

EL CONFLICTO HONDURAS—EL SALVADOR Y EL ORDEN JURIDICO INTERNACIONAL—by James Rowles: Editorial Universitario Centroamericana (EDUCA), Costa Rica, 1980. Pp.303.

Sporadic incidents in international relations often pave the road to open hostility, a fact which sometimes obscures other essential aspects of conflict. Rarely, however, is an isolated incident of much relevance to the underlying elements of tension, which are the true sources of confrontation. As Wright observed succinctly, "there is no single cause of war."<sup>1</sup>

The work under review treats a conflict, which, in the view of many, represents a "typical Central American affair." As such, the 1969 confrontation between Honduras and El Salvador frequently has been characterized as illustrative of the contradictions, irrationality, and even absurdity attributed to the region's inhabitants (*e.g.*, Latin temper, unenlightenment, and frivolity). Perhaps the most important contribution of Professor Rowles' work is its serious, scholarly approach to the conflict, a depth of analysis usually reserved for conventional conflicts among more developed nations. It is an analysis that belies the popular stereotype of the conflict.

A series of disharmonious football contests is commonly cited as the cause of this short, bloody confrontation between Central American neighbors. The national teams of Honduras and El Salvador were slated for a three-game playoff round for the 1969 world championship. At the first match, played in Honduras on June 8 and won by the home team, demonstrations against the visiting team and its Salvadorean fans were widely covered in the press and other media. The reaction of the local populace against Hondurans visiting El Salvador for the second game a week later was violent. During these demonstrations, which included desecration of the Honduran flag and national anthem, the government of El Salvador did little to protect Honduran citizens or to punish those accused of crimes in the disturbance. Thus, the crisis that emerged from these events has been dubbed "the football war."

Professor Rowles effectively disputes this simplification with a well-documented account of the conflict's historical background. Specific causes of the ultimate conflict, principally a long-running dispute over the poorly defined border between El Salvador and Honduras, are analyzed. The factors underlying the tension in-

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<sup>1</sup> Q. WRIGHT, A STUDY OF WAR 1284 (2d ed. 1965).

clude continuing political instability in both countries, demographic and geographical distribution of populations, uncontrolled immigration of Salvadoreans living and working in Honduras, a growing perception of inequality and shortcomings in the Central American Common Market, and the ineffectual mediation efforts of the Organization of American States. Of critical importance among these factors is the apparent failure of the Central American Common Market (CACM) to fulfill the expectations of its region. Professor Rowles cites Wyonczek's article, *The Rise and Fall of Latin American Integration*,<sup>2</sup> and appears to agree with its conclusion that Central America is still as backward as it was before the Common Market's inception. "[T]he message seems clear. Economic integration is a poor substitute for socio-political reforms."<sup>3</sup>

Because it is obvious—axiomatic, many would say—that any meaningful effort to achieve regional economic integration must have the support of the United States, Professor Rowles' brief examination of the U.S. role in the CACM is most interesting. The author gives credit to the United States for being reasonably open to the idea of economic integration once the CACM was established, and presents statistics detailing United States contributions to regional organizations pursuing that goal, including the Central American Bank for Economic Integration and the Fund for Central American Economic Integration. On the negative side, Mr. Rowles points out the inhibiting effect of opposition to "integration industries," a concept considered anti-competitive by the United States.

Following this background, the author traces the course of deteriorating relations between the two countries, a progression in which armed confrontation became inevitable. Perhaps most interesting to the layman is the analysis of the role of the football contests in an already volatile situation—a situation further exacerbated by opportunistic maneuvering of leaders on both sides who attempted to gain political advantages from the disturbances. Beginning with the events of June 8, 1969, Professor Rowles narrates the course of conflict and mediation through July 30. A detailed account is presented of the efforts toward conciliation of the Organization of American States and its agencies. Their attempts to halt the invasion of Honduras, which occurred on July 14, and

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<sup>2</sup> 9 J. COMMON MARKET STUD. 49 (1970).

<sup>3</sup> Translated from Spanish by the reviewer.

to convince the invaders to return to El Salvador presents a case study in conflict resolution, one in which it appears that internationally supervised mediation efforts were more effective in containing an open conflict than in preventing its outbreak.

Chapter VII, which is of particular relevance to lawyers and political scientists, contains an examination of the application of international legal pressures in the crisis. Professor Rowles provides a legal evaluation of opposing claims, including claims of El Salvador relating to the protection of its citizens in Honduras and general claims invoking the American and Universal Declarations of Human Rights. In addition, the chapter evaluates the effectiveness of international legal mechanisms through the period of escalating tensions to eventual confrontation and presents a brief study of political considerations of the United States and other countries in the resolution of the problem.

A final development too recent for inclusion in the book occurred on October 30, 1980, when Honduras and El Salvador signed a treaty in Lima, Peru officially ending the dispute. The fact remains, as observed by the author in his conclusion, that this was perhaps the first real demographic war in Latin America in the twentieth century. Whether it was a preview of developments to be expected is a matter of speculation, although the current fighting in El Salvador bodes ill for the entire region.

Professor Rowles' work certainly belongs in any library collecting material on international relations. Latin Americanists and students of international law should find the work particularly valuable. An English edition will be well received.

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