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IN COSTA RICA:  
THE 1982-83 ELECTRIC RATE STRIKE**

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This article documents the development and consequences of a protest movement in Costa Rica that successfully opposed a government-mandated increase in electricity rates in 1983. It was the first significant protest movement to have occurred in Costa Rica after the implementation of an austerity program recommended by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1982. Previous research on this protest movement<sup>1</sup> suggested it originated in poor urban neighborhoods outside San José, Costa Rica's capital. It quickly became a national movement uniting the poor and middle classes in rural and urban areas across the country. At its height, road blockades were set up by more than forty communities.

Participants in the protest claimed the movement was apolitical. They portrayed the protest as a fight to make Costa Rica truly democratic. The successful outcome of the protest was said to show that the government listens to an organized and unified people. On the other hand, the Costa Rican government and the political right claimed that the movement was communist and represented a genuine threat to the nation. Research was undertaken in Costa Rica from May 16 to July 25, 1991 to examine these claims and other aspects of the movement.

The 1982-83 electric rate strike in Costa Rica can be analyzed on at least two levels. First, it can be viewed within the context of the Cold War and the Central American crisis. At this level of analysis, reference might be made to strategies employed by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, United States policy towards Central America at this time, and the claim that the IMF fund was being used by the United States and other industrialized nations to maintain their influence in this region.<sup>2</sup> Though very important, an in depth discussion of these complex

macrolevel processes is beyond the scope of this study. Instead, the focus is on the ways in which local leaders and discontented citizens organized themselves to resist the demands of the Costa Rican government and the IMF. Specifically, we address the following question: How was it possible to unite thousands of students, housewives, children, professionals, workers, and politicians when most had little, if any, experience in blocking roads, marching, or engaging in other acts of civil disobedience? These are the sorts of local level processes and details that are often lost in academic debates about the IMF.<sup>3</sup>

**Costa Rica's National Debt and the IMF**

To a considerable degree, the impressive social gains that Costa Rica made in the 1970s were funded through foreign loans. Free medical care and education as well as state-subsidized electricity, gasoline and water made the Costa Rican standard of living one of the highest in Latin America. The precarious financial position of the country remained hidden until the world recession of 1981 when prices for Costa Rica's two main traditional exports, coffee and bananas, fell sharply. This dramatic drop in commodity prices in conjunction with high indebtedness, a swollen public sector, and generous and widespread government subsidies precipitated the early 1980s economic crisis. In 1982 the inflation rate soared to 100% and the unemployment and underemployment rates rose to 9.4% and 22.4% respectively. The 1980 exchange rate of 8.6 colones to the dollar fell to 65 to the dollar by July 1982 at a time when Costa Rica's foreign debt was \$4 billion, one of the highest per capita debts in the world.<sup>4</sup>

By July 1981 Costa Rica could no longer make payments on its debts. The nation suspended all principal and interest payments to private banks. The World Bank continued to receive some interest payments, but Costa Rica was bankrupt.<sup>5</sup> To compound matters, President Rodrigo Carazo refused to accept IMF austerity measures. The crisis festered for nearly a year until May 1982 when Luis Alberto Monge assumed the presidency and immediately began negotiating with the IMF. The result of these negotiations was an austerity program designed to increase exports, decrease imports, and slash government spending. A goal was set to reduce the foreign debt for 1982 and 1983 by 9.5% and the national budget deficit by 4.5%.<sup>6</sup> Among other unpopular measures, this package included a 92% increase in electricity rates to be phased in over a six month period. This would reduce the operating deficit of the Costa Rican Electricity Institute (ICE) which had a debt amounting to \$618.7 million, the largest of any public sector institution.

**Hatillo**

The story of the protest movement against the proposed increases in electricity rates begins in Hatillo, a suburb situated on the southern outskirts of downtown San José. Hatillo is one of eleven districts in the canton of San José.<sup>7</sup> It is composed of

eight neighborhoods (literally called Hatillo 1, Hatillo 2, Hatillo 3, etc.). Though this district is predominately poor and working class, a wide variety of occupational groups are represented: street vendors, brick masons, carpenters, teachers, lawyers and government administrators.

The district of Hatillo has a community development organization that acts as a liaison between the residents of its eight neighborhoods and the municipal and national governments. In addition, each of the eight Hatillos has its own local organization that deals with problems specific to each neighborhood and presents proposed solutions to the district development organization. The nine members of the development organization are elected by 200 associates who are in turn selected by the committees of the various Hatillos.<sup>8</sup> This political infrastructure was to play a crucial role in the protest movement. It was led by a small, well-organized, educated, and politically-active element that was able to make the grievances of its residents known to the government.

Hatillo district's community development organization was traditionally run by members of the Partido de Liberación Nacional (PLN), the party founded in 1951 by José "Pepe" Figueres, an extremely popular three-time President of the country and a national hero of the 1948 revolution. However, in community elections held in August 1982 a member of the Partido Vanguardia Popular (PVP), the communist party of Costa Rica, was elected to the presidency of the Hatillo development organization. This man was Hubert Méndez, a 33-year-old mathematics professor at the University of Costa Rica. While the communist party founder, Manuel Mora, has characterized Méndez as something of an extremist within the party,<sup>9</sup> he had nonetheless gained a reputation across party lines for his support of workers' issues, especially in Hatillo. Apparently, even people who were unsympathetic to communism found Professor Méndez a very capable leader and a man of sound reason.<sup>10</sup> Naturally, many PLN leaders in Hatillo strongly resisted the Méndez candidacy. His election was very close and the most fiercely-contested in community history.<sup>11</sup>

Tensions between Méndez and the PLN increased after the election. In December 1982, an article appeared in the *Libertad*, the weekly newspaper of the PVP, in which Hubert Méndez accused the judicial police of breaking into the office of the Hatillo development organization and stealing internal documents. He denounced the action as repressive and asserted that Mario Espinoza, the director of the National Directorate of Community Development (DINADECO) was behind the break-in. Méndez stated in the article that ever since the PLN had been defeated in the last community election, DINADECO had been trying to discredit him and the Hatillo organization.<sup>12</sup>

Méndez has further asserted that President Monge's PLN administration annulled the right of assembly for the Hatillos. He claims that the government forbid Hatillo to celebrate its annual festival in February 1983,<sup>13</sup> Méndez also claims that the community organization of Hatillo organized a large protest in February 1983 in which 1500 persons and several hundred vehicles took part.<sup>14</sup>

The PLN view of this period is that the national government did not attempt to subdue the Hatillos *per se*. Rather, local PLN operatives in Hatillo sought to mitigate Méndez' power within the community. The PLN power structure in Hatillo, which remained formidable, developed its own strategies to confront community problems and presented its ideas as an alternative to Méndez' whenever possible.<sup>15</sup> Though Méndez and the PLN present conflicting claims about the events of this time period, no one denies that there were political tensions present in Hatillo.

### The Protest Movement

The economically discontented and politically sensitive Hatillo community reacted immediately to the imposition of electric rate increases in November 1982. Local women, meeting principally in *pulperías* (small corner stores), complained to one another about the steep rise in electric rates. Residents of Hatillo 5 and 6 decided to form protest committees (*comités de lucha*) to fight the electric rate increases.<sup>16</sup> Their options, however, were limited. Because the increases were incremental, several months would pass before a significant portion of the population would become agitated by the electric rate increases as well as by other IMF-imposed austerity measures.

It was not until April 1983 that the electric rate increases had reached the level at which they were causing considerable discomfort throughout Costa Rican society. This discontent may have been compounded by a possible error in the April electric bills that inflated them even more.<sup>17</sup> At this point Hubert Méndez began his effort to unify the protest movement in Hatillo. A successfully organized march through Hatillo by citizens of Hatillo 5 and 6 awakened support throughout the district for the movement. Several meetings of the protesters followed the march so that by the end of April a centralized protest committee had been formed in Hatillo with Hubert Méndez as its primary leader.<sup>18</sup> Not surprisingly, PLN leaders of the development organization did not participate in activities of the unified protest committee because their party was in power and supported the austerity agreement.<sup>19</sup>

On May 2, 1983, the Hatillo protest group again staged a march. This time the march began in Hatillo and ended at the headquarters of the National Electric Service (SNE) in downtown San José. The protesters remained outside the building burning electric bills until the company president agreed to receive a delegation from the group. Though the citizens were allowed to present their complaints, electric company officials did not alter their position, arguing that the rate increases were necessary and justified under the agreement President Monge signed with the IMF.<sup>20</sup> However, plans were now underway to extend the protest to other communities.

On May 4, the Hatillo group met again and decided to form a National Coordinating Committee to fight the electric rate increases.<sup>21</sup> From this point, Hubert Méndez and other members of the Partido Vanguardia Popular played an

increasingly important role in the protest. Méndez used the PVP party apparatus to unify the San José metropolitan area (SIMA). For example, the National Coordinating Committee representative from Heredia, a provincial capital a short distance from San José, was a PVP member, as was the representative from Sagrada Familia, a San José neighborhood. Other municipalities in the SIMA including Tibás, Desamparados, Guadalupe, Alajuelita, and San Pedro supported the protest movement as well.<sup>22</sup>

In cities and towns outside of the SIMA where the communist party had little footing, such as Puriscal and Turrialba, Méndez and other members of the National Coordinating Committee recruited local leaders into their organization by stressing the importance of presenting a united front to the government. Even though the National Coordinating Committee was led by communist party members, it is unlikely that the majority of the members of the struggle committees being formed throughout the country belonged to the PVP. This point is addressed in more detail below.

The National Coordinating Committee met each Wednesday in the Central Market of San José. The meetings were an open forum with members free to present their opinions of the situation. The communists on the committee were aware of the dangers of turning the crisis into a polemic of the virtues of communism versus capitalism. For example, they purposefully kept PVP party leader Manuel Mora out of the confrontation in order to deflect criticism from the government that the movement was communist-dominated.<sup>23</sup>

Still, it was evident that the government was alarmed by the presence of several key communist party members on the National Coordinating Committee. Realizing that the situation was becoming serious, the government came up with what turned out to be a counter-productive strategy. It met on May 9 with a committee composed of trade union leaders, the municipal president of San José and at least one congressman who was siding with the protesters. Though this "ghost" committee had very little popular support, the government sealed an agreement with it in which electric rates would return to the February 1983 level. In addition, it was agreed that people whose accounts were in arrears would not have their electricity service suspended.<sup>24</sup>

While a protest movement less organized than that of Méndez' might have accepted this moderate gain, the National Coordinating Committee rejected it outright as an attempt to deceive the public. Instead, the committee called for electric rates to return to the November 1982 level. In addition, the committee demanded an increase in the number of kilowatt hours sold at a preferential rate to lower class homes, schools and nutritional centers. In other words, the protesters were demanding a slight decrease in the electric rates that were in effect prior to the implementation of the austerity program.<sup>25</sup>

After rejecting the May 9 agreement orchestrated by President Monge, the National Coordinating Committee organized a march from the National Assembly building to the Casa Presidencial. Once again, residents of Hatillo and other south

San José *barrios* played a major role in the demonstration.<sup>26</sup> This demonstration highlighted the government's awkward situation. On the one hand, the government could not hope to settle the crisis without negotiating with the National Coordinating Committee. However, it was loathe to do this while a locally-prominent communist sat as its president. On the other hand, the Monge government was being pressured to resolve the crisis by conservative elements in the country. The Costa Rican right supported the contras' fight against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and there were strong warnings from several quarters of a possible communist intrusion in Costa Rica. The struggle between those who supported and those who opposed the increase in electricity rates was now being cast into a battle waged between democratic and communist forces.

For example, the day after the march from the Hatillos to SNE headquarters, Movimiento Costa Rica Libre (a conservative group) placed a full-page advertisement in the *La Nación*, the nation's leading daily newspaper, that expropriated the National Coordinating Committee's popular slogan "*No pague la luz!*" The text stressed the democratic nature of the movement, included a warning against communism, and called for the kinds of popular protest that the National Coordinating Committee was already organizing.<sup>27</sup>

On May 15, an editorial appeared in *La República*, another leading daily, that stressed the precarious nature of the crisis. It advised that if the electric rate protest movement was led by persons of good faith, the result could be positive. However, if the movement was led by communists, then the discontent of the people could be converted into a communist attempt to gain power. Advising the government to pay heed to the complaints of Costa Rica's citizens, the editorial warned that Nicaragua, Cuba and the Soviet Union were intent on the "Finlandization" of Costa Rica.<sup>28</sup>

Amid these polarizing tensions, the National Coordinating Committee took action. The strategy was to erect barricades across access roads throughout the country as soon as electric service was suspended. Women on defense committees were asked to monitor houses and commercial centers sympathetic to the movement in the event that someone would try to cut off service.<sup>29</sup> The movement also had electricians ready to reconnect any residence or business whose power was disconnected.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, the various development committees kept the people motivated by spreading their message by way of megaphones and leaflets. They also collected electric bills to keep people from paying them out of fear that their electricity would be cut off.

### The Blockades

The confrontation finally erupted on June 7, 1983 when the disconnection of power to some customers in Puriscal prompted barricades to go up in that town. Méndez and committee members from nearby Ciudad Colón rushed to Puriscal to participate in the blockades. National Coordinating Committee member and Puriscal leader Marys Regidor insisted to the press—in obvious response to charges of

communism within the movement—that the strike was apolitical and not manipulated by any organization.<sup>31</sup> The Puriscal leaders asked that the government negotiate with the National Coordinating Committee. They also requested time on television and radio to present their plans to the public. Finally, they warned that if the government did not negotiate, other actions would be taken, although they did not stipulate what those actions might be. The Monge administration refused to comment on the blockades at this time.<sup>32</sup>

The following day an editorial appeared in *La Nación* attacking thirty National Assembly deputies sympathetic to the protesters and who were reputed to have signed a petition prepared by the National Coordinating Committee. The newspaper asserted that agents of government should not act outside of the law or participate in acts that are at best legally questionable. The editorial went on to say that a poor precedent would be set if the government negotiated under threats of sabotage.<sup>33</sup>

The morning of June 8 saw an epidemic of blockades in other parts of the country as community groups reacted to the action in Puriscal the previous day. The southern *barrios* of San José cut off all traffic to the city except for ambulances. Frustrated commuters were forced to walk to their jobs in the city. There were also blockades in Heredia, Ciudad Colón, Puntarenas, Limón, and in more than forty towns throughout the country. For a government that was hoping the crisis would go away, the events of this morning made it clear that it had underestimated the depth of popular discontent. The administration immediately ordered the ICE to suspend disconnection of electricity service and to reconnect any customer who had been cut off.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, President Monge convened a special council to manage the crisis consisting of the first vice-president and the ministers to the president, of planning, and of industry, energy and mines. The government also ordered a 15-day cooling off period to give it time to resolve the crisis.<sup>35</sup>

The protest leaders acted quickly. Sensing that they now had momentum on their side, they took several additional actions and threatened others. In presenting their demands to the press, they called for a return to the November 1982 electric rate, for a freeze of that rate for two years, for a return of all money paid between January and April by customers in excess of that rate, and for an increase in the preferential tariff.<sup>36</sup> Protest leaders in San José and Puriscal also called for the replacement of ICE executive president Teófilo de la Torre.<sup>37</sup> Meanwhile, Hubert Méndez was maintaining a high profile. He warned that the blockades and protests would be stepped up overnight.<sup>38</sup>

The political right also increased its pressure on the administration. *La Nación* fired a salvo at President Monge, accusing him of indecisiveness. Once again, the paper issued a strong warning against communism, and described contemporary events as "pre-insurreccional."<sup>39</sup> Stopping just short of saying that Monge should be replaced, *La Nación* warned: "He has to do something. He has to introduce changes. He has to assume the responsibility and make decisions that really [convince] Costa Ricans that there is a man in the house."<sup>40</sup>

Simultaneously, Minister of Security Angel Edmundo Solano felt increasing

pressure both from some of his associates in government and from the conservative press to take action. He was being urged to use the police force to clear the barricades and maintain order. However, he wanted to avoid bloodshed. He declared to reporters and insisted to his colleagues that negotiations must take place and that the police<sup>41</sup> should only be called in as a last resort.<sup>42</sup>

The government was now in a difficult negotiating position. The country was crippled by roadblocks. A significant percentage of Costa Ricans had not paid their electric bills for over a month and many were several months in arrears.<sup>43</sup> On one side an outspoken communist was leading the charge against the rate increases. On the other side conservative critics were demanding that Monge take action. Monge's options were limited. His Minister of Security had ruled out the use of force. As a consequence, the special council entered into negotiations with protest leaders.

Negotiating without the presence of Hubert Méndez and the National Coordinating Committee appeared impossible. Only they could effectively order the removal of the barricades. However, the Monge government did try to reduce the influence of Méndez at the bargaining table by inviting prominent union leaders who were not affiliated with the National Coordinating Committee. For example, members of the Costa Rican Confederation of Democratic Workers were invited as well into the morning of June 9. Eventually, the government was forced to concede to most of the protesters' demands. With the country still paralyzed by barricades, quickly approaching a situation that Vice-president Alberto Farió termed "total chaos,"<sup>45</sup> the negotiations adjourned. Protest leaders gathered outside the Casa Presidencial to discuss the accord with reporters. What they had won was impressive. The government agreed to return electric rates to their November 1982 levels. Payment of accounts in arrears would be on a prorated basis over twelve months without interest. Small businesses would receive a preferential electric rate for their first 1000 Kw hours; a preferential rate would apply to the first 1500 Kw hours for small factories. The first 400 Kw hours of residential electric rates would be linked to a salary-based scale for people of modest means. The current electric rate would be reduced by 50% for schools, nutritional centers for the poor, and charities. Finally, the government agreed not to take legal action against any of the leaders or participants of the strike.<sup>46</sup>

This agreement would cost the Costa Rican government \$13 million for 1983. The ICE announced that it would meet the shortfall by stopping or drastically curbing geothermic construction and rural electrification. However, these cost-cutting measures would meet less than half the deficit. The rest would be met with a loan that the ICE would request from Mexico.<sup>47</sup>

Vice-president Farió appeared on television at midday on June 9 to announce the agreement. News that the electric rate would be lowered completely diffused the crisis, although a few strike leaders complained of a sellout.<sup>48</sup> The public, however, was satisfied. The blockades were lifted.

The question of whether or not the movement was communist seemed the only

one unsettled. President Monge himself fanned the flames by charging that the protest movement was run by communists.<sup>49</sup> In responding to this, Professor Méndez said: "To enter this [cause] no one was asked what political color he was."<sup>50</sup> He asserted that the struggle and the victory won were for all the people. *La República* stated that in some cases the movements against the electric rate hikes were dominated by communists, citing sources that the paper claimed were easily checked.<sup>51</sup> Lila Mora of the National Association of Educators felt compelled to quantify this assertion by stating that the movement was 95% democratic and 5% communist.<sup>52</sup>

The suddenness and massiveness of the strike had clearly panicked the government. While admitting that the protesters' complaints were valid, President Monge condemned the methods employed by the strikers. On Saturday, June 11, he issued a stern warning through the press that he would take action to stop any similar popular actions. He was reported to be in "profound reflection" over the week's events, and he told reporters that he was going to ponder other sensitive issues over the weekend to anticipate any further disturbances.<sup>53</sup>

That same day, both *La República* and *La Nación* ran editorials warning how dangerous the strike had been. *La República* stated its concern that conceding to the strikers' demands would lead to other strikes, perhaps not so just, and that the people might now believe that they could get anything they wanted from the government. Using a protest slogan, "The Government is not those on top; it is the people," the paper asserted that if the people caused the government to fall by creating chaos, they would not be able to replace it with another democracy. Rather, the country would surely fall to a dictator or communists who would easily take advantage of the situation.<sup>54</sup>

*La Nación* ran a column which contrasted the rights of the people to protest with a warning about those who would like to destabilize things.<sup>55</sup> The following day the theme was the same for another writer in *La Nación*. He started his editorial with the assertion that the electric rate protest had democratic foundations, but he too warned of the potential threat of international communism to Costa Rica's democracy. He counseled that the government should facilitate action, channel complaints, and avoid protests. Finally, the writer argued that the rationalization that democrats can act through protests and action belies the point that communists will infiltrate their organization and seize power in a cloak of democracy that Marxism does not afford them.<sup>56</sup>

For its part the National Coordinating Committee continued to function for a time. The members met in San José as before, discussed economic concerns and monitored the progress of the government's agreement on electricity rates. By December 1983, however, there was no steam left in the movement. The committee members went their separate ways, though most of them continued to be active in politics.<sup>57</sup> In the meantime Partido Vanguardia Popular had fractured. Manuel Mora led a communist faction and formed a new party called Partido del Pueblo Costarricense. This significantly reduced the influence of the communist movement in Costa Rica.

### Chronology of the Costa Rican Electric Rate Protest, 1982-83

June 1982	President Luis Alberto Monge signs an austerity agreement with the International Monetary Fund.
August 1982	Hubert Méndez, a University of Costa Rica mathematics professor and member of the Partido Vanguardia Popular (PVP), Costa Rica's communist party, is elected president of the development organization of Hatillo, a district in San José, the capital.
November 1982	Electricity rate hikes go into effect in Costa Rica. Hatillo 5 and 6, two of eight neighborhoods in Hatillo district, create committees to fight the raises.
April 1983	Protest march by citizens of Hatillo 5 and 6 unifies the Hatillos.
May 2, 1983	Hubert Méndez assumes control of this new, unified movement. Protesters march from the Hatillos to National Electric Service (SNE) headquarters. President Monge's administration agrees to investigate their complaints.
May 4, 1983	Protesters from the Hatillo group headed by Méndez decide to form a National Coordinating Committee to unify the country in the struggle against the rate increases.
May 9, 1983	Monge's administration enters negotiations with a "ghost" committee that does not include the Méndez organization and has little popular support.
June 7, 1983	Road barricades are raised in Puriscal, one of the first cities outside of the San José metropolitan area to support a nationwide protest.
June 8, 1983	Barricades are erected in other parts of the country by more than 40 communities.
June 9, 1983	The electric rate increases are canceled.

### Discussion and Conclusions

Responding to the early 1980s economic crisis, the Costa Rican government signed a package of austerity measures with the IMF, one of which was a 92% increase in electric rates. In the context of increasing Cold War tensions being played out in the region at this time, an outspoken communist leader was able to win election to his neighborhood development committee, gain control of the movement against electric rate increases, and develop a potent national protest movement. The success of the protest movement can be attributed to at least three factors.

First, there was widespread discontent several months after the electricity rate increases went into effect. The near doubling of electricity rates in a relatively short period of time hit the lower and middle classes especially hard. However, popular discontent was a necessary but not a sufficient factor in the protest's success. The protest movement also had capable leaders especially in the person of Hubert



Méndez. His strategy to press the popular demands of the National Coordinating Committee when the government was on the defensive and his emphasis on the democratic nature of the movement played a crucial role in the success of the movement.

Most importantly, there was an effective organizational infrastructure in place prior to the protest. This included Hatillo's district and neighborhood development organizations as well as the national network of the PVP. Protest leaders used these existing organizations to recruit socially, economically, and politically diverse segments of the country's population into struggle and defense committees. It was the protesters' linkage to a highly centralized National Coordinating Committee that allowed them to stage effective demonstrations, block roads, and keep each other informed of their activities and those of their government.

Even though the possibility for violence existed, the 1982-83 electric rate protest was peacefully settled. Reflecting upon the early 1980s economic crisis in Costa Rica, Eduardo Lizano, a former president of the Central Bank of Costa Rica and governor of the IMF during 1984-1990, writes, "There was a real risk that low-income groups might spark an uprising and an equally real risk that the middle class might cause great social instability. The political decision was made to risk the latter and stave off the former. . . . At times the ground seem[ed] rocky, issues complex, and the rules of the game neither fixed nor predetermined. . . . Everybody has a different way to skin the proverbial cat. Essentially this political game is a relatively painful learning process."<sup>58</sup>

### Notes

**N.B.** Acknowledgments: Although we alone assume complete responsibility for any shortcomings of this article, our work did benefit from valuable commentaries on the first draft by Professor Marc Edelman of Yale University and Professor Mitchell Seligson of the University of Pittsburgh.

<sup>1</sup>See "Electricity Rates: From Discontent to Organized Resistance" in *The Costa Rica Reader*, eds. Marc Edelman and Joanne Kenen (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), 204-208. This article was first published as "Tarifas eléctricas: del descontento a la lucha organizada" by the staff of the progressive Catholic magazine, *Aportes* 14-15 (June-September 1983):16-18.

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, Sue Branford and Bernardo Kucinski, *The Debt Squads: The U.S., the Banks, and Latin America* (London: Zed Books, 1983), Manuel Pastor, Jr., *The International Monetary Fund and Latin America: Economic Stabilization and Class Conflict* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1987), and Scott R. Sidel, *The IMF and Third World Political Instability: Is There a Connection?* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988).

<sup>3</sup>However, see Marc Edelman, "When They Took the 'Muni': Political Culture and Anti-Austerity Protest in Rural Northwestern Costa Rica," *American Ethnologist* 17 (1990):736-757.

<sup>4</sup>Marc Edelman, "The 1980s Economic Crisis," 188 and Juan Manuel Villasuso Elomba, "The Impact of the Economic Crisis on Income Distribution," 202 in *The Costa Rica Reader*.

<sup>5</sup>"Costa Rica Tightens Its Belt," *The New York Times*, 29 June 1983, D1.

<sup>6</sup>"Tarifas eléctricas: del descontento a la lucha organizada," 16.

<sup>7</sup>Alonso Trejos, ed., *Geografía Ilustrada Costa Rica* (San José: Trejos Editores, 1991), 83.

<sup>8</sup>Interview with Jorge Muñoz, Development Committee of Hatillo 6, Partido Liberación Nacional, Hatillo, Costa Rica, 23 June 1991.

<sup>9</sup>Interview with Manuel Mora, Partido del Pueblo Costarricense, San Pedro, Costa Rica, 19 June 1991. It is worth noting that the Partido del Pueblo Costarricense was formed by Mora from a faction of the PVP shortly after the conclusion of the electric rate protest. Criticism of the kind Mora expresses here prefigured this split.

<sup>10</sup>Interview with Jorge Muñoz, 23 June 1991.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>"OIJ allanó local de Asociación de Hatillo," *Liberación* 3-9 December 1982, 7.

<sup>13</sup>Interview with Hubert Méndez, National Coordinating Committee, San Pedro, Costa Rica, 5 June 1991, Partido Vanguardia Popular.

<sup>14</sup>Méndez may be referring to the protest that occurred in San José in mid February. *Liberación*, 18 February 1983, 2.

<sup>15</sup>Interview with Jorge Muñoz, 23 June 1991.

<sup>16</sup>"Tarifas eléctricas: del descontento a la lucha organizada," 16.

<sup>17</sup>Interview with Jorge Muñoz, 23 June 1991; "Gobierno investigará los aumentos en agua y luz," *La Nación*, 3 May 1983, 2A.

<sup>18</sup>Interview with Hubert Méndez, 5 June 1991.

<sup>19</sup>Interview with Jorge Muñoz, 23 June 1991.

<sup>20</sup>"Tarifas eléctricas: del descontento a la lucha organizada," 16; "Protestan por excesivos cobros de electricidad," *La Nación*, 3 May 1983, 2A.

<sup>21</sup>Interview with Hubert Méndez, 5 June 1991; "Tarifas eléctricas: del descontento a la lucha organizada," 16.

<sup>22</sup>*Liberación*, 6 May 1983, 3.

<sup>23</sup>Interview with Hubert Méndez, 5 June 1991.

<sup>24</sup>"Tarifas eléctricas: del descontento a la lucha organizada," 17; Interview with Hubert Méndez, 5 June 1991; Interview with Ricardo Thompson, Confederación Costarricense de Trabajadores Democráticos, San José, Costa Rica, 14 June 1991, Partido Liberación Nacional.

<sup>25</sup>"Tarifas eléctricas: del descontento a la lucha organizada," 17-18.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.; Interview with Hubert Méndez, 5 June 1991.

<sup>27</sup>"No pague la luz!" *La Nación*, 3 May 1982, 7A.

<sup>28</sup>Emilio Piedra Jiménez, "Peligro de que se manipulen los movimientos populares," *La República*, 15 May 1983, 11.

<sup>29</sup>"Tarifas eléctricas: del descontento a la lucha organizada," 17.

<sup>30</sup>Interview with Hubert Méndez, 5 June 1991; Interview with Manuel Solera, 13 June 1991.

<sup>31</sup>"Bloqueada vía a Puriscal en protesta contra el ICE," *La Nación*, 8 June 1983,

6A.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup>"Las vías de hecho," *La Nación*, 8 June 1983, 14A.

<sup>34</sup>"El gobierno ordenó suspender el corte de la electricidad," *La República*, 9 June 1983,

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*; "Creecen bloqueos por tarifas," *La Nación*, 9 June 1983, 14A.

<sup>38</sup>"Los bloqueos de carreteras afectaron todo el país," *La República*, 9 June 1983, 3.

<sup>39</sup>"La consecuencia de la debilidad," *La Nación*, 9 June 1983, 14A.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*; "President's Settlement of Power Strike Provokes Criticism," *The Tico Times*, 17 June 1983, 3.

<sup>41</sup>Costa Rica's constitution bans the existence of an army. The country has a civil and rural police force.

<sup>42</sup>Interview with Angel Edmundo Solano, former Minister of Security, San José, Costa Rica, 28 June 1991; "Seguridad insiste en diálogo," *La Nación*, 9 June 1983, 4A.

<sup>43</sup>In Ciudad Colón approximately 35% of domestic accounts were in arrears.

"Government Rolls Back Power Rate," *The Tico Times*, 10 June 1983, 3.

<sup>44</sup>Interview with Ricardo Thompson, 14 June 1991.

<sup>45</sup>"Levantaron barricadas," *La República*, 10 June 1983, 3.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup>"Bajarán tarifas eléctricas," *La Nación*, 10 June 1983, 1A; "ICE anuncia que atrasará cinco proyectos este año," *La Nación*, 11 June 1983, 2A.

<sup>48</sup>"Levantaron barricadas," 3.

<sup>49</sup>"Bajarán tarifas eléctricas," 4A.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup>"Levantaron barricadas," 3.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup>"El gobierno impedirá que se repitan los bloqueos," *La República*, 11 June 1983, 10.

<sup>54</sup>"La ley de la barricada," *La República*, 11 June 1983, 10.

<sup>55</sup>J.A. Sánchez Alonso, "Algo más que una protesta," *La Nación*, 11 June 1983, 14A. Sánchez Alonso is also a Vice President of Movimiento Costa Rica Libre.

<sup>56</sup>Eduardo Ulbarri, "El accionar democrático," *La Nación*, 12 June 1983, 14A.

<sup>57</sup>Interview with Hubert Méndez, 5 June 1991; Interview with Manuel Solera, 13 June

<sup>58</sup>Eduardo Lizano, *Economic Policy Making Lessons From Costa Rica*, (San Francisco: ICS Press, 1991), 17, 28.

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