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EL SALVADOR

Land of Eternal Spring

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EL SALVADOR



*Colonial architecture
typified in church at
Coatepeque*

"NO MAN dies of hunger, thirst or cold in El Salvador," an English visitor once wrote in some wonderment. His remark was another way of saying that the Central American republic's fertile plateau bordering the Pacific is one of the most favored regions in the Western Hemisphere, and he might have added that no one dies of the heat either. For El Salvador's land is sufficiently elevated to escape the worst aspects of a tropical climate; her volcanoes are more picturesque than dangerous; her forests are lush and lovely but not the hazardous tangle of green which jungles are popularly supposed to be.

Without enough warm lowland to warrant the growing of bananas, El Salvador is the only Central American nation which has never been a factor in the world's market for that fruit. She is, however, predominantly a one-crop country although vigorous efforts are being made to vary her agriculture. Her cash crop for years has been coffee, and even so she has been fortunate because in both good times and bad, the Salvadoran bean has been in constant demand. Exceeded as a producer only by Brazil and Colombia in the Western Hemisphere, El Salvador has not suffered as much as either of her sister republics from fluctuation in prices.

El Salvador is an admirable example of the progress made in inter-American cooperation in little more than twenty years. During World War I she was the only Central American coun-

try to remain neutral; in December, 1941, she joined the others in a prompt declaration of war against the Axis.

Her material contribution to victory lies in an increased output of rubber, experiments with cinchona for quinine, and the production of derris root for the insecticides badly needed by the United Nations.

Pedro de Alvarado, Cortés's lieutenant, brought the Spanish conquest to El Salvador in 1524, overcoming Indian resistance with the ease of long practice, but the land remained isolated through the three centuries of Spanish rule. Governed by a Captain-General whose headquarters were in Guatemala City, the province was little developed and its peaceful history was interrupted only by attacks from pirates during the seventeenth century.

Central America's first battle for independence was fought by Salvadorans under the leadership of a popular parish priest, José Matías Delgado, who led a group of patriots in deposing colonial authorities on November 5, 1811. Spanish rule was restored within a month, but a second uprising took place in 1814 with two patriots, Manuel José Arce and Juan Manuel

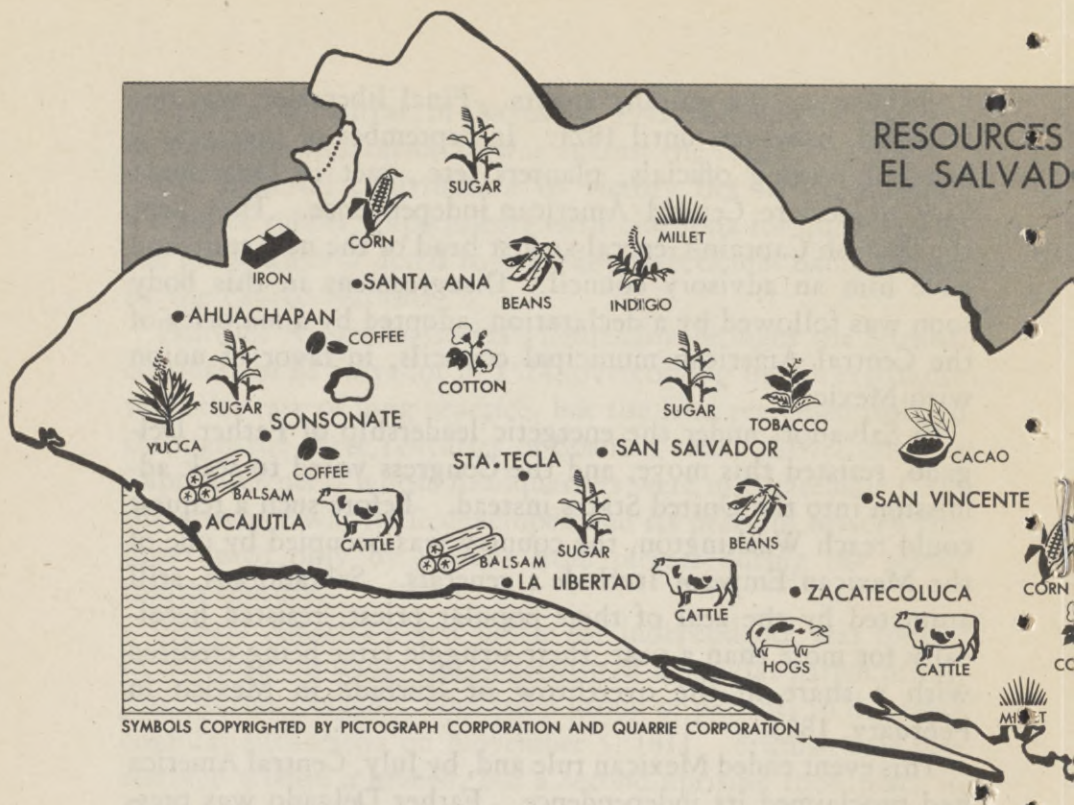


Rodríguez, as the guiding spirits. Final liberation was not achieved, however, until 1821. In September of that year a band of leading officials, planters, etc., met in Guatemala City to declare Central American independence. They kept the Spanish Captain-General as first head of the new state and gave him an advisory council. Disagreement in this body soon was followed by a declaration, adopted by a majority of the Central American municipal councils, in favor of union with Mexico.

El Salvador, under the energetic leadership of Father Delgado, resisted this move, and the Congress voted to seek admission into the United States instead. Before such a request could reach Washington, the country was occupied by one of the Mexican Emperor Iturbide's generals. Salvadorans, still animated by the zeal of their popular priest, resisted heroically for more than a year, their struggle later being credited with a share in the overthrow of Iturbide in Mexico in February, 1823.

This event ended Mexican rule and, by July, Central America had proclaimed its independence. Father Delgado was president of the United Congress which drafted a Constitution for the new state. In 1825, Arce became the first president of the Central American Federation, which survived for sixteen years. The capital was moved in 1834 from Guatemala City to San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador. Four years later the Federal Congress voted to permit each state to form its own government, but it was not until 1841 that El Salvador officially withdrew from the Federation. The concept of union, however, did not die. In El Salvador in particular, political leaders were hopeful that it might be reestablished. There were eight later attempts at union, but none succeeded.

For nearly sixty years after separation, El Salvador's politics were dominated by bitter disagreements between Conservatives and Liberals, the latter often remaining in power with the assistance of presidents of Guatemala. Many leaders ruled despotically, but few for more than two or three years. With the end of the century, political animosities became less



sharp, and the great economic progress which resulted from the introduction of coffee cultivation tended to foster political peace. From 1898 to 1931 no president was deposed by revolution. The period was an era of great progress. The population grew, trade increased, and education was expanded.

In 1931, a military uprising compelled President Arturo Araujo to leave the country. The Vice-President, General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez, filled the remainder of the term and continued in office until 1944. He was succeeded on May 9th by General Andrés Ignacio Menéndez. A new provisional government under Colonel Osmín Aguirre Salinas came into power on October 21, 1944.

Despite El Salvador's comparatively small size, she offers many contrasts in scenic beauty with her volcanoes and volcanic lakes, dense forests, fields of chocolate brown soil and gently sloping hills covered with coffee bushes and trees

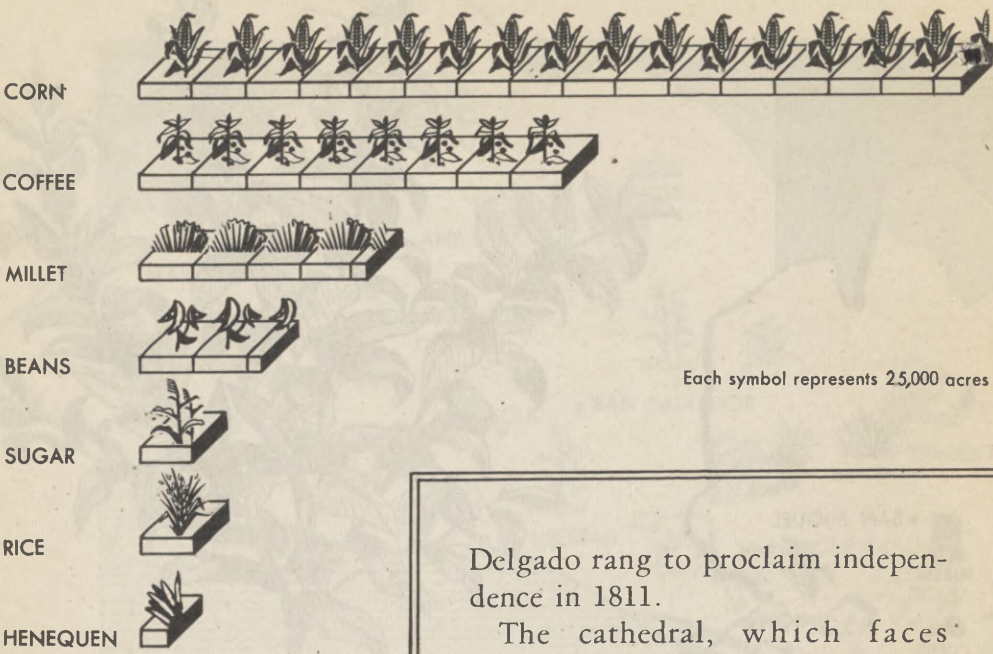


*The coffee plant
and beans*

planted to shade them. The Lempa River crosses the country from north to south through one of the most fertile sections of Central America. Two mountain ranges run the length of the Republic with peaks rising to 8,000 feet. The fertile soil, enriched with lava from the volcanoes, is cultivated even high up on the mountain sides. The plateau, with an average elevation of 2,000 feet, covers most of the country and accounts for its pleasant climate. Many of El Salvador's mountain peaks are old volcanoes; one of them, Mount Izalco, is called the "lighthouse of the Pacific", because every twenty minutes it lets forth flashes of flame seen many miles out at sea.

The city of San Salvador was founded originally in 1525 and a few years later was moved to its present site in a highland river valley surrounded by mountain peaks. Although many of the early colonial buildings have been destroyed during earthquakes, the old church of La Merced is still standing, and from its tower can still be heard the bell which Father

ACREAGE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS



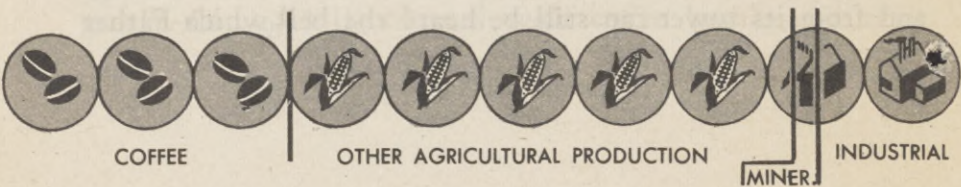
Delgado rang to proclaim independence in 1811.

The cathedral, which faces Parque Barrios, one of the city's many parks, is comparatively new, having been started in 1881.

Spanish Gothic in architecture, it has a nave decorated with a number of outstanding woodcarvings. The National Palace, which is used as the capital building, is a handsome structure in Renaissance style with stately Corinthian columns decorating its main entrances. Five miles outside the city is the National Stadium, built for the 1935 Caribbean Olympic games and now used for baseball and soccer.

A greater acreage is devoted to corn than to coffee, but coffee is more important in El Salvador's economy, at one time accounting for more than 90% of all exports. Increasing diversification of agriculture has made this one crop of relatively less importance in the national life—only 79% of total

THE NATIONAL PRODUCTION OF EL SALVADOR, 1942



Each symbol represents 10% of value of all production

THE PRE-WAR EXPORTS OF EL SALVADOR



exports in 1942—although the actual quantity has been maintained. In 1939 the country shipped 929,863 bags abroad, and in 1943 the amount had risen to 968,517 bags. Grown in large part on small plantations in the upland regions, El Salvador's coffee is sold at a high price in the United States and Europe because of its mild flavor. Since the war, the United States has purchased the coffee formerly sent to Europe. For at least two months of every year almost every other activity in El Salvador is suspended for the coffee picking, in which most of the population joins. The small farmers and their families, as soon as their own berries are picked in November and December, go to work for the large landowners. Beside them will be clerks and shopkeepers from the towns, masons and carpenters, road workers and mechanics, all turned coffee pickers for the season.

The bags in which coffee is shipped were formerly imported from India, but in recent years henequén has been grown in El Salvador and made into bags in a local factory. Production is sufficient to fill domestic needs and to allow some export to neighboring countries where there has been a bag shortage

MORE EXPORTS GO TO THE UNITED STATES



since the early years of the war. The vegetable dye, indigo, was once one of El Salvador's most valuable exports. Since the discovery of synthetic indigo, its importance has declined but the natural product stills finds a market in Peru and Mexico.

El Salvador also exports an ointment called "balsam of Peru" used in surgery and in the treatment of skin diseases for its antiseptic qualities. Mistakenly named for Peru, the product comes from a local tree and is extracted by cutting a square from the bark, catching the sap in a cloth, and boiling the cloth. Stock-raising, which was one of the chief industries in colonial days, is still important, and fills the country's demand for meat and dairy products as well as hides and skins. Gold and silver mines still yield considerable income; in 1940, one of the peak years, gold production was valued at \$1,766,111. A growing number of factories produce cotton yarns, cotton cloth, carpets and rugs, shoes, clothing and furniture.

Of importance for the war and the post-war is the experi



mental agriculture station established by the United States Department of Agriculture and the Government of El Salvador in the San Andrés valley. Already, 12,000 derris root cuttings have been distributed to farmers and planted at the station. Cultivation of derris root has become important with the loss of normal imports from the Far East and its increased need as an insecticide both on farms and on the battlefronts. A rubber nursery will distribute high yielding hevea seedlings to local farmers. The station will also be used to conduct experiments to improve such subsistence crops as corn, beans and rice as well as plant fibers and coffee.

The Pan-American Highway extends almost 200 miles through the length of the country and El Salvador was the first country to finish her share. She now has one of the most complete systems of roads and railways in Central America. There is an excellent motor road from the port of La Libertad to the capital, and railroad facilities are unusually extensive for the size of the country. The Salvador Railway, about ninety miles long, connects the port of Acajutla with Santa Ana and San Salvador, and handles a heavy traffic in coffee shipped from Acajutla. The International Railways of Central America, with 285 miles of track, run the length of the country from the Guatemalan border in the north to the city of La Unión in the south. Much of the progressive development of the Republic can be laid to the transportation system.

