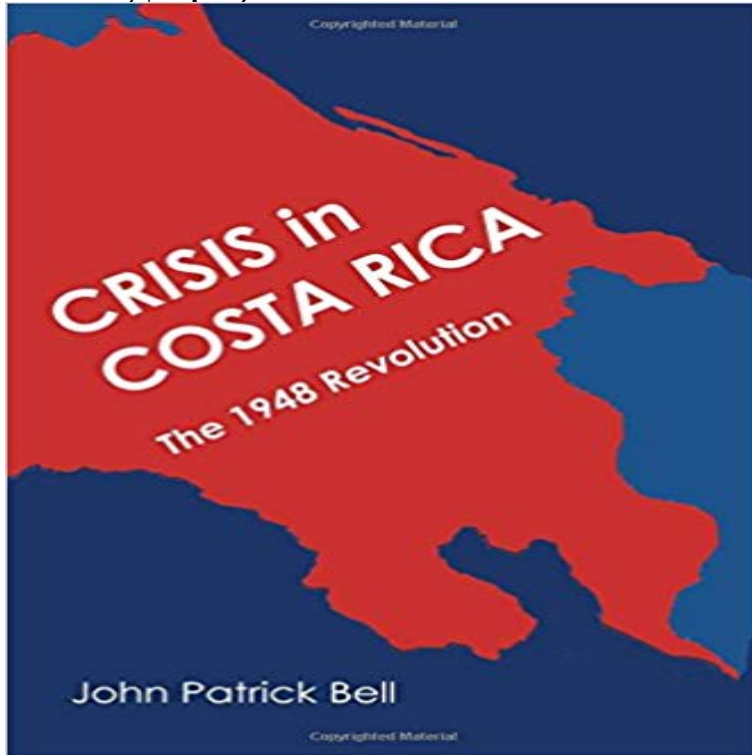


Crisis in Costa Rica: The 1948 Revolution (Lilas Latin American Monograph)



The Costa Rican revolution of 1948 capped an extended period of social tension and political unrest. This book analyzes the circumstances of 1940-1948 that led to a successful armed uprising. A secondary and related theme is the role of Jose Figueres Ferrer in marshaling disparate groups into a movement sufficiently cohesive to seize and hold power. In the 1940s the Communists, the Social Democrats (forerunners of the National Liberation Party), and the followers of Rafael Angel Calderon Guardia within the traditional National Republican party competed to lead the middle sectors demand for modernization. Most accounts of this period have presented the Calderon regime as aristocratic or oligarchic in nature, yet as linked to an international Communist movement. John Patrick Bell, supporting his argument with considerable detail and documentation from newspapers and private papers, argues that Calderon came to depend upon his alliance with the Communist-oriented Vanguardia Popular to counteract the defection of the right wing of the National Republican party and that the sources of the Vanguardia Popular were basically indigenous. The calderonistas comprehensive program for social and economic reform had elicited strong conservative reaction, and this opposition was ready to push the charge of communism against Calderon. Costa Rica thus entered a period of violent political confrontation that culminated in the electoral victory of the conservative candidate, Otilio Ulate Blanco, in February 1948. When the calderonista majority in Congress annulled the election, Jose Figueres Ferrer launched a successful uprising purportedly to force ratification of Ulates election. In reality, however, Figueres had been planning a revolt for nearly six years to redirect modernization along social democratic lines. Figueres and his group, seeking even more radical

reforms than the calderonistas, were able to use the opposition movement to their advantage, simply because they were prepared, even with force, when the right moment arrived. The National Liberation Movement, led to power by Figueres, dominated the national political development of Costa Rica for decades afterward. Eschewing a strictly chronological framework, Bell has utilized a topical structure that facilitates a full description of shifts in foreign policy in the United States and Latin America that affected the outcome of the struggle in Costa Rica.

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