

SOLIDARISMO: The Rise and Resilience  
of the Costa Rican Solidarist Movement

Afshan Golriz Fard

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By: Afshan Golriz Fard

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Signed by the final examining committee:

\_\_\_\_\_ Chair  
Dr. Dan Otchere

\_\_\_\_\_ External Examiner  
Dr. Alex Nading

\_\_\_\_\_ Thesis Supervisor  
Dr. Kregg Hetherington

\_\_\_\_\_ Examiner  
Dr. Geneviève Dorais

\_\_\_\_\_ Examiner  
Dr. Felipe Montoya-Greenheck

\_\_\_\_\_ Examiner  
Dr. Christopher Hurl

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Kregg Hetherington, Graduate Program Director

8/24/2023 \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Pascale Sicotte, Dean  
Faculty of Arts and Science

## Abstract

### **Solidarismo: The Rise and Resilience of the Costa Rican Solidarist Movement**

Afshan Golriz Fard, Ph.D.  
Concordia University, 2023

Solidarismo (Solidarism), is an economic and labour movement presented in Costa Rica in 1947. It has become a point of contention among labour activists and scholars for decades, creating the long-standing Solidarist-Syndicalist divide in Costa Rica. Despite evidence that Solidarism in Costa Rica has been used as a weapon against trade unionism, there exists the reality of its predominance in the country. In this dissertation, I offer an analysis that explains the prevalence of the Costa Rican Solidarist Movement (MSC), and its sustenance over time. I rely on both a historical and empirical analysis to provide an account of the rise and resilience of the MSC. I argue that the MSC was strategically founded at a pivotal political moment in Costa Rican history, during the anticommunist climate of the Costa Rican Civil War. As such, the movement presented itself as a middle ground between the individualism of liberalism and the collectivism of socialism. Furthermore, the movement owes its ubiquity to having deliberately forged its identity in line with the collective identities of nationalism (specifically, Costa Rican exceptionalism) and religion in the country. Over the years, the movement has seen continued support. I use the case of Del Monte Foods Inc.'s subsidiary, Pineapple Development Corporation (Pindeco), in Volcán de Buenos Aires, as a case study, to provide an ethnographic representation of community members' lived experiences with solidarist organizations such as Solidarist Associations of Employees (ASE) and Permanent Worker Committees (CPT). I tell the story of the significance of Solidarism in the lives of workers in Volcán. I use the ethnographic data collected over 12 years in Volcán, to represent the experience of Volcanians and the history that has shaped the prevalence of the movement in the country.

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Dedication:

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## Acronyms

ADEPSA	Asociación Solidarista de Empleados de Pindeco S.A.
ANEP	Asociación Nacional de Empleados Públicos y Privados (National Association of Public and Private Employees)
ASE	Asociación Solidarista de los Empleados
CBA	Collective Bargaining Agreement
CCTRN	Confederación Costarricense de Trabajadores Rerum Novarum
CPT	Comité Permanente de los Trabajadores – Permanent Workers’ Committee
CTCR	Confederación de Trabajadores de Costa Rica
FoA	Freedom of Association
FENASOL	Federación de Asociaciones Solidaristas
FENATRAP	Federacion nacional de trabajadores Publicos
GCT	Confederación General de los Trabajadores
ILU	Independent Labour Union
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILU	Independent Labour Union
OCE	Oficina de Coordinación Económica
OCE	Oficina de Coordinación Económica
PINDECO	Pineapple Development Corporation
PLN	Partido Liberación Nacional
PVP	Partido Vanguardia Popular (Popular Vanguard Party)
SEL	Sector de Economía Laboral
SITRAP	Sindicato de Trabajadores de Plantaciones Agrícolas (Agricultural Plantation Workers’ Union)
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
USC	Unión Solidarista Costarricense
PVP	Partido Vanguardia Popular (Popular Vanguard Party)

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

This dissertation centers on the rise and resilience of the Costa Rican Solidarist Movement (MSC). It is an account of how the MSC and the larger movement around it have gained immense support from Costa Ricans for over 75 years, despite the emergence of other forms of labour representation. Over the course of this thesis, I study the factors that contributed to the growth and prominence of the MSC and provide a historical and empirical analysis of the movement's rise and predominance in the country. I return to this momentarily. First, I provide a glimpse of the trajectory that led me to this point.

This isn't the story I planned on telling. I had proposed, à la Erin Brockovich, to report on the socioenvironmental effects of Pineapple Development Corporation (Pindeco), a subsidiary of Del Monte Foods Inc., in Volcán, a small town in the poorest region of Costa Rica. I had driven through Volcán once, for 15 minutes, during a summer field course in my early 20s. I witnessed pineapple plantations as far as the eye could see and swore to expose Pindeco's exploitation of the land that was sacrificed for pineapple, and of the people whose health and livelihoods had been collateral damage. As a trained scholar in Environmental Studies, the story of the extractivist multinational giant told itself. I returned to Costa Rica in September of 2011 and for 12 years thereafter, through my masters and doctoral research.

I stayed with Sara Garcia, a single mother of two. Sara had little to no income other than the child support paid by one of her children's fathers and the occasional haircut she gave her neighbours. Sara and her daughters, Valentina and Alejandra, lived in a humble two-bedroom house, one bedroom of which she gave to me during my stay, while she slept in a single bed with

her youngest daughter. She encased the bed in a *toldo*, a mosquito net that she hung from the ceiling and over the bed in case I wasn't used to the insects of the countryside. When I first arrived, I had limited understanding of Spanish and struggled even to put a sentence together. Sara's youngest, Alejandra, now in high school, was only 4 at the time. She spoke rapidly and constantly, at a pitch I was sure was reserved for only the highest of operatic sopranos. Despite her inquisitive eyes and her determination to communicate with me, I never understood what she tried to tell me. In her defence, the concept of a different language was entirely foreign to her; she had never met someone who wasn't from Costa Rica. Despite Sara's low economic status, she was welcoming and generous. When Sara put the first meal on the table, pan-fried *bistek* with beans and rice, a side of tomato, cucumber and cilantro salad, accompanied by a lemonade, I ate ravenously. I hadn't eaten much aside from the breakfast I had at Toronto Pearson prior to my departure and the plantain chips I bought on the Tracopa (the coach bus service). When I finished my meal, Sara looked at me, smiling. She was usually pleased with herself after she successfully fed someone a meal they enjoyed.

- "Quedó llena?" she asked me.

She wanted to know if I was full. Not understanding what she was asking, I assumed she wanted to know if I wanted more food. I shook my head confidently.

- "Tiene hambre!?" '(You're still hungry?!)', she let out, this time more of a statement than a question, as she served more food into my plate.

- "No no no! No más". I finally managed to communicate that I was full.

- "Aaaaah." She responded with a sigh of relief.

Sara was paid a modest amount for hosting me, some of which went toward expenses of my stay. Aside from the condition of Sara's house, her economic status became evident to me in a rather embarrassing way. That year, I was a pescatarian. With the food and lodging fee I paid,

Sara would go to Pérez as often as she could, to buy fish for me from the fishmonger. The effort that went into getting fish on the table for her sometimes-pescatarian guest was completely lost on me. *Pescado frito*? She would ask me before making my lunch. I would nod excitedly. It wasn't until I was wolfing down the fish she made me one day, that I asked through a stuffed mouth, why it was that they didn't like to eat fish. She humbly explained that fish was too expensive an item for her family's lifestyle.

In one of my stays at Sara's house, I started to notice, when I would wake up in the middle of the night, that there was a significant emergence of cockroaches on the kitchen counters and through some of the cracks on the walls. Over the next couple of weeks, I suggested to Sara that we might be experiencing an infestation, a theory she was reluctant to accept. I realize in retrospect that her denial stemmed from embarrassment and an inability to take remedial measures. One night I was awoken by a cockroach crawling over my legs. I jumped out of bed and into the living room, where I noticed an entire curtain filled with cockroaches. I soon realized they were on virtually every surface: the couch, the walls, the counters, the beds. Finally, I pulled a single chair to the middle of the living room and stood on it with a flashlight until morning. I did not stay with Sara again, until years later, in her new house.

Over the years, I learned to speak Spanish fluently and had hundreds of conversations about Pinedeco. When I was met with resistance toward my criticisms of the company, I was in disbelief. Many, despite acknowledging some negative impacts of the company on the town, regarded Pinedeco with respect. I interpreted the resistance of Volcanians toward such observations as a failure to recognize oppressive structures. As I entered conversations about working conditions, I was met not only with loyalty toward the company, but affinity. Pinedeco was regarded as Volcanian, a member of the Volcán community, and oftentimes a father figure. One interviewee, a Volcán elder in his late 80s, recounted his memories of the arrival of

Pindeco: “The thing is, Pindeco arrived and was like a father to everyone because it gave them work and food, at a time when people had very low wages and work was difficult to find, few farms had work to offer. And the company gave work, gave insurance, and paid.” As my research leaned more heavily into these experiences, a recurring theme emerged: Solidarismo. I was told about Solidarist Associations of Employees (ASE), as the organization of workers that provided benefits to the community. As I dug deeper into the meaning of the word solidarist, a web of meanings unfolded. Though skeptical, I was compelled to listen to the experiences of participants, rather than assign a different rationale to their words, or read between the lines—as I had done and had been advised to do.

Sara’s life looks different now. She was granted a house as part of a government initiative for low-income families. The house was simple when she received it, it was new and had a stable structure. Sara is now married to a Pindeco employee and a respected associate of Pindeco’s ASE, ADEPSA. The house is unrecognizable. It is filled with luxuries such as flooring, a ceiling, and bathroom doors. The large backyard has been paved and remodeled. It now boasts a paved seating space, a wood fire cooking area and sink, a large hammock, grazing space for the six dogs, and an entirely separate suite at the back of the yard. Next to the yard is a parking space for their brand-new SUV. Sara has completed several courses in hairstyling and nail design, courtesy of ADEPSA. As a result, she runs a successful business from her new house and has additional income.

Having witnessed the changes in her life over 12 years, through the tangible incentives offered to her by Pindeco and ADEPSA, I am compelled to bring her experience and those of hundreds of other Volcanians, into the discussion of the Solidarist-Syndicalist divide. The story I tell developed, not over a 15-minute drive through Volcán, or through abstract theory, but one that took shape gradually over 12 years. This story took me through two academic degrees, from

my early 20s through to my mid 30s, through unparalleled friendship and unspeakable loss. I will not make claims of representation on other people’s behalf. It is my story because I’m telling it, but I tell it through a different perspective now. That perspective addresses the prominence of Solidarism in ways only an ethnography could. It is one in which the lived experiences Volcanians no longer fit into textbook and theory. It skips over the black and white and settles comfortably into the grey areas and nuances of this long-standing and sometimes controversial movement.

## 1.2 Methods

### 1.2.1 Ethnography

This dissertation draws on 12 years of ethnographic field work. I rely on participant-observation and 50 semi-structured interviews to form these analyses. The participants’ ages range from 21 to 72 years and consist of members from varying socioeconomic backgrounds and that hold different societal positions in the community. Of the 50 interviewees, thirteen were in their 20s, eighteen in their 30s, three in their 40s, twelve in their 50s, two in their 60s, and two in their 70s. Moreover, 13 of the participants are currently employed by Pindeco, 12 were formerly employed by Pindeco, 21 were never employed by Pindeco and 6 were indirectly employed by the company. Lastly, 31 of the participants were men and 19 were women.

*Table 1 Participant Employment Status*

Directly Employed Now by Pindeco	13
Directly Employed in another moment in time by Pindeco	12
Indirectly Employed	6
Independent Income	21
Municipal Actors*	5
Union Workers and Affiliates	8

\*Some of these categories may overlap



Table 1 demonstrates the participants' employment status in relation with Pindeco. The interviewees also include representatives of the Comité Permanente, members of the Pindeco management team, the President of the municipality of Buenos Aires, local lawyer, workers of the Independent Labour Union, ANEP, and the leader of another trade union, SITRAP. Additionally, the research rests heavily on analyses drawn from participant observation and complete immersion in the community during the various research periods since 2011. The qualitative interview data is transcribed, stored, and coded using MAXQDA.

Volcán is a small *pueblito* (town, village). Located 5 hours away from San José, on a journey that requires two Tracopas (the national coach service) and a local (illegal) 'taxi', it's not a town one would accidentally stumble upon. It is also difficult to navigate one's way around Volcán, much less conduct interviews, without speaking Spanish, which I learned to do fluently.

Volcán is not structurally set up for tourists and researchers. There are no hotels, hostels, or other accommodations of the sort for lodging, no translation or information services, no public service centers that would offer internet access or work spaces, and no restaurants or places of the like where one could purchase food. The interviews were often conducted over the sound of blaring music from a neighbouring bar, tropical downpours or hourly dog fights. Nevertheless, I managed to build deep connections and conduct many in-depth interviews over the years. Involvement in the community also meant attending cultural events, sporting matches, occasional religious gatherings, funerals, and weddings. In this paper, I focus on 50 interviews that best lend themselves to this discussion. I rely also on the ethnographic insight I've gained as a researcher over the last 12 years. The relationships I built were the same ones that would allow me to snowball sample participants for my interviews and to be introduced by friends and acquaintances to other key players.

### 1.2.2 Historical Analysis

I conducted a historical analysis, using secondary sources as well as archival newspaper data from SINABI, the National Library System of Costa Rica. I accessed 125 issues from 6 Costa Rican newspapers: Acción Demócrata, Defensa Nacional, La Nación, La Prensa Libre, la República, and La Tribuna. I looked at issues from 1947-1949, and from 1975-1984. In accessing these newspapers, I was interested in the narrative that was conveyed during two critical periods in the history of Solidarism. I weave the archival data into an analysis of the development of Solidarism over 75 years.

*Table 2 Newspaper Descriptions*

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Description</b>
Acción Demócrata	Political newspaper that began publishing on February 26, 1944. Directed by Alberto Martén and managed by Emilio Villalobos. As of May 24, 1947, it changed its name to “Social Demócrata”. (SINABI, 2023)
Defensa Nacional	Newspaper of the British Legation sponsored by the Democratic Commerce. The first issue was published in October 1942. Directed by José Fernando Barrientos. (SINABI, 2023)
La Nación: periódico del pueblo y para el pueblo	Newspaper of the people and for the people Edited and managed by Juan Rafael Vargas. A political newspaper that supported the candidacy of Don Pánfilo Valverde for the Presidency of the Republic. The first issue was published on February 3, 1909. (SINABI, 2023)
La Prensa libre	Its first issue was published on June 11, 1889, as a response from the opposition to the government and its newspaper La República. It was a double-sided printed page, of a political nature, and directed by Juan Fernández Ferraz. Although it declared itself independent, it did have a political bias. After November 7, this newspaper took a more conservative stance. It ceased publication on June 12, 1919. (SINABI, 2023)
La República	A morning newspaper that first appeared on August 1, 1886, replacing the weekly publications El Crepúsculo and El Trabajador. Directed by Juan

	<p>Vicente Quirós, it was born with a commercial interest. Initially, it promoted itself as a publication of political analysis with independent character. However, starting in 1888, it changed directors and became a newspaper supportive of the government, participating in vigorous campaigns to advocate for the interests of the ruling party. (SINABI, 2023)</p>
<p>La Tribuna</p>	<p>A national daily newspaper that included national and international news. The first issue was published on April 15, 1920. Initially, it was called "La Tribuna: Diario de la Mañana" and was directed by Octavio Jiménez. It was published until 1951 and changed its title to simply "La Tribuna." (SINABI, 2023)</p>

### **1.3 Literature**

The Movimiento Solidarista Costarricense (MSC), or the Costa Rican Solidarist Movement was conceived in 1947, through a manifesto by Alberto Martén Chavarría. Since its conception, it has remained a controversial movement. Solidarism was conceptualized as a social movement with strictly economic goals but has since found itself at the heart of labour controversies, specifically, the Solidarist-Syndicalist divide. Solidarism is comprised of two types of organization: Solidarist Associations of Employees (ASE), and Permanent Worker Committees (CPT). ASEs are organizations of a mutualist nature, where employees invest a percentage of their pay, which is matched by the company, as an advance on their severance pay. The ASE is comprised of, and managed by workers. It provides economic and social benefits to its associates, described in further detail in following chapters. CPTs, by contrast, are committees that are internal to the company, and deal with worker grievances and labour representation. While there exists some tolerance and acceptance toward ASEs, CPTs have generated much controversy.

On a broader scale, these organizations fall into the criticism of infringing on Freedom of Association (Barrientos & Smith, 2007; Freeman, 2010; Gansemans & D’Haese, 2020; Liu et al., 2012; Schuster & Maertens, 2017). Freedom of Association rights and the right to collective bargaining have been cornerstones of labour standards as set out by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Labour Organization (ILO). These standards have been accepted as the benchmarks for human rights around the world (Larion, 2016). FoA has been defined by the ILO as the right for workers to join or establish organizations without approval or authorization (Anner, 2018; Bartley & Lu, 2012; Bryson, 2004; Egels-Zandén & Merk, 2014). While labour union activists have deemed trade unionism the most effective form of worker representation (Anner, 2012; Egels-Zandén & Merk, 2014; Gansemans & D’Haese,

2019; Larion, 2016; Schuster & Maertens, 2017; Wang, 2005), some countries have used representational alternatives (Johnstone & Wilkinson, 2018b; Kidger, 1992; Lamb, 1997; Liu et al., 2012; Tyroler, 1988).

Solidarismo in Costa Rica has been addressed in the literature predominantly since the 1980s (Acuña, 1985; Arrieta, 2008; Barraza et al., 2013; Barrientos & Smith, 2007; Blanco & Navarro, 1984; Castro Méndez, 2014, 2021; Chacon Castro, 2003; Delautre et al., 2021; D’Haese et al., 2018; Frundt, 2002; Gansemans & D’Haese, 2020; Hough, 2012; José & Madrigal, 1989; Laat E, 2006; Liss, 2019; Martens et al., 2018; Pocop, 2005; Salas et al., 2015; Sawchuk, 2004; Tyroler, 1988; Valverde, 1993; Zaglul Ruiz, 2022). Many have attributed the decline of trade unionism—specifically, of Collective Bargaining Agreements, in the country, to the rise of Solidarism and Direct Settlements<sup>1</sup> (Acuña, 1985; Barraza et al., 2013; Castro Méndez, 2014; Chacon Castro, 2003; Delautre et al., 2021; D’Haese et al., 2018; Gansemans & D’Haese, 2020a; Martens et al., 2018; Sawchuk, 2004). In doing so, these scholars have maintained that Solidarism has hindered trade union affiliation by presenting a false representational alternative that is neither independent of the company, nor legally equipped to fill the shoes of trade unions.

Some have argued that Solidarism was strategically created with an anti-unionist purpose and used as a weapon against trade unionism (Arrieta, 2008; Castro Méndez, 2014; Chacon Castro, 2003; Laat E, 2006; Salas et al., 2015). Arrieta (2008), writes that “[w]hile the principles that inspired Solidarism are based on the dignity of the human being, the dignity of work, freedom, justice, and solidarity, the reality is that in practice, the Costa Rican business sector, first and foremost, and later the transnational corporations, turned it into a weapon against the

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<sup>1</sup> As further explained below, a Direct Settlements (*Arreglo Directo*) is a document that constitutes a series of rights and benefits between workers and employers. The rights are enforceable by law, and usually mediated through Permanent Worker Committees (CPT).

labor movement.” (p.2, translation mine). She qualifies that over the course of its existence, Solidarism has become a controlling force over the working class, but rather than exerting its force in a coercive way, it has done so in a persuasive and consensual manner. Indeed, the dissemination of the solidarist ideology was a largely hegemonic process in the Gramscian sense. That is, the socio-political order created through the MSC, was established through processes of consent and persuasion, rather than force or violence. In fact, as I will demonstrate throughout the thesis, the leaders of the Costa Rican civil war, first used mass media to disseminate the ideology of the Second Republic—which was perfectly aligned with that of Solidarism—as one that was entirely antithetical to forceful and violent forms of power; namely, the military, which they abolished. In the second rise of Solidarism, the increasingly neoliberal ideology of the movement used the Catholic Church as the institution through which it would propagate its philosophy, once again persuading the working class. I later demonstrate, through an ethnography, the ways in which persuasion and consent transpire in the workplace, through the Solidarist philosophy. Arrieta adds: “this method of *concealing its intentions* and winning over the workers is potentially much more effective and dangerous than the use of overt coercion, in which the intentions and antagonism of the employers are clear.” (Arrieta, 2008, p. 2, translation mine, emphasis mine). Arrieta adds that the addition of Permanent Workers’ Committees (CPT) is what particularly turned Solidarism into an antiunionist movement, as CPTs are involved in labour relations and collective bargaining—which should be the role of labour unions. After the introduction of CPTs, she adds, “what was intended to be a form of mutualistic organization transform[ed] into a clearly anti-union scheme, as it [would] effectively close the door to the union as the representative of workers within the company” (Arrieta, 2008, p. 6, translation mine). This criticism of Solidarism having interfered with labour unions is echoed elsewhere.

Chacon Castro (2003) notes the impacts of Solidarism on trade unions through the following cases: while there was a “decrease in collective conventions from 85 in 1980 to 32 in 1991”, there was an “increase in the absolute number of Solidarity Associations, rising from 862 in 1986 to 1,154 in 1990.” He adds, “[t]here was also an increase in the number of direct agreements between the companies and the associations, from 24 in 1981 to 67 direct agreements in 1987, the same year in which the number of union collective bargaining agreements dropped by almost half.” (Chacon Castro, 2003, p.33). Moreover, he writes that “[b]y December 2001, in the Atlantic region, 60 percent of organizations were Solidarity Associations (199 were registered), while only 5 percent had unions (17 unions). [...] The weakening of unionism and the control of the workers by Solidarity Associations gave transnational companies room to violate fundamental rights and introduce policies of labor flexibility with no counteracting response by the unions.” (p.33). Similarly, Castro-Mendéz, labour rights lawyer and scholar writes “the enactment of the Solidarity Associations Law and its anti-union implementation had a direct impact on the [rise] of direct settlements, at the expense of Collective Bargaining Agreements. [...Collective Bargaining Agreements] dramatically decline[d] from the five-year period between 1982-1986, while direct settlements [had] a significant increase in that sector... This growth coincides with the promulgation of the Solidarity Associations Law.” (p. 91). While the current literature helps to broaden our understanding of the ways in which Solidarism hindered syndicalism, a further analysis of the rise and resilience of the movement is required.

Standing today at 1,445 solidarist associations and 400,000 members (CANASOL, 2021), Solidarism maintains a significant presence and support from Costa Rican workers, even 75 years after its conception. This brings me back to the central task of this thesis: to provide an account of the rise and resilience of the Costa Rican Solidarist Movement. To address the prevalence of Solidarism in Costa Rica, many scholars have attributed high numbers of solidarist

affiliation to workers' lack of knowledge about their options, or fear of reprisals for joining ILUs (Arrieta, 2008; Barrientos & Smith, 2007; Chacon Castro, 2003; Delautre et al., 2021; Egels-Zandén & Merk, 2014; Gansemans & D'Haese, 2020; Hough, 2012; Salas et al., 2015). Egels-Zandén & Merk (2014), for instance, state that "in countries with a history of unions under employer control (known as yellow unions, sweetheart unions, Solidarismo, etc.) auditors need to assess whether the existing union(s) operate(s) without undue interference by management. (...) Likewise, in countries where antiunion behaviour by management is widespread and often takes on violent dimensions, fear often effectively prevents workers from exercising their right to organize" (p.467). Similarly, Barrientos & Smith (2007), write that some workers in the Costa Rican banana industry fear that joining a trade union would risk their jobs (p.723). Additionally, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), in a 2006 study of trade union rights in 154 countries, including Costa Rica, found that "nowadays, most workers are too afraid to organise, for fear of reprisal" (Hough, 2012, p.240). Moreover, Hough (2012) specifies that in Costa Rica specifically, reprisals for unionized banana workers took the form of being blacklisted, dismissed, and harassed (p. 240). These factors pose essential considerations in terms of labour law and international labour representation but provide insight into only one aspect of the phenomenon. A sociological element of the lived experiences of workers remains absent in these analyses. What are the stories of workers who choose Solidarism? What has the significance of the movement been in their lives?

I address the phenomenon in three ways. In Chapter two, I explain the conception of Solidarism through the political economy of the country's history. I suggest that Solidarism gained its strength because it was deliberately interlaced in the political economy of Costa Rica in such a way as to bolster the movement. I argue that four elements were vital to strengthening the MSC. First, the MSC was introduced in an opportune anticommunist climate, just before the



creation of the Second Republic<sup>2</sup> of Costa Rica. Second, the creation of a large middle class through several decades in the country, provided a suitable demographic for the solidarist ideology. Third, the support of the Catholic Church provided the backing the movement needed for its second rise in the 1970s. Lastly, the inevitable economic reliance on the agro-export industry, created a dependency that made their presence indispensable to the Costa Rican economy.

In the third chapter, I analyse the resilience of the MSC. I argue that the movement maintained its strength and support for over 75 years because it forged an alliance with existing collective identities of Costa Rican nationalism and religion. I argue that the long-standing nationalist identity of Costa Rican exceptionalism, has 4 main pillars: whiteness, pacificism, democracy, and economic prosperity. I then demonstrate the ways in which these pillars were bolstered by the founding Junta of the Second Republic, using the press. Next, I reveal the ways in which Solidarism echoes those values, both in theory and in practice. I then describe the role of the Catholic Church in the promulgation of the solidarist ideology and establish the ways in which an alliance with Catholic identity was used to reinforce a solidarist one. The solidarist identity was thus strengthened by aligning itself strategically with already-established collective identities.

The fourth chapter looks at Solidarist-Syndicalist tensions through a case study of workers from the Pineapple Development Corporation (Pindeco) in Volcán, Costa Rica. In this chapter, I weave the historical and theoretical underpinnings of Chapters 2 and 3 into an ethnographic depiction of how these histories translate into the lives of Volcanians. I draw on interviews with residents of Volcán, workers and advocates of Independent Labour Unions, as well as Pindeco Workers to draw this analysis. I am interested in understanding, not only what

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<sup>2</sup> The Second Republic of Costa Rica refers to the ideology pushed forth by the founding Junta of the 1948 Civil War. In reality, a second republic was never created in the Country.

draws workers to solidarist organizations, but what makes them refuse syndicalist ones. First, Solidarism works on a system of incentives that are indispensable to the lives of workers. Second, the philosophy of Solidarism echoes a nationalist one, as seen in Chapter 3. As such, the pacifist and neutral approach does not threaten the presence of Pindeco—in other words, it does not threaten the livelihoods of Volcanians. Third, I explore the refusal of syndicalism as a precondition to the prominence of Solidarism. This means that in many cases, rather than Solidarism hindering syndicalist support, many workers prefer Solidarism precisely because it is not syndicalism. Chapter 4 puts a face to the theoretical debate and, through the lived experiences of Volcanians, provides, once again, an additional analysis to our current understanding of the Solidarist-Syndicalist divide.

Addressing the rise and resilience of the MSC in this way broadens our understanding of its prominence in the country. Non-union forms of representation are not unique to Costa Rica, nor are critiques of such organizations. I argue, however, that in the case of Costa Rica, the movement has grown *because* its leaders and the promoters of the movement have aligned it with nationalist values since its conception. In this way, it is useful to examine, not just *Solidarismo* as a type of organization, but the *Costa Rican Solidarist Movement*, as a movement in line with the history of the country and its identity of Costa Rican exceptionalism. This analysis of the MSC thus provides an account of how the movement came about and was sustained in the country for over 75 years.

#### **1.4 Theoretical Framework**

The perspectives posed in the current literature on *Solidarismo*, ignore the historical and sociological components of the rise and resilience of the MSC. In many cases, these perspectives fail to recognize workers' choice to be part of solidarist organizations, and their role in forming its structure. In the case of Solidarism in Costa Rica, attributing workers' choice to engage in

solidarist organizations to an inability to recognize their oppression, ignores the lived experiences of workers and the choices involved in such associations. It is possible to recognize unequal structures of power, while still appreciating the roles of those who operate within those structures. As Eben Kirksey (2012) writes: “[f]reedom in entangled worlds means negotiating complex interdependencies, rather than promoting fictions about absolute independence. Contingent alliances, sometimes even with the enemy, can open up possibilities in seemingly impossible situations. Amid warfare among worlds, coalition building and serious diplomacy generate limited freedoms for people who are stuck in conditions not of their own choosing” (p. 15). In addition to recognizing workers’ choice to participate in Solidarism, it is equally important to acknowledge the work that is presently being done within these spaces, rather than assuming that workers are simply awaiting emancipation.

In the case of Volcán, I advocate for the need to acknowledge the lived experiences of Pindeco workers and community members. I push the analysis of the Solidarist-Syndicalist divide beyond an assumption of fear, ignorance, and oppression, and into a discussion of choice and resistance to previous structures of representation. Rather than assuming that they have not yet arrived to an enlightenment on trade unionism, I urge the reader to recognize the choices of Volcanians and the history that has shaped the present conflict. Within the available structures of power, workers have created spaces of social and economic opportunity.

In May of 2023, Mateo Rivas, an outspoken ANEP worker representative ran as a member of the Permanent Worker Committee. 1540 Pindeco workers gathered in Pindeco’s assembly hall to participate in the elections. The election was conducted by an external lawyer, and an external Electoral Tribunal. Management attendance was strictly prohibited. The votes took place amidst animosity between different candidates and resistance from existing CPT representatives to open the space up to an ILU representative. With 183 votes, Mateo Rivas,

among others, was elected. The Vice-President, the President, and the newly elected member alike, took turns to speak about their varying positions on this new alliance. Mateo made a speech about honouring Costa Rican democracy and preventing further propaganda on behalf of existing CPT members. He finished his speech by extending a large Costa Rican flag toward the audience, a nod to Costa Rican democracy. The crowd was divided between applause and jeers. Another CPT representative took the microphone. In a heated diatribe against Mateo, he made a series of personal accusations: “In my opinion”, he said with agitation, “it is not possible that a representative, who is supposed to be representing workers, takes an hour and fifteen minute breakfast break and another hour break in the afternoon, while you, the packers, you, the workers, you the hard working employees, don’t even allow yourselves an extra minute of your break so that the burden doesn’t fall on others”. Once again the crowd was divided in their response but the animosity was audible amidst jeers. “It’s my opinion” he said, “but at the end of the day, the workers can choose whomever they want”. When Leonardo Reyes, the President of the CPT, took the microphone, he began by mentioning that Mateo Rivas has been a known representative of the Independent Labour Union, ANEP. “I will make a personal comment” he continued, “Mateo Rivas, whom I respect very much as a person, is a representative of the ILU, ANEP in Buenos Aires. What I want to tell Mateo is that if the assembly has chosen to elect him, he must know that it is to be a representative of the Permanent Worker Committee, *not* of the *sindicato*.” At this, the crowd erupted in what sounded like unanimous cheers and whistles. “Because we have defended this for 40 years, and we’re not about to hand it over to anyone”.

As previously mentioned, and as I continue to demonstrate throughout the thesis, Solidarism achieved its prominence in Costa Rica, through a process of hegemony. This process was restructured in different moments in the history of Solidarism, to reflect the country’s economic situation, and to maintain its position as a favourable alternative for the proletariat in

the face of rising syndicalism. In structuring the Solidarist philosophy around the economic needs of subjugated classes at different points in Costa Rican history, choosing Solidarism became the commonsensical answer for workers. As I later show in the case study of Pinedeco, this holds true for workers who are part of Solidarist organizations. Solidarism, in its echoes of already-accepted nationalist and cultural values, and with its promises of tangible social and economic benefits in the lives of workers, maintains its power over the working class through hegemony. In continuing to employ the services of a Permanent Workers' Committee representative, or in joining Solidarist Associations of Employees, workers continuously consent to the Solidarist ideology. If we consider, however, the ways in which workers are using structures of Solidarism, and reshaping those structures to better fit their needs, we might wonder if these subaltern groups are becoming leading groups and producing instead a 'good sense' (Gramsci, 1971). As demonstrated in the above anecdote and in the development of worker-led practices and investments through ASEs, we see the active role of workers in these negotiations of power. In this way, workers are not sitting around, expecting to be liberated from the shackles of Solidarism, nor are they adhering perfectly to the Solidarist structure that was previously created. Rather, Pinedeco workers are creating possibilities, as Kirksey says, in seemingly impossible situations.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Rich Coast, Poor Nation: Costa Rican Political Economy**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The Movimiento Solidarista Costarricense (MSC), or the Costa Rican Solidarist Movement, has been at the heart of the long-standing Solidarist-Syndicalist divide in the country for 75 years and is inextricably rooted in the country's political economy (Valverde, 1993). Solidarism is a social and economic philosophy that situates itself between liberalism and socialism. First introduced to Costa Rica in 1947, it has since been at the center of much debate in Costa Rican labour politics. Standing today at 1,445 solidarist associations and 400,000 members (CANASOL, 2021), it maintains a significant presence and support from Costa Rican workers, even 75 years after its conception. Nevertheless, it has been critiqued by labour unions and scholars to be a hoax and weapon against trade unionism. Solidarism has been widely perceived by these groups as being a disadvantage to workers, and one that obtains its popularity through propaganda and deceit. This perspective, however, ignores the historical development of Solidarism and its inextricable roots in the country's political economy. In this chapter, I examine the historical basis of the MSC, and provide an analysis of the sociopolitical and economic conditions that eventually gave way to the movement in the 1940s and later strengthened it in the 1970s. In doing so, I complicate the common discourse on the growth and preponderance of Solidarism and suggest instead that its prevalence in the country is a result of its deliberate interlacing into Costa Rican history, and an embeddedness in the country's national identity.

Scholars have argued that while the movement was originally intended as a movement of social and employment justice, it was ultimately used as an exploitative tool. Some have remarked that while the movement was based on "human dignity, employment dignity, freedom,

justice and solidarity” (Arrieta, 2008) at its philosophical core, the Costa Rican business sector along with the transnational business sector, converted the movement into “a weapon against trade unionism” (p.2 *translation, mine*) . Moreover, the pro-union activists have attributed the fear of unionisation in the country, along with the historically low rates of unionisation, specifically in the Costa Rican agricultural industry, to Solidarism (Ganseman & D’Haese, 2020b). In fact, many have described the solidarist movement as a necessarily anti-syndicalist movement. Trade unionists have accused solidarist organizations, especially Permanent Worker Committees (CPT) (described in further detail later), of coercion, corruption, and anti-union propaganda<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, the reasons for the prominence of the MSC in Costa Rica are manifold. The Solidarist Movement was both a sociopolitical and economic movement. As such, it is critical to explore the political economy of Costa Rica’s history to better understand the development of the MSC. Four elements of Costa Rica’s history were vital to the strengthening of the MSC: 1) the introduction of Solidarism in an opportune anticommunist climate that lent itself to the creation of the Second Republic of Costa Rica, 2) the creation of a large middle class throughout several decades, 3) the support of the Catholic Church and the movement’s rooting in the Catholic Social Doctrine, and 4) the inevitable economic dependence on the agro-export industry.

Given the long-standing political stability of Costa Rica, and its 98% literacy rate (UNESCO, 2022), I am interested in the continuous support for the MSC, as well as the rejection of syndicalist representation in the agricultural industry in the *Zona Sur*. In other words: why does a country that is relatively stable in its politics and economy, with a literate population, presumably capable of making informed decisions, continue to choose Solidarism over what has long been deemed a cornerstone of economic justice, that is: labour unions? Here, I trace the

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<sup>3</sup> Golriz, 2022 Interview data.

political economy of Costa Rica since its colonial era to present. In this history, I include aspects of the country's political economy that are relevant to labour politics in Costa Rica—specifically, to the Solidarist-Syndicalist divide. It is important to understand the development of Costa Rica's history in line with the creation of the ideology that led to the MSC. In particular, I focus on the interrelations of the rise and fall of Communism, the political influence of the Catholic Church, and the country's economic models that led to its dependence on the agro-export industry. The latter is of particular importance in the assessment of the presence of Solidarism within the Costa Rican pineapple industry—as I explore in following chapters.

## **2.2 1500s – 1848: Introducing Costa Rican Exceptionalism**

To avoid confusion when referring to Costa Rica in its different stages as a region, province, and sovereign nation, I begin with this brief history of its quest for independence. In the pre-Columbian era, present-day Costa Rica was a region consisting of semiautonomous villages, organized into chieftainships, or *cazicazgos* (Rankin, 2012, p. 47). In 1540, the province of Nuevo Cartago y Costa Rica was formed under Spanish colonial rule. In 1565, it was named the Province of Costa Rica. Three years later, the province of Costa Rica became part of the *audiencia* of Guatemala, until 1821, when independence was declared for the *audiencia*, including Costa Rica. Central America then became part of the Mexican Empire, until 1823. Following the collapse of the Mexican Empire, Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador, formed the United Provinces of Central America in the same year. In 1838, Costa Rica withdrew from the United Provinces of Central America and was declared a republic 10 years later, in 1848.

Costa Rica, often referred to as the *Switzerland of the Americas*, has long been distinguished from its Latin American neighbours because of its political stability, its lack of military forces, and its peaceful population, denoted by its slogan, *Pura Vida*. Except for two



coups, in 1917<sup>4</sup> and 1948<sup>5</sup>, Costa Rica has experienced, since its independence, nonviolent transfers of power and relative political stability. Historically, this was in part due to its geographic isolation in the country's colonial era, and its lack of exportable agricultural and mineral wealth, often being left to govern itself with little outside interference (Ameringer, 2009; Booth, 1987).

Some have attributed Costa Rica's nonviolent history to an existence of ethnic and racial homogeneity, claiming that the majority of Costa Ricans are White or White-identified. These claims are followed by an assertion that the province of Costa Rica never developed a hacienda system, and that slave ownership was not prevalent because of its small indigenous and black populations in the pre-Columbian era (Ameringer, 2009; Booth, 1987, 2008a; Miller, 1996). Others (Fonseca & Chevalier, 1984; Minott, 2005; Olien, 1980; Palmer, 1996; Palmer et al., 2004; Stocker, 2000), have contested this narrative as one that erases the histories of black and indigenous populations of Costa Rica. This depiction also contributes to the narrative of Costa Rican exceptionalism, as described in the next chapter. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to fully explore questions of race, ethnicity, and assimilation from the Costa Rican pre-Columbian era to present. Moreover, the scarcity of information on slave-ownership in the colonial era calls for a need to treat any analysis of this period, with continued scrutiny. Nonetheless, for the purposes of gaining insight into the political economy that influenced Costa Rican nationalism as we know it today, we can at least find the following middle grounds.

We can, on the one hand, say that the history of colonialism is different in Costa Rica than in other Latin American countries, at least in the extent and duration of violence. Attributing the difference, however, to an inexistence of indigenous or black populations, risks contributing

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<sup>4</sup> Frederico Tinoco Granados overthrew Alfredo González Flores, in a coup d'état, on January 27, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> José Figueres Ferrer led an armed uprising in which he and the rebels overthrew Otilio Ulate Blanco, thus ending the *Caldero-Communist* regime.

to a historiography of Costa Rica that is rooted in white supremacy and a nationalist ideology of Costa Rican exceptionalism. Many scholars (R. Lohse, 2014; Olien, 1980; Stocker, 2000) have documented the existence of hacienda systems, and slave ownership since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Palmer et al., (2004) write: “[h]istorical demographers have shown that prior to the arrival of Columbus in Cariari (today Puerto Limón) in 1502, the territory of Costa Rica was home to about 400,000 indigenous people.” (p. 9). They then explain that Spanish colonists reduced this population to the point of extinction through such measures as disease, war, and relocation. Similarly, in an extensive history of Costa Rica, Rankin (2012) asserts that conquistadores in 1524 raided native villages, capturing native people and forcing them into slave labour within the Caribbean. Rankin adds that “[m]any of the Costa Rican indigenous people succumbed to smallpox, influenza, typhus, and other European illnesses, while others were captured and enslaved. By the 1550s, the native population in the Nicoya Peninsula had dropped by more than 75 percent, and by the end of the century it had fallen by more than 90 percent.” (p.48). It is important then to reformulate the narrative into the following: it is not that Costa Rica experienced a nonviolent colonial era because of the existence of ethnic homogeneity, but that *because* of colonial violence, Costa Rica experienced near ethnic *cleansing*. Even still, the eventual racial integration of the remaining indigenous population contributed not to a predominantly white population, but to a predominantly white *and mestizo* one. The importation of slaves from the Caribbean contributed to the remaining ethnic makeup of mulato Costa Ricans.

Nevertheless, Costa Rica’s reputation of nonviolence, relative to the rest of Latin America, is not entirely unfounded. The dissipation, however, of war, violent conquest, and slavery, comes not from a cultural aversion to violence or a civilized white race, akin to a European nation, but from lack of material benefit and economic incentive to Spanish

conquistadores. Because indigenous populations were dispersed, and Costa Rica, despite its name, lacked wealth in natural resources, the Spanish Crown was not drawn to the province, nor were Spanish colonists. Moreover, settlers settled in the central valley, which, due to such geographical characteristics as its mountainous terrains, was isolated and inaccessible. The lack of access to labour, the inability to assemble the population into one region that could be easily managed, taxed, and otherwise controlled, the lack of natural wealth, and the high costs of export, made Costa Rica a poor nation, and one that was unattractive to European colonists. As such, even in the presence of a slave labour system, especially on cacao plantations, working conditions were different for labourers. Since many of the plantations were managed by absentee owners (Lohse, 2006; Rankin, 2012), labourers were often left to work with more autonomy and, as a result, sometimes under better conditions. Since these plantations were smaller in size and less economically profitable from an agro-export perspective, slave-ownership was also less profitable for landowners (Booth, 1987). Thus, manumission was prevalent because of the economic deprivation of conquistadores or through the slaves' purchase of their own freedom (Gudmundson, 1978; Olien, 1980; Rankin, 2012). Rankin (2012), among others, maintains that by the end of the colonial period, "a prominent free black and mixed-race population had become a part of the Costa Rican demographic" (p. 59). From here, we can gather, that Costa Rican racial and ethnic homogeneity is a myth or misconception at best, and a strategically racist and nationalist tool at worst. The existence, however, of a large middle-class and homogeneity within *classes*, as opposed to ethnicity, is a more reasonable deduction. Nonetheless, the creation of this nationalist imaginary of Europeanness or Whiteness, remains useful in understanding much of Costa Rica's politics, as I will address in following chapters.

What further contributed to a creation of a large middle class in the post-colonial era in Costa Rica were land concessions by President Braulio Carillo in the 1830s, for the purposes of

growing coffee. In doing so, Carillo took much of the land out of the hands of the Catholic Church. Costa Rica provided a climate in which coffee could thrive, leading to a rise in its production in 1830 and leading Costa Rica into the agro-export industry. By the 1840s, the Costa Rican economy had shifted predominantly from the production of cacao to that of coffee, giving rise to the Coffee Oligarchy among Costa Rican elites. Because coffee was the first and only export product for over 40 years, it created an oligarchy in which the elite with more land had the most control over exports and thus more economic and political influence (Evans, 1999; Lehoucq, 1991). In 1845 Costa Rica experienced a coffee boom which brought with it significant social and economic changes. Smaller farmers who once produced coffee for local consumption were no longer able to keep up with the export market and were driven to sell their land, creating an increase in both landless peasants and wage labourers (Booth, 2008b; Winson, 1989). Moreover, Costa Rica's entry into global trade increased both economic and infrastructure development, leading eventually to increased immigration and population growth and diversification. Rankin (2012) states:

As a colony Costa Rica had been far removed from the traditional centers of Spanish imperial authority. And the elite conservative power brokers within the colonial system—namely the Church, the military, and high-ranking members of the royal bureaucracy—were largely absent from daily life in colonial Costa Rica. As a result, liberalism took hold relatively easily and quite quickly among Costa Rican leaders in the decades following independence, as evidenced by the policies and reforms enacted by Braulio Carillo. That liberal impulse carried over into economic policy as well. (p. 75).

Indeed, in 1844, a Costa Rican constitution was put in place, which prioritized education, and protected basic liberties, such as freedoms of expression and association. In 1848, simultaneously with important global phenomena such as the publication of Marx and Engels's

(1848) *The Communist Manifesto*, and the revolutionary activity in Europe, Costa Rica created a new constitution and modeled its flag after that of France, in support for the French Revolution (Rankin, 2012, p. 40).

### **2.3 1850-1890 : Labour and the Atlantic Railway**

The interplay between the political economy of Costa Rica, global social and revolutionary movements following the industrial revolution, and the activities of the Catholic Church serves to demonstrate the development of the nationalist ideology within which Solidarism eventually emerged. As socialism continued to rise in Europe, with the establishment of the International Working Men's Association—or the First International—in 1864, along with the struggle for democracy, Costa Rican politics trended in a similar direction. A new constitution was put in place in 1869, under the leadership of Jesús Jiménez Zamora, placing further emphasis on education and expanding the electorate. The constitution was amended in 1871 by Tomás Guardia Gutiérrez and stayed in effect until 1949. Political domination by *Cafetaleros* (the Costa Rican coffee elite) was weakened under the dictatorship of Tomás Guardia Gutiérrez (Booth, 2008b) as he turned military attention away from internal conflict and weakened its connections with *Cafetaleros* (Rankin, 2012). During his rule, Guardia invested in education and healthcare, leading to increased literacy and an increase in the middle class. Guardia also invested in transport, in the form of the Atlantic Railway.

The Costa Rican government signed a contract with Minor. C. Keith to build a railway in San José. The railway was built between San José and Limón in 1871, to facilitate banana trade. It encouraged the recruitment of foreign workers, for both the railway and plantations, leading to increased immigration (Ameringer, 2009; Booth, 2008b). When the Costa Rican government defaulted on its payments to Keith in 1882, it consigned 324,000 hectares of tax-free land to him, along with free use of the railroad for 99 years (Warner, 2007, p. 59). This drove Keith to

concentrate his efforts in banana shipments. The rise in banana production for export further intensified labour struggles. Lower wages, poor working conditions, and increased racism and discrimination, especially against Caribbean Black and Chinese workers, led to further labour organization and mobilization. This contributed to the labour unrest between the 1870s and 1880s (Booth, 2008b). Booth (2008) argues that this also resulted in increased economic diversification, and that a surge in immigration brought with it the importation of new political ideologies. As I will continue to demonstrate, increased literacy, the diversification of the population, an increase in the middle class, and escalating tensions are elements that eventually led to the creation of the Second Republic of Costa Rica, lending itself in turn to the growth of Solidarism.

By the 1880s the liberal government was in full power in Costa Rica. Preceded by Tomás Guardia Gutiérrez (1870-1876), liberal presidents Próspero Fernández (1882–1885) and Bernardo Soto (1885–1889)—known as “the Olympians”—implemented aggressive liberal reform platforms. While Catholicism had been the dominant religion in Costa Rica since assimilation efforts of the colonial era, its political influence was not as strong as in the rest of Latin America; this was in part due to Carillo’s land distribution policies in 1840 (Booth, 2008a; Rankin, 2012). Even in earlier years, the 1824 constitution of the United Provinces of Central America had protected the privileged position of the church but limited its authority (Rankin, 2012). Part of the Olympians’ liberal reform strategy, in the 1880s, was the implementation of anticlerical measures, which they deemed necessary for the modernization of the nation. In order for the state to gain power over the church, the latter was marginalized, activities of religious order were prohibited and the church was excluded from any involvement in public education.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The limitation of the Church in education was proposed over a decade before it was effectively implemented in 1885 by Soto, through the new education law. The *Ley general de educación común* made primary education mandatory children and instated authority over the creation of the curriculum, effectively removing it from the control of the Church.

Liberal laws of 1884 such as the institution of civil registries for births, deaths, marriages and divorces further marginalized and outraged the Church, creating public animosity between the Church and the liberal government (Booth, 2018; Rankin, 2012). The church would respond to this marginalization in the coming years.

Meanwhile, this period witnessed significant growth in the agro-export industry. This was especially evident in the production of coffee and bananas, as well the continued railway project, calling for an increase in day workers, and in foreign labour, and bringing with it a rise in social conflict. In this period, as Miller (1996) puts it: “ the economic structure of the country began to change, creating a rural proletariat, rural-urban migration, and a small but politically important urban workforce. This provided the demographic base for a series of worker-based political movements.” (p. 49). Indeed, in 1888, the railway workers struck against Minor Keith following a breach of contract, beginning a wave of organized labour for workers and small producers.

The year 1889 marked an important moment in the democratic system in Costa Rica following the defeat of Ascensión Esquivel Ibarra, the Liberal Party candidate, by José Joaquín Rodríguez Zeledón, the candidate for the conservative Constitutional Democratic Party (PCD). This backlash against the liberal party—that is, the formation of the PCD—was the Catholic Church’s response to liberal reforms that had tried to limit its powers throughout three preceding governments. When Liberals tried to prevent the PCD from taking office, massive protests broke out and Soto was forced to step down (Rankin, 2012). As the country moved toward democratic systems, governments embraced constitutionalist solutions to social and economic problems, moving further away from militaristic solutions (Miller, 1996). In a climate that favoured democratic solutions, and with building emphasis on social and economic problems, government

and institutions—especially the Church, who was threatened by rising socialism—competed for power in their address of socioeconomic issues.

In the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, labour issues were at the forefront of political movements in Costa Rica. In 1898, the railway workers that had struck against Keith in 1888, formed *La Liga de Obreros de Costa Rica*, a labour organization that addressed workers' rights. This, along with other workers' organizations gained support from Mons. Bernardo Augusto Thiel Hoffman, the archbishop of Costa Rica. This support from Thiel was in line with a universal trend of the Catholic Church, following the emergence of Catholic Social Teaching, as the Catholic Church became involved in labour issues, globally. The Papal Encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, inspired not only the immediate support from Bishop Thiel in Costa Rica, but would also serve as the foundation of Solidarism, half a century later.

#### **2.4 1890-1899: Rerum Novarum and Léon Bourgeois**

The origins of solidarist ideology as it would later be applied to the Costa Rican context are rooted in late the 19<sup>th</sup> century to early 20<sup>th</sup> century Catholic Social doctrine and French political thought. Pope Leo XIII (1891) and Léon Bourgeois (1896), were particularly influential in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Amiel, 2009; Delalande, 2008; Halpern, 2002; Hayward, 1959, 1961; Mièvre, 2001; Wallaschek, 2021). As early as 1804, the concept of *solidarity* emerged in France as that which links individuals who had been emancipated from their corporate and inherited affiliations through law (Blais, 2014b). Article 1202 of the French civil code of 1804, defined solidarity as “a commitment by which people commit themselves to each other and each one for all” (p. 9). This would later spread beyond its philosophical confines by former lawyer and prime minister of the French Third Republic, Léon Bourgeois.

Threatened by the emergence of Marxist economic theories in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Catholic Church responded by issuing the papal encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* (*On the Condition*



*of Labour*) in 1891 by Pope Leo XIII. The encyclical laid the foundations for Catholic Social Teaching and for the propagation of Solidarism within this school of thought. *Rerum Novarum* rejected the socialist principle of common goods and supported the right to private property, so long as an individual does not take more than they need. It supported keeping what is necessary for one's individual and familial needs but sharing what is abundant. The encyclical states:

Hence, it is clear that the main tenet of socialism, community of goods, must be utterly rejected, since it only injures those whom it would seem meant to benefit, is directly contrary to the natural rights of mankind, and would introduce confusion and disorder into the commonwealth. The first and most fundamental principle, therefore, if one would undertake to alleviate the condition of the masses, must be the inviolability of private property. This being established, we proceed to show where the remedy sought for must be found. (XIII, 1891, p.12)

The encyclical further promoted harmony between social classes and between employers and workers, through the Church as an intermediary:

The great mistake made in regard to the matter now under consideration is to take up with the notion that class is naturally hostile to class, and that the wealthy and the working men are intended by nature to live in mutual conflict. So irrational and so false is this view that the direct contrary is the truth. Just as the symmetry of the human frame is the result of the suitable arrangement of the different parts of the body, so in a State is it ordained by nature that these two classes should dwell in harmony and agreement, so as to maintain the balance of the body politic. Each needs the other: capital cannot do without labor, nor labor without capital. Mutual agreement results in the beauty of good order, while perpetual conflict necessarily produces confusion and savage barbarity. Now, in preventing such strife as this, and in uprooting it, the efficacy of Christian institutions is marvelous and

manifold. First of all, there is no intermediary more powerful than religion (whereof the Church is the interpreter and guardian) in drawing the rich and the working class together, by reminding each of its duties to the other, and especially of the obligations of justice.

(XIII, 1891, p.14)

These teachings would eventually carry through to the Solidarist Movement in Costa Rica.

Leo XIII advocated for mutual associations, between employers and workmen, that would provide aid to those in distress, and to the spouses and children of the workers. Such associations, the Pope declared, would draw the classes closer together. Costa Rican Solidarism would base its initial organizations on this very principle, in 1947. The Costa Rican Catholic Church's initial implementation of the Catholic Social Doctrine in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, created a divide between the church and state, as it went directly against the government's goals of secularization. Bishop Thiel formed the Partido Unión Católica, promoting the concept of a just family salary (Miller, 1996) . In 1893, following in the path of *Rerum Novarum*, he published the pastoral letter *Sobre el Justo Salario*, that called for a just salary for workers.

The Catholic Church was not alone in seeking an alternative to Marxist socialism. Léon Bourgeois' solidarist doctrine arose at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in a political situation where the rise of Marxist socialism sparked a restructuring of the republican camp. As Hayward (1959) states: "By the turn of the century, its philosophy, Solidarism, had become the official doctrine of the Third Republic, opposed alike to Liberal economism, Marxist collectivism, Catholic corporativism and anarchist syndicalism, though having something in common with all of them." (p. 20). This restructuring promoted individual property against collectivism, but with a different economic agenda (Blais, 2014). Much like the MSC, the Solidarity doctrine did not reject socialism; it embraced the social question and recognised workers' rights. What it did not do was accept the class struggle or the collectivist denial of the right to private property.

Hayward (1959) wrote the following of 19<sup>th</sup> century reformists: “Struck by both the legitimacy of the proletarian grievances and by the dangers of violent class-struggle, various reformist currents emerged, opposed both to doctrinaire liberalism and to doctrinaire socialism and inspired by an anti-individualist liberalism and an anti-collectivist socialism” (p. 265). At its core then, in either of its historical bases, Solidarism stems from the need for a middle ground between the individualism of liberalism and the collectivism of socialism, a characteristic still present in the practice of Solidarism in Costa Rica today.

Bourgeois presented solidarity, in 1896, as a doctrine that could only be formulated in a given political organization, and one that was—or ought to have been—free of its former theological and metaphysical predecessors (Blais, 2014). Blais (2014b) states that Bourgeois’ version of solidarity made no reference to the union of men with God. Instead, she maintains, that “Bourgeois wanted to make the doctrine of solidarity totally autonomous, independent of any dogma, and radically secular, for this doctrine was only supported by positive scientific data.” (p. 9). Bourgeois, strongly influenced by positivism, believed that societies and societal relations should be studied in the same manner as natural and biological phenomena (Wallaschek, 2021).

Nevertheless, it is the evolution from natural solidarity to social solidarity that marked, for Bourgeois, the move from the biological vital act to social action: a deliberate act that appeals to human morality rather than natural development. For Bourgeois (1896), following Alfred Fouillée, individuals are debtors and creditors from birth. In other words, Solidarity is the debt that each person, by virtue of living in society, must pay to one another. As such, solidarity is not an individual choice but a universal law, to which people can react individually; it is objectively present in society because individuals are naturally mutually dependent within cultural, economic, or social spheres. According to Bourgeois, one is born as an *associé* into society and

by virtue of living in that society, enters into a *quasi-social contract* between all individuals. The contract is quasi-social because there is never an actual agreement. Rather, it exists by virtue of being associated to one another, and through the presumption of consent between free beings to “respect the just will of the partners if they were able to put themselves in each other’s shoes.” (Blais, 2014b, p. 14). Bourgeois held various positions within the government, extending the concept of Solidarism to an international context, becoming one of the architects of the League of Nations and eventually winning a Nobel Peace Prize.

## **2.5 1899-1929: UFCo and Rising Labour Unrest**

As the banana industry became more prevalent within the country, and as the number of workers grew nationwide in various trades and professions (Miller, 1996), so too did social tensions and labour conflict. In 1899, Keith merged his railway company with the Boston Fruit Company, to form the United Fruit Company (UFCo), a catalyst in the labour movement, nationwide (Evans, 1999; Jones & Morrison, 1952; Marquardt, 2001; Stephens, 2008). With the arrival of the banana industry came the introduction of European and North American production and transport technologies that would change the landscape of agro-export drastically. UFCo was a “pioneer of modern tropical agro-export capitalism” (Marquardt, 2001, p.50).

The 20<sup>th</sup> century brought with it changes in Costa Rican economy and democracy. The economic struggles of UFCo created increased labour and social issues. The rise in banana production paved way for foreign multinationals, as small farmers were not equipped to get involved in a production that was far more labour intensive than coffee production. The United Fruit Company also brought in Jamaican and West Indian workers and relied on their knowledge of land and production to develop their crops, under poor working conditions (Stephens, 2008). When UFCo experienced a major banana plague, however, it abandoned 8,000 hectares of banana plantations and moved its operations to the South Pacific region of Costa Rica

(Marquardt, 2001). The epidemic came to be known as “Panamá Disease”<sup>7</sup>, a fungal disease that affected the appearance and growth of fruit. It had become initially apparent to workers in Panamá and later in Costa Rica. In the 1910s, UFCo began seeing economic loss from the epidemic, driving it to abandon its plantations and relocate. In doing so however, the company also underwent a process of ethnic recomposition, banning Jamaican and west Indian workers from relocating to the new banana plantations and replacing them instead with Central American workers (Marquardt, 2001; Stephens, 2008). Economic recessions, exploitation of labourers, and poor working conditions formed the bases of the Great Banana Strike that would happen in the 1930s.

Democratic development and labour organization also advanced the public unrest of the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Universal male suffrage was established in 1902, as was the direct vote, in 1913 (Miller, 1996). With the establishment of the direct vote, Alfredo González Flores was elected to office, though without majority vote. Since no candidate won the majority vote, an alliance was formed between the National Republican Party (PRN) and the Duranista party, that placed González in power (Rankin, 2012). Because of this rocky start, González faced scrutiny from some throughout his term in office. Furthermore, González was committed to progressive policies, implementing land taxes that lost him the support of the coffee oligarchy. In the same year, the Centro de Estudios Sociales Germinal, established one year prior, turned into the Confederación General de los Trabajadores (CGT), which became the principal labour organization in the country (Miller, 1996). Supporters of the CGT fell in line with González’s politics as his policies supported the working class. The González government further shaped the nature of labour disputes, in such a way that labour organizations, in line with González’s social

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<sup>7</sup> Panama Disease (*Fusarium cubense*) and Black Sigatoka (*Cercospora musae*), two fungal diseases found in banana plantations, were determined as the two main causes of the decline in banana production in the early 1890s (Jones & Morrison, 1952)

policies, targeted issues beyond salary disputes such as limits on working hours. In response to economic strain posed by the first World War, Gonzalez's implementation of import taxes on coffee and income taxes on the wealthy, on the one hand, and his support for labour organizations and the working class, on other, created further class divides (Rankin, 2012). To quiet the rising opposition to his policies, González censored freedom of speech and the press.

In response, González's minister of war, Frederico Tinoco, and his brother, Joaquín Tinoco, organized a military coup, in 1917, that drove González out of office (Booth, 1987). This coup, while supported by some, further intensified class conflicts. Some suspected that the United Fruit Company was behind the coup, as the Tinoco brothers were related to the Keith family. While Tinoco enjoyed some initial support, he quickly lost it as he became increasingly dictatorial. He expanded the police, censored the press, and appointed his brother as Minister of War (Rankin, 2012). Within two years, opposition, strikes, and popular unrest grew in many Costa Rican industries, as did resistance from a grassroots women's movement. Tinoco was forced into exile in 1919. He was replaced by progressive candidate, Julio Acosta (Booth, 2018; Miller, 1996). Rankin (2012) says the following of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century: "Liberal social policies that had promoted modernization and progress in the nineteenth century had given rise to a highly literate population with a strong national consciousness. By the 1920s political participation was on the rise with the working class and the poor playing an ever-important role." (p. 125). In fact, it was the women of the *Colegio de Señoritas*, that led the resistance to the Tinoco dictatorship, eventually causing it to collapse (Palmer et al., 2004, p. 158).

In 1920, labour movements established the eight-hour workday and six-hour worknight (Booth, 2018). In 1923, Catholic priest, Jorge Volio, created the Partido Reformista (PR), and ran for president the same year, putting labour issues at the forefront of his platform. He initially gained support by recruiting workers from the CGT, and by the following year, the PR absorbed

the CGT (Rankin, 2012). More radical CGT workers formed the Federación Obrera Costarricense, which in turn founded the Unión General de los Trabajadores (UGT) in 1927. Among the students that were part of this labour union, was Manuel Mora, who would reformulate the UGT into the Asociación Revolucionaria de Cultura Obrera (ARCO) in 1929. Two years later, in 1931, ARCO would become the first Communist Party of Costa Rica (CPCR), with Manuel Mora as its leader (Miller, 1996, p.61).

## **2.6 1929-1939: Costa Rica in the Wake of the Great Depression**

Amid this political activity, Costa Rica was affected economically by the aftermath of the First World War. Leading up to this period, the Costa Rican economy relied heavily on the export of agricultural products. In the previous decade, coffee and bananas had come to collectively constitute 85% of Costa Rica's exports (Bucheli, 2008, p.439; Sáenz, 1972, p.6). At the onset of the Great Depression, the drop in demand for tropical fruit and coffee led to a decrease of more than 50 percent of Costa Rica's export earnings (Hidalgo, 2006; Rankin, 2012). The country's lowered earnings affected its purchasing powers, causing imports to also drop by 75 percent, significantly affecting the daily lives of Costa Ricans (Rankin, 2012). Costa Ricans saw an increase in malnourishment and health problems, as well as in unemployment. These effects created a distrust in the capitalist export economy, and fostered instead, support for the Costa Rican Communist Party, under the leadership of Manuel Mora Valverde.

Much communist-led activity took place in these years. Globally, Communist International (Comintern) had been established in 1919, prior to the establishment of the CPCR in 1931. While the CPCR eventually joined Comintern in 1935, Costa Rica's model of communism was often distinguished, by its leaders and by scholars, as its own brand: *Tico-Communism* or *Comunismo Criollo* (Ameringer, 2009; Liss, 2019; M. Olander, 1996; Rankin, 2012). As Rankin (2012) states:

Costa Rica's version of the Communist Party was not as extreme as those in other areas of the world. Instead, Mora and other labor leaders advocated moderate reform based on issues of social justice, and they generally aimed at improving workers' lives. This brand of communism became known as 'Tico-Communism,' but, particularly in its earliest years, the Costa Rican capitalist elite feared even this moderate version of communism just as much as capitalist abroad feared other brands of communism. (p.131)

Labour activism grew in the 1930s as unemployment and poverty were exacerbated by the Great Depression. Carlos Luis Fallas, shoemaker and unionist, together with communist leader, Manuel Mora, were major leaders in this activism (Liss, 2019). Three major strikes occurred in 1932-1934 by shoemakers, sugar workers and banana plantation workers (Miller, 1993). Despite the severity of the tensions, the upheaval was resolved democratically.

Miller (1993) attributes this resolution to three factors. First, there existed democratically established traditions such as universal male suffrage, open organization among different groups including Marxist organizations and the circulation of diverse political ideas. Because of this, the power of legislature to address social and labour conflicts was accessible to different social sectors (Miller, 1993). Labour organizations proposed many changes in legislature, several of which received close attention and were passed into law. The CPCR proposed a *Maximum Program* that called for the abolition of private property, and the socialization of the means of production (Miller, 1996). Recognizing that the proposal was unlikely to be well-received, they changed the proposal to the *Minimum Program*. Presented to congress in 1932, the Minimum Program called for a social security system, unemployment insurance, and laws to protect the right to unionize and the right to strike (Miller, 1996). Congress rejected the initiative but implemented many laws to support employment and public spending between 1931-1935.



Next, although communism was on the rise, the CPCR was dedicated to making changes within the confines of the governing laws while embracing democracy and progress through their aforementioned practice of *Comunismo Criollo*, the local brand of communism (Ameringer, 2009; Liss, 2019; Miller, 1993; M. Olander, 1996). In fact, while the Mora-led Communist Party was committed to making labour changes, they resisted officially associating with Comintern until 1935, maintaining first their national identity. Third, the state created a bureaucracy in 1933 that dealt with working-class pressure by creating minimum wages and unemployment insurance, among other economic regulations, which set the precedent for the social guarantees that would ensue in the following government (Miller, 1993).

Meanwhile, a few things were happening with the Catholic Church, both globally and nationally. In 1931, forty years after *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Pius XI published the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. The main purpose is demonstrated in section 15 of the encyclical:

We deem it fitting on [the fortieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*] to recall the great benefits this Encyclical has brought to the Catholic Church and to all human society; to defend the illustrious Master's doctrine on the social and economic question against certain doubts and to develop it more fully as to some points; and lastly, summoning to court the contemporary economic regime and passing judgment on Socialism, to lay bare the root of the existing social confusion and at the same time point the only way to sound restoration: namely, the Christian reform of morals. (Pius XI, 1931)

The new encyclical recalls and celebrates the old one, emphasizing its rejection of one *section* of socialism but taking a more forgiving stance on another. Pius XI maintains that since the last encyclical, Socialism has branched off into two sections. The first is one that has sunk into communism. Of this section, he says the following:

Communism teaches and seeks two objectives: Unrelenting class warfare and absolute extermination of private ownership. Not secretly or by hidden methods does it do this, but publicly, openly, and by employing every and all means, even the most violent. To achieve these objectives there is nothing which it does not dare, nothing for which it has respect or reverence; and when it has come to power, it is incredible and portentlike in its cruelty and inhumanity. The horrible slaughter and destruction through which it has laid waste vast regions of eastern Europe and Asia are the evidence; how much an enemy and how openly hostile it is to Holy Church and to God Himself is, alas, too well proved by facts and fully known to all. (Pius XI, 1931, Section 112)

The second section of socialism, according to Pius XI, is more moderate. It rejects violence and “modifies and tempers to some degree, if it does not reject entirely, the class struggle and the abolition of private ownership.” (Pius XI, 1931, Section 113). In these ways, he insists, it approaches Christian values. He is careful to reiterate that only some socialists have gone to this extent, but that for the most part, they have only modified, to some degree, their stance on class struggle and private property. He thus maintains: “Whether considered as a doctrine, or an historical fact, or a movement, Socialism, if it remains truly Socialism, even after it has yielded to truth and justice on the points which we have mentioned, cannot be reconciled with the teachings of the Catholic Church because its concept of society itself is utterly foreign to Christian truth.” (Pius XI, 1931, section 117). At its core, the new encyclical maintains the dualism between Christianity and Socialism.

Given the era in which *Quadragesimo Anno* emerged, the encyclical is equally concerned with Liberalism. Referring to Pope Leo XIII’s teachings on workers’ rights to form associations, especially those of a mutualist nature, he says:

[...] at that time in many nations those at the helm of State, plainly imbued with Liberalism, were showing little favor to workers' associations of this type; nay, rather they openly opposed them, and while going out of their way to recognize similar organizations of other classes and show favor to them, they were with criminal injustice denying the natural right to form associations to those who needed it most to defend themselves from ill treatment at the hands of the powerful. There were even some Catholics who looked askance at the efforts of workers to form associations of this type as if they smacked of a socialistic or revolutionary spirit. (Pius XI, 1931, section 30)

Ultimately, rejecting both socialism and liberalism, Pius XI strives ultimately to place the Catholic Social Doctrine in between these two extremes. Similar dynamics based on Catholic Social Teaching would transpire following the civil war, in the form of the Solidarist Movement. While they appear to stem from elsewhere and emerge in an unrelated fashion to prewar politics, it becomes evident when tracing the political history of the country, that the MSC, as we will see below, drew its support from the same forces that drove the Catholic Church and the CCTRN in the 1944-1948 prewar era.

In Costa Rica, the Catholic Church began to pave its own way into politics, in response to rising communism. In the same way that the CPR was functioning within the confines of the law, the Church also began to make its way into the state. At this time, it still maintained its aversion to Communism. Víctor Manuel Sanabria Martínez, the local bishop of Alajuela<sup>8</sup>, declared in a pastoral letter in 1938, that “Communism was, perhaps, the most dangerous enemy of the nation and that Catholics could not affiliate in whatever form with Communist organizations.” (Miller, 1996, p.229). Nevertheless, global political events would shape the future of this relationship into an unlikely alliance.

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<sup>8</sup> Sanabria would become the archbishop of San José two years later, in 1940 (Rankin, 2012).

## 2.7 1939-1947: Alliances in the Second World War

At the onset of the Second World War, Costa Rica was being governed by León Cortés Castro's National Republican Party. The following year, in 1940, an election took place between NPR candidate Rafael Angel Calderón Guardia, grandson of Tomás Guardia, and Communist Party leader, Manuel Mora Valverde. The effects of World War II on the country's economy, created unfavourable conditions for Costa Ricans, including health problems, malnutrition, and housing shortages. Calderón, winning by an overwhelming majority, responded to ongoing popular unrest through several social reforms. He avoided losing the vote of his predecessor and his party's supporters by keeping his social reformist agenda quiet during his campaign (Rosenberg, 1981). As Rosenberg puts it: "But Calderón viewed himself neither as a social-reform candidate nor as a populist. His patriarchal style was more akin to that of his oligarchic predecessors, and it was this style that had earned him the presidential candidacy and, ultimately, the presidency" (Rosenberg, 1981, p. 282).

Upon his inauguration in 1940, he promised to include social guarantees in an amendment to the constitution, which he submitted in 1942. These guarantees would include a Social Security System, regulated working conditions, the establishment of a minimum wage, the eight-hour work day and the right to organize and strike, among other rights and benefits for workers (Ameringer, 2009; Bell, 2014; Miller, 1993). In addition, in 1942, Calderón instated the Parasite Law, giving illegal, landless peasants the possibility of legalizing their land tenure (Olander, 1999). Since coffee exports had taken a hit between 1939-1940, Calderón responded with tax breaks and financing for coffee producers. This sheltered the coffee oligarchy from the effects of the war: what his critics saw as corruption and inefficacy. The combination of these tax breaks and lowered customs taxes, in the economic climate of World War II, led to an

increased fiscal deficit from 2 million CRC to 30 million CRC between 1940-1943 (Olander, 1999, p.52).

In the early 1940s, Calderón, a devout Catholic, relied on the Catholic Social Doctrine and the guidance of his friend<sup>9</sup>, Victor Sanabria, the archbishop of San José, to form his program of social guarantees. Sanabria wanted Calderón to assist the Church in reversing anticlerical measures that had been introduced in the late nineteenth century, in exchange for the Church's support for Calderón's social reform program that was being developed (Rankin, 2012). Sanabria had also committed himself and the church to social reform in the country, and openly promised to support others with a similar mission (Rosenberg, 1981). Calderón's social reform program, and populist tendencies eventually alienated his predecessor, León Cortés, and lost Calderón the support of the coffee oligarchy. This rupture ran deeper still. In the midst of the War, Costa Rica had officially joined the Allies and declared war on Germany, Japan, and Italy after the bombing of Pearl Harbor (Booth, 2008a; Lehoucq, 1991; Rankin, 2012). On July 2, 1942, an Axis submarine struck a United Fruit Company vessel at the Caribbean port, killing 24 men. Riots, led by communist party representatives, broke out in the country two days after the incident, rallying a crowd of 20,000 people, targeting Italian and German resident properties, many of whom formed the coffee elite (Miller, 1996; Olander, 1996; Rankin, 2012). Calderón placed more than 200 individuals of German and Italian descent into internment camps by 1945 (Rankin, 2012, p.138). Critics spoke out against the government's failure to protect the country in both the attack of July 2 and the riots of July 4, among them José Figueres Ferrer who publicly criticized the government in a radio address. This public criticism led to Figueres's immediate arrest and exile to Mexico (Bell, 2014; Rankin, 2012).

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<sup>9</sup> According to Olander (1999) Calderón and Sanabria had developed a friendship in the 1930s, while serving in the National Assembly.

The Church, who had built a strong alliance with the Calderonistas, was still struggling to maintain its supporters. Its lack of representative body for workers was especially losing it the support of middle class labourers. In 1943, Sanabria claimed that Catholicism was in danger of losing its followers to Marxism. Meanwhile, the communist party, who had only received 20% of the popular vote in the elections, were also concerned with their falling constituency. These factors, along with aligning elements in their political agendas, drove the three parties to build a coalition government in 1943. What further eased this coalition was that in joining the Allied powers in the war, Costa Rica had temporarily shifted its focus to the war on fascism, and away from anticommunism. To facilitate the alliance, and to ease tensions with the Church, the communist party reconstructed itself into the Popular Vanguard Party (PVP). In June 1943, Archbishop Víctor Sanabria wrote a letter giving Catholics permission to collaborate with the PVP, simultaneously backing the Calderón government's social program (Liss, 2019; Miller, 1993).

With increased labour representation and a faltering economy, tensions rose among labourers. Following the formation of this alliance, the *Caldero-Comunista* coalition government enacted the Labour Code that was approved by congress on August 26, 1943. Among the working conditions guaranteed by the Code, was the right to collective bargaining, the right of association and the right to strike. Workers were represented mainly by the Confederación de Trabajadores de Costa Rica (CTCR) and the Catholic Labour Confederation Rerum Novarum (CCTRN)<sup>10</sup>. Sanabria established the CCTRN to, at once support the labour movement, “while moderating the more extreme tendencies [of the] PVP.” (Miller, 1993, 520). Sanabria appointed Benjamín Nuñez, whom he had recruited from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., the role of Spiritual Adviser. Between the CCTRN and the CTCR, 18% of the

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<sup>10</sup> Confederación Costarricense de Trabajadores ‘Rerum Novarum’

economically active population was represented through 284 unions. This was a significant number considering that at the time, agricultural workers (69% of the economically active population) were not represented through the labour code (Miller, 1993, p. 519). The CCTRN, established with the help of Núñez, distinguished itself from the CTCR's Marxist tendencies and from the PVP. Instead, it addressed issues of labour through papal teachings, namely, *Rerum Novarum*, from which it took its name (Miller, 1993). The CCTRN tried to dissociate the term *sindicato* from its Marxist connotations and to ease tensions between the union and employers. It positioned itself as a representative of neither employers nor workers but that of social justice. This was the same rejection of the Marxist class struggle within Catholic Social Teaching that would later transpire through solidarist thought.

Labour unions, together with banana industry workers, struck against the United Fruit Company in 1943. This successful strike, the right to which was legalized that same year by the coalition government, enticed more workers to join labour unions. This labour unrest contributed to the ensuing tensions from the opposition. When Calderón's successor, Teodoro Picado Michalski, took office in 1944, these tensions escalated. Throughout his administration, Picado faced much backlash which stemmed from economic shortcomings that originated in Calderón's social guarantee program. These shortcomings included the Labour Code, as well as accusations of fraud and corruption. Opposition had also escalated, since the Calderón administration, due to a rise in the national debt from 135 million colones to 245 million colones between 1940-1945 (Olander, 1999). Moreover, the National Republican Party had lost much of its support as Calderón had veered away from his predecessor, León Cortés', anti-Communist agenda. By the time Picado took office, the party appeared weakened and divided. Picado's tolerance for oppositional retaliation contributed to the appearance of his weakened state. By 1945, several key players formed the Social Democratic Party. Among these individuals were: León Cortes,

Costa Rica's former president, José Figueres, exiled political activist, Otilio Ulate, future presidential candidate in the following elections and strong ally of the Cafetaleros, and Alberto Martén, the future founding father of Solidarism. The party was built in direct opposition to Picado's already-weakened government.

What further accelerated the weakness and division of the Picado government was the coalition allies wanting to maintain some distinction from his administration. In the case of the PVP, while there was evidence of weakening ties, the party maintained its alliance with the Picado administration to avoid strengthening the opposition (Miller, 1993). The CCTRN on the other hand, openly shifted their support toward the opposition. These new tensions resulted in the 12-day strike, *Huelga de Brazos Caídos*, in 1947. While the strike, an opposition to a proposed tax by the government, resulted in the signing of the Pact of Honour between the government and the opposition, the political tensions continued to escalate.

When the CTCR organized 50,000 workers to rally in San José in September of 1947 in favour of the social guarantees, and extended the invitation to the CCTRN, Nuñez further rejected affiliation with the CTCR and PVP, explicitly denouncing communism and setting, once again, a critical distinction between communists and Catholics (Miller, 1993, p.533). Nuñez retaliated with his own rally in October, causing a rift between himself and Sanabria who denounced the rally based on its potential for violence and further polarisation within the country. Nevertheless, Nuñez condemned the government for its corruption, communist affiliations, and fraud. Nuñez was in turn accused, along with the CCTRN, of accepting large sums of money from capitalists and agribusiness families (Miller, 1993). Although anticommunism in the country had subsided throughout the World War II period, it is no coincidence that this bolstered resistance to communism within the Costa Rican nation aligned with the onset of the Cold War.



## 2.8 1947-1948: Alberto Martén's Solidarismo

Political and economic turmoil, along with newly revived anti-communist sentiment in the country amidst global Cold War politics, created an opportunity for new economic propositions. In 1947, Alberto Martén Chavarría, Costa Rican lawyer and economist, and member of the political opposition, published his solidarist manifesto, leading to the eventual creation of the Costa Rican Solidarist Movement (MSC). The theoretical development of solidarity, as previously demonstrated, took place for over a century in Europe before its Costa Rican implementation. The success of *Solidarismo*, in Costa Rica, stems from Martén's presentation of the concept at an opportune moment amidst the country's political and economic instability. It becomes evident at this point in Costa Rican history, that no ruling party or social philosophy could succeed in the nation without incorporating the working class and the rights of workers. Every political organization that had come into power in the last near-century had incorporated, at least to some extent, elements of populism and attention to labour rights. When the ruling force became too polarized, however, either in favour of the elite or trending too heavily toward communism, the result had been turmoil, followed by political reform. Hence, Martén played his political cards with utmost tact.

In his manifesto, Martén maintained that for social justice to have practical implications, there would be a need for economic prosperity (Blanco & Navarro, 1984, p.28; Martén, 1948). He thus proposed, in line with the Catholic Social Doctrine, a formula that encouraged worker-employer collaboration. This was especially impactful as it stood in direct opposition to the Marxist approach of class struggle. He proposed to build a joint action between management and workers, a movement he intended would benefit workers (Arrieta, 2008b; Hernández, 2012; Martén, 1948). In this model, employers and workers were neither seen as classes nor individuals, rather, companies were seen as an institution and production front, the prosperity of which was beneficial to everyone. While many before him contributed to the development of the

ideology, Martén implemented it with a structure that would encourage its praxis in the exact political climate that was willing to accept it.

The Martén Plan (*Plan Martén*), an economic savings plan, called for the establishment of Solidarist Associations of Employees (*Asociaciones Solidaristas de los Empleados*) (ASE) in the country. Through ASEs, it sought to provide financial autonomy to workers. What started off as Martén's proposition for an "Office of Economic Coordination"<sup>11</sup> (OCE) took the shape of the Costa Rican Solidarist Movement (MSC)<sup>12</sup>, and the the Martén Plan, came into effect. In accordance with the Plan, companies that agreed to be affiliated with a respective ASE contributed 5% of the member's (worker) salary, an advance on their future severance pay, matched by a similar contribution by the members themselves. At its core, this economic structure was a response to Marxist critiques of the powerlessness of wage labour in granting wealth to workers. For Martén, ASEs were a demonstration of workers' ability to effectively accumulate heritage through wage labour (Blanco & Navarro, 1984).

Although Martén and his philosophy were not inherently anti-communist or anti-Marxist,—that is, much like Bourgeois, and the Catholic Social Doctrine, Martén acknowledged social injustices of class inequality in capitalist systems— he dedicated much of his manifesto to critique of Marxism. Mainly, he believed that despite the existence of class inequalities in capitalism, Marx prescribed the wrong antidote to the illness (of social injustice); in other words, he recognized the illness but not the proposed cure (Blanco & Navarro, 1984). The object of Solidarism, was to achieve social justice through economic stability, which is created by establishing harmonious, collaborative relationships between workers and employers/management. In other words, he deemed it necessary to create worker-management

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<sup>11</sup> OCE: Oficina de Coordinación Económica, or Office of Economic Coordination was the platform Martén originally sought to establish, through which the Martén Plan would have been implemented.

<sup>12</sup> Movimiento Solidarista Costaricense (MSC)

harmony to increase production and distributable goods for the wealth of the country and its people; the combination of this social harmony and economic stability would in turn lead to social justice. Martén juxtaposed this with what he deemed a Marxist chimera of social justice—that is, the theory of social equality without actual goods to distribute. Martén thus advocated strongly for cooperative relationships between workers and employers, stating that the very disharmony between workers and management was itself a form of oppression. He believed that to overcome this lack of harmony, it was necessary for both workers and employers to reach a collective agreement that would be celebrated “in good faith” (Martén, 1948).

Martén initially sought to establish a Coordination Office through the Catholic church, through which the operations of Solidarism would take place, a request that was granted, on December 26, 1947, by then-presbyter, Reverend Benjamin Nuñez. Martén described social injustice as a “sharp artificial poverty created by internal social divisions and international wars, separating people from normal economic activities and confiscating a large part of their income to pay warlike budgets” (Martén, 1948, *translation mine*). He argued that such shortages in turn create wage inequalities allowing certain social classes to thrive leaving most of the population in misery. Martén attributed Costa Rica’s poverty to insufficient production; for him, it was conflicts between employers and labourers, and propaganda<sup>13</sup> that created hate within the country: a sentence, he claimed, to perpetual misery. He acknowledged Costa Rica’s lack of exportable natural resources (petroleum, gold), thus characterizing the country’s people and its territory as the backbone of its wealth. In other words, he saw these latter as the means to produce any necessary wealth.

With this emphasis on the need for greater production, Martén rejected Marxist resistance to capitalism and proletarianization. He argued that it is a reaction without solution, and that the

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<sup>13</sup> Martén does not specify the kind of propaganda to which he is referring but it may be deduced from the context and based on his political affiliations that he is referring to Marxist rhetoric.

idea of social justice without economic backing is a social delusion for it is only through economic prosperity that social justice can be effective in practice. Martén maintained that Marxist views of exploitation are simplistic and insisted on distinguishing between two types of exploitation: mutualistic and parasitic. He borrowed from descriptions of natural symbiotic relationships to draw this comparison. Martén insisted that whereas Marxists use the term *exploitation* to necessarily imply parasitism—where one party benefits disproportionately at the expense of the other—there also exists a symbiotic exploitation. This type is based on mutualism, providing mutual benefits to both parties. Employers create opportunities for workers to make the most productive use of their labour and production in ways that they would have not been able to achieve alone. At the same time, the employers benefit from this labour because they would not have derived the same benefits without their workers. Martén maintained that an employer who mistreats his workers is no longer considered to be part of this mutualistic relationship, becoming instead, a parasite (Martén, 1948). For Martén, mutualism must have humanitarianism at its core; treating one another well must be done in good faith, for an employer treating a worker well so that they continue to produce more is the mentality, he states, of a slaveowner. A worker, then, is first and foremost a human being and is worthy of respect and human dignity; he is owed more than a salary: he must be honoured as a human and loved as a brother.

Martén proposed a three-part solution to overcoming Costa Rica's social-economic problem: Solidarism, Rationalization theory, and Mutualistic Symbiosis. He laid out 11 principles of Solidarism: 1) Increased production as its fundamental objective, 2) the eradication of class struggle and its substitution with economic Solidarism, 3) a conversion of trade union hostility into a solidary unionization, 4) the cessation of strikes and stoppages and their eventual

abolition<sup>14</sup>, replaced instead by legal and institutional solutions to the problems at hand 5) a conversion of unemployment/severance benefits into an interest saved in the company, and paid to the worker in a regulated fashion 6) the protection of the company against bad workers and employers as well as against hostile unions, 7) the resolution of problems of distribution following and together with those of production, emphasizing the need for economic guarantees as much as that of social guarantees, 8) the efficient production of, and equitable distribution of wealth, among employers, workers and the community, 9) distinguishing generated income for the purposes of taxes, in order to stimulate active companies and support agriculture, 10) relying on economic sciences to distribute public and private savings and spending in such a way to achieve maximum satisfaction, 11) attaining a growing, well-educated and well-nourished population, who can work in peace and solidarity in an atmosphere that provides equal opportunity of progress to all. Essentially, Martén saw economic stability as the antidote to social inequality, and production within a capitalist structure as the necessary means to that end. As a result, in a country where he deemed capitalist production necessary, he advocated for harmonious relationships within those structures as opposed to adversarial ones.

In a political climate where Marxist-syndicalists, middle class workers, the elite, the Communist Party, and the Catholic Church all felt their positions threatened by political instability, Martén proposed a solution that seemingly encompassed everyone's needs. His proposal was a promise for economic stability through increased production, all the while protecting worker's rights and providing them financial independence. What's more is that he would do all of this, through the teachings of the highest order of the Catholic Church, in line with two monumental papal encyclicals. Solidarism did not deny the rights of workers. In this way, ostensibly, it did not reject the purpose of syndicalism, but its method. Solidarism would

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<sup>14</sup> To date, strikes in the private sector are *not* prohibited in Costa Rica.

become the pacifist, nationalist, and inherently Costa Rican alternative to syndicalism. During the highly adversarial labour movement following the Calderón and Picado administrations, Solidarism presented itself as a solution that transcended class confines; it situated itself well between the ruling and working class because while it did not deny the existence of class inequality, neither did it deem said inequality inherently adversarial (Blanco & Navarro, 1984).

## **2.9 1948-1960: The Civil War and the Second Republic of Costa Rica**

In 1948, Otilio Ulate won the elections against Rafael Ángel Calderón Guardia, but the results were annulled by the coalition government of the time. This drove José Figueres Ferrer, a member of Ulate's opposition party, to lead a six-week armed uprising against the Picado government. Figueres's second in command was Alberto Martén Chavarría. Expecting the imminent rise to power of Figueres and his opposition party, Picado stepped down, handing over the presidency to his vice-president, Santos León Herrera, who served for 18 days. Following Figueres and the rebels' defeat of the Costa Rican military and the communist guerillas, Figueres assumed a position of leadership in the Junta<sup>15</sup> for 18 months. After this, he handed the presidency to Otilio Ulate who was believed to have been the rightful victor of the 1948 elections. Figueres would later be re-elected to presidency in 1953. Before stepping down as the interim leader, Figueres helped to establish the new constitution, enact female and black suffrage, prohibit self-succession in elections and abolish the standing army. This culture of non-violence and democratic selection of representatives was later echoed through supporters of the MSC.

Ironically, though it began with a coup and involved significant bloodshed, the civil war is celebrated in the pacifist narrative of Costa Rica, as a reinstatement of the integrity of

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<sup>15</sup> The Founding Junta of the Second Republic was the interim government of José Figueres, which he led for a planned 18-month period before handing the presidency over to Otilio Ulate and dissolving the Junta.

democratic elections and an establishment of constitutional democracy. It is especially distinguished for its abolition of the army: the quintessence of Costa Rica's nonviolence.

Figueres, the leader of the civil war, affectionately named *Don Pepe*, continues to be admired among Costa Ricans today, as the founding father of Costa Rican democracy.

Following the civil war, Martén joined the Figueres government as Minister of Economy, but was eventually removed due to differing economic and philosophical views than those of Figueres. Opposing understandings of the role of the state in Solidarism further complicated this relationship. Whereas Martén saw the economic project of Solidarism as a movement that ought to have been independent of the state, Figueres wanted to turn Solidarism into a governmental program and thus control ASE funds. In the face of these differences, Martén resigned from his position as Minister in 1949, stimulating support for the movement (Blanco & Navarro, 1984). In this first year, two solidarist associations were created<sup>16</sup> and within the next 5 years, a total of 38 associations were in place.

Following the approval of the 1949 constitution, Figueres handed the presidency over to Otilio Ulate, as set out in the revolutionary pact. Ulate and Figueres had their differences, but Ulate carried out a similar political agenda to Figueres's Junta. Rankin (2012) writes: "Figueres's supporters were concerned that Ulate would dismantle many of the social reforms they held dear, but Ulate did not deviate much from the nationalist and populist spirit that had defined the era under the Founding Junta." (p. 153) The anti-Caldero-comunista sentiment had become the identity of the Second Republic and prevailed throughout succeeding governments. In 1951, Figueres and his supporters created the Partido de Liberación Nacional (PLN), which was rooted in the opposition to the Caldero-Comunismo of the 1940s. As Rankin (2012) puts it: "They were influenced by a socialist tradition, but modified in a way that they believed would be

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<sup>16</sup> Librería Lopez and Fábrica de Chocolate were the first to companies to implement ASEs (Blanco & Navarro, 1984)

more suitable for Costa Rica.” (p.155). She adds “The staunch Marxist beliefs that drove many leftist political parties in the latter part of twentieth century were significantly toned down within the circles of the PLN, and a form of liberalism reminiscent of social Christianity emerged as a foundational ideology” (p. 155).

Rankin (2012) further explains that the PLN’s mixed economy model included inclusive social policies, elements of private ownership, with government oversight where necessary. These social and economic models fall precisely in line with Solidarism’s claims to moderation and roots in Catholic Social Teaching. The need to develop and diversify economically further veered the nation away from communism, and in turn created a hospitable political terrain for the MSC. During his term, Ulate contributed greatly to the Costa Rican economy. As Rankin (2012) states:

Ulate used increased government revenues generated by the junta’s 10 percent tax and a renegotiated contract with the United Fruit Company to finance much needed infrastructure improvements. His government improved roads, funded irrigation projects, built new dams, and constructed an international airport in San José, named after nineteenth-century national hero Juan Santamaría. He also funded programs aimed at expanding the agricultural sector beyond tropical fruit and coffee exports by providing credit and assistance to farmers wishing to cultivate foodstuffs such as beans, corn, and rice. (p. 154)

When Figueres was elected president in 1953, he also focused much of his attention on economic development, including the development of fisheries and housing. Coffee exports had remained strong throughout the 1940s and 1950s (Sawchuk, 2004). Figueres took a nationalist approach to his economic policies, wanting to minimize the economic reliance on foreign companies. To do this, he targeted the UFCo, wanting the state to take control of production and



rely only on the company for export and distribution. In 1955, Figueres negotiated higher wages for labourers but had a weak stance on union rights, especially on the right to collective bargaining. (Rankin, 2012, p.161). By the late 1950s, in an effort to reduce the presence and influence of foreign companies on the Costa Rican economy, Figueres moved toward an Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) economic model. This model was carried through even by his successor, Mario Echandi Jiménez, from the National Union Party.

In this climate, the MSC continued its slow but steady growth. By 1959, there were 70 ASEs in place (Blanco & Navarro, 1984). The movement at the time, was backed by the Unión Solidarista, the Periodico la Unión and the Corporación Solidarista, which all helped to advance it. The first of the three, the Unión Solidarista, served as a cohesion to the movement, an authoritative body of the MSC, lending the movement discipline and orientation on the principles of Solidarism. The Periódico la Unión, the newspaper of Solidarism, served as a vessel of dissemination and propaganda in favour of the MSC, recruiting members toward ASEs. Finally, the Corporación Solidarista, founded in 1956, served as the financial organ of the MSC, providing benefits to companies that signed up to be part of the movement (Blanco & Navarro, 1984).

## **2.10 1960-1980: The Fall and Second Rise of Solidarism**

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Solidarist Movement received heat from syndicalists and Marxists. It was labelled anti-unionist and fascist in that it operated on the margins of the law and did not affiliate itself with any political party, an indication for critics that it would plan an eventual takeover (Blanco & Navarro, 1984). Mainly, solidarists and syndicalists disagreed—a debate that is ongoing in present day Costa Rica—on the effectiveness of trade unions. Syndicalists believed unions to be a necessary component to social justice whereas solidarists saw them as a further cause of class divides. These critical perspectives, along with shortfalls in

the Costa Rican postwar economy resulted in a stagnation period within the MSC. In 1961, prices dropped internationally for agricultural goods. The Costa Rican coffee industry was especially affected, as prices faced a sharp decline in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Samper, 2010, p.74). As a result, many employers were unwilling to invest in social expenses, thus rejecting the MSC. Similarly, workers did not have salaries that allowed them to put money aside for savings (Blanco & Navarro, 1984; Martén, 1948). Solidarism came to be understood as a savings plan that worked only when companies were in prosperous conditions. Following this period, Martén, unable to ignore the limitations for both employers and workers, disassociated himself from the movement.

To combat the economic struggles of the decade while maintaining a nationalist approach to Costa Rican economy, Costa Rica joined the Central American Common Market (CACM) in 1962 (Rankin, 2012). The CACM allowed countries like Costa Rica to maintain their ISI models while expanding their markets to other countries in the region, without tariffs that would have otherwise been applicable. For a while in the decade between 1960 and 1970, Costa Rica saw much economic growth from these models. Over 100 new companies were formed, the number of state employees tripled, and public investment was prevalent in schools, roads, hospitals and other public infrastructures (Palmer et al., 2004). As Palmer and Molina (2004) state:

The PLN utopia was a world of cheap credit, endless salary increases, support for cooperatives (the most successful of which were those of coffee growers, who founded twenty-three cooperatives between 1963 and 1972), stable public employment, opportunities for social mobility through education, and promotion of the internal market. The main beneficiaries of the Costa Rican dream were the urban and rural middle classes, who prospered with the growth of the export economy, the expansion of public-sector employment, the increase in the size of cities, and the expansion of industry. The rise of

strong unions of public employees, which occurred during the 1960s, gave ballast to middle-class prosperity. (p. 184).

In fact, the 1970s gave rise to major syndicalist organizations such as Asociación Nacional de Empleados Públicos y Privados (ANEP), Federación Nacional de Trabajadores Públicos (FENATRAP) and Central Unitaria de Trabajadores (CUT).

The 1970s also gave way to the second rise of the MSC. The rise in syndicalism of the same decade created an auspicious moment for the re-emergence of Solidarism, which presented itself as an alternative to the syndicalist movement. What especially gained support for the MSC in the 1970s was its backing by the Escuela Social Juan XXIII (ESJ23), an organ of the Costa Rican Catholic Church. The intentions behind the creation of the ESJ23 were to re-Christianize the working class and deter them from leftist ideology. Under the leadership of Claudio Solano, the new leader of the MSC, Solidarism was promoted as the “*manifestation of authentic Christianity*” (Blanco & Navarro, 1984, p., *translation mine*). As a result, employers became self-proclaimed exemplars of Christianity and social justice.

In 1972, the state established CODESA (Costa Rican Development Corporation), a government organization that acted as a corporation investing in local businesses (Rankin, 2012), further expanding economic opportunities for the middle class. Nevertheless, to keep up with rising oil prices and increased public spending, the nation required large foreign loans. This raised foreign debt from \$164 million in 1970 to more than \$1 billion by 1978 (Rankin, 2012), making the country more dependent on foreign business and agro-export. The economic climate in the second rise of Solidarism in the 1970s was therefore highly dependent on the agro-export industry. Costa Rica’s climatic conditions and relative political stability made it an attractive base for mass production of pineapple. In 1978, Pineapple Development Corporation (Pindeco),

a subsidiary of Del Monte Foods Inc., set up its productions in Costa Rica (Evans, 1999; González, 2004; Guevara et al., 2017).

Globally, labour strikes grew significantly during the 1970s and 1980s (Centeno & Cohen, 2012; Piazza, 2005). As a result, neoliberal governments took anti-union stances. Most prominent among the events of this period were the U.S. Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) strike in 1981, and the UK National Union of Mineworkers strike of 1985 (Centeno & Cohen, 2012; Humphrys & Cahill, 2017). The defeat of workers and unions by the Reagan and Thatcher governments, set the tone for the neoliberal economic politics that would be later imposed on the global south.

### **2.11 1980s: The Debt Crisis**

In the early 1980s, Costa Rica suffered its worst-ever debt crisis (Evans, 1999; Hidalgo, 2014). Importantly, these changes were happening during the Cold War and amidst much uprising and many revolutions elsewhere in Latin America. The relationship Costa Rica built with the United States in these years is of particular importance to our understanding of Solidarism. It is important to appreciate why Costa Rica was reliant on the agro-export industry, what its relationship was to the United States, and what external factors contributed to its anti-Communist resistance.

Prior to Luis Alberto Monge's presidency (1982-1986), President Rodrigo Carazo (1978-1982) had been unable to stabilize the economy. He had stopped paying back debts to financial institutions, thus alienating the IMF and the World Bank from Costa Rica (Sawchuk, 2004). To remediate this, Monge signed Letters of Intent and Structural Adjustment Programs, shifting the country into its neoliberal era. This was carried through continuously by Monge's successors (Sawchuk, 2004). These actions further weakened Costa Rica's economic autonomy and intensified agricultural production by foreign companies within the country. In the case of the

Pineapple Development Corporation (Pindeco), as Costa Rica became more economically reliant on tropical fruit exports, there was further incentive to maintain non-adversarial relationships with employers, a problem that Solidarism was equipped to address. The debt crisis led the IMF to encourage the country to produce more exportable products such as tropical fruit. Banana export values nearly doubled in the decade following 1980 and more than tripled in the following two decades (INEC, 2018:2020; OEC, 2020).

Costa Rica's debt crisis in the 1980s was in line with the economic pressures of neoliberalism, globally. Many developing countries faced difficulties of stagflation, turning to Western banks for bailouts (Centeno & Cohen, 2012). In 1982, Costa Rica accepted \$100 million in aid from the IMF (Rankin, 2012). The United States, however, played an even more significant role in Costa Rica's economy. Between 1982 and 1989, Costa Rica received more than \$1 billion dollars directly from the United States (Rankin, 2012). In exchange, the Reagan (1981-1989) administration pressured Costa Rica to implement anticommunist measures, especially by supporting the U.S.A. in its efforts against Nicaragua (Rankin, 2012). Costa Rica maintained its antimilitaristic stance, but the anticommunist sentiment remained high in the country.

As anticommunism grew across the country, so too did the Solidarist Movement. The MSC continued to gain popularity from the early 1980s (Gansemans & D'Haese, 2020b). In 1984, Law No. 6970 "*Ley de Asociaciones Solidaristas*" (Solidarist Associations Law) came into effect, under the presidency of Luis Alberto Monge (SCIJ, 2021). The Solidarist Associations Law was supported by the Catholic Church School of Juan XXIII (Escuela Social Juan XXIII or ESJ23), as was the movement itself. Under this law, Solidarist Associations of Employees (ASE) were legally established across the country. These associations were created by employees and managed independently of, but in harmony with, company management. The

purpose of such associations was twofold: 1) to promote a harmonious employee-management relationship, and 2) to facilitate economic savings amongst employees, by encouraging a joint contribution from both management (an advance on employee's future severance pay) and employees (3-5% of their salary, monthly) (Engström, 2001).

The number of ASEs rose from 216 associations in 1981, to 1,154 associations in 1990, the constituencies growing from 30,694 to 113,879 members, respectively (ASEPROLA, 1993). Today, there are 1,445 solidarist associations and 400,000 members (CONASOL, 2021). ASEs provide benefits to their affiliates such as loans at low interest rates, sports teams and organized events, social and cultural events, investment opportunities, supermarkets, yearly bonuses, and school materials for children among other benefits. However, solidarist association boards and constituencies must remain independent of company management. They are thus prohibited from partaking in any negotiations of working conditions or labour rights (Gansemans & D'Haese, 2020b).

Following the establishment of solidarist associations, in 1986, internal committees, by the name of *Comités Permanentes de los Trabajadores (CPT)*, or, Permanent Worker Committees (CPT), were set up within companies. These committees served to represent workers and negotiate on behalf of them (Tyroler, 1988). CPTs, still in effect today, are comprised of employee-elected representatives who serve as liaisons between employees and management in the case of conflict. According to article 504 of the Costa Rican Labour Code, workers' rights, aside from those established by the country's Ministry of Labour, are determined through an *Arreglo Directo*, or Direct Settlement (SCIJ, 2021). Representatives base their cases on the *Arreglo Directo* when defending workers' rights in the case of violations.

Despite measures to represent workers, CPTs and other such forms of representation that are alternative to trade unionism have received much criticism for their inability to adequately

represent workers. Some scholars, (Anner, 2012b; Barrientos & Smith, 2007b; Cradden & Graz, 2016; Egels-Zandén & Merk, 2014b), have argued that while such alternative representative methods as CPTs may improve *outcome standards*, they fail to improve *process rights*. For instance, while such standards as working hours or overtime wages may be negotiated or improved, the right to certain procedures such as the right to collective bargaining or FoA rights remain unrepresented (Anner, 2012b; Barrientos & Smith, 2007b; Egels-Zandén & Merk, 2014b). Nevertheless, in Costa Rica, many workers maintain an aversion toward labour unions, and choose instead to be represented by solidarist organizations.

## **2.12 Conclusion**

Despite having relative political stability, and long-established adult suffrage, Costa Rican trade union membership remains low. Instead, workers continue to join both Solidarist Associations of Employees and maintain labour representation through Permanent Worker Committees, both derivatives of the Costa Rican Solidarist Movement. Syndicalists have attributed low union membership to anti-union propaganda and coercion from solidarists. The political history of Costa Rica, however, reveals the more complex bedrock on which the growth of the MSC is founded.

In theory, the Costa Rican Solidarist Movement is comprised of the same theoretical underpinnings as solidarity doctrines elsewhere. In fact, the theoretical development of the MSC resembles very closely, the Solidarité of Léon Bourgeois, and the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. In practice, however, the MSC derives its strength from the political and economic climate within which it was strategically positioned by the leaders of the movement. The creation of a large middle class by way of social and educational reforms throughout the history of Costa Rica, created a demographic that actively placed labour issues at the forefront of Costa Rican politics. With the pendulum of Costa Rican political economy continuously oscillating between

Marxist Socialism and Liberalism at its two extremes, the Solidarist Movement ostensibly presented itself as the balanced middle ground. The Costa Rican economic climate and its dependence on the agro-export industry presented a possibility of economic growth for the country and economic savings for labourers. The 1948 Costa Rican civil war, in its advocacy for democracy through its political reforms and its promotion of non-violence through the abolition of the standing army, was instrumental in setting the field for the emergence of the MSC. In this way, the MSC represented the spirit of the Second Republic of Costa Rica. The support of the Catholic Church eventually reinforced the movement as the manifestation of authentic Christianity. But what the MSC did most effectively was embody Costa Rica's nationalist sentiment in such a way that it later transcended the movement's affiliation with political parties and their leaders. The MSC, as it presented itself, was above all, pacifist, and democratic—in other words, it was quintessentially Costa Rican.



## Chapter Three

### **Soli-Tico: Solidarism, Costa Rican Exceptionalism, and The Catholic Church**

*“Any movement that hopes to sustain commitment over a period of time must make the construction of a collective identity one of its most central tasks”.*

*-William A. Gamson, 1991*

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The seed of Solidarism was planted, as seen in the second chapter, at an opportune moment in the political economy of Costa Rica. Its growth was since interlaced with the political and economic changes within the country. In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that at the time of its conception, Solidarism positioned itself strategically between liberalism and socialism. It provided an alternative to either extreme, at a time when this polarization was weakening each model. In this chapter I argue that the effectiveness and resilience of Solidarism lies in its ability to forge a collectivity that aligns itself with the country’s most powerful collective identities: those of nationalism and religion. Solidarism is deeply embedded in the Costa Rican nationalist identity.

Costa Rican exceptionalism, a powerful nationalist identity as described below, was created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and bolstered by the founding Junta after the 1948 civil war. The Junta emphasised this identity as one that was unique to the Opposition<sup>17</sup>; they did so especially by measuring their values against the failures of the Caldero-communists. In other words, by showing that the Calderonistas were violent, undemocratic, and unable to achieve economic prosperity, their agenda of economic growth, democracy and pacifism stood out. In practice though, other than a few amendments to the constitution and the abolition of the Costa Rican army, the Junta did not deviate radically from the Caldero-comunista government. What it did

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<sup>17</sup> The “Opposition” refers to José Figueres Ferrer and his supporters, who opposed the Caldero-comunista government in the 1948 Civil War.

do, effectively, was control the narrative in such a way as to tarnish the reputation of the existing government and build instead an identity of the Second Republic that would justify the civil war. Solidarism derives its strength, not from its nature as a social movement or an economic philosophy, but as an identity that mimics Costa Rican nationalism and moulds itself to principal values of the Catholic Social Doctrine. As an identity, it transcends the confines of time and affiliations with individual leaders and political parties and forms itself opportunistically to already-established collective identities.

Throughout this thesis, I seek to understand the prominence of Solidarism within Costa Rica. I have already analyzed its conception through the lens of the political economy of the country. I now turn to its persistence over 75 years, amidst the Solidarist-Syndicalist divide. I return to the principal paradox of this thesis: in a country that is a member of the International Labour Organization, where both syndicalism and Solidarism exist, and where workers are legally allowed to be represented by either or both forms of organizations, many workers choose Solidarism; why? I answer this over the course of the next two chapters. Here, I look at the role of collective identity in the movement's ability to retain its constituency over time. The exact numbers for solidarist and syndicalist constituencies are difficult to compare. This is, first, because not all private and public companies have equal access to either a Solidarist Association of Employees (ASE), a Permanent Worker's Committee (CPT), or an Independent Labour Union (ILU). Second, CPTs, ASEs, and ILUs are not mutually exclusive entities. Third, CPTs are not organizations to which workers register. That is, by virtue of working for a company that possesses a CPT, workers are automatically represented by the CPT. It is then their choice to involve their CPT representative in their grievances. Fourth, while ASE affiliation can demonstrate solidarist support, it cannot be directly compared to ILU affiliation because they serve different functions. In the next chapter, I will further discuss the Solidarist-Syndicalist

divide and compare ILU and ASE affiliations in the case of the Pineapple Development Corporation (Pindeco). In this chapter, however, it suffices to let the magnitude of the Solidarist-Syndicalist divide, along with the duration of the MSC and the affiliation of 400,000 ASE associates, speak to the prevalence of the movement in the country, making it a phenomenon worth analyzing. Moreover, despite frequent and constant changes in elected government (see Figure 1) the Solidarist Movement has continued to grow over the years, transcending the confines of political affiliation.

*Table 3 Costa Rican Presidents and Party Affiliations*

<b>1944</b>	T. Picado Michalski	National Republican	<b>1986</b>	Ó. Arias Sánchez	National Liberation
<b>1948</b>	S. León Herrera	National Republican	<b>1990</b>	R. Calderón Fournier	Social Christian Unity
<b>1948</b>	J. Figueres Ferrer	Social Democratic	<b>1994</b>	J. Figueres Olsen	National Liberation
<b>1949</b>	O. Ulate Blanco	National Union	<b>1998</b>	M. Rodríguez Echeverría	Social Christian Unity
<b>1953</b>	J. Figueres Ferrer	National Liberation	<b>2002</b>	A. Pacheco de la Espriella	Social Christian Unity
<b>1958</b>	M. Echandi Jiménez	National Union	<b>2006</b>	Ó. Arias Sánchez	National Liberation
<b>1962</b>	F. Orlich Bolmarcich	National Liberation	<b>2010</b>	L. Chinchilla Miranda	National Liberation
<b>1966</b>	J. Trejos Fernández	National Unification	<b>2014</b>	L. Guillermo Solís Rivera	Citizen's Action
<b>1974</b>	D. Oduber Quirós	National Liberation	<b>2018</b>	C. Alvarado Quesada	Citizen's Action
<b>1978</b>	R. Carazo Odio	Unity Coalition	<b>2022</b>	R. Chaves Robles	Social Democratic Progress
<b>1982</b>	L. Monge Álvarez	National Liberation			

I begin by providing a working definition and background into the concept of collective identity. I then demonstrate how the Costa Rican Solidarist Movement uses two foundational collective identities in the country to further its political agenda: those of nationalism—specifically, Costa Rican Exceptionalism—and religion. First, I look at the ways in which Solidarism has deliberately mimicked Costa Rican nationalism to retain its popularity. I argue that Costa Rican exceptionalism is founded on four main pillars: whiteness, pacifism, democracy, and economic prosperity—concepts that were developed in the second chapter.

Second, the Catholic Church played an important role in the second rise of the MSC. I demonstrated, in the last chapter, the ways in which Solidarism built its identity on the principles of the Catholic Social Doctrine. Here, I dig deeper into the role of the Catholic Church School of Juan XXIII (ESJ23) and the intertwined natures of solidarist and Catholic identities.

I caution toward the following limitation of activism in this field. Because, under law No. 7360 (ILO, 2023), ASEs were prohibited from partaking in the representation of workers, all negotiations and conflict resolution were taken on by Permanent Worker Committees, under Direct Settlements. As a result, the CPT appears as the logical adversary to ILUs. In this direct juxtaposition, interviewees who were involved in ILU representation either professionally, politically, or academically, deemed the CPT an inadequate form of representation and one that infringes on the rights of workers. The popularity of the movement was thus attributed, by ILU representatives, to fear of reprisals, anti-union propaganda, or lack of knowledge. I argue that comparing CPTs and ILUs does not provide an analysis of the *Solidarist-Syndicalist* divide, as CPTs form only one component of the MSC. I propose, instead, the following: to effectively assess the Solidarist-Syndicalist divide, both ASEs and CPTs must be taken into consideration. While CPTs produce the political makeup of the collective identity, ASEs create its social and economic components. I propose that Solidarism, along with its reach and influence, can only be understood if considered in its entirety. Ultimately, I suggest that in understanding the role of collective identity in the creation and maintenance of the Solidarist Movement, we can better understand the sociopolitical components of the identity and postulate an alternative explanation for the prominence of the MSC.

### **3.2 Collective Identity**

I use the following definition of *collective identity* as defined by Snow (2001):

Although there is no consensual definition of collective identity, discussions of the concept invariably suggest that its essence resides in a shared sense of “one-ness” or “we-ness” anchored in real or imagined shared attributes and experiences among those who comprise the collectivity and in relation or contrast to one or more actual or imagined sets of “others.” Embedded within the shared sense of “we” is a corresponding sense of “collective agency.” This latter sense, which is the action component of collective identity, not only suggests the possibility of collective action in pursuit of common interests, but even invites such action. Thus, it can be argued that collective identity is constituted by a shared and interactive sense of “we-ness” and “collective agency.” (Para, 6)

Others have provided similar definitions of the concept, adding an emotional component to the understanding of collective identity. Polletta and Jasper (2001), for instance, define it as “an individual’s cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution. It is a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly, and it is distinct from personal identities, although it may form part of a personal identity.” (p. 285). Not only is the process of identifying with a collectivity essential to the creation of collective identity, it has also been said to be a primary goal in social movements (Polletta & Jasper, 2001).

Elsewhere, it has been framed through the following assertion: “the development of group pride is a form of identity work. Identity talk within movements may be aimed not only at building solidarity but also at changing selves and relationships in ways that extend beyond the movement” (Lichterman, 1999; Breines 1989; Epstein 1991, as cited in Polletta and Jasper, 2001, p. 296). Similarly, Gamson (1991), emphasizes the durability of a movement. He argues

that “any movement that hopes to sustain commitment over a period of time *must make the construction of a collective identity one of its most central tasks*. (p. 28, emphasis added).

Hunt and Benford (2004), use Marx (1976), and Durkheim’s (1964) perspectives on class consciousness, group identification, and collective action as the basis to their own approach to collective identity. They contend that in the same way that Marx regards class consciousness as a necessary condition for revolutionary or collective action, collective identity becomes a necessary condition in social movements. In both instances, there is a need to identify the collectivity itself with shared attributes, as well as a need to identify *with* that collectivity through a ‘sense of mutuality and solidarity’ (Hunt & Benford, 2004, p.434). The authors then draw on Durkheim’s work to show how he places, in a similar manner to Marx, emphasis on the cohesion that is formed when solidarity is created through identification with a collectivity. We see this reflected in the MSC.

Solidarist Associations of Employees (ASE) contribute to the strengthening of this collective identity by adding to it a social and economic component. Hunt and Benford further develop their analysis of solidarity in collective identity, asserting that while the two are different, they are nonetheless intertwined (2004). They use the following definition of solidarity by Melucci (1996): “the ability of actors to recognize others, and to be recognized, as belonging to the same social unit” (p.23). Similarly, Poletta and Jasper (2001) explain the power of collective identity as a replacement to material incentives, arguing that it captures “the pleasures and obligations that actually persuade people to mobilize” (p. 284). Many have argued that emotions and affect are important components in the creation of collective identity (Flesher Fominaya, 2010; Hunt & Benford, 2004; Melucci, 1995). They stress that positive emotional experiences can heighten the participation of activists regardless of movement outcome, whereas the inverse can also take place (Fominaya, 2007). In a research project on the CSE (European

Social Council), Fominaya discovered that long after the movement had fallen short of meeting its goals, its members retained their loyalty to it. Interviews with the participants later revealed that the positive environment that was created was the main reason they had chosen to retain their affiliation with the movement (Fominaya, 2007). Similarly, in interviews for this research, former Pindeco employees remained loyal to the solidarist philosophies and to the organizations they had once belonged to. Regardless of their current employment, no former employees had changed their perspective on CPTs or ASEs despite having lost their formal affiliation with them.

### **3.3 Nationalist Collective Identity**

The nationalist identity of Costa Rican exceptionalism rests on the premise that Costa Rica is a civilized nation, and particularly one that is *more* civilized than other Central American countries (Ameringer, 2009; Bell, 2014; Booth, 1987; Bowman, 1999; Christian, 2013; Rankin, 2012) .

This identity has existed for centuries within Costa Rica and was emphasised by the founding Junta of the Second Republic. Solidarism has built its identity in direct alignment with Costa Rican exceptionalism. The solidarist identity is created through the shared attributes of civilization on which the nationalist identity of Costa Rican exceptionalism is built. The National Confederation of Solidarist Associations (CONASOL) website perfectly demonstrates the MSC's mission and philosophy, and even more so, its reflection of Costa Rican Exceptionalism. The opening line of the *About Us* section reads: "Costa Rica is a special Country". It continues:

... it was the first Latin American country to abolish the army and dedicates a quarter of the national territory [...] to protect nature. For this, Costa Rican institutions, national figures and scientists have won international and global awards and tributes, which have given the country notable global prestige.

The country peacefully universalized the health and education system, protection against occupational diseases and risks (occupational health) and created a mandatory

supplementary pension system. An innovative social labor organization was also conceived and developed, which has contributed and will contribute in the future to broadening and deepening the economic and social democracy of the community. This social labor entity is called “solidarist association”; The system is called the solidarist movement or sector.

Solidarism is a system that promotes production, democratizes capital and satisfies the aspirations or needs of businessmen and workers. In addition, it considers that capital and labor, the employer and the worker, must join together to increase production and improve the socioeconomic conditions of workers.

[...] the solidarity sector is currently made up of 1,445 associations, as well as approximately 400,000 affiliates, being the first most important organized social labor force in the country. It contributes to the harmony between workers and businessmen, to peace and social justice, and to the integral development of the associates and their families. It collaborates in the expansion and deepening of the Welfare State and equitable, sustainable, inclusive and participatory human development. (CONASOL, 2023)

The CONASOL website refers to key aspects of Costa Rican nationalism through its emphasis on democracy, peace, economic prosperity, and exceptionalism. I identify the promise of Costa Rican civilization through four pillars: whiteness, pacifism, democracy, and economic prosperity. The Founding Junta used this identity to justify the civil war and instate the new constitution, using the press to propagate its identity. The Junta had at least two newspapers at its disposal: *Acción Demócrata* and *El Social Demócrata* which helped it to control the narrative of the identity of the Second Republic. *El Social Demócrata* was considered, as written on each print, an “official organ of the Social Democratic Party, at the service of the Opposition”. The Social Democratic Party would later be reformed into the National Liberation Party (PLN).



## 3.4 The Four Pillars

### 3.4.1 Whiteness

Costa Rican exceptionalism rests on the promise of civilization which in turn relies on the image that Costa Rica is a predominantly white, peaceful, democratic nation, with infinite potential for economic prosperity. It is the *Suiza Centro Americana*, or the Switzerland of the Americas. In the second chapter, I demonstrated the ways in which historians have attributed Costa Rica's relative pacificism, in its colonial era, to racial homogeneity. I also criticized this perspective as being a misconception at best and a racist and nationalist tool at worst. Yet, this racial imaginary of whiteness remains among Costa Ricans and is something I've noted in my field work. I demonstrate this in the excerpt below:

I've been doing research for several years in Volcán and by now I'm well acquainted with the community, my friends, the language, and the humour. Every time I come back to Volcán something new is happening. I look forward to arriving and hearing about the things that have changed, the new programs, new gossip, new relationships in town.

Sara and I sit to have an afternoon coffee at the table in her backyard. Her husband, Leonardo, lays in a hammock behind us, his toes reaching to gently play with his sandals. Sara's eldest daughter, Valentina, accompanies us at the table while her youngest, Alejandra, plays with the newest additions to Sara's 6 dogs.

Amidst the sounds of the dogs' loud barking, the neighbour's cumbia music and the roaming roosters, a typical chaotic Volcán ambiance sets the background of our afternoon gathering. "There's a new program", Sara begins to tell me, the corners of her mouth turning up and her voice beginning to crack into her usual giggle. I can sense the mood changing. I've witnessed this all too often to know that it will only be moments before the whole family is roaring with laughter. "It's a loan program for indigenous people. So we've all been getting

tested to see if we have any indigenous blood". "I did my test" she tells me, "and *vieras!*". This is Sara's story-telling voice, animated, an octave or so below her natural voice, her eyes piercing at you as she recounts her story, and her head nodding in an almost rhythmic flow with her story. "You should have seen, she continues to tell me. I was THIRTY EIGHT PERCENT INDIGENOUS". They all break out into the cackles they had been holding back.

They are so amused that I can't help but laugh along with them. I am not surprised by this reaction. I often hear references to various races, usually through 'apodos' (nicknames). If apodos are not indicative of some type of reputation (ie. *Pele*: for being a good soccer player in their younger days), they are often a physical or character description of the person. For instance, *la flaca* (the skinny one), *el gordo* (the fat one), *la loca* (the crazy one). These descriptions, that serve either as nicknames or identifiers, can also be racial: *el negro* (the black one, —non-derogatory), *la morena* (the brown one – sometimes also used for indigenous or mixed race), and *gringo/a*: mainly a person from the United States. While these nicknames are not offensive, they are meant to highlight a distinguishing trait. As a result, one is seldom called "el blanco". As if it is not distinct, or Other enough. Whiteness is only emphasized with more extreme characteristics (ie. White skin, with blond hair, and light eyes). In this case, they are appointed the apodos "la macha", or "el macho/machillo".

Some descriptions of race are used as racial slurs. Nica, for example, to describe a Nicaraguan person, while not an offensive term per se, is used toward Nicaraguans and non-Nicaraguans alike as an insult. The offensive use of *Indio* instead of *indígena*, or the use of "cholo" for indigenous or darker-skinned people, like Nica, can be used as an insult. It has become evident to me in my experience of being in Volcán that there is slight antipathy to say the least, between the community and indigenous groups.

Sara and Leonardo continue to tell me about everyone's results. The girls had only a slightly lower indigenous percentage than Sara and some of their friends and neighbours'

results were shockingly high. They took turns recounting the many results they had heard of and poking fun at each person accordingly. How about you, Leonardo? I ask cheekily. "Yo?" he replies, his head held high, and his chest puffed out. "Yo soy prácticamente gringo" [I'm practically gringo] he responds proudly." "Aaaah get out of here", Sara mocks, throwing the towel she was using to clean at him. Laughter fills the yard again.

Exchanges of this manner, especially racial slurs, while sometimes offensive and malicious, are at other times exchanged between friends and family in lighthearted banter. Nonetheless, the origins of this kind of racial hierarchy is rooted in the same nationalist identity of Costa Rican whiteness that feeds that of Costa Rican exceptionalism. The first pillar of Costa Rican exceptionalism is the belief that Costa Rica is a predominantly white nation; from there, any racial deviation is judged according to its magnitude. Scholars (Ameringer, 2009; Booth, 1987, 2008a; Miller, 1996) have described Costa Rica as being nearly racially homogenous, placing the white population at almost 84%. This can be explained through the categorization of the census. The Costa Rican census does not divide white and mestizo in its racial categories (Figure 1). The category reads: "(name) considers themselves... 1) black or afro descendant, 2) mulato(a), 3) Chinese, 4) white or mestizo(a), 5) Other, 6) None of the above" (ILO, 2023, translation mine).

10. ¿(Nombre) se considera...					
... negro(a) o afrodescendiente?	<input type="radio"/>	1	... blanco(a) o mestizo(a)?	<input type="radio"/>	4
... mulato(a)?	<input type="radio"/>	2	Otro	<input type="radio"/>	5
... chino(a)?	<input type="radio"/>	3	Ninguna	<input type="radio"/>	6

Figure 1 Costa Rican Census Racial Categories, (ILO, 2023)

There is therefore no separation between those that consider themselves to be in part indigenous, and those that consider themselves to be white.

This aspect of Costa Rican exceptionalism serves, in Solidarism, to liken the country to European nations or to the United States, in an effort to emphasize Costa Rica's degree of civilization. In the subsection *Solidarismo in Costa Rica*, of CONASOL, the site reads:

In the Western Hemisphere, less than two thousand miles from the United States, in Central America is Costa Rica. Costa Rica, a small country (52,000 square kilometers) with a population of over 4,000,000 persons; without any armed forces, deeply democratic; lover of work and peace, has found an answer to two important questions: Is there any course of action able to contribute to social peace? Is it possible to achieve harmony and good relations between workers and management? Justice, progress for everybody and consolidation of our democracy is the solution set forth by Solidarism. (CONASOL, 2023)

Less than two thousand miles from the United States, an 84% white population, the Switzerland of the Americas (Ameringer, 2009; Helmuth, 2000; Huhn, 2009; Sawchuk, 2004); by the logic of Costa Rican exceptionalism, Costa Rica and its people were altogether geographically misplaced.

### **3.4.2 Pacifism**

The second pillar of Costa Rican exceptionalism is its identity of pacifism. As previously explained, Costa Rica's relatively nonviolent history earned it the reputation of being the *Switzerland of the Americas* (Ameringer, 2009; Christian, 2013; Helmuth, 2000; Huhn, 2009; Sawchuk, 2004). Huhn (2009) traces the imagined identity of pacificism in Costa Rican national identity, drawing on quotes from political leaders and other such political instances that refer to this identity as a natural, uniform trait among all Costa Ricans. For instance, he cites the opening lines of the Costa Rican National Plan for the Prevention of Violence: "We, Costa Ricans, are known in the world as a pacifist and tolerant people because our relationships with other people—with each other and with other nations—are based on values such as peace, respect, and

empathy.” (Ministerio de Justicia, 2007, p. 3, as cited in Huhn, 2009, p. 795). Although Huhn argues that the culture of nonviolence in Costa Rica is a construct, the imagined identity remains present among Costa Ricans through this continuous reiteration. What contributed greatly to this identity was the abolition of the Costa Rican military in 1949—now a claim to fame in the country. In fact, any tourist visiting Costa Rican souvenir shops has likely come across t-shirts that read “NO ARMY since 1949”. Like *Pura Vida*, the absence of a standing army forms part of the image of pacifism of the Second Republic. But this identity was not born of the founding Junta or the civil war. It existed even in what was arguably the party that was most antithetical to the PLN: the communist party.

In the early 20th century, Costa Rica maintained a relatively democratic and stable political system, and bore a large middle class. This identity was reinforced at the time, by the national style of communism that Costa Rica practiced, always maintaining a distinction with Comintern or Moscow. Liss (2019) writes the following of Costa Rica’s native style of communism, *comunismo criollo*—or, local communism: “Unlike most other Latin American communist parties with ties to Moscow, it developed *comunismo criollo*, a native brand of Marxism with strong democratic and progressive currents...” (p.292). Bell (1971:2014) writes that “*comunismo criollo* was ‘conceived by native-born minds and directed by the native borns.’ They accepted the Communist banner as a means to seek the social and economic advances which they had failed to achieve under Reformism.” (p. 50, original emphasis). He later follows this by saying “[a]lthough their rhetoric generally followed the Marxist-Leninist line, Mora’s followers, prior to the election of 1944, did not engage in violence or intimidation. At no point did they attempt to seize the government by force. Mora took the position that violent revolution was not necessary or called for in Costa Rica, because the Communists participated in the

democratic institutions of the nation and could thus impel a peaceful transformation of systems and institutions” (Bell, 1971:2014, p. 51).

Ameringer (2009) depicts the succession of this phenomenon in the 1940s through what he calls “Tico Socialism”. Specifically, he describes José Figueres as having identified with “a *criollo* socialis[m] of the Tico variety” (p.145, original emphasis). “He was no Marxist,” he writes of Figueres “rejecting determinism and the class struggle. He argued that the equitable distribution of goods and services mattered more than the ownership of the means of production. (Ameringer, 2009, p. 145)”. Despite the six-week armed conflict, Figueres and his supporters subsequently abolished the military, managing to paint an image of nonviolence and democracy on which the Second Republic of Costa Rica is founded. Regardless, then, of the party and political affiliation, the sense of pacificism was embedded in the Costa Rican national identity. In more tangible terms in the case of Costa Rica, the “Tico” variety of different identities constituted the shared sense of “we-ness” that was in turn used by the solidarist movement in the formation of a Soldiarist collective identity.

As seen in chapter two, despite the use of arms in the uprising and the bloodshed of the civil war, the event was nevertheless seen by many as the reinstatement of Costa Rica’s democracy and nonviolence. One headline from *El Social Demócrata* reads: “*The Opposition wants peace, but will not shy away from the battle.*”. The editorial states that the Opposition group (José Figueres and his followers) would prefer peaceful resolutions and that the instigators of violence are Caldero-comunistas. It maintains that the government has taken away the democratic rights of the people for eight years, by not respecting electoral freedom.



Figure 2 El Social Demócrata, January 21, 1948

But if we have said that peace is the best environment, that peace is our best friend, it does not mean that for the love of peace, we are ready to allow our republican institutions to be demolished. We want peace, and we have made a lot of sacrifices and tolerated much mockery. (...) But if they close our paths to peace, we will have to resort to violence. We will not do it happily, because we know what this means. But we will do it regardless. Violence is the last path, and it is the Caldero-comunistas who are pushing us there. We have done everything possible to save peace, and we will only change our ways when there is no longer an alternative path. Unfortunately for our country, it appears as though this is the only way. (Social Demócrata, January 1948, translation mine)

The narrative of peace was continuously used to at once reinforce the identity of the Opposition, while using it as the standard against which the failure of Caldero-comunistas was measured. In other words, since they were failing to maintain peace and democracy in the country, they would need to be replaced by leaders that would honour the nation's identity.



Figure 3 El Social Demócrata, May 6 1948

The editorial above, from the newspaper *Social Demócrata* in 1948, entitled *Only with Weapons Could Morality and Public Liberties be Restored* (Figure 2, translation mine), defends José Figueres’ actions, stating it was the only way to restore Costa Rican democracy. A passage from the editorial reads “all of Figueres’ interventions were inspired by a fervorous desire to conquer the essential liberties of democracy, using effective mediums. Figueres had to win. (translation mine)”. Figueres, Martén, and other supporters of the civil war, used the long-standing identity of Costa Rican pacifism and democracy to justify the need to oust Calderonistas, reinstate Costa Rican democracy and abolish the standing army.

A similar editorial in the *Defensa Nacional* newspaper celebrates the newly restored peace in the country, thanking José Figueres and Otilio Ulate for their contributions. “There is peace again in our fatherland, after having suffered scarcity and pain. (...) How beautiful is peace, oh! Brothers of the world. So many smiles of fortunate children we see, so many happy brides’ kisses. It’s that peace is seldom appreciated. May God bless the souls that seek peace, for peace is the path best lit.” (*Defensa Nacional*, April 1948, translation mine).





Figure 4 Defensa Nacional. De Nuevo Somos Dueños de la Paz. 1948

These events and figures have since continued to be celebrated in the country, José Figueres Ferrer going down in Costa Rican history as the beloved *Don Pepe*. In this climate of glorification of the civil war, Alberto Martén used the image of democracy, pacifism, and the economic desperation of the country, along with the aversion to the emerging syndicalism to create two foundational promises of the solidarist movement. The promises of economic prosperity and of worker-employer harmony—in other words, the identity of peace and autonomy—would form core elements of the solidarist identity.

Solidarism, at its core, has pacifism written even into law. In the Law N° 6970 of Solidarist Associations, Article 1 stipulates: “Solidarity associations are social organizations that are inspired by a human attitude, through which man identifies with the needs and aspirations of his fellow men, committing the contribution of their resources and efforts to satisfy those needs and aspirations in a fair and peaceful way” (CONASOL, 2023). Similarly, Permanent Worker Committees pride themselves on resorting to peaceful methods of conflict resolution, primarily through negotiation. During interviews, supporters of Solidarism continuously measured this

against the hostility of syndicalism. “It’s that I’m of a different mentality”, one worker told me, “I believe in a different philosophy. Unions tend to choose tension, strikes, stoppages, conflict with the company. Whereas CPTs resolve problems through conversation and negotiation”. Among many Pinedeco workers, strikes in ILUs are often equated with an inevitability rather than a possibility. Another worker had similar thoughts: “The union always goes against the company”, he said “regardless of who’s right. They always have bad vibes against the company and want to fight them. Whereas the CPT always negotiates”. These are recurring sentiments among interviewees.

### **3.4.3 Democracy**

The third pillar of Costa Rican exceptionalism is that of democracy. With the direct vote having been established in 1913, democratic elections have occurred for over a century in the Country. Even before the establishment of the direct vote, transfers of power among the coffee oligarchy were relatively peaceful. According to Olander (1999), in the 1930s, Costa Rica was different than its neighbours in its use of free press and open political participation “to build a reputation as a progressive society where residents engaged in free association and open exchange of ideas” (p. 27). While dictators ruled its neighbours during the Great Depression and well after for some, Costa Rica remained, at least technically, a democratic state.

John A. Booth, in his thorough analysis of Costa Rican democracy (2008), describes democracy as follows:

The main elements of democracy in its purest sense are easily seen in the word’s Greek roots—demos, “the people,” and kratos, “to rule”: rule by the people. In its various treatments during the nearly three millennia prior to the onset of pluralist-elitist theorizing after World War II, the essential characteristic of democracy—for good or ill—has been participation in the governing of a society by its people. One convenient expression of

this idea is participation by the general population of a community in its rule (the making and carrying out of decisions). Because democracy is defined by citizen participation, an equal right to engage in political activity is essential for all noncriminal, sane adults. (p. 30-31)

In Chapter 2, I discussed the creation of a large middle class in Costa Rica, the investment by various governments into public education, the existence of competing parties and ideologies, and the eventual abolition of the military. These elements of Costa Rican politics created necessary components of the country's democratic reputation.

Moreover, Costa Rica experienced few coups, most prominent among them those of 1917 and 1948. Although the 1948 civil war may be considered the antithesis of democracy because of its violent overthrow of the existing government and the bloodshed that resulted from it, its aftermath created the conceived<sup>18</sup> Second Republic of Costa Rica, hailed nationwide as the reinstatement of democratic integrity. Booth writes

[t]he constitutional elimination of a standing army has indisputably helped ensure Costa Rica's many decades of unblemished political stability, civilian regimes, and excellent human rights performance—a record unequaled in Latin America. The absence of an army combines with the constitution's extensive protection of citizens' rights to provide a national political climate with few institutional barriers to citizen political participation. By not having an army, therefore, Costa Rica has improved both the breadth and the depth of its democracy. Breadth is greater because virtually everyone may participate freely under democratic rules, encouraging citizen involvement. Democracy is deepened because reducing the repression of civil society permits unfettered expression and pursuit of popular policy preferences. (Booth, 2008, p. 143)

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<sup>18</sup> The Second Republic was never officially recognized but used to describe the post-civil war era.

The celebration of the opposition's victory in the aftermath of the civil war is demonstrated in a section of a 1948 editorial in *El Social Demócrata* (Figure 4) below.



Figure 5 *Los Hombres del Triunfo*. *El Social Demócrata* May 1948

The segment reads:

The Men of the Triumph: Here are two men that us Costa Ricans saw together before the war, and who will be together after the war. One—don Otilio—was elected president of Costa Rica February 8<sup>th</sup>; the other—don José Figueres—led the revolutionary movement when the popular will expressed in the electoral ballots was ignored. Don Otilio and Don Pepe, as they are affectionately named by Costa Ricans, constitute a single expression of the democracy that emerged so strongly and youthfully of the past emergency: they are, in the popular imagination, an inseparable pair that will build, with the help of all, a new Costa Rica. Otilio Ulate and José Figueres are two great products of the Costa Rican people, and this is why history will associate them with the difficult civil war that we just won. We are sure that this pair, despite rumours spread by the fallen enemy, will continue their unwavering service to the Costa Rican people. (*El Social Demócrata*, May 6, 1948, translation mine)

The promise of democracy was so strong a narrative of the Second Republic, that it was able to override its entirely undemocratic means to an allegedly democratic end.

Derivative organizations of the MSC—CPTs and ASEs, pride themselves on their democratic natures. Both are formed by democratically elected representatives. Within CPTs, there exists the election of worker representatives. Within ASEs, the association’s board of directors is democratically elected by other associates. In both electoral processes, candidates are democratically elected by their peers, without the presence of any members of company management. Their ability to negotiate and provide peaceful resolutions for workers’ grievances further embodies a democratic identity. A Direct Settlement (*Arreglo Directo*) is created and distributed to workers. In it, their rights and benefits are clearly outlined. The rights are enforceable by law, and usually mediated through CPTs. The Direct Settlement and the Costa Rican Labour Code provide the basis of representation for worker grievances.

Booth (2008) uses the following stipulation of democracy by Anthony Birch (2007): “It is ... fundamental to all democratic theories, that private citizens should have the opportunity to vote in elections, to organize political parties and pressure groups, and to give public expression to their views on political issues without fear of reprisals if their views happen to be unpopular with the government of the day.” (p. 82, as cited in Booth, 2008). Booth continues: “Under these conditions, a formally democratic regime would be civilian, popularly elected, and constrained by a constitution. It would follow democratic decision-making rules and would accommodate citizen organization, mobilization, and communication with the government.” (p. 35). In theory the CPT provides access to democratic elections, and while candidates don’t run in parties, they may represent different views and values. It is civilian, popularly elected, and constrained by a Direct Settlement. Syndicalists have critiqued Pinedeco’s CPT, especially where fear of reprisals is concerned. As seen in greater detail in the next chapter, the company has been criticized for

fear mongering and propaganda, when workers choose to associate with an ILU. If the allegations hold true, it can be argued that the opportunity to express political views without fear of reprisal, or to associate with an entity that represents an opposing view to that of Solidarism, is not present within CPTs. In theory, however, and on paper, the CPT holds inherently democratic values.

### **3.4.5 Economic Prosperity through Labour**

The last the key pillar of Costa Rican exceptionalism, as promoted by the founding Junta, is that of economic prosperity through labour. That is, the promise that Costa Rica would overcome the threat of poverty posed by Caldero-comunistas, by achieving economic prosperity. This prosperity would be attained through increased labour and production, a concept that Solidarism uses as a premise for its agenda of worker-employer harmony. One reason why the second rise of Solidarism took off with such ease in the 1970s, is that the principles laid out in Martén's original 1947 manifesto were already in line with neoliberal politics that would emerge during the movement's second rise. I borrow Elizabeth Povinelli's description of neoliberalism:

If a social welfare program, for instance, can be shown to lengthen life and increase health, but cannot at the same time be shown to produce a market value, this lengthened life and increased health is not a value to be capacitated. Indeed, it is a value to be actively attacked and rooted out of the state and national psyche. Once we understand that neoliberalism is neither laissez-faire liberalism nor Keynesianism—neither a social formation in which the state allows the market to proceed on the basis of one set of principles and the market allows the state to proceed on another set of principles, nor a well-planned form of state and market regulation—but something much more aggressive, then we can understand why we get nowhere within neoliberalism arguing whether this or that person did or didn't care about the vulnerable or that this or that

social welfare program was or was not a failure. (...) [W]ithin a neoliberal framework any social investment that does not have a clear end in market value—a projectable moment when state input values (money, services, care) can be replaced by market output value (workers compensated and supported by nothing except the market) –fails economically and morally. And a social investment is an economic and moral failure, whether or not the investment is life-enhancing. (p. 22-23)

It is fitting then, that in its second rise, amidst an era of global neoliberal economics, Solidarism thrived.

Nevertheless, economic prosperity was encouraged in the country several decades prior. The emphasis on work is echoed through the Costa Rican national anthem, through political addresses to the public, and through the press. The Costa Rican national anthem remarkably denotes Costa Rican exceptionalism, especially with regards to labour. Of the other six Central American countries<sup>19</sup> —with the exception of Nicaragua that makes brief mention of work— every country’s national anthem centres around freedom, independence, victory, and/or war. Costa Rica’s national anthem echoed similar principles in its 1873, 1879, and 1888 versions. Its current anthem<sup>20</sup>, however, which was officially adopted by the Founding Junta in 1949, bears a striking resemblance to the exceptionalist values described above.

Spanish	English
¡Noble patria!, tu hermosa bandera expresión de tu vida nos da; bajo el límpido azul de tu cielo blanca y pura descansa la paz.	Noble fatherland, Your beautiful flag gives us expression of your life; under the limpid blue of your sky, rests peace, white and pure.
En la lucha tenaz, de fecunda labor, que enrojece del hombre la faz; conquistaron tus hijos, labriegos sencillos,	In the tenacious struggle, of fruitful labour, that makes the face of man red; your children, simple peasants,

<sup>19</sup> (Nicaragua, Honduras, Panamá, El Salvador, Belize, and Guatemala)

<sup>20</sup> The anthem was written in 1903 by José María Zeledón Brenes and widely accepted. However, it did not become the official anthem of Costa Rica until 1949.

eterno prestigio, estima y honor, eterno prestigio, estima y honor.  ¡Salve, oh tierra gentil! ¡Salve, oh madre de amor! Cuando alguno pretenda tu gloria manchar, verás a tu pueblo, valiente y viril, la tosca herramienta en arma trocar.  ¡Salve, oh patria!, tu pródigo suelo dulce abrigo y sustento nos da; bajo el límpido azul de tu cielo, ¡vivan siempre el trabajo y la paz!	conquered eternal prestige, esteem and honour, eternal prestige, esteem and honour.  Hail, oh gentle land! Hail, oh mother of love! When someone intends to stain your glory, you will see in your people, brave and virile, the rustic tool turn into a weapon.  Hail, oh fatherland! Your prodigal soil gives us sweet shelter and sustenance; under the limpid blue of your sky, may work and peace live always!
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The Costa Rican national anthem tells the story of a pacifist country, made of simple peasants whose honest work and hard labour earned them prestige, esteem and honour. In the first verse, the anthem refers to the “whiteness and purity” of Costa Rican peace, represented in its flag. Although it cannot be assumed that there is significance beyond common literary symbolism of whiteness and purity, the passage is at least worth mentioning. Its emphasis on peace and work however, are unmistakable. Finally, the anthem ends, not with a testament of honour or a pledge of allegiance but with a much more Costa Rican promise: “¡vivan siempre el trabajo y la paz!”: may work and peace live always!



In an address to the nation, following the Opposition's victory in the civil war, José Figueres stresses the need to get back to work. An editorial in *El Social Demócrata* (May 6, 1948) reads:

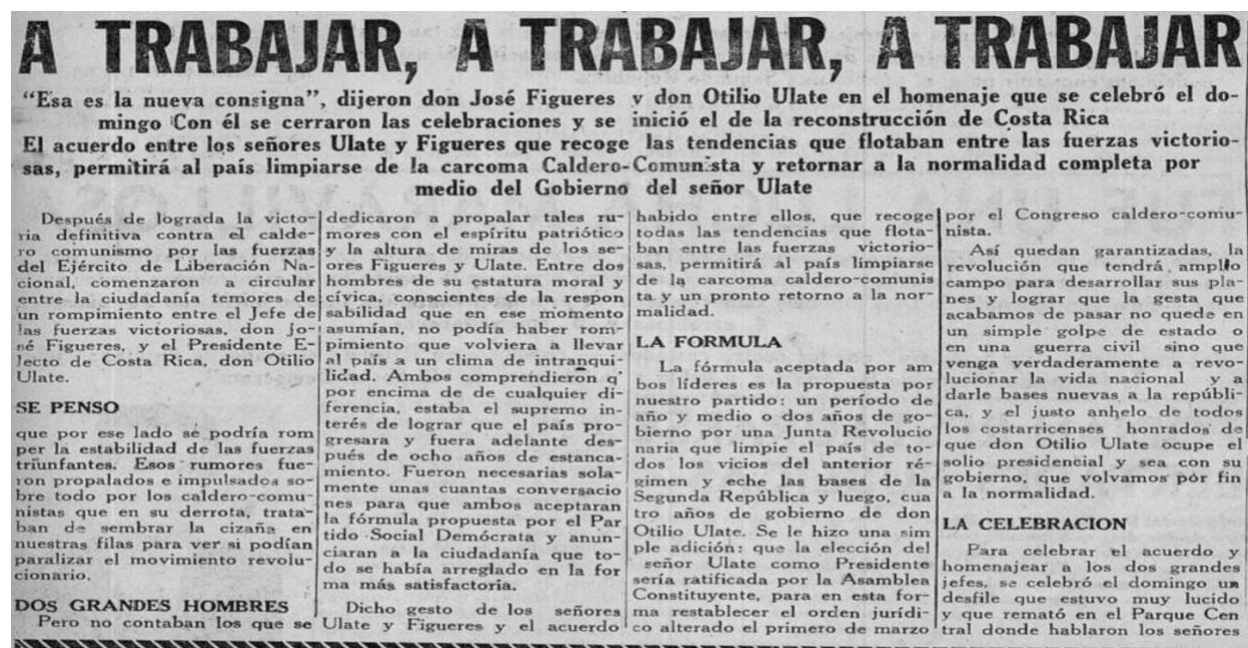


Figure 6 *El Social Democrata*. May 6, 1948

‘To work, to work, to work. This is the new slogan’ said don José Figueres and don Otilio Ulate in an homage celebrated on Sunday. With this, the celebrations ended, and the reconstruction of Costa Rica began. [...] ‘No more celebrations. We must see how, in the following years, we can manage to make Costa Rica a nation that is less poor.’ The Future: as mentioned above, Sunday’s [celebrations] wrapped up the celebratory phase of the victory. Now there’s nothing left to do but dedicate ourselves to work, to work, and to work so that the reconstruction of Costa Rica can become a reality. (p.2, translation mine)

This concept was reiterated in other editorials. In another celebratory segment of the newspaper *La Defensa Nacional*, the passage reads: “Once again we are owners of peace, once again, we work in tranquility, because work, and only work can bring life back to a small nation like ours who has just suffered the terrible consequences of a civil war. Once again, we return to our

labours, happily and filled with joy.” (May 7, 1948, translation mine). In a similar vein to the national anthem, the segment ends with: “Costa Rican brothers, one step forward with your faces held to the sky, always fighting, and ennobling our fatherland with the sweat of your brow, Let’s forget our rancour, and together with strangers who honour the fatherland with their work, lets form an indestructible unit, for the good of the nation.” (May 7, 1948, translation mine).

This emphasis on hard work and increased productivity stemmed from a criticism of the Caldero-comunista’s management of the country’s economy. In the year leading to the revolution, the same year as Alberto Martén’s initial proposal of Solidarism, the opposition sought to discredit the Caldero-comunistas. On June 28, 1947, the *Social Demócrata* released an editorial highlighting the country’s economic crisis, and pointing the finger at the Caldero-comunista government. “There is no security, there are no investments, there is no trust, there is no initiative. The country is living through an economic crisis”. The segment continues:



Figure 7 El Social Demócrata. June 28, 1947

“Because if the Public Administration is doing poorly, then the economic conditions of the people will be worse. Workers, peasants, employees, professionals, business owners, face a grave economic situation. The prices of rent, of indispensable food items, of clothes, of

attractions, are extremely high”. The article goes on to say that all Costa Ricans are feeling this economic strain, and that they don’t know how to make ends meet. Once the desperation of the country has been depicted, the culprit is revealed: “And what is the government doing? What measures has it taken to mitigate the crisis? What plans does it have to manage its future politics? It is absurd to pose these questions because there is a sole categorical answer: the government is doing nothing.”. (p. 2).

In a separate publication, the newspaper printed a cartoon that depicts a communist leader with a sword in one hand and a gun in the other, seemingly exerting aggression onto a woman in front of him who is kneeling in a prayer form and crying. He has turned his back on an angry, bare-footed peasant behind him. The ricochet of his bullets appears to be going in the direction of the peasant. The caption reads “these are the liberties that Costa Rica enjoys on the date of its “independence. (End of the Women’s Protests of August 2<sup>nd</sup>).”



Figure 8 *El Social Democrata* September 1949

The Caldero-comunista government is thus portrayed as an aggressive government that oppresses women and ignores the rights of workers. It is simultaneously criticized for its inability to manage the country’s economy and take Costa Ricans out of poverty.

Enter Solidarism. In 1947, in the midst of the country's economic strain, and the existing government's weakened position, Alberto Martén introduced the solidarist philosophy. He did so with the promise of economic prosperity, that would fulfill the country's exceptional identity of civilization. The following year, Martén would be Figueres's second-in-command in the civil war or the *War of National Liberation*. Following the war, he took his seat as Figueres's Minister of Finance and Commerce in the founding Junta. This position would further interlace the solidarist philosophy and nationalist activities as Martén was part of the initiative to rebuild Costa Rica into the Second Republic

That year, he released his book on Solidarism. Immediately preceding the start of the book, a message on the first page reads "the application of these principles, in the period of one generation, will convert Costa Rica into the most civilized nation on earth (Martén, 1948:1962, no page number, translation mine). In the book, he encourages economic prosperity through worker-employer harmony that leads to increased production. He writes:

What irritates one, what fills one with utter disapproval, is that employers and workers, out of hate, out of blindness or out of stubbornness, cannot work hand in hand to produce in harmonious collaboration, the abundant wealth on which everyone's livelihoods depend. This disharmony is also a form of oppression, a tormentor created by workers and employers themselves, that tyrannizes those with unbeatable poverty and those with the constant fear of the social revolution. To free themselves from this common enemy, both parties would need nothing more than a collective understanding, celebrated in good faith (Marten, 1948:1962, p. 11, translation mine).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> "Lo que irrita, lo que llena de inconformidad desesperante es que patronos y trabajadores no puedan por odio, por ceguera o empecinamiento, dars la mano y producir en armoniosa colaboración la riqueza abundante de que depende el bienestar de todos. Esta desarmonía también es una forma de opresión, verdugo de trabajadores y patronos creado por ellos mismos, que los tiraniza, a aquellos con su pobreza invencible, a estos con el temor constante de la revolución social. Para librarse de ese enemigo común bastaría a ambos un acuerdo colectivo celebrado de Buena fe." (p. 11)

As previously mentioned, Martén rejected Marxist resistance to capitalism and deemed the concept of justice without economic backing, a social delusion. He argued that economic prosperity was the only way that social justice could tangibly be practiced. The idea, then, was to increase production and economic growth in the country, through worker-employer harmony. Moreover, ASEs would provide economic prosperity to workers, as the savings plan would create opportunities to save and invest their income. While CPTs would perform the function of preserving the success and growth of the company itself, ASEs would provide opportunities of individual economic prosperity for workers.

### **3.5 Religious Identity**

#### **3.5.1 Solidarism and the Catholic Church**

One of the main reasons for the second rise of Solidarism in the 1970s was its backing by the Catholic Church. Just as Solidarism gained popularity by shaping itself to fit the mould of Costa Rican nationalist identity, its striking resemblance to principal tenets of the Catholic Social Doctrine also bolstered its presence. In this case, Solidarism and Catholicism—specifically, the ESJ23—relied on each other to strengthen their followings. Today, in Costa Rica, 73% of the population is religious and 47.5% of the population is Catholic (CIA Factbook, 2022), meaning 65% of the religious population identifies as Catholic. In 1970, during the second rise of Solidarism, 93% of the Costa Rican population was Catholic (Pew Research Center, 2008). Among a nearly homogenous Catholic population, the MSC used religious collective identity to grow its constituency.

Many have attested to the intertwined nature of religion—especially as an identity marker<sup>22</sup>—and culture (Figl, 2003 as cited in Beyers, 2017; Geertz, 1973). Beyers states that it is “important to note that cultural identity is ideologically motivated. People profess something

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<sup>22</sup> Woohed (2011) has distinguished religion as a belief (interest in doctrines, dogmas) as opposed to religion as an identity marker (a source of identity, either socially or personally) (Beyers, 2017, p. 5)

about their culture to motivate the manifestation of a particular group. This cultural religious identity provides people with a feeling of certainty, order and meaning – a general feeling of belonging.” (Beyers, 2017, p.6). Similarly, other scholars have argued that despite modernization and secularization, religion continues to be as prevalent today as it was in the past in influencing national identities (Dingley, 2011; Marody & Mandes, 2006; Weissbrod, 1983). Some have argued that even in secular societies, values can have religious underpinnings that are so deeply engrained that we no longer recognize their religious origins (Weissbrod, 1983). Others (Barrett, 2000) have added that “the sacred and profane may be less discriminable than is commonly assumed” or that religion may be more similar to ordinary forms of cognition, making people more receptive to religious concepts. As a result, those religious concepts may become more widespread and form shared cultural concepts (Barrett, 2000; Boyer, 1994). Relying on the work of Waggoner (2011), Beyers (2017) maintains the following:

The shift has taken place that religion no longer resides in the consciousness but within culture. (...) Religion is no longer perceived to be subjectively imagined, locating religion in the bodies and brains of people participating in religion, but rather religion is located in culture or a social system. (p. 6)

This coalescence of religion and culture, or at the very least, the ambiguity of each one’s parameters, in Costa Rica, is relevant to understanding the role religion has played historically and continues to play in the practice of Solidarism.

The Catholic Church has long been the official State Church in the Costa Rican Constitution. Religious education is mandatory in all public schools and other financial subsidies are provided for church-related infrastructures (Sawchuk, 2004). This, along with the Church’s adversarial relationship to Communism further contributes to the role of the church in the discussion at hand. Sawchuck (2004) distinguishes between 4 church bodies: the Costa Rican

Episcopal Conference (CECOR), the Centro Coordinador de Envangelización y Realidad Social (CECODERS); the Escuela Social Juan XXIII (ESJ23), and the official Church in Limón.

According to Sawchuck (2004) the ESJ23 and CECOR have a bias for Solidarism and conservative Catholicism. They share a functionalist perspective on society and emphasize harmony and social change. CECODERS, on the other hand, and the official Limón Church are biased toward syndicalism, have a liberationist orientation, and support grassroots “and even confrontational movements for social change (Sawchuk, 2004, p. iii). Thus, when I refer to the Catholic Church in this thesis, I am referring specifically to the branches of the Catholic Church that have explicitly pushed the solidarist agenda, namely the ESJ23.

I focus on the Catholic Church School, *Escuela Social Juan XXIII* (ESJ23) in its relationship to the MSC. The ESJ23 was established in 1963 by Carlos Humberto Rodríguez Quíros, as an official church agency responsible for the diffusion of the Catholic Social Doctrine. The purpose of the ESJ23 was to re-Christianise the working class and move them away from the emerging leftist movement. For the first eight years since its establishment, the ESJ23 had a small constituency and little prominence until 1971, when Fr. Claudio Solano was appointed director. Solano, unable to reach the masses through the promulgation of the Catholic Social Doctrine alone, saw the Solidarist Movement as being “fundamentally compatible with the Christian principles of social justice” (Sawchuk, 2004). As such, Solidarism was taught in this time as the manifestation of authentic Christianity, while Communism was in turn equated to atheism. At this point, the MSC had the definitive backing of the Catholic Church, among the predominantly catholic creed of the working class (Blanco & Navarro, 1984, p.74). Given the large middle class and the continuous emphasis on the rights of workers throughout multiple governments in Costa Rica, Solano saw the rhetoric of social justice through labour as a necessary means of spreading CST to a wider audience (Sawchuk, 2004; Solano, ASECCS

Noticias, 2021). Today, the ESJ23 mission statement reads as follows: “To evangelize, through the promotion and defence of Christian principles of social justice and human solidarity, in the labour field and its familial surroundings, with the goal of building a worthy and prosperous society that is founded on human rights.” (Escuela Social Juan XXIII, 2022, *translation mine*).

Over the years, Solidarist-Syndicalist tensions intensified. In 1977, the Quirós government established the Sector de Economía Laboral (SEL) with the purpose of redirecting the investment of severance pay into state institutions, in direct opposition to the ASEs of the 1950s. Together with trade unions, the state aimed to accomplish, through the SEL, the eventual disappearance of ASEs and of the solidarist movement (Blanco & Navarro, 1984). In response to this threat, the MSC and the ESJ23 formed the Federación de Asociaciones Solidaristas (FENASOL) in direct opposition to the SEL and returned to the formation of ASEs, marking the second rise of the MSC. This rise was followed by the MSC and ESJ23’s efforts in the Atlantic and Pacific regions. Their presence was especially prevalent within banana plantations with greater capacity for syndicalist activism, as the constant threat to capitalist multinationals invited a solidarist alternative. The ESJ23 was responsible for the growth of the MSC in these zones, because it provided the financing and resources necessary to promote the movement, hire recruiters, and educate workers on the MSC (Blanco & Navarro, 1984; Williams, 1989). According to Blanco and Navarro (1984), Solidarism thus gained, in the Atlantic zone, a character of higher ethical-religious content. It was redesigned by Fr. Claudio Solano, no longer as an economic and labour movement, but as a movement of Christian men and followers of the Catholic Social Doctrine as set out by the ESJ23 (p. 78).

While the Solidarist Movement was created as an economic movement, inspired by Catholic Social Teaching, but secular in its application, its adaptation by the ESJ23 gave it a new base that radically changed its approach. The ESJ23 relied more heavily on the use of both papal



encyclicals, *Rerum Novarum* (Leo XII, 1891) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (Pius XI, 1931) to propagate the Catholic Social Doctrine through the Solidarist Movement. In addition to Catholic Social Teaching, the ESJ23 relied on anti-communist propaganda to gain affiliates in solidarist associations (José & Madrigal, 1989a). To drive labourers away from unions and toward the MSC, the ESJ23 turned to the book *The Social Doctrine of the Church*. This was an anti-communist textbook that revealed what communism “really is”, warning workers of the “trick” of communism and associating communism with the mistreatment of humans, poverty, and enslavement (Sawchuk, 2004). Bell (1971) highlights a newspaper article at the height of comunismo criollo that reads “To vote for Octavio Beeche is To Vote for Communism and To vote for Communism is to go against the republic, to go against our institutions, to go against our religions (La Tribuna, February 6, 1936, p.6 as cited in Bell, 1971, p.12).

Solidarist identity was thus used as the measure of an individual’s allegiance to Catholicism. To be solidarist was to be Catholic, and vice-versa. While overt coercion of this type is less common today, Solidarism still finds much common ground with the Catholic Church. I turn to my fieldwork in Volcán de Buenos Aires to demonstrate these ties.

### **3.5.2 Catholicism in Volcán**

Religion in Volcán is as much a cultural way of life as it is a practice of faith. It transcends boundaries of the church and religious institutions and penetrates instead other aspects of life through community and culture. Public religiosity in Volcán is demonstrated in a few ways. Religious photo messages are exchanged between many, on various forms of social media and especially on *WhatsApp*—a preferred method of communication in Costa Rica. Messages of prayer, bible passages and religious well wishes are forwarded numerous times a day and shared publicly on social media statuses and profiles. Although degrees of religiosity and religious participation vary in Volcán, atheism, though it exists, is rarely voiced. Nearly every household

in Volcán has a cross and some form of display of the Virgin Mary and others of Jesus. Religion in Volcán is further demonstrated through attendance of mass for various events. Funerals, weddings, weekly mass, and certain social events take place in the church and are open to all. Ceremonies are thus open to all community members, further strengthening community ties through collective worship, celebration, and mourning.

As demonstrated above, the ESJ23 was reported to use coercive methods to recruit workers and employers during the second rise of Solidarism (José & Madrigal, 1989b). Today, however, the role of the ESJ23 and the need for coercion of this type has changed. The majority of interviewees were unaware of the role of the Catholic Church School, or had a limited understanding of its function. Some were aware that it provided classes, but these classes have taken a different shape than what they used to be. Whereas the ESJ23 had once taught workers how to be good Christians and Solidarists, the website now promotes classes in “Basic and Intermediate Excel, Advanced Excel, MS Word, MS PowerPoint, Customer Service, Basic Accounting, and Conversational English”. Similarly, while the Church is a central establishment in Volcán, and the preferred venue for many events, interviewees did not recall any mention of Solidarism in the Church’s sermons. It appears then, that the Church is no longer required to recruit workers to the Solidarist Movement in overt and coercive ways. This change is a symptom of the success of Solidarism—coercion is no longer necessary; even direct persuasion is no longer necessary. While the relationship between the Catholic Church or its organizational affiliates and the MSC may not be as coercive as it once was, the MSC has effectively used elements of Volcán’s religious culture to create its own identity. Religious influences have shaped the way Solidarism is received, especially with regards to obedience toward the employer and the act of being solidary toward one another. In the case of Pinedeco in Volcán, the MSC has intertwined the solidarist identity with an already-established religious one, serving to further the

success and establishment of Solidarism. By establishing *patrón-obrero* (employer-worker) relationships that echo familial ones and creating the image of the company as a father figure, additional emphasis is placed on obedience toward authoritative figures such as God and the family and solidarity toward your fellow community. In doing so, the MSC effectively uses an accepted identity of family, fraternity, and obedience within the community, to further cultivate the solidarist relationships between the company and workers.

Obedience, for instance, as a concept in Christianity appears in numerous passages of the bible. It has been discussed in past literature (Alwin, 1986; Ellison & Sherkat, 1993; Mahoney et al., 2001) that Conservative Protestants and Roman Catholics alike consider intellectual heteronomy, or, obedience toward authority figures, to be one of the most desirable characteristics in children<sup>23</sup>. They maintain that “observers suggest that hierarchical relationships between God and creation and between pastor and congregation establish an ‘authority principle’ that is generalized with particular fervor to the critical arenas of home and school” (p.314). In other words, this attitude of obedience toward a higher authority is also applied to the realm of home and school, where the authoritative figure becomes the parent, the teacher, and if applied to an employment context: the employer. Others (Danso et al., 1997), through the work of Christian writers (Dobson & Trout, 1976; Meier, 1977), have argued that values such as obedience are the most important goal for the socialization of children. While many of these studies focus on disobedience as the justification for corporal punishment, the use of that body of literature in this chapter is limited to the understanding of the importance of obedience itself among Catholics and protestants rather than the consequences of disobedience.

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<sup>23</sup> Ellison & Sherkat (1993) debunk previous assumptions that Conservative Protestants and Roman Catholics prefer intellectual heteronomy to intellectual autonomy and argues instead that the two in fact coexist. Here they rely on Alwin’s 1986 study which found that greater church attendance by parents related to more importance give to child obedience but not less than intellectual autonomy (Mahoney et al., 2001).

The parallels between religious concepts and solidarist ones come up repeatedly in the interviews with my participants. Pindeco worker Valentino tells me: *“The Catholic Church and Solidarism have a lot of values in common. Like helping our brothers, thinking of the well-being of humans. The church will help people in need, as will ASEs, they will always try to help those who need something.”* Another worker and ASE member tells me something similar: *“Solidarism and la Iglesia (the Catholic Church) share a lot of values. For example, mutual help between one another, thinking about the well-being of others... both have this philosophy very well engrained. For example, if they tell the Church that someone doesn’t have food for their family, the church will find a way to help them. Same with Solidarist Associations, if we find out that someone is struggling from medical problems, or doesn’t have enough to eat, we immediately find a way to help them. So this humane attitude is very similar in the church and in ASEs.”*

(Leonardo, Interview Data, 2022) While the notion of solidarity and family are felt in CPTs, through representation by a fellow worker representative, they are most often practiced through ASEs. ASEs, given their voluntary and economic nature, provide spaces where acts of solidarity are continuously practiced through financial aid to associates, comradery between members, celebratory events to honour employees, and other forms of support in times of need.

What’s more is that these acts of solidarity are extended beyond members to their families in various ways. The children of associates are provided school supplies and recreational facilities, whereas the spouses are provided courses and training to launch or advance their careers. Moreover, when dealing with an illness or the death of a family member, Pindeco’s ASE, ADEPSA, provides funding and transportation for medical expenses and funeral costs. In these ways, the ASE extends its solidarist reach beyond the members themselves and instead becomes solidary with the whole family. Gabriel, another worker says *“solidarity is about helping your neighbour and having empathy. The company has always been part of the*

*family for us, and they've always treated us like part of theirs. Anytime there is a problem, they help us in the best way possible."*

Once the company is accepted in the community as part of the family, other accepted concepts of Catholicism are more seamlessly applied to the relationship with the company. Áxel, a former Pinedeco employee draws the following comparison: *"The church and solidarism have similar values, like respect, justice and obedience too"*. When probed further about the concept of obedience, others made positive associations: *"Obedience is to stay within the structures of an organization, not go against them."*, *"Obedience means to respect the rules and not go against what you're told."* I ask informants why they believe it's important not to go against what they're told. One respondent, Yared, 25-year-old Pinedeco employee, answers *"When people don't obey they make the wrong decisions and find themselves in bad situations"*. Another respondent says *"For me, in Pinedeco for example, if I have a different vision than that of the company's, I can say it. But if it goes against Costa Rican law, then it doesn't make sense that I would go against the law of my country"*. I ask Sofia the same question. Sofia is 23 and has never worked for Pinedeco. She comes from a family of devout Catholics and happily agreed to do an interview with me after having been introduced through a mutual friend. She tells me about her relationship to Catholicism, and that of her family. When asked about obedience she says *"for me, being obedient is very positive. It's like when our parents tell us something because they know better. Or it's like following the commandments and respecting God's will, following an order"*. This concept then, of obedience as the ethic of submitting to a higher power, to Christ as the Father, finds its way into the worker-employer relationships where the employer is seen as a father-figure and these already engrained notions of obedience and solidarity are easily transferred.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have analysed the ways in which leaders of the Solidarist movement have used collective identity to gain support for the MSC. I focused particularly on Solidarism's ability to mimic Costa Rican Nationalism and align itself with principal values of the Catholic Social Doctrine. I argued that the long-standing national identity of Costa Rican exceptionalism, has 4 main pillars: whiteness, pacificism, democracy, and economic prosperity. I then assumed two tasks: First, I demonstrated the ways in which these identities have been bolstered, especially by the founding Junta of the Second Republic, using the press. Next, I demonstrated the ways in which Solidarism echoed those values, both in theory and in practice. I then described the role of the Catholic Church in the promulgation of the solidarist ideology, and demonstrated the ways in which an identification with Catholic identity was used to bolster a solidarist one. The solidarist identity was thus strengthened by aligning itself strategically with already-established collective identities.

We know from the literature on collective identity that it has been deemed a necessary component of social movements. What's particularly effective in the solidarist identity, is that it has been deliberately built to echo other collective identities in the country that had already proven to be powerful mobilizing tools. Moreover, the timeline of the first and second rise of Solidarism aligned perfectly with the emphasis on nationalist and religious identity in the popular imagination of Costa Ricans. Its initial conception aligned with the emphasis on the nationalist identity of what the Founding Junta called the Second Republic of Costa Rica. In fact, it was conceived and promulgated by the same leaders that led the civil war and founded the Junta. Its second rise was directly linked to the dissemination of the Catholic Social Doctrine in the country, and its association with the ESJ23.

Whereas the previous chapter looked at the emergence of the MSC, this chapter looked at its maintenance over 75 years. In looking at the role of collective identity, Solidarism ceases to

be just a movement, and becomes instead an identity that transcends the confines of time and political affiliation. This analysis provides an approach to understanding the intricacies behind the growth of the MSC, beyond what the literature has known it to be. It highlights the ways in which Solidarism has become the embodiment of Costa Rica's nationalist and religious identities. I now turn to a study of Del Monte Foods Inc's *Pineapple Development Corporation* (Pindeco) where I juxtapose the views of labour union representatives with those of Pindeco workers to showcase the types of experiences that challenge dominant assumptions about Solidarism.

## Chapter Four

### Pindeco and the Solidarist-Syndicalist Divide

#### 4.1 Introduction

Independent Labour Unions (ILU), have been recognized by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as the cornerstones of labour representation. They have been especially recognized for their ability to address Freedom of Association (FoA) rights and the right to collective bargaining. Nonetheless, there exist regions that, for a multitude of reasons, have seen less support or success for ILUs, and in which other forms of representation have emerged. In Costa Rica, the Solidarist-Syndicalist divide has been at the forefront of labour issues. The lack of support for syndicalism in Costa Rica has been attributed, by scholars of the field, to the rise of Solidarism (Acuña, 1985; Barraza et al., 2013; Castro Méndez, 2014; Chacon Castro, 2003; Delautre et al., 2021; D'Haese et al., 2018; Gansemans & D'Haese, 2020a; Martens et al., 2018; Sawchuk, 2004). As a result, it has received much critique among academics and labour union activists. Mauricio Castro Mendez (2014) shows that, in Costa Rica, with an increase in CPTs and Direct Settlements in the private sector, from 1982-1986, Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA) dropped dramatically (p. 91). Moreover, this decline of CBAs and trade unionism aligns with a time of economic crisis globally, as a result of a rise of neoliberalism during which labour unions were severely under attack (Centeno & Cohen, 2012; Clawson & Clawson, 1999; Engström, 2001). The undeniable prominence, to this day, of the MSC calls for an analysis of the phenomenon. I am neither interested in championing nor vilifying either side of this divide. Rather, through ethnographic research, I provide some explanations as to why this phenomenon occurs.



We know from previous chapters that Solidarism is a movement that used the political and economic climate of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century to provide an anti-communist alternative to labour representation and economic prosperity. We also know that it gained its strength by deliberately forging an identity that aligned seamlessly with two important collective identities in the country: nationalism and religion. What remains puzzling, however, is that in the Solidarist-Syndicalist divide, workers in some companies have not only chosen to affiliate with solidarist organizations but have explicitly refused syndicalist representation. I now turn to a case study of labour representation within the Pineapple Development Corporation (Pindeco), in Volcán de Buenos Aires (henceforth, Volcán), in the southern zone of Costa Rica. In this chapter, I bring the choice of workers to associate with solidarist organizations, along with their refusal of syndicalism, to the forefront of my analysis. To do so, I address Pindeco workers' personal experiences with CPTs and ASEs.

I have argued previously that for an accurate analysis of the MSC, the movement must be considered in its entirety: that is, the function of both ASEs and CPTs must be considered simultaneously. The reason for this is that they are two parts of a Solidarist whole; one was deliberately made to complete what the other could not. CPTs were created because ASEs could not participate in labour representation in the workplace. As such, many who support the solidarist philosophy receive separate benefits through their distinct affiliation with the CPT and ASE. Solidarism, especially in its second rise, in the 1970s, coincided with a rise in neoliberal economics. In prioritizing economic growth, neoliberalism threatened government assistance and the welfare state. As I have mentioned previously, what Solidarism did differently was to position itself between the individualism of liberalism, and the collectivism of socialism. In this way, while CPTs served as an antiunionist representational alternative, in line with neoliberal economic policies, ASEs fulfilled social needs. Throughout the chapter, I shed light on the

perspective of ILU workers and representatives, as well as those of Pinedeco workers. The previous chapters showed the development and sustenance of Solidarism historically and theoretically. This chapter illustrates how those histories manifest into the long standing divide in the lives of workers that find themselves at the crux of the Solidarist-Syndicalist divide.

I begin with syndicalist critiques of Solidarism. Namely, I highlight anti-union propaganda in the company, and what syndicalists describe as coercion to join solidarist organizations. ILU representatives argue that refusal of syndicalism is a direct result of antiunion propaganda on behalf of the company and CPTs, which I demonstrate through interview data and documentation provided by the ILU. In other words, workers are tricked or scared into Solidarism. For others, the relationship between Pinedeco and the Volcán community is a classic case of a patron-client system, and vertical structures of solidarity. I follow this by demonstrating the undeniable dependence of Volcán on Pinedeco, which makes the possibility of Pinedeco's departure a constant and present threat. Importantly, I am less interested here in showcasing exploitative economies, and more concerned with revealing what dependence looks like in the lives of Volcanians. This 12-year ethnography in Volcán adds another perspective to these dynamics. I turn to Pinedeco workers' experience with Solidarist organizations as well as ILUs. I highlight three alternative explanations behind the prominence of Solidarism among workers. First, Solidarism works on a system of incentives that are indispensable to the lives of workers. Second, the philosophy of Solidarism echoes a nationalist one, as seen in the previous chapter. As such, the pacifist and neutral approach does not threaten the presence of Pinedeco—in other words, it does not threaten the livelihoods of Volcanians. Third, I explore the refusal of syndicalism as a precondition to the prominence of Solidarism. This means that in many cases, rather than Solidarism causing anti-syndicalist sentiments, workers choose Solidarism, precisely because it is not syndicalism.

## 4.2 Syndicalist Critiques

Within the Solidarist-Syndicalist divide in Costa Rica, the solidarist movement is perceived in two ways. For some, it has provided an alternative form of representation through CPTs, whereas for others, ILUs and CPTs are fundamentally incomparable. These nuances are further described in this chapter. I demonstrate that there exists a reality that many workers, as seen through interview data, seek representation through solidarist organizations as opposed to ILUs. In some cases, workers express a lack of interest in—if not an absolute refusal of—ILU representation. It is not my aim to suggest that CPTs are comparable alternatives for ILUs. I do, however, insist that understanding the reasons behind the prominence of solidarist organizations, in a way that engages with the lived experiences of workers, is essential to understanding why this phenomenon occurs.

In this section, I complicate the binary discourse on Solidarism vs. syndicalism in Costa Rica. As mentioned above, the very positioning of CPTs as an alternative to trade unions is widely rejected by syndicalists. The CPT was intended to resolve only immediate problems in the workplace (conflict resolution, scheduling, etc) and not any form of collective bargaining, representation of workers in a legal setting, or activities that otherwise interfere with the work of ILUs. These alternative forms of representation have been heavily criticized by syndicalists and academics, for being weapons against trade unionism, tools that interfere with ILUs, and corrupt anti-union propaganda machines, that are used by capitalists and employers to further exploit workers (Arrieta, 2008b; Blanco & Navarro, 1984; Vega, 1985).

The effectiveness of worker representation by Independent Labour Unions (ILU) and other types of labour representation committees have been examined throughout the fields of sociology, international labour law, industrial relations, and development studies (Anner, 2012,2018; Barrientos and Smith, 2007; Egels-Zandén & Merk, 2014; Freeman, 2010; Gansemans & D’Haese, 2019; Liu et. Al, 2012, Schuster & Maertens, 2017). In some countries

with low labour union constituencies or tumultuous histories with Independent Labour Unions, other forms of labour representation have emerged. Among these alternatives, Permanent Worker Committees (CPT) have formed as internal forms of worker representation. In the case of Costa Rica, such organizations result from the Solidarismo movement that is based on a philosophy of worker-employer cooperation (Arrieta, 2008; Hernández, 2012; González, 2004; CANASOL, 2021; Gansemans & D'Haese, 2020; Tyroler, 1988). The study of Solidarism falls into the broader study of representational alternatives. These alternatives, however, are not always well-received.

In Costa Rica, although trade unions are not prohibited, the MSC has challenged trade unionism by promoting Solidarism as a harmonious relationship between workers and employers and has gained immense support nationwide in the last four decades (Arrieta, 2008; CANASOL, 2021; Hernández, 2012; Gansemans & D'Haese, 2020; González, 2004; Tyroler, 1988). Here, I demonstrate the perspectives of ILU representatives, to better represent intricacies of the Solidarist-Syndicalist divide. I then reveal, through a case study of the Pineapple Development Corporation (Pindeco) in Volcán, the elements of Solidarist organizations that have gained workers' support and examine the ways in which the MSC has fostered those components.

If there is significantly more interest in and support for the MSC and its derivative organizations than for the ILU of Pindeco's pineapple sector, ANEP, it is not for lack of trying on behalf of ANEP. Founded in 1958, ANEP is a well-established organization that has represented workers in both private and public sectors nationwide for over 60 years. In Pindeco Pacífico, ANEP representatives have confirmed ILU membership at 93 affiliates excluding the Santa Fe Plantations and the Volcán packing plant, bringing the number to 130-150 affiliates in total. I interviewed 8 participants that were affiliated with ILUs, 7 of which were affiliated with ANEP either as ANEP employees or Pindeco worker-representatives, and one from a different

labour union, SITRAP (Sindicato de Trabajadores de Plantaciones Agrícolas<sup>24</sup>). Solidarist-Syndicalist tensions become increasingly evident when these interviews are compared with those of CPT representatives.

In these interviews, Syndicalists argue that it is a false comparison to place CPTs on an even playing field with ILUs, since a CPT is not a legally recognized representative organization, nor one with which workers choose to be affiliated. Rather, it is a body that precedes workers' freedom of association by existing as an inherent part of the company. ILU representatives argue that CPTs are neither recognized by the ILO nor by the Costa Rican law as representative bodies, nor do they possess the basic requirements to fulfill representative duties—that is: they have neither independence from the companies, nor legal representation, sufficient time, or adequate training.

When asked what Solidarism means for him, Thiago Montes, 55 year-old SITRAP leader with twenty years of experience working in banana plantations since 1982, says the following:

As a former banana plantation worker, [the arrival of] Solidarism was a tragedy for workers. It meant the loss of rights, the loss of [social] guarantees, the loss of freedom of association, it meant even losing the right to speak for workers. Solidarism was the worst thing that could have happened to workers in those years, and it still is. (..) My opinion is that it is a hoax for workers, it's a manipulation to workers, it's a curse for workers. Because they put the solidarist philosophy in people's heads, and told them that with Solidarism, they would no longer have labour issues, and that the differences between workers and employers would no longer exist due to good faith, due to the philosophy of the Catholic Church, and of worker-employer harmony.

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<sup>24</sup> SITRAP is a labour union located on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica, representing workers in Agricultural Plantations

This idea of Solidarism as a hoax, or capitalist trickery is not uncommon among critics of the MSC. Moreover, CPTs and ASEs alike are criticized on the basis of lacking independence from the companies, infringing on FoA rights, and receiving funding from the company. Dr. Mauricio Castro Mendez, labour rights lawyer and scholar tells me the following of Solidarism in terms of its intersection with workers' rights:

If we interpret what Solidarism is and has been in Costa Rica, I can tell you that it was a strategy implemented, without much success, after 1948, after our civil war (...). But at a very particular moment, which was the 1980s, it was converted into an anti-syndicalist instrument that was controlled, financed, and run by employers with the help of other governments and the Catholic Church, as an anti-syndicalist strategy to create a mechanism of representation of the workers that was not a union and that would instead compete and be anti-syndicalist.

When asked specifically about his thoughts on Solidarist Associations, Mendez, like many others, is not inherently opposed to them. He maintains that one cannot reasonably oppose a mutualistic association that helps people economically, in so far as it dedicates itself to that purpose alone. "When it becomes an anti-syndicalist tool, however, used by employers and the Catholic Church to compete (...)", he continues, "then it becomes an instrument that violates the right to Freedom of Association as set out by the UDHR". He argues that, in line with studies conducted by the ILO, it is neither just nor logical to prohibit ASEs, from a legal, social, or economic standpoint. He adds, however, that if ASEs take on the responsibility of representing workers and collective bargaining, then they are undertaking a responsibility that they are ill-equipped to take on. He explains that workers ought to be free to associate with any representative body so long as they are independent and autonomous organizations. Solidarist associations, he argues, can't be autonomous because the company both contributes to funding

the ASE and is legally allowed to have a representative within the ASE, whereas ILUs are funded by members and although they are often not very big and powerful, they are nonetheless independent and autonomous.

Criticisms of CPTs are less forgiving. One ILU representative explicitly states: “I see CPTs as a way of stopping workers from affiliating with ILUs”, a thought that is echoed through many others. While trade union association is not prohibited, syndicalists are critical of the company’s interference with their process in many ways. The first, is through campaigns for Solidarism and what they consider to be anti-union propaganda. ANEP representative, Luciana Campos explains that while Solidarism exists in all the companies she works with, whether private or public, they’ve had trouble with Pindeco Pacífico because of what the ILU saw as the company’s “Campaña Sucia” or *dirty campaign*—an anti-union campaign the company launched last year to stop people from becoming ANEP affiliates. She explains that this was an attempt to prevent the ILU from reaching the percentage of affiliates required for a collective bargaining agreement. In this campaign, the company promoted their Direct Settlement using colourful flyers with captivating catch phrases such as:



*Figure 9 Death of a Family Member*

*“Did you know that thanks to the Direct Settlement, in the case of the death of a family member, the company will give 180 thousand colones to defray the costs?”*



*Figure 10 Marriage*

*“Did you know that thanks to the Direct Settlement, when you get married you will have 2 paid business days off and one leave day without pay?”*





Figure 11 Biweekly CPT Meetings

“Did you know that the Permanent Worker Committee conducts up to biweekly meetings with the company where worker requests are resolved?”



Figure 12 Safety Equipment

“Did you know that thanks to the Direct Settlement the company provides the protective equipment against the cold in the packing plants?”



*Figure 13 Safety Boots*

*“Did you know that thanks to the direct settlement, the company provides safety shoes and boots to the forklift workers in the packing plants?”*



*Figure 14 Licence*

*“Did you know that when you need to get your licence, the company will give you 4 hours of paid leave thanks to the Direct Settlement?”*

The bottom of each flyer reads “Permanent Committee and Labour Relations. We are by your side”. (*All translations mine*). Luciana challenges these assertions in saying that in many cases such as that of the provision of safety equipment, these ‘benefits’ are in fact legally required by the Costa Rican labour code. However, CPT representatives, as seen below, argue that while some elements may be legally required, the CPT exceeds the minimum requirement. For example, Article 69 d) of the Costa Rican labour code states:

Artículo 69 d) Dar oportunamente a los trabajadores los útiles, instrumentos y materiales necesarios para ejecutar el trabajo convenido, debiendo suministrarlos de buena calidad y reponerlos tan luego como dejen de ser eficientes, siempre que el patrono haya consentido en que aquéllos no usen herramienta propia;

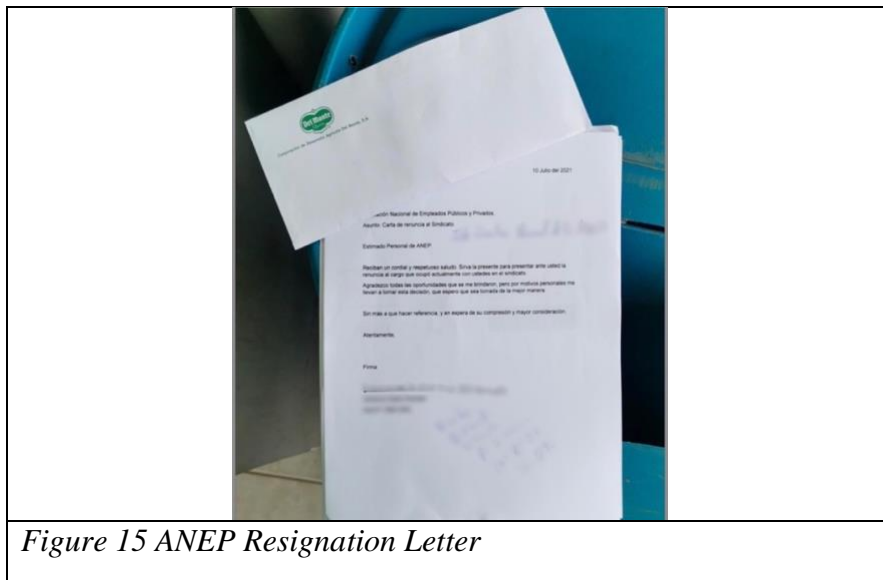
The article translates as follows:

“Give, opportunely, to the workers the necessary tools, instruments, and materials to execute the agreed work, supplying them in good quality and replacing them as soon as they cease to be efficient, provided that the employer has agreed that they do not use their personal equipment” (Costa Rican Labour Code, 2022) (*translation mine*).

Since the labour code does not specify what those tools are or the quantity in which they ought to be supplied, it can be deduced that employers consider anything above the bare minimum to be a benefit provided by the CPT’s Direct Settlement. The Direct Settlement does, however, in many instances, make reference to the labour code when providing a benefit or a right that is stipulated in the code.

ANEP representatives further condemn the *Campaña Sucia* for coercing workers into resigning. One representative of the Pindeco division says “[Solidarists] have put us in a position of having to report them to the ministry of labour because of anti-syndicalist labour practices...

for example, they would call a worker into a meeting and prepare the worker's resignation from the union.". An ANEP worker-representative recounts a similar version of events: "In fact, the human resources office of Pindeco Pacífico launched an anti-syndicalist campaign from 7am to 10pm every day for a week, calling workers into the office, telling them to disaffiliate from the union. They had the letter already made, so that the worker would only need to sign". Below is an image of a worker's resignation letter submitted to the ILU, typed on the computer and signed by hand with a company logo on what appears to be the accompanying envelope.



*Figure 15 ANEP Resignation Letter*

"In some cases" the interviewee adds, "they bribe the worker, offering them 20,000 colones, a whole day's pay for some, on the condition that they leave the union". Several other images were provided to me, of workers' resignation letters either typed or handwritten.

Companies are further criticized by the ILUs for failing to facilitate open communication between workers and unions. One ANEP worker says "CPT conditions are very different. You can stop and talk to someone from the CPT for 40 minutes and no one will question you. But for us, no, that's not the case. Workers have a paper that needs to be signed when they want to speak

with us. So the conditions of the CPT and the ILU are totally different”. Whereas solidarist entities are given the space to openly promote their associations in workspaces and during work hours, unions are confined to strict parameters. As a result, they are restricted to after-hours assemblies that are limited to those who are already affiliated with the union during unfavourable hours or on the weekend, leaving little room for further recruitment. ANEP worker representative, Mateo Rivas, reiterates this argument:

Mateo: They only allow us to speak with workers on the 15-minute coffee break or 30-minute lunch break. But not the CPT, the CPT for example yesterday they arrived at 7am and I still saw them at 2pm in their campaign for the elections. Whereas they don't give me that opportunity. And the company pays their salary, that's an unfair practice on the company's part. It's a company that is violating the rights of the workers.

Me: And when you do manage to talk to workers on these 15 or 30 minute breaks, what kind of reaction do you get from them?

Mateo: Look there's a lot, a lot of fear. A lot of fear. There's for example, this man who is now a supervisor in the packing plant, who once told my co-worker: 'what a waste that you guys spend this 1000 colones<sup>25</sup> on the ILU. You would have been better off buying a Coca-Cola'.

I ask ANEP representatives why workers don't seem to be as interested in being represented by the ILU. The majority recognize one of the shortcomings of the ILU as the inability to provide instant gratification through glamorous prizes or activities. Luciana tells me “We don't lure workers in with the same tactics as the solidarists. For example, on the “Día del Trabajador” (the

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<sup>25</sup> The equivalent of two Canadian dollars and 30 cents.

National day for workers), the CPT throws parties and gives gifts to workers. We don't do that, the most we do is give them lunch and pay their transport fees for coming out. So workers think, well if in the other place they're going to give me a *diario* [generally a package with food essentials for the family], well then that's where I prefer to go." Given that unions collect very low membership rates, and only from their affiliated members, whereas both CPTs and ASEs have company support for funding, trade unions are limited in their ability to provide glamorous events through which workers can coalesce.

I further discuss the issue of low union membership with an ANEP affiliate. I present the perspective that many workers have suggested that they have not become members of the union because they've never seen the need for it and that any issue they had had to date had been resolved by the CPT. He responds by saying "well this is one of the things they tell the workers from the time they enter the company. That there is a labour union but they cost money. On the other hand there is the CPT that doesn't cost anything, that resolves issues without charging you a single colón." He later clarifies that the cost to be associated with ANEP is only 1% of the worker's salary, a cost he finds 'pretty ridiculous' for being so little but appreciates nonetheless because of their low incomes. He continues telling me about Permanent Worker Committees:

These days the CPT gets worse every day. Because what [the representatives] are after is their own personal gain. To get a raise, to be assigned easier jobs, things like that.

They made the worker believe things like for example, the law requires that workers be presented the necessary tools for the work they're doing. So the workers, since they don't read the Labour Code, think that the boots, or the poncho, or whatever else they are given, is because of the Comité Permanente. They speak of the benefit of buses, whereas it's the company that pays. So for example, they say if there is an ILU they will

take away our bus service. But that's a lie because the constitution of Costa Rica states that rights that are acquired are irrevocable. But they take advantage of the workers' ignorance.

I ask Mateo Rivas for a final remark on the Solidarist-Syndicalist divide and he tells me this: "They keep speaking ill of syndicalism, even today, and we don't understand why. Because in syndicalism, we practice Solidarism too, it's one of the things that one sees and learns to be solidary with other workers. So I don't understand the insistence to attack the unionists". If it is not explained through fearmongering and propaganda, workers' choice to join solidarist organizations or to refuse syndicalist ones remains a mystery to ILU representatives.

### **4.3 Patron-Client Systems and Dependency**

It would be naïve not to recognize the presence of an MNE such as Pindeco, in a town like Volcán, as an unequal structure of power. These perspectives are not new and, in many ways, the dependency in this relationship reflects patron-client systems. Analyses of patron-client systems have existed for decades (Carney, 1989; Foster, 1963; Kaufman, 1974; Powell, 1970; Scott, 1972; Wolf, 1996:2013) (more recently Ansell, 2018; Auyero, 2000; Hallin & Papathanassopoulos, 2002; Hetherington, 2018; Hilgers, 2012; Holland & Palmer-Rubin, 2015; Levitsky, 2007). George Foster depicts patron-client contracts as follows: "Patron-client contracts tie people (or people to beings) of significantly different socioeconomic status (or order of power), who exchange different kinds of goods and services. Patron-client contracts are phrased vertically, and they can be thought of as asymmetrical since each partner is quite different from the other in position and obligations." (Foster, 1963, p.1281). In his analysis of patron-client contracts in Tzintzuntzan, he describes the patron as "someone who combines status, power, influence, authority (...) in "defending" himself or in helping someone else to

defend himself.” He clarifies that a person is only a patron “in relationship to someone of lesser position—a client who, under specific circumstances, he is willing to help” (p. 1282). Foster (1963), among others, also emphasizes that the relationship must be dyadic, and that “above all, the patron is always an individual.” (p. 1286). The inequality of status in these relationships is reiterated by others (Kaufman, 1974; Powell, 1970). Both Kaufman (1974) and Powell (1970) describes three essential characteristics of patron-client relationships. First, the relationship is described as a “lopsided friendship”, or a relationship “between actors of unequal power or status” (Kaufman, 1974, p.285; Powell, 1970, p. 412). Next, the relationship is based on reciprocity. Importantly, here Kaufman (1974) stresses that the system ceases once the expected rewards fail to materialize (p. 285). Additionally, though there exists an exchange, the nature of the rewards is different. In most cases, the patron provides material rewards whereas the client is more likely to provide rewards in the form of services, loyalty, votes, or other intangible payments (Powell, 1970, p. 64). Third, there is a degree of voluntarism in this exchange, and it is said to be only loosely anchored—if at all—in public law (Kaufman, 1974).

Patron-client systems are reiterated in the solidarist structure in a few key ways, when Solidarism is considered in its entirety—that is, through both CPTs and ASEs. I use the case of Pindeco specifically to draw this analogy. First, there exists a difference in the status of workers versus that of the company. In this way, the relationship, like other cases of clientelism, is lopsided. The relationship between Pindeco and workers consists of a vertical structure of solidarity, where power relationships are unequal and hierarchical, yet a philosophy of solidarity is preached, so that everyone feels they belong to one solidary entity. Second, the company mirrors a hacienda, where the company is the patron, and the workers are the clients; the workers depend on the land of the company for their livelihoods. Third, there exists an exchange of



benefits or favours. On a community scale, the benefits can take the form of membership to a community whereby an individual and their family are granted access to events. Other benefits to the community can include the establishment of infrastructure such as recreation centers, medical centers, schools, and school supplies for children. On a personal scale, ASEs provide loans, transportation, and emergency financial assistance, and CPTs provide events and gifts. It could be argued that these benefits are exchanged for the workers' loyalty to the company, under the guise of *solidarity* with the company. Fourth, there is a degree of voluntarism in the sense that workers voluntarily become associates of ASEs, and although they are represented by the CPT by default, it is their choice to involve the CPT in a particular grievance.

Nevertheless, although the relationship of dependency is undeniable in the case of Pindeco in Volcán, and while there exist similarities between these structures and patron-client relationships, the systems differ in several important ways. First, the relationships are not dyadic, nor do they necessarily occur face-to-face. While the company as an entity may provide certain benefits to workers, they are not of the same personal nature as are clientelist relationships. As Powell (1970) states, “[i]n clientelism there is an almost complete dependency on face-to-face relationships in the building and maintenance of the system. Impersonal communications between persons low and high in the system hierarchy are as ineffective as they are rare. A low-status participant may, on occasion, personally approach a high-status participant in the same clientele system, but normally he depends on a series of linkages with intermediate brokers. This norm-dependency on personal contact-derives from the nature of the patron-client contract.” (p. 423). While the CPT representative may be considered the intermediate broker, the exchange of benefits and favours doesn't always occur between the representative and the worker or the

patron and the broker. The company then, remains an intangible entity with which this system of reciprocity—or in this case, of solidarity—occurs.

Furthermore, Powell (1970) maintains that:

[t]he dyadic contract between patron and client—or broker and patron—is a private, unwritten, informal agreement, and highly personalistic in content. There is no public scrutiny of the terms of such agreements. There is no public entity which functions as an enforcement authority concerning such agreements. There is, in short, no process by which either partner of the agreement can go “outside” the dyadic relationship for enforcement of the contract, or to bring sanctions for noncompliance. (p.424)

In a similar vein, Eric Wolf states that “the clearest gain from such a relation should therefore appear in situations where public law cannot guarantee adequate protection against breaches of non-kin contracts.” (Wolf, 1966, as cited in Powell, 1970, p. 424). In Pindeco, however, this is not the case. The contract between client and patron are public, written, formal, and legal. The Direct Settlement is a written contract between workers and the company that delineates the benefits provided to the worker by the CPT and the company, as well as the expectations of the workers. The difference then, is that Pindeco has institutionalized these benefits in such a way that the exchange becomes not a covert exchange between two people, but an obligation that is enforceable by law.

Moreover, the strength of the relationships and networks within Solidarism, is found not only between patrons and clients, but in *interclient* relationships. That is, the community that is built in ASEs, between the associates themselves, resembles structures of kinship. Joshua Fisher and Alex Nading (2021) make similar observations in a study of *The Fair Trade Zone*, a women’s cooperative in Ciudad Sandino, Nicaragua. In this cooperative, Nading and Fisher

(2021) observe the ways that members form relationships in which they come to consider one another as kin. Like *compadrazgo* (godparenthood) networks in clientelist systems, this kinship is one that is not inherited, but made (Fisher & Nading, 2021). They write: “Working relationships turned into close friendships, and a spirit of solidarity, care, and shared fate extended well beyond the workplace into every aspect of their daily lives.” (Fisher & Nading, 2021, p.1240). In the same way, associates of ASEs form a community in which members of the ASE and the extended networks are treated as family, where support is offered mutually.

#### **4.3.2 An Accumulation of Poverty**

While the a priori assumption of the exploitative nature of a multinational giant like Pinedeco may be a reasonable criticism, failing to understand its very real implications in a community like Volcán can be detrimental to any sociological analysis. In this section, I explain Volcán’s dependence on Pinedeco and demonstrate what that dependence looks like through ethnographic accounts. Pinedeco arrived in 1979, and now has a virtual economic monopoly in Volcán, creating unequal power structures. The majority of Volcanians are either directly or indirectly employed by Pinedeco, and those that aren’t are usually dependent on it in one form or another. Ideally, Volcán would have many employment fronts with high paying jobs and an educated and skilled community. But that is not the reality in which Volcanians live.



Figure 16 Map of Volcán, Puntarenas, Costa Rica, Map of the socioeconomic regions of Costa Rica

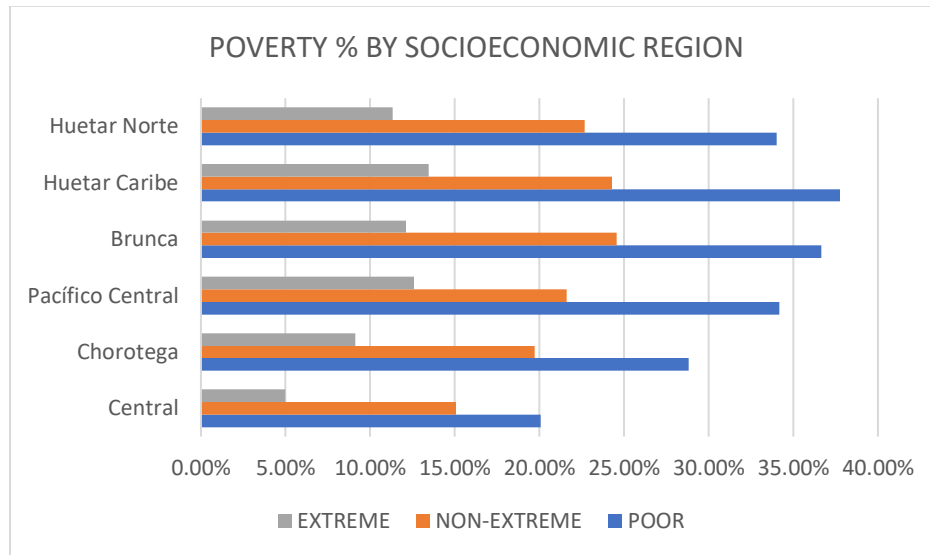
Volcán is situated in the county of Buenos Aires, one of the country's poorest districts, in the province of Puntarenas, and has a population of 3,839 (INEC, 2016). Volcán belongs to the socioeconomic region<sup>26</sup> of Brunca. The Volcán valley's history dates to the early 1900s, when the first families from Panamá settled in and named the village after their own town in Panamá. Volcán, now home to Pindeco's largest pineapple plantations, once consisted only of mountains, forests, the Volcán river, and wildlife. Economic development was brought to the watershed over time and with the arrival of Pindeco came significant change to the economy, lifestyle, and infrastructure of the village.

A few factors are important to understanding the dependence on Pindeco. First, the poverty index of the country in 2022 showed the Brunca region to rank as the region with the second highest poverty rate at 36.7 percent (INEC, 2022; Silvetti et al, 2015).

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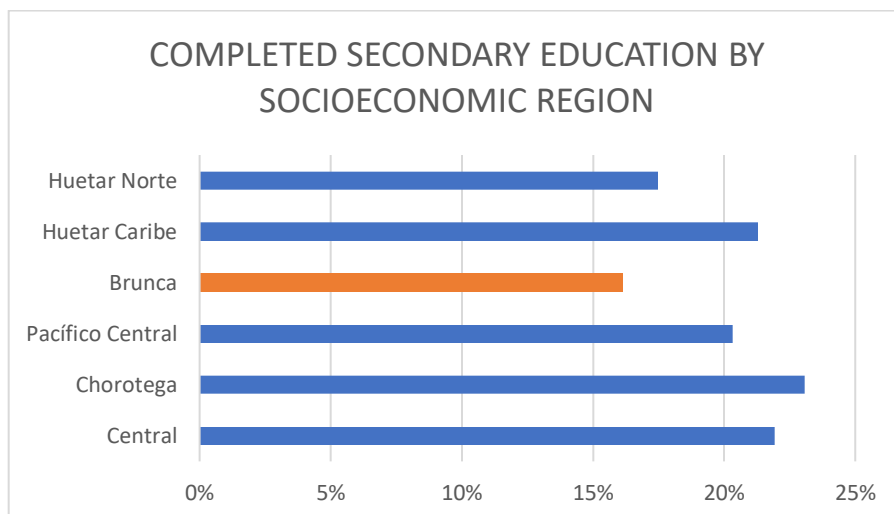
<sup>26</sup> Costa Rica is divided into 6 socioeconomic regions: the Central, Chorotega, Pacífico Central, Brunca, Huetar Caribe, Huetar Norte

Table 4 Poverty Levels by Socioeconomic Region



Furthermore, the Brunca region is the region with the lowest percentage of adults with a completed secondary level education. In Volcán, most incomes are dependent upon the presence of Pindeco. In other words, though there exist a number of positions within Pindeco,

Table 5 Population with Completed Secondary Education



as direct forms of employment, those who are otherwise employed are, for the most part, also dependent on the company. One of the main reasons for this is that the population in Volcán

consists largely of Pindeco workers who earn their salary through the company. Thus, medical centers, schools, supermarkets, small businesses, public services, and the like, are all dependent upon the income of their customers: in large part, Pindeco workers (*see Figure 19 for examples*).

Table 6 Types of Direct and Indirect Employment by Pindeco

<b>DIRECT</b>	<b>INDIRECT</b>
Packaging	Contractors
Sowing	Commerce (ie. small grocery or convenience stores)
Mechanics	Educational Workers
Fertilizing	Medical Professionals
Ground Clearing	Public Services (ie. aqueduct)
Irrigation	Cultural Committees (ie. parades, sports events)
Weeding	Aestheticians
Spraying	ADEPSA Supermarket
Operation of Machinery	
Research	

I ask Ignacio Guzmán, a 57-year-old born and raised Volcanian, about Pindeco in his town. He tells me:

These zones are very poor. In Costa Rica, the Zona Sur is the poorest zone. Here, we are located in a part of the country where there are very few employment opportunities. You can tell, starting with the houses, that they are very humble and simple houses because income is very low. But it's not that the company creates poverty, it's that the company, by virtue of creating employment, attracts poverty. Especially for those who don't have high degrees of education, they come from all over the country to work here. So it's not that the company creates poverty, it's that it accumulates poverty.

While the above statistics pose questions as to the socioeconomic importance of the company in Volcán, the immediate alleviation of certain needs by Pindeco employees cannot be ignored. In

fact, although statistics specific to Pinedeco in the Volcán region are scarce, research shows that nationwide, the pineapple industry as a whole, was responsible for 31,971 direct jobs, and 15,824 indirect jobs in 2015 (BCCR 2012; Guevara et al., 2017). Moreover, interview data shows that the company presently employs 3800 direct workers in Buenos Aires alone. The company's virtual monopoly over Volcán's economy and the overall low education rates of the region can provide an explanation as to the dependence of Volcanians on Pinedeco. But what does that dependence look like in the lives of Volcanians? I rely on an excerpt from my fieldwork to showcase this relationship.

I'm out with some friends and it's been raining since yesterday. It's October, so heavy rainfall is to be expected. A bit boring, a bit dark—a typical October in Costa Rica. The roof of the house I'm renting has holes in it. Something about avocados having fallen too hard from the avocado tree—or was it that someone tried to get up on the roof to steal avocados? Whatever its history, it left the roof with about two dozen little holes that are enough to flood the kitchen every time it rains. With the amount of rainfall in the last few days, getting the water out of the house has been a nearly hourly task—and one that I had to learn at that. Take a broom, sweep the water out of the house, put the towel over the broom head and dry the remnants of water. Wash, dry, repeat.

Tonight, we're drinking at El Rancho, which if the name hasn't given it away, is a ranch-style resto-bar. No walls, all open air, with only the strong metal roofs sheltering us from the tropical rain that's pouring around us. We're lost amidst the Cumbia music and Imperials. As the others engage with familiar faces, I order my regular drink: *un vaso michelado con ginebra, soda, limón y sal*. I have spent the day, as with most of my days, conducting interviews in different part of town and I can feel the imminent relaxation as

the server hands me my drink. I enjoy the taste of the salted rim, and the combination of gin and Costa Rican lemon. Several hours later, Juliana and her husband Eduardo drop me back off at home. By this time, Javier, 2 and Samantha, 6 have fallen asleep in the back of Eduardo's work truck.

I come home to large puddles of water in the kitchen. This much I expected. What I didn't expect was to receive a message from Juliana moments after having dropped me off. "Junte bastante agua." she writes. She is telling me to collect water. I'm not sure I understand why. I'm tired and a little buzzed from the night's outing. I consider not doing as warned. I brush my teeth in my cement kitchen sink and hang my towel up on the hole in the wall that is my window. Soon after, I receive a message from Sara, "Junte agua". Another warning. Maybe this is serious. I call Juliana and ask her to clarify. "They say we're going to lose water and power" she explains, "have your candles ready and collect lots of water". *They say*. How every piece of news starts in Volcán. Every time I'm told that "they" say something, I picture a board of directors who sits around a table and deliberates the fate of the village. The Volcán overlords. But I know this isn't the case; the community is so tightly knit that news travels faster than it would if the town had its own PA system. I tell her I don't know what to collect water in. Cups? Bowls? Bottles? I'm unprepared for an emergency. She tells me I can fill my washing machine with water. Brilliant, I would have never thought of this. I do as I'm told; I now have four candles, a pack of matches, a washing machine and a big red tin filled with water. Bring it on, storm.

I spend the next few days bathing with a cup that I fill with the water from my big red tin. I use the water from the washing machine to do the dishes, and a bottle in the fridge for drinking. Three days in and I'm missing the smell of shampoo in my hair and of



Suavitel—my favourite Costa Rican fabric softener on my clothes. Doing laundry and washing my hair are luxuries that I can't afford. Drinking water frequently is also among those luxuries. I contemplate going for a run because I fear I may be too thirsty when I come back, but I go anyway. On my way I slip and fall. There goes another item into the laundry basket. I finish my run and make my way over to Mama Celia's house. By the time get there I can feel the dryness in my throat almost unbearably. There are two and a half two-liter bottles of Coca-Cola-filled with water on the kitchen counter. I start doing the math: three bottles, five people, one dog, an unknown number of days without running water. Dare I ask for a glass? I do, finally, and when I am given water, I carefully fill one quarter of my cup: enough for just a few sips. I am very grateful.

We later go for a walk with Mama Célia and her grandchildren, to see the damage the storm had done to the town. The path-well travelled to Betty's house is now a small stream -- in other words: there is no path to Betty's house. The 'posa' in the river where we've swam for the last seven years is unrecognizable. The rocks and trees have all been taken by the river, as has the bridge. We can't swim there anymore.

Nostalgia enthralls us as we make our way back to the house. On our way home, we see dozens of children, mostly young boys, frantically riding their bicycles, all in the same direction. Nine-year-old Carmela explains to me that they are searching for water, likely from a less contaminated part of the river or a nearby ravine. Upon our return, Mama Célia goes outside to begin making lunch over the fire and I stay inside with the kids. We're calculating how many dishes we would need to dirty if we were to bake cookies when we are interrupted by the rumbling sound of the pipes. Carmela screams to her grandmother "YA VIENE EL AGUA!". Mama Célia comes rushing in as we all gather around the

kitchen sink and watch eagerly as the pipes start running. Pindeco has replaced the pipe the river had taken. There is water in the town again.

## **4.5 A System of Incentives**

### **4.5.1 ADEPSA**

As demonstrated above, there are many criticisms of Solidarist organizations, especially with regards to their role in labour representation. In Volcán, however, many Pindeco workers tell a different story than those of ILU representatives. I came across the movement through conversations with Pindeco employees about ADEPSA, the solidarist association of Pindeco employees. Of the 50 formal interviews, 25 of the participants were current or former direct Pindeco employees, and an additional 6 were indirectly employed by the company.

I tried including the perspective of Pindeco's upper management in this story. In an earlier stage of this research, I contacted several people in Volcán to secure a meeting with upper management but was met with ample resistance. I jumped through many hoops until I finally secured a meeting with the environmental supervisor. The meeting was unlike the familiar and casual meetings I had had with workers. Interviews generally took place in my house or in theirs, over a cup of coffee or lemonade. The interview was usually preceded by casual conversation and an exchange of pleasantries before we would arrive at the subject at hand. The meeting with the Pindeco supervisor was different. I arrived at a large, gated establishment: the Pindeco administrative headquarters. I was accompanied by a friend who had dropped me off but when I buzzed in, I was asked to enter alone. Upon entering the premises, I was escorted to a meeting room where I met Don José. It was here that I was told I could not record the meeting, nor conduct an interview. Instead, Don José would give me a presentation on Pindeco and its environmental impacts in the region. I was permitted only to take hand-written notes and to ask

questions following the presentation. Without being able to take notes and listen to the recording of the presentation my ability to provide an adequate analysis of the contents was limited. The interaction did, however, demonstrate the lack of accessibility and transparency in the upper management of Pindeco. This raises suspicions as it is out of keeping with the general openness otherwise expressed about Solidarism from workers. The lack of transparency at a corporate level and the unwillingness to have open and unstructured, unplanned conversations, raises doubts about the company's practices. Despite the Company's unwillingness to participate in the research at a corporate level, the perspectives that did prove useful, were those of the workers, demonstrated below.

Leonardo Reyes, the president of ADEPSA, was a helpful source, given his 20+ years of involvement in the association and the company; he is well-known by the entire pueblo. The following is an account of one interaction:

When I get to Sara and Leonardo's house that afternoon, after Leonardo had dropped me off at home in the morning, I enter through the backyard. I call *Upe!*, the campesino salute to announce one's arrival. In the *campo* (countryside), few houses have doorbells, so when visiting a house, you replace the doorbell by yelling out *Upe!* as you let yourself in. Leonardo greets me with "*Diay! Es como perder un gato!*". It's like a losing a cat, he jokes: in other words, *it's impossible to lose you because you keep coming back*. We all giggle and Sara hits him, playfully. Leonardo is a man of large stature and calm demeanour. He's one of the busiest people I have met in Volcán but he walks gently and speaks patiently; he is successful but humble; a self-made man. Perhaps the only telling giveaway of the responsibilities he bears is how quickly he falls asleep on his hammock after work, one slipper off, one leg swinging. Leonardo was born into a family of low-income and little resources as he describes it. He left his studies after elementary

school because his father didn't have the means to pay for an expense they deemed unnecessary at the time. He tells me he would have loved to continue his education:

We had to walk 30 minutes in difficult conditions. This is something I tell everyone, including my children, because it's not something I'm ashamed of, it's something that reminds me of who I am and where I came from: It wasn't until the sixth grade that I wore shoes. I always went to school barefoot, and on a rocky path at that. But it's something I'm proud of.

Despite his childhood, Leonardo is now the president of the municipality of Buenos Aires, going on 26 years of working for Pindeco, a well-respected member of the community, the president of Pindeco's ASE, ADEPSA, and a highly regarded representative of Pindeco's CPT. His experiences of poverty are not uncommon in the southern region of Costa Rica; perhaps it is Leonardo's humble beginnings that have made him a relatable representative and highly attuned to the needs of his colleagues.

Leonardo explains to me that a solidarist association is one that is comprised of and managed by Pindeco employees, where associates invest 3-5% of their monthly salary, and instead receive a plethora of benefits. Among these benefits are social and cultural events, sports leagues and centres, a supermarket for the town, transportation services to other cities, emergency funds for associates and their families such as funeral funds and funding for medical expenses, etc. Associates use their own money, in addition to an advance investment of their severance pay from the company, to create a large fund from which they may help each other in times of need, an integral part of Solidarism. In addition to using the funds that have been invested by associates for aid and benefits, the association invests part of the funds and returns a

portion of the investments and profits to the associates at the end of the year, in the form of a year-end bonus.

I ask another interviewee about his experience with the Solidarist association. Yared is 25 and has been working for Pindeco for six years. Despite his young age, he is mature, punctual and professional. “I am an associate of ADEPSA”, he tells me, “and look, I don’t know if it’s just our Tico culture, but we’re not good at saving...and ADEPSA helps us do that. For example, my mom got breast cancer, and ADEPSA paid for all her transportation to and from San José.” The financial benefits that ADEPSA provides are well-recognized among associates and their families. Transportation, for example, even just by bus, is costly and often unaffordable if required frequently. Family trips to San José or Pérez Zeledón were often determined by how many members of the family could afford bus fare. Transportation subsidies were mentioned as important benefits by nearly all other interviewees. Aside from transportation and medical aid, other benefits are also extended to the spouses and families of associates in the form of courses and certifications.

Sara, the spouse of an ADEPSA associate speaks to her experience with the association. Sara is in her mid 30s. Prior to meeting her spouse, she was a single mother to her two daughters, Valentina and Alejandra. Sara too, comes from a low-income family; I understood this when I first stayed with her in Volcán, from the structure of her small house, a house that made up for everything it lacked in structure through its warmth and hospitality. Sara’s house had no ceiling, not an uncommon feature of lower income homes – that is, most homes in Volcán. It was covered by metal sheeting that would echo every sound of the tropical downpours, making it nearly impossible to hear one another through the rain. Tile floors are a luxury—any flooring for that matter is a luxury, thus, many homes, like Sara’s, exposed bare concrete that she scrubbed

and waxed every day, sometimes multiple times per day. The bathroom, kitchen and shower were separated only by curtains, blurring the boundaries of the washroom, and making it 4-year-old Alejandra's favourite place to grace you with her company. Sara was a hard worker but had few opportunities to make an income prior to her indirect affiliation with ADEPSA. She cleaned houses and provided services to the elderly but made just enough money to provide food for her daughters. Now, as the spouse of an ADEPSA associate, she has completed several courses in hair and nail styling and runs a successful business from her new house. She tells me the following about her experience with the association:

ADEPSA is a helping hand that helps us move forward. Thanks to ADEPSA I have my own business at home, and a recognized certificate to practice my profession. Thanks to ADEPSA, I am who I am today and I was able to find myself and develop my abilities.

I ask another participant about her motivation to join ADEPSA. She is also a single mother of two. She tells me:

As an ADEPSA member, I can for example, take out a loan. That's one. Two, for savings. Christmas savings, savings for vacations, savings for school. These are made possible by ADEPSA, so I always wanted to be part of it. And then at the end of the year, they give us the surplus, which are the interests on the money that we've invested. So this is my motivation to become a member.

Another member describes the benefits as such:

Social welfare, health benefits. One time my dad was very sick, and I didn't have any money to help him, and ADEPSA helped me, for free. If someone in my household dies, ADEPSA will help with it. And they don't even just help workers, if someone in the community needs help, ADEPSA will help them.

ADEPSA has provided more than individual benefits to its associates and their families; recreation centers, sports leagues and now, importantly, a supermarket have all been provided to the community by ADEPSA. When I first went to Volcán, there were very few things you could buy in the town. Any purchases were made either from *Pulperías* (convenience stores) or local farmers, stock permitting. I continued to visit Volcán and to conduct research, in similar conditions. But when I arrived the last time, 10 years after my first visit, I was overwhelmed to have arrived for the grand opening of the ADEPSA supermarket: perhaps the size of the smallest local grocery store I know at home, but by far the biggest Volcán had ever seen. I couldn't believe that fresh meat and fish were available in *Volcán. In a supermarket*. The town was ecstatic. The supermarket was an ADEPSA effort and the grand opening was marvellous. We all gathered in front of the supermarket and danced the day away. There were raffles, food, guest appearances by Costa Rican comedians, and what appeared to be the entirety of Volcán. This was more than a store opening in the town, it was a historical milestone of its developmental evolution. And ADEPSA had done it, which meant the people had done it: in solidarity.

While ADEPSA has provided many benefits to its associates, matters directly related to the workplace and workers' rights are not addressed by solidarist associations. Instead, Permanent Worker Committees, that are also born from the Solidarismo philosophy, were created to deal with such matters, to represent them in their grievances and provide additional workplace benefits.

#### **4.5.2 Permanent Worker Committees**

The isolated resolution of workers' grievances is not the main critique syndicalists have of Solidarism. In fact, many recognize that it is with this purpose that CPTs were created and accept

that, so long as CPTs are limiting their intervention to these isolated instances, they are not interfering with the work of ILUs. The direct settlement, however, between Pinedeco and its employees, is an agreement that goes beyond worker grievances to address workers' rights and benefits more broadly. It includes personal and familial concerns; the settlement is a principal component of the support for CPTs among Pinedeco workers. In trying to mimic a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), it highlights the rights of employees, the responsibilities of both employee and management, employee benefits, wages, working hours and conditions, among other benefits. The interpersonal nature of the settlement, and the inclusion of family members into considerations for workers lends itself once again to essential characteristics of Solidarity. In this light, the company is seen as part of the community and part of each workers' family. Not only, then, are workers satisfied with the system by which they are represented through CPTs, they also don't observe significant enough voids in their representation that would merit a transfer of representation to alternative organizations such as an ILU. I ask a CPT representative, who has been involved in the Direct Settlement negotiations for years, if a trade union would be better equipped to represent Pinedeco workers. He responds with the following:

What I can tell you is that the process that we have is a successful one where we have won tons and tons of benefits that are in addition to the legal requirements, where workers get more than just their salary, but many comforts that allow them to do their job well. So I can't tell you whether with a Trade Union we would be better off, but I am very, very satisfied with the work that CPTs have done.

This satisfaction with the CPT and with the benefits that have been acquired through the Direct Settlement is reiterated through many participant interviews. I am told that Pinedeco workers receive an array of benefits, beginning with transportation from the worker's house to the



workplace. This transportation benefit is compared by some participants to workers in Limón, a region on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica, who are rumoured to receive only two bicycle wheels per year that they may use to arrive to work on their own bicycle.

Pindeco's Direct Settlement has been in effect for 35 years; it is revisited every two years and benefits may be added with each revision. Other benefits include additional vacation days to those required by law, full protective gear, and sick days for workers. Aside from protecting workers, these benefits are extended either in ways that assist the families of the workers, or are extended directly to their family members. These benefits include scholarships for students, school kits for all the children of the workers, 4 paid days for a worker's honeymoon<sup>27</sup> to enjoy with their spouse, a bereavement pay of 232,000 CRC in the case of the death of a worker, their spouse, or their children, and where applicable, their parents<sup>28</sup>, 3 working days for the death of a family member plus transportation for the transfer of the body outside of the Buenos Aires zone<sup>29</sup>. Leonardo, with his 20+ years of experience in the CPT tells me: "if me or my family have a doctor's appointment at 3pm, I get the entire paid day to take them to their appointment. It doesn't matter if their appointment is 20 minutes, I have the whole day to deal with it."<sup>30</sup> He also tells me that if a doctor orders a worker to take a sick leave, the government will pay them only 60% of their salary, but that Pindeco's CPT will cover the remaining 40% so that the worker may receive full pay and so that their family is less affected by the circumstances.

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<sup>27</sup> Section 6 Article 18 a) of Pindeco's Direct Settlement

<sup>28</sup> Section 7 Article 21 of Pindeco's Direct Settlement

<sup>29</sup> Section 6 Article 18 c) of Pindeco's Direct Settlement

<sup>30</sup> Section 6 Article 18 b) of Pindeco's Direct Settlement

Historically, the emergence of CPTs has its roots in the solidarist philosophy. Interestingly, the principles supported in the Direct Settlement are in line with participants' perception of the meaning of Solidarism and the sense of mutual aid and community it fosters beyond the workplace. I asked participants what Solidarism means to them. I interviewed Hernán, whom I've known for over a decade now. Hernán is in his mid 30s, and although he was once extroverted and outgoing, he now has a much more serious comportment. If not the result of age and life circumstances, perhaps the solemnity of his demeanour is a result of the tragic loss of his brother in a motorcycle accident several years ago. Hernán keeps to himself now, he's focused on work and his family but was nevertheless willing to participate in the interview and thanked me for including him. He told me the following about Solidarism: "The company has always been part of our family and they've always treated us as being part of theirs. Anytime there is a problem, they help us in the best way possible."

In fact, Solidarism was often equated with *help* and altruism among participants, and the company was referred to as having been solidary:

To be solidary is to help a person when and how they may need it. The company is very solidary, they help employees a lot.

- Jerónimo, former Pindeco employee

It's like, having a good relationship with society, with other people. Help, and be helped. Support and be supported. So Solidarismo is like a synonym for help, which is also practiced in the company.

- Valentino, current Pindeco employee

It's recognizing other people's needs and helping when you can. For me it's a rule to live by in life. That's what being solidary means to me. Even in companies, for management to have conversations with workers, understanding their needs, and trying to help them. The meaning of Solidarism for me is help. To help when you can and to expect nothing in return.

- Gabriel, current Pinedeco employee

For me, Solidarism is to help each other. Whether it's in a company or in a family, in all respects. In a labour context, it's having the right support and problem-solving methods, so that instead of being rejected you are helped and stimulated in order to keep growing.

-Elena, former Pinedeco employee

For me, Solidarism is always being willing to help whomever may need it. To give and to receive.

*-Sara, Pinedeco employee spouse*

This solidary aspect of the CPT and the benefits that it provides to both the worker and their family through its Direct Settlement are key components of the general support for CPT representation within the company.

#### **4.6 The Pacifist Insiders**

It has previously been assumed, by international standards, that an arm's length approach to company management is the ideal representational format—that is, representation that is independent of the company and of the management team. In the case of Pinedeco workers, however, this separation works against Independent Labour Unions like ANEP and works instead in favour of CPTs. In the solidarist model, workers not only participate in the democratic

election of their own representatives but are also represented by who they deem an *insider* to their workplace. Moreover, the solidarist identity of pacifism and neutrality, as seen in the last chapter, reflects Costa Rican exceptionalism on a relatable scale. The pacifist, neutral, insider then becomes a trustworthy confidant, whereas the ILU represents the opposite. The more removed the representative body is, or is perceived to be, and the less neutral they are—even if that neutrality works in favour of the worker—the less the workers seem to trust them.

Martín, 33, like many others, tells me he prefers an internal union, one that could better know him and defend him. I've known Martín for 11 years, although he no longer lives in Volcán and his visits to the pueblo have become less frequent. Martín is fluent in English, an uncommon skill in Volcán, and takes interest in most projects that are happening in the town, especially if they involve the opportunity to practice his already-outstanding English. I had conducted both formal and informal interviews with him in the past and was afraid that coordinating another interview would be more difficult this time around. Even though I managed to get a hold of him just a couple of hours before his bus departed for San José, he immediately came over for another interview over a hot cup of coffee and *pan tostada*. Martín and I alternate between languages and are often surprised at the other's level of improvement upon reuniting. Despite his proficiency in English, we conduct the interview in Spanish to maintain authenticity in his explanations. Martín, too, prefers representation by the CPT. He demonstrated his preference of an internal union through the following comparison:

It's like if I play soccer, and all of a sudden, a group of people who have never played soccer tell us they're going to represent us. I'm sure they would know things from having researched and studied the rules, but they wouldn't know it in the same way a soccer player would. I would rather be represented by a soccer player. (Martín, Interview, 2019)

This preference of being represented from within, by one's colleagues, is echoed through other participants. Áxel, 31, tells me the following when asked if he would prefer to be represented by an Independent Labour Union: "No. I would maintain my representation by the CPT. Because it belongs to us, the workers, who understand the problems within the company". Similarly, Yared, whose appreciation for ADEPSA I highlighted earlier, tells me:

ANEP representatives are outsiders. If you tell them your problem, they will come in and defend you, but they're only doing it because that's their job, without really understanding what your role has been, what the whole process has been: they don't have a holistic approach to the situation. (Yared, Interview, 2019)

It becomes evident that for some, this stems from a misunderstanding of who ANEP worker-representatives are—that is, also fellow workers, or "insiders". The misunderstanding could stem from the fact that they are not involved in electing the ANEP representative and are unaware of the process. Nevertheless, for others, it is the institution as an entity, including those who are further removed from the company who may get involved in the representation process, that represent the outsider. Many workers prefer an even-handed approach to representation rather than a condemnation of the company at any cost: a balance they feel CPTs provide.

In the interviews, I prod to understand if this preference toward CPTs is strictly a result of anti-union propaganda, but the participant data says otherwise. I'm told repeatedly that because of the history of trade unions in the south, and the devastating departure of a large banana company from Palmar Sur in the 1970s, the Zona Sur is still reluctant to entrust representation to unions: a reflection, once again, of the dependence on Pinedo. Importantly, the relationship with the company is not a hostile one and the representation of workers' rights is not born of a combative nature: just as the Company is expected to protect workers and address

worker grievances, the workers also protect the Company. Thus, whereas trade unions are seen by participants as combative and hostile, CPTs highlight the harmonious and cooperative nature of the solidarist philosophy.

Valentino, 21, tells me the following about ILUs:

The problem is that [trade unions] always see the company as the bad guy. The difference between this and the CPT, is that there's no negotiation that happens. The union is always, always, always, in favour of the worker. The Comité is also in favour of the worker but for example, if I'm part of the Comité and I'm resolving a working grievance, I would also try to make the worker see if they're in the wrong. (Valentino, Interview, 2022)

Fairness, dialogue, and negotiation rank high on workers' priorities when it comes to conflict-resolution with the company. As Emilio, a former Pindeco employee, put it: today, workers have access to resources such as computers, smartphones and the internet that allow them to verify information and be more confident in their rights. Emilio is 33 and I've known him now for 11 years. He describes his younger self as a rule-breaker of sorts, a rebel, if you will. He admits that he wasn't an exemplary worker and that his relationship with the company wasn't the strongest. Nevertheless, he maintains that he was never mistreated at Pindeco, that there was never an intentional violation of his rights and that if he needed something resolved, the Comité Permanente was effective in resolving it. Conflict then, for Emilio, doesn't stem from a necessary opposition between workers and management; in other words, relationships between management and workers are not inherently exploitative in a Marxist sense or representative of class struggle, rather, in many instances, they are treated as issues that can be resolved through dialogue and negotiation.

This point is further demonstrated through my conversation with Leonardo, as he emphasizes the difference in solidarist and syndicalist philosophies:

[Trade Unions] do a lot of harm to companies because they don't use dialogue, right? They go immediately to stoppages, lockouts, strikes, and paralysis. Whereas CPTs, no, they're open to negotiation with management and they like to reach agreements, and this is probably why I'm a representative of the Comité Permanente, because I have the Solidarist mentality which is a completely different philosophy than that of unionists. (Leonardo, Interview, 2022)

This cooperative and harmonious relationship described by Leonardo is one of the essential characteristics of Solidarism, working in favour of CPTs.

I observe then, that ILUs are seen as adversarial outsiders whereas CPTs are deemed pacifist insiders. This distinction places ILUs at a disadvantage in their appeal to workers. Moreover, it becomes evident that this insider-outsider negotiation moves beyond the workplace. The CPT representative becomes an insider to both the workplace and the community. Leonardo, who is the president of the Comité Permanente, and one of the strongest advocates for Solidarism, is simultaneously the president of ADEPSA, as well as the president of the municipality of Buenos Aires. Leonardo has been continuously re-elected by workers within the CPT and ADEPSA, and by residents of Buenos Aires, as President of the municipality. Leonardo's position speaks to the impact of familiarity in Solidarism. The personal relationship then, in such small communities, contributes to the trust that is placed in him and his reputation as an insider to various aspects of workers' lives.

#### 4.7 Syndicalist Refusal

Aside from the positioning of CPTs as pacifist and neutral insiders, and the benefits and incentives provided by solidarist organizations, there exists a predisposed distaste for syndicalism because of its history in the country. This means that, rather than Solidarism causing anti-syndicalist sentiments, anti-syndicalism can be a precondition to the success of Solidarism. In other words, in some cases, workers choose Solidarism precisely because it is not syndicalism. In Costa Rica, past negative experiences of trade unionism within the agricultural industry, have left traces of unionism fear in the industry even decades after the fact. This is especially true of the history of the banana industry in the southern zone (*la Zona Sur*). The departure of the United Fruit Company in the neighbouring town of Golfito in the 1980s has left a fear of labour strikes among workers within the agricultural industry, some of whom are now Pindeco employees. In other instances, there exists distrust in ILUs because workers don't see themselves in the process and don't identify with the objectives of the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

During the fieldwork for this project, a recurring theme among all interviewees was the events of the 1984 United Fruit Company (UFCo) banana workers' strike in Golfito. The narrative, however, takes two forms. Regardless of the different versions of the events, historians, media outlets, and interviewees alike, agree on at least the following accounts of the events: the United Fruit Company had a massive presence in Golfito. At the time, there was a 72-day union-led strike due to a breach of contract regarding payments, and the company shut down its operations in the region shortly after the strike. What differs between parties is the reason behind the company's cessation of operations. Many inhabitants of the Brunca region, especially workers within the agricultural industry, recall the strike as having been the reason behind the



company's departure. In a town like Volcán, where the population is almost entirely dependent on the presence of Pinedo, the fear of history repeating itself is echoed through nearly all interviews. On the other hand, critics are skeptical of this narrative, and present a different version of the events. For the most part, this version suggests that there were many factors involved in the company's departure. Attributing it to the labour strike, however, was the company's strategy to leave a region they would have needed to abandon regardless, without having to comply with the contracts they were bound by with the Costa Rican government.

The former version of the history is passed down through communities, story-telling, and collective memory. The layperson tends to believe and recount the stories told to them by their family and community, what was popularly portrayed in the media at the time, or what they believe to have witnessed. The latter version is more common among scholars and activists and is based on research rather than experience or memory. For this reason, it does not resonate as well with the community members, who trust accounts that are presented to them by their community. The latter version is demonstrated through the words of Dr. Mauricio Mendez, a labour rights lawyer and scholar who has dedicated much of his professional and academic career to Solidarist-Syndicalist tensions in Costa Rica. In the interview, Mendez recounts:

The official historiographical version is that in 1984, coincidentally at the same time of the Ley de Asociaciones Solidaristas, under the presidency of Luis Alberto Monge, a Banana strike occurred in the southern zone, which lasted 72 days. And what happened was that they started saying that because of this strike, the company had no choice but to leave. But what really happened was that the cost of transport was too high for them, and they had to go back to the Caribbean. But they had signed a contract to stay in the zone for several more years and if they left earlier, it would have cost them millions of dollars. So, what

they did was purposely breach a salary contract that they had with the company and they didn't pay the salary increase which provoked the strike. And during the strike they didn't take care of the plantations, so after the 3-month strike, they told Monge's government that they could no longer recover the plantations because of the strikes and Monge's government allowed them to leave. (Interview Data, 2022)

Mendez is not the first to provide this type of account of the events of 1984/1985 in UFCo. And while it may be true that UFCo had ulterior motives for leaving, it was certainly painted in this way, if only to serve the company's political and economic interests. Not only was the narrative engrained in the collective memories of southern Costa Ricans, it was also reiterated internationally. The Washington Post published an article on January 16, 1985 with the following depiction:

Costa Rica relies on the bananas for about \$40 million a year in concessionary payments and taxes on exports and workers' incomes, a crucial sum in the context of the nation's \$4 billion foreign debt. But two people were killed and many others injured during 72-day wage strike at the Pacific sites by leftist banana workers' unions last year. United Brands decided to shut down the operation last October because its production, already damaged by the strike, no longer could compete in the U.S. west coast market with cheaper fruit from Ecuador and elsewhere.

The article goes on to quote United Brands' senior vice president and general counsel in saying "we recognize the severity of the decision's impact but we can't afford to continue something like this". (Omang, Washington Post, 1985).

Costa Rican media showed similar images of loss and despair following the strike. La República published, on September 20 1984, an article entitled “*The Banana Strike Abated*”. The



Figure 17 La República September 21 1984

article states that in an assembly the previous night, the workers decided to stop the strike and accept the company’s proposal to return to work. In the article, the director of Labour Issues from the Ministry of Labour states that in his opinion, the strike was unjustified, and that it was a lack of responsibility on behalf of the leftist union leaders who caused the workers great economic loss and loss of benefits. He adds that it was interesting to see the rise in the awareness of the workers, turning their backs on the syndicalist leaders.

Another article outlines the massive loss of 432 million CRC in the strike for the state and workers. The article reads “In its 72-day duration, the Banana Company strike left the state and workers in 432 million colones of losses.” (La República, 1984, translation mine.) The

article enumerates each loss for the company then highlights the damage to the production,



Figure 18 La República September 21 1984

stating that operations would need to be suspended for five months while the crops recovered. The last paragraph carries a particularly anti-unionist message maintaining that this failure was the fault of the national Left who chose combative measures over dialogue. Below José Calvo Madrigal's photo from the Ministry of Labour, he is quoted in saying: "it is exemplary, the way in which the workers, by their own decision, called off the strike. This means that they saw that the strike had no reason to be, because there were very little people who were maintaining it. The fact that they are able to keep their jobs is a triumph, because peace and tranquility reign once again in the South." (La República, September 20, 1984, translation mine).

Despite syndicalist insistence that these events were fabricated and strategically orchestrated, the same narrative remains vividly in the collective memory of many residents of Volcán. In 12 years of conducting research in Volcán, ILU employees and representatives have been the only ones to present a different narrative. I speak with Volcanians about this story; for the most part, it is brought up, unprompted, by interviewees. The memory often translates into the fear of the company leaving and rumours of its plans to move. Lucía, 54, a proud *ama de casa* (housewife), has never directly relied on Pindeco for an income. Her family owned their

own farm and her late husband owned and operated a bar out of the *rancha* of their home. Lucía is a devoted Catholic and an active member of the community. Even in their relative financial autonomy, the indirect reliance on Pindeco is not lost on her. Most of the clients at the bar are Pindeco workers who stop at the bar before or after work, often still in uniform; many of their clients who purchase agricultural goods from their farm earn their incomes from Pindeco, and all three of her children have, at one point or another, worked for Pindeco. As I relisten to the recording of her interview, behind the sound of the heavy rainfall that is present in most of my interviews, Lucia's deep and slightly raspy voice brings back waves of comfort and nostalgia. She tends to whisper unconsciously when she's concerned or deep in thought. It's with this tone that she tells me: "and what would happen without Pindeco? What would happen to all these people without Pindeco?" she falls into a deeper whisper: "*siempre pienso yo, y cuando Pindeco se vaya, que hacemos?*" (I always think to myself, and when Pindeco leaves, what will we do?). She tells me that she heard rumours that Pindeco was thinking of moving to Panamá. The more she recounts the rumours the more it troubles her.

I ask another community member if he has witnessed anti-union propaganda. He responds: "The thing is, we don't need anti-union propaganda in the south. The south has a different history with unions, because a union made a banana company leave from the Zona Sur. People lived in good conditions, they had healthcare facilities, houses, supermarkets, and because of the unions, the company left." I sometimes challenge these statements by reminding interviewees that ILU interviewees contest this view, and insist instead, like Dr. Mauricio Mendez, that the company had financial reasons for leaving. I bring up these alternative reasons behind the company's departure to assess the response. For the most part, the alternative is rejected. Some respond by saying they remember the events, others recount them through

narratives passed down by their family or community, and some base their version of events on the accounts of their Pindeco coworkers who were previously workers of the United Fruit Company.

It becomes difficult then, to paint a different version of events nearly 40 years after the fact. The events reflect too perfectly, the experience and memory of workers in the region during that period. It becomes almost impossible to retrospectively convince multiple generations to rewrite their histories. Workers and community members witnessed the breach of contract in not receiving adequate pay and were active in striking against the company for 72 days. The same people then witnessed the immediate departure of the company and experienced subsequent unemployment. Regardless of how strongly syndicalists and academics advocate for the version of events that paints the departure of UFCo as a premeditated, carefully devised plan to get out of a binding contract, it is a challenging if not impossible task to convince the workers who lived through that period, that what they experienced was a constructed reality or a mere simulation. In other words, the lived experiences of Volcanians hold more weight for many residents than the academic research. The fear then, of ending up like Golfito maintains a strong presence in Volcán.

There exists also a distrust in ILUs and their representative[s]. Beyond that, there is a misalignment of goals and priorities. In other words, workers are not always behind what the ILU seeks to achieve. For other workers, there is no need for the ILU. On the one hand, while workers naturally encounter problems within their employment (issues with their managers, scheduling and payment grievances, problems with coworkers, among others), many don't sense a void in representation. In other words, despite existing grievances, they feel the CPT has adequately represented them in the past and are content to continue representation through the

CPT. For others, the difference between the CPT being free and ANEP requiring a monthly payment is what deters them from joining the ILU. Some even feel that if they ever needed ILU representation, they would join them at that time. For instance, I interview Lorenzo, a 35-year-old born and raised Volcanian who has worked for Pinedeco for 15 years.

Lorenzo walks me through some of the common answers I receive in these interviews. Namely, he is satisfied with CPT representation and has been for 15 years, he is aware of the presence of the ILU and doesn't feel too strongly about it but has no interest in joining it. When he tells me he sees no need for ILU representation, I ask him if he worries about the CPT not having legal representation. The argument here, as previously mentioned, is that CPT representatives are Pinedeco workers without legal training to represent a worker in court, whereas the ILU has access to qualified lawyers. If a case is raised in court, the worker would be at a significant disadvantage without proper legal representation. Lorenzo is unbothered by this hypothetical. Instead, he answers: "listen, the ILU costs around 1000 pesos per month, right?". I confirm that that is my impression. "so then" he continues, "if I really felt I needed legal representation, I could just join them when I had a need for them. But I haven't."

Another worker bears more hostility toward the ILU. The conversation goes as follows:

Me: Do you think CPTs and ILUs can coexist?

Her: No. Well, not by the same people. They can coexist but they can't be run by the same people. Each should be separate.

Me: Ok. So why not be part of both if you can be?

Her: Because I'm not going to pay them. You have to pay these sindicatos. And I don't see any logic to it. The CPT on the other hand can resolve a workplace issue, with only gratitude as payment.

Me: Do you know how much it costs?

Her: I don't know.

Me: You don't know?

Her: I don't know. I just don't like it, I'm just like, completely against syndicalism.

Me: And what if it were 1000 colones (2USD)

Her: No no no. Even if it were 100. I'd rather invite one of the syndicalists to lunch than to pay them. Do you know how much money these ILUs make in a year? What do they do with all that money? Where does it go? Who does it go to?

Me: Ok. What if it were free?

Her: No, no. Even if it were free.

I ask another Pindeco worker, Nancy Rodriguez if she's part of an ILU.

*N: No*

*Me: Why not?*

*N: First of all, because I feel like a sindicato (ILU) just creates a more polemic situation, instead of resolving it. Second because I don't want to give them my money. And third, because I don't find the sindicato to be trustworthy.*

*Me: What makes you feel that way?*

*N: Because if it's an analfabeto (a person who is ignorant or uneducated), who only wants to hear what he sees and what he feels and what he believes, and that's what he reports, then what can one expect?*

She's referring to Mateo Rivas, the ANEP worker-representative.

*Me: Why do you find him untrustworthy?*



*N: Everything. It's everything about him. Do you think that if a syndicalist wanted to help they would propose an 8-hour work day? I can't live off 8 hours. Lucky for anyone who does but I can't live off 8 hours. When workers like myself want to work more than 8 hours, to have a better quality of life, because life is very difficult, it's very hard. With a thousand colones now you may as well not have any money. Because with expenses here, you pay two bills, and your food, and that's it. There's barely money left for food. And with 8 hours? This is my concept of syndicalism.*

*Me: What if the ILU was suggesting they could obtain better pay and better working conditions for you to be able to live off an 8-hour day. What do you think of that?*

*N: [She cackles sarcastically], I mean, [laughs again] I don't know whether to laugh. Look. That doesn't exist. That's a lie. They haven't raised anyone's salary. Maybe the representative because he works for them. He can have the luxury of having breakfast, lunch, and coffee in the soda (diner), which is very expensive. But a normal worker, no.*

It becomes clear then, that it is not only solidarist incentives nor propaganda that inhibit workers from joining ILUs. Rather, it is a distrust for ILU demands and initiatives, and lack of understanding of and participation in the ILU process that makes Solidarism the more appealing option for some workers. Much like the insider/outsider negotiation discussed above, workers see themselves in the solidarist process. In the CPT, they elect their representatives, and rely on them to represent them in their grievances and to bring their needs forth when revisiting the Direct Settlement. In ASEs, workers operate the association independently of management, meaning they are involved in elections, activities, and financial decisions. In the ILU, by contrast, they are not united on all the ILU's propositions, and while they are allowed and

encouraged by the ILU to attend the elections, attendance remains reportedly low. Moreover, when initiatives are presented to them, they are not always aligned on the benefit the ILU is trying to achieve, nor do they trust the ILU representative to work in their best interest.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I laid out the principal tensions in the Solidarist-Syndicalist divide. I wove the historical and theoretical underpinnings of chapters two and three into an ethnographic depiction of how these histories translate into the lives of Volcanians and the case of Pindeco. I began by exploring the criticisms of solidarist organizations by syndicalist ones, both practically and theoretically. Universally, the benchmarks for adequate representation in labour remain the rights to Freedom of Association and to Collective bargaining. These rights are known by the ILO and UDHR to be best represented through Independent Labour Unions, leaving alternative forms of representation such as CPTs as the less favourable and in some cases, inadequate, option. I brought interview data, from ILU workers and representatives, into the discussion, to demonstrate the struggles they have faced in acquiring space and support for their organization among Pindeco workers. I also demonstrated how the CPT has been coercive by engaging in anti-Union propaganda. Still, this perspective paints only part of the picture. Not all workers are being cheated, tricked, or otherwise coerced into joining solidarist organizations. In some cases, the system of incentives provided by the ASE and CPT are too beneficial to workers to be renounced. Moreover, as seen in the third chapter, the solidarist philosophy has aligned itself with the nationalist identity of pacifism and neutrality, in such a way that it makes it easier for workers to identify with Solidarism. Importantly, this approach does not threaten the presence of Pindeco, on which the town is extremely dependent. But this is not the first iteration of this

philosophy in Costa Rica. It is a manifestation of the nationalist ideology of economic prosperity through hard work that had been painted in the country since the Civil War. Finally, a history of anti-unionism in Costa Rica is not easily erased. In fact, I have argued that in some cases, it is a precondition to Solidarist acceptance.

In only attributing support for Solidarism to propaganda or coercion, we erase the choice of Pindeco workers to support Solidarism. Failing to recognize the reasons behind solidarist support, limits the possibility of growth and development in labour representation. This is not to say that Solidarist organizations are not problematic in their representation of workers, nor to dismiss the critiques posed by ILUs. Indeed, as demonstrated throughout this chapter, there are certainly shortcomings that ought to be rectified. But dismissing workers' perspectives does not enrich our understanding of their lived experiences. Within the confines of their history, community, and economic reality, workers have made a choice: that choice is Solidarismo.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Conclusion**

#### **5.1 Conclusion**

This dissertation examined the Costa Rican Solidarist Movement (MSC) through a historical analysis and a 12-year ethnography. Using the lived experiences of workers and Volcanians, the dissertation put a face to the Solidarist movement. Despite considerable criticism of Solidarism and its derivative organizations, the movement remains prevalent in the country. Today, the MSC stands at 1,445 solidarist associations and 400,000 members (CANASOL, 2021). While there has been thorough analysis of the MSC in the field of labour law, and criticism of the movement as one that hinders trade union affiliation, its tangible impact on the lives of its supporters has been given less prominence in the discussion. This dissertation provides an analysis of the historical and cultural elements that fostered the growth of a movement that has affected workers for three quarters of a century. It provides a detailed analysis of the rise and resilience of the MSC. Maintaining a recognition of unequal structures of power, I unweave the intricacies of this movement through Costa Rican political economy, collective identity, and a case study of the Pineapple Development Corporation. In doing so, I provide a detailed account of the prevalence of Solidarism in Costa Rica. A thorough understanding of why Solidarism has been so prevalent in Costa Rica contributes to future conversations about representation in the country.

In Chapter 2, I examined the political economy of Costa Rica, to determine how the MSC formed its roots, historically. I argued that four elements were vital the strengthening of the movement: 1) the introduction of the solidarist philosophy at an opportune anti-communist climate, that lent itself to the creation of the Second Republic of Costa Rica, 2) the creation of a

large middle class throughout several decades in the country, 3) the support of the Catholic Church and the movement's rooting in the Catholic Social Doctrine, and 4) the economic dependence on the agro-export industry.

I demonstrated that since the 1830s, the weakening of the Catholic Church contributed to the creation of a large middle class. The 1844 constitution helped shape the middle class by prioritizing education and protecting basic liberties. Following constitutions maintained these priorities, as did various governments throughout the country's history. Many laws since the early 19th century marginalized the Catholic Church, which eventually led to increased political tensions. Other events, such as the coffee boom in 1845 created an increase in wage labourers. Costa Rica's entry into global trade, led to increased immigration and population growth. Changes in the economic structure of the country, namely, a growth in agro-export, led to a series of worker-based movements, beginning a wave of organized labour. Over the years, increased literacy, the diversification of the population, an increase in the middle class, and escalating tensions in labour, all led to the creation of the conceived Second Republic of Costa Rica, which in turn lent itself to the growth of Solidarism. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the political climate favoured democratic and anti-militaristic solutions, with emphasis on social and economic problems. As a result, different political parties and institutions, especially the Church, competed for power in their address of socioeconomic issues.

The late 19<sup>th</sup> century saw an emergence of Marxist economic theories that threatened the Catholic Church. In response, the Church issued the papal encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* (*On the Condition of Labour*) in 1891 by Pope Leo XIII. The teachings of this encyclical, along with those of the solidarist doctrine of the French Third Republic, would eventually carry through to the Costa Rican Solidarist Movement. At its core, Solidarism stemmed from the need for a

middle ground between the individualism of liberalism and the collectivism of socialism, a characteristic still present in the practice of Solidarism in Costa Rica today.

Costa Rica was affected by the global economic tensions of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Great Depression brought with it a drastic drop in the demand for tropical fruit and coffee, the country's top export products. This caused an increase in poverty, malnourishment, and unemployment. As a result, Costa Ricans leaned away from the capitalist export economy and shifted their support toward *Tico-Communism*. With this shift in politics, labour uprisings increased, prompting an anti-communist response from the Catholic Church. The social reform changes implemented during the Calderón government in the 1940s led to increased national debt, alienating some of his supporters. This political climate led the Calderón government, the Catholic Church, and the Communist Party, to form a coalition government in 1943. Economic tensions did not improve in the government of Teodoro Picado, Calderón's successor. An opposition group began to form by 1945 and the ties between coalition allies were weakened. While a shifting focus to antifascism during the Second World War had mellowed anticommunism in the country, the Cold War once again intensified these tensions.

It was during this anticommunist climate that Alberto Martén, a member of the opposition group, introduced the solidarist doctrine to Costa Rica in 1947. His proposal was a promise for economic stability through increased production, all the while protecting worker's rights and providing them financial independence. During the highly adversarial labour movement following the Calderón and Picado administrations, Solidarism presented itself as a solution that transcended class confines. These promises were further upheld by the leaders of the 1948 Civil War, and creators of the imagined Second Republic of Costa Rica. The 1948

Costa Rican Civil War, in its reinforcement of democracy and pacifism, was instrumental in setting the field for the emergence of the MSC.

The MSC witnessed an initial rise followed by a period of stagnation. In the 1970s, with the backing of the Catholic Church, the movement experienced a second rise. Economic reliance on the agro-export industry in the 1980s, following the debt crisis, further solidified support for the presence of foreign multinationals. As a result, the promise of economic prosperity and worker-employer harmony gained more appeal, increasing solidarist support and further intensifying the Solidarist-Syndicalist divide.

The Costa Rican Solidarist Movement presented itself as the balanced middle ground between Marxist Socialism and Liberalism: the two extremes of Costa Rica's political economy. The country's economic climate and its dependence on the agro-export industry presented a possibility of economic growth both individually, for labourers, and nationally. The support of the Catholic Church eventually reinforced the movement as the manifestation of authentic Christianity. But the MSC's strength lay in the ability to present itself as a pacifist and democratic movement, embodying Costa Rica's nationalism in such a way as to transcend the movement's affiliation with political parties and their leaders.

While Chapter 2 examined the rise of the MSC, Chapter 3 addressed its resilience. Specifically, it looked at the MSC's ability to forge a collective identity that aligned itself with the country's most powerful collective identities: those of nationalism and religion. Solidarism was bolstered by the founding Junta following the 1948 Civil War. The Junta effectively controlled the political narrative in such a way as to tarnish the reputation of the Caldero-Comunistas. In doing so, it justified the Civil War on the pretense that it would uphold the

nationalist identity of pacifism and democracy, as well as the principal values of the Catholic Social Doctrine.

I analysed the nationalist collective identity of Costa Rican exceptionalism through four pillars: whiteness, pacifism democracy, and economic prosperity. I then argued that Solidarism deliberately built its identity in line with Costa Rican exceptionalism. Mainly, I maintain that Costa Rican exceptionalism holds a false promise of civilization. Costa Rica is said to be a country with an 84% white population. This claim erases much of the country's indigenous history in an effort to liken the Latin American country to a European one.

The imagined pacifist identity has existed in Costa Rica since at least the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and was evident in the country's brand of *criollo communism*, succeeded by *Tico Socialism* in the 1940s. Costa Rica's identity of pacifism was significantly heightened following the abolition of the standing army in 1949, by the founding Junta of the Second Republic. I demonstrated, in this chapter, that leading to and following the Civil War, the Opposition used the Press to justify ousting the Calderonistas and to reinforce the exceptionalist identity of the Second Republic. This identity of a pacifist, non-adversarial nation is echoed in interviews through supporters of Solidarism.

Democracy, the third pillar of Costa Rican exceptionalism, has been an essential characteristic of the nationalist identity since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. With the direct vote established in 1913, Costa Rica remained a democratic state, with little military intervention and few coups. The large middle class, created in part by numerous governments' investment in education, contributed to higher citizen participation, further strengthening Costa Rican democracy for decades. The 1948 Civil War, though theoretically antithetical to democracy, was hailed nationwide as the reinstatement of Costa Rican democracy, ousting Calderonistas and



abolishing the standing army. Once again, the Opposition successfully used the press to propagate this narrative. Solidarism prides itself on similar democratic values. With democratically elected representatives in both ASEs and CPTs, the resolution of problems without hostility and violence, and the reliance on a documented set of rights and benefits, Solidarism aligns itself well with Costa Rican democracy. Despite criticisms of coercion and propaganda, Solidarism holds inherently democratic values in theory and on paper.

The fourth pillar of Costa Rican exceptionalism is that of economic prosperity through labour. Juxtaposing its values once again against the failures of the Caldero-Comunistas, the founding Junta of the Second Republic promised economic prosperity through labour. As demonstrated in the Costa Rican national anthem, adopted officially by the Junta, Costa Rica is painted as a pacifist country, made of simple peasants whose hard work earned them prestige and honour. I demonstrated throughout the chapter, how hard work was celebrated and promoted by political leaders, with the promise that it would lead to economic prosperity. Similarly, Solidarism made promises of economic prosperity that were aligned with nationalist values. In promoting an economic savings plans through ASEs, it provided workers with the possibility of economic prosperity on an individual level. Through the worker-employer harmony promoted in CPTs, the MSC also held promises of national economic prosperity. Alberto Martén, upon the conception of Solidarism, argued that economic prosperity was the only way social justice could be practiced, thus promoting increased production and economic growth.

Next, I illustrated the ways in which Solidarism aligned its identity with that of the Catholic Social Doctrine. I began by highlighting the prevalence of Catholicism in Costa Rica, followed by the role of the Escuela Social Juan XXIII (ESJ23) in the promulgation of the solidarist philosophy. Since the onset of Solidarism, Alberto Martén relied on principles of

Catholic Social Teaching from *Rerum Novarum* in his original manifesto. In the second rise of the MSC in the 1970s, the movement saw further backing by the Catholic Church through the ESJ23. Solidarism was promoted as the manifestation of authentic Christianity. A study of Volcán shows this alignment on a community level. By establishing employer-worker relationships that echo familial ones and creating the image of the company as a father figure, emphasis is placed on obedience toward authoritative figures such as God and the family and solidarity toward one's community. In doing so, the MSC effectively used an accepted identity of family, fraternity, and obedience within the community, to further cultivate the solidarist relationship between the company and workers.

In Chapter 4, I brought forth a case study of Pineapple Development Corporation (Pindeco) workers, in Volcán, Costa Rica, exemplifying the Solidarist-Syndicalist divide. Within this divide, workers in some companies have not only chosen to affiliate with solidarist organizations but have explicitly refused syndicalist representation. In this chapter, I brought the choice of workers to affiliate with solidarist entities to the forefront of the debate. I began by providing syndicalist critiques of Solidarism. I demonstrated the anti-union propaganda campaigns within Pindeco and the stories brought forth by labour union activists. These perspectives also paint the challenges ILU representatives face in trying to recruit members.

Throughout the chapter, I illustrated Volcán's dependence on Pindeco, socially, economically, and developmentally. I wove the historical and theoretical elements of previous chapters into an ethnographic account of what Solidarism looks like in the lives of Pindeco workers in Volcán. I then turned to a series of interviews with Pindeco workers and Volcanians to provide further analysis into why workers choose Solidarism. Solidarism has been critiqued for using anti-union propaganda to trick or scare workers into affiliation; it has been deemed by

syndicalists to be a hoax. Through this ethnography, I provided three alternative explanations for why the solidarist phenomenon occurs.

First, I argued that Solidarism works on a system of incentives that are indispensable to the lives of workers. The dependency of the town on the company calls for a thorough understanding of what these incentives look like in the lives of Volcanians. Through ADEPSA, workers and their families are provided a plethora of benefits. Among these benefits are savings plans that provide dividends at the end of the year, low interest loans, community events, access to new businesses such as supermarkets, free courses for spouses of workers, transportation to other towns and cities, and emergency funds for funerals and medical expenses. I then discussed the benefits provided by the Permanent Workers' Committee (CPT) through the direct settlement.

Second, Solidarism echoes Costa Rican nationalism, especially in its pacifism and neutrality. In encouraging worker-employer harmony, and taking non-adversarial approaches to conflict resolution, it does not threaten the presence of Pindeco. In the solidarist model, the CPT representative is deemed the pacifist insider—that is, a non-adversarial, worker-representative, who knows the workers and the inner workings of the workplace, who will maintain a neutral stance, or one in favour of justice. In contrast to the CPT, the ILU is seen as representing opposite values. It is perceived as the hostile adversary who will resort to conflict and strikes.

Third, I argued that syndicalism, in some cases, is a precondition to Solidarism. In other words, it is not that Solidarism causes anti-syndicalist sentiments, but that anti-syndicalist sentiments drive workers toward a solidarist alternative. Because of the history of trade unionism in the country, especially in the south, there exists severe distrust in syndicalism. This is a result of the combination of the anti-union politics of the country's history, the past experience with the

departure of the United Fruit Company in 1984 from the southern town of Golfito, and a lack of identification with current ILU objectives and processes. As a result, while some workers are indifferent toward ILUs but don't see a need for them, others are vehemently against them. This opposition paves the way for alternative forms of representation such as Solidarism.

Ultimately, I suggest that workers choose solidarism because they see themselves in the movement. Leaders and proponents of the Solidarist Movement have woven the ideology of the movement into the political economy and nationalist identity of the country in such a way that Solidarismo is able to tap into the myth of Costa Rican exceptionalism and feed the nationalist consciousness. As a result, workers see Costa Rican culture and identity in the movement's philosophy, they receive tangible benefits from the organizations that are indispensable to their lives, they see their role in solidarist organizations, and they see opportunities to create change within existing structures.

## **5.2. Discussion**

The thesis wove together a better understanding of the prevalence of the Costa Rican Solidarist Movement and the Solidarist-Syndicalist divide. It demonstrated the intricacies of hegemonic processes in the formation of the movement and the elements that helped to strengthen it. For a thorough apprehension of Solidarism and its impacts, it is not enough to recognize that it is a prominent movement, or that it has hindered trade union affiliation. Neither is it sufficient to attribute solidarist affiliation strictly with misinformation, fear, or propaganda. Rather, I analyse why and how this phenomenon occurs and why workers choose Solidarism. How did the political economy in the history of Costa Rica shape the prominence of the MSC? How did the MSC retain its prevalence for 75 years and transcend the confines of time, class,

and political affiliation? Importantly, what do lived experiences of MSC supporters look like and why do benefits of Solidarism become indispensable to workers and community members' lives? While the predominance of Solidarism in Costa Rica is undeniable, workers' role in shaping the future of Solidarism has received less visibility. Making room for the experiences of workers in the discussion of the Solidarism is a key component to understanding the phenomenon and the future of labour representation in the country.

When Mateo Rivas was elected as a member of the permanent worker committee, it altered the bedrock of Solidarism in unprecedented ways. It is too soon to tell what the effects will be of this election and what impacts Mateo's new role may have in the CPT. The unlikely alliance, however, is a demonstration of the role and choice of workers, not only to be affiliated with Solidarism, but to affect its structure. At the very least, the democratic electoral process of the CPT was upheld, despite the results being seemingly antithetical to the usual Solidarist-Syndicalist dualism. In these elections, workers managed to disrupt the expected structure of Solidarism, and create instead a space of their own choosing.

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