

El Salvador Indians - 4-16 '60 (as of early 1960's)

ETHNIC GROUPS

In the early years of the colony few Spanish women accompanied the men to establish new settlements, and there was consequently much mixing with the indigenous population. Beginning in 1541 African Negroes were imported to work as slaves and were settled primarily in the regions of Zacatecoluca, San Vicente, and Chinameca, where they worked as miners and agricultural laborers on the indigo and sugar plantations. Despite prohibitions against miscegenation, unions were made between Indians and Negroes and Negroes and whites. At first the distinctions among the many racial mixtures were clear and very strict; for example, both Indians and Negroes looked upon people with mixed Indian-Negro blood as inferior to them. Class and cultural distinctions were definite and based to a large extent on racial background.

Under Spanish tutelage, Indians and Negroes learned European ways and adopted those that seemed superior to their own and even some that did not, but which made relations with the Spaniards easier. After the various forced labor and slavery systems were abolished, the process of acculturation proceeded even more rapidly, and racial lines became progressively blurred. Cultural distinctions came to be made only between Indian and *ladino*.

Ladinos

Although there are general racial differences between *ladinos* and Indians, the designations are primarily cultural. Most *ladinos* are *mestizos* (persons of mixed Spanish and Indian ancestry). The Negro element is occasionally visible in the *ladino*, but the pure-blooded Negro (*moreno*), whose roots were in colonial slavery, is rarely seen. West Indian Negroes have not been drawn to work on the plantations as they have in the Caribbean areas. Whites, Negroes, and even full-blooded Indians who exhibit traits that are associated with *ladino* culture are classified as *ladinos*.

Ladino culture had its origins in both Indian and Spanish culture. To a great extent this is also true of Indian culture in El Salvador, as there are no traditional or isolated Indians who have retained an almost exclusively indigenous way of life. Selected remnants of pre-Columbian culture and colonial practices learned from the Spanish serve to distinguish the modified or transitional Indian from the *ladino* population. The Indian has changed tremendously but in ways that still keep him somewhat aloof from the dominant *ladino* way of life.

Many of the traits that distinguish the Indian from the *ladino* are of Spanish origin; for example, the costumes worn by Indian women in some municipalities are imitations of colonial Spanish dress. Certain forms of colonial political organization too are per-

petuated only in the Indian culture. On the other hand some purely indigenous practices are shared by Indians and *ladinos*, such as the digging stick in agriculture. When the Spanish came they introduced the plow, but the digging stick used for planting seeds continued in use because it was inexpensive, and some lower class *ladinos* adopted and still use it. Corn cultivation also originated with the Indians but is practiced by both Indians and *ladinos*.

They speak Pipil (a dialect of Nahuatl) Indians

Most of the country's least acculturated Indians live in separate municipalities of the southwest on the southern slopes of the Sierra de Apaneca, where the pre-Columbian culture was strongest at the time of the conquest. These Indians are descendants of the Pipil nation, which dominated most of the country in the late fifteenth century. Enclaves of descendants of other tribes exist, but present-day Indian culture is similar throughout the country, at least in part because of Pipil hegemony at the time of the conquest. Divisions among the Indians date from colonial times when authorities divided the native population into townships, preventing the Indians from maintaining their former cohesiveness.

Numerous migrations of Mexican and Mayan peoples crossed the area of El Salvador in the pre-Columbian era (see ch. 2, Historical Setting). Because of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions it has often been difficult for archaeologists to determine the exact chronology of various cultures and the migratory movements that brought the people to the area.

Early Mayan people constructed some of the finest pre-Columbian towns, now in ruins, and contributed excellent ceramics and statues to the Salvadorean heritage (see ch. 7, Education, Culture, and Public Information). Newer migrations into the area established the patterns of culture found at the time of the conquest. Indians of Mexican, Mayan, and South American origin were resident at the time.

Elements of the Pipil Indians arrived in the highland Mayan area some time during the eleventh century. They were a Nahuatl-speaking Toltec people from Mexico; their migration, according to various theories, was precipitated either by drought or by wars that followed the breaking up of the Toltec Empire. By the end of the fifteenth century the Pipil nation was dominant and well developed. The Pipil had overcome or absorbed many of the previous inhabitants. Because they were often at war, their towns, which were actually trading centers, were located in the highlands for defense purposes. There were seven chiefdoms, each ruled separately. No emperor or king ruled the entire agglomeration, but the ruling elite of Cuicatlan a chiefdom located southeast of present-day San Salvador, was dominant over all the others. The second most

important chiefdom was Izalco, which was extensive in area and densely populated. Many of the present-day Indians are found in the township of Izalco in the department of Sonsonate.

When Pedro de Alvarado arrived in 1524, he was accompanied by Nahuatl-speaking Indian soldiers with whom the Pipil, after centuries of separation, could still communicate. These Mexicans founded several towns, including two called Mejicanos, one in the department of San Salvador and the other in Sonsonate, and constituted another Mexican migratory overlay on the population.

At the time of the conquest there were enclaves of people who spoke Cacaopera, a dialect of Matagalpa of South American affinity. At the end of the sixteenth century these people migrated to the present-day towns of Cacaopera in Morazán Department and Lisique in La Unión Department, both of which retained strong Indian identities into the 1960s.

One of the most important Indian groups resident in the area was the Lenca. There has been much discussion among authorities as to the origins of these Indians; some believe they were an offshoot of the early Maya, and others think that they exhibited South American culture traits. The same controversy revolves around the origin of their language, agreement on the classification of which had not been reached by the early 1960s.

The Lencas established themselves in the east. Much Lenca territory was taken over by the Pipil before the Spanish conquest; many of the Lencas were absorbed into the dominant Pipil culture, but some retreated north into Honduras. Some Lenca territory remained independent until the conquest, and Lenca tribes exerted a strong defense against Spanish incursions. In 1537 an insurrection almost destroyed the city of San Miguel, but the rebellion was suppressed. Some of the remaining Lenca villages were destroyed in the seventeenth century by English pirates operating in the Gulf of Fonseca.

The Pipil were also preceded by various branches of the Maya, some of whom had moved south and east after the decline of the Mayan Empire. Among these were the Chorotega, who settled near the Gulf of Fonseca and farther south, and the Pokomam, who moved into the northwest from the Mayan highlands in Guatemala.

Process of Acculturation

A number of factors of the pre-Columbian era, the conquest period, and the colonial era contributed to the present-day pattern of Indian culture and settlement, particularly the tenacity of the Pipil Indians, although their culture bears little resemblance to that existing at the time of the conquest. Although the Pipil Indians suffered severe reversals, they were both numerically and culturally stronger than the other Indians, which has contributed to their survival.

After his arrival Alvarado ordered the massacre of the ruling elite to facilitate the conquest of the Pipil. Many of the Pipil retreated to the high mountains, from which they sent out forays against the Spanish enemy. Eventually, however, these Indians were forced to establish permanent contacts with the Spaniards, but they were able to maintain their separate Indian identity better than other Indian groups.

The Lenca Indians were weaker culturally and less numerous than the Pipil. The majority of them in the east soon acquired *ladino* traits. It was estimated that as early as 1796 about 64 percent of the people in the two eastern regions of San Vicente and San Miguel were considered *ladinos*, compared with only 40 percent in the three western regions of Santa Ana, Sonsonate, and San Salvador.

The original Spanish population, although not numerous, used many techniques for subjugating, converting, inducing, and otherwise affecting the Indian population. Religious orders established monasteries and churches and sent missions into areas of strong Indian cultural influence to make Christianity more accessible and conversion easier. The religious orders were important not only in spreading Christian ideas but also in teaching the Spanish language.

The *encomienda* system also served to bring the Indian into the realm of the colonial economy. The *encomienda*, a grant given by the Spanish crown, at first permitted the Spanish landholder to require the services of the Indians on his land and later just required them to pay taxes (see ch. 2, Historical Setting). This was later replaced by *repartimiento*, a system under which Spanish authorities could impose work and levy taxes on Indians.

The activities of the Indians were circumscribed by Spanish economic demands and Christianizing activities. The focus of their culture came to rest on their separate villages and not, as formerly, on relatively large groupings.

Most Indians lived in close proximity to Spaniards, while descendants of Spaniards (*criollos*), and *mestizos*, which may have exacerbated the tensions between them and encouraged them to seek solutions that usually resulted in their adopting *ladino* ways. Some Indians remained belligerent and staged periodic uprisings that were put down with brutality. The reprisals perhaps served to quicken the process of acquiring *ladino* traits, in order to encourage the Indians to merge with the dominant power. In 1832 an Indian rebellion under the leadership of Anastasio Aquino, who had himself crowned emperor of the Nonualcos, a Pipil tribe, was suppressed by government troops.

A century later, in 1932, an uprising of Indians and other peasants of the southwest was met with severe reprisals; according to many sources between 25,000 and 30,000 people were killed, most of them in the department of Sonsonate. Some observers felt that after these retaliations Indians of the area deliberately began

wearing *ladino* clothing, using the Spanish language more often, and otherwise affecting *ladino* ways, particularly when they migrated to other areas for the coffee harvest.

The economic and agricultural system also contributed to the acculturation process. In the late nineteenth century coffee plantation agriculture began to dominate the economy. The Indians were induced, by the prospect of supplementing their meager incomes, to migrate seasonally for the coffee harvest or to move permanently to the plantation areas where increased interaction with the established *ladino* way of life further weakened the Indian religious and family ties. Moreover, the industrialization of many of the cottage industries disrupted the Indian pattern of livelihood, which depended to some degree on the local production of hand-made textiles and other handcrafted goods.

The National Indian Institute was established in 1943, but it was later dissolved. Indian problems have been handled primarily in the context of general rural problems; for the most part Indians have their problems in common with the rural *ladinos*. The government's approach has been to further acculturate the Indians.

In the 1960s the process of acculturation was continuing. Indians were distinguishable from lower class *ladinos* mainly by means of a few remnant culture traits, such as certain religious practices, political organization, retention of an indigenous handicraft industry, perpetuation of an Indian language in addition to Spanish, and a distinctive women's costume. These traits were not typical of every Indian *municipio* (township); many were transitional communities, well on the way to becoming new *ladino* towns, retaining only one or two of these characteristics.

Settlements and Living Patterns

Modified Indian *municipios* were found primarily in the southwest and included Panchimalco, southeast of the national capital, and Nahuzalco and Izalco, both in the department of Sonsonate. One community in the northeast, Cacaopera, was included in this category. Transitional communities tended also to be clustered in the southwest, but enclaves were found in other areas of the country.

Indians tended to live as unified groups, whether in the center of a town, on the outskirts, or in the rural areas. Although most Indians lived in rural areas, significant numbers in Izalco and Panchimalco were considered urban.

Family organization among the Indians was similar in most places to that of the *ladinos*; that is, both sets of parents were equally important, and newly married couples established homes of their own. In Panchimalco and a few other towns, patrilocal residence (a situation in which a newly married couple moves in with the

husband's family) was common. Consequently, many of the households had several generations living together. In certain other towns, including Cacaopera, temporary patrilocal or matrilineal residence was established by newlyweds before they moved into their own homes.

The construction of the Indian house is similar to that of the lower class *ladino*, the walls being made of mud or some other material and the roofs of thatch, but certain things inside the house may serve to distinguish it. The Indian commonly prepares food over a floor fire, built between three rocks. If it is the house of one of the village's leaders, a room may be set aside in which to keep the altar of the town's patron saint. Although houses are usually built by paid labor, community housebuilding is done in Izalco, where the neighbors contribute labor and the family provides food and drink for those contributing their labor.

Economy

Indians have been highly acculturated into the *ladino* agricultural economy. The technology used, the crops grown, and the labor applied vary little from that of the lower class *ladinos*. Indians have been drawn to seasonal work on the coffee farms and subsistence agriculture on their own plots of land. They grow corn, beans, rice, sorghum, and even sugar, using the wooden plow drawn by oxen where the land is good but the digging stick where the soil is poor or the ground is very steep. In Izalco the two methods were combined, whereby a laborer with a digging stick would follow the plow, making small holes in which to plant the seed. Among the Indians it was common for the women to perform agricultural field labor, whereas this was almost unheard of among *ladinos*.

The Indians in some *municipios* have retained their indigenous craft traditions. Although the *ladinos* are adept at producing many types of baskets, textiles, and other home wares, they use modern technological processes, and the beauty and value imparted by handcrafting have been replaced by simple usefulness. Factory wares have to some extent replaced the handcrafted products of old, and the native skills are being lost.

In both Izalco and Panchimalco the hip-strap loom was still being used to produce textiles in the early 1960s. In this process, one end of the loom is attached to the waist and the other to a tree branch or similar raised object. In Izalco the loom is used to make three-inch-wide belts; in Panchimalco it can produce cloth three feet wide, which is unusual for a belt loom. Three types of skirt material are produced on the Panchimalco looms: two for women up to middle age and one for older women.

Most textiles, however, even those worn by Indians, are commercially woven on foot looms. Indian men no longer wear distinct-

god of n, but the spectacle is terminated when the best part of the pig is offered to a statue of the Christ Child, which leads the procession. This dance is usually performed on Christmas Day.

Indian administrative and political organizations have tended to disappear faster than religious ones because they interfered with the establishment of a single governing influence. Nevertheless, in the early 1960s Indians in the towns of Ataco (department of Ahuachapán), Panchimalco, Cacaopera, and Izalco still retained their own local political positions, which were common throughout the country in earlier days. In Ataco, in addition to the regular municipal officials, there was a group called the Civil Municipal Patrol whose members were directed to take turns patrolling the town at night. Members of the patrol were appointed for a year and received no pay. A similar system still existed in Cacaopera, but the patrol consisted of both Indians and *ladinos*. In Panchimalco a similar group composed solely of Indians patrolled the rural areas of the *municipio*, maintaining order and reporting weekly to the local government on such things as recent births and deaths.

In Izalco the Indians were represented before the national government by a chief, whose power was unrelated to other political or religious posts. Just how he was chosen was unclear, but his power in earlier days was undisputed.

The election of the village mayor in Cacaopera was one of the few traditional customs relating to political office that has remained intact. Indian candidates for the office stood opposite a row of archers with bows drawn just enough that the arrows would barely pierce the candidates' skin. Judges tasted the drawn blood to determine whose was the purest and who was consequently to be mayor.

LANGUAGES

Spanish is the official language and is spoken by virtually all the inhabitants. It is the language of the government, schools, newspapers, and radio. Most of the Indians, particularly those who are most acculturated, are monolingual in Spanish. Nevertheless, in the early 1960s some of the Indians in the southwest towns of Panchimalco, Izalco, and Nahuzalco still spoke Pipil as well. Retention of an understanding of Pipil was increasingly the province of elderly people and women, who had the fewest contacts with *ladino* culture. Figures were not available, nor were estimates, on the native speakers of an indigenous language, but the number was thought to be very small.

Some of the other languages spoken at the time of the conquest remained in use until the twentieth century. Pockets of Lenca speakers, the origin of which is much debated, existed into the twentieth century. Cacaopera, a dialect of the Matagalpan family of

the Macro-Chibchan group of languages, was spoken in the northeast until perhaps the 1950s.

Spanish was introduced by the Spanish conquerors and was perpetuated by their descendants and by all who joined the dominant *ladino* culture. The Pipil language, sometimes called Nahua, was one of the dialects that developed from the ancient language of the Nahua people. It was introduced by the Pipil who entered the area around the eleventh century and has been perpetuated by those people who have remained relatively untouched by *ladino* culture. The language belongs to the Uto-Aztecan family of the Azteco-Tanoan group of languages.

Many Pipil words have crept into the Spanish spoken in the country. The words borrowed have been ones for which no acceptable Spanish equivalents were available, including the names for indigenous animals, plants, and food, including methods and tools for its preparation, among others.

Since World War II the country had reflected an increased national awareness and growing political conscience. The present-day party system is an outgrowth of the coups d'état that occurred between 1944 and 1961 and started with the formation in 1944 of the first modern party, the Party of Renovating Action (Partido Acción Renovadora—PAR). Many other parties were subsequently formed over the next twenty-five years, but most had a brief existence, either from lack of support or because of official proscription.

Since 1950 national politics have been dominated by the government-supported party in power at the time, virtually constituting an official party, and most elections have witnessed an alignment of opposition combined against the incumbent group. From 1950 to 1960 it was the Revolutionary Party of Democratic Unity (Partido Revolucionario de Unificación Democrática—PRUD) and, since 1961, the Nacional Conciliación Party (Partido de Conciliación Nacional—PCN). Since 1964, however, when representatives of the opposition were elected to the Legislative Assembly for the first time since 1931, opposition parties have been making some progress, particularly in legislative and municipal elections.

By 1970 PAR and PRUD were no longer in existence, and the government party, PCN, clearly was the most powerful. In 1960, with the ousting of President José Lemus, PRUD had been disbanded; PAR was declared illegal shortly after the 1967 presidential election, allegedly for disseminating Communist ideologies. The PCN, however, was meeting increasing competition from a resurgent Christian Democratic Party (Partido Democrática Cristiano—PDC), which was steadily assuming the role of opposition party. With only two major contenders in the field, many observers believed that something resembling a two-party system appeared to be emerging.

The PCN had scored a substantial victory in the presidential contest of 1967, winning 57 percent of the popular vote as against 22 percent for the PDC. The PDC made a better showing, however, in the 1968 legislative elections, increasing the number of its seats from fifteen to nineteen, whereas the PCN dropped from thirty-one to twenty-seven. Two other minor parties won seats in the election: four for the Salvadorean Popular Party (Partido Popular Salvadoreño—PPS), and two seats for the National Revolutionary Movement (Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario—MNR), a shortlived leftist successor to the outlawed PAR. With the next presidential election two years off, in 1972, the PDC was building its strength in by-elections, aiming to present a greater challenge in the forthcoming national contest.

There was no way to predict what additional parties might compete in the 1972 elections. In 1970, with the elimination of the PAR, there were only two major parties on the political scene, the

incumbent PCN and the growing PDC. All indications pointed to a confrontation between these two factions. Of the minor parties that had participated in the 1967 election, only the PPS remained active. Some other small groups maintained a precarious illegal existence or were dormant, and there were indications that some new parties might be formed. Such groups were expected, however, to have nothing more than limited local significance.

Major Parties

In 1970 the reins of political power were firmly in the hands of the PCN. It was the official government party of President Sánchez Hernández, and it held a majority of the seats in the Legislative Assembly as well as a substantial preponderance of the country's municipal offices. The party was founded in 1961 by the directorate that ousted the junta that had overthrown President José Lemus the previous year. Many of the new party's leaders had been active in the earlier PRUD, which had held power for ten years but was unable to survive the aftermath of the successful coup against their incumbent president (see ch. 2, Historical Setting).

The PCN was not an extension of PRUD under another name, although ideologically it did not differ greatly from its predecessor. It had similar aims with respect to social improvement through evolutionary change and was basically opposed to radical upheaval that would disrupt the nation's socioeconomic base. It did, however, differ in methods and philosophy, particularly in the economic field and in its early years appeared to be striving to become an institutionalized single party. The party's first presidential candidate, Lieutenant Colonel Julio Rivera, was elected in 1962 without contest, since the election was boycotted by the opposition.

As a result of gains scored by the opposition in 1964, when twenty Assembly seats were won by the PDC and the PAR, the party developed two opposing factions that for a time threatened serious disunity within its ranks. The differences were based on the attitude to be adopted toward opposition parties. One group favored toleration of other parties as furthering democracy; the other side believed such parties should be severely restricted. The more moderate group finally prevailed and, since the legislative elections of 1966, the operation of opposition parties has been uninhibited. Five of them participated in the presidential election of 1967. In selecting their presidential candidate for 1967, the PCN demonstrated a democratic approach that was new to Salvadorean politics. The party's central committee presented eight candidates for consideration by its nominating convention, three of whom emerged as the final contenders. Incumbent President Julio Rivera strongly endorsed his minister of the interior, Colonel Fidel Sánchez Hernández, and urged his nomination. The delegates gave

twenty-six votes to the president's choice and twenty-three to the other contenders. Although the result did not break completely with the traditional power of the president to name his successor, the closeness of the vote did demonstrate an independence of action that largely got away from the rubberstamp procedures of the past.

After the opposition increased their Assembly seats in 1968 to twenty-five, nineteen of them going to the PDC, the PCN made a moderate comeback in the March 1970 elections, regaining four of the opposition's seats. In the local municipal contests the PCN did even better, virtually sweeping the field with victories in 252 of the country's 261 mayoralty races. The PDC won 8, and I went to a new party, the National Democratic Union (Unión Democrática Nacionalista—UDN).

The country's other major party, the PDC, was a growing political force but did not yet appear to be a real threat to the PCN. It constituted, however, the principal and, in fact, the sole significant competition to the party in power. The party had been making steady advances since 1964; although it had suffered a setback in 1970, this was attributed to popular support of the government resulting from the 1969 war with Honduras. As the only vehicle that had appeared in recent years as a counter to military rule, it retained its potential as a future popular party of the masses.

The PDC was founded in 1960 and put forward a program of reform and opposition to military rule. The new party met with considerable response but built up its strength slowly, setting its goals for the legislative elections of 1964. When in that year it won fourteen of the Assembly's fifty-two seats, it became the first opposition group to capture a congressional seat in over thirty years. It also scored a notable victory in electing one of its members mayor of the capital city of San Salvador.

Because of the constitutional ban on international ties, the PDC has no formal connection with other Christian Democratic parties in Latin America or Europe. It was active, however, in founding the Christian Democratic Organization of Central America in 1966 and has engaged in informal discussions and exchange of views with the international group. The PDC's 1967 presidential candidate, Abraham Rodríguez, was executive secretary of the Central American organization.

Despite its slight setback in the 1970 elections, probably because of the Honduran war, the PDC, after ten years of activity, had established itself as a permanent fixture on the political scene. Since the outlawing of the PAR, it has become clearly identified as the loyal opposition and offers a base for those elements dissatisfied with the regime in power or who hold different views from the PCN, particularly with respect to the continued ascendancy of the

military in national politics. The real test is expected to come in the presidential election of 1972, when the PDC will have to make a meaningful showing if it is to continue its growth and its development as one of the factions in a two-party system.

Minor Parties

Although many small parties have had a brief existence in Salvadorean politics, few have remained active for long or demonstrated any real potential for growth. Of the minor groups that participated in the last presidential election, only the PPS continued to exist. Its candidate had run a poor fourth in the contest for president, but the party did have four seats in the Legislative Assembly, one of two groups, other than the two major parties, to have such representation.

The PPS was founded in 1965 by a group of former leaders of the PAR who disagreed with the party's new leftist line. They were joined by a number of dissatisfied members of the PCN, and the party took on a rightist and nationalist orientation. In the 1967 election it was supported mostly by wealthy interests and large corporations. There have been no indications that the party intends to enter the 1972 presidential race, and in some quarters it was felt that the PPS would attempt to gain access to government circles by forming a coalition with the PCN. One additional party has appeared since the 1967 election, the UDN. Little had been publicized regarding its composition or philosophy. It won one mayoralty contest in the 1970 municipal elections.

There was a sizable list of dormant and defunct parties, few of which had any political significance in 1970. A number had been declared illegal, some were the temporary personal following of a popular leader, and others maintained an organizational structure but could not count on enough strength to resume activity.

Among the dormant, but still organized parties, two had participated in recent elections. The Republican Party of National Evolution (Partido Republicano de Evolución Nacional—PREN) had elected one representative in 1966 but had lost the seat in 1968. The Central American Unity Party (Partido Unionista Centro Americano—PUCA) campaigned strongly for free elections, Central American unity, and proportional representation but did not elect any candidates.

Several leftist parties appeared briefly over the years, and some managed to create a temporary stir. None met with any significant success, however, and were soon banned because of their radical ideologies or actual Communist affiliations. Among the more prominent were the Revolutionary Party of April and May, declared illegal in 1961, and the National Reform Party, banned in 1963. But the principal leftist force the country considers it has to contend

with is the illegal Communist Party of El Salvador (Partido Comunista de El Salvador—PCS).

In recent years the Communist Party has for the most part maintained an ineffectual covert existence. Banned almost since its organization, it was officially declared illegal in December 1952 and has remained an illegal party ever since.

The PCS was founded in 1925, sponsored by a group of Communist leaders from neighboring Guatemala, where the movement had become entrenched a few years earlier. The economic depression of the 1930s enabled it to prosper and grow in its early years, and it became the best organized Communist movement in Central America. In 1932 the party attempted to foster a series of peasant uprisings that were allegedly part of a plot to take over the government. The movement was discovered and was suppressed by the dictator Hernández Martínez, who executed the leaders and took advantage of the occasion to eliminate a large number of minor opposition leaders who were allegedly involved in the plot.

Since that time Communist leaders have been arrested and imprisoned periodically for alleged plots or subversive activities. After the fall of Hernández Martínez in 1944, the PCS was able to make some inroads into the labor movement, but subsequent government action negated these gains by outlawing the affected unions and arresting the party leaders.

There were a number of extensive roundups of Communists during the 1950s and again as late as 1962, when Rivera was president. By 1970 there was little evidence of Communist activity in the country, either overt or covert. It was believed that the party maintained its basic organizational structure, but estimates placed membership at only some 200 card-carrying adherents. Government leaders and a sizable segment of the population were strongly opposed to the movement, and the general atmosphere of the country did not appear to be sympathetic or receptive to communism.

The Electoral Process

All citizens eighteen years of age or older, with a few minor exceptions, are eligible to vote. Women were granted suffrage in 1950. Voting is considered a civic duty, and in some departments it is a compulsory legal obligation. This requirement has been found difficult to administer, however, and the statute is rarely enforced. Presidential and legislative elections are usually staggered.

Elections are regulated by the Electoral Law of 1961. It provides for the election of public officials by direct, equal, and secret ballot and sets forth rules governing the conduct of elections, the electoral function of the citizen, and requirements for the constitution of political parties. The law also provides for the Registry of Voters