

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY JUDGE CESAR ORDÓÑEZ-QUINTERO,
ON BEHALF OF THE INTER-AMERICAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS,
ON SEPTEMBER 5, 1979, AT THE MEETING HELD BY THE SUPREME COURT
OF ELECTIONS OF COSTA RICA IN HONOR OF THE COURT.**

Mr. President of the Supreme Court of Elections

Distinguished Magistrates

As a result of the fact that the Organization of American States does not possess an electoral system as perfect as that which you so admirably administer, I have unexpectedly found myself a part of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, surrounded by jurists who, by their mere presence, add glory to my modest status as a lawyer.

I am highly honored that the President of the Court should have asked me to speak on its behalf, and I take advantage of the occasion to express to you the admiration and respect that we feel for the exemplary way in which Costa Rica has developed its organization of the judiciary and the administrative and political structures surrounding the electoral process.

The administration of justice and the celebration of popular elections are both vital expressions of the democratic system, and in this wonderful nation -so closely linked throughout history to Colombia, my native country - you have reached that state of absolute perfection in which the judiciary is an autonomous entity, managing its own budget, and the Supreme Court of Elections has become a fourth institutions branch of government, as behooves the nature of suffrage, which is the driving force behind the whole structure of the State.

The decision to choose the capital of Costa Rica as the permanent seat of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights was inevitable, considering the political climate which Costa Rica has attained through the perfection of its institutions and the peace that reigns here. For of all the countries of America, this land, ennobled by the conduct of its citizens, would appear to be the only one in which human rights might achieve full force and effect, making it possible for man to attain his goal of a happy life and an honorable death.

Ranke came to this conclusion, but it had already been fully explained by Guillermo Ferrero when he described the influence that the customs and usage of primitive tribes had on the juridical structure of Imperial Rome; throughout history, we have had repeated proof of the fact that some countries which, because of

their small size (both in land and population) have never figured as leaders of the fortunes of men, nevertheless leave their mark on the political architecture of States responsible for the cultural eras of history.

Costa Rica has countless times been described as the Switzerland of America; however, the time has come to rectify and complement that statement: it is obvious that both Republics have a great similarity as regards the peace reigning within their borders because of their balanced political organization. However, Costa Rica has an advantage over Switzerland, for whereas the latter has not bequeathed any of its experience to Europe, Costa Rica has the firm purpose of delivering all its legal wisdom to the American continent, to serve as a crucible for new conceptions in statemanship.

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights is based on a contractual Pact which implicitly contains the power to bring about the formation of currents of thought aimed at the unification of the national legislations of the hemisphere, at least in all aspects pertaining to the essential principles governing the authentic existence of individual guarantees. It will be an easy task for us, as magistrates and men of law, to further these logical and necessary aims of achieving juridical unity, precisely because we shall be doing so from San José, whose image reflects the spiritual serenity of an illustrious nation that has not sought its destiny in an expansion of power, but in the invincible Christian banner of peace and justice.

This ceremony marks the end of the official functions celebrating the initiation of our task. It is a pleasure and an honor for me, on behalf of the Inter-American Court, to express once again our zeal for the civic standards of our permanent seat and the satisfaction with which we will strive towards the universalization of its liberal spirit throughout the continent, in order to achieve a true flowering of culture.