acuña (1988) examines the labor-CPCR association through the formation of the shoemakers' union as does Sánchez Valerio (1986) and Morales (1984). Acuña's work is especially valuable for its presentation of the daily lives of workers. Rojas Bolaños and Camacho in Abarca et al. (1981) both provide useful factual and ideological outlines of the development of the organized labor movement throughout the twentieth century.

For the years prior to the decade of the 1930s: the history of the nascent labor movement is told from 1830 to 1902 by Fallas (1983); for the years 1870 to 1930 by De La Cruz (1980); for the 1880s by Aguilar Bulgarelli (1989); and for the years 1890-1914 by Oliva Medina (1985). These works, based on union documents (platforms and petitions) and newspaper accounts, view the nascent labor movement as a force of change pushing against the dominant export-oriented oligarchy. Acuña (1986) provides a close narrative of the 1920 strike, which resulted in the eight-hour work day legislation. A useful compendium compiled by Aguilar et al.

(1986) examines the labor movement and the working class from 1870 to 1930.

Two important works that offer examination of the labor movement through the vehicle of leading political personages are M. Volio's (1983) study of Jorge Volio and his *Partido Reformista*, and Torres's (1985) biography of Otilio Ulate. In addition, a number of theses produced at the University of Costa Rica (UCR) have addressed the evolution of the labor movement. These include Barrantes Araya's 1981 work, which focuses on the developments immediately surrounding the banana strike in 1934, and Gustavo Blanco's 1982 work on *Solidarismo*.⁸ Authors who have examined the banana industry and the famous 1934 strike include: Carlos Luís Fallas's "fictional account", Mamita Yunai (1944); Charles Kepner (1949); Casey Gaspar (1979); Sibaja (1983); and Aguilar's (1983) and Arroyo's (1973) biographies of Carlos Luís Fallas.

Finally, there are a number of authors who address the development of the labor movement from a functional, unionist perspective. These include Bolaños Cespedes (1985); Calderón Sandi (1990); Chacon León (1980); Castillo H. (n.d.); and Torales (1977). These works are limited in the scope of their examination but do provide important information regarding sequential developments and the "shop floor" flavor of some of the political battles.

The consequences of the 1948 uprising on labor are

addressed by a number of authors including González Muñoz (1966), McGovern (1966), Aguilar Hernández (1987), and Blanco (1982). There is much written on the ideological formation of political parties. These works include: Solís and Esquivel (1980); Romero (1982); and Jonas Bodenenheimer (1984) on the growth of social democracy; Volio (1983) and Rodríguez (1982) on reformism; and Botey and Cisneros (1984) on Communism.

Given the availability of the above-cited, secondary material, the justification for this work rests on two arguments. The first, as already stated, is its unique periodization and conceptualization. The second is the extensive use it makes of new archival sources.

V *Sources and Methodology*

This work uncovers and assesses forces of change in Costa Rican labor history. The initial investigation of the country's labor movement immediately revealed the extent to which it was oriented towards achieving legislative and juridical change, particularly up to 1943. Materials relevant to an examination of the nature of the organizations, their demands, and the governmental response are located in two main sources. These are congressional records, housed in the *Archivo Nacional de Costa Rica*, and the country's periodicals, located in a number of archives throughout the country, but principally in the *Biblioteca*

Nacional. Congressional records reflected the popular agitation for change. This, in itself, revealed several significant factors about Costa Rican society. It underscored the literacy of the population, and the responsiveness of the political system to the poorest of the country's citizens. Newspapers, principally, though not exclusively the Communist Party organ, Trabajo, contain the most comprehensive and detailed coverage of worker activity, particularly during the period of the 1930s.

There are several reasons to use Trabajo as a source. First, CPCR proximity to, and penetration of, the labor movement gave the CPCR unique access to labor activities. Because other newspapers were less concerned with labor activities, these events were not consistently covered, unless they were of an exceptional nature. However, other papers proved useful, as well. These included La Tribuna, La Ultima Hora, La Prensa Libre, and Diario de Costa Rica. Second, the government's ministerial files are discontinuous, and labor union files are not extant for the period of the 1930s and 1940s. *Informes* by the Ministry of Labor are useful aggregate compilations of various statistical data, but only toward the end of the 1930s do they offer a close monitoring of labor activities. Thus, in many cases Trabajo coverage is the sole record of activities. Use of the CPCR publication presents problems of bias, which are addressed.

A significant part of this study is devoted to juridical history, particularly for the decade of the 1930s. In the main, efforts to trace the juridical evolution of labor laws, through the annual compilations of Ley Colección de Leyes y Decretos de Costa Rica, and a number of in-house (and very useful) legislative compilations, was successful. Having established the evolutionary trajectory of this juridical history, this work then offers explanations for the economic imperatives and political alliances that underlay the passage of these laws.⁹

A final aspect of this phase of the study is an evaluation of the effectiveness of the juridical effort. Here government documents are more useful, and accordingly extant annual reports issued by the Ministry of Labor to the Executive have been used.

The demographic analysis of the work force relies on the two censuses of 1927 and 1950, as well as on the agricultural census of 1950, and the commercial/industrial census of 1951. In addition, the exhaustive statistical studies of Roger Churnside on the labor force have been useful,¹⁰ as have the *Anuario Estadístico* for the years between 1927 and 1949.

As the study moves from the 1930s to the 1940s, the focus of the work changes as a consequence of developments in the labor movement. Accordingly, the source material used reflects this shift. Immediately after the promulgation of

the Labor Code and Social Guarantees in 1943, the Catholic church entered the field of direct labor organization. The examination of the Catholic labor initiative, *Confederación Costarricense de Trabajadores "Rerum Novarum"* (CCTRN) is divided into three parts. The first concerns the institutional impetus of the initiative. The second concerns its domestic impact. Material on both phases was found in the previously closed, *Archivo de la Curia Metropolitana de San José*. The third part traces the CCTRN's international affiliations, examined through the archives of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC) in Washington D.C. and the Serafino Romualdi Papers in the Industrial Labor-Management Library at Cornell University.

The CCTRN was not the only labor organization with developed international affiliations. The Communist-directed *Confederación de Trabajadores de Costa Rica* (CTCR) was deeply influenced by the *Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina* (CTAL) seated in Mexico. The evolution and impact of this relationship is reflected, on the Costa Rican side, in reports and conference summaries issued by the CTCR and often reprinted in Trabajo. The Mexican side is found in CTAL correspondence files housed in the *Universidad Obrera*. The U.S. Embassy also followed this relationship with interest.

The United States Archives proved to be a valuable source, particularly for the period of the 1940s. In

November 1944 a State Department directive was issued to all Embassy personnel to closely monitor the labor situation in their host countries. The directive went on to stipulate the type of information sought, and subsequent labor dispatches adhered to the letter of this directive. In many cases U.S. Embassy labor dispatches contain information either lost or destroyed in the Costa Rican Ministry of Labor.¹¹ As with CPCR materials, a distinct bias was embedded in these reports, particularly by 1947 with the emergence of the Cold War.

The role of the Communist Party as patron of the labor movement through the 1930s and as champion of the dominant sector of the labor movement for the balance of the period makes its study an indispensable aspect of this study. The party is examined from two angles: first, its legislative proposals and its political platforms. The former are found in the country's congressional records, which are far more complete for the 1930s than for the 1940s. The latter are widely available either in Trabajo or in a number of compilations of CPCR positions. Second, the party has been examined to ascertain its internal composition, structural relationship to labor, and overall vitality as a political organization. Sufficient internal party documents exist to make these assessments for the period of this study. Of particular interest are the correspondence files between PVP sectoral and sectional organs.

On the national political front, the 1940s witnessed great swings in the political alliances that ruled Costa Rica. The Allied war against the Axis powers had a powerful impact on Costa Rican society, which resulted in the enactment of the "Proscribed List Against Alien Nationals." For Costa Rica, with its sizable, and influential ethnically German (and to a lesser extent, Italian) populations, this led to significant alterations in the country's elite order. The mechanism created to carry out these "alterations" was the *Junta de Custodia de Propriedad Enemiga*. The documents of the junta, housed in the National Archive of Costa Rica, are now indexed and available. They offer a fascinating glimpse into the political and economic dislocations undergone by the country in the 1940s. The fact that organized labor (through the PVP and Catholic church) was able to capitalize on these changes by reaching an unprecedented proximity to power makes the examination of the junta files important for this study. Other important archival sources for this study have included: the *Archivo Judicial de Costa Rica*; confidential United Fruit Company File (referred to as the Bourgeois Papers); and the archive of the *Ferrocarril al Pacífico*.

Finally, this study has made extensive use of interviews of the principal actors in the country's labor movement in the decades of the 1930s and 1940s. The use of this source needs to be justified and qualified. The nature

of the subject and the serious lacunae in documentation make these individuals the ultimate repository for parts of this history. Nevertheless, the spoken word has been confirmed by the written whenever possible. When this was not possible and when the spoken assertion was in itself remarkable, its unconfirmed nature has been noted.

VI *Outline of the Work*

Following the periodization indicated above, this work is divided into two parts. The first begins in 1932 and ends in 1940. It explores the early efforts toward labor unification and legislative solutions to the country's social and economic crises. As will be seen, in many respects significant progress was made in achieving these objectives by 1940, although the actual culmination of these processes did not occur until September of 1943. Since so much of organized labor activity was directed toward the state, the state's response to labor efforts is an important part of this work. In the decade of the 1930s, the state underwent both ideological and structural transformation. These transformations, in part a response to labor's demands, facilitated a significant expansion of both the juridical and the administrative reach of state authority. This expansion accelerated throughout the entire period under examination and was unbroken by the rise and fall of the wartime alliance or the civil war of 1948.

Since the labor movement was under the control of the CPCR, it is appropriate to ask how the CPCR viewed the process of state expansion. This requires an evaluation of the similarities of state and CPCR policies on labor and their trajectory through the decade. An additional factor was the demands expressed directly by labor. The first part of this work shows how by the end of the 1930s the demands of the CPCR, the demands of labor, and the objectives of the state were in alignment.

The first part of this work will also explore the means by which the CPCR-led labor movement achieved unification. Although labor unions did not achieve unified national representation until 1943, by 1939 with the formation of a national shoemakers' union, the process was clearly outlined and significantly developed.

The second part of this work begins in 1940 with an in-depth examination of the tangible results of the efforts of the 1930s. However, it would be incorrect to think of this process as a simple continuation of past policies. World War II caused fundamental shifts in the balance of power inside the country. Chapter III will explore those shifts from a single, overriding vantage point: how they facilitated labor's obtaining direct access to the centers of national power. In 1943 organized labor, through the CPCR/PVP alliance with the church and the Calderón government, was inside the decision making apparatus of the state. This

unprecedented proximity to state power was as vital to the country's future as it was short-lived. By 1945, political forces in the country again shifted, and though the unique wartime alliance still stood, it was visibly fragmenting.

In the labor arena, regardless of the doctrinal logic of the church-led labor confederation, its emergence increasingly served to divide the Costa Rican labor movement.¹² This fragmentation of the wartime alliance will be examined in Chapters IV and V.

Chapter IV will examine the conception, rise, and growth of the CCTRN and the growing tension between it and the Catholic church. It will also examine an ironic juxtaposition of forces that saw the CCTRN grow more autonomous at precisely the time that the CTCR was being drawn into ever tighter compliance with PVP directives. Due to the personalities of the leaders involved and the burgeoning Cold War climate, the two labor confederations found themselves on a collision course.

As was true for the CTCR, the CCTRN was more influential than its numbers would have indicated. This was reflected in its proximity to political influence and the capability of its leadership. But the political influence and the effective leadership of these movements obscured their institutional and demographic weaknesses. Schisms in the ruling alliance and in the labor movement, exacerbated by continued scarcity of goods, spiraling inflation, and

heated accusations of electoral fraud, produced a grave crisis. This crisis was particularly disastrous for the two dominant partners in the coalition, the Calderón-Picado National Republican Party (PRN) and the PVP. Chapter V explores the crises of the Picado years and details the structural crisis in the PVP.

The final chapter traces the international connections and affiliations of the CTCR and the CCTRN. There are a number of reasons why this examination is necessary. First, it is in the very nature of ideas of labor organization to transverse national borders. The early efforts towards labor organization at the turn of the century in Costa Rica (as elsewhere), were influenced by the ideas of anarchism, anarcho-syndicalism, socialism, bolshevism and reformism. In the period under discussion, these efforts were most directly influenced by the ideas of Communism and the doctrines of Christian social justice. In addition, the small size of Costa Rica and its key geographic position next to the Panama Canal (particularly during the second world war and its aftermath) intensified the involvement of international actors and thus their impact on the country's labor movement. To what extent international forces or domestic forces ultimately determined Costa Rica's development is a difficult, and to a degree a rhetorical, question. Nations are never independent of outside currents. Much of the Costa Rican experience in the 1930s and 1940s

can be attributed to the world events of economic depression and war (both hot and cold). However, the way in which the dislocations were felt and ultimately resolved must be understood within the unique Costa Rican political and social landscape.

Despite this qualification, both CTCR and CCTRN involvement with international labor organizations was significant and deserves exploration. International influence is a two-way street, and an effort will be made to indicate the effect the two wings of the Costa Rican labor movement had on labor movements elsewhere in Latin America, particularly in Central America. Finally, the closing chapter will offer some conclusions on the issues and questions raised through the course of this work.

Notes

1. These were the shoemakers' strike in San José, the sugar workers' strike in Turrialba, and the banana workers' strike in Limón. These strikes will be discussed in Chapter II, below.
2. The CPR formally changed its name to *Partido Vanguardia Popular* (PVP) after June of 1943.
3. For an excellent examination of the racial and ethnic policies employed by United Fruit to manage its labor force throughout Central America and Panama see, Phillipe Bourgois, Ethnicity at Work: Divided Labor on a Central American Banana Plantation (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).
4. The banana workers and the banana industry have been widely examined. The more noted works include: Jeffrey Caspar Casper, Limón: 1880-1940: Un estudio de la industria bananera en Costa Rica (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1979); Víctor Hugo Acuña, La Huelga Bananera de 1934, (San José: CENAP-CEPAS, 1984); Marielos Aguilar Hernández, Carlos Luis Fallas: Su época y sus luchas (San José: Editorial Porvenir, 1983); and Carlos Luis Fallas, Mamita Yunai (Madrid: Castellote, 1976). See also citations in Chapter II, Section 1c, below.
5. The civil war in 1948 overthrew the wartime alliance established between the Calderón government, the Catholic Church and the Communist Party in 1943. I have chosen to refer to the uprising led by José Figueres in 1948 as a civil war, not a revolution or *golpe d'estado* for two reasons. First, both sides in the conflict, the government and the opposition, had deep indigenous roots. Second, though Figueres came to power with a developed social program, it is the judgement of this work that this program (and its implementation) was marked by historical continuity, not revolutionary upheaval. In the same vein, it is the profound content of the Figueres program that distinguishes his uprising from a limited political *golpe*.
6. These characterizations are from Theodore S. Creedman, "Political Development of Costa Rica, 1936-1944: Politics of an Emerging Welfare State in Patriarchal Society" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1971), 78; and Jacobo Schifter, La Fase Oculta de la Guerra Civil en Costa Rica (San José: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana, 1979), 132-136. Schifter uses the phrase authoritarian corporativism.
7. Most notably, the CPR followed the Soviet line during the period immediately after the announcement of the German-Soviet non-aggression pact in September 1939.

8. *Solidarismo* is another ideology of union organization. Its founder, Alberto Marten, served as Minister of Finance in the Figueres Junta. However, as a labor movement, it did not gain currency until the late 1970s early 1980s, when under the administration of Luis Alberto Monge *solidarista* organizations were granted legal recognition. The core of the approach was to replace class conflict with class collaboration through the mechanism of employer-worker funds. These funds were to serve as the source for worker benefits and as organization-limited credit unions. In exchange for the employer's contributions workers renounced the right to strike. The spread of these organizations has alarmed many in the labor movement in Costa Rica. The collaborationist vision has been subject to many abuses on the employer side, and its utility as an alternative to traditional labor unions is being questioned. For a recent exposé of *solidarista* organizations, particularly in the textile industry see, The Tico Times (San José), March 1, 1990.

9. The political alliances culminated in 1943 with the formation of the *Bloque de Victoria*, by the ruling *Partido Republicana Nacional*, the Catholic church, and the newly renamed Communist Party, the *Partido Vanguardia Popular*. It was this alliance that ensured the passage of the Labor Code of August 1943.

10. Roger Churnside, Formación de la Fuerza laboral costarricense, (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1985), and "Organización de la Producción por Mercado, de Fuerza de Trabajo y Políticas Laborales en Costa Rica, 1864-1950," (San José: Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales, UCR #38, n.d.).

11. In this regard it is striking to note the almost complete absence of congressional records for the second half of the 1940s. No such lacunae exist for the 1930s. In general Costa Rican social scientists have not enjoyed access to U.S. Legation/Embassy documents housed in the United States National Archives.

12. This is true even if it is limited to an assessment of the confederation's political influence through the effectiveness of its leadership, principally Father Núñez. Nevertheless, the CCTRN was able to mobilize upwards of 60,000 individuals for its October 1947 demonstration, a demonstration which was held in polar opposition to the CTRC and can be viewed as an immediate foreshadow of the 1948 civil conflict.

Part I

Chapter I

The State and the Working Class: 1932-1939

Unlike other countries in Central America, Costa Rican politics have been characterized by regular elections, peaceful transferences of power, and conciliatory processes.¹ To what extent has this type of discourse marked the relationships between workers and the government? In order to explore this question this chapter will evaluate the state as a vehicle for change by looking at the relation between 1) proposed legislation and expressions of popular will, 2) proposed and enacted legislation, and 3) enacted legislation and its implementation.² To do this it is necessary to examine the interaction between Costa Rica's political parties, labor organizations, and the governmental structure.

It is a fundamental thesis of this work that the responsiveness of the legislature was the key determinant of the political orientation of Costa Rica's labor movement. Throughout the decade of the 1930s, a wide perception developed within the working class that the conditions of their material lives could best be improved through legislative activity. The perception directed the labor movement toward constitutional reform and away from

revolutionary activity. This was a situation unique in Central America and was attributable to both the country's democratic traditions and the evolutionary nature of its Communist Party.

1. The State and the Communist Party 1932 to 1939³

The parameters of the debate over labor's rights and protections emerged out of the dialogue between the state and the CPRC in the 1930s. After 1934, the CPRC had emerged as the progenitor and advocate of an undivided, labor movement. The crushing impact of the world depression radicalized workers and worsened worker-employer relations. The CPRC exploited the deteriorating economic situation and played a leading role in the important banana and shoemaker strikes in 1934. In addition to this many of the individuals in the reformist movement, which dominated labor organization in the 1920s, relinquished their labor affiliations to enter government.⁴ However, though the movement was undivided, it was not integrated into provincial or national organizations. Accordingly during the 1930s the formation of a national confederation became a central objective of the CPRC and its labor associations.⁵

a. The Nature of CPRC control of the labor movement

The majority of workers belonging to the various labor organizations in the 1930s and 1940s were not Communists.

The CPR's membership never exceeded 3,000.⁶ At its height in 1945, membership in labor organizations (under the influence of the party) was between 20,000 and 30,000, or slightly over 8 percent of the economically active population (EAP).⁷ If one assumes a one-to-one correlation between rank and file and party and union membership, CPR presence in its own labor movement was no more than 10 percent; by extension its overall presence in the working class was slight, around 1 percent. Reflecting its small numerical presence, the CPR repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of militancy and the ignorance of large segments of the working class population. The party made a sharp distinction between militants and workers and required significantly lower degrees of political awareness from union members.⁸ This fit with the CPR analysis of Costa Rica as a "semi-feudal" economy that held much of its working population under the yoke of paternalistic relations, and inhibited the development modern national economy.⁹ For these reasons how, where, when, and to what extent the CPR altered its program to conform to the expressed will of the working class needs to be examined.¹⁰ First, however, a brief overview of the composition of the labor force is required.

b. The Composition of the Labor Force

Examination of tables 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 reveals three clear characteristics of the labor force: it was predominately agricultural, male, and Costa Rican. The Costa Rican composition of the labor force was important. Workers were citizens; they had access to, and, as pro-labor legislation was enacted, protection from the country's political apparatus. Strike activity, especially in the Central Valley, did not carry the risk of disenfranchisement or deportation. The sole exception to this was found in the province of Limón. There, as will be seen, Jamaican and particularly Nicaraguan workers faced the prospect of deportation for political activity. This was also the case for Chinese and Italian railroad workers at the turn of the century.¹¹

In 1927 the EAP was 162,172, out of a total population of 471,524, or 34.39 percent. Fifty-six percent of the total population was between the ages of 14 and 65 and over 83 percent of the population was defined as rural.¹²

TABLE No. 1.1
Economically Active Population by Sector (1927)
(Percentages)

SECTOR	% of EAP	% Male	%Female	% Costa Rican
Agriculture	63.7	99.3	.7	88.6
Mining	.2	100.0	0.0	87.2
Industry	12.4	81.4	18.6	84.8
Communications	2.3	93.2	6.8	87.3
Commerce	3.3	93.2	6.8	74.1
Public Administration	5.1	67.0	33.0	n/a
Professionals	2.2	83.2	16.8	n/a
Services	6.3	34.4	65.6	n/a
Other Occupations	3.2	69.9	30.1	n/a
Unemployed	.8	54.6	45.4	n/a

Source: *Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Resumen de Censos de Mayo de 1927*, (San José) Microfilm rolls 4 and 11.

What is notable about the data in the above table aside from the predictable concentration of agricultural laborers, is the high presence of women in the service sector and in the ranks of the unemployed. Women also dominated (76.7 percent) the teaching profession.

Agricultural Workers

The labor force was divided into two groups, agricultural workers and artisanal/industrial workers. The most economically significant of these occupations are listed in Tables No. 1.2 and No. 1.4.

TABLE No. 1.2

Selected Occupation by Sector (1927)
(Agriculture)*

Occupation	% Sector	% of EAP	% Male	% Costa Rican
General producers	19.8	12.6	99.9	91.3
Banana cultivators	1.5	.9	100.0	38.6**
Coffee cultivators	6.7	4.3***	98.6	98.0
Sugar cultivators	1.4	.9	99.6	97.4
Grain cultivators	2.9	1.8	99.9	n/a
Day workers	66.5	42.3	99.1	87.9
Cattlemen/cowhands	.7	.4	100.0	n/a
Other occupations***	.5	.5	n/a	n/a
Totals	100.0	63.7	99.3	88.6

* In total, there were 17 different occupations listed under the agricultural grouping. All those with a more than 250 workers are listed above.

** There is no breakdown by nationality for 10.5 percent of the work force involved in banana cultivation. The figure of 38.6 percent pertains to the 89.5 percent for which there are statistics.

*** This figure is misleading because it excludes day workers, who comprised the largest segment of the coffee work force.

Source: Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Resumen de Censos de Mayo de 1927, (San José) Microfilm rolls 4 and 11.

Unfortunately, the 1927 census did not differentiate between employers and employees in its occupational breakdown. Only *jornaleros* clearly referred to day workers; however, this classification was not divided by product. Day

workers were by far the largest group of agricultural workers (or workers of any kind), and they were the poorest paid and least protected. Because this group was not categorized by product made, it is not possible to determine with specificity the total work force for the various agricultural sectors. Certainly, coffee production, which was the largest export crop, absorbed the greatest number of workers.

Toward the end of the 1930s, the Institute for the Defense of Coffee¹³ placed the total work force engaged in coffee production at slightly under 28,000 (or 27 percent of the total agricultural work force). Men overwhelmingly dominated the cultivation of coffee. However, it was women who sorted the beans (*escogedores de café*) and were the worst paid of all coffee workers.¹⁴ Women regularly occupied the lowest paying jobs and constituted the fastest growing segment of the work force during the period examined in this study. Between 1927 and 1950 the presence of women in the work force increased by 143.37 percent.¹⁵

Foreign Workers

Foreign labor was concentrated in banana production in the Atlantic province of Limón, where blacks from Jamaica and Nicaragua were heavily represented. Outside Limón, the agricultural labor force was predominantly homogeneous. If Jamaican and Nicaraguan migration to Costa Rica's banana

enclave were discounted, the presence of foreign workers in the total agricultural sector would drop well under 10 percent.¹⁶ In all, foreigners comprised 9.4 percent of the total Costa Rican population and about 12 percent of the EAP.

TABLE No. 1.3

Foreign Population by Country of Origin (1927)

Country*	Number	% Foreign Population	% Total Population
Colombia	1,243	2.8	.3
U.S.	672	1.5	.1
Nicaragua	10,658	24.0	2.3
Panama	2,877	6.4	.6
Jamaica	17,245	38.8	3.7
Other British Colonies	842	1.8	.2
Germany	685	1.5	.1
Spain	2,513	5.6	.5
Italy	1,342	3.0	.3
China	693	1.5	.1
Other Nations**	5,570	12.5	1.2
Totals	44,340	100.0	9.4

* Only countries represented by more than 500 nationals are listed.

** Other nations included non-British European colonies for a total of 41 countries.

Source: *Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Resumen de Censos de Mayo de 1927*, (San José) Microfilm rolls 4 and 11.

Many of the priests were Spaniards, prompting charges by leaders of the labor movement and the CPR that the church was falangist. These charges were particularly

intense during the Spanish Civil War.

Artisanal/Industrial Workers

The industrial and light manufacturing labor force comprised 12.4 percent of the EAP. Among the occupations listed in Table 1.4, the shoemakers, bakers, printers, tailors, carpenters and cabinet makers would spearhead the union movement. As is shown below, statistically these workers were a small percentage of the total work force; however, the urban setting, a relatively high level of education, the circulation of ideologies of worker organization, and the presence of a (small) number of politically active foreigners contributed to the burgeoning of a class consciousness and a union movement among these occupations.¹⁷ Outside of the banana growing regions, the presence of foreigners in the labor force declined sharply. Nevertheless it was larger in the (urban) artisanal/industrial sector (15.2 percent) than in the agricultural sector. (11.4 percent).¹⁸

TABLE No. 1.4

Selected Occupations by Sector* (1927)
(Industry)

Occupation	Number	% Sector	% of EAP	% Male	%Costa Rican
Cabinet Makers	560	2.7	.3	99.8	88.7
Carpenters	3,700	18.3	2.3	100.0	85.1
Cigar Makers	831	4.1	.5	9.6	94.8
Dress Makers	2,129	10.5	1.3	0.0	n/a
Painters	419	2.0	.2	100.0	83.2
Printers	346	1.7	.2	96.8	87.5
Masons	1,367	6.7	.8	100.0	91.5
Mechanics	1,186	5.8	.7	100.0	80.0
Bakers	1,444	7.1	.8	85.8	83.7
Tailors	1,127	5.5	.6	98.4	77.3
Shoemakers	2,212	10.9	1.4	98.7	84.6
Other					
<u>Occupations</u>	<u>4,813</u>	<u>23.9</u>	<u>2.9</u>	<u>n/a</u>	<u>n/a</u>
Totals	20,134	100.0	12.0	81.4	84.8

* The 1927 census lists 56 different occupations under the industry grouping. All those with more than 340 workers are listed by occupation. All others are grouped in the category "other occupations."

Source: *Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Resumen de Censos de Mayo de 1927*, (San José) Microfilm rolls 4 and 11.

Women were concentrated in two occupations in the industrial workplace: dressmaking and cigar production (Table No. 1.4). Workers in these occupations, and also in cigar manufacturing, received extremely low pay. In addition there is evidence that the representation (14.2 percent) of women in baking was attributable to employers' ability to pay women less than men for equal work.¹⁹

c. Precursors to the CPR

The Communist Party founded in 1931, represented the culmination of various political and labor movements whose roots can be traced to the 19th century.²⁰ Six dominant ideologies influenced Costa Rican labor organization from the turn of the century to the Figueres uprising in 1948. These were mutualism (1870s-1900), anarcho-syndicalism (1900-1920), socialism and reformism (1920-1930), Communism (1930-1948); and Catholicism (1943-1948).

The initial forms of labor organization were mutual aid societies providing accident insurance and death benefits to their members. The hey day of mutualism was between 1889-1894 with the first of these societies founded in 1876 in San José.²¹ Despite being overshadowed by more ideologically charged forms of labor organization, these aid societies remained in existence well into the twentieth century. For example, in 1932 a petition approved by the Congress protected the funds of the *Socorros Mutuos de Empleados de Comercio* from impoundment by creditors. This society, with 587 members, claimed to have distributed throughout its 17 year existence ₡90,000 (\$22,500) in illness subsidies and ₡10,000 (\$2,500) in death benefits.²²

Major strike activity first occurred towards the end of the nineteenth century. There was an unsuccessful strike among Chinese railroad workers in 1884, which was followed in 1888 by a railroad strike of 2,000 recently arrived

Italian immigrants. The latter strike successfully compelled the railroad company, *Compañía Keith*, to honor the contractual wage rates.²³ The first major industrial strike by native Costa Rican workers occurred among telegraph workers in 1883.²⁴

The last decade of the nineteenth century saw a surge in electorally-oriented labor organizations. These organizations received an important impetus from the 1893 *Carta Pastoral* of Bishop Bernardo Augusto Thiel Hoffman, which condemned concentrations of wealth and called for a just salary for workers and peasants. Thiel's *pastoral*, which foreshadowed the efforts of Archbishop Víctor Sanabria Martínez²⁵ fifty years later, spurred the formation of the *Partido Unión Católica* in the 1890s.²⁶ It also placed him in direct conflict with the liberal government of Próspero Fernández (1882-1885), who felt that Thiel's doctrines were "in grave error," particularly in advocating that the government should set minimum wages and in "inciting" workers to organize.²⁷ Combined with these efforts to promote pro-labor legislation was pressure to expand the suffrage. This pressure culminated in the passage of universal manhood suffrage in 1902.²⁸

The turn of the century witnessed a surge in the influence of anarcho-syndicalism. In 1903 bakers in the *Sociedad El Ejemplo*, led by the Spanish anarchist, Juan Vera, waged a bitter strike, which was repressed by the

government of Ascención Esquivel Ibarra (1902-1906), who then disbanded the union.²⁹ In 1912 Omar Dengo, a self-professed anarchist, along with other young intellectuals, founded the *Centro de Estudios Sociales Germinal*.³⁰ By 1913 the *Centro Estudios* had evolved into the *Confederación General de Trabajadores* (CGT). The CGT quickly grew into the principal labor organization of the time and was responsible for the first celebration of May First as the International Day of Labor in Costa Rica. The founders of the CGT were the intellectuals, writers, and educators, Carmen Lyra, Omar Dengo, and Joaquín García Monge, and the workers Félix Quesada, and Gerardo Vega.³¹ With the formation of the CGT the labor movement expanded its concerns beyond strictly economic matters.³²

This was not the case before 1914. Of the twenty-six strikes between 1874 and 1914 recorded by Mario Oliva Medina,³³ twenty were related directly to salary disputes, and in over half the strikes the workers involved were foreigners. This indicates that in the early period the transformation of worker's mutual aid societies into trade unions was abetted by immigrant workers. This was the case even though of the thirty worker organizations listed by Oliva in existence between 1909 and 1914, twenty-three were *Sociedades* or *Clubs*, indicating that the name of the organizations stayed the same while their objectives and ideological orientation changed. This was particularly true

for the tailors' and bakers' associations.

The short-lived progressive atmosphere of the Alfredo González Flores Administration (1914-1917), further encouraged labor development. González attempted to promote national economic development, and small scale agricultural productivity through state-sponsored financial measures. (In many respects these programs foreshadowed state interventionist policies that followed the Great Depression and were intensified during the Second World War.³⁴) The administration established *Juntas Rurales de Crédito*, the International Bank of Costa Rica, and imposed a land tax.³⁵ These measures, ended by the Tinoco coup d'etat in 1917, attempted to restructure the country's economy in response to the disruption World War I caused in the country's export markets. In addition, the short-lived Constitution of 1917 placed responsibility on the state to guard the living conditions of the working class.³⁶

Socialist influence in the labor movement began with the establishment of the *Centro Socialista de Costa Rica*, founded in 1919. Under the direction of Dr. Anciento Montero, the *Centro* introduced the ideas of the Bolshevik Revolution into Costa Rica. However, the *Centro's* proclamation that it would work to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat caused a split inside the labor movement and the country's progressive politicians between those who advocated electoral/reformist solutions

and others who supported revolutionary change. This split would characterize the labor movement until its leadership was assumed by the CPCR in 1934. After that, the tension between constitutional reform and revolution would be resolved (in the favor of constitutional reform) inside the party hierarchy.

In 1923 Jorge Volio, a priest, formed the *Partido Reformista* (PR). The PR had a strong electoral orientation³⁷ and argued that the broad inclusion of Costa Ricans into the political process through the vote (and the use of referenda) would facilitate the solution of many of the country's social problems. Volio promoted the establishment of a comprehensive workmen's compensation system for both urban and rural workers. The PR, which advocated recognition of the Soviet Union,³⁸ was anti-imperialist and advocated nationalization of the country's wealth, the development of its commercial infrastructure, and the parcelization of large, unused tracts of land. In addition, its founding program advocated municipal autonomy, direct taxation, religious tolerance, expansion of the public elementary school system, and the establishment of a national university system.³⁹ To strengthen the party's popular base, Volio sought to incorporate the CGT within PR ranks and subordinate it to the party's electoral objectives.

The CGT had grown into the country's dominant labor organization after a successful series of strikes which

began in February, 1920. These strikes, led by the carpenters' and cabinetmakers' guilds, resulted in the establishment of the eight-hour work-day.⁴⁰ However, the growth of the CGT presaged a split in its ranks between anarchist and reformist tendencies, and rendered it incapable of reaching a consensus on whether it should actively participate in electoral politics or work for a revolutionary uprising. This split ultimately resulted in the absorption of the CGT by the *Partido Reformista*, and to the consternation of more radical forces, the dissolution of the CGT as an autonomous labor organization.

To replace the void left by the dissolution of the CGT, the *Federación Obrera Costarricense* (FOC) was formed.⁴¹ The skilled artisans inside this Federation would subsequently form the core (with the banana workers) of the Communist-led labor organizations at the close of the 1930s. In 1927 the *Liga Anti-imperialista de las Américas*, opposing what it defined as U.S. imperialism, was founded with the principal objective of promoting solidarity with Sandino in Nicaragua, the Revolution in Mexico, and representatives of the international workers' struggle, such as Sacco and Vanzetti. Almost at the same time and with the same anti-imperialist concerns, the *Sociedad Aprista* was founded by Joaquín García Monge.⁴²

In the same year and arising out of the same tradition as the FOC, the *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT) was

founded under the guidance of Gonzálo Montero Berry. Subsequently, the leadership⁴³ of the UGT became involved with students from the Escuela de Derecho, among them Jaime Cerdas, Ricardo Coto Conde, Manuel Mora, and Luís Carballo, and in 1929 reformulated itself as the *Asociación Revolucionaria de Cultura Obrera* (ARCO). Both Gonzalo Montero Berry and Joaquín García Monge were instrumental in this process.⁴⁴

ARCO was the immediate precursor of the CPR, which was founded on June 16, 1931. Also involved in the young party were educators Luisa González and Carmen Lyra. With an initial number of about 500 militants the CPR was comprised of educators, law students, intellectuals, anti-imperialists, and workers.⁴⁵ The new party dedicated itself to confronting the crises that beset Costa Rica by bringing an "intense spirit of justice and liberty to all men." It then declared itself to be the only viable alternative to the existing order and the failed philosophies of socialism and reformism. Three groups directly contributed to the founding of the CPR and the subsequent labor movement that it would direct. These were artisanal workers (principally shoemakers), lawyers (and law students) from the Central Valley,⁴⁶ and banana workers on the Atlantic Coast.

Upon its founding relations between the CPR and Volio's *Partido Reformista* were tense. Manuel Mora, the head of the new party, accused Volio of having co-opted the

workers' movement during the 1920s in order to advance his electoral ambitions. Mora's attacked the *Partido Refomista* along three lines: Volio's demagoguery; his defense of both the existing state structure and the "sacred principle of private property;" and his betrayal of the working class by taking the "magnificent" labor organization, the CGT, and transforming it into an electoral vehicle.⁴⁷

Upon its founding the young party issued a Maximum and Minimum Program. In the preamble, the party called for the abolition of private property and the socialization of the means of production. However, realizing that this would spark ruinous intervention by the metropolitan powers, specifically in the United States and in England, the CPCR called for the following of their Minimum Program.

The fear of rightist reaction, either domestic or international, continually prompted the CPCR and its later manifestation the *Partido Vanguardia Popular* (PVP) to modify its tactics and objectives. This was true for the entire period 1932-1948. Even after the PVP-supported government was overthrown by José Figueres in 1948, PVP leadership feared rightist reaction. In an extraordinary letter regarding the Figueres revolution PVP leader Mora wrote to the Archbishop of Costa Rica, Víctor Sanabria: "I think... the social and political economy policies that the new government has adopted are bad, more for being well

inspired. These young ones are playing with fire. They are acting without knowledge of our reality. They are going to produce a great economic crisis ... that will leave the country in [the hand's] of the extreme right."⁴⁸

The Minimum Program⁴⁹ was divided into three sections: economic, political and administrative. Its economic section called for the nationalization of the subsoil; state control of public utilities, the revision of contracts with foreign companies, the elimination of *latifundos*; the expropriation and division of uncultivated state lands among poor peasants; and the construction of a national system of transport.

The sections on political defense and social planning directly addressed labor issues. It called for the establishment of minimum wages tied to the cost of living and under the control of worker and peasant councils; the creation of a social security system under the auspices of the state for the unemployed, injured, ill, aged, and pregnant; the promulgation of laws protecting the right to unionize and the right to strike; the regulation of women and child labor on the basis of equal pay for equal work (this was part of a larger effort directed at constitutionally reforming the place of women in Costa Rican society); the provision of clean, inexpensive housing for workers; and the hygienization of the country. In addition, the party pledged to struggle against social diseases,

alcoholism, and drug abuse (drogamania) through education and the suppression of the National Liquor Factory.

Finally, the party's position on the role of the state would undergo the greatest transformation. Its calls for the reduction of governmental bureaucracy and the promulgation of a law that would prohibit civil servants from earning higher salaries than workers would be reversed. There are obvious parallels between this program and the Mexican constitution of 1917, reflecting the important influence Mexico had on the CPR/PVP throughout its legal existence (1932-1948)⁵⁰.

d. 1932: In the Wake of the Great Depression

The CPR was founded in June 1931 in the wake of the Great Depression. By 1931 the collapse of the world capitalist economy heralded by the stock market crash in New York in 1929 had hit Costa Rica with full force. Costa Rica, like all countries whose primary source of revenue was exports, suffered a crippling shortage of funds. Customs duties, which historically contributed between 45 percent and 50 percent to total government revenue fell dramatically.

TABLE No. 1.5

Coffee as a Percentage of the Value of Total Exports
Various Years 1927-1948

Harvest	Value*	W in Ks**	Av.p/k\$	% of Exports
1926-27	10,611,178	16,153,980	.657	58.7
1929-30	10,419,445	23,536,645	.510	n/a
1930-31	10,115,640	23,014,687	.439	70.8
1931-32	5,388,595	18,499,038	.291	63.2
1932-33	7,935,365	23,901,702	.332	74.6
1933-34	5,938,740	n/a	.380	68.3
1935-36	5,089,961	21,326,158	.238	57.7
1937-38	4,937,870	n/a	n/a	48.7
1938-39	4,644,301	n/a	n/a	51.1
1939-40	3,989,310	n/a	n/a	53.3
1940-41	4,994,411	n/a	n/a	48.8
1941-42	6,044,286	20,672,426	.292	57.2
1944-45	7,488,761	21,581,443	.347	64.5
1946-47	10,741,665	18,361,820	.585	47.9
1947-48	10,901,515	16,961,515	.643	34.2

* In US\$

W in Ks=Weight in kilos; Av.p/k= average price per kilo

Source: *Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Anuarios Estadísticos* (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, years cited).

Coffee was by far the largest revenue generating commodity, accounting for 70.8 percent of the value of all exports in 1931.⁵¹ Income from the London coffee market, which accounted for the approximately 75 percent of all Costa Rica's coffee purchased, declined a precipitous 40 percent from 1930 to 1932. The overall decline from 1925 to 1932 was a disastrous 48 percent (Table 1.16).

TABLE No. 1.6

Variations and Index of Coffee Income in London

Year	Index	Variation from Previous Year
1925	100	--
1926	96	-4
1927	97	+1
1928	94	-3
1929	88	-6
1930	82	-6
1931	52	-30
1932	42	-10
1933	42	-0
1934	48	+6

Source: Botey and Cisneros, La Fundación Del Partido Comunista, 83.⁵²

As indicated in the discussion regarding the González Flores Administration, Costa Rica experienced a similar shock with the closure of the European coffee market during World War I. Governmental efforts to rectify the fiscal situation at that time through the imposition of a land tax were ineffective and ultimately collapsed with the coup d'etat of Federico Tinoco in 1917. It has been argued that it was precisely this attempt to tax the landed oligarchy and extend credit to small producers through the creation of a state bank that led to the overthrow of the González Flores government.⁵³

The failure of the tax reform kept the country burdened with significant fiscal imbalances. By the end of 1931, the country's total debt was US\$22.6 million, up from US\$18.5

million in 1927.⁵⁴ The bulk of this, caused by a two-and-one-half fold increase in the external debt, led to widespread calls for a debt moratorium.⁵⁵ However, until the collapse of the export market, the immediate effects of the fiscal imbalances were mitigated by the extension of two loans by the U.S., in 1924 and 1928, totaling US\$12 million.⁵⁶

The immediate social effect in Costa Rica of the collapse of the world coffee market was an increase in unemployment. Out of a national population of .53 million, 8,863 were unemployed. Adjusting the 1927 census EAP figures yields a 1932 unemployment rate slightly under 5 percent.⁵⁷ However, this does not take into account under-employment or concentrations of unemployment. Of the 8,863 unemployed, 8,449 were in agricultural enterprises and related industries, raising unemployment in the sector to slightly under 7 percent. Of this, 6,705 of the unemployed were agricultural workers in the coffee regions of the Central Valley, raising unemployment in the coffee sector to almost 25 percent.⁵⁸ The concentration of the unemployed, the technical limitations of the census, and the non-inclusion of the under-employed, contributed to an understatement of the magnitude of the crisis. The situation was exacerbated by the policies of austerity enacted through salary reductions by governmental agencies and large agricultural enterprises.⁵⁹

The situation continued to deteriorate. Before the founding of the CPR in January 1931, the UGT demanded immediate relief for the "unbearable" situation of the unemployed by shifting the resources of the country away from the wealthy to the workers.⁶⁰ As the crisis intensified in 1932, angry workers, facing the growing threat of impoverishment, demonstrated in July in San José. Immediately following the demonstration, *Partido Reformista* Deputies Julio Padilla Romero and Carlos María Jiménez Ortiz⁶¹ submitted a plan to authorize the investment of a minimum of ₡200,000 (\$50,000) to create public works projects. Fearing the repetition of what they referred to as a second episode of "pseudo Communism," the deputies characterized the actions of the unemployed as arising from "great necessity before which the Congress should not be found in fault for inaction" and described their proposal as a "work of fraternity and social tranquillity."⁶²

The "first" manifestation of the "pseudo-Communism" referred to by the Deputies was a workers' rally on the streets of the capital at the end of May 1932, which erupted into an open confrontation between unemployed workers and police. The demonstration had followed a series of well attended meetings organized by the CPR. Immediately after the confrontation, party leaders asserted that they desired to find peaceful solutions to the problems confronting the country. In an interview to the mainstream La Prensa Libre,

Manuel Mora, the head of the young party gave the following explanation of the CPCR's position:

We are not looking for an alteration nor much less a bloody overthrow of the [existing] order as many believe. No, our system is very different; we struggle for our ideas, but to repeat, inside the laws that govern us."⁶³

Regardless of Mora's reassurances, there was fear among congressional deputies and organs of the press that continued demonstrations would lead to violence. In the minds of many was the bloody civil strife taking place in El Salvador. The year 1932 witnessed the *matanza*, the slaughtering of 30,000 Salvadoreans by General Hernández Martínez (1932-1944) in suppression of a Communist-influenced uprising.⁶⁴ This contributed to the mainstream consensus that unemployment problems must be addressed immediately and that all future Communist Party meetings must be banned.⁶⁵

The first phase in the government's response to the crisis entailed the investment of ¢1 million (US\$220,000) in public works projects, principally road building and the construction of schools, hospitals and administrative buildings. These works were to be funded by income generated from the government's monopoly on gasoline, a monopoly established by Law No. 35 on March 30, 1931.⁶⁶ In January 1932 the Executive was authorized by the Congress to spend an additional ¢6,000,000 in a similar manner. The second

phase was an attempt to control the cost and supply of primary necessities. Hoarding or the withdrawal of these goods, in whatever form, was prohibited and punishable by fines.⁶⁷

This initial governmental response, though limited, was significant. Although the actions of the influential deputies from San José, Carlos María Jiménez and, particularly, Julio Padilla, were in defense of powerful coffee interests,⁶⁸ state responsiveness to the crisis created an environment in which calls for governmental intervention were perceived as viable and realistic activities. This had important consequences for the future development of the country's labor movement.

The government's actions also contributed to rural to urban migration. Without prospects for work or the means to ride out the crises, throughout the decade of the 1930s rural workers began to migrate toward the province of San José and the toward the capital. There were several reasons for this. Rural conditions remained depressed rural, and as the government began to respond to the crisis through state funded public work programs (the pavement of the *Paseo Colón* in San José and the construction the National Archives), work became relatively more available in capital. In addition, as the government began to subsidize imports of rice, beans, and grains and place them for sale in the San José market, food became more accessible in the capital.⁶⁹

Finally, after the promulgation of the minimum wage law in December 1934, government wage/price councils were seated in provincial capitals where they had their greatest impact.⁷⁰

TABLE No. 1.7

Population of San José (Province)
and Migration to the Capital

Year	Population of Prov. San José	% Increase Population (Province)	% Increase Population (city)
1927	153,183	n/a	n/a
1931	171,472	11.9	n/a
1936	192,513	12.2	11.3
1942	223,238	15.9	16.1
1945	242,581	8.6	9.6
1947	262,894	8.3	10.6
1949	278,280	5.8	6.1

Source: *Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Anuarios Estadísticos* (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, years cited).

Though not as dramatic, the populations of the cities of Alajuela, Heredia and Cartago experienced growth between 1931 and 1936 of 10.49 percent, 9.71 percent, and 11.02 percent, respectively.⁷¹ Overall in 1927 83 percent of the population lived in rural areas. By 1950 this percentage had declined to 33.5 percent, as defined in the 1950 census.⁷²

After these government initiatives, a series of labor-related proposals came before the Congress from both the reformist and Communist political camps. An examination of these proposals will reveal the degree of consensus and

dissension among two of the country's political factions and the state.

e. The Reformist Proposal

The proposal was submitted by *Unión Obrera Pro-Trabajo*, a worker organization associated with the *Partido Reformista*. Introduced by Deputy Jorge Volio, the bill aimed at alleviating the suffering of the country's urban and rural working class populations. In the preface its writers justified the bill's similarities, not in size but in orientation, to the five year plan of the Soviet Union. This, they argued, was required by the magnitude of the crisis confronting Costa Rica. The authors gave voice to the "resentment that [was] ferment[ing] among the proletarian masses," caused by the indifference leaders of the republic showed before the "great misery whipping the working class." A misery so profound that it was "undermining the health and morality of the people." The preface concluded with the admonition: "Already we know that homes without bread procreate prostitution, robbery, and all that degrades human dignity."⁷³

This dismal assessment was borne out by government reports. Prostitution practiced by minors was prevalent, especially in San José where special hotels existed for this purpose. Hospitals and clinics in San José recorded extremely high rates of syphilis and gonorrhoea in men,

women, and children, with an alarming 60 percent of infant deaths caused by syphilis.⁷⁴ Similarly, both mortality and infant mortality rates were high and showed increases from previous years. For the period 1883-1886 the mortality rate (as measured against total population) was 2.2 percent, and the infant mortality rate was 6.9 percent. In the period 1927-1930 these increased to 2.4 percent and 7.9 percent, respectively.⁷⁵

The proposal, believing that only a massive reallocation of fiscal resources by the state could spark economic recovery, called for substantial state investment in urban construction, road building and agricultural development. In particular, the bill set aside \$1 million to coffee growers (especially small producers) to aid in the collection of their harvest.⁷⁶

The incorporation of the demands of small producers with those of the workers was a consistent aspect of pro-labor proposals put forth by all factions of Costa Rica's labor movement. This important characteristic of Costa Rica's labor movement was due to the prevalence of small producers, in many cases coffee producers, in the Central Valley, who like the workers were dependent on the large processors/exporters.⁷⁷ Throughout the period under examination urban and rural workers attempted with limited success to enter into alliances with small producers.

The bill was significant both for what it did and for

what it did not advocate.⁷⁸ First, it intensified the pressure on the government of Ricardo Jiménez Oreamuno (1932-1936) to establish tax funded public work projects, as a principal means to cope with the crises of the 1930s. This indeed was done. A compilation of laws and decrees covering the 1930s, refer to at least nine separate laws enacted between 1931-1935 to create employment through public spending.⁷⁹ Aside from the previously mentioned gasoline tax, public works projects were funded through taxes on imported flour⁸⁰, banana and coffee exports, cigarettes and beer. Funds were used to build roads, water-works, public edifices, and to support pensions for teachers and provide school lunches.⁸¹

However, the proposal made no provision to force the state to intervene directly in the economy, nor did it enable the state to respond to the country's social crises by creating or significantly expanding governmental bureaucracies. Such steps were advocated by the CPR, and were subsequently enacted by the state, though in a different form from that originally proposed.

f. The Communist Proposal

Examining the CPR's early proposals on state responsibility to the working class furnishes a base line to measure the party's evolution. In addition, comparing CPR programs to enacted legislation provides a gauge of the

distance between the government's initiatives and CPCR proposals. This measure can be analyzed over time to yield comparative trajectories.

In order to combat the problems of unemployment and poverty, the CPCR proposed to create: councils of urban and rural workers to set minimum wages; a fund to assist unemployed workers; and, a department, assigned to the Ministry of Labor, that would control, centralize, and distribute work to the unemployed. Before offering the details of the plan, Mora made certain that the ideological underpinnings of the proposal were clear.

Our petition to the Congress is supported with the sympathy of the working classes of the country; it is not a renunciation of our Marxist ideology. We believe, with firm conviction, that the liberation of the workers will be done by the workers themselves, that the definite redemption of the proletariat will only be realized by a government of workers.... This does not exclude our belief that.... [we] must press [the Costa Rican] bourgeoisie to make less desperate the situation of misery and hunger of the country's workers.⁸²

The centerpiece of the proposal was the creation of a Worker Peasant Council to set regional minimum wages on the basis of the cost of necessities for a family of six. Basic foodstuff included rice, beans, meat, bread, eggs, and vegetables. Other cost to be factored into the minimum wage were clothing, housing, the provision of medicine, and entertainment.⁸³ The councils were to be comprised of

representatives from each of the formed or-to-be formed provincial labor federations, together with two government delegates with a voice and vote. Employers also were to have a seat on the council. However, the number of employer delegates, and whether they had a voice and vote of equal weight to the workers, was not made explicit. Violation of the council's decrees were to be punished by fines, and in the case of repeated violations imprisonment.

The second major initiative of the proposal was the establishment of an unemployment fund for all unemployed adult workers, male and female, and minors who were heads of families. The fund would pay out a weekly allowance based on the minimum wage. Workers who could not work due to injury, illness, or the abuse (*ultrajes*) of employers were also to be protected under this provision. Marking a reversal in the CPR's position on the role of the Costa Rican state, the proposal called for the establishment of an employment department in San José, with regional offices attached to the Ministry of Labor, designed to monitor unemployment and serve as employment offices (*Bolsas de Trabajo*). Unions and the unemployed were to have the right to maintain delegates in these offices. Employers were to be required to submit weekly reports indicating the number of workers on their payrolls and the number of workers released. Until the establishment of the department these functions were to be carried out by the provincial, cantonal and district

governments.⁸⁴ Any shortfall in the bill's funding was to be overcome by the imposition of a direct, pro-rated tax on income above ₡50,000 (US\$ 11,100).

The proposal immediately met with congressional opposition on the ideological grounds that it would force the state to violate its long standing liberal economic precepts.⁸⁵ Already prompted by the crisis of the Great Depression, the Congress had moved away from a position of strict economic non-intervention to a willingness to use state monies to generate work and stimulate the economy. However, the Congress resisted placing the state between the employer and worker by imposing wage and price controls determined by the cost of living. A majority of deputies agreed that wages must be determined by the cost of production and the market price of the article produced, not by the cost of living and not by worker/peasant councils that lacked viable employer representation. The initiative to create an unemployment fund was also rejected. The commission pointed to the example of England where such efforts met with disastrous results.⁸⁶

In 1934, responding to the continuing crisis, the CPCR, which had elected two deputies to Congress in February, submitted two additional proposals. The first was a minimum wage bill; the second was a bill to aid the unemployed.⁸⁷ The unemployment proposal was identical to the 1932 proposal.

The 1932 and 1934 minimum wage proposals differed in two significant areas. First, the projected role of the unions was sharply expanded. Unions were to distribute work directly and to serve as administrators of governmental subsidies, which were to be raised through an emergency, direct tax on foreign and domestic capital over ¢100,000 (US\$ 22,200). Second, the minimum wage proposal (again) demanded the formation of a *Consejo de Obreros y Campesinos*. However, no provision was made for employers' participation, and employers' compliance with the decisions of the council was to be obligatory, with no recourse to appeal. As the 1934 proposal signaled a clarification and radicalization of the CPR's proposals to reorient the country's political-economy, the government's response reflected a profound shift in the state's handling of the crisis.

2. The State Response

a. The Expansion of State Bureaucracy: Wage/Price Controls

The minimum wage proposal put forward by the CPR was rejected by the Congress on two grounds which clearly marked the boundaries of the state's reaction. First, the disproportionate number of workers and peasants on the council removed a vitally important function from government control. The Commission argued that if this were to happen, "...the Government will become an obedient servant of this organism which will be given the power to act with complete

liberty in the exercise of its functions." This would have in effect created a state within a state, a situation intolerable to the legislature, and one in conflict with the nature of the Costa Rican political structure in which the government increasingly saw itself as "the regulator of diverse activities that give impulse to the national life."⁸⁸

In its second ground for rejecting the CPCR initiative, the legislature openly redefined the economic orientation of the state. The legislature now drew attention to the passage of Law No. 14 of November 22, 1933, which authorized the establishment of the *Oficina Técnica del Trabajo*.⁸⁹ The *oficina* was charged with the responsibility of creating a *Consejo de Obreros y Patronos* (comprised of three workers and three employer representatives) to study the problem of wages and recommend appropriate levels.⁹⁰ In determining appropriate wages, both the *Oficina Técnica del Trabajo* and the *Consejo de Obreros y Patronos* were free to take into account the varying costs of food, housing, clothing, and family size in the country's different climates and zones.

Using the November 1933 law as precedent, in 1934 the Congress, on the recommendation of the *Consejo de Obreros y Patronos*, enacted comprehensive minimum wage levels for the country's seven provinces. The minimum daily wage was set at ¢2 per day in all provinces except Limón, where due to the higher cost of living, the wage was set at ¢2.75 per day.⁹¹

Wages set for one factory, workshop, or business were applicable to all like factories, workshops, or businesses in the province. Pay for piece work was to meet the daily levels. Pay to women and minors (between the ages of fourteen and eighteen) engaged in agricultural work was set at one-half that paid to men. Minors under fourteen were permitted to run errands and engage in light work and were to be paid 20 percent of the adult wage.⁹² In an unsuccessful attempt to reform the provisions covering woman and child labor, CPCR Deputies Mora and Jiménez Guerrero argued, "the labor of minors less than eighteen years of age and women is to be calculated, based on the dispositions of the current law, acting on the principle of 'equal work for equal pay.'"⁹³

The stipulation in the 1934 minimum wage law that the cost of living be included in the evaluation of worker salaries was controversial.⁹⁴ In the ensuing congressional debate, Mora and Jiménez argued that wages must be based on need and be defined as the minimum necessary for a family of six (husband, wife, three children and a single grandparent) to live in health and in material dignity.⁹⁵ They calculated the minimum necessary at ₡2.80 per day. Representatives of large coffee interests, deputies Peralta and Zeledón Castro, argued that salaries must be determined by those prices which would allow Costa Rican exports to remain competitive

on the international market. Failure to do this would cause the ruin of the country's economy. Both Peralta and Zeldón Castro were large coffee exporters.⁹⁶

In setting wages for the country, the *Oficina Técnica del Trabajo* and the *Consejo de Obreros y Patrones* took a middle ground.⁹⁷ In justifying the wage of ¢2 per day for sugar workers in Turrialba, both the *consejo* and *Oficina Técnica* argued that sugar prices were high enough to support the wage and workers seemed satisfied with it.⁹⁸ Again, in justifying the establishment of minimum wage decrees for coffee workers, the Executive branch of government pointed out wages had not risen though coffee prices were projected to increase from ¢25 to ¢30 per *fanega* for the 1932-1933 harvest to ¢55 to ¢60 per *fanega* for the 1934-1935 harvest.⁹⁹

A like situation existed within the tobacco industry where workers earned ¢4 per 1,000 cigars produced. It took thirty-two hours, or four days, to roll this quantity of cigars. The rate of ¢4 per 1,000 was frequently reduced to ¢2.50-¢3.00, yielding a wage below ¢1 per day while the manufacturer's profit margin was 36 percent and the wholesaler's (excluding overhead) 51.5 percent. Over 90 percent of these extremely poorly paid cigar makers were women.¹⁰⁰

Beyond the setting of minimum wages, the law broke significant ground in the extension of state authority into

the regulation of inter-class relationships.¹⁰¹ Instead of a single national wage commission, the law established a mechanism to organize councils in each of the country's cantons. Councils were established at the petition of ten or more resident workers or employers. Comprised of five members (two workers, two employers and a state representative¹⁰²) the commissions were empowered to make recommendations to the Secretary of Labor through the *Oficina Técnica del Trabajo*, without need of further authorization. The ensuing decrees of the Secretary of Labor had the force of law ten days after being published in the official paper, Gaceta. In addition to its responsibilities regarding wages, the council president was charged to watch over the price and weight of articles of prime necessity. The commissions were then required to issue bi-monthly reports to the *Oficina Técnica del Trabajo* so that observed abuses could be remedied by punishing speculators.

The establishment of the councils was extremely important, even though much of their work was limited by an inability to enforce compliance. The focus of workers' protests shifted from petitions for passage of pro-labor legislation to demands that the existing labor laws be obeyed. Agitation for additional legal protections did not stop, but from this time on workers placed their efforts behind (not in opposition to) state initiatives.

The 1937 May Day demands of the shoemakers, bakers, and

tailors included "perfect compliance" with existing minimum wage legislation.¹⁰³ In January of the same year four hundred workers from the "third category" of shoemaking shops, *tallers del calzados baratos*, went out on strike to force conformity with the recently enacted, minimum wage levels.¹⁰⁴ The issue of compliance also spurred the formation of unions. In January 1937 El Comité Pro-Defensa de los Trabajadores de Cachi organized a union of peasants to force owners of coffee *fincas* to observe the minimum wages decrees.¹⁰⁵ Aside from ignoring the wage decrees, employers found other ways to lower their labor costs. For example, the owner of a large bakery, Douglas De Ford, employed women in place of men as a means of keeping salaries low. Trabajo argued that employment for women was perfectly suitable, but at "equal pay for equal work," not at one-half the rate paid to men.¹⁰⁶

Compounding the problem of compliance, the existence of mechanisms to establish cantonal wage commissions did not insure their widespread existence nor did it guarantee the effectiveness of those that were established.¹⁰⁷ Owners resisted the imposition of uniform wages on variable business costs and complained that they were being unfairly forced to pay poor work at the same rate as good work, and resisted doing so.¹⁰⁸ In spite of the difficulties, Durán Rocha, the head of the *Oficina Técnica*, cited the establishment of the salary commissions as the major

conquest of Costa Rica's social programs to date.¹⁰⁹

Concurrent with the non-compliance with the wage degrees, serious allegations were made of price control violations. Price controls were circumvented principally through speculation and hoarding. To combat these practices, a special congressional commission was established in 1937 to study the problem. It recommended that the state import rice, beans, and corn and sell them at subsidized prices.¹¹⁰ Again, proposed direct governmental intervention in the marketplace sparked a heated debate. The subsidies were opposed on the ground that the subsidized prices would undermine local growers. For this reason, the León Cortés Administration (1936-1940) did not favor the proposal. However, in August, Congress overcame the administration's opposition and authorized the Executive to import grains and sell them at subsidized prices.¹¹¹

Contributing to scarcity was the long-term decline in the percentage of arable land devoted to farming. By 1935 in almost all the cantons of the Central Valley, no more than five percent of the available arable land was used to grow foodstuff.¹¹² The following table shows the extent to which Costa Rica was dependent on food imports.¹¹³

TABLE No. 1.8

Imported Foodstuff 1930-1943
(in millions of kilograms)

Year	Rice	Sugar	Beans	Corn	Wheat & Other flours
1930	4.28	.20	.02	.85	11.42
1931	5.13	.03	.32	.03	11.60
1932	1.25	.006	.67	.06	8.61
1933	1.03	.007	.02	.006	8.59
1934	.44	1.19	.04	.007	10.16
1935	.13	.34	.01	--	7.09
1936	.44	.04	.05	--	8.26
1937	1.40	.11	.14	--	8.26
1938	.55	.05	.06	--	9.26
1939	10.44	2.35	.77	.18	10.67
1940	1.77	5.13	.04	--	10.05
1941	1.05	.47	.006	--	10.81
1942	.02	.23	.003	.12	8.11
1943	2.30	.002	1.38	1.05	11.37

Source: *Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Anuario Estadístico* (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, 1943).

The dependency becomes clearer when placed on a per capita basis. The annual per capita consumption of imported foodstuff averaged as follows: for the year 1931, 32.42 kilos; for 1933, 17.50 kilos; for 1936, 14.79 kilos; for 1939, 38.19 kilos; and for 1943, 22.85 kilos.

In spite of these measures, by 1939 the crisis in the standard of living of the working population had not improved, but worsened. The primary reason was the disruption in the export market caused by the outbreak of European hostilities.

Congress again debated the issue of subsidizing food imports and this time organized labor joined the battle.

Fearing that the proposed law to subsidize food imports would be undermined by large scale domestic producers, leaders of the printers', shoemakers', bakers', tailors', and Cartago workers' unions sent letters and telegrams urging the passage and effective enactment of the law. On June 22, 1939, overcoming opposition led by Deputy Mariano Cortés, the executive was authorized to spend \$200,000 to import grains and sell them directly to consumers at subsidized prices.¹¹⁴ With the passage of this bill in 1939 the quantity of imported foods soared. Imported foods accounted for almost 35 percent of all rice, beans and corn consumed in the country!

Outside the area of wage price controls the government expanded its involvement in mediating non-accident-related and non-strike-related labor disputes. The available statistics indicate a dynamic trend.

TABLE No. 1.9

Non-Accident Related Cases Brought
before the *Oficina Técnica del Trabajo*

Year	# of cases	% change over previous year	# of case not settled*
1939	712		93
1940	619	-13	49
1941	2,772	347	---

*These case were referred directly to the *Agencia de Policía* and the *Jefe Políticos*.

Sources: *Ministerios de Gobernación y Policía, Trabajo y Previsión Social, Memoria*, (1939, 1940, 1941).

A related major area of contention over the proper role of the state in the worker-state relationship occurred over the definition, application and extension of workmen's compensation, which remained an important and contentious issue throughout the 1940s.

b. Workmen's Compensation

It took over forty years to establish a system of comprehensive workers' accident insurance in Costa Rica. Examination of the system and the struggle to create it, uncovers important employer-worker relations as well as the long term influence of agro-exporters (and small producers) in defining the state's role in this area. The relationship between small producers and exporters was that between sellers and processors/buyers. Because exporters monopolized the processing capacity in the country, they were in a position to set the price for the domestic product. This placed enormous pressure on the small producers to control their costs. In this area, small producers and large exporters were allies fearing the consequences of a workmen's compensation system that included agricultural workers and transferred the insurance cost to the producers.

In 1914, several congressional deputies, including Luis Anderson and Arturo Volio, proposed legislation to protect "*operarios and empleados*" against accidents and sickness and

to provide death benefits.¹¹⁵ However, no mention was made of agricultural workers.¹¹⁶ In spite of this proposal the country remained without a comprehensive mechanism protecting laborers from work-related accidents. At this time mutual aid societies provided workers with their only protection against accidents, and issued death benefits to their families.¹¹⁷

The basic law governing accident insurance was enacted on January 31, 1925 and subsequently amended.¹¹⁸ (Laws governing accident protection for workers had been passed in both Colombia and Panama in 1916. Also by this time thirty-two states in the United States had workmen's compensation laws.)¹¹⁹ The series of laws defined those workers who were protected under the law and those who were excluded. It established a mechanism by which claims could be adjudicated and payments administered. It provided death benefits and outlined health and safety standards for certain industrial work places.

Specifically, Article 11 enumerated those classifications of work protected under the law. These included: work in factories, workshops, warehouses, hotels, restaurants, hospitals, theaters; laborers who worked with explosives, machinery, and electricity; firemen, policemen, construction workers, dock workers, and communication and transport workers. Article 12 excluded: workers engaged in domestic service, and workers engaged in agriculture,

forestry, and the handling of livestock except when exposed to machinery, motor powered transport or animal transport over rails. Also excluded were all laborers employed on agricultural enterprises that employed less than five workers.¹²⁰

Initially the law stipulated that claims had to be filed and all accidents reported to the political authority in whose locality the accident occurred. In 1933 the law was amended to centralize the process under the authority of the Executive branch of government. Certain government authorities were required to expand their function by serving in a dual capacity.¹²¹ In this way the compensation system built upon the existing bureaucratic structures.

Enterprises whose workers were protected under the law were required to insure their workers with the *Banco Nacional de Seguros* or be subject to penalties.¹²² The law also established a mixed tribunal, the *Tribunal Superior de Arbitraje*, which served as a court of appeals. The *Tribunal* was comprised of three members nominated by the Executive branch, one employer and one worker representative, and a representative from the *Banco Nacional de Seguros*. The *banco*, which was established by the country's coffee growers,¹²³ played a pivotal role in the determination and issuance of indemnifications. Aside from having an expert voice on the *Tribunal Superior de Arbitraje*, in specified circumstances, it determined the rate and nature of

payment.¹²⁴

Workers and the CPCR strongly contested the administration of the system and its statutory limitations. In 1937 and 1938 the CPCR proposed modifications in the workmen's compensation laws, of which the most important was that coffee, banana, cocoa, and sugar *fincas* employing more than five workers be protected by the above laws.¹²⁵ They claimed that as currently written, the law excluded over 90 percent of the country's work force from protection.¹²⁶ This undoubtedly was an exaggeration. However, the labor force was overwhelmingly agrarian and engaged in the planting and harvest of crops. Almost one-half of the rural labor force was composed of day workers.¹²⁷ And these, the largest single sector of the labor force, were not the only workers excluded from the laws protection. Permanent workers on large and small *fincas* of all types were also excluded when not engaged in those activities protected under the law.

The distribution of the agrarian work force and the average size of the *finca* became critical factors in determining whether workers were protected against injuries. Though the following table is from 1950, the absence of a radical restructuring of land tenure during the decade of the 1940s (in spite of significant pressure)¹²⁸ validates its use.

TABLE No. 1.10

Number of Workers According to Size of Farms
(1950)

Size	#/F	%F	Total/W	Avg/F	%/W
1 to 4	12,004	27.9	19,353	1.6	14.7
5 to 9	6,972	16.2	13,942	2.0	10.6
10 to 14	4,263	9.9	9,500	2.2	7.2
15 to 19	2,306	5.3	5,988	2.6	4.5
20 to 29	3,897	9.0	9,917	2.5	7.5
30 to 49	5,107	11.8	13,877	2.7	10.5
50 to 99	4,703	10.9	15,910	3.4	12.2
100 - 174	1,895	4.4	9,277	4.9	7.0
175 - 249	725	1.7	4,346	6.0	3.3
250 - 499	638	1.5	8,723	13.7	6.6
250 - 999	328	0.8	9,271	28.2	7.0
1,000-1,499	90	0.2	4,364	49.0	3.3
1,500-3,499	106	0.3	3,862	36.4	2.9
3,500 and over	49	0.1	3,568	72.8	2.7
Totals	43,086	100.0	131,898	3.1	100.0

Size=size in *manzanas*; #/F=total number of *fincas*; %F=percentage of *fincas*; Total/=total number of workers; Avg/F=average number of workers per *finca* size; %/W=percentage of total number of agricultural workers.

Source: *Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Censo Agropecuario de 1950*, Table 49.

Using the above table, the exclusion of *fincas* with less than five workers effectively excluded 74.2 percent of the agricultural workers from workmen's compensation and, as will be seen, from many of the provisions of the 1943 Labor Code. In 1950, 74.2 percent of the agricultural labor force comprised almost 36 percent of the total work force. For the period of the 1930s the percentage was higher.¹²⁹

Therefore, it is not surprising that there was widespread agitation for the law's modification. In July

1936 over one thousand rural workers from over twenty different districts submitted petitions to the Congress demanding that the law be revised.¹³⁰ By the early 1940s these proposed reforms were supported by the nation-wide agrarian movement represented by the *Unión Campesina por la Lucha por Tierra y Crédito* (UCLTC). The UCLTC (whose history will be discussed in Chapter II) argued that it was "absurd that in an agricultural country only industrial workers have accident protection while rural workers [were] left without any protection in case of injury or death."¹³¹

The *Banco Nacional de Seguros'* official response to the CPRC proposed reform was revealing. It implicitly criticized the Costa Rican industrial working class for what it perceived as an extremely high rate of accidents per worker.¹³² Directly addressing the question of insurance for agricultural workers the bank manager wrote:

There is an enormous difference between agricultural and industrial production. The raising of taxes that will be demanded from the coffee growers if the Law of Accidents is applied, will result in the ruin of the industry.

He then offered his medical assessment of the majority of injuries.

These are thousands of small accidents, which have no need of medical attention, drugs, certifications, or indemnifications. Natural bodily defenses are enough to prevent infections.¹³³

The CPRC challenged the bank's attitude. It accused the

Bank of indifference to the well-being of workers and of using legalisms to avoid payments to injured workers.¹³⁴

The CPR proposed other, less central reforms.¹³⁵ These included allowing workers to choose their own doctors, altering the composition of the *Superior Tribunal of Arbitration* to mitigate the state's and bank's dominance on the board, and upwardly revising the schedule of indemnification. A final proposal called for furnishing all required forms to the injured party free of charge and by means of a simple letter.¹³⁶

Reflecting dissatisfaction with the bank, the CPR repeatedly requested the transfer of the compensation functions to governmental bureaucracies. During the Calderon Guardia Administration (1940-1944), the PVP proposed the transference of the Bank's functions to the newly created *Caja de Seguros Social*.¹³⁷ The reasons offered were that the *Caja* could extend benefits beyond ten year limit, if needed, increase compensation levels, remove distinctions between injury and sickness, and improve the delivery of health care. Not mentioned, but undoubtedly important, was the influence the PVP had in the *Caja*.¹³⁸ The PVP approved of the *Caja's* top administrators,¹³⁹ and in 1945 the PVP was successful in organizing a cell of *Caja* employees.¹⁴⁰ In spite of the above limitations, there was a marked increase in the application of the laws, as can be seen by an examination of the following tables.

TABLE No. 1.11

Work Related Accidents by Years

	1936	1938	1939	1941
A. Accidents Denounced				
Insured	3,541	4,519	6,795	9,080
Not Insured	45	64	45	38
Total	3,586	4,583	6,840	9,118
B. Proceedings Terminated				
Insured	1,709	5,862	3,275	6,278
Not Insured	67	26	53	73
Total	1,776	5,888	3,328	6,351

Sources: *Ministerios de Gobernación y Policía, Trabajo y Previsión Social, Memoria*, (1936, 1938, 1939, 1941).

However, a comparison of this table with the following reveals a profound tension in the application and administration of the system of accident compensation.

TABLE No. 1.12

Indemnities Paid (in colones)

Year	Temporary Incapacity	Absolute Incapacity	Total
1936	34,461.77	220,553.87	255,015.64
1938	114,047.42	90,228.78	204,276.20
1939	87,380.45	176,701.43	264,081.88

Sources: *Ministerios de Gobernación y Policía, Trabajo y Previsión Social, Memoria*, (1936, 1938, 1939, 1941).

The most glaring deficiency in the system was the exclusion of the majority of agricultural workers from the law's protection due to the profound tension between the

agro-export and popular sectors and the presence of large numbers of small producers in the country side. This exclusion remained unremedied under Calderón Guardia's Labor Code of 1943 reflecting the composite and compromise nature of the Code. It was not until Figueres' first Administration that the five worker limit for all provisions in the Labor Code except severance pay was abolished.¹⁴¹

Beyond this, the role of the *Banco Nacional de Seguros*, sympathetic to the coffee growers' position, revealed a growing tension between the state and sectors of the financial community. The reforms of 1933 brought the accident reporting apparatus under the authority of the Executive branch through the Secretary of Labor; the indemnification functions remained under the *banco*. Although the figures presented in Tables 1.11 and 1.12 are limited, they reveal a striking divergence between claims denounced and the size of the indemnifications awarded. Whereas denounced accidents rose from 3,586 in 1936 to 9,118 in 1941, an increase of 254 percent and proceedings terminated rose in the same period from 1,776 to 6,351, an increase of 357 percent, total compensation rose from ₡255,015.64 in 1936 to ₡264,081.88 in 1939, an increase of only three percent! Even if figures from 1939 are used for denunciations and proceedings terminated, the contrast in the rates of growth is dramatic.

This divergence underscored an important area of

conflict between the state, as it expanded its protective apparatus, and the banking-agro-export sector. The growing incorporation of the popular class by the state would, when combined with the peculiar pressures and alliances of war-time, open profound chasms between sectors of Costa Rica's elites and the state. This would happen under the administration of Calderón Guardia with the promulgation of a series of measures that greatly extended and strengthened all areas of state regulation over the society.

3. Conclusion

The decade of the 1930s witnessed a grave crisis for the Costa Rican working class. Poverty, unemployment and scarcity of basic commodities threatened to unleash social upheaval. Three factors combined to forestall this possibility, and in doing so fundamentally redefined the role of the Costa Rican state in society.

First, even though the political structure was controlled by the coffee oligarchy, the country had firmly established democratic traditions. Universal, manhood suffrage was established in 1902. The organization and activities of political parties and worker organizations, including Marxist parties were permitted. And despite certain prohibitions (which in the main were not enforced) against "subversive" materials, political ideas circulated freely.¹⁴²

These democratic traditions were solidified by the viability of the legislature as a body accessible to, and capable of, reconciling the demands of different sectors of society. In the decade of the 1930s proposals submitted to the legislature by labor organizations received careful attention. If these proposals were not passed into law in their entirety, significant segments of them were.

Second, the CPR which was founded and rose to prominence during this period (and whose leadership came of age during the reformist González Flores Administration) was committed to fundamental change within the existing constitutional order. It openly and immediately rejected its revolutionary program as unviable and as risking a powerful rightist reaction. Following from this, under CPR leadership, the worker's movement was directed towards agitation for legal reform and away from revolutionary activities.

Third, the state responded to working class pressure for change by undertaking a number of initiatives. Through taxation, it created employment by establishing public works projects. It established funds to aid the unemployed and in doing so set a precedent for the social welfare state that would emerge full-blown under the administration of Calderón Guardia. And finally, the state, fully abandoning its liberal economic precepts, intervened directly in the domestic economy by setting minimum wages and monitoring

both the availability and the price of basic commodities.

This last initiative required the state to create a bureaucracy authorized and willing to intercede in the daily commerce of workers' lives. The creation of this bureaucracy fundamentally altered the relationship between the government and the working class. Workers now demanded the enforcement of duly authorized governmental decrees against recalcitrant employers and businesses. Regardless of the causes that limited the effective implementation of legislative solutions, from this point on, workers' political activities were placed squarely behind the extension of state power in these areas.

There were limits to what the state could, and to what it desired to accomplish. The discussion of the evolution of the system of workmen's compensation indicates a fundamental contradiction in Costa Rican society. Not all workers were entitled to state protection. Those workers, whose labor drove the engine of the country's economy (agricultural exports, principally coffee) were excluded. These exclusions would persist (with modifications) after the Social Guarantees and Labor Code of the 1940s. Seen in this light, the evolution of the Costa Rican state in the 1930s can be viewed as based on an emerging deal between the state, agrarian elites and representatives of the urban working class. This deal insured social harmony by extending state

protection to the urban working class, at the expense of the poorest rural workers.

Notes

1. After the election of Bernardo Soto y Alfaro in 1885, Costa Rican presidential successions were constitutional with the exception of the Tinoco coup d'état in 1917. David Busnell and Neil Macaulay, The Emergence of Latin America in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 227. For a recent examination of the continual expansion of political liberties in Costa Rica see Miguel Angel Rodríguez, Al Progreso por la libertad: una interpretación de la historia de costarricense (San José: Libro Libre, 1989). The direct vote was established in the constitution of 1844. Women, however, did not receive the vote until 1949.

2. Though the relationship between the Congress and the Executive was a factor, tensions between the two branches were mitigated by the presidential party always having a congressional majority. The tendency for the Executive to be the dominant political authority was further reinforced by the personalist nature of Costa Rican political parties.

3. The party ran candidates for office under the name of the *Bloque de Obreros y Campesinos*. For reasons of clarity, the term Communist Party of Costa Rica (CPCR) is used to refer to party until it formally changed its name to the *Partido Vanguardia Popular* (PVP) in June 1943. For an analysis which includes both an examination of the party's foreign (economic), and domestic inspirations see Ana María Botey and Rodolfo Cisneros, La Crisis de 1929 Y La Fundación Del Partido Comunista De Costa Rica (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1984), 116. The work is a well documented examination of the external forces that prompted the formation of Costa Rica's Communist Party. For a less sympathetic view, which places greater emphasis on the role of the Comintern in the ideological formation of the CPCR see Rodolfo Cerdas, La Hoz y la Machete (San José: 1986). Cerdas, however, does not deny the national character of the party.

4. For a discussion of reformism in Costa Rica, see Marina Volio, Jorge Volio y el Partido Reformista (San José: Editorial Universidad Estatal A Distancia, 1983); and Miguel Acuña, Jorge Volio: El Tribuno de la plebe (San José: 1972). For a brief discussion of the *Partido Reformista* in this work, see Chapter I, Section 1c, below.

5. For a discussion of this process see Chapter II, Sections 4-6, below.

6. For a full discussion of CPCR/PVP membership, Chapter V, Section 1, below.

7. For documentation of the 30,000, see U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated March 25, 1945. USNA, 818.504-06. For a full discussion of the development of the CTCR see, Chapter II, Section 6, below.

8. Lack of militancy and dissident tendencies prompted the head of the shoemakers union, Rodolfo Guzmán, to urge the imminent holding of a national convention to foreclose the possibility of schisms. (See Trabajo, July 1, 1939.) These complaints were not limited to workers; party leaders expressed long-term dissatisfaction with the lack of commitment of party members. (See, Trabajo, February 13, 1937.) For the situation in the 1940s, see the three volumes, Partido Vanguardia Popular -Sección San José, Sector Número Cuatro, Correspondencia - 1945, Archive of the Banco de Costa Rica, and the discussion, Chapter V, Section 1, below.

9. See Trabajo, May 13, 1939 for Rodolfo Guzmán's periodization of Costa Rica's labor movement. He credits organized labor as modernizing the country's economy by fostering a rational use of the country's work force. In interviews with old-time party leaders they habitually referred to Costa Rica's economy as marked by feudalistic relations, against which they struggled with much difficulty and limited success. See Eduardo Mora, Interview by author, May 1990, tape recording.

10. An early and important example of the tension between leadership and the rank and file is given in Gordon A. Craig, Germany 1866-1945 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). Craig discusses the relationship between the German trade unions and the German Socialist Party at the turn of the century. At an important party meeting in Manheim in 1906 labor leaders rejected the revolutionary theorizing of the political authorities. In Costa Rica as well the play between pragmatism and revolutionary zeal played an important role both in the party's orientation and that of its labor movement. For a discussion of this relationship, also see Roberto Michels, Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical of Modern Democracy, (New York: Collier Books, 1966). The work was originally published in 1911.

11. For a discussion of the labor movement at the turn of the century see Chapter I, Section C, below.

12. Churnside, Formación de la Fuerza Laboral, Cuadro 6.2.

13. The Institute for the Defense of Coffee was established and registered by the government in 1935.

14. Trabajo, March 21, 1941.

15. See Chapter II, Section 2, below.

16. For a recent work examining the West Indians in Limón during this period, see Ronald Harpelle, "West Indians in Costa Rica: The 1934 Banana Contract." Paper presented at the Seventh Annual Southern Labor Studies Conference, Georgia State University, October 10-13, 1991.

17. The most noted of these foreign individuals in the 1930s were the Spaniards Adolfo Braña and the blind writer, Heras Hervas, and the Venezuelan Rómulo Bentancourt. The U.S. was particularly interested in the movements of a number of individuals termed *Polacos*, who were purported to spread Communist ideology as they traveled through Costa Rica and other countries of Latin America, peddling their wares. U.S. State Department, (Costa Rican Legation). Dispatches, dated February 12, 1931 and April 29, 1931), USNA, 818.51/500. *Polaco* was used as a derogatory term for Jews in Costa Rica at this time, stemming from their Eastern European origins. For the definitive work on the Jews in Costa Rica, see Lowell Gudmundson, Jacobo Schifter and Mario Solera Castro, El Judio en Costa Rica (San José: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 1985).

18. If the large number of foreigners in the banana industry are excluded, the foreign content of Costa Rica's agricultural labor force decreases to slightly over 10 percent.

19. The best example of this was the use of women by the De Ford bakeries in an effort to undermine a strike called by the baker's union. See Trabajo, October 23, 1937. Another example of the notorious low wages paid to women were the salaries received by women cigar rollers. This is discussed further in the minimum wage law of 1934. See Chapter I, Section 2a, below.

20. For a far more detailed examination of the evolution of the Costa Rican labor movement before 1930, see Carlos Luis Fallas Monge, El Movimiento Obrero en Costa Rica, 1830-1902 (San José: EUED, 1983); and Mario Oliva Medina, Artesanos y Obreros Costarricenses, 1880-1914 (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1985). For an organizational history of social movements in Costa Rica from 1870 to the founding of the Communist Party, see Vladimir de la Cruz, Las Luchas Sociales en Costa Rica (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1980); and Mariellos Aguilar Hernández et al., Historia

gráfica de las luchas populares en Costa Rica, 1870-1930, (San José: Editorial Porvenir, 1986).

21. *La Sociedad de Artesanos de San José* was founded in 1876; *La Sociedad de Artesanos de Cartago*, *Artes y Oficios de Heredia*, and *Caja de Ahorros de Puntarenas* in 1891. Aguilar Hernández et al., Historia gráfica, 57-67, and De la Cruz, Las Luchas Sociales, 25-28.

22. Congreso. "Petition submitted by Socorros Mutuos de Empleados de Comercio," No. 16208, 1932, NACR. The Costa Rican currency, the colon (¢), rose from 4 to the dollar at the beginning of the period under study, to 5.61 in 1948. Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Anuarios Estadísticos (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1933 and 1949).

23. *Compañía Keith* was granted the concession to build a railroad from Puerto Limón to San José. Land grants on both sides of the tracks were latter developed into the United Fruit Company's banana plantations. See Watt Steward, Keith y Costa Rica (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1967).

24. Manuel Rojas Bolaños, "El Desarrollo Del Movimiento Obrero en Costa Rica; Un Intento de Periodización" in Abarca et al., Desarrollo Del Movimiento Sindical en Costa Rica, (San José: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 1981), 14. The Chinese were imported as contract labor to build the railroad. Edwin Chacon León, El Sindicalismo en Costa Rica (San José: 1980), 8. For the definitive work on nineteenth-century railroad conflicts see Oscar Aguilar Bulgarelli, La Huelga de los Tútiles: 1887-1889 un capítulo de nuestra historia social (San José: EUED, 1989).

25. Sanabria was archbishop from 1940 until his death in 1952. Previous to that he was Bishop of Alajuela. Born in San Rafael de Oreamuno on January 17, 1899, he was ordained in Rome in 1921. Vicar Hidalgo, San José, to Humberto Vizcaino Leal, Secretary General de Comité de Festejos, Guatemala, October 7, 1943, AACC. His critical role in Costa Rica's social reforms in the 1940s will be discussed in detail in second part of this work.

26. Rojas Bolaños, "El Desarrollo Del Movimiento Obrero," 14. According to Rojas, Theil's pastoral, "Sobre el justo salario de los jornaleros y artesanos y otros puntos de actualidad que se relacionan con la situación de los destituidos de bienes de fortuna," was clearly influenced by the encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum, written two years earlier. De la Cruz, Las Luchas Sociales, 35-41.

27. Gerardo Castillo H., Sindicalismo en Costa Rica, (Costa Rica: C.A.A.S.-CEDL, n.d.), 10.

28. Rodolfo Cerdas Cruz, "Costa Rica After 1930," in Leslie Bethell, ed., Central America After Independence, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 282.

29. Aguilar Hernández et al., Historia gráfica, 60.

30. Rojas Bolaños, "El Desarrollo Del Movimiento Obrero," 14.

31. Aguilar Hernández et al., Historia gráfica, 98, Eduardo Mora, Interview by author, June 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording.

32. Oliva, Artesanos y Obreros, 109-111. Also see his chart on p. 149. Since much of Oliva's documentation is based on periodicals comprehensive conclusions must be made with caution.

33. Ibid., 109-111.

34. Carlos A. Monge, Nuestra Historia y los Seguros (San José: 1972), 152-155.

35. Aguilar Hernández et al., Historia gráfica, 106, and De la Cruz, Las Luchas Sociales, 79-85.

36. Rojas Bolaños, "El Desarrollo Del Movimiento Obrero," 15.

37. Its electoral orientation met with early success. In 1924 the Partido Reformista was able to elect five deputies to the Congress. These were Enrique Fonseca (San José), Jorge Volio and Florentino Lobo (Alajuela), José Joaquín Ortiz (Cartago), and Silverio Chaverri (Heredia). Volio, Jorge Volio, 176-177.

38. Subsequently, Volio's stance on the Soviet Union changed. By the end of the decade he was accusing the Soviet secret police (the CHEKA) of committing crimes against the Russian people. Manuel Mora attacked Volio for this shift. See, Manuel Mora, "Pronunciado en la Camara el 12 de Junio de 1934 Contra la Demagogia de Jorge Volio y Defiendo Posiciones del Partido Comunista," in Manuel Mora, Discursos, (San José de Costa Rica, A.C.: Talleres Tipograficos de "La Tribuna," 1980), 1-37. The Discursos contain many of the more important public speeches and writings of this principal founder and long-time leader of the CPR.

39. For the definitive work on Jorge Volio and the Reformist Party, see Volio, Jorge Volio, The party's program is found on pages 99-100. Volio was also a member of the clergy and

as such, was within the church reformist tradition begun by Bishop Theil.

40. The eight-hour work day and six-hour work night were established by Law No. 100, December 17, 1920. For an excellent monograph of the strikes, see Victor Hugo Acuña, Los Orígenes de la clase obrera en Costa Rica: Las Huelgas de 1920 Por La Jornada de Ocho Horas (San José: COMARFIL, 1986). See also Rojas Bolaños, "El Desarrollo Del Movimiento Obrero," 15.

41. It included the *Federación Gráfica, Centro Internacional de Obreros, Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos de Sastres, Gremio de Albañiles, Sociedad de Panaderos, Federación Obrera de Puntarenas, Comité Gutemberg de Tipographia, Sociedad de Ebanistas*, and the *Federación de Trabajadores de San José*. Aguilar Hernández et al., Historia gráfica, 123. The *Federación de Trabajadores de San José* was the Costa Rican contact for the *Confederación Centroamericanos (COCA)* which was formed in 1921. De la Cruz, Las Luchas Sociales, 110.

42. Also involved in the *Sociedad Aprista* were the ex-president, Alfredo González Flores, Dr. Alejandro Montero, and José María (Billo) Zeledón. Aguilar Hernández et al., Historia gráfica, 132. The Aprista movement was begun by Haya de la Torre in Peru and spread throughout Latin America. Based on anti-colonialism and nationalism, the movement increasingly drew sharp distinctions between itself and Marxist-based parties.

43. The Board of the Directives of the UGT was Gregorio Bravo, Secretary General; Gonzalo Cerdas Mora, Secretary of Agreements, Efraín Jiménez Guerrero, Secretary of Correspondence and Fabian Soto, Secretary of Finances. De la Cruz, Las Luchas Sociales, 224. Jiménez would run successfully for Congress in 1934 on the CPR ticket.

44. In March 1930 ARCO published Revolución, the precursor to the CPR publication, Trabajo. Botey and Cisneros, La Fundación Del Partido Comunista De Costa Rica, 116. See also, Cerdas and Contreras, Los Años 40, 11-13.

45. De la Cruz, Las Luchas Sociales, 275-276. The new party's Provisional Executive Committee was composed of Manuel Mora, Secretary General; Luis Carballo Corrales, Secretary of Acts; Ricardo Coto Conde, Secretary of Correspondence; Jaime Cerdas Mora, Secretary of Finance; and Efraín Jiménez Guerrero, Carlos Montero Obando, Gonzalo Montero Berry, Alfredo Valerín, José Barquero and Anselmo Soto, *Vocales*. Throughout its history the CPR attempted to maintain a balance between workers and intellectuals. See

the subsequent discussion of the CPCR/PVP in Chapter V, below.

46. The number of lawyers in the country was small, but they were influential. According to the census of 1927, there were 259 lawyers in the country, overwhelmingly Costa Rican and male. Censos de 1927, NACR.

47. Mora, Discursos, 1-37.

48. Manual Mora, Mexico, to Víctor Sanabria, San José, July 28, 1948, AACR. Mora was specifically referring to the Revolutionary Junta's nationalization of the banks and ten-percent capital tax on wealth.

49. *Sección Legislativa. "Programa Mínima y Máxima de Partido Comunista de Costa Rica,"* No. 16397, 1932, NACR.

50. The party regained its legal status in 1973.

51. Botey and Cisneros, La Fundación Del Partido Comunista, 8.

52. The table was originally compiled by José Luís Vega Carballo in, Hacia una interpretación del desarrollo costarricense: ensayo sociológico (San José: Editorial Porvenir, 1980), 170.

53. Ibid., 81. A similar argument is found in De la Cruz, Las Luchas Sociales, 86-94. De la Cruz goes on to argue that the opposition that developed against the Tinoco dictatorship encouraged the nascent union movement.

54. Figures are taken from "Mensaje de Presidente Jiménez" as reported in La Prensa Libre, May 1, 1932.

55. Calls for a debt moratorium were not limited to individuals in the socialist or Communist camps, but included reformist congressional representatives. Deputy Juan Rafael Arias argued that "Costa Rica has no choice but to impose a moratorium on foreign debt." Interview given to La Prensa Libre, June 16, 1932.

56. Mensaje de Presidente Jiménez as reported in La Prensa Libre, May 1, 1932.

57. The growth of the EAP has been pro-rated between the two census years of 1927 and 1950. There are no aggregate statistics reflecting the economically active population or economic growth in 1932.

58. Unemployment rates by Central Valley districts were as follows: Goigoechea, 7.8 percent; Belén 6.8 percent; Sto. Domingo, 5.6 percent; Tibás, 5.3 percent; Heredia, 4.9 percent; La Unión, 4.8 percent; San Isidro de Heredia, 4.7 percent; Barba, 4.5 percent; Flores, 4.5 percent; Sta. Bárbara, 4.4 percent; Alajuelita, 4.4 percent. *Censo de personas sin Trabajo, 1932* as cited in Botey and Cisneros, *La Fundación Del Partido Comunista*, 98.

59. Policies of austerity effected a reduction of governmental salaries between 5 percent and 30 percent. The United Fruit Company and other large-scale enterprises lowered salaries up to 20 percent. Ibid., p. 94. Other agricultural salaries were reduced to between ₡1.50 and ₡2.50 a day (between US\$.33 and US\$.55). These wages were below subsistence. When asked how workers could survive in such an environment, Dr. Pedro Alvarado Charendado, a leading coffee grower, had no answer. *La Prensa Libre*, June 10, 1932.

60. The letter, sent to the President of the Republic was signed by M.R. Poveda, G. Montero Pérez, Alfredo Sosa S., Max Bermúdez, and eight others. U.S. State Department, (Costa Rican Legation). *Dispatch*, dated February 12, 1931, *USNA*, 818.51/500.

61. Julio Padilla was *Efectivo Presidente de la Directiva Central* and a member of the *Comité Prensa* of the PR. Volio, *Jorge Volio*, 250-251.

62. Their proposal be found in *Congreso*. No. 16707, 1932, *NACR*.

63. *La Prensa Libre*, June 2, 1932.

64. The Communist Party of El Salvador, was founded in 1930. For two histories of this period, see Roque Dalton, *Miguel Marmol*, trans. Kathleen Ross and Richard Schaff (Connecticut: Curbstone Press, 1987) and Thomas Anderson, *El Salvador's 1932 Communist Revolt* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1971). A discussion of Dalton's work appears in Barbara Harlow "Testimonio and Survival: Roque Dalton's *Miguel Marmol*," *Latin American Perspectives* (Fall 1991) 9-21. For a broader comparative overview of Central American labor movements, see Vladimir De la Cruz "Apuntes para la historia del movimiento obrero y sindical centroamericano," *Revista Estudios Laborales* No. 2-3, (1979).

65. The disturbance in late May 1932, according to the Director General of the Police, Coronel Jorge González Ulloa, was caused by an inflammatory speech given by the Communist, Luís Carballo. In the speech Carballo attacked

the rich and the absence of a governmental response to the crisis. Sixty-seven members of the party, including Manuel Mora, and Jaime Cerdas, the party's lawyer, were fined. The number of people involved in the demonstration was placed at several thousand. La Prensa Libre, May 27, 1932, and May 30, 1932.

66. The authority given to the Executive to fund public works was printed in Gaceta, 160, July 20, 1932. All laws, decrees, Governmental proceedings and official pronouncements were required to be published in the Gaceta.

67. Gaceta, 158, July 17, 1932. The fines were between ¢250 and ¢2,500 (US\$55 and US\$550).

68. Both openly admitted their belief that public works projects were the most effective way to divert potential labor unrest from large landowners. La Prensa Libre, June 7, 1932.

69. See Chapter I, Section 2a and TABLE No. 1.8, below.

70. See Chapter I, Section 2a, below for a full discussion of the December 1934 law.

71. *Dirección General de Estadística y Censo*, Anuarios (1931 and 1936).

72. Churnside, Formación de la Fuerza Laboral, Cuadro 6.2. The census years of 1927 and 1950 provide the most comprehensive statistical frame for this study.

73. Congreso. "Original del Proyecto Económica que presenta la "Unión Obrera Pro-Trabaja," No. 16333, 1932, p. 1, NACR. Sitting on the Unión's Executive Council were Moisés Arias, Enrique Mora Z., Juan R. Pérez, Cornelio Sabrio S., Teo Jiménez E. and Jesús Pérez Navarro. Subsequently, Enrique Mora Z. became a member of the Communist Party. The document went on to enumerate the sicknesses besetting the population, particularly tuberculosis, and the numerous cases of begging and thievery.

74. *Ministerios de Gobernación y Policía, Trabajo y Previsión Social*, Memoria de Gobernación, Policía, Trabajo y Previsión Social - Año 1932, (Costa Rica: *Imprenta Nacional*, 1934), 205-206. The report, showing an admixture of a nascent social-welfare consciousness and puritanism, attributed the prevalence of prostitution to lack of work, poverty, mental deficiencies, the malevolent influence of riches, excessive passion bordering on pathology, and the cruelty of parents sending their children out to live on the streets.

75. Churnside, Formación de la Fuerza Laboral, Cuadro 7.13.

76. The money was to be borrowed from the International Bank, established during the Administration of González Flores. See discussion of the González Flores Administration, Chapter I, above. The loan, which was never made in this form, was to be underwritten by export levies either through increased taxes or the conversion of one-half of the letters of credit on International Bank notes. Additional revenue was to come from the gasoline monopoly and a tax of five centavos per ten machine-rolled cigarettes. At no time would the Bank be permitted to charge more than two percent annual interest. In case where exporters refused the conversion, taxes would be increased. Envisioned was a coffee tax at \$1.00 per quintal (approximately, 100 pounds), and/or a general tax on exports at 20 percent of their value.

77. Small producers is defined as owning a finca under five manzanas and employing under five workers. The presence of significant numbers of small producers in the Costa Rican coffee sector is often pointed to as contributing to the survivability of Costa Rican democracy. See Samuel Stone, La Dinastía De Los Conquistadores: La Crisis Del Poder en la Costa Rica Contemporánea (San José: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana, 1982); John A. Peeler, Latin American Democracies: Colombia, Costa Rica, Venezuela (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1985). For the geographic-historic development of coffee in Costa Rica, see Carolyn Hall, El Café y el Desarrollo Histórico-Geográfico de Costa Rica (San José: ECR, 1982). This discussion is further developed in Chapter II.

78. Congreso. No. 16333, 1932, NACR. The document was dated July 26, 1932. Though it was not enacted, parts of the bill were passed on to other legislative initiatives and found their way into law.

79. The compilation of laws and decrees is Fabio Solorzano Calvo baja la Presidencia de Liceniado, Francisco Fonseca Chamier, Indice Alfabetico de Leyes y Acuerdos Del Poder Legislativo de 1920 hasta el Decreto No. 865 de 17 de Junio 1947, Acuerdo 9 de 10 de Julio 1947 (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1947).

80. The tax on flour, set at ¢.10 per kilogram, was passed on December 14, 1931. Colección de Leyes y Decretos (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1932). The tax was strongly criticized by pro-labor organizations as increasing the cost of living for those least able to afford it.

81. A partial list of the enactments include: Law No. 36, dated February 13, 1931; Law No. 17, dated May 9, 1931; Law No. 9, dated August 5, 1931; Law No. 26, dated September 24, 1931; Law No. 57, dated June 6, 1933; Law No. 156, dated August 3, 1933; Law No. 178, dated August 8, 1933; Law No. 234, dated August 23, 1934; and Law No. 123, dated July 23, 1935. Colección de Leyes y Decretos (San José: Imprenta Nacional, years cited).

82. The above quotation and the discussion which follows were taken from *Congreso*. No. 16397, 1932, p. 1, NACR. The proposal was submitted with 500 supporting signatures, 364 of which were collected by the shoemakers union, headed by Emilio Moscoa, who was a member of the CPR.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

84. The following governmental bureaucracies corresponded to the nation's administrative categories: *Gobernación*-provincial, *Jefaturas Políticas*-cantonal, and *Agencia de Policía*-district. The use of existing bureaucracies to serve a dual function was employed by Calderón Guardia when he significantly expanded the states authority in labor matters. See Chapter III.

85. For example, the Congress rejected a housing proposal initiated by Dr Vargas Araya, a member of the *Partido Reformista*, on the grounds that housing construction must be in private, not governmental hands. Vargas had characterized the workers' bleak living conditions as follows: "The father [sick with] tuberculosis lives in a room three [meters] by three [meters] without windows where aside from the mother three children also sleep." *Congreso*. No. 15094, 1928, NACR.

86. *Congreso*. No. 16397, 1932, p. 10, NACR.

87. *Congreso*. "CPCR Project on Minimum Wage, "No. 17138, 1934, and *Congreso*. "CPCR Project on Unemployment, "No. 17139, 1934. The bills were submitted on May 11 and 16, 1934.

88. *Ibid.*

89. Colección de Leyes Y Decretos, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1934), 375. The Ministry of Labor, in order to establish norms and programs regulating labor, was created by Law No. 33 of July 2, 1928.

90. The law also prohibited daily wages from falling below ₡1 per day.

91. Before the recommendation of the Technical Office, agricultural wage levels for eight hours of work in the seven Provinces were: Guanacaste- ¢2.00; Cartago- ¢1.75; Heredia- ¢1.56; San José- ¢1.49; Alajuela- ¢1.47; Puntarenas- ¢2.00; Limón- ¢2.75. Agricultural work comprised over 63 percent of all work in the country. Oficina Técnica del Trabajo, Proyecto de Salario Mínimo elaborado por la Oficina Técnica del Trabajo, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1934).

92. Law No. 41 of December 19, 1934, Ley Colección de Leyes y Decretos, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1935).

93. Congreso. "Communist Party Initiative," No. 17138, 1934, p. 15, NACR. The advocacy of equal rights for women was a repeated demand of the CPCR and PVP.

94. Article 1 required that the minimum wage "tak[e] into account food, housing, family size in the different climates and zones of the country" in order to best determine the real condition of the working population. Article 2 stipulated that the determined wage was subject to variation "in conformity with the general economic conditions of the country." Oficina Técnica, "Proyecto de Salario Mínimo." A legislative draft of the bill is found in Congreso. "Proyecto de Salario Mínimo," No. 17012, 1934, NACR.

95. This language was strikingly similar to that of Calderón Guardia when he submitted his Labor Code to the Congress nine years later. See Texto Del Mensaje Que Envió el Señor Presidente De La República, Junto Con El Proyecto De Código de Trabajo, al Soberano Congreso Constitucional, April 12, 1943. According to the 1927 census the average household size for the entire country was 5.0 persons. The national average was depressed due to the low family size in Limón (2.7), caused by the presence of a large number of single men working in the banana fields.

96. José Manuel Peralta Quesada was a representative from Alajuela; Roberto Zeledón Castro, from San José. Both were coffee exporters. Zeledón Castro was listed among the leading coffee exporters in the 1926, 1931 and 1937 Anuario Estadísticos. Peralta, whose export business was smaller, was listed only in 1931. Zeledón Castro was repeatedly criticized in the CPCR organ, Trabajo, for his harsh treatment of workers on his coffee *fincas* in Aserrí, San José.

97. Efforts to steer a middle course run throughout Costa Rican history. In addition to the establishment of mixed commission, greatly welcomed by labor, the 1934 wage law stipulated that "all societies, unions, syndicates of

laborers or workers will be civilly responsible for the damages and actions of their affiliates in the work place and, in the case of a strike remain obligated to give just reparations. This responsibility is held jointly by the society, union or syndicate and their executive council or directors." *Oficina Técnica, "Proyecto de Salario Mínimo,"* 25.

98. The daily wage of ¢2 was won by the sugar workers in the settlement of a bitter strike. See Chapter II, Section 2, below, for a discussion of the 1934 strike in Turrialba.

99. The average price for the 1934-1935 harvest was ¢.38 per kilo or ¢36.48 per fanega, far below the projected ¢55 to ¢60 per fanega. *Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Anuario* (1936). A fanega is ninety-six kilos.

100. The Executive strongly criticized this situation. *Congreso. "Proyecto de Salario Mínimo,"* No. 17012, 1934, NACR.

101. Law of December 19, 1934, in Colección de Leyes Y Decretos (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1935), 509-512. Aside from the above indicated provisions, the law repeated restrictions against normal work days longer than eight hours (nights longer than six) and stated its respect for traditional agreements between workers and employers only when these were in favor of the workers. These agreements referred to arrangements made regarding the provision of tools, health care, and housing.

102. If the commission resided in the provincial capital, the Governor was to serve as state representative; otherwise, the position would fall to the *Jefe Político*. The state representative was authorized to head the commission.

103. Trabajo, May 1, 1937.

104. Third category shoemakers were the least skilled and poorest paid of all shoemakers.

105. Trabajo, January 16, 1937, and Trabajo, January 23, 1937.

106. Trabajo, October 23, 1937.

107. Violations of the labor laws remained numerous. For example, in the 1936 report of the *Agencia de Policía de la Zona Atlántica* to the Technical Labor Office, over sixty *fincas* were cited for labor violations and almost one hundred retail outlets for price or weight violations. In 1938 these numbers rose to ninety and fell eighty-two,

respectively. Ministerios de Gobernación y Policía, Trabajo y Previsión Social, Memoria de Gobernación, Policía, Trabajo y Previsión Social - Año 1936, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1937), 215-18; and Ministerios de Gobernación y Policía, Trabajo y Previsión Social, Memoria de Gobernación, Policía, Trabajo y Previsión Social - Año 1938, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1939), 22-28. These figures include only the Atlantic coast and Turrialba.

108. Ministerios de Gobernación y Policía, Trabajo y Previsión Social, Memoria, (1936), 10.

109. Ministerios de Gobernación y Policía, Trabajo y Previsión Social, Memoria de Gobernación, Policía, Trabajo y Previsión Social - Año 1939, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1940).

110. The prices per pound were to be set at ¢.30; ¢.25; ¢.10, respectively. Congreso. No. 18345, 1937, NACR.

111. Decree No. 82 of August 25, 1937. Colección de Leyes y Decretos (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1938).

112. In a few cantons (Desamparados, Escazú, and Santa Ana) the percentage of arable land was as high as 20 percent. Hall, El Café, 82.

113. Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Anuario (1943). The dollar values were as follows: 1930 (US\$1,222,759), 1931 (US\$1,017,268), 1932 (US\$539,971), 1935 (US\$480,500), 1940 (US\$869,644), 1943 (US\$1,394,102).

114. The subsidy was to be funded through a theatre tax. Prices were set as follows: ¢.10/kilo of rice; ¢12.00/46 kilos (quintal) corn; ¢22.50/46 kilos (quintal) beans. These prices were to be maintained by the government in the San José market. Deputy Cortés's opposition was based on the belief that the subsidy would jeopardize the existing price structure for agricultural goods by undermining the country's protectionist laws, first established by Law No. 107, dated July 15, 1933. Congreso. No. 18863, 1939, NACR.

115. The proposal established a schedule of payments in direct correlation to the severity and in cases of work-related accidents that resulted in death, employers were required to cover funeral expenses and provide a pension equal to two years of salary to widows, orphaned children, and grand children. Deputies Volio and Anderson enjoyed friendly relations with the United Fruit Company. See E.P. Chittenden, Administrator, United Fruit Company, Limón, to Arturo Volio, San José, April 30, 1921, Bourgeois Papers. The correspondence refers to a visit to the Atlantic Coast taken

by Volio and fifteen congressional deputies (including Anderson) as guests of the United Fruit Company. The purpose of the visit was to discuss the development of the Talamanca region which constitutes the eastern region of Costa Rica north of the Panamanian frontier.

116. Deputies Anderson, Volio Francisco Faerron, Aristides Agüero, Manuel J. Grillo, José J. Esquivel, and Juan Alfaro V, Protección al obrero contra Los Accidentes del Trabajo (San José: Imprenta Alsina, May 14, 1914).

117. For a discussion of mutual aid societies see Chapter I, Section 1c, above.

118. What follows is based on Law No. 53 dated January 31, 1925 *Reparación por Accidentes del Trabajo*, and the amendments of 1926, 1927, 1931, 1933 and 1942. In general these additions revised indemnification schedules and fines, refined and specified procedural questions and the role and composition of the appeals court, the *Tribunal Superior de Arbitraje*. The 1926 law broadened coverage to include all those whose work entailed use of motor power. The law of February 3, 1931 provided an indemnification schedule based on a percentage of salary and severity of injury. For minor injuries workers would receive one-half their salary (with a minimum of ₡1 per day) until they were able to return to work. More serious injuries were paid out over a period of years. Ten years for what the law termed *Incapacidad parcial permanente* and fifteen years for injuries called *Incapacidad absoluta permanente*. For example total loss of the use of the right arm was indemnified at 75 percent of the worker's annual salary for ten years; the left arm at 65 percent. *Incapacidad absoluta permanente* such as blindness in both eyes was indemnified at two-thirds the workers annual salary for fifteen years. Laws dated August 24, 1926, September 13, 1927, February 3, 1931, June 20, August 23, 1933, and September 18, 1942, Colección de Leyes y Decretos, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1932, 1934 and 1943).

119. Caspar Casey, Limón, 301. James T. Patterson, America in the Twentieth Century: A History (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Joanovich, Publishers, 3rd ed., 1989), 30.

120. These exclusions were specifically enumerated in the Law dated February 3, 1931, Article 12. The law of January 1925 left the possibility open that (pending financial feasibility) agricultural workers regardless if they worked or did not work with machinery could be protected by the Banco de Seguros. Colección de Leyes y Decretos, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1926 and 1932).

121. Law dated August 23, 1933, Article 30 clause b. Colección de Leyes y Decretos, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1934). These were the *Agente Principle de Policía de Accidentes de Trabajo* in San José; the *Agente Principle de Policía Judicial* in the other provincial capitals; the *Jefe Político* in canton heads; and the *Agente Principle de Policía* in the districts. These officials were required to specify hours in which they were available to hear accidents claims. At other times, they assumed the regular functions associated with their offices.

122. If an employer failed to insure his workers with the *banco*, he would be required within thirty days to deposit a sum sufficient to cover whatever costs arose from an injury. Law dated February 3, 1931 amended the law of January 31, 1925 to allow *patrons* to discharge their obligations to injured workers in a single payment if they so desired. It also established a system of fines for employers if they knowing failed to report an accident to the proper authorities. Fines were set between ₡50 and ₡250. For repeated offenders fines would double. Colección de Leyes y Decretos, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1932).

123. Cerdas Cruz, "Costa Rica After 1930," 280.

124. For example, on the question of whether rents would be commuted in case of work disability, the *banco*, stipulated that it would cover rent if it was under 20 percent of the workers salary. However, if it was above 20 percent, the *banco* agreed to pay only if there was agreement between the *banco* and the worker. Article 25 of the January 31, 1925 law. One of the reforms advocated by the CPR was the replacement of the phrase "agreement between the parties" by "at the solicitation of the worker." Trabajo, February 15, 1941.

125. This specific proposal was submitted to Congress in July 1937 and again in June 1938. *Congreso*. No. 18702, 1938, NACR.

126. Trabajo, April 22, 1939.

127. According to the 1927 Census agricultural workers comprised 64 percent of the work force or 103,377 laborers, of this 68,730 were day workers (*jornaleros*).

128. See Chapter II, Section 5, below.

129. Broken down by province average concentrations of workers are lower. They are as follows: San José- 2.6 workers per *finca*; Alajuela- 2.7; Cartago- 5.0; Heredia- 2.9; Guanacaste- 2.8; Puntarenas- 3.9; and Limón- 2.7.

Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Censo Agropecuario de 1950, Chart 49. The high concentration in Cartago reflects the presence of large sugar plantations. These plantations were often owned by individuals of German origin. The ethnicity of these individuals became an important issue during the Second World War. Cerdas, "Costa Rica After 1930," 282.

130. Congreso. No. 17716, 1936, NACR. A partial list of cantons and districts submitting the petitions included: Paraiso; San Rafael de Heredia; Pavas, Escazú, Barba Province, San Ramon, Alajuela, Atenas de la Provincia Alajuela, Grecia, Heredia, Santo Domingo, Heredia, Cartago, San Nicolás (Taras), Paraiso, Puntarenas, Turrialba, San Isidro de Coronado, and Desmonte San Mateo.

131. Congreso. No. 18702, 1938. Letter dated July 1, 1941 and signed by José Arguedas P., President; Rafael Loria A., Vice President; Villalobos, R., Secretary; and Manuel Solís, Treasurer.

132. The letter claimed that in New York the accident ratio was one in six hundred while in Costa Rica the *banco* processed 4,000 claims a year out of an industrial work force of 20,000. JMA, Gerente, *Banco Nacional De Seguros Costa Rica to Señor Oficial Mayor del Congreso Constitucional*, July 4, 1938, Congreso, No. 18702, 1938, NACR.

133. Quotes are taken from *Ibid.*, 3 and 4, respectively.

134. A particular case involved two workers injured by falling rocks while working with drills in Quepos on the Pacific coast. The workers who were injured at the beginning of March had not received their payments by the middle April. Trabajo, April 15, 1939.

135. Much of this material appeared in the *CPCR* periodical, Trabajo in 1940 and 1941, in a series of articles written by Jaime Cerdas Mora who was the legal council for the party and subsequently the *Confederación de Trabajadores de Costa Rica*.

136. Congreso. "Initiative of Deputy Jiménez O." No. 16468, May 3, 1933.

137. A 1943 manifesto issued in support of the Calderón Guardia's Social Guarantees by sixty labor unions drew attention to the agrarian question and insisted that the functions of the *Caja de Seguro Social* be maintain separate from *Banco Nacional de Seguros*. Of the sixty unions signing

the document, twenty were agricultural unions. Trabajo, February 6, 1943.

138. Trabajo, July 7, 1945. The reform to transfer the administration of workmen's compensation to the Caja was again proposed in the Programa de Bloque de la Victoria published in Trabajo, February 23, 1946. The opposition press printed repeated accusations that the Caja was infested with Vanguardistas. Though the charges were exaggerated, the Caja's sub-director and principal operational officer, Guillermo Padilla was sympathetic to labor and appointed many individuals of "left-wing" sympathies to posts under him. Other evidence that the PVP had a high profile in the Caja came from a report titled Datos Para Un Estudio del Partido Vanguardia de Costa Rica. The Caja was listed among those institutions that the PVP either directly or indirectly controlled or influenced. Judging by its content the anonymous, undated report was probably written in 1946 by either a member or ex-member of the party. For further discussion of this report, see Chapter V, below. The report is located in "Doc. Partido Vanguardia Popular," AACC.

For an examination of the financial crisis in the Caja during the Picado administration, see U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch dated April 11, 1946, USNA, 818.504. The dispatch's analysis is of particular interest. It contrasts the position taken by Caja personnel, in particular, technical expert, William Dittel, that the social security system should be administered by a private institution such as the Banco Nacional de Seguros, to those who insisted that the Caja's oversight authority be expanded. This same argument that social security should be "privatized" was made by Barahona Streber, legal council to the Catholic confederation, the CCTRN, in his recommendation to Guatemalan President Arévalo on how to establish a comprehensive labor and social code. See Chapter IV, below.

139. When Manuel Francisco Quesada was named head of the Caja in 1946 he was welcomed by the PVP. Rejecting charges that Quesada was a member of the party, the PVP praised him as an energetic, dedicated and progressive individual in the mold of Brenes Guitierrez, Secretary of Labor. Trabajo, July 27, 1946.

140. The cell, 22 de Mayo was organized by a c. Dimitrov. Annual Report for 1945, Partido Vanguardia Popular -Sección San José, Sector Número Cuatro, Correspondencia - 1945, Archive of the Banco de Costa Rica.

141. Presidential decree No. 2 dated January 29, 1952 Ley Colección de Leyes y Decretos (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1953).

142. This is a reference to Article 31 of the *Reglamento de Correos* of August 31, 1921. For a discussion of this see Chapter II, Section 4, below.

Chapter II

Strikes, Social Conditions and the Formation of the *Confederación de Trabajadores de Costa Rica*

In 1934 three major strikes ripped across Costa Rica causing fear among businesses and government that these activities would lead to revolutionary upheaval.¹ Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Costa Rican workers focused their efforts in three major activities: legislative initiatives, strikes, and the effort to form a unified national labor movement. Chapter I examined legislative initiatives, this one will analyze the great strikes of 1934 and the effort to form a national labor organization.

At the outset, it is important to indicate that a sharp discrepancy exists between urban and rural strikes. Of all strikes between 1934 and 1943 approximately 25 percent involved agricultural workers in spite of the fact that they comprised over 60 percent of the work force. During the same period almost 50 percent of the strikes involved artisans such as shoemakers, printers, and cabinet makers although they comprised about 15 percent of the work force.²

1. The Strikes in 1934

The strikes in 1934 marked the emergence of a vitalized labor movement under the leadership of the CPR. The first of these strikes was that of the shoemakers of San José.

a. The Shoemakers in San José

In January 1934 shoemakers from one of San José's largest workshops, *La Renaciente*, received a unilateral pay cut. Large workshops averaged between 50 and 75 workers.³ Confronted by a 10 percent lowering of their weekly salary, the workers presented the following complaint:

We are not in agreement with this latest reduction. We consider it impossible to live on a salary so reduced. Furthermore, the reduction is an injustice because it was not communicated to us before hand. We appeal to your nobility and ask you revoke this last reduction.⁴

The owner of the workshop tore-up the petition, sparking the spread of unilateral wage cuts throughout the capital's shoemaking industry. Shortly after workers from another zapatería, *El Record*, received the same cut. Refusing to accept the reduction, the workers met in a public space adjacent to the *Hotel Costa Rica* and were addressed by Efraín Jiménez Guerrero, a young shoemaker and member of the CPR.⁵ Jiménez convinced the workers to form a strike committee, which then pledged to impede entrance to the workshops to all workers.

There were three types of workers in zapaterías. These were: finishers (*alistadores*), mounters (*montadores*), and cutters (*cortadores*), the highest paid of all shoemakers.⁶ There was also a distinction between workers and workshops which produced "fine" shoes and those that produced "inexpensive" shoes. Workers who produced "inexpensive"

shoes belonged to, what was called, the "third category;" they were the poorest paid and had the lowest rate of unionization among the shoemakers. Workshop owners repeatedly attempted to exploit the difference in skill, salary and rates of unionization of the respective workers.

As soon as the strike committee formed more than one hundred workers walked out of their workshops. The strike spread rapidly to over one thousand workers halting all shoe manufacturing in the capital. At the end of January, the strikers held their first assembly in a hall lent to them by the CPR. At the meeting the workers authorized the strike committee to negotiate on their behalf, organize pickets, and solicit support from other worker organizations. The committee demanded reinstatement of the unilateral wage reduction, wage increases, and recognition of a shoemakers' union.⁷ Also the workers were informed that the strike had spread to the surrounding areas of Cartago and Guadalupe and decided to send two of their leaders, Efraín Jiménez G. and Rafael Arias, to aid in the formation of a strike committee.⁸

As the strike spread workers faced severe financial difficulties. They had no savings, strike funds were non-existent and the resources of the CPR were limited. Manuel Mora, General Secretary of the CPR, offered logistical and moral support, but only limited assistance and only to those workers in greatest need.⁹ Additional material assistance

came from the *Sociedad de Obreros Panadores* and the *Federación Gráfica*.

Towards the end of January, the strike faced its first leadership crisis when it was learned that two smaller *zapaterías* agreed to the worker's terms. The larger workshops, however, remained unmoved. At a meeting presided over by Rafael Arias, the shoemakers voted to reject a partial solution and refused to authorize a return to work to the smaller *zapaterías*. Two days later this decision was reversed. Efraín Jiménez (who was absent at the previous meeting) displaying the pragmatism that would guide many of the CPR's decisions, successfully argued that the union was not powerful enough to confront the entire industry. The salaries of returning workers could help support those still on strike, and the larger *zapaterías*, experiencing the loss of business, would feel greater pressure to capitulate.

Taking a position that was reversed in a few years, the strike committee adamantly opposed any prospect of government involvement. The committee argued that the administration of Ricardo Jiménez Oreamuno (1932-1936) was controlled by large capitalists and it foresaw no prospects of favorable governmental action. Don Ricardo Jiménez was one of the great "*Olimpiads*" of the country. The other was Cleto González Víquez. Representatives of powerful coffee interests they controlled the presidency for twenty of the thirty years from 1906 to 1936.¹⁰

The committee also defended itself against charges that the strike was a political manipulation of the CPCR. In the CPCR organ, Trabajo, the committee clarified the CPCR's role in the strike. It argued that the CPCR was not manipulating but *aiding* the strike by lending workers a meeting place and money, by printing announcements and that the leadership of the strike was Communist because Communists possessed a sincere desire to improve the living conditions of shoemakers and were the most able to provide effective direction. It declared that the strike was not an electoral vehicle of the CPCR.

These explanations were early evidence of the problematic relationship between worker organizations and the CPCR and would be repeated over the next fifteen years with limited effectiveness. The ever present concern among the union/CPCR leadership was that the CPCR association would inhibit the growth of the union movement. This indeed was the case. However, try as the leadership might, there were a number of structural reasons that made it impossible to remove the union/CPCR identification. The dual role of many leaders as party and labor functionaries was long standing and had the effect of forcing worker organizations to act as "organs of the party."¹¹ Party and union officials reached positions of authority at a young age and many enjoyed long careers. The age of many of the shoemakers in leadership positions in the 1934 strike was between twenty

and twenty-five¹² and the composition of subsequent shoemakers' union Executive Councils would show a remarkable continuity until the civil war in 1948.¹³ The same was true in the CPR. For example, Manuel Mora was nineteen when he helped found the CPR in 1931 and Jaime Cerdas Mora was twenty-five.¹⁴

Another reason for union/party identification was the CPR's penetration of the labor movement. The party directed all of its members to be active unionists, and the structure of the CPR cell was designed to facilitate penetration into the union leadership.¹⁵ In addition, the CPR's numerical weakness and its ideological orientation led it to develop worker organizations as a mass base of support. Finally, the mainstream press carried out a long, consistent and ultimately effective campaign identifying labor unions with the CPR. This was particularly true of papers such as Diario de Costa Rica, La Hora, and La Prensa Libre.¹⁶

Returning to the shoemakers' strike, by the beginning of February more than twenty-five workshops producing inexpensive shoes (*calzados baratos*) had agreed to wage increases ranging from 20 to 25 percent. By the end of February all *zapaterías*, including those in Guadalupe and Cartago had agreed to the workers demands. *La Renaciente*, where the strike had originated, was the last to agree.

With the wage settlement the shoemakers achieved the first stage of their objective. On February 8th their

General Assembly nominated Efraín Jiménez, Rodolfo Guzmán, Edwin Arburola and Manuel Valverde to begin writing a founding charter, and on March 12th, based on that document, the union, *Sindicato de Zapateros*, was established and its Executive Council elected. At least 4 of the 7 person council were CPR members.¹⁷

In addition to consolidating its economic gains, the newly formed union vowed to work in solidarity with other worker organizations, to fight against the employer class, and "yanqui" imperialism, and pledged to focus its efforts on obtaining pro-labor legislation. The introduction of the issue of imperialism revealed a growing sophistication of the labor movement and the development of an international political line. This in large measure was attributable to growing CPR influence.

Costa Rican historian Víctor Hugo Acuña has argued that if before 1930 the most radical workers were the bakers, influenced by the ideas of anarcho-sindicalism, the January 1934 strike marked the emergence of the shoemakers under the influence of the CPR as the vanguard of the workers movement.¹⁸

After its successful strike, the union directed its efforts to form shop committees (*comités de talleres* or *comités de bases*) and organize affiliate shoemaker unions in the provinces. The shop committees, usually comprised of between five and ten workers, became the intermediaries

between the rank and file, and the employers and the union leadership. The effort to organize provincial unions was successful. Important unions were established in Guadalupe, Cartago, Grecia, Turrialba and Limón. By the second half of the decade the shoemakers were well positioned to found a national federation.

In 1934 labor unrest was not limited to shoemakers in the Central Valley. Aside from the famous banana strike in Limón in August 1934, there were disturbances and the beginning formations of agricultural unions in the sugar growing region of Turrialba in the province of Cartago.

b. Sugar Workers in Turrialba

Centered in the *finca Aragon* owned by Guillermo Niehaus, the sugar worker strikes focused primarily on the issue of salary. A number of subsidiary issues including, availability of medicine, decent housing, provision of tools, and payment in money, were settled early. Turrialba, fifty kilometers east of San José, was the central sugar producing region in the country. By the 1920s a handful of families of German origin dominated the industry, producing more than one-half of all the country's sugar. By 1939 this would rise to 80 percent.¹⁹

At the outbreak of the strike in May 1934, Guillermo Niehaus in concert with the local political leaders requested that the head of the newly created *Oficina Técnica*

del Trabajo, G. Zayas Bazán, mediate the conflict.²⁰ Upon his arrival in Turrialba, Zayas Bazán called an open meeting of workers, local politicians, and owners. The tactical decision to hold an open meeting was an important one: it muted the voice of the more radical workers and implied non-recognition of the nascent worker's organization represented by the strike committee. In a raucous gathering of over six hundred workers, -90 percent of whom were *jornaleros*-, finca owners and municipal leaders were successful in having their offer of a 14 percent increase in wages to ¢2.00 per day accepted. The strike committee, supported by the CPR and the newly formed *Sindicato de Zapateros*, was unable to hold the line on their demand for a 40 percent increase to ¢2.25.

For the CPR the meeting underlined its difficulty in achieving leadership over this rural work force. Bitter at what it viewed as the workers' capitulation, the CPR quoted the leader of the majority faction of the workers as having said, "we are like Poles (*Polacos*). We ask for more in order to be able to let it go for less."²¹ There were several reasons for the ineffectiveness of the CPR. The paternalistic practices prevalent in the region were reinforced by a periodic recourse to intimidation, and a number of rural organizers fell victim to this climate in the mid-1930s. The most notable case was the assassination of Herminio Alfaro, a rural activist murdered in the province of Heredia. According to a local witness to the

killing, Alfaro was assassinated precisely because of his CPCR affiliation and growing popularity among the rural population in Heredia.²²

Contributing to the CPCR's defeat, was the limited time it had spent preparing for the conflict. This the party would successfully work to overcome. Another factor was the role played by the state. Dominated by large agricultural (principally coffee) interests, the state was ill-disposed to tolerate widespread unrest in the countryside.

However, in spite of the May settlement, renewed unrest erupted in Turrialba in September. The May wage settlement was not being adhered to nor was the wage a livable one. The government had recently released figures that placed the cost of living for a family of five at ₡13.76 per week. The strike committee reconstructed these figures including the cost of bread, shortening and clothes to arrive at a minimum weekly budget for a family of five of ₡18.86 or ₡2.72 a day. The committee then issued a demand for a minimum daily wage of ₡2.50, and argued that in spite of previous agreements the average wage remained between ₡1.25 and ₡1.75.²³

In October, a second strike erupted in Turrialba. Zayas Bazán again interceded, this time with a series of pro-employer proposals including reconstituting the incipient union by naming Guillermo Niehaus as Secretary of Finance. Another proposal would have lowered the daily wage to ₡1.75. When these proposals were summarily (and expectedly)

rejected by the workers, the political authorities responded with a significant show of force. Union leaders²⁴ were physically accosted and a reported black list of undesirable workers was circulated. The show of force was significant; the police reportedly outnumbered the striking workers and forced an end to the work stoppage.

In December, in an effort to improve the worst of the workers' conditions and forestall revolutionary turmoil, the Congress passed a minimum wage law which set agricultural wages at ¢2.00 per day throughout the country.²⁵ The legislation reflected an important shift in the state's position²⁶ and allowed for an uneasy truce to settle over the region.

After the strike, the CPCR maintained an active presence in Turrialba. The party organized meetings throughout the decade. Political authorities fearful of another eruption of strike actions, closely monitored CPCR activities. On at least one occasion these authorities expressed frustration at the limited force at their disposal to disperse party gatherings.²⁷ Regardless of the political climate, the CPCR meetings were not clandestine; they were preceded by a public announcement and held in private homes. On average, they were attended by between 100 and 150 people.²⁸ The organizational work would bear fruit. By the 1940s Turrialba was one of the CPCR/PVP's areas of strength.²⁹

Sugar workers strikes in Turrialba differed in important respects from the shoemakers' strike. They were agricultural strikes involving a much larger work force earning a significantly lower wage. Because of the widespread implications of agrarian unrest, the government response was immediate, and for the same reason the workers confronted a level of intimidation significantly greater than that faced by urban workers. Finally, lower educational levels and the persistence of paternalistic relations impeded rural labor organization. These conditions combined to forestall the emergence of an agrarian workers' movement of national impact until the first years of the 1940s. Whereas the shoemakers won a clear victory, the outcome of the Turrialba strike was ambiguous. Although workers won a wage increase in May, it was rolled back and only reinstated after the passage of national legislation decreeing a ¢2 minimum wage.

c. Banana Workers on the Atlantic Coast

The 1934 banana strike in Limón was the watershed event in the evolution of Costa Rica's labor movement and marked the emergence as the CPR as a viable, disciplined organization with strong roots in sectors of the working class. The history of the banana strike has been told on more than one occasion. The limited intention here is to integrate the strike into the context of a burgeoning labor

movement by examining it in comparison to the artisanal and agricultural strikes of the Central Valley.

In any discussion of labor unrest in Limón, its geography, and its unique demographic composition must be emphasized. Located 120 kilometers east of San José (an eight to ten hour train ride, depending on track and weather conditions), the province was a hot, rain-filled lowland, strongly influenced by the populations in the surrounding Caribbean countries. The following table derived from the 1927 census offers a racial breakdown by province of the country's population.

TABLE No. 2.1
Racial Composition by Provinces (1927)
Absolute Numbers and Percentages

Provinces	White	Mestizo	Negro	Indian	Others	Total
San José	133,089	17,807	431	1,334	522	153,183
%	86.9	11.6	.3	.9	0.8	100.00
Alajuela	90,820	6,519	24	126	88	97,577
%	93.1	6.7	--	.1	0.1	100.00
Cartago	66,223	2,969	309	411	286	70,198
%	94.3	4.2	.5	.6	0.4	100.00
Guanacaste	16,380	34,285	67	17	393	51,142
%	32.0	67.1	.1	--	0.1	100.00
Heredia	36,828	1,546	1	--	32	38,407
%	95.9	4.0	--	--	.1	100.00
Limón	11,060	1,073	18,003	1,065	1,077	32,278
%	34.3	3.3	55.8	3.3	3.3	100.00
Puntarenas	23,594	2,413	301	1,244	1,187	28,739
%	82.1	8.4	1.1	4.3	4.1	100.00
Republic	377,994	66,612	19,136	4,197	3,585	471,524
%	80.1	14.1	4.1	0.9	0.8	100.00

S.J.=San José; Ala.=Alajuela; Car.=Cartago; Gua.=Guanacaste; Her.=Heredia; Lim.=Limón; Pun.=Puntarenas; For.=Foreign

Source: Censos de 1927.

In addition, to the dominance of blacks in the province (55.8 percent of the total population), 69 percent of Limón's population were not citizens of Costa Rica. Of these over 55 percent were from Jamaica (Jamaicans were not considered Costa Rican citizens even if they were born in the country³⁰) and the balance from Nicaragua.³¹ The potential for conflict and racially divisive labor tactics was compounded by the internal migratory origins of the province's population. Again, according to the 1927 census only 28 percent of the individuals living in Limón were born there. This contrasts with a far lower migratory rates in the other provinces, particularly in those of the Central Valley.

TABLE No. 2.2

Percentage of Costa Ricans by Place of Birth (1927)
(By Province)

Jurisdiction	S.J.	Ala.	Car.	Gua.	Her.	Lim.	Pun.
San José	<u>86.1</u>	4.4	4.1	0.6	3.4	0.2	0.2
Alajuela	2.4	<u>93.1</u>	0.3	0.2	3.4	-	0.4
Cartago	8.8	2.3	<u>86.5</u>	0.2	1.5	0.2	0.3
Guanacaste	1.2	9.0	0.2	<u>83.9</u>	0.9	-	3.4
Heredia	2.8	3.7	0.5	0.1	<u>92.5</u>	0.1	0.1
Limón	20.1	11.7	12.6	12.7	6.8	<u>28.3</u>	5.3
<u>Puntarenas</u>	<u>6.1</u>	<u>18.8</u>	<u>1.3</u>	<u>7.1</u>	<u>1.2</u>	<u>0.3</u>	<u>64.3</u>
Republic	32.5	25.0	15.8	10.1	10.7	0.8	4.6

Source: Censos de 1927, NACR.

The above table reflects the migration of Costa Ricans to Limón during the height of the region's banana-led growth. This growth began with the establishment of the United Fruit Company (UFCO) in 1889. By the early 1890s the UFCO had built 112 miles of railroad, had 212,394 hectares of land, and \$2,000,000 in total capital. By 1930 UFCO capital had reached \$11,230,000 and its lands were valued at \$242,398,163.³² however, though it continued to grow, the industry (in Limón) had reached its height immediately before the First World War. At that time the UFCO exported eleven million *racimos* (bunches) of bananas generating over \$5 million in income. But beginning with the war and the loss of European markets the industry declined. Pre-war levels of income were regained in 1921 and continued to rise until 1926. However, after 1927 decreasing production, increased world competition, and falling prices accelerated the decline. By 1934 banana exports had reached an all time low of 3.2 million bunches selling for \$1.6 million.³³ These conditions were exacerbated by the UFCO refusal to deal adequately with the problems of soil exhaustion and disease. Instead of developing new areas of exploitation on the Atlantic coast (as it pledged in its 1930 contract with the state) it began planning for the transfer of its operations to Golfito on the Pacific coast.

TABLE No. 2.3

Banana Exports (Selected Years)

Year	Quantity of Exports in (racimos)	Value in (US\$)	Price
1913	11,170,312	5,195,725	.46
1917	8,686,516	4,041,635	.46
1920	8,652,473	4,024,406	.46
1925	8,348,972	6,261,729	.75
1927	7,869,175	5,901,881	.75
1930	5,834,045	4,375,534	.75
1931	5,079,944	3,174,965	.63
1932	4,313,379	2,450,783	.57
1933	4,293,383	1,981,561	.46
1934	3,210,169	1,602,106	.49

racimo=approx. 25 kilograms.

Source: Casey, Limon, p. 322³⁴

As can be seen in the TABLE 2.3, price (at least until 1931) was less a factor in the region's decline than the continual and precipitous drop in production and demand. As Limón's productivity fell so did its rate of population growth, which did not exceed 1 percent per year until 1950.³⁵

The crisis initiated a change in the system of production. By 1934, 75 percent of the banana crop was grown by independent producers who then sold the crop to the UFCO. The company reserved the right to set prices and reject bruised bananas at point of purchase. Since UFCO was the sole purchaser and had monopoly control over transport and distribution facilities, tremendous pressure was placed on the independent producers to lower their labor costs.

This new arrangement worsened already poor living conditions. Workers earned ¢.50 an hour- ¢4.00 a day while the cost of an individual's daily diet³⁶ was between ¢1.50 and ¢2.00 a day.³⁷ These wages reflected a steep erosion in the workers' earnings. At the beginning of 1931 workers earned as much as ¢5.7 per day. On April 1 this was lowered to ¢4.76 per day and at the end of August to ¢4.28. By 1933 earnings ranged between three and four colones.³⁸ In addition workers were paid by the UFCO and local producers in coupons redeemable in company stores which were transferable only at a discount of between 25 and 30 percent. Housing was inadequate, comprised of barracks like shacks without plumbing, drinkable water or impermeable roofs. Living areas were surrounded by swamps and contagious diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, and typhoid were common. The presence of snakes and the lack of antidotes for their venom was also a problem. The hospital in neighboring Siquirres (four hours by train) and medical facilities in Limón remained primitive despite the deduction of 2 percent of the workers salary for hospitalization.

The province had the highest percentage of single men in the country.³⁹ The average family size in Limón was 2.7 persons per household. This contrasted with a national average of five. Banana workers often lived without their families. These factors combined with an absence of cultural or organized activities led to increased incidences of

public disorders, drunkenness, and the prevalence of prostitution.⁴⁰

Feeding the current adverse conditions was a history of labor unrest in the region. The earliest of these were the railroad strikes by Chinese and Italian immigrant-laborers in 1882 and 1888, respectively. The latter strike resulted in the deportation of many of the workers to Italy. There was an important strike in 1910 by Jamaican banana workers who demanded an increase in salary, the shortening of the work day and the elimination of payment in company coupons instead of money. The action was met by strong repression.⁴¹ In 1913 there was a strike in Sixaola (Costa Rica) and the adjacent plantations in Bocas del Toro (Panama). In 1921 a strike was aborted due to the ensuing territorial war between Costa Rica and Panama. After the impact of the Great Depression signs of worker unrest and discontent increased. The year 1932 witnessed a sharp increase in criminal activities, most commonly banditry.⁴² As the economic and social situation deteriorated in the province, the pace of political and organizational work accelerated. In April 1933, the *Limón Bloque de Obreros Y Campesinos* was formed, representing the merger of the provincial based *Partido del Pueblo* and the CPCR.⁴³ The *bloque*, rejecting the slogans of bourgeois politicians, cast itself as a soldier in the world wide struggle against capital.⁴⁴

The actions of the CPCR galvanized the growing unrest.

Carlos Luis Fallas (Calufa),⁴⁵ exiled to Limón for his labor related work, began to establish strategically placed CPR cells on the banana *fincas* including *Milla 48*, *Parismina*, *La Suiza*, and *26 Millas*.⁴⁶

The CPR followed a two-pronged strategy. It continued organizing at the local level and its congressional deputies in San José, Manuel Mora and Efraín Jiménez, attempted to address the workers' grievances through legislative action.

The strike's chain of command ran from the political seat of the CPR in San José to the *Comité Central de Huelga*, headed by strike leaders Fallas and Jaime Cerdas at *26 Millas*. Below this was the *Comité Regional de Huelga* in Río Jiménez led by Arnoldo Ferreto and Tobías Vaglio, which coordinated and delegated the activities of the various *finsa*-based strike committees. In additions, the strike received support from national and international labor organizations.⁴⁷

The CPR attempted to tap the significant level of opposition to the UFCO inside the country. Large coffee exporters who competed with United Fruit for labor, resented the high freight charges on the UFCO controlled Northern Railroad, and the low tax on the export of bananas. The 1930 contract between the González Víquez Administration and UFCO provided for an extremely low export tax on bananas.⁴⁸ (The tax was 2.5 percent of the market price per *racimo* in 1930; it rose to 4.5 percent in 1934.) In addition the autonomous

operation of the banana company was seen as an affront to national sovereignty. This position was taken by conservative politicians such as Otilio Ulate⁴⁹ as well as organizations such as the *Liga Anti-imperialista de las Américas* and the *Sociedad Aprista*.⁵⁰

In spite of the broad-based opposition to the UFCO, the CPCR legislative strategy failed due to the unparalleled influence the company had with key congressional deputies. To combat UFCO influence the Congress attempted to prohibit deputies from "lending" their professional service to foreign companies.⁵¹ The initiative was prompted by the action of the President of the Congress, Arturo Volio, in rescinding the penalties the Special Committee wanted to impose on the UFCO for not complying with the provisions of the 1930 contract. UFCO involvement with Volio, as well as with other government officials, was long standing. As early as 1921 the company invited and feted Deputy Volio along with other congressmen on a trip to the Talamanca coast (Limón and Cahuita).⁵²

With the collapse of the legislative effort, organizational activity intensified. On August 4, 1934 Fallas was elected head of the strike committee at the *finca Los Angeles* in 26 Millas, the center of the unrest. On August 9th, a strike was declared. The workers demanded a wage of ¢6.00 a day (for a six hours) to be paid promptly⁵³ in money, not coupons; the improvement of living conditions;

installation of adequate medical facilities; protection under the 1925 Accident Compensation law;⁵⁴ state and employer recognition of the their union, the *Sindicato de Trabajadores del Atlántico*; and the elimination of the practice of "botazones"⁵⁵. "Botazones" was a widely abused practice through which the Company rejected unwanted quantities of bananas by claiming they were damaged or bruised.

The inclusion of producer demands with those of the workers was important to this and future labor conflicts. Small scale production was widespread throughout the country.⁵⁶ In the province of San José land holdings ranged in size from under four *manzanas* per *finca* to over twenty with the lower figure far more prevalent. In the canton of San José the average holding was 4.99 *manzanas*. In the province of Limón alone there were 1,500 independent producers of bananas.⁵⁷ Consequently, it is not surprising that worker organizations and the CPCR continually articulated demands designed to win the allegiance of the small producers.

However, attempts to bridge the ideological gulf between workers and independent growers met with limited success. The interest of the two groups were not identical. Small producers were employers, and the economic dominance of the agricultural processors/exporters made it extremely difficult for small producers to pass along increased labor

costs in the sale price of their commodity. Their only practical alternative was to keep labor costs low. A clear example of the divergence of interest between small producers and the rural work force was seen in the limited application of workmen's compensation.

In Limón the gulf between workers and small producers was complicated by the region's racial composition.⁵⁸

Although the CPCR and the *Sindicato de Trabajadores del Atlántico* made particular efforts to win Jamaican support for the strike,⁵⁹ the Jamaican population was by and large quiescent.⁶⁰ There were two reasons for this. First, the Jamaicans felt themselves protected by neither Costa Rican nor British law. Lacking citizenship, they feared deportation. Second, since many of Jamaicans had migrated to Costa Rica during the boom period of banana exploitation before the First World War, a significant number had risen from workers to small producers who if they did not own the land, rented it from UFCO.⁶¹ Finding themselves caught between the UFCO and the workers, many Jamaicans attempted to remain disengaged from the strike.

The strike had two phases: the first from August 9 through August 28, 1934. At the end of this period the workers won many of their demands in a negotiated settlement with the larger national producers. United Fruit was not a party to, nor did it honor, this settlement. The second phase was from August 31 to September 16 when the strike was

crushed and its leadership arrested.

The police were active during the entire strike. The government initially dispatched one hundred men under the command of the *Director General de Detectives*, General Monge, and Coronel Gallego, and immediately deported Nicaraguans it accused of being labor agitators.⁶² However, despite the police activity and the importation of strike breakers from the cities of Limón and Puntarenas the first phase of the strike was generally peaceful and effective. In large measure the peacefulness of the strike was due to the discipline imposed by the CPR.⁶³ By the end of August steamer ships were leaving the Port of Limón either empty or with very light cargos.⁶⁴

The success of the strike prompted negotiations. The Secretary of Government and Labor, Santos León Herrera, visited the region and opened discussions with the workers. The initial round of talks broke down over the question of wages. However they resumed and on August 28 an accord was signed between the national producers and the workers.

The August 28th settlement gave workers much of what they demanded: a daily salary of ₡4.20 for a six hour day; local commissaries with selling prices equivalent to those in surrounding regions; tools to be sold at cost; medical facilities at all *fincas*, outfitted in direct proportion to number of workers; the promise of hospitalization when needed; amnesty for strike leaders; and recognition of the

union, *Sindicato de Trabajadores del Atlántico*.⁶⁵

The agreement did not hold. The UFCO renounced it and its renunciation was joined by a few large national producers. Upon receiving communication of the UFCO's action, the administration of Ricardo Jiménez dispatched police reinforcements to the region. The second phase of the strike began on September 10th, when the police invaded the strikers' compound at 26 Millas, and torched the strikers' barracks.⁶⁶ Whereas the first phase of the strike was marked by peaceful resistance - with little damage to material outside the destruction of some harvested bananas, the second phase of the strike was marred by violence. Rolling stock was damaged and tracks torn up. The police, deployed as military units, cut off all supplies to the province. Workers were forced to organize into hunting parties to secure food. By the middle of September strike leaders Carlos Luis Fallas, Jaime Cerdas Mora, Arnoldo Ferreto, Lino Octavio Bustos, Tobías Vaglio were either detained or arrested by the police. In addition to the military tactics, the strike was combatted with propaganda (principally in Diario de Costa Rica)⁶⁷ and the importation of strike breakers from the province of Puntarenas.

The government treated this phase of the strike as an insurrection. This attitude was encouraged by the UFCO. In an August 22nd letter to the President of the Republic, George Chittenden, Manager of the UFCO in Limón, asserted

that the strike had to be seen not as a movement of workers but as a "social movement, instigated, directed and supported in the larger part by foreign elements." He went on to declare that the UFCO would never deal with "professional agitators or their representatives or with any strike committee" made up of individuals "affiliated with the party which has declared itself, on its own authority, the spokesman or representative of the workers."⁶⁸ The "party" referred to was clearly the CPR. Foreign Minister, Raúl Gurdian expressed the same distaste for the CPR when he said in a public interview that threat of Communism to Costa Rica was like that of tuberculosis to an individual. Gurdian argued that the government wanted an agreement based on justice and did not advocate the use of violence to crush the strike. We must not "refuse to accept ideas which the Communists have due to the mere fact that they are Communist ideas." Yet Gurdian went on to call for the establishment of an anti-Communist party and, if necessary, a reliable army.⁶⁹

The second phase of the strike brought with it harsh repercussions. Neither Fallas nor Cerdas welcomed the resumption of the strike or saw it as a viable revolutionary opportunity.⁷⁰ However, other elements of the banana worker leadership did.⁷¹ This conflict between revolutionary and constitutional tendencies was long standing within the CPR. The party was able to maintain its unity and its

constitutional orientation in large measure due to the dominant leadership of Manuel Mora and others (such as Jaime Cerdas Mora) who never defined themselves as "professional revolutionaries" and directed CPR activities in accordance with the country's constitution.⁷²

Although the strike was crushed and its leadership arrested, workers did secure some gains. In the December 7, 1934 contract negotiated between the Jiménez Administration and UFCO, workers salaries were increased, the work day was reduced and workers were entitled to increased medical protection. Also small producers received limited guarantees that the UFCO would pay higher prices for their crops.

Why did the UFCO made these concessions? Attention has focused on the December 1934 contract negotiations for the extension of the UFCO's contract with the state.⁷³ During these negotiations three days before the violated August 28th settlement the government offered to permit the UFCO to vastly expand its Pacific coast operations. In exchange the UFCO pledged itself to favor Costa Rican employment and not import "negros or Jamaicans" into the Pacific banana zone.

The December 7, 1934 contract explicitly prohibited the labor of colored people on the Pacific coast.⁷⁴ However, both the state, the UFCO, and the country's large coffee exporters were well aware of Costa Rica's limited labor supply, and accordingly Nicaraguans and Hondurans were permitted to seek employment on the Pacific coast. Seen in

this light, the West Indian population bore the brunt of the settlement between the state and the UFCO. The strike settlement, by granting the workers a number of concessions, ensured the UFCO a relatively quiescent labor force as it pulled out of Limón (even taking its railroad tracks). The decline of Limón, palpable since 1927, became precipitous after 1938 and by the 1940s banana exports from the port city had dropped to zero. Reflective of the decline of Limón was both its stagnant population growth and the sluggish rate (.045 percent per year) at which labor availability grew from 1927 to 1950.⁷⁵

What were the consequences of the strike? Although its leadership did not produce victory, the CPR emerged as a well organized, disciplined party with viable support among important sectors of the work force. The *bananeros* emerged with a heightened sense of class consciousness⁷⁶ and would remain staunch defenders of the CPR/PVP until the party's illegalization by the Figueres government in 1948. Shortly after the strike Fallas addressed the banana workers. "The Party has brought the light of consciousness to you; it has lifted the rebellion that sleeps in each one of you, and it has organized you."⁷⁷

The strike clearly showed that the CPR was an organization capable of imposing an effective and centralized command structure on disparate labor activities. This had both positive and negative consequences. It enabled

workers to find unprecedented strength through a unified organizational structure. However, at the same time it tended to transfer individual and local autonomy to the bureaucratic apparatus based in San José. Even if this process is judged inevitable and necessary, it had adverse consequences on the independence and strength of the labor movement. This was clearly seen in the 1940s with the increased penetration of the CPR leadership into almost all positions of influence within its wing of the labor movement.⁷⁸ In this regard CPR-led unions became vehicles for party objectives. By the Cold War period the complete politicalization (of both wings) of the labor movement became inevitable.⁷⁹ Divided by the civil war in 1948, labor lost the autonomy and independence it enjoyed in the 1930s.⁸⁰

The Consequences of the Strikes

In December 1934 the Costa Rican government passed comprehensive wage price controls and established mixed, cantonal commissions to oversee their enforcement. This marked the emergence of the state as an active player in the employer-worker relationship. In this respect, though the strikes did not have uniformly successful outcomes they represented an important victory for organized labor.

Examined separately, the strikes reveal important characteristics and distinctions within the labor force. The

shoemakers won outright victory. They were victorious on the wage issue and in achieving recognition of their union. Under the guidance of the CPR, they immediately built upon their success by developing provincial affiliates. This process placed them in the vanguard of the labor movement and the effort to forge a national confederation.

The outcomes of the strikes by the sugar and banana workers were ambiguous. Gains were won through government intervention⁸¹ after the strikes were suppressed. The actions of the Ricardo Jiménez government were revealing. Initially government interests coincided with those of large agro-business (Niehaus and UFCO). However, governmental unwillingness to use unchecked force (there were no deaths reported in the strikes), and its belief that the best way to forestall greater CPR-led labor activity was through social programs, not whole scale repression, pushed the government to seek legislative solutions to ameliorate workers' harsh living conditions.

Though the sharpest contrasts were in the nature and handling of urban and rural unrest, the strikes in Turrialba and Limón also present differences. The banana enclave dominated by a foreign monopoly and employing workers throughout the Caribbean proved to be a far more fertile organizational field for the CPR than the relatively demographically homogenous sugar workers.⁸² There were a number of reasons for this.

Limón was a port city: radical ideas of labor organization and the circulation of "labor agitators" were far more prevalent there than in the mountainous sugar regions of Turrialba. This was the case in spite of efforts by the UFCO to prevent "known agitators" from "infecting" its work force.⁸³ In addition, the barracks like living conditions of a predominately male work force, unencumbered by wives or children, facilitated the organization of the banana workers. As a result of these conditions local CPCR organizations had developed and were active in Limón two years before the strike. For these reasons, banana workers, in spite of the mixed results of the 1934 strike, remained staunch supporters of the CPCR/PVP and the wartime alliance of the 1940s.

Turrialba presented a different situation. The region did not have a history of unrest comparable to that of Limón. The CPCR had not yet developed its own organizations in the area. And relatively isolated in the interior of the country, workers were removed from the "contagion" of labor ideologies. However, by the 1940s this situation had changed.

An number of reasons explain the change. Persistently negative economic conditions throughout the 1930s in both the coffee and sugar industries kept wages low and workers dissatisfied. Worker-employer relations were further irritated due to the fact that the region's large exporting

and processing facilities were controlled by ethnically German families.⁸⁴ The tendency of these families to maintain their cultural heritage and impose it on the region caused ethnic-based tensions between the owners and workers.⁸⁵ The CPRC exploited these conditions and did not abandon the region. It continued its organizing efforts in Turrialba, and by the 1940s Turrialba along with San José and Limón constituted an important area of CPRC militancy.

Throughout this period (1934-1948) there were sporadic strikes of coffee workers.⁸⁶ These strikes, which on occasion were led by women,⁸⁷ were of short duration and were limited to a small number (40 to 150) of workers. Isolated and uncoordinated these strikes met with limited success.

2. Standards of Living and Wage levels, 1935-1939

After the passage of pro-labor legislation many workers' actions were means to force employer compliance with the law. What was the effect of this legislation was on the standard of living of the Costa Rican working class? To assesses, this two fundamental questions must be addressed. What was the relationship between the minimum wage and the cost of living; and what was the rate of compliance to the minimum wage?⁸⁸

Minimum wage levels for rural laborers were set (Law No. 157 dated August 21, 1935) at ¢.25 an hour for coffee,

sugar, and tobacco workers, and at ¢.50 an hour for banana and cacao workers.⁸⁹ Government statistics disclose the following rate of compliance with the wage decrees.

TABLE No. 2.4

Rural Wage Levels (1938)

Province	Salary Range	Avg. Salary	Avg as % of Minimum Wage
San José	¢2.50-1.50	¢2.00	100
Alajuela	2.00-1.50	1.75	87
Cartago	2.25-1.75	2.00	100
Heredia	2.00-1.60	1.80	90
Guanacaste	--	2.62	131

Avg=average

Source: *Ministerios de Gobernación y Policía, Trabajo y Previsión Social, Memoria*, (1938).

Were the government figures accurate? Anecdotal and incomplete compilations reflected extreme variations in agricultural wages between ¢1 and ¢2.25 for an eight hour day.⁹⁰ The most comprehensive calculation of agricultural wages were issued by the Institute for the Defense of Coffee. The institute placed the total number of households engaged in coffee production at 28,000. These families received an annual wage of ¢285, or a daily wage less than one colon, under half the legally stipulated minimum wage.⁹¹ Clearly in order to survive these households must have had alternative sources of income.

Was the minimum wage a livable wage? As can be seen by

the following composite budget weekly expenditures on food, housing and other essentials for a family of six left little with which to purchase clothing and medicine.

TABLE No. 2.5

Composite Weekly Budget -1940 (Family of 6)

1.75 cuartillos (1.75 kilograms) of corn	¢1.23
.875 cuartillo (.875 kilograms) of beans	2.36
3.5 atados (7 tapas) of dulce	2.45
1.4 pounds of coffee	.84
7 pounds of rice	2.10
1 pound of salt	.15
1½ kilograms of meat	.90
vegetables	.90
lard	.20
rent	1.25
<u>firewood</u>	<u>1.75</u>
Total	14.13

Source: Trabajo, November 2, 1940.⁹²

Although there are apparent distortions in the above budget (the high sugar and salt consumption and low corn consumption) they are more reflective of Costa Rican diet, than errors made by the budget compilers. Corn has not been a staple in the Costa Rican diet and the salt consumption was attributable to lack of refrigeration.

More to the point, the budget confirmed the insufficiency of a single head of household's wages and the resultant economic pressure on women and minors to enter the labor market. Women employed as domestics, dressmakers and low-wage factory workers, entered the labor market in

increasing numbers.⁹³ Between 1927 and 1950 while the total labor force increased by 67.71 percent, the presence of women in it increased by 143.37 percent. According to the census of 1927 there were 17,210 women in the labor force, or 6.35 percent of total force. By 1950 women's presence increased to 41,885, or 15.4 percent.⁹⁴ Subsequent legislation enumerating the rights and offering protection for women and minors in the work place called attention to this growing phenomenon. The 1943 Labor Code prohibited the firing of women due to pregnancy and provided special feeding rooms in work places for women to nurse their babies.⁹⁵ The effort to organize them became a principal objective of the both wings of the country's labor movement.⁹⁶

The persistence of subsistence wages in the coffee and sugar fincas in the Central Valley intensified the migration to higher paid jobs in urban areas. Even excluding professional and administrative positions, urban artisanal and light industrial work had significantly higher levels of compensation.

TABLE No. 2.6

Workers' Occupations Ranked by Wages*
(Various Years)

Occupation	1934	1936	1940	1941	1946
Agricultural workers					
female	-		52		-
male**	100		100		100
Municipal workers	200		-		-
Dressmakers (women)	175		-		-
Factory workers (food)	385		-		114
Bakers (day)	520		185		187
Bricklayers	520		285		280
Cabinetmakers	520		272		312
Average laborer	-		299		124
Drivers (various)	605		274		-
Shoemakers					
Finishers	-		294		-
Mounters	-		207		-
Cutters	-		310		-
(average)	650		271		328
Bakers (night)	650		211		202
Carpenters	730		285		280
Mechanics	680		284		-
Accountants	-		498		192
Commercial Employees	-		396***		-
Printers (1st level)	845		624		-
Government workers					
(office)	-		398		-
Governmental Inspectors	-		689		-
Governmental Adm. (top)	-		2,490		-

* 100 is the base wage representing the minimum wage earned by male agricultural workers.

** The minimum wages earned by these workers were ₡2.00; ₡2.80 and ₡3.90 per day for the respective years, 1934-1936, 1940-1941, and 1946. All other wages were computed as an adjusted multiple of the agricultural wage.

*** This is a median figure; the wide range is between 199 and 597.

Sources for 1934: Oficina Técnica del Trabajo, Proyecto de Salario Mínimo (1934); for 1940-1941: Trabajo, various issues; Ministerios de Gobernación y Policía, Trabajo y Previsión Social, Memoria, (1940); for 1946: Congreso, Junta de Custodia de Custodia, Signaturas 203-212, NACR. For 1946, Salarios Mínimos Que regiran en el País Durante un Año - Apartir del 1° Junio 1946 Decreto No. 10 de Junio 10, 1946, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1946).

Table 2.7 offers a fixed time as well as a decade-long trajectory of wage levels. Read vertically the table indicates the existing hierarchy among wage earners. Read horizontally, it surveys the changes in each occupation's relative earning capability. The sizable compression of the wage differential between urban and rural workers from 1934 to 1941 and again to 1946 is attributable to the low base of agricultural wages and their relatively high gains through the minimum wage decrees. In this qualified sense the lowest paid of the agricultural workers received the greatest percentage increase in the twelve years from 1934 to 1946. However, this fact is more indicative of the impoverished position of this sector of the working class at the beginning of the 1930s.

Skilled workers occupied a middle ground in the wage scale with printers (of the first class) holding the highest rung. White collar office workers earned slightly more than the artisanal occupations but significantly less than professionals and middle level government employees. High level government administrators topped the scale with an income twenty-four times that of an agricultural worker and eight times that of an urban laborer.⁹⁷

The higher urban wages increasingly drew population from the countryside. Aside from the increase in the population of the city of San José, other provincial

capitals in the Central Valley experienced population growth. Alajuela grew from a population of 31,577 in 1935 to 35,555 in 1941, an increase of 12.6 percent; Heredia grew from a population of 15,235 in 1935 to 17,104 in 1941, an increase of 12.2 percent. The population of the city of Cartago fell during the same period. However, this was attributable to the growth of Turrialba and the administrative creation of another district in the province.⁹⁸

3. The CPR and Labor's Political Platforms 1935-1939

Responding to the adverse conditions throughout the 1930s, different organizations issued proposals to develop the country's economy and improve the material conditions of workers' lives. An examination of the labor components of the CPR platforms, the public positions of a number of unions, and the Labor Code passed in 1943 reveals a remarkable convergence.

In 1935, under the headline of "What must we do in the Struggle against Imperialism, the National Bourgeoisie and the Fascist States," the CPR made public its plans for the domestic and international organization of labor. On the national level this included efforts to transform existing unions and organize new unions into industry-wide federations with shop committees; protect the unemployed; form new cadres of leaders among women, negroes and the

young; and develop the tactic of the strike, organized and led by a strike committee.

Reflecting Comintern influence, its international program called for the creation of a united front grouped around a single ideology to combat counter-revolution, monopoly capitalism, anarchism, anarcho-sindicalism, and reformism; the formation of illegal unions in countries under dictatorships; and the construction of a Latin American wide central.⁹⁹ In 1935, the CPR joined the Comintern in 1935 and sent Rodolfo Guzmán, who later headed the national shoemakers' union and the *Confederación de Trabajadores de Costa Rica* (CTCR), as its delegate to the International's Seventh Congress.¹⁰⁰

Within two years the CPR, significantly moderated and increased the specificity of its proposals.¹⁰¹ Less concerned with international issues, the 1937 party platform first called for the maintenance and expansion of Costa Rica's democracy and the abolition of the Ley Guardian - under which publications of the party were censored and its editors subjected to jail terms.¹⁰² Revealing a sharp moderation in the party's positions, the proposal called for the effective implementation of the eight hour work day, the six hour work night, and the upward adjustment of minimum salary rates, but not to the detriment of small businessmen or small agricultural producers. It also limited the authority of worker representatives on salary councils. In

addition, the party called for the sharp expansion of the law governing accidents (again, however, without ruining small producers) and the provision of social security insurance for those over seventy.¹⁰³ Finally the proposal called for equal pay for equal work for women and pay one month before and one month after child birth.

In addition to the CPCR proposal, four labor unions (the bakers, the shoemakers, the tailors, and the construction workers) submitted a twenty-two point plan to the Congress. The document represents the most cogent and comprehensive statement of organized labor's positions to that date and it provides a useful measure of labor-CPCR relations. Importantly, within six years all of the planks in this platform, with the exception of those calling for a broad expansion of the workmen's compensation system, were passed into law in the Labor Code of 1943.¹⁰⁴

Indicative of the broad role labor was attempting to establish for itself, the project included narrowly defined labor issues and broader concerns of political economy. The strictly work-related initiatives called for the reform of the minimum wage law; the expansion of accident compensation coverage; legislation to prevent dismissal without receipt of severance; regulation of child and woman labor, especially in the case of maternity; the obligatory classification of Sunday as a day of rest; the transformation of the *Oficina Técnica del Trabajo* into a

true executive organ initiating legislation and collecting statistics; and recognition of unions by simple administrative declaration.

The workers also elaborated their plans for the restructuring of the country's political economy. The more important of these proposals included the improvement of sanitary conditions in poor neighborhoods, the construction of low-cost housing, a modest land reform,¹⁰⁵ and a program of road building based on internal market needs, not tourism.¹⁰⁶ The plan's fiscal planks called for the establishment of a progressive property tax based, the lowering of customs duties on prime necessities and the raising of rates on luxury goods. Political demands included the immediate lifting of restrictions on the circulation of certain political material,¹⁰⁷ and the establishment of a popular autonomous university. In the area of foreign policy, the project called for the reinstatement of the unrestricted right of asylum and voiced strong support (against the stated policy of the Costa Rican government) for the loyalists in Spain.

The document, signed by representatives of the bakers, shoemakers, tailors, and construction workers unions, was submitted to the appropriate ministries for response. A number of the ministries deferred comment or took refuge in further study. *Gobernación* rejected the article calling for the expansion of the *Oficina Técnica del Trabajo* as an

infringement on the rights of the Executive. The Ministry of Foreign Relations acknowledged the unions' right to free expression but reserved for itself the formation of foreign policy.¹⁰⁸

Notably, in all major areas the document conformed with the positions advocated by the CPR. This extraordinary convergence was attributable to the CPR's effective articulation of the labor problem, and its equally effective ability to penetrate existing labor unions and directly aid in the creation of new worker organizations.¹⁰⁹ Reversing its position of four years earlier, the unions clearly expressed their desire for increased governmental intervention in the labor field. Finally, all the work related demands (except the expansion of workmen's compensation system) would be enacted into law.

4. 1939: Towards the formation of the *Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores del Calzado*

In May 1939, Rodolfo Guzmán, Secretary General of the *Sindicato de Trabajadores de Calzados de San José*, addressed the need to formalize ties between the provincial shoemaker unions as the first step in the formation of a nation-wide labor confederation. Refuting the accusation that the labor movement was the creation of its leadership, Guzmán pointed to the great strikes of 1934 as evidence of an organic transformation being undergone by Costa Rican society. He argued that the minimum wage legislation, and the provincial

councils established to monitor its implementation, were enacted in response to the pressure exerted by workers. In this direct way, the labor movement had exerted itself as "one of the factors determining the democratic nature of the Republic." Guzmán argued that the pro-labor legislation was modernizing the country's economy and increasing productivity. Workers' demands forced employers to rationalize their resources while the organization of workers into unions disciplined the labor force.¹¹⁰

In June Guzmán set the date for the first national convention of shoemakers. In response to arguments that the movement was ill-prepared to take such a step he answered that the meeting was needed precisely to overcome weak organizational links and lack of militancy. In addition, Guzmán advocated "close ties with worker movements in other countries," particularly those that were more developed and had greater "logistical and political experience." This was a clear reference to Mexico and the *Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina* (CTAL).¹¹¹ In March 1938, Carlos Luís Fallas had travelled to Mexico to attend the *Primer Congreso Obrero Latinoamericano* organized by CTAL.¹¹² In Costa Rica, Guzmán argued, this experience could best be absorbed through national not provincial organizations.

The first National Conference of Shoemakers was held from October 24 through 25, 1939. The nine attending provincial unions voted to form the *Sindicato Nacional de*

Trabajadores del Calzado (SNTC) and at the same to affiliate with CTAL.¹¹³ There were 425 members in the San José union and over six hundred in the various provincial locals, representing about 35 percent of the total number of shoemakers.¹¹⁴ Reports given by the union representatives addressed major organizational problems.¹¹⁵

These were as follows: in the province of San José, the employment of third category shoemakers, the least skilled and poorest paid of all shoemakers, remained outside the control of the union. The use of these workers to make inexpensive shoes threatened worker solidarity and was an impediment to close ties between the union and the masses.¹¹⁶ Rural migration to the capital exacerbated the problem by feeding a pool of non-unionized workers. The steady stream of recent arrivals from rural areas kept overall rate of unionization "very low," and indicated a stratification of Costa Rica's urban working class between artisanal/unionized workers and unskilled or lesser skilled/un-unionized labor.¹¹⁷

In the provinces shoemaker efforts faced two major challenges: to increase membership and to raise the working population's standard of living. The latter effort focused on attempts to control price increases, increase the availability of primary goods, and alleviate the shortage of decent housing. All unions reported persistent economic problems. Strike funds were low or non-existent and the

collection of dues difficult. Other problems were regional, and the urban-rural, divisions among workers.

However, along with these difficulties, the delegates reported a number of important gains including wage increases, reinstatements after unjustified dismissals, the recognition of the right to organize in the work place, and an increase in the number of factories found in violation of health and safety standards closed by the *Oficina Técnica del Trabajo*.¹¹⁸

In August 1939 the San José local of the shoemakers' union announced their intention to form a *Comité Inter-sindical*.¹¹⁹ The goal was to form a single nation-wide confederation, that could present a united workers' front to the state, the owners, and management. There were a number of reasons for shoemaker militancy. The zapateria itself was conducive to discussion, reading out loud periodicals, or the listening to political speeches on the radio. The work day was long up to fourteen hours and the work product, produced for retail sale, lent a transparency to the profit margins. (Shoemakers knew the cost of materials, labor, and the sale price of the product. They, therefore, could calculate the rate of profit per unit and multiply it by volume to determine the zapaterías gross profitability.) Finally, the high number of CPCR members in its ranks and among its leadership facilitated the process of political and cultural indoctrination.¹²⁰ Víctor Cordero, Rodolfo

Guzmán, Carlos Luís Fallas, and Efraín Jiménez Guerrero were all shoemakers and all were in positions of responsibility in both the CPCR and the union.

However, there were serious obstacles to the union's ability to exert its influence. Principal among them was the shoemakers' small numbers. To overcome this Víctor Cordero, who would assume leadership of the national union at the beginning of the 1940s, argued that shoemakers, specifically, and workers in general, must abandon their traditional apoliticism.¹²¹ Although this was rejected at the conference as dangerous and premature, within three years the SNTC moved toward overt support of the Calderón government and the *Partido Republicano Nacional* (PRN)-PVP alliance.¹²² This important decision to take an open political stance was encouraged by Vicente Lombardo Toledano, Secretary General of CTAL.

Apoliticism in many respects would prove to be the most contentious of all issues facing the labor movement. Narrowly defined, it meant strict non-involvement in electoral politics; it did not mean abstention from the society's political-economic decision making process. However, as the country's partisan politics took on increasingly populist characteristics the union leaders questioned the wisdom of remaining outside the electoral process. The benefits to be derived from successful political intervention (both personal and organizational)

were substantial, while remaining aloof from politics ran the risk of marginalization.

In March 1940 the *Comité Inter-sindical*, established by the shoemakers' union, called for the fortification of unions through the training additional labor leaders and the education of the rank and file. Workers were educated in a number of ways. Most immediate was the indoctrination they received in the shop through discussion, the reading of periodicals, principally *Trabajo*, and the listening to speeches on the radio. Outside the workplace, the CPCR attempted to raise the education level of the workers through the spread of its platforms and its analyses of domestic and international events. Aside from radio addresses, the principal means to do this was circulation drives of its newspaper. The PVP had a daily program called "El Grito del Pueblo" broadcast on radio station T.I.C.C.S. (1150k).¹²³ Another avenue for worker education was through correspondence courses offered by the *Universidad Popular Mexicana* founded in 1936. The University, an instructional center for Latin American workers, offered courses on union organization, workers' rights and the teachings of Karl Marx.¹²⁴

The formal training of workers was achieved after the formation of a national confederation through the *Escuela Sindical*, established in San José in 1943. The *Escuela de Sindical*, a branch of the *Universidad Obrera*,¹²⁵ operated

throughout the year and offered the following courses: Labor Legislation and Labor Laws, The Fundamentals of Political Economy, The History of Costa Rica, The History of the International Working Class, and Agrarian Legislation. The first two courses were of particular importance. The first because much of the labor struggle was in fact a juridical struggle. The second because an understanding of political economy was needed in order for union leaders to serve as effective members of the mixed salary councils, and when necessary confront employers. For these reasons the school placed particular importance on the role of lawyers. Professors included: Carlos Luís Sáenz, Carmen Lyra, Enrique Benevides, and Alvaro Montero Vega. Each instructor used his or her own texts. However, the courses in political economy used classic Marxists texts.

The school was in existence from 1943-1947. On average each course lasted one month and had thirty students.¹²⁶ In all, four workers per union were relatively well versed in legal issues. Professors donated their time and union contributions paid for materials. Tuition was nominal.¹²⁷ The school also sold printed versions of lectures. These included: "*Historia de Costa Rica*," "*Fundamentales de Leninismo*," "*Historia de las luchas Sociales*", and "*Derecho Obrero*."¹²⁸

5. The *Unión Campesino de Lucha por Tierra y Créditos*: Urban and Rural Collaboration

The effort to organize rural workers was aided by the artisanal unions, principally the shoemakers. An example of this were the events immediately following the shoemakers' strike of March 1940 in *Zapatería Infantil* in Turrialba. The strike erupted over an attempt by management to prohibit union and union related activities. The national union immediately responded with moral and economic support for the local and threatened to close all the zapaterías in Turrialba. When the *Oficina Técnica del Trabajo* expressed interest in mediating the strike, the union first responded with distrust still present from the acrimonious events in Turrialba in 1934. However by the beginning of May, government intervention facilitated the settlement of the strike on the following terms: union recognition and the recognition of the union's right to carry out its business in the workplace; the prohibition against the dismissal of workers without the acknowledgement of the union's central committee; and the removal of the owners brother who served as the shop manager and was a particular irritant to worker-management relations.¹²⁹

Immediately after the strike was settled, the SNTC called a meeting to discuss the profound economic crisis effecting Turrialba. Present at the meeting were Víctor Cordero, Rodolfo Guzmán and Alfredo Picado, all CPR

members. Their principle objective was to organize the agricultural workers in Turrialba whose wages, due to the collapse of Costa Rica's European export markets, had fallen to ¢.90 a day.¹³⁰ The initiative in Turrialba was repeated throughout the country and by November 1940 a conference of agricultural workers was held in the town of Barba in the Province of Heredia. Under the banner, *Unión Campesino de Lucha por Tierra y Crédito* (UCLTC) delegates, representing sixteen different cantons and over thirty-seven districts from the provinces of Heredia, Alajuela, Cartago and San José were in attendance. The conference elected a provisional committee headed by José Arguedas Prendas and closely tied to the CPR.¹³¹ The committee was charged with the responsibility of forming a grass roots organization. In addition, it began a campaign to have at least ten workers from each canton in the country bring the demands of the rural population to the attention of public authorities. This campaign was in response to President Calderón's proposed agrarian reform.¹³² The UCLTC argued that the legislation must be based on a concrete plan of colonization with accurate lists of uncultivated land over five hundred hectares, and must earmark ¢10 million for development. These funds were to be issued at "just" interest rates by commercial banks in bi-annual installments of ¢5 million. The state was to guarantee repayment of the loans and assume all surveying costs.¹³³ A letter in support of the above

platform signed by over five hundred workers in Turrialba was sent to President Calderón.

The organizational process was aided by the industrial/artisanal unions, primarily the shoemakers, and the CPR. UCLTC committees were founded in the provinces of Heredia, San José, Alajuela, and Cartago, and in the cantons of Orotina and Grecia.¹³⁴ Many of these committees were formed in meetings held in the locals of shoemakers' unions or at the homes of well-known CPR leaders.¹³⁵ In addition, the CPR occasionally organized excursions to the countryside sold raffles and organized dances as fund raisers. Finally, in coordination with the growing peasant movement the Central Committee of the CPR modified its agrarian platform to include demands for credit for small proprietors, support for squatters (*paracitos*) to acquire the land that they had cultivated, and demands for an office to process land claims in each provincial capital. Specific provisions stipulated compensation for legal land owners and that the cost of claiming uncultivated lands be assumed by the state.

At a CPR Central Committee meeting devoted to formulating its agrarian platform, a debate ensued over which lands were appropriate for expropriation.¹³⁶ Luis Carballo proposed that only uncultivated state lands be subject to agrarian reform. This was opposed by Carlos Luis Fallas and Arnoldo Ferreto who argued that all uncultivated

land above a five hundred hectare reserve limit be subject to expropriation.¹³⁷ They argued the practical outcome of Carballo's proposal would restrict expropriations to inaccessible lands, that the formula for designating it would be complex and as a result the movement would lose the support of the peasantry. Carballo, on the other hand argued, that Ferreto and Fallas' plan as originally conceived ran the danger of provoking a crushing reaction by land owners. Carballo's proposal was provisionally approved subject to a study to ascertain the availability of arable land.¹³⁸

The moderation shown by the CPR was consistent with its other positions. Subsequently, responding to accusations made by the *Centro de Estudio para Problemas Nacionales* that its agrarian program was based on confiscation and collectivization, the CPR argued that its program was based on the "thesis that what Costa Rica needed was" the creation of the small farmer and the development of these small properties through a system of cooperatives."¹³⁹ The young intellectuals in the *centro* formed an important intellectual opposition to the Calderón-Picado Administrations and through an alliance with the Partido Acción Demócrata founded the *Partido Social Demócrata* (PSD) which provided the political base for the Figueres uprising in 1948. Some of the more prominent of these progressive intellectuals were Rodrigo Facio, Daniel Oduber, Gonzalo Facio.¹⁴⁰

Reflecting its independence from the CPR, the UCLTC reiterated its three point agrarian plan: land to the peasantry; credit at low interest; and accessible technical advice. The lands for agricultural colonization included, uncultivated land, municipal lands, and land held from production by large land owners above the five hundred hectare limit.¹⁴¹ It was proposed that these lands be divided into parcels of forty hectares and organized into cooperatives of production. To finance this project the UCLTC proposed that the government offer a \$1 million loan at 5 percent interest over two years, backed by reserves and frozen funds of the country's ethnic German and Italian populations.¹⁴² It asked that technical help be made available and that the management of the cooperatives remain autonomous.¹⁴³

Aside from land, other reasons fostered the organization of peasant unions. For example, in the province of Alajuela a peasant organization formed with the express purpose of establishing a meat selling cooperative. The sixty-eight member cooperative directed their efforts against a businessman who had migrated to the province and, in the view of the local population, made excessive profits selling meat.¹⁴⁴ Wage concerns and compliance with minimum wage decrees were other spurs to rural organization. In March 1941, peasants from San Gabriel in the canton of Aserri sent a letter to President Calderón supporting the

UCLTC. The letter accompanied by over two hundred signatures complained about the low wages paid to those who sorted coffee beans. These workers, overwhelmingly women, were among the lowest paid in the country. In San Gabriel they earned ¢.70 to select a quintal of coffee which took approximately 10 hours.¹⁴⁵

However, the majority of the UCLTC activities centered around the need for land. Accordingly, the union organized expeditions to survey uncultivated lands suitable for production. One such expedition set out with twenty members from various cantons in the Province of Heredia to examine the lands north of Vera Blanco. On the trip they were accompanied by the head of the CPR, and surveying services were provided without cost by a member of the party, Enrique Góngora.¹⁴⁶ The expedition resulted in a letter written to President Calderón requesting that the state establish an agricultural colony on lands owned by the municipality of Santo Domingo de Heredia and other adjacent lands for the production of corn and beans.

Despite these activities, land reform efforts met with limited success. Those efforts that did result meet with success were intimately bound up with wartime measures. In 1943, the *Cooperativa Agrícola Industria* was created and empowered to transfer land expropriated under the *Bloque Económico*¹⁴⁷ to the *Banco de Costa Rica*. The bank was then authorized to organize cooperatives. Though the UCLTC hoped

that this law would spark a widespread reform, its application was limited to a few of the Turrialba sugar fincas.¹⁴⁸

The PVP continued to assist the UCLTC, by disseminating information concerning favorable government programs and printing denunciation forms to facilitate the legal transfer of land. According to Abel Dobles Chacon, head of the party's Office of Land Claims, the party was successful in this effort and was able to win new adherents among peasants who previously rejected CPR/PVP overtures.¹⁴⁹

6. Toward the formation of the Confederación de Trabajadores de Costa Rica

In March 1941 Cordero was re-elected Secretary General of the Shoemakers' Union. On the occasion of his re-election he outlined the union's three tiered objectives: strengthen internal organization of the SNTC, expand the base of the national labor movement, and strengthen ties with international labor confederations.

To accomplish the first objective, the Central Committee tightened its fiscal control over all extraordinary expenditures, made attendance at union meetings compulsory (absence was punishable by fines of ₡1) and initiated a two pronged effort aimed at organizing third category workshops.

Turning his attention towards national problems, Cordero, saw serious obstacles to forging a single national

confederation. The state of the national labor movement was not strong. Aside from the shoemakers, bakers, tailors and printers, all other unions were in a state of "total disorganization."¹⁵⁰ To overcome this the shoemakers formed a *Comité de Organización Sindical* and charged it with integrating unions throughout the country into a national confederation. The comité soon put forth a plan to lower the cost of living. The core of which was the continued organization of councils on the cantonal level to monitor prices,¹⁵¹ the reduction of domestic transportation tariffs, and the extension of credit to small farmers to grow foodstuff. The cost of imported food presented a continual problem for the working class.¹⁵² The union argued that country's inability to feed itself was caused by transfer of arable lands from food production to production for export and the practice of large landowners of keeping sizable reserves. For these reasons union leadership opposed lowering the exchange rate fearing it would spur an increase in the cost of basic foodstuff and contribute to the inflationary pressures in the economy.¹⁵³

The comité issued three additional proposals: to improve communication and transportation facilities; to place worker representation on all relevant councils; and to expand the power of the *Oficina de Técnica de Trabajo*. This last demand represented an evolution of the role of the state in the eyes of organized labor. The oficina, founded

in 1933, initially was seen as little more than owners' representatives and antagonistic to workers. As late as 1940 the SNTC viewed its operation with suspicion. But as labor legislation was enacted, and enforced with increasing consistency, the labor movement began to view the *oficina's* intervention in a positive light. The advantageous outcome for labor of the 1940 strike in *Zapatería Infantil* finally alleviated the shoemakers' fears.¹⁵⁴

Increasingly professional, the *oficina* saw its role as an honest mediator between workers and owners. The mediating effort included providing the greatest possible benefits for the workers while promoting the formation of responsible worker organizations. In his report to the Secretary of Labor, Alberto Durán Rocha, Director of the *oficina* wrote,

Slowly the workers of the country have come to understand the enormous advantage they gain by the existence of the Technical Office of Labor.... I would like now for the business people of Costa Rica understand these same advantages and that it is better for them to deal with unionized workers.¹⁵⁵

Durán Rocha's argument that unions fostered discipline and productivity among workers and economic rationalization among the business class echoed the arguments made by Rodolfo Guzmán.¹⁵⁶ This enlightened approach to labor-management relations was clearly in effect during the strike settlement at the shoe workshop *Pascual Ingianna y Hnos.* in Puerto Limón. The strike was settled through the direct intervention of Durán Rocha on the basis union recognition

on the part of the owners and a pledge to increase productivity on the part of the workers. Durán Rocha's enthusiasm was unbridled: "This is ... the first legal collective contract in Costa Rica and its results have been magnificent."¹⁵⁷

Efforts continued toward the formation of a national labor confederation. In May 1942 the Executive Board of the *Comité Sindical de Enlace* (CSE) formed in San José to coordinate union activities.¹⁵⁸ In October delegates from sixty-four unions met in San José. The delegates pledged to centralize the direction of the labor movement through the CSE of San José by forming a national coordination committee, the *Comité Nacional Sindical de Enlace* (CNSE). They condemned all efforts that worked to fracture the unity of the labor movement.¹⁵⁹ And in an effort to achieve maximum production for the war effort, the delegates voluntarily renounced the use of the strike. The workers viewed the pledge as the strongest contribution they could make to the war effort. To settle labor disputes during the war, the CNSE called for the formation of a council of conciliation and arbitration (*Junta de Conciliación y Arbitraje*) and made it clear that the renunciation of the strike would terminate with the wars' successful end.

At the end of November 1942, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, Secretary General of (CTAL) arrived in Costa Rica and provided an important catalyst to the unification of the

country's labor movement.¹⁶⁰ During his visit he addressed a number of international and domestic issues. Foremost was his concern that Costa Rica form a unified labor movement under the direction of a single central. For this reason he applauded the transformation of the CSE of San José into the CNSE and called for the rapid formation of a national confederation of Costa Rican workers.

Citing the rapid growth of the Costa Rican labor movement and the shortage of experienced leadership, Lombardo Toledano recommended the immediate bureaucratization of the movement with moderately paid positions. Bureaucratization was an important development: it stratified the work force by creating and funding positions within an emerging union hierarchy, and it greatly facilitated the formation of a national confederation and the political direction of the labor movement.

Critically, Lombardo Toledano argued that the central had to be involved in politics. Demands for an apolitical form of labor organization belied the nature of the challenges confronting workers and their unions. The worldwide struggle against Nazism and fascism, and the struggle for social guarantees and democracy were political struggles. However, he cautioned, the movement must also maintain its "independence and autonomy" from party manipulation.

Finally, pointing to the Congress of Industrial

Organizations (CIO) model of industry-wide organization as the best way to fight modern capitalism, Lombardo Toledano strongly recommended an industry-wide model of organization to supersede a model that rested on the workshops or factory level.¹⁶¹ This was not the pattern of union organization in Costa Rica. Up to now, depending on the size of the commercial enterprise, the region of the country and the nature of the work force, some unions were organized by work-place, others by industry or region. This was true for agricultural as well as industrial/artisanal workers. Agricultural unions were organized across regionally proximate *fincas* usually at a district or cantonal level. Or if a *finsa* was large, employing several hundred workers, it would constitute its own union. Some industrial/artisanal workers were organized in a like manner, such as printers who customarily worked in large workshops.¹⁶² Over this base regional not industry-wide federations were built. The CTCR inherited this varied pattern of labor organization at the time of its founding in 1943. In this regard the shoemakers' efforts to build a national union had been exceptional, and uniquely positioned them to lead the effort to found a national confederation.

The Founding of the CTCR

In June 1943 planning for the formal formation and bureaucratization of the CTCR began. The founding assembly

set for September, was financed by provincial organizing committees and the unions themselves. To supplement these funds, organizing committees and unions held festivals, issued raffles and requested loans to raise funds. An assessment of the financial strength of labor confederations and individual unions at this time is exceedingly difficult. It was only after the passage of the Labor Code in 1943 that financial reporting became required (though frequently this regulation was not followed). Unions were overwhelmingly under funded. This was a function of both the low wages with which workers had to support their families and the difficulty union officials had in collecting dues.¹⁶³

The founding conference was held on October 4, 1943 in *Estadio Mendoza* in San José. Over one thousand workers representing ninety-six different worker organizations claiming a total membership of thirty thousand were present. The issues of overriding importance to the leadership of the CNSE were the movement's unity, its bureaucratization, and its ability to maintain pressure on the government to enact and enforce pro-labor legislation and the Social Guarantees of Calderón Guardia¹⁶⁴. Two months before the conference, Víctor Cordero returned from Cuba where he had represented Costa Rica at a meeting of CTAL's Executive Council. When he returned he reiterated the importance of maintaining a single labor front and pointed to events in Argentina (where the labor movement was split) and efforts of individuals

like Matthew Woll of the AFL as dangers to the unity of the movement.¹⁶⁵

Strongly influenced by the Mexican-based organization, the CTCR modelled itself after CTAL. It included three regional secretaries of (one for the Central Valley, and one each for the Pacific and Atlantic zones of the country); secretaries of interior and exterior; a secretary of conflicts and social legislation and a secretary of peasant action. Employing this structure, the CTCR strove to present a solid national worker front and contribute to the international organization of workers.¹⁶⁶ Calderón Guardia was named honorary President of the conference. Lombardo Toledano addressed the assembly and offered warm praise to both President Calderón and Archbishop Sanabria, but pointed out the clear distinctions between their philosophies of social organizations and CTAL's. Costa Rica's Secretary of Labor, Brenes Gutiérrez, was also present. Reflecting the unique wartime environment Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and Josef Stalin were all saluted.

7. Conclusion

After 1934 there was an increasing correlation between labor activities, the work of the CPCR and the legislative activities of the Costa Rican state. Though there were important distinctions between urban and rural workers, both won important gains during this period (1934-1943). Rural

workers, beginning with the lowest base pay, made the greatest relative gains. They also achieved a limited, but unprecedented degree of unionization with the formation of the UCLTC.

However, a significant land reform program was not enacted. There were two overriding reasons for this. First, the numerical significance and the ambiguous position of the small producers lessened the pressing need for land reform and reduced the number of landless workers for the UCLTC to recruit. Second, rural organization was a secondary concern of the urban labor unions. The process of urbanization and the growth of food processing and light-manufacturing plants expanded the political potential of the urban working class. It was primarily this potential that was tapped by the emerging national union and the CPCR. The efforts of unions to secure recognition, higher wages, better working conditions, and legislative protection subsumed concerns for effective land reform. Though urban unions and the CPCR demanded land for the landless, the issue was secondary to their effort to form a politically influential national labor confederation. This was reflected in the complete urban domination of the Executive Council of the CTCR.¹⁶⁷

Regarding living conditions, although significant progress was made in improving workers' material lives and legal standing through the decade of the 1930s, there were limits to these gains. Women and minors were forced into the

work place in increasing numbers to supplement household earnings. Incidences of non-compliance and violation of labor laws indicated that although the state had abandoned its liberal economic precepts, it lacked an apparatus capable of uniformly enforcing its labor-related decrees.

Finally, underscoring the convergence of interests between organized labor and the Costa Rican government was the presence of the following individuals at the founding convention of the *Confederación de Trabajadores de Costa Rica*: President of the Republic, Rafael Calderón Guardia; his Secretary of Labor, Brenes Gutiérrez; the Secretary General of the CPR, Manuel Mora; and the Secretary General of CTAL, Vicente Lombardo Toledano. The CTCR was born, autonomous from, but with the blessings of, the state. In no small measure this was possible because of the unique international environment engendered by the war against fascism.

Notes

1. The relation between popular mobilizations (such as strikes) and revolution has been the subject of widespread theoretical examination. For a recent summation of the literature and its relevancy to Central America, see John A. Booth, "Socioeconomic and Political Roots of National Revolts in Central America," Latin American Research Review, Volume 26, (1991): 33-74.
2. There are no comprehensive records of strike activity for this period. Only in 1940 did the Ministry of Labor start compiling such statistics. Before that the sole record of strikes were in periodicals or in the accounts of the *Jefes Políticos* and *Agencias de Policías*. For different reasons both these sources have lacunas in their reportings and preservation. The above estimate was culled from a number of the country's periodicals for the years 1934-1943. In total, these sources reveal twenty-six strikes, undoubtedly an under-estimation. However, the percentages of agricultural and urban strikes provide a gauge of relative activity in these two sectors of the work force.
3. Alva Montero Vega, Interview by author, June 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording.
4. The letter was signed by the following workers: Rafael Gómez, Francisco Loaiza, José Gámez, Manuel Valverde, Santos Chavarría and Víctor Mora Mora. What follows is based on Juan Rafael Morales Alfaro, "50 Años de Lucha del Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de Calzado, Cuero Y Similares," TMs [photocopy], Papers of Juan Rafael Morales, and an almost identical version of the same history located in *Trabajo y Seguridad Social*, Sindicatos, No. 73, NACR. The quote is taken from Morales, "50 Años de Lucha," 2-3.
5. In 1929-1930 Jiménez Guerrero was the Secretary of Correspondence for the *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT). Marvin Sánchez Valerio, "La Huelga General de Zapateros de Cartago, de Julio de 1935: Frustración o Victoria Obrera" *Univerisdad Nacional*, "Escuela de Historia, Seminario Interdisciplinario I, June 1986, 8. He would, along with Manuel Mora, successfully run for Congress on the Communist Party ticket in February 1934.
6. The proclamation was dated January 25, 1934. Morales, "50 Años," 4.
7. Ibid., p. 5.

8. At a future meeting, Beto Soto and Juan Rafael Morales Alfaro, representative of shoemakers from these regions pledged their support for their co-workers in the capital. They announced the possibility that they too would go out on strike against the firm "La Norma", owned by Elias Uma, which employed over one hundred workers. Subsequently the workers did wage a strike against the firm. Uma attempted unsuccessfully to divide the workers by favoring the most skilled. Juan Rafael Morales Alfaro, "*Formas Primitivas de Organización de Trabajadores y Artesanos en Costa Rica, 1930*," n.d., TMS [photocopy], 15-20, Papers of Juan Rafael Morales.

9. Trabajo, January 28, 1934.

10. Jiménez was President from 1910-1912, from 1924 to 1928 and again from 1932-1936. Don Cleto González was President from 1906-1910, from 1912-1914, and from 1928-1932. For the succession of Costa Rican presidents see Thomas E. Skidmore and Peter H. Smith, Modern Latin America (New York: Oxford University Press, 2d edition, 1989) 402-403.

11. Eduardo Mora, Interview by author, June 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording.

12. At that age, they already had between five and ten years experience practising their trade. Víctor Hugo Acuña Ortega, "*Vida Cotidiana, Condiciones de Trabajo y Organización Sindical: El Caso de Los Zapateros en Costa Rica (1934-1955)*," Revista de Historia, (1988): 228. Acuña's work provides an interesting look into the social composition and work life of Costa Rican shoemakers. The article was based primarily on contemporary interviews with leaders of the 1934 strike.

13. There is some evidence that leadership continuity resumed after the immediate dislocations caused by the Figueres victory subsided. As late as 1955 25 percent of the union's leadership had been active during the 1934 strike. Trabajo y Seguridad Social, Sindicatos. No. 73, NACR. However, given the lacunae in documentation, it is impossible to trace a direct line of continuity through the history of the shoemakers' union.

14. Mora and Cerdas, as many of the CPCR and union leaders came of age after the Tinoco coup d'état (1917) and before the Great Depression. For brief biographical sketches of some of the CPCR/PVP leaders see Chapter V, Section 1c, below.

15. See the PVP Correspondencia and the ensuing discussion concerning PVP statutes, membership and policies, Chapter V, Section 1, below.

16. In assessing the impact of press campaigns on the formation of worker consciousness, it must be kept in mind that country has enjoyed a high literacy rate and its newspapers high circulation rates. See Chapter V, Section 1a, below.

17. The Executive Council of the Union was as follows: General Secretary, Efraín Jiménez Guerrero; Secretary of Finances: Ricardo Molina Leiton; Secretary of Acts: Emilio Moscoa Barrantes; Secretary of Correspondence: Rodolfo Guzmán Rodríguez; Prosecretarios: Felix Robleto, Rafael Arias, Carlos Luís Naranjo. Morales, "50 Años de Lucha," 8.

18. Acuña Ortega, "Vida Cotidiana," 225-6. The bakers had waged bitter strikes over long hours and working conditions in 1926 and 1930. The latter strike led to violent confrontations with the police and the jailing of many in the union, *Sociedad Mutualista de Artesanos de Panadería*. Morales "Formas Primitivas de Organización," 6-7.

19. Eugenio Herrera Balharry, Los Alemanes y el Estado Cafetalero (San José, Costa Rica: Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 1988). 133.

20. As previously mentioned, Law No. 14 of November 22, 1933 authorized the Secretary of Labor to establish the *Oficina Técnica del Trabajo*.

21. Trabajo, May 13, 1934. The paper's account is of particular interest precisely because of its strong partisan nature and the frustration the CPR faced in attempting to accomplish its objectives. Trabajo argued that Zayas Bazán, Congressional Deputy José Monge Dumani, and the local jefe político exploited the prevalence of paternalistic relations in the countryside to sap the strike of its militancy. The characterization of Jews (Polacos) is also worthy of note.

22. Abraham Alfaro Carvajal, Autobiografía as recorded in Concurso Nacional de Autobiografías, 1983, *Universidad Nacional de Heredia* (UNH). The autobiographies of over one hundred workers was undertaken in 1983 by the *Escuela de Planificación y Promoción Social*, UNH, under the direction of Lic. Olga Goldemberg G. and Lic. Elisa Donato M. It is a large and largely under-utilized resource. See also, Contreras and Cerdas, Los Años 40, 11.

23. Trabajo, September 23, 1934.

24. Trabajo, October 21, 1934, and October 28, 1934. Other leaders in the strike committee were Mora Buet and Ismael Arias.

25. Except in Limón where it was ₡2.75 due to the region's higher cost of living.

26. For a discussion of the importance of the 1934 minimum wage legislation see Chapter I, Section 2a, above.

27. For this complaint see Jefe Político, Turrialba, to Secretary of State in Office of Government, April 21, 1938. Gobernación, 8872, No. 4 Legajo # 16, 1938, NACR. The Jefe complained that his responsibility was limited to gathering information for the Oficina Técnica del Trabajo and that he lacked a requisite amount of force to properly deal with the Communists.

28. Gobernación, 8872, No. 6 Legajo # 21, and No. 4 Legajo # 16, 1938, NACR.

29. See TABLE No. 5.2, below.

30. See, Ronald N. Harpelle, "West Indians in Costa Rica: The 1934 Banana Contract" paper presented at the Southern Labor Studies Conference, Georgia State University, October 1991. For the most detailed work to date on blacks in Costa Rica, see Carlos Meléndez and Quince Duncan, El Negro en Costa Rica, (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1974).

31. The above chart and Acuña, La Huelga Bananera de 1934, 21.

32. Chartered under the laws of New Jersey, the company's principle founders were Lorenzo Baker, Andrew Preston and Minor Keith. José Luís Torres, Otilio Ulate: su Partido y sus Luchas (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1985), 62. For a history of the early development of the United Fruit Company see Watt Steward, Keith y Costa Rica.

33. Acuña, La Huelga Bananera, 15. For the definitive history of the banana industry in Limón see Caspar Casey, Limón.

34. Casey's table is comprehensive from 1883 to 1940.

35. Caspar Casey, Limón, 303; Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Anuarios (1929-1949).

36. The common diet consisted of locally grown products: yucca, yams, corn, sweet potatoes, plantains, bananas and avocados. This was supplemented with imported products: rice, beans, salt-dried pork, beef, cod, lard and pigs tails. There were high levies on imported food. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Legation in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated April 7, 1933, USNA, 818.504-506.

37. Acuña, La Huelga Bananera, 19-23.

38. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Legation in Costa Rica). Dispatch: Labor Conditions in Limón, dated April 7, 1933, USNA, 818.504-506. The writer of the dispatch saw little evidence of a strike, or the possibility that the young Communist Party could make significant inroads in the region. The only known labor group, *Hermandad de Trabajadores*, he wrote, "has never taken any public action which might smack of Communism."

39. Censos de 1927, NACR. Over 47 percent of the nation's male population (over 15) was single. In Limón this percentage was 72.6 percent. Female rates were as follows: 45.0 percent in the Republic, 60.9 percent in Limón.

40. Acuña, La Huelga Bananera, 19-23.

41. Aguilar Hernández, Carlos Luis Fallas, 77. See also Aviva Chomsky, "Afro-Jamaican Traditions and Labor Organization on United Fruit Company Plantations in Costa Rica, 1910," paper presented at the 7th Annual Southern Labor Studies Conference, Georgia State University, October 10-13, 1991. Chomsky's work underlines the unsuccessful attempt of the strikers to receive protection as British citizens.

42. Acuña, La Huelga Bananera, 23-25.

43. The party's Presidents were José Pres Portilla and Gregorio Mora. Its Vice President was Rogelio C. Mendoza M.; its Secretary was Carlos Valverde. Rogelio C. Mendoza M., Limón, to Lino Octavio Bustos, April 7, 1933, Congreso, No. 1062, 1934, NACR. Bustos was a local small producer and organizer of the 1934 strike.

44. Rogelio C. Mendoza M., Limón, to Lino Octavio Bustos, April 10, 1933. Congreso, No. 1032, 1934, NACR. The letter describes the CPCR as the only true representatives of a "*lucha genuinamente classista*."

45. Fallas who consulted with the party before deciding where to go was banned from within one hundred kilometers from Alajuela for "*el delito de injurias con difamación en*

perjuicio de los Secretarios del Congreso Nacional." Aguilar Hernández, Carlos Luís Fallas, 81. Fallas wrote Mamita Yunai based on his strike experiences. See Fallas, Mamita Yunai.

46. The following *fincas* contained Communist Party cells: *La Suiza*, *Carmen*, *El Bosque*. There were also cells in the cities of Limón and Siquirrres. Acuña, La Huelga Bananera, p. 25.

47. United Fruit and President Jiménez received telegrams supporting the strikers from among other North American unions, the International Labour Defense, Maine Workers Union, and the Steel Metal Workers Industrial Union. Aguilar Hernández, Carlos Luís Fallas, 91.

48. The contract also permitted UFCO to begin exploitation of the Pacific coast. In exchange for the permission the company promised to develop 3,000 more hectares in Limón and turn over an additional 3,000 hectares to private hands. According to a 1932 report by a congressional special commission, the latter provisions were not fulfilled. Torre, Otilio Ulate, 69.

49. Ulate, was became the publisher and owner of the Diario de Costa Rica, ran for President against Calderón Guardia in the annulled 1948 election. He served as president from 1949-1952.

50. Torre, Otilio Ulate, 60-68.

51. Ibid., 72. This initiative was submitted by Santiago Ovares Arias *suplente* from Alajuela.

52. The UFCO desired to receive additional land concessions and the congressmen wished to develop region, particularly in light of the territorial conflict with Panama and the presence of oil in Cahuita. See Bourgeois Papers, UFCO internal documents various dates from February 18, 1920 to May 10, 1921.

53. The prevalent practice was to pay workers monthly, which placed them in perpetual need of credit to purchase necessities at the local commissary.

54. Aguilar Hernández, Carlos Luís Fallas, 82. For discussion of workmen's compensation see Chapter I, Section 2b, above.

55. The list of demands can be found in La Tribuna, August 14, 1934 and reprinted in Acuña, La Huelga Bananera, 34.

56. See Churnside, Formación de la Fuerza Laboral, Cuadro 4.3. Churnside's source is the Coffee Census of 1935.

57. Acuña, La Huelga Bananera, 35.

58. Nevertheless, the severe economic pressure faced by small producers generated some important strike leaders. These included Tobías Vaglio and Lino Octavio Bustos.

59. The Central Committee of the CPR in Limón issued special instructions that special attention be paid to the "negroes." Rogelio C. Mendoza M., Limón, to Lino Octavio Bustos, undated, but probably June 1933, *Congreso*, No. 1032, 1934, NACR.

60. The U.S. consular office in Limón reported that dock workers, mostly Jamaicans were not sympathetic to the strike. "They feel themselves well treated in every way." The report goes on to question whether the black banana workers who have stopped working have done so out of desire for better wages and support for the strike out of fear. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Legation in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated August 24, 1934, USNA, 818.504-506.

61. Harpelle, "West Indians in Costa Rica," 14.

62. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Legation in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated August 24, 1934, USNA, 818.504-506. It was routine practice of the UFCO to monitor the movement of labor agitators. See for example, Bourgeois Papers, UFCO internal documents, March 8, 1929 containing descriptions, travels and photographs of alleged labor agitators.

63. After the strike ended, Fallas declared before the *Corte Suprema de Justicia* that "we are neither reactionaries nor provocateurs." Aguilar Hernández, Carlos Luís Fallas, 84.

64. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Legation in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated August 24, 1934, USNA, 818.504-506. Steamer Sixaola left Limón with only 18,000 stems and the steamer Peten which was one of the three passenger boats from Limón to New York, left with none.

65. The agreement, signed by Santos León Herrera, F. Neverman, Ricardo Gutiérrez, Roberto Salazar, José María Pinaud, Carlos Luís Fallas, Manuel Mora, Adán Cárdenas, José María Bustos, Tobías Vaglio, was reprinted in La Tribuna on August 28, 1934.

66. According to the judicial archives, by their own admission the police were directed to set fire to the striker's quarters after shots were heard coming from

imprecise locations. Union documents were also seized. Aguilar Hernández, Carlos Luís Fallas, 88.

67. For examples see Diario de Costa Rica, August 30, 1934 and La Tribuna August 21, 1934.

68. George P. Chittenden, Limón, to Ricardo Jiménez, San José, August 22, 1934, U.S. State Department, (U.S. Legation in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated August 25, 1934, Enclosure No. 1, USNA, 818.504-506.

69. Interview with La Tribuna August 21, 1934 in U.S. State Department, (U.S. Legation in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated August 21, 1934, USNA, 818.504-506. An anti-Communist organization called the Liga Anticomunista was subsequently founded, Acuña, La Huelga Bananera, 43.

70. Jaime Cerdas Mora, Interview by author, July 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording.

71. Rogelio C. Mendoza M., Limón, to Lino O. Bustos, June 18, 1933, Congreso, No. 1032, 1934, NACR. Mendoza wrote, "que es un solo cuerpo solidario el que mueve el UNIVERZO; es una sola alma que en grito unisono grita VIVA LA INTERNACIONAL." Emphasis in original. Though the letter dates a year before the strike it was indicative of the revolutionary ferment in the province.

72. Jaime Cerdas Mora, Interview by author, June 1990, San Pedro, Costa Rica, tape recording.

73. Harpelle, "West Indians in Costa Rica," 17-18. Though acknowledging the absence of any direct evidence, Harpelle links the government's hard line in the second phase of the strike to the deal it struck with UFCO regarding the impending December 1934 contract.

74. *Se estipula que los trabajos de producción y explotación de la industria bananera del país, se procurará dar preferencia a los costarricenses y éstos gozarán en igualdad de ocupaciones de las mismas ventajas y prerrogativas que los empleados y trabajadores de otras nacionalidades. Queda prohibido en la zona Pacífico ocupar gentes de color en dichos trabajos.* Torre Otilio Ulate, 74. Torre is quoting from, Congreso, No. 17004, December 10, 1934, NACR. The inclusion of this article (No. 5) was directly related to a 1932 congressional report on conditions in the banana zones of the country. The report, though strongly critical of the UFCO singled out Jamaicans as the being the central cause of the labor problem. "En Limón asistimos a una Asamblea promovida por la sociedad de trabajadores y en la que fue sometida a nuestra consideración el problema del predominio

de los trabajadores de la raza de color, con perjuicio del trabajador criollo...." Congreso, No. 16358, December 7, 1932, NACR. Quoted in Torre, Otilio Ulate, 69. The Commission included Otilio Ulate, Adriano Urbina, and Jorge Ortíz E.

75. The absolute numbers of available work force were 26,958 in 1927 and 29,962 in 1950. These numbers exaggerate but do not distort the stagnant nature of the work force because the 1927 numbers include all those over ten years of age. Churnside, Organización de la Producción, 26.

76. Aguilar writes that the principal consequence of the strike of 1934 was the "*conciencia de clase que obtuvieron los bananeros*." Aguilar Hernández, Carlos Luís Fallas, 89.

77. Trabajo, October 7, 1934, Quoted in Aguilar Hernández, Carlos Luís Fallas, 94.

78. Regarding the role of the CPR in organizing the strike Acuña writes, "*En este sentido, el hecho de que el Partido Comunista asumiera la conducción de la huelga tuvo consecuencias contradictorias: por un lado, le confirió a la lucha coherencia, globalidad, unidad y protección nacional pero, por otro lado, hizo que el destino del movimiento dependiera excesivamente del destino de los líderes comunistas, entre el Partido, el Sindicato y el Comité de Huelga tuvo consecuencias negativas*." Acuña La Huelga Bananera, 41.

79. CPR leadership of the labor movement was challenged in 1943 with the founding of the church-led movement under the direction of Archbishop Víctor Sanabria and prelate Benjamín Núñez. For a discussion of this see Chapter IV, below.

80. These themes will be explored in great detail in Chapters V and VI, below.

81. The sugar workers' gains were solidified in the December 1934 minimum wage legislation; the banana workers' in the December 1934 UFCO-government contract.

82. Over 86 percent of the population of province of Cartago was born in the province. See TABLE No. 2.2. The table does not present separate figures for Turrialba.

83. For example, see Bourgeois Papers, UFCO internal documents various dates from February 18, 1920 to May 10, 1921.

84. Ethnic Germans owned 80 percent of the sugar mills in Turrialba. Cerdas Cruz, Costa Rica After 1930, 282. Also see TABLE No. 3.3, below.

85. For a history of the Germans in Costa Rica see Herrera Balharry, Los alemanes.

86. See Trabajo, November, 3 1935; November 27, 1937, September 15, 1940.

87. For example the strike in the *Finca de Chile* in Moravia. Trabajo, November 27, 1937.

88. The principal area of focus of this section is the Central Valley of the country.

89. There was a hierarchy of pay scale among coffee workers. Those who cleared and planted the land were the highest paid; choosers and pickers of the bean were the lowest.

90. Sources for this statement include listings of *fincas* in violation of salary decrees in the Ministry of Labor's reports, and numerous complaints in the country's newspapers, principally, but not exclusively, Trabajo. Ministerios de Gobernación y Policía, Trabajo y Previsión Social, Memoria, (1936).

91. These figures were reported in Trabajo, June 15, 1940.

92. The budget was compiled with the help of José Prendas Arguedas, leader of the peasant union movement in the Central Valley. This was one of an occasional series of budgets that appeared in Trabajo in an effort to highlight the economic struggle faced by the rural population. Prices lists which appeared as official pronouncements in other periodicals confirm the above prices. Of interest is the high sugar consumption.

93. Women were employed in manufacturing and processing plants that began to develop in the 1930s. Principal among these were food processing factories. One of the largest was *Empresa Pozuelo*, which experienced a major strike in 1943. See Trabajo, July 31, 1943. *Empresa Pozuelo*, owned by the Grace Company Central America, was founded in 1938. Another large employer, this time of textile workers was *Fábrica Saprissa* founded in 1931. Francisco Esquivel, El desarrollo del Capital en la industria de Costa Rica, 1950-1970 (Heredia: EUNA, 1985) 169, 173.

94. See Censos de 1927, NACR, and Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Censo de Población de 1950 (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1950).

95. Articles 94-100, see Chapter III, Section 4, below.

96. Guzmán characterized women as the most exploited of all workers. Trabajo, April 1, 1939. The PVP was consistent in appreciating the important and increasing role of women in the workplace. See Trabajo, July 13, 1946, for an example of the PVP rededicating itself to expanding its work among women. On the other hand, one of the first strikes led by the Catholic labor confederation involved a large number of women employees. Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, May 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording.

97. It is interesting to note that individuals of German origin working in German owned business often earned substantially higher wages than the national average. See various inventories located in *Congreso, Junta de Custodia de Custodia, Signaturas 203-212, NACR*. The question of German presence in the Costa Rican economic and political structures became critically important during the Second World War. See Chapter III, Sections 1-3, below.

98. *Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Anuario* (1936, 1942). See also Chart No. 1.7, above.

99. Trabajo, December 8, 1935.

100. Aguilar Hernández, Carlos Luis Fallas, 96-99. Guzmán was the only one of the CPR leaders to travel to Moscow during this period.

101. The platform was issued at the same time the 1938 CPR ticket was announced. The candidates were the following: Manuel Mora, Carlos Luis Sáenz, Jaime Cerdas, Rodolfo Guzmán, and Efraín Jiménez. Mora and Sáenz were elected. However, Sáenz's election was "arbitrarily" annulled by President Cortés. See, *Ibid.*, 107-110 and Contreras and Cerdas, Los Años 40, 40-44. In their broader treatment of the document Cerdas and Contreras characterize it as "bourgeois democratic" with populist overtones.

102. Restriction of the circulation of Communist Party materials was sporadically enforced throughout the 1930s and 1940s. It was based on Article 31 of the *Reglamento de Correos* of August 31, 1921 and justified on the basis of insuring social harmony. Enforcement of the restriction became lax during the Administration of Calderón Guardia (1940-1944) but was reinforced by Figueres after the civil war in 1948. See correspondence between the *Secretaría de Ministerio de Gobernación y Policía*, Fernando Valverde Vega, and the Administrator of the *Departamento de Paquetes Postales* dated July 14, 1949, in which the Post Office was authorized to seize subversive materials allegedly being

sent into the country by exiled *Vanguardistas*. The material in question in this correspondence was an article, "Terror y Miseria en Costa Rica, Historia y Origenes de la Barbaria Figuerista" published in Repertorio Americano. The material was confiscated and then shown to an international news correspondent, Julian A. Watson, as an example of Communist propaganda. *Gobernación*, 1949, NACR.

103. Trabajo, December 12, 1937.

104. What follows was taken from *Congreso*, No. 18355, 1937, NACR.

105. Rural development planks demanded confirmation of the Executive's promise to give title after two years to land cultivated by squatters (*paracitos*) and the adoption of measures to increase credit to small producers.

106. This was a specific reference to the building of the Pan-American highway which labor believed was being built to favor tourist/commercial interests. Construction of the road from Cartago to San Marco was supported by the Council to Aid Tourism, Cartago, the Chamber of Commerce of Costa Rica and the Costa Rican National Council of Tourism. *Congreso*, No. 18320, 1937, NACR.

107. This was a direct echo of the CPCR 1938 platform.

108. *Congreso*, No. 18355, NACR.

109. The extent and nature of CPCR/PVP penetration into labor organizations will become apparent. See Chapter V, Section 1, below.

110. Trabajo, May 13, 1939.

111. Trabajo, July 1, 1939.

112. Aguilar Hernández, Carlos Luis Fallas, 110-112.

113. Trabajo, October 28, 1939 and Acuña, "Vida Cotidiana," 229.

114. The estimate of one-third was derived by taking the mid-point in the number of shoemakers in the 1927 and 1950 census. Since the census of 1950 included shoemakers with textile workers, the ratio of shoemakers to textile workers found in the 1927 census was applied to the population census of 1950. See Charts No. 4.1 and 4.2, below. In addition, if the "very low" level of unionization in San José is taken to be approximately 25 percent, that places

the number of shoemakers in San José at about 2,000, and the number throughout the country at 3,000. The number 2,000 was used by Juan Rafael Morales in the author's June 1990 interview with him. Juan Rafael Morales, Interview by author, June 1990, Grecia, Costa Rica, tape recording.

115. The following locals were present: San José - headed by Efraín Jiménez with 425 members; Cartago - headed by Salomón Brenes with 221 members (100 of which were classified as militants); Heredia - headed by Nautilio Guzmán with 100 members; Alajuela - headed by Emilio León with less than 50 members; Puntarenas - headed by Reinaldo Uglade with 105 members; Limón - headed by Albín Monge with 45 members; Grecia (in the Province of Alajuela) - headed by Juan Rafael Morales with 72 members; Turrialba (in the province of Cartago) - headed by Alfredo Picado with 38 members; and Guadalupe (in the Province of San José) - headed by Omar Solozano which was organically tied to the San José organization. Trabajo, October 28, 1939.

116. Trabajo, March 2, 1940. "Report of the Secretary of the Executive Central Committee on hygienic conditions, salaries, protection against arbitrary firings and liberty of organization inside the work place."

117. Acuña "Vida Cotidiana," 225. Though shoemakers formed a working class elite, they were portrayed as rogues by those in more affluent sectors of Costa Rican society. Shoemakers, like other occupations, tended to live together in distinct *barrios*. In San José, this was in the southern part of the city.

118. Trabajo, March 2, 1940.

119. Trabajo, August 12, 1939. Víctor Hugo Acuña wrote: "It is not exaggeration to affirm that the union movement in Costa Rica in this period was articulated around the shoemaker's union." Acuña, "Vida Cotidiana," 226.

120. Ibid., 231. Even lessons in correct pronunciation did not fall outside the role of the workshop, as young men from the provinces were instructed in the political culture of the capital.

121. The union's executive council, elected at the start of 1940 was as follows: Secretary General, V. Cordero; Secretary of Organization and Propaganda G. Loiza; Secretary of Correspondence, A. Poveda; Secretary of Finance, C. Tosso; Secretary of Acts and Agreements, O. Zúñiga; Fiscal Agent, F. Guevara; Pro Secretaries, E. Jiménez, C. L. Naranjo, O. Chacon, F. Caravajal; Commission of Vigilance and Justice, G. Cubero and T. Marín.

122. After 1940, the PRN headed by Calderón Guardia was the country's ruling party.

123. Annual Report for 1945, Partido Vanguardia Popular, Correspondencia - 1945, and Datos Para Un Estudio del Partido Vanguardia, 36, NACR.

124. Trabajo, June 8, 1940.

125. Two members of each Vanguardia cell had the right to attend the University Obrera. Circular dated February 24, 1945, Partido Vanguardia Popular Correspondencia - 1945. The first school established by the Communist Party in Costa Rica was the Universidad Popular. Established in February 1933 in San José with branches subsequently opened in Cartago, Heredia, and Alajuela. U.S. Department of Justice. FBI Report, Totalitarian Activities in Costa Rica Today, September 1943, USNA, Roosevelt Library, OF 10b Box #23.

126. The University's Director was Carlos Luis Sáenz and its General Secretary was Enrique Benevides. U.S. Department of State. U.S. Department of Justice. FBI Dispatch dated September 17, 1945. USNA, 818.00.

127. Alvaro Montero Vega, Interview by author, June 1990, San José, tape recording.

128. The lectures sold for between ¢1.15 and ¢1.85. Communication dated October 8, 1945, Partido Vanguardia Popular, Correspondencia - 1945.

129. Trabajo, May 11, 1940.

130. The figure of ¢.90 for agricultural workers was based on statistics published by Instituto del Café and reported in Trabajo, June 15, 1940.

131. Trabajo, April 26, 1941. Arguedas characterized his movement, as a joint struggle of workers and peasants to overcome their oppression.

132. Eventually an agrarian reform law was passed. Law No. 49 July 22, 1943 created the Cooperative Agrícola Industrial. Calvo Gamboa, Costa Rica En La Segunda Guerra Mundial, 1939-1945 (San José: Editorial Universidad Estatal A Distancia, 1985), 155.

133. Trabajo, November 9, 1940.

134. Trabajo, December 21, 1940.

135. In Heredia the meeting was held in the house of the CPR leader Arnolfo Ferreto, and in Cartago both Ferreto and Arguedas were present. Trabajo, November 23, 1940; November 30, 1940; December 7, 1940; and December 14, 1940.

136. An account of the debate is given in Trabajo, March 1, 1941.

137. Fallas, leader of the 1934 banana strike was the party's Secretary of Agitation and Propaganda. Ferreto, well-known for his hard line views, was the party's Secretary of Organization. Contreras and Cerdas, Los Años 40, 46.

138. Trabajo, March 1, 1941.

139. Trabajo, March 28, 1942.

140. Much has been written about this group of young intellectuals and students. Strongly influenced by Aprista ideology, their subsequent contributions to Costa Rican history was substantial. The PSD formed the institutional base for the Figueres uprising of 1948. After the victory the party reconstituted itself as the Partido Liberación Nacional (PLN). The PLN has remained the dominate party in Costa Rica ever since. Early members of the Centro such as Rodrigo Facio, Daniel Oduber, Gonzalo Facio, Alberto Cañas, Jorge Rossi, Gabriel Dengo, Fernando Fournier, Hernán González Gutiérrez, Isaac Azofeifa, Roberto Fernández Durán, Rafael Zuñiga among others came to dominate Costa Rica's post-1948 politics. Almost all the members of the Centro were from prominent families which assured their ideas a hearing at least within the upper strata of Costa Rican society. Principal among their positions was that Costa Rican development was dependent on a sound program of economic modernization. This included plans for the country's industrialization and political stabilization which entailed regular elections free of fraud. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated October, 18, 1943, USNA, 818.504-506. Among the works that address this subject are: Oscar Aguilar Bulgarelli, Democracia y partido políticos en Costa Rica (San José: 1981); Charles Ameringer, Don Pepe: A Political Biography of José Figueres of Costa Rica (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978); Alberto Cañas, Los Ocho Años (San José: Editorial Universidad Estatal A Distancia, 1955); Arturo Castro Esquivel, José Figueres: el hombre y su obra (San José: Imprenta Torme, 1955); John Charles Morgan, "The Partido Liberación Nacional of Costa Rica" (Ph.D. diss., Louisiana State University, 1979); and Susanne Jonas Bodenheimer, La Ideología Social Demócrata en Costa Rica, (San José: EDUCA, 1984).

141. The actual lands targeted were: for the province of Heredia, in the cantons of Sarapiquí and Santa Clara; for the province of Alajuela, in the canton Rio Cuarto; and for the provinces of Cartago and San José, in the canton Del General.

142. See Chapter III, Section 2b, above, on the *Junta de Custodia de la Propriedad Enemiga*.

143. Trabajo, May 24, 1941, reported that Calderón viewed these demands with sympathy.

144. Trabajo, December 21, 1940.

145. Trabajo, March 21, 1941. A quintal is 46 kilos or slightly over 100 pounds.

146. Trabajo, April 19, 1941.

147. The *bloque*, created to respond to the wartime situation, had under its charge the *Junta de Custodia de la Propriedad Enemiga* which was empowered to confiscate property of enemy nationals.

148. For a fuller discussion of the *junta* and the lands distributed under it, see Chapter III, Section 3a, below.

149. Circular dated August 17, 1944, *Partido Vanguardia Popular*, Correspondencia - 1945.

150. Trabajo, march 29, 1941.

151. They argued that food prices should be controlled by legislation to arrive at "fair price" which would vary according to province and transportation costs.

152. For a quantification of food imports, see Chapter I, Chart No. 1.8, above.

153. Trabajo, June 21, 194. At the same time the union opposed lowering tariffs on imported shoes in spite of the tariffs obvious inflationary implications. The reason for this was apparent: shoemaking, essentially a craft industry in Costa Rica, could not survive a influx of manufactured shoes.

154. See Chapter II, Section 5, above.

155. *Ministerios de Gobernación y Policía, Trabajo y Previsión Social*, Memoria, (1942), 110.

156. Guzmán was describing the deleterious economic consequences of the exploitative and paternal relations that existed between employers and workers, especially among rural workers.

157. This the agreement was set to last two years. The document was signed by all parties before Durán Rocha, and the Governor of Limón. *Ministerios de Gobernación y Policía, Trabajo y Previsión Social, Memoria*, (1940). 242.

158. Trabajo, May 23, 1942. It also pressured the government to place more workers on the mixed salary councils.

159. Particular reference was made to the *Asociación de Ferrocarrileros de Costa Rica (ASCR)* and the administration of the *Ferrocarril Eléctrico al Pacífico* which rejected the repeated attempts of the *Sindicato de Ferrocarrileros de Northern (SFN)* to unify. Trabajo, October 24, 1942.

160. Thousands of workers met him at the Sabana Airport on the western outskirts of the Capital. Trabajo placed the figure at 10,000. November 28, 1942.

161. These four areas were discussed in an interview with Lombardo Toledano by Rodolfo Guzmán published in Trabajo of January 2, 1943. During his visit to Costa Rica Lombardo Toledano travelled to Turrialba where he was received warmly. He spoke to the gathering of agricultural workers about the Mexican Revolution and the laws of Cárdenas. He then went on to compare the reforms of Calderón to those of Cárdenas. Trabajo, November 28, 1942.

162. Alvaro Montero Vega, Interview by author, June 1990, San José, tape recording.

163. Some indication of financial structure of the labor movement is revealed in a financial statement of the UCLTC printed in Trabajo on August 21, 1943. Of the ₡1,270.50 (\$226.00) recorded income over 75 percent came from worker contributions, the bulk of the balance from the sale of raffles and membership cards (carnets) (14 percent and 6 percent, respectively). The expenditures totalling ₡595.75 went to salaries, 35 percent; travel expenses, 17 percent; comminatory events and promotion, 21 percent and the remainder on general expense. Trabajo, August 21, 1943.

164. For a discussion of these social welfare measures see Chapter III, Sections 3 and 4, below.

165. At the meeting a resolution was passed praising the work of Calderón Guardia in spite of its social Christian under-pinnings. Trabajo, August 21, 1943.

166. The full Executive Council held 22 members. They were as follows: a Secretary General; a Secretary of Acts and Agreements; a Secretary of Finance and Statistics; three Secretaries of Organization; a Secretary of Foreign Correspondence; a Secretary of Domestic Correspondence; two Secretaries of Press and Propaganda; two Secretaries of Conflicts and Social Legislation; a Secretary of Education and Culture; a Secretary of Technical and Economic Matters; a Secretary of Peasant Action; and a Representative from the following sections of the country: Alajuela, Heredia, Cartago, Limón, Puntarenas, Turrialba, and Puerto Cortés. Trabajo, June 12, 1943.

167. Trabajo, October 4, 1943. See also *Trabajo y Seguridad Social*, Sindicatos. No. 514, NACR, and "*Disolución de CTCR y organización afiliados Junio 8, 1949.*" [Remesa 467; Estante 186; Archivo 416; Sección 5], AJ.

Part II 1940-1948

Chapter III

Calderón Guardia and the 1943 Labor Code

The progression of Costa Rican labor law in the 1920s and 1930s culminated in the Labor Code of August 26, 1943. The Code was the realization of the Calderón Administration's (1940-1944) social experiment and the crowning achievement of the political alliance that supported his government. The code, approved by the Congress thirty-eight votes to zero, with six delegates absent, became effective on Independence Day September 15, 1943.¹ In celebration President Calderón, Secretary General Mora and Archbishop Sanabria rode before forty thousand Costa Ricans in an open jeep down the streets of San José.²

Although the Code was a unique expression of the current domestic and international political forces that created it, it drew on ideas and efforts long present in Costa Rican society. In 1939 during the Presidency of León Cortés, the head of the *Oficina Técnica del Trabajo*, Alberto Durán Rocha, compiled a list of existing labor laws for the express purpose of developing a comprehensive code.³ Nevertheless, the authorship of the Code became a matter of controversy. Many in the opposition and mainstream dailies accused the Communists of exerting excessive influence on

its drafting even though the Code openly acknowledged its allegiance to social Christian principles. And despite the presence of many segments of the document which were warmly welcomed by labor, a close reading reveals an unmistakable intent to promote an "evenhanded" approach to labor-capital relations.⁴ Furthermore, the support of the *Partido Vanguardia Popular* (PVP),⁵ although vital for the code's passage, promulgation and effective implementation, was in itself insufficient. Active church support was also needed. Nor could either organization (the PVP or the church) effectively expand its influence (or advance the protection of labor) without the agreement of the state.

For these reasons, the Labor Code must be seen as a document of compromise ultimately defined by the historically continuous expansion of the role of the state. The latter point is especially relevant to subsequent developments. The civil war in 1948 which overthrew the political factions and organizational entities most closely identified with the pro-labor legislation, not only kept the reforms intact, but in certain cases expanded them as it intensified the function of the state as mediator of class relations.⁶ The continuity argument is further strengthened by the positive reaction to Figueres' initial policies by Manuel Mora.⁷ Before discussing the Code, it is necessary to provide an analysis of the economic and political crises that surrounded the legislation.

1. The Economic Crisis⁸

Throughout the 1930s the Costa Rica was heavily dependent on its European, particularly coffee, export markets, and coffee was the country's principal export. For example in 1936 coffee accounted for over 57 percent (in terms of value) of all Costa Rican exports and of that over 70 percent was shipped to the United Kingdom (41 percent) and Germany (32 percent). The United States accounted for only 14 percent of all coffee exports. In 1939 80 percent of the cacao (Costa Rica's third largest export after coffee and bananas) went to Germany while coffee exports to Germany increased to 40 percent.⁹ Only banana exports were heavily dependent on the U.S. market which traditionally received 70 percent to 80 percent of the crop.¹⁰

With the outbreak of European hostilities the country's economy received a profound shock as trade with the Axis powers completely collapsed. Trade with Germany and Japan fell to zero.¹¹ Trade with Great Britain, which had absorbed 25 percent of all Costa Rican exports in 1940, also fell precipitously.¹² This sudden cessation of virtually all European trade caused immediate and widespread economic dislocations.

Just how profound the export crisis was can be seen in the government response. Immediately upon taking office the Calderón Administration lowered export taxes, guaranteed

coffee exporters a minimum price of \$.30/kilo (Coffee had sold at \$.22/kilo in 1936) and had the *Banco Nacional de Costa Rica* extend terms and lower to 1 percent interest on loans made to coffee exporters.¹³ Still the country remained in grave danger. Isolated from its traditional markets, it had little alternative but to respond to U.S. initiatives.

The Convention of Washington (1940) signed between the U.S. and the coffee producing countries of Latin America reserved a share of the relatively small, high quality coffee market for Costa Rica. The agreement, which set aside a quota of twelve million kilos for the United States market and 14.4 million kilos to other allied markets (principally Canada and the Canal Zone) enabled the country to compete with the larger Latin American coffee exporters such as Brazil and Colombia.¹⁴ In addition the agreement raised coffee prices to \$.32 a kilo, a price that had not been reached since the coffee harvest of 1930-1931.

The ensuing shift in Costa Rica's export markets was dramatic. By 1942 coffee's importance to the economy was undiminished. However, .01 percent went to the United Kingdom, 0 percent to Germany, while 69 percent was shipped to the United States.¹⁵ This was the most significant commodity in a shift of economic orientation that saw trade between the United States and Costa Rica increase by over 200 percent from 1938 to 1945.¹⁶

Domestically the difficult economic situation was

aggravated by the increased cost of both labor and goods, and the growing problem of scarcity. From 1941 to 1943 wages in the countryside rose 60 percent, but barely kept pace with inflation, which was being driven by higher wages, the higher cost of shipping, the insufficiency of supply due to diversion to support the war, and the chronic practices of speculation and hoarding.

TABLE No. 3.1

Cost of Living Index (1940-1949)
(1940=100.00)

Year	General Index
1940	100.00
1941	103.01
1942	124.30
1943	159.95
1944	168.46
1945	179.16
1946	186.03
1947	212.53
1948	218.18
1949	241.59

María de los Angeles Aguilar Hernández, "*Clase Trabajadora y Organización Sindical en Costa Rica 1948-1971*" (Tesis, Ciudad Universitaria "Rodrigo Facio", Costa Rica, 1987) 7-8.¹⁷

Reflecting the inflation rate, money in circulation more than doubled from ₡52.3 million in January 1939 to ₡118.7 million in 1943. The public debt exploded from \$2.3 million in 1939 to \$30 million in 1943!¹⁸ Directly contributing to this deficit was the cost of the social programs enacted in the first years of the Calderón Administration. So serious were the linked problems of

inflation and scarcity that the government created the *Junta Central de Abastos* and authorized it to combat speculation at the district and neighborhood level. It regulated the supply of foodstuff and imposed jail sentences for anyone caught hoarding or speculating in it. Increasingly the government identified hoarding and speculation as subversive (fifth column) activities on the part of its ethnically Italian and, particularly, German populations,¹⁹ and empowered the *junta* to impose stiff penalties.²⁰

Speculation indeed was a serious problem. Carlos Luís Fallas, then PVP congressional representative from Puntarenas, estimated that the hoarding of foodstuff was costing the Costa Rican people ₡2,000.000 a month. His computations were based on the difference between prices set by the *Junta de Abastos* and the black market price multiplied by the monthly consumption of the articles under examination. These included: rice, beans, corn, salt, meat, bread, and sugar.²¹

The crisis continued throughout the war. In November 1944, five hundred workers gathered in Heredia to protest the high cost of living and practices of speculation and hoarding.²² Addressing the workers, Manuel Mora repeated his party's charge that reactionary forces were manipulating the supply of goods to undermine the social gains won under Calderón and now, being maintained by President Teodoro Picado (1944-1948).²³ If appropriate actions were not taken

to remedy the situation, Mora threatened to call a general strike in defense of the gains.

The end of the war did not bring relief to the Costa Rican economy. In a failing attempt to reverse the spiraling cost of living, increasingly comprehensive price controls were placed on a widening number of articles deemed to be of prime necessity.²⁴ In July of 1945 the CTCR called a public rally. Mora was not in favor of the meeting. However, in this instance, he gave in to the demands of hardliners in his party. Addressing an audience of over one thousand individuals, Mora fearing a deterioration of the political situation, urged moderation and positive action against speculation.²⁵

2. The Political Crisis²⁶

In the early 1940s the chronic economic crisis was joined by a political crisis that sharply altered the domestic balance of power. In 1940 Rafael Calderón Guardia (1940-1944) was elected President with 90 percent of the popular vote and strong support from the powerful agro-export and banking sectors. By 1942 the President and his *Partido Republicana Nacional* (PRN) found themselves dependent on the country's Communist Party for critical support. What caused this? As will be seen, there is little consensus among either contemporary or subsequent commentators on the structural and social forces that

underlay the shift, or what implications should be drawn from such a dramatic erosion of traditional support.²⁷ What is clear is that subsequent Costa Rican history up to and through the civil war of 1948 were intimately connected to the political events of the early 1940s.

Foremost of the charges levied against Calderón by a bitter opposition was that he disregarded the interests of all but the urban and rural working class. This was not the case. As already stated, the Calderón Administration quickly responded to the crisis in the coffee industry by eliminating all taxes on coffee exports, guaranteeing minimum price levels and signing the coffee treaty with Washington which secured coffee growers sufficient market share to avoid catastrophe. In May 1941, he signed a law protecting nascent domestic industries by eliminating all taxes on imports of machinery and tools. In an effort to aid large agricultural producers, Calderón signed an agreement with the Inter-American Institute of the United States to provide food for Allied troops in the Canal Zone. Under the agreement \$400,000 worth of foodstuff was sent to Panama.²⁸ Finally, the role of the Central Bank, *Banco Nacional de Costa Rica*, also was enhanced. In order to combat the spiraling cost of living all domestic banks were required to obtain authority from the Central Bank to implement any changes in interest, accounting, or in lending policies.²⁹ In addition the Central Bank was authorized to import needed

agricultural equipment and sell it to producers through the *Juntas Rurales de Crédito* established during the González Flores Administration.³⁰

Given the Calderón Administration's efforts to address various sectoral interests, an unambiguous attempt to explain anti-Calderonista sentiment as an elite reaction against his social policies has limited utility. The applicability of this argument is further compromised by the signing of a public letter by members of Costa Rica's dominant class in support of Calderón's reforms.³¹ Before continuing this analysis into the erosion of Calderón traditional support an examination of his social program is in order.

a. The Social Program

Calderón Guardia entered office with a social philosophy that was in marked contrast to the liberal ideology that had dominated Costa Rican politics since the 1880s. Strongly influenced by Cardinal Mercier with whom he had studied as a youth,³² Calderón advocated limitations on property rights and argued that without the "control of orthodox 'Catholicism' capitalism would destroy private property."³³ Accordingly, on May 1, 1941 Calderón announced his intention to submit a body of laws based on the concepts of social Christian justice to the Congress.

Social Christian justice in the modern period is based

on the twin papal encyclicals, Rerum Novarum (1891) and Quadragesimo Anno (1931). The doctrine arose out of an effort to supplant the Marxian concept of class conflict with a peaceful solution to worker-employer confrontations. Two fundamental principles underlay the doctrine. The first is the notion of class collaboration resting on the principle of a "just family wage," defined as the wage sufficient for a worker to support himself and his family in material *dignity*. The second was the "social function of property" which held that property's first purpose was to serve the material needs of a community. Only after those needs were met could the use of property for private gain be morally sanctioned. Benjamín Núñez, who led the church labor initiative in Costa Rica, offered the following definition of the social function of property. "In extreme necessity all property is held in common" and should be used to fill the common need. Núñez then went on to define the presence of hunger and malnutrition as situations that constitute "extreme necessities."³⁴ Embedded in the doctrine of social Christian justice was the belief that all individuals require a sufficient level of material well-being (food, shelter, clothing) before the church can guide them in the full development of their spiritual natures. Poverty was an injustice; it did not prepare the soul for spiritual awakening.

In concert with this doctrine, Calderón's reforms

attempted to provide a basic level of material sustenance to the citizens of Costa Rica. Among the most significant of these reforms, known as the Social Guarantees, were the construction of low-cost housing³⁵ for workers earning less than ¢250 per month³⁶, free school lunch and shoe programs,³⁷ the reinstatement of religious instruction in the public schools,³⁸ and the establishment of nation-wide health clinics accessible to the country's poor.

In his exposition to the Constitutional Congress, President Calderón explained the necessity and ideological foundations of the reforms. The law "that protects the life of the worker constitutes the first step in a series of reforms that we consider indispensable in order to equalize the just relations between employers and wage earners." Calderón continued, the legislation "based on a point of view entirely Christian" would "insure the bases of the future peace of the Costa Rican people by consigning "in the Constitution the principle of social security as an inalienable right of workers."³⁹ This was the centerpiece of the Social Guarantees and it was to be administered through the newly created *Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social*.⁴⁰

The social security program provided for medical service, maternity benefits, accident compensation and funeral benefits, financed by tripartite contributions from workers, employers and the state. In 1943 the program was expanded to include "all workers, manual and intellectual,

who earn a wage or salary." The only exceptions were foreign workers under short term contracts, members of the wage earners' family who worked but did not collect monetary compensation, workers already receiving a pension from the state, and those who worked less than ninety days a year.

The *Caja* was administered by a junta appointed for a five year term by the Executive branch but "absolutely independent of it." Workers contributions, determined by the junta were never (except in exceptional situations) to be greater than those of the employers. The CPCR claimed credit for this provision and the one that limited excluded workers to those who worked less than ninety rather than one hundred and eighty days a year. The latter provision affected primarily agricultural workers.⁴¹ The junta was empowered to impose fines on employers who did not make their contributions. Repeated offenders were subject to arrest.⁴² The majority of the government's contribution was to be financed by custom increases (of up to 20 percent) on beverages and luxury items, taxes on the consumption and production of alcohol, and an increase of .01 percent on the land tax. The consumption taxes directly contributed to the inflationary pressures that the country experienced. Though no statistics are available for the earlier part of the decade, the following table indicates that despite the Executive's initiative well into the 1950s most Costa Ricans remained outside the protection of the *Caja Costarricense de*

Seguro Social.

TABLE No. 3.2

Workers Assured Against Illness and Maternity

Years	Insured Workers	National Population	EAP	% of EAP
1948	52,750	766,064	261,096	20
1949	57,398	788,852	268,798	21
1950	63,317	812,036	273,774	23
1951	65,900	858,084	282,434	23
1952	70,189	868,741	290,159	24
1953	71,876	971,312	297,347	24

The table is taken from Aguilar Hernández, "*Clase Trabajadora*," 55.

Regardless of their limitations, workers strongly supported the Guarantees. In February 1943 sixty worker organizations issued a manifesto in defense of Calderón's initiatives. At the same time, the workers complained that they contributed over 50 percent of the government revenues while commercial interests contributed only 2 percent. The fiscal acrimony centered on the persistent wheat tax which the unions argued protected agricultural interests by keeping food prices high.⁴³ The workers' accusation was based on the declining importance of the land tax. Between 1918 and 1930 the land tax comprised 41.67 percent of all tax revenues. However, due to the advent of other forms of taxation in the 1930s, principally a poll (*cedula*) tax and a national patent tax, this percentage fell to 30.83 percent

in 1940.⁴⁴

The Social Guarantees were the first phase of the Calderón Administration's social program. They were soon followed by the Labor Code and agrarian reform legislation. In fundamental ways all three expanded and transformed the political foundation of Executive power in the country.

As early as 1941, with the first wave of these reforms, the Communist Party and the Catholic church moved toward support of the PRN. The former in support of the reforms and the latter in support of their Christian foundation and its re-entry into the country's educational structure. The incipient alliance was reinforced when after the 1942 mid-term elections, Jorge Hine, Director of the *Banco Nacional de Costa Rica*, sounded out various political leaders to back a coup attempt. Hine's actions were reportedly prompted by allegations of electoral fraud.⁴⁵ To give his movement a popular base, he asked Mora to endorse the attempt.⁴⁶ Mora declined and to counter the threat of widespread instability offered his support to Calderón and his social reforms.

Allegations of electoral fraud were not new in Costa Rica. Two years earlier Mora had run against Calderón for the presidency. Mora received 10,700 votes, Calderón 91,000. *Partido Confraternidad* candidate, Salazar Leiva, offering a "third way" received 6,300. Mora claimed Communist poll watchers were barred from carrying out their

responsibilities and that the ensuing electoral fraud deprived him of 40,000 votes.⁴⁷

This heated, unstable political climate climaxed when, in July of 1942, the scuttling of two Axis submarines off the Atlantic coast inflamed anti-German sentiment in the country and sparked looting. An ensuing wave of political denunciations blamed Communist agitation and governmental acquiescence for "the desecration of property." Capping the denunciations, José Figueres then a little known land-owner, broadcast a ringing condemnation of the government. As Figueres was speaking, Calderón ordered the radio station surrounded, forcibly terminated Figueres' speech, and subsequently sent Figueres into exile.⁴⁸ Calderón's hardline is explained by his suspicion that the speech delivered by Figueres was drafted in part by followers of Jorge Hine.⁴⁹

With his traditional base eroded, Calderón turned to the unlikely combination of the country's church and Communists. However, a wide ideological gulf still separated the parties. This was overcome in June 1943 with a public and planned exchange of letters between Manuel Mora and the country's archbishop, Víctor Sanabria. The CPCR renounced all anti-religious doctrines and changed its name to the *Partido Vanguardia Popular* (PVP). In exchange the church permitted its members to enter the ranks of the new party. The product of this alliance, the *Bloque de Victoria*,⁵⁰ was designed to promote social reform and solidify the struggle

against international fascism.⁵¹ Domestically, this meant the effort against Costa Rica's influential, ethnically German and Italian communities.

b. Junta de Custodia de la Propriedad Enemiga

On December 8, 1941, Costa Rica became the first American power to declare war on Germany, preceding the U.S. by a day. By the end of the month the country was presented with a "Proclaimed List of Axis Nationals" compiled by England and the United States. On March 25, 1942 the *Junta de Custodia de la Propriedad Enemiga* was established.⁵² The junta, headed by Tomás Soley Güell,⁵³ was authorized to take possession of any agricultural, commercial or industrial enterprise possessed by an enemy national as defined by the law.⁵⁴ It was also empowered to order the internment or expulsion of individuals of Japanese, German and Italian ancestry. These individuals were excluded from the oversight of the junta only if they and their parents were born in Costa Rica.⁵⁵ Since the German and Italian immigration to Costa Rica dated from the second half of the nineteenth century this decree effected the majority of those in the German and Italian communities.⁵⁶ Subsequently, there were numerous cases in which Costa Rican born individuals of German descent had their properties subject to expropriation and themselves subject to deportation or internment in concentration camps.⁵⁷ There were two concentration camps

for this purpose, one in Costa Rica near the Sabana airport, and another in the United States in Texas.⁵⁸

Jews of German descent were also subject to the oversight of the *Junta de Custodia de la Propriedad Enemiga*. One Federico Poldes Kober, owner of a small business in Puntarenas, appealed to the *junta* to exempt him from their jurisdiction due to the fact that he as Jew, far from being a Nazi, had suffered greatly at their hands and he accused Costa Rican Nazis of organizing boycotts against Jewish owned businesses.⁵⁹ The *junta* denied his request, because under Costa Rican law he was considered a German.⁶⁰

What were the consequences of the *junta's* activities directed against individuals of German and Italian heritage, and what effect did this have on the political structure of the country? Individuals of German ancestry had long dominated parts of the country's agro-business and agro-export sector, and through them the country enjoyed long-standing ties with German merchant houses.

TABLE No. 3.3

Export of Coffee (in sacks)
 % Exporters of German Ancestry to Total
 (Various years 1908-1923)

Year	German Exports	Total Exports	% of Total
1908	27,776	146,320	18.98
1911	29,710	206,609	14.37
1914	40,530	283,073	14.32
1917	21,958	182,893	12.00
1920	13,214	196,097	11.63
1923	41,506	267,395	15.52

Source: Herrera Balharry, Los Alemanes, 192.

After 1923 exports to Germany, and production on fincas owned by Costa Rica's ethnically German population continued to grow. In 1931 in a list of the country's 132 coffee exporters over 14 percent had names reflecting German origin and they accounted for one quarter of all exports.⁶¹ Similar figures were reported in 1937 and 1938.⁶² Coffee exports to Germany continued to expand and reached 31.20 percent of all coffee exports in 1936.⁶³ At which time, León Cortés Castro, increased both Central Bank and trade ties with Germany.⁶⁴

German presence in sugar production was even more pronounced.

TABLE No. 3.4

Producers of Sugar (in thousands of kilos)
 % Producers of German Ancestry to Total
 (Various years 1908-1918)

Year	German Production	Total Production	% of Total
1908	530.3	2,381.1	22.27
1910	690.0	2,127.2	27.20
1912	564.0	2,470.5	22.83
1914	1,071.2	2,654.4	40.35
1916	2,546.0	5,931.1	42.92
1918	2,177.2	3,884.6	56.04

Source: Herrera Balharry, Los Alemanes, 196.

Similarly from 1918-1941 German dominance of the sugar industry grew. By the late 1930s ethnic Germans controlled 80 percent of the sugar processing facilities in the country.⁶⁵ Reflective of this dominance was the *junta's* subsequent expropriation of the German sugar *fincas*.⁶⁶

The *junta* had wide authority over these enterprizes. It was authorized to either administer or expropriate these properties based on its interpretation of the national interest. Bank accounts of enemy nationals were frozen and all their commercial and financial transactions had to have the specific approval of the *junta*.⁶⁷ In order to fulfil its functions the *junta* established administrative and accounting organs manned by teams of agricultural and commercial inspectors.

These inspectors were charged with conducting all aspects of the enterprise including taking

inventories, overseeing production, issuing payrolls, and managing labor relations in strict accordance with the existing labor regulations.⁶⁸ However, despite their authority the labor laws were not fully complied with,⁶⁹ and demands for wage increases were rejected on the bases of economy.⁷⁰ For these reasons the *junta* was accused of being a care-taker, administering expropriated property just as the previous owners would have, and not using its wide authority to redistribute the country's agricultural wealth.

Most affected by the oversight and administrative functions of the *junta* were the coffee and sugar interests controlled by Costa Rica's ethnically German, and to a lesser extent the commercial properties of the ethnically Italian populations.⁷¹ By 1942, properties worth ¢2.7 million were sold by the *junta*. The largest of these expropriated properties were those of Crespo and Madrigal, Juan R. Castella, Walter Guillen, Fabo Fournier, Alfredo Echandi, Francisco José Orlich B, and Otilio Ulate.⁷² In addition over ¢2 million in funds in 137 different accounts were either controlled or frozen by the *junta*.⁷³

In 1943, the *Cooperativa Agrícola Industria* was created and empowered to transfer land expropriated under the *Bloque Económico* to the *Banco Nacional de Costa Rica*. The *banco* was authorized to organize cooperatives.⁷⁴ In December 1941 the Communist affiliated *Unión Campesina por la Lucha por Tierra y Crédito* (UCLTC) petitioned that 1,500 hectares of land in

Turrialba near Pavones be expropriated and subject to immediate sub-division.⁷⁵ In 1942 the UCLTC submitted a proposed law to the Congress that if enacted would have empowered the President of the Republic to expropriate lands above a two hundred hectare limit and distribute them to poor peasants.⁷⁶ Although the PVP and the UCLTC hoped that the July law would spark widespread reform, actual changes in land tenure were modest. Over sixty properties were authorized for expropriation with about a third converted to cooperatives.⁷⁷ The properties most affected were the Niehaus sugar lands in Turrialba.⁷⁸

Although a significant amount of land came into state hands, in many cases expropriated lands were not distributed nor sold to the rural population farming them. Workers remained concerned that the future sale of *finca* lands by the *junta* to other non-Axis nationals landowners would jeopardize their crops. To forestall this, they petitioned the Inspector General that he allow them to rent unused lands. Junta administrator, Van der Laat responded that an arrangement through the *Banco Nacional de Costa Rica* would be worked out by which workers could rent vacant lands.⁷⁹ The absence of a significant land reform indicates that the expropriations were prompted by political and geo-political issues, not social concerns.⁸⁰

As the *junta* was carrying out its program against enemy nationals, the country underwent a fundamental shift in its

geo-political orientation. As European and particularly German participation in the Costa Rican economy collapsed, U.S. involvement in the country soared. The following tables illustrate how, cut off from its traditional markets at the start of the Second World War, Costa Rica moved into a geo-political sphere dominated by the United States.

TABLE No. 3.5

Value of Cost Rican Exports to Country of destination
as percentage of total exports
(1937-1943)

	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943
Canada	-	-	-	-	7.04	13.31	6.57
England	20.03	24.41	16.91	25.00	-	-	-
Germany	19.46	19.17	25.08	-	-	-	-
Panama§	-	-	-	-	-	6.03	2.00
U.S.	45.07	45.62	45.60	58.82	81.03	71.17	74.30

§ Including the Canal Zone.

Source: *Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Anuario* (1938, 1943).

The above table reflects both a dramatic swing towards U.S. markets, and a powerful disruption of long standing market connection between Costa Rican producers/exporters and particularly German merchant houses.⁸¹

TABLE No. 3.6

Value of Imports to Costa Rica by Country of Origin
as percentage of total imports
(1938-1943)

	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943
England	6.60	3.95	4.55	3.82	2.93	2.53
Germany	19.79	17.76	3.51	-	-	-
Mexico	-	-	-	-	7.03	12.87
U.S.	49.10	58.80	75.03	81.00	73.03	60.85

Source: *Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Anuario*
(1938-1943).

The dramatic shift in trade flows was a direct consequence of Costa Rica's geopolitical position. That Central America, and particularly Costa Rica occupied important strategic territory just north of the Panama Canal made the disposition of its government and the fate of its "enemy nationals" of prime importance to the United States government. A 1943 Federal Bureau of Investigation Report on totalitarian activities in Costa Rica explicitly stated this. The report, which was primarily concerned with the Nazi and Nazi front activities, evaluated Costa Rica's geographic position as follows. "[Costa Rica] is of tremendous strategic importance to the U.S. ... The Bay of Culebra which forms part of the northwest province of Guanacaste, has been rated by the U.S. experts as the finest harbor in Central America and best potential naval base between California and the Canal Zone."⁸²

Reflective of the importance placed on Costa Rica's

strategic position, and their immense influence in the country, U.S. officials forced the expropriation of properties owned by "proclaimed Axis nationals." In August 1942, the United States announced that it would not buy coffee from enterprises owned in full or in part by these individuals and offered Import-Export Bank credits to finance the sale to appropriate Costa Ricans. When Soley Güell requested that this position be reconsidered, the U.S. reiterated this policy with the further proviso that coffee produced under the administration of the *Banco Nacional de Costa Rica* would be denied import licenses.⁸³ Restrictions on the importation of coffee were subsequently loosened, although no coffee produced on lands owned by "proclaimed Axis nationals" could be imported into the United States.⁸⁴

At the same time the United States continued to funnel a disproportionate amount of money into the country. For example, between 1942 and 1944 Costa Rica received over 10 percent (though its population was well under 1 percent of the total Latin American population) of the President's Emergency Fund which was established for the "purposes of carrying out a cooperative health and sanitation program in all American Republics."⁸⁵

The discussion of the *Junta de Custodia* is intended to underscore two points. First, the Costa Rican state underwent significant expansion. The creation of the *Bloque*

Económico combined with other wartime measures⁸⁶ accelerated the state's active intercession into the economic and civic life of Costa Ricans. The junta's corps of inspectors would shortly be mirrored by similar brigades of government agents with the passage of the 1943 Labor Code.⁸⁷ Both these corps sharply extended the reach of the country's executive and judicial branches of government.

The second point is to reexamine the causes for the Calderón government's alienation from its traditional sectors of support. The explanation that the radical nature of the social reforms was wholly responsible for destabilizing the country's politics is inadequate. First, the Social Guarantees and the Labor Code represented culminations in a long series of social legislation. They accelerated the pace of change but did not break fundamentally with the past. This is true despite Calderón's social Christian leanings, because the repeated crises from 1914 to 1941 forced the state to take an increasingly activist role in the country's societal affairs. Second, as indicated, many of Calderón's policies favored social groups other than the popular sectors, and even within the agro-export elite there was support for the Social Guarantees and the Labor Code.⁸⁸

The evidence presented here indicates that state control and expropriation of German and Italian property combined with a significant trade and geo-political

reorientation to cause substantial dislocations in Costa Rican society. The result was a forceable disenfranchisement of an important sector of Costa Rican society. This combined with Calderón's social philosophy and the unique wartime environment to open the possibility of a new political alliance based on a strong commitment to social reform.

The implications of this were extensive and for the labor movement critical.⁸⁹ Through the PVP alliance with the PRN, labor now had unprecedented access to the organs of government and influence in the legislature. The church, reintegrated into the nation's educational system, enjoyed close ideological and personal relations with Calderón and his government.

3. The Labor Code⁹⁰

Announced on September 15, 1943, the Labor Code cemented the new political coalition and articulated the most important and powerful expression of the activist state. Though opposition politicians and press accused the Code of being unduly influenced by the country's Communists, the document was inspired by a diversity of sources.⁹¹ These included national labor laws enacted over the past forty years, the doctrine of social Christian justice, the CPR, the International Organization of Labor, and labor laws in other countries.⁹²

At its base, the Code strove to balance the demands of

the social forces in the country. It provided for a wide array of worker and employer rights and obligations and enabled the country to develop a modern social welfare state. In doing so the Code won the allegiance of the working class and greatly antagonized both foreign and domestic business interests. Yet it placed important restrictions on the rights of workers: It perpetuated the exclusion of agricultural workers from state protection and placed strict limits on the range of permissible activities of organized labor.

Throughout its composition, the Code was characterized by this evenhanded recognition of the country's political realities. Rights and obligations given to workers and their organizations were given as well to employers. For example, the Code provided for days of rest and paid holidays, including a two week paid vacation period for every fifty consecutive weeks worked. It also provided for notice of dismissal and severance pay. As would be expected, these provisions alienated the country's businessmen. Yet the requisite that fifty consecutive weeks be worked for every two weeks vacation effectively excluded almost all agricultural workers. Similarly in almost all matters regarding accident insurance the Code reiterated the existing exclusions of rural workers.

The Code recognized unions and formally legalized the strike. It allowed for collective bargaining and regulated

work conditions and the labor of minors and women. At the same time it recognized the legality of lock-outs and banned unions from engaging in political activity. In addition all workers whose labor was judged indispensable to the security of the state were denied the right to strike including agricultural workers during harvest time as well as transportation workers.

The Code was cognizant of the country's political realities. Unions were recognized as legal entities before receiving state certification. (The *de facto* recognition was an implicit concession to the independent base of labor organizations and an explicit acknowledgement of the Christian, not corporativist orientation of the Code.⁹³) However, the Code reserved the right to dissolve any organization that did not fully comply with the laws governing labor activities.

Ultimately the Code served to expand the power and authority of the state. It established mixed provincial commissions and empowered them to recommend wage levels (based on the cost of living), monitor compliance, and hear appeals. In order to enforce the provisions of the Code, the state bureaucracy underwent significant expansion and empowerment. The Ministry of Labor was reorganized and the expanded Inspector General's office was authorized to police the Code through a corp of newly created inspectors called *Visitadores Sociales*.

A look at personnel and budgetary changes in the Ministry of Labor illustrates the extent and limitations of the expansion. In all forty persons were employed in the Ministry with the greatest concentration of resources placed in the General Inspector of Labor's Office.⁹⁴ Though this expansion was paralleled by the establishment of an array of governmental agencies (the most important were the *Junta de Custodia* and the *Junta Nacional de la Defensa Económica*) the extension of the state into labor relations had definite limits. The budget of the Secretary of Labor for the years cited in the following table never rose above 1 percent. It declined in both absolute and relative terms during the heated political climate of 1946 and 1947 and it dropped by half in the tumultuous year of 1948. The sharp increase in 1949 was indicative of the commitment the Figueres government had to both statist solutions, and the maintenance of the social gains won during the Calderón and Picado years.

TABLE No. 3.7

Actual and Percentage of
Labor and Social Security Expenditures
to total Governmental Expenditures
(for various years in colones)

Year	Labor & Social Security (Actual)	Total Government Expenditure	Labor & Social Security (Percentage)
1944	574,477	67,017,945	0.80
1946	566,502	78,726,614	0.72
1947	506,801	96,658,101	0.52
1948	442,738	114,862,993	0.39
1949	1,026,782*	118,021,381	0.87

* Based on extension of September 1949 expenditures for all of 1949 for purposes of comparison.

To place these expenditures in context, the four budget items that consumed the largest share of expenditures for the years 1946-1948 were Public Education, 16.86 percent; Debt service (interior and exterior) 12.18 percent; Public Security 10.98 percent; and Public Works, 10.43 percent. The percentages represent the average over the three years.⁹⁵

a. Authorship and Reaction to the Code

In spite of its acknowledged indebtedness to the doctrine of social Christian justice, inside and outside the country the popular reaction to the Code was that it was a Marxist document. For this reason the authorship of the Code is an important question. James Backer in his work, La Iglesia y el Sindicalismo en Costa Rica, reiterated the

argument of the Costa Rican historian Oscar Aguilar Bulgarelli that the Code was written by Oscar Barahona Streber with the help of Manuel Mora and Víctor Sanabria. There is considerable evidence to support this theory, and that individual most responsible for the document was Oscar Barahona Streber.⁹⁶

Barahona Streber began his political career in the 1930s as a member of the CPR. By the early 1940s he had served on the Costa Rican Social Insurance Board in the Calderón Administration, and was closely associated with the Catholic church. When the church labor initiative was launched in August of 1943 he served as its legal counsellor. He subsequently moved to Guatemala, where as the Manager of the *Instituto Guatemalteco de Seguridad Social*, he advised Guatemalan President Juan José Arévalo (1945-1951) on the establishment of a social security system and labor Code in Guatemala.⁹⁷

Barahona Streber's recommendations closely followed the Costa Rican legislation. He urged adaptation of a Code that reflected the particular national characteristics of Guatemala while reflecting the same "even handedness" of rights and legal recognition given to worker and employer organizations in the Costa Rican Code.⁹⁸ Barahona Strebers' role was again underscored in correspondence between himself and Archbishop Sanabria. From New York he informed Sanabria that he has been working to change the perception that the

reforms were causing the "rojización" of Costa Rica by meeting with prominent U.S. Catholics, in particular, the Rector of Fordham University, Father Gannon, and Cardinal Spellman, and a number of favorably disposed U.S. business leaders.⁹⁹

Finally, correspondence between Archbishop Sanabria and ex-President Calderón through the year 1945 reinforce the weighty evidence that the Code was inspired by the precepts of social Christian justice. In the correspondence Sanabria pledged to continue the work of promoting "the principles of social Christian justice" and refute the accusation that the reforms were motivated by Marxist ideology.¹⁰⁰

The roles played by Sanabria and Barahona Streber did not eliminate the influence that the country's Communists had in the promulgation of the reforms. The continual pressure maintained by the CPCR and its labor associates throughout the 1930s was critical in forcing many of the laws incorporated into the Code of 1943. And immediately before the Code's passage, Mora made two key radio addresses in support of the legislation: the first on April 3 and the second on April 10, 1943.¹⁰¹ In these widely listened to broadcasts Mora argued that rights of the workers were born of struggle and reflected the organic evolution of the society. He went on to claim that the Communist Party was the "motor of the reforms,"¹⁰² and pledged to back the

government only if the pending labor legislation and the Social Guarantees received congressional approval.¹⁰³

Costa Rican businessmen were directly affected by the passage of the Code. Their reaction was immediate and condemnatory. In a letter addressed to President Calderón, they wrote that after an initial study they found the provisions of the Code "of such gravity" that they were forced to adamantly oppose its implementation.¹⁰⁴ They argued that the Code was "in substance and form extremely [o]ppressive for the employers." If this pervasive feature was not eliminated it would lead to a merciless class struggle." Particularly onerous were the provisions which forced the employers to pay for forty-nine non-work days per year,¹⁰⁵ causing an estimated additional increase in the cost of labor of 22 percent. In addition, employers argued, the limitation of the work week to forty-eight hours would further reduce the availability of already scarce labor during harvest time an additional 20 percent. Previously during harvest the work week could include up to sixty hours of labor.

After counselling further study and deliberation, the authors warned that if some groups desired to move rapidly they did so not out of a concern for the general good but to take advantage of the political openings haste and confusion would create. Then appealing to Calderón's high office the

letter's signatories called on him to draft and promulgate "a wise and workable law, which would harmonize all the interests of the country" and would forge "A PERMANENT POLICY OF NATIONAL SOLIDARITY".¹⁰⁶

This was a widespread perception. Many Costa Rican politicians, lawyers and businessmen argued that the Code was far too radical. Costa Rica was not an industrial country, there were no sweat shops, and unemployment historically had not been a serious problem. They feared that if the Code were strictly enforced, it would drive up the cost of labor and effectively close the country to foreign investment.¹⁰⁷ Indeed the cost of labor did rise and contribute to the inflationary spiral the country experienced in the 1940s.¹⁰⁸ However, foreign capital was not driven out of the country. But predictably, it too reacted negatively to the Code.

Mr. Luis Anderson, attorney for two large foreign monopolies operating inside Costa Rica, the electrical monopoly, Electric Bond and Share, and the *Compañía de Bananera de Costa Rica*, the Costa Rican subsidiary of United Fruit, declared that "if a Machiavellian person desired to do harm to the present administration and to Costa Rica he could have chosen no better means than to present such a labor code." He went on: "not only will costs to companies be raised an estimate 38 percent, but large coffee growers are fearful least the added costs to them will be a death

blow to their activities."¹⁰⁹

In addition the *compañía* desired to amend the proposed Article 13 which stipulated that at least 90 percent of those employed in various work categories be citizens of Costa Rica and that Costa Ricans receive at least 80 percent of the total payroll. The *compañía* wanted to exclude those in managerial positions from the article, and make special provisions for Jamaicans working on the Atlantic coast unable to obtain Costa Rican citizenship.¹¹⁰ The UFCO had a long history of attempting to circumvent legal restrictions on employment of foreigners. For example, in order to circumvent a 1935 Panamanian law requiring that all companies employ at 75 percent Panamanian nationals, the UFCO insisted on listing workers on their payrolls as Central American instead of Panamanian, Nicaraguan, or Costa Rican.¹¹¹

The U.S. closely monitored labor developments in Costa Rica.¹¹² Costa Rica's strategic position north of the Panama Canal, the presence of large North American companies, the building of the Pan American highway, and the location of war related industries on Costa Rican soil all deepened the importance of the country's labor situation for the United States.¹¹³

The Code also posed problems for the U.S. government, particularly in regards to the war related industries. The two most important of which were the Experimental Rubber

Plantation in Turrialba run by the U.S. Department of Treasury and the abacá plantation run by the UFCO. In the Experimental Station a dispute erupted over the Department of Agricultural's refusal to acknowledge its obligation to abide by the Costa Rican Labor Code and issue severance pay. The conflict took on a disingenuous technical character with the department claiming it did not have the authority exceed its approved budget lines. In a failing attempt to have this position reversed, U.S. Embassy personnel and the Costa Rican Ministry of Labor argued that non-compliance with a country's existing laws set a poor example and showed lack of respect for the democratic process. The U.S. would insist that U.S. companies were not bound by Costa Rican labor laws. In 1949 a similar confrontation occurred when the U.S. State Department backed the UFCO in a wage dispute with the Costa Rican Ministry of Labor.¹¹⁴

b. The Reform of the Labor Code of 1943

Between 1943 and 1955 there were over sixty reforms to the articles and clauses of the Labor Code of 1943. The largest blocks of reforms were undertaken in 1944, 1946 and 1949.¹¹⁵ Some of the changes were of a procedural nature, however, the more important of them broke down into three general areas referring to agrarian workers, general working conditions, and the expansion of the state bureaucracy.

Regarding agricultural workers the reforms cut two

ways: initially they made rural labor more available to employers at the same time they strengthened employer reporting obligations for occasional workers. However, most agricultural remained outside the protection of the Labor Code. It was not until the 1950s that agricultural workers won vacation benefits, and laborers on *fincas* of less than five workers received workmen's compensation.¹¹⁶

Reforms bearing directly on conditions of work and rights of unions, were also of a dual nature. The earlier reforms tended to increased worker availability by giving the worker the option to sell his labor on Sundays and proscribed holidays. In addition certain businesses were permitted to operate on Sundays. At the same time, the bureaucratization of unions received encouragement. Executive Council re-elections were allowed, and the permissible pool of qualified candidates for the council was expanded.¹¹⁷ This bureaucratization process which was reflective of the PVP's influence in government and the strength of the CTCR, was not favored equally by the CTCR and the Catholic, *Confederación Costarricense de Trabajadores "Rerum Novarum"* (CCTRN). The CTCR supported the process. The CCTRN, for reasons that will become apparent, opposed it.¹¹⁸ Finally, after wartime restrictions, some previously defined workers received the right to strike after exhausting a series of arbitration proceedings designed to provide "cooling off" periods.¹¹⁹ This law

reversed a November 1944 reform which prohibited strikes by workers in the transportation sector. The lifting of the strike-ban was the subject of intense agitation on the part a number of unions.¹²⁰

The largest area of reform was the expansion of the authority of the Ministry of Labor and its agents. These included reducing worker and employer representation on salary commissions (1944); expansion of the authority and number of labor judges (1946, 1947 and 1951); the institution of "cooling off" procedures (1946); the increase in the coercive power of the Ministry to punish violations of the labor laws, and a shift of responsibility to denounce violations from local political to administrative officers.¹²¹

After 1948 these measures combined with the initiatives of the Figueres government to significantly strengthen the power of government over organized labor. The 1949 reorganization of the Office of the Inspector General of Labor enabled the Inspector General to intervene in all labor conflicts with the object of restoring harmony between workers and employers.¹²² The Ministry of Labor was empowered to monitor union contacts with international labor organizations. Appeals outside the labor courts to the country's highest court, the *Sala de Casación* were restricted.¹²³ Finally, both the *Ministerio Previsión Social* and the labor inspectors received a sharp expansion in their

responsibilities and authorities. The ministry was authorized to respond to any abnormal social condition and develop a corp of *visitadores* modeled after the labor inspectors. Labor judges (who now could be women) were authorized to act in an official capacity in any part of the country, regardless if it was outside his or her jurisdiction.¹²⁴

4. Northern Railroad: Strike and Seizure by the Picado Government, 1945-1946.

In December 1945 a strike broke out at the British owned Northern Railroad Company. At the heart of the short and caustic conflict was a bitter struggle over the interpretation and application of the country's Labor Code.

Historically, labor relations at Northern were antagonistic and worker complaints were long standing. In the 1930s despite enactment of the eight-hour work day, railroad employees worked sixty-hour weeks without receiving overtime pay. There were disputes over leave-time, medical care and working conditions. These contentious relations were exacerbated by the use of a dual wage scale for whites and blacks.¹²⁵ Whites systematically received the best jobs and the highest pay. For example, white engineers were paid \$150.00 compared to the \$60.00 a month received by black engineers.¹²⁶

However, the dual scale and the animosity on the part of some workers to the CPCR inhibited the development of a

single national organization of railroad workers. In 1942, the Executive Committee of the *Sindicato de Trabajadores de Northern*, (STN) proposed to unify railway workers under the auspices of the *Comité Enlace de San José* (CESJ).¹²⁷ The *Asociación de Ferrocarrileros de Costa Rica* (AFCR) whose primary base of support was in the government owned and operated Pacific Electric Railroad Company rejected the offer citing the presence of Communists in the STN.¹²⁸ In turn the CESJ condemned the split and singled out the AFCR and the administration of the *Ferrocarril Eléctrico del Pacífico* for blame.¹²⁹

Unable to unify the movement, the STN sent a list of demands to William Green, Manager of the Northern Railroad Company. Citing a 50 percent increase over the past three years¹³⁰ in the cost of living, they demanded a 30 percent raise in salary; recognition of the eight hour day; time and a half for overtime; paid vacation at one-half pay; and, the provision of locker facilities at company expense. Finally showing what can only be described as naivety the letter informed Green that the workers had renounced the right to strike for the war's duration.¹³¹ Northern was neither convinced nor moved to generosity by the workers' show of patriotism. Having little confidence in the workers' pledge, the railroad company mounted a successful campaign to amend the original Code to prohibit strikes by transportation workers.¹³² In a subsequent confrontation between Green and

the CTCR's lawyer, Jaime Cerdas Mora, Cerdas condemned Green's disdain of the interests of the workers which he directly attributed to the strike prohibition. With a great deal of accuracy, Cerdas charged that the ban was imposed on the Labor Code by foreign monopolies.¹³³

During the war the tense situation showed little change. The union repeated demands for a shortening of the work day and salary increases. Citing financial difficulties the company remained unmoved.¹³⁴ However, immediately following the end of the war tensions mounted. In November fliers in both English and Spanish, citing the sharp deterioration of real wages,¹³⁵ urged workers to go out on strike. And on December 21, 1945, the workers led by Carlos Luis Fallas and Alfredo Picado left their posts.¹³⁶ The company immediately submitted a letter to President Picado demanding that he declare the strike illegal.¹³⁷ In the face of the threat of direct government intervention the CTCR took direct control of the strike and demanded salary increases between 15 percent and 20 percent; reduction of the twelve-hour work day for conductors and machinists; and the diminution of excessive night hours.¹³⁸ Insisting on collective bargaining rights, the strike committee rejected a plan to review workers' salaries on an individual basis.¹³⁹ When President Picado offered a wage increase based on new tariff schedules. The company responded that if its rates increased then those of the government owned and

operated Pacific Electric Railroad would have to as well. It then reiterated its demand that Picado declare the strike illegal and the railroad under martial law.¹⁴⁰

The strike brought all transport in and out of Limón to a halt.¹⁴¹ Stepping up its attacks, the company reiterated its demand that the contracts of all strikers be declared null and void. Picado, who was subject to mounting pressure by conservative elements in his administration and by the opposition, acquiesced to Green's insistent demand and declared the strike illegal. The government seized the railroad and promised that it would not carry out dismissals or reprisals against workers and that all labor issues would be resolved through the operation of the Labor Code.¹⁴²

The company viewed the government take-over as a great victory.¹⁴³ Government control was nominal and other than a reduction in the length of the work day the company operated the railroad as before. It continued to insist that the strikers had lost all collective rights and were now manning the railroad in the capacity of draftees into the government's army.¹⁴⁴ Northern argued that when the railroad was returned, it could not be compelled to keep undesirable workers. There were forty-two workers on the company's undesirable list with four designated as especially dangerous. Stating the fear of sabotage, the company defied repeated government requests to reinstate these workers.¹⁴⁵

In May, encountering immense supply and logistical

difficulties, the state abruptly returned the railroad to Northern. The government had lacked the technical knowledge to efficiently manage the railroad and the company's had engaged in gross manipulation of vital supplies.¹⁴⁶ In addition, the government's role as Military Controller of the railroad exacerbated the growing tensions between the Picado Administration and its PVP backers. The PVP attacked the weakness of the Picado administration and demanded that worker-management relations on the railroad be fundamentally reformed.

Ultimately, the company received much of what it wanted out of this situation. After a brief period, the administration of the railroad was returned to it without any structural changes. The declaration that the strike was illegal enabled it to discharge unwanted workers. For the company this meant workers "tainted" by Communism. From the beginning the company saw the conflict as a critical political struggle against Communist influence in the country. If its hardline on CTCR activities were successful a crippling blow would be dealt to the country's Communists. However, if the company remained passive or was defeated, it feared that the PVP would force Picado to nationalize the railroad. Indeed a year later this became a plank on the PVP platform.¹⁴⁷

For its part, the railroad workers continued to pressure for reform. When the railroad was returned to

Northern, conflict between it and the CTCR immediately ensued.¹⁴⁸ The company fired workers affiliated with the union and the CTCR called mass protests to demand that transportation workers receive the right to strike.¹⁴⁹ In September 1946, after months of agitation¹⁵⁰, transportation workers did receive the right to strike,¹⁵¹ which immediately enabled them to obtain comprehensive adjudication of their grievances.¹⁵²

5. Conclusion

The Second World War, by causing the disenfranchisement of an important sector of Costa Rica's dominant class, prompted a realignment of political power with the country. The Calderón Administration, faced with the erosion of its traditional support, turned to two previously marginalized sectors of society to bolster its government: the Catholic church and the working class as represented by the CPR. In entering into a coalition with the ruling PRN both the PVP and the Catholic church had two objectives: to fulfil their spiritual/ideological aspirations by improving the material live of their fellow Costa Ricans, and enhance their political influence within the country. These objectives could only be achieved by winning the allegiance of the working class and by restructuring the relationship between government, capital and labor. The document that solidified this new arrangement was the 1943 Labor Code.

The Labor Code was a compromise document. It integrated Marxist, social Christian and state bureaucratic tendencies. The Code balanced employer and worker interests, but increasingly posited the state as the ultimate authority. The Code established a new layer of state bureaucracy and facilitated the use of existing provincial agencies by central authorities. The Code legalized associations (for both workers and employers) and allowed for their effective, long-term bureaucratization.

For the labor organizations the effect was ironic. Communist-led labor organizations became a key pillar of support for the Calderón-Picado Administrations. This politicalization of the labor movement had great rewards: the Social Guarantees and the Labor Code of 1943. It also had two powerful adverse consequences. One, workers' organizations increasingly became vehicles for their political leadership. Two, the leadership, locked into support for the existing political coalition, lost its political maneuverability. This process was true for both the CTCR and the CCTRN.

The delicate balance between the increased political influence of organized labor and the reduced autonomy of individual workers was disrupted by the intense political polarization that began at the end of 1946. However, after the initial dislocations caused by the civil war in 1948, the state's authority was enhanced. And After 1948 workers'

benefits and protections were increased, not as a result of popular mobilization, but as a consequence of state policy.

Notes

1. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch dated August 23, 1943. USNA, 818.504-506.
2. Manuel Rojas Bolaños, Lucha Social Y Guerra Civil en Costa Rica, 1940-1948 (San José: Editorial Porvenir, 4th ed. 1989), 88.
3. Alberto Durán Rocha, *Disposiciones Legales Vigentes Sobre Trabajo, Recopilación dirigida por* (San José: Imprenta Nacional 1939).
4. See Chapter III Section 4a, below.
5. The CPR changed its name to the *Partido Vanguardia Popular* (PVP) in June 1943.
6. Analyzing the events of the 1930s and early 1940s Manuel Rojas Bolaños writes, "the State intervened with the proposition of re-establishing the equilibrium between the factions of capital and preserving the 'social peace.' In general it took the position of apparent mediator in the social conflict." Rojas Bolaños, Lucha Social Y Guerra Civil, 36. However, Rojas does not emphasize that the state used its role as mediator to justify a significant expansion in the effective reach of its own authority. Similarly, Samuel Stone argues that the Calderón policies and the subsequent Calderón-Mora alliance, was the culmination of a process of change that was initiated by the reforms made around the turn of the century and the First World War. These reforms, Stone argues, accelerated class divisions and gave rise to the *Liga Cívica* and the *Partido Reformista*. See Stone, La Dinastía, 302.
7. The favorable reaction was in spite of the junta's actions in declaring Mora's party, the PVP, illegal, initiating the judicial dissolution of the CTCR, and forcing Mora into exile. See Curia, exchange of letters between Manuel Mora and Archbishop Sanabria May through August 1948. AACC. Mora expressed approval of Figueres' policies, though he was fearful their extreme nature would spark a rightist reaction. Letter from Mora to Sanabria dated June 29, 1948.
8. Much of what follows is based on Gamboa, Costa Rica En La Segunda Guerra Mundial. Gamboa's work is particularly useful for the close attention he places on the macro-level economic consequences of the war. Also his use of the under employed documents of the *Junta de Custodia de la Propiedad*

Enemiga reveal some of the rifts the war caused among Costa Rican elites. This work will examine the *junta* documents in some detail later in this chapter.

9. Creedman, "Political Development of Costa Rica" 78.

10. See *Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Anuario* (1927-1943).

11. Gamboa, *Costa Rica En La Segunda Guerra Mundial*, 155. Trade with Germany fell from \$2.27 million to zero and with Japan from \$118,746 to zero.

12. *Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Anuario* (1943).

13. Gamboa, *Costa Rica En La Segunda Guerra Mundial*, 131-139.

14. Hall, *El Café*, 155.

15. *Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Anuario* (1943).

16. Gamboa, *Costa Rica En La Segunda Guerra Mundial*, 155. Trade increased from \$4.6 million to \$9.8 million.

17. The table was initially compiled by the *Banco Nacional de Costa Rica*, Aguilar's source was *La Nación* of January 18, 1950. Both Gamboa and Aguilar viewed inflation as the greatest challenge facing the country's population throughout the decade. The end of the war did not signal the end of the inflationary spiral. Between 1946 and 1947 inflation jumped over 14 percent. Economies of this time traditionally experienced little or no inflation.

18. Gamboa, *Costa Rica En La Segunda Guerra Mundial*, 142, 150. Gamboa does not indicate whether these were in real or inflated dollars. Even if the amount was not adjusted for inflation it still represents a dramatic real increase.

19. In response to a series of telegrams from citizens in the Province of San José, the government attacked speculators as fifth columnists and promised strong measures. *Gobernación*, No. 9532, *Ministerio de Trabajo, Correspondencia*, February, 1943, *NACR*.

20. A speculator ran the risk of a jail term up to six months and retraction of applicable business licences until a year after the end of the country's state of war. See Laws Nos. 34 and 37 dated July 8, 1943 and July 13, 1943,

respectively. Colección de Leyes y Decretos, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1944).

21. Trabajo, December 23, 1944.

22. Trabajo, November 18, 1944, and November 25, 1944.

23. Teodoro Picado M., Vice-President under Calderón Guardia was elected president in 1944. Costa Rican Presidents were prohibited from succeeding themselves. He served as president until the disputed election in 1948 erupted into civil war.

24. For the purposes of the law food, medicines, clothes, articles made with leather, fuels, electricity, tools, materials used in light manufacturing, agriculture and the raising of livestock, and selected other items were deemed to be prime necessities. See Ley de Defensa Económica dated March 26, 1945, Colección de Leyes y Decretos, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1946).

25. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated July 19, 1945. USNA, 818.504-506. Also addressing the crowd were Víctor Cordero, head of the shoemakers, Antonio Vargas, head of the workers Federation of San José, and Rodolfo Guzmán, head of the CTCR. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated July 16, 1945. USNA, 818.504-506.

26. There are a number of histories that deal with the successive political crises of the 1940s. For some of the more comprehensive accounts see, Oscar Aguilar Bulgarelli, Costa Rica Y Sus Hechos Políticos De 1948 (San José: Ciudad Rodrigo Facio Editorial Universitario Centroamericano, 1970); John Patrick Bell, Crisis in Costa Rica: The 1948 Revolution (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1971); Ameringer, Don Pepe; Hugo Navarro Bolandi, La generación del 48 (Mexico: Ediciones Humanismo, 1957); Rojas Bolaños, Lucha Social Y Guerra Civil; Jacobo Schifter, Costa Rica 1948: Análisis de documentos confidenciales del Departamento de Estado (San José: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana, 1982); Jacobo Schifter, La Fase Oculta de la Guerra Civil; Mariana Campos Vargas, "La coyuntura, 1940-1948: el ascenso de nuevas fuerzas sociales y los cambios en las funciones del estado" in Jaime Murillo Viquez (ed.) Historia de Costa Rica en el siglo XX (San José: Editorial Universidad Estatal A Distancia, 1989); José Albertazzi Avendaño, La tragedia de Costa Rica (Mexico, D.F.: SPI, 1951). Soto Valverde, La Iglesia Costarricense y la cuestión social (San José: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 1985). For a treatment that questions the class analysis as causality for subsequent political events see, Fabrice Edouard Lehoucq,

"Class Conflict, Political Crisis and the Breakdown of Democratic Practices in Costa Rica: Reassessing the Origins of the 1948 Civil War" Journal of Latin American Studies, Vol 23, No. 1, February, 1991.

27. There are three schools of thought on this subject. First those who argue that the economic changes led to the emergence of new social classes and divisions among the country's elites (Rojas, Stone, Campos Vargas, and Creedman); those who argue that political alliances forged by the unique personalities of the time were predominantly responsible for the changes (Aguilar, B., Contreras, and Bell); and those who place the focus of their inquiry on international factors (Gamboa, Schifter and for the later period Ameringer).

28. Gamboa, Costa Rica En La Segunda Guerra Mundial, 97. The agreement was signed in October 1942. Also included in the agreement was the growing of abacá (hemp) by the *Compañía Bananera de Costa Rica*, the United Fruit Company's wholly owned Costa Rican subsidiary. Mora criticized the provision of the treaty that granted United Fruit the hemp concession as tantamount to selling the patrimony of the country to enrich foreign interests. The agreement further increased Costa Rica's dependence on the United States. The Institute was created by the Office of Inter-American Affairs. In 1942 and 1943 the Program expended over \$300,000 in Costa Rica. USNA, Roosevelt Library, OF4512.

29. Rojas Bolaños, Lucha Social Y Guerra Civil, 48.

30. Law No. 101 dated August 12, 1943, Colección de Leyes y Decretos, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1944).

31. Those signing the letter included José Joaquín Alfaro, Tomás Malavasssi, Mariano Cortés, Fausto Coto Monge, and Walter Dittel. Dittel, a leading economic expert, advocated the privatization of the "social welfare" functions of the state. The letter dated August 5, 1943 is cited in Lehoucq, "Class Conflict, Political Crisis," 48.

32. Mercier was a Belgian theologian whose Social Code of Malinas was a precursor of the encyclical Rerum Novarum. On the theological influences on Calderón's thought see Creedman, "Political Development of Costa Rica," 119-124. See also Michael Picado, La Iglesia Costarricense entre Dios y el César (Sabanilla, Editorial DEI, 1989) 113-116.

33. Picado, La Iglesia Costarricense, 124.

34. Benjamín Núñez, "La Doctrina Social Christiana y la Propriedad" paper given at the Seminario Nacional de Reforma Agraria para Sacerdotes, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, March 14-20, 1969, Núñez Papers.

35. The availability and cost of housing was an ever present problem facing the working population of Costa Rica. To combat the problem of high rents, the Law of Subsistence No. 6 dated September 21, 1939 called for the levying of fines if rents were raised. In spite of the prohibitions the scarcity of housing, especially in San José and neighboring cantons, pushed up rents. Though no statistical breakdown was given the Oficina Técnica del Trabajo claimed that it was successful in rolling back rents in some case. The oficina complained that the majority of landlords filed for dis-occupation to make "imaginary" repairs and subsequently rent at a new and higher rate. Ministerios de Gobernación y Policía, Trabajo y Previsión Social, Memoria, (1940), 240-248.

36. The program was undertaken by the newly created cooperative, Casas Baratas Familia under the authority of the Junta Nacional de Habitación. La Gaceta, August 21, 1942. This was one of the governmental institutions developed by Figueres in the 1950s under the name, Instituto Nacional de Vivienda y Urbanismo (INVU). Mario Carajal Herrera, "Political Attitudes and Political Change in Costa Rica: A comparison of the attitudes of Leaders and Followers with Respect to Regime Values and Party Identification," (Ph. D. diss., University of Kansas, 1972) 43.

37. Law No. 104 signed June 30, 1941. The stated impetus behind the law was the desire to stop the spread infectious diseases. Colección de Leyes y Decretos, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1942). The subsidized shoe program (shoes were sold at a discount to those who could afford to pay and given free to those who could not) was run by the former Communist Deputy to Congress, Efraín Jiménez Guerrero. Jiménez sought and received approval from the party to administer the program. However, the party conditioned its approval on Jiménez's ability to maintain militancy in both the party and union and issue reports on his government work. His failure to do so, led to his one year expulsion from the party. Trabajo, April 18, 1942.

38. Law No. 21 signed November 10, 1940. Parents who did not wish their children to receive religious instruction were required to request an exemption in writing. Colección de Leyes y Decretos, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1941).

39. Quoted in Juan Francisco Rojas Suárez, Costa Rica en la Segunda Guerra Mundial: 7 de diciembre de 1941 - 7 diciembre de 1943 (Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, 1945), 275.

40. Rojas Bolaños, Lucha Social Y Guerra Civil, 51. The basic law establish the Caja Costarricense del Seguro Social was passed October 10, 1943. Bernardo Van der Laat, La Huelga y el Paro en Costa Rica, (San José: Ediciones Juricentro, 1980), 15.

41. The Caja had the discretion to excluded workers for unspecified extraordinary reasons. Trabajo, October 25, 1941.

42. Creedman, "Political Development of Costa Rica," 124-155. Law No. 17 dated October 22, 1943. Ley Colección de Leyes y Decretos (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1944).

43. Trabajo, February 6, 1943. Due to Costa Rica's dependence on imported food, this was not an insignificant source of revenue. From 1930 to 1943 the country imported well over 123 million kilograms of wheat flour, or an average of 30 million kilograms a year. See Table No. 1.8 and Anuario Estadístico Año, 1943.

44. Cuadro Estadístico General De Impuestos, Dirección General de la Tributación, (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, February 28, 1941), 245-246.

45. The role that both the Banco Nacional and the Banco Seguros played in the political and economic development of Costa Rica requires study. Future collaborative initiatives with the Banco Nacional put forth by the PVP are puzzling given Hines' actions. See Chapter V Section 1 for PVP proposals concerning the Banco Nacional.

46. This well known event is discussed in Aguilar Bulgarelli, Costa Rica Y Sus Hechos Políticos, 489-491 and in Ameringer, Don Pepe, 12. Ameringer cites the invitation by Hine to Mora as the catalytic event that prompted Mora to enter into an alliance with Calderón. Essentially the same story was retold to the author by Manuel Mora. Manuel Mora, Interview by author, July 1990, San Pedro, Costa Rica, tape recording.

47. Creedman, "Political Development of Costa Rica," 104-118.

48. For a detailed narrative on this event see Ameringer Don Pepe, 20-25. Ameringer viewed this as the precipitous event in what would culminate in the union between the Centro por Estudio del Problemas Nacionales and the Acción Democrática

in March of 1945 to form the *Partido Social Democrática*. Figueres returned to Costa Rica in May of 1944 and was elected to the new party's National Executive Committee.

49. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Telegram from Ambassador Scotten to Under Sec. of State. dated July 13, 1942, USNA, 818.00.

50. The *Bloque* was officially proclaimed in July of 1943. Some have argued that the church's alliance with Mora arose from Sanabria's desire to limit Communist influence in the Calderón government. Gamboa, Costa Rica En La Segunda Guerra Mundial, 86. This position undoubtable has validity as can be inferred from many statements made by Sanabria against extremism. However, the view, if intended to provide sole or even primary motivation for Sanabria's actions, is too narrow. See Chapter IV, Section 1, below.

51. Political dialogue reflected the war time alliances. The epitaphs Nazi and fascist were frequently employed to characterize the political opposition, while the Calderón Administration was indelibly linked with Communism in the mind of its critics.

52. The junta was established under the *Bloque Económico*. The *Bloque* was a wartime measure designed to coordinate the nation's economic activities under the direction of the Executive branch of government.

53. Tomás Soley Güell was a coffee planter and businessman. He was also instrumental in the formation of the anti-fascist coalition, *Alianza Democrática Nacional* in 1939. The Coalition comprising progressive and Communist forces, included: Jesus Pinto Fernandez, President; Dr. Edgar Pinto Hernández, Vice President; Juan Bautista Ortiz Escalante, Secretary of Finance, Juan Francisco Trejos Quiros, Secretary of Acts and Agreements; Victor Julio Arias G., Secretary of Correspondence; Manuel Mora Valverde, Secretary of Agitation and Propaganda; and Arnoldo Ferreto Segura, Secretary of Organization. Tomás Soley Güell and Drs. Peña Chavarria, and Marcial Rodríguez also aided the *Alianza*. Contreras and Cerdas, Los Años 40, 50-51 and Aguilar Hernández, Carlos Luis Fallas, 114-118. Other members of the *Junta de Custodia* were Juan Trejos Quiros and Hernan Sáenz Huerte.

54. Foreseeing the creation of the junta, as early as the close of 1941, U.S. Consul General, Leslie E. Reed was urging that the Office of Coordination in the Ministry of Finance set up a mechanism to prevent individuals on the "Proclaimed List" from becoming public charges once their properties were controlled or confiscated. The mechanism

envisioned was the issuance of monthly stipends. Leslie E. Reed to Rodolfo E. Piza, Chief, Office of Coordination, Ministry of Finance and Commerce December 30, 1941, *Junta de Custodia*, No. 264, NACR.

55. *Junta de, Custodia*, No. 587, p. 42, NACR.

56. Herrera Balharry, Los Alemanes, 87-115. See especially his table on 102.

57. See for example, *Junta de Custodia, Signaturas*, 206-212, NACR.

58. Creedman, "Political Development of Costa Rica," 151. On internment and deportation see, Emilio Doersam, Ellis Island, to Víctor Sanabria, San José, April 28, 1946, AACC. Doersam, interned for the past four years, asked the archbishop to intercede to prevent his imminent deportation to Germany.

59. In particular he singled out Karl Bayer as a prominent Costa Rican Nazi. This research located few examples of anti-semitism in Costa Rica. One of the most virulent was issued by an organization calling itself the *Comité Nacional Anti-Judío*. Typical of its positions was the following. "Ud.. debe saber que todos los judios son comunistas y agentes de Rusia Soviética" After explaining how Jews corrupted Costa Rican women and owned all the country's land they continued "ESTOS NO ES RACISMO NI NAZISMO. ES NACIONALISMO." Caps in original. *Comité Nacional Anti-Judío*, Flier entitled "Cadena del Patriotismo Costarricense" in folder marked June 1946, AACC.

60. *Junta de Custodia, Signatura No. 206*, p. 13, December 31, 1941. For a study of the Jews in Costa Rica, see Gudmundson and Schifter, El Judio.

61. *Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Anuario* (1931).

62. *Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Anuario* (1938, 1939).

63. *Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Anuario* (1938).

64. Peeler, Latin American Democracies, 55.

65. Cerdas Cruz, "Costa Rica After 1930," 282.

66. *Junta de Custodia, Signatura No. 67*, pp. 91-92, 99, NACR. The properties were valued at over ¢10.6 million (\$1.9 million).

67. The exacting nature of the oversight extended, for example, to the buying or selling of automobiles by the daughters of individuals on the proclaimed list. See AN, *Junta de Custodia, Signaturas Nos. 209-212*, NACR.

68. *Junta de Custodia, Signatura No. 567*, pp. 14-18, NACR. In addition, inspectors were prohibited from buying, selling or expending funds not specifically authorized by a pre-existing budget without the specific authorization of the junta itself.

69. Father Núñez, head of the church sponsored labor movement, monitored the labor situation in the junta controlled fincas. He warned that workers were fearful of being fired and "reminded" administrators that all workers must receive between fifteen and thirty days notice before dismissal. Raúl Montealgre, Inspector *Hacienda Lindora* to Administrator Andres van der Laat, June 3, 1944, *Junta de Custodia, Signatura No. 8*, NACR. The letter apprises Van der Laat of Núñez activities which were not restricted to *Hacienda Lindora*.

70. Trabajo, December 5, 1942.

71. The largest of the Italian properties were the Musmanni Bakeries (which had ¢108,274.13 in liquid capital assets in 1942) and the shoe manufacturer/outlet Pascual Ingianna & Hnos. (whose assets in July of 1942 were ¢669,577.70). *Junta de Custodia Signaturas Nos. 387 and 287*, NACR.

72. Gamboa, Costa Rica En La Segunda Guerra Mundial, 46.

73. *Junta de Custodia, Signatura NO. 157*, NACR. Aggregate figures for the properties and funds administered by the junta are difficult to calculate. The archive from which this material was based is organized primarily on the basis of individual holdings along a chronological line determined by the reports of inspectors and administrators. I found very few aggregate compilation done by the junta itself. To complicate matters inventories of such prominent families as Niehaus, Steinvorth and Miller are disarticulated on the basis of individual family members. Due to multiple entries and a system that relied on an individual providing an inventory of his or her wealth, it is impossible to declare without exhaustive study whether family (and individual) holdings are over or under stated. The files are voluminous, though much work in their organization has been admirably and effectively done by Ms. Cecilia Arce at the Archivo

Nacional de Costa Rica. There are well over eight hundred separate entries with many of them containing hundreds of pages. As the subject of the *Junta de Custodia* was not essential to the subject at hand, limited time was spent exploring the archive. However, a close examination of the financial and property transfers enacted under the both *Junta de Custodia* and the *Reclamos de Guerra*, and *Tribuna de Sanciones Inmediatas* established after the successful uprising of José Figueres, may offer unique insight into social forces that underlay the political upheavals in Costa Rica in the 1940s.

74. Gamboa, *Costa Rica En La Segunda Guerra Mundial*, 125. Law No. 49 dated July 22, 1943, *Colección de Leyes y Decretos*, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1944).

75. *Trabajo*, December 20, 1940.

76. The proposal also would have authorized the *Banco Nacional* to emit low interest loans totalling ₡50,000.00. See *Trabajo*, June 13, 1942, p. 1. Responding to the pressure for land the Communist Party established an *Oficina de Denuncia* in March of 1942 to facilitate and expedite peasant land claims. The Office, under the direction of Abel Dobles Chacon, processed 48 solicitations in its first six months. *Trabajo*, November, 21, 1942.

77. Law No. 49 date July 22, 1943, *Ley Colección de Leyes y Decretos*, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1944).

78. The properties were expropriated under a formula that valued property at 16.6 times the return on an average harvest, or a 6 percent return on the capital investment. The Niehaus and Hübbe properties valued and expropriated in this way included *Haciendas Victoria* (₡4,235,000), *Lindora* (₡1,845,000), *Aragon* (₡2,400,000.), *Porro* (₡625,000.), *Waldeck*, (₡500,000.), and *La Caja* (₡1,000.000.) *Junta de Custodia*, *Signatura* No. 67, pp. 91-92, 99, *NACR*.

79. Van der Laat, San José, to Calderón Guardia, San José, May 20, 1943, *Junta de Custodia*, *Signatura* No. 165, *NACR*.

80. *Trabajo*, April 28, 1945. Expropriations continued into the Picado administration. Presidential degree No. 27 dated April 26, 1945 promised that 12,000 hectares would be distributed to the citizens of Heredia.

81. For a detailed list of these merchant houses see *Dirección General de Estadística y Censo*, *Anuario* (1937).

82. U.S. Department of Justice. FBI Report, Totalitarian Activities in Costa Rica Today, September 1943, USNA, Roosevelt Library, OF 10b Box #23. The quotation is taken from page two of the report. U.S. interest in the bay was long standing. As early as 1934, in response to such interest CPCR Deputy Jiménez Guerrero. submitted a congressional resolution to prohibit U.S. ships from carrying out maneuvers in the Bay based on Article 73 of the Costa Rican constitution. The initiative was endorsed by Otilio Ulate. *Congreso*, No. 17175, 1934. NACR.

Manuel Mora was particularly attuned to the geo-political consequence of Central America, and particularly Costa Rica, for the war effort. According to Mora, the United States in order to secure complete military control of Central America wanted to build a canal in Nicaragua running from the San Juan river through the Lakes of Nicaragua and Managua and exiting at the bay of Fonseca. Similarly, in negotiations with U.S. authorities Mora who was the head of the PVP faction in Congress was willing to allow the U.S. use of Costa Rican ports and sea space for war maneuvers. However, he did not agree to military bases on the soil of Costa Rica. Manuel Mora, Interview by author, August 1990, San Pedro, Costa Rica, tape recording.

83. Exchange of letters between Soley Güell, San José, and U.S. Ambassador Robert M. Scotten, San José, August 17 and August 20, 1942. *Junta de Custodia, Signatura*, No. 264, NACR. Why the U.S. took this stand is an intriguing question. An accurate answer would need to evaluate the policies and personnel of the Bank as well as U.S. perceptions of them.

84. Coit MacLean, U.S. Commercial Attaché, to the *Junta*, San José, April 29, 1943, *Junta de Custodia, Signatura*, No. 264, NACR.

85. (Emphasis added.) The Fund was established in February of 1942 with \$25 million. Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, 1943, Annual Report of Basic Economy Department, p. 1, USNA, Roosevelt Library, OF4512 Box 2.

86. For a compilation of laws, regulations and presidential decrees during the war-time period see Rojas Suárez, Costa Rica en la Segunda Guerra Mundial, 273-315.

87. The Labor Code created a body of inspectors under the authority of the Ministry of Labor, and enlarged the system of labor judges.

88. See note 31, above.

89. Organized labor fully understood the implications of the divestment of German and Italian properties. They monitored individuals of German and Italian ancestry and were quick to classify their movements as fifth column activities. Immediately after the war Guzmán wrote Vicente Lombardo Toledano of a campaign in the opposition press to promote the immediate return of Germans married to Costa Rican women to Costa Rica. Guzmán characterized this campaign as the current focus of Nazi activities in Costa Rica. Rodolfo Guzmán, Costa Rica, to Vicente Lombardo Toledano, September 12, 1945, AUOM.

90. For a full discussion of the Code see Appendix A.

91. What follows was taken from Alvaro Ruíz Valverde, comp. Código de Trabajo de Agosto 23, 1943 (San José: Imprenta Nacional, September 1943).

92. The countries whose labor laws served as inspiration were Chile, Mexico, Cuba, Columbia, Bolivia, Venezuela, Spain, Argentina, and the United States. *Texto del Mensaje que Envió el Señor President de la Republica, junto con el Proyecto de Código de Trabajo, al Soberano Congreso Constitucional*, April 12, 1943, Rojas Suárez, Costa Rica en la Segunda Guerra Mundial, 12.

93. For an examination of the corporativist union structure see, Kenneth Paul Erickson, The Brazilian Corporative State and Working-Class Politics (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977) 27-46. The Costa Rican state never attempted, in the period under discussion, the type of control in existence in Brazil. Erickson writes of the Brazilian trade unions: "They are primarily organs for collaboration of the state and for providing the types of social services associated with old-time mutual aid societies and the modern welfare state. The state controls their purse strings and requires them to be conduits for social services." p. 36. For example, though financial reporting by unions was required by the Costa Rican Code of 1943 (Articles 274-276), it was in the main ignored without penalty. The Brazilian Code of the same year (May 1, 1943) exacted a trade union tax or *imposto sindical*. For a recent examination of continuity and discontinuity of the Brazilian labor laws under the 1988 Constitution see, Russ Smith, "The 1988 Constitution: Continuity and Change in the Brazilian Industrial Relations System" TMS [photocopy], November 1991.

94. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated January 10, 1944, USNA, 818.504-506. The office employed twenty six individuals, of these twelve were inspectors earning between ¢250. and ¢300. per month. Based on monthly compilations, the annual budget for the Ministry

was ₡574,477 (US\$103,405.85), of which ₡62,426 (US\$11,236) or 11 percent went to the Inspector General's office. If fixed costs, such as rents and capital expansion are subtracted, the percentage of funds allocated to the Inspector General's office would rise to eighteen percent. The capital expansion budget itself was \$24,696.

95. Congreso. No. 20923, 80, 83, 91, and 105-106, NACR.

96. It was also the understanding of the U.S. Embassy that Barahona Streber was charged by President Calderón to draft the legislation. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated April 21, 1943, USNA, 818.00.

97. James Backer, La Iglesia y el Sindicalismo en Costa Rica. (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1975), 99. Backer's work is the most comprehensive approach to the political relationship between the church and the labor movement in Costa Rica. As Guatemalan politics shifted to the left, Barahona's positions were increasingly seen as reactionary. In April 1949, Barahona and the Instituto were attacked by left-wing students. Oscar Barahona Streber, Guatemala City, to Víctor Sanabria, San José, April 24, 1949, AACC.

98. Exchange of letters between Juan José Arévalo and Geraldo Gordillo Barrios, Guatemala, to Barahona Streber, San José, December 19, 1946 and (Streber's response) January 15, 1947, AACC. For a synopsis of Barahona Streber's recommendations, see Appendix B, below.

99. Oscar Barahona Streber, U.S., to Víctor Sanabria, San José, January 6, 1945 and March 1, 1945, AACC. Business leaders included a Mr. Earl Harding, economic advisor to the Remington Rand Corporation and a "great admirer" of Costa Rica's legislation. Barahona Streber hoped Harding's influence would be useful in changing the minds of the "appropriate people" about the situation in Costa Rica.

100. Exchange of letters between Calderón Guardia, New York, Víctor Sanabria, San José, April 20, 1945, October 17, 1945, and October 10, 1945, AACC. Sanabria counselled Calderón that he should not take to heart the attack upon his work by those who did not understand it.

101. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated April 21, 1943, p. 11, USNA, 818.00. Of interest is the following characterization of both Mora and Calderón. "It is the almost unanimous opinion of all Costa Ricans, that in dealing with Manuel Mora he [President Calderón] is dealing with a politician who is much more brilliant than he and that in the end Mora, not the President, will be the gainer."

102. Mora Discursos, 264-265.

103. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated April 21, 1943, p. 11, USNA, 818.00. If support was withheld from either, Mora promised to withdraw his political support. Though he was out-spoken in support of the pending legislation he voted against a congressional motion limiting debate on the issues. The motion passed on April 14, 1942. It limited discussion to fifteen minutes for each deputy, and no more than six on-hour speeches for and against the legislation.

104. A translation of the letter appears in U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated June 21, 1943, USNA, 818.504-506. As to the authorship of the letter, Labor Attaché, Fay Allen Des Portes, writes, "The letter ... was signed only by personal and political friends of President Calderón Guardia. Many persons who agree with this letter in every respect were not allowed to sign it, because for some reason or another they had broken with the administration and therefore the President may have taken the letter as being a move on the part of his political opponents."

105. This was calculated as five holidays, fourteen vacation days and thirty days for retirement. On this last point, the Code provided thirty days severance pay for each year worked with an eight year limit. It was not accurate to consider it a yearly obligation. See Appendix A.

106. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated June 21, 1943, USNA, 818.504-506. Caps in original.

107. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated April 21, 1943, p. 3, USNA, 818.504-506.

108. See Table 3.1, above.

109. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated April 21, 1943, p. 4, USNA, 818.504-506. The additional costs repeatedly referred to were attributed to the establishment of minimum hours, minimum wages, guaranteed holidays, two week vacation, workmen's compensation and the provision of medical services.

110. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated June 21, 1943, p. 1, USNA, 818.504-506.

111. See W.C. Miskell, Esq., to G.P. Chittenden, Limón, January 30, 1935, Bourgeois Papers. The practice of the United Fruit Company of employing workers of different

nationalities and then playing upon ethnic difference to maintain labor control is well documented in Bourgois, Ethnicity at Work.

112. A U.S. State Department Circular of November 1944 instructed Embassy personnel to provide monthly analysis of the labor situation in their respective country based wages, employment, cost of living, industrial relations, social legislation, and on the state of organized labor. U.S. State Department, Circular dated November 9, 1944, USNA, 818.504-506.

113. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated April 30, 1945, USNA, 818.504-506.

114. Benjamín Núñez, San José, to Edward Miller, Washington, D.C, November 7, 1949, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). USNA, 818.504-506.

115. Law No. 25, November 17, 1944, Law No. 668, August 14, 1946 and Law No. 717, August 24, 1949. Colección de Leyes y Decretos, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1945, 1947 and 1950). These were not the only reforms. The modification of the Code was an ongoing and continual process. As was the Code, the reforms were subject to worker agitation and mobilizations in support of certain provisions. An important of this was the July 1946 CTCR meeting with congressional deputies regarding the lifting of strike prohibitions against transportation workers. Trabajo, July 27, 1946.

116. Reforms dated October 5, 1955 and January 29, 1952, respectively. Colección de Leyes y Decretos, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1953, 1956).

117. Law No. 25, November 17, 1944 and No. 731, September 2, 1946, respectively. Colección de Leyes y Decretos, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1945 and 1947).

118. For discussion of this conflict, see Chapter V, Section 2, below.

119. Law No. 773, September 16, 1946, Colección de Leyes y Decretos, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1947). Most directly effected by these changes were dock and transportation workers. For a discussion of these laws and the railroad workers, see the following section on the Northern Railroad strike of 1946.

120. The general secretaries of the provincial federations of the CTCR directly confronted Congress with their demand that restrictions on the right to strike be lifted. Trabajo, May 18, 1946.

121. This included the right of the Labor Judge to enlist the assistance of the local political authority. Law No. 668, August 14, 1946. Colección de Leyes y Decretos, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1947).

122. by José Figueres and Benjamín Núñez, Reglamento de la Inspección General de Trabajo, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, August 16, 1949).

123. Law-Decree dated August 10, 1948, Colección de Leyes y Decretos, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1949). The limit was raised from ₡2,000 to ₡5,000 before the Casa would hear the case.

124. Law No. 717, August 24, 1949. Colección de Leyes y Decretos, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1950.)

125. Built at the turn of the century by Minor Keith, the railroad ran from San José to Puerto Limón and as such employed many Jamaican blacks. According to the 1927 census over 55 percent of the Limón's population was black, or 18,003 out of a total population of 32,278. For a discussion of the banana-railroad empire of Minor Keith see, Stewart, Keith y Costa Rica. For an examination of Costa Rica's Caribbean population, see Duncan and Meléndez, El Negro en Costa Rica.

126. Other wage levels were as follows: Conductors (white) \$145.00 per month; Firemen -\$50.00 per month; Brakemen - \$50.00 per month; Motor car conductors -\$50.00 per month; Laborers -\$.90 per day. In addition senior level white employees received a house furnished with one servant as additional compensation. The railroad company deducted 2 percent of the monthly salary for hospitalization costs. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated March 9, 1937, USNA, 818.504-506. The wage rates were for the province of Limón where the cost of living was traditionally the highest in the country. No clear definition of white or black was provided.

127. Trabajo, August 29, 1942. The National Committee submitted a formal letter to this effect to the Secretary of Labor.

128. Trabajo, September 12, 1942. The *Asociación de Ferrocarrileros* had approximately 300 affiliates in Limón.

129. Trabajo, October 24, 1942.

130. The cost of living rose almost 60 percent from 1940 to 1943. See Table No. 3.1, above.

131. Trabajo, January 2, 1943.

132. "We have been well aware of the danger of a strike in the railroad and for that reason ever since the Code was enacted we endeavoured to have an amendment passed to the Code forbidding a strike in the railroad... In November of 1944 we succeeded and the Congress, at the request of the Government, banned strikes on railroads." letter from Mariano Anderson, San José, to William Green, San José, January 9, 1946. Archive of Pacific Electric Railroad, Mariano Anderson along with Luis Anderson were the company's lawyers.

133. U.S. Department of Justice. FBI Report, J.E. Hoover to Departments of State, Navy and War dated July 23, 1946, USNA, 818.00. In general FBI reports have to be viewed carefully both for factual accuracy and bias. In this case, the vituperative tone of Cerdas' reported remarks are corroborated by numerous public statements that attest to the disdain the PVP and CTCR had for William Green.

134. The company alleged that it had lost \$4 million from 1905 to 1940. Diario de Costa Rica, December 25, 1946. The claim was disputed. A financial report on Northern said that it kept three sets of books, one in San José, one in New York, and one in London and through this mechanism did not pay taxes or dividends (estimated to be \$700,000 annually over a thirty-five year period) on income earned in Costa Rica. The company was also accused of not paying appropriate taxes in England. Members of this commission included José Manuel Sáenz Whitting for the company who did not sign the report; Manuel Francisco Quesada for the state and Horacio Laporte for the workers. Quesada, who was liked by the PVP, would shortly be appointed to head the Caja de Seguro Social. Trabajo, May 25, 1946.

135. The railroad company claimed that this was not true. Citing Banco Nacional figures it argued that inflation from 1943 to 1945 was 12.16 percent while salary increases amounted to 22.5 percent. Memorandum by William Green, dated January 3, 1946, 3, Archive of Pacific Electric Railroad. According to the Banco Nacional de Costa Rica the increase in the cost of living was slightly over 19 percent. See Table No. 3.1 and Banco Nacional Sub-Gerente, San José, to Mr. William Green, Limón, December 21, 1945, Archive of Pacific Electric Railroad.

136. Federico Picado and Carlos Luis Fallas, Limón, to William Green, Limón, December 21, 1945, Archive of Pacific Electric Railroad. The letter informed Green of the strike.

137. Diario de Costa Rica, December 21, 1945.

138. Diario de Costa Rica, December 22, 1946.

139. The company argued that they could not afford a collective revision of salaries having suffered net losses totalling ₡40,000,000 since it began operations in 1905. The strikers and the PVP did not believe these claims and cited the Quesada, Laporte Report. The opposition press did and viewed the demands by the workers as unreasonable. See, Diario de Costa Rica. December 18, 23, and 26, 1945.

140. Diario de Costa Rica, December 26, 1945. The letter sent by the *Asociación Sindicato de Comerciantes* cited Article 369 clause c which prohibited strikes by transport workers. It was signed by William Green. As stated, the definition of public service workers was expanded to include transport workers and those involved in loading and unloading of goods in November of 1944.

141. See "Daily jottings of strike incident from Dec. 20th, to 27th," Archive of Pacific Electric Railroad.

142. Próspero Guardia Mora was named administrator of the railroad in conformity with Article 381 of the Labor Code and Executive Order No. 41. The government also reserved the right to review the company's books.

143. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated January 3, 1946, USNA, 818.504-06. The opposition press also praised the result. By December 28, the trains were running and Diario de Costa Rica declared the "Communist led strike" a failure. Diario de Costa Rica, December 27, 1945.

144. M. Anderson, San José, to William Green, Limón, January 3, 1946, 2, Archive of Pacific Electric Railroad.

145. See, "Translation of the letter of January 22nd 1946 to the President of the Republic," Archive of Pacific Electric Railroad. Workers who were singled out as particularly undesirable included conductors, De Abate, Núñez, and Facio.

146. See, Wm. Green, Limón, to F.J. Oliver, London, January 1946, (draft letter), Archive of Pacific Electric Railroad.

147. Estatutos de Partido Vanguardia Popular - 1947, Protocolos of Jaime Cerdas Mora, Tomo II, 41-51. The platform was dated June 12, 1947 and was signed by the party's leadership including Manuel Mora, Arnoldo Ferreto, Rodolfo Guzmán, Alvaro Montero Vega, Víctor Cordero, Efraim Rodríguez, Alfredo Picado and fourteen others. The Protocolos recorded the official acts of legal council.

148. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated May 13, 1946, USNA, 818.504-06.

149. Trabajo, May 11, 1946.

150. For example a meeting of 500 hundred workers in the barrio *La Constructora* in support of the right to strike. Trabajo, June 8, 1946.

151 Law No. 773, September 16, 1946, Colección de Leyes y Decretos, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1947).

152. Following a conflict with the Pacific Electric railroad workers in November of 1946, the Second Labor Court issued a series of decisions which balanced worker demands with those of the employer. Both sides of the dispute, along with the official judgement are given in exhausting detail in "*Ferrocarril Eléctrico Al Pacífico Conflicto Colectivo de Carácter económico-social: Trabajadores de la Empresa contra el Ferrocarril Eléctrico al Pacífico*, 1946" (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1946).

Chapter IV

Confederación Costarricense de Trabajadores "Rerum Novarum"
and the Church, 1943-1945

Two months after the formation of the *Bloque de Victoria*, and one month before the public unveiling of the Labor Code, the church announced the formation of its own labor confederation. A number of considerations lay behind the church's action. Deeply committed to the doctrine of social Christian justice, the church sought the material improvement of worker's lives. To do this the church focused its efforts on reinvigorating parish based organizations and developing a nation-wide labor confederation. From its inception the confederation had a dual function: to improve workers' lives and limit Communist influence in the labor movement by offering a Catholic alternative. With the election of Calderón Guardia, the church's ability to accomplish these objectives was greatly enhanced. For the first time in over sixty years it enjoyed unprecedented influence with the ruling government based on a shared ideology of societal reform and close personal relations Archbishop Sanabria and the President of the Republic. This church-state collaboration culminated in a political alliance joined by the former CPR. The alliance provided all parties with immediate benefits. The Calderón Administration gained immediate popular support. The church newly integrated into the country's educational system was

positioned to expand its institutional base in the society.¹ And the PVP received church and state sanction for its activities. However, if the archbishop's action gave the PVP wide political mobility, the church's entrance the labor field was designed to moderate Communist influence in the working class.

Before examining the state-church-PVP alliance and the development of the Catholic confederation, it is important to underscore that this alliance was made at the highest organizational level and, in certain instances, was extra-organizational. The ability of Calderón, Sanabria and Mora to override internal divisions within their organizations helps explain both the remarkable breadth and ultimate fragility of their coalition.

1. The Church-State-Partido Vanguardia Popular Alliance

The political alliance between the church, the state and the PVP was cemented with the public exchange of letters between Manuel Mora, Secretary General of the Communist Party, and Archbishop Sanabria on June 14, 1943. In his letter, Mora announced the formation of the PVP and the authorization of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee to seek out those "alliances that the present political circumstances of the country may impose." The letter reflected the resolutions of a party Congress of three hundred. The party then issued its wartime program

calling for agricultural diversification, and the promotion of industrial growth through state funding and selective application of protectionist tariffs. It advocated the replacement of all forms of indirect taxation by an income tax, and aside from the confiscation of properties on the "Proclaimed List,"² the PVP affirmed its respect for private property and the existing constitutional structure.³ In accepting the "existing constitutional structure" the PVP signaled to the PRN and the Catholic church that it implicitly recognized the applicability of Calderón's policies to the country's social problems.

Sanabria seized this opportunity. He welcomed the new party that acquiesced to "the social politics of the President of the Republic,"⁴ and permitted Catholics to enter into alliances with the new party. In response the PVP opened its doors to practicing Catholics. To be a member of the party an individual had to believe in the party Program, be a militant and pay their dues. No other conditions were required.⁵ As early as 1935 the CPCR disavowed overt anti-religious positions and avowed its respect for the religious beliefs of all workers.⁶ The church-PVP alliance was unique in Central America. Never before had a Central American church openly sanctioned the activities of a Marxist party.

Inside Costa Rica, the alliance marked a profound shift in the archbishop's position. While still Bishop of Alajuela, Sanabria wrote in his April 25, 1938 pastoral

letter that "Communism was, perhaps, the most dangerous enemy of the nation and that Catholics could not affiliate in whatever form ... with Communist organizations." In his Easter Pastoral of April 28, 1940, Sanabria repeated that the church would "always struggle without rest for reasons of religion and politics against Communism."⁷

What prompted the change in the church's position? The answer lay in the powerful effect international developments had on domestic politics, and in the institutional needs of the church. The new Allied struggle against international fascism shattered traditional political and ideological relationships. In Costa Rica, owing to the significant presence of ethnic Germans and Italians, the wartime shifted the weight of domestic politics away from combatting Communism to fighting those now seen as domestic fascists. This process caused sharp divisions in the country's elite society. The resultant vacuum, accelerated the incorporativist tendencies of the state and augmented the influence of previously marginalized groups.⁸ Both the church and CPR found themselves in heightened positions of influence. But this in itself does not explain why the church reversed its long standing anti-Communist position.

In July 1943, Sanabria offered the key institutional explanation for his entente with the new party: Catholicism was in danger of losing its adherents to Marxism. Sanabria understood Marxism as possessing two fundamental aspects:

its material atheistic philosophy, and its practical derivations. Opposition to its material philosophy was justified, opposition to its practical derivations on economic and social justice was costing the church the allegiance of the working class. Sanabria wrote, "while the church continues in opposition to the organization of workers, I speak of an unjust opposition, since with Communism we know there will always be opposition, the de-Christianization of the workers will increase each day."⁹ Sanabria's distinction was clearly stated by the French theologian, Jacques Maritain.¹⁰

The sin of the Catholics in the past century was that no one among them wrote Das Kapital based on Thomistic principles.¹¹

Subsequently, Father Núñez, who was picked by Sanabria to direct the church labor initiative, expanded on the relationship between Thomistic principles and the social function of religion. Citing Saint Thomas on order, Núñez wrote, "when things... are not correctly disposed toward their ends, we can not speak of order but disorder." Núñez continued: "Thus one can not consider as ordered a society which does not pursue its correct end... to provide a dignified life for its citizens. The true destroyers are those who want to maintain these situations which are in open conflict with God's natural law, and the true up holders of order are those who want to end these 'created' situations and adjust the order toward its true ends."¹²

A final element needs to be introduced to understand the church action. Sanabria's distinction between Communist ideology and the practical derivations of Marxist thought hinged on his conviction that the PVP's involvement in the politics of the nation arose out of concerns that were "exclusively and essentially" Costa Rican. In the preamble to its June 1943 program the PVP took pains to establish the nationalist character of the old CPCR. "The Communist Party was never the instrument of force foreign to our nation though its enemies have been set on affirming the contrary... the *Vanguardia Popular* is a party uniquely Costa Rican."¹³ Sanabria explicitly accepted the national orientation of the PVP, and at the close of the war, at the founding Convention of the Catholic oriented labor confederation, he reaffirmed his conviction that the PVP was unquestionably a Costa Rican party.¹⁴

The national allegiance of the PVP was a contentious issue.¹⁵ While certain Costa Rican scholars have argued that the CPCR was fundamentally national in its orientation, others have pointed to its international affiliations as proof of the party's historic subservience to the Comintern.¹⁶ The CPCR joined the Comintern in 1935 at which time it was seen as the most vital Communist party in Central America. In 1939 the national shoemakers' union, closely associated with the CPCR, affiliated with the Marxist *Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina*

(CTAL). For Sanabria affiliation did not necessarily indicate subservience, and he remained consistent in his appraisal of Mora as not a "Communist in the political sense, nor ...dominated by Moscow."¹⁷ At the same time, Núñez never wavered from his position that the PVP and their labor organization were foreign directed.¹⁸ This disagreement contributed to the serious rift that developed between the two men. Other opposition leaders who coalesced around ex-President León Cortés, and publisher of the opposition Diario de Costa Rica, Otilio Ulate, were unrelenting in identifying the Calderón Administration as *Calderón-Comunismo* and Communism with foreign subservience.¹⁹

In the heated wartime environment the church sanction on Communist influence in the country's politics was explosive and controversial. The ambiguities of the situation and the easily manipulated distinctions of Sanabria caused divisions inside the church hierarchy and drew the parishes directly into the controversy.²⁰ Priests were caught between the interests of large landowners, grassroots organizations²¹ and the position of the archbishop.²²

There was also dissent in the church hierarchy and there were ambiguities in the archbishop's position. La Epoca, an unofficial publication of the Catholic church was shut-down by the government during the war due to

allegations of Nazi sympathies.²³ And in stating that the church-PVP alliance rested on the PVP acceptance of the Christian foundation of the country's social reforms, Sanabria cautioned his priests that their sacred obligation was to fight Communism and admonished them to remain aloof from partisan politics.²⁴

Outside the church, individuals from all sectors of Costa Rican society voiced incredulity and disappointment that a revered figure of the church would enter into a deal with Communists. The central complaint was that the archbishop and President Calderón were deceived by the Communists who had no intention of abandoning their Marxist principles. Was the formation of the *Vanguardia Popular* a change in anything but name? Skepticism was widespread, from denunciations in the press to pleas personally directed to the archbishop.²⁵

The charge that the change from the CPR to the PVP was only in name was almost certainly true. There was no change in leadership, or organizational structure. Luís Carballo who was elected as PVP representative to the Congress from San José in 1944 was quoted as saying, "Communism has never left its [the PVP's] program, nor was it inconvenienced by [the need] to obtain the archbishop's approval."²⁶ The party which had long since rejected revolutionary solutions maintained its platform,²⁷ and examination of internal party correspondence confirms unbroken continuity between the CPR

and the PVP.²⁸

The church-PVP alliance touched a strong political nerve throughout the country revealing a deep seated anti-Communist sentiment. Yet the stature of the archbishop was not diminished. He remained a highly respected and influential force for moderation in the country. Opposition to the church-PVP entente existed outside the country as well. At the close of 1943 Sanabria was denied a visa to travel to Guatemala due to the publicity and notoriety surrounding his participation in politics and fraternity with one of the "militant parties."²⁹

Sanabria rejected allegations that his relationship with the PVP signaled a betrayal of his nationalism. Rather he argued, it was inspired by a clearly thought out and deeply felt desire to avoid the ravages of class conflict in the post-war period. "[W]e have not left Costa Rica. We have proceeded from a realism in its essence Costa Rican [and] we have discovered a truth: In the social doctrines of the church there are possibilities to resolve our social problems ... through evolution and not revolution."³⁰

2. The formation of the Confederación Costarricense de Trabajadores "Rerum Novarum" (CCTRN)

The alliance with the PVP was the first step in Sanabria's plans; the formation of a Catholic labor organization the second. These two developments were inextricably linked. To begin the work of constructing a

labor organization, Sanabria summoned Father Núñez from the Catholic University of America (CUA) in Washington, D.C. where he was studying under Reverend Francis J. Haas.³¹ Haas, the Dean of the School of Social Sciences had introduced Núñez to the internal operations of both the American Federation of Labor (AFL) under Jim Carrol and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) under Phil Murray. Núñez was deeply influenced by his U.S. experience and took an important principle from these contacts: formal apoliticism, defined as non-involvement in party politics, not the silencing of labor's voice in the directing of social policy.³² The separation of union organization from partisan politics was one of three conditions Núñez insisted on when he agreed to Sanabria's request that he direct the labor movement.³³ The two remaining conditions were that the CCTRN would never be a confessional or proselytizing organization (including leadership positions), nor would it agree to be dependent on ecclesiastical authority.³⁴

Union involvement in electoral politics was a bitter and controversial issue throughout the 1940s. Only activities that directly led to the workers economic and social betterment was permitted. All other union activities were prohibited by the Labor Code (Article 280). The accusation that the CTCR actively supported the PVP's electoral effort in 1946 led its judicial dissolution in June 1951.³⁵ Núñez, was also accused of using his labor

movement to advance particular political interests. As the decade progressed, organized labor's inability to remain independent of political parties drew it directly into the country's political turmoil.

In preparation for a formal launching of the labor movement the church founded the periodical, La Luchador.³⁶ Although the church boasted that the paper had a large circulation, Sanabria realized the church initiative lacked a cadre of experienced and well-trained labor leaders. In a letter sent to Núñez at the time of the formal registration of the *Confederación Costarricense de Trabajadores "Rerum Novarum,"* the archbishop stated the challenge: "It is said that before forming unions of Catholic orientation one must first train the workers to be militants in it. On the contrary, I think both tasks ... can happen at the same time."³⁷

Despite Sanabria's optimism, the lack of experienced labor leaders was a serious problem for the church movement. Other than Núñez and his brother, Father Santiago Núñez, there were few other leaders including Luís Alberto Monge, Carlos Manuel Castillo, Alfonso Cárdenas, Danilo Jiménez, and a few defectors from the ranks the CTCR, primarily from the tailors union.³⁸ Responding to the need for competent leadership, the central established a school to train union leaders in July 1944.³⁹

The lack of qualified leadership had important

consequences. In the initial period it forced the church movement to take the extraordinary step of seeking aid from the leader of the PVP, Manuel Mora.⁴⁰ This unique collaboration was possible for a number of reasons. First, Sanabria envisioned the CCTRN as a movement designed to cooperate with, not oppose the CTCR.⁴¹ Second, the authority commanded by both Sanabria and Mora enabled them to act outside their institutional constraints. Finally, the PVP realized that there were certain sectors of the work force it could not hope to organize. It preferred these workers to be organized by the church rather than remain unorganized. Mora then directed the attention of Sanabria to those sectors of workers who would not affiliate with the CTCR due to its overt Communist affiliation. These were certain groups of agricultural workers, as well as clerical and municipal employees.

Mora characterized his assistance as of a personal nature "due to the presence of those in his party who would not understand this type of collaboration."⁴² However, the cooperative spirit was formalized with the establishment of an inter-confederation coordinating committee called the *Comité de Inteligencia*. This organization whose existence mirrored the rise and fall of the wartime alliance in Costa Rica, monitored and, for the years 1944 and 1945, harmonized the activities of the two labor confederations.

On August 2, 1943, at the *Basilica de los Angeles* in

the city of Cartago the Catholic labor initiative was launched in a sermon delivered by Father Núñez.

Acknowledging the role that Marxists played in the history of the Costa Rican labor movement, Núñez announced that the objective of the new central was not to divide labor "but channel it under the wide course indicated by papal teachings." Under this principle *Rerum Novarum* agreed to work with other organized and unorganized workers to fight social injustices. Still Núñez took pains to distinguish his movement from that of the Communists and to rid the term "*sindicato*" of its Marxist connotations. Hoping to purge Costa Rica of Communism by eliminating the reason for its existence: social misery, Núñez told the gathering there is not a demand workers can not make from the camp of social Christian thought.

Núñez also directed his remarks to the country's employers. He informed them that the new central did not oppose them. And although he and his organization ran the risk of rebuke and denigration by extremists, he clearly stated the church's desire to form an enlightened employer class that it could work with on the basis of class collaboration. Núñez elaborated. The church was neither with the workers or with employers was with social justice. It only appeared that the church had sided with the workers because capitalists have dealt a blow against justice.⁴³

As the alliance with the state and the PVP, the

decision to launch a Catholic labor movement was prompted by a number of concerns. Both Sanabria and Núñez believed that the church should protect the poor, and that the social doctrines of Popes Pius XI and Leo XIII offered a blueprint for societal transformation.⁴⁴ While the theological bases for the archbishop's actions are well documented, political concerns played an important role.⁴⁵ He believed that working in concert with the PVP was the most efficacious way to enact vitally needed social reforms and, at the same time, moderate Communist influence in the Calderón government.

The commitment to an evolutionary change was central to Sanabria's political thought. He was critical of what he termed the anti-clerical extremism present in Mexico and from this basis, offered contextual justification for the *Sinarquistas* in Mexico.⁴⁶ On the other hand, he attributed the defeat of the loyalist forces in Spain, in part, to its isolationist church, which lacked needed social economic awareness.⁴⁷ But most importantly he hoped the new labor organization would provide the church a popular foundation from which it could overcome its historical marginalization and enable it to exert its influence on the social/political orientation of the country.

The marginalization of the church throughout Central America was a consequence of the liberal reaction at the close of the nineteenth century. In Costa Rica, whose church

was never as wealthy or as powerful as the Guatemalan or Mexican church, the liberal reforms of 1884 prohibited the activities of religious orders in Costa Rica, separated secular burial grounds from religious grounds, and excluded the church from any involvement secular education.⁴⁸ Church pronouncements on the country's political economy, such as Bishop Thiel's pastoral on a "Just Family Wage," were met by strong governmental opposition.

The political isolation of the church was compounded by its weak numerical presence among the country's population. The census of 1927 recorded only 139 clerics of whom eighty-four were foreign born, of the eighty-four most were born in Spain. This yielded a ratio of one priest for every 3,400 men, women and children in Costa Rica.⁴⁹ By 1948 the ratio of priests to population had decreased to 1 for every 5,000 Costa Ricans. Costa Rica's ratio was not exceptional. Comparable ratios existed for Bolivia (1:8,750), Colombia (1:6,085), Panama (1:9,000), Peru (1:6,000), and Venezuela (1:5,000). In comparison ratios in the U.S. (1:600), England (1:440), Germany (1:900), France (1:625), and Spain (1:600) were much higher. The comparable ratios that existed for other Latin American countries gave hemispheric urgency to the church to expand its organizational activities in an effort to influence the growing working class.⁵⁰

Under Archbishop Sanabria, the Costa Rican Church developed a strategy divided into spiritual and material

camps to meet this objective. The development of the parish based organizations of *Acción Católica* (AC), which contained within it the *La Liga Espiritual Obrera* (LEO), and *La Juventud Obrero Católica* (JOC), were designed to nurture the spirit. In the material camp the strategy was to develop a labor confederation to address the material interests of the population and maximize church influence among the secular population.⁵¹ The work of each camp was designed to enhance that of the other. Communism could not be fought with material arguments alone.⁵² It had to be joined on the spiritual plane. The coordination of these two levels of church activity was designed to bridge the two planes and enable the church a material and spiritual enhancement of workers lives.

In spite of Sanabria's objectives, AC efforts to create strong parish based organizations to serve as the spiritual complement of the labor movement met with limited success. The parish organizations were weak, and the coordination between them the labor movement was marred by disputes over authority and personal conflicts.⁵³ In many organizations these organizations did not exist and where they did they were small, weak, lacked financing, coordination, and a leadership attuned to existing conditions. It was only among young women that these groups enjoyed support.⁵⁴ It should be noted that the single area of vitality in these organizations paralleled the CCTRN's strength in industries

that employed large numbers of women.

The lack of a strong parish base weakened the church initiative and inhibited the CCTRN from developing a strong base of spiritually committed leaders. This had two powerful effects. It accelerated the movement of the CCTRN away from the church, and it contributed to a profound leadership crisis after the civil war of 1948 and the appointment of Father Núñez as Minister of Labor in the Figueres Junta.⁵⁵

The weakness of the Catholic worker organizations at the parish level paralleled a similar crisis in the cellular structure of the PVP in the post 1943 years immediately following its entrance into the government alliance.⁵⁶ The erosion of the PVP and CTCR militant base also had profound though in certain respects opposite effects than those experienced by the church-led movement. As the weakness of the church's spiritual organizations contributed to a loosening of CCTRN-church ties, the decline of the PVP's popular base led to the loss of any flexibility in the CTCR-PVP relationship.⁵⁷

a. Relations between the CCTRN and the Church

The CCTRN was designed to be under the general guidance of the church hierarchy and serve a dual function. It was to strive to secure the material well-being of the workers and elevate their spiritual awareness. In a February 25, 1944 memorandum Sanabria issued guidelines defining and governing

the new labor central's relationship to the church. These were: One, the CCTRN was inspired by the church's social doctrines as expressed in the Papal Encyclicals, Rerum Novarum and Quadragesimo Anno. Two, Christian religious and moral values were to be taught in the labor organization's "programs of orientation." Three, the church reserved the right to name a spiritual advisor to supervise the activities of the confederation's unions and particularly their leaders.⁵⁸ The church was represented by an ecclesiastical authority.⁵⁹ In cases of doubt or disagreement appeal to the ecclesiastical authority would be allowed. Four, neither the ecclesiastical authority nor the spiritual advisor was responsible for the administration of technical and economic matters. However, if their unions were in jeopardy of ceasing to exist, union leaders were required to inform these authorities of the danger. Five, the ecclesiastical authority, through the spiritual advisor, reserved the right to decide which actions of the central were in conformity with points one and two above and had the right to insure that the fundamental orientation and inspiration of the movement would remain in the hands of leadership dedicated to its fulfillment. Six, the spiritual advisor, in order to ensure compliance with point two, would oversee the maintenance of cordial relations with the AC.⁶⁰

By 1945 relations between the church and its labor movement had undergone important changes. The ecclesiastical

authority continued to monitor the confederation's adherence to the social Christian doctrine under which it was founded. This was the indispensable condition for the church to continue its patronage of the central. However, the church's responsibility ended here. Now the church viewed the "social, economic, and technical successes or failures of the Central" as the "successes and failures of that very Central and its leaders." The church declared itself to know "where the Reign of God ended and where the dominions of Caesar began." Accordingly, the fulfillment of the spiritual function of CCTRN no longer remained as a "indispensable condition" for church support.⁶¹ Sanabria went on to express the desire that all who joined the ranks of the CCTRN be Catholic, but in no way was religion a requisite for membership.⁶²

As the church-CCTRN relationship narrowed to exclude all but the reporting responsibility of the spiritual advisor to the ecclesiastical authority, it became subject to a series of tensions. In part these changes were prompted by the transformation of an idea into a reality with the replacement of theoretical challenges by political contingencies. In the case of CCTRN this process was compounded by its notable initial growth. In addition, in the absence of ancillary mechanisms, the connection between the church and the CCTRN increasingly reflected the strains in the relationship between Sanabria and Núñez. At their

base, these strains were caused by increasing CCTRN involvement with rightist organizations. This involvement stemmed from the CCTRN's uneven but dramatic initial growth and its leadership's growing opposition to the PVP-PRN government.

b. The Growth of the CCTRN

Immediately after the sermon of August 2, 1943, the CCTRN began its organizational work. Its first workers included: the employees of the Municipality of San José dissatisfied with their CTCR organized union, commercial workers of Cartago, agricultural workers from Barreal de Heredia, and textile workers from the large Saprisa plant in San Pedro, Montes de Oca just east of the Capital.⁶³

By September 15, 1943, a short six week after it was formally launched, the CCTRN claimed the affiliation of fifteen unions with several thousand members.⁶⁴ The central continued to expanded and by the summer of 1944 it had sixty affiliate unions and was growing rapidly. These unions tended to be small. For example, the *Sindicato de Sastres y Anexos, San José*, was founded in the beginning of 1944 with thirty-six members.⁶⁵ The *Sindicato Agrícola de Barreal de Heredia* (mentioned above) was founded in September 1943 with twenty-four members,⁶⁶ and the *Sindicato Agrícola de San Antonio de Belén*, with Father Núñez presiding over the initial meeting, was founded in October 1943 with eighty-

three members.⁶⁷

By 1945 the CCTRN formed ten Federations with 102 affiliate unions,⁶⁸ and claimed a membership of 13,580. (The CTCR's membership at the same time was placed at 22,598.)⁶⁹ By September 1945, 284 unions had been registered with the Ministry of Labor. These numbers must be used cautiously. Many of the unions lacked leadership and organic unity and a number were paper organizations having very few members.⁷⁰ In addition a precise quantitative assessment of the strength and vitality of the federations and their affiliate unions is difficult.⁷¹

Núñez quickly realized the dangers of over expansion and focused his energies on consolidation through the tactical formation of federations, based either on industry or region. As will be seen, the elaboration of the federative structure in 1945-1946 was intimately tied to an influx of outside funds into the confederation.⁷²

Who were the workers attracted to the CCTRN? Initially, the CCTRN concentrated their activities on national and local government workers, manufacturing/processing and commercial/service sector employees,⁷³ and salaried agricultural workers, primarily in the coffee and bananas industries. Subsequently, they focused their activities on organizing small agricultural producers in the Central Valley who owned small plots of land.⁷⁴

The following partial list of the CCTRN unions, with

membership totals, reflects the nature of the confederation's membership.

TABLE 4. 1

Partial List of CCTRN affiliates (1944)

<i>Sindicato de Empleados de Comercio de Cartago</i>	140
<i>Sindicato de Carpinteros de Cartago</i>	68
<i>Sindicato Nacional de Costuras</i>	55
<i>Sindicato de Trabajadores Municipales de San José</i>	234
<i>Sindicato Nacional de Inspectores Sanitarios</i>	125
<i>Sindicato de Trabajadores de Obras Sanitarias</i>	160
<i>Sindicato Nacional de Empleados de Empresas Teatrales</i>	58
<i>Sindicato de Empleados de "El Gallito"</i>	138
<i>Sindicato de Empleados de Dry Cleaning y Lavanderías</i>	35
<i>Sindicato de Trabajadores Florestales</i>	50
<i>Sindicato Textil Costarricense</i>	190
<i>Sindicato de los Trabajadores de la Fosforera Costa Rica</i>	215
<i>Sindicato de Trabajadores Municipales de Heredia</i>	85
<i>Sindicato de Trabajadores de Construcción de Heredia</i>	40
<i>Sindicato de Empleados de Comercio de Heredia</i>	70
<i>Sindicato de Curtidores de Heredia</i>	51
<i>Sindicato de Trabajadores de Minas</i>	120
<i>Sindicato Agrícola de Desamparados</i>	50
<i>Sindicato Agrícola de Santa Ana</i>	76
<i>Sindicato Agrícola de Santo Domingo</i>	68
<i>Sindicato Agrícola de San Antonio de Belén</i>	70
<i>Sindicato Agrícola de Barreal</i>	65
<i>Sindicato Agrícola de Oreamuno</i>	56
<i>Sindicato Agrícola de Villa Colón</i>	76
<i><u>Sindicato de Trabajadores de Escazú</u></i>	<u>85</u>
Total	2,570

Source: U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica), Dispatch, dated January 10, 1944, USNA, 818.00-506.⁷⁵

The CCTRN made its greatest inroads in the

manufacturing/processing and service sectors, particularly in industries that relied on the labor of women who were entering the labor force in increasingly large numbers. Between 1927 and 1950 while the total labor force increased by 67.7 percent, the presence of women in it increased by 143.4 percent.⁷⁶ Industries of particular high concentrations of women included textiles and food processing plants. This increase was reflective of a number of factors: the development of a more complex economy and the creation of previously non-existent "light manufacturing" jobs; the use of women to replace traditionally higher paid and better organized men;⁷⁷ and the steady pace of inflation, which pushed women into the work force to subsidize family income. It was no coincidence that the single sector of strength in the parish based church organizations corresponded to this growing sector of the work force and was targeted by the CCTRN for recruitment.

Estimates of the sectoral breakdown of the CCTRN's membership is as follows: municipal workers and office workers 23 percent; manufacturing/processing and service workers 14 percent; agricultural workers 18 percent; industrial workers 34 percent.⁷⁸ In evaluating these figures it should be kept in mind that agricultural workers accounted for approximately 55 percent of the economically active population (EAP); industrial workers 15 percent;

manufacturing/processing and service sector workers 22 percent, of which 34 percent were services of a personal nature (mostly domestics). If personal service workers are eliminated the percentage of the combined commercial and service sectors in the EAP is lowered to 14 percent, thus emphasizing CCTRN concentration in this sector. This broad picture of the labor force is brought into sharper focus when sectoral rates of growth are computed by comparing the following two tables.

TABLE No. 4.2

Economically Active Population by Sector (1950)

SECTOR	Total	# Male	% Male	% EAP
Agriculture	148,837	144,127	96.8	54.7
Mining	754	747	99.0	.3
Industry & Construction	41,495	34,891	84.1	15.2
Electricity, Water, & Sanitation	1,607	1,571	97.8	.6
Commerce	21,412	17,339	80.9	7.9
Transportation & Communication	9,465	8,961	94.7	3.5
Services	40,166	14,509	36.1	14.8
Other				
<u>Occupations</u>	<u>8,248</u>	<u>8,004</u>	<u>97.0</u>	<u>3.0</u>
Totals	271,984	230,149	84.6	100.0

Source: *Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Censo de Población de 1950, Cuadro XL.*

In the 23 year period between the censuses of 1927 and 1950, the employment in the commercial and service sectors increased by almost 400 percent. The number of service

sector workers in 1927 was 10,337 and 40,166 in 1950. The number of workers in the commercial sector was 5,496 in 1927 and 21,412 in 1950.⁷⁹ The percentage of office workers grew by 65 percent,⁸⁰ similar to the increases in agricultural employment (69 percent) and industrial employment (67 percent).⁸¹

TABLE No. 4.3

Economically Active Population by Sector (1927)

Sector	Total	# Male	# CR	% EAP
Agriculture	103,377	102,740	91,660	63.7
Mining	408	408	356	.2
Industry	20,134	16,396	17,080	12.4
Communications	3,874	3,747	3,384	2.3
Commerce	5,496	5,126	4,078	3.3
Public Administration	8,308	5,567	---	5.1
Professionals	3,596	2,993	4,364	2.2
Services	10,337	3,559	---	6.3
Other Occupations	5,195	3,635	---	3.2
<u>Unemployed</u>	<u>1,447</u>	<u>791</u>	<u>---</u>	<u>.9</u>
Totals	162,172	144,962	---	100.0

CR=Costa Rican

Source: Censos de 1927, NACR.

These changes reflected a number of economic and demographic transformations in the country. The country's light manufacturing base, particularly in food products and textiles, was expanding. (Three large operations of this nature were the *Saprisa* textile factory in Uruca, San José [founded in 1931], and food processors *Galleto* and *Empresa*

Pozuelo [founded in 1938].) The presence of these jobs (which increasingly went to women) accelerated urban population growth and commercial activity. At the same time the expansion of the administrative functions of government (some of which, like workmen's compensation, were administered in the private sector) contributed to the growth of white collar employment.

Commercial and service sector workers as well as women were unencumbered by traditional ideological allegiances to Communist-led unions. The opportunity afforded by a newly burgeoning sector of the work force was not missed by the CCTRN and they directed much of their organization efforts toward these groups. However, in spite of the combined CTCR and CCTRN activities, it must be kept in mind, that the total percentage of workers organized into unions never rose above 20 percent.⁸²

c. The Process of Organization

There were two principal avenues in which the CCTRN conducted its organizational activities. These were through recruitment drives led by a small cadre of labor leaders accompanied by organizer-priests dressed in their clerical robes, and groups of students.⁸³ This direct action approach was particularly effective among rural workers. Another avenue for the CCTRN presented itself when it was invited to organize workers by management.

Once organized, the unions had direct contact with the CCTRN's local located adjacent to the main Cathedral in San José. The unions then associated to form federations that served as the intermediary between local unions and the confederation. In small workplaces there were union representative in every *fábrica* or *taller*. When the workplace was large it would constitute its own union with its own board of directors. The role of the union representatives was to call meetings, hear grievances, distribute literature and collect dues.⁸⁴

The collection of dues was problematic and the unions often found themselves in a weak financial position.⁸⁵ Dues were of three types: initiation dues, membership dues, and extraordinary monthly levies. Forty percent of the funds were appropriated to cover administrative costs, split between the local and the confederation. The balance of the funds went to promote social welfare, unemployment and sick benefits. There were no provisions for strike funds.⁸⁶

Activities at the Goodyear Rubber Plantation of Costa Rica in the Province of Limón provide an example of how the CCTRN was invited by management to organize workers, and how CCTRN efforts fit into the complex of labor-management relations in Costa Rica. Limón was a CTCR stronghold due to its authoritative presence among the banana workers. Outside of the Central Valley, the banana workers were the backbone of CTCR and the PVP. This relationship which began with the

historic strike of 1934, continued until the civil war in 1948.⁸⁷

Fearing organization of its plant by the CTCR, the Goodyear management invited Núñez to organize its workers. Núñez accepted the invitation and after establishing a union of Goodyear plantation workers, returned to San José. However, working conditions remained difficult and the CCTRN's hold on the workers' tenuous. To strengthen the CCTRN's position Núñez sent Danielo Jiménez to Limón. Jiménez's trip followed that by another union official Carlos María Campos. Campos who spent much of his time in the management compound alienated many of the newly recruited workers by calling a salary increase inappropriate.⁸⁸

Jiménez issued two reports: the first after he met with the workers; and the second after he met with Goodyear Vice President, Leslie Geyer. His initial report attacked the below subsistence salary structure and the dangerous working conditions, particularly in carrying and smelting the corrosive latex.⁸⁹ Salaries were low, ranging from ¢5.00 per day to ¢6.25 with wages reduced due to lost time caused by travel and/or rain, which was frequent in the region. Jiménez computed that the average family of three with one worker required minimum daily earnings of ¢5.25 which excluded the cost of kerosene, matches, cigarettes, clothing, soap and salt. All goods which were sold at the

Company store at excessively high prices.⁹⁰

Conclusions from Jiménez's report were printed in the local press and immediately increased the tension between workers and management. The situation grew explosive. Attempting to calm the situation, Jiménez met with Geyer and issued a second, "corrected" report. In this report latex no longer corroded clothing nor emitted a foul odor, workers were no longer subjected to long unpaid periods, and company prices were in line with those prevalent in the province. In exchange for the more favorable report, Goodyear agreed to enact certain health and safety improvements for the workers (primarily the distribution of goggles in the smelting house), and promised to sell needed equipment (*machetes*) at lowered prices. In conclusion, both the Company and Jiménez agreed that the principal problem of the workers could be solved not by a "pay raise but [by] control of the cost of living in Costa Rica by the government's installation of efficient price control measures."⁹¹

Several conclusions regarding the CCTRN's mode of operation and philosophy can be drawn from this episode. Organizational activities emanated from and were controlled by the central based in San José. The central was sensitive to the workers complaints and its tenuous hold over the workers. Its negotiation approach was marked by compromise and an avoidance to push the situation to extremes: workers gains were to be won through collaboration not

confrontation. Finally the CCTRN showed a readiness to blame malevolent conditions on the inefficacious policies of the national government. The CCTRN's focus on the government's failings as prime cause for the workers problems would increase throughout the Picado Administration (1944-1948). The PVP committed to its difficult alliance with Picado, strongly criticized the CCTRN for its attacks on the government.⁹² However, in spite of what appears to be compromised tactics by CCTRN two important factors must be underlined. First, both the CTCR and CCTRN were adamant in their position that uniform application of the Labor Code was the backbone of worker protection and was an immutable question of national sovereignty.⁹³ Second, the CCTRN continued to promote labor organization and unwaveringly defended the sanctity of the workers' right to strike.

d. Rightist influence in the CCTRN

In his speech of August 2, 1943, Father Núñez portrayed his organization as an alternative than the Communist-led CTCR for the enlightened employer. In the same speech, Núñez went on to announce that it was just such a group of businessmen who helped underwrite the church initiative.⁹⁴ The admittance by the leadership of the CCTRN that they had accepted assistance from wealthy business interests led to charges that the confederation was compromised. There was a good deal of substance to these charges.

The CCTRN accepted aid from "rightist" elements for its inaugural meeting on May 1, 1945. Both the CCTRN and the CTCR had planned to hold major assemblies in San José on the same day. To circumvent what was perceived as the CTCR's monopoly of transport, Núñez accepted direct material aid, principally in the form of bus conveyance made available to him by "rightist elements" interested in the development of the CCTRN."⁹⁵ Further evidence of involvement by capitalists in the financing of the CCTRN was given by Oscar Barahona Streber.⁹⁶ Barahona explained that the CCTRN was "founded as a counterpoise to the CTCR" and it "has been drawing financial support from favorably disposed employers." Barahona was satisfied that this in no way jeopardized the unions' independence of action but acknowledged "in principle some danger was to be expected from this alliance."⁹⁷

Barahona Streber was referring to a group of large coffee producers-exporters that Núñez had been introduced to by of Edward Cuffe, a junior economic attaché in the U.S. Embassy.⁹⁸ Cuffe had arranged a meeting with Núñez at the house of the large coffee exporter Víctor Manuel Yglesias with Howard Lindo, Alberto Dent, Carlos Rohrmoser, Fernando Alvarado, Manuel Jiménez, Rodolfo Montealegre and Yglesias.⁹⁹ All these individuals were important coffee producers and all opposed the Picado government.¹⁰⁰ At the meeting they agreed to subsidize the Catholic confederation

and set the monthly contribution at ¢2,500 (\$445).¹⁰¹

These individuals were linked through Fernando Alvarado who with others had formed an anti-Communist paramilitary organization in August 1944.¹⁰² This organization led by "prosperous young capitalists," recruited and armed shock troops (¢3,800 [\$676] was spent purchasing machine guns).¹⁰³ These troops were drawn directly from workers employed in the business owned by the young capitalists and their families.¹⁰⁴ Aside from its paramilitary activities, the group sought alliances with members of the Picado government, principally René Picado,¹⁰⁵ the president's brother, and José Joaquín Peralta, respectively Ministers of Public Safety and Agriculture. Both these individuals adamantly opposed the administration's strained alliance with the PVP.

How were these funds used by the CCTR? First, they promoted the activities of May 1, 1945. The meeting of May 1, 1945 was particularly important as it marked the founding of the confederation, and a failure at this juncture would have greatly weakened CCTR efforts to compete against Communist influence in the labor movement.¹⁰⁶ The balance of the funds went to develop the bureaucratic and federative structure of the confederation.¹⁰⁷ In addition the funds financed the travel of national leaders: propaganda and educational efforts including leaflets, pamphlets, radio broadcasts, newspaper announcements; and the establishment

of the *Escuela Obrera de Heredia* under the direction of Lalo Gámez.¹⁰⁸

The formation of a federative structure solidified the confederation's hold over its affiliate unions. This change in the CCTRN's fortunes did not go unnoticed. U.S. Ambassador Johnson noted that the CCTRN leadership had "decided to concentrate ... on establishing federations of its present unions." The policy of consolidation has resulted in improving the financial condition of the CCTRN which during February 1945 was "so critical as to force Núñez to consider suspending operations."¹⁰⁹ The consolidation of the confederation through the establishment of regional offices was directly attributable to the influence of these business interests. The inferences made by Ambassador Johnson in April became explicit a few weeks later. After witnessing a rebirth of the CCTRN's fortunes, Johnson wrote that Núñez having started the CCTRN with the explicit support of Archbishop Sanabria as a non-political organization "has by accepting the badly needed financial aid of reactionary Rightists, changed the nature of his movement and placed himself in the hands of a Rightist political group."¹¹⁰

Sanabria was acutely aware of the CCTRN's financial situation and its acceptance of outside funds. Nevertheless he remained confident that Núñez would reject inappropriate demands even at the risk of financial loss.¹¹¹ Sanabria's

confidence was well grounded. In September 1946, in response to accusations, that the CCTRN was using their financial backing for non-union activities, Núñez terminated relations with the businessmen. Núñez perceived the accusation as a technique to maintain the CCTRN in a position of financial dependency and answered that the CCTRN was willing to face "economic bankruptcy but would not consent to moral bankruptcy." The businessmen had objected to the founding and operation of a number of worker cooperative in the Central Valley.¹¹² Núñez insisted that no financial impropriety on his or his confederation's part was involved. Núñez's refusal marked the end of this phase of the financial relationship between the CCTRN and the businessmen.¹¹³

3. Conclusion

The church entered the alliance with the state and the PVP for a series of reasons. First, the alliance initiated a series of social reforms whose ideological origins and practical ends the church was in deep agreement. Second, by entering the alliance the church hoped to moderate PVP influence in the government. Third, the church hoped to use its position in the alliance to significantly expand its influence among the country's working population.

Two efforts, designed to be harmonious, were undertaken to achieve the last objective. These were the strengthening

of the church's spiritual organizations and the founding of a Catholic labor organization. In significant measure these efforts failed. The spiritual organizations experienced little growth and their relationship with the Catholic labor movement was more competitive than collaborative. The CCTRN, once created it became subject to pressures and demands that altered its original intent. Conceived of as a complement to CTCR, it increasingly confronted the CTCR on a range of issues, the fundamental one being the CTCR's Communist affiliation. Its profound anti-Communism combined with an endemic financial base¹¹⁴ to push the CCTRN into political arrangements with rightist forces. This danger, present at the organization's inception, grew as the country entered the acrimonious post-war period.

In offering itself as counter to the Communists, the CCTRN expanded the effective demographic base for union activities. Women, certain factory and agricultural workers, off-limits to the CTCR, could now be recruited. However, at the same time, the increasingly clear political identification of the country's two confederations, elevated the danger that the labor movement would be manipulated towards partisan ends. This process began in 1945, it intensified in 1946, and culminated with the tumultuous events of 1947 and the civil war of 1948.

Notes

1. Congressional decree of November 8, 1940. The response of the church was recorded in El Mensajero del Clero November 1940, 2954-2957. Backer quotes, "In our national ecclesiastic history, the congressional decree on religious teaching in our school will figure in pages of gold." Backer, La Iglesia y el Sindicalismo, 89.

2. The "Proclaimed List" was issued by the United States and Great Britain. The *Junta de Custodia*, which was established in 1942, controlled the businesses, properties and lands of ethnic Germans, Italians, and Japanese on the list. See Chapter III, Section 3b, above.

3. The resolution and manifesto were printed in Trabajo, June 19, 1943. This version was taken from the Earl Browder Papers, (New York Public Library: Microfilm), Reel 5 No. 102.

4. Quoted in James Backer, La Iglesia y el Sindicalismo, 255. For the period 1943-1948, Backer's work relies almost exclusively on Father Núñez's "Informe: Sobre Las Relaciones Entre El Movimiento Obrero Católico Costarricense Y La Autoridad Eclesiástica," (New York, January 1956), TMs [photocopy], Núñez Papers. The *Informe*, an internal defense of his acts and ideology as President of *Rerum Novarum* and as Minister of Labor, covers the years between 1940 and 1952.

5. Trabajo, January 1, 1945.

6. Trabajo, June 16, 1935.

7. Backer, La Iglesia y el Sindicalismo, 97-99.

8. For a discussions of the evolution of the Costa Rican state toward wider incorporation of the popular sectors see, Rojas Bolaños, Lucha Social Y Guerra Civil, Stone, La Dinastía, Joseph J. McGovern, "The Costa Rican Labor Movement: A Study in Political Unionism," Public and International Affairs (Spring 1966), as well as Chapters I and II, above.

9. Víctor Sanabria, San José, to Jaime Fonseca, *Noticias Católica*, Washington, D.C., July, 27, 1943, AACR. *Noticias Católica* was a Catholic publication affiliated with the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC) in Washington, which had distribution outlets throughout the Western

Hemisphere. In 1945 Fonseca became the Washington editor of the publication. See Chapter VI, Sections 1-3, below, for a discussion of the NCWC and its role in Costa Rica and Latin America.

10. Maritain, author of Integral Humanism: Temporal and Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom, was the keynote speaker at the National Catholic Welfare Conference's (NCWC) Inter-American Seminar of Social Studies, "The Americas and the Crisis of Civilization," held in Washington, D.C., in August 1942. He delivered a paper of the same title. At the time, Maritain was Visiting Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University. Sanabria was invited to the conference but was unable to attend due to political turmoil in Costa Rica. However, Benjamín Núñez was present. See Chapter VI, Section 2, below.

11. Interview with Benjamín Núñez October 23, 1975 in Santiago Arrieta Quesada, El Pensamiento Político Social de Monseñor Sanabria (San José: EDUCA, 1977) 70.

12. Quoted from Benjamín Núñez, "La función social de la religión," Combate, No. 4 Enero y Febrero 1959, 32-41.

13. The Earl Browder Papers, (New York Public Library: Microfilm), Reel 5 No. 102.

14. See "Discurso de Excelentísimo Señor Arzobispo de San José Mons. Dr. Don Víctor Sanabria Martínez" in "Memoria de la Primera Convención Solemne de la Confederación Costarricense de Trabajo Rerum Novarum," May 1, 1945, in Cerdas Cruz, "Guerra Fria Y Movimiento Obrero," 7.

15. Those arguing that the CPR was a national oriented party include among others, Cerdas, La Hoz y la Machete, Schifter, La Fase Oculta de la Guerra Civil, Botey and Cisneros, La Fundación Del Partido Comunista. Those arguing the contrary include: Robert Alexander, Organized Labor in Latin America (New York: 1968); Victor Alba, Politics and the Labor Movement in Latin America (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968); Núñez, "Informe;" Roberto Durán, Huelga de Brazos Caídos (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1983); and many individuals in the political opposition, at the time of the Calderón-PVP alliance. This research found no evidence to doubt the national loyalties of the CPR/PVP.

16. The Comintern was dissolved in June 1943. See Manuel Caballero, Latin America and the Comintern 1919-1943 (Cambridge University Press, 1986), 53. Caballero saw the Costa Rican party as the "most important ... [in] Central America and one of the most successful in the continent." He

emphasized the role Rómulo Betancourt played in its organization.

17. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated March 7, 1945, USNA, 818.504-506.

18. Núñez accused the Communist wing of the labor movement of being "under the direction and constant tutelage of the skillful centers of Communists from Moscow or of their American affiliates. Núñez, "Informe," 16.

19. Daily headlines attest to the acrimonious dichotomy in the country's political culture. For a analysis of Cold War tensions and anti-Communist sentiments in Costa Rica during this period. See Schifter, La Fase Oculta de la Guerra Civil.

20. Evidence of the split in the church was an open letter addressed to Sanabria and printed in Trabajo on January 31, 1942. Respectful in tone, the letter denounced the statements of some priests that a vote for Mora would condemn the voter to eternal fire. It argued that the peasants are simple and they do not understand how a vote for a party that pledges to improve their lives could cause such a fate.

21. There is a reference to the *Unión Campesina por la Lucha por Tierra y Crédito*. The union formed around CPR member José Arguedas Prendas in 1941 with the strong backing of the Communist Party. See Chapter II, Section 5, above.

22. Pbro. Rodríguez, Heredia, to the Vicar General Alfredo Hidalgo, San José, July 6, 1943, AACR. Hidalgo was a strong supporter of Sanabria's social agenda.

23. The paper's editor was Father Rosendo de Jesus Valenciano. U.S. Department of Justice. FBI Report, Totalitarian Activities in Costa Rica Today, September 1943, USNA, Roosevelt Library, OF 10b Box #23. The same report classified Sanabria as being uniquely pro-Ally in the church. Though this was an exaggeration, it indicated the depths of the divisions in the church. For a description of the presence of anti-Communist sentiment throughout all organs of the church see, Crescencio Cabanilla Anajada, "Los Sacerdotes de la Arquidiócesis de San José y su Actuación en la sociedad," (*Licenciatura en Historia, Ciudad Universitaria Rodrigo Facio*, 1985), 142-151.

24. Sanabria continued: Priests should "be neither on the side of the poor or the rich, but on the side of justice." See Archbishop Víctor Sanabria, "Palabras Dirigidas a

Venerable Clergy de la Arquidiócesis de San José," September 12, 1945, AACR.

25. The owner of a small dress-making shop questioned Sanabria. "Have you not observed that the same immoral individuals that formed the Communist Party are those that now form the *Vanguardia Popular*?" Blanca de Castro, San José, to Víctor Sanabria, San José, January 28, 1944, AACR.

26. Celino Angel Mora, to Víctor Sanabria, San José, April 6, 1944, AACR.

27. The CPRC renounced revolutionary solutions almost from its inception. In 1931 it put forth its Maximum and Minimum Programs, and immediately stated that its Maximum Program (until there was a revolution in the "metropolitan powers") ran the risk of an overwhelming rightist reaction and dedicated itself to carrying out its Minimum Program. See, Congreso. "Programa Mínima y Máxima de Partido Comunista de Costa Rica," No. 16397, 1932, NACR.

28. See *Partido Vanguardia Popular*, Correspondencia - 1945.

29. "One of the militant parties" was a direct reference to Sanabria's relationship with the Communists. Ricardo Jiménez Guatemala, to Víctor Sanabria, San José, January 3, 1944, AACR.

30. Víctor Sanabria, San José, to Vicente Sáenz, July 23, 1943, AACR. Vicente Sáenz was a highly regarded Costa Rican writer, educator and intellectual who ran for President of the Republic on the CPRC ticket in 1936.

31. Núñez was sent to the United States by Sanabria who paid for his education from his personal, not church, funds. Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, June 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording.

32. Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, May 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording. The influence of Núñez's U.S. education is underscored by historians of the period. Rodolfo Cerdas argues that the fundamental influences on Father Núñez were: 1) the Catholic church, more specifically, Archbishop Sanabria; 2) exposure to U.S. labor leaders and their anti-Communist ideology; and 3) after 1950 the *Partido Liberación Nacional* of which Father Núñez became one of the principal figures. Cerdas Cruz, "Guerra Fria Y Movimiento Obrero, 27.

33. Non-involvement in electoral politics was written into the charters of the CCTRN affiliated unions. Articles 7 and 8 professed the non-political nature of the labor

organizations while permitting acts of a social-political nature that would contribute to the well-being of workers. The near uniformity of the language of the CCTRN charters does not reflect an organic and historically unique development of individual unions. This is in keeping with the trajectory of the CCTRN as a labor confederation directed by and generated from above. The articles quoted were taken from *Trabajo y Seguridad Social*, Sindicatos. No. 538, NACR.

34. Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, May 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording.

35. The CTCR was effectively disbanded immediately after the victory of the Figueres forces in May 1948. In June 1951 all judicial appeals were exhausted. For an examination of the case see Chapter V, Section 4b, below.

36. The paper was under the direction of Father José Vicente Salazar Arias. Salazar was the director of *La Juventud Obrero Católica* (JOC).

37. Víctor Sanabria, San José, to Benjamín Núñez, San José, September 15, 1943, AACR.

38. Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, May 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording.

39. Courses offered at the *Escuela Obrera de la Central Rerum Novarum* included: Elemental Principles of Economy and Politics taught by R. Facio and Benjamín Núñez; Introduction to Labor Law taught by Oscar Barahona Streber and Jaime Lujas; Principles of Political Science taught by Carlos María Campos and Otto Fallas; Problems of Work, Techniques and Practices of Unions, and the History of the Workers' Movement and the Social Catholic Doctrine taught by Benjamín Núñez and Danilo Jiménez. La Prensa Libre July 7, 1944. It is interesting to contrast this with the courses offered by the CTCR's *Escuela Obrera*. Both schools emphasized the legal aspects of the labor movement.

40. Manuel Mora, Interview by author, July 1990, San Pedro, Costa Rica, tape recording. No independent confirmation of this was found. However, the tenor of the remarks are consistent with Mora and Sanabria's philosophic commitment to social and economic justice and their personal relationship.

41. Sanabria wrote, "The *Rerum Novarum* has its own character.... It does not agitate in the ranks of the 'ANTI' but in the those of the 'PRO'... that is, pro social justice, pro workers, pro social obligations." Archbishop

Víctor Sanabria, "*Discurso de Excelentísimo Señor Arzobispo de San José Mons. Dr. Don Víctor Sanabria Martínez*" Memoria de la Primera Convección Solemne de la Confederación Costarricense de Trabajo Rerum Novarum (San José: May 1, 1945). Justifying the collaboration, Sanabria told Mora, "that as it is a natural law that a body has two hands, a left hand and a right, so it is a natural law for the labor movement to have a left and a right." Manuel Mora, Interview by author, June 1990, San Pedro Costa Rica, tape recording.

42. Manuel Mora, Interview by author, August 1990, San Pedro Costa Rica, tape recording.

43. Sermon pronounced by Benjamín Núñez in the *Basílica de los Angeles*, Cartago [August 2, 1943], Núñez Papers, Quoted are the words of Sanabria as quoted by Núñez. The new organization's slogans [lemas] were: "Order in Justice and Justice in Order." "Organize in order to construct. Never organize in order to destroy." "Social liberation by and with Christianity."

44. In a letter to President Calderón in December, 1943, Sanabria reiterated his firm conviction that the "social legislation was based firmly on the principles of social Christian justice as proclaimed in the papal encyclicals." Víctor Sanabria, San José, to Rafael Calderón Guardia, San José, December 24, 1943, AACR.

45. For an excellent examination of the relationship between Archbishop Sanabria's political thought and theological beliefs see Arrieta Quesada, Pensamiento de Monseñor Sanabria. For an historical overview of this subject see Picado, La Iglesia Costarricense.

46. The *Sinarquistas* represented the extreme right in Mexico, during the Second World War, *Sinarquistas* organizations often served as Nazi fronts.

47. In addition, Sanabria was harsh in his characterization of Vicente Toledano Lombardo, the Secretary General of *Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina* (CTAL), as "almost venal." U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch dated August 23, 1943, USNA, 818.504-506. Sanabria was consistent in his appraisal of Toledano. In 1945 characterized Toledano as "not a true Mexican." This was in profound contrast to his respect for Manuel Mora. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated March, 7, 1945, USNA, 818.504-506.

48. For a discussion of the church at the turn of the Century see Picado, La Iglesia Costarricense, 59-66. See also Ricardo Blanco Segura, 1884 El Estado, la Iglesia y las

Reformas Liberales, (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1984), and the chapter on the reforms in Creedman, "Political Development of Costa Rica."

49. Censos de 1927, NACR. A March 1939 article in Trabajo demanded that Costa Rica should have Costa Rican not foreign born priests, especially not those with fascist sympathies from Italy and Spain. Trabajo, March 11, 1939.

50. Rev. Alfred Moreno, Report on Latin American Students, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, (National Catholic Welfare Conference, July 1948,) AACR. The report deemed 1 to 1,000 as the lowest serviceable ratio. To strengthen church presence among the working class population in Latin America, hemispheric-wide conferences of the Acción Católica (AC) were convoked throughout this period. San José was the host city for the 1946 conference. See José Vicente Salazar to Víctor Sanabria, San José, September, 22, 1945, AACR.

51. The JOC was founded in Belgium in 1925; in Costa Rica it was under the leadership of Father Salazar. The LEO was under the direction of Father Carlos Humberto Rodríguez Quirós. For an examination of the division and interrelationship within the church between spiritual activities and social/economic activities see, Backer, La Iglesia y el Sindicalismo, 103-131.

52. Víctor Sanabria, San José, to, Archbishop of San Salvador, Luís Chávez y González, San Salvador, August 12, 1944, AACR. The reference to the limits of material arguments is to Manuel Atria, El Marxismo, las Ciencias y La Filosofía de la Natureleza (Santiago, Chile: Editorial Difusión. 1945). Sanabria thought the book an excellent refutation of Communism.

53. Ibid., 120. Backer argues that Father Salazar was not interested in using JOC to create a cadre of labor leaders with a strong Catholic consciousness, but was, in effect, anti-labor. This argument is born out in a ringing condemnation of Salazar by Father Núñez who accused Salazar of denouncing Archbishop Sanabria as a Communist before a member of the U.S. Embassy. Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, June 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording.

54. Box marked Circulars 1947-1953, AACR. The questionnaire asked the following: *Hay en su Parroquia algun grupo de Acción Católica de Hombres? Hay en su Parroquia algun grupo de Acción Católica de Señoras? Hay en su Parroquia algun grupo de Acción Católica de jovenes (Jocistas u otro grupo)? Hay en su Parroquia algun grupo de Acción Católica de Senioritas?* The responses yielded the following percentages: for men 26 percent yes, 56 percent no, 17 percent no

response; for Women 33 percent yes, 56 percent no, 11 percent no response; for Youth 66 percent yes, 23 percent no, 11 percent no response; for Young Women 63 percent yes, 26 percent no, 11 percent no response. Thirty parishes responded.

55. Muñoz, Necesidad del Fuero Sindical, 24-42, and Luis Alberto Monge, Interview by author, May 1990, Santa Ana, Costa Rica, tape recording. Monge, President of the CCTRN after Father Núñez and until his appointment to the Secretariat of the Organization of International Labor in Geneva in 1950, recalled that the leadership of the CCTRN was weakened by internal fights, divisions within its centrals of (which first occurred in 1950) and the struggle against Peronism. See also Cronica de la Asamblea General de la C.C.T. Rerum Novarum, August 13, [1950] Robert Alexander Papers. The document describes an attempt by Peronists to reduce the power of the General Assembly and replace it with a Presidium. The Peronists were defeated and angrily left the assembly.

56. For internal-party examinations of the crisis see, Partido Vanguardia Popular, Vanguardia Popular: "Trabajo" en su Trece Aniversario: Dos Informes: Circulation y Finanzas (Costa Rica: Imprenta Cartin, 1944); Arnoldo Ferreto, Materials de discusión del 1st Congreso Extraordinario de Partido Vanguardia Popular Año 1944: Informe sobre Organización (Costa Rica; Imprenta Cartin, 1944); Arnoldo Ferreto, Ediciones Vanguardia: Los Principios de Organización del Partido Vanguardia Popular (San José, C.R: Etna, 1946); and Partido Vanguardia Popular, Correspondencia - 1945.

57. Francisco Rivas, Interview by author, May 1990, Offices of Confederación de Trabajadores de Costa Rica (CTCR), San José, tape recording. This CTCR is the contemporary expression of the old CTCR. This theme will be developed in Chapter V, Section 1, below.

58. Father Núñez served in this capacity until his appointment as Minister of Labor under Figueres.

59. Archbishop Sanabria served in this capacity throughout the period under discussion.

60. Víctor Sanabria, "Memorandum Sobre Rerum Novarum" February 24, 1944, AACR.

61. Sanabria, "Discurso" Primera Conveción de Rerum Novarum, and Backer, La Iglesia y el Sindicalismo, 281."

62. Articles 4 and 5 of the confederation's charter mirrored the separation. Article 4 stated that, "The Confederation professes respect to the Catholic church as defender of the workers and recognizes in it the right and capacity to intervene in social affairs. Although supervised by the Catholic church, the Confederation does not depend on the Ecclesiastical Authority." Article 5, stipulated that the CCTRN was open to all religions but would nevertheless "watch to preserve the religious values and morals that form the social well being of the worker. *Trabajo y Seguridad Social, Sindicatos. No. 86, pp. 1-2, NACR.*

63. Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, May 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording.

64. These numbers are questioned in Aguilar Hernández, "Clase Trabajadora," 30. She argues that only in 1945 when the CCTRN was converted into a confederation with 102 unions did its membership reach 5,000.

65. *Trabajo y Seguridad Social, Sindicatos. No. 723, NACR.* By 1950 it had grown to include 115 members.

66. *Trabajo y Seguridad Social, Sindicatos. No. 483, NACR.* By 1951 it had grown to include 73.

67. *Trabajo y Seguridad Social, Sindicatos. No. 481, NACR.*

68. U.S. State Department (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). *Dispatch*, dated July 24, 1944, USNA, 818.504-506. The writer of the Report, E.G. Trueblood viewed favorably the prospects of the CCTRN "the idea of a labor union organized under Christian principles as opposed to Marxist principles is one that may have widespread success, particularly in the Catholic countries of Central America."

69. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). *Dispatch*, dated March 25, 1945, USNA, 818.00-506.

70. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). *Dispatch*, dated October 19, 1945, USNA, 818.00-506. Backer, *La Iglesia y el Sindicalismo*, 125, and Aguilar Hernández, "Clase Trabajadora," 30. Aguilar argues that the dysfunctional nature of many of the CCTRN unions left only 85 out of 102 viable organizations.

71. The reporting requirements stipulated in Articles 274-276 of the Labor Code frequently were not followed, nor was the Ministry of Labor scrupulous in its record keeping. Similarly existent labor confederations were negligent in maintaining historical records. The last conclusion is based on the author visiting, among others, the contemporary

offices of the *Confederación Unitario de Trabajadores*, and the *Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores*, the modern-day successors of the CTCR and the CCTRN, respectively.

72. The 10 founding Federations were: (1) *Federación Agrícola de Heredia*; (2) *Federación Costarricense de Ferrocarrileros*; (3) *Federación de Comercio de San José*; (4) *Federación Obrera de Heredia*; (5) *Federación Obrera Industrial de San José*; (6) *Federación Provincial de Cartago*; (7) *Federación Provincial de Puntarenas*; (8) *Federación de Servidores de la Salud Pública*; (9) *Federación de Trabajadores del Estado*; and (10) *Federación de Trabajadores de Guanacaste. Trabajo y Seguridad Social, Sindicatos. No. 86, NACR.*

73. According to Father Núñez, the CCTRN was responsible for the first collective contract signed in Costa Rica among the employees and owners of the "Soda Palace" a large and popular gathering spot in downtown San José. Núñez spoke of the challenge of organizing young women to strike. Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, June 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording.

74. Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, May 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated December 31, 1947. Perceiving the failure of the CTCR to make significant inroads into this traditionally conservative sector of the rural population, the CCTRN attempted to extend its influence among small farmers at the close of 1947. Between the increased cost of processing (*beneficios*), rising inflation and agitation for higher real wages, small producers found themselves squeezed throughout the 1940s.

75. When this list in the U.S. Embassy dispatch was compared to Costa Rican government files discrepancies were found. However, the discrepancies were not extensive and were likely due to additions or reductions in membership after or before the U.S. Embassy made its report. It is likely that the U.S. Embassy Report was based on Ministry of Labor records that were subsequently lost or destroyed. The Embassy kept a running account of registered unions.

76. According to the census of 1927 there were 17,210 women in the labor force, or 6.35 percent of total force. By 1950 women's presence in increased to 41,885, or 15.4 percent. See Censos de 1927, NACR and Dirección General de Estadística y Censo, Censo de Población de 1950.

77. See for example the use of women by bakery owner De Ford to attempt to defeat a CTCR supported strike. Trabajo, October 23, 1937.

78. These percentages are based on the membership records listed in the previous cited U.S. Embassy dispatch dated January 10, 1945. These percentages are less representative if one accepts the 13,000 as opposed to the 5,000 figure for CCTRN membership at this time. Again, it should be emphasized that these figures represent the early efforts of the CCTRN. Subsequently, it would have success in organizing banana workers as well as compete with the CTCR for the allegiance of the railroad workers and teachers in 1946.

79. See Tables 1.1 and 4.1, above.

80. Churnside, Formación de la Fuerza Laboral, cuadro 5.4.

81. The percent increase in the overall EAP between 1927 and 1950 was slightly under 60 percent. The long arc of availability of labor (over fifteen years of age) in Costa Rica is as follows: In 1864, 68,580; in 1883, 104,804; in 1892, 142,338; in 1927, 276,528; and in 1950, 457,795. Roger Churnside, Organización de la Producción Mercado, de Fuerza de Trabajo y Políticas Laborales, 26. Churnside's sources are the censuses of 1864, 1883, 1892, 1927 and 1950.

82. This is based on total EAP of 271,984 in 1950, and the combined high estimate of CTCR and CCTRN member of 50,000 in 1945, the height of organized labor's numerical strength.

83. This combination of organizers was maintained in order to maximize each groups knowledge and learning potential. Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, May 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording.

84. Luís Alberto Monge, Interview by author, May 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording.

85. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch. USNA, 818.504-506.

86. In general these unions did not maintain financial records until the close of the decade and then funds were invariably small. For a few of the unions previously cited the following are approximate total income for the indicated years: The Sindicato de Sastres y Anexos: (1950) ₡350.00 (\$67.00). The Sindicato Agrícola de Barreal de Heredia: (1949) ₡143.00 (\$27.00). The Sindicato Agrícola de San Antonio de Belén (1950) ₡448.00 (\$86.00) Trabajo y Seguridad Social, Sindicatos. Nos. 483, 481, and 723, NACR.

87. For a history of the industry see Caspar Casey, Limón. For a history of the conditions that led to the 1934 strike see, Fallas, Mamita Yunai. For a broader history of banana workers and the United Fruit Company see, Bourgois,

Ethnicity at Work. This work treats the 1934 strike in Chapter II, Section 1c, above.

88. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated August 2, 1944, USNA, 818.504-506.

89. Jiménez wrote of the rubber tappers. The tapping is usually done far from "the place in which they [the workers] have to deliver the milk (latex), therefore the tappers have to carry it in buckets that more or less weigh fifteen kilos and carry it to the factory ... that is half an hour distance... This milk when dried emits an unbearable smell and corrodes the clothing and shoes and therefore these laborers use more clothing than the usual laborer." Ibid., 5.

90. Ibid., 8. Prices in Limón were historically higher than in the Central Valley due to relative scarcity and the region's inaccessibility. Accordingly, minimum wage levels for Limón were set higher.

91. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated August 2, 1944, USNA, 818.504-506.

92. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated September 18, 1944, USNA, 818.504-506. For a discussion of the PVP-Picado alliance see Chapter V, below.

93. The U.S. government did not consider business owned by the U.S. nationals or directly by the U.S. government itself (such as the Experimental Rubber Plant in Turrialba) as being subject to Costa Rican labor laws. In this case the conflict was over the requirement that a worker receive one month severance pay for every year worked. The CCTRN, the CTCR and the government opposed the U.S. position. In addition, when he was Minister of Labor, Núñez took a very strong stand on the right of the Costa Rican government to force foreign companies to abide by its national laws. Núñez Papers, and Benjamín Núñez, San José, to Edward Miller, Washington, D.C, November 7, 1949, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). USNA, 818.504-506.

94. At the suggestion of Archbishop Sanabria, the confederation's first local was given by Catolina Dent, a coffee heiress. Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, May 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording.

95. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated June 19, 1945, USNA, 818.504-506. Regarding the apolitical stand adopted by the CCTRN, U.S. Ambassador Johnson wrote: "The Rightist elements who are interested in the development of the *Rerum Novarum* and who at the same

time are extremely influential realized quickly that *Rerum Novarum* should not be brought into politics."

96. Barahona Streber served in various capacities with the CCTRN. He was the confederation's Legal Advisor and Treasurer, and served on the CTCR-CCTRN coordinating committee. He was also credited with playing an important, if not the leading role, in the drafting of the Labor Code. See Chapter III Section 4b, above.

97. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). F. Safier, Memorandum of Conversation, dated September 6, 1945. USNA, 818.504-506.

98. Padre Benjamín Núñez, Cooperative Oral History Project, (University of Kansas - *Universidad de Costa Rica*, July 7, 1970).

99. Jacobo Schifter, Schifter, Costa Rica 1948: Análisis, 123.

100. Cerdas Cruz, "Guerra Fria Y Movimiento Obrero," 29. and Rojas Bolaños, Lucha Social Y Guerra Civil, 83. Rojas identified a number of these individuals as supporters of León Cortés. Their opposition to the Picado Administration, helped push Picado into an alliance with the PVP. Rojas names the following individuals: Hine, Rohrmoser, Marco A. González Lahmann, Carlos Gutiérrez, Robert Salazar M. and Mario Echandi J, but does not directly link these individuals with the CCTRN.

101. Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, June 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording.

102. From the information uncovered during the research for this work only Fernando Alvarado was member of both groups. This does not necessary preclude other connections.

103. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated August 9, 1944, USNA, 818.504-506. The organization charged an entrance fee of ¢500 with monthly dues of ¢25.

104. These included, the Costa Rican Coffee House, *La Hortelena*, owned by Rafael Yglesias Bonilla, and the plantations owned by Fernando Alvarado.

105. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated September 2, 1944, USNA, 818.00. During the Figueres uprising René Picado abandoned his position as Minister of Public Security and left for the United States.

106. Held at *Estadio Mendoza* in San José, the meeting attracted at least 5,000 workers. Archbishop Sanabria addressed the meeting and a charter establishing the confederation was passed. Backer, *La Iglesia y el Sindicalismo*, 128. Backer dismisses *El Mensajero del Clero* (May 1945), 113, claims of 10,000 as high.

107. Benjamín Núñez, San José, to A Group of Esteemed Gentleman That With Their Generosity have offered Pecuniary Help to the C.C.T.R.N., September 14, 1946, *AACR*. These included: a Department of Organization with four employees, a Department of Agriculture with two employees, a Legal Department with three employees, a Department of Propaganda with one employee, and a Department of Finance with two employees. The confederation also established lightly staffed provincial offices in Heredia, Cartago, Grecia, Quepos, and Puntarenas.

108. Núñez, to A Group of Esteemed Gentlemen, September 14, 1946, *AACR*. The provincial office were usually staffed with one employee.

109. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). *Dispatch*, dated April 7, 1945, *USNA*, 818.504-506. The report was written by U.S. Ambassador Hallet Johnson. In a subsequent report, Johnson wrote that the CCTRN declined throughout the months of March and April followed by "sudden rebirth" caused by an infusion of funds from capitalists. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). *Dispatch*, dated May 15, 1945, *USNA*, 818.504-506.

110. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). *Dispatch*, dated May 2, 1945, *USNA*, 818.504-506.

111. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). *Dispatch*, dated May 23, 1945, *USNA*, 818.504-506. The Report was based on Johnson's interview with Sanabria.

112. Núñez, to A Group of Esteemed Gentleman, September 14, 1946, *AACR*. Referred to were the establishment of a gasoline cooperative by the *Sindicato Nacional de Transportes*, and the establishment by the *Cooperativa de Construcción* of a system of revolving credit used to purchase materials.

113. Subsequently, Núñez, spoke deprecatingly of the generosity of the "Gentleman." He characterized the amount of money involved as "peanuts". Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, June 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording.

114. The church in Costa Rica was not wealthy. Its most significant financial contribution was the payment of Father Núñez's ₡300 (US\$53) monthly salary. Benjamín Núñez,

Interview by author, June 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording.

Chapter V

The Partido Vanguardia Popular and the Fall of the Ruling Alliance

In 1944 Teodoro Picado was elected president of Costa Rica on the PRN ticket. Lacking an independent base of support, Picado renewed Calderón's governing alliance. By 1946-1947, the PVP had attained unprecedented influence in the affairs of state. Unfortunately for the PVP this was more reflective of the weakness of the PRN and of President Picado, than of their own strength.

Although the end of the war saw a rise in coffee prices, the Picado Administration (1944-1948) continued to be beset by a series of economic and political crises. Coffee prices rose from \$.35 per kilo for the 1944-45 harvest to \$.60 in 1947-48, and the total value of the coffee harvest rose from \$7,488,761 to \$14,189,041. Still scarcity of goods and the high cost of imports drove inflation. The trade deficit expanded from \$15 million in 1945 to \$25 million in 1947,¹ and by 1947 inflation reached 16 percent.² In addition, the mounting public debt placed pressure on the administration to raise tax revenues.

However, far worse than the economic difficulties facing the government were the persistent attacks on its legitimacy and integrity. The elections of 1944 and 1946 were marred by allegations of electoral fraud. Though the official count had Picado (PRN) defeating ex-President León

Cortés by almost a two to one margin, the vote was suspect.³ The government was perceived as corrupt, inefficient, weak and under the domination of the country's Communists. Agencies such as the *Junta de Custodia*, were accused of abusing its powers. The newly created social welfare funds were poorly administered and the government seemed unable to deal with the vitriolic attacks of the opposition and ultimately incapable of maintaining public order. Unlike Calderón Guardia, Picado came to office without a personal base of power. An intelligent and cultivated individual, he was a weak and vacillating politician. His party, the PRN, was personalistic, and held its fundamental allegiance to the ex-President Rafael Calderón. Accordingly, the administration grew increasingly dependent on the PVP for support. These conditions placed a heavy strain on the ruling coalition and ultimately caused a profound crisis between and within the coalition partners. The situation was exacerbated by the end of Allied wartime alliance and the emergence of the Cold War.

At the same time there were fissures in the opposition. Large producers and exporters, led by León Cortés (and after his death by Otilio Ulate), incipient industrialists whose program was expressed through the *Centro de Estudios*, and the labor confederation represented by Benjamín Núñez each had their distinct agendas. The depth of these divisions would become apparent during the electoral dispute of 1948

and the ensuing civil war. However, before 1948, these divisions were covered over by the unacceptable prominence of the PVP in the country's politics.

Events within the organized labor movement reflected the above polarization in the country. The CCTR, originally designed as a cooperative alternative to the Communist-led CTCR, by the end of 1946 had joined the ranks of the opposition. At the same time the CTCR became increasingly dependent on the political directives of the PVP. This chapter will analyze the nature of the PVP, its increased domination of the CTCR, and the causes of the crises in the ruling coalition.

1. The Structure of the Partido Vanguardia Popular

The party operated on the basis of democratic centralism with elections organized by direct vote for members. Lower party organs had to report to higher organs and follow their directives. Discussion inside the party was unlimited before a decision was taken. After it was taken all members were expected to comply with and support that decision.⁴

The basic organizing unit of the party was the cell with between three and twenty members.⁵ Cells corresponded to workplace, or territory: either neighborhood, village or canton. The cells were charged with teaching the party line, organizing and carrying out struggles, and attracting new

militants. Above the cell there were sectoral and sectional committees. Whenever possible, the sectional committees conformed to the administrative divisions of the country. Above the sectional level was the national committee and the Political Bureau. (For a full description of the structure of the PVP from 1944-1947 see Appendix C.)

In 1946 there were 11 sectional committees, 39 sectoral committees and 251 cells in the country. The following table provides a summary of cellular concentration.

TABLE No. 5.1

Summary of Concentration of *Partido Vanguardia Popular* Cells
1946-1947

Section	No. of Sectors	No. of Cells
San José*	8	87
Cartago	2	16
Heredia	4	18
Alajuela	7	35
Puntarenas	2	11
Limón	4	21
Turrialba	-	11
Parrita	2	6
Puerto Cortés	5	25
Cañas	3	7
<u>Santa Cruz</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>9</u>
Totals	39	251*

*Five Vanguardia cells in the Province of San José were not included in the Section of San José. These cells are included in the total.

Source: "Datos Para Un Estudio del Partido Vanguardia, 1946" TMs, pp. 9-17. ACCR.

The greatest concentration of cells were in San José with eighty-seven; the next greatest concentration was in the banana growing regions of Puerto Cortés and Limón. Since *Vanguardia* Sections corresponded to the administrative divisions of the country, it is possible to examine the number of *Vanguardia* cells alongside population statistics to yield a map of proportional concentration. The third column in the following table is a measure of relative *Vanguardia* strength. The higher the quotient of A/B the greater the concentration of party cells.

TABLE No. 5.2

Proportional Concentrations of *Vanguardia* cells
as a percentage of Provincial population (1946)

Province	% of all Cells	Province as % of Total Pop.	A/B
San José	36.6	32.7	1.11
Cartago*	10.7	14.7	.73
Heredia	7.1	7.2	.99
Alajuela	13.9	20.8	.67
Puntarenas§	16.7	7.0	.38
Limón	8.4	5.2	.62
Guanacaste¶	6.4	12.1	.52

* Including Turrialba. Excluding Turrialba the numbers are as follows 6.3 percent of all cells; 11.2 percent of national population; A/B=.56. For Turrialba itself the numbers are: 4.4 percent, 3.5 percent; A/B=1.26. Turrialba constituted its own sectional committee.

§ Includes the banana growing regions of Parrita and Puerto Cortés. Parrita and Puerto Cortés each had their own sectional committee.

¶ Includes Cañas and Santa Cruz. Cañas and Santa Cruz each had their own sectional committee.

Sources: Source: "Datos Para Un Estudio del Partido Vanguardia, 1946" TMs, pp. 9-17. ACCR; and 1946 Anuario Estadístico (1946).

This table reveals that the centers of PVP activity were in the banana growing regions of the country, the agricultural regions Turrialba, as well as the Province of San José or more specifically the capital and its immediate environs. Almost all San José cells were located either in certain *barrios* in the capital or in the cantons that lay adjacent to it. Not surprising there was a strong cellular concentration in the *barrios* occupied by shoemakers in the south of the city.⁶

Since cell size was set between three and twenty militants, total membership in the lowest level of the party was in a range between 750 and 3,000 members. In the years 1945-1947 membership was closer to the higher than the lower number.⁷ Three thousand, which represented the zenith of party strength, was a generally accepted figure for total party membership in the immediate post-war period. Party leaders bristled at the suggestion that the party was numerically weaker than this.⁸ (Communist Party membership throughout Latin America also reached its zenith during this period. It had grown from 100,000 in 1939 to 500,000 in 1947.⁹)

However, as late as 1943 membership accounted for no more than 600 hundred militants in party cells. One year later membership levels had more than tripled. Though the rate of growth was sizable, it should be kept in mind that

membership in the PVP never rose above .5 percent of the total population or 1.18 percent of the country's economical active population (EAP). Also indicative of the party's numerical weakness was the circulation of its periodical, Trabajo. Despite repeated campaigns to boost sales, circulation was about 7,500, or one for every thirty economically active persons.

Numerical weakness, however, did not preclude areas of PVP concentration. Examination of the following table reinforces the conclusions that San José, Puntarenas, Limón and parts of Heredia (neighboring Barba) were areas of PVP strength, while Alajuela, Cartago (outside of Turrialba and Grecia) and Guanacaste were the region most resistant to PVP policies and initiatives.

TABLE No. 5.3

Circulation of Trabajo (1944)

Province	Population	Circulation	Circulation as % of population
Alajuela	134,148	620	.46
Heredia	43,319	516	1.12
Cartago			
(excl. Turrialba)	73,775	514	.70
Turrialba	22,900	310	1.35
Puntarenas			
(excl. Puerto Cortés)	33,719	620	1.84
Puerto Cortés	6,457	500	6.15
Guanacaste	74,461	450	.60
Limón	36,649	925	2.53
San José	207,799	2,500	1.20

Source: *Partido Vanguardia Popular*, "Trabajo" en su Trece Aniversario.

It should be noted that the impact of Trabajo was greater than the numbers indicate due to the practice of reading the paper out loud, particularly in certain workplaces. Nevertheless, the PVP viewed the circulation as "very weak" compared with that of the bourgeois presses.

The PVP continually attempted to boost the size of its membership. There are a number of reasons why numerical strength was important to CPCR leaders. Almost from its inception the party dedicated itself toward an electoral path to power. In 1934 it elected two representatives to Congress and ran candidates for the presidency in 1936 and 1940. This strategy was effective and the party's popular, electoral character enabled it to offer Calderón Guardia the support needed to insure passage of the Social Guarantees and the Labor Code in 1942 and 1943. Party leaders were well aware that their influence rested on popular support for their programs and waged repeated campaigns to increase membership. Of course, the party's electoral appeal was greater than its membership. Mora received 15,000 votes in the 1940 presidential election, and in the disputed 1948 election the party had twelve deputies elected to Congress.

Despite these caveats, the tripling of the party size between 1943 and 1944 was impressive. What contributed to it? In his report to the Party Congress, Secretary of Organization Arnoldo Ferreto offered the following

explanations. First he emphasized that the PVP, by entering into the *Bloque de Victoria* with the Calderón government and the Catholic church had followed the correct policy. Second, the change of name from the Communist Party of Costa Rica to the *Partido Vanguardia Popular*, along with its agreement with the church, removed the stigma associated in the popular mind with Communist Party membership. Third, the pronounced growth of the labor movement, and the increasingly effective work of the sectional committees, combined with the favorable international climate to swell the available pool of potential activists. Ferreto placed cellular membership in 1944 at approximately 2,000.¹⁰

Both the PVP's organizational design and presence in the country reflected a substantial development of the party over the previous ten years. Late into the 1930s the "sectional" level of the party acted as the sole interlocutor between the party's local (cellular) and national levels. The lack of any provision for sectoral committees underscored the party's numerical weakness as well as the embryonic nature of its bureaucratic apparatus.¹¹

However, the party's structural relationship to the labor movement was always clearly defined. According to the 1937 statutes, the Executive Committee of each cell was required to have three members: a general secretary, a secretary of finance, and a secretary of unions. The

secretary of unions served in a dual capacity. In the cell he was to oversee the movement of party militants into union ranks and act as a secretary of propaganda.¹² On the sectional level, the secretaries were charged with coordinating the activities of the cellular labor secretaries under their jurisdiction.¹³ However, as the party developed, these functions became more complex, sophisticated, and rigid. By the mid 1940s the party's secretaries of unions were responsible for insuring that all PVP militants not only join their respective unions,¹⁴ but be the most active union affiliates for the purposes of fortifying the union. Circulars were issued by the sectional and sectorial organs to party members to attend and aid CTCR activities whenever and in whatever ways possible.¹⁵ Similar attention was devoted toward CTCR efforts at organizing rural workers.¹⁶ As will be seen this effort to penetrate and control union activities steadily increased until the defeat of the PVP in the civil war of 1948.

a. Crisis in the Cellular Structure of the PVP

The year 1945 marked the beginning of a crisis in the party that was to intensify in the following years.¹⁷ In spite of the impressive growth of the PVP from 1943 to 1946, the party confronted a series of daunting problems stemming from its role in the country's ruling coalition. Primary among them were the continuing deterioration in the living

standard of Costa Ricans and the alleged inefficiency and corruption of the Picado government.¹⁸ These problems were particularly vexing for the PVP. Significant sectors of the population, including party members at the cellular level believed that the *Vanguardia* was the dominant faction in the government and was in a position to control its activities. This placed the PVP in a difficult and sensitive position. If it openly broke with Picado, it ran the risk of jeopardizing the social reforms won in the early 1940s. If it did not, it ran the danger of losing its popular support. The challenge it faced was to distance itself from the more visible errors of the Picado government while maintaining Picado in power and the social reforms in effect. Ultimately, the PVP failed the challenge.

Most critical for the party was the steep erosion in both numbers and commitment in the ranks of its followers. A large number of militants believed that the party was working in an opportunistic manner by continuing its alliance with Picado. In response the party made a tremendous effort to stem the disintegration of cells. The effort met with partial success: ranks were reduced, but now reflected greater militancy.¹⁹

The PVP accomplished this in a number of ways. It attempted to clarify its relationship to the government. The party acknowledged that the administration was corrupt, inefficient and unable to fully utilize the resources at its

disposal. It was unable to achieve national unity and its pledge to respect individual liberties appeared as an admission of weakness before the broadside attacks of the opposition.²⁰ To counter this, the PVP emphasized the positive accomplishments of the administration. These included pledges to uphold the social gains and the *Código Agrario*;²¹ measures to insure minimum prices to small producers and punishment to speculators; the provision of cheap credit; and the building of low cost housing.

Party leaders stressed the danger that to break with Picado ran the grave risk of relinquishing the ability to maintain the social reforms.²² And after rejecting an open break with Picado, they mounted an intense drive to initiate immediate improvements in living conditions at the neighborhood level. This was to refute the effective propaganda campaign being waged by the opposition.²³ Finally, the accomplishments of PVP national deputies and their municipal representatives (*regidores*) were published.²⁴ Finally the party restated its demand that administration of workmen's compensation be transferred from the *Banco de Seguros* to the *Banco Nacional*.²⁵

In 1946 the PVP pledged to maintain good relations with the government as it pushed for the rapid expropriation of lands owned by "totalitarios"²⁶ and the widespread distribution of land to the peasantry. It also advocated the promotion of a viable electoral code; the purge of all

reactionary elements from the government capable of sabotaging progressive programs; and the employment of energetic means to combat speculation and the spiraling cost of living.²⁷

The Picado government was equally uncomfortable with the alliance. Prominent voices inside the PRN were advocating a break with the PVP including Minister of Agriculture Peralta and Minister of Public Security, René Picado, the President's brother.²⁸ Its 1946 electoral reform, by centralizing the counting of votes, was designed to rid the administration of its dependence on the PVP.

The fracturing within the alliance was symptomatic of wider tensions in the society. As opposition to the Picado-PVP alliance mounted, these tensions were mirrored in the activities of the country's two labor confederations. However, until the end of 1946, CTCR and CCTRN relations were characterized by collaborative efforts.

2. The Period of Collaboration between the CTCR and the CCTRN, 1943-1946

The organization designed to bridge the activities of the two labor confederations was the *Comité de Inteligencia*. The committee, comprised of two members from the CTCR and two members from CCTRN,²⁹ was entrusted with mediating territorial conflicts and presenting a unified labor front. A positive example of these efforts occurred when delegates from both the CTCR and the CCTRN simultaneously attempted to

organize the agricultural workers of Barreal de Heredia, a coffee region about fifteen kilometers west of San José. After consultation and in order to defuse potential conflict, both sides agreed to put the matter to a vote. Two elections were held; the CCTRN won both.³⁰ Subsequently, the committee upheld and monitored the results of these elections.³¹

On issues of mutual interests the committee coordinated the two confederations' efforts. For example the committee petitioned the Executive branch to insure that labor judges were separated from common tribunals and given special training. They also demanded that no union official be fired without due cause certified by a letter from a labor judge.³² In spite of areas of agreement, as early as the beginning of 1944 disputes erupted between the two confederations.

In an April 15, 1944 letter to the Secretary General of the CTCR, Rodolfo Guzmán, Núñez delimited the authority of the committee. He characterized it as an "organ of mutual information and common planning" whose agreements had never been given "executive authority." but should be "submitted *ad referendum*, to the top leaders of both social organizations."

Núñez then turned to the matter at hand, a heated exchange between two members of the committee, Oscar Barahona Streber, Legal Counsellor to the CCTRN and Enrique

Benavides of the CTCR.³³ The issue was the proposed reform of the Labor Code to allow reelection of the executive board of unions. The CCTRN was adamant in opposition to the reform; the CTCR favored it and wanted CCTRN support. In a phone conversation between Barahona Streber and Víctor Cordera, Secretary General of the Shoemakers' Union, the CCTRN agreed to include in the committee's recommendations (*pliego de peticiones*) only on those issue upon which there was mutual consent. Benavides' "forceful" reaction to the omission of the reelection demand in the petition prompted the exchange of letters. Núñez defended Barahona Streber and expressed willingness to have the matter heard before a tribunal drawn from members of both confederations. However, the CCTRN did not alter its position. Subsequently the Code was reformed to allow for re-election.³⁴

This early conflict revealed fundamental differences on how to maintain and transfer union leadership. The CCTRN argued that allowing reelection would facilitate the control of the unions by an entrenched group. Not so subtle was the inference that labor would be dominated by a well organized minority with totalitarian leanings. The CTCR saw the prohibition as a powerful threat to the strength and vitality of the labor movement itself.³⁵ Both the CCTRN and the CTCR admittedly lacked qualified individuals to serve as effective labor leaders. Correctly, the CTCR argued that to limit the period of office of union officials in this

environment was to behead the movement. Ironically, the CCTRN had a greater need for leadership but it perceived CTCR entrenchment as a more dangerous threat. The CTCR also objected to the wearing of clerical robes by CCTRN organizers-priests such as Benjamín Núñez, his brother Santiago, and Francisco Herrera. They argued that this gave the CCTRN an unfair advantage, particularly among rural workers.³⁶

The Comité was in existence for approximately two years. Despite disagreements during this time, it met once to twice a month to share information, coordinate activities and mediate disputes. The fragile relationship, though weakened by rightist influence in the CCTRN, continued until Serafino Romualdi visited Costa Rica as a guest of the CCTRN in December 1946.³⁷ Romualdi, the American Federation of Labor's (AFL) emissary to Latin America was attacked by CTCR head Guzmán as a stooge of the U.S. State department and Pentagon whose main objective was to divide the Latin American labor movement.³⁸ Núñez characterized the attack as obscene and ended all CCTRN/CTCR collaborative efforts.³⁹ However, the charges, particularly the latter, were not without foundation. In May 1946 at a International Labor Organization meeting Romualdi with the support of delegates from Chile, Canada, Peru, Venezuela, and Costa Rica mounted an unsuccessful attack on Lombardo Toledano's dominant position within the Latin American labor movement. One of

the most active of these delegates was Núñez. Among the other charges made against Romualdi was that during the war he was employed by Nelson Rockefeller's Office of Inter-American Affairs.⁴⁰

The collapse of the collaborative mechanism between the CTCR and the CCTRN, spurred territorial raiding by the now rival confederations.⁴¹ In September 1947 a national conference of shoemakers' underlined the threat facing their union caused by the disintegration of some workshops, the practice of home work, and the forced lowering of wholesale prices.⁴² Recognition of the problems did not alter the union's decline and subsequently the decision to allow home work was viewed as a great error.⁴³ The CCTRN was able to take advantage of a shift in the labor needs of the industry and dissension in the union, to organize shoemakers who worked out of their home and for certain large *zapaterías*- such as *Reciente*- during strike periods. The *Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria del Calzados de la Provincia de San José* formally affiliated with the CCTRN in November 1947.⁴⁴ The workers involved were the least skilled and lowest paid of the shoemakers.

3. The Emergence of the Hardline

Cold War tensions struck Costa Rica with full force at the end of 1946. Though this process was already evident in 1945, it was not until 1947 that a substantial hardening of

positions occurred. On the side of the PVP, this was influenced by the establishment of the Cominform and the profound schism affecting the Costa Rican as well as hemispheric labor movement due to the efforts directed principally by the AFL.⁴⁵ An examination of some key aspects of the 1946 and 1947 PVP party platforms outline these tensions.

Between 1946 and 1947 the policy objectives of the PVP underwent significant revision. In large measure the *Pleno Amplio* in 1946 still reflected the wave of Browderism⁴⁶ that had shaped Costa Rica's left. The party pledged itself to publicize the positive consequences of the Conference of Teheran and Crimea. Its objective was to show that only through the means of "mutual concessions" could peace be consolidated and the potential of the international meetings be realized. To accomplish this the party declared that it would move immediately to "seek a direct and frank understanding" with progressive capitalists of whatever party affiliation, including foreign capitalists, on the post-war problems of national production and social legislation. In addition the party declared its willingness to enter into discussions with foreign companies to arrive at agreements that would best advance the national interest. Regarding labor, to enforce its political line, the PVP maximized the number of *Vanguardistas* in positions of influence in the national and provincial organs of the CTCR.

An examination of the CTCR National Board of Directors shows an almost complete overlap between CTCR leaders and PVP membership.⁴⁷ At the same time, the PVP and CTCR undertook a campaign to educate workers with the objective of maximizing their access to social benefits and minimizing worker-management conflicts. The latter phase of this policy opened the CTCR to charges made by the leadership of the CCTRN that it deliberately negotiated "soft" contracts for political purposes.⁴⁸

On international issues the party promised to work toward the democratization of Central America and study the feasibility of Central American economic integration including the possibility of establishing a Central American bank. In addition, the PVP maintained contact with similar organizations in Central America. Approximately twenty workers from Nicaragua arrived in San José monthly for six month training stints before returning to Nicaragua. In particular, the Socialist Party of Nicaragua under Fernando Hernández Segura sent party members to Costa Rica to train under the PVP and organize Nicaraguans living in Costa Rica.⁴⁹ Salvadoreans were also organized in a similar manner inside the country. Finally the PVP promised to strive for worker representation in all national and international conferences called to study the problems confronting the post-war world.

At the end of December 1946 in an article reprinted in

Trabajo, the Cuban Communist Blas Roca condemned Browderism as a deviant development and called for an intense propaganda campaign to reverse its effects.⁵⁰ By 1947, reflecting these tensions, the PVP significantly revised its platform. After a detailed outline of its agrarian reform,⁵¹ the party elaborated its plan for "national liberation." To forestall the negative consequences of an "invasion" of foreign capital the platform called for domestic industrial development;⁵² the nationalization of the railroad, the electrical industry and the ports of Quepos and Golfito; and the completion of the system of inter-oceanic transportation by building a road to Puerto Limón from San José. In addition, Latin American and particularly Central American economic integration was sought to achieve a level of economic leverage when entering into commercial treaties with the United States.

Despite the "disintegration" of the Good Neighbor Policy caused by, what it characterized as, attacks from monopoly interests, the party still held out prospects that the wartime alliance could be resurrected. Accordingly, it called for the formation of a Continental Bloc, organized under the principle of internal democracy, to continue the fight against fascism now defined as those domestic forces opposed to the "prosperity of the people."⁵³

Reflective of the chill in the international and domestic climates particularly as it effected labor, the

1947 statutes significantly expanded the secretaries of unions' functions. Their duties now included monitoring the "thought and acts" of the PVP members, as well as actively promoting a unified labor movement at the local and national levels.⁵⁴ The direct intrusion into the mental disposition of its militants marked stridency and inflexibility in the PVP not present during the wartime period.

Occupation Analysis of the PVP leadership

It is difficult to offer a collective biography of CPCR/PVP leadership let alone rank and file membership for the period under discussion. Trabajo had announced that it was undertaking a survey of its readership. The results, if any, were never published. What does exist are FBI reports compiled and submitted by informants. Though this is a limited source, a number of factors justify its use for the present delimited purposes. First, at the time they were written (1944-1946) the PVP was a legal party and information concerning its leadership was a matter of public record. Second, the information contained in these reports does not contradict other sources (regarding these CPCR/PVP leaders). Third, these reports have been used only for demographic and occupational information, and not their often skewed analyses.⁵⁵ Given these justifications, it should be kept in mind that the data base is small and incomplete. However, it does offer a glimpse into the make-

up of the party leadership.

Of the thirty-eight individuals in leadership positions or positions of influence in the party who were the subjects of these reports, fifteen had professional training - with teachers the most numerous. Workers occupied a similar proportion of leadership positions with shoemakers leading the list. There were far more men than women; however at a ratio of almost four to one, which compared favorably to the number of women in positions of influence in other political organizations. Almost all the members of the party subjected to these reports were born in Costa Rica.⁵⁶ More specifically, fifteen of the seventeen individuals whose place of birth was known were born in the Central Valley, and of these over half were born in San José. Sixteen of the nineteen individuals whose dates of birth were known were born in the first decade of the twentieth century. All these individuals came of age between the Tinoco *coup d'etat* and the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and, the advent of the Great Depression in 1930. Finally, all these individuals with one exception were reported to be from humble origins.⁵⁷

4. 1947: Towards Civil War

By 1947 relations between the two confederations were openly antagonistic. Accusing the government of holding fraudulent elections (in 1944 and in 1946) and corruption,

the CCTRN moved closer to open affiliation with the opposition. In February, a General Assembly of the CCTRN issued a series of declarations. Professing loyalty to the political system and the recently enacted electoral and tax legislation, the CCTRN's Assembly warned that a grave crisis was facing the country. Workers earnings were rapidly falling behind spiraling inflation. What was needed to stem the growing poverty and urban migration was massive investment in industrial production, combined with the distribution of land and credit to the rural population. These demands were in sharp contrast with the positions of its conservative backers and revealed an important division in the opposition forces. Ominously, the Assembly warned that unless confidence were restored in honest government and the electoral system, the "hour of the rebels and revolutionaries" would be at hand.⁵⁸

The first overt manifestation of the deep tensions tearing at the country was a strike by bankers and large wholesalers in July-August, 1947 called, the *Huelga de Brazos Caídos* (The Strike of the Fallen Arms).⁵⁹ The immediate cause of the strike was the sacking of a warehouse by government supporters,⁶⁰ and a harsh police reaction against Ulate partisans in Cartago.⁶¹ The deeper causes were the incidences of fraud and corruption and protest against the recently legislated income tax. Indeed the PVP argued

that the strike (which it called a lockout) was a political maneuver by the wealthy to overturn the 1946 income tax legislation.⁶²

Passed in December 1946, the tax prescribed a progressive scale of taxation, beginning with 1 percent for annual incomes under ₡1,000.00 rising to 15 percent for incomes over ₡500,000.⁶³ Its direct justification was to fund a much needed and universally supported 15 percent increase in teachers' salaries. However, immediately after the law's passage, a group calling itself the *Comité Nacional de Defensa Cívica* formed and strongly opposed the means and long-term necessity of the new tax. This committee was founded by a number of congressional deputies and representatives of powerful agricultural producers including the *Cámara Nacional de Agricultura y Ganadería*, the *Cámara de Industria de Costa Rica*⁶⁴, the *Sindicato Patronal de Cafetaleros*, the *Sindicato Patronal de Productores de Azúcar*, and the *Asociación Sindical de Comerciante Importadores y Mayoristas*. Giving evidence of the imminent political instability, the committee advocated open defiance of the tax.⁶⁵

There were also divisions with the banking sector. The *Banco Nacional de Seguros*, founded and dominated by the country's large coffee interests, had long allied with the opposition. The Calderón and Picado governments attempted to strengthen the *Banco Nacional's*, and the recently founded

Caja de Seguro Social's, influence over the economy. At issue was the administration of large social welfare funds and the direction of the economic development of the country. The large producers and importer-exporters maintained its financial control until the Figueres Junta's imposition of a 10 percent tax on all capital over \$50,000.⁶⁶

The strike lasted twelve days. The banks and large warehouses remained closed and, in the course of events, middle sector women marched in support of the action. The PVP brought three thousand banana workers from the coast in an unsuccessful effort to overwhelm the organizers of the lock-out. The events terminated with the "Pact of Honor" between Ulate, Calderón and Picado, in which the government pledged to hold clean elections, and took the extraordinary step of relinquishing control of the National Electoral Tribunal to the opposition. (It was this tribunal, in the hands of the opposition, that played a key role in the disputed 1948 election.)

Several CCTRN affiliates supported the lockout, and Father Núñez offered direct aid to the women who organized pot-banging demonstrations against the Picado government. These actions were protested by members of the PVP and PRN in an appeal to Sanabria.⁶⁷ Núñez defended his actions, arguing that he was serving the general good in a situation of severe food scarcity.⁶⁸ Although the CCTRN was now openly

associated with the opposition, it disagreed with it on certain key issues. The most important being the 1946 income tax. This divergence between the CCTRN and its capitalist backers underscored important divisions within the opposition forces, divisions that would become magnified in the civil war of 1948.

The inflamed political climate continued. In August the PVP's printing press was blown-up.⁶⁹ In September Mora's car was dynamited.⁷⁰ It was widely believed that both acts were committed by rightist forces. In the midst of these events the CTCR held its second annual conference in San José from September 14th through 16th; it was attended by 150 delegates.⁷¹

In a public letter addressed to workers who had affiliated with the opposition, the CTCR acknowledged governmental malfeasance, the high cost of living and increasing unemployment. However, it blamed these problems on capitalism in decline and called for workers "to open their eyes" and see who their real enemies were.⁷² To help them do this the convention issued its most comprehensive plan to date. It called for the expansion of state authority, vigilant enforcement of existing laws and regulations, and extension of the Labor Code's authority to include all agricultural workers. In addition the resolutions demanded: the rationing of basic goods and the continued operation of the *Junta de Investigaciones y*

Control de Precios;⁷³ the effective application of the enacted income tax and the *Ley Tierras*, which was to become effective January 1, 1948; construction of affordable housing; and the issuance of equal pay for equal work for women.⁷⁴ Also, at the conference the workers elected a new executive council.⁷⁵

The CTCR convention was highlighted by a large Independence Day demonstration to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the Labor Code. On September 15th, 50,000 workers gathered in the *Parque Nacional* to confirm support for the social guarantees and the income tax legislation. The CTCR extended an invitation to the CCTRN to join them. Núñez declined. Reflecting the complete break in relations between the two confederations, he stated that "Communism is not Catholic[;)]... it exploits the misery of the people to serve the interests of Moscow." Pointing to the corruption in the Picado Administration, Núñez charged "that one of [the] principal aims [of the PRN-PVP alliance] seems to be the assurance of lucrative jobs for its leaders."⁷⁶ He then issued a call to the workers affiliated with the CCTRN to rally on October 12th under the banner of "freedom from misery and fear."⁷⁷

Ignoring the rebuke and arguing that it, too, was fighting against misery and terror, the CTCR offered its organizational help for the October rally.⁷⁸ When Núñez categorically rejected the offer, the CTCR filed for

permission to hold its own rally on the same day. After the Governor of San José refused to decide the issue, the Secretary of Government issued parade permits to both the CTCR and the CCTRN. Attempting to foreclose the likelihood of violence, President Picado first pleaded with Núñez in the name of social peace and labor unity to call off his plans, then threatened to hold Núñez morally responsible for any outbreak of unrest.⁷⁹

The pressure on Núñez intensified; Sanabria, extremely displeased by the proposed October rally, prohibited all clergy from involvement.⁸⁰ Sanabria's actions were directed toward defusing the increased polarization affecting all sectors of Costa Rican society and insulating the church from the effects of profound politicization. In an audience he forbade Núñez to participate. Núñez agreed, but at the price of leaving Costa Rica and never returning. At this point Sanabria relented, but said to Núñez, "know what you do is against your Archbishop's will."⁸¹

The rally was held as scheduled and the mouthpiece of the opposition, Diario de Costa Rica, reported favorably on it. At the rally Núñez called for a parcel of land for each producer, an end to the monopoly of politicized unions, and inter-American labor solidarity based on respect for mutual sovereignty. He vowed to fight Communism at the level at which it derived its strength, "social misery."⁸² The leftist press printed wide-spread allegations that Núñez's

activities were underwritten by *Ulatista* forces,⁸³ enabled the CCTRN and its affiliates to monopolize transportation to the capital.⁸⁴

Immediately before the demonstration, Núñez explained the reasons for his activities as follows: the demonstration would "have the character of a judgement against Communism" and against its direct and indirect "forceful penetration of our nation."⁸⁵ For Núñez, the struggle against Communism combined with electoral fraud and bad government to make the close of 1947 a defining moment in Costa Rica's history, a moment in which inaction was abdication before the evil of Communist totalitarianism.⁸⁶

The CTCR also had its demonstration and despite expectations, violence was avoided, a fact probably attributable to intense seasonal rain storms.⁸⁷ According to the CCTRN Vice President Monge, at least 60,000 supporters participated in the CCTRN demonstration.⁸⁸

Though both the CTCR and the CCTRN claimed their actions were apolitical and nonpartisan, their respective fates became inextricably tied to political parties. Whatever remnants of collaboration that existed at the beginning of the year between the two confederations were destroyed by the events of July-August, and October. At its General Assembly in November, the CCTRN declared that it opposed the infiltration of Communism as a "*doctrina*

exótica" and vowed to oppose the CTCR "in the camp of ideas and wherever events carr[ied] it." [Emphasis added.] The Assembly characterized CTAL as nothing but an arm of Soviet expansion, employed to divide Latin Americans from their North American brethren. Accordingly, the decision was made to send CCTRN delegates to the AFL's 1948 January Lima Conference.⁸⁹ The Lima Conference was the culmination of AFL efforts to forge a hemispheric-wide labor confederation. At it the *Confederación Interamericana de Trabajadores* (CIT) was established with the CCTRN as the Costa Rican affiliate.⁹⁰

At the close of 1946 in the name of national labor unity, the CTCR continued to invite its competitor's collaboration.⁹¹ However, by October 1947 the CTCR's and PVP's discourse was as inflamed as the CCTRN's. They attacked the CCTRN's October demonstration "[as] false in its essence as its Central,"⁹² whose sole purpose, they said, was to divide Costa Rica's labor movement. Núñez's acceptance of the Lima invitation intensified the antipathy of the CTCR. He was denounced as the movement's number one traitor for attending a meeting organized by the "agents of imperialism".⁹³ The CCTRN's support for the Clayton Plan, a U.S.-sponsored free trade proposal, was also condemned by the CTCR, who saw the plan facilitating the domination of the hemisphere by U.S. industry.⁹⁴ These bitter events set the stage for the election of February 1948 and foreshadowed

its bloody aftermath.

The divorce between the two labor confederations also reflected division within the Costa Rican Church.⁹⁵ Archbishop Sanabria opposed the October 12th demonstration. He opposed the continued politicization of the labor movement, and although he supported the international affiliation of the CCTRN to a preferably, Catholic inter-American labor confederation,⁹⁶ he had reservations regarding the proposed confederation of Serafino Romualdi. Sanabria wished Romualdi success. However, given the political climate, Sanabria believed, with or without reason, Romualdi's confederation was going to be seen as an agent of U.S. imperialism. Romualdi seemed to him, if well informed about Latin America, determined to interpret these facts in the light of U.S., not Latin American, social conditions.⁹⁷

5. The Civil War of 1948 and the Judicial Dissolution of the CTCR

a. The Civil War of 1948: A Brief Overview⁹⁸

The civil war of 1948 was the central event in twentieth century Costa Rican history. The immediate incident that gave raise to the uprising was the disputed elections of February 8, 1948 between Otilio Ulate of the *Partido Unión Nacional* (PUN) and Calderón Guardia of the ruling PRN. The vote count showed a victory for Ulate (54,931 votes to the PRN's 44,438),⁹⁹ but the government

alleged electoral irregularities on the part of the opposition. Allegations were made that the ballots in PVP strongholds were destroyed.¹⁰⁰ This anomalous situation in which the opposition had control of the electoral machinery arose from the August settlement of the *Huelga de Caidos Brazos*. Indicative of the tribunal's sentiments was action of the head of the tribunal, Lic. Benjamín Odio, who joined Figueres' National Liberation Army before the electoral certification process ran its course.¹⁰¹ Despite its oppositionist leanings, due to the contention that so many ballots were destroyed,¹⁰² the tribunal was unable to certify the Ulate's victory by February 28th deadline. Picado immediately sent the matter to the Calderonista-dominated Congress and on March 1, in a tumultuous session the Congress annulled the election.

José Figueres seized the annulment as evidence of continuing electoral fraud and began his uprising. Figueres had been exiled for an anti-Calderón speech in July of 1942. In exile he worked to build an international brigade, called the Caribbean Legion, dedicated to overthrowing dictatorships in the region. Three governments were targeted: Trujillo's in the Dominican Republic, Somoza's in Nicaragua and the Picado-Calderón government in Costa Rica.¹⁰³ On March 12th the rebellion broke out on Figueres' finca, *La Lucha*, south of the capital. Shortly after the forces of the Caribbean Legion landed in Puerto Limón. The

object of the campaign was to cut the capital off from southern part of the country and secure the airport in San Isidro to maintain supply lines with the Arévalo regime in Guatemala. December 16, 1947, the Guatemalan government oversaw the formal founding of legion. Meanwhile the Picado government was receiving its strongest international support from the Nicaraguan dictator Somoza.¹⁰⁴ There was a good deal of irony in the international political alliances. The Communist-supported Arévalo government was allied against the Costa Rican Communists, while the repressive Somoza regime offered to defend the "*Calderón-Comunismo*."

A number of factors help explain this ideological paradox. First, Arévalo's promotion of Central American union alienated regimes like Somoza's who suspected Guatemalan hegemony. Second, the individual principally responsible for supplying the Legion was not socialist-minded Arévalo, but Colonel Arana. In this regard, it is important to note that the pace of change in Guatemala underwent sharp acceleration (culminating in the radical land reform of José Arbenz) after the assassination of Arana in 1949.¹⁰⁵ Third, in offering support for the Picado government, it was suspected both by the PVP and the PRN, that Somoza's ultimate object was to acquire territory along the country's northern frontier.

The U.S. asserted an ambiguous neutrality, as it refused to sell arms to the duly-elected Picado government.

As the war progressed, there is evidence that the U.S., uncomfortable with both Figueres¹⁰⁶ and the Picado-PVP alliance, hoped that a Somoza-Picado alliance would both be strong enough to defeat Figueres and split Picado from his reliance on the PVP.¹⁰⁷ This, however, did not occur. The Picado government fragmented. Minister of Public Security, René Picado fled to the U.S. and never distributed the caches of rapid fire weapons possessed by the government. To defend San José, the PVP brigades, under the command of Carlos Luís Fallas, were forced to use single shot rifles. In need of manpower, the PVP transported the traditional backbone of their support, the banana workers from the banana regions to the Central Valley.¹⁰⁸ With the capital being patrolled by PVP forces, Picado called for meeting of the diplomatic corps to end the crisis. Figueres now in Cartago issued a series of demands including that the reigns of government be turned over to him, not Ulate. This showed another division within the rebel forces. During the negotiations Nicaraguan forces crossed the Costa Rican border and occupied Villa Quesada in Guanacaste. Caught between an insurrection and invasion, and fearing the loss of territory in the north, Picado sued for peace.¹⁰⁹

On April 18, after 2,000 deaths, negotiations were arranged through the Mexican Embassy in Costa Rica with Manuel Mora effectively representing the government and Benjamín Núñez the *Figuerista* forces. At the outbreak of

hostilities Núñez released all CCTRN members to follow their conscience and offered his services as spiritual advisor to the National Liberation Army.

The outcome of the negotiations, referred as the *Pacto de Ochomogo*, ended the fighting. Mora acquiesced to the formation of a Figueres-dominated government, and agreed to disband the PVP forces and to go into exile. (Subsequently Figueres signed a pact with Ulate in which he agreed to turn over power to Ulate within eighteen to twenty-four months.) In exchange for agreeing to the truce Mora claimed that Núñez made three promises to him: that the social reforms would be respected; that PVP would not be outlawed and, that the CTCR would not be dissolved. Of the three, only the first was kept.

Núñez denied he entered into any *quid pro quo*. Claiming it a forgery, he disavowed a letter committing the *Liberación* forces to the above promises that appeared in La Nación. Mora from his exile angrily demanded that Núñez comply with the promises.¹¹⁰

The evidence is not on the side of Núñez. An agreement signed by him and Picado in the Archivo General de la Nación-México clearly stipulated that amnesty would be granted to all Costa Rican citizens engaged in the conflict.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, in short order the PVP was outlawed¹¹² and the Ministry of Labor under Father Núñez moved to dissolve the CTCR. The illegalization of the PVP

was not an isolated act. It coincided with Organization of American States Conference in Bogotá at which U.S. declared that any government that permitted Communist participation constituted a threat to the entire hemisphere.¹¹³ Reflecting the mounting Cold War tension, the Communist Party of Brazil was declared illegal in May 1947 and the Communist Party in Chile in September, 1948.¹¹⁴

Underlining the different social agendas of the Figueres and Ulate forces, from Mexico Mora applauded the programs undertaken by the Figueres' Junta. Ironically, but deeply consistent with the evolutionary approach of the CPRC and the PVP, Mora warned that the radical nature of the policies ran the danger of an overwhelming rightist reaction.¹¹⁵

b. The Dissolution of the CTCR

From the first half of the 1930s until the civil war in 1948 the dominant focus of the labor movement was juridical reform and effective administrative enforcement of the pro-labor legislation. This lends an ironic congruity that the demise of the dominant wing of the labor movement was ultimately accomplished through an exhaustive legal process.¹¹⁶ It must not be forgotten that the legal process completed what had already been decided on the battlefield. The death of hundreds of CTCR members during and immediately after the conflict,¹¹⁷ the destruction of locals, the wide-

scale loss of employment and the voluntary and involuntary exile of many CTCR and PVP made the *de jure* decision, after the fact.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, the case was pursued through all appeals, taking over two years until a final verdict was rendered.

The accusation brought against the CTCR charged that it had violated three provisions of the 1943 Labor Code. The most serious charge was that it had defied Article 280, prohibiting union involvement in politics. The two other charges were that it had not limited its activities to the economic and social betterment of its members and that it had not complied with reporting requirements as stipulated in Article 269. The last charge pertained to the failure of CTCR affiliates to report changes in its Executive Council in September 1948. A final charge levied against the CTCR was that it used the its local as a garrison in defense of the government during the civil war. To support this accusation the prosecution submitted testimony from individuals held captive at the CTCR headquarters.¹¹⁹

The prosecution based their case on five documents.¹²⁰ These were an October 4, 1943 report made by Rodolfo Guzmán to the Congress of the PVP on his work as a labor leader; a February 17-18, 1945 report made by Rodolfo Guzmán to the "pleno ampliado" of the PVP; two reports made by Rodolfo Guzmán to CTAL, one on September 9, 1946 and the other on December 8, 1946;¹²¹ and a June 30, 1946 report allegedly

presented to the leadership of the PVP by Manuel Mora.¹²² In that report Mora was said to have underlined the intimate relation between the CTCR and the PVP:

The CTCR has been converted into a mere name that rests (vegeta) in the shadow of the Party. The errors of the Party are reflected in the CTCR and the weakness of the CTCR are seen in the failures of the Party...."¹²³

The CTCR defense, mounted by Jaime Cerdas Mora, was four-fold. First, no statement in either the CTCR founding charter or its minutes of Executive Council meetings (*Libros de Actas*) could be used to implicate the CTCR in electoral politics. Second, no barriers to union leadership existed, based on race, religion or political affiliation. CTCR leaders and members were free to choose their personal political associations. If leadership overlapped between the CTCR and the PVP, he maintained, that was a consequence of the exercise of free will, not structural design. Third, changes in executive councils were not reported on September 15, 1948 because a significant percentage of union leadership was in jail at that time. And fourth, Cerdas argued that the CTCR could not be held responsible for any action committed before the date of its formal incorporation as a labor confederation on September 20, 1946.

Cerdas' use of September 1946 as the date for confederation's founding indicated the strength of the prosecution's case. By the use of the date (which was in conflict with the Ministry of Labor's registry) Cerdas was

attempting to absolve the CTCR of any legal responsibility for the CTCR's activities during the February 1946 electoral campaign. The confederation was so committed to the effort that it postponed its annual conference from December 1945 to March 1946 to allow more time for political work.¹²⁴

Cerdas pressed on with his defense and presented the CTCR charter into evidence, which made no mention of direct political affiliation and/or endorsement. The confederation's *Libros de Actas* could not be located and Cerdas charged that the Ministry of Labor was deliberately concealing information.¹²⁵ As to the democratic nature of the confederation, Cerdas presented the testimony of individuals who openly acknowledged opposition loyalties but nevertheless held executive positions within the CTCR or its affiliate unions. These individuals testified that although they were in a minority, there was "absolute democratic liberty in the meetings, assemblies and elections of the CTCR."¹²⁶

On the last charge the CTCR defended itself by arguing that the use of the local as a garrison was not a violation of the Labor Code, rather the site was government property and defending it against attack was an obligation of CTCR members.¹²⁷ Despite these arguments, the First Labor Court ruled against the CTCR and ordered its judicial dissolution on April 21, 1950. This was appealed by Cerdas, and on May 11, 1950 the decision was upheld by the Superior Labor

Court.

Indicative of the fundamental shift of power that had occurred in the country, the prosecution now appealed the decision to the Supreme Court (*Corte de Casación*). It argued that although the CTCR had been denied all legal standings, its affiliate unions had not and this rendered the CTCR dissolution symbolic. Cerdas countered, contending that the appeal was invalid since it was not accompanied by a request to overturn a judgement. The Court agreed with the letter of Cerdas's appeal, invalidated the lower court's ruling and reopened the entire case.¹²⁸

What ensued was a legal wrangle over the jurisdiction of the court. The case returned to the First Labor Court, which ruled that it was not competent to hear cases outside of San José. In so doing, they rejected the prosecution's argument that the place of offense (CTCR-organized rallies were held in San José in support of PVP candidates), not the domicile of the union, was the determining factor. However, the court found that it was within its jurisdiction to examine evidence as to whether offenses committed by the CTCR's San José affiliate unions warranted dissolution. On April 4, 1951 the First Court again dissolved the CTCR and all but three of the CTCR's San José affiliate labor organizations.¹²⁹ The court then proceeded to hold the dissolved unions responsible for all legal costs. This decision was appealed by the CTCR to the Superior Labor

Court, which upheld the lower court judgement on April 27, 1951. And on August 17, 1951 the First Court instructed the General Office of Labor to carry out its judgement.

6. Conclusion

The Picado years marked the high water mark of PVP influence in the government of Costa Rica. (The PVP had twelve deputies elected to Congress in the 1948 election. However, none of them would take office.) The PVP's high visibility within the coalition had three important consequences. On the positive side, it helped maintain and expand the social contract in effect since 1943. On the negative side it caused a crisis within the party, and galvanized opposition to the government.

High inflation, scarcity of goods, alleged corruption, and overt governmental weakness, tarnished the party's image within its own ranks. Party militants questioned the wisdom of continuing support for the government. At the same time, the domestic opposition intensified its attacks on the Calderón and Picado administrations. By 1946 the vitriolic domestic opposition was reinforced by the emerging international anti-Communism that presaged the Cold War.¹³⁰ Opposition to the PVP in government from both within and outside the country, pushed the party to adopt an increasingly hard line on domestic and international issues, and demand ever higher degrees of militancy from its

members.

The growing inflexibility of the party in the polarized atmosphere of 1947 had disastrous consequences for the country's labor movement. With an almost one to one correspondence between union and party leaders, the CTCR lost the ability to act autonomously. At the same time, the anti-Communism of Father Núñez propelled the CCTRN (away from the design of Archbishop Sanabria) into the camp of the opposition. By October the CCTRN and the CTCR were bitter rivals. The disputed election of February 1948 plunged the country into civil conflict and paved the way for the first Figueres government (1948-1949). The government's policies devastated the CTCR. The confederation was physically dispersed and legally dissolved. On the other hand, the CCTRN suffered no repression and its leader, Father Núñez, became Minister of Labor. However, the inorganic growth of the confederation, and its chronic lack of leadership rendered it unable to take advantage of the situation. In 1949, CCTRN Vice President, Luis Alberto Monge, left to join the secretariat of the International Labor Organization in Geneva. Monge's departure left the confederation vulnerable to a bitter leadership fight which was compounded by the presence of Peronist insurgents inside the organization. With the protracted leadership crisis the CCTRN lost its effectiveness.

In spite of this the position of the country's working

class did not deteriorate. The Figueres government destroyed the remnants of the wartime coalition, *Bloque Victoria*. The PRN was dispersed, the PVP outlawed, and the church subject to bitter attack. However, Figueres' social program was in concert with the evolutionary expansion of the social function of the state, and the social contract in effect since 1943 was maintained.

Notes

1. Cerdas Cruz, "Costa Rica After 1930," 289.
2. See Table 3.1, above.
3. Cerdas Cruz, "Costa Rica After 1930," 285. Picado received 82,173 votes and Cortés 44,435.
4. Datos Para Un Estudio del Partido Vanguardia, 18, ACCR.
5. The cell was defined as a revolutionary family where members met to discuss, listen and cooperate on issues concerning local and national problems. Party materials were required to be read collectively to raise the consciousness of members. Cells were scheduled to meet every fifteen days. Ferreto, Los Principios de del Partido Vanguardia Popular 14. From the sectional correspondence examined cell meetings followed the above guidelines. See Partido Vanguardia Popular, Correspondencia - 1945.
6. Acuña "Vida Cotidiana 229.
7. In 1944 the average cell had eighteen members. Ferreto, Materiales de discusión del Partido Vanguardia Popular, 1944, 3.
8. Mora placed the party's strength at 3,000. Mora "Debemos Entregarlo Todo Para Alcanzar La Victoria-1947," in Discursos, 197-211.
9. Leslie Bethell and Ian Roxborough, "Latin America between the Second World War and the Cold War: Some Reflections on the 1945-1948 Conjunction," Journal of Latin American Studies (May 1988): 167-189.
10. Reports from the Sectional Committees provided the following provincial analysis. San José - 45 cells with approximately 650 members; Alajuela - 7 cells with 215 members; Heredia -11 cells, 180 members; Cartago (excluding Turrialba) -4 cells, 96 members; Turrialba -5 cells, 100 members; Puntarenas --15 cells, 224 members; Limón -8 cells, 67 members; Guanacaste -2 cells 40 plus members. Totals 92 cells and over 1,650 members. Ferreto, Principios de Organización del Partido Vanguardia. In 1945 PVP membership in the various cells in San José rose slightly to 697, in spite of the erosion and disintegration of some cells. Annual Report for 1945, Partido Vanguardia Popular, Correspondencia - 1945.

11. See Partido Comunista de Costa Rica, Estatutos de Partido Comunista de Costa Rica, 1937. (Costa Rica: 1937).

12. Ibid., 8.

13. Ibid., 15.

14. For an example of a directive urging all PVP members to belong to their respective unions see, Circular dated June 2, 1944, Partido Vanguardia Popular, Correspondencia - 1945.

15. Circular dated July 5, 1945, Partido Vanguardia Popular Correspondencia - 1945.

16. Circular dated June 21, 1945, Partido Vanguardia Popular Correspondencia - 1945. Part of the text of the circular read as follows. "Es necesario y urgente que esos mitines tengan el mayor éxito posible. Los camaradas responsables de esos sectores deberán esforzarse por movilizar el mayor número de gente possible a cada uno de esos mitines." The meetings in question were to be held in Uruca and Tibas on July 3 and 8, 1945, respectively.

17. Ferreto, Materiales de discusión del Partido Vanguardia Popular, 1944, 3.

18. Picado, who had no popular support of his own, was well-known for his anti-Communist sentiments.

19. Circular dated October 5, 1945 and Annual Report for 1945, Partido Vanguardia Popular, Correspondencia - 1945.

20. The opposition ran a vicious campaign attacking the Picado government. Opposition cartoonists were fond of portraying the Picado Administration along with the PVP as pimps proffering the largesse of the government to the highest bidders. This campaign was effective in eroding popular support away from the PVP and CTCR.

21. The Code promised to distribute up to 20,000 hectares of land; its implementation was interrupted by the Revolution of 1948.

22. "Si nosotros rompemos con el Gobierno, ... creamos dos posibilidades: la de que el Gobierno se debilite hasta correr el peligro de derrumbarse o la de que trate de sostenerse haciéndole concesiones a la reacción." Mora, "No estamos satisfechos con algunas actuaciones de este Gobierno - 1945" in Discursos, 184.

23. The campaign carried out against the PVP was vitriolic. Mora wrote that never has such hatred been directed toward the PVP than during this period. He reasoned that a flexible party confronting national problems was perceived as far more dangerous by "backward looking capitalists" than a small sectarian party on the margins of the country's politics. From, "*Debemos Entregarlo Todo Para Alcanzar La Victoria - 1947*," Mora, Discursos, 197-211.

24. For example see, *Partido Vanguardia Popular, Por Que Lucha Vanguardia Popular*, (San José: 1945.) The pamphlet lists among other PVP victories the construction of low cost housing and the law punishing those who speculated in basic foodstuff.

25. *Comité Seccional de San José de Vanguardia Popular, Hemos tenido una política incorrecta*, (San José: 1945.) The relationship between the PVP and the Banco Nacional warrants further investigation. The presence of PVP members or supporters among various levels in the banco's bureaucracy may explain the continual push on the part of the PVP and the CTCR for an expanded role for the bank in the administration of social welfare programs. Some PVP members were forced to resign from the party due to the banco's prohibition against its employees from taking part in partisan political activities. Without significantly additional research it is impossible to determine how many individuals were involved. See Letter dated December 9, 1945. *Partido Vanguardia Popular, Correspondencia - 1945*.

26. This was a direct reference to the properties controlled by the *Junta de Custodia*. The PVP wanted these lands expropriated to foster a significant land reform and forestall a reactionary backlash. For a discussion of the junta see Gamboa, *Costa Rica En La Segunda Guerra Mundial*, 140-150 and Chapter III, Section 3b, above.

27. The PVP party Platform is found in, *Datos Para Un Estudio del Partido Vanguardia, NACR*. 28-29. For a discussion of the platform see, Cerdas and Contreras, *Los Años 40*, 115-138.

28. Interview with Manuel Mora in U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). *Dispatch*, dated October 19, 1944, *USNA*, 818.504-506.

29. An agreement to this effect was signed between the CTCR and the CCTR. See Phillip Williams, *The Catholic Church and Politics in Nicaragua and Costa Rica* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), 97-120. The work, focused on the modern period, does provide an historical overview. See also, Backer, *La Iglesia y el Sindicalismo*, 131.

30. Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, May 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording. The same event was retold by Manuel Mora. Manuel Mora, Interview by author, June 1990, San Pedro, Costa Rica, tape recording.

31. Other examples of collaboration included Mora's use of his influence in the government to have Father Núñez appointed to a post in the *Caja de Seguros*, and have the Ministry of Labor donate building to serve as the local for the CCTRN. Manuel Mora, Interview by author, August 1990, San Pedro, Costa Rica, tape recording. Núñez concurred with the early shows of support. However, he viewed the donation of the local as a show of even-handedness because the government had already donated a local to the CTCR. Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, May 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording.

32. Trabajo, April 8, 1944.

33. Benjamín Núñez, San José, to Rodolfo Guzmán, San José, April 15, 1944, AACR. The letter was in response to a March 29, 1944 letter from Guzmán to Núñez on this subject, which presumably contained a demand that Oscar Barahona Streber resign from the *Comité*.

34. Reelection was prohibited by article 276 clause a of the Labor Code. Ruiz Valverde, comp., Código de Trabajo de Agosto 23, 1943. It was reformed to allow reelection by Law No. 25, November 17, 1944, Colección de Leyes y Decretos, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1945).

35. In a call for Vanguardia party members to attend a meeting announced by the construction workers for December 17, 1944, Federico Caravajal, *Seccional Secretario Sindical*, warned "recuerdan que el sindicato tiene gran número de militantes reaccionarios y que por la apatios y la falta de vision de los camaradas pueden caer en manos de la reacción... y no solo en esto Sindicato, sino que la maniobra la piensan llevar a todos los Sindicatos en vista de que perdieron el proyecto de 'no reelección' en el Congreso, que es lo que ellos pretendian." Federico Caravajal, to members of the cell, Antonio Hernández, n.d., *Partido Vanguardia Popular*, Correspondencia - 1945. The letter was written after October 27, 1944 and before the law was reformed on November 14, 1944.

36. Backer, La Iglesia y el Sindicalismo, 134.

37. Writing still in a period of collaboration, Trabajo reported that the CCTRN and the CTCR are organizations "that advance on distinct lines, but toward the same ends. However, to proceed along the path taken by the CCTRN would lead very soon to the fall of the government and with it all gains that were obtained with the loyal and valuable help of their own

Archbishop." The "path taken" was a reference to the acceptance of funds from capitalists. Trabajo, April 28, 1945.

38. The CTCR consistently attacked the AFL, accusing it of being allied with capitalists and imperialists, and trying to divide the Inter-American labor movement. According to the CTCR, AFL unions were characterized by high quotas of entry, high dues, discrimination against Latins and Blacks, and by a leadership disposed to act against the best interests of the rank and file. For a similar characterization of the AFL (though excluding the polemic of the final point) see Gerald Rosenblum, Immigrant Workers: Their Impact on American Labor Radicalism (New York: Basic Books, 1973). The CTCR was also critical of their organizational structure, which, they argued, was tied to the workplace not the industry. Trabajo, March 2, 1946.

39. Núñez met Romualdi previously in the United States. Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, May 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording. It is fair to speculate that the introduction came through the offices of the Catholic University of America and/or the National Catholic Welfare Conference. See Chapter VI Section 3, below. Although it may have come via the implementation of a grant Romualdi received from Columbia University in the early 1940s to train trade-unionists. Jessie Friedman, Interview by author, August 1989, transcript.

40. Ronald Radosh, American Labor and United States Foreign Policy (New York: Random House, 1969), 348-371.

41. However, it should not be assumed that this marked the beginning of the competition for union affiliation. For example, a year earlier five unions affiliated with the CCTRN joined the CTCR. These included sanitation workers, Gallito Coffee workers, Sanitary Inspectors Association, Dry Cleaning workers and the Erizo Textile Workers in Alajuela. CTAL News, November 18, 1945, AUOM. CTAL News was the English language version of the Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina's Noticiero CTAL.

42. Trabajo, September 27, 1947.

43. Eduardo Mora, Interview by author, June 1990, San Pedro, Costa Rica, tape recording.

44. Trabajo y Seguridad Social, Sindicatos, No. 73, NACR.

45. The Comintern was dissolved in June 1943 it was replaced by the Cominform in 1947.

46. Earl Browder was head of the United States Communist Party (CPUSA) during the Second World War. His policy were marked by efforts to attain a united front of all progressive forces to combat the fascist threat. In 1944 he dissolved the CPUSA and formed the Communist Political Association of the United States. After the Second World War his collaborationist approach fell under intense attack from Communist hardliners. The most famous of these attacks was mounted by the French Communist, Jacques Duclos. For an insider view of the USCP during Browder years, see George Chaney, A Long Journey (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968) 137-149.

47. The CTCR *Directiva* included: Rodolfo Guzmán, Víctor E. Cordero, Edgar Brenes, Oscar Zúñiga, Efraim Rojas, José Barquero, Roberto Camacho, Carlos Luís Fallas, Fernando Aguilar, Bernardo Villafañe, Carlos Delgado, Asel Sánchez, Enrique Benavides, Carlos Luís Sáenz, Humberto González, Rigoberto Alvarez Marota, Guillermo Barquero, Jaime Cerdas Mora and Francisco Chaverri. Of the nineteen individuals listed, at least fourteen were PVP members. Another tactic employed by the PVP to fortify the union structure was to designate a liaison in each cell to facilitate the entrance of PVP militants into CTCR ranks. Datos Para Un Estudio del Partido Vanguardia, 28-29, NACR.

48. Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, June 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording. It is impossible to prove or disprove such charges. Cases in which they were made were in regard to the National Light Company, and the *Tabacalera Costarricense*. See U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated June 19, 1945, USNA, 818.504-506, and U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated April 7, 1945, USNA, 818.504-506. The CCTRN leadership vigorously accused the CTCR of selling out the workers and vitiating the social Christian justice provision embedded in the 1943 Labor Code.

49. There were over twenty-five Nicaraguans in these committees. Datos Para Un Estudio del Partido Vanguardia, 26-27, NACR. In an interview with the U.S. Embassy in the latter part of 1944, Mora expressed confidence that the PVP would be able to effect fundamental social and economic change in Nicaragua without resorting to armed insurrection. This was due primarily to Somoza's growing isolation from Nicaraguan capitalists caused by his avarice. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated October 19, 1944, USNA, 818.504-506. For an examination of the Nicaraguan labor movement at this time see, Jeffrey Gould, "For an Organized Nicaragua: Somoza and the Labor Movement, 1944-1948," Journal of Latin American Studies, (November 1987): 353-387.

50. Trabajo, December 21, 1946.

51. The party's program for de-colonization and agrarian reform was based on the expropriation of uncultivated lands above specified reserve limits. These limits were rather high, above 1,000 hectares in wooded areas, and above 2,000 hectares in cultivated lands. The program also called for the establishment of an Office of Agrarian Credit in the *Banco Nacional*; the imposition of an additional tax on uncultivated lands above the specified limits; the prohibition of warehouses from withholding produce from consumption; the reform of laws regulating the relationship between processors (*beneficiadores*) and producers to benefit the latter, the formation of nuclei of agrarian production, and the creation of Department of Commercialization of Exports housed in the *Banco Nacional*.

52. Industrial production included perfecting the development of national industries (textiles and light manufacturing) by raising the level of technology and the quality of the product and by incorporating the highest level possible of Costa Rican labor in such industries as rubber, abaca and wood. The country's coffee industry was to be maintained and amplified by expanding export markets in concert with other Latin American coffee producers and the creation of a Department of Harvest Exportation within the *Banco Nacional* to promote exports and secure the best prices. Finally, technical education was to receive special attention.

53. Partido Vanguardia Popular, Estatutos de Partido Vanguardia Popular - 1947, 44-511.

54. *Ibid.*, Article 37.

55. The reports that date from the wartime alliance between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. are muted in their anti-Communist bias. However, in the post-war period, when called on to "evaluate" the nature and policies of the Costa Rican Communists, the analyses were in many cases unsupportable. For example, the FBI divided the "so-called" Costa Rican Communists into three groups. According to the FBI informants, the first group even though they were Costa Ricans would support the Soviet Union against Costa Rica; the second group were those opportunists who although they now praise the U.S.S.R. would "in the case of emergency" support Costa Rica; and the last group, those who were the majority of the party did not fully understand Communism, were loyal to Costa Rica, and were merely in the party to obtain "as many personal advantages as possible." U.S. Department of Justice. J. E. Hoover to Departments of State Navy and War, FBI Report dated July 26, 1946, USNA, 818.00. It is of note that shortly after

the wars' end the term "intelligent" was replaced by the "opportunistic" when describing Communists.

This analysis was flat out refuted by the actions of PVP/CTCR leaders. The party's leadership clearly realized that it was firmly contained in the geo-political sphere of the United States and within it demanded that Costa Rican national sovereignty be respected. Consideration for national sovereignty included respect for its democratic traditions. For this reason, the PVP opposed Calderón's coup attempt against Figueres in December of 1948 though it may have led to a reinstatement of their political power. Mora and other PVP leaders (i.e. Rodolfo Guzmán) argued that invasion from Nicaragua, and the Calderón-Somoza alliance violated Costa Rica's national sovereignty, even though their party was outlawed and they were in exile. See Manuel Mora, Mexico, to Víctor Sanabria, San José, June 29, 1948, AACR.

56. Only the birth place of Pilar Nicolasa Bolaños was uncertain and believed to be El Salvador.

57. U.S. Department of Justice. FBI Dispatches dated November 2, 1944 and September 10, 1945, USNA, 818.00.

58. *Episcopado Odio*, *Correspondencia* 1950-1954, AACR. Though it was located in a folder marked 1950, by reference to the passage of recent land and income tax legislation (December 1946) the document was written in February 1947.

59. For accounts of the July-August events see, Ameringer, Don Pepe, 34-45. Bell, Crisis in Costa Rica: The 1948 Revolution, Chapter 6. Schifter, Costa Rica 1948: Análisis. See also, Aguilar Bulgarelli, Costa Rica Y Sus Hechos Políticos. For an anti-government testimonial see, Durán, Huelga de Brazos Caídos.

60. The pejorative connotations of the word "sacking" are, perhaps, undeserved. Many government and PVP supporters were convinced that high prices and product scarcity were caused by hoarding and speculation in a deliberate attempt on the part of reactionary forces to sabotage the social reforms.

61. Otilio Ulate was the owner and publisher of the opposition Diario de Costa Rica. He ran against Calderón Guardia on the Partido Unión Nacional ticket in the disputed election of 1948. Ulate served as President from 1949 to 1953. For a recent biography see, Torres, Otilio Ulate.

62. Trabajo, August 2, 1947.

63. Law No. 837, December 1946, Leyes y Decretos, (San José: Imprenta Nacional, 1947). For an examination of the role the Impuesto Sobre Rentas played in the events of 1947 and 1948

see Rojas Bolaños, Lucha Social Y Guerra Civil, 122. Rojas suggests that opposition to the law by agricultural interests was an important factor leading to the civil conflict.

64. At the beginning of the Picado Administration Carlos Yglesias M. was Pro-Secretario of the organization. Curia, Alfredo Sasso Robles, Secretary of the *Cámara de Industria de Costa Rica*, to Víctor Sanabria, San José, July 20, 1944, AACR.

65. Diario de Costa Rica, December 22, 1946. The committee was comprised of key individuals in the country's political and economic establishment. It included lawyers Fernando Volio, who was elected deputy to Congress from Cartago in 1946; Juan Batista Ortiz; Jaime Solera who was a prominent anti PRN-PVP businessman; Manuel Francisco Jiménez Ortiz, a member to the Constituent Assembly in 1949; Dr. Antonio Peña Chavarría, elected deputy to Congress from San José in 1946; Dr. Carlos Luis Valverde; Dr. José Víctor; Mariano Cortés, an opposition politician; Ramon Herrero and Alfred Hernández.

66. Cerdas Cruz, "Costa Rica After 1930," 296.

67. The Men and Women of the *Partido Vanguardia Popular* and *Partido Republicana Nacional*, San José, to Víctor Sanabria. San José, August 14, 1947, AACR.

68. Núñez, "Informe," 36.

69. Ameringer, Don Pepe, 44.

70. La Ultima Hora, September 25, 1947.

71. Trabajo, September 20, 1947.

72. Trabajo, September 27, 1947.

73. This was one of a number of state bodies created under the wartime *Junta de Defensa de la Económica*. For a comprehensive list of Costa Rica's wartime measures see Rojas Suárez, Costa Rica en la Segunda Guerra Mundial, 273-315.

74. Trabajo, October 4, 1947.

75. The National Committee of the CTCR was as follows: Secretary General, Rodolfo Guzmán; Sub-secretary General, Víctor Cordero; Secretary of Organization, Antonio Vargas Sibaja; Secretary of Finance and Statistics, Oscar Zuniga Calvo; Secretary of Press and Propaganda, Rob. Camacho Segura; Secretary of Work Conflicts, Ansel Sanchez Bagnarellos; Secretary of Legal Affairs, Jaime Cerdas Mora; Secretary of Peasant Action Ramón F. Córdoba Córdoba; Secretary of Youth Action, Fenando Hernández Ortiz; Secretary of Education and

Culture, Danilo Hernández Jácome; Secretary of Correspondence, Gonzalo Solano Castillo; Secretary of Acts, Manuel Camacho Segura; Fiscal General, Manuel Solera Solera. In addition the National Committee had the participation of the workers in the following industries: shoes, metallurgical, printing, wood, clothing, retail commerce, communications, drivers, construction, nurses, agriculture, baking, iron, stevedores, aviation, banana and hemp. Trabajo, September 20, 1947.

76. Núñez's statement quoted in U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated September 18, 1947, USNA, 818.504-506.

77. As with the *Huelga de Brazos Caídos*, the Demonstration of October 12th is discussed in Ameringer, Don Peppe, 34-45; Bell, Crisis in Costa Rica: The 1948 Revolution, Chapter 6; Schifter, La Fase Oculta de la Guerra Civil Schifter, 1982: Cerdas Cruz, "Guerra Fria Y Movimiento Obrero;" Backer, La Iglesia y el Sindicalismo, 144-151. Backer's account is taken primarily from Núñez, "Informe," 37-42.

78. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated September 18, 1947, USNA, 818.504-506. Trabajo, September 20, 1947.

79. In an open letter to Núñez in La Tribuna, September 26, 1947, Picado wrote "if in this mass demonstration there unfortunately should occur incidents or disorders, the thing would be still worse for all. You would be blamed for having organized and stimulated it at a moment of great political excitement." Picado continued "... you, in addition to your outstanding role as a labor leader, have a very high ministerial calling... you would not remain exempt from greater responsibility or at least and at best, of grief and disgust which weigh heavily on a secular person, but which to every Catholic are specially painful when falling upon one of its pastors." The translation is taken from U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated October 2, 1947, Enclosure 1, USNA, 818.504-506.

80. The prohibition was communicated through an ecclesiastical circular. A letter from Santiago Núñez to Sanabria dated October 3, 1947 and Sanabria's response of October 6, 1947 make explicit reference to a circular sent at the close of September. Only Santiago Núñez was given permission to join his brother on October 12th. See AACR, correspondence files and Núñez, "Informe."

81. Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, May 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording. Núñez argued that if the demonstration were cancelled, it would be viewed as a victory by CCTRN's enemies and a betrayal by its friends. Núñez's

account was, in all major points, identical to his *Informe* written twenty-five years earlier.

82. Diario de Costa Rica fully covered the October 12 rally and Núñez speech. It placed the size of the rally at 50,000 and warmly congratulated the CCTRN. Diario de Costa Rica, October 13, 1947.

83. See Trabajo, October 18, 1947; and, La Ultima Hora, September 27, 1947. The La Ultima Hora article quoting "un viejo abogado," castigated Núñez for being ignorant of the intricacies of Costa Rican politics and letting the CCTRN, whose growth had no organic logic, to be used by powerful elites.

84. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated October 2, 1947, USNA, 818.504-506. When questioned about the 1947 assistance, Núñez did not deny it. Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, June 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording.

85. Benjamín Núñez, San José, to Víctor Sanabria, San José, October 11, 1947, AACR. Núñez went on to define the demonstration as a positive fight for the benefit of the working class.

86. Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, June 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording.

87. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated October 17, 1947, USNA, 818.504-506. It is interesting to point out that the tenor of these dispatches are hostile to the PVP and the CTCR in contrast with early reports. Before 1947, relations between the U.S. Embassy and the PVP (particularly with Manuel Mora) were cordial, if not warm. Embassy dispatches were consistently respectful regarding Mora's intelligence and integrity. Mora counted certain Embassy personnel among his friends. Manuel Mora, Interview by author, August 1990, San Pedro, Costa Rica, tape recording. By 1947 Embassy personnel were reflecting the increased polarity in Costa Rican politics and the Cold War environment. The shift of this perspective and its effect on Costa Rica is the principal thesis of Schifter, La Fase Oculta de la Guerra Civil.

88. Luís Alberto Monge, San José, to Serafino Romualdi, Washington, D.C., October 16, 1947, Serafino Romualdi Papers, 136-67, L-MDC, Box 3 File folder 1. The letter which served as a report to Romualdi made repeated references to the "apolitical" nature of the demonstration.

89. Diario de Costa Rica, November 25, 1947. One hundred delegates attended the CCTRN assembly in San José.

90. In 1950 CIT became the Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores (ORIT). For discussions of AFL involvement in Latin America see Alba, Politics and the Labor Movement; Alexander, Organized Labor in Latin America; Serafino Romualdi, Presidents and Peons: Recollections of a Labor Ambassador in Latin America (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1967); and Radosh, American Labor Foreign Policy. A far more critical view of AFL activities is found in Hobart Spalding, Labor in Latin America (New York: 1973). For the latter period see Hobart Spalding, "Unions Look South" and "AIFLD Amok," NACLA: Report on the Americas (May/June 1988): 14-27.

91. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated December 11, 1946, Enclosure no. 2, "Resumé of Official Report of Costa Rican Labor Federation (CTCR) to CTAL Council Meeting," USNA, 818.504-506. This document was later used against the CTCR during its judicial dissolution.

92. Trabajo, October, 18, 1947. The inflamed language condemned the CCTRN forces as united with the forces of reaction under the Hitlerite slogan "anti-comunismo."

93. Trabajo, January 24, 1948.

94. Trabajo, April 26, 1947.

95. It should be recalled that there was never unanimity inside the church on the social issue to begin with. During the 1930s there were voices in the church speaking out against the New Deal social reform taking place in the United States. The split between Sanabria and Núñez was attributable in large part to their different understanding of Costa Rican Communism and relationship with Manuel Mora. Church-state relations in the initial months of the Figueres' de facto government were tumultuous and bitter. The junta submitted a plan to the Vatican to reorganize the church hierarchy by having two archbishops in the country. See Aguilar Bulgarelli, Costa Rica Y Sus Hechos Políticos, and Cerdas Cruz, "Costa Rica After 1930," 297.

96. See Chapter VI, Section 4, below.

97. Víctor Sanabria, San José, to José Salazar, August 20, 1947, AACR. On the other hand, Romualdi's assessment of Sanabria was unbridled in its praise. After their first meeting in May 1947 Romualdi wrote, "He [Sanabria] certainly is a remarkable man with a broad and progressive social vision almost unequalled." Serafino Romualdi, to Rev. Professor Luigi

Sturzo, Italy, May 26, 1947, Serafino Romualdi Papers, 136-67, L-MDC, Box 3 File folder 1.

98. The following note refers those readers who wish to explore this precipitous event further to suitable sources. Some of the more prominent histories of this period include: the pro-Calderonista, José Albertazzi Avendaño, La tragedia de Costa Rica; Aguilar Bulgarelli, Costa Rica Y Sus Hechos Políticos; Bell, Crisis in Costa Rica: The 1948 Revolution, Charles Ameringer, The Democratic Left in Exile (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1974); Alberto Cañas, Los Ocho Años; Rojas Bolaños, Lucha Social Y Guerra Civil; Schifter, Costa Rica 1948: Análisis; Schifter, La Fase Oculta de la Guerra Civil; Vargas, "La coyuntura, 1940-1948;" Lehoucq, "Class Conflict, Political Crisis and the Breakdown of Democratic Practices;" For a treatment of the Figueres *de facto* government, see John W. Gardner, "The Costa Rica Junta of 1948-1949" (Ph.D. diss., St. Johns, 1970).

99. Cerdas Cruz, "Costa Rica After 1930," 291.

100. For a detailed description of the electoral process and a view critical of the opposition's electoral tactics see Bell, Crisis in Costa Rica: The 1948 Revolution, Chapter 6.

101. See Section, 4b, above.

102. Jacobo Schifter in "Democracy in Costa Rica as the Product of Class Neutralization" in Chester Zelaya ed., Democracia en Costa Rica? Cinco opiniones polémicas (San José: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 1978) quantifies the vote count as follows: 75,000 "abstention" votes were located in pro-Calderonista areas. Puntarenas experienced an increase in abstentions of 20.7 percent over those in 1944; Limón of 20.4 percent; Guanacaste 9.18 percent San José 3.6 percent. In pro Ulatista areas abstentions were minimal: Cartago 2 percent increase; Alajuela .97 percent; Heredia 0 percent. The essay was reprinted in Marc Edelman and Joanne Kenen, eds., The Costa Rica Reader, (New York: Grove Press, proofs, 1989) 111.

103. Only the Calderón-Picado government in Costa Rica was overthrown. For the history of the Legion see Charles Ameringer, The Democratic Left in Exile. How dependent was Figueres on the Legion? Mora argued that Figueres lacked support when he entered San José, having only 600 men (of which more than half were foreigners) under his command. Frank Marshall who was a lieutenant under Figueres argued that non-Costa Ricans in the Liberation Army numbered no more than sixteen. Mora "Respuesta al Diputado Frank Marshall - 1959" in Discursos, 323-335. Marshall was the step son of Ricardo Steinworth, a prominent coffee grower and businessman of

German descent. Steinvorth's properties as others of German descent were confiscated by the *Junta de Custodia de la Propiedad Enemiga*. Ameringer, Don Pepe, 45-53.

104. See, Ronald Hellman and Morris Blachman, "Costa Rica" in eds., Leogrande, Sharpe and Blachman, Confronting Revolutions: Security Through Diplomacy in Central America (New York: Random House, 1986).

105. Bell, Chapter 6. For a recent study of Arana, see, Piero Gleijeses, "The Death of Francisco Arana: A Turning Point in the Guatemalan Revolution" Journal of Latin American Studies (October 1990): 527-552.

106. Early news reports regarding the conflict in the U.S. portray Figueres alternatively as a radical and a fascist. See The New York Times, March 18-22, 1948.

107. Cerdas Cruz, "Costa Rica After 1930," 291, and Manuel Mora, Interview by author, July 1990, San Pedro, Costa Rica, tape recording.

108. The workers were called *mariachis* because of the Mexican blankets they carried to keep them warm in the cool night air of the capital.

109. Somoza claimed that he was acting on the behalf of Calderonista forces, However the ruling coalition mistrusted his intentions. Manuel Mora, Mexico, to Víctor Sanabria, San José, June 29, 1948, AACR, Manuel Mora, Interview by author, June 1990, San Pedro, Costa Rica, tape recording.

110. Núñez has maintained that at the termination of the negotiations he said to Mora, "say to your people what you need to, but I have made no promises." Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, June 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording; Manuel Mora, Mexico, to Benjamín Núñez, San José, July 10, 1948, AACR; Manuel Mora, Interview by author, June 1990, San Pedro, Costa Rica, tape recording; See also, "Confesiones de 48" in Rumbo (Costa Rica, July 3, 1990) 8-12. This article reported on the first public dialogue between Mora and Núñez since 1948.

111. In the document the Liberation Army also pledged itself to refrain from carrying out reprisals. Archivo General de la Nación- México, Document 577.1/56.

112. Decreto-Ley No. 105 of July 1948 declared Communism illegal in Costa Rica. Article 1 specifically banned the PVP.

113. Schifter, Costa Rica 1948: Análisis, 146-150.

114. Bethell and Roxborough, "Latin America between the Second World War and the Cold War," 177.

115. Manuel Mora, Mexico, to Víctor Sanabria, San José, June 29, 1948, AACR. He was referring to the junta's 10 percent tax on capital above \$50,000, and the nationalization of the banks.

116. The option of judicial dissolution over administrative fiat was selected by Labor Minister Núñez. Núñez argued that in moving against the CTCR he was merely following the weight of both the evidence and public opinion. He opted for the judicial alternative believing that administrative dissolution would set a unwelcome precedent for governmental handling of the labor unions. Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, June May 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording and Luís Alberto Mora, Interview by author, May 1990, Santa Ana, Costa Rica, tape recording.

117. The most well-known cite of death during the uprising and its aftermath was the *Codo de Diablo* along the rail line to Limón where PVP leaders were ambushed and killed. Those killed were Federico Picado Sáenz of General Secretary of the *Federación Provincial de Trabajadores de Limón* and deputy-elect to the national Congress, Octavio Sáenz a leader of the railroad workers, Tobiás Vaglio a leader in the 1934 banana strike and a current leader of small producers in Limón, and Lucio Ibarra Secretary General of a union of small producers in Guapiles. Manuel Mora "Respuesta al Diputado Frank Marshall - 1959," in Discursos, 323-335.

118. Many of the exiles went to Mexico and Venezuela. See also Eduardo Mora Valverde, De Sandino A Stalin: Recuerdos de Eduardo Mora Valverde, (San José: Editorial Revolución, 1988), 130-145 and Eduardo Mora, Interview by author, June 1990, San Pedro, Costa Rica, tape recording.

119. Statements of Raúl Guardían Rojas, Fernando Terán Vallas, and Rufino Gil Pacheco. They testified that at the locale they saw PVP leaders acting in the capacity of military commanders. The PVP leaders identified were Luís Carballo, C.L. Fallas and, José Mercini y Coronado. *Disolución de CTCR y organización afiliados Junio 8, 1949*. [Remesa 467; Estante 186; Archivo 416; Sección 5], AJ.]

120. The Special Prosecutor for the State was Carlos Luís Solórzano González. "Disolución de CTCR," AJ.

121. These were probably two versions of the same Report. Neither document appears in the judicial brief. However a translated summary of an "Official Report of Costa Rica Labor Federation (CTCR) to CTAL Council Meeting" appears as an

enclosure to U.S. Embassy Dispatch of December 11, 1946. The summary prepared by Labor Attaché Alex Cohen made no mention of CTCR actions in direct support of the PVP. Rather the summary of the Report focused on international issues such as CTCR involvement in the Nicaraguan labor movement through the efforts of such individuals as C.L. Fallas and Antonio Vargas and the continuing frustration expressed by the CTCR at the persistence of reactionary labor relations in Costa Rica's agro-export industries. It would have been unlikely for the U.S. Embassy to overlook statements directly implicating the CTCR in electoral politics. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated December 11, 1946, USNA, 818.504-506.

122. Mora did not "recognize" the document as his though he admitted that he shared some, though not all, of the ideas contained in the document. The document was accepted into evidence. Mora's Report does not appear in the judicial file.

123. This is taken from Minister of Labor, Núñez's denunciation, "*Disolución de CTCR*," 4, AJ. . The same passage was quoted in U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated September 16, 1948, USNA, 818.504-506.

124. CTAL NEWS. November 26, 1945, AUOM.

125. The accusation that much union related material was seized and some of subsequently destroyed during the war was expressed repeatedly by the leaders of the time. Jaime Cerdas Mora, Interview by author, July 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording; Eduardo Mora, Interview by author, June 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording. And the then Minister of Labor, Benjamín Núñez, admitted that CTCR and PVP papers were confiscated "in a certain manner." Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, June 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording.

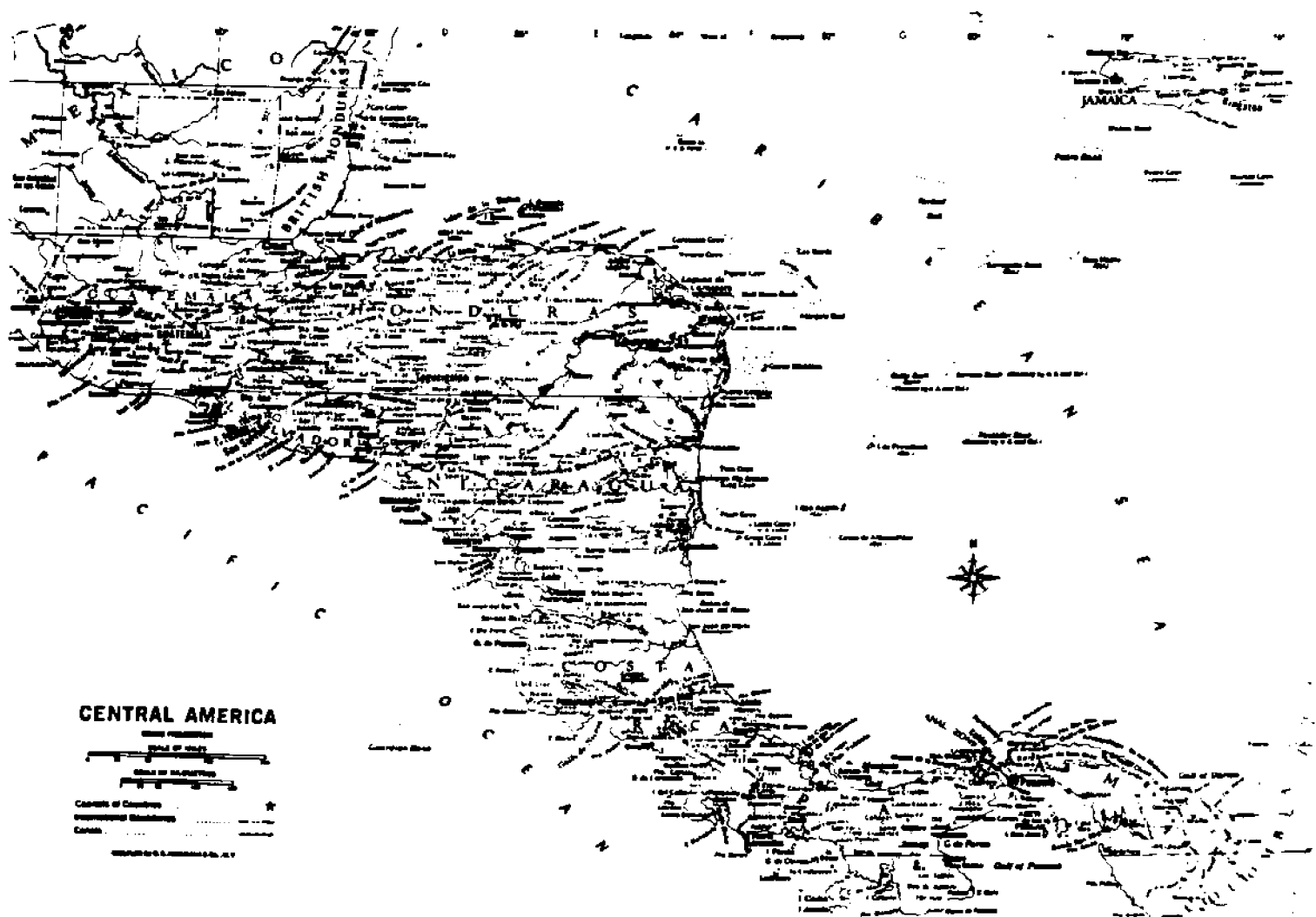
126. Three statements were entered into testimony by Oscar Sánchez Rodríguez, José Angel Mason, and Ovido Loáiciga, all members of the opposition and all involved in CTCR union activities. The statement quoted was made by Oscar Sánchez Rodríguez who became a lieutenant in the Liberation Army. For these testimonies see AJ, *Disolución*, 71-77.

127. This defense was presented in Cerdas' brief (auto) of April 5, 1950. AJ, *Disolución*, p. 78.

128. The invalidation was based on Article 594 of the *Código de Procimientos Penales*.

129. The three organizations spared dissolution were the *Sindicato Agrícola fr Uruca*, *Sindicato de Madera*, and the *Federación de Trabajadores de San José*. AJ, Disolución.

130. The conflict in Costa Rica coincided with the domination of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union and the hardline meeting of the Organization of American States in Bogotá. Schifter, Costa Rica 1948: Análisis, 146-150.



Chapter VI

International Influences:
the *Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina*
and the National Catholic Welfare Conference

The relationship between international organizations and the evolution of the Costa Rican labor movement was an important one. Though its two labor confederations had national roots, they were strongly influenced by international organizations, principally in the United States and Mexico. To trace and evaluate these influences presents inherent difficulties. It is relatively easy to establish points of contact; it is far more difficult to determine their effects. This problem is compounded by the intense politicization that has historically accompanied the transference of ideologies of labor organization. In Costa Rica the CTCR was accused of being subject to foreign domination, while the CCTRN was charged with being a tool of U.S. imperialism. These polemics cloud the distinction between the domination of, and commerce in, ideas, and the fact that transference of ideas is often marked by dialogue between like minded individuals.

Both wings of the Costa Rican labor movement had significant contacts with organizations outside the country. For the CTCR its principal contact and prototype was the *Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina* (CTAL) based in Mexico, for the CCTRN it was labor and church organizations in the United States, principally the American

Federation of Labor (AFL) and the National Catholic Welfare Conference's Social Action Department. (NCWC/SAD).

1. The Confederación de Trabajadores de Costa Rica and the Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina

The *Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina*, led by Vicente Lombardo Toledano was formed in 1938 to promote worker unity and security throughout Latin America. It agreed to include in its ranks only those national confederations that accepted its tactics and objectives and insisted that only one confederation could represent a country. It argued that additional national confederations would only undermine the unity of the labor movement and play into the hands of national and international capital. Explicitly, the leadership of CTAL agreed to respect the individual character and autonomy of all national affiliate labor confederations.¹

In its statement of objectives the confederation pledged to promote the unification of the Latin American working class through the establishment of national industry-based unions capable of defending the interests of the rank and file. It intended to lend tactical aid to help develop national movements by training labor leaders through instructional programs at the *Universidad Obrera*, and pressuring governments to enact pro-labor legislation. In the global arena, CTAL dedicated itself to fight imperialism and fascism.

In addition to its chartered responsibilities CTAL issued a series of resolutions underlining the fundamental anti-establishment nature of the confederation. It called for the overthrow of all remnants of the feudal structure, the attainment of economic and political authority by the working class through the legal establishment of the basic rights of association and collective bargaining, and the replacement of current Latin American regimes by governments that embrace the principles of democracy and economic justice.² To accomplish these objectives CTAL pledged itself to collaborate with national confederations and other pro-labor organizations by mediating disputes, compiling statistics, and by applying "the instruments of proletarian struggle according to circumstances." Most importantly the confederation elaborated a bureaucratic structure that promoted regional autonomy while it ensured centralized control.³ It did this through the formation of a Central Committee and a General Congress (Article 7). The Central Committee was composed of a single president; two vice presidents; one secretary general; and two regional secretaries.⁴ The president and the secretary general resided in Mexico City. The regional secretaries, whose seats were determined by the General Congress in consultation with the national confederations, were instructed to guard the interests of the confederation throughout Latin America. For this purpose Latin America was

divided into three zones. Zone one, the south, included Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, Bolivia and Chile. Zone two, the center, included Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Panama, Venezuela and the lesser Antilles. Zone three, the north, under the direct stewardship of the central seat in Mexico City included Mexico, Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. Within this structure the focus of power rested in the President and the Central Committee which was elected for three years by the General Congress.⁵

How important was CTAL to the formation of the Costa Rican labor movement? At key moments in its development, CTAL provided a model, information, and important technical advice. In 1939, Costa Rica's only national organization, the *Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de Calzados*, in its first international act affiliated with CTAL. Immediately after, labor leaders anxiously requested aid in applying the principles of organization developed in Mexico to Costa Rica.⁶ In November 1941 three Costa Rican delegates attended the CTAL conference in Mexico. These were Communist Party members Arnoldo Ferreto and Rodolfo Guzmán, and the Director of the *Oficina Técnica del Trabajo*, Alberto Durán Rocha.⁷ Ferreto and Guzmán's travel expenses were paid for by CTAL.⁸ The educator and writer Carmen Lyra also attended the Conference as an observer. After attending the conference Ferreto rhetorically addressed the importance of Mexico for

the nascent Costa Rican movement. "Costa Rica has only one real guarantee, that is Mexico, the Mexican Revolution, its [social] conquests, the consciousness of the Mexican people, and the unbreakable will of the working class that is the vanguard of Latin America."⁹

Upon his return Guzmán gave a public account of the conference. The conference's political resolutions declared that the war against international fascism and the war against fifth columnists was the war of the people of Latin America. In this fight, all democratic freedoms were to be defended and all efforts made to support the war. Its economic resolutions called upon the United States' trusts and monopolies to support Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy, and for the U.S. government to put an end to all monopoly activities that ran contrary to the interests of the people of Latin America.¹⁰

With the outbreak of war in December 1941, the anti-imperialist struggle was subsumed in the war against fascism. This had a number of important consequences. It facilitated alliances among organizations with divergent ideologies. It moderated the more extreme tenets of Marxists labor movements and it pushed more conservative organizations and governments to develop increasingly socially-based labor policies. For Costa Rica, the presence of the government official, Durán Rocha at the 1941 CTAL conference with a note of introduction from Manuel Mora

evidenced the attempt to form a common front against the international and domestic of fascism.¹¹

Threats of fifth column activities in Mexico and Central America were taken very seriously and furthered the impulse to forge a united labor front.¹² CTAL feared a network of fascist spies throughout Latin America. In 1942 in Mexico, most feared were the Spanish falangists followed by the Germans.¹³ Fears of a common enemy contributed to the establishment of cordial relations between CTAL and the AFL. CTAL and the CIO already enjoyed close relations. In October 1942 the AFL reported to its 62nd annual convention the need to develop a post-war plan to strengthen and enrich "all the people of all the Americas."¹⁴ In the wartime environment CTAL continued to grow. By the end of 1942 it had affiliated bodies in over thirteen Latin American countries and approximately a million members.¹⁵ With the German armies unsuccessful in their second winter offensive against the Soviet Union, the war's apparent outcome allowed old doctrinal rivalries to dismantle the show of unity. By the summer of 1943 the political climate and relations with the AFL cooled markedly. In August 1943, CTAL attacked Matthew Woll for the AFL's efforts (so far unsuccessful) to develop anti-Marxist Latin American labor confederations.¹⁶

While relations between CTAL and the AFL quickly grew strained this was not the case between CTAL and the Costa Rican government of Calderón Guardia. Lombardo Toledano

toured Costa Rica in March 1942. He met with the workers in Turrialba and dined with President Calderón.¹⁷ Immediately upon Lombardo's departure the transitional organization, the *Comité Nacional Sindical de Enlace* (CNSE), declared its adherence to CTAL.¹⁸ In July 1943 CTAL passed a resolution in praise of Calderón and his social programs. In December of the same year Lombardo Toledano in a remarkable speech at the Sabana airport outside of San José argued that there was no fundamental incompatibility between religious beliefs and revolutionary activity.¹⁹ Lombardo Toledano's prestige legitimized Calderón's social guarantees and squashed any possible dissent within the PVP to PRN-church alliance, and its endorsement of the Christian-based social program.²⁰ In recognition of the influence of CTAL, Lombardo Toledano was invited to preside at CTCR's founding conference in September 1943. At the close of the conference the new confederation voted to affiliate with the Mexican-based organization.

With the successful conclusion of the war against the Axis, CTAL shifted its focus to domestic events. The threat now facing the workers of Latin America came from "internal forces that... served imperialism." However this did not prevent CTAL from advocating collaborative relationships with enlightened capitalists. Asserting that national unity provided the sole route for viable development, CTAL

encouraged its affiliate organizations to enter into direct agreements with progressive capitalists.²¹ And in marked contrast to AFL sponsored labor organizations, CTAL openly encouraged its affiliates to engage in political activities. CTAL encouraged action "to assist political parties of a democratic character to reach agreements so that their conflicts may not weaken the trade union movement, and so that all democratic and progressive forces can devote their full energies to finding a satisfactory solution to national problems."²² These same policies were adopted in Costa Rica. The PVP advocated collaborative efforts with progressive capitalists²³ and despite its denials, the CTCR engaged in political activity.

In December 1946 CTAL's executive committee met in San José. The meeting's agenda called for an examination of the Truman Doctrine, the emerging Cold War atmosphere and the Clayton Plan, the free trade proposal floated by the United States. CTAL offered the following assessment of the free trade plan. "...these plans are only instruments to secure absolute economic control over the weak people of the world by the U.S. monopolies, and ... interrupt the historical evolution of our countries."²⁴ Guzmán hailed the site of the executive meeting as reflective of the importance Costa Rica and the CTCR had for CTAL. Costa Rica's value rested in its strategic geographic position and in the fact that it was the only country in Central America to enjoy fundamental

labor rights. Aside from Costa Rica 73 percent of the region's population was illiterate; 92 percent were without shoes and malnourished. Combined with the presence of dictators throughout the region, this situation effectively blocked the development of free labor unions and frustrated the efforts of both CTAL and the CTCR to develop unified labor organizations in the remaining Central American countries.²⁵

The timing of the CTAL meeting worsened the unstable political climate in Costa Rica. It coincided with the visit of Serafino Romualdi to Costa Rica and the unveiling of President Picado's unpopular income tax proposal. Internationally heightened U.S.-U.S.S.R. tensions were reflected in the attack on Browdersim by the influential Cuban Communist, Blas Roca.²⁶ Predictably, the conference reflected the growing polarization in the region's labor movement. Hardening its position, CTAL issued a strong call for unity: unity of resolve and most importantly unity of organization. It rhetorically characterized its resolutions as the "the weapons... of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, that the workers will use to forge the destiny of humanity,"²⁷ and roundly criticized those forces who were attempting to fracture the hemispheric labor movement. Among the imperialist and "Trotskyite" organizations it cited were the *Apristas*, under the leadership of Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, and the "American Federation of Labor, headed by

Messrs. Green Woll, and Meany."²⁸

The meeting condemned the economic and world developmental plans emanating from the United States. It declared that the Truman Plan was "incompatible with the historical interests of all the countries of Latin America," and that the Clayton Plan intended to "impede the industrialization of the countries of Latin America" by making them exporters of raw materials and tropical fruits."²⁹ The conference heralded the formation of the World Federation of Labor (WFL) as a key international organization around which a new post-war order could be forged and the world's troubled economies invigorated. The AFL which did not join the WFL was again singled out for harsh criticism.³⁰ CTAL now saw AFL efforts as simply attempting to divide the labor movement by attracting to its ranks small and unimportant unions and mounting personal attacks on its leadership.

The conflict between CTAL and the AFL was mirrored in Costa Rica where the international labor rivalry was exacerbating the deepening domestic polarization. The CTCR and the CCTRN broke not in the least over allegations regarding each confederation's international backers. With the outbreak of civil conflict in the country the battle lines were sharply drawn. CTAL was unequivocal in its support of the government forces. Lombardo likened the Costa Rican situation to Spain's a decade earlier. It

characterized the Figueres-led rebellion as a disingenuous attack on Costa Rican democracy aided and abetted by mercenary forces.³¹ In addition, CTAL accused the United States and particularly its Pan American Highway construction camps of supporting the rebels.³² Finally, CTAL condemned Benjamín Núñez for both his activities as a ardent supporter of the Figueres forces and his presence at the AFL's conference in Lima in January 1948. However, aside from its proclamations of solidarity,³³ and the offer of refuge to PVP and CTCR affiliates after the conflict, there is no evidence that CTAL directly aided either the government forces or its affiliate CTCR.³⁴

In the aftermath of their defeat in April 1948 PVP and CTCR leaders requested the CTAL use its influence to secure for them save haven in Mexico. Rodolfo Guzmán wrote from San José penitentiary asking CTAL to finance the travel of four of his companions to Mexico if they were able to secure their freedom.³⁵ By September, Guzmán secured his own release and travelled to Mexico where he assumed the function of Regional Secretary for CTAL. From this post he was able to report on developments in Costa Rica and help transmit information in and out of the country. He, like Mora,³⁶ opposed Calderón Guardia's failed coup attempt launched from Nicaragua in December 1948.

Guzmán feared that the junta forces would use the invasion as a pretext to jail or assassinate those labor

leaders still in Costa Rica. Guzmán's worst fears were realized. Outside Limón, in the Codo del Diablo, a number of prominent PVP and labor leaders were killed. Guzmán alleged the assassinations were part of a campaign waged by German-ethnics (with the assistance of the U.S. Embassy) to roll back the wartime gains and rid the country of all progressive forces. Interestingly he looked forward to the assumption of the office of the Presidency by Otilio Ulate in the hope that Ulate would restore the country's democratic institutions.³⁷

In order to assess the importance of CTAL to the Costa Rican movement it is necessary to separate practical assistance from questions of ideological and structural guidance. On a material plane CTAL offered the CTCR little other than occasional transportation costs, and correspondence courses at the *Universidad Obrera*. CTAL was similarly powerless to prevent, forestall or impede the dismantling of the Costa Rican movement. All it did was offer passage and refuge to those PVP and CTCR leaders able to leave Costa Rica. On the other hand, it is difficult to overestimate the importance of CTAL as an advisory and counselling body. It provided a functional model of labor organization and served as a guiding and inspirational force for the Costa Rican movement. On numerous instances Lombardo Toledano's advice was solicited and when received followed.

The organizational structure of CTAL both in union formation, and bureaucratic elaboration was followed. Finally the example of CTAL nourished the ambitions and objectives of PVP and CTCR leaders. Costa Rica, surrounded by Central American labor movements crippled by impoverished economies and harsh dictatorships, looked to Mexico for reaffirmation of the existence of a social system and a labor confederation based on ideas it valued as equitable and just.

Whether the CTCR followed an ideological line set by CTAL is a matter of debate. The ideological origins of the CTCR pre-dated the existence of CTAL and were essentially Costa Rican. Nevertheless, as the wartime alliance between the U.S. and U.S.S.R. shattered, both CTAL in Mexico and the CTCR in Costa Rica responded in similar fashions. Both organizations rejected U.S. post-war initiatives as a new guise for U.S. imperialism. Both called for a reinstatement of Roosevelt's Good Neighbor policies, and until 1947 both advocated entering into constructive alliances with progressive capitalists, both domestic and international. Finally, both organizations strongly condemned what they perceived as the divisive machinations of the American Federation of Labor.

2. The National Catholic Welfare Conference

The inspirations for Costa Rica's Catholic labor confederation were various and owed much to theological and political influences. The most direct theological inspiration for the Costa Rican Catholic movement was derived from the papal encyclicals of 1899 and 1931 and the writings of such theologians as Cardinal Mercier and Jacques Maritain.³⁸ This does not deny the indigenous Catholic antecedents for the CCTRN, of which the clearest was the 1893 *Carta Pastoral* of Bishop Bernardo Augusto Thiel Hoffman. The pastoral, which called for a just salary for workers and peasants, underlined the relationship between concentrations of wealth and destitution. Bishop Thiel's advocacy of a just wage was strongly influenced by the encyclical, Rerum Novarum, written by Pope Leo XIII two years earlier. Though Thiel's activities provided precedent, there was a significant difference between them and Sanabria's initiatives forty years later. Whereas Thiel's efforts gave rise to a weak Catholic party, in the 1940s Costa Rican theologians, their position in society enhanced by Calderón's religious reforms, directly built a labor movement in order to implement the practical derivations of their theological beliefs.

The movement from lay to secular organizations to develop the social and spiritual teachings of the church was the great challenge of the CCTRN. This was also the

challenge of an organization of American bishops and theologians called the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC). To meet this challenge in Latin America the NCWC, through its Social Action Department (SAD), committed itself to build a Catholic inter-American labor confederation.

The NCWC, founded in Washington, D.C. in September 1919, was an advisory body led by an Administrative Board of ten United States archbishops and bishops for the purpose of "unifying, coordinating and organizing the Catholic people of the United States in works of education, social welfare, immigrant aid and other activities."³⁹ The Conference was organized into eight departments each with its own director under the supervision of an Episcopal Chairman. The Departments were: Education, Press, Catholic Action Study, Lay Organizations, Executive, Social Action, Legal, and Youth. The SAD conducted studies and issued recommendations in the fields of international affairs, civic education, social welfare and rural life. Two ancillary offices closely affiliated with the SAD were the Cooperating Conference on Industrial Problems (CAIP) and the Catholic Association for International Peace (CAIP).⁴⁰ The Reverend John A. Ryan served as the Director of the SAD for twenty five years until his death in October 1945 at which time, his assistant the Reverend R. A. McGowan, assumed the directorship of the organization.⁴¹

The NCWC/SAD understood solutions to the problems

confronting the peoples of the Americas required a hemispheric approach. As early as August 1942, it began addressing the projected challenges of the post-war period. On the spiritual plane the NCWC/SAD called for the application social Christian justice as means to overcome the flagrant violations of material well-being and spiritual dignity of the hemisphere's industrial and agricultural worker forces. It also advocated that relations between the nations of the Americas be governed by universal brotherhood, absenting the spirit of domination. On the material plane the organization demanded an equitable distribution of primary and manufactured goods.

The SAD developed and disseminated its program through the establishment of an International Seminar on Social Studies, the first meeting of which was held in Washington D.C. from August 24 through 30, 1942.⁴² The meeting was followed by a two week tour to Notre Dame, Chicago, Buffalo, Detroit and New York ending with a return to Washington on September 12, 1942.⁴³ The seminar invited Latin and North American lay and secular leaders actively engaged in the fields of social, economic, urban and rural labor issues and offered them the opportunity to exchange ideas and explore grounds for the defense of the "common institutions and social and economic concepts of this hemisphere." Importantly the seminar also gave these individuals "an opportunity to meet leaders... in the United States" and to

visit and become acquainted with U.S. educational, social and labor institutions.⁴⁴

Archbishop Sanabria accepted the invitation to the August meeting but was unable to attend.⁴⁵ This proved significant. A replacement was not sent. The seminar asked Benjamín Núñez, then a young student attending the Catholic University of America (CUA), to serve as a translator and tour guide. This role gave Núñez wide exposure to labor and business leaders throughout Latin America, the U.S., and Canada provided him with invaluable contacts and experience.

The seminar was funded by the United States Government through Nelson Rockefeller's Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA).⁴⁶ Dr. Richard Pattee and Father McGowan first proposed the seminar to the Science and Education Division of the OIAA.⁴⁷ At this time Pattee, the principal organizer of this and subsequent meetings was the Assistant Chief of the Division of Cultural Relations in the State Department. In 1946 Pattee became the Director of the newly formed Latin American Bureau of the SAD.⁴⁸ The proposal was steered through the OIAA by Wallace K. Harrison and approved by Walter Prendergast, Assistant Director of Inter-American Affairs. The State Department reserved the right to suggest and approve invitees. McGowan bristled at the retention of this oversight authority but felt that it would not affect the composition of the seminar.⁴⁹ Harrison,⁵⁰ along with Nelson Rockefeller, Francis Alstock, Francis A. Jamieson and

John E. Lockwood, were also on the Board of Directors of Precinradio, Incorporated. This organization, established by the OIAA was formed in view of the "practical difficulties in having the [U.S.] government participate directly in foreign countries in activities of a confidential nature" to "improve the existing media and create additional media for the dissemination of information." In October 1943 this organization, a precursor of the Cold War radio free broadcast stations, had assets of over two million dollars.⁵¹

In all sixteen individuals from Latin America, twenty-five from the United States and the Canadian representative of the International Organization of Labor attended the meeting. In a letter of invitation to address the seminar, Father McGowan wrote to William Green, President of the AFL, that "these men have and will have a great influence on the labor movement in Latin America and I want them to meet you and have you speak."⁵² A similar letter of invitation was sent to Phillip Murray of the CIO. Neither of these men were able to attend. However, in their place Matthew Woll, Vice-President of the AFL, and James B. Carey, Secretary of the CIO addressed the seminar session "Problems in Industry." Monsignor Francis J. Haas, who opened the board rooms of the AFL and CIO to Núñez, chaired their panels.⁵³ Haas would shortly be appointed Chair of the Fair Employment Practices Committee by Franklin Roosevelt.⁵⁴

The seminar attributed the world crisis to moral sickness engendered by a resurgence of paganism (as represented by the German Nazis) and the denial of Christian values. The totalitarian state through depravation of liberty and dignity oppressed the individual. Only a democratic system which permitted the free existence of autonomous institutions and protected democratic liberties could ensure the common good.⁵⁵

At the seminar, the French theologian, Jacques Maritain, addressed the relationship between Christianity and Communism. After establishing that Communism was unchangeable and linked to atheism, Maritain argued that if Communism was solely economics it would be possible to "to conceive of a Christian Communism." But this was not possible because Communism was not merely an economic system, but "a philosophy of life founded on an absolute and coherent rejection of divine transcendency." However, because of the emerging new world order prompted by the wartime U.S.-U.S.S.R. alliance, and the societal upheavals that were bound to follow, Maritain argued that there was a real chance for the renewal of democratic thought and the restoration of dignity not in "Marxian orthodoxy" but among "many who sympathize with Communism out of sentiment, and many of those whom the revolt against social injustice disposes toward Communism."⁵⁶

There was a remarkable coincidence between Maritain's

ideas and the thoughts and subsequent actions of Archbishop Sanabria.⁵⁷ Both Maritain and Sanabria realized that the church was in competition with Communism for the allegiance of the socially and economically disenfranchised. And Sanabria's rejection of the material philosophy of Communism, while accepting the utility of its practical derivations, led him, within a year of Maritain's speech, to condone Catholic participation with Communist organizations.

The seminar's then addressed the labor question: it argued that social reforms must be modelled on the teachings of the church, especially the norms contained in the encyclicals Rerum Novarum and Quadragesimo Anno. These norms, which, included a just family wage, economic security, comprehensive workmen's compensation, and the right to form unions, aimed to elevate the standard of living of all workers and "sustain them in a reasonable and permanent well-being."⁵⁸ The seminar then claimed that the contentious issue of class struggle could be overcome by substituting the capitalist concept of private property with the Christian concept of the social function of property. The seminar defined the social function of property: "Neither the land nor the people who inhabit them exist for the individual or a particular family or a nation." Land was given by God to produce for all humanity. The primary function of land was to provide a standard of living that insured material well-being and spiritual dignity to all

individuals. This was the first, irreducible function of land, all other functions were secondary and could only be assumed after its primary function was fulfilled.⁵⁹

After articulating its principles, which it realized would have to be adjusted to correspond to particular national realities, the seminar proposed a mechanism of dissemination. Until a permanent organization was developed official Catholic organizations (primarily those of *Acción Católica*) would serve as coordinating and planning agents. Also temporarily, the NCWC agreed to serve as the overall supervisory agency. Finally, the seminar urged "*Noticias Católicas*," the Spanish language agency of the NCWC, to expand its service in Latin America.⁶⁰

What the NCWC/SAD had in mind as a permanent organization was an inter-American Catholic federation of labor. Within a year the NCWC/SAD argued for the creation of such an organization to replace the dormant Pan American Federation and confront CTAL.⁶¹ CTAL and other Communist Party-dominated Latin American labor organizations viewed any discussion of reviving the Pan American Federation with deep distrust claiming that the Pan American union was created to "subordinate the people of Latin America to the great economic interests of the United States."⁶²

As the war drew to a close the SAD decided to reconvene the seminar to develop policies towards: the Latin American

labor movement, the organization of Latin American small producers, Communists in the Americas, the inter-American work for world organization and peace.⁶³ Thus the central focus of the meeting, a Catholic solution to the problems of workers in the Americas, corresponded to that of the 1942 meeting. But there was a significant shift of emphasis. Accommodation with Communists and Communist sympathizers was replaced by outright opposition. The post-war meeting was now urgently needed "because of the increasing influence of Communism and because of the international entail that is kept between the Communists of Latin America."⁶⁴ McGowan cited the Latin Americans' concern regarding "working out some inter-American contacts and activities "which would help the CIO and AFL channel their endeavours to contact South American peoples.... "Otherwise," McGowan feared, "their work could possibly turn out to be more harmful than useful" for building sound inter-American relations.

At the meeting, held under the joint auspices of *Acción Católica Cubana* and the NCWC/SAD, Núñez analyzed what he defined as the three natures of Communism: First, a philosophy based on historic materialism; second, a system which denies freedom of action and personality to the individual; and, third, a vehicle through which social justice has been demanded, principally through the development of unions. Acknowledging that only the final nature of Communism had justice, he pledged that in Costa

Rica, "the aspiration of *Rerum Novarum* is to end with Communism by ending the social misery that is its cause."⁶⁵

Capital, as well as labor, was also represented at the conference. This kept with the church view that its work was to create social harmony. And after listening to the principles and methods of workers' activities, the seminar heard the voice of the owners.⁶⁶ This was consistent with the first meeting in when the Latin Americans were introduced to leading U.S. businessmen including J. Peter Grace, President, W.R. Grace; Samuel Zemurray, President, United Fruit Company; Luis Rosenthal, Vice-President, Chase Manhattan Bank; Col. Sosthenes Behn, President, I.T.T.; A. J. Byles, President, American Petroleum Institute; and William Cotter of Union Carbide.⁶⁷ During the same visit, Cardinal Spellman addressed the seminar when it was in New York.

The seminar organizers placed a great deal of importance on meetings between capital and labor, and sought business views on the appropriate role of labor in the production process. One U.S. businessman, Wm. A. Prendergast, President of the New York and Honduras Mining Company suggested that "the most effective way to help the Latin-American countries is to help them develop their natural resources and find markets for them." He continued, "I think this should be the essence of the Good Neighbor Policy."⁶⁸ In 1942 a similar recommendation was made by the

founder of the United Fruit Company, Samuel Zemurray. He suggested to the OIAA that the best way to implement the Good Neighbor policy was to educate Central Americans to aid the U.S. war effort by developing their productive capacities. Zemurray announced that he was planning to build an agricultural school in Honduras for this expressed purpose.⁶⁹ These efforts of the NCWC/SAD were appreciated by business leaders in the U.S. and Latin America. At the 1946 meeting, Bernardo Elosua, a Monterrey industrialist, encouraged the continued establishment of employer Catholic study groups such as those that existed in northern Mexico as an instrument to spread the postulates of the papal encyclicals and "promote the formation of worker-leaders (*dirigentes obreros*)."⁷⁰

The meeting closed addressing the need to establish permanent organs to enable the seminar to carry out its work and intensify "the continental solidarity of the labor movement."⁷¹ Simultaneously, the NCWC/SAD founded an Inter-American Affairs Office. Pattee was named Director and given a \$10,000 annual budget.⁷² By June 1946, a Latin American Bureau was installed under the direction of John Parr.⁷³

Work continued to develop a Catholic inter-American labor confederation. This was finally accomplished at a third gathering of the seminar in Rio de Janeiro at the end of August in 1948. The conference, attended by over one hundred delegates from twenty-two American countries,

formalized the establishment of the Inter-American Catholic Social Action Confederation with headquarters in Washington, D.C. The nascent organization had its first affiliates in Mexico, Bolivia, Ecuador and the United States. Pattee and the NCWC were sensitive to the issue of imperialism and argued that the Washington seat of the confederation would not give the U.S. a preponderance of influence due to the loose federative structure of the organization. Interestingly, the French Canadians were the most contentious on this issue.⁷⁴ However, the Inter-American Catholic Social Action Confederation was not able to maintain an identity separate from the more powerful AFL initiative. By the 1950s the SAD's confederation had lost much of its vitality.

3. *Rerum Novarum* and the National Catholic Welfare Conference

How were the activities of the NCWC/SAD related to the labor situation inside Costa Rica? First, the NCWC/SAD developed an ideology of social organization whose proximities to social justice and distance from Communism found a deep resonance in the Costa Rican Church. This in itself was not remarkable. The NCWC's doctrine of social justice was firmly rooted in Catholic tradition and was, in that respect, universal. What was decisive was that the NCWC developed a network of communication, instruction, and organization that facilitated the transference of Catholic

social doctrine from the ideological to the practical plane. This was crucial for the organizational development of the CCTRN. (However, it must be noted, as in the CTAL-CTCR relationship, advice and aid moved both from and to the NCWC/SAD and the countries of Latin America.⁷⁵) The NCWC/SAD provided the social science training for the labor priests of Costa Rica. The career of Father Benjamín Núñez was the first and clearest example of this educational process. Núñez was sent by Sanabria first to Niagara University⁷⁶ and then to the CUA where he felt more comfortable in Washington's New Deal atmosphere.⁷⁷ As has been described, Núñez became deeply involved with the activities of the NCWC/SAD in Washington. This relationship continued after Núñez's return to Costa Rica in June 1943.

Francisco Herrera followed the path paved by Núñez. The career of Herrera, a young, intense seminary student provides another example of the operation of the Inter-American Catholic network as well as a unique glimpse into the process of selection within the Costa Rican Church. On the *Fiesta de San Bruno* in October 1944, Herrera addressed a letter to Sanabria, asking for the opportunity to "marry his thoughts to action, to strive for a better world and towards a new Christianity."⁷⁸ By December Sanabria offered Herrera a grant to study in the United States. Herrera accepted, embracing the idea "to be able to serve god ... [through] the methods imposed by the necessities of the times."⁷⁹ In

June Herrera was notified that a Fall enrollment was reserved for him at the University of Kansas,⁸⁰ where he studied social conditions in China and Latin America, and interned in the Social Security administration.⁸¹ For Herrera the relevance of his work to Costa Rica was direct. He wrote to Sanabria, "I believe that the knowledge and tactics that I am acquiring will be an admirable complement to the ... work already initiated ... for the solution of the problems of our Costa Rica."⁸²

Subsequently Herrera was sent to St. John's Seminary in San Antonio, Texas where under Archbishop Lucey⁸³ he studied the plight of Mexican immigrant labor.⁸⁴ His thesis, for which he received a Master of Science in Social Work, analyzed the distribution of health care in a poor community in Texas.⁸⁵ He returned to Costa Rica, served as the National Secretary of Catholic Action,⁸⁶ and in the Costa Rican Ministry of Labor under Father Núñez. After the civil war in 1948, Herrera served on a committee established by the ruling junta to study the prospects of establishing a new Labor Code.⁸⁷

The relationship between Jaime Fonseca and Archbishop Sanabria was another important link between the NCWC/SAD and the Costa Rican Archdioceses. Although outside the priesthood, Fonseca, a Costa Rican, corresponded frequently with Sanabria and Vicar Hidalgo exchanging ideological views and practical information.⁸⁸ Fonseca became the Washington

Editor of the NCWC's *Noticias Católicas* in the summer of 1945.⁸⁹

In tracing the careers of some of Archbishop Sanabria's disciples and their training in the U.S. certain characteristics become apparent. Few individuals were involved and the amount of money expended slight.⁹⁰ The exchanges were of an ad hoc nature based on the idiosyncratic play of personalities. Though this argues against theories based on grand designs and conspiracies, it does not detract from the significance these interactions had for Costa Rica. The strategic importance of the individuals, the lack of a developed cadre of labor leaders,⁹¹ the shared New Deal, anti-Communist, Catholic philosophy had a serious impact on the evolution of the CCTRN and by extension Costa Rican society. This became even more apparent when the AFL's influence, through its "Ambassador to Latin America" Serafino Romualdi, increased inside the country.

4. Hemispheric-Wide Catholic Labor Movement

In applying the techniques of modern social sciences and progressive Catholic theology to the problems that confronted his country, Sanabria also hoped to be able to export the Costa Rican experiment to the countries of Latin America by offering an alternative Latin American-wide confederation to CTAL. Indeed certain sectors of Central

American society were eager to explore the CCTRN experiment. Pedro Joaquín Chomorro, owner of La Prensa in Nicaragua, invited Núñez to Nicaragua to advise them on social issues and help them devise a policy "similar to what you have done in Costa Rica," He offered to cover transportation costs and pay an honorarium.⁹² There were similar attempts to develop a Catholic union movement in El Salvador, where Sanabria had dispatched an agent there for this purpose.⁹³ This effort was funded by the AFL which voted to support the CCTRN's organizational work in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua.⁹⁴ However, the CCTRN had a marginal impact on the labor movement in other Central American countries. CCTRN influence was limited by harsh dictatorships,⁹⁵ crippling poverty and the identification of the Costa Rican Church with Communism. For example, in 1945 a debate over the nature of Sanabria's social program exploded in the Guatemalan press. Sanabria was accused of trying to bury the Costa Rican Church in the chaos of Communism.⁹⁶

In spite of the difficulties, Sanabria remained convinced of the need to build a Latin American-wide Catholic confederation. He wrote McGowan, proposing that a future conference be held in the U.S. or Canada because only these countries had the proper environment to examine labor and social problems in a hemispheric context. He then posed the following dilemma: "Why in almost all the countries of Latin America is the pro-labor movement in the hands of

socialists and Communists? ... What culpability do we clerical and secular Catholics have in this?"⁹⁷

Sanabria addressed the same issue in a series of letters to the Bishop of Talca, Manuel Larrain. In a letter of June 7, 1946, he wrote of his Central American efforts and urged Larrain to begin the work in Chile. He closed with the "gran proposición;" to found in Chile "a continental organization, on the model of CTAL." This confederation would then be able to "solidify on international lines those movements that are ours or almost ours."⁹⁸

Shortly after writing this letter Sanabria elaborated plans for a Catholic confederation to rival CTAL.⁹⁹ He argued that although CTAL, which was based on Communist and liberal principles represented 70 to 90 percent of the organized work force, the possibility of a Catholic or neutral labor confederation attracting large numbers of workers existed. Unfortunately, the lack of a coordinated organizational effort, has left workers with the impression that the church was either indifferent or opposed to the improvement of their material lives. To develop a basis of support among workers this false impression had to be altered. Sanabria's arguments were in accordance with those of McGowan. In a September 1943 circular McGowan called for the formation of a new Inter-American Federation of Labor. The Pan American Federation was moribund and according to McGowan there was widespread dissatisfaction with CTAL. He

called for U.S. labor leaders and U.S. Catholics to intensify their efforts. Again in a May 1947 circular McGowan analyzed the weakness of Communist unions, and pointed to the existence of Catholic and independent unions as a possible basis for a new federation.¹⁰⁰

The broad outline of the confederation's ideology and formation was as follows. The confederation must be non-Marxist, grounded in Catholic doctrine, and be democratic in "*un sentido Latinoamericano*." Its organization should follow the guidelines initiated by CTAL with a provisional committee, drawn from Catholics committed to the social cause, based in one of the major countries of Latin America: Argentina, Chile, or Brazil.¹⁰¹ The committee would be empowered to write a referendum and plan and implement the process of organization by seeking affiliates from Catholic or neutral unions throughout Latin America. Where such unions did not exist these individuals would be empowered to create them. When this grouping of unions reached a significant size, a continental conference would be called to establish the new confederation.

The memorandum then examined the technical and tactical challenges. Should the confederation be Catholic in name or operate under Catholic principles without an explicit Catholic designation? If the organization was not explicitly Catholic what would be its relation to the Catholic hierarchy in Latin America? Finally, by creating a labor

confederation counter to CTAL would the Latin American labor movement be divided and weakened? (The threat to labor unity was the central and repeated warning issued by CTAL, in the hemispheric context, and by the CTCR, in the national context.)

In responding to these questions, Sanabria modified and projected the CCTRN experiment on to Latin America. His answers reveal a fundamental political practicality and reflect the doctrinal role of the church as a spiritual organization. The confederation should not be explicitly Catholic; priests should play an advisory, not a direct, role. Therefore, confessional organization, explicitly excluded from the organizational structure of the confederation, were charged with intensifying their efforts to raise the spirituality of their congregations. Sanabria underscored the importance of knowing Rome's position on his proposals. However, he did not believe that explicit approval was required. (This same position was taken by the NCWC.¹⁰²) Nevertheless, Sanabria communicated his ideas on societal organization to the Vatican. He expected Rome to agree in principle, but issue an endorsement.¹⁰³ When Rome remained silent, Sanabria interpreted this as tacit approval of his project.¹⁰⁴ However, inaction on the part of the Vatican deprived the initiative of institutional support.

Underscoring Sanabria's conviction that his proposal was inspired by positive dedication to workers, he argued

that a Catholic confederation would not split Latin American workers' movement for the following reasons: not all labor organizations were affiliated with CTAL; Marxism was not natural (*no tiene verdad ambiente*) to Latin America and offered solutions insufficient for the Latin America condition; and much of the political and governmental opposition to a progressive labor policy was based on the assertion that such policies were the results of Marxist agitation. A Catholic confederation would render this pretext useless. Furthermore, Sanabria predicted that governments who lacked confidence in, and feared CTAL would welcome a Catholic confederation. In addition, the confederation's purpose would not be to combat CTAL, but to moderate it and further Christian values. Thus, its contribution would be positive not negative. In each of these points Sanabria, reflecting on the Costa Rican experience, attempted to temper extremist solutions and extend Catholic influence.

In spite of the importance placed by Sanabria on the formation of a Catholic international labor confederation and CCTRN membership in it, the CCTRN did not join either the regional or the hemispheric organizations founded by Pattee and the NCWC/SAD.¹⁰⁵ Nor did it send a delegate to the founding August 1948 meeting in Rio de Janeiro. Why? First, the CCTRN affiliated with the *Confederación Inter-Americana de Trabajadores* (CIT) organized by Serafino

Romualdi under the auspices the AFL. The attendance of the CCTRN at the January 1948 founding conference in Lima, marked the culmination of the CCTRN's movement away from church sponsorship and into the dominant stream of anti-Marxist labor organization. Second, by time of the NCWC/SAD's Rio de Janiero Conference (in August 1948) Costa Rica's political environment and the situation of the CCTRN and Father Núñez were radically altered. The victory by the Liberation Army and the appointment of Núñez as Minister of Labor effectively reversed the proximity to political power enjoyed by Costa Rica's labor confederations. It also sparked a powerful leadership crisis within the confederation.

A critical question remains. What was the relationship between the efforts of the NCWC/SAD and the AFL? The history of the CCTRN itself demonstrates that both NCWC/SAD and AFL efforts were directed toward the same potential affiliates; both movements shared a profound anti-Marxism, both advocated the development of "apolitical" "democratic" anti-revolutionary trade unions; and both promoted the social justice rights of labor within the existing hemispheric order. As has been demonstrated, the NCWC/SAD actively sought AFL and CIO participation in its meetings and organizational work. All this was indicative of a coincidence of objectives between the NCWC/SAD and the AFL. What evidence was there of direct collaborative efforts?

For the influential AFL vice-President, Mathew Woll, the relationship was direct. Speaking about Father Ryan (the SAD's director until 1945) Woll said, "he worked on us and for us, as we won our battles he rejoiced with us."¹⁰⁶ In the Latin American arena, McGowan continued the collaborative relationship. The clearest example involves the case of the *Unión de Trabajadores de Colombia* (UTC). At Romualdi's behest McGowan wrote to Rev. Vicente Andrade Valderrama head of the UTC conveying Romualdi's worry that his organization had not yet not accepted the invitation attend CIT's founding conference. He then urged Andrade Valderrama to go to Lima to work for the "intensification of continental solidarity of the labor movement."¹⁰⁷ Romualdi also made direct appeals to the CCTRN to "interven[e] in a friendly way" with the UTC.¹⁰⁸ Responding to the pressure, the UTC joined the AFL sponsored organization.

5. Conclusion

An important question remains. Why was the Catholic labor movement, which was based on fundamentally anti-capitalist principals (i.e. the social function of property), subsumed by the AFL in its battle against Communism? A common anti-Communism was part of the reason. However, there is a deeper answer. In his writings, Jacques Maritain defined three planes of Catholic social action; (1) action "as a Christian as such" which formally engages the

institutional church; (2) "action as a Christian" engaging only oneself; and (3) action which in theory is related to the first plane, but in practice takes place on the second.¹⁰⁹ He went on to indicate that the first and third planes should never be confused. The CCTRN, Sanabria's proposed inter-American Catholic confederation, and the NCWC/SAD's inter-American confederation founded in Rio de Janeiro in August 1948, were all initiatives that took place on the third plane. And as such were disengaged from the institutional church. The purpose of these secular organizations was to provide workers with a sufficient level of material well-being, so the church could fulfil its true mission the spiritual awakening of its congregation. The Thomistic dichotomy (between nature and grace) kept the church from direct institutional involvement in the social movement it was attempting to guide.

In the Costa Rican case this was apparent on a number of levels: the church accepted the separation between the "realm of Caesar" and the "realm of God;" it acknowledged that the "success or failures" of the CCTRN were those of the confederation itself and not of the church; and Sanabria's prohibited his priests to become involvement in politics. Only the organizations of Acción Católica were organically tied to the church and structurally linked the labor initiative. However, they were too weak to anchor the CCTRN to the church. Adrift from its institutional and

theological base and ideologically anti-Marxist, the CCTRN joined the dominant anti-Communist current of the time. In domestic politics this meant enlisting in the ranks of the opposition; in the realm of international labor relations, this meant the joining the AFL effort spearhead by Serafino Romualdi.

In many respects the history of the Inter-American Catholic Social Action Confederation mirrored that of the CCTRN. Influenced by U.S. government offices (the State Department and the OIAA) and U.S. trade unionism, the Catholic confederation lacked institutional church support. Richard Pattee, realized the strength Vatican endorsement would have given the confederation. However, his effort to seek the approval of the church hierarchy was overridden by the NCWC hierarchy. (Judging by the Vatican's silence on Sanabria's initiatives, it is highly unlikely that if approval was sought, it would have been granted.) Anti-Marxist but conceived of as the "third way" the NCWC/SAD initiative was designed to operate in the "realm of Caesar," while the church remained in the "realm of God." The institutional links between these two realms, the organization of the *Acción Católica* throughout the countries of Latin America, were not strong enough to overcome the political polarization caused by the Cold War. By the 1950s, the church initiatives were subsumed in the less ambiguous and institutionally grounded "anti-Marxist, democratic"

union movement.

These tensions, were not present in the Marxist movement. No division between spiritual and material realms existed. Marxism's "atheistic philosophy" precluded an institutional commitment to a spiritual realm or any ontological division between political and labor organizations. For this reason, as the international environment became polarized by the Cold War, the Marxist unions, solidified their ranks, and became more closely tied to their political sponsor. In Costa Rica, as has been amply demonstrated, the disengagement of the CCTRN from the institution of the church and the CTCR's deepening dependence on the PVP placed the two confederations on a direct collision course. This course had its mirror in the contentious AFL-CTAL relationship.

A final question remains: can the Costa Rican experiment be viewed as a precursor to the liberation theology of the 1970s and 1980s? The Costa Rican Church's commitment to alleviate the material suffering of the working population, its willingness to enter into the material, social and economic life of the country presaged the later movement. However, there were important theological and practical distinctions. The Costa Rican Church limited its direct involvement to the organizations of *Acción Católica*. It sponsored a labor movement, but fundamentally viewed that labor movement apart from the

church.

This dichotomy does not exist in the theology of liberation. The organizational entity of liberation theology is the base community, which though institutionally separate from the church, is viewed by liberation theologians as fulfilling the fundamental mission of the church: spiritual consciousness through material dignity. For Sanabria material well-being was a prerequisite for the true mission of the church: spiritual awakening. To enable his congregation to achieve grace, the material lives of Costa Ricans had to be improved. Liberation theologians rejected this Thomistic dichotomy. For them, the entrance of Christ into history symbolized the union of these two realms. The ultimate act of liberation was preformed by Christ in saving man from sin, "which is the ultimate root of all disruption of friendship and of all injustice and oppression."¹¹⁰ Far from being a violation of the spiritual realm to enter directly into the political world, it became an obligation. An obligation that was rooted in a particular political perception of the structural causes of oppression. Whereas the theology of Sanabria and Núñez decried the implicit institutional violence of poverty, it could also state that it was neither with the rich nor the poor, but with social justice. Liberation theologians could not accept this distinction. Their political analysis led them to conclude that concentrations of wealth arose out of an oppressive

political structure. It led them to see political action as a spiritual end and that if they were to be neither with the rich or the poor, they could not be with social justice.

Notes

1. "Statutes of CTAL." in Trabajo, February 11 and 19, 1938.
2. Trabajo, January 14, 1939.
3. The structure of CTAL provided a model for Archbishop Sanabria's vision of a rival, Catholic oriented, Latin American-wide labor confederation. See Section 4 of this chapter.
4. The Central Committee had the following responsibilities: to form a program of action; to decide on the admission of national centrals; to convoke meetings of the General Congress; to prepare budgets; and, to resolve all affairs in the absence of the General Congress. Central Committee meetings were deemed valid only if four members, including the president were present.
5. The confederation set the following scale for dues: up to 10,000 members - \$.0015 for each member; between 10,00-50,00, \$.0008; 50,00-100,000, \$.0006; 100,000-300,000, \$.0003; 300,000 and up, \$.0002 per member. The rates were expressed as "... centésimos de centavos de dólares." Note that the largest per capita burden fell on the smallest confederations.
6. J. García Monge, Costa Rica, to Vicente Lombardo Toledano, Mexico, June 24, 1940, AUOM.
7. *Ministerios de Gobernación y Policía, Trabajo y Previsión Social, Memoria*, (1941), 112-113.
8. Manuel Mora, San José, to Vicente Lombardo Toledano, November 12, 1941, AUOM. Due to delays securing secure sea passage Mora requested money for air fare.
9. Trabajo, November 29, 1941.
10. Trabajo, December 13, 1941.
11. Manuel Mora, San José, to Vicente Lombardo Toledano, Mexico, November 12, 1941, AUOM.
12. Vicente Lombardo Toledano, Mexico, to Rodolfo Guzmán, San José, May 26, 1942, AUOM. For allegation of fifth column activities in Costa Rican schools José Ortega, Mexico, to Dr. Efraín Monge y Compañeros de Comisión Congreso Constitucional. AUOM.

13. Confidential Circular, 1942, AUOM.

14. As quoted in Confederation of Latin American Workers (CTAL), (n.d.), 4, AUOM.

15. In 1944 CTAL's own figures put membership at an exaggerated 3,365,000. Centrales Nacionales Afiliadas a la Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina, 1944, .AUOM. If the Costa Rican figures were any indication, the exaggeration was by a factor of three. The CTCR is listed as having 90,000 members when the zenith of its membership was no more than 30,000.

16. Trabajo, August 20, 1943.

17. Lombardo Toledano was also declared a guest of honor of the Republic. Telegram, March 27, 1942, AUOM.

18. Rodolfo Guzmán, San José, to Vicente Lombardo Toledano, Mexico, May 16, 1942 and September 11, 1942, AUOM.

19. "Nunca ha habido pugna de ninguna especie entre el espíritu revolucionario y el espíritu católico." La Tribuna, December 18, 1943.

20. Arnoldo Ferreto, San José, to Vicente Lombardo Toledano, Mexico, May 26, 1942. AUOM. Ferreto writes, "Es decir, los círculos políticos del país que nosotros hemos caracterizados como progresistas acusan de demólogica la proposición del Presidente Calderón Guardia" Ferreto went on to ask Lombardo to endorse the social guarantees.

21. CTAL held up the agreement made between the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) and the Chamber of Manufacturing Industry of the Mexican Republic of April 7, 1945, as a model. See "Extraordinary Congress of the Confederation of Latin American Workers." in International Labour Review (Nov. 1945): 557-560.

22. Ibid., 558.

23. See Chapter V, Section 1, above.

24. LLAMAMIENTO A LOS TRABAJADORES DE AMERICA LATINA - 1948, March 28, 1948, AUOM.

25. Vicente Sáenz, Memorandum Sobre Centro América, February 15, 1944, AUOM.

26. Trabajo, December 21, 1946.

27. Trabajo, December 14, 1946. Quoted was Mexican delegate Dionisio Encina.

28. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated January 22, 1947, USNA, 818.504-506.

29. Resolutions No. 4 and 5. as translated and reported in Ibid.

30. Trabajo, November 6, 1946.

31. According to CTAL, Figueres' Liberation Army, was composed of ex-military men from the Ubico dictatorship as well as Nicaraguan, Cuban and Honduran mercenaries. They argued that the rebellion lacked popular support. Report, April 15, 1948. AUOM. There was a history behind CTAL monitoring the Costa Rica situation. In 1944 CTAL investigated a plot to overthrow Calderón Guardia. CTAL's investigation indicated that José Figueres' was involved in the plots. Trabajo, February 12, 1944.

32. The particular camp that was cited was the Villa Mills camp.

33. An example of one such proclamation of solidarity was: "*La Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina hace pública su íntegra y más ferviente solidaridad con los trabajadores de Costa Rica, que bajo la bandera de la heroica C.T.C.R. libran una admirable batalla en defensa de sus libertades y del decoro de su patria.*" Report, April 15, 1948, AUOM.

34. This is not surprising given CTAL's character as a labor organization and its endemic weak financial base. At the December 1946 meeting in San José, Lombardo reported that affiliate centrals often failed to comply with their "statutory economic obligations" and with few exceptions the financial burdens of the organization have fallen on the "revolutionary and democratic movement of Mexico." Resolution No. 10 as translated and quoted in U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated January 22, 1947, USNA, 818.504-506.

35. See for example Rodolfo Guzmán, Mexico, to Ocampo, San José, July 22, 1948, AUOM.

36. Manuel Mora, Mexico, to Víctor Sanabria, San José, June 29, 1948, AACR.

37. Rodolfo Guzmán, Sobre Ultimos Acontecimiento En Costa Rica, January 1, 1949, AUOM.

38. As a young man in the 1920s, President Calderón Guardia studied with Cardinal Mercier.

39. Elizabeth McKeown, American Catholics and World War I (NY: Garland Publishing, 1988) 173. See also "Catholic Action" October, 1942, p. 2, CUA Archives, NCWC SAD, File 10. "Catholic Action" was the monthly publication of the NCWC. In 1964 the NCWC changed its name to the United States Catholic Conference (USCC).

40. 1933 NCWC Brochure, CUA Archives, NCWC SAD, File 10.

41. Thomas E. Blantz, A Priest in the Public Service: Frances J. Haas and the New Deal (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982) 3.

42. Listed by country those present at the seminar included: Argentina: Mons. Miguel De Andrea, Rev. Leo Harkins; Brazil: Dr. Heráclito Sobral Pinto; Dr. José Vieira Coelho, Dr. Armando Camara; Chile: Mons. Oscar Larson; Colombia: Rev. Felix Restrepo, Felix Henao Botero; Costa Rica: Benjamín Núñez; Cuba: Sr. Raúl Maestri; Ecuador: Dr. Julio Tobar Donoso, Señorita Rosario Tobar, Mexico: Bishop of Tulancingo, Mons. Miguel Dario Miranda, Rev. Alfonso Casteiello, Rev. Antonio Brambia, Lic. Efraín González Luna, Señora González Luna; Señorita González Luna; Venezuela: Sr. Rafael Caldera; United States: Rev. McGowan, Richard Pattee, State Department, Edward Hefferon, Mark McGarth (Notre Dame), Robert Lucey, Archbishop of San Antonio. Contingent were Peru: Dr. Rafael Belaunde; United States: Mr. Courtenay Savage. Revised Tour List (n.d.), CUA Archives, NCWC SAD, File 10.

43. Memorandum dated July 23, 1942. CUA Archives, NCWC SAD, File 10.

44. Quote is taken from a draft of the Proposed Project Authorization dated May 12, 1942, CUA Archives, NCWC SAD, File 10.

45. Richard Pattee, Caribbean, to R.A. McGowan, Washington, D.C., July 24, 1942, CUA Archives, NCWC SAD, File 10. Sanabria could not attend because of the turmoil caused by the scuttling of two Axis submarines off the coast of Limón in July. See Chapter V, Section 4, above.

46. Draft of Memorandum of Agreement, June 12, 1942, CUA Archives, NCWC SAD, File 10. The Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA) pledged \$17,795.00 to cover transportation and per diem costs. The Memorandum of Agreement was signed on of June 17, 1942. Instructed by Nelson Rockefeller, the CIAA also "tendered" a luncheon to

the seminar participants. See Final Report. Rockefeller was invited to address the seminar but declined due to his full schedule.

47. Inter-Office Communication from R.A. McGowan, to Monsignor Ready, April 4, 1942, CUA Archives, NCWC SAD, File 10. Ready served as an assistant to the General Secretary of the Coordinating Executive staff.

48. Pattee's career is worthy of further study. He was born in Prescott, Arizona in April 1906 and received a Masters Degree from the CUA. He was Professor of History from 1927 to 1938 at the University of Puerto Rico. From 1938 to 1944 he served as Assistant Director, then Assistant Chief of the Division of Cultural Affairs, State Department. After 1944 he worked with the NCWC developing their Latin American Bureau and forming the Inter-American Catholic Confederation. He lived principally in Puerto Rico, Mexico and Canada. Through the correspondence it is clear that Pattee was the key liaison between the NCWC and important labor leaders in Latin America. He severed relation with the NCWC in the 1960s due to personal reasons. Curriculum Vita, 1946 Havana files, CUA Archives, NCWC SAD, File 10, and interview with United States Catholic Conference Archivist Warren Willis.

49. R.A. McGowan to John Ready, June 12, 1942, CUA Archives, NCWC SAD, File 10.

50. Harrison was appointed Director of the OIAA on March 23, 1945. USNA, Roosevelt Library, OF4512 Box 2.

51. Annual Report of Precinradio Incorporated, 1943. USNA, Roosevelt Library, OF4512 Box 2.

52. R.A. McGowan, Washington, D.C., to William Green, Washington, D.C., July 27, 1942, CUA Archive, NCWC SAD, File 10.

53. Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, May 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording.

54. Blantz, A Priest in the Public Service: Frances J. Haas, 200-227.

55. Circular, R.A. McGowan, Washington, D.C., to Members of 1942 Inter-American Seminar, February 7, 1945, AACR.

56. Jacques Maritain, "The Crisis of Civilization" Paper delivered at the Inter-American Seminar of Social Studies "The Americas and the Crisis of Civilization," p. 10, CUA Archive, NCWC SAD, File 10. Emphasis added.

57. Though Sanabria did not attend the Conference he was informed of its proceedings by McGowan's circular, and one can certainly assume by Father Núñez. Sanabria was impressed by the proceedings and wrote McGowan that he would publish the documents emanating from the Seminar in an ecclesiastical "revista." Víctor Sanabria, San José, October 21, 1942, to R.A. McGowan, Washington, D.C., AACR.

58. Circular, n.d, to Members of the Seminar, AACR. The circular is undated and unsigned, but judging by its content and related correspondence was almost certainly written in September 1942. The circular contains a cover letter, a summary of the seminar's proposals written by Dr. Heráclito Sobral Pinto, Professor of Law at the Catholic University in Rio de Janeiro, the text of a brief statement given by the CIO delegate, and the seminar's Declarations of Principles and Resolutions.

59. "There is an obligation that transcends ... all the rights of the individual, of the family and of the nation; it is the obligation to develop the resources of the land and distribute these goods ... for the well-being of all of humanity." Ibid., 2. This is taken from the "*Declaración De Principios*." Also see Núñez, "*La Doctrina Social Christiana*." In the paper Núñez quotes Pope Pius XII, "*bienes creados por Dios son para todos los hombres, para que lleguen con equidad a todos*," 9.

60. *Noticias Católicas* was the World Service Press agency of the NCWC. Under Director Frank Hall (who was under the direction of the North American hierarchy) *Noticias Católicas* had 138 subscribers in twenty-seven different countries in Latin America. A number of the subscribers themselves had numerous outlets. Brochure, 1942, on Noticias Católicas, CUA Archive, NCWC SAD, File 10.

61. R.A. McGowan, San José, to Seminar Participants, September 17, 1943, CUA Archive, NCWC SAD, File 10. The Pan American Federation founded through the efforts of Samuel Gompers in 1918 had been inoperative since the 1930s.

62. Circular dated July 1, 1941, AUOM. Also see Spalding, Labor in Latin America, 254.

63. Circular from McGowan to Members of 1942 Inter-American Seminar, February 7, 1945, AACR. Invitations were to be sent to Latin American Bishops and an attempt would be made to secure a Papal letter of approval. The latter was never done. The NCWC hierarchy decided papal authority was neither necessary nor the complication which may have derived from a request desirable. R.A. McGowan, Washington, D.C, to Rev. Howard Carroll, Washington, D.C, September 3, 1947, CUA

Archives, NCWC SAD, File 10. Rev. Monsignor Howard Carroll was the General Secretary of the NCWC. It is interesting to note that the concern for Vatican approval originated with Richard Pattee, a lay person. See Richard Pattee, Fribourg, Switzerland, to R.A. McGowan, Washington, D.C, August 30, 1947, CUA Archive, NCWC SAD, File 10.

64. Ibid.

65. *II Seminario Interamericano de Estudios Sociales, Boletín 7*, p. 2. This was a direct reiteration from the speech that launched the Catholic labor movement in August 1943. See Chapter IV, Section 2, above. The meeting took place from January 2nd through 9th, in the college of Belén, in Havana Cuba.

66. Ibid., 1.

67. It is unclear from the document if all the business representatives listed met with the seminar. The New York trip was held in September 1942. New York Program as of August 10, 1942, CUA Archives, NCWC SAD, File 10.

68. Wm. A. Prendergast, New York, to Miss Catherine Schaeffer, Committee Secretary, CAIP, Washington, D.C., July 22, 1942, CUA Archive, NCWC SAD, File 10. Prendergast was responding to the invitation to a conference organized by the Inter-American Committee of the Catholic Association for International Peace (CAIP). It is not unreasonable to assume a family relationship between the two Prendergasts.

69. Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, USNA, Roosevelt Library, OF4512. Reportedly, Roosevelt responded encouragingly. The working relationship between the OIAA and the NCWC should be kept in mind.

70. *II Seminario Interamericano, Boletín 7*, p. 1, CUA Archive, NCWC SAD, File 10..

71. Provisional Statement of the Second Inter-American Catholic Seminar of Social Studies, March 21, 1946, p. 4, CUA Archive, NCWC SAD, File 10.

72. Rev. Carroll, Washington, D.C, to Richard Pattee, December 14, 1945, CUA Archive, NCWC SAD, File 10.

73. Richard Pattee, to Rev. Carroll, Washington, D.C, June 5, 1946, CUA Archive, NCWC SAD, File 10.

74. John Brophy, Rio de Janiero, to Phillip Murray, Washington, D.C, September 24, 1948, CUA Archive, NCWC SAD, File 10. Brophy, Director of Industrial Unions Council, CIO,

and Molly Lynch were the CIO delegates to the seminar. Additional information on the seminar can be found in NCWC SAD files under Rio de Janeiro 1948. The stridency of the French Canadians prompted Pattee to consider jettisoning their participation. See Richard Pattee to R.A. McGowan, Washington, D.C, August 30, 1947 and R.A. McGowan, Washington, D.C, to Rev. Carroll, Washington, D.C, September 3, 1947, CUA Archive, NCWC SAD, File 10.

75. Curia, exchange of letters between Pattee and Sanabria dated March 1, 1945 and March 15, 1945. Pattee was in the Caribbean responsible for securing a cite and the cooperation of local organizations for the January 1946 conference. He sought the advise of Archbishop Sanabria who directed him to visit with Fathers Salazar and Núñez. Pattee, also sought Núñez's help to analyze the Central American labor movements and to found an inter-American Catholic Confederation. See, Richard Pattee, Puerto Rico, to Benjamin Núñez, San José, July 24, 1946 and April 7, 1947, CUA Archive, NCWC SAD, File 10, concerning the formation of an inter-American federation. Pattee asked directly for the CCTRN's help.

76. Folder marked Doc. Pbro. Benjamín Núñez, AACR. Núñez's Fall 1940 courses were in Political Science, Economics, and Sociology. He wrote his thesis at Niagara on tuberculosis in Costa Rica.

77. Benjamín Núñez, Interview by author, June 1990, San José, Costa Rica, tape recording.

78. Francisco Herrera, Costa Rica, to Víctor Sanabria, San José, *Fiesta de San Bruno*, October 1944, AACR.

79. Exchange of letters between Víctor Sanabria, San José, and Francisco Herrera, December 16, 1944 and December 19, 1944, AACR.

80. Curia, letter from Edwin O'Hara, Kansas City, to Francisco Herrera, Costa Rica, June 2, 1945. The Most Reverend Edwin V. O'Hara, D.D. was Bishop of Kansas City and Chairman of the Social Action Department of the NCWC.

81. Francisco Herrera, Kansas City, to Víctor Sanabria, San José, November 2, 1945, AACR.

82. Francisco Herrera, San Antonio, to Víctor Sanabria, San José, February 14, 1946, AACR. Herrera was referring to union activities undertaken by both Sanabria and Núñez.

83. Robert E. Lucey, Archbishop of San Antonio served as a member of the California State Department of Social Welfare and President of the California Conference on Social Work. He was the Vice-President of the Catholic Conference on Industrial Problems (CCIP) and the Catholic Association for International Peace (CAIP). Both organization were part of the NCWC and closely associated with the SAD. Request for Essential Information for the NCWC/SAD 1942 meeting, CUA Archive, NCWC SAD, File 10.

84. The poverty he wrote was worse then that seen in Costa Rica; Mexicans lived eight to a room without water lights or ventilation. Francisco Herrera, San Antonio, to Víctor Sanabria, June 29, 1946, AACR.

85. Francisco Herrera, San Antonio, to Víctor Sanabria, San José, June 7, 1947, AACR.

86. Francisco Herrera, San José, to Víctor Sanabria, San José, October 9, 1947, AACR.

87. Víctor Sanabria, San José, to Manuel Mora, Mexico, August 17, 1948, AACR. A similar sojourn through the United States under the guidance of the principals of the NCWC was undertaken by the young priests Alfaro and Varela who upon their return to Costa Rica became actively involved in the CCTRN. See for example, the exchange of letters from Priests Alfaro and Varela, Montreal, to Víctor Sanabria, July 22, 1946 and Sanabria's response September 4, 1946, AACR.

88. Jaime Fonseca, Washington, D.C, to Vicar Hidalgo, San José, December 9, 1944, AACR. For example, Fonseca requested and exchanged lists of Central American prelates and organizations concerned with social issues.

89. Frank Hall, Washington, D.C, to Víctor Sanabria, San José, Summer 1947. Frank A. Hall was the Director of the Department of Press of the NCWC.

90. See for example the letter from Sanabria to Herrera; Herrera's scholarship was for only one year of a two year program and though money will be found somewhere, Sanabria laments that, "it is a disgrace that we can not help you as we should." Víctor Sanabria, San José, to Francisco Herrera, Kansas City, February 18, 1944, AACR.

91. These activities consisted of having labor-priests trained in the social sciences join with students and workers to lead organizing expeditions. Luís Alberto Monge, Interview by author, May 1990, San Pedro, Costa Rica, tape recording.

92. Pedro Joaquín Chomorro, Managua, to Víctor Sanabria, San José, July 17, 1946, AACR.

93. Víctor Sanabria, San José, to Bishop Larrain, Santiago, Chile, June 7 and July 9, 1946, AACR. "Sanabria's agent" was the CCTRN's Vice President Carlos María Campos. Benjamín Núñez, Report to Mathew Woll, Chairman, Free Trade Union Committee-AFL, March 21, 1947. Serafino Romualdi Papers, 136-67, L-MDC, Box 3 File folder 1.

94. Serafino Romualdi, Confidential Memorandum, to Mathew Woll, March 21, 1947, Serafino Romualdi Papers, 136-67, L-MDC, Box 3 File folder 1. The amount involved was relatively small, \$750.00. In the same Memorandum Romualdi relayed the CCTRN's request for a minimum of \$4,000 to "employ the personnel needed for the ordinary tasks in the various syndicates."

95. For an overview of the major developments of Central America's labor movements, see De la Cruz, "*Historia del movimiento sindical centroamericano*."

96. "El Comunismo de Monseñor Sanabria" re-published in Acción Social Cristiana, Guatemala, August 30, 1945. The article which is in defense of Sanabria, was located in the August 1945 correspondence folder, AACR.

97. Víctor Sanabria, San José, to R. A. McGowan, Washington, D.C, November 23, 1944, AACR.

98. Víctor Sanabria, San José, to Bishop Larrain, Santiago, Chile, June 7, 1946, AACR. Monseñor Larrain was Bishop of Talca, Chile. In his response, Larrain wrote that Sanabria has been referred to as "*mi hermano rojo*." Bishop Larrain, Santiago, Chile, to Víctor Sanabria, San José, October 11, 1946. The reference to CTAL indicates that Sanabria was continually willing to use Marxists techniques, or techniques developed by Marxists, for his own ends.

99. Memorandum Sobre Confederación Católica - Interamericana, caja Episcopado M. Sanabria, Correspondencia 1949-1952 - Marginales M. Sanabria Comunicaciones Eclesiásticas, AACR. Though the memorandum itself is undated, correspondence between the Sanabria and the Papal Nuncio, Luis Centoz, date the document in the summer of 1946, probably late July or early August. A finished version of the memorandum, identical in substance, was printed in Núñez, "*Informe*," 44. Backer, La Iglesia y el Sindicalismo, reprints the Memorandum (Appendix H) as it appeared in the Núñez Report. Núñez refers to the document to only to underscore the difficulty the CCTRN had in developing international affiliations.

100. Circulars, R.A. McGowan, Washington, D.C, to Seminar Participants, September 17, 1943 and May 13, 1947, AACR.

101. For the organization of CTAL see Chapter VI, Section 1, above.

102. See the previously cited correspondence between Ready and Carroll and Pattee in this chapter, Section 2, above.

103. Víctor Sanabria, San José, to Bishop Larrain, Santiago, Chile, August 22, 1946, AACR. In the same letter Sanabria told of the close contact and support he enjoyed from the Papal Nuncio in Costa Rica, Luís Centoz, who felt the project urgent and necessary. Núñez agreed that the Memorandum was written at the urging of Centoz and was never responded to by Rome. Núñez, "Inform," 45.

Centoz's own anti-Communist sentiments were well-known. Upon arriving in Costa Rica in May he attacked the Soviet Union and characterized Sanabria alliance with the PVP as follows: he did what he did "to unite his thoughts with the social ideas in force but [in expectation of coming] out ahead." Mora responded that the Monsignor did not understand Sanabria's action. U.S. State Department, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). Dispatch, dated May 13, 1946, USNA, 818.504-506.

104. Víctor Sanabria, San José, to Bishop Larrain, Santiago, Chile, March 10, 1947, AACR.

105. Labor organization in the following countries had affiliates join the NCWC/SAD's Inter-American confederation: the Bahamas, Dominican Republic, British Guiana, Trinidad, Bolivia, United States of America, British Honduras, Ecuador, México, Honduras, Guatemala, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Canada, Argentina, Nicaragua, Cuba, Haiti, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Peru. The Membership was as of March 23, 1948. CUA Archives. NCWC SAD, File 10.

106. Ryan, however, wanted the AFL to shed "its conservative skin." Neil Betten, Catholic Activism and the Industrial Worker (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1976) 13. For a discussion on the SAD's program for U.S. labor see 33-47.

107. R.A. McGowan, Washington, D.C, to Andrade Valderama, Colombia, December 5, 1947, AACR.

108. Serafino Romualdi, Washington, D.C, to Luís Alberto Monge, San José, March 3, 1948, CUA Archive. NCWC SAD, File 10.

109. Dennis P. McCann, Christian Realism and Liberation Theology: Practical Theologies in Creative Conflict (New York: Orbis Books, 1981), 154. McCann is citing Jacques Maritain, Integral Humanism: Temporal and Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom, trans. Joseph W. Evans (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), 298-99.
110. Gustavo Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (New York: Orbis Books, 1973) 37.

Chapter VII

Conclusion

This study has examined the of the Costa Rican labor movement between the Great Depression and the Cold War. These events combined with domestic developments to have profound repercussions in the country.

I *The Great Depression and the Growth of the State*

The Great Depression fundamentally altered the role of the Costa Rican state in society. In order to mitigate the worst effects of the collapse of the country's export markets, the state abandoned its liberal principles and entered the economic arena in an increasingly aggressive and significant manner. By expanding its legal authority and bureaucratic apparatus the state displayed a willingness to insert itself directly into the economic life of the country's working class. This was done in three major areas: public work, wage/price controls, and social insurance funds.

In taking these actions, the state became viewed as an ally by the working class and, by its most vocal representative, the CPR. Both the state action and the positive response to it by the CPR were important events. The state's visible and effective response encouraged workers to direct their activities toward the expansion and

enforcement of existing legislation, not a radical restructuring or the overthrow of the state apparatus. The CPCPR's evolutionary orientation ensured that its activities would be constitution and forestalled a schism within the party between revolutionary rhetoric and practical action.¹

II *The Evolutionary Nature of the Costa Rican Communist Party*

The CPCPR was formed in the wake of the Great Depression. From its inception the party was committed to change within the existing social structure. This commitment arose out of three fundamental causes: the country's political traditions which allowed public discourse to be characterized by dialogue; the overt state attempts to ameliorate the crisis confronting the urban and rural working class; and the nature and personal relationships of the leadership involved. Through the course of the 1930s, the party persisted in advocating legalistic solutions to the problems of the society. The acceptance of these reforms and their enactment into law revealed a general consensus on how to confront the country's social ills. The agreement was fragile. With important implications for the future, the different political and institutional factions (the CPCPR, the PRN and the church) arrived at this consensus through fundamentally different approaches. In the immediate post-World War II period this proved to be a source of intense discord and polarization.

Nevertheless, throughout the entire period considered in this study, the CPR saw representative democracy as a functional avenue for fundamental change. The focus on legislative solutions to social problems on the part of the state and the CPR was the defining characteristic of the country's labor movement. Even in the agricultural sector, where the Jiménez and Cortés governments were more easily disposed to use force, violent confrontations were minimized.

The Second World War rapidly accelerated the process of state intervention into the economic life of the country. The war, by profoundly disrupting export markets, and forcing the formation of international and national anti-Fascist fronts, effectively destroyed the political basis of the country's previous ruling alliances. For Costa Rica, as well as other Central American countries, the fight against fascism was drawn along ethnic as well as political lines.² The activities against Costa Rica's ethnically German and Italian populations enabled the state both to expand its wartime authority over the rights of its citizens, and free it from reliance on an important sector within the country's elite. This, in turn, forced the newly elected Calderón government to seek new institutional partners with whom it could forge a survivable political alliance. The culmination of this process was the formation of the *Bloque de Victoria*.

III *The Formation of the Church-PVP Alliance*

As we have seen, the 1930s was marked by the state's selective acceptance of its expanded economic obligations. Primarily it was the working class that was the object and recipient of this responsibility. For its part, the working class increasingly directed its energies toward the formation of national organizations capable of bearing maximum pressure on the state to expand and enforce protective labor legislation. The rupture in the country's elite order caused by the disenfranchisement of the ethnically German and Italian populations converged with the developments of the 1930s to make a political alliance between the state and the working class possible. It was the CPR, now called the *Partido Vanguardia Popular* (PVP), that served as the workers' representative in the alliance.

Though the CPR/PVP was never a majority party (in the 1940 election, its leader, Manuel Mora, received 10,000 votes) the party, behind a thin veil of autonomy, controlled the country's sole (up until 1943) labor confederation and through it had wide influence in numerous sectors of the working class. However, the wide-spread presence of anti-Communism, fanned by a vitriolic press, made it imperative that the CPR's participation in the governmental alliance be legitimized. The sole agent in the country capable of doing this was the Catholic church.

In taking on this burden and sanctioning the

participation of Catholics with Communist organizations, the church acted out of several institutional and ethical concerns. It moved to cement the political alliance with the Calderón Administration which marked its re-entrance into the country's political mainstream, a mainstream from which it had been excluded since the liberal laws of the 1880s. Historically denied the possibility of influencing the country's youth through the educational system, the church actively sought new avenues to advance its authority among the country's population, and through its newly achieved position of influence, the church hoped to be able to apply its solution to the social ills confronting the country. Finally, the church positioned itself to moderate extremist approaches to the social question.

Ultimately, the basis of the church-state-PVP alliance was each institution's objective to substantially broaden the base on which its influence rested. It was by no means unrelated that less than two months after the formal announcement of the *Bloque de Victoria*, the church launched its own labor initiative, the *Confederación Costarricense de Trabajadores "Rerum Novarum"* (CCTRN). And less than one month later, in celebration of Costa Rican independence, the Labor Code was formally heralded as the crowning achievement of the Calderón Administration and of the new alliance.

The convergence of common political/institutional concerns on the part of the church, State, and Communist

Party, was paralleled by a common commitment to employ evolutionary means to improve the living conditions of all Costa Ricans. In this regard, the church and the Calderón Administration were essentially of one mind. This is not surprising given the strong influence of Catholic theologians on the formation of Calderón's thought, and the tradition of church-related reformism in the country, represented by such figures as Bishop Thiel and Jorge Volio. What was extraordinary was the ability of both the church and the Communist Party to suspend the rigid logic of their doctrinal beliefs in favor of practical objectives. To whatever extent institutional concerns influenced their decisions, their commitment to practical reform over doctrinal orthodoxy was beyond question. In this regard there was a fundamental coincidence of concern over the general material well-being of the Costa Rican working class.

IV *The Post-war collapse of the Alliance*

After the election of Teodoro Picado and the end of the Second World War, maintaining the alliance with the ruling PRN caused serious problems for the PVP. In a time of growing governmental inefficiency, and spiraling inflation (caused by scarcity of goods and exacerbated by the practices of hoarding and speculation) the party felt compelled to stay within the alliance to protect the social

legislation. By doing so it alienated its most militant supporters, and became identified with the corrupt and ineffectual Picado government. Through out 1946, the mounting Cold War undid the wartime collaborative atmosphere, reduced the party's flexibility and contributed to the intensifying polarization in the country.

This had a profound and ultimately devastating effect on the labor movement. As direct consequence of PVP inflexibility directives tightened between the PVP and the CTCR. At the same time tensions between the church and its labor confederation produced the reverse effect. These tensions had many causes. However, the fundamental reason was that the CCTRN was designed as a secular organization linked to, but structurally outside the institutional church. This had important consequences. In important measure, the PVP-church alliance was based on the personal relationship between Manuel Mora and Archbishop Víctor Sanabria. As the activities of the CCTRN moved out of the control of the archbishop, the CCTRN became increasingly influenced by opposition and anti-Communist forces. Mirroring this development, relations between the CCTRN and the CTCR moved from collaboration to antagonism, and ultimately to direct opposition.

This internal process of polarization of the labor movement was strongly influenced by the emerging Cold War. The presence in Costa Rica at the close of 1946 of both

Vicente Lombardo Toledano, as the guest of the CTCR, and Serafino Romualdi, as the guest of CCTRN, removed any appearance of national labor unity.

The final split came in October of 1947 with mass demonstrations and counter demonstrations followed less than five months later by civil war. By the end of 1947, it was no surprise that the now rival confederations lined up on opposing sides of the country's political battle lines.

V *The Revolution of 1948 and the Autonomy of the Labor Movement*

The Figueres uprising brought into stark relief the lost autonomy of the country's labor movement. There are three levels of workers' autonomy to be addressed here. First, that of the individual worker in relation to his or her union; second, the degree of decision making by individual unions within the federation and confederation; and third, the ability of the confederation to act independently of its political support. A closely related question is how to evaluate the importance of a labor movement which at its height comprised under 20 percent of the economically active population?

Questions such as these are extremely difficult to answer. Observers characterized the Costa Rican rank and file as fundamentally docile by arguing that other than the paying dues and attending rallies the workers left union business to their leadership. How accurate an assessment was

this? What other autonomous activities were to be expected of the rank and file?

Indices of Autonomy

Strikes, rallies, submission of congressional petitions, fund raising activities, organizational and land surveying expeditions, newspaper circulation drives, all reveal an effective level of activism, particularly through the 1930s and the first years of the 1940s. For example, in spite of PVP pledges to refrain from strike activity as the workers' unique contribution to the war effort, there were twenty-two strikes in 1943. By comparison from 1948 to 1953 there was an average of slightly over thirteen strikes per year.³ The willingness of workers to strike in defiance of their leadership indicates a level of independence not present in the post-civil war period. In addition, attendance at the *Escuela Sindical* reflected interest and participation in practical labor issues and law as well as the ideological analysis of political-economy. The school trained approximately over one thousand workers in its four year existence from 1943 to 1947. The CCTRN also had its own school during this time.⁴

Indices of Weakness

Despite this there is ample evidence to indicate that the country's labor confederations were weak. Dues were not

deducted from payroll. As a result the collection of dues became a continual problem and both confederations were endemically under funded. Federative and confederative structures were consciously built (by both the CTCR and the CCTR) not on the organic strength of the local unions, but to overcome internal divisions and weakness, and, in the case of the CCTR, a particularly weak numerical base.

The weak base of the CCTR made it vulnerable to outside political forces. The acceptance of funds from wealthy capitalists spoke more to the inherent dangers of top down union building than to the CCTR's rightist tendencies. Ultimately it would be false and misleading to categorize the CCTR as a "white" union. This was evidenced by CCTR firm commitment to defend the rights enumerated in the 1943 Labor Code, its support of the 1946 income tax legislation, and its uncompromised defense of its country's national sovereignty.⁵ The CCTR joined forces with the opposition on three grounds: anti-Communism, anti-corruption, and anti-electoral manipulations.

However, what became clear with the appointment of Núñez as Minister of Labor (in 1948) and Luís Alberto Monge to an administrative post in the International Labor Organization in Geneva (in 1949), was the serious lack of effective leadership in the confederation. By the beginning of the 1950s the CCTR lost much of its force as a dynamic labor organization due to internal power struggles among the

leadership, the threat of Peronism, and the usurpation of workers' initiative by the Figueres government.⁶

The CTCR presents a more complex picture. The confederation absorbed artisan groups such as the shoemakers, carpenters, tailors and bakers that were politicized and active and had a tradition of successful worker mobilization dating from the beginning of the century. Their commitment to forge a national confederation that included rural workers, underlined their efforts to build horizontal and vertical linkages among worker organizations.

However, the energies toward bureaucratization of the labor movement and the successful effort at securing effective state labor protections, had a deleterious effect on the autonomy of the movement. Increasingly workers looked to their leadership, and the leadership turned to the government to pressure for expanded state action. With the entrance of the PVP into the governing alliance, its labor affiliates now had an unprecedented stake in politics and an unprecedented ability to defend their hard won gains.

The politicalization of the labor movement, perhaps unavoidable, was ultimately disastrous. The involvement or non-involvement in partisan politics was the most contentious of all issues facing the labor movement. As the country's politics took on populist and mass based

characteristics the confederations lost the ability to remain outside the electoral process. In addition, the benefits to be derived from successful political intervention (both personal and organizational) was a powerful attraction. In this scenario to remain aloof from politics ran the risk of marginalization. This proved impossible for both wings of the labor movement, and by 1946 the labor struggles of the CTCR and the CCTRN were fully enmeshed in the country's partisan battles. With different degrees of deniability both entered the political arena in spite of the specific prohibition of the 1943 Labor Code.

The entrance into partisan politics, aside from being illegal, exposed the confederations to manipulation by powerful domestic and international political forces. In addition, the relative small size of the labor movement pushed the confederations to attempt to amplify their pressure by exploiting the country's political machinery. In this sense the confederations became political vehicles of their leadership. For the CTCR, its increasingly indissoluble ties to the PVP hurled it into the fulcrum of civil war and ultimately led to its military dispersion and judicial dissolution by the victorious *Figuerista* forces. Ultimately, it was the military defeat of the PVP that spelled the destruction of the confederation. For its part, though Father Núñez released CCTRN affiliates from obligation when he joined the Liberation Army,⁷ CCTRN

activities had been, since the end of 1946, openly supported by and identified with the opposition.

Figueres' victory in 1948 had a number of remarkable implications regarding the country's work force. Most notable was that despite the defeat of the PVP and the CTCR, and the manifest weakness of the CCTRN, the range of protection enjoyed by both urban and rural workers increased beyond the precedents set in the previous decades. The labor-related activities of the Figueres government accelerated the decades old process of increased state involvement as an arbiter and enforcer of labor-management rights and obligations. This was in spite of its indifferent attitude towards the CCTRN⁸ and its aggressive actions against the CTCR. The following table offers graphic evidence of devolving organizational weakness of the Costa Rican labor movement.

TABLE No. 7.1

Unions Active and Defunct
1948-1953

Year	Registered	Defunct	Active
1948	15	11	204
1949	11	51	164
1950	14	1	177
1951	11	12	176
1952	13	-	189
1953	16	131	74

Source: Anuario Estadístico, (1971), 212.

The deterioration was caused the judicial dissolution of the CTCR, the weak of organizing tradition of the CCTRN, and the December 1948 decreto-ley No. 306 which authorized employers dismiss any worker accused of "Calderón-Communism."⁹

VI *Some Underlying Structural Transformations in the Labor Force*

To what extent did the political changes reflect transformations in the country's work force? There were two large changes in the composition of the labor force from 1927 to 1950. First, as the overall work force grew, the country experienced a decline in the percentage of its total work force engaged in agricultural pursuits from 63.7 to 54.7 percent of the EAP. At the same time the percentage of workers engaged in industrial production increased from 12.4 to 15.3 percent. In addition, what was defined as industrial production in 1927 (in effect artisanal or craft production) was increasingly mechanized and replaced by manufacturing. Second, the service sector including government workers, underwent significant expansion. Workers employed in the service sector jumped from 6.3 percent of the EAP in 1927 to 14.8 percent in 1950. The sizable growth of the service sector was accompanied by the entrance of large numbers of women into the labor force. In 1927 women comprised less than 1 percent of the work force; by 1950 they were 15.6 percent.

This dramatic growth shifted the demographic base under the older CTCR; and to a significant extent, the CCTRN drew their members from the newly emerging sectors of the work force. These workers had little tradition of labor struggle and were unencumbered by traditional labor ideologies. There is evidence that some of them, particularly women, were influenced by the parish-based Catholic Action organizations. If these workers joined unions, they were prone join those affiliated with the CCTRN. If they did not join unions, and many did not, they increasingly turned to the state for protection. For its part, the Figueres government was profoundly aware of the increased importance of women as a political force in the country. In recognition of this women received the right to vote in the 1949 constitution.

VII *The Church and Communism*

In recognizing the legitimacy of the PVP and reversing the church's decades-old policy on Communism, Archbishop Sanabria made a ground breaking distinction between Communism's atheistic philosophy and those Communists committed to improving the material lives of the majority of Costa Ricans. According to Sanabria, while Communism was rightly condemned, its practical approach to social problems was praiseworthy.

This distinction which made the church-PRN-PVP alliance

possible and insured the passage of the country's social reforms could not be preserved in a heated political atmosphere by men less committed to the peaceful resolution of conflicts. The profound polarization that struck the country in 1946 made political neutrality impossible. The kind of alliance that existed between 1943 and 1946 between Archbishop Sanabria and Manuel Mora was no longer sustainable. International developments, the burgeoning cold war, the strong economic dislocations, and the intensified struggle over control of the workers, fractured the labor movement into two distinct camps.

However, the unique nature of the Sanabria-Mora relationship should not obscure the ideological origins of the Costa Rican Church's initiative or the mutually problematic relationship between the PVP and the church. In 1949 Father Núñez argued that the Americas should be free from Communism, not as an ideological doctrine but as a system of government. The Americas needed to show the world that economic liberation was possible without Communism and that "Communism [was] not the defender of the working class." Núñez went on to say that, "Communism [was] not interested in economic liberation but political domination."¹⁰ For theologians such as Sanabria and Núñez, a sufficient basis for distributing wealth justly could be found in doctrines such as "family wage" and the social function of property. Communism with its rejection of God

and centralized political structure was an organization to be fought by all available means. Sanabria and Núñez diverged in their assessment of the CPCR and of Manuel Mora, not in their fundamental anti-Communism.

On the side of the PVP, there were also limits to the alliance. Carlos Luis Fallas, commenting on Archbishop Sanabria's pastoral, "*Salario Familiar*," wrote that while the principle of a family wage was good and just it could not become a reality without the abolition of the present social order which the church does not advocate. Nevertheless Fallas believed that the archbishop was "among the most intelligent and capable church leaders."¹¹

VIII *The Consequences of Foreign Influence in the Costa Rican Labor Movement*

A measure of foreign influence is the degree to which a country's historical development is marked by continuous evolutionary patterns or abrupt change. Examination of Costa Rica's labor movement reveals evidence of both.

In the 1930s, labor activities in Costa Rica were oriented towards the legislative development of a body of pro-labor laws. Foreign influence was seen primarily in the nature and means of the bureaucratization of the movement. In the 1940s the labor movement became increasingly susceptible to the incursion of outside influences. When the country's domestic alliances paralleled prevalent international alignments, there was relative domestic

tranquility and collaboration between the two wings of the country's labor movement. The Cold War shattered the international wartime alliance and exacerbated deep seated domestic tensions.

By 1943, labor's two dominant hemispheric players, the AFL and CTAL, were openly antagonistic, each intent on forging a new international order of labor-management relations. At its founding the CTCR affiliated with CTAL. Through its relationship with Serafino Romualdi the church movement joined ranks with the AFL. With the civil war in 1948, and the decisive split in the country's labor movement, Costa Rica became the first country in the Western Hemisphere to experience the full force of the CTAL-AFL conflict. This is not to reduce the events in Costa Rica to a battle between different labor ideologies, but to underline the importance international labor affiliations played in determining workers' allegiances.

Ultimately, this conflict was less over worker rights and protections than over who would provide and insure them, and what role organized labor would play in the country's political economy. The transformations from the 1930s on, increasingly made popular support a requisite for government. The emergence of the political importance of the working class led to the question of how it would be incorporated into the larger society. The outcome in Costa Rica greatly weakened organized labor and represented the

first, decisive defeat for CTAL. However, it would be in error to understand the developments of the Costa Rican labor movement as a simple mirror of international alliances and tensions. If this were the case, the social fruits of the domestic wartime alliance would have been destroyed with the ruling coalition. This was not the case.

The pledge by the *Figuerista* forces to "keep the reforms" while dismembering the alliance was not an historical accident. It reflected both the nature of Costa Rican democracy and the historical roots of the social reforms and the labor laws. These laws were not the product of executive fiat or foreign intervention, but the result of legislative initiative that can be traced to the turn of the century. The effective judicial enforcement of the 1930s and the codification in 1943 marked a significant leap in legal formulation and effective implementation. Ultimately, the evolutionary nature of Costa Rica's social reforms went a long way toward insuring the their continuation in spite of foreign influence and civil conflict.

Notes

1. The party did split in 1984 over revolutionary vs. constitutional tendencies. The issue was whether a banana strike in Golfito on the Pacific coast should be transformed to spearhead a Sandinista-like revolution.
2. It was under the dictatorship of Jorge Ubico in Guatemala that German coffee *fincas* were expropriated under strong U.S. pressure. Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, Bitter Fruit; The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981).
3. Aguilar Hernández, "Clase Trabajadora," 22.
4. Alvaro Montero Vega, Interview by author, June 1990, San Pedro, Costa Rica, tape recording.
5. A particular, example of this was the exchange of letters between Secretary of Labor Núñez and U.S. Under Secretary of State Edward Miller. Núñez attacked Miller for attempting to violate Costa Rican sovereignty by insisting that the United Fruit Company had the right to impose wages that differed from the those decreed by the Figueres' junta. In uncompromising language Núñez accused Miller of reverting to pre-Good Neighbor, imperialist tactics. Núñez Papers, and Benjamín Núñez, San José, to Edward Miller, Washington, D.C, November 7, 1949, (U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica). USNA, 818.504-506.
6. For an appraisal of CCTRN strength in 1950, see Arturo Jauregui, Honduras, Report on the Situation in the Costa Rican Labor Movement, to, Serafino Romualdi, August 30, 1950, Robert Alexander Papers.
7. The name given by José Figueres to the forces under his command.
8. In a February 1949 statement Núñez accused the junta of impassivity towards the problems of the CCTRN. Aguilar Hernández, "Clase Trabajadora," 91.
9. Ibid., p. 91.
10. Benjamín Núñez, "Discurso de P. Núñez como Ministerio de Trabajo y Delgado Gubernamental en IV Conference de las Estados de America de la O.I.T. - Montevideo, Abril-Mayo 1949," in Justicia Y Libertad. Copy of text in Núñez Papers.
11. Trabajo, July, 19, 1941.

Appendix A Discussion of the Labor Code

The Labor Code drew its inspiration from five distinct influences: existing national labor laws; the doctrine of social Christian justice; the CPR; the International Organization of Labor; labor laws in other countries.

General Dispositions

Designed to "prevent today in order not to have to cure tomorrow," Article 1 explicitly stated that the dispositions of the Code were in agreement with the Christian principles of social justice. Calderón wrote that the reforms were designed

to harmonize the conflictive interests of capital and labor by working to establish as a base of relations the eternal principles of justice and Christian solidarity.*

On the Contracts and Conventions of Work

Articles 28 and 29 regulated dismissal and severance pay (*aviso e auxilio de cesantía*). As will be seen the provisions of these articles provoked bristling criticism from the country's business community. In cases of unjust firings severance pay was set according to the following schedule: if an employee had previously worked between three

* Dr. Calderón Guardia, "Páginas Autobiográficas", Revista Archivo Nacional, Año VI, (Noviembre y Diciembre 11 y 12, 1943): 564-576.

and six months, he was entitled to ten days pay; between six months and one year, one month pay; over one year, one month per year worked, not to exceed eight months. Workers did not have right to this pay if they were beneficiaries of other funds such as retirement pensions, old age pensions or other funds administered by the state or the *Banco Nacional de Seguros*, or if they were fired for just causes, such as negligence or non-performance of obligations.

Collective Contracts

Articles 51-53 empowered union representatives to enter into collective contracts for their affiliates. Dissolution of the union did not vitiate the contract. In cases where unions did not exist workers could enter into collective contracts by "common right."

Collective Conventions

Articles 66-68 set forth the regulation of hours, minimum pay and working conditions, and Articles 69-72 established employer and worker obligations and prohibitions. Of these, Article 70 clause c, prohibited employers from compelling workers to quit their unions.

The Suspension and Termination of Worker Contracts

Article 82 enumerated just reasons for an employer to terminate a worker. These include acts deemed immoral,

irresponsible, misleading, negligent or criminal. By acting in such a manner a worker forfeited his right to notice and severance pay. Article 83 listed the conditions under which a worker could terminate a contract. These were unprovoked injury to the health, safety and dignity of the worker by the employer/owner and/or any member of the employer/owner's family.

The Work of Minors and Women

Article 88 prohibited minors (under 18) from night work and working where alcohol was sold. Articles 94-100 prohibited the dismissal of women due to pregnancy and provided periods in the work day for breast-feeding. Establishments with more than thirty women were required to furnish a room for feeding (*amamanter*).

Of the Work Day, Rest and Salaries

Articles 136-137 limited the work day to eight hours; the work night to six that could be extended to ten and eight hours, respectively but could not exceed forty-eight hours a week. The clauses also provided for at least one-half hour of rest per day. Articles 147-148, and 153 stipulated Sunday and fourteen paid holidays, and two week paid vacations for every fifty consecutive weeks worked. The requisite that fifty consecutive weeks be worked for every two weeks vacation effectively excluded agricultural workers

from this benefit. In keeping with the Christian underpinnings of the Code, Article 177 declared that "all workers had the right to enjoy a minimum salary that covered the normal material, moral, and cultural necessities of their home..." (This language was identical to that used by CPRC deputies Mora and Jiménez during the 1934 congressional debate concerning the minimum wage legislation.) Articles 179-191 established mixed provincial commissions comprised of the governor, four employers, four workers, and a secretary from the Inspector General of the *Oficina Técnica del Trabajo*. The commissions were empowered to recommend wage levels, monitor compliance, and hear appeals brought by ten or more employers or employees. Wage levels were to consider the cost of living indexes prepared by the *Banco Nacional de Costa Rica*.

Protection of Workers During the Work Day

Articles 193-202 set forth conditions of hygiene and security in the work place. Reiterating the exclusion of the majority of the working population from accident insurance firmly set since 1931, Article 206 excluded agricultural workers from workmen's compensation benefits except when exposed to motor-powered machines, or engaged in agricultural transport over rails. In cases involving injured workers articles 210-211 placed the first responsibility on the employer. If he was found negligent

the *Banco Nacional de Seguros* was required to pay the indemnification and then be reimbursed (including legal costs) by the employer. Articles 213-235 established rates of indemnification for accidents. (The rates were as follows: for a temporary injury one-half pay with a minimum of ¢1.5 per day for one year; partial permanent injury one half salary for five years; absolute permanent injury two-third pay for 10 years. Provisions were also established for payments to beneficiaries in case of death. Articles 218-228.) Workers insured by their employers through the *Banco Nacional de Seguros* were treated at pre-determined clinics or hospitals. However, incorporating a long advocated CPRC reform, dissatisfied workers were free to seek their own care and be covered up to the allowed costs. Uninsured workers were entitled to seek treatment at a clinic or hospital of their choosing with those institutions able to recover costs from the *Banco*. In all other matters regarding accident insurance this legislation simply codified the existing laws.

Social Organizations

Articles 262-263 legalized unions and cooperatives and prohibited them from activities that did not directly advance their economic-social interests. Article 269-273 authorized workers, employers, professional and independents to form associations, but prohibited them from making

membership compulsory. These associations were not required to provide previous notification before becoming legal entities. However, they were required to register with the Ministry of Labor within thirty days. The *de facto* recognition of unions by the state was both an implicit concession to the independent base of support enjoyed by various provincial and national labor organizations and an explicit acknowledgement of the Christian, not corporativist orientation of the Code.

Articles 274-276 stipulated legal reporting requirements (membership lists, charter revisions and financial statements) and charter criteria (one of which designated exclusive authority to declare a strike to the union's general assembly). Executive councils were to be elected for one year with reelection limited to a single term (Article 276 clause a). This restriction on union leadership was the subject of bitter contention. It was seen by the dominant confederation of the time, the CTCR as a direct attack on its position. The article was reformed to allow unrestricted reelection on November 17, 1944.

Articles 280-81 empowered the Secretary of Labor to dissolve a union under three conditions. These were: (1) when a union was involved in electoral politics; (2) when it failed to comply with the Code's reporting requirements; or (3) when it fell below membership limits, or had foreigners on its Executive Council. In the above cases the state's

ysole recourse was dissolution, either by administrative fiat or through the courts. It could not impose alternate union leadership.

Collective Conflicts of a Social Economic Character

Articles 364-371 set conditions for legal and illegal strikes. Legal strikes were peaceful, temporary stoppage of work by a group of at least three or more workers with the exclusive proposition to defend "their common economic and social interests." All legal procedures -set down subsequently in the Code- must have been exhausted and at least 60 percent of the employees in the work-place must have supported the action. Article 368 prohibited strikes in the public sector; Article 369 clause b. included in the public sector agricultural laborers when harvesting crops in immediate danger of deterioration; clause c included workers in the transportation industry. The prohibitions on the right to strike were hotly disputed. The inclusion of transportation workers within the prohibition was a result of pressure exerted by the Northern Railroad Company. It figured as an early (November 1944) amendment to the initial Code. The restriction was lifted in August 1946.

Articles 372-378 delineated legal from illegal lock-outs (*paros*). Legal lock-outs were peaceful activities that complied with all legal procedures, and at the exhaustion of these procedures gave thirty day notice to the workers.

Lock-outs were illegal if they emanated from a "malicious" intent of patron.

The Special Jurisdiction of Work

Article 393 stipulated that a Labor Court would be established in each of the judicial circuits of the country. Articles 397-404 established the Tribunals of Conciliation and Arbitration and authorized them to "harmonize the interests of capital and labor." The judge, joined on the Tribunal by a worker and an employer representative, acted on the behalf of the state. Articles 405-412 established a Superior Labor Tribunal in the capital with nation-wide jurisdiction. (Provisions establishing the nation wide jurisdiction of the court were subsequently restated.) See, Law No. 717, August 24, 1949) It too was tripartite in design.

Articles 500-518 outlined the procedural steps of the labor courts. These included petitioning the court; hearing cases (*comparencias*), and issuing decisions that both parties had the right to reject. In cases where the parties failed to reach agreement, the Tribunal had forty-eight hours to repeat the process. If no agreement was then reached the Tribunal closed its work and issued a report enumerating causes and recommendations to the Inspector General. At this point, the parties could either agree to arbitration or submit a petition to go on strike or declare

a lock-out. The labor judge then was required to decide whether to allow strike or lockout (based on articles 368, 369 and 377) and to notify the Secretary of Labor of his decision. Final authority rested with the Secretary. After the decision was announced, workers had twenty days to declare a strike; employers three days to give workers their thirty day notice before declaring a lock-out. If this was not done in the allotted period, the legal process had to be repeated.

Articles 519-530 set the procedures to bring the case to the Tribunal of Arbitration in cases where there was agreement between the parties to do so. Arguments had to be heard by the Tribunal within fifteen days. Its decision was then sent to the Superior Tribunal, which announced it within three days.

Articles 549-556 provided the right to appeal before the *Sala de Casación*, the country's highest court; after hearing the arguments, the Sala was required to give its decision within fifteen days. These legal procedures were indeed followed. The most important example was the juridical dissolution of the CTCR.

The Organization of the Labor Administration

Articles 580-584 codified the organization of the Ministry of Labor. The Ministry was divided into four departments: the General Office of Labor, the General Office

of Social Security (*Previsión Social*), the National Institute of Research and Social Studies, and the Inspector General of Labor. A fifth bureau was established to account for future contingencies.

Finally, Articles 585-600 empowered the Inspector General to police the Code through a corp of newly created inspectors, *Visitadores Sociales*, who were authorized to carry out all necessary functions in each of the country's provinces and cantons. The *visitadores* represented the establishment of a new bureaucratic apparatus, and as such, further extended the interventionist role of the government in labor-management relations.

Appendix B

Synopsis of Oscar Barahona Streber's letter on the proposed Guatemalan Labor Code to Juan José Arévalo and Geraldo Gordillo Barrios, January 15, 1947.

The following represents the major points of Barahona Streber's letter: (1) The Guatemalan basic law of March 11, 1945 is rigid and needs to be amended in a progressive way to serve the actual needs of the country. Given Guatemala's history, the law should not weigh too heavily on the employer class. (2) The Code should be implemented and watched closely before further changes are attempted. (3) The legislation should enforce minimum levels and be seen as a whole related to the entire fabric of society. It should move forward but without "a blow that would upset the order of all things in the country." (4) The Code should avoid copying from other countries without modification to the Guatemalan situation. The Code should avoid making revolutionary promises. (5) The head of the labor code, the Minister of Labor, should be energetic and sympathetic. The government not the labor unions should be the pace setter. A Ministry of Labor and Social Security (*Trabajo y Previsión Social*) should be created and linked with a new Ministry of Economy and Industry. Increased growth would facilitate the deserved increase in worker benefits without creating dissension in the employer class. Worker benefits should be compatible with national wealth and avoid inflation. (6) The Code should not become a matter of party politics. (7) The

Guatemalan Code should learn from the experiences of Cuba, Mexico, Chile, Colombia and especially Costa Rica. Regarding the Costa Rican experience efforts should be made to establish the ideological base for the codification. (8) Care should be taken that a heavy burden not be placed on the patronal class regarding back and severance pay. (9) Specific articles protecting women and children should be written. (10) Regarding labor unions the following points were made: a) management should deduct union dues from the payroll; b) unions should have seats on national councils; c) heads of unions should not be subject to firings without just cause; d) union elections must be democratic; f) a public registry of unions should be created; and g) the dissolution of unions should be regulated by the government.

Appendix C
The Structure of the *Partido Vanguardia Popular*
(1944-1947)*

The basic organizing unit of the party was the cell with between three and twenty members. Cells corresponded to workplace, or territory: either neighborhood, village or canton. The cells were charged with teaching the party line, organizing and carrying out struggles, and attracting new militants.

The cells were subject to the oversight of the *Comités de Sector*. No more than ten cells could be included in a single *comité* (Article 22). The *Comités de Sector* in turn were organized under *Comités de Sección*. These *comités*, which whenever possible conformed to provincial boundaries were comprised of eight members. However, the size of the *comités* could be expanded by either the Political Bureau of the National Committee or by the *comité* itself if sufficient reasons existed to justify the expansion (Article 29 and Article 32). The functions of the Sectional Committees included: following the directives of the Political Bureau; directing the sectors by enforcing the party's political line and the decrees of the Political Bureau or the National Committee; organizing new cells and dissolving old cells;

* The following is based on Ferreto, Los Principios de del Partido Vanguardia Popular; Datos Para Un Estudio del Partido Vanguardia Popular; and Partido Vanguardia Popular, Correspondencia - 1945. The Articles are from the Datos Para Un Estudio del Partido Vanguardia Popular.

distributing militants according to need; nominating committees to either direct or develop projects; issuing monthly reports to the Political Bureau. The Political Bureau was nominated by the National Congress of the party and was required to comply with the international party line. It had all the powers that were invested in the National Congress except it could not set national policy (Article 25).

Both the sectoral and sectional levels of the party were periodically organized into assemblies. The Sectoral Assembly included all cell members (when the party was legal) or two members from each cell if the party was declared illegal. The responsibilities of this assembly included issuing activity reports and making those adjustments necessary to effectively carry out the party line (Article 28). The Sectional Assembly was comprised of all sectoral members in a province or region as proscribed by the Political Bureau and one representative from each cell in that province or region (Article 34).

The National Committee held sixteen members with a minimum of seven from San José which was the permanent seat of the committee. Intellectuals (non-workers) were prohibited from holding more than half of the committee seats. It functioned as the governing body of the party responsible for effectively applying the party line, directing the party's parliamentary faction, and entering

into alliances with progressive parties in Costa Rica and establishing relations with other like-minded parties in Latin America. The National Committee directly controlled the activities of the Sectional Committees, applied sanctions, responded to initiatives or changes when required, and in effect controlled the functions of the "entire party" (Article 49).

The largest non-sitting national body of the party was the National Congress. The Congress included all National Committee members, three members from each of the Sectional Committees, two members from each of the Sectoral Committees, two members from the Press Committee (Articles 56-58), and one member from each cell in the country. At the height of party membership this body included approximately 380 individuals. All delegates had a single, uncommitted vote (Article 50). The floor of the Congress was not open; all theses or reports had to have the prior approval of the of the Political Bureau before being presented to the party's lower organs. The Congress formulated the party's program, statutes and reforms; elaborated and developed the party line, elected (in closed session) the National Committee; controlled and balanced the relationship between the National Committee and party members; and enforced total or partial suspensions when appropriate. All decisions regarding the above functions were to be carried out on the basis of majority vote. It was this Congress in June 1943

that agreed to the change of name from the CPCR to the PVP, and to the new party's platform (Article 55). The National Convention, which selected candidates for the party's presidential and congressional ticket, was composed of one delegate for every ten militants, three delegates from each of the Sectional Committees and all the members of the National Committee. The Convention included approximately 350 individuals (Article 59).

The party operated on the basis of democratic centralism with elections organized by direct vote for members and indirect vote for delegates. Lower party organs had to report to higher organs and follow the directives issued by those higher organs. Discussion inside the party was unlimited before a decision was taken. After it was taken all members were expected to comply with and support that decision.

The PVP also had a youth movement called, *Juventud Vanguardista* (JV) "whose mission consisted in educating the young in the doctrine of the party." The JV differed from the PVP in a number of significant ways distinct from the age of the membership. The JV and PVP affiliates were subject to different methods of discipline and organization. Unlike the PVP, the JV was organized in soccer teams, study groups, and other academic based organizations. However, to insure that there was no deviation between the JV and the PVP, the JV possessed a central nucleus of workers. In

addition, although the Executive Committee of the JV was an autonomous entity, it was under the direct vigilance of the *Secretaria de Juventud* in the Political Bureau. It was also expected that close ties be maintained with the JV through the *Confederación de Trabajadores de Costa Rica's* and the *Unión Campesina por la Lucha por Tierra y Créditos' Secretarias de Juventudes*.

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