



Lesson 17

The Country Without an Army

At the close of the ceremony honoring him, the dark-haired, **impeccably** dressed forty-six-year-old passed among the many **dignitaries** gathered at San José's Metropolitan Cathedral. He stopped before a frail, elderly man, who had tears of joy streaming down his cheeks, and embraced him. On this occasion, Costa Ricans had gathered to celebrate their president, Oscar Arias Sánchez. Arias was about to leave for Oslo to receive the 1987 Nobel Prize for Peace.

This award was to be **conferred** upon Arias because he was the main architect of an **accord** known as "The Arias Peace Plan." It was signed that year by representatives from Nicaragua, Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Honduras. It **affirmed** the intentions of these countries to make a strong effort to end the armed conflict that had **embroiled** parts of Central America for decades. Arias was uniquely qualified to initiate this effort; for almost forty years, his country had enjoyed both domestic tranquility and a democratic political system. Both of these blessings had been **bequeathed** to Costa Rica by its former president José Figueres Ferrer, the man Arias now embraced.

In the early 1940s, Figueres was a successful but largely unknown coffee planter. He was outraged by the country's corrupt government. Like those that had preceded it, the government rigged elections; it shot or jailed political opponents; it allowed the army to brutalize the population into abject submission. In 1942, Figueres gave a radio speech attacking the country's president. For this act, he was sent into exile. But his courageous defiance made him a national hero. Six years later, he led an armed **coup** that toppled the government.

The year 1948 marked the beginning of a new **epoch** in Costa Rican history. In May of that year, Figueres formed a new government. Within months, his government had transformed Costa Rica. Among the reforms he **instituted** were full voting rights for women, low-cost healthcare, and free and open elections. But his most amazing accomplishment was the **renunciation** of war. This was not mere **rhetoric**. Figueres followed up his declaration by abolishing Costa Rica's army. Taking a sledge hammer, he struck the symbolic blow that began the destruction of the army's headquarters. As head of the National Liberation Party, which he formed, Figueres was three

times elected president of his country. Each reelection further indicated the strong **rapport** that existed between the citizens and this leader.

Now, in 1987, the aged Costa Rican **patriarch** stood on the steps of the Metropolitan Cathedral with Oscar Arias Sánchez. The younger man, he hoped, would carry their dream of peace beyond the nation's frontiers. The former and current presidents acknowledged the cheers of the people as they made their way on foot, and without need of protection, to the National Museum of Culture. This museum was once the site of the **citadel**, headquarters for the army. Observing the two leaders, an onlooker commented, "It was as though George Washington had appeared at the inauguration of John F. Kennedy."

Oscar Arias Sánchez served as president until 1990 and was reelected in 2006. Between terms as president, he used his Nobel prize money to establish the Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress.

- **Answer each of the following questions in the form of a sentence. If a question does not contain a vocabulary word from the lesson's word list, use one in your answer. Use each word only once.**

1. What ended for Costa Rica in 1948?

2. How did the Costa Rican people **affirm** their respect for Figueres and Arias?

3. Was there anything unseemly about Figueres's record as president of Costa Rica? Explain.

4. What is the meaning of **rhetoric** as it is used in the passage?

5. In what way can José Figueres be compared to George Washington?

accord
affirm
bequeath
citadel
confer
coup
dignitary
embroil
epoch
impeccable
institute
patriarch
rapport
renounce
rhetoric

6. How has Costa Rica gotten along with its neighbors in recent decades?

7. Give evidence of the **rapprochement** between Figueres and the people of Costa Rica.

8. Why is the Arias Peace Plan described as an **accord**?

9. Name some of Figueres's **bequests** to Costa Rica.

10. How did Figueres come to power in Costa Rica?

11. What is the meaning of **conferred** as it is used in the passage?

12. Which **dignitaries** signed the Arias Peace Plan?

13. What is the name of the **institute** that celebrates Costa Rican culture?

14. What did the signers of the Arias Peace Plan pledge to **renounce**?

15. Why would the army have had its headquarters in a **citadel**?

FUN & FASCINATING FACTS

- If, after having a “heart-to-heart” talk with someone, you find yourselves in complete agreement, you could say that you are in **accord** with each other. This would be particularly appropriate since the word is formed from the Latin prefix *ad-*, meaning “to,” and the Latin root *cor*, meaning “heart.” Other English words derived from this same Latin root include *courage*, *cordial*, and *cardiac*.

- In French *coup* means “blow” or “strike.” *Coup* in English, meaning “the overthrow of a government,”

is short for the French *coup d'état* (pronounced *kōō dā tä'*), meaning “a sudden blow within the state.”

A *coupe* (pronounced *kōōp*) is a closed, two-door automobile. A *coop* (also pronounced *kōōp*) is a shed where hens are kept.

- The adjective form of **rhetoric** is *rhetorical*. A *rhetorical* question is one that is asked only for effect and does not require an answer. *What sort of person would betray his country for a few dollars?* is a rhetorical question.