Abstract .

D. Phil. thesis . Conservative Party in Colombia , 1930-1953 .

This thesis consists of a set of interrelated essays that illust -rate the persistence of the Conservative party in Colombia in the early twentieth century . No particular landmarks or turning-points can be identified in recent Colombian history . The dates 1930 and 1953 are , therefore , in part , dates of convenience : but they carry some , if limited , significance . In 1930 the Conservative party was ousted from office after over forty years of office , and was replaced by a coalition government with a Liberal president . In 1953 a Conservative government was again removed from power : on this occasion by a military government with an initially Conservative complexion . The period chosen makes possible the study of the Conservative party in contrasting postures : in opposition , in power and in coalition with Liberals . Because the period of study is no more clearly defined than this references outside it have been made freely

The work has been organized in the following manner :

Chapter One performs a double function . It contains both a general narrative of political events at a national level and an examination of mutations in the relationships between and within the elites of the two parties : Conservative and Liberal . An extensive treatment serves to underline the flexibility and durability of the Conservative party : the strivings of its members after a distinct party identity , their attitudes to coalition , the practice of co-option and economic policy are discussed . Regional and local considerations have been mentioned in this section only where they bear immediately on party relationships at a national level .

The Colombian political elite , in the period under review , put a heavy stress upon abstract political speculation . Chapter Two gives an account of how ideological postures were used to substantiate partisan and personal positions and of how ideological restatements

gave sporadic sensations of renewal to the Conservative party .

Chapters Three and Four consider the relationships between the Conservative party and principal institutions - the Church , the army and the police . The role of the Church was crucial because it was expected by Conservatives - at least , until 1949 - to act as the primary bulwark of the social and political order . Despite its claim to a single identity , the Church rarely behaved coherently , largely as a consequence of contrasting regional patterns of social , religious and political behaviour . The ways these were projected nationally are considered at length .

The failure of the Church to maintain the public order led Conservatives to fall back on the army and police . Liberals , for much of the period studied , considered the army to be a Conservative institution and built up the police as a countervailing force . CertainConservatives strove to preserve the army as a partisan institution , and , from 1946 , tried to convert the police force into a Conservative instrument . The destabilizing impact of the relationships of the parties with the coercive arms of the state is considered ; and the relationship of civilian Conservative and miltary leaders beforethe coup of 1953 is stressed .

Chapter Five contains a brief study of Conservatives and elections . It falls into two parts : some qualitative statements about electoral behav -iour are substantiated by some quantitative data .

Chapt er Six considers the national leadership of the Conservative party by focusing upon two of its outstanding figures : Laureano Gómez , unequalled leader in the period undertaken and president in 1950 , who represented the tradition of confrontation at its most persistent and articulate ; and Mariano Ospina Pérez , president in 1946 and arguably the most important Conservative figure after 1953 , who represented a tradition of conciliation and concession . Some conclusions about patterns of leadership with reference to other Conservative leaders then follow .

Conservative activity in the regions is considered in Chapter Seven. The department of Antioquia receives particular attention , and the Santanders some . This section stresses variations in political style and underlines the proclivity

underlines the proclivity of the party structure to fission and breakdown.

Some general perspectives on the Conservative party then follow . Appendix One contains a brief account of the role of the press in Colombia . Appendices Two and Three serve to illustrate the election materials in Chapter Five . An extensive bibliography should go some way towards correcting the paucity of bibliographical aids on twentieth-century Colombia .

CONSERVATIVE PARTY IN COLOMBIA, 1930-1953

Thesis submitted for

the degree of

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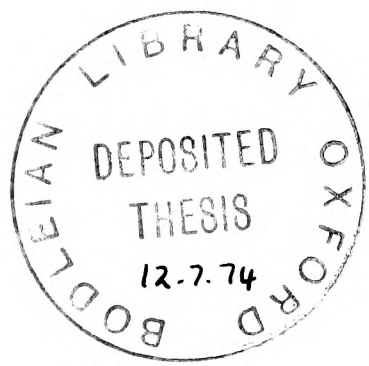


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Preface

Colombians write little history and less political science. Their country can hardly afford to support a historical profession. History is as unattractive to the professor who cannot make a reputation from it as to the undergraduate who cannot build a career from it. Each generation produces a figure who towers over all other writers of history in Colombia - Luis Ospina Vásquez and Jaime Jaramillo Uribe spring to mind - but none sadly has yet generated a school of rigorous historical analysis.

Political science is equally fragile in Colombia. After years of painstaking spadework the herculean efforts of Fernando Cepeda Ulloa at the University of the Andes in Bogotá are beginning to bear fruit. Yet the political scientist confronts the same obstacles in Colombia as the historian. There hardly exists the belief that a non-partisan analysis can be attempted, even less completed: politics - past or present - is understood only to embrace partisan traditions; it can be only Liberal or Conservative, or perhaps Falangist or Communist in slant.

Though there is no tradition of critical analysis of recent history in Colombia, there is much reference to history - and, in times past, and especially the period encompassed by this thesis, there was more. Newspaper articles, especially in the 1940's, acted as a surrogate for historical analysis: some sentimentalized the past, others elevated heroes or castigated villains, others still recalled victories and triumphs with nostalgia. Most authors were party apologists: their prime purpose was unmistakable - to justify present political actions in past terms. They presented their arguments as self-evident and confidently regarded their conclusions as incontrovertible. The newspapers to which they contributed postured as custodians of authentic party traditions and could not,

therefore, afford to be seen questioning those very traditions. The partisan versions of history won veneration: they were passed from generation to generation through the press, verbally and through works of hagiography. The interpretative formulae which they repeat in 1973 are essentially the same as in 1943 or 1913: they alter only in the virulence with which they are expressed, and in line with journalistic fashions. The mere suggestion that journalistic formulae are contrived provokes a prickly party - consciousness in most educated Colombians. Only since the 1960's has the passion for projecting current rivalries - familial and religious as well as political - into the past (or those of the past into the present) begun to abate: how far this change in attitudes can be perceived at a local level as well as a national is unclear and would be worthy of thorough study. Perhaps the election campaign of 1974 will disclose the extent to which old animosities are still being replayed and how far they continue to condition political behaviour at all levels.

This thesis is an endeavour to escape from a partisan perspective. I have tried to outline the history of the Conservative party without imposing a preconceived interpretation. I have tried, too, to escape as far as possible from an excessive dependence upon the perspectives of foreigners. Colombians have, by Latin American criteria, possessed a particularly literate elite: my study stems from their writings. In only one area have I been compelled to make heavy use of diplomatic dispatches: that is in considering the army - I have found the government <u>memorias</u> particularly uninformative. Elsewhere I have used diplomatic sources and travellers accounts only to confirm and add nuance and detail to Colombian materials.

Private papers have not been available to me: in a country without a tradition of writing of recent history this is hardly surprising; all the more so since most of the major families in politics in the

'forties are active today. I have supplemented printed government and press sources with ad hoc interviews. Though memories are frequently short, interviews have been useful to confirm published materials and also for understanding the years 1949-53 when censorship was endemic. I have interlaced points arising from interview and personal conversation within the text without making explicit references for reasons of confidentiality. I have neither used questionnaires, nor sought systematic results from interviews: these have been beyond both my time and resources; and I have, in any event, little confidence in questionnaires on retrospective themes.

The state of research in Latin American studies is such that this thesis cannot be presented as a case-study in the Latin American Right and conservative-Catholic movements: the empirical work necessary for any general statements has not been done. Similar phenomena to those described here have existed elsewhere: in Jalisco (Mexico), in parts of Bolivia and especially in upland Ecuador: but none has been adequately studied.

Colombian studies are in their infancy. The policy of canalizing funds and research students to those countries that have been more thoroughly worked and where there is, anyway, a locally established profession of historian and sometimes of political scientist, persists. A few historians and political scientists in the United States - notably David Bushnell, J. León Helguera, Frank Safford and Robert H. Dix - have produced valuable work: but their cumulative impact cannot be expected to compare with that achieved in the Mexican literature even by the early 1950's. In view of these disparities, this thesis can be only preliminary and tentative. Rigorous analysis of small-town politics, the local Church and city barrio politics merit urgent attention. I hope to consider some of them on another occasion.

Acknowledgements.

A thesis is not the place to catalogue personal debts. I shall record only academic ones. I wish to thank those at the Centre of Latin American Studies, St. Antony's College, Oxford and previously at the Institute of Latin American Studies of the University of London who have encouraged me in my Colombian studies. In Oxford, Colin Steele has always been bibliographically suggestive; the omissions of this thesis would be even more glaring without his help. Roger Brew has been consistently helpful, especially in matters Antioqueño. I have enjoyed many conversations with Marco and Alicia Palacios.

In the United States J. León Helguera of Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, was unstintingly generous in his hospitality and, above all, in granting me access to his unequalled private archive of Colombiana.

In Bogotá Fernando Cepeda Ulloa and his colleagues at the Department of Political Science at the Universidad de los Andes were most kind, tolerant and long-suffering. I recall conversations with Mario Laserna, founder of the university, with much pleasure.

In Medellín I remember the generosity of Father Carlos E. Mesa, c.m.f., of the Archivo de Historia Eclesiástica at the Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana. I appreciate this all the more because my interpretation of many events of the twentieth century would not be his. I am indebted too to Luis Ospina Vásquez for his encouragement.

My main debt, however, is to Malcolm Deas of St. Antony's College, Oxford, who has gone far beyond the duties of a thesis supervisor in giving me encouragement and support.

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Oxford, November 1973

Symbols

A.S.R.E. Archivo del Secretariado de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico City.

D.S. U.S.A., Department of State, Washington, D.C.

H.A.H.R. Hispanic American Historical Review.

J.I.A.S. Journal of Inter-American Studies.

Mem....guerra....Memoria del ministro de guerra al Congreso, followed by date.

Mensaje....Mensaje del presidente de la república al Congreso, followed by date.

P.R.O. Public Record Office, London.

R.J. Revista Javeriana.

Date-Chart

1886 -	Regeneration settlement reached by President Rafael Núñez and Conservative leader, Miguel Antonio Caro. Constitution of 1886.
1902 -	Conclusion of War of Thousand Days. Loss of Panamá.
1903 -	Peace of Wisconsin between Liberals and Conservatives.
1904/9	General Rafael Reyes President. Conservative government of military leaning with some Liberal support.
1909/10	Ramón González Valencia, acting President.
1910/14	Carlos E. Restrepo President. Republican government of civilian complexion depending on informal alliances with Liberals and Conservatives. Constitutional Amendment.
1914/18	José Vicente Concha President. Conservative government.
1918/21	Marco Fidel Suárez President. Conservative government.
1921/22	Jorge Holguín Acting President. Conservative government. Settlement with United States.
1922/26	Pedro Nel Ospina President. Conservative government.
1926/30	Miguel Abadía Méndez President. Conservative government.
1928/29	Banana zone crisis.
1930	Electoral defeat of Conservatives.
1930/34	Enrique Olaya Herrera President. Government of 'National Concentration' based on Conservative-Liberal coalition with Liberal President and, until 1933, Conservative Congressional majority.
1932/33	Leticia War with Perú.
1934/38	Alfonso López Pumarejo President. Liberal Government of 'Revolution on the march'.
1936	Constitutional Reform.

1938/42	Eduardo Santos President. Liberal Government.
1942/45	Alfonso López Pumarejo, second term of office. Liberal Government.
1944	Kidnapping of López and detention of Laureano Gómez opposition leader.
1945/46	Alberto Lleras Camargo Interim President. Liberal Government with some Conservative representatives.
1946/50	Mariano Ospina Pérez President. 'National Union' Government with Conservative Presidency and Liberal Congressional majority.
1948	'Bogotazo': assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, Liberal leader and riot in Bogotá.
1949	Closure of Congress.
1950	Laureano Gómez President. Conservative Government of 'Revolution in order'.
1951/53	Roberto Urdaneta Arbeláez interim President. Conservative Government.
1952/53	Campaign of Mariano Ospina Pérez for re-election. Decision of Laureano Gómez to resume presidential office frustrated by military coup led by General Gustavo Rejas Pinilla.
1953/57	Gustavo Rojas Pinilla President. Military Government of Conservative leaning with some Liberal support.
1957/58	Interim government by military junta.
1958/74	'National Front' Governments: Conservative-Liberal Coalitions.

Chapter One

Elite Conservatives and Elite Liberals

1. The Parties in 1930.

The Conservative party was weaker in 1930 than at any moment since 1902. Party confidence, at a peak under Concha, was slowly eroded in the 'twenties and shattered by the defeat in the 1930 election. The facade of Catholic moralism that had surrounded the governments of Concha and Suárez had evaporated. The Ospina government had no answer when accused of preferring material advancement to Catholic idealism. The party divided over who should gain the lion's share of the U.S. indemnity. It divided again over candidates for the 1926 election: and a split was averted only by prompt action on the part of the Nuncio. Party bosses were now more mobile: they could both afford to travel more often and had the means - aviation rather than railways - of rapid movement; and they were more alert than before to regional disparities of wealth and more audacious in pressing central government for favours.[1] The artificially favourable circumstances of the early 1920's generated an overconfidence that was exposed by the performance of the Abadía government: indecisiveness provoked a scramble of competing interests for the national budget.[2] The Abadía administration, unable to contain the ambitions of contract - hungry factions, exasperated the political nation by the haphazard selectivity of its public works legislation. Regional and pressure-group alliances hardened around competing Conservative presidential candidates - Guillermo Valencia and Alfredo Vásquez Cobo. Abadía did little to reconcile warring factions: he was popularly believed to be, as the cartoonist Rendón

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1. For aviation see Herbert Boy, Una historia con alas (2nd ed., Bogotá, 1963) esp. p. 115.

2. Euripedes Caballero R., La administración Abadía Méndez contra la historia (Cali, 1930) is a rare defence of the Abadía regime.

portrayed him in El Tiempo, asleep and unwilling to be disturbed. The capital-city Liberal press, whose influence was steadily growing, conjured up a composite picture of graft, mismanagement, incompetence and inspired violence. Many disaffected Conservatives were persuaded of the validity of the El Tiempo critique by the events of 1928-9.

Even with improving communications Bogotá continued to receive inadequate political information from the departments. The Minister of War, General Ignacio Rengifo, put political instability to his own ends. Knowing the proclivity of the national elite to believe in the slenderest of evidence, he built up a national Communist scare. After working up hysteria over bombs in the sewers of Bogotá he demanded an increase in the standing-army. The bogey of social revolution was swallowed whole by Abadía who interpreted limited, localized violence - in the towns of El Líbano in Tolima, on the Puerto Wilches railway and in Santander - as the product of "Bolshevik movements going in the right direction to subvert the universal order." It was true that a Partido Revolucionario Socialista had been formed, had manufactured a small number of bombs, had established weekly newspapers in Cali, Medellín and Bucaramanga and had, with a few sympathetic Liberals, looked to the revolutionary overthrow of the government.[1] But it was also true that its organizational achievement was scattered and unsustained and its influence negligible. Civilian Conservatives soon grew suspicious of officially-sponsored talk of general Communist incitement and agitation. The powers which the Rengifista faction in Congress were demanding for their leader were clearly excessive.[2] The swaggering

1. El Tiempo, 2,7,11 July, 1928, 9,10 Feb., 18 May, 1929; Mensaje presidencial al Congreso Nacional en las sesiones ordinarias de 1927 (Bogotá, 1927) p. 8; Robert J. Alexander, Communism in Latin America (New Brunswick, N.J., 1957), pp. 51, 245.

2. (República de Colombia) Disposiciones sobre defensa social y orden pública (pamphlet, Popayán, 1929)

style of the Rengifistas seemed more dangerous than any subversive Communist menace: it looked increasingly like a bogey contrived to propel Rengifo to presidential power through a coup originating in the ministry of war or through an unassailable military candidature in the 1930 election. In alliance with likeminded Liberals the civilian Conservatives put up a prolonged Congressional resistance to the ironically named "heroic projects" and fought them in the cabinet.

The brutal mishandling of the strike of banana workers in the Santa Marta area strengthened the civilian case.[1] Congress - and, in particular, the rising rhetorical star Jorge Eliécer Gaitán - who displayed an initiative rare amongst Congressmen in visiting the remote banana zone to investigate conditions and complaints for himself - seized on the episode to embarrass Rengifo.[2] Political debate reached a pitch unknown since the fall of Reyes. Its content was tired, lame and predictable: the need for the Conservative party to live up to its slogan, 'liberty and order'; the abuse of authority; the supremacy of civilian values; the inadequacy and incompetence of the party leaderships. Even the old warhorse of centralism versus federalism was revived.[3] The national and capital-city elites were distressed at the general drift of politics. Nationally, militarism seemed in the ascendancy; in Bogotá itself a Conservative city boss, Arturo Hernández, remembered by his nickname Chichimoco, was putting the perquisites of city management, especially in tramways, to personal electoral advantage on an hitherto unknown scale.

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1. Judith White, "The United Fruit Company in the Santa Marta Banana Zone, Colombia: Conflicts of the '20's" (unpublished B. Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1971) pp. 15-6, 19, 74-109. A North American author wrote in the same year of the United Fruit Company, "Some day it will be recognized as one of the great civilizing forces of the century...." Samuel Crowther, The Romance and rise of the American tropics (New York, 1929), p. 182. United Fruit does not believe that that day has yet come: it does not admit historians to its archives, and, indeed, claims it has none.
2. Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, Las lágrimas de sangre (Bogotá, 1929)
3. Universidad, 16,23 Mar., 13 Apr., 25 May, 1929.

Elite dissatisfaction reached a crescendo when a student, whose father was a friend of Abadía, was killed in a peaceful protest in Bogotá. The opponents of Rengifo claimed that inspired violence was no longer confined to the national periphery. Between 8 and 10 June, 1929, the civilian elite, including the aristocratic Gun Club, led a bipartisan, multi-class demonstration of civic solidarity against a government which it stigmatized as in the hands of a military clique.[1] The degree of civilian consensus in the capital was impressive. The government withdrew the police from the streets and confined the army to barracks for fear of confrontation. Abadía was pressed into removing both Rengifo and his henchman, General Carlos Cortes Vargas who had been immediately responsible for the banana zone brutality and, after it, had been injudiciously rewarded with the post of national police chief.[2] The episode fortified civilian self-esteem but it damaged the Conservative party irreparably by exposing frictions between its civilian and military wings which neither Abadía nor the Conservative candidates of 1930 healed.

Alarm over military intentions coincided with mounting economic difficulties. The unpredictability of urban and rural employment and regional fluctuations in prices were reflected in short-lived outbreaks of local restlessness. The Depression soon aggravated the situation. The business elite whose confidence stemmed from coffee success was severely demoralized when the international coffee price fell by fifty per cent in 1928-9. Because it lacked both persuasive orators and a powerful press to present its case, the Abadía government

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1. Ibid., 15 June, 1929; Alejandro Vallejo, Bogotá, 8 de junio (Bogotá, 1929). For an example of Conservative protest against government repression outside Bogotá, see Abel Carbonell, Por la doctrina (Barranquilla, 1929), pp. 52-3.

2. For his version of the banana events, see Cortes Vargas, Los sucesos de las bananeras (Bogotá, 1929). For a Rengifista apologia, see Hernando Navía Varón, Caudillo y gobernante - Doctor Ignacio Rengifo Borrero (Cali, 1964.)

shouldered most of the opprobrium for a Depression which no Colombian government could have predicted. It was blamed too for slowness in passing ameliorating legislation when this was, in fact, obstructed by its Congressional opponents.

In the mid-twenties only a skeletal Liberal party survived. The party leadership was despised by younger generations. Alfonso López Pumarejo in 1927 regretted that Herrera had refused to co-operate with the Ospina regime: the "definitive fusion of Conservatism with official Liberalism...(was) convenient and necessary." Gabriel Turbay and Gaitán , both Liberal candidates for the presidency in 1946, wrote of Liberalism as a revolutionary party gone evolutionist and announced their adherence to socialism.[1] One member of the Bogotá Liberal Directorate saw the eclipse of the party as an aspect of the decline of international Liberalism.[2] But, in 1929, with the government discredited, the Conservative party riven by factionalism, the army in popular disgrace and a depressed economy deepening sentiments of cultural pessimism, López and El Tiempo saw the moment was ripe for Liberal resurgence. Enthusiasm at the 1929 Liberal Convention surpassed the most optimistic expectations. Its product was a Liberal candidate on a conciliatory ticket of National Concentration, Enrique Olaya Herrera.

The Liberal party had regained the confidence and optimism which the Conservatives had lost: it set about re-establishing old bonds between the centre and periphery and it campaigned vigorously. Olaya was suspected in both parties of being overfriendly towards the United States. El Tiempo had expressed concern at his "disconcerting statements" as minister in Washington on U.S. interventionism in countries

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1. Universidad, 25 June, 2 July, 1927, 14 Apr., 12 May, 1928.
2. Antonio José Iregui, El espíritu liberal contemporáneo y el mensaje a la convención nacional (Bogotá, 1929), p. 5.

that the United States government considered unstable.[1] But, otherwise, Olaya was an unexceptionable candidate. He gave an impression of singlemindedness and unimaginative solidity. He could lure some Conservatives, like the Diario del Pacífico group in Cali, away from the factional infighting of the Vásquistas and Valencistas: and he had the formidable backing of the Liberal veterans of the civil war.[2]

The fall of the Conservative party was not merely a product of the Depression. The reasons for Conservative collapse were deeply embedded in the 1900's and 1910's. The association of Valencia with Reyes was unforgotten; old allegations of venality against Vásquez were circulated.[3] Factional alignments in these decades coloured subsequent personal relationships; no concerted effort was made to remove the sting from individual hatreds. Yet Conservative predominance might have survived but for the overconfidence of 1926-7 when the Liberal party appeared finally to have been reduced to a client rump and Conservative leaders felt secure enough to jettison the system of co-option of dissident factions that had worked since 1910. The Conservative party fell by its own criteria. It had failed in 1929 to keep public order; it reduced the pace of public works construction; it seemed about to default on the public debt; and, as will be discussed elsewhere, it failed to co-operate with the Church.[4] To a younger generation the Conservative party seemed to lack the vigour and intellectual equipment to overcome the impact of

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1. El Tiempo, 5 Feb., 1928
2. José Manuel Pérez Sarmiento, Reminiscencias liberales (Bogotá, 1938?) pp. 201 ff.
3. Gabriel Castro and José Manuel Arango R., La salvación de Colombia (Medellín, 1930?), p. 112; Mario Ibero, Andanzas (Bogotá, 1930), p. 8.
4. Sonja Karsen, Guillermo Valencia - Colombian Poet (New York, 1951), pp. 22-7
See pp. 172-5.

world crisis: it had become habit-ridden and routine-bound.[1] Liberalism seemed vital, and, to generations without a memory of a Liberal president, original. Conservative complacency was shaken: but its political arrangements survived.

2. The Conservative Elite and Coalition, 1930-46.

The same themes recur in the history of the Conservative party during the period studied: the tension between the advocates of coalition government that would surmount crisis and the intransigent elements of the party who sought to "purify" it from Liberal influence; the problem of defining the party, of originality and distinctiveness; the question of unity and of economic policy.

The transition from the Conservative Abadía to the Liberal Olaya went smoothly.[2] Despite initial fears expressed, in particular, by Carlos E. Restrepo, that Olaya had lost touch with Colombian idiosyncrasies while overseas, Olaya proved generally successful in transforming the broad-based appeal of his "National Concentration" ticket into a workable coalition of Liberals and Conservatives of most factions. Sensitive to the small, apparently insignificant political shifts upon which the fragile stability of the Colombian state depended, Olaya steered elegantly between the extremes of both parties and isolated his most vociferous critics in each. Olaya had an ambiguous appeal: his militant record in the War of the Thousand Days and the demonstrations against Reyes appealed to veterans; his insistence on civilian supremacy and past association with the decidedly anti-militarist Restrepo government attracted civilians. He seemed the best guarantee of continued civilian rule to the Bogotá and Medellín

1. Gilberto Alzate Avendaño, Sus mejores páginas (Manizales, 1961), p. 57.

2. A convenient character-sketch of Olaya is included in Alberto Soto, Fullerías (Bogotá, 1932), pp. 83-95. For the transition, see Arturo Quijano, Notas politicas del día (Bogotá, 1930).

city elites whose fears of a Rengifo-style militarism were revived as civilian governments in other South American countries collapsed under the pressure of the Depression. Olaya chose his ministers of war carefully: first, Agustín Morales Olaya, a Vásquista Conservative and cousin of Olaya; and, later, a Liberal confidant, Carlos Adolfo Urueta, former secretary and son-in-law of Uribe Uribe. Their presence in the ministry of war guaranteed loyalty to Olaya; neither provoked the officer corps by purging Conservatives or swamping the ranks with unemployed Liberals. It was a reflexion of the success of Olaya's balancing that, despite the Depression, no major radical or revolutionary movement on a national or near-national scale, like Aprismo in Perú, was thrown up in Colombia. The Liberal faction of Alfonso López pre-empted most radical sentiment. A popular movement Unirismo, adopting Gaitán as its leader, did emerge: but it was short-lived and it never established itself outside Bogotá, Medellín and small areas of Cundinamarca and Tolima. The diminutive Communist party, though making a permanent and overpublicized impression in the village of Viotá, had no permanent electoral strength in the cities and less in the countryside.[1]

When Olaya's bipartisan policy seemed to be breaking down in 1932, he was rescued by war with Perú over the Leticia boundary. The outbreak of war suspended intra-party hostilities, terminated violence in the East of Colombia, reduced the critics of "National Concentration", to silence, provoked discussion of an extension of Olaya's term of office, and enabled him to co-opt retired Conservatives into the national cause. Vásquez was recalled from the legation in Paris to lead the armed forces in the Putumayo; and Valencia served on the committee in Rio that negotiated the settlement with Perú. War revived the

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1. El Tiempo, 14 July, 1931, 2, 3 Aug., 1932.

reputation of Olaya: his apparent decisiveness won the acclaim of the veterans; his preference for a negotiated solution reassured the civilian elites. His conduct of the war ensured the pre-eminence of coalition sentiment in the Conservative party in 1933, and he remained a stronger force in the party than any Conservative leader.

The position of Olaya in the Conservative party was slowly eroded: first by the onslaughts of Laureano Gómez, ex-minister under Ospina, then by his departure from power and loss of government patronage. During the "revolution on the march" of Alfonso López, Olaya remained popular among more conciliatory Conservatives and a likely coalition candidate for the 1938 presidential election: but he died in 1937.

Eduardo Santos inherited the Republican tradition of Restrepo and Olaya. Through his newspaper El Tiempo he had built himself up as champion of the inherited respectability. A Liberal, he claimed to act as president above party. He entered into negotiations with Conservative chiefs, and an alliance seemed probable: but resistance to a coalition was too strong both from Liberal caciques who did not want to share government patronage with Conservatives and from Conservative chiefs who feared being supplanted in the party by a Santista faction like the Olayista faction of the 'thirties. The fall of government revenues caused some crisis in the departments: Atlántico was obliged to reduce its number of government employees; Santander had a deficit of one million pesos, and had to suspend its teacher-training and school meal schemes.[1] Pressure for a coalition solution to overcome economic crisis was, however, balanced by the lessening attraction of government employment in a period of falling revenues. The need for a coalition solution was obviated by a Liberal government pursuing an unprovocative immobiliste policy.

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1. R.J., xiii (1940), Suplemento, 105.

During the second government of López politics were unsettled from the top by a sense of treachery and a ready resort to the vocabulary of betrayal. Calls for coalition to overcome crisis in government were again voiced. But the conciliatory faction in the Conservative party led by the erstwhile collaborators of Olaya, Roberto Urdaneta Arbeláez, Estebán Jaramillo and Francisco de Paula Pérez, lacked a popular following. The conciliatory faction was convinced after the Pasto coup that a consensus within the political elite was necessary if the polity was to be re-stabilized: but the personal acrimony and bitterness that had characterized politics before the kidnapping of López remained. The López government grasped desperately for political expedients to give the impression of action. It put out feelers to Conservatives. El Tiempo and the conciliatory Conservatives, especially Urdaneta, seized upon Communist successes in the C.T.C. and the municipal elections of 1944 to launch a bipartisan anti Communist crusade.[1] Party collaboration, mooted since 1938, now seemed a practical proposition. López, concluding that his own presence in power was the sole obstacle to reconciliation between the parties, resigned. His assessment was partly correct; with the focus of Laureanista antipathies removed, elite politics were briefly tranquillized.[2] Communists, alarmed that elite effort would now be concentrated against them, called for a civic strike against Falangist dictatorship, the failure of which exposed their own organizational weakness.[3]

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1. Communist electoral strength reached an unsurpassed peak of forty thousand in 1944 when the vice-presidency of the municipal councils of Bogotá, Barranquilla and Ibagué and the second vice-presidency of the Valle Assembly were occupied by Communists. R.J., xxxi (1944), Suplemento, 222.
2. República de Colombia, Presidencia, Documentos relacionados con la renuncia del Presidente López y el orden público (Bogotá, 1945) El Siglo, 1 Dec.,1942,23 June,1943,5 Sept.,1945; El Colombiano Medellín, 2,5 Sept.,1945.
3. Diario Popular, 6 May,1944. They lacked funds and propaganda, devoted an excessive percentage of their resources to maintaining the Diario Popular of small circulation. Their strength in the C.T.C. was uncertain and their infiltration of the government was superficial. The party failed, above all, to keep contact with the urban workers except at election time.

During the caretaker government of Alberto Lleras three Conservative ministers were employed and hostilities between the parties at an elite level abated. The division of the Liberal party in the presidential elections of 1946 meant its defeat by the Conservative candidate, Mariano Ospina Pérez, who, adopting the López formula of a National Union government, seemed about to capture the consensual Republican tradition from the Liberals.[1]

3. The Conservative Elite: Purity, Definition, Originality, 1930-46.

Advocates of the alternative strain of Conservative thinking that emphasized a purified partisan tradition untainted by Liberalism were in disarray in 1930. Those associated with the factioneering of 1929 could not speak credibly of purity. Isolated groups of Conservative outs - the 'Leopards' in Tolima, Caldas and Cundinamarca, the El Colombiano group in Medellín and the faction surrounding Rengifo and Primitivo Crespo in the Valle - embittered at exclusion from office, agitated for Conservative withdrawal from Olayismo.[2] But they were unable to mobilize the businessman generation of the'twenties which, in a situation of business paralysis and commonplace bankruptcy, was more concerned to preserve its properties than in expensive, time-consuming political activism.[3] They also lacked common purpose and co-ordination. The return of Laureano Gómez provided these qualities: but adept orator and untiring organizer though he was, Gómez still found it difficult to strike up a distinct posture. Olaya stood for the virtues of passive, stable government; López assumed a more radical position;

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1. For his programme, see Mariano Ospina Pérez, La política de Unión Nacional - el programa (Bogotá, 1946).
2. El Tiempo, 2, Dec., 1931.
3. Revista del Banco de la República, iii (Bogotá, 1930), 131; Julio Holguin Arboleda, Mucho en serio y algo en broma Bogotá, 1959), p. 301.

and Gaitán courted revolutionism. Only violence in the Eastern departments provided Gómez with an issue which could unite Conservatives disenchanted by Olayismo. Arguing furiously that the violence was evidence of the corrosive effects of coalition, Gómez won adherents to the view that the future of Colombia lay in the purified essence of its traditional parties. Olaya, who had previously dismissed Gómez contemptuously as "our little Hiram Johnson" had to recognize Gómez' talent when he pushed through the Senate a demand that funds from Leticia be expended only on national defence. The Peruvian War, however, worked against Gómez. He had to submit to the prevailing mood of national solidarity. The war allowed Olaya to build up other Conservatives as counterweights to Gómez in the party. He was careful too to exploit the tacit friendship of Gómez with López. The taunts of Gómez that Olayismo was dominated by the selfish machinations of cliques rebounded: the López-Gómez friendship qualified as a clique in the eyes of its rivals. When López, insistent upon the merits of open political competition called for an opposition Conservative candidate, Gómez, willing to concede competition, was overruled by the remainder of the National Directorate. Remembering the Liberal recovery after abstaining from the 1926 election and aware of the superiority of Liberal organization and funds, it decreed a mass party abstention as a protest against violence in the East and electoral fraudulence.[1]

Initiative lay clearly with the Liberals. An influential sector of the Conservative party expressed a negative preference for Olaya. The apparent originality of López was unchallenged. His rise to political leadership had been fast, a product of the vacuum of the late 'twenties. He was a Liberal located very definitely in a

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1. El Pais, 30 Apr., 17 Oct., 14-15 Nov., 1933; El Tiempo, 6-9 Jan., 10 Feb., 1934.

civilian tradition. Too young to fight in the 'Thousand Days', he had learnt from his father of the impact of civil disturbance upon the family quinine and coffee business. He had accumulated political experience first in Tolima and then in Congress, some newspaper experience on the ephemeral Bogotá press of the late 'teens and early 'twenties and considerable banking and business experience: he had acquired and extended an international range of contact as a young man. His education was unorthodox: it was said that, as a boy, he lost interest in religion when he heard a teacher describe God as the principle of casualidad , not causalidad . He gained notoriety when at the downhearted Liberal Convention of 1929 he predicted the return of Liberal government, a well-timed forecast that he later exploited fully.[1]

López postponed his return to Colombia in 1933: he wished to avoid arriving before the municipal elections so as to delay defining his attitude towards Conservatives. While Olaya was actively promoting proteges with more ministerial experience and inherited respectability, López prudently avoided commitment to radical policy. He sought to attract Liberal 'outs' by emphasizing the need for a 'pure' Liberal government, but reassured the Church that fanatical anti-clericalism had been buried in the nineteenth century and the Bogotá and Medellín elites by rejecting any intention of taking up arms to implement his programme. But López never secured total control of the political initiative: he was unable to disown those rural Liberals who depicted him as the legatee of martial heroes like Uribe Uribe and Herrera.

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1. Hugo Latorre Cabal, Minovela - apuntos autobiográficos de Alfonso López (Bogotá, 1961), pp. 119, 132-3, 136, 220 - Alcides Arguedas, Obras completas (Madrid, 1959), ii, p. 773. Abelardo Forero Benavides in Acción Liberal, año 4 (1936) 31. Eduardo Zuleta Angel, El Presidente López (Bogotá, 1961)pp.37-8; El Hombre del Liberalismo, Alfonso López - candidato del partido liberal para presidente de la república en el período constitucional de 1934-38 (unnumbered ed., pamphlet, Bogotá, 7 Aug., 1934); Alejandro Vallejo, Políticos en la intimidad (Bogotá, 1936), p. 27.

He could not afford to offend anti-clericals who anticipated a clerical purge. He projected himself as a nationalist refraining at the 1933 Pan American Conference in Montevideo from pro-U.S. postures and lambasting United Fruit for partial evasion and Standard Oil for total evasion of exchange controls; but dared not offend the Liberal business elite by proposing severe restrictions upon foreign capital.[1] López was careful, above all, not to close the options of Conservatives. In the 'twenties he had not aimed at a Liberal hegemony: in the 'thirties he stressed repeatedly that the line between Conservatism and Liberalism had been blurred by prosperity in the 'twenties and Depression in early 'thirties, and that the Conservative party had to recognize that it had moved "leftwards" and overtaken the Liberal ideology of the nineteenth century. López, therefore, left open the possibility of an alliance with sympathetic Conservatives, like Gómez, in the event of Liberal deflections.

López brought showmanship to Colombian politics. He provided relief from the monotony of the 'twenties and the gloom of the Depression. He brought a touch of Madison Avenue, a certain hucksterism to political campaigns. He impressed opponents and supporters alike by his mobility, especially his use of the aeroplane on speaking-tours. Unlike some of his predecessors López competed for office with a programme imprecise in detail but attractive in generalities, it established a set of objects and priorities as guidelines for governing: a peace policy with Peru, a national coffee policy, agrarian and educational reforms. The programme was neither radical nor comprehensive, but it was certainly daring at a moment when the future of the economy was uncertain after the Depression and the revenue situation was unpredictable after the Leticia War. Unwilling to be cast in the role of his predecessors,

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1. El Tiempo, El Espectador, 14-16 Dec., 1933; F.O. 371/17513/ A 4975, 20 June, 1934, Dickson to F.O.

López departed from established styles. The political nation, accustomed to a verbose and leisurely rhetoric, found his icy, crisp expositions engagingly simple and seductively clear. His speeches conveyed an impression of frankness and purposefulness. López made few claims to being an ideologist, though his campaign literature portrayed him as one.[1] Showing a preference for the palpable but deferring to the abstract, López was said to read Marx for the slogans, not the doctrines.[2] He was unconcerned about his own lack of formal education, shrugging off the claims of critics that this incapacitated him for office - this knowledge of the outside world was useful in negotiating with foreign bankers. Suave and anglicized in appearance and argument, López was certain of his own unequalled brilliance in Colombian politics, and dazzled some of his opponents.

Eclectic, empiricist, sceptical and opportunistic, López seemed tantalizingly original both in programme and style. The Conservative party was nonplussed: an intelligent, if impish, Liberal commentator dared even to predict the absorption of Conservatism by Unirismo or socialism.[3] Liberals set the criteria of debate. They established a radio station and a network of casas liberales to diffuse propaganda and reanimate local-level interest; and Conservatives imitated them. Liberals began a journal, Acción Liberal that represented the Liberal ideological vanguard, and Conservatives followed suit with the Revista colombiana. Liberals debated the possibility of a national lay "non-partisan" university, and Conservatives discussed with clerics the extension of the national confessional "non-partisan" educational system. The growing clarity of Liberal policy sharpened the Conservative response. It was, however, clear that the political initiative in 1934 rested

1. El hombre del liberalismo...., p. 56-7.
2. Azula Barrera, op. cit., p. 44.
3. Juan Lozano y Lozano, Acción Liberal, ano 2 (1933), 372-3.

alternately with the Lopista Liberals and Olayista coalitionists; and the Conservative party, though better defined than in 1932, remained an opposition fringe whose only hopes of power lay in co-option by one wing of the Liberal party or in an irretrievable split between the Olayista and Lopista Liberals.

López betrayed initial overconfidence in office. He seemed oversure that his own presence would sweep out electoral corruption. He found the details of administration irksome. He was insufficiently sensitive to differences within the Liberal party of which his opponents were only too well aware: "....If Liberalism tries (to make a revolution), it will divide and revolutionaries will be in a minority in the country; and, if it wants to remain united, it will have to abstain from the adventure..." Discouraged by his failure to complete a Cabinet in his first month as president, López lost some of his private confidence, but, in public, remained imperturbable and retained control of the political initiative; and, during 1935, he recovered some of his private self-esteem.[1] In 1934-5 he was successful in equipping his government with a feeling of movement. It was definitely not a one-man show. López had several impressive proteges, mis muchachos, Dario Echandía, Alberto Lleras Camargo, Jorge Soto del Corral, among them. López liked to be surrounded by a glittering galaxy of dazzling satellites in eternal orbit: his ministers were there to amuse him, coax, inform, cajole and defend him - and did so loyally. López' opponents were disarmed by the untried, youthful team that formulated and executed the reform programme of the "revolution on the march". López and his Cabinet brought an arresting informality to the previously stuffy business of government. López refrained from the aloof postures that had marred Olaya's reputation, and invited Congressmen regularly to

1. D.S. 82100/475/22 Dec., 1935, Dawson to Sec. of State. Abel Carbonell, La quincena política (Bogotá 1952) i, 161.

cocktail parties in the presidential palace where he sought to dispel political differences in a congenial atmosphere. Dissembling shrewdness behind an easygoing exterior, López encouraged all groups to press their claims and stimulated open debate in the hope that discussion could be so conducted that a consensus was reached that coincided with the view he held himself.

Olaya successfully divided López and Gómez, but was less successful in sustaining a coalition faction that might return him to office in 1938. His attack on the Lopista programme was blunted by the slow pace with which it was legislated. López kept to his promise not to stampede his programme through Congress: each measure, the introduction of the graduated income tax, for example, was considered separately, resisted fiercely by Olayistas and gently piloted through both Houses. Olaya himself held back from dividing the Liberal party further for fear of Conservative revival, and accepted a brief tenure of the ministry of exterior relations and then the post of minister at the Vatican. Olayistas were dumbfounded. Those that remembered the crash of the Banco López in the 'twenties feared that the president would employ untrustworthy subalterns. Others expected him to favour his family. Both suspicions were unfounded: his brother, Eduardo López Pumarejo, known in Bogotano circles as "the poet of capitalism" was one of the president's most consistent critics on his taxation and interventionist policies in 1935-6, even prophesying that Liberalism would fall as a consequence of the disasters of interventionism.[1] According to a Liberal critic, López, in mid-1935, had confounded predictions. The upper classes had expected a graft-ridden government and were reassured by an administration without ties to particular economic groups. Popular Liberal hopes that the relics of Conservative "hegemony" would

1. Sábado, 1 Jan., 1944.

be finally removed were not fulfilled. López was not the able financier that had been expected, but he was the most "lyrical, touching, prophetic, pure and apostolic" president in Colombian experience. His administration was slow and ponderous. López, concluded Juan Lozano, treated the presidency as a chair in political sociology.[1]

His style, above all, brought López to the presidency. But style and the patronage that accompanied power were insufficient to substantiate his position. He lacked a sympathetic press, and had either to conciliate El Tiempo and El Espectador or to bypass them with speeches broadcast direct from the palace. López had to consider the old Liberal families and the war veterans; he had to deepen Liberal attachments in rural areas - three members of his first Cabinet had experience of managing provincial branches of agrarian banks; and he had to give the departments effective representation in his Cabinet.[2] He had also to contain the aspirations of a younger generation who were entering politics in larger numbers as the national budget expanded.[3] He had finally to keep the initiative in the face of Olaya, whose prestige remained undiminished, and of an anti-clerical rank and file. He sought to consolidate his position by forming a Popular Front alliance with the Communists: but this came to nothing. The Communist party had no electoral strength, and alliance with it was a handicap exploited by Conservatives.[4] The appointee of President Lazaro Cárdenas as minister for Mexico, Palma Guillen, dismissed Lopismo as mere "verbal revolutionism". López told her privately that Alberto Lleras had written the presidential message of 1935 that contained some Leftist ideas in order

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1. El Tiempo, 7 Aug., 1935.
2. El Pais, 28 Sept., 1934. The three ministers were Marco A. Aulí (Finance), Abel Cruz Santos (Industries) and Echandía (Government)
3. Azula, op. cit., p. 75.
4. There was nothing odd in Bogotá in the 'thirties in a banker allying with Communists: in 1932 Gaitán negotiated a brief working arrangement with the 'Leopards'.

to convince the Left. When Lleras and Echandía exchanged the portfolios of education and government, an act widely interpreted as a move to the right, López joked with Guillen: "What do you say, that we are moving to the right?" and added that Mexicans must teach him to be revolutionary.[1]

Political debate was, for the moment, concentrated within the Liberal party. The comparative merits of individualism and collectivism were discussed at length: the "social functions of property" with vacuous monotony.[2] Big business formed an ephemeral cross-party alignment, A.P.E.N. (Associación Patriótica Económica Nacional) to defend its interests. The Conservative party remained isolated. A substantial fraction was not alarmed by the López programme. It was reassured by the knowledge that the Liberal majority in Congress would resist any effort by the government to raise taxation further; by the likelihood of the return of Olaya to office in 1938; and by the certainty that no single government could alter the complexion of Colombia dramatically within a mere four-year life-span. Some Conservatives even regarded the López programme as the overdue continuation of Conservative reforms before the Depression.[3] López himself dispelled apprehensions. He insisted repeatedly upon his total commitment to a fully-fledged two-party system; he expressed his unease at the possibility of a one-party state with a subservient second party fobbed off with jobs. His pronouncements were at one moment provocative and at the next anodyne. In his message to Congress in 1935, for

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1. A.S.R.E., F.T. 27-26-28/D.C. III/510 (861-0) '35'/4050-R, 12 Nov., 1935; F.T. 27-26-28 (2/D.C. III/510 (861-0) '35'/4050-R, 8 Sept., 1935; F.T. 27-29-17/D.C. III/510 (861-0) '36'/4050-R, 8 Feb., 1936. Guillen to Secretary of Exterior Relations, Mexico City.

2. For example, Juan Lozano y Lozano, La función social del Liberalismo y el comercio de la capital (pamphlet, Bogotá, 1937).

3. Francisco de Paula Pérez, Política social: el partido conservador colombiano y los problemas sociales (Bogotá, 1939).

example, he admitted obliquely to "an initial clash between oligarchy, privileges and democracy": but he added that class-struggle in Colombia could be solved by negotiated adjustments and would be played out within the parties and not between them.[1]

The Conservative leadership lacked issues that gave the party a distinctive identity and a pdemical edge. Gómez, fully aware that the party was in danger of being reduced to an electoral nonentity like the Liberals in 1926, exploited ruthlessly all available issues. He alleged a breach of faith by the government over the settlement of the Leticia war. He denied the legitimacy of the government on the spurious grounds that the Conservative majority in the country was unrepresented. His persistence opened him to mockery: when he elevated passive resistance in imitation of Gandhi, the Liberal press responded with caricatures of him in the pose immortalized by Punch. Conservative leaders, still suspicious of electoral corruption, maintained an abstention policy. But none of these disputes awakened popular enthusiasm.

Clear lines of policy demarcation emerged in 1936. Dispute about the Constitution and Church provided issues which El Siglo, Gómez' new mouthpiece, could grasp and exploit. They allowed El Siglo not only to ridicule the "Liberal Republic" but to deride the entire order upon which it rested. The 1886 Constitution was held up by Conservatives as the crowning achievement of Colombian history: to displace it was to upset the fragile peace which it permitted. Conservative leaders wrote a collective letter of protest against the new "Liberal" constitution. Gómez used the letter as a means of detaching wavering Olayista Conservative leaders, conscious that the 1886 Constitution was so deeply written into the party consciousness that refusal to sign would be generally equated with party unorthodoxy. The signatories emphasized

1. Mensaje....1935 (Bogotá, 1935).

their intention to use every means available to safeguard the "spiritual" interests which, they claimed, were the heritage of Colombians irrespective of party. The letter was courteously expressed but it coincided with another from the hierarchy that cited specific offensive clauses. The bishops expressed alarm at the elimination of the name of God from the preamble, the removal of most religious clauses from the 1886 Constitution and of all Church privileges. This, they claimed, represented a dramatic change in the moral climate of a country deeply imbued in a Catholic tradition. Liberals concluded that a collusive arrangement had been reached between the Church and the Conservatives. The parties were suddenly polarized; the coalitionist Conservative groupings were dissolved; and the Church, despite muted denials, was popularly identified with Conservative policy. "I was without any serious misgiving up to three days ago," the Nuncio told the British minister, " and now the whole situation has changed and I do not know what may happen."[1]

López, attuned to the urgency of dampening local-level clerical and anti-clerical incitement, replied immediately. He told the hierarchy that ecclesiastical privileges would be safeguarded in a bilateral Concordat but had no place in the Constitution, and insisted that his policy did not constitute an attack on the Church. He covered the same ground in answering the Conservatives, adding that their non-representation in Congress was a consequence of their deliberate abstention.[2] Both parties resorted to the radio to restate their cases.[3]

López confronted by a hostile Conservative party and a neutral

1. F.O. 371/19776/A 3454/23 Mar., 1936, Dickson to Eden.
2. República de Colombia (Presidente), La opinión nacional ante la reforma de la Constitución (Bogotá, 1936).
3. La constitución de 1886 y las reformas proyectadas por la República Liberal (Bogotá, 1936).

Olayista Liberal majority in Congress, sought expedients. He wooed the residual Liberal force of Bogotano artisans and the swelling ranks of government employees and urban workers. On May Day, 1936, López took the unknown step of addressing a demonstration from the presidential balcony. His speech was marked by moderation: he avoided replying to Communist demands for immediate redistribution of wealth. But his opponents were not placated. Gómez took up an alarmist stance in El Siglo. He claimed López was playing with demagogic methods used to date only by European dictators; and accused him of advocating a befuddling set of principles designed to conn the electorate into the false hope of a phoney paradise.

As Liberal, derechista and Communist protest spilled into the streets in August, 1936, Olayistas debated public order in the Senate. They upbraided López for indulgence towards Left and Right, and, interpreting his May-Day speech as an endorsement of Popular Frontism, insisted that he define his position more clearly. When Santos seized the opportunity to insist publicly on the purification of Liberal principles and seemed to threaten López with a Liberal split in which López would be relegated to the party periphery, López answered with the claim that the Popular Front in Colombia was a mental phantasma because almost all of its potential members were Liberals and added that a Popular Front was possible only where minorities saw their lawful positions menaced by reactionary forces.[1] He went on to compare his regime not with the French or Spanish Popular Fronts but with the English radicalism of fifty years before. His reply satisfied nobody. To Leftists it looked ambiguous and smelt of betrayal; Olayistas obstructed government legislation in Congress; Gómez, to out-conservatize the Olayistas, fell back upon taunts and mockery. The government was

1. La Razón, 19 Sept., 1936.

behaving ambiguously: while López took a tranquillizing stand in Bogotá, some of his ministers endorsed calls to class warfare at a syndical congress in Medellín with their presence.

The peak of partisan hostilities had been reached. The pace of Liberal mobilization was then slackened by López, and the line between Conservatives and Liberals again seemed blurred. El Siglo, for lack of internal disputes, seized on external issues, especially the Spanish Civil War, as means of maintaining polarized postures. The fall of Madrid in November, 1936, was interpreted as being locally significant by both parties: Lopistas and Santistas consolidated around the Spanish issue. El Tiempo and El Siglo, drawing facile equations between Colombia and Spain, indulged in shadow-boxing. López was depicted as a local Azana, whose subsidies to syndical congresses presaged civil war. Portraits of Azaña, La Pasionaría and Largo Caballero were carried with those of López and Echandía at a syndical demonstration in Barranquilla.[1]

During the Santos government the Conservative party continued to lack definition. Though a Liberal administration, it adopted the conciliatory tone of Restrepo and Olaya. Declining wartime revenues limited the scope of imaginative legislation. Santos did little to undermine entrenched Conservative or Lopista interests, and relied on inertia, thinking it more trustworthy than his supporters. Santos' choice of ministers reflected his priorities. None was controversially radical; most had political or administrative experience: Santos was not averse to employing ex-Lopistas. The strength of Santos lay in his knowledge of the backgrounds of political actors and in his confident self-identification with Colombia, built up through El Tiempo. Lopismo had clearly lost the initiative: López and Alberto Lleras had tried to establish a permanent factional base in the trade unions, but

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1. R.J., vii (1937), Suplemento, 235.

hopes that they would constitute a docile instrument were soon dashed. From 1937 the government had been unable to make new social welfare concessions: once certain sums had been earmarked for particular new institutions - the National University, for example - the range of political choice could not be expanded without politically impossible tax increases. As the reformist trend of the "revolution on the march" was arrested, small groups of Communists and Socialists acquired a greater hold on the syndical leadership. Lopista influence was proportionately diminished. López and Lleras assured the government a role in industrial relations as conciliator, but, of course, bequeathed the conciliatory machinery to the Santos government. In opposition, the Lopistas lacked a clearcut position: on the one hand, they sponsored the labour syndicates for fear of losing their support to Santos; on the other, conscious that the unionized sector corresponded to only a minority of the working force, they bid for multi-class support. Under pressure from advertisers, their newspaper El Liberal was less hostile than expected.[1]

A hint of renewed violence in the East broke the elite consensus. El Siglo now turned on Santos. It depicted him as a man as quick to take offence as to pour scorn, a man of suffocating idealism, personal malice and unremitting condescension. It sought to expose his inconsistencies in office: the claim, on the one hand, to a masterly inactivity steering Colombia away from the recklessness of López radicalism, and the campaign, on the other, of El Tiempo to show that the Santos regime was more radical than its predecessor.

The press bitterness of later years was shaped during the Santos regime. The dulcet tones of El Tiempo represented for El Siglo the poison of sweet reasonableness. Santos' protestations of impeccable

1. D.S. 821.00/2339/2 Sept., 1938, Braden to Sec. of State.

constitutionalism rang false in Conservative ears. The institutional faith of El Tiempo belied the sordidness of Colombian reality according to El Siglo. El Tiempo was made out to be the mouthpiece of an elaborately constructed confidence-trick to deceive Colombia and the world into the belief that Colombia was a staunch, unblemished democracy and that Eduardo Santos epitomized a democratic tradition. The professed object of El Siglo was to uncover the truth, to rake over the muck of corruption, graft, nepotism and insincerity that characterized the regime. El Siglo stood as the champion of a moral crusade: it pointed to the fall of France in 1940 as a warning of the effects of Liberal cupidity: the choice of example was calculated to offend Santos, a Francophil. El Siglo argued tirelessly that moral rectitude was necessary if Colombia were to take her place in the world; Colombia would develop both economically and "spiritually" when the rottenness induced by Liberalism had been purged and expunged. As a sales campaign, the crusade of El Siglo was only briefly successful: out-pourings of high-pitched moralizing rhetoric, unsubstantiated by a programme or any considered projections of post-war development, became dull and repetitive. As a political tactic, the campaign was more successful: El Siglo gained more of the political initiative and slowly undermined confidence and morale.

Press rivalries reinforced party antaganisms more strongly than the Second World War. This did not have the divisive effect of the Spanish Civil War. Individual Conservatives and Liberals flirted with Italian Fascists and German Nazis more out of a parochial desire to embarrass Liberal governments than from any conviction of the superiority of the New Orders proclaimed. Nazi and Fascist penetration was superficial because Colombia was not strategically placed like Panamá and did not, like Argentina, export basic foodstuffs for which there were no adequate substitutes. The British Foreign Office and the U.S.

Department of State did express concern at isolated cases of Colombians in high places with German connexions: the Minister of External Relations, Luis López de Mesa, was on intimate terms with only one foreign representative, the German minister. The Minister of Government, Jorge Gartner, was of German descent. The sister of the Minister of Education, Guillermo Nannetti, was married to an active local German Nazi; and Nannetti was reported to have accepted German funds for university laboratory equipment.[1] The U.S. minister, Spruille Braden, reported that he was reliably informed that López, in 1941, allowed Nazis to contribute over seventeen thousand pesos to his campaign funds of which five thousand pesos had been reasonably well-proven.[2] The Santos government was on chilly terms with Germany and Italy and was regarded by the Foreign Office as its firmest ally in South America: only one minor incident - an article in the Evening Standard alleging that more Japanese than Spanish was spoken in Cali - aroused official complaint.[3] Even in the tobacco sector in Santander there was little evidence of public pro-German sympathy, despite German immigration and despite the fact that ninety-seven per cent of tobacco exports had gone to Germany in 1938. Continuous and heavily subsidized Nazi activity was not evident: mimeographed bulletins were produced in the Bogotá legation until the government prohibited the distribution of propaganda by belligerents, and pamphlets were imported from Buenos Aires.[4]

Lopista Liberals, while in opposition, were more pragmatic than the Santos government: El Liberal displayed a more reserved attitude

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1. F.O. 371/A 7705/182/11/25 Sept., 1941; A 9019/334/11/19 Oct., 1941, Snow to Eden. See also David Bushnell, Eduardo Santos and the Good Neighbour, 1938-1942 (Gainesville, Fa., 1967)
2. D.S. 821.00/Confidential/1 Sept., 1941, Braden to Welles.
3. F.O. 371/A 3461/59/11/4 May, 1939, Paske-Smith to Halifax; A 182/182/11/10 Jan., 1941, Minute by Mr. Perowne. The Foreign Office was embarrassed that Britain as a tea-consuming nation, could absorb no more coffee when it was blockading neutral Colombian customers.
4. F.O. 371/A 5286/3243/11/25 June, 1941, Snow to Eden.

towards the United States than the Santistas. López himself was in mid-1941 convinced of coming Nazi victory and set out to adjust policy on lines that would give Colombia the maximum benefits whatever the new order.[1] Conservatives were more concerned about the United States than about European conflict: memories of the loss of Panamá still rankled. An outspoken anti-Americanism distinguished Conservatives at the beginning of the war: El Siglo even accused the Colombian Petroleum Company of bombing the Motilon Indians, a group in which it was not interested at any other time. In 1941 Braden tried to win the friendship of Gómez and to press El Siglo into a more favourable position. He hoped that the loss of a North American banking and law-office clientele would induce Camilo de Brigard Silva, an associate on El Siglo, to press for a change in policy. This made no marked difference. When, however, Braden persuaded U.S. advertisers to withdraw their support, Gòmez switched dramatically to a pro-U.S. position, though El Siglo, Braden reported, straining not to be hostile to the United States, despite inaccurate headlines and innuendoes, had instead become anti-British.[2]

The re-election of López in 1942 did not augur well. In retrospect the "revolution on the march" had a pastiche quality: it looked well-intentioned but ill-prepared. López and his Cabinets seemed to have been dazzled by their own ingenuity. The first López government had left more enduring achievements than its two immediate predecessors: but economic conditions were more propitious, and its achievements hardly assumed "revolutionary" proportions. Leftists, once protected by Lopistas, claimed that López had done little except change the composition of the governing elite, give new force to those adept at

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1. D.S. 821.00/personal/13 June, 1941, Braden to Welles.
2. D.S. 821.00/1445/26 Mar., 1941; 821.00/1923/29 July, 1941/ Braden to Sec. of State.

manipulating elections by expanding the electorate and arouse false hopes of a transitional period before a revolutionary state.[1] "Bourgeois" Liberals parading radical sentiments - claimed Leftists - had been put to the test by the strikes of 1936-8, and found to be wanting.

In 1942 the national elite was as sceptical as the Leftists. López seemed unclear as to what he understood by Liberalism. The candidness that once caught opponents unawares had become a well-worn style. López lacked a show of determination; his government looked sluggish, and even Lopistas, expecting new ideas when none flowed out, were disappointed. López' lucid presentation of politics had once enlarged political imaginations; but Lopistas were no longer deluded into believing that a clever diagnosis equalled a durable solution. The glitter of the Cabinets of López now looked tarnished: those now promoted to political pre-eminence came - with the exception of Gaitán - from a predictable background. The return of López to office was widely believed to have been motivated by spite for Santos: López lacked a programme, priorities and new sources of revenue. He seemed fragile from the start: his martinet-like behaviour in his first government was normally interpreted as a symptom of strength and will-power; his refusal to tolerate intractable disobedience in his second was represented as a loss of stamina and self-confidence. As the health of his (first) wife deteriorated, he was increasingly self-reproachful and given to morbid introspection. He lost his capacity to hide behind a veneer of frivolity. His panache was pricked; his sense of irony and humour diminished under growing strains; and his dejection was increasingly apparent in public. López regained power in inauspicious circumstances. His attempts to mediate in the

1. Antonio Díaz, A la sombra de Fouché: pequeño proceso de las izquierdas (Bogotá, 1937).

ferocious combat of El Tiempo and El Siglo failed. The division of the Liberal party in 1942 between Lopistas and supporters of Carlos Arango Vélez (who aligned with Conservatives) was rapidly healed at a national level: but, at a local level, resentments ran deeper.[1] Small, ephemeral factions surrounding a regional leader but without national backing sprang up to voice regional grievances caused largely by wartime dislocations.

The failure of the Liberal leadership to capture the popular imagination permitted Conservatives to gain ground. Minor scandals were ruthlessly exploited by El Siglo to discredit the government. Alleged complicity of the upper police in the murder of a boxer, known as "Mamatoco", was covered daily. As responsibility was shuttled to and forth and the whole case was delayed in the bewilderingly complex judicial apparatus, the opposition press placed responsibility entirely on the shoulders of the Cabinet: heavy centralization of political appointments meant that only a short chain of intermediaries connected the Cabinet with the criminal.[2] Alleged black-market dealings by the son of López, Alfonso López Michelsen, provided scope for further scandal. Exposé, guilt by association, the use of circumstantial evidence and rumours of a veil of secrecy contributed to a soaring sense of insecurity.[3]

A rudderless government was shaken by the attack of Gómez. He conveyed a superior sense of moral direction, if not of policy direction, and, thereby, won much of the political initiative. His exposures shocked a sophisticated minority into the belief that all politics

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1. Sabado, 18 Mar., 7 Oct., 1944.
2. El Siglo, 16-18,21-22,25 July, 1943. The Mamatoco case was compared by El Siglo to the Matteotti scandal, El Siglo, 30 July, 1943.
3. D.S. 821.00/1556/2 Sept., 1943; 942/8 Nov., 1943, Lane to Sec. of State. A Conservative whispering-campaign alleged complicity of López ' wife: the Nuncio confided that she was deeply concerned whether she had made an inadvertent remark that might have caused Mamatoco's death.

were evil, all political leadership contemptible, all political structures intrinsically indefensible. But they did more to underpin the partisanship of the less sophisticated majority. The Conservatives were convinced that standards of political morality had fallen steadily since they left office, and that the party in power, and not the political system, needed replacement. An embarrassed governing party retreated into episodic silence, interfactional squabbles, talk of the urgency of adjustments, counter-moralizing postures and the unearthing of memories of Conservative scandals of the 'twenties. Elite relationships deteriorated so far that Gómez was imprisoned at the instance of a local magistrate on charge of contempt of court after a libel suit brought by the Minister of Government, Alberto Lleras. "Prison", commented the Santander Conservative Directorate, "seems today to be the only place of honour and dignity since the palaces are full of assassins and prevaricators".[1]

The kidnapping of López in 1944 briefly arrested a deteriorating trend. It gave a fillip to the government, since Liberalism consolidated - and even El Tiempo, previously indifferent, supported López firmly. It allowed López to decree what Congress would never normally permit: the expropriation of foreign firms. But the reprieve was shortlived: ministerial lack of direction and extensive disruption of the political system by Congress destabilized government. The political system was increasingly unworkable as a result of indecisiveness, indiscretion, eagerness to believe in conspiracy, appetite for scandal, a gullible newspaper readership-cum-electorate, a fractious, factioned Church, feuds within and between the military and police, press impetuousness and the lack of respect commanded by an inefficacious judicial system. Institutional arrangements that could moderate party and factional antagonisms were still notoriously deficient.

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1. El Siglo, 10 Feb., 1944.

During the preparations for the presidential elections of 1946 a sense of impending doom swept the governing classes. Only the popular leaders - Gómez and Gaitán - were successful in capturing the political moment and in seeming to offer some attractive novelties of political style, if not of programme. As early as 1944 an influential Liberal journalist warned that a Liberal party caught offguard might be swallowed up by the Conservatives, as in the 1890's when Uribe Uribe was the only Liberal in Congress.[1] Oligarchic leaders, with few acts of heroism to boast about, reminded their followers of the careers of past scions of the parties: the National Liberal Direction, for example, ran a strip-cartoon of the life of Olaya in its literature,[2] The Conservatives attempted to revive a tradition of revolt from the nineteenth century. The oligarchs, however, stood back hesitantly when appeals to past heroism were answered by a popular urban demagognery that could, as it seemed to them, be swung Left or Right at will.

4. The Conservative Party: Unity, Co-option, Competition, 1930-46.

The proclivity to fission of an opposition party without patronage was apparent throughout this period. The national convention of November, 1931, the first to be held for a generation, underlined the depth of Conservative division. Twenty-four of eighty-eight Conservative Congressmen indicated their impatience with party politics by absence. Continuing recriminations between the Valencista and Vásquista factions thwarted the Convention.[2] The Convention failed, above all, to unite around a single convincing leader or to create a viable national leadership: it elected instead, a National Directorate whose members, though faithfully representing regional interests, lived

1. Sabado, 7 Oct., 1944.
2. El Tiempo, 25 Nov., 1931.

outside Bogotá.[1] The Convention did, however, unite around a programme which dutifully repeated the timeworn slogans of religion, patriotism, the rights of family and property, and an amalgam of "political centralization" and "administrative decentralization". For the first time, the party committed itself irrevocably to the social encyclicals of Leo XIII. It assented, on paper, at least, to compensation and compulsory insurance for workers. It laid down lines for an agrarian policy: the extension of credit facilities, suppression of middlemen, encouragement of settlement, organization of markets, and measures to encourage smallholdings and to split up large estates. The programme spoke too of filling government posts with permanent civil servants and of discouraging political influence in the bureaucracy: transparent cant preached by all oppositions and never practised by governments. The programme was vaguely expressed and lacked clear priorities. It neither titillated campesino appetites nor reinflamed dampened cacique ardour. It contained nothing innovatory or vote-catching: and failed to revive or unite Conservatism.[2] Nothing in Olaya's programme or record could infuriate Conservatives into unity. He had neither reformed the 1886 Constitution nor upset the Church; he had either drawn powerfully-placed Conservatives into his government or reduced them to benevolent neutrality; he was careful to smooth out partisanships in regional government - especially in the more central departments of Boyacá, Tolima and the Valle; he variously courted the Liberal

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1. General Pedro José Berrío resided in Santa Rosa de Osos (Antioquia) and his suplente in Bucaramanga; Miguel Jiménez López came from Paipa, Boyacá and his suplente Guillermo Cote Bautista from Santander; Laureano Gómez was appointed, though still minister in Berlin; his suplente, Aquilino Villegas, lived in Manizales.

2. The programme is reproduced conveniently in Alvaro Gómez Hurtado and others, Una política conservadora para Colombia Bases para la nueva plataforma social del partido (Bogotá, 1969), pp. 245-59.

El Tiempo and the Conservative El Nuevo Tiempo.[1]

Violence in the Eastern provinces and the return of Gómez went some way to reuniting the party. In the 1910's and 1920's a measure of violence in the Santanders and Boyacá had been taken for granted in the Capital, so long as its contagion was not felt elsewhere. Ministers and party chiefs paid tranquillizing visits, and Governors were shuffled. The same phenomena occurred in 1930-1: capital-city Conservatives were ill-informed of remote violence and of distrusted clerical caciquismo. The only Conservative newspaper in Bogotá on the closure of El Nuevo Tiempo - El Pais - showed little interest in the East: it was capitalized by Antioqueños, and its editor came from the Valle. Gómez, aware after the banana episode of the political capital that could be made from exploiting geographically peripheral violence, lunged into the government: but his effort to reunite Conservatives against Olaya was frustrated by the Leticia war.

Gómez was struck by a heart-attack during a Congressional debate.[2] He had a long convalescence and it was widely believed that he would not return to politics; but no leader emerged as a credible unitary alternative in his absence. Vásquez had, after the war, attempted to recover his former position, alleging that the army had been prevented by Olaya from achieving total victory against Peru: but, in the prevailing mood of non-belligerency, he had failed to reshape his old faction; and a stroke invalided him to an estate near Cali. Rengifo made a bid for the leadership in 1935: certain derechistas proclaimed him heir of Suárez.[3] He made a particularly virulent impression at the

1. Olaya was quoted by Caffery, "I cannot expect any act of good will from Eduardo Santos.... but what can you do? I cannot have a prensa fria". D.S. 821.002/1443/13 Aug., 1930, Caffery to Sec. of State.

2. El Pais, 2 Feb., 1935. López was one of the first to visit him in hospital.

3. El Tiempo, 16 Oct., 1935.

1935 National Convention: but memories of Suárez were insufficient to focus political loyalties; and the mud that stuck to Rengifo's name in 1928-9 remained. Few Conservatives would enter a firm alliance with him, and he died in 1937.[1] Valencia, after taking part in the Rio settlement, competed briefly for the leadership: but, ageing, and, after two electoral defeats, his name had lost some of its magic. His poetry, fresh and original in the 1900's and '10's, looked dated and tawdry. Mariano Ospina Pérez seemed the most likely candidate to supplant Gómez: he launched a forceful attack on the administrative deficiencies of the government, but did not bid seriously for the leadership.[2]

The Conservative party divided in its reaction to the Popular Front. A younger generation, impatient with the abstentionist tactics of the national leadership, formed splinter-groups that made embarrassing intrusions into Conservative strongholds. Liberal students, organized in an Alianza nacional estudiantil anti conservadora, supported by the government and the National Liberal Direction and given discreet encouragement by the Mexican ambassador, provoked Conservative youth into forming parallel derechista movements that foreswore constitutional methods and resorted to tactics of direct action.[3] Loosely affiliated rightist groups multiplied: Haz Godo, Cruz de Fuego, Acción Nacional Derechista, a Centro Primo de Rivera in Bogotá, a women's derechista movement in Medellín; a centro derechista in Sopó, a Legión de extrema derecha in Bucaramanga, haz de juventudes godas in Antioquia.[4] The party leadership even lost a seat in Eastern Cundinamarca to a member

1. Ibid., 24 Oct., 1935.
2. El Pais., 9 Mar., 1935.
3. R.J., vi (1936) Suplemento, 392-3.
4. Ibid., vi (1936), Suplemento, 373; Derechas femeninas, Medellín, 25 May, 1937.

of Acción Derecha.[1] Shock-forces, argued one derechista newspaper, should reclaim rights for Conservatives by legal or illegal action.[2] The Conservative leadership fearing permanent generational fission founded a student movement in the hope of co-opting dissidents. Fascism made no deep or enduring impression on the party.[3] International anti-semitism had a momentary impact: there was one brief demonstration against Polish Jews in the readymade clothing business: but, on Jesuit estimates, there were no more than 2,500 Jews in Colombia.[4]

The party was again in disarray. Members of an older generation who in 1930 admired the military bearing of Olaya showed sympathy for the stance of the derechistas. The party in the Western departments, eager to oust Gómez from the national leadership and abandon his badgering style and abstentionist tactics, fomented younger generation discontent. The major newspapers of Medellín, Manizales and Cali, El Colombiano, La Patria and El Diario del Pacífico pressed for Gómez' removal. Debate within the party became conveniently, for Gómez, focused in Manizales, where a former minister of public works, Aquilino Villegas, took the editor of La Patria to task for undemocratic and, therefore, un-Conservative pronouncements. Each group accused the other of self-seeking, of putting the party to personal ends: Aquilino Villegas condemned Fascism for being as corrosive of Conservatism as Marxism was of Liberalism. Silvio Villegas responded by accusing Aquilino of wishing to deny Conservatives the power which

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1. El Tiempo, 25 Oct., 1935.
2. Flecha azul, Bogotá, 3rd week (no clearer date specified) Nov., 1937.
3. Its one articulate exponent, Simón Pérez y Soto, published a shortlived weekly, El Fascista in Bogotá and a novel, De poetas a conservadores - novela nacionalista y un estudio anexo sobre masonería y judaismo (Manizales, 1938).
4. F.O. 371/A 1290/1290/11/18 Jan., 1937, Paske-Smith to Eden; R.J., v (1935), Suplemento, 56. Salvador Tella Mejía, Colombia ante los judios - Peligro! Suramericanos! en pie! (2nd ed., Medellín, 1936) sought unconvincingly to uncover an international Jewish conspiracy in South America.

was electorally and morally theirs by right. Gómez presided amiably and without commitment from Bogotá: he avoided overassociation with both factions and accusations that he was trying to impose his will on the party. On one day El Siglo published an editorial by Aquilino Villegas attacking Fascism as a foreign import like the "revolution on the march" and stating his preference for López to the Lenins, Mussolinis and Hitlers who imposed censorship; and on the next the editorial space was occupied by a Fascist, José Domingo Rojas who insisted that Fascists in power would be as democratic as Conservatives: "Democracy is in the Colombian Conservative blood", but "true democracy" could not be recovered by "strictly democratic means".[1] Challenged by Ramírez Moreno to define his position, Gómez played for time, calculating that the youth movements would dissolve.[2] The 1937 Convention - endorsing Silvio's catchphrase formula No hay enemigos en la derecha, smoothed over differences and approved unanimously a motion of a young Caldense, Gilberto Alzate Avendaño declaring that the Conservative party was derechista.[3]

The abstentionist tactic had been based in the hope that Liberals would not have enough experienced manpower to discharge administrative posts at all levels.[4] Because this had proved wrong, the pressure that had been directed into derechismo was in 1937 diverted into re-capturing the national government. The business elements in the Conservative party were increasingly irritated by El Siglo's penchant for expose and for inflicting minor issues that they believed, distracted from more important matters of policy and lowered the tone

1. Aquilino Villegas, 40 años de opinión (Bogotá, n-d) pp. 171 ff., El Siglo, 15-16 Dec., 1936.
2. El Tiempo, 13, 20 Oct., 1936; Agustin Ramírez Moreno, La crisis del partido conservador en Colombia (Bogotá, 1937).
3. El Tiempo, 4-5, 26 Feb., 1937.
4. Acción Liberal, iv (1937), 91.

of the party. El Siglo attacked a minister of finance for giving patronage to relatives, complained of doubled expenditure on the palace bureaucracy, hit at Olaya over a small armaments deal with Czechoslovakia, exposed "Judaism in the public instruction of the regime", encouraged strike tactics among students and taxi drivers, and complained of censorship of despatches by the ministry of posts. It fell back on the old warhorses of regional persecution and electoral interventionism. It played up the case of a particularly distasteful Liberal cacique, Carlos Barrera Uribe, in Armenia. It rehearsed the old worn pejoratives: Liberalism was dominated by Jacobinism; Communist syndicates were resorting to a "reign of terror" in the Valle.[1] Petty misdemeanours were catalogued in relentless detail. The style of attack infuriated moderate Conservatives: it was undiscriminating - minor foibles were given the same space and precedence as major differences of policy - and it lacked singleness of direction. In 1937 Silvio Villegas and La Patria tried to force Gómez' hand by proclaiming the candidature of Ospina Pérez: and El Colombiano and Diario del Pacífico followed suit. Gómez was embarrassed. If elections were free, as López promised, it was unlikely that Conservatives would make a respectable showing in the East because the party organization had been damaged by the violence of 1931-2, abstentionist policy and Liberal allocations of patronage; and if the party were defeated in the East and not the West, Gómez would be scapegoat. If elections were not free, the case for a popular Conservative rebellion would be strengthened: and the party was not ready for it. If Ospina were elected, he would command government patronage and could imperil Gómez' presidential ambitions.

Gómez played for time. He calculated that Ospina was too vacill-

1. El Siglo 18-20,22,29 Feb., 1,29 Mar., 1936, 25-27 Feb., 14 Oct., 1937, 25 Mar., 9-17 May, 1938; Unión Liberal, 12 Feb., 1937.

ating and evasive to project himself as a contender for office. He had also to consider the Liberal party: Echandía and Santos were both proposed as Liberal candidates, but Echandía stood down when the Santistas scored over four times the Echandista vote in the April, 1937 departmental elections. Gómez knew that the Santista machinery, El Tiempo and the appeal of Santos' conciliatory language to big business and industrial interests were unassailable. El Siglo conspicuously refrained from mounting a fullblooded electoral campaign. El Tiempo, in the meanwhile, stressed Conservative divisions covering extensively campaign speeches by Silvio Villegas in the West, and sought to discredit El Siglo by accusing it of dividing a democratic party and propagandizing for "the blackshirts".[1] Ospina was prudently silent, awaiting events in both parties and never expressing hostility towards Santos; and, when Villegas withdrew the candidature he accepted a face-saving formula elaborated by the National Directorate: there would be no presidential candidate because Conservatives had had insufficient time to supervise the issue of electoral identity-cards but there would be Conservatives standing in the 1939 Congressional and departmental elections.

Party unity was again threatened by fission. In 1938 groups critical of the moderate posturing of the leadership took on a Falangist label. Patria Nueva of Cartagena, for example, admired Franco, Mussolini and Hitler in language that echoed Spanish Falangism.[2] A casa de Falange española was inaugurated in Cali, and men and boys were photographed in Falangist uniforms.[3]

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1. El Tiempo, 10,27 Jan., 25 Feb., 7-8,10 Mar., 1938.
2. Patria Nueva, Cartagena, 5,19,26 Feb., 1938. Nazism made a minimal impression on the party in Barranquilla and none elsewhere. As many German expatriates formed anti-Nazi circles as adopted Nazi insignia. Conservatives and Liberals were equally horrified at Nazi treatment of Catholics and agreed upon retaliatory measures against German import quotas in 1934.
3. El Siglo, 21 June, 1938.

President Santos tried to reduce the Conservatives to silent acquiescence or to divide them: and succeeded in each in turn. A shooting-incident in the village of Gachetá, Cundinamarca, in 1939, during which departmental police killed several Conservative peasants, roused Conservatives in Eastern Cundinamarca to press the leadership to assume a more militant posture. Delegates at the Cundinamarca Convention "swore solemnly before God, before the entire country and for the honour of the party that the political representation of the province of Guavío will be Conservative and that, therefore, it will not be permitted that the national and departmental elective bodies be usurped by subjects who do not belong to our political collectivity."[1] Moderate Conservatives, unconvinced that one distant instance of violence was sufficient to launch vitriolic attacks against the regime answered with a collective letter rejecting violence at the growth of the doctrine of 'legitimate defence.'[2]

The campaigns of El Siglo perhaps satisfied Conservative militants in the East: newspaper sniping possibly acted as a surrogate for physical violence: but the party remained divided. The party in Boyacá registered a brief protest at centralized decision-making by disregarding directives from Bogotá but failed to set off a chain reaction.[3] The party in the West and in Ocaña, concerned at the risks to political stability presented by El Siglo, was more interested in devolution of power and decentralization of revenue, and allied with local Liberals in bipartisan demonstrations that reflected a lack of party polarization.[4]

The return of López to power provided the tool for intransigent

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1. Ibid., 16,22 Jan., 1939.
2. El Tiempo, 29 Jan., 1939.
3. Victor Dugand, Entre conservadores(Barranquilla, 1941); El Siglo, 14 Jan., 27 Feb., 2 Mar., 1940; El Espectador, 13 Mar., 1940; El Liberal, 18 Feb., 1940; R.J., xiii (1940), Suplemento, 170.
4. El Colombiano, 11,13 June, 1939; La Patria, 11,13 June, 1939; Antioquia descentralizadora (Medellín,1938).

elements to reincite the businessman Conservatives satisfied with "the lukewarm sensation of normality" radiated by the Santos government.[1] But moderate elements were more concerned at the attack of Gómez on the senior Church hierarchy which broke the 1942 electoral alliance with Aranguista Liberals and threatened to split the Conservative party. The Spanish minister, startled by Gómez' indiscretion, tried to persuade him not to publish his attack but Gómez, thinking of "a revolution which is always simmering underground" ignored the advice.[2] Gómez, isolating himself from the party, was excluded from senatorial candidatures for both Cundinamarca and Tolima and nearly manoeuvred out of a senatorial seat altogether.[3] Conservative groupings became increasingly fluid. Ramírez Moreno and the doctrinarios made a bid for the leadership in 1942: the "independent" Conservatives, who included former Olayistas and diplomats for Liberal governments like Urdaneta and Eduardo Zuleta Angel, formed their own directorate and published a programme rejecting Laureanista tactics of 'intrepid action' and repudiating the mixing of religion in political debate.[4] Gómez was so weakly placed that, in 1943, there were hints of differences with the co-director of El Siglo, José de la Vega, over de la Vega's senatorial candidature in Bolívar.[5]

Elite divisions to the party crystallized in 1943 when the "independents" founded a newspaper, El Nuevo Tiempo, emphasizing the democratic, non-totalitarian tradition of Conservatism.[6] The first capital-city Conservative rival to El Siglo ~~until~~ since 1936, El Nuevo Tiempo

1. Rafael Bernal Jiménez, López, símbolo de la anti-patria (Bogotá, ? 1941); Sábado, 18 Dec., 1943.
2. The Spanish minister to his British counterpart. F.O. 371/A 6993/873/11/23 July, 1942/Snow to Eden.
3. El Liberal, 19 May, 1942.
4. Ibid., 15 June; El Tiempo, 5 Sept., 1942.
5. El Tiempo, 19 Feb., El Siglo, 20 Feb., 1943.
6. El Nuevo Tiempo, 6 Aug., 1943.

made no commercial impression and did little to modify the political scenario. But the "independent" group counted for little: it was, according to Alberto Lleras, "soft and timorous", if Gómez died they would be afraid of his ghost.[1] At the kidnapping of López, Urdaneta offered the support of "independent" Conservatives to the government, denying Conservative responsibility for the rebellion; and López was careful to thank sympathetic Conservatives.[2] The "independent" faction lacked the popular roots necessary to act with independence: Urdaneta, therefore, sought to influence party policy by trying to buy the stock of De la Vega in El Siglo. He failed, but the party re-united around the basis of a declaration against Communism.[3]

Bogotá was alive with rumour. Gaitán was believed to know the plans of the Pasto coup. The Communist Diario Popular predicted another military uprising.[4] Gómez warned López that the Antioqueño industrialists, though professing public support for the government, were financing conspiracy underground.[5] The C.T.C. (Confederación de trabajadores colombianos) was rebuked by Alberto Lleras for unconstitutional practices when it announced the formation of popular militias against a "Fascist-military" plot. The return in December, 1944 of Gómez from exile in Ecuador reawakened party enthusiasm. The party remained structurally fragile, carrying only one city, Manizales, in the municipal elections of October, 1945: but, feeling threatened both by Communism and by insurgent Gaitanismo, the Conservative elite displayed a degree of unity unattained since 1936.[6]

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1. D.S. 821.00/1280/19 July, 1944, Lane to Sec. of State.
2. Alfonso López, El Presidente López da respuesta a eminentes jefes y voceros del Conservatismo (Cartagena, 1944); Emilio Ferrero, Importantes Documentos. Carta de eminentes jefes conservadores al Exmo. Sr. Presidente de la República (Bucaramanga, 1944); El Tiempo, 15 July, 1944.
3. D.S. 821.00/689/31 July, 1944, Lane to Sec. of State.
4. Diario popular 29 Nov., 1944; Azula, op.cit., p.150.
5. López to U.S. ambassador. D.S.821.00/776/7 July, 1945, Wiley to Sec. of State.
6. El Siglo, 12, 14 Dec., 1944.

5. Conservatives and Economic Policy, 1930-46.

Political power lost much of its attractiveness in 1930 because the Depression forced government incomes down. Olaya appointed as Minister of Finance Estebán Jaramillo, a Conservative financier of unequalled experience in national economic management whom Kemmerer had admired as the only Colombian who could talk economics intelligibly. The choice reflected a desire for a bipartisan policy of reconstruction. Jaramillo pursued, with some success, a cautious, unspectacular policy designed to cushion Colombia from the worst effects of the Depression.[1]

Economic interests did not correspond to party formations. Oil divided the parties in rancorous debate. In the mid-1920's Colombia had been the world's eighth largest oil producer: in 1931 her political leaders still dreamt of riches on a Venezuelan scale. The readiness of Olaya to make generous concessions to U.S. oil companies aroused cross-party criticism. Projected legislation to reduce royalties as a means of stimulating capital - praised by the U.S. adviser, Mr. Rublee- evoked fierce Congressional hostility. But the issue split the Conservative party. La Defensa of Medellín, a Conservative newspaper, accused Olaya of being a direct agent of Gulf Oil, United Fruit and the National City Bank.[2] But El Nuevo Tiempo of Bogotá came warmly to his defence, and the Conservative-controlled senate passed a vote of confidence in him.[3] Even a cohesive group like the 'Leopards' was divided on oil: Silvio Villegas attacked the critical Catatumbo contract and accused the government of acting as middleman of "Saxo-

1. Joaquin Emilio Jaramillo, Estebán Jaramillo - su vida y su obra (Medellín 1952) pp. 25-6; F.O. 371/15833/A 7447/18 Oct., 1932, Dickson to Simon.

2. La Defensa 20 May, 1931. For past debate of the same issue, see José María González Valencia and Emilio Ferrero, La concesión Barco (Bogotá, 1926?).

3. F.O. 371/15085/A 4026/206/11, 30 May, 1931, enclosure by A.D. Francis in Dickson to Henderson.

American imperialism", while Camacho Carreño voted for it and considered collaboration in oil policy as consistent with both nationalism and Pan Americanism.[1] So long as the government received substantial loans from the oil companies, Olaya could divide the parties by careful distribution of the proceeds to the departments. Had the loans been suspended, the credibility of Olaya would have been shattered. Olaya told the U.S. ambassador bluntly in 1931,

> "You can understand that after all I have done to force the oil law and the Catatumbo contract and other legislation you wanted through Congress, if I am compelled to say that your people have refused to co-operate with me, there will be nothing left for me but get out, and I do not believe that your bankers will get very sympathetic treatment from my successors."[2]

Other pressure groups competed for government favour. The strongest and most articulate was the coffee, which, briefly strengthened in 1930-1 by the Brazilian 'revolution' was being organized and streamlined by the National Federation of Coffee Growers, which under the vigorous management of Mariano Ospina Pérez was concentrating buying in its own hands and eliminating firms of foreign buyers. The Coffee

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1. El Tiempo, 4 June, 1931; El Pais 27 Aug., 1932. The debate was not new: Olaya had himself accused Súarez' foreign minister of trying to convert Colombia into a petrol protectorate in 1919, Jorge A. Villegas Arango, Petróleo, oligarquía e imperio (Bogotá, 1969), p. 175. The anti-Yanqui case was put persuasively by Aquilino Villegas, La moneda ladrona (Manizales, 1933) and hysterically by an Antioqueño derechista and satirist, Juan Roca Lemus (Rubayata) who blackguarded Olaya as "an international trafficker". "Mister Olaya presented to his countrymer of Wall Street the petrol of Catatumbo, the gold of our mines, the bread of our soldiers and 'all that God in his goodness gave us'," Roca Lemus, En la República de los vagabundos. Diario intermitente con sabor de novela (Medellín, 1936), pp. 122-3, 221, 244.

2. D.S. 821.001/59, 12 May, 1931, Caffery to Sec. of State. Villegas had revived the old bogey of a U.S.-inspired secessionist republic of Zulia uniting the oil-producing zones of Venezuela and Colombia. Silvio Villegas, El imperialismo económico (Bogotá, 1931), p. 5. The leading oil-producing town was subsequently described as being "where the Colombian is a foreigner and needs a passport". Gonzalo Canal Ramírez, Del Vaticano al Catatumbo (Bogotá, 1940), p. 87.

Federation clashed with Olaya's minister of industries, Francisco José Chaux. The first priority of the coffee sector was subsidy and protection to coffee exports: but the first of Chaux was the provision of incentives to diversification, and especially to encourage the producers of those foodstuffs - wheat, rice and lard - that had been imported on a considerable scale since the mid-'twenties. The Coffee Federation feared U.S. reprisals against Colombian coffee imports if Colombia permanently excluded U.S. foodstuffs.[1] The issue never took on politically partisan dimensions. The Federation was insistently bipartisan; the coffee-producing areas of Antioquia and Caldas were almost equally Liberal and Conservative in political colouring. It was clear that if a partisan wedge were driven into coffee production the entire industry would be at risk.

The rivals of the coffee sector avoided overassociation with one party: neither the industrial sector nor the independent banana growers, who competed, though less persistently, for the favours of government intervention and subsidy, stood to gain by dividing their supporters and by identifying with parties whose future was unpredictable. Nor was it in the interest of parties to risk incurring the divisive effects of heavy commitment to particular economic interests.

After the resignation of Chaux rivals to coffee articulated their demands with particular feebleness. They were persuaded that the prosperity of the nation, and not only of the coffee sector, was intimately linked with the fortunes of coffee.[2]

The export sector was less highly developed than those of some other South American countries, and it was less heavily concentrated in

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1. Mem.... industrias, 1932 (Bogotá, 1932), lxiii-lxx; F.O. 371/A 28/28/11 3 Jan., 1933, Dickson to Simon.

2. F.O. 371/17511/A 3891, 25 Apr., 1934, memo, by T.J. Anderson in Dickson to Simon.

in one politically strategic region. For lack of a thoroughgoing monetization of the economy, it was relatively easy in Colombia to fall back on a subsistence or/and local cash economy. Subsidiary crops and livestock were, generally, kept as a secondary investment and an insurance by small coffee planters. The monetary policy was arguably too concessionary to foreign investment and too orthodox: Colombia was very slow to default on her national debt. Yet the scope for unorthodoxy was constricted; and the apparati for government intervention were few, untried and unwieldy. Jaramillo explored them intelligently: the circulation of currency was prudently restrained by the Bank of the Republic and the exchange control board used its discretionary powers sensitively and with some success. The economic policy of Olaya and Jaramillo preserved established institutional arrangements.

Economic issues did practically nothing to sharpen party identities during the first López government. The Liberal picture of Conservatism as obscurantist allies of capitalist privilege gained some general currency but was distorted.[1] Olaya mollified the United States Government - there was always an Urdaneta or an Urueta in his Cabinet to state the U.S. case - and smoothed the way for further foreign investment which López too encouraged. Even United Fruit was allowed to consolidate its position as the banana debate subsided: in public it stated it was initiating activities in Ecuador; in private it made loans and tax advances to Colombian governments.[2]

Conservatives tried to exploit economic uncertainties under López. Unsustained efforts were made to win over demobilized troops threatened by unemployment, to attract white-collar workers - mainly in banking -

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1. Azula, op. cit., p. 378.
2. F.O. 371/17511/A 3891/25 Apr., 1934, memo. by T.J. Anderson in Dickson to Simon.

who went on strike over inflation, and, above all, to promote economic discontent in coffee areas in 1935 following heavy rains and government discussion of price stabilization.[1] At a local level in Caldas, Cauca and Antioquia Conservatives captured the sense of local grievance. But at a national level the party failed to co-ordinate and channel it. It was left to the National Coffee Federation, and its manager Ospina Pérez, to engage in national dispute over coffee policy.[2] The attempt of the government to reduce the organizational independence of the Coffee Federation met with stiff resistance from the Federation, not the party.

The same pattern persisted in other sectors. Conservatives had no distinctive policy on wheat, flour, rice and lard: the success of the government policy of import substitution of wheat, flour and rice - and not of lard - was not a matter of polemic. A revival of debate over exchange proceeds from oil threatened to split both parties; the Conservatives did not take issue over oil. Conservatives did not protest at the introduction under U.S. pressure of discriminatory tariffs against cheap Japanese textiles: Antioqueño producers of both parties stood to benefit; rumours of Japanese support for the Peruvians in the Leticia crisis made for unanimity. The tobacco sector was characterized by opposition to the growing influence of the British Tobacco Company in fixing the price: demonstrations in Antioquia and Santander were occasions for bipartisan solidarity.[3] The parties did not divide over interventionist legislation introduced to the

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1. F.O. 371/18674/A 1491/1 Jan., 1935, Dickson to Simon; 18673/ A 6942/ 7 Aug., 1935, Anderson to Hoare.

2. El Pais, 27 Feb., 2 Mar., 1935; Carta del doctor Mariano Ospina Pérez al doctor Alfonso López - la política cafetera de Colombia (Bogotá, 1934).

3. Gobernación de Santander, Documentos y estudios sobre la reforma al gravamen del consumo de tobaco (Bucaramanga, 1937).

banana industry in 1937: the government acquired powers over the quality of the exported product, wages, contracts, expropriation of land, public works and control of credit to producers. By 1938 the Magdalena Fruit Company, the Colombian subsidiary of United Fruit, was whittled down to twenty per cent of its previous plantation area. When the Government charged the U.S. General Manager and the Colombian lawyer of Magdalena Fruit with distributing surreptitious funds to maintain a monopoly of the banana export trade, it was not opposed by Conservatives who blamed U.S.-banana interests for the embarrassments of 1929.[1]

The López government had effectively pre-empted what little distinctive Conservative policy there was when it rejected laissez-faire Liberalism in favour of a doctrine - not clearly expressed - of Government responsibility for the social functioning of property. Conservatives subscribed, in general terms, to government interventionism in accord with Catholic norms, and had rejected what they called Liberal 'Manchesterianism'. Conservatives differed over government tax policy: those whose eyes were fixed upon central government were less perturbed than local interests who resented the increasing concentration of revenue in the hands of central government. In expanding the areas of economic development and social welfare within the purview of government, the "revolution on the march" incurred some Conservative hostility. Even this was silenced when Conservatives came to recognize that new government agencies would extend the scope of patronage for future Conservative governments.

By the late 'thirties the Colombian entrepreneurial classes had recovered some of the optimism of the 'twenties but acquired more

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1. F.O. 371/A 3465/152/11, 11 Apr., 1938, Paske-Smith to Halifax; Board of Trade, Report on the economic and commercial conditions in the Republic of Colombia, September, 1938 (H.M. Stat. Off., 1939), p. 17.

caution. Governments had now at their disposal a well-tried set of interventionist implements: income-tax, an established coffee-marketing system, experience in import substitution, a growing state borrowing capacity and increasing bank reserves which the state could influence. The Santos government extended the range of interventionist tools by founding autonomous institutes to promote agrarian, mining and industrial credit and municipal growth: but, underfinanced in wartime conditions, these proved to be ineffective channels of patronage.[1]

Political debate in the early 'forties bore no immediate relation to economic conditions: but economic insecurity during and after the war exacerbated the instability associated with the second López Government. Regional markets began to break down for lack of transport, especially vehicles and spare parts. Even the coffee crop of 1942 was threatened by a tyre shortage: Conservatives estimated that Caldas needed not the two hundred tyres allocated but six or seven thousand.[2] In 1943 urban building declined owing to rising costs of construction materials.[3] In 1944 El Siglo played upon a one-day general strike in Cali, a strike of comerciantes, fat, sugar and meat shortages, high prices of yeast and the ineffectiveness of government intervention in prices of staples: but it offered no alternative economic policy.[4] Although the contracts of Tropical Oil and Socony Vacuum Oil were removed in 1944, there was no party polarization except for an expose of litigation involving the López family over a land tract in an area of oil concessions in the Carare. Banana exports halted by 1943:

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1. Colombia - Report presented to the Conference of Commissions of Inter-American Development by the Colombian Commission of Inter-American Development (Washington, 1944), p. 15; Luis Eduardo Nieto Arleta, "Efectos de la guerra en el comercio exterior de Colombia", Trimestre económico, xi (Mexico City, 1945), 644.
2. El Siglo, 7 Oct., 1942; Revista del Banco de la República, xv (1942), 223.
3. Revista del Banco de la Republica, xvi (1943), 3.
4. El Siglo, 4, 29 Mar., 12 Apr., 4 May, 1944.

and debate about United Fruit abated, though, it continued to maintain a presence, since in 1945 there was talk of its departure as a result of new labour legislation and a wave of Sigatoka disease.[1] Colombian industry diversified exports successfully in the short term: textiles and chemicals were diverted to Brazil and Argentina, but the gains were shortlived and the markets lost after the war. National economic policy added to uncertainties: an increase of forty-four per cent in national income between 1942 and 1945 was financed by inflationary loans and issues, not by heavier taxation. The speculative economic atmosphere demoralized a country already destabilized by political rumour.[2] The post-war interim government of Alberto Lleras devoted itself to maintaining the political system intact, doing nothing to relieve post-war economic crisis.

6. The Problem of Elite Consensus, 1946-8.

The crisis within the national governing class was well reflected in the presidential election of 1946. The Liberal leadership recognized the desirability of a single candidate as a condition of party stability, but failed to agree on one. Both Gabriel Turbay and Jorge Eliécer Gaitán stood. Turbay, a Santandereano doctor was treated disdainfully as a turco arrivista by the national elite: caricaturists of both parties never tired of mentioning his Syrian origin and his aquiline nose that seemed to divine the proximity of the political storm. Talk of the Lebanon, cedars and mysterious odours was all too inevitable;[3]

1. F.O. 371/A 741/741/11, 1 Jan., 1943; R.J., xxiv (1945), 20.
2. Luis Eduardo Nieto Arteta, Ensayos sobre economía colombiana (Medellín, 1969), p. 29.
3. Jose María Córdoba, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán: tribuno popular de Colombia (Bogotá, n.d., 1962) ? 48; Azula Barrera, op. cit., pp. 136-9 Agustin Rodríguez Garavito, Gabriel Turbay - un solitario de la grandeza (Bogotá, 1965) p. 57.

In the 'twenties an armchair revolutionary like Alberto Lleras, Turbay was the first Liberal Minister of Government since the Regeneration. He was an efficient orator, an able administrator and an unsurpassed electioneer whose talents had been employed by López in 1933. Well attuned to the value of the national payroll, he introduced legislation to protect public employees and provide some social security benefits. In the early 1940's he was identifiable neither as a Lopista nor as a Santista but as an independent Liberal leader, unequalled in his knowledge of the caciques (especially in Santander) and adept at manipulating the electoral machinery. His unsullied record in the follies of the 'forties assisted his ascent.[1] El Tiempo announced its lukewarm support for Turbay only when attacked by Gaitán. After the withdrawal of Echandía López desisted from public support for any candidate, but was widely believed to prefer Ospina. Neither Santos nor López attempted to defuse a vigorous racist campaign against Turbay that had origins among Conservatives and echoed among Gaitanistas.

Turbay captured the continuista tradition within the Liberal party. Gaitán was better adjusted to the urban mood of the moment. Gaitán came from Bogotá: his father had dealt in second-hand books, tried his hand as a playwright and taken part in two newspapers; his mother had been a pioneer of women's education in Bogotá, founder of the Universidad Femenina, and had been excommunicated on grounds of suspicion of freemasonery for predicting equal rights.[2] Gaitán

1. Rodríguez Garavito, op. cit., pp. 60, 80,87, 143 ff; F.O. 371/16572/A 1232/13 Dec., 1932, Dickson to Simon; Gonzalo Buenahora, Biografía de una voluntad (Bogotá, 1948) pp. 57, 71, Sabado, 25 Dec., 1943; Gabriel Turbay, 12 momentos de una vida al servicio del partido (pamphlet, Bogotá, 1946); Enrique Cuellar Vargas, Crisis de la sociedad Colombiana (Bogotá, 1965) pp. 20, 22; Doctor Gabriel Turbay, eximio conductor del liberalismo y candidato a la presidencia de la República (pamphlet, Bucaramanga, 1946).

2. See Elíecer Gaitán, Biografia de Policarba Salabarrieta (Bogotá 1911).

himself was educated in an orthodox manner by the Christian Brothers, and then joined modish iconoclastic groups interested in Russian literature, Proustian psychology and other snobismos of the 'twenties including an ill-defined socialism.[1] Gaitán was established as a lawyer before becoming a career politician. After a training in Italy, he was acknowledged as the leading penal lawyer in Bogotá and his office became fashionable. Gaitán was impressed by the façade of Fascist discipline and the style of Mussolini's rhetoric: but more conventional patterns of constitutional legatism were deeply inculcated in him. When, therefore, he embarked on a rhetorical career during the banana debate, Gaitán stressed the theme of unconventional militarism more strongly than that of class repression.[2]

In the 'thirties Gaitán acted outside the norms of two-party debate in the hope of co-option. In 1932 he, again, took up the cause of the geographical periphery when he appealed, without enduring success, against the maltreatment of peasants in Nariño.[3] Briefly President of the National Liberal Direction in 1932, Gaitán agreed to accept the leadership of Unirismo: but he left its administration to others, emphasizing its "voluntary organization" which he contrasted with both caciquismo and Fascism. Inaction freed him from the obligations of organization and left him time to pursue his law practice and to impress his contemporaries in Congress with didactic debating points about Marx, Hegel and positivism.[4] The ambiguity that pervaded his career was now apparent. On the one hand, Gaitán used a language that suggested the efficacy of extra-legal methods - he spoke, for

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1. Azula, op. cit., p. 56; Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, Las ideas socialistas en Colombia (Bogotá, 1924).
2. Abelardo Forero Benavides, El Espectador - Diario de la tarde (Bogotá, 1936), p. 183.
3. El Pais, 2 Aug., 1932.
4. El Tiempo, 23 Aug., 1933.

example, of the "insurrectional right" of youth to demand fulfilment of electoral promises; on the other, he confined his own action to established legal methods and never led a rebellion. He was the bête noire of Communists who accused him of distracting attention from the genuine class struggle. He was accused of duplicity by members of the political establishment: of rabble-rousing, of trying to refocus political debate away from the clericalism which other Liberals were intent upon reviving. He was suspected by Uniristas of leaving the middle-levels of the movement to receive the bullying and buffeting of governments.[1] His collaboration with those whom he later labelled oligarchs was unashamed. Gaitán was briefly mayor of Bogotá for López: but was removed after a disruptive strike by taxi-drivers when he tried to put them all in uniforms. He was Minister of Education for Santos, but resigned, with unctuous praise for Santos when Congress rejected his legislation for further centralization of educational policy: "The government of....Eduardo Santos....has done a fecund, great and vigorous work, and, like the two previous governments, is a page of gold in the history of Colombia which nobody could fail to recognize."[2] Gaitán used his position as Minister of Work in the second López government to build a network of party contacts, especially in the C.T.C., and his trips resembled electoral campaigns rather than journeys on government business.[3]

The programme of Turbay in 1946 repeated the now paling promises

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1. Gaitán - Antología de su pensamiento económico y social (Bogotá, 1968), pp. 10-11, 23-24, 40, 44; El Bolchevique, 4 Aug., 1934, 24 Apr., 1935; Fermín López Giraldo, El Apostól desnudo o dos anos al lado de un mito (Manizales, 1936), pp. 31, 37, 99, 101.
2. República de Colombia, Ministerio de Educación Nacional, La obra educativa del gobierno en Colombia (3 vs., Bogotá, 1940); Idearío Politico de Jorge Eliécer Gaitán - publicación ordenada por las directivas como homenaje a la memoria de Jorge Eliécer Gaitán en el tercer aniversario de su muerte (Bogotá, 1951), pp. 15-6.
3. Sábado, 29 July, 1944.

of the 'thirties. The programme of Gaitán was equally unoriginal in content: like other Liberals he promised nebulous agrarian reform, credit extensions, vague changes in industrial relations. His slogans drew upon past Liberal, Conservative and derechista campaigns: "the struggle against the oligarchies" had been used by Arango in 1942; "A la carga!" was borrowed from Silvio Villegas; "the moral restoration of the republic" had a Laureanista flavour. The distinction between el pais nacional and el país político came, at second hand, from Charles Maurras. His programme was unoriginal and his vocabulary was eclectic but the speaking style of Gaitán was original. His speeches could keep an audience in the Teatro Municipal - that paid to enter and that identified with his movement only through that payment since there was no system of fully paid-up membership-entranced for two or three hours. His delivery was guttural, dramatic and hypnotic. "..The pueblo is the motor and I am the dynamo".[1]

Liberal division meant the election of a Conservative President, Mariano Ospina Pérez, on a coalitionist National Union ticket. The Conservative party was united in its enthusiasm for sharing again in the spoils of office. Ospina, like Olaya in 1930, was a figure that commanded general respect but, outside Antioquia, did not win affection. But the party lacked definition. The comment of Juan Lozano was again apposite: the Conservative party"..has remained a latent force in Colombia as the sentimental sediment of old struggles; as a campesimo subconscious that resists analysis, that is the party of religion; as a snobbish posture of certain smitten intellectuals of literary aristocracy; as a pretext for struggle for certain temperamentally

1. Semana, 4 Nov., 1946; J.A. Osorio Lizarazo, Gaitán: vida, muerte y presencia permanente (Bogotá, 1952), p. 244. Certain election speeches of Gaitán can be heard on the gramophone record, Caudillo y muchedumbres, Vol. 1 (manufactured by Jorge Eduardo Gíron Barrios, Bogotá, n.d.).

nonconformist persons; as an obligatory portion of the budgetary booty for some politicos. It lacked an economic policy. It was undecided whether to be democratic or authoritarian. But its collapse would usher in total anarchy."[1] The Conservative party consisted of an uneasy alliance of those like Ospina, committed to an insecure coalition with Liberals, those, like Gómez, envisaging the National Union as a transitional phase before a period of hegemonic Conservatism and those seeking a rapid switch to hegemonic Conservatism. The Liberal majority in Congress and the lack of unanimity within the Conservative party guaranteed that there would be no immediate reversal of Liberal policies.

Each party was destabilized from the top. The decision of Turbay to abandon politics and his death intensified competition for the Liberal leadership. Gaitán, who, despite electoral defeat, still embodied popular urban aspirations, outmanoeuvred a resurgent Santos. The 'oligarchy', perceiving the risk of being isolated by Gaitán from the party following, reluctantly endorsed his leadership and awaited the opportunity to wrest it from him. The Liberal 'oligarchy', already alarmed by the rise of Rómulo Betancourt in Venezuela, feared a collusive deal between Gómez and Gaitán. Communists had spoken openly in 1945-6 of a wave of "intrepid action" inspired by an alliance of Gaitán, Gómez and Father Andrade Valderrama, the proponent of the flourishing Unión de Trabajadores Colombianos (U.T.C.). An anti-Franco demonstration was alleged to have been broken up by Gaitanista police; a C.T.C. declaration rejected the "Fascist demagoguery" of Gaitán; in the 1946 election he was said to have used Aranzazu, the electoral base of Silvio Villegas as his springboard in Caldas.[2]

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1. Sábado, 16 Nov., 1946.
2. Diario Popular 5,28 Aug., 27 Sept., 1945, 7 Mar., 26 Apr., 1946

El Siglo had commended the sincerity of Gaitán and, at first, advocated his candidature, quoting his speeches and condemning "....the vast conspiracy of silence which the two oligarchies are practising against him..." The language of Gaitán resembled that of Gómez: both spoke of a reconquista, both invested their followers with a peculiar moral superiority; each placed himself within a tradition of party agitation; each spoke of an idealized past rather than a superior future - in the words of Gaitán, "Our struggle is pacific, our struggle is pacific, but it is courageous....Men who still believe in the Colombia of yesterday, strong, vigorous, without hatred, forward!..."[1] Gaitán had heralded Gómez as a future president, praising his "political ethic ....consecrated like a moral peak within the Colombian ambiance..." and contrasted López and the 'oligarchy' with Gómez whom he exalted as "a great fighter" whose "qualities as a combattant within the Conservative party" he praised.[2] 'Oligarchic' fears were justified: the combination of Gaitán's urban support and Gómez' rural following would have been unbeatable. Both Laureanismo and Gaitanismo were crude reactions against machine politics, though both shared features of the machine politics they condemned. The Liberal 'oligarchy' had lost the initiative: Santos, still not sixty in 1946, was scorned by younger generations as a condescending pedant and thought of as a contemporary of Uribe Uribe and Herrera ready for the geriatric ward.[2]

Ospina, alone among 'oligarchs', retained any political initiative; and had to reconcile shuffling factions whose capacity to survive was a matter of profound doubt. Ospina, unlike Olaya, could not reduce political activism by pruning budgets. The perquisites of power were more attractive in 1946 than in any previous year. Liberals were

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1. El Siglo, 21, 25 Feb., 1945.
2. El Siglo, 19 Aug., 1946.

accordingly more reluctant to desert the government apparatus than the Conservatives had been in 1930.[1] Ospina improvized by feather-bedding: he seemed to hope that, with abundant patronage to pasture on, Conservatives could be recruited into government without displacing many Liberals. The tactic was not enough: Liberal fears - in a capital-city where they predominated - seemed confirmed by the smallest removal of Liberals; Conservatives demanded immediate satisfaction; and Congress was hesitant to pass necessary taxation to extend government underemployment: and the tactic, in any event, ran counter to Ospina's concern with administrative reform and improvement.

Ospina was, in the first instance, more successful in warding off Liberal criticism than in restraining Conservative carping. He was felt by many Conservatives to be too friendly towards the Santos interests, especially when, on making public his pleasure at the choice of Santos as designate, he was said by Semana to be a "clandestine Santista.... (who had always been) a weakness of El Tiempo". The relations of Ospina with Gaitánwere also initially good. Gaitán concentrated his attack upon the 'oligarchy' and not upon Ospina who, despite his business connections was less clearly linked by the Gaitanista following with the 'oligarchy' than Santos, López or Carlos Lleras.[3]

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1. Semana, 11 Jan., 1947.
2. The expenditure of the national government for 1947 was more than double that for any single year up to 1944, and for 1948 was double that for any year before 1945. National government expenditure rose from 93 million pesos in 1938, to 101 in 1939, 131 in 1940, 113 in 1941, 157 in 1942, 180 in 1943, 179 in 1944, 199 in 1945, 282 in 1946, 364 in 1947, 419 in 1948, i.e. a rise of over three hundred and fifty per cent in a decade. Board of Trade, Overseas Economic Surveys, Colombia: Economic and Commercial Conditions in Colombia (H.M. Stat. Off., 1950) pp. 2,7; By 1947 the budget of the national government was three hundred pesos, while industry - from textiles, breweries and tobacco to small cheese and oblea-producing enterprises - was worth only five hundred. Sabado, 29 Sept., 1947.
3. Sabado, 28 June, 1947. Gaitan's attacks on the Conservative party were unhistronic:he insisted that the solutions of Caro were inappropriate to the conditions of the 1945, that, though they were intended to produce order, they could produce only disorder. Gaitán saved his virulence for the 'oligarchy'.

The possibility of an arrangement between Ospina and Gaitán was not out of the question: after all, if the Conservative intransigents, Guillermo León Valencia and Gilberto Alzate Avendaño, captured the bulk of Conservative congressmen, El Siglo turned chilly and the unpredictable Liberal establishment cold shouldered Ospina, he might, indeed be forced into an alliance with Gaitán.

Gaitán too was vulnerable. He was concerned to avoid repetition of the eclipses that had marred his career in the past. He was alert to 'oligarchic' efforts to eliminate him. He was, therefore, concerned to sustain the level of popular enthusiasm he had awakened in Bogotá in 1945-6. He kept up a hitherto unknown level of seductive demagoguery and organized his supporters in torchlit processions (and went home by car himself). He was careful not to be autocratic in the Gaitanista movement: when its members came to consult him they received suggestions, not instructions. The Gaitanista newspaper, Jornada, was left free to voice rank-and-file criticism of Ospina: "With the same tone of voice, slow, hesitant, agrarian, as prophet of the cafeteros and evangelist of the contrite plutocracy, the president appears on the balconies with the best smile of a sympathetic Christian man that is trying hard to reproduce the stereotypes on the posters. Meanwhile, the Conservative governors manage the electoral machinery in the provinces, obeying the fanatical watchword of the political directorates. And, the Liberal governors and the Liberal ministers believe they are serving noble ideas in which nobody has confidence, some preserving the sincerest neutrality and others serving as docile instruments to practise the systematic slaughter of suffering Liberal functionaries...."[1] If he were to retain his precarious influence

1. Jornadg, 4 Feb., 1947. The cartoons of Jornada imitated those of El Siglo in the early 'forties: Ospina as gravedigger leaning over Liberal tombs, with Santos and López grinning. Jornada, 16 Oct., 1947.

in the Liberal party, Gaitán had to reconcile the apparently incompatible: he had both to restrain violence and to satisfy growing demands for relief from inflation.

Conservative pressure upon Ospina hardened. Gómez made no open criticism of the government: he could not afford to push Ospina into the arms of the Liberal 'oligarchy'. But he travelled restlessly, attending the inauguration of President Alemán of Mexico, electioneering in both the Costa and the interior.[1] Valencia, the son of the presidential candidate of 1918 and 1930 articulated Conservative reservations about Ospina. He argued publicly that if Conservatives had gained the elections, they should govern.[2] He encouraged members of a younger generation who complained that the party leadership was a closed shop controlled by Gómez and that Ospina awarded government posts to those who had collaborated with Liberalism - Governors for Olaya, the persistently anti-Laureanista circle in Cartagena that surrounded the Diario de la Costa, Urdaneta and Eduardo Zuleta Angel who had ministries in Liberal governments - and not opposition Conservatives of the 'thirties. The confidants of Ospina were said to be two Lopista Conservatives - Urdaneta and Zuleta - and one Laureanista - Luis Ignacio Andrade. Other members of his team had had office in the late 'twenties.[3] Valencia's gestures aroused the ire of Ospina. Valencia cast an ostentatious blank vote when Santos, supported by Ospina, was

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1. Gómez, Semana noted, 30 Dec., 1946, rejected the homages of derechistas and eulogized Alemán, in sharp contrast with his attacks on the Mexican regime in the 'thirties. The difference between Cárdenas and Alemán was not appreciated in Colombia.

2. Semana, 28 Oct., 1946.

3. Sabado, 28 June, 5 July, 16 Aug., 8 Nov., 1947. Liberals complained that Ospina chose experienced, well-known Conservative ministers and untried, unknown Liberals. Sabado, 16 Aug., 1947.

elected first designate, and won the applause of the Conservative barras and the students of the Universidad Javeriana. Valencia, dabbling in political brinkmanship of the kind adopted by Gomez during the Olaya regime, was never forgiven by the Ospinas who regarded him as a shabby showman who, unlike themselves, had made no contribution to the national economy and, unlike Gómez, had done nothing to hold a disspirited opposition party together. A man of nil qualifications for the party leadership had the audacity to risk provoking a breach between the government and the National Directorate. And he could not be ousted from the Directorate because he enjoyed the protection of Gómez, for whom he was useful as a stalking-horse (and by whom, as by others, his talent was underestimated) and because he might whip up even more Congressional hostility to Ospina. Gómez raised some political doubts: during a Conservative fund-raising week he dusted over the old themes of Liberal repression and Conservative self-sacrifice, concluding that, while some Liberals were loyal, "The National Union has had pertinacious and tireless enemies. All those enemies are Liberals...."[1]

Gaitán, pressed from below, had to break with Ospina. At first he alleged only that Ospina had failed to comply with the encyclicals he claimed to endorse. Rural violence, more extensively (and more hysterically reported in Bogotá than in the 'thirties) exacerbated elite divisions. Ospina invited Gaitán, Gómez and Santos to speak over the radio to condemn violence: each competed to denounce it more vigorously than the others. But, within a week, further incidents were reported, and Ospina and Gaitán were seen engaged in recriminations.[2] In a style reminiscent of Gómez Gaitán revealed to Congress that tear-gas and gas-masks had been bought by the government in the

1. Ibid., 23 Dec., 1946.

2. El Siglo, 16, 23 Mar., 23 Apr., ; El Tiempo, 16,23 Mar., 1947.

United States and delivered by U.S. planes from the Panamá Canal to the office of the U.S. military attache in Bogotá, from where they were distributed to the police without passing through normal military channels and procedures of fiscal control. The scandal eliminated the Minister of Government, Urdaneta and Ospina's reply, that he was merely following the policy of his predecessor, hardly received attention.[1] Urdaneta's successor, José Antonio Montalvo, an intransigent orator, was less acceptable to Liberals than Urdaneta. His appointment reconciled doubting Conservatives, especially the Alzate group surrounding El Eco Nacional and alarmed Liberals. A style of persistent opposition to Ospina emerged in Congress. Referring obliquely to Conservative precedents, Gaitán spoke sententiously of the need for Liberalism to avoid systematic opposition.[2] Sensitive to growing Liberal reservations about Gaitán, El Tiempo tried to discredit him as a failed leader, responsible for inflicting Montalvo upon Liberals.[3] He replied with barbed comment about the luxurious absenteeism of the governing oligarchy: López, Santos, both Lleras and Echandía were overseas at international conferences or absent from day-to-day politics.[4] A bid to put Echandía in the party leadership met with an immediate rebuff from Gaitán: leadership had popular origins, it was not "at the will of the plutocrats of El Tiempo".[5] The mood of Congress reflected the violence of remoter areas: Senator Cesar Ordoñez Quintero, a Liberal from Santander, even invited Urdaneta, now Minister of War, to a duel with machetes.[6] Ospina continued to choose Liberals who lacked Congressional respect, worked without regard for party executive

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1. Jornada, 13 Sept., El Siglo, 13 Sept., Semana, 20 Sept., 1947.
2. Semana, 18 Oct., 1947.
3. El Tiempo, 29-30 Nov., 1947.
4. Semana, 6 Dec., 1947.
5. El Siglo, 8 Dec., 1947.
6. Sabado, 13 Dec., 1947.

decisions and did nothing to halt political violence. They were even criticized caustically for their failure to resign at opportune moments.[1] The declaration of Montalvo that political violence would be answered with blood and fire signalled the end of political bipartisanship: Ospina formed a homogeneous Conservative Cabinet in which Gómez was Minister of Foreign Relations.

7. Breakdown: the Bogotazo, the '9 April'.

The pleadings of Ospina made no impression. El Siglo denounced Gaitán as leader of a "band of irresponsible men", "a madman with fury, virtuoso of demagoguery and of phonetics" who, despite professions to the contrary, betrayed the purer belligerent tradition of Herrera.[2] Gaitán called a demonstration in February, 1948: it was held in total silence, a political blow calculated to give the impression that Gaitanismo was a disciplined civic movement shattered by police repression in the provinces.[3]

The decision to hold the Pan American Conference in Bogotá in April, 1948 deepened the mood of agitation. Gómez, now Minister, refused to accept Gaitán on the Colombian delegation. An offended Jornada set out to embarrass Gómez with photographs of him at a Falangist ceremony in 1939 plastered on its front page as the U.S. delegation arrived. In imitation of El Siglo, Jornada revealed a note that purported to bear Gómez' signature asking the Banco Emisor to yield a contract for one of his political friends and authorizing a favourable exchange rate at an agency established for the Conference at the Capitol.[4]

Economic disparities sharpened resentments. The population of Bogotá more than doubled between 1928 and 1948. The poor took the brunt

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1. Semana, 9 Aug., 1948, Sabado, 27 Mar., 10 Apr., 22 May, 1948.
2. El Siglo, 24, 25 Feb., 1, 18 Mar., 1948.
3. Azula, op. cit., p. 308.
4. Jornada, 1, 4, 8 Apr., 1948.

of post-war inflation and privations. Meat was scarce; lack of rain meant water and electricity shortages in some barrios so that the Pan American delegates would have adequate supplies. Conspicuous expenditure on the Conference preparations - railway improvements, construction of an Avenue of the Americas, reconstruction of the Capitol - all supervised personally by Gómez refuelled dissent. Fortunes were being made on the black market and in contraband. Inflation was popularly believed to have been caused, at least partly, by the Conference.[1] The populace of Bogotá had received few tangible benefits from the Ospina government. The compulsory exodus of Liberals from jobs swelled the ranks of the unemployed with an educated or semi-educated group of declassés, of the socially downward mobile whose bitterness was cultivated sedulously for two years by Liberal leaders.

Rural violence reinforced nervousness: Bogotá, remote from most violence, felt immune. After the initial shock-wave of violence in 1946-7, it became episodic, repetitive and without resolution. The national elite reminded itself of the Indian element in the blood of the peasant, recalled past violence and its reassuringly circumscribed dimensions, and shunned responsibility, calling only for tighter security precautions and a selective sprinkling of palliatives. The press alternated between pious platitudes of hope for the future and unfettered newspaper warring. 'Oligarchy' and press were blinded to a nomadic element added to the Bogotano political scene: a rural migrant labour force, thrown up by demographic pressure and political tensions, that lacked kin ties and Church affiliation, an inarticulate, amorphous residue easily exploitable for political purposes.[2] Conservatives were

1. Jornada, 8 Feb., 1948; Elisco Martínez Zelada, Colombia en el llanto crónica auténtica del movimiento popular de abril de 1948 (Mexico City, 1948) pp. 36,39,49; Abraham Osorio Tapias, Por que mataron a Gaitán ? (Bogotá, n.d.) p. 54; "El 9 de abril y sus causas", El mes financiero y económico, 2 (1948), 34-7.
2. Mario Fernandez de Soto, Una revolución en Colombia. Jorge Eliécer Gaitán y Mariano Ospina Pérez (Madrid, 1951), p. 59.

further alarmed by the presence of "hundreds" of Venezuelans as "observers" and "tourists", who could conveniently be blackened as a foreign activist insurrectionary base.[1]

The assassination of Gaitán on the 9 April triggered off apparently spontaneous urban violence. A Guatemalan commentator stated that delegates at the Pan American Conference had seen no leaders organizing crowds: though radio - legitimate and clandestine - was used to speed the news of the assassination and the rumour that Gómez, Valencia and Montalvo had been lynched, and to incite popular revolution. The objects of popular attack followed patterns of agitation of the nineteenth century: ironmongers, drink and grocery-shops, the cathedral, the palaces of the archbishop and nuncio, convents, churches, Catholic colegios, police stations and archives and the Capitol. The building of El Siglo and Gómez' house were burned. The big banks and larger capitalist enterprises, better protected, were disturbed less.

Police participation in the revolt reinflamed Liberals. The police of the barrio of La Perseverancia, where rumours that the El Siglo group and Urdaneta planned to pull down one-storey houses and construct a fashionable suburb, handed out arms. The revolt exposed the physical weakness of the government: there were only seven hundred troops in the Bogotá barracks and a presidential guard of sixteen at the palace.[2] Revolt spread to the provinces: in Cauca and the Santanders there were radio calls to arms; in Barranquilla, Ibagué and Bucaramanga, agitation was intense but no better co-ordinated than in Bogotá.[3] Speculation and hysterical hoarding followed the decision of Cundinamarquense peasants

1. Azula, op. cit., p. 338.
2. Semana, 24 Apr., 1948.
3. Martínez Zelada, op. cit., p. 61.

to market their produce.[1]

A plane was ready to take Ospina to Medellín or Neiva to re-establish the government, but he insisted that he should remain in Bogotá: "Better a dead president than a fugitive one." The Liberal leaders assembled and met Ospina at the palace. Carlos Lleras worked frantically in meetings at El Tiempo and with the C.T.C. Ospina, despite Gómez who suggested a military junta in a civilian-led cabinet, offered the ministry of government to Echandía and other posts to Liberals. Echandía's broadcast of his acceptance fell like a cold douche upon the crowds: and he hastened to placate Liberals opposed to collaboration. His decision mobilized a previously indecisive military; the Bogotá barracks surrounded the fifth police division; army reinforcement from Tunja was unnecessary.[2]

Analysis - the word dignifies the prejudice bred by Cold War hysteria - of the '9 April' ran along predictable lines. Conservatives and El Tiempo insisted that the Soviet Embassy, international Communism and the Venezuelans were responsible.[3] Latin America had already felt starved of economic assistance and envied the outpourings of dollars into Europe. Exaggerating the Communist bogey at a moment when General Marshall was in Bogotá might extract United States aid that could conveniently prop up the regime. The argument was not, however, convincing. Evidence for a Communist conspiracy was circumstantial:

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1. José M. Blanco Núñez, Memorias de un gobernador - el nueve de abril de 1948. Antes, durante y después (Barranquilla, 1948).
2. Azula Barrera, op. cit., p. 355; Joaquín Estrada Monsalve, El 9 de abril en el palacio - horario de un golpe de estado (5th ed., Bogotá, 1949) pp. 20, 29, 66; Martínez Zelada, op. cit., p. 36, Sabado, 12 June, 1948.
3. Azula, op. cit., p. 302, Azula claimed even that the '9 April' was the upshot of a century of Liberal reform characterized by Jacobinism divorced from a sense of justice and blind to the implications of divorcing Church and state, p. 493. José Vicente Pepper, La gran embosoada (Cindad Trujillo, Dominican Republic, 1948), p. 58.

the organization of the party was poor; by the mid-1940's it was no more than a splintered fringe-group divided on personalista lines with an entrenched, elderly leadership. The party was neither ready to lead a revolution nor capable of taking advantage of rioting. Its performance, except on the radio, was negligible.

Gaitanistas held the Falangist fringe of the Conservative party responsible: but their evidence was equally circumstantial - incitement to assassinate Gaitán by a newspaper in Bolívar. Only two aspects of the assassination were established by the subsequent inquiry without contradiction or doubt: the identity of the assassin and the fact that he was a religious fanatic. Ospina was discreet in his comment: monosyllabic and veiled, he was careful to protect himself from criticism and censure, and to stress the urgency of preserving the government. El Siglo now contrasted the remaining Liberal leaders and Gaitán whom it depicted with the resourceful unctuousness of the obituary-writer: "What was mystique in Gaitán, sublime passion, will to sacrifice, would turn out to be caricature, cheap demagoguery, deceit, farce, in his imitators."[1]

The effects of the '9 April' were curiously undramatic. There was no business panic, presumably because the coffee areas were hardly touched.[2] There was some loss of political frivolity among the elite: it feared the destructive power, if not the organized power, of the Bogotanos; but it saw too how popular insurrection deliquesced when the national elite reshuffled to contain it. Some members of the elite behaved as if nothing had happened: the author Enrique Caballero Calderón romanticized about the obligations of Colombians to protect

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1. El Siglo, 25 Apr., 1948. Betancourt later claimed that an anti-Communist crusade was used in Latin America to defend dictatorship. "Panamericanismo y dictadura (La opinión continental frente a la X Conferencia Interamericana)", pamphlet offprint from Cuadernos Americanos (Mexico City, 1957?), p. 8.

2. Revista del Banco de la República (1948), 236.

for future generations a democratic heritage that might fall in Europe.[1]

8. Towards Conservative hegemony, 1948-50.

Ospina reshaped the Cabinet, with Liberals and Conservatives in equal proportions, and he introduced a soldier, General Germán Ocampo, who was not publicly hostile to Liberalism, as Minister of War. The new Cabinet brought a shortlived stability: only Echandía, among the Liberal members, had any popular affection. And the militant elements of the Conservative party, in particular, Gómez and Montalvo, were conspicuously absent.

The party leaderships were shifting and fluid. The Liberal leadership was shared by Echandía, a friend of Gaitán and Carlos Lleras, a former rival of Gaitán who hoped to inherit his position. Others, like Jorge Uribe Márquez, a former lieutenant of Gaitán, competed for this and tried to feed off the Gaitanista myth. But none could create a comparable personality cult; none could claim with equal plausibility that he was the pueblo; none had the same oratorical gifts. Gaitán, it should be noted, had always surrounded himself with mediocrities so as never to be outshone. Carlos Lleras, with the support of El Tiempo, set about re-organizing the party: El Siglo launched a campaign of out-and-out vilification of Lleras.

The Conservative leadership was even more uncertain. The voluntary exile of Gómez after the Bogotazo extended the freedom of movement of other Conservatives. In the latter half of 1948 the outstanding figure was Valencia, less intransigent after the '9 April': but he abandoned the leadership on seeing that his presidential hopes for 1950 were dashed. A tussle for power followed. The commanding figures in the party in Bogotá were, by early 1949, Urdaneta and Zuleta. Both were spoken of as presidenciables if Gómez stood down: but neither had a national following. A loose alliance of regionally influential

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1. Sabado, 18 Dec., 1948.

figures competed with them for national influence: a re-emergent Ramírez Moreno in Tolima, Alzate in Caldas and José María Villarreal in Boyacá. The party was rapidly lacking the coherence it had had in 1946: caciques asserted a lost local pre-eminence, played off the national figures and excluded their influence locally to an extent unknown in the previous two decades. The loss of co-ordinated, centralized decision-making in the Conservative party became comparable to that in the Liberal.

Echandía could no more maintain a balance between moderate and militant in the Liberal party than Ospina in the Conservative. Both recognized that a civilian two-party system would depend for its survival on bipartisan government. Both underestimated the persistence of backwards belligerency, the extent to which violent vocabulary at the centre - in particular when endorsed by a minister or national leader - fed upon violent action at the periphery, and, in turn, nourished it. Rural violence meant the resumption of virulent exchanges between the press of each party. Liberals accused Conservatives of submission to international Falangism; Conservatives charged Liberals with supine passivity in the face of a criminal Communism. Acts of violence in Congress fanned the flames of local violence.[1] Vigorous onslaughts alternated with tentative détentes - at one moment, a tactic of relentless harassment, at the next, one of self-sacrificing appeasement - until mutual confidence collapsed.

Ospina and Echandía retained some initiative for as long as the parties were divided. The National Union formula was dismissed by some members of both parties as a sell-out. A former minister, Estrada Monsalve, for example, criticized Ospina implicitly when he accused Echandía of shiftiness and López of trying to convert the National Union

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1. Incidents of violence are catalogued in Mgr. Germán Guzmán and others, La violencia en Colombia (Bogotá, 2nd ed. Vol. 1, 1963; 1st ed., vol. 2, 1964).

into a party auxiliary and build a 'sub-government'.[1]

Both parties sank their internal differences as the presidential campaign of 1949 approached: the result was a heavier polarization. Among Conservatives only Gómez could reunite the party. He used his superior mastery of the political machinery to renew the contact lost between the centre and the periphery, and to outbid alternative candidates for the presidency. The more moderate leaders in an Ospinista style were overtaken by the more outspoken, radicalizing, elements of the party and were neutralized.[2] El Siglo drew the history of Liberal governments as a saga of repression and violence.[3] Central government was reduced to ineffectiveness when the Governors of Boyacá and Nariño refused to answer Echandía's correspondence. In four departments Governors refused to implement government policy on the distribution of alcaldías.[4] Militant Conservatives, playing on memories of the '9 April' as a warning against a (to them) fellow-travelling Liberalism, pressed Ospina to oust the Liberal members of his Cabinet. The death of Gaitán, they claimed, had dissolved fantasies of political discipline in the Liberal party and opened the way to Communist control of the rank-and-file.

Liberals were equally uncompromising. The memory of Gaitán provided inexhaustible material for polemic: no longer had Liberals to depend on the warrior heroes of the nineteenth century.[5] Liberal attitudes to the assassination varied: 'oligarchs' had either to revere Gaitán and risk being accused of double-faced inconsistency or avoid mentioning him and provoke allegations of complicity in his death.

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1. Joaquin Estrada Monsalve, Asi fué la revolución - del 9 de abril al 27 dediciembre (Bogotá, 1950), pp. 34, 37-8.
2. Sabado, 15 Oct., 1949.
3. El Siglo, 6 Dec., 1948.
4. Sabado, 19 Mar., 28 May, 1949.
5. A cartoon of El Tiempo, 18 Oct., 1949, recalled vividly the martyrs of the War of the Thousand Days.

9 April was annually commemorated as a day of Liberal mourning, speeches and processions. Liberals responded to Conservative pressures on Ospina with a series of demands: for central control over the selection of Cabinet secretaries of Boyacá and Nariño, for central decision as to which municipios should have military alcaldes and where elections should be supervised by the army, and for the discharge of Colonel Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, Commander of the Third Brigade of Cali, who was said to have instructed officers to prevent political speeches or demonstrations. The non-compliance of Ospina occasioned the resignation of Liberals from his Cabinet and the appointment of soldiers to the ministries concerned with public order - Government, War and Justice.[1]

Dispute over the date of presidential elections led Liberal Congressmen to enter into impeachment proceedings against Ospina. His choices were constrained: he could only close Congress and jettison National Union or throw his lot in with the Conservative militants, or depend on the army without more than a very small civilian power-base. He chose the second, replacing the impartial Colonel Gaitán at the ministry of government with an intransigent Laureanista, Luis Ignacio Andrade, who had been responsible as manager of El Siglo for putting the paper back on a sound financial footing. The choice of Andrade meant the appointment of Governors of a militant complexion and Liberal charges that National Union policy had never been sincere.[2] Doggerel published in El Tiempo underlined popular Liberal opinion

> "No gobierna quien opina
> ni guia quien tiene mano;
> por eso no manda Ospina
> sino obedece a Laureano."[3]

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1. Semana, 28 May, 1949.
2. Semana, 8 Oct., 1949.
3. El Tiempo, 17 Oct., 1949.

Mutual distrust became so intense that the Liberal party withdrew its candidate, Echandía, for fear of electoral violence.[1] Conservative militancy had broken the spirit of the Liberal leadership but could not suppress local-level enthusiasm.

The elimination of the Liberal party laid bare divisions within the Conservatives. Office-seekers pleaded loyalty to Gómez but prepared to switch factional allegiances on hearing his appointments. Since neither Ospina as outgoing president nor Gómez as his successor could be party leader, a vacuum in the party leadership remained to be filled. The Medellín Convention of June, 1950, proclaimed Alzate as jefe supremo.

The ascent of Alzate was the product of hard work. A Conservative hostile to the patrician tone of the party leadership and a self-styled revolutionary traditionalist, Alzate was a Manizales society lawyer of eclectic interests - he wrote articles on jazz, Paul Valéry, Debussy, Kipling and German philosophy - who considered himself self-taught and compensated for lack of formal education with constant reference to standard authorities like Ortega y Gasset.[2] He had been provisional president of the directive board of the Third Congress of Students in 1928 (Carlos Lleras was president).[3] After a brief tenure as Secretary of the National Directorate during which he fell out with Gómez over opposition tactics, Alzate helped to build up the Nationalist movement with Silvio Villegas and to propagate the Ospina candidature of 1938.[4] He took a consistently independent line: he regarded the

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1. Previously Liberal propaganda had depicted Echandía in the tradition of Gaitán. A photograph of Gaitán trying to place himself in a Santandereano guerrillero tradition with a mil días veteran clasping him by the shoulder was used for the cover-page of a piece of Echandía's campaign literature, Verbo Liberal - segunda edición aumentada. Artículos, Discursos oraciones de los mas grandes liberales (Bucaramanga, 1949).

2. ed. José Luis Lora Peñalosa, El pensamiento vivo de Alzate Avendaño (n.p., n.d.) p. 67.

3. III Congreso Nacional de Estudiantes - Colombia (Bogotá, 1928) unnumbered.

4. Dimensión intelectual de Gilberto Alzate Avendaño. Algunas de sus grandes páginas literarias y políticas (Manizales, 1966), p. 22.

Concordat of 1942 as a victory of the Vatican - "a failure of the regime's diplomacy in the face of Vatican wisdom" and even opted out of the party in 1943, re-emerging in 1947.[1] Alzate combined energy in organization (in Bogotá as well as Caldas) with rhetorical skill. When the freshness of Gómez' oratory was wearing off, Alzate emerged as a Conservative answer to Gaitán. In the demoralized politics of the late 'forties his magnification of the hero and vocabulary of triumph and hope were refreshing. He admired Gaitán for forging a political movement out of nothing, without intellectual resources and in the midst of a "conspiracy of silence." Alzate was convinced of the powerfulness of rhetoric and sloganizing, "Our rationalist superstitions have brought us to believe that a party cannot be kept going without an ample rhetorical 'stock' and without a varied supply of formulae. This is false. A simple idea, an elemental notion, a 'slogan' can give cohesion to a formidable political force." Compared to Alzate the Communist leaders were said to be like members of the League of Catholic Women.[2] Alzate freed Caldense Conservatism from being a mere acquiescent satellite of the Antioqueño party and set out, through El Eco Nacional to make a national impression. El Eco Nacional did not survive because there was too little room in Bogotá for an alternative Conservative newspaper: but it did project Alzate sufficiently to alarm the party notables whom he taunted and, especially, Gómez, who built up his own protege for national power, Jorge Leyva.

The editorials of El Siglo reflected the movement of the balance of the Conservative party away from a Christian Democratic position to a Falangist one.[3] Alzate was unable to contain a clash between the

1. Gilberto Alzate Avendaño, Sus mejores páginas (Manizales, 1961) p. 159; El Nuevo Tiempo, 15 Oct., 1943.
2. Alzate, op. cit., p. 138. Sábado, 2 Aug., 1947, 12 June, 1948.
3. One editorial saw the defeat of the M.R.P. in France as a defeat for a Catholicism collaborating with men of Liberal persuasion including "quasi-heretics" like the "Israelite" Robert Schuman, El Siglo, 6 Dec., 1948.

Falangist and democratic wings of the party at the 1950 Convention. The Social Catholic doctrines affirmed at the 1948 Convention were replaced by more pugnacious Falangist proclamations of secular faith. Falangist hymns were adopted, and the Falangist shout,

> "Una sola patria: España!
> Una sola religión: la Católica!
> Un solo candidato: Franco!
> España, una grande libre!
> Arriba España!"

was adopted for local consumption

> "Una sola fé: Dios!
> Un sólo amor: Patria!
> Un sólo fin: Justicia!
> Una sola revindicación: Pan!
> Un solo afán: Unidad!
> Un sólo grito: Arriba Colombia!"[1]

The internal disorganization of the Conservative party was reflected in a popular Bogotano Conservative movement without elite endorsement, led by Eduardo Kronfly. Interim editor of a Conservative weekly, La Nación, Kronfly had been Alzatista and was an exponent of 'national revolution' or 'Conservative revolution'.[2] He rejected the democratic system as a myth and proclaimed Calvo Sotelo, José Antonio, Trujillo, Salazar and Franco as sources of inspiration to Colombian Conservatism.[3] His rise to brief prominence in the Bogotá barrios (his movement had a branch in Medellín) coincided with the formation of militant groups of shock-troops, the Legión Azul, protected by Alzate and Villarreal. In the absence of Alzate, Kronfly organized fifty comandos in the Bogotá barrios, and used them to seize control of the Bogotá Conservative Directorate after suspensions of municipal employees, among them comando members, by the alcalde. Elite control was clearly in jeopardy: Alzate spoke of the loss of control of the party by the 'oligarchy'; The expulsion of the sons of Urdaneta and Andrade reminded the

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1. El Colombiano, 11-15 Aug., 1948; El Tiempo, 25 June, 1950.
2. Jornada, 9 June, 1950.
3. La Nación, 7 Oct., 1949.

Conservative establishment of the 'popular' composition of the Kronflyista movement. The departmental Directorate of Cundinamarca decided to expose Kronfly. His claim that the Directorate had lost touch with the pueblo suggested to rural Cundinamarca gamonales socialist leanings and a desire to organize Conservatism as a mass party on Gaitanista lines. Kronflyismo reflected rank-and-file disenchantment with a leadership that claimed to recognize the magnitude of social problems and promised a more just and equitable society built on Catholic lines but, in practice, produced almost inconsequential improvements in working and living conditions. Jornada, semi-sympathetic to the Kronflyistas, predicted that "popular" Conservatives would be defeated by the adherents to Caro as popular Liberals hoping, in 1936, for a radical Constitution had been defeated by the 'oligarchy'. The premonition proved correct: Kronflyismo was stifled and absorbed by the Conservative establishment aided by censorship.[1]

The prospect of Gómez as president intimidated some Liberals: interviewed in Spain in August, 1948, he had compared the state of Colombia to that of the Asturias in 1934, and stated that civil war would be inevitable but that Conservatives would win.[2] The editorial comment of Jornada was unyielding: "The Government of Gómez would be the rule of the hyena, the kingdom of the bestia, the return to the darkness of the Middle Ages. Nobody would be certain of his life or of his possessions. Thousands of Colombians would seek refuge in neighbouring nations. The press - which is the honour and reputation of Colombia - would be gagged. Black clerical predominance would be imposed on the intellect. The university would be converted into a seat of directed Kultur. Science and free investigation would disappear

1. Jornada, 9,18 June, 5-13, 27-8 July, 1 Aug., 1950, 3 Feb., 6,17 Mar., 1951; El Tiempo, 11 Mar., 1951; Sábado, 17 Mar., 1951.

2. Jornada, 8 Aug., 1948.

as they have in Spain. And the president himself would be no more than a viceroy of Franco, a gauleiter of the assault troops, an inquisitor of the conscience.[1] Gómez represented for most Liberals an insensitive brutality and an appeal to a barbaric but dynamic atavism: attempts by López to revive his friendship as a means of bridging the gap between the parties were received with mockery by most Liberals.

Gómez' choice of Cabinet - welcomed as a "Rhapsody in Blue" by El Siglo - nonplussed both Conservatives and Liberals. Gómez contrived an able balance of generational, regional and interest groups. Big business was strongly represented: while only Villarreal at the ministry of commerce represented outspoken backwoods elements. Urdaneta, dependably gobiernista, received the ministry of war where his negotiating skills could be usefully employed. The outstanding figure in the Cabinet was Leyva, appointed Minister of Public Works. Initiated into politics under the patronage of the Jesuits, Leyva had founded co-operatives - with lower than market-place prices - in Eastern Cundinamarca. He competed, especially with Juan Uribe Cualla, an El Siglo veteran, for a clientele through the marketing organization. In 1947, demanding rewards for his followers in government posts, Leyva came sharply into conflict with Jorge Holguín, the Secretary of Government for Cundinamarca who refused to displace Liberals.[2] Gómez promoted young men to be Governors: that of Boyacá was thirty-five, that of Huila thirty-three. The only conspicuous omissions from Gómez' appointees were second-rate El Siglo henchmen. The Liberal elite lapsed into despairing mood. It lacked both patronage to unite the party and new ideas to mobilize it. The Fe y Dignidad campaign of Santos received short shrift from López.[3] Divisiveness nullified the

1. Jornada, 14 Oct., 1949.
2. Semana, 30 Oct., 1947; El Siglo, 8 Aug., 1950.
3. El Siglo, 15 Feb., 1951.

effects of public and private initiatives to renew Conservative-Liberal contact: when, for instance, Abelardo Forero approached Andrade, again Minister of Government, rebuking him for couching government statements in immoderate language, El Tiempo dismissed the initiative with heavy irony.[1] The C.T.C., deprived of its juridicial personality, collapsed, leaving only fragmentary cells of activists.[2]

Liberal underlining of Conservative differences was muted. Liberals could not scrutinize Conservatives as Gómez had them: they did not want to be accused of mimicking his style, feared counter-exposure, were denied access to legitimate broadcasting and were heavily censored. Yet they made some capital out of factional frictions. El Tiempo warmed to Alzate's opposition to censorship; it pointed to the silence of some Conservatives and the open condemnation by others of the "inspired" burnings of the houses of López and Carlos Lleras and the buildings of El Tiempo and El Espectador; and it emphasized the complaints of El Colombiano against censorship.[3] Alzate had firmly to deny that there were Liberals in his movement to avoid stigmatization.

Negotiations between the party leaderships continued during most of the government. Before his inauguration Gómez expressed his sympathy for inter-party collaboration.[4] But he received only a hostile response: El Relator of Cali was the only Liberal newspaper to cover his inauguration; the others abstained from publication for two days. Cases of successful co-option were few: when Indalecio Liévano Aguirre accepted the Cuban embassy in 1952 he was 'excommunicated' by El Tiempo.[5] Negotiations usually broke down over the guerrilla issue.

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1. Sabado, 8 Nov., 1952.
2. El Siglo, 24,26 Oct., 1952; Diario de Colombia, 29 Nov., 1952; Abelardo Forero Benavides, Por la conciliación nacional: un testimonio contra la barbarie política (Bogotá, 1953), pp.51-3,55.
3. El Tiempo, 9,10 Sept., 22 Nov., 1951; El Espectador, 27 May, 1952.
4. El Relator, Cali, 19 July, 1950, quoted in R.J., xxxiv (1950), Suplemento, 58.
5. El Tiempo, 27, 28 Jan., 1952; El Siglo, 27,28 Jan., 1952.

Repressive action in the 1949 election campaign had propelled isolated foci of Liberal militancy into guerrilla action. The National Direction - López, Santos and Carlos Lleras - was accused of seeking the release of an assassin when it requested that of Eliseo Velásquez, a Liberal leader held in Venezuela. Liberal chiefs of Boyacá were accused by the Governor of directing banditry. In 1951, a joint declaration of the party directorates rejecting violence was followed, within days, by the detention of the secretary of the National Liberal Direction for tendering moral and physical support to guerrillas.[1] The appointment of Urdaneta as interim president - Gómez was ill - afforded a brief moment of Liberal hope: he was believed to be a trimmer. He provided official planes for López to parley with the guerrillas in the Llanos. Urdaneta had, also, to consider Conservative reactions to conciliatory gestures: he retained outspokenly anti-Liberal members of his Cabinet - Andrade and Leyva. Urdaneta believed in the sincerity of López, but was unconvinced that all Lopistas desired peace.[2] The negotiations of López finally collapsed when Andrade accused him of seeking freedom for the bandits and discredit for the police.[3]

With Liberalism excluded from national power, the Conservative party divided. In 1949 leaders had hedged their bets: violence, the impossibility of predicting Gómez' appointments accurately and the desire to avoid offending potential followings had meant that factional bosses had evaded stating their objectives clearly. The capricious incidence of censorship, restrictions upon travel and ignorance reduced the sensitivity of the central party to political shifts at a local level;

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1. El Siglo, 28-9 May, 5 Aug., 7, 17 Oct., 1951.
2. El Siglo, 16,24 Aug., 1952; República de Colombia, Alocución del excelentísimo señor doctor Roberto Urdaneta Arbeláez, Designado, encargado de la presidencia de la república, dirigida a los colombianos en la noche del 13 de septiembre de 1952 (Bogotá, 1952) pp. 10-11. República de Colombia, Conferencia del señor ministro de gobierno, doctor Luis Ignacio Andrade sobre orden público y otros temas, (Bogotá, 1953).
3. El Siglo, 3 Mar., 1953.

and they failed to reconcile divisions. The party in Antioquia fell into four groups. The local Conservative press and the alcalde were at loggerheads in Bucaramanga. Protracted debate between Conservatives in the Valle in 1950-2 had the same bitter tone as that between Liberals and Conservatives in 1948-9: the Lloreda group controlling El Pais accused the Borrero Olano faction of El Diario del Pacífico of collaborating with the nueve-abrileños, the Liberals condemned for taking part in the 1948 insurrection.[1] Incohesiveness was aggravated by a federal structure that made for regional discrepancies: a member of the Cundinamarca Directorate could be elected to the Senate but a member of the Antioqueño, because of a section ruling, could not.[2] Party groups fell, broadly speaking, into two alliances: the Alzate, Valencia and Villarreal factions (powerful in Caldas, Cauca and Cali and Boyacá respectively) aligned against Andrade, Urdaneta and the El Siglo group (powerful primarily in the Upper Magdalena Valley and Cundinamarca). Both groups courted the party in Antioquia and the Santanders, but it was so divided in both that regional interests could not be projected onto the national scene through the party structure.

The division between the two alliances was formalized in competing National Directorates and focused on the issue of constitutional reform, and hardened during the reshuffle when Urdaneta was appointed. The two groups were known respectively as Alzatistas and Alvaristas - after Alvaro Gómez Hurtado, the son of Laureano, now leader of the former Laureanistas in Congress and boss of El Siglo. Gómez Hurtado was thirty-one, and was a polemicist like his father but with less reason: he did not have to be aggressive to reach the top. As a youth he had belonged to the Academia Caro in the 1930's which represented an admixture of intellectual polemic and streetfighting. His juvenile

1. Jornada, 18 June, 5,9,13,24 July, 1950, 8 Sept., 1951.
2. Sabado, 12 Sept., 1951.

flirtations with derechismo and his threat to assassinate López were smiled upon by his father as understandable adolescent excesses.[1] He had been briefly a Representative and Minister in Switzerland. After the '9 April' he took over the reconstruction of El Siglo, which, under his management, was possibly even less restrained than under his father. His alliance with the colder, more calculating Leyva, Minister of Public Works, caused widespread concern among Conservatives who feared that a Laureanista 'dynasty' would exclude them from office. Most remembered that Ospina and Laureano had begun their political careers at the ministry of public works. The rise of Gómez Hurtado seemed too fast to be decent: many Conservatives feared that he enjoyed an excessive degree of political immunity and protection.

Alzate seized on scandalous material in the hope of capturing the apprehensive: he attacked venomously expenditure on the Magdalena Railway (which connected Bogotá by rail with the Caribbean for the first time). Neither of the major factions was secure. Villarreal left the Alzatistas to make a brief bid with the older generation Antioqueño leadership and El Siglo to break his faction, and the Alzatistas passed from opposing the government within the governing party to being more gobiernista than the government. Even the power-base of Alzate in Caldas was uncertain.[2] The Congressional leadership of Gómez Hurtado was erratic and aggressive and pushed many old-guard Conservatives into a factionally neutral position. El Colombiano commented disdainfully: "What is happening in Bogotá seems inexplicable....while everyone else is disunited and the government feels unsupported by the party, we are in danger of disappearing."[3] Urdaneta proposed the arbitration of Gómez but differences were patched up only momentarily.[4]

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1. El Liberal, 2 Jan., 1942; Semana, 10 Jan., 1953; El Colombiano, 14 May, 1953.
2. Sábado, 17 Feb., 1951.
3. El Colombiano, 13 Nov., 1951.
4. El Tiempo, 21 Nov., 1951.

Constitutional debate polarized factions with more clarity. It also allowed less polemically inclined members of an older generation - Abel Carbonell, Miguel Jiménez López (Minister of Government for Pedro Nel Ospina) and Francisco de Paula Pérez - who retreated from factional commitment and were afraid of being ousted by their juniors to reassure themselves and parade their legal expertise. The government and the Alvaristas preached the desirability of a constitutional reform on the corporate lines advocated by Jesuit universities since the 'thirties. They proposed an eclectic Constituyente in which occupational groups would be represented. Their Conservative opponents argued that a Constituyente was an alien innovation lying outside Colombian experience. They said that they adhered to the 1886 Constitution in 1936 when it was attacked by Liberals and that they would continue to do so when it was attacked by Conservatives: the argument that Liberals imported random extraneous ideas in 1936 was now turned on the government; Colombia might enjoy a spiritual kinship with Spain, but her political history was sui generis. El Colombiano mediated between the two factions, but its formula of constitutional reform consistent with the precepts of Caro and Núñez carried little weight in Bogotá. The central irony of the constitutional debate was unmentioned: from 1949 the Constitution was rendered largely inoperative owing to the declaration of a state of siege.

Ospina lay low and vigilant. On leaving Colombia he said only that Conservatives should unite around Catholic doctrines and the papal encyclicals.[1] Refusing to accept the party leadership, he preferred to live in New York, distant from aspirants to power, and wait, emphasizing his solidarity with the government and its debt, especially in public works policy, to his. In 1952, he was forced reluctantly to take a stand. Alzate brought out a new Bogotano newspaper, Diario de

1. El Colombiano, 18 Apr., 1950.

Colombia, proclaiming Ospina's candidature with the slogan, "Con Ospina Pérez Adelante!"[1] Ospina showed more discretion and caution than his new-found enthusiasts. He could use the Alzatista network to rise to office, but its capacity for survival was in doubt. He could, in any event, win over the Congressional ballast alarmed by both Alvaro Gómez and Alzate, and gain his residual support - office-holders excluded by Laureano - and newspapers like El Colombiano. Ospina. therefore, avoided being overtied to Alzate: he contrived to remain above faction and, as far as was possible in 1952, above party (he did not exclude the possibility of winning some Liberals over); he avoided being a figure-head, withdrew from inflexible public commitment on the constitutional issue, refused to be embroiled in ideological debate, and was careful even to dissociate himself from any remarks attributed to him which he had not authorized.[2] He made no comment when Alzatistas uncovered manoeuvres against him. Alzatistas became increasingly touchy about his non-commital posture, until, in early 1953, campaigning in Colombia, a previously effusive Diario de Colombia lost interest in his tour when it interpreted a statement that it was the responsibility of the party to unite around its directives as an act of recognition of the opposing directive. It did not, however, drop his candidature.[3] El Colombiano, La Patria and Diario del Pacífico continued to canvass Ospina's candidature. El Siglo, on the defensive, seemed unusually reserved: the Alvaristas, expected to put up Leyva as Conservative candidate, had been outwitted. For the first time a formidable alliance of central and provincial Conservatives resisted the hold of the El Siglo group over the party. It chose its moment for counter-attack carefully. A proposal by Diario de Colombia to throw a party to commemorate Ospina's heroism on 9 April was savaged by El Siglo: 9 April was not a day of

1. Diario de Colombia, 2 Sept., 1952.
2. Jornada, 9 Feb., 1951.
3. Semana, 17 Jan., 28 Feb., 1953; Diario de Colombia, 12-15, 18,26 Jan., 1953.

Conservative triumph but of Liberal and Communist antipatria. El Siglo was accused of breaking the convention that the press should not concern itself with politics in Holy Week. A trivial issue broke into a public debate between Ospina and Laureano Gómez. Latent recriminations about the '9 April' were exchanged. The Alzatistas renewed their support for Ospina. The army intervened, offering a banquet to Ospina at which Generals Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, Regulo Gaitán and Mariano Ospina Rodríguez were present.[1]

The promised 'revolution in order' lurched inconsistently like the 'revolution on the march', because government had to reconcile warring factions within the elite and the governing parties. The energy that swept Gómez to office was sapped at a national level by internal disputes within the Conservative party and at a local level by the ferocity of Liberal response - underestimated by Conservative governments, as the 'revolution on the march' had underestimated local Conservative response.

9. Economic Policy, 1946-53.

Conservative government did not substantially reverse the economic policies of Liberals. There was a wide area of agreement in both parties on the necessity for pragmatic, if limited, state interventionism. The Minister of Finance for Ospina, Hernán Jaramillo Ocampo, considered a social security system desirable but added that the social legislation practised in Britain and Switzerland was premature in a country of fifteen years' industrialization: a view that corresponded to that of most Liberal leaders.

An economic policy of stability and growth aided by foreign capital was the first stated policy of the Ospina government. In practice, the administration lacked the will, the administrative

1. Diario de Colombia, 9,10 Apr., 1953; El Colombiano, 11 Apr., 1953; R.J., xxxix (1953), Suplemento, 120, 162.

mechanisms and the expertise to cope with the problems arising from the post-war speculative boom. Fears of a recurrence of world conflict that would prevent the utilization of accumulated reserves impelled a burst of government and commercial spending.[1] Another Minister of Finance, Pérez, stated that two-thirds of bank credits were absorbed by "speculative industries". But the government made only demagogic gestures and statements of intent: it intervened to move oil to Antioquia to deal with a departmental petrol shortage; it introduced a clear set of priorities in transport policy, emphasizing trunk roads; it gave the police special powers to deal with speculation by small tienda owners.[2] The business elite, whose optimism was more closely correlated to the coffee price in New York than to internal political conditions, was blind to the politically disruptive potential of speculation and unbalanced development. Political instability reflected, in part, both class antagonism and a sense of regional discrimination. Leftists condemned exchange controls as instruments of privilege. The East felt that the coffee-producing areas, more heavily concentrated in the West, shared disproportionately in the boom and in the rural housing and credit provided by the Coffee Federation.[3] But very little distinguished Conservative and Liberal economic policy: multi-class parties reconciled apparently incompatible interests that saw to it that they were represented in both parties in order to avoid reprisals.

The scale of social action of the Ospina government was limited to a slight easing of campesino and urban worker predicaments - energetic action to abolish chicha, free shoes and overalls and some state-assisted

1. Board of Trade, op.cit., p. 2; Revista del Banco de la República, xviii (1945), 217.
2. El Siglo, 20,22,23,30-1 Aug., 2,18 Sept., 1946; El Tiempo, 6 Oct., 1946.
3. Mejía J., Veinte anos de la Federación Nacional (Bogotá, 1956), pp. 53 ff., 129.

credit and housing for factory workers.[1] But the artisan working in the small-scale establishments that formed the majority of workplaces and that, still, according to the industrial census of 1945, employed the majority of urban workers, was untouched even by this legislation. White-collar workers, too, received few tangible benefits although they carried the brunt of a tax burden that, with falling living standards, was becoming increasingly vexatious. But even the legislation thought necessary by the Ospina government was obstructed by Congress: an attempt to oblige local manufacturers to buy locally produced raw materials in cotton at fixed minimum prices failed.

The '9 April' awakened the government to the need for a more determined economic policy. Aid was secured from the U.S. Exchange policy was modified so that tariffs on those foodstuffs and raw materials that were not produced locally in sufficient quantities were reduced and those on luxuries were raised: but by 1949, the new policy was in abeyance. The government welcomed the first mission of the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development led by Laughlin Currie. Through the Instituto de Fomento Industrial it pursued a policy of concentration upon three or four bottlenecks in the economy - fertilizer production in the Valle, for example: but in some cases, like the iron-and-steel works at Paz del Río in Boyacá, the bottleneck was electoral rather than economic.

In practice both the Ospina and Gómez governments pursued orthodox business policies. The Gómez regime paid more lip-service to post-war developmental ideologies than that of Ospina: it replaced, for instance, the ministry of mines and commerce with one of growth ('fomento'). In practice, however, it hardly differed from its predecessors. Its first

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1. Antonio García, Gaitán y el problema de la revolución colombiana (Bogotá, 1955) p. 12. The Ospina policy is outlined in Mariano Ospina Pérez, La nueva economía colombiana - llamamiento al trabajo y a la concordia (Bogotá, n.d., after 9 Apr., 1948).

object was to reassure business interests: savings and bank deposits fell back during the violence of the election campaign but recovered after Gómez was inaugurated.[1] The members of the committee that it selected to study the Currie report were predictably big businessmen.[2] The Gómez government stressed public works; it was committed to an unaudacious policy which it strove to reconcile with capitalist doctrines. El Siglo editorialized in praise of the encyclicals Rerum Novarum and Quadragesimo Año of Pius XI on the grounds that they sought justice not only for proletarians but for proprietors: an editorial well-timed on May Day to appeal to small peasant proprietor or self-employed artisan against the urban and rural proletariat.[3] The Gómez government avoided a recurrence of the 1945-7 speculative boom during the Korean War, thanks, largely, to the favourable coffee price and a poor crop in Brazil.[4]

1. Revista del Banco de la República, xxii (1949), 839, xxiii (1949), 1950;
2. El Siglo, 2 Sept., 1950.
3. El Siglo, 1 May, 1951.
4. F. Echavarría, Consideraciones sobre algunos aspectos de la economía colombiana durante el 13 del junio (Rome, 1961), p. 28.

Chapter Two:

Secular Thinking and Political Practice

The durability of the Conservative party is explained, in part, by the plausibility of its ideology. The resilence of the Conservative party to the strains of the early twentieth century can be explained adequately only by reference to its assimilation and rejection of new ideas. This chapter is written in the belief that the semi-autonomous treatment of political thinking and its relation to political practice can be fruitful.[1]

The conditions of political debate in the early twentieth century were not substantially different from those prevailing in the nineteenth. Colombia in the nineteenth was marked by a tradition of revolution from above, not below. In particular areas, it is true, radical movements outran their instigators in the Bogotano or local elites: but these areas were too isolated and the movements too ill-organized to pose more than a transitory threat to the central political leadership. The tradition of counter-revolution can be stated less clearly and less succinctly. The leadership of counter revolution came usually not from below or from semi-below: the cacique and provincial clerical strata initiated political action at a regional or subregional level: and Bogotano politicians grasped the opportunity to co-ordinate scattered expressions of grievance. The dominant features of political activity in the nineteenth century - isolation and immobility - have persisted in the twentieth. The same problems of political articulation have survived: local-level leaders have defended, sometimes with violence, their prerogative of evaluating political pronouncements radiated from

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1. Cf. the admirable Jaime Jaramillo Uribe, El pensamiento colombiano en el siglo xix (Bogotá, 1964) which betrays no preferences for one political party or one personal intellectual mascot. Jaramillo confines his focus to specific authors and, in particular, to the intellectual interplay of capital-city ideologues.

the centre and of prescribing the tactics to be used to express local grievances. Local traditions have varied considerably: the distribution of strife and unrest was very uneven in the nineteenth century; the distribution of its memory equally so - in some areas memories of the dignified advocacy of past causes have been sedulously cultivated and transmitted across generations; in others they have been lost. The primary problem for political leaders at the centre has not changed: how to mobilize, with scant economic resources, distant and ill-defined groups of diverse political experience in manageable political parties. The solution has remained the same: assiduous correspondence with the caciques, more recently reinforced by the telegraph and telephone, plus rhetorical appeals of such generality that no local followings could find them exceptionable.

Colombia has lacked a sense of national identity. She has no memory, like other countries of Latin America, of a concerted national movement. There has been no set of events to which Colombians regardless of region, race or social class could refer and in which they could feel collective pride. No heroic wars have been waged against the United States or France as in Mexico: no upsurge of national resistance, like the reaction to Spanish revanchisme in Peru has occurred. Colombia has suffered no major national outrage - no Anglo-French fleet demanding reparations or compensation, for example - that could act as a lynchpin of national sentiment. Colombia could produce no figure of the stature of José Marti - no nationalist combining civilian reputation, military prowess and the legend of a martyr. The only event in Colombian history that aroused deep national feeling was the excision of Panamá: but that evoked a sense of frustration and humiliation, not of self-assertion. Efforts to foment a precocious nationalism in the banana and oil zones against the United States collapsed when they failed to release sustained sympathy in other regions where the United States

presence was neither felt nor visible.

Internally Colombia experienced no national movement of 'self-vindication' that could compare with the Liberal achievement of Benito Juárez in Mexico. The effort to dramatize the partnership of Rafael Núñez and Miguel Antonio Caro, presidents in the 1880's and '90's in comparable terms was only partly successful. Nationalism came to be understood in terms of nation-construction: the delineation of national boundaries, the extension of government to them, the establishment of a permanent Congressional machinery. The architects of the successor state - Simón Bolívar and Francisco de Paula Santander - were portrayed as superhuman. But the idolizing of both was unconvinced; the memory of them was distant; and their legatees claimed each of them for the political party (Bolívar for the Conservatives, Santander for the Liberals), not for the nation. Neither compared to Martí: the peak of Bolívar's achievement was a 'Gran Colombia', not a small one; Santander was too mixed up in petty intrigue to be deified convincingly. Yet extensive reference was made to both and in particular to Bolívar. Marco Fidel Suárez appealed to the doctrine of Bolivarian harmony between the three nations of the former Gran Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Colombia.[1] The private secretary of Laureano Gómez wrote that "Pueblos without heroes incite bad thoughts...To deny the hero, to allow the hero to be forgotten, is a symptom of bad international education."[2] Gómez himself referred recurrently to Bolívar.[3] Opponents of parliamentarianism claimed that their brainchild of a "democratic dictatorship" lay in the tradition of Bolívar.[4] Aspirants to a Hispanic "community of sentiment" also claimed the inheritance

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1. Jorge Sánchez Camacho, Biografía de Marco Fidel Suárez (Bogotá, 1958), p. 87.
2. Felipe Antonio Molina, Días sin fecha (Bogotá, 1964), p. 80.
3. See, in particular, El Siglo, 25 June, 1945.
4. Daniel Valois Arce, Itinerario espiritual (Manizales, 1937), p. 108.

of Bolívar.[1] Leftist Liberals in 1949 said that to hand arms to the pueblo was merely to maintain the tradition of Bolívar and Santander.[2] The Rojas Pinilla government claimed inspiration in Christ and Bolívar.[3] Santander and Bolivar are still referred to as reference-points for political action.[4] If, despite heavy publicity-efforts, neither Bolívar nor Santander symbolized national aspirations effectively, it was unlikely that their successors, men of narrower vision and less administrative experience, could do so.

What national sentiment there was derived not from moments of national grandeur and heroism but from centralist and Catholic exhortation. Social and political order was understood to be possible only in conjunction with the moral order governed by the Church. Leading educators, usually clerics, argued during the Conservative 'hegemony' that religion and language were the first desiderata for national life, that the future of an ordered Catholic society lay in unity of philosophy, religion and language.[5] Catholicism and the Castilian language united Colombia and gave her singularity: Catholicism had to be preserved from Protestant or agnostic contamination at all costs; the Castilian language was so precious that even humiliating Gallicisms had to be warded off. "A nation that looks upon its language with indifference, renounces the greater part of its intellectual independence, and testifies that it is resigned to die."[6] Linguistic nationalism was not merely an aesthetic question but a moral duty: the Poles were raised as an example of a repressed nation united by their language.[7]

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1. Hugo Velasco A., Retorno a la hispanidad (Bogotá, 1951), pp. 88-90.
2. Enrique Cuellar Vargas, 13 años de violencia - asesinos intelectuales de Gaitán (Bogotá, 1959) pp. 13, 111.
3. Gonzalo Canal Ramírez, El 13 de junio en 33 numeros de Ya (Bogotá, 1954), p. 107.
4. Jaime Posada, La revolución democrática (Bogotá, 1955), pp. 29,38.
5. Rafael Maria Carrasquilla, Sermones y discursos escogidos (Bogotá, 1953,) p. 22; Marco Fidel Suárez, Escritos, 2nd selection (Bogotá, 1935) pp. 134-40.
6. Jorge Sánchez Camacho, Marco Fidel Suárez - Biografía (Bogotá 1958) p 101
7. Miguel Antonio Caro, Obras completas (Bogotá, 1920), ii, 131.

Linguistic dilution conduced only to the advance of materialism. This argument was advocated with force. The patria, religion and language were understood to be interconnected; and linguistic and philological studies were pursued with elite acclaim. The national unity that was sought was, however, only metaphysical, not physical: national boundaries were beyond the imaginative or physical horizons of most of the population. And the distinctiveness was unreal: Colombia was religiously and linguistically different from France, Britain or the United States, but not significantly so from the countries she adjoined. Any claim she had to be the unique champion of Catholic propriety in Spanish America was transitory: the anti-clerical ascendancy in Venezuela and Ecuador in the 1890's subsided into religious indifference.

National consciousness was not fostered in Colombia by 'radicalizing' immigration. Colombia did not receive the large influx of impoverished southern Europeans that formed a reservoir of discontent in Argentina. There were no Spanish shopkeepers in luxury-goods that provided a focus for radical agitation as in Mexico City. Equally, there was no significant Oriental presence to inflame class and ethnic consciousness as in Peru and Cuba. In Colombia immigration was more discussed than practised. In debate, Liberals portrayed immigrants as giving a new injection of life into a routine-ridden society; while Conservatives resisted immigration as a dissolvent of Hispanic tradition and an agent of racial and religious tensions. In practice, all governments were ill-prepared to receive immigrants: when the Anglican bishop of Chichester tried, in 1940, to arrange the settlement of some Jewish refugees from Central Europe near Popayán, only after months of negotiations with the Colombian government was it found that the proposed site had no water.[1] The only important immigration was informal, unaided and small-scale: turco refugees from the Levant, who

1. F.O. 371/A 3407/3407/11/ 21 Nov., 1940/Paske-Smith to Halifax.

after suffering persecution in the eastern Mediterranean, trod lightly. They were scattered and mainly employed in a retail trade which they created themselves. Since they neither displaced Colombians nor proselytized for Islam, but were willing to adjust to the status quo even to the point of being converted to Catholicism, they were assimilated smoothly and absorbed rapidly in chambers of commerce and municipal government.

Other immigrant groups were insignificant. A trickle of Germans - usually connected with trade or aviation - was rapidly absorbed by intermarriage. They differed among themselves over the extent to which they identified with Germany, especially with Nazism. The entry of Jews in the late 'thirties made no enduring impression: anti-semitic statements by some members of both parties were not translated into action. Neither Germans nor Jews created serious political repercussions. A handful of Spanish Republican refugees settled in Colombia after the Civil War: most were professionals whose impact was unfelt outside the universities and whose impression in them was exaggerated by Conservative propagandists. On the Colombian periphery local migrations had some disturbing influence. The mobile pool of labour circulating in the Caribbean brought radical ideas to the banana zone in the 'twenties: but maritime radicalism exerted no influence in Bogotá as it did in Havana and Caracas. The small clusters of emigrés on the Venezuelan frontier had a locally destabilizing effect but not a radicalising one.

Ideological insularity has made for static and repetitive political debate. Until the 1950's the peripeteias of the nineteenth century - the crisis of 1848-51 and the Constitutional debates of 1863 and 1885-6 provided the compass-points for forming attitudes: past heroes were lauded and villains denigrated.[1] However much Liberals claimed during

1. Anuario Liberal, 1935 (Bogotá, 1935), p. 5 ff. For example, see a speech of Laureano Gómez, El Siglo 7 Oct., 1949 and an article of a canon of Tunja, Adan Púerto, Ibid., 29 Apr., 1949.

the 1936 constitutional debate that their position had changed since the notoriously federalist Constitution of 1863, many Conservatives continued to maintain that their caricature of the red-hot radicalism of the 1850's and 1860's still represented the quintessence of Liberalism and that any subsequent modification was a superficial gloss. Likewise, attempts of businessman Conservatives to retreat from clerical postures in the 1920's were dismissed by Liberals as unthinkable: Conservatism, Liberals argued, without clericalism, would be emancipated, rootless; it would have thrown off the clerical shackles it had preserved for so long and would become indistinguishable from Liberalism. Until the 'fifties Conservatives and Liberals continued to make elaborate appeals to and against the experience of the nineteenth century and to seize upon those pivotal issues upon which easy condemnations of their opponents could hang. Political attitudes were expressed in exaggerated form. The entry of a few salesmen of Leftist books and pamphlets in 1928-9, evoked references to past "floods" of "subversive" propaganda; the Constitution of 1886 was praised by Conservatives not only as a workable expedient - which it was - but as an inspiration to a continent - which it most definitely was not.[1]

Elite debate was still conducted in privileged, restricted, but not totally exclusive circles: the anteroom of Congress, the clubs, the salons. A French or Spanish republican style, self-consciously imitated in Colombia in the nineteenth century, was preserved till the old rhetoric was extinguished by the closure of Congress and censorship of the 'fifties. The mode of political debate hardly altered. The most successful of politicians were those who were most persuasive in a conversational, face-to-face vein of political discussion and in writing stylish and often nebulous newspaper articles of a semi-theoretical and

1. La constitución de 1886 y las reformas proyectadas por la República Liberal. Discursos - conferencias -y otros documentos (Bogotá, 1936), pp. 14-15, 34, 62, 79, 107.

generalizing nature filled out with classical references.[1] The content of publication remained fairly stationary: political writing was dominated by personal apologies and strident polemical blasts on particular issues, usually peppered with references to European experience. Numbers of books on political matters fell after 1900 - a symptom of post-war poverty and of lessening political interest - only to rise again in the 'thirties and fall during the print and paper shortages of the Second World War. Most of the political analysis was perfunctory, written only for the political moment: there was neither the demand nor the leisure-time for sustained theorizing.

I. Núñez, Caro, the 1886 Constitution

The Conservatives possessed the dominant intellectual tradition between 1902 and 1930. It set the tone and style of debate: the subjects at issue remained God, religion, the patria, the public order, public debt and public works. All else was subsumed under these general headings. Conservatives claimed Simón Bolívar as their progenitor and founder, represented their own party as embodying his inheritance and Liberals as the descendants of those who thwarted his vision of a pure, selfless nationalism. They drew a picture of a glorious Conservative tradition, disrupted only by the bloody hiatuses caused by radical Liberal movements. The saga of repression and violence had been broken - mercifully -- by the Regeneration settlement of 1885-6. Though one of the authors of the settlement, Rafael Núñez, was himself a Liberal of radical background, Conservatives claimed the Regeneration as a Conservative (and, therefore, national) accomplishment. Conservatives measured the achievements of the Regeneration not by overseas experience but by the yardstick of the Colombian past. They used the economic expansion of the 1880's and 1890's as evidence of the superior

1. See Marco Fidel Suárez, Escritos (Bogotá, 1953), esp. pp. 12, 163.

quality of the institutions of the Regeneration; and ridiculed Liberals for their programmatic inconsistency and for their failure after the War of the Thousand Days to find a new vision.

With striking speed Conservatives spun a hagiography around Núñez and Caro and exalted the Constitution of 1886 as the pinnacle of national achievement.

Núñez was a man of profound scepticism searching for his authentic self, perhaps the only Colombian "romantic", a man with a peculiar sensitivity to personal drama. He was worldly, well-travelled, well-read, agnostic but looking for communion with something ill-defined, perhaps Nature, perhaps a Divinity. Slowly disillusioned by the radical experiments which he espoused in his youth, Núñez came to believe in the necessity of a centralized state, an alliance of the state with the Church, the urgency of introducing central credit institutions.[1] "The sacramental word of the Regeneration", he wrote "is...tolerance": political mysticism and religious intolerance by both Catholics and their opponents had been the undoing of Colombia.[2]

Caro too was introspective. But he began from a foundation in certainty: he was an orthodox Catholic in the mold of Pius IX and the First Vatican Council, who advocated religious uniformity and condemned Liberalism vigorously.[3] Caro was an omnivorous reader, a linguistics scholar and translator of poetry with a network of literary contact extending across Western Europe and Mexico.[4] He would have preferred a Catholic party but made his peace with the Conservative party that had, at times, not defended Catholicism with the ardour that he believed

1. Rafael Núnez, La reforma politica de Colombia (Bogotá, 1944-50), i, 148, 267-9.
2. Núnez, op. cit., i, 21-2, 316; Ensayos de crítica social (Rouen, 1874), pp. 124-5, 174.
3. Miguel Antonio Caro, Obras completas (Bogotá, 1962 edn.), pp. 751-60.
4. Epistolario de Don Miguel Antonio Caro. Correspondencia con Don Rufino J. Cuervo y Don Marcelino Ménen dez y Pelayo. (Bogotá, 1941), passim.

it merited.[1] He defended the Catholic record on humanitarian issues like slavery forcefully and lambasted the Liberal utilitarian record. He was renowned as an orator: the Argentine minister, overwhelmed by the feverishness and intellectual weight of Colombian politics, spoke of Caro "A fanatical monk, attorney of Valverde in the court of Spain, would not have spoken with greater vehemence or malevolence...."[2]

The partnership of Núñez and Caro, however impermanent, had a particular appeal in Colombian elite circles. Both were inflexible in their insistence on the necessity of centralizing national decisions. Both were pragmatic on the paper-money issue. Both insisted on a peculiar Colombian destiny.

The esteem in which the 1886 Constitution was held rose as it became clear that it worked and even survived civil war. Conservatives, astonished that it proved to be practical for so long, first respectabilized it, then sanctified and enshrined it, and by the 1930's, mythologized it.[3] It was a saviour, an irreversible document that illuminated Colombia.[4] Demonstrations were held to commemorate its fiftieth anniversary. López and Echandía were later rebuked for arrogance in trying to rectify Núñez and Caro.[5]

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1. Caro, Obras completas, (Bogotá, 1932 edn.) pp. 287-91.
2. Miguel Cané, Notas sobre un viaje en Colombia y Venezuela (Bogotá, 1893) p. 40.
3. Marco Fidel Suárez, Sueños de Luciano Pulgar (Bogotá, 1925-7), iv, 35.
4. Suárez, Sueños.... v, 251.
5. Azula Barrera, op. cit., p. 76.

Caro seemed inventive in the 1880's. He wrote with apparent confidence. He made received truths sound original. The coherent form which he gave his ideas was a novel artefact in the context of the late nineteenth century. But even in his lifetime the ideas began to look stale and stereotyped. His supporters and friends would quote them, would reproduce them: but burning conviction sank into bored indifference.

Marco Fidel Suárez tried to renew enthusiasm in the next generation. He cultivated the memory of Núñez and Caro. He engaged enthusiastically in linguistic studies and intellectual discourse.[1] But he never reached a peak comparable to that of Caro. It was as if Caro had struck a new synthesis and Suárez was groping for new ideas to synthesize with Caro's framework but failed to find them. Caro's style had been thrusting, dry, cryptic and to many of its readers liberating. His ideas seemed resilient when challenged. Suárez, by contrast, seemed hesitant, discursive and didactic: a tired style led to the lame conclusion that national decline set in once Suárez had been turned out of office. Suárez saw the need to revitalize Conservative ideology, but he only restated it. Political debate had, for lack of an intellectually respectable Liberal challenge, lost much of its excitement. Arguments for the rehabilitation and sanctification of Hispanic culture that had sounded powerful and relevant in the 1880's, seemed second-hand and puny in the 1920's. Discussion of the grand design of Bolívar looked chimerical. Suárez did not impress younger generations: he was accused of emasculated whimpering, of trying to bore Conservatism into submission and obedience.

2. The Contradictions of Conservatism

Conservatism comprised contradictions. The claim of some

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1. Ibid., iv, 35, v, 216, 251.

Conservatives to monopolize national tradition irked Liberals and embarrassed other Conservatives who claimed only to share in it. Suárez had difficulty in squaring absolutist thinking with democratic republicanism. On the one hand, he was too tied to a clerical hardline to be able to countenance the compromising gestures of a Carlos E. Restrepo. On the other, he held the view that Colombia was a popularly elected democracy. The dilemma seemed irresoluble; and Suárez squeezed out of it unpersuasively: he argued that it was ordained of God and decided by the free will of the people that Colombia should be Catholic, that Liberalism had been condemned by the Church and was notoriously unfit to govern; but, that since government consists only of men, not of angels, it was fallible and a temperate opposition permissible. In practice his main fear was the opposition press: he spoke of its irresponsibility and the laxness of Colombian press legislation.[1] But he realized too that he could not afford both to adhere to democratic catchphrases and muzzle the opposition press, especially since the opposition had few other peaceful means of expressing grievances.

Conservatives differed in their view of politics. Republicans, like Restrepo, of the Centenerista generation regarded government as a question of elementary statecraft, of maintaining an efficient if unexerting day-to-day administration that introduced an occasional mild reform and avoided collective mystiques and party superstitions. Stricter Conservatives were less prepared to compromise: politics for Suárez were the object of an incontrovertible set of verities about man and society from which all else sprang.[2] Republicanism was implicitly amoral: its advocates preferred political power to purity and consistency. While Restrepo or Ospina regarded politics as a positive,

1. Mensaje....1918 (Bogotá, 1918), p. 18; ... 1920 (Bogotá,1920), p.16.
2. Suárez, Escritos (Bogotá, 1953), pp. 67-191.

moulding activity, Suárez treated them as evil, as devoid of human charity. The difference in emphasis shone through their writings: Restrepo referred to Henri IV of France, Pope Leo XIII, Norman Angel and García Calderon; and Suárez quoted Caro and Colombian luminaries of the nineteenth century and figures central to the Hispanic tradition.[1]

Friction between the generations brought other divisions to the surface. A younger generation, led by the Leopards, called upon their elders to restore the virility and excitement of nineteenth-century politics. Shamelessly lifting the writings of Charles Maurras, they argued that, unless Colombian political life rose above the prevailing gloom and the electorate released from its mood of complacent apoliticism, Colombia would stagnate while the rest of the world advanced.[2]

Conservatives were not spared the impact of economic change. Reyes tried to follow the example of Porfirio Díaz. Ospina studied cotton in Mexico and England.[3] Conservative industrialists and merchants prospered like Liberals in the boom of the 'twenties. There was always some ferment among foreign - educated Conservatives: pressure for businessman governments, oblivious to religious discord and using Republican administrations in the United States as prototypes, was growing. Suárez warned that the Conservative party was being contaminated by material aspirations, that the party would dissolve if it succumbed to indifference and indolence and if regard for Catholicism as

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1. Mensaje.... 1912 (Bogotá, 1912) p. 15; ....1914 (Bogotá, 1914), pp. 14-17.
2. These statements were reproduced in later collections of writings, notably Silvio Villegas, No hay enemigos a la derecha (Materiales para una teoría nacionalista (Manizales, 1937), pp. 229-33. Guillermo Camacho Carrizosa, Santiago Pérez y otros estudios (Bogotá, 1934), pp. 60-5.
3. Luis Ospina Vásquez, Industria y protección en Colombia (Medellín, 1955), p. 330.

a guide to political action declined. His advice went unheeded. Catholic notions of 'the public good' as the prime end of government policy were supplanted by profit motive and private greed.[1] El Debate constrasted Catholic charity with capitalist egoism: "Like Communism, capitalism does not recognize frontiers."[2]

Conservatism did not consist of a well-defined set of political, social and economic goals so much as a feverish, emotional attachment which could be released on demand. This is not to say that Conservatism was unrealistic. It did, indeed, have an internal rationale. But it posited a stationary society when some of its advocates were proponents of those sectors of that society which made immobility impossible. This contradiction explains part of its breadth of appeal. Conservatism was comprehensible simultaneously in its static aspect in Nariño or Boyacá and in its nebulous otherworldliness in Medellín where it could be something of an emotional and spiritual compensation for capitalism. This dilemma was never resolved. No politician could afford to say that economic change was undesirable. Ignorance of economics made any statement on the subject hazardous - Caro ventured out into economic issues very hesitantly. And when he did so he stuck either to safe subjects like usury - where he could restate clerical thinking confidently - or to questions that were interpretable as matters of expediency and not dogma - like paper currency. Suárez considered such matters as worker education and public works as 'transient', and oil concessions were to be understood as a means of ensuring harmonious international relations.

Liberalism, in the meanwhile, went into eclipse: nervous and

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1. Suárez, Sueños, op. cit., i, 237, ii, 220; Guillermo Camacho Carrizosa in introduction to Abel Carbonell, Por la doctrina (Barranquilla, 1929), pp. ix-x; Universidad, 17 Sept., 1927.
2. El Debate, 29 July, 1927.

demobilized after the War of the Thousand Days, the party was, in the words of a 'Leopard',"a majestic revolutionary fossil."[1] Liberal hopes had soured. The old radicalism was silently absorbed into the party: it looked stale and staid. Events in Europe - the rise of Communism and Fascism, the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera - did nothing to replenish Liberal visions. The few major political debates of the moment were conducted within the Conservative party: Liberals made individual contributions, but did not act collectively. Liberals could depend upon their interests being defended for as long as the Conservative party contained a strong Republican element that kept ultras under control.

3. The Liberal Revival

The crisis of 1929-30 provoked a wave of retrospective moralizing in the Conservative party. Suárez seemed justified: perhaps the party had been too seduced by economic gain; perhaps it had been infiltrated by Liberal utilitarian thinking. The "capital sin" of Conservatives was, according to an influential Antioqueño Conservative, Gonzalo Restrepo Jaramillo, to exchange doctrine for material progress: the party had deviated from genuine Conservatism during the government of Ospina in whom, he claimed, education in the United States had impregnated a pragmatism "up to the marrow of the bones".[2] The 'Leopards' felt vindicated: life had become too soft for Conservative leaders; agitation had to be restored at the heart of the party. Armchair militancy was not enough. Others spoke of dictatorial solutions; others, still, of adjustment, of renewal of ideological equipment, even if it meant, like the Conservative party in Britain, adopting parts of the Liberal programme.[3] But, despite considerable heart-searching and

1. Augusto Ramirez Moreno, "Católicos renegados" in Universidad, 2 June, 1928.

2. Gonzalo Restrepo Jaramillo, El pensamiento conservador (Medellín 1936), pp. 15,20, 47-8.

3. Augusto Ramirez Moreno, Episodios (Bogotá, 1930), pp. 39,105; El Debate, 18 Feb., 1930; Carbonell, op. cit., pp. xvi, 18-19.

the espousal of the social encyclicals of Leo XIII, Conservatives found little to renew popular hopes after the Depression.[1]

The Liberals captured the ideological initiative. López, who had won public acclaim when he fulminated against 'prosperity through debt' in 1928, revived a latent Liberal radical tradition. López had to reconcile divergent Liberal strands; the veterans who recalled the struggles of the nineteenth century with pride but recoiled at incipient syndicalism;[2] a younger generation demanding an inventive and imaginative programme unlike that of Olaya;[3] artisans and urban workers looking for improved working and living conditions; bankers and landowners wanting generally quiescent government. López tried to do so with an apparently sweeping programme.[4] With some success he fabricated a revolutionary tradition; even the memory of General Benjamín Herrera, the singularly taciturn presidential candidate of 1922, was inflated because he provided a convenient link with more convincing nineteenth-century figures. López drew also on contemporary European and United States experience: he spoke of a New Deal, of a Popular Front. By comparison with the blinkered Conservative pessimism of most of his predecessors - not Ospina - López seemed visionary. Even the Conservative claim to achievement in philological studies seemed outclassed by Liberal education policy: the construction of the National University and the National Library, new syllabuses for primary schools and new educational publications, all of which Liberals later claimed as visible

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1. Mario Fernández de Soto, Una revolución en Colombia (Bogotá, 1951) p. 113.
2. Convención nacional de veteranos liberales, (Bogotá, 1938) pp.21-2,58.
3. De Jorge Zalamea a la juventud colombiana (pamphlet, London, 1933), pp. 6-12.
4. This is embodied in the declaration of party principles contained in Anuario Liberal, 1935 (Bogotá, 1935), pp. 115-20, picked up lock, stock and barrel from Alejandro López, Idearium Liberal (Paris, 1931).

proof of their attainments.[1] The adoption of radical vocabulary and, in particular, the endorsement of trade-unions pre-empted radical movements outside the Liberal party.

A new wave of debate surrounded the constitutional reform of 1936. Democracy and the republic were brought into question. Conservatives, jeering at the proclamation of "the Liberal Republic" claimed to have governed a republic for all Colombians. Conservatives found it difficult to compete with Liberal novelties: they were caught in the eternal dilemma of trying to be both traditional and original, undeviating and innovating. They promoted anxiety by emphasizing that Liberalism was undermining the authority of parents and priests and was threatening to redistribute property. While Liberalism was unpredictable and capricious, Conservatism, derived from a basis of certainty: certainty that the party embodied the historic residue of Spanish culture, certainty that it represented the majority party in the country, certainty that it was infused with Catholic orthodoxy and could rely (as it turned out it could not) on Church support. Restrepo Jaramillo revived, and carefully argued, the neo-Thomist theory of the right to resist tyrannical authority. The spectre of the French Revolution rose again: "the cross disappears..."; Catholics again would live under the tutelage of the state"[2] Conservatives, lacking an original alternative policy, fell back on mystical appeals: Liberals were offending against the sacred; the state was in the sacred trust of Conservatives; Conservatism was intangible, immutable, an article of faith; "the reign of the supernatural" was invoked by Gómez.[3] Meditation was, according to Restrepo Jaramillo, necessary if Conservatives were to escape from "the captivity of Babylon".[4] Gómez advocated the

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1. El liberalismo en el gobierno, (3 vs, Bogotá, 1946) passim.
2. Restrepo Jaramillo, op. cit., pp. 41, 137 ff., 220-31, 250.
3. Revista Colombiana, I (1933), 260-6, VIII (1937), 214.
4. Restrepo Jaramillo, op. cit., p. 65.

virtues of Gandhi as an iridescent example of self-abnegation in action. In answer to Acción Liberal Gómez founded the Revista colombiana in Bogotá, Restrepo Jaramillo La tradición in Medellín and Guillermo Valencia Claridad in Popayán. Debate became more acid as Liberalism and Conservatism were depicted, as in 1899, as representing conflicting ethos.

Younger Conservatives were impatient. The leadership was under-reacting to the 'revolution on the march'. Some claimed that only the 'nationalist', Falangist ideas being developed in Spain had sufficient vitality to substantiate the Conservative claim to being authentically Hispanic and Catholic in vision and derivation. The derechista argument was doubly persuasive. It derived both from a telescoping of history - a primaeval colonial superhappiness was depicted as having been disrupted by an alien thuggery in the nineteenth century that López was now reviving - and from contemporary experience - the Spanish Civil War, which conveniently crystallized and highlighted the division between the parties. Tradition was in jeopardy: the drama that was being played out in Spain might find a second theatre in Colombia.[1]

It soon became clear that the derechistas were offering only a dramatized version of official policy. The party did not espouse a radical Falangist programme and their recruitment drives met with negligible response. The party leadership was careful not to be over-receptive to Falangist and derechista ideas. Gómez pre-empted the derechistas - he appealed too to the spirit of the reconquista, to the joy to be found in struggle and in self-sacrifice, to the triumph of Conservatism through asceticism.[2] But he did not do so persistently

1. Villegas, No hay enemigos a la derecha (Manizales, 1937) pp. 111, 113; Octavio Quiñones Pardo, Los bárbaros, 1538-1540, 1938-1940 (Bogotá, 1940), pp. 67-81, 301-313; La fiesta de la raza en Cali - homenaje de Falange Española y de las JONS (pamphlet, Cali, 1938).

2. Gómez, "Decadencia y grandeza de España", Revista colombiana, ix (1938), 261.

because the anti-democratic aspects of Falangism alarmed republican businessmen in the party for whom little joy was to be found in the struggle and less in self-sacrifice. Excessive zeal and appeals to counter-revolution and direct action might induce them to embrace an alliance with an eager Santos, himself once a Liberal Republican, who, in El Tiempo, emphasized the loyalty of both Liberals and Conservatives to a common republican tradition. Gómez moved with agility: he did not underestimate either the vitality of the republican myth or the risk of the Conservative party being reduced to a fringe-faction.

Gómez evaded the problem of squaring democratic Conservative rhetoric with Falangism. Liberals underlined discrepancies within Conservative doctrine, and painted Falangism as a set of alien concepts disguised in traditional vocabulary. It was the turn of Liberals to assert their claim to a superior democratic tradition. Gómez tried hard to play out Conservative divisions in Medellín and especially Manizales - where Aquilino Villegas dismissed the 'nationalist' doctrines of La Patria as being as corrosive of Conservative democracy as Marxism was of Liberal- and to umpire them from Bogotá, insisting on his own continued adherence to free, open debate.[1] The central party could not, however, avoid being embroiled in the debate, and was rescued from serious division only because the Liberal threat was perceived to diminish.

By 1937 Liberal revolutionism was seen to be less momentous in its effects than had once been feared. Its appeal to class warfare was as timid as that of the Conservatives to class collaboration was unconvincing.[2] The Liberal party had jettisoned its one-time doctrinaire individualism, and had made, instead, a positive virtue of interventionism. Divorce legislation had been rejected by a Liberal-controlled

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1. Aquilino Villegas, 40 años de opinión - escritos políticos (Bogotá, 1937) pp. 171 ff; La Patria, Manizales, 2-10 Dec., 1936.

2. Francisco de Paula Pérez, Politica social (Bogotá, 1939).

Congress. The Church had retained control of most of secondary education and of the right to inspect textbooks. The Liberals were themselves divided. Militant young radicals accused collaborators in the Conservative "hegemony" of treachery, of betraying those defenders of the Liberal credo whose blood had been shed in the wars. But they did not eliminate their elders from influence in the party. Lopismo was soon demonstrated to be less revolutionary than expected. It extended the suffrage but only to deepen the Lopista power-base. Like most of the governing elite, the Lopista leaders excluded the majority of the population for fear of a jacquerie. The 'revolution on the march' was soon shown to be frivolous and dilettante: it broke with stultifying protocol and with academicism. It permitted a degree of broadmindedness; in the university it allowed freedom to teach to those differing from official opinion.[1] A decade later the mood of the mid-thirties was recalled nostalgically: the otherworldly ambiance of the Café Victoria where Picasso, Malraux, Blum, Pirandello, Chaplain, Joyce and Ulysses and John Dos Passos were all discussed with curious innocence.[2] This summed it up. The 'revolution on the march' marked a change in political style, not in political substance. It took place in the coffee-shops, hardly on the streets, even less in the factories and the fields. It represented an ill-digested mixture of cosmopolitan influences and local radical traditions: and when, like the radical movements of the nineteenth century, some of its supporters at a local level threatened to outradicalize its instigators, then the government turned to a policy of entrenchment and consolidation.

4. The Liberal Collapse

Lack of substantial subject-matter for political polemic in the

1. Alfonso López Michelsen, Cuestiones colombianas (Mexico City, 1955), p. 15.
2. Sábado, 29 Jan., 1944.

early 1940's was partly concealed by an increase in appeals to history in ideological debating. Old themes were dusted over dutifully. The outbreak of the Second World War evoked memories of the loss of Panamá: but Colombia was too remote from the war for debate about it to polarize parties. Lack of original ideas among Liberals was mirrored by lack of inventiveness among Conservatives. After the victory of Franco Conservatives romanced about a more 'spiritual','Hispanic' society: but the hallucination dependent on a fiction of racial purity, could not be popularized in a predominantly mestizo society.[1] A literary group, the Academia Caro, was formed to foster Spanish traditions.

Only the centenary of the death of Santander served to fill the ideological vacuum. The centenary was used by Santos to win over the Republican Conservatives. Santos tried to build up the myth of Santander, "the man of laws", play down the radical tradition of 1863 and, basking in the reflexion of Santander to claim to epitomize national tradition. The implicit absorption of the republican tradition and relegation of Laureanismo to a derechista pressure-group that endangered the republic produced a sharp clash between Santos and Gómez. Gómez sought to deflate the memory of Santander and reinflate that of Bolívar; he claimed to be more patriotic and more loyal to Catholicism than Santos; he accused the government of creating popular sentiment around Santander as "the main representative of our pueblo." Santos retorted by portraying Gómez as a worthless iconoclast intent upon demolishing a fragile republican edifice that had been centuries in the making. Each accused the other of misleading youth by falsifying national history.[2]

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1. The theme of Hispanidad was lovingly dwelt upon throughout 1941 by the Revista colombiana

2. Laureano Gómez, prologue to Guillermo Camacho Montoya, Santander-el hombre y el mito (Bogotá, 1941?) p. 5; Gómez, El mito de Santander 2 vs. (Bogotá, 1966), esp., i, 24; Eduardo Santos, Las étapas de la vida colombiana (Bogotá, 1946), pp. 71, 105 ff, 162, 206-7; Alfonso Romero Aguirre, El partido conservador ante la historia (Bogotá, 1944), p. 7.

As the centenary of Santander's death faded, the theme of Hispanidad received another airing. Conservatives asserted that their superior moral power derived from a solid ideological grounding in the Hispanic tradition. Liberals responded with assertions that Liberal politics were informed by decency, goodwill and tolerance, unlike the self-seeking vindictiveness of Conservatives. U.S. pressures were brought to bear on El Siglo. Where the son of Gómez, Alvaro Gómez Hurtado, had, in 1942, vigorously asserted that Hispanic America could not accept the "intellectual tutelage" of the United States, Gómez himself insisted, in 1943, that Hispanidad was consistent with democracy and was a spiritual movement doing nothing to counteract Pan-Americanism. The author of editorials on Hispanidad in El Siglo underlined that the Spanish receipt of help from Germany and Italy did no more to modify Spanish traditions than Russian alliance altered those of Britain and the United States: and he made a point of delivering the editorials at the U.S. Embassy.[1]

Debate lost its ideological edge and assumed a greater quality of personal fractiousness. The demise of the Revista colombiana meant the loss of the only remaining mouthpiece of the intelligentsia. The only sources of information were an increasingly partisan press and radio.

Growing scepticism about democratic practices and rituals and the efficacy of democratic institutions played briefly into the hands of Falangists and Communists between 1943 and 1945. But ideological lines remained conveniently blurred. Democratic Conservatism and derechista groups coexisted under the same umbrella: they could be brought to agree upon espousing corporate thinking, borrowed from Portugal and articulated in the most general terms.[2] Democratic Liberals and various

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1. Alvaro Gómez Hurtado, "Panamericanismo o un disfraz mediocre", Revista colombiana, xiii (1942), 857-60; El Liberal, 26 June, 1943; El Siglo, 10-17 March, 1944; D.S. 821.00/3496/24 Mar., 1944, Lane to Sec. of State.

2. El Siglo, 8 Sept., 1942.

shades of Leftist and communist coexisted, if with growing strain. As partisan government proved increasingly difficult to maintain, Liberals and Conservatives realigned in 1946, forming a National Union coalition in a republican tradition. The party chiefs, blind to growing social distance shown in the building of new suburbs for the better-off and the expansion of private motor transport, acted without considering popular reaction. A republican government could be depended on to defend business interests: it would not implement any lingering hopes of a Liberal social security programme, or a corporate state. Conservative and Liberal leaders - except Gaitán - sank their differences: a Leftist writer, Antonio García, exaggerated slightly when he later commented that only the derechista youth had remained faithful to its principles - the absolutist state and the cult of violence.[1]

In the 'thirties popular disenchantment was canalized by the 'revolution on the march', incipient trade unionism and religious radicalization. What class consciousness there was remained confined to peculiar areas of high physical mobility where it was difficult to establish disciplined cadres. From the early 1940's the central party machines lost control of the rank-and-file party and syndical activists. The Communist party sought to build a sense of class consciousness out of popular grievances: but it tried in vain. There were no clear lines of social stratification, no rigid or regimented class system: and political parties incorporating members of all social groups blurred class lines further. The peasantry was equally ill-defined: the term included a vast number of different statuses - the sharecropper, the large and small peasant proprietor, a rural wage proletariat. The urban working force included equally contrasting groups: artisans, small shopkeepers, wage-earners in the first factories. In a heavily

1. Antonio Garcia, Gaitán y el problema de la revolución Colombiana (Bogotá, 1955), p. 293.

atomized society the first identity was felt with recognizable units - the municipality, valley, local work-force, Church - not with classes. The strength of clientilistic and weakness of class consciousness obstructed Communist endeavour. And Communism itself hardly developed from being a mere literary posture, a speaking-point in cafes and the universities.[1]

The rhetoric of Gaitán struck a more resonant chord: Gaitán was setting out to establish as broadly-based a following as possible. He did not seek to define class, but merely distinguished the pueblo which he flattered with gratuitous commendation and the 'oligarchy' which he castigated with venom.[2] Gaitán used the vocabulary current in the forties. He, too, spoke of superior morality; but he attributed it to the pueblo in the catchphrase "the pueblo is superior to its directors." The control of the oligarchy (or the pais politico)was an illegitimate superimposition upon a victimized pueblo (or the pais nacional). His programme was vague, insubstantial and unremarkable by the criteria of the decade: state co-operatives, "rationalized" exploitation of agriculture (without mention of the administrative instruments for rationalizing it), social security.[3] Hoping to draw Conservative support, Gaitán spoke against inflaming clerical feelings; at the same time, he reaffirmed his Liberal credentials with pilgrimages to the tombs of Uribe and Herrera.[4] He called the pueblo to the struggle and underlined its unique capacity for mystical sacrifice.

The 'oligarchy' had no new ideological tools. The National Union was clearly an expedient to preserve government at a moment when it

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1. Raúl Andrade, La internacional negra en Colombia y otros ensayos (Bogotá, 1951?), p. 48.
2. Gaitán - antología de su pensamiento económico y social (Bogotá, 1968), pp. 257 ff.
3. José Maria Córdoba, Los mejores discursos de Jorge Eliécer Gaitán (Bogotá, n.d.), pp. 23-6, 103.
4. Ibid., pp. 59-60.

verged on collapse. The risk of a class war with central direction was magnified in the mood created by the Cold War. The assassination of Gaitán did nothing to relieve tensions: the control of his myth and of his following was fought over by Liberals none of whom could equal his effectiveness and his actual significance was contorted by party-bosses who sought a hero and a martyr.

Violencia - the term is inadequate, but it has the advantages of being neither partisan nor deeply coloured - shook cherished values. The National Union had no spirited defenders in any quarter. Events shocked a claustrophobic alta sociedad, depicted in a novel of Alfonso López Michelsen, as an exotic plant divorced from the rest of Colombia, interested not in Colombian culture but in Tatler and the Illustrated London News; not in the effects of war upon Colombia but in iron ore prices - and compared by the younger López to the upper classes in the Balkans before 1940.[1] Events disturbed those educated outside the cosmopolitan strata: for they belied the leitmotif of a hierarchical and orderly society that pervaded Church education; they fell outside the neat constructs of neo-Thomism.

Conservatives responded to violence with Cold War slogans: they alternated wildly between attempted rapprochements with Liberals and exclusive Falangist flirtations.[2] The party was divided by the muted, frustrated, censored debate over constitutional reform that revived the division between democratic Conservatives and derechistas. Christian democracy was mentioned: Ospina spoke sententiously of there being no democracy without Christianity.[3] Conservatives espoused intensive public works programmes in the hope that they would satisfy cacique-level demands.

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1. Alfonso López Michelson, Los elegidos (Mexico,1953), pp.15-36,121-2.
2. Diario de Colombia, 11.13 Oct., 1952.
3. El Colombiano, 18 April, 1950.

Liberals responded with outworn slogans. They looked to Europe for inspiration and found none. Santos fell back on a shortlived unconvincing campaign of 'faith and dignity' which did little to restore either. Despite the professions of their antagonists, neither Falangism nor Communism flourished: carefully co-ordinated hierarchies upon which both would need to rest could not subsist in the state of disruption.

Violencia shattered the world-view of those for whom all parts should dovetail neatly to form a divinely-ordained whole: there seemed no means of explaining the disturbance except conspiracy - theories - alliances of Freemasons, atheists and Communists or of Falangists, clericals and crypto-Fascists. Violencia was protracted as those who had taken up irretrievable postures reaffirmed them. Too much of the Church was heavily identified with one party to be able to mediate. Some members of the Bogotano elite sought hopelessly to reach intermediate positions. Others expressed utter disbelief in the problems, tried to minimize or exorcize them, appease the conscience and tinker with the institutional framework in the ludicrous hope that mere adjustments could solve all. Except during the immediate aftermath of the '9 April', the elite did not feel threatened as a group: both the urban working force and the peasantry were too divided to overthrow the governing classes. It was concerned, rather, for the wellbeing of individuals in an uncontrollable situation and for the preservation of any form of society.

5. Conclusions

Abstract political ideas received in Colombia before the 'fifties a respect rarely equalled elsewhere in Hispanic America. A rising politician had not only to display his rhetorical skill and ability in party management but also to project the party ideology, effectively in the press and tracts to be accepted as a leader. The reluctance to indulge in discursive ideological tracts probably obstructed the careers

of some leaders - Mariano Ospina Pérez among Conservatives and Gabriel Turbay among Liberals, for example.

Party unity depended not only on skill in balancing interests but also in perceiving ideological shifts and securing some kind of balance between them. Laureano Gómez was particularly talented at such ideological manipulation. He projected a positive image of a decisive and united party despite dissensions within the Conservative elite during the Liberal decline from 1941 to 1949. The contradictions within his thinking became apparent only during his government: his vision of a society free of envy and unmotivated by personal gain was inconsistent with the free rein that he gave to expansionist big business.

Abstract political speculation lost much prestige in the 'fifties and never recovered. It had usefully veiled personal differences since 1902. It had helped to establish and damage political reputations. In the 'fifties censorship severed the tradition of abstract political writing and coercion exposed the claims of both parties to moral superiority. The dispute for intellectual paramountcy between the parties, bitterly fought in the 'thirties and 'forties, has not been reanimated since the 'fifties. Party distinctiveness has, in consequence, been less pronounced.

Chapter 3

Conservatives and the Church

The Church was heavily identified with the Conservative party until the crisis of early 1950's. Sectors of the Conservative party regarded sectors of the Church as their leading allies. The Church, indeed, was widely regarded between 1902 and 1949 as the agent of a 'moral order' which made resort to physically coercive power unnecessary. It was, until 1949, the primary component of the public order while the military was a secondary ingredient. The influence of the Church in Colombian politics can be understood only by some extensive reference to the nineteenth century.

1. The Church in the nineteenth century

The power of the Church was gradually and unsystematically eroded from the reign of Charles III. Independence was accompanied by a crisis both within the Church - of ordination: bishops died and were not replaced, so new priests could not be ordained - and in its relation with the polity - the dissipation of Church wealth in military expenditure and the import of fashionable secularizing European ideologies. The colonial Church, which had been insulated by distance and the restraints of Spanish government to most of the impact of the European religious wars, the 'scientific revolution' and the Enlightenment, was rudely disrupted.

New Granada had in the eighteenth century, been dominated by a single, coherent world picture propagated by the Church. All proof was derived and deduced from preaxiomatic assumptions; denial of all or part of that framework was rebeldía, Satanism. Anthropocentric modes of thinking percolated in the nineteenth century from cosmopolitan, patrician circles to the village level. All that was cherished was brought into question: the family, religion, vital rites of passage - baptism,

marriage, burial. The possibility of divorce was entertained. The control of the cemetery by the priest was disputed. Lay, anti-clerical, sometimes atheistic educational schemes threatened to undermine sanctified childhood attitudes to authority. Printed literature was uncensored. The sacred right of property was challenged. The right of bishops to select and ordain priests was imperilled. Radical proposals to abolish tithes and firstfruits jeopardized priestly incomes and endangered philanthropic and educational endeavours that embraced the whole community.[1] The sense of shock experienced by isolated village communities where the possibility of alternative social arrangements had hardly been conjured up is impossible to estimate.

Crisis assumed epidemic proportions in 1848-9. The expulsion of the Archbishop of Bogotá, Manuel José Mosquera, by the anti-clerical government of José Hilario López confirmed parochial suspicions of the intentions of the government. At a village level it was as if the entire precarious social fabric was being incomprehensibly imperilled: neither mental boundaries nor existent vocabulary could comprehend the imported thinking. Priests took to political activism to defend their status, income and the remaining patchwork of inherited Church privilege: they painted vivid pictures of a diabolical enemy and appealed to a primitive Christian sense of struggle between good and evil. An alarmed Church was faced by the dilemmas: "since the absolute monarchy had been

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1. Juan Pablo Restrepo, La iglesia y el estado (London, 1885); José Restrepo Posada, Arquidiócesis de Bogotá. Datos biográficos de sus prelados 3 vs (Bogotá, 1961-6); Restrepo Posada and others, Antología del Ilustrísimo senor Manuel José Mosquera. Arzobispo de Bogotá y escritos sobre el mismo (Bogotá, 1954); ed. Restrepo Posada, Iglesia y estado en Colombia - sus relaciones desde la colonia hasta nuestros días (Medellín ? 1971?); José Maria Fernández and Rafael Granados, La obra civilizadora de la iglesia en Colombia (Bogotá, 1936); J. León Helguera, "Antecedentes sociales de la revolución en elsur de Colombia (1848-1851)" Anuario Colombiano de Historia social y de la cultura 5 (1970) 53-63. Helguera, "The Problem of Liberalism versus Conservatism in Colombia, 1849-85" in ed. Fredrick B. Pike, Latin American History: Select Problems (New York, 1969).

destroyed, why not now the absolute Church? If freedom to form political factions was permitted and freedom to exchange goods, why not too the unbridled liberty of picking and choosing between ideologies?

Churchmen divided in their response to the anti-clerical challenge. Some advocated a militant stand: they proclaimed that the crown of martyrdom was glorious, that concession was capitulation and toleration or negotiation approximated to trucking with the enemy. For them no tactic in the defence of the Church was excessive, over-excitement in the cause of God an impossibility. Many of their more moderate colleagues advocated a more introverted strain of thinking: they attributed some of the advances of anti-clericalism to indiscipline within the Church and insisted that the seeds of decay lay in the non-rectification of old abuses. Catholic revival, for them, depended upon self-reform and a slow, internal cleansing. Uniformity must be impressed upon the Church: locally-inspired innovations, medieval heretical relics, syncretic variations of Indian and negro origins must all be eliminated. Seminaries must be restored and parochial vacancies filled. The first priority of the Church must be to provide a context of peace and harmony in which the progress of each soul to the celestial city could be facilitated. The Church must avoid overassociation with political parties since they are all fabricated by man and, therefore, sin-laden.

Factionalism within the Church was unavoidable. The Church was under the constant surveillance of politicians who were alert to the possibility of its challenging or underpinning their authority. While political factions crystallized around the clerical/anti-clerical issue, political interference exacerbated divisions within the church. The intransigent element criticized loudly a prudent prelate like Mosquera who held back when Conservatives tried to put religious fanaticism to electoral purposes.[1] The moderate element expressed alarm at local

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1. Restrepo Posada, op. cit., ii, 111-3.

resistance to attempts of the metropolitan Curia to impose uniformity. Veiled threats of provincial dissidence were common, and often coincided with politically decentralizing movements. Yet more than a veneer of unity was maintained: ecclesiastical groupings had a discontinuous existence; factions shaped and reshaped around issues but were never formalized. All groups had much in common: their insistence on a living Hispanic Catholic heritage from the colony; their endorsement of new cults - the Sacred Heart, the Immaculate Conception - that would breathe a new life into Catholicism; their recognition of the need for social activism in the parishes. Recurrent debate reintegrated the Church and gave it a vitality that reinforced its grip. The best index of its strength was its fascination for its opponents.

Liberalism began to fade in the late 1870's. It had dazzled substantial numbers of intellectuals, artisans, shopkeepers and peasants with its promise of a terrestrial salvation. Novel ideologies provided a momentary sense of release. Liberalism competed with the Church in efforts to satisfy demands for security and status: but it failed in its vision. Its exhortations inculcated a certain agnosticism but did not reshape the Catholic world-picture persuasively. The Liberal state was less efficient as a philanthropic agency and less effective as an educator than the Church. Liberalism failed to compete artistically: religious images were frequently the sole examples of artistic creativity in the village. In the civil wars there was a crying need for justification of action, for a single impulse, a unity of life that made chaos comprehensible. Liberalism could not provide this. For all its rhetoric Liberalism was never relentlessly rationalist: its fortunes depended on what was unashamedly called a Liberal 'mystique'.

The Church, in the meantime, regained in confidence and in articulation. The initiatives of Pius IX put it back on the offensive. The return of the Jesuits, the manipulators of the canon law and managers

of theological argument par excellence, reassured the Church that its claims would be advanced with expertise and symbolized for its opponents the restoration of the ancien regime. Ecclesiastical ideologues argued the view that of all Colombian institutions the Church was the most firmly anchored in the past. It had led in forging the colony and the nation; it had acted as the magnanimous messenger of humanitarianism to the New World, and had ameliorated the greed of the conquistadores; it was the principal agent of social activity; it was, above all, the angel of 'civilization'. Membership of the Church carried with it identification with the 'civilized' world: to forgo membership of the Church was to forfeit 'civilized' status and membership of the patria, and to commit oneself to 'barbarism'. This argument was wielded intelligently: it was far from threadbare. The claim of the Church to authenticate the traditions of Andean America could not be surpassed by any other corporation. The image, popularized by the Church of man secure in Catholic civilization or fumbling on darkly in barbarism reached a receptive audience for whom analogy to impenetrable jungle, unknown animals and horrific diseases was immediate and tangible.

The clerical use of history was as intelligent as its use of imagery was intelligible. The Church, it argued, was of all Colombian institutions that most firmly anchored in the past and that most contributive to Colombian identity and nationality. Colombia had no recent memory of religious pluralism: that of Indian cults had been eliminated. Ecclesiastical ideologues, therefore, appealed to the least distant memory of religious heterogeneity - the confrontation of Spain and the Ottomans. They appealed to the spirit of the reconquista and presented events of the sixteenth century as if they were immediately relevant. They reminded Colombians of their triumphant struggle with the Moor. The titanic confrontation of God and the devil in the sixteenth century was being re-enacted in a new setting in the nineteenth. In the time-

less context of upland Colombia arguments that hinged on an overspanning of events had some propagandistic success. The fact that the argument was quite lacking in chronological sense was neither here nor there. The scenario and the actors changed: but the struggle between God and the devil persisted.

The personal crisis at village level was acute. The Church and the political party were the means by which the peasant interpreted and identified with the outside world. If Church and party collided, the peasant had, in many areas, to choose between the two. For each demanded a totality of loyalty and an unqualified denial of the other. Where did the duty of the individual lie? If he accepted the doctrine of Pius IX that Liberalism was a sin, he might be betraying his family honour, breaking reciprocal obligations with his kinsmen, undermining his friendships, jeopardizing his marketing network and, in effect, negating the rightness and legitimacy of his own passionate military career. If, on the contrary, he denied the Church, he ran the risk of exclusion from communion and burial, deprivation of education of his children and disloyalty of his wife.

Debate continued during the decades of civil disturbance between the 1840's and 1880's, but no consensus was reached on how much latitude to permit to novel speculations, on what rights those who sought to shake received truths were entitled, on what degree of nonconformity was tolerable. Even Radical Liberals came to recognize that to restabilize society it was necessary to accommodate the Church: it could not be annihilated. A willing Archbishop of Bogotá, Telésfero Paúl, worked out with Núnez a conciliatory solution, the Regeneration, embodied in the Constitution of 1886, the Concordat of 1887 and the Additional Convention of 1892. These documents regulated Church-state relations in such a way as to minimize conflict between the two: they recognized that the state could be governed only in collaboration with the Church, that

Catholicism was "the religion of Colombia" and "an essential element of the social order". Confiscated Church properties were not restored, but the Church had the same right to acquire new ones as any other judicially recognized body. The provisions of the Council of Trent were binding by civil law on baptized Catholics. The state would recognize the independence of the Church and would be bound to protect the right of the Church to full enjoyment of privileges.[1]

The legislation was passed and an uneasy truce reached. The settlement enabled the Church to reorganize radically: a wave of missions, parochial visitations and Church and school-building followed. Many Liberals were reassured: Church-attendance gave social respectability and access to Church education and freed them from the embarrassments and attendant disabilities of excommunication.[2] Continued tranquillity depended upon two unpredictable phenomena: the alliance of conciliatory political factions and the central control of the provincial Church. Politique calls for the subordination of confessional hatreds to a republic without rancour redivided the Church. Admirers of Pius IX expressed misgivings as the international context changed, and the apocalyptic pronouncements of Pius IX gave way to the measured optimism of Leo XIII. In the 1890's the Church felt encircled: the ecclesiastical configuration of Hispanic America seemed set against it. The power of the Church in Venezuela - never very great - had been curtailed severely even by professed Conservatives. Ecuador had fallen to the heresiarch, Eloy Alfaro. The Mexican Church seemed, from the distance of Colombia, to be heavily repressed. Cuba had been liberalized by the war against Spain. Colombia stood out as a single citadel of clerical

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1. The terms of the Concordat and the Additional Convention are to be found conveniently in Conferencias Episcopales de Colombia, Tomo I, 1908-53 (Bogotá, 1956), pp. 519-38. For an extensive commentary on the Concordat, see Gabriel de Ibarra, El Concordato de Colombia (Bogotá, 1941).
2. Antonio Maria Amézquita, Defensa del clero español y americano y guía geografico - religiosa del Estado de Cundinamarca (Bogotá, 1882), esp. pp. 166, 194, 204, 214, 219; Vicente Maria Cornejo, Refutación de la carta del senor presbitero D. Baltazar Vélez V. titulado los intransigentes (Tunja, 1897), pp. 47-8.

truth. The formation of a specifically Catholic party was advocated.[1]

Conservatives, trying to ease the Liberals out of political power, were confronted by Liberal revolt. Discrepancies within the Church were exposed by the presidential election of 1898. The Primate, Archbishop Bernardo Herrera Restrepo, was pressed by Bogotano Conservatives to recommend a candidate. He did so, only to be condemned by the parish priest of Cali and the canons of Tunja cathedral. The open debate between Churchmen that ensued gave Herrera Restrepo no choice but to win the disapprobation of all by leaving the decision to the faithful.[2]

War between 1899 and 1902 underlined the raw hostility between the contemplative and militant strains of the Church. Division was reflected in a shrill controversy that reigned on the Colombian-Ecuadorian frontier. Dissident Conservatives resentful that the hierarchy did not always act at their bidding, made common cause with dissident clerics for whom tolerance suggested heterodoxy and indifference and Liberal Catholicism was a cynical disguise for evil.

In Pasto, Colombia, Bishop Ezequiel Moreno y Díaz, a Spanish friar lambasted Liberalism and Liberal Catholicism. Liberalism was polluting Colombia; it professed the deepest mysteries. It was a duty before God to purge heresy, and, if necessary, to engage in mass expulsions and forced migrations, as against the Moors. "The native and formal reason of Liberalism is rebellion, and Liberals in consequence, are rebels to throw to the winds the revolutionary voice of their progenitor Lucifer; that oracular, criminal and scandalous Non serviam, which has come to be the 'shout' of all rebellion." "....Only punishment can await peoples and individuals infected with the horrible pest of Liberalism". The animus of Moreno y Díaz was directed primarily against the Bishop Federico

1. Rafael Maria Carrasquilla, Ensayo sobre la doctrina liberal (Madrid, 1899).
2. José Restrepo Posada, La iglesia en dos momentos difíciles en la historía patria (Bogotá, 1971), pp. 4-43.

González Suárez the bishop of the Ecuadorian diocese of Ibarra, the only bishop to avoid banishment during the Alfaro regime. Moreno accused González of collaboration, of Liberal Catholicism, of gratuitous sympathy towards Liberals. Moreno commented "When we see Jesus Christ treated as an intruder and driven out of the laws, the centres of instruction and everywhere in the neighbouring nation by an impious government; when we see that government taking a delight in prescribing laws which enslave the most free, the most beautiful Wife of Jesus Christ, the Church; when we see that that Government is throwing its battalions into our territory, hoisting its satanic colours in union with the revolutionaries of Colombia and to establish the regime of Lucifer in our pueblos; when we see that they want to accomplish that great mystery of iniquity, and that they assault and wound and kill us, and do not do more because they cannot ....how?! Great God! How do we preach peace? No., No peace is possible. Peace in this case is betrayal and apostasy: in these circumstances there is nothing more fitting than the shout of war, the cry of Julius II, 'Out the barbarians!' The cry of the Crusades, the same that we are now hearing from our fervent and valiant Catholics, 'To fight for our religion! God wishes it! .....Catholics! ....fight together the battles of God and march together to the combat! Ahead! By Jesus Christ, who gave us victory! By His Most Sacred Heart, which so visibly protected us! .....[1] He who suffers for God, will be confessor of Jesus Christ! He who has the good fortune of dying for Jesus Christ will be the martyr of Jesus Christ! Fortunate, happy, enviable death! .....[1] To fight for the defence of our Religion! God wills it! Long live Jesus Christ!" "We fought the Mohammedans and we fought the Pelagians and we must fight the Liberals." "And those Catholics who are tolerant, condescending, bland, extremely sweet towards the masons and furious enemies of Jesus Christ keep all their bad temper for those

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1. Only these ellipses are mine. The others are Moreno's.

who shout 'Long live the Religion!' and defend it suffering continuous penalties and exposing their lives. According to them, those who shout 'Long live Religion!' are exaggerated or imprudent...will prejudice the interests of the Church."[1] The differences between Moreno and González, exacerbated by war hysteria, were reproduced elsewhere in Colombia, though in less vitriolic language. Ultra-clerical condemnations of Liberalism were exploited by Conservatives and embarrassed more judicious prelates seeking a settlement. The destructiveness of the War of the Thousand Days won converts to a little-modified version of the Regeneration solution: and peace allowed the metropolitan hierarchy to try to re-establish clerical discipline.[2] A period of ecclesiastical respite followed. The distinction of activism and quietism, contemplation and crusade, apolitical religiosity and politicized religion that had been highlighted in the extreme circumstances of ferocious war became, again, blurred.

2. Sacralization and secularization. Some general comments

A general pattern of secularizing affrays and sacralizing comebacks can be detected in Colombia in the twentieth century. The gradual sacralizing trend began in the 1880's, was briefly halted by the War of the Thousand Days and was continued till the late 1920's; a peak can be identified between 1913 and 1915. A spurt of secularization, sometimes with a vengeance - especially at a local level - followed in the 1930's and early 1940's, with a peak between 1935 and 1936. This was succeeded

1. Ezequiel Moreno y Díaz, Cartas pastorales (Madrid, 1908), pp. 75-6, 241-2, 266, 531. The debate and subsequent discussion are to be found in Toribio Minguella y Arnedo, Biografía del Ilmo. Sr. D. Ezequiel Moreno y Diaz (Barcelona, 1909); Carta del Ilmo y Rmo. Sr. Dr. D. Federico González Suárez, Obispo de Ibarra (Quito, 1900); Wilfrido Loor, Estudios históricos (Quito, 1939); Ricardo A. Sanchez, La veneranda memoria de González Suárez (Quito, 1939); Federico González Suárez, Memorias íntimas (Guayaquil, n.d.) Before dying Moreno instructed that a large placard with the words "Liberalism is Sin" should be exhibited during his funeral-rites. Moreno, op. cit., p. 595.

2. Carta de su excelencia Monsenor Francisco Ragonesi, Arzobispo de Mira, Delegado Apostólico al Ilmo, Sr., Antonio Arboleda, Arzobispo de Popayán (Bogotá, 1908).

by a wave of sacralization, often again with a vengeance, in the late 1940's and 1950's, with its apex between 1949 and 1951. Creeping secularization has set in since the 1950's.

This pattern is vague and oversimplified. The terms 'secularization' and 'sacralization' are woolly, and must be approached cautiously. This pattern does not take into account deeply divergent regional and sub-regional patterns. It blurs the possibility that the Church, by its attachment to political power and worldliness, has been an agent of insidious secularization.[1] The pattern does take into account that secularization is not a once-and-for-all process; it is neither single nor irreversible. It draws attention to the fact that the dominant strands of each period coincided approximately with the presence of a particular party in power. It underlines the resilience of both clericalism and anti-clericalism: undercurrents of both have persisted and made resurgence possible. It implies that secularization could be warded off by entry into key positions in secular institutions - big business, government, the press and education - where a religious presence might provide some security and emotional gratification; by control over alternative forms of leisure-activity - dancing, theatre, film censorship; by some control of the arts - craftsmen have usually worked for the Church, though, of course, poetry has usually been romanticized and beyond the purview of the Church. No immediate correlation between secularization and industrialization can be drawn: in Medellín, industrial values and hierarchies have been widely sanctified; by contrast, in the traditionally less devout Cali, industrial areas have remained relatively free of Church influence.

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1. This point was illustrated by an advertisement in a Cúcuta newspaper, "The Most Illustrious and Reverend Archbishop of Guatemala blesses the inventors of Scott's Emulsion". The Secretary of the Archdiocese had commented, "His most Illustrious Grace has taken on various occasions this preparation of universal fame by facultative prescription, and he has always experienced salutary effects from it. His Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Lordship wishes you all prosperity and blesses you in the Name of the Lord." Ecos de Cúcuta, 24 Dec., 1910.

Religious symbolism remains all-pervasive. The habit of the Magdalena boatmen in the nineteenth century of singing hymns to the Virgin before beginning work persists in the shrines to Virgins on buses.[1] Politics remain heavily infused with religious vocabulary. The language of redemption, regeneration, expiation and atonement has been freely used across the political spectrum. A Conservative spoke at the 1948 Convention of "the Word made Laureano Gómez."[2] A prominent anti-clerical from Cartagena spoke of the ballot-box as "the altar of the patria where the citizen takes communion with the host of the free vote."[3] A Liberal journalist stated that the two plagues that the Lord had forgotten to include among those afflicting Egypt were Conservative and clerical caciquismo.[4]

The secular quality of religious debate is reflected in the general lack of theological discussion: in the twentieth century, debate has focused on the political aspects of the Church. Theological debate remains amateurish and is rarely heated.

3. The Church and politics, 1902-1930

The Church was the chief ally of Conservative governments between 1902 and 1930. The War of the Thousand Days had proved that an arrangement between the Church and the political parties was a prerequisite of peace, that the slogan of Nuñez, 'Regeneration or Catastrophe' was not idle. In 1902 government was again established on the lines of 1886. The Church was again able to entrench itself: its predominant position was guaranteed on paper by the Constitution and in practice by its

1. Charles Empson, Narratives of South America; illustrating manners, customs and scenery: containing also numerous facts in natural history, collected during a four years' residence in tropical regions (London, 1836), p. 4.
2. El Colombiano, 9 Feb., 1948.
3. Alfonso Romero Aguirre, Ayer, hoy y mañana del liberalismo colombiano (3rd edn., Bogotá, 1949) iv, 29.
4. Caliban (pseud. Enrique Santos) Danza de las horas (Bogotá, 1969), p. 176.

unique capacity to rouse Conservatives in certain areas.

Reyes and Restrepo hoped to abstract clerical/anti-clerical conflict from political debate. Restrepo went as far as arguing that the mere existence of "theological parties" damaged the Church by provoking a backlash:[1] he complained directly to the pope of "the impudent, low and calumnious insults" hurled against him by two clerical newspapers - one founded at the instance of the 1908 Episcopal Conference, the other of Jesuit inspiration.[2] Demands for a specifically Catholic party were voiced in Pasto and Tunja: but enthusiastic entreaties encountered in Antioquia a muted hostility because allies of Restrepo were powerful in Antioqueño Conservatism and because prospering Medellín interests wanted to avoid provoking Liberals. A Catholic party without strength in the leading Catholic department was doomed.

Clerical influence was reasserted through the Conservative party, which was reunited after negotiations between Concha and Suárez. Restrepo was alarmed that the Concha-Suárez alliance would revive the worst fanaticism of 1876. Catholic-political societies were formed, and Te Deums raised for electoral triumph. Sermons threatening excommunication were aimed at those not voting with Catholics. And Conservatives began to equate Republicanism with anti-clericalism. The parish-priest of Saboya "inflamed the blood and shed it abundantly"; that of Ibagué was armed to the teeth with three or four thousand functionaries.[3]

The governments of Concha and Suárez allowed the Church to entrench itself further. In particular, it received handsome concessions on the national periphery. A Convention was reached in 1908 by which the out-

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1. Mensaje....1914 (Bogotá, 1914) p. 14.
2. Carlos E. Restrepo, Exposición que hace el Presidente de Colombia ante la Santa Sede sobre asuntos políticos - religiosos, 18 de marzo de 1912 (Bogotá, 1912), esp. p. 6.
3. Restrepo, Orientación republicana (Medellín, 1930), i, p. 333.

lying zones, which constituted two-thirds of the national area, but were almost uninhabited, were designated as mission zones. Missions, usually Spanish and deeply clerical, were assigned government subventions in exchange for fulfilling administrative and judicial functions. The arrangement was mutually satisfactory. All pretence to government in peripheral areas had been absurd: now, a minimum was mobilized without a preposterous outlay; and the Church was seen to comply with an encyclical of Pius X calling for a renewed missionary effort to Indians.

Liberalism posed few serious challenges, and the Church became increasingly identified with Conservative government, especially because Herrera Restrepo had more years of active political participation than any president of the period. From 1914 the president had a haloed, sanctified role. His election depended on the nihil obstat of the Primate, not on popular conventions - there was none. He was chosen in Congressional cabals, in private homes of factional leaders and in the palaces of the Nuncio and Primate. The office and the individual holding it were legitimized in the eyes of the Church by the Te Deum that followed the inauguration. The Church posed as mediator of divine favour to the President: the threat of withdrawal of that favour was taken seriously. Ecclesiastical epithets were showered upon presidents. The president was projected as second archbishop - a guiding light, a tutor, a guardian. He was entrusted by the Church with the charge of suppressing evil. If he failed to do so, the Church might, in theory, impose sanctions against him; in practice, the president could not afford to hazard hierarchical criticism, and the Church could not risk the advantages to Liberals of a break with the president.[1]

It is arguable that the Church was more powerfully placed than in a monarchy. The president could not claim the divinization attributed to kings. He was never anointed; indeed, he was only sparingly gratified

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1. See, above, pp. 22-3

with the ecclesiastical symbols of rulership. Nor did he have perpetuity of tenure: a dissatisfied hierarchy could press not only for a change of policy but for a more acceptable candidate at the next elections. Any claim of presidents to derivation of sovereignty direct from God was easily refuted; and a Conservative president could use the alternative - sovereignty of the people - only lightly, for it was a liberal, atheistic notion stemming from the French Revolution. The possibility that the president was a strong contender for control of consciences was negligible. In a Christocentric Colombia the Church controlled the national drama. The events in Congress were a sideshow by comparison. Nothing was more imposing, moving and memorable than the sanctified drama of the Church. The president reaffirmed his relation with the Church by his leadership of laymen in the annual Corpus Christi procession and his dedication of the nation to the Sacred Heart. Concha attended the first National Eucharistic Congress in 1913, Suárez the coronation of the Virgin of Chiquinquira in 1919.[1]

Endorsement by the Church carried other qualities: in areas of heavy Church influence the presidential office was laid up in heaven, untouchable, unalterable. As he arrived in Pasto in 1920, for example, Suárez was addressed by the president of the municipality, "There you are, Lord, with the irradiation of the thinker and the circumspection of the statist, with the strength of the apostle and the perseverance of the martyr. And from the summit of the Capitol you go down to traverse the pueblos, to examine their vitality, to promote the development of their capacities and to hasten the seasoned fruit which are seen to yield in the common heap of the majority of the Patria."[2]

In delivery and composition priestly and political rhetoric over-

1. Secretariado Permanente del Episcopado, Anuario de la iglesia católica en Colombia, 1938 (Bogotá, 1938), pp. 450-1.

2. Ferrocarril de Nariño, Pasto, 27 Mar., 1920.

lapped. The proximity of style was ineludible: the same gestures, intonation, organization of material, appeal to God, the patria and hogar, the same sermonizing attack on the enemies of the patria and religion. By 1920 the president and primate had a common interest in perpetuating the political and ecclesiastical system and keeping control over the regional political and ecclesiastical structures.

The stickiest part of the relationship of the Church and Conservative governments was the ministry of public instruction. Here even Conservative regimes clashed, at times, with the Church. Concha tried to avoid dispute by appointing a fashionable metropolitan preacher, Father Carlos Cortés Lee (Caro had done the same with Father Rafael Maria Carrasquilla in 1896) as minister: but Cortés Lee declined the post.[1] Pedro Nel Ospina ran into more serious embarrassment. His government was considered dangerously materialistic and laicizing by its critics. A proposal by the minister of public instruction to contract a foreign mission was, in general, favourably received. One senator, indeed, recommended that a mission should be hired from Cork in the Irish Free State, on the grounds that its members would not only be Catholics and Republicans but also, as hungerstrikers, well-equipped to understand the plight of underpaid Colombian schoolteachers. A minor incident in which an oversensitive minister felt snubbed by the Nuncio was inflated by the opposition press into a gesture of defence of national dignity. Ospina removed the minister and blundered in seeking an occupant to fill the delicate job. Liberals revelled at his first erratic choice: a man unacceptable to the Church because he had made blistering attacks upon the Indian missions in 1918. Liberals protested loudly that the minister had either to be a puppet of ecclesiastical interests or to forfeit the support of the president.[2]

1. Rafael Maria Carrasquilla, Obras completas (Bogotá, 1957), i, 491-2.
2. F.O. 371/A732/732/11/11 Jan., 1924/Seeds to Curzon, A2322/2322/11/ 28 Jan., 1924/Seeds to Macdonald. A1338/225/11/1 Feb., 1924, Seeds to Macdonald.

The presidential election of 1930 again exposed divisions within the Church. Archbishop Herrera Restrepo had, in 1926, instructed the co-adjutor, Archbishop Ismael Perdomo, to speak informally with the two possible Conservative candidates for the 1926 election, Abadía Méndez and Vásquez Cobo and to inform them that the "high authorities" had chosen Abadía as candidate for 1926 and Vásquez for 1930.[1]

Herrera Restrepo died in 1927, and was succeeded by Perdomo. His appointment was resented within the hierarchy, especially by the Archbishop of Medellín, Manuel José Cayzedo; and was believed to have been imposed by the Nuncio.[2] The lapse between the death of one primate and the selection of the next allowed ecclesiastical politicking to get out of hand.

Perdomo had worked for a decade in the rural diocese of Ibagué. He was respected by Liberals because he had interceded on their behalf during the War of the Thousand Days. He had founded the village of Cajamarcá, a seminary, savings banks and consumer co-operatives and had introduced the Salesian Brothers to run an agricultural school.[3] His non-partisanship was known. His style was simple and direct: he contrasted strongly with his predecessor, a prince of the Church who received priests, bishops and Conservative leaders majestically in the throne-room and accumulated power over three decades, power that Perdomo was reluctant to inherit. But his choices were restricted. He received the supplications of Conservatives; he suffered the inevitably damaging comparisons with Herrera Restrepo.

In 1929 the question of candidates again arose. Some metropolitan clerics wanted the Primate to withdraw from the selection: but the Nuncio

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1. José Restrepo Posada, La iglesia en dos momentos difíciles de la historia patria (Bogotá, 1971), p. 51.
2. Ruy Blas, 9, 14 Dec., 1927.
3. Obituary in R.J., XXXIV (1950), 4-8.

was reluctant to admit to Rome that ecclesiastical influence was ebbing; and the Vatican seemed to approve of political intervention.[1] Reluctantly, Perdomo remained "the elector of electors".[2]

Vásquez sought and received endorsement by Perdomo. The Communist scare fanned by Rengifo led some clerics to believe that Vásquez would be the best candidate to suppress subversive influences. Some metropolitan clerics were convinced that Vásquez would resort to a coup and reprisals against the Church if it vetoed his candidature for a third time. A circular from Perdomo supporting Vásquez was rebuffed by the Valencista faction. In a hastily convened meeting of Conservative congressmen, a majority voted for Valencia as candidate. They pressed Perdomo to withdraw his circular and to support Valencia whom, they said, was already legitimized by the party majority in Congress. Perdomo did so. The result was ecclesiastical pandemonium. Strongly Vásquista areas expressed their dissidence, and Perdomo reaffirmed the Vásquez candidature, agreeing that eighty per cent of Colombian Catholics followed Vásquez. The vacillation of Perdomo outraged provincial bishops: that of Cali complained he could not perform miracles; Cayzedo declared his support for Valencia. A vote against Valencia, said Bishop Miguel Angel Builes of Santa Rosa de Osos, would contribute to "the sad defeat and ruin of our Christian institutions." The Church in Caldas was divided when the bishop of Manizales refused to be bound to a partisan stand, he was upbraided by a locally influential maverick priest for allowing a divided Catholic party to leave triumph to the Liberals. The Vásquista Bishop of Ibagué claimed that the masonic lodges were working for Valencia. In Boyacá political campaigning was mixed crudely with religious activity. Certain Boyacense priests gave eighty days of indulgence to Vásquista

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1. F.O. 371/13479/A 5749/1190/11/5 Aug., 1929, Dickson to Simon; Semana, 2 Dec., 1946.
2. Alcides Arguedas, Obras completas (Madrid, 1959)i 748.

voters. After a procession of Our Lady of Mongui to the cathedral of Tunja, a discourse by a canon was followed by a partisan speech after which one clique of priests applauded and another remained silent: a sudden viva for Vásquez aroused a counter-cheer for Valencia.[1] In the Cali region priests used an earth-tremor as a warning to vote for Church candidates or lose souls.[2]

Abadía was strictly impartial. Clerical endorsement of Vásquez had aroused some resentment within the government. Some ministers whose measures had been outvoted by Vásquista-Liberal alliances in Congress felt that their assiduous protection of Church interests was not being reciprocated with equal loyalty by the Church.[3] They used the government machinery to obstruct Vásquistas in the elections to the House of Representatives in 1929.[4] The Nuncio told the United States ambassador that Abadia tried to wreck the Vásquez candidature: after inviting the Nuncio to reconcile the two factions, Abadia had 'phoned the Colombian Embassy before the Holy See to complain that the Nuncio was meddling in local politics.[5]

The Liberals were conspicuously silent. They enjoyed the embarrassment of the Church. They alleged clerical complicity in Rengifista fraudulence: the ministry of war was said to be subsidizing illegally the publication of religious pamphlets and the production of 'zincographs' of the Sacred Heart for the mission zones.[6] The cartoonist Ricardo Rendón was merciless in criticism of both Church and Conservatives, even portraying Vásquez as a porpoise harpooned by a mitre.[7] The Liberal

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1. El Tiempo, 3 Sept., 22 Nov., 1929, 1,4,7,8,9,15,26 Jan., 1 Feb., 1930; El Espectador, 8 Jan., 6,21 Feb., 1930; El Nuevo Tiempo, 4,6,7,25, 27,28 Jan., 2,4 Feb., 1930; Guillermo Salamanca, La república liberal (Bogotá, 1936), i, 1-45; Mario Ibero, Andanzas (Bogotá, 1930).
2. D.S. 821.00/voluntary political report/17 Feb.,1930/Chapman, Consul in Cali, to Sec. of State.
3. Restrepo Posada, op. cit., pp. 55-61.
4. Salamanca, op. cit., i, 49,53-61; D.S. 821.00/937/19 Feb., 1930/ Caffery to Dept. of State.
5. D.S. 821.00/937/19 Feb., 1930/Caffery to Sec. of State; Salamanca, op. cit., 49, 53-61.
6. Ruy Blas, 17 Nov., 1928.
7. Ricardo Rendón, Caricaturas (Bogotá, 1952), ii, unnumbered.

leadership, however, was careful not to take action that would unite the Church.

The political system between 1902 and 1930 was sustained by an interdependent church and state: it collapsed only when both the political and ecclesiastical orders fragmented. The close identification of the political and ecclesiastical structures that had once been mutually beneficial now damaged both: the upper clergy spoke angrily of "Conservative tutelage" while Conservatives wished to discard "the clerical imposition."[1] Restrepo Jaramillo insisted that the Conservative party had placed too much confidence in the clergy and had used the Church for ends that were at odds with its interests; in its turn the Church had overestimated its influence and turned itself into an electoral agent.[2]

5. Conservatives, Liberals in Government and the Church, 1930-1946

Olaya was careful not to offend the Church. He insisted that his brand of National Concentration was not even a pale reflexion of the 'red' radicalism of the 1850's. He recognized that good relations could be maintained if he resisted Liberal pressures for divorce and lay legislation. Certain sectors of the Church were carefully conciliatory: the superiors of the Jesuit and Salesian orders were even present in Barranquilla when Olaya arrived from the United States.[3] The Nuncio was equally anxious to establish cordial relations with Liberals: he worked unobtrusively to spread the view that an upsurge of clerical fanaticism would be disastrous.[4] Perdomo was silent, not even commenting on the warning - a week after Olaya's inauguration - of candidates for the National Conservative Directorate.[5] The unintended result of the combined efforts of Olaya, Perdomo and the Nuncio was an informal Olayista

1. Fabio Lozano y Lozano, El liberalismo colombiano en poder (Lima, 1930) p. 20; El Nuevo Tiempo, 9 Jan., 1930.
2. Gonzalo Restrepo Jaramillo, El pensamiento conservador (Medellín, 1936), pp. 56-9.
3. D.S. 821.00/1355/11 July, 1930/Muse to Sec. of State.
4. F.O. 371/A 2852/2852/11/23 Mar., 1931/Dickson to Henderson.
5. El Tiempo, 16 Aug., 1930.

faction among priests who hoped to restrain both Liberals and clericals by preaching the virtues of an apolitical social catholicism. In some areas of rural Cundinamarca the conversion was said to be more total: some parish-priests were turned miraculously into Liberals.[1] Even Cayzedo, considered by Liberals a bigoted pillar of Conservative hegemony in Medellín, gave nominal support to what he grudgingly admitted was a legitimately elected government.

Olaya was so unwilling to be embroiled in open debate with the Church that, when the Nuncio tried to reach a formal agreement over army chaplaincies, he responded with amiable procrastination.[2] Clerical and Conservative resentments at alleged manipulation of the Nuncio by Olaya during clerically-inspired disturbances in the Santanders culminated in a Congressional vote during which Conservatives refused to approve a customary message of greeting at the inauguration of a new Nuncio. Whereas, before 1930, Conservatives had always proposed the message, phrasing it provocatively so that Liberal Congressmen would vote against it, in 1932, the Conservative Congressmen were rebuked by the hierarchy for disrespect.[3]

Olayismo was successful in subtracting much of the sacred and inflammatory content of national political power. Clerical-Conservative alliances persisted sometimes at a parochial and diocesan but not at a national level. El Nuevo Tiempo and El Pais avoided supercharged clerical diatribes. A divided Conservative party made no coherent attempt to exploit the Church. A Colombian depicted in a cartoon of Samper commented to another, "In Colombia there no longer exists a religious problem: if the episcopal conference prohibits the clergy from intervening in politics, what disillusionment for the Conservatives!"

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1. Fermín López Giraldo, El apostól desnudo o dos años al lado de un mito (Manizales, 1936), p. 14.
2. F.O. 371/15085/A 512/512/11/29 Dec., 1931/Dickson to Simon.
3. F.O. 371/15834/A 5868, 11 July, 1932, Dickson to Simon.

The retort came, "And for the clergy, Doctor! And for the clergy!"[1]

To cosmopolitan clerics the Liberal revival did not seem threatening. The Vatican in the 'thirties was in conflict or trying to come to terms with Communism, Nazism and Spanish republicanism. A Liberal government of mildly reformist complexion, like that of López, did not portend serious ills. López, too, wished to avoid confrontation. His political statements in the 'twenties had been of the vaguely anti-clerical, jocular, smooth-tongued variety characteristic of Liberal politicians; he had condemned the Church for retarding national education. But he did not go further than was mandatory for all Liberal politicians.[2] Before entering office López was careful not to ruffle episcopal susceptibilities; though he did tell the Mexican ambassador that he wanted a Concordat on French or Belgian lines.[3] López did not want to convey the impression that secular power was bestowed by the Church: but he did desire a public demonstration of friendship between Church and state. If Liberal politicians were seen hobnobbing with the upper hierarchy by Conservatives attempts to depict the Liberal government as illegitimate would be demolished. López and Perdomo met at a school prize-giving ceremony. Perdomo recognized López as "the representative of the authority of God in the temporal government of the nation", and brought López' wife the benediction of Pius XII, while sparing López embarrassment by explaining that his wife had requested it, and that in her name he had included her husband. López responded by accepting the co-operation offered by the Church and expressing pleasure at these signs of a new spirit in it.[4]

At a superficial glance, anti-clerical Liberalism had mellowed and clericalism was relegated to the backwoods. Neither side wished to push

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1. El Tiempo, 14 July, 1933.
2. Ruy Blas, 24 Dec., 1927; Universidad, 14 Apr., 1927, 11 Feb., 1928.
3. A.S.R.E. T 34-3-34. D.C. III/510 (861-0) '33'/4050-S, 14 Nov., 1933, Duplan to Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico City.
4. F.O. 371/17514/A 7825/6 Sept., 1934/Dickson to Simon.

the other into an uncompromising position from which it would be impossible to negotiate or disentangle itself. But López and the metropolitan hierarchy counted without both the attempts of Laureano Gómez to revive the Conservative party and the strength of local-level anti-clericalism. Attitudes towards the Church provided the readiest issue for polarizing the parties. After the violence in the Santanders the Conservative caciques were readily activated by fears of the Church drifting into Liberal hands.[1] López' formula of "a free Church in a free state" was out of touch with opinion at a local level that had no faith in Liberal-clerical coexistence. López believed that religious claims had been softened, and he overestimated the change in institutional thrust of the Church, taking it at its metropolitan face-value.

The 'revolution on the march' coincided with a new power-struggle within the Church. In 1933 a new Archbishop Coadjutor, Juan Manuel González Arbeláez was appointed to Bogotá. His style was distinct from that of Perdomo: he was young, ambitious, athletic in appearance, a spiritual martinet confident of his own rightness, with a fund of humanity, well-known in Medellín and Manizales, educated in Spain, impatient with diplomacy and despising prevarication.[2] Covertly critical of Perdomo's political quietism - mildly expressed pastoral letters and quiet lobbying to secure Church interests - González was ready to lead those bishops who had distrusted Perdomo's political judgement since 1929 and resisted his attempts to curb their secular ambitions. For González the reform programme constituted an open challenge to the Church. Conciliation was mere camouflage; the López regime suggested the persecutions of the nineteenth century - Communism in Spain, Russia and Mexico. The year

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1. A member of the Cathedral clergy of Santa Rosa de Osos reminded his flock of the Liberal persecution in Antioquia in 1877: though, for three months there had been no priest, and no baptisms, "...there are still people who believe Liberalism does not persecute." El Adalid, Santa Rosa, 23 Feb., 1935.

2. Sabado, 20 Nov., 1943.

1935 marked the peak of both Liberal revolutionism and clerical ardour. The potential of the Church for counter-revolutionary organization was demonstrated at the Bolivarian Eucharistic Congress in Medellín: bishops were flown in, indeterminate numbers of peasants bussed; and González flew from Bogotá, descending triumphantly from the aircraft carrying the Host. The Conservatives reckoned that some four hundred thousand of the faithful prostrated themselves before the Holy Sacrament, and interpreted the Congress as a demonstration of popular Colombian rejection of legislation for divorce and lay education.[1] Several bishops used the radio to order Catholics not to obey atheistic legislation. A speech by González was interpreted by Liberals as incitement to rebellion: he called on the Catholic pueblo to swear before the Eucharistic tabernacle to sacrifice themselves in defence of the Church.[2]

Liberal newspapers expressed fears that González hoped to convert Catholic Action into the vanguard of a new military counter-revolutionary movement.[3] Alberto Lleras, Minister of Government, had confided to the Mexican ambassador his belief that only the Church could precipitate civil war.[4] Liberals were already using Liberal Doctrinaire Centres to counter clerical propaganda and rekindle the Liberal mystique of the nineteenth century. The traditionally anti-clerical city council of Bogotá challenged González: it sent to the Congress in Medellín greetings that were conditional upon hierarchical acceptance of divorce reform, civil marriage and secularization of cemeteries. The response of González was unequivocal: the Church would never surrender privileges in the face of a masonic, atheistic, communizing and heretical onslaught. "....

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1. El Pais, 4 Aug., 1935; El Colombiano, 23 Aug., 1935.
2. Humberto Bronx, El arzobispo Juan Manuel González Arbeláez y selección de sus poesías (2nd Ed., Medellín, 1966), p. 64.
3. El Espectador, 15 Oct., 11 Nov., El Tiempo, 12 Nov., 1935; José Ramon Lanao Loaiza, La cuéstion religiosa (Bogotá, 1935), p. 19.
4. A.S.R.E. F.T. 27-26-28 D.C. III/510/861-0) '35'/4050-R, 15 Feb., 1935/Guillen to Sec. of Exterior Relations, Mexico City.

Listen, gentlemen of the green sect: we Colombian Catholics are ready for the struggle, to shed blood and give our lives. Let them hear it well: to defeat."[1] When everyone else, including Gómez, seemed willing to bend, González remained resolutely hostile to the government.

López' conception of politics had not extended as far as such obscurantist virulence. The government, fearing deadlock, sought to avoid pushing the more moderate elements of the Church into the arms of the militants. It, therefore, reduced the momentum of its programme and secured the help of the Primate and Nuncio in averting violence.

There remained the obstacle of González. Perdomo could not compete with his theatricality; nor could he tame his ambition. Gómez, deterred for some time by the chilly unresponsiveness of Perdomo, saw the political advantages to be gained from a liaison with González. Liberals were convinced that González was prepared to put the apparatus of Catholic Action as a surrogate Conservative network at the service of Gómez; they were concerned, moreover, that he was using Catholic Action as a means of recruiting Liberals against the government. González was suspected of having pulled strings with Gómez in Cauca to provoke a minor military revolt.[2] He was said to have organized syndicates of schoolmasters to counter Liberal educational reform and parochial movements to indoctrinate seven-year-olds in the wickedness of Liberalism after taking their first communion.[3] The Mexican ambassador, herself a fierce anti-clerical, reported that he had ordered priests to organize solemn ceremonies at which the faithful would swear to "shed the last drop of blood" in defence of the Church.[4] Liberals feared an uprising organized by González: the government was believed to have requested his resignation.[5] The Vatican

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1. Bronx, op. cit., p. 105.
2. F.O. 371/19776/A 6837, 21 July, 1936, Paske-Smith to Eden.
3. A.S.R.E. F.T. 27-29-17 D.C. III/510 (861-0) '36'/4050-R, 8 Feb., 1936. Guillen to Sec. of Exterior Relations, Mexico City.
4. A.S.R.E. F.T. 27-29-17. D.C. III 1510 (861-0) '35'/4050-R, 12 Nov., 1935, Guillen to Sec. of External Relations, Mexico City.
5. El Pais, 11, 13 Nov., 1935, El Espectador, 16 Oct., 1935.

concerned at his indiscretion, confined González to his residence, and, then, rescinding the order, permitted him to make parochial visits in Cundinamarca. The Vatican was persuaded that he must not succeed to the primacy, and González was removed to the remote Southern archdiocese of Popayán on the pretext of irregularities in an order of laywomen he had founded. Supporters of González compared him to the "archbishop martyr" Mosquera.[1]

Relations were again strained over the constitutional issues. Catholic revivalism received a fillip from opposition to the constitutional reform. The government hoped to put the relationship of God and man outside the terms of political reference. Desiring to secularize politics, not to persecute, it left mention of God from the preamble to the new Constitution. Conservatives were quick to exploit Catholic fears: a Conservative broadcast complained, "The barbarians wanted to destroy God. They have wiped his name from the Constitution..."[2] Liberal fears of clerical-Conservative collusion deepened when a letter from the hierarchy about the constitutional reform coincided with a protest from the Conservative leadership. Liberals were not convinced by the denials of Perdomo: in spite of his statement that the Church could not be connected with any political party, the drift of Church policy seemed to follow that of the Conservatives too closely. Even the hour of Catholic Action on La voz de Bogotá began in the month when the constitutional debate was at its most acrimonious.[3]

Catholic revivalism threw up a wave of anti-clericalism. El Tiempo was playful: it hastened to contrast the violence of the pastoral letters of one bishop with the charity of those of another.[4] The Bogotano

1. El Espectador, 1, 7 May, 1937; Bronx, op. cit., pp. 80-2; Daniel Restrepo, S.J., "El arzobispo martir", R.J. V(1936), 327-61.
2. La constitución de 1886 y las reformas proyectades por la República liberal (Bogotá, 1936), p. 15.
3. El Tiempo, 19 Mar; El Pais, 25 Mar., 1936; R.J., v(1936) 300; República de Colombia, Relaciones del estado y la iglesia. Texto de las respuestas del senor presidente de la república a las cámaras legislativas, sobre el manifiesto del episcopado y al directorio nacional conservador. (Bogotá, 1936).
4. El Tiempo, 24 Mar., 1936.

artesanate and government employees were more serious. Anti-clericalism had canonized lay figures like Uribe; it had created its own orthodoxy, its own tenacity. Anti-clerical agitation reached a peak at the MayDay demonstration of 1936 when anti-clerical Liberals mixed with a few Communists parading old slogans like 'Death to the clergy'. According to the Jesuit Revista Javeriana, all but one of the speakers were crypto-Communists "animated by the Jew Marx and the Tartar Lenin."[1] López was as blind to the prevalence of anti-clericalism in his own party as to clericalism in its opponent.

The Spanish Civil War renewed fears. The Church and Conservatives held comparable views. El Siglo spoke of "rivers of blood"; Gómez warned of the example of persecution of priests in Germany and Spain. Spain, he said, was "...as in the Middle Ages,...deputed by God....to save the divine civilization of Christ from the furious horde of barbarism"[2] The 1936 Episcopal Conference spoke of those "who have had the enviable chance of giving their life and shedding their blood for the cause of the Catholic religion, sealing their meritorious existence with the religious palm of martyrdom."[3] Father Daniel Jordán, returning from Europe, saw the war as a warning against divorce: the triumphant Spain was the legitimate Spain - in the line of Don Pelayo, El Cid, the Catholic Kings and the whole array of heroic kings and artists.[4] Events in Spain, however, thoroughly exploited, could not serve to sustain clerical or anti-clerical enthusiasm, only to reinforce it. The deceleration of the 'revolution on the march' dampened ardours. The 'Liberal republic' was no 'red' upheaval: it seemed a sham. And counter- revolution was looking equally trumped-up: Gómez was no more a Franco than López an

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1. El País, 3 May, 1936; R.J. v(1936), Suplemento, 385.
2. El Siglo, 20 Aug., 1936; Laureano Gómez, "La persecución contemporánea" in Revista colombiana, ix(1937), 137; "Decadencia y grandeza de Espana", Revista colombiana, ix(1937), 261.
3. Conferencias episcopales de Colombia, Tomo I, 1908 - 1953 (Bogotá, 1956), p. 186.
4. Daniel Jordán, Notas por viaje (Bogotá, 1937), pp. 55-6, 139-43.

Azaña. The Church, too, was seen not to be an easy sleeping-partner of the Conservative party.

Suspicions remained. The Liberal elite might again try to reduce the Church to a sect. Liberals could not foresee the exact degree of intimacy of the Church with Conservatives. Conservatives feared that opportunistic elements in the clergy might write them off as a permanent opposition party and form enduring liaisons with Liberals. Each extreme - clerical and anti-clerical - had displayed a facility in making snap judgements based in prejudice masquerading as experience. Each had made veiled threats, had goaded the other into taking action that would fulfil its prophecies, had depicted hypocrisy, malice, deceit and hatred in its opponent. Each had underestimated the capacity of its opponent to mobilize. Above all, the weakness of government, torn between clerical and anti-clerical pressures, was exposed.

The Santos government avoided ecclesiastical conflict. The Vatican had, in 1937, raised the possibility of reforming the Concordat, Santos hoped that by introducing civil administration of the cemeteries, a civil register and civil marriage, a revised Concordat would mean that Bogotá was no longer "Lhasa of the Americas". They claimed too that the Concordat reform would strengthen the Church by giving it more independence.[1] Negotiations with the papacy proceeded so slowly that debate of the Concordat reform began in earnest only during the transitional phase between the Santos government and the second López administration.

The metropolitan Curia hushed up the friction between Perdomo and González as far as possible: the Concordat debate gave González the opportunity to avenge himself for the loss of the succession. The tacit alliance of Gómez and González - there is no evidence of a formal understanding - was put to good effect. Crisis was preluded by an incident

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1. Mensaje....1939 (Bogotá, 1939) pp. 20-1; Memoria...relaciones exteriores, 1941 pp. xxxiv-xxxv; Ibid., 1942 pp. vi-vii.

in the Colon Theatre during a homage to the Church by the minister of education. Shouts from the balcony of "Long live the martyr archbishop!", "Long live the Colombian pope!" and "Down the triumph of masonery!" drew a hasty letter of apology from the metropolitan chapter which the Liberal press enjoyed publishing but which El Siglo omitted to mention. Correspondence between the Nuncio and González was published; and the Nuncio denied that the removal of González had been recommended by the government.[1] After Perdomo's censure, El Siglo applauded the interruptions as a genuine expression of Catholic sentiment. It editorialized that Liberals had not changed essentially since the nineteenth century: they were merely more subtle when they wanted to imprison archbishops.[2] Perdomo distributed a pastoral letter threatening with excommunication those who continued to attack the Church. Gómez protested his loyalty. But within two days he circulated two outrageous letters, one to the Nuncio, the other to parish priests. Gómez alleged that the masons managed the archdiocese of Bogotá, that Liberals were exploiting a passive hierarchy, that "Catholics are paralyzed because their spiritual chiefs are moderate and compliant...." and that the pope, imprisoned in the Vatican, had been deceived by a freemason ambassador, Echandía, into accepting a Concordat rejected by Colombians, as a ruse to defraud the Church of its legitimate and inherited rights. Perdomo, infuriated, forbade the entry of priests to the offices of El Siglo for any reason - social or otherwise - under the threat of ipso facto suspension from clerical functions: it was not, he said, for El Siglo to teach the hierarchy religion and morals.[3]

Gómez was not silenced. He fell back on the old tactic of attacking Liberals as masons and was accused of pharisaism, for attacking those

1. El Tiempo, El Liberal, 6 July, 1942, La Iglesia, xxxvi(1942), 221.
2. El Siglo, 3, 8, 18 July, 1942.
3. La Iglesia, xxxv (1942), 250-4; El Catolicismo, 5 Sept., 1942, quoting mimeo. pamphlet, Laureano Gómez, Para conocimiento exclusivo del clero del pais (n.p., n.d.)

with whom he had allied in the elections of 1942.[1] Alarm at the open wrangling of Gómez with the Curia prompted the businessman element in the Conservative party to form an "independent Conservative" group which deplored Gómez' hostility towards the Curia and declared its respect for the Concordat. One of its number, Francisco de Paula Pérez, engaged in a correspondence with Perlomo on the nature of Church orthodoxy. Pérez was rewarded with praise as an exemplary Catholic. But the "independents" lacked a popular following: their stand won little support outside industrial and financial circles.[2]

Gómez, meanwhile, strove to mobilize support. The debate had been confined to Bogotano circles: the major provincial presses treated it as a prize instance of Bogotano politicking: shadow-boxing of careerist but not national importance. Gómez sought the support of conflicting Church interests. He looked to the Jesuits: he tried to court them by denouncing a refusal of the government to devolve a building to a major Jesuit school.[3] The Jesuits responded with an eloquent silence; and their journal, the Revista Javeriana remained cool and detached throughout the debate. The spearhead of the Siglo attack now passed to an Antioqueño lawyer, Alfonso Uribe Misas, who had experience of a personal struggle with the archdiocese of Medellín in 1920.[4] Uribe argued that the government did not represent the authentic feeling of the people, that there was no urgency in civil marriage, divorce and secularization of cemeteries.[5] The Nuncio expressed his bitterness that Uribe lacked confidence in him: but several provincial bishops were galvanized into cheering response. "Admirable, sublime, lofty - Bless you, Embrace you!", telegrammed González. Builes of Santa Rosa and Martínez of Garzón were

1. El Liberal, 19, 22 July, 1942.
2. El Tiempo, 5 Sept., 1942; El Catolicismo, 17 Sept., 1942.
3. El Siglo, 29 July, 1942.
4. ed. José Restrepo Posada, Iglesia y estado en Colombia - sus relaciones desde la colonia hasta nuestros días (Medellín ? 1971 ?) p. 96.
5. El Siglo, 22 Sept., 1942.

equally affirmative. Díaz was more so - a "serene, respectful, reasoned, opportune, excellent exposition...."; the provincial bishops were ready for all kinds of sufferings, even the alliances of their compatriots with enemies of the patria.[1] An anti-clerical later reminisced that the opponents of Perdomo proclaimed from the pulpits that churches would be turned into mangers and priests would be banished from Colombia.[2] And Builes wrote a letter to all Conservative Congressmen: "What will be of the Church, what of the rights of the truth and of the good, if Conservative representatives, persons of the only traditional party to have protected Catholic religion sincerely in Colombia, shut up and do not oppose with all their strength the aspirations of Liberalism?....I want in these hours of difficulties and contradictions for such distinguished representatives, to extend my voice of congratulation for the judicious and reverent manifesto directed to the most Excellent Señor Nuncio on the Concordat reforms and to ask them that they do not weaken in the work begun, till defeat or death..."[3]

The newspaper war simmered: on the same morning El Siglo stigmatized El Tiempo as "the devil making hosts" while El Tiempo charged El Siglo with the "rebellion of the proud."[4]

The rightist provincial bishops flocked to the aid of Gómez. González, unwilling to bury hatchets at this juncture, published a catalogue of the sins of El Tiempo over the previous fifteen years - blasphemous cartooning, mockery of the Church, defence of masonery, etc. - prohibited its circulation in his diocese and applied the usual penalties. Díaz and Rodríguez of Ibagué followed suit.. Builes went further: he even condemned certain Medellín Conservative newspapers. El Pueblo had 'disoriented' Catholicism; El Colombiano had misled the faithful. Only

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1. Ibid., 25 Sept., 1942, La iglesia, xxxvi (1942), 221-2.
2. Francisco López, Proceso al poder religioso en Colombia (Bogotá, 1968), pp. 22-3.
3. El Siglo, 28 Sept., 1942.
4. El Tiempo, El Siglo, 28 Sept., 1942.

La Defensa was to be praised for courageous campaigning against the Concordat reforms.[1] Gómez Martínez of El Colombiano responded by writing of the "satanic rebellion" of opposing Vatican mandates.[2] El Tiempo unearthed a tame presbyter who called for respect towards the Holy See and reassured readers that El Tiempo had been neither censured nor proscribed by Perdomo, who had, however, censured El Siglo without explicit prohibition.[3] El Catolicismo, the official organ of the Curia, accused El Siglo of deliberate mutilation of a telegram of Archbishop Brioschi of Cartagena and altering its sense.[4] Perdomo recriminated against parish priests who, despite his recommendations, were not selling El Catolicismo in their parishes; and reminded them that the pulpit was not to be a profane tribune.[5] El Siglo alleged that masonic machinations were responsible for bishops being kept incomunicado with the Holy See: a telegram from González had been rejected by the Popayan office.[6]

The pattern of accusation and counter-accusation came to embrace most major political and ecclesiastical figures: only López, Ospina and Gaitán were conspicuously silent. Younger Conservatives saw the opportunity to make a rhetorical reputation. Guillermo León Valencia reminded Congress that Perdomo had himself as a young bishop vigorously condemned the pamphlet of Uribe Uribe, De como el liberalismo colombiano no es pecado (On how Colombian Liberalism has not sinned). Congress was not allowed to forget that Enrique Santos, brother of the former president and regular columnist in ElTiempo had been excommunicated eleven times while editor of La Linterna of Tunja.

Not one bishop embraced Perdomo warmly during the conflict. The moderates seemed spineless and voiceless. Luis Concha, Bishop of

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1. El Siglo, 30 Sept., 5, 6 Oct., El Tiempo, 30 Sept., 30 Oct., 1942.
2. El Colombiano, 5 Oct., 1942.
3. El Tiempo, 6, 16 Oct., 1942.
4. El Catolicismo, 1 Oct., 1942.
5. La iglesia, xxxvi (1942) 252-6.
6. El Siglo, 12 Oct., 1942.

Manizales, son of the president, friend of López, and widely tipped for the job of archbishop-coadjutor when González was appointed, said he saw no reason for banning El Tiempo in his diocese, because he considered it " a very good and respectable newspaper", adding, for good measure, that a man who is not obedient to Vatican decisions is not a Catholic.[1]

When the Nuncio complained that the National Conservative Directorate had tried to bypass him and cable the Holy See directly, El Tiempo proclaimed that Colombia was in schism. Debate was so heated that the Archbishop of Medellín and Bishop of Jericó called upon the clergy of their dioceses to abstain from discussion. Prominent Conservatives in Antioquia like Restrepo Jaramillo and Gómez Martínez welcomed the decision. Only a clear order of silence from the pope meant that there was no further ado; and even this instruction percolated only when it was issued for a second time.[2] The debate at last subsided, but not completely. Uribe Misas complained that Conservatism had been sold out by the Colombiano group: he spoke of political traitors in Antioquia and attacked the rule of 'oligarchs'.[3]

The 1943 elections promised to resurrect old acrimonies. Perdomo counselled his flock to vote for good Catholic candidates who were obedient to the Church authorities. He forbade priests to refuse absolution to penitents for the sole fact of militating in a party. He forbade priests to take an active part in elections as members of political committees, to allow political meetings in their houses, to distribute propaganda and, in view of the circumstances, to vote. He referred to past divisions within the episcopate, but emphasized that bishops had quickly returned to obedience when matters had been made clear to them.[4] The pastoral was quoted at length in the Liberal press.

1. El Tiempo, 3 Oct., 1942.
2. La iglesia, xxxv (1942), 260-1; El Catolicismo, 25 Sept., 1942.
3. El Siglo, 25 Dec., 1942.
4. El Catolicismo, 25 Feb., 1943; Arquidiócesis de Bogotá, Gobierno Eclesiástico, Circular a los senores parrócos y sucerdotes de muestra arquidiócesis (Bogotá, 1943), pp. 6-7.

El Siglo omitted it. Instead, it carried, in serial form, a lengthy condemnation of Liberalism by Builes who rested his case upon decisions made by the episcopal conference of 1924 and sought to demonstrate that Liberalism had not changed substantially since that date.[1] The organ of the Curia, El Catolicismo, answered with an editorial that the Liberal party had, indeed, changed its religious policy dramatically.[2] And El Colombiano asked if to vote for Laureanista lists would contravene the norms laid down by the Holy See.[3]

The debate had value for members of both parties. It assured Liberals a degree of unity, at least at capital-city level, between Lopistas and Aranguistas. It exposed to Gómez the unpopularity of the 'independent' Conservatives. It crystallized divisions within the clergy. Gómez announced one of his sporadic retirements from the Senate: it was clear that he had failed to mobilize a united front of Conservatives and the Church and that he had been rescued only by provincial bishops. It was equally clear who in the Church calculated the limits of ecclesiastical power and who insisted on the limitless strength and support of the Almighty and were, in that knowledge, prepared to risk the effect of political recklessness. It was equally true that the main resistance to a united front of clerics and Conservatives came not from Liberals but from Perdomo. The weakness of Liberalism was manifest, and, in a longer term, was put to Conservative advantage. A strong group of bishops - in the main, those appointed before 1934 and who assembled at the Marian Congress in Popayan in 1942[4] - had committed itself irrevocably to a clerical cause. It was clear which could be relied on by Gómez and which not. The Liberal establishment was rocked. López was possibly right when with characteristic cynicism, he told the United States minister

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1. El Siglo, 19, 20 Feb., 1943.
2. El Catolicismo, 18 May, 1943.
3. El Colombiano, 13 Mar., 1943.
4. El Siglo, 8-10 Dec., 1942.

that Gómez had raised the matter only as a means of winning back lost readers from El Tiempo.[1] But, in winning extensive episcopal support for his sales campaign Gómez had also gone a long way to restoring Conservative and lowering Liberal morale.

The debate is interesting for what it shows of Colombian - and Bogotano - political style. The press of both parties had publicized the Second World War to the full in order to expand sales. Wars always expanded newspaper sales in Colombia. But the war was relegated to the inner pages while canon lawyers and interested laymen revelled in the publicity which accompanied amateurish theological dispute. The one point which the press - of both parties - never made clear at the time was that the revised Concordat treaties were never exchanged and, therefore, were never made effective.[2] That did not seem to matter.

The second López government kept its distance from the Church: the risks of entanglement were too evident. It was marked by growing Falangist influence within the Church. Falangism was a contradictory mixture of lofty idealism, selfish political intriguing, wanderlust adventurism and uncompromising evangelism. It flourished amongst those who exploited fears of social disintegration, and for whom it was a moral imperative to retrieve a past position that had been stolen by stealth. Falangism was probably stronger in the Church than in the army or among civilians. Falangist clergy attacked their moderate colleagues, in private, for shoring up the regime with an ersatz Catholicism. They formed a semi-subterranean network most heavily represented in those rural monastic communities that had recruited Spaniards. These were located in remote areas from where it was difficult to obtain an accurate perspective of the practical limits upon ecclesiastical power. Before

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1. D.S. 821.00/1285/2 Oct., 1942, Lane to Sec. of State.
2. José Restrepo Posada: "Galeria de representantes de la Santa Sede en Colombia" in ed. Restrepo Posada: Iglesia y Estado en Colombia (Medellín, ?, 1969?), p. 241.

the Second World War Falangist activity was overt: in 1938 a representative of Franco made a heavily publicized fund-raising tour and was present when González enthroned the Sacred Heart at the building of the Spanish Nationalist Centre.[1] During the war, there were occasional Liberal complaints of open Falangist activity: an allegation that the Sisters of Charity were demanding contributions to the Falange in a school in Santander; photographs of priests with uniformed laymen together in a Falangist salute in Cali.[2] But most Falangist activity was now underground. Involvement of González in Falangist conspiracy increased as he recognized the impossibility of rousing a peasant insurrection. As the second López government lost credibility in early 1944, González suddenly disappeared for Lima. British Intelligence reported that the secret Acción Combinada de Hispanidad sent him to Argentina to secure arms from the Argentine government, and that he did so. British Intelligence did not know about the numbers of arms, but reported that they included modern machine-guns and ammunition. It stated too that the civil-ecclesiastical section of Acción Combinada was working ahead of the military section and keeping it uninformed. The ecclesiastical sector, largely Spanish priests, saw a real opportunity in 1944 to overthrow 'López and his clique'. They hoped to awaken their army colleagues whom they felt responsible for repeated postponement of a coup. Each member of Acción Combinada was armed, and there was a subscription system by which richer members paid for the guns of the poorer.[3] González did not return to Colombia. He was retired to a convent in Spain where he later met Colombians - even Echandía - on friendly terms.[4] Clerical Falangism seemed, for the moment, stifled. Clericalism and Falangism, in the late 'thirties and early 'forties

1. R.J., ix (1938), 149
2. El Liberal, 1 Mar., 1942, Diario Popular, 29 Jan., 1942.
3. F.O. 371/AS 4245/195/11, 9 May, 1944, Memo, H. Henderson to R.G. Henderson.
4. Bronx, op. cit., pp. 84-5.

were defeated by the compelling presence of a more imaginative Liberalism and by its own lack of singlemindedness: but its capacity to demoralize Liberals, however, prepared the way for movement into a share of power in the late 'forties.

After the Concordat debate Perdomo looked desperately for issues that could unite the hierarchy. Protestantism and Communism were immediately convenient: both were visible, tangible, immediate and extraneous.

Protestantism was an easily inflatable side-issue. Some Protestant bible-peddling in the nineteenth century had caused heated controversy: the logic and vocabulary inherited intact from the sixteenth century equated Protestantism with freemasonery, atheism and communism.[1] Before 1930 Protestantism had few adherents outside European and United States businessman and diplomatic circles.[2] Incidents between Protestant and Catholics were rare: a warning by Cayzedo against Seventh-Day Adventists selling quack medicines, excommunication of Catholic parents selling children to North American schools, public burning of Protestant literature by the parish-priest of Ituango, Antioquia, a stoning of a Presbyterian mission in Bogotá.[3] The Liberal regime from 1930 proved more congenial than its predecessors: it did not welcome Protestant missions with abject enthusiasm, but it did not obstruct them. Numbers of Protestant missionaries almost tripled between 1929 and 1938; and in 1938 there were three Protestant newspapers.[4] Contempt was mutual: some Catholic clerics resented the financial resources of the Protestants and derided their materialism and denominational divisions. Protestants responded by accusing the Catholic clergy of keeping the pious in poverty and hellish

1. José Restrepo Posada, Arquidiócesia de Bogotá - datos biográficos de sus prelados (Bogotá, 1961-6)ii, pp. 35-6, 109-11, 359-61; Carey Shaw jr., "Church and State in Colombia as observed by American Diplomats, 1834-1906", H.A.H.R., 21 (1941), 571-613.
2. W. Reginald Wheeler and Webster E. Browning, Modern Missions on the Spanish Main - Impressions of Protestant Work in Colombia and Venezuela (Philadelphia, 1925), passim.
3. Manuel José Cayzedo, El combate por la fe y por la iglesia (Medellín, 1931), p. 21; Boletin diocesano (Ibagué, 1917), 122-3; Eugenio Restrepo Uribe, El protestantismo en Colombia (Medellín, 1944),pp 25-31.
4. Kenneth G. Grubb, The Northern Republics of South America. Review of ten years' evangelical progress (London, 1938), p. 6.

ignorance.[1] Perdomo did not doubt the sincerity of the missionaries, but condemned their "spurious bibles" and"specious pamphlets" and warned that Protestantism was a trespasser upon a uniquely Catholic community and constituted a menace to peaceful relations between Latin America and the United States.[2] The Catholic hierarchy distributed pamphlets to demonstrate the liturgical and doctrinal errors of Protestantism and to exploit cases of crude propaganda - the offering, for example, of money to those who could quote the biblical text that teaches prayers to the VirginMary.[3] Skirmishes at a small-town and village level were sometimes exaggerated.[4] Protestantism was interpreted by Catholics as a tool of an imperialist United States.[5] Protestants regarded themselves as the sole obstacle to Communism in Latin America; Catholics considered them a social dissolvent that aided the entry of Communism.[6] In the early 1940's Protestantism was having a creeping success: it provided a means of registering social protest and a sense of community for the outcast and the wayward. Diplomatic and cosmopolitan civil and ecclesiastical circles in Bogotá were alert to the risks of a primitive Bible-belt Protestantism coming into conflict with an equally primitive Catholicism in villages without moderating agencies. The embassy of the United States discouraged missionary activity emphatically but ineffectively.[7] The United States minister, Spruille Braden, imported a Catholic

1. Norman P. Grubb, Mountain-movers - a work of faith in Colombia (London, 1943), esp. pp. 12-3.
2. Ismael Perdomo, Estudio sobre la campaña y penetración protestante en Colombia (Bogotá, n.d.); El Debate, 5 Feb., 1929.
3. Eduardo Ospina, El protestantismo: su estado real y a la luz de la historia y su doctrina a la luz de la biblia (Bogotá, 1942), pp. 18-20.
4. Conflito social creado en San Martín de loba por el parróco Luis E. Garcia (Magangué, 1940); El Siglo, 26 May, 5 Dec., 1943.
5. Mora Díaz, El clarín de la victoria (Tunja, 1942), pp. 25, 146, 192; El Cruzado, Tunja, 19 Apr., 1940.
6. Kenneth G. Grubb, The advancing Church in Latin America (London, 1936), pp. 18-9.
7. Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers. 1945. The American Republics (Washington, D.C., 1945) vi, 80-91.

bishop from the United States to remind Colombians of the existence of Catholicism in the United States and to give a favourable impression. Though the bishop made no impression at all, Braden boasted of this characteristic act of demagoguery in his memoirs.[1]

A formal protest by the Nuncio against tolerance of Protestant missions in the peripheral Catholic mission zones confirmed Protestants in their feeling of systematic persecution and reinforced their conviction of the rightness of their mission.[2] The issue was unresolved: the expansion of the number of Protestants from nearly eight thousand in 1948 to nearly twelve thousand in 1953 kept the squabble alive and brought out allegations of Protestant collaboration with Liberal guerrillas.[3]

The attack on Communism was more strident and had a politically bipartisan appeal. The Church had always been emphatically opposed to Communism: bishops figured among the most ardent supporters of the "heroic projects" of 1928 and 1929. Perdomo had defended the government record against Communist charges and spoken of the desirability of the Church and the state working together.[4] The Cristero rebellion in Mexico was raised by some bishops into an object-lesson in Catholic militancy. In Antioquia the Marian cult was revived and cash raised to help Mexican Catholics; in Boyacá missionary efforts, especially in the transport and artesanal sectors, were renewed.[5]

Pastoral letters condemning Communism were common in the 1930's.

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1. Spruille Braden, Diplomats and demagogues - the memoirs of Spruille Braden (New York, 1971), p. 210.
2. D.S. 821.00/3440/8 Mar.,; 4176/4 Aug., 1944, Lane to Sec. of State.
3. Benjamin Haddox, Sociedad y religión en Colombia (Bogotá, 1965)pp.42-4 Eduardo Ospina, Las sectas protestantes en Colombia. Breve reseña histórica con un estudio especial de la llamada Persecución religiosa (2nd edn., Bogotá, 1956); El problema del protestantismo en Colombia por un sacerdote católico convertido del protestantismo (Bogotá, 1958)
4. Ismael Perdomo, Carta que dirige a los obreros el ilustrísimo y reverendísimo señor arzobispo de Bogotá, primado de Colombia (Bogotá, 1928), pp. 22-8.
5. Jesús Maria Fernández and Rafael Granados, La obra civilizadora de la iglesia en Colombia (Bogotá, 1928) pp. 628-62; Eco de suroeste Jerico, 29 Sept.,1928; Revista eclesiástica,xii(Jerico, 1928) 111-2; La familia cristiana, Medellín, 4 Feb., 1927; El Debate, 16 Nov., 1927. The feast of the Virgin of Guadelupe was set aside for prayers and the cult of Christ the King was revived.

In the years 1943-5 the likelihood of Communists gaining control of the C.T.C. seemed great; and the Church was alarmed because the C.T.C. had definitely outcompeted Church syndicates for popular support. The 1944 episcopal conference condemned Communism as the most serious obstacle to Christianity.[1] Bishops seized on cases of alleged Communist subversion: two called for the expulsion of the Mexican trade unionist, Lombardo Toledano, in 1943.[2] Jesuits withdrew from their customary political silence to emphasize the alleged Communist danger, no doubt because the Society of Jesus advocated Catholic syndicalism enthusiastically. The Communists replied by pointing out the discrepancy between Jesuit emphasis on the democratic duty to vote in Colombia and the absence of a demonstrable pro-democratic posture by the Jesuits in Spain, Italy Albania and elsewhere.[3]

Liberals expressed concern. López saw the implicit dangers of the hierarchical call to an anti-Communist crusade that opposition to Communism was for some bishops a cover for hostility to Liberalism and a launching-pad for staging a political comeback.[4]

Charges of freemasonery persisted from the nineteenth century. Liberals insisted that it was a harmless diversion and not, as some Conservatives portrayed it, a fund-raising institution of anti-clerical activists. Its visible activity had been sporadic. The masonic lodge of Cartagena had been active in expelling Archbishop Brioschi from Cartagena in 1910.[5] The death of Benjamín Herrera had been accompanied by masonic rites that scandalized Conservatives in 1924. López had been accused of masonery.[6] The appointment by López of Echandía, grandmaster,

1. Conferencias episcopales de Colombia (Bogotá, 1956), i, 78-9.
2. El Siglo, 10-11 Dec., 1943.
3. Diario Popular, 3 Aug., 1945
4. Mensaje....1945 (Bogotá, 1945), p. 3-19; R.J. xxiv (1945),62-4.
5. Pedro Adán Brioschi, Veinticinco años de episcopado (Cartagena, 1925) pp. 20-1, 167-176.
6. El Debate, 28 Oct., 1928

of the Bogotá lodge, to the ministry of education provoked renewed anti-masonic diatribes: masonery was "the author....of everything ill in the world."[1] Jesuits were alarmed at masonic celebrations of the death of Santander in 1940.[2] The bogey of freemasonery was disproportionately inflated by Conservatives. Denunciations of Protestantism and Communism were usually rounded off with a gratuitous reference to freemasonery. Positions could be reversed: when Gómez supported the candidature of Arango Vélez in 1942, Lopistas retaliated by exploiting Conservative fears that he had masonic associations.[3] Freemasonery made a convenient target: it was, unlike Communism, an established object of opposition, familiar and comprehensible.

6. Conservatives in Government, Liberals and the Church, 1946-53.

The return of the Conservative party to political office reanimated clerical ambitions. The efforts of the metropolitan Church to curb political activism on the periphery and to retain cordial relations with the Liberals were condemned to failure. In 1947 there were already reports of political rhetoric from the pulpits of Santander.[4] The '9 April' confirmed militant bishops in the belief that Communism was rooted in Colombia and hastened parochial reorganization: clerical and anti-clerical animosities were renewed as Bogotá buzzed with rumours of priests shooting upon Liberals from the towers of churches. The Communist conquest of Eastern Europe and success in China revived the strident tone of the Church militant. Medellín was consecrated to the protection of our Lady of Fatima, "queen of the peace and of the anti-Communist struggle".[5] The imprisonment of Cardinal Mindsentzy in Hungary was given heavy adverse publicity.[6]

1. Boletín diocesano xviii (Ibagué, 1936) 84; Julio Hoenigsberg, Sintésis histórica de los masones que han sido presidentes de Colombia (Bogotá, n.d.) pp. 23-5.
2. Modesto Montáñez, Cartas godas (Bogotá, 1942), passim; Mora Díaz, El clarín de la victoria (Tunja, 1942) pp. 139-40; El Liberal 19, 22 July, 1942.
3. R.J., (1940), 294.
4. El Tiempo, 26 Jan., 1947.
5. La iglesia, xlii (1948), 147.
6. R.J., xxii (1949), 150.

As hostilities between Liberals and Conservatives deepened and debate over Communism, Protestantism and freemasonery continued, it became impossible, despite evidence of the willingness of the metropolitan clergy, for the Church to act as a plausible mediator. Clericals believed that Liberal acts of violence fulfilled their gloomiest predictions of the effects of Communist penetration of the Liberal party; Liberals retorted that prophecies of collapse had prepared the ground for the demoralization that made violence unavoidable. Before the 1949 election the accumulated sins of Liberalism were recounted in pastoral letters. Liberalism was denounced as religiously deviant, unpatriotic and dissolvent of the family. Certain regional hierarchs drew upon the experience of the nineteenth century to strengthen their cases. Builes referred to the expulsion of Mosquera and the warnings of Pius IX.[1] Liberals tried again to capitalize upon divisions in the Church: Jornada spoke of schism when Builes insisted upon the criminality of Liberalism, Concha only ordered his flock to vote according to conscience, and the majority of bishops took a stand between the two.[2] Conservatives exploited Catholic sentiment by using propaganda posters showing burning churches.[3] Liberals alleged a resurgence of clerical power at a local level - in Boyacá where the Dominicans were said to be distributing portraits of Franco, in Antioquia where there was believed to be an alliance of Falangists and clericals, in Santander where priests were said to offer heaven to those killing Liberals.[4] Carlos Lleras claimed that the only rebellion against the Church in sixteen years had been Conservative, that Liberals had taken the Church issue out of politics and that Gómez had put it back.[5]

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1. El Siglo, 28, 29 Apr., Semana, 30 Apr., El Colombiano, 4 May, 1949.
2. Jornada, 5 May, 1949; R.J. xxxi (1949), 265.
3. Semana, 4 June, 1949.
4. Jornada, 8, 10 July, 1949.
5. Carlos Lleras Restrepo, De la república a la dictadura (Bogotá, 1955), pp. 190-1.

Papal diplomacy seemed wary of Gómez. His past attempts to exploit clerical sympathies for Conservative purposes and the claim of Laureanistas to be custodians of the Church were not forgotten in 1950. Gómez had avoided confrontation with all sectors of the Church since the Concordat debate.

The power-balance within the Church altered dramatically on the death of Perdomo in 1950. Censorship prevents us from knowing the exact significance of his death. But during the period of interregnum there was much jostling for position and influence - and an effort, if not a co-ordinated or centrally directed movement, for a complete clerical-Falangist take-over within both the Church and the Conservative party. Perdomo's successor, Bishop Lisandro Luque of Tunjá, was unapologetically conservative. He was widely admitted to be a successful Church politician. He had - in Colombian terms a singular triumph - asserted his independence of the cathedral canons of Tunja. On provocative occasions he had rebuked Liberals for their purported sins:: but he had not waged consistent campaigns of castigating invective, even less launched clerical onslaughts on Liberals. His appointment was ambiguous. His relationship with Gómez was proper and cordial but not warm. He had displayed neither an urge to politick nor a refusal to admit that the Church had political interests to defend. His appointment did something to reconcile those in the East who felt that all the best posts went to Westerners. He was a scrupulous primate who receded from projecting himself into the political arena but did not hesitate to do so when he calculated that apoliticism could only damage the interests of the Church: hence his interventions towards the end of the Rojas regime. Luque neither satisfied Falangist aspirations nor pushed Liberals into firmer anti-clerical positions than they were already occupying. Nothing breathtaking occurred at the first formal meeting of Luque with Gómez: merely general talk of "the great hand over us."[1]

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1. Semana, 6 July, 1950.

Luque faced the same problems as Perdomo in asserting himself within the Church. Internal disputes, however, did not in the years 1950-3 gain the publicity they had received in earlier years, thanks to censorship. Luque made the official position quite clear: there was to be no change from Perdomo's policy of political disengagement.[1] The effort to dismantle the clerical offensive of 1949-50 is obscured by censorship: perhaps it faded away for lack ofsuccess and cohesion. The documentation has yet to be made public.

7. Regional Variations in Catholic behaviour

Colombia has not been characterized by geographical uniformity of religious patterns. The ecclesiastical geography of Colombia offers some clues about the political proselytization of the clergy. A fairly clear correlation of incidence of heavy religious conviction and of the clergy-population ratio is apparent. Figures of numbers of priests per diocese are available for the years 1938, 1948 and 1951. Certain points are strikingly consistent. The dioceses of Antioquia had the highest proportion of priests to inhabitants (not only baptized Catholics) on all three years of assessment, except that the diocese of Garzón - which corresponds exactly to the department of Huila and contains a heavy percentage of Antioqueño immigrants - overtook that Antioquia on the 1951 count. At the other end of the scale, the coastal dioceses of Barranquilla and Cartagena were, at each reckoning, those with fewest priests in proportion to population. In 1938, for instance, for every priest in Barranquilla there were 31,000 persons, while in the Santa Rosa diocese in Antioquia there were 2,068. Other points of consistency emerge: the diocese of Garzón in predominantly Conservative Huila had considerably more priests in proportion to population than the diocese of Ibagué in largely Liberal Tolima. A study of fluctuations in the ratio

1. Jesucristo y Colombia (Bogotá, 1953); Semana, 31 May, 20 July, 1952.

of numbers of priests to diocesan populations for these three dates suggests little of political significance outside the archdiocese of Bogotá. A very considerable fallback between 1938 and 1948 was arrested after the '9 April', so that by 1951 the priest-population ratio was higher than in 1938. (1938: 5,650 persons per priest; 1948: 8,791 persons per priest; 1951: 3,051 persons per priest). The religious orders tended to be concentrated in the upland dioceses, and especially in Medellín and Bogotá: but it was in the Pasto and Santa Rosa dioceses that there were most in proportion to population. Approximately one person in a hundred in these two dioceses belonged to a religious order in 1938. The call for reform of the Church structure after the '9 April' met with a remarkable response from the orders. Nuns multiplied dramatically: in Bogotá they increased ninefold between 1948 and 1951, in Cali two-and-a-half fold; no other diocese underwent more than a fifty per cent increase.[1]

A. Antioquia

Fragmentation of Colombia by the Andes gave rise to considerable variation in patterns of religious practice. It made centralized ecclesiastical government as difficult a task as civil. The Church was compelled to adapt to autonomous regional cultures in order to survive. Distance and bad, broken communications gave parish priests considerable independence.

Antioquia is the outstanding case of a department of intense clerical influence. Its population is primarily Spanish in descent; and it has been, in part, to reinforce a sense of Hispanic superiority, that the Catholic content of Antioqueño culture has been stressed by Antioqueños. The seclusion of Antioquia left it relatively free from the scars of

1. Anuario de la iglesia catolica en Colombia 1938, p. 166, 1948, p. 97, 1951, pp. 70-1.

the civil wars of the nineteenth century and particularly isolated from the movement of foreign ideas. For Antioqueños Catholicism seemed to offer reassurance. To migrants, in particular, old Testament stories and pastoral imagery of the Bible seemed particularly immediate: Western Colombia offered "a land of promise and blessing".[1]

Parish-priests were frequently community leaders. Their local influence was underpinned by incessant reminders in the parochial press that the founders and benefactors of villages had been priests. Usually themselves of peasant origins, priests were closely identified with their communities. By virtue of their urban seminary education, priests entered the local governing classes: yet they were, at the same time, on equal social footing with the 'faithful'. They shared the same relaxations and had a first-hand knowledge of agricultural problems because they worked their own plots to eke out their livings.

The power of the parish priest in Antioquia was considerable. Some priests had influence as economic innovators. One in Remedios received the 1933 gold medal of the National Federation of Coffee-Growers after forming an agrarian syndicate and organizing a co-operative to obtain a coffee-thresher.[2] Another, in Salazar de las Palmas, imposed the planting of coffee-trees as a penance.[3] Priests were often responsible for propagating the advantages of regular patterns of work, punctuality and saving, and for introducing the first timepiece in the village, the church clock. Access to superior technological information in Medellín or Manizales and acting as the middleman in procuring public works enhanced

1. Carlos E. Mesa, Jesus Aníbal - testigo de sangre (2nd ed., Madrid, 1964), p. 29.
2. Fernández and Granados, op. cit., p. 732.
3. Ricardo Olano, El estatuto de la aldea colombiana elaborado por el ministerio de educación nacional y mejoramiento de las poblaciones menores (2nd ed., Medellín, 1934), p. 13.

the influence of the clergy. Priests were sometimes responsible for the movement of the market-day from Saturday to Sunday so that both the local economy and Church-attendance would be boosted.

The priest had influence through education. He or a predecessor usually founded the local school and he taught catechism in it, appointed its teacher and acted as its inspector.

The priest was the central figure in local charitable endeavours. Inmoments of economic emergency - food shortages, tropical rainstorms - he was primarily responsible for the organization and distribution of aid. In normal times he organized committees for the relief of the worst local poverty, orphanages and some school-meals for children. In Granada, a hat-making shop was founded to employ poor women; in Jericó, the Society of St. Vincent of Paul established a spinning-factory.[1]

The Church had a near-monopoly of entertainment and of the visible arts. It provided relief from day-to-day routine with fiestas, drama, music, and sometimes some fireworks and pageantry: its rites were the one occasion when the village met communally. The church was usually regarded as the peak of local achievement in architecture. Villages were not rich in art: but what there was, apart from portraits of Bolívar, was usually religious: sculptures in the churches, representations of the Virgin and the Sacred Heart in the home. A vivid, brutal portraiture had a particular resonance in Antioquia: the theme of 'Christ and Blood' had a special local memory, as the local cult of the beatified Antonio María Claret, Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba in the nineteenth century, who flagellated himself in order to expiate the sins of others when he was the innocent victim, illustrated well.[2]

Above all, the priest had a moralizing role. He insisted on religious conformity. The Church, he argued, was maintaining a civil-

1. Ibid., p. 13.
2. Nuestra ofrenda (Medellín, 1933), pp. 41-9.

izing' mission: it was the one continuous and visible link with the civilized world; and to adhere to its norms was to identify with that world, and to deviate from them to descent into barbarism. As recently as the late 1950's an anthropologist, reporting on a visit to Eastern Antioquia and Eastern Caldas - a department of Antioqueño immigration - remarked upon the strict matrimonial code enacted by the clergy. At the masses of largest attendance priests publicly denounced the immorality of individuals. In the villages a woman thus denounced was equal to a prostitute: the parochial order did not tolerate the presence of women at family dances, tea or coffee-houses or cinemas, walks in the country where men were present, mixed bathing, slacks or horse-riding except sidesaddle. The obligations of kin morality were enjoined with such severity that the mother of the woman who offended local susceptibilities was also denounced.[1] After the War of the Thousand Days, some priests conceived of their role as moral leader of the community to extend as far as leading antialcoholic campaigns: temperance fanaticism was such in Sonsón that Sonsoneñses, egged on by the parish priest attacked an aguardiente distillery: and order was restored only after a request from the Governor to the Archbishop to put an end to the campaign.[2]

The influence of the priest could be greater than that of the alcalde. His income was more secure. His tenure was more certain: a new bishop did not signify a change of personnel throughout the diocese as a new Governor did in the department. The priest was less susceptible to the vagaries of departmental power. He was trained specifically for the job; and the priesthood was a lifelong vocation, unlike the alcaldía. The breadth of experience of the priest put him at an immediate advantage: on his second and subsequent parochial appointments he possessed an

1. Virginia Gutiérrez de Pineda, La familia en Colombia (Bogotá, 1968), pp. 274 ff.

2. José Nestor Valencia V., Rasgos de un colono de Cristo - el Padre Daniel Maria López, 1865-1965 (Manizales, 1965), pp. 36-40. See also editions of El Temperante, Sonsón, for 1909.

accumulated experience of dealings with mayors. The priest had a circle of urban contact through which he could obtain aid for his village. He could easily exact social ostracism against an unrepentant excommunicant and reduce him to the status of a social outcast or compel him to migrate to Medellín.

Political power followed from this accumulation of social and economic influence: during elections political intervention by priests was pronounced. To take an extreme case, the parish-priest of Pueblorrico exhorted his congregation in 1913, "All women and any men that listen to me: parricide, infanticide, robbery, assassination, adultery, incest, etc., etc., is less bad than being Liberal, especially as far as women are concerned."[1] In another parish the priest accused Republicans of breaking "the clean traditions that used to guide this isolated and good parish."[2] Attitudes towards Liberalism were not uniform: because in some areas parish priests were dependent on Liberal tithes, and, in others, like Rionegro, because Liberals were orthodox Catholics and not anti-clerical.[3] The political leanings of priests were usually apparent. In the 1913 elections they had the job of wiring election results to Medellín: the parish priest of Concordia telegraphed "Catholics 240, Luciferianistas 83"; that of Pueblorrico, "Catholics 435, rebels against God and his Holy Church 217."[4] The parish-priest had much political power in Sabanalarga, it was said in the 1950's, that political violence stopped after one man registered his change of political credo in his presence.[5] The priest did not, however, have unbridled political influence: in villages containing both Liberals and Conservatives he could divide his flock by political commitment;

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1. Jorge Rodríguez, Maizopolis, monografías de los distritos antioqueños (Medellín, 1915), p. 127.
2. Valencia V., op. cit., p. 67.
3. Benigno A. Gutiérrez, Gente maicera - mosaico de Antioquia la grande (Medellín, 1950), pp. 86-8.
4. Rodríguez, op. cit., pp. 58, 127.
5. Hemel Ramírez B., El diablo estuvo aquí (Medellín, 1956), p. 109.

but, equally, by abstention from political commitment, he could divide himself from much of the village and damage local respect for himself.

The bishops propagated parallel views and tried to ensure moral discipline. Archbishop Cayzedo wrote against Japanese immigration as a force likely to detract from Antioqueño uniqueness and to introduce religious and ethnic heterogeneity.[1] The threat of divine intervention was used as a warning by the Bishop of Antioquia in 1933: a vengeful God castigated pueblos severely for their collective sins. "The earthquakes, fires and inundations of Martinique, Messina, Managua and other cities that with their sacrileges, blasphemies and lewdnesses provoked the wrath of the Almighty, give testimony of the supreme abhorrence which he has for these sins...." He went on to press for strict uniformity in religious practice, especially in the sacraments: too many diocesans were communicating only weekly - the bishop demanded a daily presence at the eucharist.[2] Cayzedo interpreted the economic depression of 1930 as the product of religious indifference: "...we repeat to you with paternal insistence that we must purify ourselves with penitence if we want the Lord to be propitious...."[3] In the diocese of Antioquia in 1933 the bishop instructed parish priests to read a list of those who had paid their tithes every first Sunday of the month in order to move others.[4] Bishops appealed to the peasant by preaching their superior virtue: they were told that it was their duty to warn the peasantry against Communism, but that it was self-evident that Antioqueño peasants would not embrace it. The peasant was readily sentimentalized: "....Country life, especially in our mountains, is cleaner and more tranquil for the body and the soul,

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1. Corona funebre del excelentisimo y reverendísimo senor doctor don Manuel José de Cayzedo y Martínez de Pinillos (Medellín, 1971), p. 35.
2. Pastorales cuadragesimal de Ilmo Sr. D. Manuel José Cayzedo, Arzobispo de Medellín (Medellín, n.d.), p. 5.
3. Pastorales del Excmo. y Rvdmo Sr. D. Maximilian Crespo, promulgadas durante el tiempo que ocupó las sedes episcopales de Antioquia y Santa Rosa de Osos (Bogotá, n.d.), p. 24.
4. Revista eclesiástica, xxi (1937), 313, 341.

and, therefore, more morally sound than the debilitating and noisy life of the cities. In the country, as everybody knows, social sanctions are more strongly felt...." Better to avoid the less catechized cities.[1] Unrecalcitrant villages were handled with equal confidence. In Ebéjico in 1917 public speeches were given on themes like "The Church is a falsifier of documents" and "The documents which priests make public and recommend in the Churches are false documents"; the priest was cold-shouldered and then insulted. When no parishioner came to the defence of the priest, the bishop withdrew him to the diocesan capital and placed the village under interdict. In consequence, there were no Christian rites and inhabitants of neighbouring villages were reluctant to enter business with Ebéjico. Only when a local committee begged for the return of their now beloved priest would the bishop consider it.[2]

The moral exhortations of bishops had a political aspect. Cayzedo intervened to assure party orthodoxy among Conservatives: in 1927 he put his weight behind the centralizing Conservatives and against the Romanistas in Eastern Antioquia who were willing to make concessions to Liberals.[3] In 1931 he attacked national concentration: "one cannot", he insisted, "have an alliance between Christ and Baal, between light and darkness".[4] In 1933 he intervened to declare the inclusion of a nominee for the House of Representatives "illicit" because he made concessions to the "enemies of Catholicism" and was opposed to "moral principle."[5]

The political style of Cayzedo was not preserved by his successors

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1. Cayzedo, quoted in Mensajes que los gobernadores de Antioquia han dirigido a la asamblea del departmento (Medellín, 1930), ii, 492-3.
2. Santiago López Palacios, Apuntos biográficos del Excmo. Señor Maximiliano Crespo, centenario de su nacimiento, 1861-1961 (Medellín, 1961), pp. 90-1.
3. Humberto Bronx and Javier Piedrahita E., Historia de la arquidiócesis de Medellín (Medellín, 1968), pp. 103, 115-8.
4. Emilio Robledo, La vida ejemplar de Mgr. Manuel José Cayzedo, Arzobispo de Medellín (Medellín, 1952), p. 250.
5. Bronx and Piedrahita, op. cit., p. 108.

in Medellín who were primarily administrators, less political and less intransigent towards Liberalism. It was maintained more faithfully in the rural diocese of Santa Rosa de Osos by Bishop Miguel Angel Builes. Builes was a priest of peasant origins whose mother protected refugee priests during the War of the Thousand Days.[1] He received his apprenticeship as missionary in two of the most remote and hostile parishes on the Lower Cauca. His talent was recognized by Pedro Nel Ospina who recommended his name as bishop in 1923. He bought up printing-presses and founded the only bookshop in Northern Antioquia in order to spread the truth.[2] He established a reputation for the virulent style of his pastoral letters, in which he portrayed Catholicism literally as a condition of survival and was resourceful in exploiting simple imagery - "the darkening shadow", "the night of masonery." His attacks on Liberalism became increasingly ferocious during the 'thirties. He claimed that egalitarian doctrines were responsible for difficulties in finding servants and peons, that Liberalism was the son of Lucifer, that atheistic educators were campaigning with "diabolical fury", that carnivals were a means by which masonery corrupted Colombia, that the police committed "official homicide". He depicted Colombia engulfed in a wave of blood and lashed out at those Conservatives, like the management of El Colombiano, who were willing to make concessions to Liberals.[3] Builes set out to re-evangelize his and other dioceses. He was responsible for building a seminary for missionaries at Yarumal, which, after seven years in operation, had over one hundred pupils.[4] He founded a seminary for parish-priests in Santa Rosa.[5] By opening seminaries in his diocese

1. Bernardo Morino Botero, Su resistencia - Monseñor Builes (Bogotá, 1964), p. 17.
2. Fernández and Granados, op. cit., p. 518.
3. El Siglo, 2 Dec., 1936; R.J., xi (1939) 94; Miguel Angel Builes Cartas pastorales (Medellín, 1939), pp. 69, 193, 244, 376, 390.
4. El Pueblo, Medellín, 7 Mar., 1936.
5. Semana, 14 Aug., 1948.

Builes hoped to shelter his subordinates from European modernism, the wickedness of the city and modish fads like feminism or co-education. In the 'thirties Liberals smiled at Builes: his admonitions seemed quaint and retrogressive but not dangerous. By the mid-'forties Liberals thought otherwise: they recognized that ideas that seemed outmoded, flat and repetitive in Bogotá seemed apposite and convincing in much of Colombia. Builes spoke of religion as the first victim of Liberal persecution: by not condemning a Conservative newspaper in Santa Rosa that recommended that Conservatives carry arms and accused unarmed priests of betrayal, he seemed to endorse it. Liberals complained that Builes was a "sectarian cacique"; Juan Lozano y Lozano warned that if Liberalism made life unbearable for Ospina Pérez that he would be "converted into an instrument of Bishop Builes". Liberals now exaggerated the significance of Builes: they depicted him as the long-term instigator of radicalized Catholicism in Colombia. Admiring priests defended Builes against Liberal critics, "...He has been called a politicking bishop, but does not know the art of intrigue...Never has he placed his influence at the service of any name, nor is he matriculated in any school but that of the Church of which he is pastor..." He was so unpopular that he travelled incognito to the 1949 episcopal conference.[1] By 1950 Santa Rosa was the citadel of traditional clericalism, from which attacks on Liberalism and especially Liberal-Protestant guerrilla activity were launched.[2] Though the political impress of Builes was most deeply felt in the clerical resurgence of 1949-50, his presence continued to be apparent: the rumour spread that Builes was closely associated with the fall of Rojas.[3] Builes is still remembered for his energy and consistency

1. Revista del seminario de misiones, Yarumal, No. 7., June-Aug., 1949, 116; El Liberal, 10 May, 1945; 28 Feb., 1949; Sabado, 7, 28 Sept., 1946; Morino Botero, op. cit., p. 126; Semana, 21 May, 1949.

2. El Tiempo, 6 Mar., 1952.

3. Testis Fidelis, Del humorismo al asfalto (Medellín, 1957), p. 95.

by both hero-worshipping Conservatives and devil-hating Liberals.

The influence of the Church in Antioquia was diminished by urban growth. Though the Church made a considerable effort to adapt to urbanization, its success was limited. It went some way to imbuing a sense of divine purpose into Antioqueño businessmen, to convincing them that they were working out an Antioqueño destiny in exploiting worldly resources to the greater glory of God and to the inestimable benefit of man. The Church sought to preserve links: it tried to retain the allegiance of the peasant immigrant by equipping him with a sense of belonging. The shared ideology of Catholicism, in theory, forged a powerful link that connected industrialist, worker and peasant. But the fragility of the Church in Medellín was underlined by the decision of the archbishop to increase the number of parishes from seven to twenty-two between 1948 and 1951.[1]

The Church in Antioquia continues to act as a repository of sentiments and focus of community life. Common sentiments have been expressed in ecclesiastical rallies, of which the largest was that of 1936. Since the Bolivarian Eucharistic Congress, the influence of the Antioqueño Church has slowly declined, despite efforts at resurgence, as in 1949-50. Until the mid-'thirties the Church exercised a more forceful presence in the village than the state. While the Church commanded at least weekly devotion and acted as an agent of social solidarity and cohesion, the influence of the state was felt most strongly during electoral competitions. In an unspecialized society the parish-priests went some way to providing the expertise in literacy and technology - as well as ritual - that made small-scale and unco-ordinated, haphazard improvements possible. It was, in part, this loss of control that made violence possible.

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1. R.J., (1951), 128.

The influence of the Antioqueño Church has spread well beyond Antioquia. Antioquia has consistently produced a surplus of priests and nuns for export to less saturated areas: as recently as 1961 45.2 per cent of Colombian priests came from Antioquia and Caldas.[1] It was felt in other ways: in the numbers of Antioqueño bishops outside Antioquia, and as an exemplar of mass-produced piety and small-scale charitable action.

B. The Costa

Areas of negro predominance - the Pacific coast, the Chocó and the Valle de Cauca - have been less deeply catholicized than Antioquia and most of the Colombian interior. Pantheistic afro-cults permitting the entry of new deities, readily accommodated a lightly-felt Catholicism. These areas were dissatisfying for stern, unyielding missionaries: there was no struggle or crusade to engage in, no feats of missionary heroism to brag about, no militant religion (like Islam) to confront. Far from it, Afro-cults were so flexible that considerable variations could be identified across short distances. Until recently, priests of upland birth and mestizo or Spanish origins were reluctant to enter the 'hot country' for fear of tropical disease. Missionary effort has, since the colonial period, been discontinuous: the negro zones - apart from the Chocó - did not experience the proselytizing onslaught of the Regeneration and the Conservative 'hegemony'. Lack of clergy meant rare churchgoing, nonpayment of tithes and firstfruits, a frequent incidence of free unions and illegitimacy, the preservation of social habits condemned by missionaries - nakedness, unorthodox invocations to the saints in magical practices for curing purposes.[2] The Catholic impression

1. Gustavo Pérez and Isaac Wust, La iglesia, en Colombia - Estructuras eclesiásticas (Fribourg, 1963), p. 104.

2. República de Colombia, Informes sobre misiones del Caquetá, Putumayo, Goajira, Meta, Vichada, Vaupés y Arauca (Bogotá, 1917); Relaciones de algunas excursiones apostólicas en la misión del clero (Bogotá, 1924); Congreso y exposición de misiones catolicas (Bogotá, 1924).

was so superficial that in one village near Cartagena little or no identification was felt between African divinities and Catholic saints. In Sincelejo, similarly, dance-feasts have had no bearing upon Catholic festivals. In Condoto negroes complained in the early 1950's that laws imposing a fine for certain forms of "disturbing the peace" were deliberately applied to erode Catholic customs.[1] The priest was rarely a central figure in the community. His ritual functions were dispensable. In the case of illness costeños resorted to folk-curers to invoke the saints. The educational qualifications of the priest were remote from local needs. The official Church was treated usually with indifference, and on occasions with hostility when religious schools were accused of discriminating against negroes and the illegitimate.[2] Communities which would not run to the defence of the Church did not recognize the Church as a political issue. A local Church which usually failed to collect its tithes could not be accused of exploitation; and its lack of influence reduced its attraction to Conservatives as a means of political mobilization. Even an emphasis on the multiracial Church, black saints and San Pedro Claver did not alter the situation dramatically: the Church remained an exotic plant in the 'hot country', an alien, uplander importation whose penetration was perfunctory.

C. The Santanders and Boyacá

The three departments of North and South Santander and Boyacá are in marked contrast to both Antioquia and the Costa. They are adjacent to Antioquia: but they meet in a lowland jungle area of low population density and were connected, until the 1950's, by nothing more than mule-tracks (now only cart-roads). Social contact has usually been restricted

1. Thomas J. Price Jr., "Estado y necesidades actuales de las investigaciones afro-Colombianas", Revista colombiana de antropologia 2 (1954), pp. 11-36.

2. Ramón Manrique, A sangre y fuego (un dramático reportaje del 9 de abril en todo Colombia) (Barranquilla, 1948), p. 220.

to the neutral ground of Bogotá. All three departments were less isolated in the nineteenth century than Antioquia: lying on the major trade-route from Bogotá to Venezuela, they were more susceptible to the import of new ideas and to the movement of troops. They endured more serious economic dislocations than Antioquia during the wars and had few of the compensations of rich natural resources possessed by Antioquia. They had little claim to uniqueness: coffee success had a peripheral impact in the northern area of North Santander but not elsewhere. There was little to boast about: Boyacenses were prone to revel in self-pity about their "martyred" land. But there was very little that was singular about these zones and too much that was only too common to Colombian departments after the War of the Thousand Days: social distress, relentless poverty, economic stagnation and hardly a gleam of hope in the future. They did not even have a migratory safety-valve for excess populations: to the west and north-west was unhealthy, unpenetrable jungle, to the south and north-east overpopulated Cundinamarca and Táchira (Venezuela), to the east the unknown and unhealthy Llanos which could be developed only with considerable capital resources not possessed in the eastern departments.

The eastern departments mattered to the Church more than the Costa. They were areas of mixed population that had been heavily proselytized during the Colony. They were physically and climatically accessible from Bogotá. They contained major outposts of clerical orthodoxy: the seminary controlled by the bishop at Pamplona to which even Venezuelans flocked, the Dominican and Augustinian bastions at Chiquinquirá and Tunja.

The political and economic influence of the Church had been a sorely divisive issue, especially in the Santanders, during the nineteenth century. In overheated, introverted communities of expanding population but often stagnating or contracting wealth clerical and anti-clerical

ideologies gave continuity of ideological posturings that legitimized family vendettas and village feuds. Liberalism and Conservatism were elevated into competing codes of behaviour: a Liberal morality and Liberal conformism was set against a Catholic morality and Catholic conformism: Liberalism was condemned wholesale by clerics as a reprehensible moral code that meant civil marriage, lay education and relativism. Liberals responded by assuming the intransigent position that was expected of them. The priest-haters aligned against the priest-ridden. Incidents of blasphemy, sacrilege, profanation and iconoclasm were more common than in Antioquia, and their memories were cherished by stationary populations. Areas of intense clericalism were often adjacent to those of intense anticlericalism: where no modus vivendi could be reached, the only solution was extermination because there was no underpopulated frontier zone. Envy at the affluence of certain clerics bred anti-clericalism: the privileges afforded by the 1892 Concordat to the religious orders of importing furniture and other school equipment at negligible tariff rates offended lay educators. The perquisites of the shrine at Chiquinquirá whetted the appetites of competing religious orders as well as Liberals.[1] During the Regeneration after the Jesuit mission of reconversion in 1887, the Church, with new endowments, entrenched itself in sectors of privilege.[2]

The priest in the Santanders, though less often in Boyacá, was an alien figure. The homegrown product was in a minority, and usually educated at Pamplona where clerical inflexibility was strengthened. The majority in the Santanders came from Antioquia or Spain. The Antioqueños usually expected a degree of conformity, deference and social solidarity that they could not exact. The Spaniards were more intrans-

1. Manuel Ancizar, Peregrinación de Alpha (Bogotá, 1888), passim.
2. Daniel Restrepo, La compañía de Jesús en Colombia (Bogotá, 1949), p. 286.

igent: a heavy leavening entered the Santanders during the Regeneration. Emigres, Spanish priests and religions inflamed local politics by their determined attempts to stamp out the spread of Liberal ideas that they had come to hate in the peninsula. Conceiving their mission to be to destroy Liberalism before it destroyed Colombia as it ruined Spain, they disseminated an uncompromising Carlism, resisting the moderating efforts of the central Church authorities as contaminated by Liberalism and claiming a superior knowledge of local needs.

In Medellín a capital-city, patrician churchmanship tried, at times, to attenuate the superheated clericalism of the backwoods and prosperous Liberal merchants and industrialists tried to curb the excesses of zealous anti-clericals. In the Santanders nobody tried; and in Boyacá the attempt was conducted usually at a long distance by mail from Bogotá. There was no middle position in Santandereano or Boyacense politics: no Republican party took root. The Bishop of Pamplona was very rarely a mediator, and usually a mouthpiece of clericalism: the cathedral was lent as an arms depot to Conservatives in the war of 1900.[1] The Bishop of Tunja, more inclined to have an eye on the archdiocese of Bogotá, was more temporizing in his dealings with Liberals but usually checked by an outrageously clerical cathedral chapter. Clerical discipline was impossible to maintain from Bogotá, especially when bishops were obstructive. In a situation of continuous priest shortage, priests were irreplaceable. Their knowledge of this and the reluctance of bishops to make public reprimands that would shake the authority of an already weak local Church meant that bishops were open to charges of tacit acquiescence in insubordination.

The Church, in the early twentieth century, was not universally, as in Antioquia, a focus of community life. It could also be a cynosure

1. Max Grillo, Emociones de la guerra (Bogotá, 1903), p. 199.

of local hatreds. Local rivalries, except in rare economically extroverted zones (usually of less clerical penetration) like Cúcuta and Sogamoso, were frozen. The presence of the state was negligible: it negotiated through local caciques, usually in this period of a Conservative and clerical complexion, who had edged Liberal families out of power, though not from the locality. Sometimes the parish-priests, as in Málaga, were themselves the caciques, negotiating for small public works for the locality and education and jobs for their protegés. Within their ambit of influence, they depicted politics simply - the confrontation of good and evil: St. Joseph was the first Conservative and the Devil the first Liberal.[1] They shared with lay Conservatives and Liberals a common hostility to central government, a concern to preserve patterns of informal influence which assured a degree of continued municipal and parochial autonomy. They sought legitimacy and funds outside, but wanted to retain their independence of decision.

The influence of the priest in the village was circumscribed and his pre-eminence disputed. On his arrival his role was usually marked out for him by his predecessors. He inherited specific political alliances: he had to take into consideration the political whims of patrons; he had to risk politically sponsored withdrawals of funds; he had to establish his prowess, his machismo, before gaining local respect; he had to adjust to local social patterns rather than to adapt them. Otherwise, he felt isolated and unable to implement any plans for Catholic activism or economic assistance.[2]

The crisis of 1930 awakened latent hostilities. The fragility of the local economy was exposed by the Depression. The rapid displacement

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1. El Conservador, Málaga, 1 Mar., 1919, 24 Jan., 1920.
2. See the novel of Eduardo Caballero Calderón, El cristo de espaldas (Bogotá, 1961); Fernández and Granados, op. cit., pp. 628-62.

of Conservative government employees by Liberals heightened a sense of local catastrophe: alternative employment was not available. Parish priests identified with their Conservative allies: in Arboledas they would not tolerate the introduction of a lay school; in Málaga and García Rovira they incited popular uprising: some considered it an opportune moment to arouse Conservative enthusiasm and rid the Santanders of Liberals.[1] The coalition government in Bogotá had only one hundred soldiers in the Santanders: unsure of the loyalty of a largely Conservative army, it came up against further waves of priest-launched revanchism once it had mustered enough men to reinforce public order. Violence, sustained by Liberal police activity, gave rise to vengeful, morbid writing in the local Catholic press and a series of condemnations of sins allegedly tolerated by Liberalism - mixed bathing, co-education, sex education, euthanasia. Liberals replied with a wave of profanations and Church-burnings: an image of the Sacred Heart was thrown irreverently out of the cabildo sessions in Ocaña. Anti-clericalism, deficient in its own symbols, was active only in destroying those of clericalism.[2] The interventions of a mission from the metropolitan Church proved futile: its gestures were resisted by Bishop Rafael Afanador y Cadena who resented outside intervention and pursued a lifelong vendetta with one Liberal boss, José Arturo Santos, a relative of Eduardo Santos. Liberal demands for the removal of Afanador met with no response from the Vatican.[3]

Violence in the Santanders did not awaken a wave of clerical sympathy across the country. The Jesuit journal, the Revista Javeriana,

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1. Reflejos, Ocaña, 5 Feb., 1934; A.S.R.E. F.I. 34-3/33 D.C. 111/510 (861-0) '34', 4050-R, 14 Feb., 1934, Guillen to Sec. of Exterior Relations.

2. El Espectador, 8 July, 1931, Sanción Liberal, Bogotá, 22 Dec., 1931; La unidad católica, Pamplona, 7 Jan., 11, 24 Feb., 16 Sept., 1933, 24 Mar., 21 July, 1934, 12, 19 Oct., 1935; El Pais, 2 Jan., 1934; Correo del norte, Ocana, 26 Apr., 29 June, 1935; R.J., x (1938), 14; Manrique, op. cit., pp. 132-40.

3. Calíban, Danza de las horas (Bogotá, 1969), p. 132; D.S. 821,00/4261/30 Aug., 1932, Caffery to Sec. of State.

was chilly towards the Santandereano clergy: in summarizing the conflict, it did not take the local priests at their word, but concluded ambiguously that evidence was so contradictory that no adequate conclusions could be drawn and that probably both parties were equally blameworthy.[1]

Similar phenomena persisted in Boyacá: but dispersed settlement and competition between both the different religious orders and the orders and the secular clergy made a concerted clerical movement improbable. The rhetoric of some clerics alarmed Liberals. Canon Adán Puerto of Tunja cathedral opposed each measure of the 'revolution on the march' in turn in oratory compared by his critics to that of Gaitán.[2] Fray Mora Díaz, a Dominican of Tunja, and founder-editor of El Cruzado, maintained a diatribe against Liberals, invoking the Spanish Civil War. The Leftist press, he claimed, depicted Franco with his hands stained in blood and with a caption asking whether he would be able to wash them. "From the heart the Generalisimo would pardon the blameworthy, but his conscience prohibits it and history would not pardon such indulgence. 'The inquisition returned,' they shout. Blessed be the hour of its reappearance. If only it had been re-established years before; with four or ten executions the sea of blood which drowned the peninsula would have been avoided."[3] Or, on another occasion, "Moses was a reactionary against the pharaohs and obtained the liberty of a pueblo. Reactionaries were Judith, Deborah, the Maccabees. The great reactionary of Universal History was Jesus Christ..."[4]

The clergy of Chiquinquirá were equally alarmed at Liberalism but more concerned at the possibility of losing influence and souls to Protestants, "those rapacious wolves dressed in a sheepskin" who

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1. R.J., (1934) 68-70, 133.
2. Trinchera, Tunja, 18 June, 30 July, 1937.
3. El Tiempo, 18-19 Oct., 1936; Fray Mora Díaz, El clarín de la victoria (Tunja, 1942), p. 107.
4. Quoted in El Renacimiento, Pasto, 3 Mar., 1938.

blasphemed God and the Virgin and invented texts that were convenient to themselves and moved "among persons of low social sphere...deserter souls who succumb to the cajolery of passions, pass to the field of unbridled liberty, and desert the Cross of Christ to follow the rebel banner of Lucifer..."[1] The Franco movement was followed enthusiastically by all the orders: but, especially by the Augustinians and Dominicans, who had a large contingent of Spaniards, and, according to Liberals, distributed posters of Franco to be placed next to the image of the Sacred Heart, in peasant cottages.[2]

Among individual priests in Santander who kept up an anti-Liberal rhetoric after violence had subsided in 1934, Father Danial Jordán of Málaga stood out: the Santander assembly was so angry at his political behaviour that it requested his transfer but confronted the stubborn resistance of Afanador.[3] A maverick cleric, he travelled frequently to Bogotá, in 1932 haranguing Bogotanos in the Plaza de Bolívar to prepare for war against Peru.[4] His reputation as an agitator led to the destruction of the office of his newspaper, La Defensa, in 1935. He submitted a report on the state of Conservatism in Santander to the National Convention of 1935.[4] Alleged by El Siglo to be a victim of the Popular Front, Jordán travelled to Rome, from where he reported gleefully that the Liberal Olaya had repented of freemasonery and received the last sacraments.[5] Editorializing in El Siglo, he heralded the day when Colombia would be resurrected, as the salvation of Spain had risen from the martyrdom of Calvo Sotelo.[6] He took a prominent part in organizing the centenary celebrations of the death of Santander in Cúcuta,

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1. Veritas, Chiquinquirá, 16 Dec., 1917, 12 Sept., 1934, 13 June, 1945.
2. Eugenio Ayape, Historia del desierto de Candelaria (Bogotá, 1935), pp. 284-5; Jornada, 8 July, 1948
3. La unidad catolica, 25 Apr., 1936.
4. El Pais, 16 Sept., 1932, 21 Mar., 1935, El Tiempo, 24 Oct., 1935.
5. El Siglo, 17 Sept., 14 Oct., 1936, 10 Mar., 1937.
6. Ibid., 14 May, 1942.

carefully dissociating himself from Liberal inflations of the reputation of Santander but not going the whole way with Conservative deflations of it.[1] During the Concordat dispute he contributed editorials to El Siglo in defence of Gómez, and was reproved by Perdomo and ordered out of the archdiocese of Bogotá where he had no licence to preach or publish.[2] He was arrested when bombs were found in Bogotá cathedral in 1945 and returned triumphantly with another 'Carlist' priest, Father Julio Ernesto Duarte - to a Te Deum in the parish church of Cúcuta.[3] The influence of Jordán in the Conservative party in Norte de Santander persisted in 1950 when, in a local power-struggle for predominance in the party, Jordán defeated the Ocaña leader, Lucio Pabón Núñez.[4] Other local priests kept the religious temperature high: some in Santander were alleged to offer heaven to those who killed Liberals; Father David Cote - member of a major Conservative family - was said to have twelve Chinacotá police in his pay while the municipality paid only three.[5]

In 1949-50 a clerical resurgence seemed probable. Canon Puerto who was left in charge of the diocese of Tunja during the appointment of a successor to Bishop Luque, ordered priests to collaborate with the Gómez government. "....The ~~government~~ Church has no reason to doubt the word of the Government. Its help will, therefore, be frank and intense; parish-priests will recommend the initiatives of the government to the faithful from the pulpit; they will be insistent in dispersing prejudices against them; they will permit cedulators to take from the parish books any data they need in the presence and on the days that are definitely arranged for the urban and rural censi they will see to it that inhabitants do not move for motives of a religious kind, even if this involves anticipating or

1. Daniel Jordán, Patria (Bucaramanga, 1942).
2. La iglesia, xxxv (1942), 250-4.
3. El Siglo, 12-13 Mar., 8-9 Apr., 1945. The father of Duarte, a local Conservative boss, had been assassinated in 1938 "traitorously, villainously by sycophants of the regime", according to his son in a telegram to Santos. According to the Jesuits, Santos replied serenely. R.J., x (1938), 196-8.
4. Jornada, 14 Aug., 1950.
5. Jornada, 30 Jan., 1948; El Tiempo, 24 Jan., 1948.

or delaying traditionally celebrated fiestas".[1] Censorship leaves the net effect of clerical endeavour in the early 1950's in the Santanders and Boyacá unclear: but a superficial impression would suggest that parish-priests were successful in recovering some of their lost pre-eminence in Boyacá but made no long-term impression in the Santanders.

8. The Church Hierarchy

The Nuncio and Primate sat uneasily on this fabric of regional power structures within the Church. They gave a veneer of singleness to a Church disunited by distance, deeprooted in one area and surface-deep in its influence in another.

A. The Nuncio

The position of the Nuncio was always precarious.[2] As a foreigner he made an easy scapegoat. As a political and ecclesiastical broker he was a readymade focus of conspiracy. As honorary head of the diplomatic corps he had to settle minor diplomatic disputes. The job called for a discretion which few Nuncios at least till the late 1940's had. When a Nuncio worked unobtrusively to restrain clerical fanaticism his efforts usually went unappreciated. When, as in the case of the Nuncio Gasparri during the Reyes government, he worked openly for a political cause, he elicited unmitigated contempt: While Nuncios worked at times with care and prudence to restrain those ecclesiastics prone to over-reaction, at others they bungled shamelessly, negating any influence they had previously. The diplomatic fiasco of the Concordat crisis seemed to persuade Nuncios not to intervene in internal politics and to resist being drawn into public debate. No subsequent Nuncio was publicly implicated in inciting violencia or working to bring Rojas to power or to throw him out. It was a reflexion upon the tact of later Nuncios that none received a mention,

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1. El Siglo, 25 Oct., 1950.
2. For biographical information see ed. Jose Restrepo Posada, Iglesia y estado en Colombia (Medellín ? 1971?), pp. 173 ff.

even less a blast, in Gómez' diatribes against the hierarchy from exile. To be effective, Nuncios needed the collaboration of bishops. As Archbishop Perdomo agreed publicly, each bishop, by canon law, takes the action he considered necessary in his own diocese.[1] Episcopal collaboration with Nuncios was, therefore, sometimes half-hearted. When, for example, the U.S. ambassador complained to the Nuncio of the treatment of Protestant missionaries in the diocese of Pamplona, the Nuncio confessed that Bishop Afanador obstructed all efforts he had made to impose authority on the Málaga clergy.[2]

B. The Primate

The Primate has always occupied an ambiguous role. Though, in the eyes of governments, he is the representative of the episcopacy, he has no power of demanding obedience from bishops. He lacks weapons, only the spurious advantages of proximity to the Nuncio and the government, the ear of Rome, a strategic location and the deference that comes with seniority. The introduction of periodic episcopal conferences, made possible by peace and improved transport from 1908, was seen as a possible answer to this dilemma. Collective policy-decisions could now be reached, without risk of dissension. But frequently unanimity was possible only when policy was stated in terms of calculated imprecision. Collective recommendations were, therefore, open to diverse interpretations. The moderating impact of a carefully considered pastoral letter was nullified at parochial level if the bishop, on distributing it, added his own allocution which, in simplified and bellicose vocabulary re-interpreted the pastoral ostensibly to make it comprehensible to peasants.[3] Discrepancies within the episcopacy meant constant embarrassment for the Primate, always answerable and rarely in command

1. El Siglo, 6 Dec., 1936.
2. Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers, 1945, vi, (Washington, D.C. 1945), pp. 80-91.
3. Boletín Diocesano, xviii (Ibagué, 1936), 43-6.

of the situation. His pronouncements tended to express an uneasy consensus of episcopal opinion at any given time. He worked in a metropolitan milieu where he had to consider both mutations in papal diplomacy and the polished scepticism of Bogotano society. His provincial colleagues were only rarely satisfied: the Primate was liable to charges of inconsistency, pussy-footing and vacillation. Perdomo, Primate for most of the period in the question, was, after the 1930 election fiasco, remarkably acute in ecclesiastical balancing: "Mgr. Perdomo can say that he had peace or war in his hands in the past sixteen years...."[1]

C. Bishops

The degree of independence of decision and financing that each bishop possesses is easily underestimated. None is committed to decisions made by colleagues in other dioceses. None can be obliged to submit accounts to the metropolitan Curia. A recommendation by the Primate on, for example, presidential candidatures, is binding only upon the parish priests of his own diocese. Those of his neighbours can politely disregard it. The mere suggestion of intervention by an outside bishop has created acute resentments.

The style of Colombian bishops has been varied: they have not come of a single class or educational background. Some have come of peasant, usually Antioqueño stock; others have commanded the deference due to an upper-class background. Since the 1940's a new genre of professional administrators of less individuality has arisen. Those of an Italian or French education have been more refined in their theology, more adaptable to "modernizing" ideas, more insistent on the virtues of prudence and tranquility, and more likely to use the restrained vocabulary of Leo XIII and Pius XI. Those of a Colombian - especially Antioqueño - or Spanish education were generally more militant in state-

1. Sabado, 2 Dec., 1946.

ment, more literal and aggressive in language, and more indebted to the florid style of Pius IX.

Colombian bishops could not be faulted for their conscientiousness: they easily measured up to pre-conciliar (or post-Vatican I) criteria. They engaged in charity, distributed pastoral letters regularly, performed their visitations punctiliously, encouraged new cults and renewed old ones, attempted to renovate the Church with new methods of proselytization- the Marian cult, the feasts like Christ the King and the Immaculate Conception, new pious societies for men, women and children - and did so assiduously. They have rarely been tainted by a hint of gossip, a whiff of scandal.[1] They could not be accused of absenteeism or splendid living: indeed, Archbishop Brioschi of Cartagena complained that the poor organization of the agenda of the first Episcopal Conference made him an unwilling absentee from his diocese for three months.[2] For reasons of friendship, kin and residence ties, the first identification of bishops was with their diocesan flocks: and, so, often, they preferred to sacrifice episcopal unanimity or national interests to diocesan responsibilities.

There was no formal overlap of episcopal jurisdictions: but informal influences often crossed the boundaries of dioceses. Bishop Builes, for example, had considerable influence because his pastoral letters were published by La Defensa of Medellín and El Siglo, and because some other bishops would order the reading of his pastoral letters in the churches of their dioceses as well as their own.[3] The influence of Archbishop González stretched, in the mid-'thirties, throughout Colombia because he had national responsibility for Catholic

1. The claim of Tribuna Libre, Cali, 9 Dec., 1936 that bishops and priests concealed "the sexual inheritance of the Borgias" beneath their cassocks is not well-documented.

2. Pedro Adán Brioschi, Veinticinco años de episcopado (Cartagena, 1925), p. 26.

3. El eco del Vaticano, xviii (Garzón, 1949), 474. El granito de arena, xxviii (Cúcuta, 1942), 127.

Action and the League of Catholic Women. Bishop Concha exerted influence beyond his diocese of Manizales in the mid-1930's because he was attached to the Bogotá seminary. Relations between bishops were often embittered by conflicts of formal and informal power: that between Concha and González when Concha, resentful that González was promoted to the archbishop coadjutorate and not himself, tried to prevent González at Bogotá airport from carrying the Host by plane to Medellín on the grounds that the necessary dispensation from the Vatican had not arrived.[1]

Conformity has been the price of most promotion. Bishop Luque mastered the art of writing pastoral letters on uncontroversial subjects - like the quality of faith and the meaning of prayer - and was rewarded with the metropolitan see and a cardinal's hat. Connexion helped too. Bishop Concha, son of a Conservative president, was a personal friend of López andEchandía and quoted enthusiastically by El Tiempo.[2] He was probably too friendly towards Liberals to earn the prize of Bogotá in the prevailing mood of 1950: but his judiciousness paid off on the death of Luque.

As ecclesiastical institutions proliferated, bishops became conscious that they might lose influence to alternative hierarchies within the Church in which they had no voice.[3] In 1951 the Episcopal Conference founded a Permanent Episcopal Secretariat as a means of co-ordinating Catholic Action, Social Action, missions, education, press, propaganda and 'moralizing' campaigns, and as a central bureau for the collection and distribution of information and documentation about the Church.[4] Its influence has not been dramatic.

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1. Humberto Bronx, Arzobispo Juan Manuel González... (2nd edn., Medellín, 1966), pp. 86-8.
2. See, for example, El Tiempo, 6 Feb., 1937.
3. For an examination of the same problem in a later period, see David Mutchler, the Church as a Political Factor in Latin America with particular reference to Colombia and Chile (London 1971).
4. Anuario de la iglesia....1953 (Bogotá, 1953), p. 31.

D. The Religious Orders

The religious orders gave further complexity to an already confused power-structure. They were in Colombia, as is customary, independent of the secular clergy but respectful of its hierarchy. Their share of the total number of ecclesiastics in Colombia has grown slowly - from about thirty per cent in 1912 to forty-three per cent in 1960. The Conservative governments between 1886 and 1930 welcomed European religious orders, especially as educators. Bishops did not share preferences: Herrera Restrepo imported the better educated, more conciliatory and charitable French orders, especially the Christian Brothers. Cayzedo looked to the more fanatical Spanish orders whom he claimed shared the same cultural tradition.[1] A higher concentration of foreigners was found in the orders than in the secular clergy - a situation persisting in 1960, when 5.5 per cent of the secular clergy was foreign and 36.1 per cent of the religious orders. The religious orders, in consequence, constituted a focus of xenophobic feeling. There were not only strains between the local and the foreign clergy that were strenuously denied by the Jesuits; there were also opportunities for xenophobic anti-clericalism. Some foreign religious were accused of living graciously off the fat of the land of sending remittances, profits from education, out of the country.[2] The presence of others was ideologically provocative: (for example, Father Manuel Santacruz Loidi, known as el cura Santacruz, for example, a guerrilla in the Second Carlist War, sought refuge in Pasto.[3] The religious orders were prone to paint a picture of Europe sunk into degeneracy that could be avoided by the practice of self-abnegation and asceticism in Spanish America.

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1. F.O. 371/2260/233369/20 Oct., 1916/Wyndham to F.O.
2. F.O. 371/877/10330/19 Nov., 1909, Stronge to Grey; Eduardo Ospina, El clero extranjero, Conferencia, 2 de mayo de 1935 (Bogotá, 1935).
3. Daniel Restrepo, Los jesuitas en Colombia (Bogotá, 1940), p. 329.

The Jesuits were the outstanding religious order. Though first re-introduced in 1843 to teach Indians, they were soon established as the leading educators of upper- and middle-class youth: they were so popular that there were even clashes between towns - like Santa Fé de Antioquia and Medellín - hoping to obtain a local Jesuit school which would seem to endorse the supremacy of the town in the department. Careful to follow modulations of Vatican policy, they were vociferous only in defence of their own interests, an hacienda in Cundinamarca while Abadía was president, a school-building in Bogotá in 1938-40. Known for their suavity, which contrasted with the demagoguery of other orders, they preferred a low-pitched argument and the exercise of informal pressures to noisy rhetoric and clerical radicalism. This did not, however, protect them from charges of organizing student demonstrations against the first López government. The wealth of the Jesuits has been a matter of rumour: they have dismissed it as a calumny of seventeenth-century origin revived by the Portuguese revolution of 1910.[1] Yet their acquisition of properties in the village of Chapinero, now a prosperous suburb and secondary shopping-centre of Bogotá would substantiate their reputation for business acumen and do more credit to their much-vaunted intellects. The care with which they discouraged publicity opened Jesuits to conspiracy hypotheses: they were accused of connivance in the assassination of Uribe Uribe and of subtle influence of the policy of the Conservative hegemony.[2] There were never many Jesuits: but their numbers multiplied almost fourfold from 159 in 1905 to 598 in 1955, with the largest growth for any single decade coming significantly during the Liberal government in 1935 to 1945.[3] The main Jesuit influence remained in education: they founded both the

1. La Compañía de Jesús. Los jesuitas colombianos en el IV centenario de la Compañía a sus enemigos y bienhechores (Bogotá, 1953), pp.42-3.
2. Restrepo, op. cit., p. 302 n.1; L.E. Nieto Caballero, Frente a los jesuitas (Bogotá, 1927).
3. La Compañía, op. cit., p. 36.

Universidad Javeriana in Bogotá and the Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana in Medellín during the 1930's. Their influence upon young Conservatives was twofold: they disseminated corporate ideologies of Portuguese origin that reinflamed younger Conservatives, and recognized and promoted the talents of the less well-connected aspirants to power, like Gómez in one generation and Leyva in another.[1] Their activity was not, however, confined to education: their influence in social welfare schemes were such that by 1953 they controlledthe National Co-ordination of Social Action.[2] Through Félix Restrepo, the founder-rector of the Javeriana, they exerted influence through credit co-operatives, the Catholic youth movement, Catholic Social Action and a linguistics centre, the Instituto Rufino J. Cuervo.[3]

No other religious orders had as much general influence as the Jesuits: though in certain areas where they were well established, like the Dominicans in Chiquinquirá, the Augustiniansin Tunja and the Franciscans in Cali, they accrued local power through social leverage: the Dominicans in Chiquinquirá, for example, were not only the leading educative agency but ran a night-school and a printing-school.[4]

Tensions between the secular clergy and the orders were never as pronounced as in the nineteenth century.[5] One incident that did break into the open suggests the possible quality of conflict. In 1947 the Bishop of Cali excommunicated a Franciscan, improbably named Francisco Franco: Franco had broadcast an attack on the bishop for selling a Franciscan reformatory-for prostitutes-for which he was representative to the Curia. After outside intervention the bishop was forced to resign

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1. Leyva was brought into politics through the Jesuit Co-operative organization. Semana, 30 Aug., 1947.
2. Anuario de la iglesia católica en Colombia, 1953. (Bogotá, 1953), pp. 42-3.
3. Semana, 19 Apr., 1947.
4. Veritas, Chiquinquirá, 27 May, 1936.
5. Restrepo Posada, Arquidiócesis de Bogotá, Datos biográficos de sus prelados (Bogotá, 1964) ii, 104-9.

and retired to cultivate plums and live with his aviary of thirty canaries in Madrid, Cundinamarca.[1]

The question of missions to Indians attracted intense national attention. The privileges awarded to the missionary orders to administer peripheral areas were a recurring source of dispute. In 1917 the department of Nariño claimed to take over the Putumayo territory; the claim was rebuffed by the apostolic prefect who accused the departmental government of an avaricious hankering after aguardiente revenue.[2] Restrepo alleged that the majority of vicars-general was active in Colombian politics although they were not Colombian citizens.[3] But the subject was too distant to remain long in the limelight. The missionaries competed to project an impression of heroism:[4] but, though they gained the moral support of the local clergy, they won nothing more tangible. The renewal of the Convention of 1892 in 1928 and 1953 provoked momentary and unenthusiastic debate because in both years, less distant problems seemed more pressing.[5] Only later was the government accused of "delivering three-quarters of the Republic to the Spanish clergy for its exploitation and domination."[6]

The possibility of competing lay orders alarmed the religious orders. On the pretext of blasphemies in the Manizales assembly in 1935 a lay organization, Alianza por la Fé, was founded with episcopal blessing[7] in Medellín as the vanguard of resistance to Liberal reformism. Cayzedo recommended the Alianza to all "who glorify in the name of Catholics"; Builes ordered that its bases be read in the churches of his diocese.[8]

1. Semana, 9 Aug., 1947, 22 Jan., 1949.
2. República de Colombia, Informes sobre las misiones del Caquetá, Putumayo, Goajira, Casanare, Meta.... (Bogotá, 1917), p. 41.
3. El Espectador, 30-1 Oct., 1936.
4. Juan Botero Restrepo, El problema misional (Bogotá, 1952), esp. p.502.
5. The terms of the 1953 Convention are conveniently located in Ivan López Botero, Concordato y teocracia (Bogotá, n.d.) pp. 49-58. See also J. Lloyd Mecham, Church and State in Latin America (revd. edn., Chapel Hill, 1968), p. 133.
6. Francisco López, El proceso al poder religioso en Colombia (Bogota,1968)
7. El Adalid, Santa Rosa de Osos, 29 June, 1935; La unidad católica, Pamplona, 22 June, 1935.
8. El Adalid, 11 May, 1935.

A parallel society, Cruz de Malta, which included ex-military and ex-policemen sacked by the Liberal regime, was already distributing arms and giving military instruction in Antioquia.[1] But the members of the National Directorate were divided because the rest of the country was not prepared for a coup. There was no guarantee that the army would ally with the rebels. The government itself was in conciliatory mood, even conceding to the Jesuits the right to found a university in Medellín. When the Alianza spread in Antioquia, Gómez and Berrío first resigned from the National Directorate and then intervened with Jesuit help to suppress the movement. The lay Conservative element feared the loss of the party apparatus to the bishops; the Jesuits, concerned that a rival secret lay organization would reduce their influence, condemned the Alianza as a clerical freemasonery.[2] Presented with the choice of resignation from the party or disbanding the Alianza, the Alianza leadership first divided and then disbanded it.

9. Catholic Social Action and Syndicates

The Church in the nineteenth century often had success in social policy when the state did not: Archbishop Mosquera could channel the philanthropic feelings of the local ladies of Cundinamarca, as the Governor of Cundinamarca could not.[3] It was implicitly understood in the Regeneration solution that the Church would take charge of social policy. The activity of the Church was haphazard, badly co-ordinated and unevenly distributed: but it was more thorough and complete than that of the state. In Manizales, for example, in the 1890's two mutual savings societies, a charity society and a casa de beneficiencia

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1. Alfonso Cock Arango, La conspiración de 1936 y la universidad catolica (hoy pontificia) Bolivariana - Historia documentada de la fundación de la Universidad Católica Bolivariana de Medellín (part printed, part mimeo, pamphlet, Medellín, 1936), esp. pp. 27-9.
2. R.J., iv (1935) 134-6; Colombia nacionalista, Medellín, 13 July, 1935; El Espectador, 15 July, 1935; La tradición, Medellín, 12 Oct., 1936; Cock Arango, op. cit., pp. 54-76.
3. Restrepo Posada, Arquidiòcesis de Bogotá....ii, 348-54.

were founded; groups to promote rudimentary savings and investment and mutual protection were introduced. The Church carefully constructed social bonds in a frontier society with few constraints.[1] In Medellín the Society of San Vicente de Paul, founded in 1882, cared for three hundred and fifty destitute families weekly by 1932.[2] As early as 1910 the superior of the colegio of San Bartolomé in Bogotá saw Catholic activism as the most effective means of "arresting the tide of Communism, incipient today in Colombia,....which can, if it is ignored, assume a most disastrous character in the future." The outstanding figure in Bogotano charitable activism was a Gallego, born in Corunnah, Father Campoamor, an impressive speaker and efficient organizer who, at times, alarmed Bogotano alta sociedad with an unequalled capacity for mobilizing and capturing the affection of workers. In 1911 Campoamor introduced the first school-meals. He went on to improvize savings schemes, to run campaigns against alcoholism and prostitution, to try to induce principles of elementary hygiene (like regular bathing of children), to organize Christian workers' circles by age-group and sex, to organize an "infantile battalion" on quasi-military lines, to inject a sense of nationhood through flag-waving spectacles during national drama - and - exhibition festivals. Campoamor ardently defended the rights of workers and buenas costumbres and extolled the virtues of virginity and motherhood. He appealed to the sense of dignity and honour of the obrero, and called on workers to relish the poverty that they shared with Christ the obrero.[3] The success of the endeavours of Campoamor was such that by 1941 the Círculo de obreros in Bogotá could mobilize 1,345,000 pesos, and

1. Luis Londoño O., Manizales - contribución al estudio de su historia hasta el septuagesimo quinto aniversario de su fundación (Manizales, 1936).
2. Antioquia por Maria, x (1932) 2022-3.
3. Maria Casas, El R.P. Campoamor, S.J., y su obra El círculo de obreros (Bogotá, 1953), pp. 30, 60-75, 125-36, 137-40, 155.

that in the 1930's new circles were established in Sogamoso, Duitama, Manizales, Pamplona, Málaga, Cali and Tunja.[1] The philanthropic excursions of the Church were rarely controversial: though one wing of the Liberal party did regard some of them, in the late 'twenties as too 'advanced.'[2]

Before 1930 Catholic Social action was discontinuous, its funds deficient, its organization poor. Successive episcopal conferences engaged in pious exhortation but few of their recommendations were acted upon.[3] González tried to answer the 'revolution on the march' by centralizing and co-ordinating the patchwork of Catholic social schemes in Catholic Social Action. By 1938 this claimed 100,000 active members and fifty-seven Catholic weeklies selling 120,000 copies per week.[4] Catholic activity was stepped up, enthusiastic nuns mobilized, virgins and matrons assembled in crusades. Even classes in typing, needlework and obligatory religion multiplied, study classes and devotional groups were introduced, a Protectorado Doméstico for maid-servants set up and Yocismo, the Catholic youth movement of Belgian origin, founded. Girls of religious vocation called Marias were educated in accountancy and management of savings banks at a granja agricola. Local co-operative movements were boosted, a Colombian Legion of Decency founded, embryonic libraries of 'good books' set up and controlled film-distribution encouraged. Catholic syndicates were expanded - and the cult of the kingship of Christ stimulated.[5] González proposed even to establish a radio station for Catholic Action and to import one thousand radios to distribute to the peasants.[6] The attempt to bring this diversity of

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1. Ibid., p. 86; R.J. xvii (1942), 106.
2. Ruy Blas, 25 Apr., 1927.
3. Tercera conferencia episcopal colombiano, 1916 (Bogotá, 1916), pp. 24-30; Carlos Alberto Lleras Acosta, Cuestiones obras sociales (Bogotá, 1923), pp. 44 ff.
4. Anuario de la iglesia catolica, 1938 (Bogotá, 1938), pp. 429, 439.
5. Acción católica colombiana, i (1934), 7, vi (1939), 129; Comite ejecutivo nacional del Yocismo, Manual del yocismo colombiano (2nd ed., Bogotá, 1938), pp. 9, 28-30; El Trabajo, Bogotá, 28 Nov., 1936.
6. Bronx, op. cit., pp. 67-78.

of voluntary associations under one umbrella met with some resistance from anti-centralizing groups within the Church; it met with greater hostility from Liberal leaders. Liberals were called on to abandon their anti-Christian party and join with Conservatives in the traditionalist militias of Catholic Action making homage together to Christ the King. Acción Liberal depicted Acción Católica as a movement contrary to Christian ethics.[1] It was condemned by some employees in the Cundinamarca government as a state within a state which in some areas even provided military instruction. The Governor of Cundinamarca complained that the Catholic syndicates had an almost military character. Liberal fears of Catholic Action as a militant elite seemed confirmed by its proclamation that it was itself an "army ordered for battle."[2]

The reduction in pace of the 'revolution on the march' and the removal of González to Popayán defused hostilities between Liberal and Catholic activists. They did not, however, permanently reduce pressure to syndicalize. C.T.C. activism in the mid-'thirties, culminating in the Congress of 1938, which the presence of Alberto Lleras, Minister of Government, appeared to endorse on behalf of the López administration, provoked counter-activism usually at a parochial level.[3] The strength of clerical syndicalism in the mid-'thirties is difficult to assess: in Bogotá central co-ordinating efforts were hazy and unsystematic; in the localities parochial syndicates were often hardly more than an extension of the parish vestry fitted with an acceptable-sounding name; no concept of fully-paid-up membership percolated. For the moment the survival of Catholic syndicates derived from three sources: pre-existing

1. El Ideal, Neiva, 31 Oct., 1936.
2. Antonio García in Acción Liberal, No. 54, Apr., 1938, 17-18.
3. El Siglo, 18 Feb., 25 Mar., 1938. El Pueblo, Medellín, 15 Jan., 1938.

Church-inspired organizations onto which they were grafted and with which they could be fused; a heavy flow of rhetoric about the urgency of re-injecting the "Christian imperatives" into capital-labour relations; and the anti-clerical content of C.T.C. rhetoric.[1]

The revival of Communist organization in 1944 heralded a more concerted Catholic syndical movement. The Church took a more aggressive stance: at the Cali meeting of C.T.A.L. (the Congreso Latinoamericano de Trabajadores) the representative of Archbishop Perdomo, the Jesuit Father Vicente Andrade Valderrama claimed (and was denied) the right to speak.[2] In Medellín a wave of small Catholic syndicates was formed after Builes condemned the Federación de Trabajadores de Antioquia.[3] Syndical expansion was so rapid that in 1944 the Ministry of Work conceded legal personality to 190 syndicates.[4]

The moment was propitious for Catholic syndical expansion because the Alberto Lleras government, fearful of Communist power, was anxious to subjugate the C.T.C. and, in 1946, because the Ospina government hoped for informal influence, if not immediate leverage, through the Catholic unions. Andrade Valderrama was foremost in co-ordinating small, local unions interested primarily in mutual aid and limited ameliorative action together in one federal organization, the U.T.C. (Unión de Trabajadores Colombianos), the professed object of which was to secure better wages and conditions for workers in a context of harmonic industrial relations and class collaboration: Catholics would be united against the universal corrosion of Communism.

The Communists reacted ferociously, accusing the Jesuits of inciting

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1. Luis A. Forero Leon, Dos ciudades - la iglesia y el estado (Bogotá, 1938), p. 81. Mueras to the pope were shouted at a C.T.C. demonstration in Barranquilla in 1937, R.J., vii (1937), 235.
2. R.J., xxiii (1945) 28.
3. El Siglo, 12, 17, 20 June, 1944; El Tiempo, 15 Sept., 1944.
4. Justicia social, Bogotá, 12 July, 1945.

sabotage at the C.T.C. conference at Medellín in 1946 and alleging that Andrade Valderrama was in sinister alliance with Falangists and Gaitán.[1] In Medellín the "Falangist" clergy were accused of recommending the use of women workers in a biscuit factory because they would be more docile than men and of attempted infiltration in the syndicates of municipal workers and at the ARGOS cement plant.[2] In rural areas the C.T.C. condemned the U.T.C. as a Falangist organization providing new opportunities for gamonales to turn worker against worker: one C.T.C. leader, Victor Julio Silva, argued that areas of greatest syndical development were also those of least sectarian politics before the introduction of the U.T.C. because there was no Conservative versus Liberal struggle between workers.[3]

The federal structure of the U.T.C. frustrated central decision-making and delayed action. In the name of preserving a patriarchal system of industrial relations, the Jesuits and the U.T.C. lay leadership negotiated some sops for workers - the compulsory provision of sandals and overalls, for instance. The failure of the Jesuits to contain growing friction between the U.T.C. lay leadership and industrialists is obscured by censorship.[4]

IO. Education

Certain themes recurred in debate between Liberalism and the Church. Control of education, Church wealth and public morality were the most predictable.

Catholic educators in the early twentieth century as in the nineteenth were concerned with the teaching of revealed truths and the diffusion of preconceived formulae: there was no sense of direct

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1. Diario popular, 28 Aug., 1945, 18 Jan, 2 June, 1946.
2. Ibid., 24, 29 Jan., 1946.
3. Sabado, 6 Sept., 1947.
4. See the tone of demands reported at the third U.T.C. Congress in Manizales. Semana, 11 Feb., 1950. After a justicialista tendency was identified in the U.T.C. both the C.T.C. and U.T.C. warned supporters against Peronista infiltration. Semana, 19 Jan., 28 June, 5 July, 1952.

observation or independent inquiry. Even at a university level teaching concentrated upon those subjects that involved not questioning, but rote-learning - theology, law, medicine, more recently engineering. Catholic educators, mainly priests, felt it desirable to channel the leaders of rising generations through institutions of an appropriately pious complexion. While young men were being prepared for a professional occupation, their professors marked them out for promotion and brought them to the attention of prominent Catholic laymen, often Conservative politicians and frequently part-time professors or ex-pupils. The Church extended the field of patronage into the university and created an informal old-boy network.

The Liberals operated in a like manner. It was rare that they taught theology: but their teaching methods - dogmatic drilling and uncritical absorption of predigested material - were similar. They used the university as a recruiting-ground and vanguard of anti-clerical doctrines. The educational system was potentially always the hub of clerical/anti-clerical dispute.

In the period 1902 to 1930 education was a matter of permanent concern but not of dispute. The Church retained effective control of education at most levels except certain special institutions - like the School of Mining in Medellín. The only serious government resistance to clerical control came from Reyes who, wanting more science and less philosophy and human letters to be taught, obstructed the renewal of a contract for colegios with the Jesuits.[1] The Church was concerned at the foundation of a new anti-clerical university, the Universidad Libre, in Bogotá in 1922. But its anxieties proved exaggerated: the new university was not the hotbed of red radicalism that some clerics expected. Other frictions were small: the Bishop of Antioquia wrote to the Governor that he had no objections to Liberals as secretaries of

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1. Daniel Restrepo, La compañía de Jesús en Colombia (Bogotá, 1940), pp. 340-1.

hacienda or public works but "no Liberal must be employed....in the branch of public instruction." It would be intolerable to have a Liberal appointing schoolmasters: "...A Liberal schoolmaster is, at least, cold towards piety, hardly enthusiastic about the clergy and not in the least zealous about the moral education of children...."[1] Outside the special institutions a general picture of educational stagnation can be drawn. Central government showed little concern for primary education: it left that to municipal pride. The figures for distribution of school text-books in 1927 reflected priorities in central policy: the Catechism of Christian Doctrine and the Handbook of Hygiene easily surpassed their competitors, each striking up a distribution of over 50,000 where no other reader or primer topped 21,000.[2] No surprise was registered when the budget of the ministry of public instruction was the first to be cut in the Depression.

The 'revolution on the march' coincided with a revival in Catholic educational endowments: the foundation of the Universidad Nacional by the Liberal government was anticipated by the opening of the Jesuit Universidad Javeriana in Bogotá and followed by the opening of another Jesuit foundation, the Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana in Medellín. The López administration did not want to alienate the Church on the education issue: but it did hope to demonstrate that it could improve upon the Church record. By increasing the education budget it sought to expand lay education facilities at all levels.

The aims of the government were not those at a local level. Anti-clerical groups sought to remove the entrenched clerical influences of the Regeneration. They were aided by the fact that educational contracts

1. Santiago López Palacios, Apuntos biográficos del Excmo, Señor Maximilian Crespo. Centenario de su nacimiento 1861-1961 (Medellín, 1961), pp. 119-20.
2. F.O. 371/13479/A 8026/8026/11, 12 Apr., 1929, Monson to Henderson.

entered into the departments in the 1880's were usually due for renewal in the 1930's. The Jesuits were "despoiled" of their colegio in Bucaramanga by "sectarian persecution"; they were replaced by the Christian Brothers (who were more easily reconciled to Liberal government) in Ocaña; after strong pressure in their support from the Unión Educadora they were removed from Medellín; and in 1938-9 their arrangement over the elite colegio of San Bartolomé in Bogotá was revised.[1] (The connexion of the Jesuits and Conservatives seemed confirmed by the presence of three prominent ex-ministers among the teaching staff.)[2] Anti-clerical activism at departmental level scandalized Catholic susceptibilities. A school-inspector in South-West Antioquia was accused of encouraging sex education for both sexes; in Caldas a theosophist was appointed school-inspector; in Ocana Liberals imported more Liberal schoolteachers to break the Conservative-clerical grip on education; the Assemblies of Cundinamarca and Antioquia subsidized the anti-clerical Alianza Nacional estudiantil anticonservadora; the Director of Education in Cauca distributed to schoolteachers a "socialist" Mexican government publication on primary education.[3] Clericals complained of outrages: the Director of Education in Caldas ordering the suppression of the name of Christ; a militant atheist, running schools in Boyacá, and an attempt to replace the colegio of Jesus, Mary and Joseph of the Dominicans by an Instituto Alfonso López in Chiquinquirá, an atheist director of education in the Valle, a masonic school-inspector substituting an oration to Santander for the Paternoster; in Cundinamarca non-Christians - Syrians, Jews and Spanish Republicans - received teaching posts.[4]

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1. Restrepo, op. cit., pp. 345-8.
2. Ospina Pérez, Francisco de Paula Pérez and Jesús Maria Marulanda. See the university prospectus, R.J., 1 (1933) 21-4. Pérez and Marulanda remained on the Council of Administration in 1951. Anuario de la iglesia catolica en Colombia, 1951 (Bogotá, 1951), pp. 44.
3. R.J., v (1936) 84-6, 219, 388, 392-3; Reflejos, Ocaña, 18 Feb., 1934.
4. Avances, Bucaramanga, 8 May, 1936; Mora Diaz, El Clarín de la victoria (Tunja, 1942) p. 58; La Vigia, Tunja, 21 Jan., 13 Feb., 18 June, 1938; La voz catolica, Cali, 26 May, 1935; Abel Carbonell, La quincena política, (Bogotá, 1952) v, 321; El Pais, 11 Feb., 1936.

The Church reaction was uniformally hostile. The Revista Javeriana, a model of Jesuit prudence, warned that the dismantling of religious education would "wound the Colombian pueblo in the most delicate and sensitive fibre of its heart....religious sentiment".[1] One ideologue of the government spoke of applying a new Liberal ethic in education - morality without education and conscience of faith.[2] The recommendation of the government that religion should be taught in the form of anecdote or exemplary biography scandalized El Adalid of Santa Rosa which proclaimed shrilly that the Person of the Word Incarnate was being reduced to the stature of Confucius or Buddha.[3] The bishops spoke out. Insisting on freedom to each Perdomo prohibited the entry of school inspectors except to examine hygienic conditions.[4] The Bishop of Cali declared it a mortal sin to attend a coeducational school; that of Ibagué forbade parents to send their offspring to the official colegio; that of Santa Marta forbade the faithful to send their children to non-Catholic, neutral or mixed schools.[5] Fears that a relaxation of morals would deCatholicize Colombia were reiterated: Perdomo quoted Leo XIII: "The school is the battlefield where it is decided whether the future generation will or will not be Catholic".[6] Catholics were reminded that anti-clerical education would make for religious heterodoxy and social and national divisiveness.

The conflict extended upwards to embrace Bogotano and national politics. The Universidad Javeriana was attacked by the Liberal municipal council of Bogotá as a sinister focus of a clerical intelligence network.[7] Yet the ministry of education was hardly brought into the

1. R.J., i (1934), 251-2.
2. El Espectador, 19 Mar., 1936.
3. El Adalid, 8 Dec., 1934.
4. R.J., v (1936), 223.
5. La hoja parroquial, Santa Marta, 3 Jan., 1937.
6. El Pais, 3 July, 1935.
7. El Pais, 4 Nov., 1934.

debate. Only an offshoot of capital-city experiment with educational methods in a publication, the Revista de Indias came under fire as an obscene publication fomenting vice by displaying nudity under the pretext of sport.[1]

The Church soon felt relief. Only one minister of education, Dario Echandía, was a major figure whose appointment raised the prestige of the ministry: his successors were nonentities. Clerical fears that religious influence would reduce and secular influence supplant it were appeased when the increase in the educational budget flattened out. At the same time, growth in lay expertise that seemed to threaten clerical pre-eminence in the villages tailed off.

The Church may well have come out of the López administration stronger than it entered it. Challenged, it renewed its vigour and entrenched itself. In 1936, the Church was still maintaining 583 primary schools, three universities, eleven institutes of commercial education and 207 colegios; in 1938 78 per cent of enrolled secondary schoolchildren were still in Catholic establishements.[2]

Subsequent disputes about education revolved around the same themes: appointments, clerical control, text-books. Education did not, however, again in this period become an issue of more than local incidental political significance. The Church slowly consolidated its influence, sometimes acting as an innovator - as when it introduced the first popular educational radio station in 1948 at Sutatenza.

11. Wealth.

The wealth of the Church has always been shrouded in mystery. The few clues to it are invariably suspect. Not only has the Church been

1. El Siglo, 26 Nov., 1936; El Tiempo, 3 Dec., 1936.
2. Anuario de la iglesia católica en Colombia, 1938 (Bogotá, 1938), p. 468; Eduardo Ospina, La obra educativa de la iglesia en Colombia (Bogotá, 1938), p. 2.

reluctant to open its accounts to the public gaze but the dioceses have refused to submit their accounts to the metropolitan Curia. The silence of the Church has been politically prudent: its wealth has been the subject of rumour and speculation but not of sustained comment. Liberal government did not dare upset the Church by bringing its wealth into debate and possibly lacked the necessary information.

Some information is available for assessing the means of financing the Church. The system of tithes and firstfruits was inherited from the colonial period. Payment was irregular in the nineteenth century: anti-clerical activism and economic dislocations, especially depredations of cattle, frustrated payment. Excommunication was a blunt weapon against those for whom it was an honour and useless against those who could not pay. The Diocesan Synod of Medellín clarified in 1871 what it considered the dues of a priest: "1. - of animals subject to the payment of tithes, one will be paid from each ten; it will not be the best or the worst, but a compromise. 2. - When the number does not reach ten, one real will be paid for each head of sheep, goats and so on; four reales for each bovine and equine; six for a mule, and one-tenth part of the other animals according to their value; 3. - Four per cent of sugar elaborated will be paid, that is to say, of each 25 pounds one, either in specie or in money according to its value; 4. - Of sugar or panela, whether it is extricated directly from the cane or drawn from the product of the distillation of the sugar, five per cent, that is to say, of each 20 pounds will be paid one, whether it be in specie or in money according to its value, and this is to be paid by he who markets the cane; 5. - Of beans will be paid of each 20 medias, one, but shelled; 6 - Of the other fruits and animals will be paid as has been the custom in our diocese...."[1]

1. Sinodo diccesano del obispado de Medellín y Antioquia, Tit. xxii., (Medellín, 1872), p. 189. Jorge Enrique Alvárez Arango, Diezmos u oblación personal? (Medellín, 1962), pp. 145-6.

In the Archdiocese of Bogotá (each diocese had separate regulations) Perdomo laid down the distribution of finances in 1931. Seventy per cent of tithes were to be sent to the Treasury of the Archbishop, and thirty to the parish. The parochial share would be equally divided between the priest, the fabric and the property of the benefice invested to sustain the priest. The treasury share would be allocated - in what proportions are not made clear - to the archbishop's table, general costs of ecclesiastical administration, cathedral and seminary upkeep and expenses. Parish priests were obliged to devote money from those fruits of their benefices which they did not require for their "honest sustenance" to the poor and pious causes.[1]

The scattered information available suggests a haphazard financial structure in which the better-off dioceses did not help the poorer. Cartagena remained the ugly sister: Brioschi regretted the "absolute negligence in paying tithes and firstfruits". Financing was so precarious that the expenses of the seminary after the War of the Thousand Days were twice its revenue. In theory, the faithful were supposed to pay one day's wage a year, with the exception of those unable to provide sufficiently for their own and their family's needs; in practice, ecclesiastical tariffs were the only source of income.[2] Dioceses showed remarkable independence in matters of finance. Some, in the 1930's, hired out the collection of tithes: other preferred direct raising.[3] Urbanization made the collection of tithes on traditional lines redundant in some dioceses. The archdiocese of Bogotá led the way in overhauling its system of financing by establishing voluntary contributions in 1934 which

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1. Arquidiócesis de Bogotá, Sinodo diocesano celebrado por el excelentísimo y reverendísimo Monsenor D.D. Ismael Perdomo en La Basílica primada en los días 6, 7 y 8 de diciembre de 1931 (Bogotá, 1932), pp. 279-80.

2. Alvárez Arango, op. cit., pp. 147, 194; Brioschi, Veinticinco años del episcopado (Cartagena, 1925), p. 8; Anales de Colombie - coup d'oeil préliminaire sur l'etat religieux et les Seminaires de la Colombie (Besancon, 1927), p. 41.

3. Arquidiocésis de Bogotá, op. cit., pp. 279-80.

transformed diezmos reales into diezmos personales, it recognized that payments to the Church were voluntary. Some other dioceses followed suit. In others the bishop decreed tithe rates for urban workers: the minimum in Pamplona was one peso a year and 0.3 per cent of the income of "businessmen, industrialists, professionals and capitalists": perhaps Bishop Afanador reckoned that, if asked for more, these groups would opt for excommunication.[1] Three groups of diocese emerged: the most urbanized which adopted the oblation system, the least urbanized which followed traditional patterns of raising tithes and firstfruits, and the intermediate which operated both systems. No general rule regarding the allocation of tithes emerges: in Medellín the percentage received by the parish depended on the number of its inhabitants, and city parishes were counted as special cases. The threat of denial of absolution for non-payment was not uniformally applied: in 1948 the inhabitants of the diocese of Pasto who could afford to pay tithes but did not were threatened; but by 1962 many bishops preferred to play down the question of mortal sin and some demanded that priests not be overinsistent in payment. Adjustments continued: the growing feeling that agricultural workers were the victims of discrimination induced Archbishop Luque to introduce money payments in the archdiocese of Bogotá as a substitute for payments in kind.[2]

Curiously the wealth issue hardly received political attention. In 1935 the president of the Bogotá municipal council, Julio Salazar Ferro, exposed to Unirismo statistics of the alleged value of untaxable ecclesiastical properties by department. The statistics were not confirmed by any other source, and are, in any event, incomplete; the two significant departments of Antioquia and Santander are omitted.

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1. Alvárez Arango, op. cit., p. 164.
2. Ibid., pp. 168-71, 179, 200, 281.

In the other departments (apart from the Chocó) there was said to be 18.7 million pesos worth of rural untaxable property, of which that in Cundinamarca was valued at 16.8 million pesos, and 68.6 million pesos worth of urban untaxable property of which that in Boyacá was worth 27.2 million pesos, Cundinamarca 12.8 million, Caldas 5.6 million and North Santander 4.0 million. Unirismo claimed that the rural property of the Church was worth six times that of the government, six times that of the departmental and intendancy governments combined, twenty per cent more than the total value of the property of municipalities and eleven times that of charitable properties. In all, it continued, tendentiously, Church property constituted sixty-five per cent of the value of Colombian real estate, the greater part of which, it concluded, was held by foreign communities. Unirismo repeated the well-worn case against foreign missions: it mouthed resentment at import duties by religious communities (on wines, statues and ornaments and small quantities of iron and glass) and the increase by the Liberal government of funds for foreign missions in peripheral zones.[1] The diatribe was not sustained. No Liberal or extra-Liberal group took up the information offered to launch an attack on the Church. Unirismo soon closed, and Gaitán, cognizant of the suicidal implications of confronting the hierarchy, sidestepped the issue.

12. Morality

The Church argued, though not with consistent force, that the moral ordering of society depended on its unhampered vigour. It claimed insistently that denials of the authority of the Church presaged a breakdown of the nation, property, the family, tradition and hierarchy. The Church appealed to a sense of outrage at the breaking of social conventions: this was exploited by Conservatives who were as keen to exploit the vices of their opponents as to reaffirm their own moral

1. Unirismo, 25 Feb., 1935.

integrity and religious purity. The Church sought to strengthen traditional morality with revivals of cults. The attitude of the Church to codes of moral conduct varied by region. In some areas the minimum of conformity practised by Liberals was accepted so long as tithes were still paid: external observance was considered preferable to hostility. In others morally neutral behaviour had to be condemned for fear of censure by the faithful. Local differences in social discipline were concealed behind a united front on specific issues: condemnations of divorce legislation, civil marriage and civil control of cemeteries.

Locally the Church conceived of its role as protecting society from internal dissolution. La unidad católica, condemning mixed bathing in Bochalema, quoted Seneca, "The exhibition of the naked woman is the immediate beginning of the decadence of a pueblo". Bad books and blasphemous authors - Voltaire, Renan, Rousseau - were attacked.[1] Gambling was held up to scorn. Bishop Builes divided dances into two categories: the decent and the forbidden. Cinema was depicted as a serious moral problem: El granito de arena condemned it as a means by which Jews subverted national morale and introduced 'Oriental sensualism'.[2] The news that ninety per cent of conscripts to the army were syphilitic was lamented by Fray Mora Díaz as the product of religious indifference.[3] The 1951 Episcopal Conference petitioned Congress to renew legislation prohibiting concubinage, prostitution and zones of tolerance that, after falling into abeyance, had been abolished by Liberals in 1938. Euthanasia and women wearing short dresses were, in turn, condemned.

The entry of Liberals to power was widely equated by Churchmen with a decline in moral standards. The return of Conservatives to office was depicted by only a few as heralding a glorious age of Catholic morality. It became gradually clear that the breakdown of established social bonds

1. La unidad católica, Pamplona, 7 Jan., 1933, 21 July, 1934.
2. El granito de arena, Cúcuta, 28 Aug., 1943.
3. Mora Díaz, El clarín de la victoria (Tunja, 1942), p. 283.

was less connected with the party in office than with migrations to the cities and the failure of ordination to keep pace with population - especially urban.

13. Clerical Ideology

Much of the strength of the Church has lain in its ideology. Catholicism provided a sense of serving a universal cause, unbound by time and space. It was comprehensible at both literate and illiterate levels: and, unlike its competitors, Catholicism had a unifying core of meaning.

Papal pronouncements were ruthlessly exploited by Conservatives. Pius IX's condemnation of Liberalism as sinful and contrary to Catholicism was revived during 1911-4 and in 1949-50. A pamphlet of Rafael Uribe Uribe setting out reasons why the Colombian variant of Liberalism was not included among those condemned by the Vatican precipitated a wave of agitation.[1] The pamphlet of Uribe was condemned by the Holy See: and Liberals pressed Rome for a reversal of the decision. Their representative, Carlos Arango Vélez, later wrote that negotiations went well while Cardinal Rampolla was Secretary of State but collapsed when the irreducibly anti-Liberal Spanish Cardinal Merry del Val succeeded.[2] The discussion ran out of fuel. An episcopal conference laid down careful instructions for the handling of Liberals in the confessional. Priests were instructed to tell Liberals that there were two forms of error:

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1. Rafael Uribe Uribe, De cómo el liberalismo Colombiano no es pecado (Bogotá, 1910); Uribe, Ensayo sobre las cuestiones teológicas y los partidos políticos en Colombia (Bogotá, 1911); X. X. X. Por la iglesia - artículos políticos religiosos sobre la actualidad (Bogotá, 1909); Pedro Fabo, Liberaldas de una revolución (Pamplona, 1914).

2. Carlos Arango Vélez, "Dos capitulos ignorados en la vida del procer" in ed. J. Elias Duque H., El mártir del capitolio. Biografía del Doctor y General Rafael Uribe Uribe (Medellín, 1965), p. 40.

to profess the name of Liberal and to co-operate directly with Liberals by participating voluntarily in revolution against legitimate authorities or by working or entering into compromises with candidates who demonstrated their hostility to the Church by not giving special guarantees. If the confessor was certain that the penitent professed a condemned error but was not admitting it, he was to question him prudently. After a sincere repentance the penitent was to be absolved:"....if the penitent was obstinate in his error appearing rebellious and stubborn, absolution must be denied, because he is unworthy of it." Priests were instructed to take the same line with those professing Liberal virtues though belonging to other parties. Priests were, finally, reminded that there were no objections to Liberals as godparents, witnesses at weddings, couples presenting themselves for marriage or participants in Church services: God, after all, did come to the world to speak to sinners.[1]

The theme of Liberal sinfulness was not revived till 1949. In the 1930 election it could not be rehearsed because Conservatives were too clearly guilty of moral backsliding. In the mid-'thirties it seemed due for another airing. Liberals who pictured a world of theocratic fantasy were promising that it would be dissipated by a Liberalism that would emancipate Colombia with lay education and divorce legislation. Revival of the sinfulness debate was averted by Father Félix Restrepo, Rector of the Universidad Javeriana, who, quoting the Vatican dictum that "there are various species of Liberals", declared that Colombian Liberalism was not a sin because it was not hostile to Catholicism.[2]

The Jesuits shifted the focus of clerical ideology from anti-Liberalism to corporate doctrines. They preached class-collaboration, and held Portugal, under the "exemplary figure" of Salazar, to be

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1. Conferencias episcopales de Colombia, 1908, 1912 y 1913 - Conclusiones, Resoluciones y Normas (Bogotá, 1913), pp. 150.4.
2. Unirismo, 18 Oct., 1934.

exemplary.[1] An Antioqueño layman was less restrained in his enthusiasm: the Salazar and Dollfuss regimes were, he claimed, "...those closest to the Christian type of society."[2] In outlying areas corporate ideologies made little impression: perhaps the local clergy dismissed them as spurious constructs of city-slicker Jesuits. But in the cities, they diverted the energies of young Conservatives from the lay derechista movements.

Ill-defined variants on traditional Church doctrine - social Catholicism and Christian Democracy - were foci of debate within the Church in the late 'forties. Felix Restrepo, after the debate of oligarchic politics had failed, outlined the purpose of the Universidad Javeriana as being not "an oligarchy of money, but an oligarchy of talent...."[3] But these discussions were dwarfed by the events of the Violencia. Churchmen who had been reared on teaching that assumed an ordered life in a hierarchically-arranged society were peculiarly ill-fitted to comprehending intense disorder and hierarchical uncertainty.[4] Succumbing to the commonplace illusion that society is knitted together by concepts and that social disintegration is the product of an attack on those concepts, most clergy were satisfied with inadequate conspiracy hypotheses. Some backwoods bishops revived the argument that the events of 1948-50 further substantiated the view that Liberalism was sinful. An implicit clash between hardline clericals and conciliatory Church leaders was averted by diplomacy and censorship.

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1. Félix Restrepo, El corporativismo (Bogotá, 1938), "El corporativismo al alcance de todos", R.J., xi (1939) 76-9 .
2. José López Henao, "Comunismo y Fascismo. Conferencia pronunciada en la Hora Católica por la Emisora Philco de Medellín, el domingo 14 de mayo de 1937", in Conferencias de la Hora católica. Medellín (collected in one volume at Sala de Autores Antioquenos, Universidad de Antioquia, Medellín), p. 224.
3. La Nación, 25 Feb., 1950.
4. Félix Restrepo, of a utopic Cristolandia, Colombia en la encrucijada (Bogotá, 1951). Even he was not spared derechista criticism: for all his encouragement of corporate doctrines, he was condemned by one rightist, Cornelio Reyes Reyes, as "liberal in the marrow" Sabado, 18 Aug., 1 Sept., 1951.

14. Conclusions

The Church remained the most powerful corporation till 1949-51. But, then, it became clear that it was doing more to disrupt the public order than to maintain it. The overassociation of some sectors of the Church with Conservative factions estranged them from other Conservative factions. Strident denunciations of Liberalism by provincial bishops neutralized any attempt by the Primate and Nuncio to mediate between the parties. The survival of the influence of the Church had been tied up with the varieties of influence it could exert: at both national and departmental levels it lobbied politicians and distributed pastoral letters; at a parochial level its leadership was sometimes undisputed; in some areas, it had a place in extra-legal codes of behaviour; in the mission zones its political, judicial and administrative power had been barely challenged. This changed after 1949. Disruption of government at all levels made it more difficult to lobby; the parochial influence of the Church was challenged locally; areas of extra-legal codes of behaviour and mission zones were often those most divided by violence. Until the mid-1940's those who had argued that the Church was an obscurantist, unbending, typecast institution incapable of initiative, had been confounded by its flexibility. In 1949-53 this was no longer the case: the Church became enmeshed in stationary debates that sapped its energy. Efforts of the 'thirties to keep pace with industrialization and urbanization had been renewed only halfheartedly. The Church was no longer equipped to be first ally of the state in keeping the public order. It was replaced by the army.

Chapter Four

Conservatives and the Apparatus of Public Order

Public order was the first priority of all governments from 1902 to 1934 and from 1938 to 1953. Governments after the War of the Thousand Days felt some sense of achievement at functioning at all, and their aims were rarely far-reaching. Until the mid-'thirties it was generally understood that the army was the first budgetary priority. Only during the first López administration did the government place a heavier rhetorical stress upon welfare legislation than upon military considerations. The first López government could, however, afford to subscribe to rhetoric about social legislation because, by expanding government revenues more dramatically than any other government, it was able to raise the military budget in absolute terms, even if the military budget fell by some 1.6 per cent of the national budget in the years 1935-8.[1]

The army was, nevertheless, only a secondary feature of public order maintenance until the 'fifties. Conservatives, after 1902, looked more to the Church as a bulwark of public order than to the army. Liberals, too, were more concerned at the potential of the Church for disturbing the public order than the army. Only in the early 'fifties did the army displace a Church of diminishing political credibility as primary component of the public order. From 1902 to 1949 it is best treated as a secondary phenomenon.

1. The Army and Police before 1928

No specialized warrior class existed in Colombia during the nineteenth century. Officers were usually civilians, often lawyers who took to the field. Military followings were composed of the same men as political clienteles: their loyalty was contingent upon regular payment

1. Francisco Leal Buitrago, "Politica e intervención militar en Colombia" in La dependencia external y el desarrollo politico de Colombia (Bogotá, 1970), p. 172.

and adequate feeding. Warfare had been an adventure for the upper classes that, in the Thousand Days, soured. Romantic enthusiasm and ignorance of military technology made civil war more bloody than it might otherwise have been,[1] The squalor of the Thousand Days led a horrified civilian elite to react against military values and to rely on ecclesiastical sanctions rather than military support.

Reyes recognized the urgency of a military overhaul: to remain in power he had to avoid uprisings like those of 1894 and 1899, because he had neither the financial resources nor a lieutenant as ruthlessly competent as himself to suppress them. He had, therefore, to convince Liberals of the genuineness of his conciliatory rhetoric: he appointed a Liberal Minister of War, General Benjamín Herrera, and imported a military mission from Chile, which was known for the subordination of the army to civilians and had itself received German military advice in the previous decade. The first steps - a cadet school, especially - towards the professionalization of the army were taken.

Liberals, though as susceptible to war fatigue as Conservatives, were slow to endorse the reforms of Reyes. Remembering the abuses of corporate military privilege in the nineteenth century, they were wary of any attempt to enhance the power of the central state apparatus. Their hesitation proved partly justified: the Chilean mission resigned on discovering that its most promising pupils were being replaced by friends of Reyes. The successors of Reyes reassured Liberals by keeping aloof from officer promotions and by introducing obligatory service in the ranks [2]

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1. J. León Helguera, "The Changing Role of the Military in Colombia", J.I.A.S., 3 (1961), p. 352; Max Grillo, Emociones de la guerra (Bogotá, 1903), pp. 85, 215; Alejandro Vallejo, Hombres de Colombia (Bogotá, 1936), p. 23.

2. Mensaje....1912 (Bogotá, 1912), pp. 31-7; Eduardo Lemaître, Reyes (Bogotá, 1953), p. 285.

The status of the army was slowly redefined: it came, in a limited sense, to resemble the Church, with a permanent hierarchy and its own promotion patterns. Membership of the officer corps was no longer a passing phase in a civilian career. The recovery of military discipline and the rarity of military interventions in politics raised the army in civilian esteem. The officer corps began to acquire a sense of exclusiveness as a body that recruited a mere twenty to twenty-five graduates annually from the cadet school and that preserved a distance from the petty rancours of party and faction.[1]

The period 1902-1930 was important for a change in elite political evaluations. In the nineteenth century lavish spending on personal splendour and entertainment and, above all, on fighting was widely regarded as ennobling and rarely as despicable. Prowess in armed combat was a highly desirable goal; and self-aggrandizement through violence was not viewed in many circles - especially outside Bogotá and Antioquia - as reprehensible but as the normal run of things. The prudent civilianism of Rafael Nuñez was a rare and much disparaged phenomenon.

The Thousand Days changed all that. The economy was so damaged that personal extravagance was considered antisocial. So deflated was military prowess that one ex-minister of war was reduced to selling dolls for a living. Reyes was the last of the martial heroes in office, and his capriciousness in office provoked an elite civilian reaction which deposed him. A new generation of politicians without fighting experience exalted the virtues of civilianism and intellectual attainment. During the period of reconstruction they avoided retrospective discussion of the wars: partly for fear of reanimating suspended hatreds and partly so as not to embarrass political allies by exposing the waste of human resources. The deeds of soldiers were not immortal-

1. Mensaje....1914 (Bogotá, 1914), p. 197.

ized by poets and chroniclers in elite publications: but they were remembered at a cacique level where the switch to civilian value structures did not always percolate. Later presidents, like Pedro Nel Ospina and Olaya, appealed intermittently to residual warrior sentiment and veteran solidarity at a local level.

Conservatives were as keen as Liberals to keep a small, subordinate army. The mere suggestion of enlarging, strengthening or re-equipping the army met with bipartisan civilian opposition. The smaller the military budget, the lower were taxes and the more patronage remained for items of civilian appeal like public works.[1] Fears of an overpowerful army dominated civilian behaviour and were kept alive by the egoistic militarism of President José Vicente Gómez of Venezuela. The mere fact that the officer corps promoted the name of a military Conservative, Jorge Roa, as presidential candidate for the 1922 election was enough to dash his chances. When a minister of war, like Roa or Ignacio Rengifo, tried to put the army to factional uses, the civilian elite of both parties coalesced with incomparable speed. The presidential palace was attacked in 1919 after press demands for the quotations of the prices of proposed imports of military uniforms.[2]

The loyalty of officers was never certain. Restrepo appointed chiefs of barracks without roots in the region they served - a Caucano in Barranquilla, a Boyacense in Manizales. Obedience was not unquestioning: the head of the Pasto barracks, for example, refused a demand of the Governor to dissolve a Conservative demonstration before the 1913 election.[3] The army was allowed to languish: in 1922 it had only 139 officers and 1,500 enlisted men: by 1927 Colombia had the smallest army

1. Jorge Sánchez Camacho, Pedro Nel Ospina - una biografía (Bogotá, 1960), p. 181.
2. Jorge Sánchez Camacho, Marco Fidel Suárez - Biografía (Bogotá, 1958), p. 162.
3. Carlos E. Restrepo, Orientación republicana (Medellín, 1930), ii, 196, 366.

and military budget in proportion to population in South America.[1] Successive administrations reassured the army with promises of improvements in working and living conditions and with anodyne rhetoric lacking palpable content. The army was usually sufficient to meet the problems that arose. It coped with a rising by a cuadrilla of political pretensions in a remote area of the Llanos; an Indian revolt led by Quintín Lamé on the borders of Tolima, Huila and Cauca; the practice of intoxicating Indians in the Guajira and carting them off to Venezuelan haciendas; the security of the Capitol when violence was threatened in 1924 during a dispute between Conservative factions over elections to the House of Representatives.[2]

The one ambitious challenge to the army was an abortive airborne revolt in 1919, when a veteran of the Thousand Days, General J. Cicerón Castillo plotted to buy thirty aeroplanes and terrorize the government with bombing, He proposed to land sixteen planes, some rifles and machine guns on the Pacific coast and deposit the remainder quietly on the Caribbean. Buenaventura and Tumaco would first be captured: and then aeroplanes would proceed inland and bomb barracks. Arms were to be distributed as the uprising caught fire. Bogotá and Cali were to be attacked from the air and revolutionary armies would advance by train and river overcoming all opposition. There was one snag. United States capital was not forthcoming. Promises to Senators Lodge and Knox of legislation favourable to U.S. oil interests (Castillo claimed Knox was a large shareholder in Tropical Oil) fell on deaf ears. Attempts to float a loan in London and New York failed. The Ecuadorian government, regarding the episode with incredulity, refused to handle smuggled arms. Liberal leaders hastily dissociated themselves; and the Suárez

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1. Helguera, op. cit., 352; Memoria....guerra, 1927 (Bogotá, 1927), p. 5.

2. Mensaje....1917 (Bogotá, 1917), p. 4; Mensaje....1926 (Bogotá, 1926), pp. 68-70; Ernesto Camacho Leyva, La policía en los territorios nacionales (Bogotá, 1947), p. 59.

government played down the fiasco.[1]

The army was largely ornamental. Its training was often inept: men posted to the hot Venezuelan border were prepared in cold-country conditions. Discipline was impossible when a cavalry regiment of three hundred men had only one hundred and fifty horses and seventy saddles. The army was near to breakdown. In a debate with Herrera, Ospina had to admit government doubts about the capacity of the army to contain serious disturbances: some three thousand rifles and one hundred and fifty thousand cartridges had been distributed to civilians before the 1922 election to avert a collapse of the public order.[2]

As civilian opportunities broadened in the 'twenties, officer recruitment fell: an army conscious of its own fragility rumbled. A coup of younger officers was avoided in 1924 by posting malcontents to the national periphery. But the problem of recruitment remained unsolved: in the late 'twenties seventy per cent of entrants to the officer school failed annually. When Rengifo asked the Governors to send two pupils from each department for a proposed extraordinary course, only one had the necessary qualifications for entry.[3] Professionalization had a hollow ring about it. As late as 1929 all the generals were veterans of the Thousand Days, and most had served before it: the same applied to twenty-seven of the thirty-three colonels.[4]

The police force was less important than either the Church or the army in keeping the public order. As a unit distinct from the army it

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1. El Tiempo, 16 Jan., 1920; El Dia, Cúcuta, 5 May, 1920.
2. Memorial politico del señor General don Benjamín Herrera Respuesta del Excelentisimo señor Presidente de la República (Bogotá, 1924,) p. xxxiii.
3. Memoria....guerra, 1927 (Bogotá, 1927), p. xxii.
4. Ministerio de Guerra, Departmento de Personal, Ejército de la República de Colombia - Escalafón de Actividad en 1° de junio de 1929 (Bogotá, 1929), p. 5.

was defined first in 1821; but, in practice, it lacked a clear function until President Carlos Holguin introduced a French mission led by Marcelino Gilibert in 1891. This recommended the formation of a new force under national control but independent of the war ministry. The force was established in 1892, but its independence was not assured till 1917 and its financing was precarious. The War of the Thousand Days reduced its number to five hundred, mainly youths without Gilibert's training. Reyes tried to put the police force on a new footing as the Gendarmería Nacional: but this was discredited as a political pawn and purged in 1910.[1] Restrepo instigated a permanent centralized police force that extended beyond Bogotá, the salt and emerald-mines and the leper colonies.[2] Restrepo established a frontier force of four-hundred men: he recognized the disparity in numbers of such a force when compared to those in other areas but was aware too of the importance of having a frontier service under the control of central government and not peripheral interests. He sent the first Colombian student to the United States to study police organization. He founded the Revista de la policía nacional, a judicial section; police medical services and a detective school; and he was responsible for the first gropings towards modern detective methods. But the national police was still embryonic. Local interests resisted central interference. Lack of definition of functions, poverty of training and shortage of manpower combined to reduce police effectiveness. Liberals and some Conservatives remembering the secret police of Reyes, were frightened that regional potentates might arrogate the apparatus of law enforcement to themselves.[3] The efficiency of the police was further curtailed by lack of status and lack of revenue. A policeman from the ranks was slow to

1. Alvaro Castano Castillo, La policía - su origen y su destino (Bogotá, 1947), pp. 36-62.
2. Mensaje....1912 (Bogotá, 1912), p. 11.
3. Restrepo, op. cit., ii, p. 181.

arrest those towards whom he felt deference.[1] The national police in 1918-19 was unpaid.[2] The police force was helpless in trying to prevent arms-peddling from Cúcuta into Venezuela for an uprising in 1921; they came up against the size of the Venezuelan colony in Cúcuta, the length of the border and the violently pro-insurgent Cúcuteño press.[3]

A degree of disorder that did not threaten the stability of government was considered by the political elite preferable to the taxation that a better state of public order would demand. Minor cases of disorder were useful in reminding governments that they were not omnipotent. The cost of thorough policing of the Llanos was prohibitive. The effort to reduce contraband was tentative for fear of rusting the wheels of the economy. Gold was smuggled with impunity from Antioquia to Ecuador through Cartagena and Panamá and sold at a considerable profit in a silver-dependent market from which all gold had been drained.[4]

The risk of international disorder was diminishing. Fear of encirclement by aggressive anticlerical regimes that had created something of a siege mentality among Conservatives in the 1890's wore off as neighbouring countries were increasingly immersed in internal conflicts. Successive governments were confident that efficient diplomacy could filter off the belligerence of Venezuelans and Ecuadorians.[5] Each government, knowing the vulnerability of Norte de Santander to political and economic pressures from the Venezuelan department of Táchira, handled Venezuela with care: the minister in Caracas was also scrupulously selected.

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1. Harry A. Franck, Vagabonding down the Andes (London, 1919), p. 31.
2. Miltor A. Puentes, Historia del partido liberal colombiano (2nd ed., Bogotá, 1961), p. 567.
3. Mensaje....1921 (Bogotá, 1921), p. 47; Mensaje que el primer designado encargado del poder ejecutivo dirige al Congreso Nacional en sus sesiones ordinarias de 1922 (Bogotá, 1922), pp. 16-17.
4. Marco A. Restrepo Jaramillo, El rey de la leña (Buenos Aires, 1958), p. 19 ff.
5. Germán Cavelier, La politica internacional de Colombia, Tomo III 1903-1959 (Bogotá, 1959).

Reyes and his successors pursued a policy of benevolent neutrality towards the radical Liberal government of Eloy Alfaro in Ecuador, despite clerical hysterics in Pasto. Responsiveness to external political conditions dwindled as the likelihood of arms trafficking from outside diminished.[1] Colombia was never expansionist in foreign policy because governing Colombia was itself a gigantic task: Colombia did not covet half of Ecuador or Venezuela; nor did it publish plans for the recapture of Panamá.

2. The Public Order Question, 1928-1946.

A communist scare, orchestrated by Rengifo, as Minister of War in 1928-9, provoked a civilian backlash. Minor, isolated outbreaks of violence - on the Puerto Wilches Railway, in El Libano and Palmira - were used to promote fears of a general plan of subversion. Scandal was caused by the exposure that religious publications and effigies in zinc of the Sacred Heart for use in mission zones were being subsidized from the war budget. For several months the apparatus of a state of siege protected the army in the banana zone from criticism. Once the censorship was lifted the civilian establishment of both parties united to condemn the scale of repressive action. The error of repression was compounded by that of ineffectiveness: the nominal leader of the alleged revolutionary movement, Raúl Mahecha, was not caught.[2] Rengifo was portrayed by the opposition press as lurching drunkenly towards power.

The events of July 1929 confirmed civilian fears. The city populace of Bogotá took to the streets in an elite-led multi-class demonstration of civic solidarity reminiscent of a manifestation that precipitated the fall of Reyes in 1909. Abadía, alarmed, removed

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1. The cathedral at Pamplona had been used in 1900 for stockpiling Venezuelan arms destined for Conservatives. Grillo, op. cit., p. 174.

2. El Debate, 12 Dec., 1928; Hernando Navía Varón, Caudillo y gobernante - Doctor Ignacio Rengifo Borrero (Cali, 1964), pp. 192, 228.

Rengifo, reduced the war budget, transferred recalcitrant military to remote outposts and retired some relics from the Thousand Days. In the unrest surrounding the 1930 election some civilians feared that the group surrounding the defeated Vásquez Cobo would press him to stage a coup. But, in fact, there was hardly mention of a military uprising. The upper classes were more concerned with looking to their properties and cushioning themselves against the worst effects of the Depression than with engaging in unpredictable military adventures.[1] Later commentators attributed the smooth transition of power to the educative influence of the cadet school: this seems rather farfetched.[2]

Civilianism, in 1930, was clearly in the ascendancy. The fact that the officer corps was a definitely Conservative institution because Liberals were never admitted to the Cadet School did not divide civilians because the prestige and salary scales of the army were low. A united civilian front was maintained; and the support of the army for Olaya in his first years of office was unreserved. His first nominee as Minister of War, a Conservative cousin, was intelligent. A later choice, a young Liberal Carlos Arango Vélez, was less prudent: he had to be dismissed for trying to impose a state of siege in the Santanders and Western Boyacá as a means of turning over jobs in the army to Liberals.[3]

The Leticia War exposed the ineffectiveness of the army and disenchantment within the officer corps. Its numbers, equipment, education, practical experience, recruitment policy, capacity to mobilize and degree of overall professionalism all proved inadequate. The defence budget had been reduced by two-thirds between 1928 and 1932. The number of

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1. F.O. 371/14221/A 1591/1591/11/29 Feb., 1930/Lomax to Henderson; El Debate, 4 Sept., 1929.
2. General Rafael E. Pizarro and Colonel Liborio Márquez Orejuela, 50 años de la escuela militar (Bogotá, 1958), p. 141.
3. El Pais, 25 May, 1932; F.O. 371/16570/A 28/28/11/3 Jan., 1933/ Dickson to Simon.

soldiers fell from 8,000 in 1929 to 4,500 in 1931.[1] The cash had not been available to replace pre-First World War rifles, carbines and pistols.[2] Military confidence was lowered even further by the fact that the civilians stole what glory there was: the diplomatic coup of López in flying to Lima to negotiate with the incoming Peruvian president, General Benavides, won more plaudits than military self-sacrifice at the front.

Conservative reaction to the Leticia crisis was initially uniform. Olaya successfully used memories of Peruvian attempts to encroach on Colombian territory in 1911 to create a mood of national unity, and exploited fears that Peruvian expansionism would first engulf Huila - a predominantly Conservative department - and then sweep across the country. The government called for a national subscription of ten million pesos: bishops instructed the parish priests to whip up a frenzy of voluntary offering; the rich contributed jewelry; the poets of Manizales subscribed golden violets.[3] The ease with which the subscription was raised reinforced national enthusiasm: government propaganda obscured the fact that a heavy proportion was loaned by the Bank of the Republic. Civilians were determined not to be surpassed in patriotism by the army. Lawyers, making an international parade of Colombian democratic principles and adhesion to international law, competed frantically with each other to draw up the case to be presented at the International Court and the League of Nations. Orators leapt at the opportunity to make declamatory harangues: Ramírez Moreno, for whom the temptation of self-advertisement was irresistible, proclaimed that he would be the first Colombian mayor of Lima. National unanimity

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1. D.S. 821.00/2264/19 Feb., 1931/Caffery to Sec. of State.
2. Memoria....Guerra, 1927 (Bogotá, 1927), p. xix.
3. El Tiempo, 27 Sept., 1932; Jesus Absalón Martínez, Nariño y la guerra (Pasto, 1933?), p. 45.

united the leaders of both parties: Liberals were relieved at the suspension of violence in the East, and Conservatives were glad that their failure to assume a united and consistent stand towards the Olaya administration was concealed; and tried to outdo the patriotism of Liberals.[1] The position of Olaya was strengthened by the war: his apparent decisiveness was generally reassuring. But he was cagey, and felt concern at civilian overenthusiasm and military ardour, at the extraordinary facility with which chauvinism was fabricated and at his knowledge of the inability of the government to guarantee supply lines to the jungle.

Leticia was possibly a liability: its loss would not have been serious economically if an arrangement for the movement of trade in the Amazon basin had been reached with Peru. No government, however, dared take the political risk of losing Leticia. The Colombian sense of nationhood was precarious; and loss of territory would only have renewed separatist tendencies. The memory of the seizure of Panamá was too strong for any government to contemplate a voluntary concession of territory, least of all the humiliation of a loss to Peruvians who were regarded with a contempt not felt for North Americans.

As the war proceeded, division between the government and the Conservative El Pais became manifest. While El Pais played up fears of Peruvian nationalism, the Olaya government, hoping for a diplomatic solution, insisted that mere outlawry was responsible for the dispute: Aprista dissidents in Iquitos, Perú, ambitious both to take over the Amazonian trade and embarrass the Lima government, had taken Leticia. The tone of the Colombian government changed, however, when it became clear that its Peruvian counterpart had decided to pre-empt Aprista revolt by endorsing the invasion and had made substantial orders for

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1. Laureano Gómez, Comentarios a un régimen (Bogotá, 1934), passim.

armaments. Colombia had difficulty in mobilizing; the nearest Colombian garrison to Leticia was one thousand kilometres at Caucaya; Leticia was easier of access from Perú than from Colombia. Reports in Bogotá of the time taken by a commission travelling from the Southern frontier port of Florencia to Leticia varied from ten days to six weeks. As triumphant reportage of mobilization faded out the government, already convinced that its case in international law was stronger than its military preparedness, decreed restrictions upon the freedom of the press to report troop movements and took special powers to guarantee national security.[1] The central logistical problem of getting an army to the Peruvian frontier without serious casualties from tropical diseases remained: attempts to overcome it were more imaginative - the hiring of Fyffes banana boats to transport troops from Santa Marta to Trinidad before a trip up the Amazon - than effective. Warweariness set in without the armies meeting.

The diplomats in Rio and Geneva looked for face-saving devices for both sides. Colombians were united in believing that Perú was culpable but divided in their attitude to negotiations. Some Conservatives aired suspicions that Olaya was prepared to barter Leticia away. Some stated even that nothing short of military victory or a Peruvian declaration of guilt was a sell-out.[2] Stab-in-the-back hypotheses - of poor foundation - were briefly current. Gómez, in particular, sought

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1. El Tiempo, 16, 17, 23 Sept., El Pais, 16, 18, 22 Sept., 1932; F.O. 371/15876/A 5746/5746/35/5 Sept., 1932, Hobson (Lima) to F.O. A 6507/5746/35/7 Sept., 1932/ H.M.'s Consul (Iquitos) to Simon. The Colombian chargé d'affaires later informed the Foreign Office that a ruined rubber planter organized revolt after his attempt to sell his estate to the Colombian government had failed.

2. Arcesio López Narváez, El conservatismo y la cuestión colombo peruana (El protocolo de Rio de Janeiro). Conferencia dictada el 12 de diciembre de 1934 (pamphlet, Bogotá, 1934), esp. p. 45.

to exploit officer restlessness. Peruvian dilatoriness over the terms of the Rio Protocol lengthened Colombian debate of the war. Criticism of the government rebounded. The professionalism of General Vasquez Cobo's staff was called into doubt: it bore an unhealthy resemblance to that of his legation in Paris. The government, in the meanwhile, took action to consolidate its position in peripheral areas by extending mail, telegraph and radio communications and by setting up hygiene posts.[1] And it eliminated much of the deadwood in the higher ranks by accelerating promotion.[2] Those officers who had the government to thank for recent promotion formed a nucleus of loyal support as a counterweight against dissidence initiated by Conservatives. Civilian pre-eminence was again established: the Rio settlement was depicted as a civilian triumph, achieved despite military bungling in the field.

Conservatives insisted that both López governments set out to demoralize the army. López was acoused of introducing discriminatory measures into the barracks, of speaking to his followers of the uselessness of an army in a Leftist democracy and of threatening to demean the military by giving it agricultural tasks in inhospitable areas.[3] López had some reason for his suspicions of military intentions. The measures of Olaya and the Leticia War had not neutralized the entire army. One general, who was reported to have recommended revolt in a closed-doors session of the National Conservative Convention of 1935, was retired, and

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1. Ernesto Camacho Leyva, La policía en los territorios nacionales (Bogotá, 1947), p. 48.
2. Leal Buitrago, op. cit., p. 171.
3. Rafael Azula Barrera, De la revolución al orden nuevo: proceso y drama de un pueblo (Bogotá, 1956), p. 84; José Camacho Carreño, El último leopardo. Capitulos de la República Liberal que no se olvidaron a un conservador (Bogotá, 1935), p. 151. Colonel Regulo Gaitán, Minister of Government for Ospina Pérez, later reminisced that the dignity of the army had been offended at being treated like a Swiss guard that could be left to help in agriculture. Nación, 30 July, 1949.

resisted arrest after failing to suborn serving Conservative colleagues.[1] A minor plot involving gun-running from Ecuador uncovered in 1936 prompted suspicions of an alliance of Gómez, González and dissident military in the south.[2]

The choice of an intransigent Boyacense Liberal, Plinio Mendoza Neira in a radical, anticlerical tradition, as Minister of War, was interpreted by El Siglo as a step towards converting the army into a Liberal tool. Capital-city Liberal newspapers dissented from this view but it was confirmed by El Radical of Chiquinquirá, Boyacá, which welcomed permanent employment for local Liberal reservists and a "....Liberal army to make Liberal government."[3] Mendoza made swift changes in the military command, and ordered a consignment of five thousand rifles from the Mexican government.[4]

Liberal attempts to build up the police as a force to counteract the army confirmed military and Conservative suspicions. López' choice of a prominent former minister as Director-General of the Police suggested that he wanted to promote the Director-General to a status parallel to that of the Minister of War. The influence of the Director-General was increased by decisions to centralize the departmental forces of Cundinamarca and Cauca and to empower him to appoint and remove all employees and officers of both the national and judicial forces. Further doubts were raised when an advisory Chilean mission advised that the police be equipped with rifles or carbines.[5] Recruitment to the police force was believed to depend on certificates of recommendation of the municipal Liberal Party.[6] The nervousness of the government and

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1. El Tiempo, 22 Oct., 1935; El Siglo, 25,26 July, 1936.
2. F.O. 371/19756/A 6837/21 July, 1936/Paske-Smith to Eden.
3. El Siglo, 12,13 Aug., 1936; El Radical, Chiquinquira, 19 Aug., 1936.
4. F.O. 371/19776/A 6901/ 8 Aug., 1936/ Paske-Smith to Eden.
5. R.J., v (1936), Suplemento, 217.
6. Ministerio de Gobierno, Biografía politica de la policia nacional (mimeo, Bogotá, n.d.), p. 31.

its dependence on police support were evident in July, 1936, when, afraid of a military coup, the government ordered police patrols onto the streets at night and the erection of machine guns and anti-airraid cannon in public buildings.[1]

The Conservative opposition exploited differences between the army and police ruthlessly. They recalled the ubiquitous police informers of Reyes. They played on military fears of being dwarfed by a better-armed, militarized police force and of being reduced to a peripheral presence for ceremonial, parade-ground purposes. Indiscipline in the police was said to be rife: forty-eight per cent of the Medellín force was reported to be syphilitic, and many of its members suffering from two or three different complaints every three months.[2] El Siglo alleged that the Cauca police was expanding while mayors and school-teachers were unpaid.[3] It hinted darkly that a militia system on Spanish Communist lines was being introduced. But the Conservative campaign was unsustained: military concern was reduced by the removal of Mendoza and the stabilizing of the police budget. Yet the overall effect of the 'revolution on the march' and Laureanista proselytizing in the army was to confirm doubts about its loyalty to Liberal governments.

A distinct change of mood was visible in the army during the Santos administration. Santos soothed the worst fears of the army with tranquillizing rhetoric: he flattered it about its possible future role in the Second World War and did little to disturb its balance - there were no dramatic postings or boosts to the police force.

War enhanced the importance of the army. It could no longer be

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1. R.J., v (1936), Suplemento, 217
2. R.J., v (1936), Suplemento, 217
3. El Siglo, 27 May, 1936.

regarded as dispensable. The interest shown by both Nazi agents and the Allied Embassies reinforced its self-esteem. Nazi agents had a limited success in infiltrating the army: Spruille Braden claimed to have proof that the Secretary-General of the Minister of War - the man closest to the Minister - was in Nazi pay; and did not exclude the possibility of the Minister also being in it. Reports of officers shouting "Long live Germany! Down with the Allies!" came from Popayán and Tunja.[1] But the evidence available is insufficient to suggest widespread Nazi sympathies in the army. The U.S. ambassador expressed alarm at the state of the army and of government intelligence: the army was destabilized by an annual turnover of recruits of between fifty and sixty per cent; the Minister of War himself admitted to the poor quality of intelligence work; the U.S. Embassy arranged the loan of a F.B.I. man, but this made little impression.[2]

Though Santos was successful in removing the military-police question from party politics, latent tensions between the two forces remained. A shooting affray between the police and army in Medellín in 1941 was reported by the British ambassador: after bloodshed some kind of truce was reached, the incident was hushed up by the government and was not reported by the press.[3]

The maintenance of public order depended more upon inertia and careful balancing in public employment than upon the army or police. Isolated political violence pointed to the fragility of national government. In Nariño and Bolivar two different assemblies, both claiming to be legitimate, were installed in 1940; and in Santander a session of the assembly was closed when some deputies refused to leave their revolvers

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1. D.S. 821.00/175/27 June, 1940; 821.00/1120/24 Oct., 1940; 821.00/1136/31 Oct., 1940; 821.00/1250 (Enclosure No. 1)/19 Dec., 1940/ Braden to Sec. of State.
2. D.S. 821.00/184/6 July, 1940; 25/4 Mar., 1939/Braden to Sec. of State.
3. F.O. 371/A 9019/334/11/19 Oct., 1941/ Snow to Eden.

with police after kidnapping and shooting incidents.[1]

The return of López to the presidency renewed frictions between army and police. The High Command suspected that López intended to reduce army strength (about 8,000 in early 1943) by about one-quarter in order to obtain funds to re-organize the police force as a personal machine. Senior officers feared a reshuffle in which those friendly to Santos' Minister of War, Castro Martínez, who had strengthened the army (if only to employ his Boyacense clientele) would be removed.[2] The arrest of General Eduardo Bonitto confirmed military fears. The Lopista newspaper El Liberal claimed he had been incited by a speech of López at the Staff College charging the officer corps with being out of touch with movements of political opinion and of constituting an isolated and useless class. Bonitto believed the government wanted to "finish with" the army: he was purported to have said, "The police has everything, and we nothing" and, resentful of Liberal promotions, to have approached officers with a view to a coup. The Bonitto case was surrounded by rumour. Some believed he represented opposition to plans to devote a substantial part of the military budget to vocational training of recruits for post-service employment. But there was no reason to suggest that he had personal ambitions.[3]

The Mamatoco case diminished police prestige. Several urban workers, among them Francisco A. Pérez, a boxer from the Guajira known as Mamatoco and believed once to have acted as bodyguard for Gómez, were charged with incitement to military rebellion. The judge in the case

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1. El Liberal, El Siglo, 28 Apr., El Espectador, 13 May, 1940.
2. D.S. 82100/548/27 Mar., 1943/ Lane to Sec. of State.
3. F.O. 371/A 3669/308/11/ 31 March, 1943; A 4510/308/11/21 Apr., 1943, Snow to Eden; República de Colombia, Investigación adelantada al General Eduardo Bonitto - Documentos oficiales (Bogotá, 1943), pp. 9, 23, 35; El Liberal, 23 June, 1943; El Siglo, 28 Mar. - 1 Apr., 1943.

stated that the police officers conducting the affair had exaggerated its scope. The sudden murder of Mamatoco, attributed to policemen delayed government plans to militarize the police force and persuaded López to put soldiers in top police positions. The army was not reassured: the dependability of both agencies of public order was now in doubt. Arrests of more military officers, an incident in the palace involving López and another general, a new round of postings to remote garrisons, the publication of a list of new police postings and an increase in police salaries that coincided with a cut in air-force salaries exacerbated the situation. Only the appointment of a Conservative soldier, General Domingo Espinel, as Minister of War, guaranteed military loyalty to the government.[2]

The secret Hispanic societies that sprouted in the 1940's alarmed Liberal governments. Bonitto was believed to have been the first leader of a secret group of ecclesiastical inspiration, Acción Nacional Militar Católica, related to another movement, Acción Combinada de Hispanidad, with ramifications across Spanish America.[3] The evidence available permits no definitive judgement but the defectiveness of the secret police and mood of conspiracy suggest that government fears of these movements were exaggerated and bizarre. Suspicion between the government and the army was deepened by the detailed cataloguing by El Siglo of military grievances. El Siglo reported that the Southern barracks were threatened by hunger following inflation, that rumours were circulating in Ecuador of Peruvian preparations to attack Colombia. El Siglo published a cartoon portraying the pleasure of López at discrediting the army and reported alleged disagreements over appointments

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1. F.O. 371/A 6795/308/11/1 July, 1943/ Snow to Eden; D.S. 821.00/1556/2 Sept., 1943/ Warren to Sec. of State.
2. D.S. 821.00/1238, 19 July, 1943, Warren to Sec. of State El Siglo, 9 Aug., 1943.
3. D.S. 821.00/memo., 1 Oct.,/1747/29 Sept., 1943/ Lane to Sec. of State.

between López and Espinel.[1] In June, 1944, an editor of El Siglo, Francisco Plata Bermúdez, addressed a meeting of a lay Hispanic movement, the nationalist, anti-U.S. Legión Colombiana in Barranquilla, stating that Gómez had taken over leadership of the movement and anticipating 'revolution' before 20 July with Argentine and Ecuadorian support and the entry of more soldiers to Bogotá (there were then three or four times the number of police as military in Bogotá).

The upshot of incoherent and poorly articulated discontent within the army was the kidnapping of López in Pasto while inspecting military manoeuvres in July, 1944. The uprising triggered off sympathetic revolts only in Ibagué and Bucaramanga, and made no enduring impression. Echandía assumed the presidency and Alberto Lleras, Minister of Government, took control of the government propaganda machine. El Siglo was closed; and Lleras himself made a series of broadcasts of such imperturbable optimism that they both demoralized his opponents and dissuaded Liberals from taking up arms.[2] The instigator of the Pasto coup, Colonel Diogenes Gil, aware that taking his revolt further would be suicidal, capitulated.

The reasons for the revolt remain only partly clear. Some military elements were discontented because the government declared only a state of belligerence and not of war against the Axis. Many felt in the army that the United States was dissatisfied with the Colombian war effort, a view promoted by U.S. officers and discouraged by the U.S. ambassador.[3] The supplies position of the army was poor, the middle-ranks felt underpaid; the upper ranks feared a purge. The officer corps was convinced that it had legitimate grievances that demanded satisfaction: but it was

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1. El Siglo, 17, 19, 20 April 6 May, 5 June, 1944.
2. Rafael Azula Barrera, De la revolución al orden nuevo: proceso y drama de un pueblo (Bogotá, 1956), p. 151. For the speeches of Lleras, see República de Colombia, En defensa de la democracia colombiana (Bogotá, 1944).
3. D.S. 821.00/1213/11 July, 1944/Lane to Sec. of State.

divided over the means of expressing them. The limited evidence available suggests that a minority of officers, concluding that the army had been collectively wronged, ventured into the civilian domain in order to restore military honour. The majority seems to have shared the sense of grievance of the minority: but was either convinced of its subordinate role in national affairs or unwilling to take the political and personal risks involved in revolt.

In Nariño, special conditions prevailed. A local tradition of Conservative-clerical authoritarianism founded in the Wars of Independence persisted. An itinerant U.S. Vice-Consul detected a strong undercurrent of sympathy for totalitarianism in Pasto during 1943, where the Spanish Civil War had made a deep impression. He found even Liberals of Nazi sympathies in Nariño.[1] Rumours spread among illiterate reservists that the government proposed to draft some of them to Australia to fight the Japanese or to sell them to the United States at five dollars a head.[2] Local rivalry between the police culminated in an exchange of shots on the day before the arrival of López.[3]

Rumours circulating in Bogotá suggested that sixty per cent of government employees were contributing to Conservative funds and that a general rebellion planned for July 16 would establish a triumvirate of General Pizarro, Gómez and Gaitán.[4] The evidence available lends little credence to the rumours. They merit attention only because, in the mid-1940's, political reactions were frequently governed by rumour. The U.S. ambassador reported that, during the kidnapping, Pizarro was asked for a declaration of support for the government in the presence of Echandía and the high army officers and stated that it would be inconvenient. Coups involving Pizarro had, according to López, misfired

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1. D.S. 821.00/2464/19 July, 1943; 821.00/2594, 16 Aug., 1943/ Warren to Sec. of State.
2. D.S. 821.00/1344 and 1254/13 July, 1944/Lane to Sec. of State.
3. Jaime Quintero, Consacá (Cali, 1944), p. 52.
4. F.O. 371/AS/4108/195/11/18 July, 1944/ Snow to Allen.

in January and March, 1944.[1] López himself admitted that there was no proof of Gómez' participation in the coup, although he had close connexions with Spanish, Argentine and German interests.[2] The Communist newspaper,, Diario Popular, implicated Gaitán in the plot, but only perhaps because they were competing for the same popular following. The courts-martial exculpated both Gómez and Gaitán: but suggested an ill-conceived general plan of revolt in which Colonel Gil had acted precipitously. General Espinel, Minister of War, reassured Congress that only a total of four hundred men was involved in the revolt.[3] But López, in private, conceded that more officers were involved than he had previously suspected. He told the U.S. ambassador that having received prior warning of the proposed coup because a drunken Conservative had been overheard discussing its generalities in the Jockey Club, he walked deliberately into the ambush in the hope of enhancing the reputation of his government.[4] No other available evidence substantiates that of the diplomats. There remains an area of suspicion: it seems likely that López hoped to exploit fears in the United States of Axis penetration in order to re-arm the police force. Within a month, the Colombian ambassador in Washington requested five thousand rifles and appropriate ammunition for the army and did not mention the police, while López asked the U.S. ambassador in Bogotá for arms and ammunition for the police.[5]

The position of López was only briefly consolidated by the coup. The courts-martial brought charges and counter-charges that the government was being overenergetic and overmerciful. El Siglo tried to exploit military fears of the formation of revolutionary militias by the C.T.C.

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1. D.S. 821.00/714/10 Aug., 1944/ Lane to Sec. of State.
2. D.S. 821.00/1254/13 July, 1944/ Lane to Sec. of State.
3. Diario Popular, 14 July, 1944.
4. F.O. 371/AS 3755/195/11/14 July, 1944, Snow to Eden.
5. D.S. 821.00/1253/14 July, 1944, Lane to Sec. of State; 821.00/unnumbered/8 Aug., 1944, Dept. of State to U.S. Embassy, Bogotá.

and quoted at length reports that Espinel had been in Pasto four days before López arrived.[1] An armed mutiny of officers in the Bogotá Panóptico again upset the precarious balance between the army and police: for now the police was dissatisfied at the conciliatory attitude taken by López in countermanding the call of the Director-General of the Police, General Carlos Vanegas, for surrender in ten minutes.[2]

The army seemed paralyzed in the years 1944-7. Doubts about its loyalty further destabilized an already shaky political system. The military conspiracies were foiled not by the intelligence network of the government but by the bungling of the plotters. During the paper shortage of the Second World War political commentary outside the oligarchic press was scarce: one author, whose partisanship is not pronounced attributed the resignation of López, above all, to his promotion of friction between the army and police.[3]

3. Public Order and Conservative Governments, 1946-53.

The government of National Union (1946-50), meant a refocusing of political controversy. The question of government employment became paramount in political discussion; differences between the police and army were secondary. Ospina stressed the importance of making the police into an apolitical and more technically competent force; and set out to win the unqualified loyalty of the army, allowing it its first manoeuvres since the kidnapping of López.[4]

First, Conservatives doubted police loyalty after a riot in October, 1946,[5] heightened tensions between the parties. The Liberals were alarmed by the dismissal of General Vanegas, the Director-General of the police: for he was known to be at odds with the prefect of

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1. El Siglo, 26-28 Jan., 1945.
2. El Siglo, 1-2, 7-8, 13-14 June, El Tiempo, (2nd and 3rd edns.) 1 June, 1945; D.S. 821.00/759/2 June, 1945; 764/4 June, 1945/ Wiley to Sec. of State.
3. Carlos Galvis Gaitán, Por qué cayó López? (Bogotá, 1946).
4. El Siglo, 9 Aug., 1946, Semana, 4 Nov., 1946.
5. Azula Barrera, op. cit., p. 223.

security, Hernan Quiñones Olarte, an active and partisan Conservative inspector of identity-cards, who had engaged in sackings of some three hundred Liberal detectives and tried to acquire the direct support of the Minister of Government, Urdaneta.[1] The choice of a new police chief, General Delfin Torres Durán, a retired general and indefatigable organizer of boy-scouts, hardly assuaged Liberal fears. Changes of personnel favoured Conservatives. Liberals claimed that Liberal detectives were disarmed so that Conservatives might be armed. The decision of Torres and Quiñones to found a Section of Public Order so agitated Liberals that Urdaneta ordered its dissolution.[2] The dismissal of Quiñones on charges of abuse of authority worsened the crisis of police employment: the future of employees of both parties was brought into question.[3] The Liberal majority in Congress protested that "....far from constituting a guarantee of life, honour and wellbeing of citizens, (the presence of Torres) implies a serious menace to democratic institutions and national concord...."[4] Liberals were disturbed too at Ospina's creation of a national police force. He was, in fact, taking the policy of López to its logical conclusion. Ospina extended the police force centralized by López in the capital for specific departments to all. Liberals complained to Conservative denials, that arms were being illicitly imported presumably for a Conservative police force.[5] Reshufflings in police personnel were rapidly responsible for the breakdown of public order in Norte de Santander. One example of this will suffice: after the desertion of cottages on the Cúcuta-Pamplona road

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1. Semana, 11 Jan., 1947.
2. Jornada described it as a Gestapo containing Conservative fanatics employed to spy on Gaitán and the Jornada offices, 26 May, 2 July, 1947.
3. Jornada, 22 July, 1947.
4. Semana, 26 July, 1947.
5. El Siglo, 19, 27 Sept., 1947.

and the issuing of passes to Liberals to enter Chinacotá, a military mayor was imposed who suppressed and disarmed the police-force, three of whom had been paid by the municipality and twelve by the Conservative Directorate and the parish priest, a member of the locally prominent Conservative Cote family.[1] Liberal bitterness was reflected in the tone of an observation by the National Liberal Direction in 1951: "The worst of the sins committed by the government of Señor Ospina Pérez was the composition that was given the police forces"; they accused him of the "recruitment of true criminals soaked in blood" and of ultimate responsibility for delinquency and butchery.[2]

Ospina prudently avoided repeating the indiscreet transfers and advance retirements with which López had disrupted the army. He tightened loyalty during crisis by putting middle-ranking soldiers into civilian positions where they would not be dislodging established military figures: so, for example, General Gustavo Matamoras was appointed jefe civil y militar of Norte de Santander in January, 1948.

The loyalty of the army and the frequent presence of the police force in opposition to the government on the '9 April' enhanced the self-esteem of the army and accelerated Conservative demands for reform of the police force. Gómez, taking refuge in the Ministry of War, had led several generals to believe that Ospina intended to form a military junta.[3] Ospina did not: but he was responsible for the slow incorporation of the army into civilian government. He appointed colonels and lieutenant-colonels as jefes militares y civiles in Tolima, Santander and Boyacá and Colonel Regulo Gaitán as Director-General of

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1. El Tiempo, 25 Jan., 1948.
2. "Informe que rinde la Dirección Nacional del Liberalismo a la Convención del Partido, Bogotá, 23 junio de 1951" in Carlos Lleras Restrepo, De la república a la dictadura (Testimonio sobre la politica colombiana) (Bogotá, 1955), p. 267.
3. General Mora Angueira interviewed by Sabado, 6 May, 1949.

the Police. The selection of Minister of War had reacquired an importance it had lost in the 1910's: for the maintenance of public order depended decreasingly upon the decision of the Minister of Government: the choice of General Germán Ocampo for the War Ministry seemed judicious because he had organized the courts-martial after the kidnapping of López and was equally acceptable to Conservatives and Liberals.

Attitudes to political power within the upper ranks varied considerably. Some soldiers expressed a considerable distaste for political power, and feared that the reputation for impartiality that had been regained during the '9 April' might be lost. General Sánchez Amaya disclaimed political ambitions and insisted that since the army had pacified Colombia it was for civilian politicians to find practical solutions. General Ocampo expressed his concern that the use of military justice for civilians was diminishing military prestige.[1] Some members of the military hierarchy, remembering the experience of the police force, resisted Conservative attempts to use the army as a partisan instrument. Some civilian Conservatives were more concerned to oust soldiers from positions of political power to which Conservative clients might be appointed. Liberals asserted that the army was losing its independence of party, that Colonel Gustavo Rojas Pinilla had put the army in Cali unconditionally at the service of the Conservative Directorate and gamonales, and that Conservatives were receiving faster promotions.[2] The political allegiances of the upper hierarchy were not always publicly identified: but the scope for divisiveness was consistently apparent.

The failure to quench rural violence compelled Ospina to move as

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1. Sabado, 15 May, Jornada, 31 July, 1948.
2. Jornada, 19 Aug., 7 Sept., 1948.

carefully between shifting factions within the army as between the political parties. He had no interest either in stimulating permanent political ambitions in the army or in encouraging those who desired its total withdrawal from political involvement. The machinery of civilian government and of law enforcement were so strained by the resignation of Liberals. that military assistance was inescapable. High-ranking figures were brought into the ministries of Government and Justice as well as that of War. The military ministers were particularly vulnerable: they lacked popular following and a personal civilian power-base; they were accused by Liberals.of acting as Conservative stooges; they were open to Conservative charges of soft treatment of Liberals. An astute civilian president could use them as a buffer against criticism by both civilians and the lower ranks. They lacked both political experience and a popular power-base. Political violence demoralized the military hierarchy further; there was no heroism for soldiers to bask in, but plenty of martyrdoms for local politicians. Pressure upon Ospina from the Conservative Directorate of Cundinamarca precipitated the dismissal of Ocampo from the Ministry of War; he had been inflexible in his impartiality, and his resentment at being removed was ill-concealed.[1] His successor, Colonel Gaitán, resigned within months when, Liberals believed, he differed with Ospina over the handling of violence.[2] The intransigent composition of the final Cabinet of Ospina seemed to confirm the suspicions of that sector of the military hierarchy which believed it was being used to facilitate the transition of power to militant Conservatives and to manipulate military appointments for civilian political ends.[3]

The imposition of a state of siege in 1949 and the introduction of military alcaldes gave soldiers of lower rank a taste of political

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1. Semana, 23 July, 1949.
2. Ibid., 8 Oct., 1949.
3. Semana, 29 Oct., 1949.

influence. The local power of an alcalde, military or civilian, during a state of siege, was considerable: he could suspend all arrangements reached by his predecessors that he considered prejudicial and could enforce decisions of local councils that had been derogued, the one major restriction upon him being that he could not create new jobs or increase old salaries.[1]

Censorship makes it difficult to see much of what occurred. But, perhaps, the army, already demoralized by the failure to isolate foci of violence, was in 1949 further discouraged by police activity. Demobilized, unemployed Liberal policemen were prominent amongst guerrillas; Conservative policemen were frequently ill-disciplined, and as in the case of the chulavitas of Boyacá, amongst the proponents of local violence. In Western Antioquia, the police acquired a reputation for robbery, rape and killing. In Cartagena the police force was dissolved after a political assassination and public order entrusted to the navy.[2] In Boyacá, Liberals alleged that the army was reduced to an impotent witness of police atrocities.[3] In Cali revelations of interdepartmental gangsterism were followed by detentions of detectives. The speed of execution of police reforms after the '9 April' varied by department: the decree putting departmental police under national supervision was implemented hastily in Cundinamarca where Conservatives complained of police behaviour but tardily in Boyacá where Liberals were the first victims.[4]

The army did not, however, assume a united posture against the police force. The more politicized members of the upper ranks were, in 1949-50, competing to win the attentions of Gómez; they had not only their own ambitions to satisfy but a clientele of military subordinates hoping to keep or obtain civilian and military positions.

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1. Semana, 26 Nov., 1949.
2. Semana, 3 July, 1948.
3. Sangre y fraude - testimonio de la tragedia Boyacense (Bogotá, 1949), pp. 11.13.
4. Semana, 19 July, 1949.

Some of the less politicized officers, alarmed by the growing political involvement of the army and loth to be regarded by civilians as part of an army of occupation, were enabled by retirement benefits that had been improved by the Ospina administration to enter civilian employment with good pensions.

Divisions within the army persisted during the government of Gómez. The participation of the Batallón Colombia, which consisted of over one thousand men, in the Korean War provided a convenient diversionary tactic and a means of satisfying military demands for heroic opportunities.[1] It was also a ready public relations gesture towards the United States, where expatriate Liberals and returning U.S. missionaries were giving the Conservative government a bad press as a Falangist dictatorship. The experience of Korea was perhaps useful in raising the efficiency and morale of the Colombian army: its value for combatting civilian rural violence is less certain.[2] War in Korea refuelled partisan acrimonies. Some Liberals were convineed that Gómez was despatching Liberal, Ospinista and neutral officers to Korea in order to impose a dictatorship run through a Laureanista army in alliance with a Laureanista police force. One Gaitanista, however, commented otherwise: that many soldiers welcomed the opportunity to fight in Korea rather than to flush out fellow Colombians in the Llanos.[3]

The Korean War ended in 1951: the army was only briefly diverted. The substitution of Urdaneta for Gómez made for greater uncertainty within the army: it meant, in particular, a change of Cabinet.

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1. Pablo E. Torres Almeyda, Colombia en la Guerra de Corea-impresiones de un combatiente (Bogotá, n.d., post-1958), esp. p. 54.
2. Coronel Alberto Ruiz Novoa, Enseñanzas de la campaña de Corea aplicable al ejército de Colombia (Bogotá, 1956), esp. pp. 184 ff.
3. Enrique Cuellar Vargas, 13 años de violencia - asesinos intelectuales de Gaitán: dictaduras, militarismo alternación (2nd edn., Bogotá, 1960), p. 90.

Urdaneta was more conciliatory than Gómez towards those elements in the officer corps less sympathetic to Gómez. He won, in particular, the support of Rojas Pinilla who, after a brief tenure at the ministry of communications in 1949 was ambitious to occupy the ministry of war. Personal differences between Gómez and Rojas culminated in an incident when Rojas, incensed by information that he would be removed from active service and the command, refused to take part in a mission to Guatemala.[1] Gómez could not tame the political ambition of Rojas who was now courting newspaper publicity.[2]

Military tensions accumulated. The army was increasingly aware that it kept what government there was operational. The view gained in weight that the army should have a greater say in reaching political decisions since it had to carry the brunt of responsibility for executing them. It became increasingly resentful that a sybaritic oligarchy enjoyed the luxuries that accompanied the post-war boom while it performed the unpleasant chores of regaining public order. It was depressed too by the formation of rural paramilitary mounted police forces, the Carabineros, in 1951, which drew its status again into question.

The gestures of Urdaneta to reconcile the Ospinista and Laureanista wings of the army seemed condemned to failure when in 1953 the division between Ospina and Gómez became public. Debate between the Conservative factions over the banquet to Ospina to celebrate the '9 April' seemed resolved by the decision of the army to give Ospina a banquet. But, in a speech, Rojas made his factional alignment clear: "the armed forces remember proudly the 9 April, because....they were identified

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1. Carlos J. Villar Borda, Rojas Pinilla - el presidente libertador (Bogotá, 1956), p. 82.

2. Diario de Colombia published his photograph almost daily in October, 1952. His extensive feastings with Alzate and other Conservative leaders were widely reported. Diario de Colombia, 5, 18 Oct., 2 Nov., 1952, 27, 30 April, 1953.

with you in the mission of saving Colombia..."[1] Urdaneta continued to work for a rapport with the army but was incapable of restraining those Conservatives promoting disorder in order to obtain factional advantage without considering the embarrassments to the army.

The deadlock was broken by Gómez who had opposed the choice of Rojas as Minister of War by Urdaneta in January, 1953 because Rojas had been appointing anti-Laureanista subordinates in order to assure his personal position against Gómez.[2] Gómez suddenly announced his intention to resume actual as well as titular presidential office on receiving reports of maltreatment by the army of an Antioqueño businessman, Felipe Echavarría, that could be used to replace Rojas by the more politically recessive General Gaitán. The move boomeranged because, prevailed upon by his supporters, Rojas strove to put Urdaneta or Ospina back in presidential office, and when both rejected the offer as unconstitutional, himself assumed power.[3]

The coup of 1953 was publicly represented as a vindication of military honour that had been offended by the interference of Gómez in the career structure of the army. The ideologue and Minister of Government of the Rojas administration, Lucio Pabón Núñez defended the coup as a means of preserving both the nation and the Conservative party.[4] The Liberal leadership welcomed the coup cautiously.[5] The Alzatista Diario de Colombia enthusing at the providential thought of employment for Alzatistas, headlined, "GOD ILLUMINATED Rojas Pinilla is the

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1. Diario de Colombia, 10 Apr., 1953.
2. Lee M. Simpson, "Role of the Military in Colombian Politics, 1946-53" (Senior thesis, Princeton University 1962), p. 107.
3. R.J., xl (1953) Suplemento, 38-47; Gonzalo Canal Ramírez, Del 13 de junio al 10 de mayo en las fuerzas armadas. Confrontación de algunas teorías y episodios (Bogotá, 1958), pp. 8, 35; Antonio Escobar Camargo, El salon de los virreyes (Bogotá, 1959) passim.
4. Diario de Colombia, 13 July, 2, 21 Aug., 1953.
5. As early as 1949 Carlos Lleras had been accused of inciting the military to a coup at the burial of the assassinated brother of Echandía. Joaquin Estrada Monsalve, Así fue la revolución (Bogotá, 1949), p. 66.

exclamation of the emotional pueblo".[1] The police force was conspicuously silent. Rojas brought diverse elements together into a single manageable institutional framework in which the entire political elite except the Laureanista faction, acquiesced - a moment of elite political unanimity unequalled since the outbreak of the Leticia war.

4. Conclusions

Conservatives had always flattered the army into believing that it constituted the final repository of the democratic tradition. It was ironical that, in defence of that position (and in order to protect its institutional independence from civilian intervention), the army seized power in 1953. The fragile civilian-ecclesiastical alliance that had permitted a measure of stability from 1902 to 1951 was disrupted finally by the degree of commitment of local Church leaders to partisan political positions. In a power vacuum the army emerged as the only force capable of mediating between the parties and providing a focus of national allegiances. The army, which had been treated by some Conservatives and most Liberals, as a Conservative-leaning institution, now displayed its intention to establish its independence. In office, the military removed the constant irritant of competition with the police force by improving pay and conditions and upgrading the status of both. And it was successful in dissociating itself in the minds of both parties from identification with the Conservatives.

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1. Diario de Colombia, 15 June, 1953.

Chapter Five

Conservatives and Elections

The content of Colombian elections changed little between 1930 and 1953.[1] The electoral reform of 1935 extended the suffrage. Electioneering was accelerated and took place on a larger scale. Methods of choice of candidates remained haphazard. Conventions of the Conservative party issued programmes from 1931, in which policy was laid out in the most general of terms, and was altered over these decades only in nuances. The reluctance to define a single party position, even less to redefine it dramatically, avoided party divisions. Methods of urban and rural canvassing changed only in detail. Electoral tactics of the 1950's were barely distinguishable from those of the 1930's.

1. Electioneering

The pattern of electioneering in Colombia followed a predictable pattern. It began usually with extemporized attempts at mobilizing support for competing presidential candidates in Bogotá by pre-existing factions. There were exceptions to this: the most notable was the campaign by the Western Conservative press to mobilize the candidature of Mariano Ospina Pérez for the 1937-8 election, but it fizzled out when the central party failed to respond. It was the only case of a regional candidature surviving for more than two months. Frenetic movement of campaigning politicians in Bogotá was accompanied by attempts to sound out regional opinion. Accurate information was not easily available from distant areas. All groups suffered from poor resources for gauging switches of support: it was symptomatic of the unpredictability of elections that in 1942 the Conservative supporters of the coalition candidate, Carlos Arango Vélez, expected him to receive a smaller Conservative vote than his Lopista opponents expected of him.[2]

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1. See below pp. 359-65 for Appendices II and III that illustrate rural electoral procedures.

2. D.J. 821.00/4053/18 Apr., 1942, Braden to Sec. of State.

The key figures linking centre and periphery were widely known as lagartos, manzanillos, gamonales and caciques. All four terms are crudely defined, are partly interchangeable and may be understood differently by region. The lagarto is primarily an urban phenomenon: he acts as broker between the city politician and the urban party, interprets local demands to the politician, and endeavours to placate the electorate when these demands are not fulfilled or to sustain their support when they are. The manzanillo is more commonly but not invariably a rural phenomenon. (The two terms are not mutually exclusive: though lagarto carries a greater measure of popular disapproval than manzanillo.) The manzanillo fulfils the function of shortening distances between different classes. "The poor intellectuals dedicated to manzanillismo have to learn to eat popular meals, to take campesino drinks, to sleep in primitive beds and to live the real life of Colombians."[1] The manzanillo is often an aspirant to political power of limited means and ill-defined class background whose talent has been recognized by the city politician and who is prepared to undergo the hardships of political brokerage in exchange for an apprenticeship and for the opportunity to build up his own circle of contacts. An adroit manzanillo can acquire power in his own right by withholding or providing knowledge to either his patron or the local rural leadership. His peculiar combination of access to urban culture and knowledge of peasant life are essential for the coherence of the faction to be preserved. It can be assumed but not demonstrated that the combination of demographic growth, an increase in physical and social mobility in the 'thirties and 'forties, expansion of exploitable political resources and of both lay and clerical education inflated numbers of political aspirants and intensified competition between would-be manzanillos.

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1. José Gutiérrez, La rebeldía colombiana (Bogotá, 1962), p. 35.

The cacique is usually the man who can control a bloc of party votes in a sub-region.[1] He may, as has been the general rule in Antioquia, then barter that bloc of votes with a politician in the departmental capital aspiring to Congress in exchange for favours. The cacique may, as has been more common in Boyacá and Santander, where the departmental capitals have been less dominant, use his electoral support to project himself into Congress. When employed in the capital-city, the term cacique is usually used superciliously to conjure up pictures of manipulation in rural backwaters. When used locally, it can carry overtones of intense hostility or affection when applied to opponent or friend. It is convenient, too, as an interpretative tool: the president, for example, can be understood by distant Indian groups if referred to as el gran cacique. The gamonal is customarily the man of traditional political command rooted in the country who can influence local voting by mobilizing bonds of deference due to lineage, by exploiting local property or by coercion.[2] It can be said, in the most general terms, that the power of the gamonal declined in the 'thirties and 'forties as peasant populations became more mobile. He did not, however, disappear in the most heavily deferential departments where the crisis of 1949-53 was exacerbated by gamonales playing off Conservative leaders against each other.

Such a structure was sufficiently flexible for local demands to be heard at the national level and for national decisions to be understood at the local level. But it had compensating disadvantages: in particular, the encouragement of party indiscipline and factionalism arising from the competition between potential leaders in Bogotá for the support of competing local-level leaders acting, in turn, in most departments, through the offices of competing departmental party leaders.

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1. Malcolm Deas, "Algunas notas sobre la historia de caciquismo en Colombia", Revista del occidente (Madrid, No. 127, 1973) 118-140.
2. Alejandro López, Problemas colombianos (Bogotá, n.d., post-1934), pp. 58-59.

Until 1930 Conservative candidates were chosen between factions meeting in the homes of Congressmen in Bogotá and the palaces of the Nuncio and Primate.[1] After 1930 the National Directorate called a national convention to discuss candidates. Conventions were flexible: there were no fixed procedures, no statutory demands upon the National Directorate to call a Convention. Conventions tended to confirm decisions already reached in small caucuses: the Convention of 1946 uncritically accepted the candidate proposed by the National Directorate. In 1934, by contrast, the National Directorate decided upon a policy of abstentionism without summoning a Convention. Conventions were pre-arranged, stage-managed affairs: only in 1939 was there a note of sharp dissonance when the Antioqueño delegation walked out in protest at the policy prescribed by Gómez and the National Directorate of 'intrepid action'.

Organization in the last months of Congressional and presidential elections was frantic. Operating on an ad hoc basis from a central office in Bogotá, the party established casas conservadoras as foci of campaigning in the cities, larger towns and as many of the smaller municipalities as it could afford. Fund-raising was haphazard. Neither party retains documentation of its finances before the 'sixties: but interview suggests that most party funds came from central sources and that attempts to raise municipal subscriptions were rarely thorough and met with a negligible response.

The speed of campaigning was accelerated by aviation. López set a pattern of energetic stumping of the country by aircraft. Peripheral areas of considerable density of population like the Coast that once had been omitted from electoral tours for reason of distance, were now included. Crowds were organized to turn out for rallies and to support

1. Aquilino Gaitán P., Por qué cayó el partido conservador (Bogotá, 1935), passim.

presidential candidates. The canvassing of the Church at a local level was often critical: the best index of its importance was the frequency of Liberal complaint of the use of the pulpit as a political tribune. The parochial organization had proved very serviceable in the elections of 1913 and 1914: it had been largely responsible for the Conservative landslide. But, after 1930, with a hierarchy more divided in its political attitudes, participation varied from parish to parish.

2. The Electorate, Programmes, Electoral Machinery and Tactics

The electorate was composed, until the first López administration, of the male population subject to manipulable property and literacy qualifications. In 1935 the suffrage was extended to include the entire male population. Despite patrician murmurings about "riff-raff" entering politics, the Conservative leadership did not oppose the electoral reform. It recognized the possibility that, with the help of the parish clergy, it might mobilize an expanded voting population that was predominantly rural more effectively than Liberals - especially in the event of division within the Liberal party.

Conservative Party programmes were drawn up at conventions of 1931, 1937, 1939, 1949 and 1951, and were published extensively in the party press.[1] But very little significance was attached to their contents. They provided texts couched in a vague phraseology around which party conventions could be persuaded to unite. The content of programmes was predictable: liberty and order, in the proportions that were convenient at the specific moment; adherence to the social policy of the Church; an emphasis on the patriotic and Catholic qualities of Conservatism; a stress on the virtues of private property as the foundation of public order with a qualifying clause on traditional

1. These are conveniently contained in Una política conservadora para Colombia Bases para la nueva plataforma social del partido (Bogotá, 1969), pp. 221-77.

Catholic grounds dissociating Conservatives from a widebound adhesion to non-interventionism in non-economic matters. From 1939 the Conservative party also committed itself on paper to "corporate" organization of the economy: this too was never clearly defined. In general, if asked for a programme, Conservatives responded with that of 1849: the principal tenets of Conservative belief, they insisted, were unchanged; their continuity of doctrine contrasted with the inconsistency of Liberals.

The electoral machinery favoured the governing party. Boyacá, the poorest of the central departments and the most dependent on national assistance with revenue, was the most manipulable. Boyacense municipios, amongst the smallest, most numerous and most impoverished in Colombia, relied upon the departmental government in Tunja for approximately eighty per cent of their revenues. In the periods of transition of power between 1930-33 and 1946-49, Boyacá was the first department to switch allegiances. The gobiernista tendencies of Boyacá were well-known in Bogotá. In 1932 the Conservative Abel Carbonell alleged that the departmental government sent out an excess of electoral identity-cards to Liberal municipios and a paucity to Conservative; that the police used vagrancy legislation to move on opponents; and that Conservatives were being disfranchised by fraudulent boundary-lines.[1] Carlos Lleras visited Boyacá in 1942: he was later alleged to have ordered a minimum quota of votes as if he were "imposing a commercial pact on some exportable product" and to have expected the order to be carried out with automatic precision.[2] In 1944 an antiLopista Liberal commented that no Conservative voted in

1. Abel Carbonell, La quincena política (Bogotá, 1952), i, 69-73, iii, 178-9.
2. Rafael Azula Barrera, De la revolución al orden nuevo: proceso y drama de un pueblo (Bogotá, 1956), p. 140.

Boyacá because he knew he was exposing himself to the greatest danger and preferred the directors of the pueblo to negotiate the votes.[1]

Electoral violence, fraud and demagoguery were tolerated in elite circles. But they were exploited by the press to expand circulation. Allegations of chicanery made good reading: but it also embittered relations between the parties at a local level. Each party accused the other of filling peasants with chicha or aguardiente to persuade them to vote. Each accused the other of exaggeratedly crude rhetoric: the choice between Liberalism or hunger, Conservatism or the destruction of the family.[2] Each government promised to overcome fraud and violence, and each, in turn, failed. The Olaya and Ospina coalitions obtained pacts of honour from the party leaderships: but arrangements made at an elite level were soon broken locally.

Each president hoped to be remembered for having abolished electoral corruption. López, for example, in 1934, introduced legislation to distribute two million identity-cards with photographs and finger prints that the Olaya government had had to delay because of war expenditure.[3] López was believed by Conservatives to be sincere in his desire for clean elections: Gómez even promised to pilot the legislation through Congress. But the leaderships reckoned without the wrecking tactics of insubordinate government employees - mayors, electoral inspectors, local electoral committees - who stood to lose their jobs if their party was defeated.[4] From Bogotá it was unclear that so much of the electoral system was weighted against open democracy. Pabón Núñez reported that in Ocaña, Norte de Santander, four hundred pesos were spent on some five to six hundred identity-cards and about one thousand photographs.

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1. Sabado, 26 May, 1944.
2. See for example, El Tiempo, 17 Feb., 1931; Aquilino Villegas, 40 años de opinión - escritos políticos (Bogotá, 1952), p. 37.
3. F.O. 371/18673/A 6155. 11 July, 1935 - Anderson to Hoare.
4. Manuel Serrano Blanco, La vida es así - conferencias en tono menor (Bogotá, 1953), pp. 258-260.

Peasants had had to undergo three days of delay discussing their credentials in the mayor's office. The prefect, in charge of identity-cards, was obstructed by the police, the local Liberal party and the almost illiterate mayor. Pabón claimed that Conservatives were almost excluded from use of the postal and telegraph services because presenting the identity-card was practically obligatory. In a nearby village, Villa Caro, the mayor also performed the functions of president and secretary of the committee responsible for electoral registration. In Málaga, Santander, when a literacy qualification was still mandatory, the secretary of the electoral committee denied the vote to Conservatives who refused to read out a Liberal speech.[1]

Opposition tactics ran along predictable lines. When a party gained office for the first time in a generation, the party press would proclaim that victory reflected the residual majority that had been concealed by the fraudulence of the preceding regime. In 1931, for instance, Liberals protested that Conservatives had gained a majority of seats in the Senate when they had only a minority of votes and that Conservatives had arbitrarily fixed electoral districts to ensure their 'hegemony'. They pointed to small country districts of Cundinamarca of some one thousand or one thousand, five hundred voters that returned the same number of deputies to the assembly as Bogotá, with a population of a quarter of a million.[2]

Both parties resorted to mass abstentionism as a means of registering collective protest: Liberals used it in 1926 and 1950, Conservatives in 1934 and 1938. Total abstention saved party leaderships from the embarrassments of inevitable defeat. They shielded

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1. Correo del Norte, Ocaña, 1 Dec., 1934, 26 Feb., 1935.
2. El Tiempo, 15-16 Jan., 1931; F.O. 371/15085/A 1540/206/11, 13 Feb., 1931, Dickson to Henderson.

themselves with rhetoric of self-denial and reminders to their supporters of their unwillingness to risk lives in a public contest with a repressive government. Unanimous abstention could be projected as an act of collective defiance. It could rebound, and, on occasions, did. Gaitán instructed his movement to abstain from the elections of October, 1945, but ill-discipline in the movement was exposed by the appearance of Gaitanista slates.[1]

The line between collective and individual abstentionism is difficult to draw. Clearly, caciques aggrieved by the failure of central government to implement their demands - for example, the lack of reforming consistency of the 'revolution on the march' - withdrew bloc votes. A degree of political indifference was induced in both parties by elections, by periods of political tranquillity and by much of the crude career politicking in Bogotá during the second López administration, when the Colombian electorate was so cynical and apathetic that even the sensation of discovering bombs in the organ-loft of the Bogotá cathedral wrapped up in copies of El Siglo during the week before the elections of March, 1945, failed to arouse any reaction.

Electoral competition retained something of a lighthearted, good-humoured quality until the more sustained efforts of both parties to mobilize permanent followings in the mid-'thirties. Previously, each side was usually prepared to enter into a deal. Acrimonious exchanges would be resolved in a mood of national unity. There were, of course, exceptions to this. The Conservative party was defeated in 1930 - and left dumbfounded - in part, because Valencia refused to enter into a deal with Vásquez Cobo. After revelations of graft in gunboat contracts among Vásquistas were followed by counter-exposes of chicanery in public

1. D.S. 821.00/1066/24 Oct., 1945, Willey to Sec. of State.

works among Valencistas, a transaction was expected in which Valencia would employ Vásquez as minister in Paris with the sidekicks of Vásquez in positions where they could curtail the freedom of action of Valencia. Valencia, however, refused to be supple, and rejected all entreaties: and factional antagonism became more ferocious. To a Bolivian observer, however, even the 1930 election was conducted in a gentlemanly style unknown in the rest of Latin America; and Colombians had good reason to congratulate themselves upon the peaceful transition of power.[1]

The tone of electoral bitterness rose between 1933 and 1942 as it became increasingly clear that the Liberal party was so firmly entrenched that the Conservative party would have difficulties in dislodging it. In 1942 El Siglo fell back on a smear-campaign: which was original not in its content but in its sustained intensity. It accused López of appropriating state-lands in the Carare; it sought to alarm Catholics by displaying propaganda that was said to be Lopista: "Long live Doctor López, the Colombian Stalin. Down with private property and the Catholic family..." In the week of the presidential election, El Siglo depicted López with fist raised in the style of Stalin and adorned with hammer and sickle.[2] After the Lopista victory, López was said to have converted the Conservative party into a public enemy; and El Siglo alleged that 120,000 public employees had made Lopista propaganda, that there were fifteen political assassinations, 210,000 fraudulent Lopista votes, 120,000 Aranguistas without identity-cards, and a majority of Lopistas among electoral delegates supervising the elections.[3]

The same themes recurred when the Conservatives re-entered power. Gómez, during the Ospina government, pressed for electoral reform,

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1. Alcides Arguedas, Obras completas (Madrid, 1959), ii, 795.
2. El Siglo, 8, 10, 11, 21, 27 Mar., 7, 22 Apr., 1947.
3. Carlos J. Infante and others, El partido conservador y la reelección de Alfonso López - Conferencias 1942 (pamphlet, Bogotá, 1942), esp. p. 8; El Siglo, 13 May, 1942.

claiming that Liberals had so managed the political system that Conservatives were deprived of 1,800,000 votes (the figure baffled Liberals who thought 800,000 a more reasonable figure). In 1949, it was the turn of Liberals to complain that Ospina was failing to provide electoral guarantees. El Tiempo alleged that the army was no longer politically neutral, and that its electoral intervention on behalf of Conservatives was signalled by the replacement as chief of staff of Colonel Gaitán by Colonel Rojas Pinilla "whose greatest qualifications are (his).... uncontrollable aversion to Colombian Liberals".[1]

The pitch of debate was highest in the municipal elections of 1949 which culminated in a predictable Conservative landslide. The attempts of Ospina and Echandía to smoothe out party differences had failed notoriously. Propaganda was fierce. Conservatives distributed posters of houses and churches burning and bearded rebels wielding machetes: the legends were unmistakable - "Remember the 9 April" and "Betrayal of the patria". Liberals posted strips reminding Bogotanos "when reaction assassinated Gaitán to destroy democracy."

Semana ruminated on the fact that thirty-nine elections had taken place since 1929.[2] No other country in Latin America, it claimed, had endured so many: Colombia was in a state of 'perennial duel', exacerbated by the progressive expansion of bureaucratic positions. The delays in holding elections between 1950 and 1953 were, in private, considered a godsend by Liberal leaders: they would not expose the structural collapse of the party and add to the disrepute of the leadership. Delay had the additional attraction of dividing Conservatives: Alzatistas alleged that they were not receiving due representation in Congress.[3]

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1. Semana, 10 Jan., 1948; El Tiempo, 15 Oct., 1949. El Siglo stated that two million identity-cards were delivered between 1950 and 1953, 12 March, 1953.
2. Semana, 11 June, 1949. For a description of an election in Santander, see Appendix Two.
3. El Tiempo, 17 Mar., 22 Aug., 1951.

3. Electoral Analysis

Electoral statistics for the period 1930-1953 are very scattered. Breakdowns for most departments and the municipios remain unavailable. A thorough effort is, however, being made to glean what figures can be found.[1] The figures quoted are particularly unreliable. Coercion, fraud and panic-stricken abstentionism cannot be taken into account. All statistics have been rounded off to the nearest thousand and all percentages to the nearest integer in order to avoid suggesting an impossible degree of precision. No statistic here should be taken to represent more than a very distant approximation.

Olaya won power in 1930 on a minority vote of forty-five per cent of the total of 824,000 votes cast.[2] In the subsequent elections to the departmental assemblies, House of Representatives and municipal councils the Liberals gradually whittled away at the Conservative vote until in October, 1933 it had fallen to a mere 27 per cent of a total that was larger than that for the presidential elections of 1930: a result that evoked Conservative cries of fraud because turnout at presidential elections had customarily been very much larger than in the municipal ones, partly because the national budget was a plum of unequalled attractiveness and partly because centrally concerted action was less vigorous during municipal elections.

Conservative scepticism deepened when López, unopposed by a Conservative, gained a vote in 1934 larger than the total cast in the

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1. I am grateful for the use of unpublished statistical data to Fernando Cepeda and his colleagues at the University of the Andes, Bogotá. They are engaged in a full-scale compilation and analysis of electoral statistics since 1930. There is no reserve of easily accessible electoral statistics for any decade before the 1960's. The "electoral bank" of the University of the Andes is being drawn from government documents and press scurces. I am concerned here only with the implications of the available material for the Conservative party.

2. At no moment in the period studied did any third party gain more than two per cent of the total vote. Since none posed a serious challenge, no third party is considered here.

1930 presidential election. There seems little doubt that Liberal organization and morale were superior in 1933-4 and the Liberal press stronger than those of either party at any moment since the War of the Thousand Days. Yet Conservative claims of an artifically inflated poll seemed borne out by subsequent results. Only in the 1949 elections, after more than a decade of demographic growth, did Liberals approach the numerical achievement of 1934 - despite the extension of the suffrage in 1935.

Liberal divisiveness and Catholic-Conservative activism at a local level seemed to be heralding a Conservative recovery in October, 1935: in the municipal elections the Conservatives won 35 per cent of a depleted overall vote (682,000 as opposed to 860,000 in the municipal elections of 1933). But the policy of abstentionism imposed by the National Conservative Directorate, dampened Conservative ardour. There was no Conservative competition with Liberals in the elections to the departmental assemblies and the House of Representatives in May, 1935 or in May, 1937. The fragmentation of the Liberal party that Conservatives hoped for did not come about. When Conservatives returned to the municipal polls in October, 1937, they won only 32 per cent.

The Conservative share of the total vote remained substantially unchanged when the abstentionism policy was abandoned after the election of Santos. In all six of the elections of 1939 and 1941 - to the House of Representatives, the departmental assemblies and the municipal councils - the Conservatives gained between 30 and 36 per cent. Their consistency of performance suggested that power could be recaptured only by alliance with dissident Liberals.

The presidential election of 1942 occasioned a record turnout: the first to exceed that of the 1934 presidential election. But Conservative coalitionist tactics failed: Arango polled only forty-one per cent of the total vote. The dissident Liberals soon

demonstrated their dissatisfaction with the alliance, and realigned with Lopista Liberals.

Conservative performance in the elections of 1943 and 1945 compared unfavourably with that in 1939 and 1941: Conservatives secured only between 31 and 33 per cent of the vote. Liberal division in 1946 reawakened Conservative enthusiasm and roused Conservatives to hasty reorganization. In a poll of unprecedented size - 1,336,000 in all - Ospina defeated the two Liberal candidates, gaining 41 per cent of votes cast. Conservatives, believed to be considerably weaker in the cities than Liberals, were sufficiently well organized to poll over 30 per cent. in five cities: 49 per cent in Manizales, 46 per cent in Medellín, 37 per cent in Cali, 33 per cent in Pereira and 31 per cent in Ibagué.[1]

The four elections of 1947 - to the assemblies, House of Representatives, Senate and municipal councils - all recorded an increase in the Conservative share of the vote to between 43 and 45 per cent.[2] The absolute Liberal vote, however, did not fall. Liberal electoral efforts were as intensive as Conservative, and culminated in a series of turnouts without precedent for both parties. The total poll at each of the elections of 1947, except that to the municipal councils, exceeded the turnout for the presidential elections of 1946.

The attempt by Conservatives to overtake the Liberal vote in 1949 failed narrowly. The total number of votes cast reached a peak of 1,752,000, as Conservatives won 47 per cent.of the vote to the assemblies and 46 per cent of that to the House of Representatives.

Liberal resort to abstentionist tactics gave a spectacular victory to Gómez. He won 1,141,000 votes - more than the combined total

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1. Richard S. Weinert, "Political Modernization in Colombia" (Ph, D. thesis, Colombia University, 1967), p. 142.
2. The Senate was popularly elected after the 1946 electoral reform.

of the two leading candidates in the 1946 election, Ospina and Turbay. Liberal cynicism at the result was visible in abstentionism designed to sharpen Conservative divisions in the 1951 and 1953 Congressional elections. In 1951 only an insignificant fringe of Liberals defied the party's national policy and stood for election. The result was a swinging Conservative victory in which the Conservative vote exceeded the combined vote of both parties in all elections to the House of Representatives before 1946.

Any general comment on electoral participation in a context of extended periods of electoral abstention by one or other of the political parties will be spurious. In a European or North American milieu to cast a vote is normally held to be a positive act of electoral behaviour. This is not the case in Colombia, where political parties repeatedly postulated the view that disciplined abstention was the most positive form of electoral action possible in a context of government-inspired manipulation and coercion. The practice of casting a blank protest vote has not caught on outside sophisticated Bogotano circles: for the minority of elections for which numbers of blank votes were recorded the percentage never approached one per cent. What can be said about the extent to which Colombia has been politicized from electoral statistics? Two suggestive trends have been traced for the period after the electoral reform of 1935: first, from the percentage of male adults of over twenty-one years (projected from the 1951 and 1964 censuses) voting in presidential and congressional elections; secondly, from the percentage of those possessing electoral identity-cards voting in the same elections. (The records of the numbers of electoral identity-cards for the elections in the years 1939, 1941, 1943, 1951 and 1953 are incomplete).

The following tentative results are drawn. Between 1935 and 1938 between 20 and 30 per cent of the masculine adult population voted;

with the renewed participation of Conservatives, 46 per cent voted in 1939, but the percentage fell away, except in the presidential election of 1942, until, in 1945, it had reached a mere 39 per cent. The renewal of Conservative and Liberal activism in 1946 made for a sharp increase in the percentage voting until in the 1949 Congressional elections 73 per cent of the adult male population voted, a percentage that has not since been equalled. Liberal abstentionism meant another decline, so that in the 1951 and 1953 elections the percentage voting was of the order only of 35 to 40 per cent.

The limited figures available for those possessing electoral identity-cards who voted suggests a low level of participation in the uncontested elections of 1935-8 of between 30 and 33 per cent. In the contested presidential election of 1942 the figure reached 60 per cent, falling to 38 per cent in the contested congressional elections of 1945. A peak of 63 per cent was attained in the contested Congressional election of 1949, falling to 40 per cent in the presidential election of the same year, in which the Liberals abstained.[1]

No complete information is yet available by department except for isolated elections. Statistics by department for the presidential election of 1942 have been culled: but, since Arango stood on a coalition ticket, these do nothing to pinpoint Liberal and Conservative electoral patterns. These statistics apart, only those for the presidential elections of 1946 and those to the House of Representatives for 1945 and 1947 are available. These confirm impressionistic evidence of the tendency of certain departments to follow a gobiernista line and of the success of the Liberal party in entrenching itself elsewhere. The most malleable departments were Boyacá, Norte de Santander,

1. Departmento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística, Colombia política (Bogotá, 1972), p. 214.

Nariño and Santander where between 1945 and 1947 the Conservative share of the vote rose by 38, 35, 31, and 29 per cent respectively. In Atlántico an increase in the Conservative share of ten per cent was registered, in Bolívar of nine and Cauca of eight per cent. The Conservative vote rose less dramatically elsewhere in the same period: by four per cent in Cundinamarca, Caldas and Antioquia, by one per cent in Tolima and by less than one per cent in Huila.

A larger increase was recorded in all departments between the elections of 1945 and 1946 than between those of 1946 and 1947: indeed, in Bolívar, Caldas and Huila a small decline in the Conservative percentage was registered between 1946 and 1947.

4. Conclusions

The materials suggest no consistent trend towards greater politicization. Periods of intense mobilization were usually short, and followed by longer periods of relative demobilization. Lack of organization, cash and, above all, the frequent failure to deliver the promised goods obstructed sustained mobilization. This was as true of the early 'fifties as of the 'thirties: indeed, the lack of systematic information and central co-ordination of the parties had probably become more pronounced in the early 'fifties, because the parties had largely failed to adjust to migrations and urbanization, and because they had failed to sustain the youth movements of the 'thirties and the veteran movements had largely faded out. No significant innovations in mobilization by age-group or sex were visible: both parties nurtured the younger generations but neither over-stressed youth for fear of loss of older generation support; the political potential of women was, until the Rojas government, unrecognized by both parties, though it had been canvassed by Doña Berta de Ospina.

Chapter Six

The Conservative Leadership

Laureano Gómez and Mariano Ospina Pérez represented two strands of Conservative leadership: the one less ready to compromise, the other more disposed to do so. They were not, of course, typical of the party leadership: they were both success-stories. But they provide useful cases of party leadership because each successfully epitomized a party tradition: Ospina Pérez traced intellectual (as well as genetic) ancestry from Pedro Nel Ospina and Reyes; Gómez postured as the heir of Concha and Caro.

1. Laureano Gómez

Laureano Gómez emerges in the literature as a wooden, two-dimensional figure, a provincial megalomaniac, "violent and irresponsible", spawned by Mussolini and Hitler.[1] It is unclear how and why Gómez was so effective in both mobilizing Conservative support in the 'forties and in demobilizing it in the late 'fifties. It does not make clear why so assiduous a Congressman switched to a Falangist, apparently totalitarian style of politics. If he represented real needs and articulated genuine feelings, it is unclear what they were: and if he did not, then it is equally unclear how he managed to remain leader - if disputed leader - of an opposition party in a two-party system for fourteen years with little more patronage at his command than a newspaper office that he shared. The Colombian material on Gómez is not substantial. For the majority of Conservatives his career represents an example to young people; the immortals need no defence - there is no black, and so there is nothing to whiten. A more judicious Conservative majority keeps silent. Liberals believe that Gómez is better not discussed for fear

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1. Vernon Lee Fluharty, Dance of the millions - Military Rule and the Social Revolution in Colombia, 1930-56. (Pittsburgh, 1957), p. 60.

of antagonizing their Conservative partners in the National Front arrangement; and remember him semi-gratefully, but not forgivingly, as one of its architects.

A. Laureano Gómez and the Conservative leadership

Ascent to the Conservative leadership was difficult for Gómez. He faced not only the barriers that confronted any son of migrants from the remote town of Ocaña in North Santander: there was also, in the 1910's, a well-established older-generation leadership, usually of military experience, which was hesitant to abdicate to members of a younger generation without it. Gómez was briefly editor of La Unidad: but, after being sacked for offending his elders, Gómez refused to be cowed by their condescension and awaited the opportunity to avenge himself.

Gómez sought advancement impatiently: he brought himself to public attention by scandalizing easily shocked sensibilities. He delighted in embarrassing the prophets of the conventional wisdom: archbishops, presidents, party leaders. He was clearly out to be bought off, but had the arrogance to want to state the price.[1] He was not a man to despise any form of influence: he welcomed the support of El Tiempo, which exploited him as a resentido who embarrassed Conservative governments.[2] He accused the lay establishment of dangerous complacency in allowing Church participation in politics, and was looked upon by the lay and clerical establishment as a curt, devious iconoclast that brusquely brushed aside accusations of insincerity. He seemed fearless and passionate; and, perhaps was perverse enough to be convinced by his own argument for as long as he was uttering it.

Before the 1922 election Gómez attacked the candidature of Pedro

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1. For his negotiations to appear in the electoral lists for 1921 see Luis J. Sanmiguel, Recuerdos de periodista (Bucaramanga, 1970), pp. 145 ff.

2. El Tiempo, 4 Sept., 1928, Felipe Antonio Molina, Días sin fecha (Bogotá, 1964), p. 209.

Nel Ospina. But Ospina did not take offence easily: he seduced Gómez first with the Colombian legation in Buenos Aires, and then with the Ministry of Public Works. At Public Works Gómez was useful to Ospina as the principal target of former supporters of his predecessor, Marco Fidel Suárez, deflecting blows which might otherwise have hit the president.[1] Gómez' performance at Public Works was not memorable. The fact that certain projects were completed during Gómez' tenure did him no particular credit: they would have been, anyway, during the 'dance of the millions'. But Gómez tried to make maximum political capital out of them, and out of rubbing shoulders with Ospina on a trip round Boyacá and the Santanders where he hoped to establish a support-base.[2] But, in the meanwhile, in Bogotá the press took him to task for deserting his office and indulging in provincial bachanals while the River Magdalena silted up and the economy was in peril.[3] Gómez deliberately provoked crisis between Congress and government: he tried to steamroller a loan negotiated by Alfonso López with a British firm for forty-five million pesos through Congress, and when Congress modified it, Gómez threw it out abruptly. On one occasion, General Ignacio Rengifo, then President of the Senate, excluded Gómez for disrespect towards Congress. He was alleged to have provoked a "mob of revolutionary students" to attack the National Capitol with stones and

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1. El Nuevo Tiempo portrayed Gómez as the main handicap of the government, 1 Jan., 1926.

2. His success was limited: his entry to the assembly of Santander as a deputy was followed by the indefinite suspension of sessions and riots in Bucaramanga, as Santandereano Conservatives divided between the pro- and anti-Gómez factions. Carlos D. Parra, Epílogo de una campaña política y documentos que demuestran que el autor de este folleto no ha calumniado a nadie (Pamphlet, San Gil, 1928).

3. ~~See above, pp.~~ El Tiempo, 30 Nov., 1925; El Nuevo Tiempo, 25 Jan., 1926.

sticks.[1] Gómez was warmly received only by the Liberal opposition. El Espectador defended him against the "moral level" of both Chambers: he "shouted in 1921 against a bad government in the name of a good and generous pueblo, and in 1925 he shouts at a bad Congress in the name of a worse administration."[2] Gómez was, at least, loyal: he seemed genuinely grateful to Ospina for giving him ministerial experience, and when Ospina, dead, was under fire for his part in the unbalanced economic growth and party demoralization of the late twenties, Gómez rose to his defence in a series of stirring articles.[3]

Gómez was less outspoken in his opposition to the Abadía regime. In attacking the 'Heroic Projects' as inconsistent with the Conservative theme-tune of 'liberty and order' he was only saying what other Conservatives were shouting.[4] He was carefully non-committal over the choice of candidate for 1930.[5] Before departing for Europe he spoke of forming cells as organizational nuclei for the moment when the pueblo "decides to pour out onto the street" and reminded Bogotanos of the street agitation that had brought down Reyes.[6] But during the crisis within the Conservative party he was silent; and his silence was rewarded by Olaya with the ministry in Berlin.

After the 1930 crisis the main competitors with Gómez for influence among younger Conservatives were the 'Leopards' - an informal group of three (for a time four) young Conservatives, the outstanding of whom was Agustín Ramírez Moreno. In the mid-'twenties they captured public attention with their oratory. They engaged in a rabid, hyperbolical

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1. El Nuevo Tiempo, 2 Oct., 1927.
2. El Espectador, 17 Nov., 1925, El Tiempo, 17 Nov., 1925, El Nuevo Tiempo, 4 Dec., 1925.
3. Laureano Gómez, "El caracter del General Ospina", Universidad, 11, 25 Feb., 10, 31 Mar., 1928.
4. El Tiempo, 16 July, 1928. See above, pp. 2-4
5. El Tiempo, 16 Aug., 1929.
6. Ibid., 10 June, 1930.

rhetoric; their invocations of personal heroism caught something of an old military style; and they indulged in fashionable talk of European aesthetics. They looked to Maurras, Barrès, Action Française and D'Annunzio for inspiration: they even idolized Disraeli. To a Conservative of a later generation their style seemed morbid and undulating.[1] By attempting self-consciously to escape from the received truths of Conservatism, the 'Leopards' put themselves outside the central Conservative tradition.[2] They had no clear affinity with the Colombian past except in their militant gesturing. Their talents were not administrative. One, Eliseo Arango, though briefly Minister of Education for both Abadía and Ospina Pérez, was primarily interested in university teaching. Another, Silvio Villegas, though venturing periodically into electoral politics, especially in 1937-8, was primarily a journalist, working variously on La Patria of Manizales, El Pais of of Cali, and El Debate and La República of Bogotá. His reputation reached its nadir in 1929 when the Vatican caught the local Church unawares by condemning Action Française: Villegas had been editing a Conservative daily financed by the Church and had been quoting Action Française writings wholesale. The 'Leopards' remained a political force to be reckoned with in 1931-2, but their decadent revellings and affectations had little general appeal. Ramírez Moreno was an able rhetorician with an unsurpassed capacity for rousing peasants to momentary frenzies of political violence, but he lacked the capacity either to capture the elite imagination or to sustain a scattered rural following; and was outmanoeuvred after the return of Gómez from Berlin. Ramirez failed in his efforts in the late 'thirties and early 'forties to convince Conservatives of the dictatorial determination of Gómez or to outbid Gómez for political followings in Cundinamarca,

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1. Azula Barrera, op. cit., pp. 295-6.
2. For an example of this self-consciousness, see Ramírez Moreno, Universidad, 30 June, 1927.

Tolima and El Chocó. His constant efforts to gain the attention of youth relegated him to the political margin where Gómez was happy to keep him.

While Liberals were consolidating themselves in Eastern Colombia in 1932, Gómez successfully articulated local-level grievances in locally understood terms while other capital-city Conservatives hopeful for places in Olaya's government, were hardly vocal. A speech to a Conservative Convention in the small Cundinamarquense town of Chía, in September, 1932, underlined the clarity with which Gómez spoke for small-town clerical-Conservative sentiment: "....An eminently doctrinaire party, Conservatism has one ideological and sentimental treasure which is constituted by the purest religious beliefs of which humanity is proud, by the most sound and perfect moral doctrines, by juridical theories most in accord with native and human dignity, by the scientific wealth reaped by men of thought that have consecrated their lights and vigilance to the study of the problems of civil life....There rises in the mind of the Conservative guild (gremio) before any other the concept of duty, which is logically ordained towards God, the 'Patria' and Society as the first terms of its propositions....It recognizes that the Catholic religion is the irreplacable factor of the highest human culture and wants to see it regulating the ineffable commerce of believing souls with the Divinity, in the full independence of its own sphere, with the respect and veneration indispensable for its sovereign mission; but as a political being it neither mixes nor confuses the field of temporal and earthly with the spiritual and divine....(The) public actions (of the party) have not to compromise, in consequence, but with the association of civil men who constitute the political party, leaving always very carefully, without injury, the prestige and propriety (decoro) of institutions and persons to those whom the supernatural task of

leadership of souls belongs...."[1] Words which seem indigestible to more cosmopolitan ears were, still in the 1930's, rich in meaning at a local level in Eastern Colombia. Gómez was appealing against memories of past Liberal persecutions of the Church and Conservatives and to campesino austerity. He was not seeking to win the Antioqueños: he recognized in 1932 that other groups had a prior claim to party leadership in Western Colombia, but that clerical and Conservative discontent in the East was uncoordinated, headless and under-represented in Bogotá.

Uniting the party was a slow and painful process. Gómez rose to prominence over the political corpse of Román Gómez, the leading Conservative collaborator in Olaya's government with a faction strong in Antioquia and much of Tolima. Román was the cynosure of Laureano's attack for as long as he had influence in the party. In a series of celebrated speeches in Congress Laureano sought to demolish Román. Each resorted to raking up the past: Román depicted student pranks of Laureano at the expense of former President José Maria González Valencia in 1911-2 as murderous; and he sought to discredit Laureano as a peddler of ministerial posts. But his efforts backfired.[2] Laureano succeeded in extending his campaign against Román to embrace both Liberals and Conservatives hostile to the National Concentration policy. Román was portrayed as the puppeteer with Olaya on his strings: he alleged that it was public knowledge in Medellín that Román drafted legislation to extend Olaya's powers during the Leticia war for his own Antioqueño purposes and that Olaya "signed it docilely" in Bogotá.[3] Román was slowly eliminated: but Gómez, despite a speech-making trip to Medellín in 1933, failed to make an opening for himself in Antioquia. Those closer to local interests had established their pre-eminence.

The risk remained that Conservative interest would peter out.

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1. El Pais, 12 Sept., 1932.
2. Laureano Gómez, Ospina y otros discursos (Bogotá, 1966), p. 21; El Tiempo, 22 July, 1932.
3. El Pais, 11 Oct., 1933. The decree referred to was No. 604 of 1933.

Gómez, therefore, undertook a campaign to dislodge the Olaya government at a regional as well as a national level. He kept up a debate at two levels: the one designed to embarrass and oust Liberal governors - especially in the marginal departments falling slowly to Liberalism - Caldas, Antioquia, Santander, Boyacá and Cauca; the other to embarrass Olaya himself. Gómez courted confrontation with Olaya first by attacking the Minister of War, Morales Olaya, a cousin of Olaya. He then seized upon the declaration of extraordinary faculties for the Leticia war in the hope of reducing government patronage. He accused Olaya of having been forewarned of the war eighteen months before it began. The imperious will of Olaya, he declared, was comparable only to that of Wilhelm II. Gómez now portrayed the period 1910-30 in a new light - free of political persecution and characterized by the impartial administration of justice and a respect for civil liberties, an epoch when national arms were not entrusted to hired assassins.[1] By the criteria of Colombia in the 'thirties, the attack was outrageous. What was more, it was inconsistent: as minister in Berlin, Gómez had written in ecstatic praise of Olaya's achievement. And however much he tried to sidestep his past career, he was not allowed to forget it.[2] The campaign to foment Liberal division at departmental and municipal levels in the hope that the party would crumble from below was too disjointed to be effective. Gómez could not alone release a wave of sustained Conservative enthusiasm: he had always to look over his shoulder at possible rivals for the leadership; like Guillermo Valencia, still in 1933 a symbolic force within the party, with whom Gómez had to manufacture a clash over the issue of "peace with the government" in order to eliminate him from competition.[3] Gómez was reprimanded by Ramírez for

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1. El Tiempo, 7 Sept., 11-12 Oct., 1932; Laureano Gómez, Comentarios a un régimen (Bogotá, 1934), pp. 169, 218.
2. El Tiempo, 16 July, 1931, 8 Sept., 1934.
3. El Tiempo, 13 June, 1933. See above pp. 33-4

denying the party a parliamentary foothold which, however,shallow, could be used to influence policy-making, and then of taking personal advantage of a series of miscalculations at the expense of the party.[1] Gómez was not responsible for the fact that opposition was too diffuse. His strategy was more consistently thought out and followed through than that of the old guard: he was less faltering and vacillating. He was not merely abdicating political responsibilities like certain members of the Antioqueño Conservative elite. Gómez could claim, with some accuracy, that if any one Conservative politician had held the party together through thick and thin it was he; and that if keeping up a momentum in opposition had been problemmatic it was the result not of lack of effort on his part but of division within the party. When he called for mass electoral and educational strikes among Conservatives, they were not uniformally adhered to. When he could bargain from a position of popular strength which he reinforced with the threat to use force, Antioqueños shrank from the possibility of violence. When, attuned to the dangers of a younger generation that felt disinherited, he absorbed a number of the younger talents within the party between 1935 and 1938, he incurred the resentment of the old-stagers, many of them has-beens from the 'Thousand Days'. Whereas in the 'twenties, Gómez had had no support-base worth speaking of and could shift position at will, in the 'thirties he established one which constrained him: it was difficult to take an immoderate posture and then withdraw. Each of his actions was carefully scrutinized: when there was talk, for example, of the formation of Conservative shock-forces, Gómez was open to criticism whether he backed or repudiated them or remained silent. Gómez was usually successful in gauging the mood of the party and adjusting to it. He was careful to avoid conveying the impression that

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1. Agustín Ramírez Moreno, La crisis del partido conservador (Bogotá, 1937).

he was clinging to the leadership, and insisted that he preferred sharing the leadership to a jefatura única of the party.

In 1942-3 opposition from within the Conservative party came primarily from the Bogotá-Medellín business establishment. Gómez had to take into account the more impassioned provincial Conservatism of Santander and Tolima: and he had fair success in balancing the moderate and immoderate elements within the party. There was no audible talk of forming a new clerical party as during the presidency of Concha: and discussion of a separate independent Conservative moderate group came to nought.

The relationship of Gómez and Mariano Ospina Pérez was particularly intricate. Gómez was accustomed to receiving a response: fullblooded retaliation followed when he baited Santos; demoralization set in when he trapped López. But Ospina seemed indifferent to his gratuitous advice and undisturbed by criticism: he shook it off as if there were more important matters at hand, like the conduct of government.[1] Gómez underestimated Ospina's political talents and his taste for political power, and miscalculated his stubborn independence and his popularity. Gómez could never avoid the fact that, unlike Ospina, he was neither well known nor well liked in the Western departments.

Differences between Gómez and Ospina were manifest after the '9 April'. On the 19 April, Gómez spoke on the Voz de Antioquia supporting Ospina as the only legitimate authority and 'emblem of the Patria': but a subsequent article in El Siglo pinpointed the division - Liberals, according to El Siglo, should be punished; collaboration with rebels was unwarrantable.[2] The division, if perceptible, was latent: Ospina allowed government in 1949 to drift in a direction that suited Gómez. Each seemed to recognize that to court collision would be

1. Semana, 30 Dec., 1946.
2. Alberto Dangond Uribe, Laureano - su vida es su victoria. Un estudio de la actualidad politica (Bogotá, 1962), pp. 229-30; El Siglo, 4 May, 1948.

catastrophic. Each saw that the other was the commanding influence in the party in key regions. Confrontation came only when Ospina sought re-election. Unspoken differences between the two leaders broke into the open, and the debate was acid. Ospina revealed a hitherto unknown biting edge. The accumulated resentments of generations were aired: Ospina was accused of political indifference in the 'thirties, absence from key debates, repudiating the "authentic voices of the party" in 1948 and preferring the "theses of its enemies". Gómez was reminded of how he had engineered the disgrace of Suárez. His stratagems of expose in the 'forties were pilloried, his tactics of the 'thirties held up to public scorn. "Intrepid action", "discipline for dogs" - the debates of the 'thirties and 'forties - were revived.[1] The rise of Rojas accentuated personal friction: both Gómez and Ospina had to fight if they were not to be marooned without a support-base. Ospina aligned conditionally with Rojas while Gómez resorted himself to unqualified opposition. It was a reflexion of the hostility felt between the two leaders that the National Front experiment almost foundered as a result of it.

B. Laureano Gómez and Alfonso López

From 1932 until the rise of Gaitán the friendship - and then the enmity - of López and Gómez hypnotized the Colombian political nation. It was odd that a nouveau-riche banker should rise to the Liberal leadership that generals had previously occupied; it was stranger that a man of obscure origin, with many enemies in high places, should ascend to the Conservative leadership. It was even more curious that they were personal friends. Discussion of the friendship nourished political debate that was starved of ideological content. The friendship, it was said, began after Gómez said of López that he had pulled off the

1. Gómez, Ospina y otros discursos (Bogotá, 1966) see pp. 39 ff.

miracle of speaking for three consecutive hours without a theme.[1] Gómez and López worked together on the Tolima Railway before moving into Congressional politics. López put the newspaper El Diario Nacional at the service of Gómez when he set out to unseat Suárez. They engaged in minor exposes of railway contracting methods in the late 'twenties, and hastily had to deny having railway interests. They condemned the Abadía administration for its policy of contracting oil to foreign companies, proposing instead a nationalist policy of exploitation of Colombian oil by Colombians: neither followed an expropriation policy in office.[2] López was alone in his praise of Gómez' handling of the ministry of public works: "To him corresponds the merit of having put the country on the move." López made the tendentious claim that Gómez had been responsible for drawing the periphery - the Llanos, the Guajira and the Chocó into the national economy - though he did not make clear how. López defended Gómez against Abadia's accusation of 'exhibitionism' in office and added that he had selected a minister whose plans were identical to those of Gómez.[3] When Gómez was Minister in Berlin and López in London, they were suspected by Olayistas of cooking up plans for a joint political ascendancy. While Olaya was in power, Gómez praised López to the skies. The friendship of López and Gómez was sealed symbolically when, at the ceremony of López' inauguration, Gómez as President of the Senate, took López' oath and led the applause that punctuated his speech.

He set out next to consolidate his own and López' positions by demolishing the support for Olaya in both parties. He attacked Olaya's oil policy, his relations with the United States and the National City Bank. But the tactic boomeranged when Gómez tried to sabotage the

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1. Guillermo Camacho Montoya, Laureano Gómez, un dominador politico (Bogotá, n.d. 1941) p. 28.
2. El Tiempo, 1 Oct., 1927, 6, 17, 27 Mar., 1928.
3. Universidad, 13 July, 1927.

settlement with Peru which Olaya regarded as the crowning achievement of his administration. Olaya replied with unaccustomed ferocity, dramatizing the "sinister friendship" of López and Gómez. The stiff resistance of Olaya left López with a clear choice: to jettison the support of the Liberal majority in Congress and incur Peruvian hostility or to break his friendship with Gómez. He chose the latter. Gómez felt spurned and humiliated. He had discouraged Conservatives from putting up a candidate against López in 1934 and had co-operated in pushing an electoral reform through Congress. In return, he had expected help in embarrassing Olaya, "I believed in López. How much I was mistaken! - that he was going to free the country from the ensnaring tricks of improbity."[1] Gómez was blind to the fact that he was forcing López to choose between personal friendship and effectiveness in government.

The rivalry of López and Gómez was the prime focus of national political conflict for the next decade. The two leaders remained interdependent: until 1935 they had acted in concert; between 1935 and 1945 each fed upon the opposition of the other. In the poisonous atmosphere of the early 'forties, Gómez believed that he could not obtain a fair hearing in the courts and López that there was no tactic to which Gómez would not stoop. Public life was demoralized by the bitterness of exchange and by the growing conviction that the situation was the normal run of things. The sanctimonious self-righteousness of the press underlined the gravity of the conflict. Gómez diffused anxiety and insecurity, accusing López of covering up for his own personal circle, when the innocent, like Mamatoco, were being murdered with impunity. Both sides tried to exploit Church factiousness and to define the rules of political etiquette to their own advantage.

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1. El Siglo, 1 Dec., 1936. See above, pp. 15-17.

Once López was out of power, the tactic of Gómez had to be altered. He could no longer argue, that if only López were removed, all would be righted and Colombia would resume its pre-ordained course. Gómez seemed to lose a certain sense of direction without López in office. On the death of López' wife Gómez shared López' sense of grief and perhaps felt some sense of shame that he should have been responsible for adding to the misery of her last years with whispering-campaigns. Gestures of sympathy towards López made possible a slow recovery of their friendship: in 1950 López tried to create a climate where Gómez could take a few Liberals to moderate his government; in 1950-2 López made conciliatory gestures to Gómez which neither party would accept. No longer did either feel the desire for revenge or fear being hoodwinked or outwitted by the other: they were, in the words of one journalist, "two inseparable enemies".[1] Each came to believe that peace was ensured so long as their leadership of the parties was not in doubt. Both came to resent the ingratitude of followers who switched allegiances when other leaders seemed more capable of guaranteeing their employment. And both, despite long absences from Colombia, did not grasp how quickly messianic attraction could wear off, how easily it might be transferred to another and how far popular appeal had to be worked at. Frequently the manipulators of legends lost control of them. In 1949-53, Liberals and Conservatives in rural areas were fighting in the names of leaders who were themselves on terms of matey bonhomie. 'Klim' reported them photographed together, complacent, and smiling, engaged in the following exchange:

> "How are you, Alfonso, how are you?"
> "Very well, Laureano, and how are you?"
> "I see you are putting on a little age."
> "You also are getting a little fat."
> "See you, Alfonso."
> "Enchanted, Laureano."[2]

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1. Abelardo Forero in Sábado, 11 Feb., 1950.
2. Klim (pseud. for Lucas Caballero Calderón) Figuras politicas de Colombia (Bogotá, 1945), pp. 185 ff.

The revived friendship was strained when Gómez was silent after the burning of López' house by Conservatives in 1951: López accused Gómez of silence after "fifty years of struggle raised against abuse and ignominy."[1] But it survived.

C. Gómez as opposition leader

Gómez was more remarkable as leader - if disputed leader - of an opposition party than as leader of a governing party. He established himself in 1932-3, and never lost the whip hand for more than a few months in fourteen years. As one articulate Gaitanista put it, he dominated "the reduced panorama of political activity of his contemporaries."[2] His position was never established. He was open to the charge - especially as he got older - that he sat comfortably in Bogotá directing Conservatism by mail and telephone while others did the difficult work of stumping the country and rousing a tepid rural party. His imperious leadership was largely a matter of bluff. Gómez knew how precariously placed he was but knew too that however incredible he might appear at any given moment any alternative leader looked even more incredible. His tactical judgement was superb: he performed the awkward task of reconciling differing brands of rural Conservatism with assurance. He was agile: at one moment he would radicalize the right with techniques of street agitation that hinted of contemporary Europe but bore more resemblance to Colombia of the nineteenth century; at the next, he would seek to tranquillize the right and appealed to business-man elements. Gómez sometimes blundered in opposition: his speeches became repetitive; once he had pulled out all the stops, there was nothing he could do except pull them out again - apart, of course, from brief indulgences in the cacophony of direct action.

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1. Hugo Latorre Cabal, Mi novela - apuntos autobiográficos de Alfonso López (Bogotá, 1961), p. 247.
2. Enrique Cuellar Vargas, 13 años de violencia - asesinos intelectuales de Gaitán (Bogotá, 1960), p. 159.

After establishing a reputation for unwillingness to compromise, Gómez could not afford to sabotage that reputation by assuming a low profile. He had, therefore, to assail at his opponents with venomous invective. Not content with petty personal tauntings, he was generously unstinting in his distribution of abusive epithets, and apt to impute cowardice, treachery and corruption. He was successful in assessing the vulnerability of his opponents, identifying their weak points and exploiting them ruthlessly. He was careful, too, with whom he picked fights: on the whole, he preferred to avoid Alberto Lleras. He opened himself to the charge of debasing the political currency with excessive use of supercharged accusations - Lèse-patria},for example: but shrugged it off. By the late 1930's he was well-known both for his high-flown generalizing and for his singlemindedness in probing into details. Given the limited range of tactics at his disposal, Gómez was peculiarly adept at devising new variations upon them. He conjured up the spectre of convolutions of the nineteenth century, and drove Liberals to the point where any Liberal reaction could be labelled as persecution while silence was sinister.

The controversies of the early 1940's were wearisome, contentious, insubstantial and, for the most part, trivial. The diatribe of Gómez against his opponents was coolly consistent in content; but in presenting it his rage became uncontrollable. Whether he attacked individuals or the Liberal party as a whole, the argument was predictable: the Liberals, led by men like Echandía, proscribed as a dangerous Jacobin, mason and anticlerical, were driving Colombia to ruin. There had to be retribution, Gómez pounded, immediate retribution, godly vengeance upon misdoers. The local regulations of debate played into Gómez' hands: Colombians did not consider illogical - as overseas observers did - his wild alternations between petty constitutional niceties and utterances of such generality that they lost contact with political reality.

His style was singular: first, he scrutinized the details of petty government expenditure with dogged persistence; then, he appealed to the elimination of corruption and the cleansing of the franchise; finally, he drew the conclusion that Liberalism was condemned - and finished with a series of ritual denunciations: that his opponents were merely parodying representative democracy, that Liberal government was a squalid, despicable charade. The burden of the argument changed as Conservatives re-entered Congress after the period of abstention: Gómez switched from attacking the lack of calibre of men in high position to waging war against the defectiveness of the system. Festerings opening within the Liberal party made it more vulnerable: in the 1930's Gómez could only wound; in the 'forties he could strike. The invective of Gómez assured his position: it mesmerized allies and opponents alike. He was a constant irritant to Liberals: if he was silent, they wanted to know why; if he spoke, he was carping. While much of the Conservative apparatus built the myth of Gómez as an almost supernatural figure, Liberals reinforced it by depicting him as a man of diabolic sleight-of-hand. Conservatives who were reserved about the tactics of Gómez in the early 'forties admitted, in private, in 1946, that his tactics were vindicated by electoral victory. But a few were correct in contending that Gómez, in undermining the position of the Liberal leadership, was also sowing the seeds of subversion of his own position and that of Ospina. The suppression of Liberal opponents between 1949 and 1951 bred a renewed lack of confidence within the Conservative party which Alzate exploited ably: if Liberals were thus suppressed, so too might Conservatives.

D. Gómez and the Liberals

The strength of Gómez drew, in the final analysis, from the attitude of Liberals. The dominant Liberal image of Gómez took shape in the mid-

'thirties and ossified in the early 'forties. El Tiempo and El Liberal left an unshakable impression upon the Liberal majority that was difficult to eradicate when the leadership switched, in 1958, to parleying with Gómez, in order to eliminate Rojas. From about 1939 Liberals attributed to Gómez a consistency and immutability he did not possess. His protests cut no ice with them: each calumny pushed them into greater intransigence. They were irritated that matters that for them were tactical were for Gómez questions of conscience; and they were annoyed by Gómez' public display of his own conscience as much as by the suggestion that they were conscienceless. Most were blind to the least gesture of flexibility on his part: each calumny served only to intensify their intransigence. Some came even to share his own belief in a providential mission, and were disbelieving at any hint of his plans miscarrying. He had forecasted doom: and it came, and was worse than he had predicted. Liberals were so captivated that they had to borrow the language of Gómez to describe him and his gestures to attack him. Communists were as spellbound as Liberals: they singled him out during the Second World War as the prime object of attack, accusing him, with about as much substantial evidence as he used in his own oratory, of being a fifth-column agent and a "Nazifier".[1] Gómez was never regarded with equivocation or indifference. His Conservative opponent, Silvio Villegas, had labelled him El Monstruo in 1938; and the Liberals borrowed the phrase in the 'forties. In their more generous moments, he was a man of alloplastic personality prone to manic depressions that incapacitated him for power. At other times, he was the master-trickster to whose propaganda antics an unsuspecting Conservative electorate succumbed. His name, synonymous with reaction and retrogression, was useful to the Liberal leadership: it became a bogey that could be resurrected in crisis, to provide a semblance of unity in the party. But his presence was

1. El Diario Popular, 26 Apr., 1943.

overshadowing: Liberals came to judge their own actions, in government and in Congress, by the response that they expected from him.

Counter-attack was difficult. The personal life of Gómez was irreproachable. His leadership of opposition was masterly. Liberals could find no defects of character: peculation, sloth, sexual scandal - to seize upon. The most that could be said to deflate his reputation was that he fled to foreign embassies when in personal danger.[1] Jealousy and distrust reinforced his reputation for duplicity. Liberals lost sight of the fragility of Gómez' position: however tenuous his seat in the saddle, they still regarded him as all-powerful dictator of the Conservative party. Since he was culpable for much, Liberals blamed Gómez for all unrest - omitting conveniently to remember factors often well beyond his own control but not outside their own influence, like the post-war inflation.

E. Gómez: Personality and Ideology

The exterior confidence of Gómez belied inner self-doubts. Gómez felt acute disappointment at the failure of his short-term tactics. He felt jaded periodically by political preoccupations. He was rarely exuberant in public: his natural ebullience was apparent only in the company of a small circle. In his private life Gómez had deep attachments, in his public life only deep antipathies. In his speeches he expressed impulses of pique and despair: but despair couched in universal terms about the human condition. Visions of human perfectibility of nineteenth-century origins hardly rubbed off on Gómez. He had no time for cautious political humanism: the Conservatism of Gómez was distinguished both from Liberalism and from the more optimistic Conservatism of some of his peers by his highly developed sense of human fallibility deriving from original sin. Man, for him, was in a

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1. Sabado, 2 June, 1945.

desultory, moribund condition. A series of lectures given by Gómez in Bogotá in 1928 was locally traumatic.[1] It was characterized by national deprecation of a kind that had a curiously morbid attraction. Colombia, insisted Gómez, had to live down its past if it were to obtain redemption. He confessed to pessimism about its racial composition: the "languid" Spaniard unsuited to the tropics mixed with the "false, servile and abandoned" negro and Indian. As Minister in Buenos Aires, he had swallowed whole notions of geographical determinism then current in Argentina. He lamented the absence of any plan to develop Colombian natural resources. He lambasted the predominance of foreign influences in both Cartagena and Santa Marta. He was enraged by the state of the Conservative party, "....without thinkers....without journalists, without orators and without illustrious men." He found no comfort in the Liberal party. He regretted that political power was being viewed only as an object to satisfy nepotistic greed, that the political parties were converted into two anonymous companies working to exploit the budget. And he drew comparisons with"the shameful epoch of the Spanish decadence". Gómez condemned the all-permeating mediocrity of Colombian public life and what he viewed as the triumph of hypocrisy. Though he never expressed these views again with the same force or the same economy, he never changed them. He was deaf to pleas that it was precisely this style of fatalism which had a deadening effect on reformist legislation, that induced the pessimism and lack of confidence that was responsible for inertia.[2] But, equally, Gómez could claim credit for his own remarkable prescience on past occasions. The vagueness of his statement played into his own hands. Man, he reiterated, had only one hope - in God. Gómez felt and projected a sense of his own unique isolation, his own personal

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1. See above, pp. 1-4.

2. Laureano Gómez, Interrogantes sobre el progreso de Colombia (Bogotá, 1971), The speeches were a characteristic product of upland isolation: Gómez was mocked by El Espectador for thinking that the parrot swam on the sea. Alejandro Vallejo, Hombres de Colombia (Bogotá, 1936), p. 70.

direction by divine providence and his own disgust for humanity. His belief that he was more than a mere temporal leader of party with an ambition of government gave him the confidence to challenge the Church authorities when they seemed to him to be depriving the laity of hope.

Gómez projected his own career as a personal struggle. He had fought in the 1910's against all odds to be admitted by the political establishment. He had fought in the 1920's to establish his position. In the 'thirties and 'forties he had waged a continuous struggle to keep the Conservative party in existence. He had challenged, in one generation, the stifling alliance of clerics and lay clericals and, in another, the inhibiting condescension of Santos. The vocabulary of the struggle came easily to him.

The most persistent theme in Gómez' writings and speeches is the improvement of political morality. He claimed to have been influenced, in adolescence, by a biography of Abraham Lincoln who had impressed him most as a symbol of sacrifice.[1] If it were to triumph, the Conservative party had to adopt a similar posture of self-abnegation. Victory would come only by conquering the rottenness inherent in the Colombian political system to which the Conservative party succumbed in 1930. As early as 1915 Gómez spoke of the need for purification: to be vital, the Conservative party had to break the barrenness, boredom and claustrophobia of Bogotano political and social conventions in the 1910's.[2] The political outlook of Gómez was animated by a claim to the superior moral value of a purified Conservatism and a view of human nature derived with copious textual references to biblical andCatholic precedent. He argued against Republicans in 1909, against Román Gómez in 1932 and against Ospina in 1953 that Conservatism would collapse if it lost its purity of ideological content and policy direction.[3]

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1. Molina, op. cit., p. 84.
2. La Unidad, 25 Feb., 1915.
3. Caretas, 20 Nov., 1909, quoted in Molina, op. cit., p. 173.

The theme of morality had a seductive, comprehensive appeal: it carried religious as well as political meaning. It was easy to evoke popular anger on suggesting that the rest of Colombia was making sacrifices while the Liberal leadership was indulging in a whisky-soaked life. An appeal to morality united a party split by generational divisions, economic interests or ideological commitments, or suffering from a vacuum of new ideas or attached to old ones devoid of attractiveness towards a younger generation. There was always material for moralizing.

Gómez conceived of himself as a man of particular personal destiny as a purifier. He was careful to appear austere, to avoid any hint of self-indulgence and, in the 'thirties, to cultivate a reputation for asceticism. He did not entertain lavishly, though he was not averse to being feted. He was not clubbable. His relaxations were modest and he took them in private: gardening, painting, plaster-modelling, going to the cinema, reading history at home while smoking a Pielroja.[1] He had no passion for motor-cars and no penchant for brothels; he was not an easy spender. He projected an aura of personal self-denial which struck a resonant chord amongst those whose own self-denial was a product of economic circumstances. The concept of self-sacrifice was useful to him because its nebulousness made it pliable: with some conviction, Gomez could contrast himself with the alleged self-seeking of patrician Liberals. Gómez considered himself a man of consistent views and continuous principles, around whom the waves of party opinion moved at one time leaving him high and dry and at the next engulfing him. He consistently identified himself with the imperative of untrammelled purity in the Conservative party. He felt himself a participant in an ongoing historical process - and, as his view of history was that of a visionary

1. Hugo Velasco A., Ecce Homo - Biografía de una tempestad (Bogotá, 1950), p. 205 ff; Semana, 21 June, 1947.

that telescoped events rather than an empiricist that hypostatized them - it is hardly surprising that he reduced history to terms which professional historians cast in a European mould might find oversimplified. He saw himself as an actor in a remote theatre of a universal drama, as having a personal mission in a heroic struggle with origins in the Reformation to recapture liberty of the spirit for the individual. Historical patterns followed predictable lines: Liberalism gnawing away at the patria and at the Church, and Conservatism defending them. Gómez had no sense of the casual nature of events: all was foreseeable. The intensity of Gómez' personal commitment is explicable only in terms of his self-image and not of his economic interests. He desired sincerely to be an epic figure: his was "an epic of purification", according to one of his sycophantic biographers.[1] He built up national dangers - U.S. imperialism in alliance with Liberal government in 1941 and 1942, Liberalism and the collapse of moral values between 1943 and 1945 - and posed as national saviour.

Gómez picked examples from current overseas experience to reinforce his doctrines of moral purity. He admired the rich, pleading, mystical rhetoric of Hitler.[2] He was impressed by the direction that Mussolini gave Italy. But Gómez was no more a Nazi or Fascist than he was a follower of Gandhi. For he also admired the superhuman qualities of Gandhi, his singleminded desire to purify India, "the difficult road of sacrifice towards the peak of liberty". Gómez kept a bust of Gandhi in his study, and exalted the doctrine of passive resistance that was paralyzing British power in India. He also extolled the exemplary suffering of the Russian Church. Gómez' rejection of Nazism was

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1. Molina, op. cit., p. 116.

2. Gómez, El cuadrilátero (Bogotá, 1936) pp. 283-4, 301. Neither of these examples had much appeal to the narrowly Catholic Church of Colombia: they seemed foreign to Hispano-Catholic experience. Gómez also kept a statue of Judith, naked, with the head of General Holofernes, dripping vermilion. Alejandro Vallejo, Políticos en la intimidad (Bogotá, 1936), p. 108.

unequivocal: he condemned Nazi materialism, coldness and bogus moralism and views of the purity of the German race. He saw Nazism as a warning to Catholics to reaffirm their traditional values, especially after the persecution of Catholics. There was certainly a trait of anti-Semitism in his thinking: he believed the power of Judaism to be underappreciated in South America. But the anti-Semitism of Gómez was of a Hispanic, Catholic genre, not a Central European one - derived from a stereotype of the Jew not as a moneylender but as murderer of Christ. Gómez' attitude to Mussolini was as unequivocal as his view of Hitler: he saw him as the product of a crisis in sterile parliamentary politics, a "prodigious opportunist" lacking in concern for universal values. Gómez considered it erratic to see in Fascism a defence against Bolshevism, and argued from the claim of Mussolini that Fascism was inimitable and peculiarly Italian that it was also irrelevant to Colombian needs.

Gómez borrowed extensively from Spanish experience. If his arguments of Spanish derivation were frequently shallow, they were never supine. In the shadow of the Spanish Civil War, Gómez referred repeatedly to Hispanic uniqueness. The Nationalist Spain provided the inspiration for sanctity, heroism, a superior moral leadership. He felt genuinely that the Civil War expiated past Spanish sins: and he was convinced that Colombia was hell-bent upon a similar course. He made no bones about it; Colombia had either to be anchored to the past or shipwrecked. The fate of the Third Republic in France was used to clinch the argument.

Gómez was burnt up by politics. Politics enveloped his personality. Despite illness he refused to be reduced to a political wallflower. Finding himself in a tight corner, he would withdraw abroad or to his home at Fontibón, a village outside Bogotá (now a suburb). But he was not content to be a spectator. His retirements, in part the product of pressure from his family to protect his health from political strains, were also tactical. He could proclaim that, disenchanted with politics,

he was retiring from them and taking a rest. During the breathing-space the party found there was no other leader around whom it could unite and Gómez read, acquired new debating materials and planned a comeback staged with the assistance of El Siglo. Retirement had advantages. It meant being spared the callers who made demands for posts that an opposition leader could not satisfy. And Gómez' family had good reason for concern: his ill-health caused him to hand power to Urdaneta in 1951. Gómez was photographed during the Rojas regime, relaxing as a family man on the Spanish beaches or reported giving an occasional lecture at a Spanish university. But while he seemed to enjoy moments of relief from Colombian politics, the impulse to return to them was always too great to be resistible. Gómez was uncomfortable, rudderless and lost in silence and inertia. He still desired to work out his personal destiny. Total retirement would be publicly discreditable and immoral: he would have misled his followers and be seen to be defeated by his opponents.

Gómez' attitudes to political morality were consistent in principle but ambiguous in practice. During his tenure of the Ministry of Public Works, he confronted Congressional obstructiveness, and became convinced that Congress was the lynchpin of Colombian immorality. But during the Olaya government Gómez pursued the same delaying tactics in Congress that he had once condemned: Congress was now the instrument that would 'repurify' the political system. But it did not. He professed his growing disenchantment not only with Congress but with the entire political system. He dilated upon its valuelessness, its moral bankruptcy. He described the political system as an exploitative conspiracy founded in greed, sloth, vanity and caprice: and he concluded, that Congress was an alien imposition, distant from Colombian needs, whose defects could be remedied not by new Conservative recruits alone but by a total overhaul of the entire system, perhaps a remodelling along corporatist lines experimented with in Portugal.

Gómez expressed concern about the institution of the presidency. He criticized Olaya for autocratic methods and López for reducing the institution from its pedestal with broadcast harangues. It was Gómez' professed concern to restore the prior prestige of the presidency, to remove it from the market-place, to undo the damage done by Liberal administrations.

For Gómez the Colombian solution - and recipe for the moral foundation of a modern Colombian state - was a combination of himself, a faultless providential figure in the presidency, and a corporate system which he came genuinely to believe, could reflect popular demands more accurately than parliamentarianism. In his analysis economic interests and social cleavages had little place: they were petty, trivial, worldly things by comparison to the glories of the Republic or the crusade of the Catholic Church. In his writings Gómez barely made reference to economics - which he could not discuss with the knowledge or conviction of Ospina Pérez, Estebán Jaramillo or Carlos Lleras. He made rhetorical appeals to administrative reform - "Interventionism of the state....is more a phenomenon of bureaucratic growth than of scientific action" - but he never spelt out proposals in any detail.[1] His main concern was to impose a metaphysical harmony upon an empirically incompatible whole. He glossed over conflicts of race or class, interesting himself only in conflict of faction, party or morality. Conservatism, for Gómez, was a creed, an expression of faith: and Gómez conceived of himself as the Moses who cut out the articles of faith of the party on the stones of Sinai: a posture which met with incredulity among diplomats and sneers in sophisticated capital-city circles but won applause at a local village and small-town level where the bulk of the Conservative electorate was.

F. Laureano Gómez and Use of the Press

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1. Sábado, 24 July, 1943.

Gómez knew how to use the press as no other Conservative of his generation. The Jesuits who had educated him and observed his talents gave Gómez the opportunity, as a young man, to edit the newspaper La Unidad. La Unidad, facing the competition of a newspaper run by the older-generation party leadership, El Nuevo Tiempo, could hardly survive in Bogotá, a city of perhaps two hundred thousand persons of whom the majority was Liberal.[1] Gómez, in a desperate bid for readers and advertising, horrified the establishment with allegations that the doyen of patrician respectability, Archbishop Bernardo Herrera Restrepo had been involved in squalid emerald dealings. Gómez made himself a name and won the acclaim of members of the same generation who had a similar desire to prick the sensibility of their elders but lacked Gomez' audacity. In 1918 he was already described as "the most loved chief of a combative youth..."[2]

During the 1918 election campaign Gómez used La Unidad to unite Liberals and Republicans with younger Conservatives around the candidature of Guillermo Valencia. The Nuncio intervened hoping to persuade Gómez to switch his support from Valencia to Marco Fidel Suárez so as to unite the Conservative party: but even the promise of the diplomatic post of his choice did not tempt him.[3] Grounds of ideological difference between Suárez and Gómez hardly existed. Gómez tried to draw Liberals with the assertion that Suárez represented "ultramontane ideas and theocratic pretensions incompatible with the modern constitution of a civilized people".[4] Suárez was portrayed shielding himself behind the cassocks of mother Church. The customary opposition claptrap - the bad example of government to youth, its ineptitude in international relations - were fully deployed. Suárez won the election: but the strength of

1. Azula Barrera, op. cit., p. 142.
2. Luis Eduardo Nieto Caballero, Colombia joven (Bogotá, 1918), p. 44.
3. La Linterna, Tunja, 14 June, 1916.
4. La Unidad, 7 Feb., 1917.

Gómez was such that Suárez tried again to co-opt him with an offer of the Ministry of the Treasury: Gómez turned it down, requesting Public Works unsuccessfully.[1]

Gómez was frivolous in his political activity in the 'twenties. He had used La Unidad as a political training-ground and been sacked from it for offences against good taste (the Jesuits set the criteria). Until after the Depression Gómez was more interested in gaining Congressional, diplomatic and ministerial experience than in the press. He maintained a running feud with El Nuevo Tiempo until its demise: in 1931, he even wrote from Germany to say that it was so sold out to Yanqui interests as to be ready for burial.[2] On his return in 1932 a group of admirers reformed La Unidad: Gómez ignored it.[3]

Gómez began by contributing to the newspaper El Pais: but this was inadequate for his purposes. It represented a cross-section of Conservative opinion when Gómez wished to build a personal machine: and any attempt of his to place it at his own disposal came up against severe resistance. Lacking a general direction of policy, El Pais was tottering: the decision of Gómez and a Conservative prominent in Cartagena, José de la Vega, to launch a rival El Siglo eliminated it.

El Siglo was always a precarious enterprise. It was Gómez' only major venture into business. At its inception its majority shareholder was Alejandro Angel, the leading Antioqueño coffee-marketing magnate. But, in 1937, he fell out with both Gómez and de la Vega. Liberals suspected differences between Angel and the editors over the Ospina candidature: Angel mentioned differences with Gómez and de la Vega over costs, especially wage increases. After a crisis in which Angel spoke of liquidating the enterprise and the management ordered its provisional suspension, agreement was reached by which the newspaper was taken over

1. El Nuevo Tiempo, 4 Dec., 1925.
2. Renovación, Ocaña, 7 Nov., 1931.
3. La Unidad, 19 July, 1932.

entirely by Gómez and de la Vega.[1] El Siglo was more successful than any of its Conservative predecessors in building a circulation. It had staying-power, despite Liberal competition in Bogotá and Conservative in the provincial capitals. Its expansion was favoured by the abstention policy of the mid-'thirties: while Conservatives had no voice in Congress or the Cundinamarca assembly, El Siglo and the radio were the only instruments of Conservative articulation in Bogotá. It survived the reduction of advertising in the Second World War, though it had to bend its policy towards the United States when the United States embassy put pressure on allied firms not to advertise in it in 1941.[2] It took advantage of improvements in communication with rural areas and in the slow growth of literacy. In the continuing battle to broaden its readership - and even to maintain its circulation - El Siglo made excursions into sensationalism, smear-campaigning and scandalmongering. It resorted to hints, dark intimations and outright calumny. It tried to make mileage out of millimetres. Like the Liberal press, it doctored documents; but did so more often. El Siglo never overestimated the intellect of its readers: regarded in elite Bogotano quarters as predictable, laughable and sometimes contemptible, it aimed at a less sophisticated, predominantly rural audience for whom it might be, apart from a parochial magazine, the only reading matter. El Siglo repeated the same points till they became eternal verities. It garbled the speeches of its opponents and then uttered outraged shrieks of being misrepresented itself. It attacked censorship but was censorious in its selection of news. By 1942 or 1943 El Siglo was a national institution: admired by credulous readers, loathed by its opponents but always taken into account.

The prime purpose of El Siglo was to inflate the public personality

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1. La Defensa Social, 23 Oct., 1937.
2. See above, pp. 41 ff.

of Gómez and to deflate that of his opponents: it did both with some success. It contained photographs of him, editorials and political articles by him, reproductions of his speeches, reports of his travels and activities. He wrote as a literary critic under a pseudonym and drew cartoons (bad ones) under a different one. In his absences from the country, El Siglo was at a loss for subject-matter: it wept at the vacuum that he left, and fell back upon vilification of his opponents. Gómez had a genius for being newsworthy. He used to generate events which his newspaper could report and which his competitors could not afford to ignore for fear of loss of circulation. Gómez used the press to prepare responses: El Siglo, on one day, anticipated a mass welcome for a heroic Gómez returning from Europe or Ecuador, and on the next confirmed its prediction with headlines, photographs, speeches and 'plebiscites' of support drawn in from the provinces. All contrived to give the impression that the scale of the expected event had been surpassed and to create at a local level a sense of solidarity and sharing in the occasion. (The opposing press, by contrast, used hardly mention the arrival, relegated it to an interior page, and added how disappointed and demoralized the party leadership was by the small turnout). El Siglo did not, however, project only Gómez: he left some freedom of action to his collaborators on El Siglo, partly because he wished to avoid the stigma of party dictator and partly because de la Vega insisted that younger Conservatives should be won over with space for articles.

El Siglo was more than a newspaper: the 'blue room' of its building was a meeting-place for Conservatives in the 'forties where they haggled for patronage and posts. It became the focus of Liberal attack. Liberals who complained of the inertia of Conservatives before El Siglo was founded now wished Gómez was more inert: they postured about the old-world reticence of Restrepo, Concha and Pedro Nel Ospina and about

the fact that Gómez did not mellow with the years.

In the 'forties El Tiempo came to mirror El Siglo. El Tiempo enhanced the reputation of Gómez by singling him out for attack. The two newspapers proclaimed competing idealisms, denied the tissues of lies which they represented their opponents as perpetrating, reported on day-to-day intrigues, published cartoons, small ads, gossip, sport, beauty-queens and edifying articles by the locally erudite. There the similarities ended. El Siglo was explicitly the personal tribune of Gómez, El Tiempo only implicitly that of Santos. Gómez founded El Siglo so that he could bask in the glare of a publicity of his own making: it had to be sold if he was to keep in the limelight. Santos preferred to operate in the shadows though his actual grip over El Tiempo was perhaps greater than that of Gómez over El Siglo. El Tiempo put less stress upon the unique qualities of its owner and projected itself rather than its boss as epitomizing the residual virtues of the nation. The styles of Santos and Gómez were different: but the purpose was the same - the conversion of a newspaper into a personal vehicle.

G. Gómez and the use of oratory.

Gómez put his rhetorical powers to effect at an early age. He made his oratorical debut in 1906 at a street demonstration after the Reyes government transported luminaries like Abadía Méndez to prison-camps in the jungle-bound villages of Mocoa and Orocué. He admired Concha as the best orator of an earlier generation.[1] He spoke on behalf of the Valencia candidature in the 1918 election. But his reputation was established by an onslaught on Suárez in 1921.

Gómez had been outspokenly opposed to the election of Suárez.[2] For Gómez and for most of his peers, Suárez epitomized the platitudinous self-satisfaction of an extinct generation. Suárez was forbidding:

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1. Molina, op. cit., p. 199.
2. See above, pp. 95 ff.

it was, therefore, attractive to reduce him to size. Gómez sought to embarrass Suárez by attacking his appointees: the notorious Jorge Roa, who occupied the profitable post of fiscal agent in London and was Minister of War for Suárez; Pedro Nel Ospina who, as Governor of Antioquia, was alleged by Gómez to be handling loans without the endorsement of certificates.[1] Sustaining the level of opposition to the government was difficult. There was little muck to rake in the poverty of Colombia after the First World War. Opportunities for fiscal irregularities were negligible. Not much of the mud that stuck to Roa or Ospina splattered upon Suárez. Gómez was already being dismissed as a seven days' wonder. To maintain public interest he had to shift his attention to Suárez. Only one course was open: the fabrication of a plausible conspiracy. With López, Gómez concocted charges against Suárez of graft in negotiation with a British firm: an accusation particularly hurtful for a man who had cultivated a reputation for integrity and had patronized his juniors on its role in public life. López formulated the attack, and Gómez catapulted it in Congress.[2] He spoke with such eloquence and such apparent assurance of his rightness that an easily scandalized Congress was convinced. The tone of Gómez' expose had a rancour unheard since Miguel Antonio Caro was at his rhetorical peak in the 1880's. The speech suggested the virtues of political euthanasia: it left Suárez with no alternative but resignation and gave Gómez a reputation as a demolition expert that he would never shake off.

The destruction of Suárez established the style for which Gómez was to become famous: a combination of innuendo, false or selective charges, complaints of high-handedness, exploitation of petty foibles and lengthy appeals to the greater, national interest. Yet Gómez used this style less often than his opponents made out. More usually he resorted

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1. Jorge Sánchez Camacho, Biografía....Ospina (Bogotá, 1955), p. 147.
2. Eduardo Zuleta Angel, El Presidente López (Bogotá, 1961), p. 121.

to mere Congressional interjections, sometimes acid, frequently elusive. Only for a brief period in the 1940's did Gómez engage in extended set-piece speeches: and he found it difficult to sustain their momentum. Liberals still admit that Gómez could dominate Congress as none of them. His personality made an individual imprint - his magnetic presence, his stoop and hunching back in older age. For Gómez words were quicksilver: they cascaded from his mouth and would move and mobilize an enthusiastic following. At any poor speech, his opponents rushed to say that the old magic had evaporated. But El Siglo always reassured the faithful that the master was in excellent form and was about to launch a new and even more effective onslaught. Sometimes he did.

H. Laureano Gómez and the Church.

The relationship of Gómez with the Church was particularly fraught. He attended mass frequently, and was punctilious in observance. In his youth he saw that ruffling religious susceptibilities was the quickest road to public notoriety. His skirmishes with Herrera Restrepo were repeated throughout his career but, despite them, Gómez constantly protested his irreproachable orthodoxy. The local priesthood often preferred the line of El Siglo and was prepared to risk the strictures of their superiors. Support for El Siglo had a double appeal locally: it constituted an act of defiance against the centralizing metropolitan Church; it expressed local dilemmas that in the harsh exigencies of Liberal regimes it was a necessary and godly duty to seize upon vigorous language in order to project truth.[1]

The belief of Gómez that he was an instrument of God's will pervaded his relationship with the Church. He made his beliefs abundantly clear.

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1. The comment of Richard Pattee, a Catholic from the United States, is revealing. "Would it be possible to conceive of a worse situation than that of Colombia in which El Siglo, the mouthpiece of Laureano Gómez, supposedly reflects the Catholic view of things?" Pattee, America, 29 Jan., 1944, quoted by Sister Suzanne Dailey, "United States Reactions to the Persecution of Protestants in Colombia" (Unpublished thesis, St. Louis University, 1971), pp. 68-9.

that the Church could be a bulwark of the social order only if it opposed Liberalism, that the "revolution on the march" had exposed an anticlerical face in its projected divorce and education legislation, and that any compromise with Liberalism would betray the Church's mission. Its duty was to speak out. Gómez looked for a closed-shop monopoly of Catholic sentiment: but Archbishop Perdomo would not have it. The experience of the 1930 election had been too embarrassing. When Gómez failed in his courting of the Primate and Nuncio, he changed his tactic, courting instead provincial hierarchies and cajoling the capital-city religious establishment.

The Church was divided in its attitude to Gómez. Churchmen had not enthused when Gómez had espoused Gandhi; he was hardly a Catholic saint. Until the Concordat debate of 1941-3 Gómez was prepared to go to any lengths to embarrass those sectors of the Church that did not go along with him. The debate changed that. Feeling outsmarted by Liberals(El Tiempo even tried to forge an alliance of Santista Liberals with the metropolitan Church from which the Church recoiled) Gómez had been forced into anti-Church postures that conflicted with his earlier pronouncements. As his influence slowly increased from 1943, Gómez was careful not to alienate sectors of the Church, and came to accept the political neutrality of the metropolitan establishment.

Forced out of office in 1953, Gómez fell back upon his old divisive tactics. He attempted to extract statements from Church leaders that the government was illegimate in order to embarrass Rojas: but he mistook his tactics. The official organ of the metropolitan curia, El Catolicismo, considered the presidency vacated.[1] The rector of the Jesuit Universidad Javeriana, Father Félix Restrepo considered Rojas

1. Laureano Gómez, Desde el exilio (Bogotá, 1956) pp. 247-52; Laureano Gómez y la jerarquía eclesiastica - cartas cruzadas....entre el jefe del conservatismo y eminentes figuras de la iglesia católica Colombiana (Bogotá, 1955), p. 13.

legitimate, not a usurper - and rebuked the bitterness of Gómez. And when Gómez attempted to extract advantage from long-standing competition for local power between the Bishop of Tunja and the canons of the cathedral, he forgot to count with the likelihood that Boyacense canons would align with the Boyacense Rojas.

I. Laureano Gómez at a local level

Gómez was a shrewd judge of how politics were understood at a local level. He understood the degree of religiosity that had to be injected into political speeches to make them persuasive. He carefully judged his audiences: in Boyacá, he identified with the "martyred" soil; in Antioquia, he referred to local houses, incidents, sentiments; in Málaga, Eastern Santander, his religious utterances were calculated to appeal to clerical caciques like Daniel Jordán;[1] a eulogy to the dead at the Conservative Convention at Chía, Cundinamarca, in 1932, suggested a record of the saints.[2] Gómez projected a primitive Christian sense of good in combat with evil that made him comprehensible to rural Conservatives and easily acceptable to a semi-educated rural clergy that found the intellectual disquisitions of its capital-city superiors unattractive. Gómez spanned the gulf between electors and elected as no other figure of national dimensions - except López and, between 1945 and 1948, Gaitán. Gómez contrived an emotionalized situation that would generate political activism. His language was vivid, his metaphor intense. He expressed himself in terms of extreme situations: triumph and defeat, failure and success, glory and disaster; and appeared to believe in them. It was as

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1. In January, 1933 Gómez was prohibited from speaking in Málaga. His intended speech was locally published. After asserting that there had been no political violence six years before, he moved into a religious vein. He had not come, he said, to open a chapter of rancorous recrimination but to extend his cordial sympathy and to repeat the words of the Evangelist, "If we have worked badly, give testimony of ill; and if well, why do you wound us?" Gómez, Comentarios...., pp. 290 ff.

2. Gómez, op. cit., p. 275.

if he was setting out not to propagate a policy but to win adoration: in Boyacá, portraits of him were erected in cottages next to the Sacred Heart. Gómez could convince caciques and also forge direct links with his following by conveying his message in clear, simple terms - the choice between death and redemption. His political interventions were powerfully dramatic; his figure athletic and warlike; his posture arrogant; his command of language and of diction were impressive: his economy of action drew paeons of praise from a Boyacense leader of the peculiar sceptical insight of Rafael Azula Barrera.[1]

In the slavish biographies written for popular consumption, Gómez was presented in messianic terms: "....Gómez....has not yielded an inch from his convictions....He is as Conservative as the first martyrs of the Catholic Church were Christian...The propriatory victim will be Gómez, only he...the New Moses." He was a man above inflated, petty prides, mediocre preoccupations, idle languishings; his attraction was magnetic, his personality irresistible.[2]

Part of the strength of Gómez in the Conservative party drew from the knowledge that he could go over the heads of his peers and appeal directly to the party following by radio. Some of his Congressional speeches of the 'forties were clearly calculated more for their impact outside Congress than their impression inside. Gómez, by 1949, was successful, in rural Eastern Colombia, at least, in spinning a legend around himself as the carrier of light who took Colombia out of sixteen years of darkness and gloom into the semi-light of Ospina to which he added total illumination in 1950.

I. Laureano Gómez in power.

An exterior of iron covered an indecisive, temporizing and self-doubling interior which surfaced after Gomez assumed office. Gómez had

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1. Azula, op. cit., p. 34.

too easily believed that the qualities that had made him an effective opposition leader would equip him for presidential office. But no amount of boldness, bluff or bravura would conceal his weakness. Gómez was imprisoned by the machinery he had himself set up. He had promised the business sector a firm, strong, stable government that would make continued economic expansion possible. He had promised the Conservative youth movement a Conservative revolution that would answer Leftist and Communist revolution.[1] He promised, in his inaugural speech, to respond to clerical demands: "The Patria awaits with anxiety the intensification of this sublime apostolate (of the Church), from where immense goods and uncountable blessings will result."[2] He promised Liberals he would "strip myself of all partisan passion to be president of all Colombians..."[3] He had promised to eliminate the corruption and horse-trading of his competitors. In only one respect was Gómez untied by commitment: he had few debts to pay off, he had risen to office almost entirely through his own efforts and had a free hand in choosing his ministers. Yet he was constrained in the sense that he had to perform a shrewd balancing-act between Conservative sectors, and, at the same time, to keep Liberals at bay. To satisfy the business elements, Gómez had to curb warlike and genocidal sentiment at base: but the upsurge of local-level fanaticism in the vacuum before his inauguration had stimulated clerical and cacique revanchisme in remote area; and government had to work through local revanchistes if it was to have a presence at all. To win the confidence of the Liberal leadership, Gómez had to restrain the departmental and municipal Conservative police, which, during the transfer of power, had become accustomed to putting its own interpretation on instructions from above. In his Cabinet Gómez tried to neutralize those who proffered

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1. Velasco A., op. cit., pp. 257, 281.
2. República de Colombia, Discurso de posesión a la presidencia de la República, 7 de agosto 1950 (Bogotá, 1950), p. 3.
3. El Siglo, 18 June, 1950.

the hope of counter-revolution - Villarreal and Leyva - with others - like Domingo Sarasty - whose presence dispelled it. In dispensing jobs Gómez had to weigh the loyalty of members of the El Siglo staff against the qualities of younger place-seekers.[1] The 'revolution in order' ran out of steam even faster than the 'revolution on the march': it had no all-consuming ideological passion and no substantial legislative programme to carry it along. Very generalized promises - national redemption, for example - could not bear translation into specific legislation; slogans of managerial dirigisme were not embodied in new instruments of government intervention in the economy. Gómez had only one major piece of legislation to implement: a constitutional counter-reform, which divided the Conservative party. Some - largely Alzatistas - regarded it as a means of perpetuating Laureanistas in office. Others felt that it was irrelevant and consuming in congressional time and ministerial energy and that there were more urgent matters, like the Violencia. Others, still, accused Gómez of aping López and asked why he could not break away from drawing comparisons between himself and his friend: they did not believe that circumstances had changed so radically that the 1886 Constitution which they had defended so ardently in 1936 need now be abandoned as inadequate.

The result was continuing disarray and inert, directionless government. Gómez grasped at the limited opportunities to consolidate himself in power that there thrown up by the moment. He kept up a public appearance of optimism, but, by 1951, he was visibly failing, losing in both confidence and health.[2] After appearing decisive in opposition, he now seemed irresolute in power. Gómez had not, as he had hoped, shone as president: in opposition, he had shown dexterity in his sense of timing; in power, he could not spring surprises on the country,

1. Sábado, 5 Aug., 1950.
2. República de Colombia, Un año de gobierno, 1950-1951 (Bogotá, 1951), i p. 7.

because there were no media that could project them. The opposition press hardly gave him more than conventional space; and El Siglo had sprung so many surprises that they ceased to be astonishing. Gómez failed to release himself from the Conservative aspirations and the Liberal hatreds which his name symbolized. Gómez had failed palpably in his 'moralizing' purpose. Censorship lent credence to the belief that his government was as clogged down with corruption as any other. No mythologized pre-1936 "spiritual" fasting for the Colombian state was recaptured. An already chaotic party was further destabilized by manipulation behind the scenes about a successor as the health of Gómez ebbed.

The experience of office brought out in Gómez a degree of sympathy for his predecessors: at last he appreciated the practical limits of presidential action. Gómez seemed genuinely to appreciate the conciliatory gestures made, in particular, by López who, horrified at the handling of violence by Ospina and Andrade in 1949-50, hoped Gómez would have a better record. The fact that these gestures came to nothing was not a product of lack of will on the part of either Gómez or López: the action of each was circumscribed by the demands of intransigent followers - an intransigence which each had, at different times, been responsible for promoting. Gómez who had given hope, if not physical support, to armed uprisings against his predecessors, could not expect to be immune from those who wanted vengeance.

J. Laureano Gómez and the army.

Claiming that Olaya mismanaged the Leticia crisis, Gómez courted the army in 1933-4. But, at no time, did he dare to place all his bets upon a military uprising, preferring a more conventional rise to power where there was less risk of being outmanoeuvred. He attracted the support of General Amadeo Rodríguez who, after an inglorious career in

the Peruvian war, complained bitterly at the treatment of the army by Olaya and even offered his services to Paraguay in the Chacó War. Gómez probably in the hope of winning veteran and military support against Liberal governments of a pronounced civilian complexion, arranged for Rodríguez to be a member of the National Conservative Direction in 1936. The alliance was fruitless: Rodríguez was not uniformally popular in the army.

Gómez, in the 'forties, put out feelers to establish a power-base in the army: but a sizeable sector of the officer corps felt the same distaste at Laureanista proselytizing in the army as they did at Liberal penetration of the police force. Gómez seemed to smile upon conspiracies against Liberal governments but the evidence was circumstantial. As the possibility of his own rise to power grew, from 1945 Gómez disengaged from action that would politicize the army: but the memory of his attempts to suborn its independence remained and was revived by General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla between 1951 and 1953.

K. Laureano Gómez out of office

Gómez looked more comfortable in the more familiar milieu of opposition from 1953. From Spain he launched diatribes against the diabolical worldly ambition of the Rojas regime: in an extensive correspondence, he strove to stir up the clerical support that had surrounded him in 1949. Gómez reacquired the sting he had lost in office; he branded Rojas as a usurper at a moment when much of the 'oligarchy' supported him but could not legitimize the '13 July'. The opposition of Gómez was harping, cantankerous and all too predictable. He seemed to alternate violently: too embittered at one moment to act with moderation, he was too nervous at the next to act at all. His correspondence was tetchy, self-pitying, that of a martyr seeking recognition of his sacrifice. He never tired of reminding audiences of his paterfamilial

devotion and how it befitted a good son of the Church; of how he had done badly by his family, dragging them into the mire of politics, and, thence, into exile with him. His correspondents were not allowed to forget how Gómez had foresworn earthly pleasures in the noble spirit of sacrifice and dedication to the Church and the patria. And what reward did he receive? Calumny. And he would suffer it.[1] But not in silence.

The Rojista case against Gómez was expanded by the experience of his government. The Minister of Government for Rojas, Lucio Pabón Núñez, recounted not only the attacks of Gómez upon Herrera Restrepo and Suárez but allegations that Gómez wanted to dishonour the army, was displeased at the popularity of Urdaneta in it, and pressed for a government of anti-Ospinista complexion rather than a united Conservative. He was said to want a presidency that was effectively non-transferable, moving only within a small Laureanista clique.[2] Gómez made no straight reply to the allegations : he lacked allies, was politically fading and felt demoralized. He made a point of turning down the pension due to an ex-president until the date of the conclusion of his expected term of office - August, 1954.[3] Slowly he adjusted to the view that coexistence of the two parties was necessary, that the loss of one devitalized the other, that interplay was healthy and mutually rewarding. For Gómez, the regime of Rojas, an interloper, was more reprehensible than Liberal governments that had reached power lawfully. Merging with the Liberals in the insipid Republican tradition would be damaging to both parties: but an agreement between the two leaderships could launch a civilian movement against the military government in which the purified traditions of both parties could coexist. When the Rojas government overstepped

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1. Gómez, Desde el exilio, esp. pp. 24, 145, 153.
2. República de Colombia, Conferencia radial del señor ministro de gobierno, Doctor Lucio Pabón Núñez, como replica al manifesto del ex-Presidente, Laureano Gómez, y otros documentos (Bogotá, 1954), pp. 12. 19, 24, 26.
3. Hugo Escobar Sierra, Dos hombres, dos políticos (Bogotá, 1961), pp. 9, 12, 14-15.

itself, Gómez, after much bluff and intense effort to extract maximum concessions for the Laureanistas, was willing to meet Liberals halfway over a bipartisan National Front policy.

2. Mariano Ospina Pérez.

Mariano Ospina Pérez was born into a "presidential lineage" that combined the virtues considered desirable for those in office: prowess in battle, industry in work, respect for parents and conformity in religion.[1] He was born into a milieu of political discussion and public service: the Ospinas were compared by Alzate, in hyperbolic mood, to the Cecils and Chamberlains.[2] Both Ospina's uncle and his grandfather were presidents; his father was a prominent businessman in Antioquia. The Ospina dynasty recognized the potential talent of Mariano in his youth: he was carefully groomed for office. His background induced a self-confidence which made him appear comfortable in power: foreign correspondents remarking upon his serenity compared him to European monarchs and contrasted him with his uneasy predecessors. For Ospina there has been no question of rising; there have been few personal struggles; and, as a consequence, he has been a man of few rankling resentments and without enduring feuds.

From his youth Ospina moved freely but discreetly in 'oligarchic' circles. Discretion is the key to his character. He has never engaged in open polemic with influential sectors of the Church like Gómez; he never overtly disobeyed the instructions of the National Directorate by accepting posts proffered by Liberal regimes, unlike Roberto Urdaneta Arbeláez and Eduardo Zuleta Angel. He was never in open rebellion against the older generation leadership in Antioquia like Fernando Gómez Martínez.

Ospina received his first managerial experience on the family coffee,

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1. Juan Pardo Ospina, Tres presidentes de Colombia y semblanzas de grandeza (Bogotá, n.d.), p. 144.

2. Gilberto Alzate Avendaño, Sus mejores páginas (Manizales, 1966) p. 67.

tobacco and mining properties. In his youth he flirted with journalism, as co-founder of La Joven Antioquia, an undistinguished newspaper in Medellín that by attacking Reyes confirmed his civilian credentials. Ospina rose smoothly and dramatically through the normal Antioqueño channels of civic government in Medellín, departmental government and railway management; he endorsed local charities, was a member of the Sociedad de mejoras públicas, and was briefly editor of the Medellín evening newspaper, La Defensa. He established his reputation in Congress in 1924 with a speech that secured the passage of a government project on the public debt. Ospina moved to Bogotá to live but kept his connexions with Medellín through his friends and family - in particular, a cousin Luis Navarro Ospina, and responded to Antioqueño Catholic sentiment by annual attendance at the procession of the Holy Sepulchre in Medellín on Good Fridays.[1] Abadía recognized the talent of Ospina and, needing Antioqueño weighting in his Cabinet, appointed him Minister of Public Works in 1926.

A. Mariano Ospina Pérez and national politics, 1930-46.

In his career between 1926 and his elevation to the presidency in 1946 Ospina shows several consistent traits.

He was little concerned with ideology: he was usually content to endorse the 1886 Constitution and the principles of the 1849 Programme drawn up by José Eusebio Caro and his grandfather, Mariano Ospina Rodríguez. Sometimes he seasoned these with references to Burke and to the social doctrines of Leo XIII which he brought out of Conservative mothballs for his campaign in 1946.[2] He was also influenced by anti-Communist feeling both in 1928-9 and when Urdaneta proposed an anti-Communist front at the beginning of the Cold War: but never engaged in

1. Sabado, 11 Apr., 1946.

2. See Mariano Ospina Pérez, "El pensamiento politico y social de León XIII", R.J. XV (1941), 295 ff.

fiery opposition to Communism, never drew simpliste equations between Communism and Liberalism, and was never publicly associated with Falangism. Ospina was never dogmatically in favour of exclusive private enterprise and supported an ill-defined degree of state interventionism.

The first concern of Ospina was with good management. His resignation from the Abadía government in 1927 followed the rejection by Congress of his proposals for an integrated transport - road and rail - plan. Ospina seems also to have foreseen the outcome of political mismanagement by the same government.[1] His concern was primarily with what he considered practical in any given situation: he preferred a talented Liberal administrator to an untalented Conservative one: despite local Conservative pressure he refused to sack a Liberal mayordomo who brought the local Liberals out to vote on his estate at Amagá.[2] He made his national reputation as manager of the National Federation of Coffee Growers where he was responsible for the first coffee census, for the foundation of coffee warehouses, education in agrarian technology, the control of marks of origin, technical stations and credit for coffee growers and took a substantial part in founding the Banco Agricola Hipotecario.[3] His success in withstanding partisan attempts to convert the Federation into a political tool was reflected in his unanimous re-election as president.

Between 1930 and 1946 Ospina was rarely a central figure in national party organization. His name was mentioned as a possible minister or Governor of Antioquia during the Olaya government, but he never joined it and, during the 1953 debate, attacked Gómez for both accepting Olaya's patronage and condemning his government. During the López administration he appeared from time to time on the National Directorate, where his

1. El Colombiano, 14 June, 1929; El Tiempo, 26-7 Aug., 1929.
2. Sabado, 11 Apr., 1946.
3. Sabado, 30 Mar., 1946.

presence suggested historic respectability (very important in the Conservative party), Antioqueño and big-business representation (the latter then rather thin among Conservative hierarchs) and a degree of acceptability to Liberals. But he was seldom to be seen tramping the country and restoring party morale. Ospina presented a veiled threat to Gómez: his name appeared first on the lists of the National Directorate as soon as Gómez had his heart-attack and then disappeared briefly when he recovered. During the Liberal governments he was outspoken in only one extended public debate: on coffee, where, acknowledged as Conservative of unequalled expertise, he attacked the first López administration for mismanagement and received considerable space in both El Siglo and El Colombiano to do so. His identification with Antioqueño business interests led Ospina to prefer tranquillity in debate and docility in the electorate: he registered his open disapproval of Gomez' policy of 'intrepid action' in 1939 by walking out of the Conservative Convention. But any disapproval of the actions of Gómez that he felt in the 'forties was muted. Ospina was no more identified with vocal opposition to Gómez from within the Conservative party than he was with out-and-out opposition of Gómez to Liberal administrations. The sporadic nature of his political activism opened him to charges of political opportunism from within his own party. When a strong alliance of newspapers pressed for his presidential candidature in 1938 and a Casa Ospinista was set up in Bogotá, Silvio Villegas, editor of La Patria, was pressed to withdraw, he remained silent until Silvio Villegas, editor of La Patria, had to withdraw the candidature and only then declared that he had never wanted it and had always been loyal to the decisions of the official party leadership.[1] Ospina was ready to associate his name with passing political phenomena where these might have repercussions, like the campaign for decentralization of revenues to the departments during

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1. See, above, pp. 45-6

1938-9: Ospina appeared at the meetings of the campaign, spoke only rarely, and never afterwards discussed the passing of the campaign with regret.

Ospina was a devoted but not an overzealous Catholic. When the family business was in poor shape after the War of the Thousand Days, the Jesuits awarded him a scholarship. He repeatedly expressed his gratitude for this: indeed, according to the first prospectus, he figured among the founder-professors of the Jesuit foundation, the Universidad Javeriana.[1] But Ospina did little to inflame Catholic sentiments: he neither dissociated the Conservative party from Catholicism, nor tried to put religion at the service of party.

B. Ospina in power.

Ospina was an intelligent choice of Conservative candidate in 1946. He had no provocative vision of a Falangist order; he was a guarantee against civil strife.[2] Only the Communists and some Gaitanistas expressed strong disapproval of Ospina.[3] Standing on a National Union ticket, Ospina won the grudging confidence of some establishment Liberals for whom he was more congenial than either of the Liberal candidates: they expected only a lame-duck presidency like that of Santos. Ospina saw his own role as "maintaining the equitable distribution of discontent."[4]

Ospina brought a businesslike style to government. He was up daily at six in the morning to read the newspapers, and at eight was in his office. He asked questions of all, and said nothing and then decided. He received a daily list of economic indicators on his desk: the coffee price in New York, the height of the water on the River Magdalena, the dollar exchange rate. He kept careful track too of details: the

1. R.J., I (1933), Prospectus, 21-4.
2. Sabado, 9 June, 1945.
3. Jornada spoke of simony, 6 July, 1946.
4. Sabado, 5 July, 1947.

quantity of milk marketed, for example, in Cúcuta.[1] Ospina looked primarily for administrative ability in choosing his ministers. The república literaria, it was said, was replaced by the republica financiera.[2] His first Cabinet represented the business virtues: it was upright but it was not apparently abrasive.

Ospina was a politician of commonplace statement. He was never magniloquent and displayed a positive distaste for oratory but developed, in office, a talent for impromptu speeches which served as a substitute for set-pieces of rhetoric. He lacked the flourishes, the rich literary allusions and powerful punch-lines that made the speeches of Gómez memorable: but the very fact that Ospina never betrayed himself by overemphasis meant that his speeches were forgotten and never held against him. Ospina substituted mobility and visibility for rhetorical panache: in early 1947 he visited Antioquia, the West, the Costa and Boyacá: journeys that had made politicians ill in the 'twenties were now eased by road improvements. He was also careful to be seen frequently - usually dancing.[3] Ospina exploited popular sympathies to the full: he interlaced his speeches with familiar references and employed a homespun style. He nurtured a gran campesino image which was not entirely false: Ospina was a man of simple tastes, whose preference for a dish of fríjoles was genuine, not merely diplomatic. He was a man who enjoyed cattle-fairs, who was fascinated by improvements in breeds and feeds, grasses and questions of agrarian mechanization. It was wholly appropriate that on the morning of the death of Gaitán he should be visiting a livestock fair. He was more at ease on retreat in his hacienda where he displayed a sense of humour which was not so publicly visible: he said that he must change the names of certain cattle on his Antioqueño estates from

1. Semana, 14 June, 26 July, 1947.
2. Sabado, 8 Nov., 1947.
3. Semana, 14 June, 1947.

those of the crises of Liberal governments, Mamatoco, Handel and so on. Conservatives insisted that, unlike Liberal leaders, his knowledge of the country was not academic; that he was not a patrician of cosmopolitan tastes, who read the New Statesman like López or joined U.N.O. commissions like Alberto Lleras.[1] When Bogotanos shouted Mueras to the oligarchy in the late 1940's, Ospina was rarely an object of venom.

Ospina's selection of ministers was unimaginative and unexceptional - at least until the choice of José Antonio Montalvo as Minister of Government in late 1947. He began his government by selecting Conservatives from two groups - those who had served under Abadía Méndez before 1930 (his kinsman Francisco de Paula Pérez, Alejandro Cabal Pombo and Montalvo): and thpse labelled Lopista Conservatives because they had defied Directorate discipline and entered the Liberal government (Urdaneta, Zuleta Angel). The notable exception was Manuel Serrano Blanco whom Ospina selected as Minister of Government: Serrano was a Santandereano whom Ospina hoped would, in effect, represent the Santanders and Boyacá where Ospina proved to be an ineffectual choice: there was nobody who could unite Conservative and Liberal in Boyacá and the Santanders. In selecting Conservatives, Ospina seemed to play for safety, since his own position was unassured. In appointing men of experience from the 'twenties, he frustrated the ambitions of a younger generation who flocked to the banner of Gilberto Alzate Avendaño. Ospina's choice of Liberal ministers hardly endeared him to any sector of the party: reluctant to appoint those who carried prestige, for fear of Conservative reaction or of being overshadowed, he selected the unknown and the mediocre. Ospina was not a maker of political reputations: he did not have his muchachos like López: indeed, he had fewer political offspring than Santos, who gave both Gaitán and Carlos Lleras their first

1. Alzate, op. cit., pp. 67, 73; Rafael Azula Barrera, De la revolución al orden nuevo . - proceso y drama de un pueblo (Bogotá, 1956), pp. 262-3.

ministerial posts. His only significant protegés were Hernán Jaramillo Ocampo, whom Gómez subsequently recruited as Minister of Finance and who has been considered presidenciable but never reached a candidature; and Misael Pastrana Borrero, who was still very junior when Ospina left office but rose rapidly through ministries and embassies until becoming president in 1970. Ospina failed to recruit many new politically convincing figures, partly because he put a higher priority on administrative than political talent, and partly because in the boom of the late 'forties talented young men felt there was more future in business than in politics. As president, Ospina behaved more as primus inter pares than as dominant figure. Yet his knowledge of Colombia was such that no minister received complete independence of decision, except in foreign affairs, Ospina's one area of lassitude. Ospina left a personal imprint upon his government that was confirmed by his steadfast refusal both to leave the palace on the '9 April' and admit a military junta to his administration.

Perhaps comparison with the Olaya government was inevitable (at least from Liberals). Certainly Ospina lacked some of Olaya's flair for political balancing; but Olaya had experienced working in the Republican government of Restrepo, while Ospina had only that of serving the entirely Conservative Abadía administration. Olaya was not overshadowed from within his own party by Laureano Gómez. The opppsition to Olaya was downcast and downtrodden: that to Ospina was not. The rising Gaitanista movement and five Liberals of presidential experience - López, Santos, Alberto Lleras, Echandía and Carlos Lozano y Lozano - were ranged against Ospina: Olaya, by contrast, was faced only by two ex-presidents, Abadía who was discredited and Restrepo who collaborated willingly. Olaya had the assistance of Estebán Jaramillo to smoothe Colombia through the Depression; Jaramillo died within months of Ospina's election, and the only economist of comparable stature, Carlos Lleras, was an ardent opponent of Ospina. Ospina had also to contend with a newspaper war

raging throughout his presidency. Ospina did, however, strive to rise above the atmosphere of elite defeatism of the late 'forties, and, until 1949, had some success. His contempt for zeal and disengagement from social passion opened him to charges by Liberals of callous indifference that seemed substantiated by his slowness to act after the speeches of Montalvo or the outrages committed by the chulavitas (Conservative political police) in Boyacá. A perceptive Liberal commentator alleged that Ospina's main failure was his blindness to passion:[1] but, in a sense, the strength of Ospina lay in his ability to steel himself against violence and keep a cool head during the acceleration of rural outrages. In the crisis of 1949 Ospina was forced by both parties into autocratic practice that ran counter to his prior statements and subsequent action. For the first time Ospina personally was the object of Liberal animosities: it took over a decade to restore Liberal confidence in him, and some apprehensions persist.

Ospina's relations with his fellow Conservative leaders were rarely warm. Ospina admired Gómez for his persistence in opposition and ability as an organizer: but he was less manipulable than Gómez expected. After 1948 both leaders kept a facade of chilly cordiality that hardly concealed differences over the handling of relations with the Liberal party. Ospina's regard for Gómez did not extend to Guillermo León Valencia. Gómez was a man who had fought to establish a reputation: Valencia had not. Both from established families, Ospina believed Valencia had done nothing to ground himself in matters of industrial relations, business management and agrarian technology; had done little to organize the party, and had only played the part of a hunting-and-fishing provincial aristocrat and son of the Poet to the point of exaggeration. Rivalries between the two families were of long standing:

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1. Abelardo Forero Benavides, Sábado, 1 May, 1948.

the Valencias treated the Ospinas with some disdainful distance as of inferior breeding. Resentment deepened when Valencia, from the Senate and as President of the National Directorate, led the hard-line Conservative opposition at the beginning of Ospina's term of office and - with Alzate - aroused Liberal fears that Conservatives intended to sabotage the National Union. Ospina tried to rid himself of the embarrassment of Valencia by offering him attractive diplomatic plums: he rejected them. Ospina's relationship with the Church was warm: he did nothing to alienate those sectors whom Gómez had estranged. The rector of the Universidad Javeriana, Padre Félix Restrepo, was said to be his personal counsellor. Unlike other Conservatives Ospina refused to exacerbate political feelings with interpretations of political behaviour in terms of sin and redemption, making reference only to uncontroversial statements by Leo XIII.[1]

Ospina aimed at a quiet, mildly reformist administration in which business could flourish unperturbed and where some of the benefits of post-war economic growth would percolate to the workers. He extended Liberal social reformism by legislating to provide overalls and shoes for industrial workers, for the expansion of social security schemes, for the abolition of chicha and the development of the Caja Agraria. His government gave indirect encouragement to Catholic unionism; but made little headway in minimum wage legislation. The admitted intention of his social reform programme was to conservatize.[2] He had no apparent wish to introduce new but unreliable political groups to form a personal power-base as López had done; he moved, instead, with dexterity between pre-existing power-groups whose behaviour was more predictable. Social reform expenditure was limited by opposition from both parties in Congress and by a rapid rise in public order expenditure. Ospina's practice of

1. Mariano Ospina Pérez, El gobierno de unión nacional. Ultimos meses de gobierno. Documentos de enero a agosto 1950 (Bogotá, 1950), viii, pp. 67, 103.
2. República de Colombia, La oposición y el gobierno (Bogotá, 1949), esp. p. 70.

political palliatives came too late, was too little and was executed too lethargically: the policies lacked conviction and failed to correspond to the needs of the political moment. Resourceful in expedients, Ospina, like Santos, was liable to present small concessions as if they had revolutionary dimensions. Ultimately Ospina failed to bring to government efficient managerial administration of a Coffee-Federation type: his étatiste vocabulary was not backed up by effective instruments of intervention - inspectorates, planning apparatus, efficient statistics offices and so on. His government failed miserably to combat post-war inflation and speculation. Rhetoric about government activism against speculation served only to aggravate growing resentments that exploded with the assassination of Gaitán. Only when Ospina gave his blessing to the first Currie mission, introduced by Emilio Toro and the Bank of the Republic, were tentative steps towards administrative overhaul taken.

C. Ospina out of office.

Ospina's subsequent career confirms the above impressions. Out of office he was as circumspect as in power: in 1950-1 he was carefully noncommittal about the Gómez government, asserting his loyalty and abstaining from comment. He has, at different times, reached an understanding with those who had before attacked him: Valencia, Carlos Lleras, Alzate. During his term of office he gained a taste for power, and sought re-election in 1954: his bid was abruptly terminated by the 1953 coup. He campaigned for re-election in characteristic manner. He did not found a newspaper: that would have been politically indiscreet, overcommitting him or being transparently evasive, and putting him in direct competition with the El Siglo group; it would also have been a loss-making enterprise. He had, anyway, the potential support of El Colombiano of which his brother-in-law was manager for forty years and, by careful bargaining, could hope to win the support of the greater part of the provincial Conservative press. Ospina hoped to be the beneficiary

rather than the architect of political alliances for a second time: he was shrewd in his manipulation of the electoral base built up by Alzate in Caldas and Cundinamarca and the organization maintained by Navarro Ospina in Antioquia; he saw to it that he had substantial support in the army and made a point of emphasizing the contrast between the repressive methods of the Gómez government and the conciliatory tactics of his own in conversation with Liberal leaders. And he showed a persistence and stubbornness in the quest for re-election that alarmed the Laureanista faction in 1952-3: Ospina resorted to underground pamphleteering when the censorship apparatus was concentrated against him.[1] Inevitably Ospina was accused of returning to Colombia to conspire : his tacit endorsement of the Rojas coup was the source of enduring friction with Laureanistas.[2]

Ospina withdrew in silence from political campaigning, and returned to his business interests. López wrote to his son in 1954 that while Ospina was disappointed, he was enjoying the compensations of flourishing business:[3] the Ospinas branched out into urban construction with such success that by 1970 they were operating in Caracas.

In one respect Ospina has been unique in Colombian politics: his wife, dissatisfied with being a mere observer, did not withdraw from publicity like the wives of his predecessors. She was prepared to break with crusty Bogotano traditions: she had learnt to drive when ladies never drove; she preferred to wear slacks. She recognized the importance of appealing to the barrios of Bogotá, some of them containing Conservative migrant refugees from Boyacá and the Santanders of the 'thirties. She was alive to the risks inherent in popular castigation of the National Union as an 'oligarchic' conspiracy; and, therefore, set

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1. See, above, pp. 79-81
2. Hugo Escobar Sierra, Dos hombres, dos políticos (Pamphlet, Bogotá, 1961), pp. 26, 28.
3. Alfonso López Michelsen, Los últimos días y cartas intimas de tres campañas (1929-1940-1958)(Bogotá, 1961), pp. 120-1.

in motion a campaign of friendship between the 'palace' and the barriado "...If she had been a politician, the leaders would have died of envy at her results".[1] Out of the personal friendships she created with those flowering orchids of the barrios, the Conservative caciques, grew a clientele and a support-base upon which, in the 'fifties, she built herself as an independent politician. Where her husband has been cautious and unhistrionic, Doña Berta has been extravagant in language, uncompromising, willing to take on all comers: she has, no doubt, been useful to her husband as a means of testing political reactions without committing him.

Ospina has remained one of the foremost influences within the National Front. Liberals have been willing to work with him. He was not anathema to them, like Urdaneta, tarred with the brush of having been a client of Liberal governments who turned round to persecute his patrons. He was widely respected, especially in elite circles for his coolness in the crisis of the '9 April': and he has capitalized heavily on the aphorism "Better a dead president than a fugitive one". He has avoided resuscitating dead polemics, and, as a matter of political necessity, has been forgiven for the events of 1949. He has even overcome the apparently implacable hostility of the Laureanistas in the early 'sixties. Despite his age he was seriously considered as a possible Conservative candidate for the 1970 election. Though never a man of masterstrokes who can arouse a chorus of indiscriminate adulation, Ospina remains uniquely capable of uniting disparate genres of Conservative industrialists with coffee-producers, peasant with urban leaders. He is still accused repeatedly of political dilettantism, of lack of forthright leadership, and of refusing to make up his mind until he has no alternative. Yet his opinion has been sought and respected by successive presidents and his

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1. Semana, 22 Feb., 1947, 5 June, 1948.

influence has extended into Liberal circles. His durability, in the last analysis, rests in his reading of an informal political structure, his knowledge of the party, his sensitivity to the political moment and his capacity to adjust to and with it.

3. Conclusions

Being a Conservative leader was hard work. It required consistency of behaviour: while Ospina and Gómez projected this with success, Urdaneta, for example, did not. His apparent shiftiness - willingness to accept posts from both López and Gómez - lost him the respect of both parties. Leadership demanded an interest in the localites, a concern for the party support-base. Ospina and Gómez displayed this. Urdaneta, again, is an example of a potential party leader who did not. He married into the Holguin family, perhaps the most influential landholders in Colombia, and championed an aristocratic, not a popular Conservatism. He detested caciquismo, stood aloof from party campaigning and standing on balconies, and made no effort to extend the radius of his political influence beyond Cundinamarca. He overestimated the capacity for political management of a small circle: "All", it was said in 1947 "was for him, a question of Enrique (Santos), Laureano, Alfonso, Eduardo, Mariano and now Jorge Eliécer".[1] Leadership required a capacity for balancing,mediation and conciliation: Ospina was, until 1949 and in the late 'fifties, adept at this between the parties; and Gómez was usually successful at conciliation within the party (or at pushing dissidents into isolation on the party perimeter). These were talents lacked, for example, by Alzate and Andrade. Leadership, again, implied a sense of timing, an ability to capture the appropriate moment - as Gómez did, in 1946, when he proposed the Ospina candidature - a talent not shared by, for example, Guillermo Valencia (though his son revealed it during the

1. Enrique Santos was the leading journalist on El Tiempo, Semana, 30 Aug., 1947.

Rojas government). Leadership took too a skill in calculation and in assessing the exploitable potential of inertia: Ramírez Moreno lacked these qualities. Leadership suggested, finally, a degree of intellectual credibility: Ospina established this through his writings on practical, business matters and his connexion with the Universidad Javeriana; Gómez built up an intellectual reputation through oratory and the press. Lack of intellectual esteem excluded the military from party leadership and rapidly diminished the reputation of General Rojas Pinilla. Only specialists at the Cadet School could hope to compete with civilians on intellectual grounds and civilians tended to dampen any reputation they acquired.

In the period studied a slow but perceptible shift in the focus of the party leadership can be detected. In the late 'twenties the veteran and clerical (or lay clerical) elements vyed with the insurgent business groups were clearly in the ascendancy; though, protected by Gómez - and with him as their representative - the lay clericals and the veteran residue made some momentary impression, more pronounced at the local than at the national level in the years 1949-52. It is a reflexion of the relative primitiveness of Colombian politics that these groups were never formalized and, at least, in public, did not identify themselves in such clearcut terms. This is, no doubt, because the area of overlap was considerable. A Conservative influenced by local priests into political participation was easily co-opted by the business elements and had no need to shed his earlier clerical identity. There were, anyway, different nuances of clerical or business influence: they were variously exerted, and, in the case of clerical influence, less directly so as the period studied proceeded.

Chapter Seven

Conservatism and the Regions.

Bogotá is not typical of Colombia: it has never been as dominant as Buenos Aires in Argentina or Santiago in Chile. Bogotano Conservatism is even less typical of Colombian Conservatism, for the Bogotano party has always formed a minority in the capital. Bogotá has, since the Viceroyalty of New Granada, performed the role of inter-regional conciliator, sitting, with oscillating confidence, upon highly disparate regional subcultures. The extant literature goes little way to explaining the importance of regionalism in Colombian politics. Dix, for instance, hints that "....Colombia's unusual multifaceted regionalism....persists and continues to have important implications for the country's development ...": but does not explore the suggestion.[1] Bogotano perceptions of the Conservative party are particularly distorted: first, because they are usually Liberal, if also moderate and conciliatory in tone; second, because they are shaped in a milieu dominated by government empleado groups with a vested interest in centralization. This chapter constitutes a brief attempt to escape the distorting lens of the capital-city.

1. The Regions, 1902-1930

The disposition of regional forces in 1902 was uncertain. No province had ever secured hegemonic control in republican Colombia. Ascendancies had been contingent upon shifting alliances of regions and dynasties and upon the centrally strategic location of Bogotá. Successive governments sought to bury the controversy over federalism versus centralism. The Reyes government panicked in a conflict over the aguardiente revenue with the regions, and the Suárez administration overreacted when faced with pressures to decentralize.[2] Tremors of secessionism led

1. Robert H. Dix, Colombia - The Political Dimensions of Change (London, 1967), pp. 23, 51-4.

2. See pp.

capital-city politicians, alert to the risks of Bogotá being isolated by regional alliances, to look for provincial partners.

But where to look? The Santanders and Boyacá were characterized by persisting factional animosities and fanatical clerical and anti-clerical rumblings. The 'Thousand Days' delivered the final blow to the old Cauca. Dismembered administratively and deprived of its earlier economic bases of mining and indigo, Cauca was enfeebled and impecunious. The Popayán elite chose between emigration to Cali or Bogotá and stagnation plus an ethos of nostalgia for a glorious colonial past.[1] While the particular identity of Popayán in Colombian politics was shattered, Cali was slow to assert one of its own. A sound basis for national reconstruction could not be found in an alliance of Bogotá with the old Cauca. The Costa was an unalluring ally: briefly a force to be reckoned with while led by Rafael Núñez in the 1880's and 90's, the Costa was impoverished to the point where local government was almost impossible outside the cities. Except in the cattle-ranching and sugar-producing areas, the conditions hardly existed to cement the Costa together as a political unit: in a society dominated by shuttling trade, mobile labour and casual serial unions, the family rarely acted as a politically unitary force and a system of patron-clientage was fluid. A Spanish-dominated elite was reluctant to politicize the submerged negro and mulato working classes for fear of racial conflict. Political allegiances could be created only by a charismatic figure or an external enemy: but there was neither. Tolima and Huila were too fragmented and underpopulated to project a coherent regional interest. That left Antioquia and Caldas, the new migrant department hammered out of Antioquia by Reyes.

2. Antioquia

Antioquia was a little-known quantity in Bogotá. Antioqueños were

1. A good instance of the latter is Arcesio Aragon, Fastos payaneses (Bogotá, 1938).

regarded warily as lacking a "cultured", colonial past and longevity of lineage. They were granted a grudging respect for their business dealings and their pliability and expertise in negotiation. But they were feared too. They might work so hard as to upset the Bogotanos, and try to swamp the public administration with cronies and efficiency. They might, above all, indulge in regional aggrandizement. But there was no escaping the fact that Medellín was the second locus of power.[1] The government of Reyes recognized this implicitly; Reyes was the first president to visit Medellín during his term of office for half-a-century.[2] But the Reyes administration failed to take recognition to its logical conclusion.

What social and economic phenomena have distinguished Antioquia in the twentieth century? The Antioqueño population has not increased at the dramatic rates of the nineteenth century.[3] But it has represented a consistently significant share of the national population. Antioqueño population has increased from 741,000 (1,082,000, including Caldas) in a national population of 5,073,000 in 1912, to 1,189,000 (1,959,000 with Caldas) in a national total of 8,695,000 in 1938, to 1,570,000 (2,638,000 with Caldas) in a national total of 11,545,000 in 1951.[4] And a growing percentage of Antioqueño population has been concentrated in Medellín: from approximately 8½ per cent of the Antioqueño total (excluding Caldas) in 1912 to 32 per cent (again without Caldas) in 1960.[5] The figures above understate the numbers of persons born in Antioquia. A population surplus

1. See Roger Brew, "Coffee and Social Development of the Antioqueño Region, 1870-1920" (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1974). The potential of Medellín was soon recognized overseas. See Board of Trade, Commercial Intelligence Committee, Reports to the Board of Trade on the Conditions and prospects of British Trade in Central America, Colombia and Venezuela by Mr. G.T. Milne H.M. Stationery Office, London, 1913) p. 30.
2. Francisco Duque Betancur, Historia del departmento de Antioquia (Medellín, 1967), p. 902.
3. James J. Parsons, Antioqueño Colonization in Western Colombia (revd. edn., Berkeley, 1968), p. 102.
4. UNESCO, Economic Commission for Latin America, Some Aspects of Population Growth in Colombia (General E/CN 12/618. 10 November, 1962)pp.10,17.
5. Asociación Nacional de Industriales, Estudio general sobre Medellín, y su area circundante (Medellín 1961), p. 12.

has been exported to other departments. Superfluous younger sons and daughters have been readily deposited in the less cluttered cloisters of less religiose departments.

Physically Antioquia has been relatively cohesive. Her administrative arrangements were intelligent: Antioquia has never resembled the old Cauca that sprawled hopelessly from the Caribbean to Ecuador.[1] Her transport system has converged conveniently upon the valley of Medellín. Capital has been slowly available - and hazards of engineering and disease have been overcome - so that railways could be built to serve coffee and other commodity interests.[2] Indicators of physical integration suggest an achievement impressive by the criteria of other Colombian departments: by 1928, for example, ninety-three out of ninety-eight municipalities had a telegraph office.[3] But the achievement should not be overstated: in 1938, only forty-five out of ninety-nine municipalities had cart-road contact with Medellín.[4]

Economically, poor transport and high freight costs imposed upon Antioquia in the nineteenth century a degree of self-sufficiency unequalled in most of Colombia. Transient, quasi-nomadic populations, engaged primarily in mining, kept alive a tradition of mobility and migration. And mining - and later coffee - gave buoyancy and backbone to the local economy and consolidated the interests of certain families.[5] The evidence is incomplete. But it suggests that, though hit seriously

1. J. León Helguera, "The First Mosquera Administration in New Granada, 1845-1849" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1958).
2. William Paul McGreevey, An Economic History of Colombia, 1845-1930 (Cambridge, 1971) Chaps. 8 and 9; Ferrocarril de Antioquia, La fiebre en Tamacocho (pamphlet, Medellín, 1917).
3. Diego Monsalve, Monografía estadística del Departmento de Antioquia (Medellín, 1929), p. 189.
4. Duque Betancur, op. cit., p. 976.
5. Roger Brew, "Mining in Antioquia", unpublished paper given at St. Antony's College, Oxford, 18 Nov., 1972; Parsons, op. cit., passim; Hermano Claudio Marcos, Monografía del municipio de Donmatías (Medellín, 1952), p. 56.

by the 'mil dias' and the volatility of prices in subsequent years, Antioquia was more free of scars than other regions.[1] Antioqueño and Caldense coffee exports recovered more rapidly than those of other regions: Cundinamarquense confidence was eroded by oversowing and labour shortages; the product of Norte de Santander was hit by the reprisals of the Venezuelan president, Juan Vicente Gómez, who prohibited the transit of Colombian - largely Santandereano - produce through Venezuelan territory.[2] In Antioquia, by contrast, the capital was available for Pedro Nel Ospina to found the first textile enterprise at Hato-Viejo (later Bello) in 1906. And there was sufficient capital for his success to stimulate others, until, in 1920, Antioquia could claim fifty-five per cent of Colombian loans.[3] The press of Medellín was confident in the local economy: it provided easily digestible information on matters of rubber cultivation, coffee-marketing, leather, hat and cacao production.[4] Singer sewing machines were advertised in 1912 in as remote a town as Yarumal.[5] Ospina, Governor in 1919, reported that for each cent that coffee rose on the New York exchange, departmental revenue went up by three hundred thousand pesos.[6] A Cucuteño observer looked askance at the liberality of commerce and credit in Medellín.[7] A traveller from the United States was impressed by the businesslike character of a

1. Aniversario Posada - Tobón - 60 años - 1904-1964 (Medellín, 1964), p. 2.
2. Affaire de limites entre la Colombie et le Vénézuela. Cartes, plans et documents geográphiques, comuniqués par les gouvernements de la Colombie et du Venezuela (Neuchatel, Switzerland, 1919).
3. Colombian Trade Review, I (1921), 106-7.
4. El Diario, Medellín, 18 Mar., 1910; El Sol, Medellín, 1910, passim; El Obrero, Caldas, 8 June, 1907; Antioquia Industrial, 22 Sept., 1905.
5. Fraternidad Docente, Yarumal, 16 Mar., 1912.
6. Luis Ospina Vásquez, Industria y protección en Colombia, 1810-1945 (Medellín, 1959), pp. 338-9;
7. Hermes García G., En la tierra de Robledo (Caracas, 1908), p. 56.

chemist's shop in Medellín: "You find washstands, kerosene cookstoves, automobile tyres, mothballs, Epsom Salts, plumbing fixtures and coloured pictures of the Immaculate Conception stacked side by side. There are adding machines and crucifixes, typewriters and lanterns, cigars and ashes of roses, lariats and lily cups, spark plugs and scapularies, plaster saints and proprietary sedatives. There are portraits of the Virgin, and portraits of ladies whose talents lie in other directions...."[1] The entire economic picture cannot be drawn here: but, by 1947, there were some two hundred and fifty factories and workshops in Medellín and its adjacent towns; the majority of gold and all Colombian petrol and iron-producing firms had their headquarters there; it was the unequalled centre of the coffee business.[2] The local elite educational system was designed to underpin economic growth: the School of Mining acted as a focus of local diffusion of improvements in mining technology, the School of Agriculture imported new tobacco seeds, new breeds of cattle, sheep and pigs, and new grasses.[3]

Socially Antioquia appeared remarkably homogeneous from the vantage-point of Bogotá or Cali. Ethnically it was particularly uniform: only in peripheral areas - the lower Magdalena and lower Cauca valleys and the Chocó borders were there sufficiently large Indian, negro and mulato populations for racial conflict to cause concern.[4] It is unclear, anyway, how far antagonisms were racial and how far regional: the same hostilities over jobs that polarized Antioqueño blancos and costeño negroes, set Antioqueño against Santandereano. Antioquia and Caldas were the only departments impervious to turco immigration: Medellín held its

1. William McFee, Sunlight in New Granada (New York, 1925), p. 265.
2. El Tiempo, 15 Feb., 1947.
3. Julio César Garcia, Historía de la instrucción pública en Antioquia (2nd edn., Medellín, 1962), p. 314.
4. Gonzalo Buenahora, Huelga en Barranca - contribución a la lucha contra el imperialismo (Bogotá, 1938), pp. 7, 27-9, 89-90.

own in competition with the bargain basements of Barranquilla and Cali.[1] The coffee-producing core of Antioquia was populated largely by blancos and mestizos united by family ties and religious practices and undivided by rigid patterns of social stratification. Ties of kin bound dispersed groups from Medellín to Cali, and even as far as Ecuador. Landowning, commercial and political connexions interlocked to assure individual careers and consolidate family interests. Scattered clans - like the Jaramillos or the Muñoz - might appear heterogeneous - inside Antioquia: but, from the perspective of Santander, they looked particularly coherent.[2] Local confidence stemmed from coffee success, and was fortified by a belief in a collective Antioqueño victory in the battle against a hostile environment. Those who shared in that ennobling experience were characterized by a felt, if not an economically tangible, egalitarianism.[3] Priests reinforced the prevalent view that status was defined not by economic but by spiritual differentials: presence at religious rites and quality of performance in sacred duties towards the family and in work. The combination of an ethic of self-reliance, religious uniformity, relative economic success and social coherence has given rise to a widespread belief in Antioqueño uniqueness.[4] This has been asserted so stridently and so often that it should be treated with some misgiving.[5] Antioqueño economic performance has not been so spectacular, and that of Bogotá, Barranquilla and Cali not so unimpressive, as Antioqueños may steamroller us into believing. But it is important in shaping a belief

1. P.L. Bell, Colombia - A Commercial andIndustrial Handbook (Washington, 1921), p. 36.
2. Gabriel Arango Mejía, Genealogías de Antioquia y Caldas (2nd ed., Medellín, 1942), ii, 25-53, 111, 371; La ciudad - Medellín en el quinto cincuentario de su fundación - pasado, presente, futuro (Medellín, 1925), pp. 220-4; Marco A. Restrepo, El rey de la leña (Buenos Aires, 1958), passim.
3. Alfonso Villegas Montoya, Centenario de la raza (Medellín, 1941), pp. 21, 95 ff.
4. Cf. Libardo López, La raza antioqueña (Medellín, 1910), p. 9.
5. Frank Safford, "Significación de los antioquenos en el desarrollo económico colombiano", Anuario colombiano de historia social y de la cultura, V (1967), 46-69, affords a useful antidote.

in local uniqueness and a regional ethic of progreso and optimism.

Reyes had been slow to recognize the potential of Medellín as a focus of resistance. The graft, censorship and security methods of his regime offended the Antioqueño business elite, which already complained of regional partiality in policy, because it felt under-represented in the government and squeezed by Reyes' system of licences and restrictions. Antioqueño business prepared to exploit means of non-violent resistance to Reyes to the full: they sought to bombard him into submission with clandestine memorials, pamphlets, speeches and newspapers. In 1908 a memorial signed by three hundred Antioqueños was enough to precipitate a Cabinet reshuffle.[1] Medellín business, led by the banker, Carlos E. Restrepo, gained in confidence. Reyes hastily offered Restrepo the ministry of finance to strengthen his government, but Restrepo turned it down when Reyes rejected his condition of acceptance: the abolition of offending centralized monopolies. (The 'aguardiente' revenue had contributed fifty per cent of the Antioqueño budget in the nineteenth century). Medellín resistance was founded in local chambers of commerce and formalized in the Republican movement, led by Ospina and Restrepo, that approximated to a mirror-image of Reyes' own coalition. It aimed at submerging partisan differences and was unsupported by both extreme clericals and anti-clericals, and emphasized a central bank and economic expansion as high priorities of policy. The particular appeal of Republicanism lay in its claim to a superior political morality, which could unite otherwise disparate opponents of Reyes. Republicanism found allies in Bogotá and elsewhere; and, in 1910, catapulted Restrepo into the presidency. Antioqueño strength lay in three facts: that it could organize at all; that Antioqueños appealed to civilian 'virtues' when

1. FO 371/8247/13 Mar., 1908/Stronge to Grey.

military ones were discredited; that Restrepo carefully avoided favouring Antioqueños.

Republicanism, as a party, was unable to put down roots in most of rural Colombia. Its leaders were accused of being "Iscariots" by Conservatives.[1] It lacked a heroic ancestry and popular slogans. But its achievements and its style survived. The moderating influence of a Bogotá-Medellín partnership outlived the movement that had brought it into being. Liaisons between Liberals and Conservatives reached under a Republican aegis persisted when they returned to their hereditary allegiances. Even a distinctive Antioqueño style of oratory - businesslike statements of policy sprinkled with familiar references to Christ, Bolívar and the superior virtue of the campesino was exported. Antioqueños needed a permanent nucleus of able representation in Bogotá. And presidents, after Restrepo, were careful to include Antioqueños in their Cabinets. The circle of Antioqueños with access to national power was small, but before 1930 it threw up two presidents, Marco Fidel Suárez and Ospina, the indispensable minister of finance, Estebán Jaramillo.[2] Antioquia set the pace in loan policies, technical education, infrastructural innovation, and import of foreign expertise. Ospina's success in negotiating loans in New York for Antioquia as Governor prompted him to repeat this policy in modified form as president.[3] Though Conservatism between 1914 and 1930 was an undisputed majority party, most of its policy-making of Antioqueño inspiration was politically neutral, and appealed alike to Conservative and Liberal.

1. El Conservador, Medellín, 9 June, 1911.
2. It was still possible for an Antioqueno figure of first rank to remain little known nationally. This was true of the prominent Liberal economist, Alejandro López, in the 1920's (See the vignette of Juan Lozano y Lozano, Ensayos críticos (Bogotá, 1937), pp. 234-5); and of the leading Conservative politician - businessman, Luis Navarro Ospina in the 1930's.
3. Mensajes que los gobernadores....(1919), p. 61.

Republican thinking was visible, above all, in the National Federation of Coffee Growers, which held its first Congress in 1927 with Restrepo as President. The Federation successfully sought to avoid party polarization and class antagonism within coffee production and marketing.[1] Mariano Ospina Pérez, as president of the Federation, projected it carefully not as the work of political parties but of "the working man".[2]

Latent conflict within Antioqueño Conservatism about political perspectives gave rise to little open debate. But what debate there was suggested the possibility of rancorous exchanges. On the one hand stood a backwoods clericalism with a theocratic vision of society in which lay politics took a secondary and subservient part; and on the other was a socially and physically mobile Conservative business elite dominant in Medellín. The business elite, though having little truck with religious 'deviants' (Protestants, 'turcos', theosophists, rosacrucians) demanded a flexible Catholicism as a condition of social tranquility. Sometimes their insistence on elasticity brought them into conflict with clericals especially in the educational sector.

The business elite kept specialized institutions like the School of Mines as free of clerical interference as possible, and preferred religious heterodoxy to a single-minded suppression of "error".[3] Usually, the clerical faction, once it had reduced Republicanism at village level to an electoral nonentity, was appeased by a minor public work which the clerical cacique might negotiate with Medellín. Edges were blurred so long as departmental politics and business were conducted with a careful regard for local interests and were defended in unexaggerated language.

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1. According to the 1932 Censo Cafetero, (Bogotá, 1932), Antioquia produced nearly eighteen per cent of Colombian coffee, and Caldas a further twenty-nine per cent. Hence concern to avoid upsetting the coffee sector with political hostilities.

2. Carta abierta del Doctor Mariano Ospina Pérez al Presidente López (Bogotá, 1934), p. 4.

3. Frank Safford, "In Search of the Practical: Colombian Students in Foreign Lands", H.A.H.R., 52 (1972), 230-249.

Conservative government survived for as long as the Bogotá-Medellín partnership could withstand pressures from both inside and outside. The national party recognized that the Antioqueño party held two trump-cards: electoral strength and fund-raising ability. Medellín, similarly, acknowledged the sources of strength of the party in Bogotá: proximity to Congress and the government, and superior knowledge of the departments. The prosperity of the 'twenties meant the realignment of regional interests: Antioqueño and Caldense interests in Bogotá, led by Jaramillo, Mariano Ospina Pérez and Jesus María Marulanda, formed a small, well-concerted and informal pressure-group, known as the Leviathan,[1] which clashed with an alliance of interests in Bogotá and Cali pivoting upon railway management and led by Alfredo Vásquez Cobo. The failure of the Abadía government to maintain the regional balancing of its predecessors raised the pitch of factional competition until neither group dared lose face by withdrawing its candidate. In Medellín disgruntled young Conservatives cast a protest vote in favour of Olaya,[2] in Rionegro a dictatorial solution was proposed as the only means of preserving public works programmes.[3] The Bogotá-Medellín partnership was seriously dented. The attempt to disrupt it had contributed to the collapse of the Conservative government. Conservatives soon recognized that they must reconstruct the alliance of Bogotá and Medellín if they were to recapture national power.

The context of power was altered with Liberal presidents in office from 1930 to 1946. Depression brought a host of allegations of loss of moral direction during the boom of the 'twenties. The departmental

1. For a convenient summary of the career of Jaramillo, see Jairo Casas Upegui and Jesus Rodríguez Jaramillo, Monografías de Colombia - monografía de Abejorral (Medellín (?), 1967).
2. El Tiempo, 4 Feb., 1930.
3. Correo del Oriente, Rionegro, 26 May, 1929.

government pursued a new strength of moral purpose: Governor Camilo C. Restrepo even forbade the carnival in Urrao on the grounds that drunkenness could not be afforded.[1] Conservatives complained of a collapse of social discipline fostered by Liberals - unemployment in coffee municipios, drunkenness, increased prostitution and an aggressive police force.[2] But moral exhortations could not conceal the difficulties of recovery from the Conservative breakdown of 1930. Funds were sparse as the coffee price fell. President Olaya was so prudently conciliatory that he won the support of a large Conservative sector. The plight of the opposition sector in Conservatism was reflected in its choice of leader - Pedro José Berrío - an Antioqueño patriarch of extensive kin connexion from the remote cathedral town of Santa Rosa de Osos - a man without a national reputation and without any apparent yearning for national power, who emerged only by default and by seniority.[3] The Berristas founded a new Conservative newspaper, El Pais, in Bogotá: but Berrío lacked the driving-force to mount a Conservative comeback. And Conservatism in Bogotá found sustained inspiration only after the return from Europe of Laureano Gómez, who poured invective upon the Olayista Conservative leadership, especially the Antioqueno Román Gómez, whose collaboration facilitated Olayista control of Antioquia. The ruthlessness of Laureano's elimination of Román alarmed even Román's Conservative opponents in Antioquia who clustered around the newspaper El Colombiano. The Antioqueño leadership, though accepting that Laureano had been the first to reinflame the national party and give it singleness of direction, was resentful at his refusal to acknowledge that the Antioqueños had been the first to stir after the 1930 defeat, and they were concerned to retain

1. El Adalid, Santa Rosa de Osos 10 Aug., 1929.
2. Pedro Nel Giraldo Londono, Don Fernando - juicio sobre un hombre y una época (40 años de historia política de Colombia) (Medellín, 1963), pp. 94-100.
3. Berrío had twice been Governor of Antioquia and once- briefly - Minister of War. For an Antioqueño version of the defeat of 1930, see Fernando Gómez Martínez, Grandezas y miserias de una derrota (Artículos publicados en El Colombiano) (Medellín, 1931).

an initiative independent of the central party.[1] They acknowledged that Laureano's appeal was unequalled in Bogotano Conservative circles, but were ill-disposed to being mere sleeping-partners in his designs, especially since his reputation in other departments was uncertain. They, therefore, consistently resisted attempts to concentrate the leadership in Laureano's hands; and carefully avoided using the salvationist vocabulary with which he projected himself in El Siglo. From 1932 to 1949, the press of Medellín refrained from magnifying Gómez' political persona: the Conservatives did not represent him as the man of burning sincerity portrayed by El Siglo; the Liberals did not paint him as the monster of demonic lack of principle drawn, in the 1940's, by the Liberal press of Bogotá.

The alliance of Bogotano and Antioqueño Conservatism was uneasy. El Siglo and El Colombiano became the mouthpieces of recurrent conflicts. When, for example, in 1937-8 Gómez wanted mass Conservative abstention from the presidential election, the Antioqueños announced a candidate.[2] El Siglo accused El Colombiano and its allies of lack of candour and Gómez tried even to 'excommunicate' the editor of El Colombiano, Fernando Gómez Martínez from the party.[3] El Colombiano responded by accusing El Siglo of squalid manoeuvring and of bringing Conservatism into disrepute. In 1939, under pressure from party militants in Cundinamarca, Gómez called for a policy of extra-constitutional 'intrepid action' at the national party Convention. Berrío led the Senatorial Antioqueño delegation out;[4] and Gómez' name was eliminated from the Senatorial lists, to the chagrin only of a small Laureanista rump in

1. Giraldo Londoño, op. cit., p. 120.
2. El Colombiano Medellín, 22, 25, 28 June, 1937, 22 Apr., 1938.
3. Giraldo Londoño, op. cit., p. 121 ff.
4. Giraldo Londoño, op. cit., p. 126 ff; Campanadas, Jericó, 30 Apr., 1939.

Jericó. Berrío announced his abstention. When López was kidnapped in 1944, Antioqueño Conservative leaders expressed their collective concern whilst Gómez was conspicuously silent.[1] Again, in 1946 the initial support of Gómez for the candidature of Gaitán was received with hostility in Medellín.[2] Throughout the Liberal governments, the Bogotá-Medellín partnership was strained. Gómez could not bind Antioqueños to himself. He had no patronage outside El Siglo. He could resort only to cajolery, bluff, empty threats. The Antioqueño leadership could try to initiate policy and to keep a restraining hand upon the party nationally. But their influence in Eastern Colombia was very circumscribed. The most the Antioqueño leadership could do was to ward off Gómez' attempts to establish a power-base in Antioquia. El Siglo tried to capture the readership of El Colombiano but with little success since El Colombiano had superior municipal reporting in Antioquia and the clear advantage of several hours during which it could be distributed in Antioquia before El Siglo arrived after dawn at Medellín's unilluminated airport. El Colombiano was also preferred by local opinion-makers like the convents because it avoided sensationalism and muck-raking.

The Conservative party reorganized locally with lack of conviction. The newspapers El Colombiano and La Defensa were put on a surer financial footing and changed managements: but the majority of wealthy Conservatives diverted their attention from politics to industry.[3] Ferocious debate surrounded government employment: in 1930 it produced street-fighting in Medellín; departmental instability was reflected in fifteen changes of Governor between 1930 and 1934.[4] Hostilities over employment reached a crescendo in 1933-4 over the Railway of Antioquia:

1. El Colombiano 25 Apr., 1942. See also the reportage of El Tiempo 14 Jan., 1941, on a subterranean conflict between Gómez and Berrío.
2. El Colombiano, 20 July, 1944.
3. Fernando Guillen Martínez, Raíz y futuro de la revolución (Bogotá, 1963), p. 163.
4. El Espectador, 21 Jan., 1930; Duque Betancur, op cit., pp. 958-62.

its management had, since its inception been a coveted source of political patronage. Trackside influence was at a premium: Conservatives had hoped to push the line across land owned by Conservatives, with one exceptional tract, and through the Conservative town of Marinilla. Liberals had other plans: a direct link between Medellín and the Liberal town of Rionegro, the traditional rival of Marinilla, with which its inhabitants had no social contact because of political scruple despite a distance of only five kilometres.[1] Liberals deliberately inflamed a railway strike so that the Governor could declare martial law, departmentalize the railway, oust its board of management and replace Conservative employees with Liberals.

How should Conservatives respond to Liberal incursions? Berrío retaliated by insisting that Conservative enterprises give priority in employment to copartisans and that corporations of Conservative majority help unemployed white-collar workers. But the party lacked both patronage and funds. Above all, Conservatives feared Liberal Trade Unionism. For the López government seemed first to promote agitation and then to try to gain the accolades of both employees and employers by mediating, producing both concessions for the workers and a return to work to placate the employers.[2] It was clear that the Liberals were trying to turn Antioquia into a permanent Liberal bastion, to demolish the fragile Bogotá-Medellín Conservative alliance and supplant it with a Liberal arrangement straddling the two cities that would assure Liberal dominance. Antioqueño Liberalism easily shrugged off the challenge of Unirismo which miscalculated on trying feebly to convince Antioqueños that Liberalism was only pseudo-revolution.[3] For Liberalism in Antioquia stressed

1. La voz del agricultor, Fredonia, 29 Dec., 1934.
2. See the way in which a strike of textile workers at Coltejer and sympathetic railway and tramworkers was handled. El Pueblo, Medellín, 22 June, 1935; R.J., II (1935), Suplemento; José Restrepo Restrepo, "Comentarios politicos", La Tradición, Medellín 12 Oct., 1935, 27-8.
3. El Crisol, Medellín, 6 Oct., 1934.

its traditional, unchangeable aspect: The 'Revolution on the March' trumpeted forth in Bogotá was proclaimed pianissimo for Antioqueño consumption. Revolutionary appeals in Antioquia were resonant only in the transport sector. Elsewhere, Liberals claimed little more than superior administrative talent. Without the camouflage of revolutionary enthusiasm, the purge in Antioquia was all the starker, as Liberal governments replaced much of the inherited bureaucratic train with their own nominees.

How should Conservative retaliate? They were constantly offended by minor repressive action.[1] They complained that they were not being allocated enough electoral identity-cards.[2] But no particular issue could awaken permanent enthusiasm. The constitutional reform issue excited lawyers but not the electorate. The removal of the name of God from the 1936 Constitution could be used to mobilize a demonstration in support of the 1886 Constitution - but no more.[3] Doctrinaire Centres were set up to restore confidence and knowledge of Conservatism. Conservatives tried hard to play upon Liberal divisions.[4] A younger generation, dismayed at what it condemned as Conservative complicity with Liberalism, took up modish derechista tactics, uniforms and vocabulary.[5] But the appeal of derechismo outside university circles was limited. And its improvized newspapers could not gain the backing and advertising

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1. Abel Carbonell, for example, reported a letter of the Liberal Directorate of Medellín to a Liberal alcalde of Itaguí who appointed a Conservative secretary: "You know that when the Gobernación names a Liberal for a pueblo of Conservative majority, it is with the exclusive end of making it Liberal", Carbonell, La quincena política, (Bogotá, 1952), ii, 45-7.
2. El Pais, 12 Sept., 1934.
3. El Colombiano, 10 Aug., 1936.
4. They tried, for example, to set Medellín Liberals against Rafael Arredondo, sugar-planter at the 'feudal' seat of Ebéjico, who slavishly imitated the vocabulary of the 'revolution on the march' and was said to be suspiciously close to López of whom he was considered a protegé, República Liberal, 4 Jan., 1937.
5. El Nacionalista, Medellín, 19 Sept., 1935, 18 July, 20 Aug., 1936.

of a wary elite who soon co-opted the more able derechistas. It was increasingly clear that Conservatism could be revived only in alliance with the Church. But such an alliance carried the risks of a clerical attempt to take over the party leadership, and of religious radicalization overreaching its organisers.[1]

Liberal leaders in Bogotá and Medellín had difficulty in assessing priestly influence in Antioquia. In certain parishes there was a thoroughly politicized Church. In others there was a network of Church organizations which might, if the political temperature rose, be open to political influence. In the month before the Eucharistic Congress the junta técnica de la educación pública relegated teaching members of religious communities to the lowest salary scales on the grounds that religious communities live economically.[2] The mass rally at the Congress reminded elite Liberals forcibly of how clerics could flex muscles.[3] National government reversed its policies, softpedalling all that hinted of anti-clericalism. And departmental government trailed behind, loth to stop teasing Catholic susceptibilities.

The 'Revolution on the March' revealed strains between Conservatives who feared clerical-rightist radicalization and sought to neutralize or mollify it and Conservatives who encouraged and aided it and between Liberals who sought to radicalize and Liberals who looked only for spoils and small modifications in the status quo. By 1938 moderate, tranquillizing elements seemed in command of both parties. Since Antioqueño interests were hardly imperilled by the immobile government of Santos, Antioqueño elite Conservatism could afford to be dormant.[4] From 1937 Liberal governments slowly withdrew the indulgence shown towards trade unions between 1934 and 1936,[5] removing the greatest fear of Antioqueño

1. See above, pp.
2. El Pueblo, 18 July, 1935.
3. Revista Javeriana iv (1935) suplemento, 134-6.
4. In Yolombó, for example, Conservative abstention from the polls was decreed in 1939 because the priest refused to abstain from violent campaigning. El Tiempo, 18 Mar., 1939.
5. El Siglo, 18-20 Sept., 1937.

industrialists.

Political differences were briefly refocused along bipartisan lines. Horizontal unity of Liberals and Conservatives was not a novelty: during the Conservative 'hegemony' pliant Liberals had been found to occupy a minority of posts in departmental government. The growing disparity of resources between central and departmental government, accentuated by the López tax reforms, was parallelled by an expanding gap between departmental and municipal resources. In 1933-4 there were hints of a decentralizing movement in Medellín and Cali: but it faded out during the controversy over the 'revolution on the march' and was dismissed in Bogotá as a final federalist whimper.[1] In 1938-9 decentralization again provided a rallying-cry: the initiative came from the village of Titiribí. In the first place, the movement was aimed at Medellín: its sponsors claimed that Medellín consumed ten times more revenue per head than the municipalities.[2] The Medellín leadership then seized the opportunity to pre-empt the movement, and refocused hostility between village and city against Bogotá. The campaign served the Medellín elite by defusing local partisan hostilities and popular identification with the belligerents in the Spanish Civil War and by reminding their followers of their continued interest in their well-being. But the decentralization campaign lacked steam: it could generate a day of speeches and demonstrations - but bipartisan resistance to Bogotá was qualified by the willingness to accept jobs there.[3] Santos responded by conceding a ministry to a leader of the decentralization movement, Alberto Jaramillo Sánchez - Health and Work - the one ministry the Medellín press complained

1. El Pais, 11, 14 Nov., 1933, 23 Feb., 1934.
2. Manuel Monsalve M., Antioquia descentralizadora (Medellín, 1938), pp. iv-v,ix; Mensaje del gobernador a la asamblea departmental, 1938 p. 6.
3. F.O. 371/A 4860/181/11, 19 June, 1939, Simpson to Halifax.

plaintively where decentralization was unnecessary.[1] Brief moments of interest in decentralization recurred: the attempt of Gaitán as Minister of Education to extend central decision-making in education met with fierce Antioqueno resistance;[2] Antioqueño authors drew up statistics to establish a pattern of discrimination against Antioquia in education, hygiene, social assistance, public order and libraries budgets.[3] El Heraldo de Antioquia, the decentralist newspaper, closed; and, during the Ospina and Gómez governments it was the Eastern departments, not the Western, that complained of central discriminatory bias.

A chilly relationship between Conservatives in Bogotá and Medellín persisted during the governments of Ospina and Gómez. The tacit understanding that Ospina would stand in 1946 and Gómez in 1950 amounted to an alliance between Bogotá and Medellín: but it was fraught by suspicions: rumours of the impending (but never occurring) move of El Colombiano from Medellín to Bogotá disturbed Laureanistas.[4] Some Ospinistas, however, worked hard to maintain the alliance: indeed, the principal fund-raiser for Gómez' election campaign in Medellín was Ospina Pérez' brother, Francisco.

Attitudes toward collaboration with Liberals in the Ospina government exposed latent frictions within the Antioqueño party and Church. Hispanicizing movements had made some impression in Antioquia in the early 1940's. But the moderates were spurred on by the election of Ospina in 1946. They relished the organization by Liberals of a pro-Ospina demonstration in Donmatías and insisted that such Liberals were not turncoating, that alliances between the parties were honourable and that, indeed, Conservatives had voted for a Liberal presidential candidate,

1. El Heraldo de Antioquia, 8 Aug., 1938; El Colombiano, 9 Apr., 8 Aug., 1938.
2. Alfonso Uribe Misas, La escuela única (Medellín, 1941).
3. Daniel Ramos, El centralismo en cifras. El municipio vive una vida miserable. Necessita mayores recursos y mas autonomía (Medellín, 1941), pp. 4-14; Fernando Gómez Martínez, Contra centralismo descentralización (Medellín, 1944).
4. Semana, 26 July, 1947.

Arango Vélez in 1942, without ceasing to be Conservative.[1] Until the '9 April' of 1948 the moderate and extremist wings of the Conservative party were evenly balanced. But the events of 1948 and the context of Cold War combined to push most factions into irretrievable positions. The Church split: Bishop Miguel Angel Builes of Santa Rosa de Osos, who had campaigned against the C.T.C. since the early 'forties, preached a holy crusade against Communism, and denounced Liberalism as incompatible with Catholicism.[2] The Jesuits, by contrast, were willing to forgive Liberals their blemishes if they could be restored to the bosom of Mother Church, through an anti-Communist front in Catholic trade unions.[3] Though the Church in Medellín sought consistently to be conciliatory and to depoliticize, the insurgent upland Church was now in the ascendancy. The experience of urban and rural violence in 1948 led Bishop Builes to preach a holy crusade that would eliminate the immediate danger of Communism. Well-timed thunderbolts descended from Santa Rosa de Osos as election campaigning began for the 1949 elections. La Defensa even brought out a special edition to publish a pastoral letter on elections by Builes, that aimed at mobilizing the passive and indifferent by depicting the menace of Communism looming large on the horizon of the montaña.[4] Liberals were already in 1946 divided between three directorates in their attitude to National Union. It was hoped to split them finally.[5]

Medellín industrialists were alarmed by Jesuit syndical activism. Businessmen who had been swayed by Jesuit preached doctrines of social reconciliation felt uneasy. Popular Liberal politics had injected an

1. El Siglo, 2-3 Apr., 1946.
2. Ibid., 15, 17, 20 Sept., 1944.
3. El Colombiano, 23 Jan., 1950.
4. El Siglo, 30 Apr., 1949; El Colombiano, 7 Mar., 1949.
5. El Siglo, 7-9 Nov., 1948.

inextricable element of class warfare into industrial relations. Industrialists began openly to espouse unashamedly capitalist doctrines. They paid little heed to social catholicism, to sanctified middle-ways between the twin evils of atheistic communism and materialistic capitalism. Jesuits advocated a degree of industrial paternalism which some industrialists were hesitant to pay for, and preached peaceful collective bargaining which became increasingly difficult to obtain. Businessmen who had been sympathetic to the foundation of local syndicates for mutual aid purposes were disturbed by the formation in the late 'forties of the Unión de Trabajadores Colombianos (UTC). This was a national federal organization under the auspices of the Jesuits, which competed with the CTC on its own terms and, by 1947, could claim more Antioqueño members than the CTC.[1] The Jesuits were furnishing the programmatic tools for militant trade unionism: co-operativism; expropriation of unused land; rural education; compulsory primary education; payment on religious holidays; obligations upon large employers to invest part of their profits in employee housing, hygiene and education; minimum wage and price control legislation; some marketing guarantees.[2] The goals of the UTC were strictly limited: but, in the eyes of some Medellín industrialists who had already confronted similar demands of a (to them) Communist inspiration from the CTC, they were revolutionary. Their fears seemed vindicated. The Jesuits would first be compelled to make similar promises to those of the CTC in order to retain their membership; and they would, then, be either radicalized or ousted from the movement by an increasingly militant lay leadership. Conflict became overt in 1950-51. When the textile firm of Coltejer claimed exemptions from social security and the ICSS (Instituto Colombiano de Seguridad Social),

1. Miguel Urrutia, The Development of the Colombian Labour Movement, (New Haven 1969), p. 207. See, above, pp. 155-6.

2. El Colombiano, 4 May, Justicia Social, 15 May, 1947; Revista Javeriana xxxiii (1950), 98.

an Ospina creation of some Jesuit inspiration, denied them. ANDI, the employers' federation based in Medellín, criticized the powers of the ICSS manager; and a further thirty-seven Antioqueño enterprises sought exemptions. Victor Duarte, the UTC President, warned of the risks of major enterprises being exempted.[1] In the vacuum of 1950-1 the UTC and the ICSS were powerful forces in Medellín. In 1950 the ICSS claimed 60,000 afiliados and, in 1951, 75,000, in Medellín and the contiguous towns of Envigado and Itaguí. It had also two clinics, nineteen consultant doctors, thirteen dispensaries and thirteen rural posts.[2] In 1951 fifty-four syndicates were affiliated to the Antioqueño branch of the U.T.C., and it claimed 35,000 members in the Archdiocese of Medellín.[3] The Jesuits slowly lost their moderating influence in the UTC. They had succeeded in constructing a Trade Unionism that was neither Conservative nor Liberal on a foundation in Medellín, and they had projected it onto the national scene. They had performed more effectively than the Liberal-Leftist urban workers' movement, and, aided by government repressive methods, gone a long way to displacing it. But by removing some of the partisan flavour from Trade Unionism, the Jesuits had re-injected some of the class-consciousness into industrial relations which Alberto Lleras had partly subtracted and they had re-focused industrial conflict along class lines.

The deteriorating situation from 1948 was reflected in the growing strength within the Antioqueño Conservative party of its more intransigent leaders and a movement towards inflexibility among its previously less partisan leaders. Conservative speakers readily identified Liberalism with Communism, and portrayed Liberalism vividly as a front-organization. Even El Colombiano, previously committed to caution, was less

1. El Colombiano, 18 May, El Tiempo, 28 July, Justicia Social, 3 Aug., 1950.
2. R.J., xxxiv (1950), 111; xxxvi (1951), 92.
3. Anuario de la iglesia catolica en Colombia, 1951 (Bogotá, 1951), pp. 150, 190.

moderate. Cold War motifs provided Conservative rallying-cries: a demonstration solidarizing with the imprisoned Hungarian churchman, Cardinal Mindszenty, reaffirmed the alliance of Conservative and cleric in 1949.[1]

As Liberals were slowly eliminated from office, the ideological and personnel bases of Conservatism were broadened to embrace Falangists. Members of fringe derechista and Falangist groups of the 'thirties and early 'forties like Haz Godo and Jerarquia, were absorbed within the inner circles of the Conservative elite. The incorporation of outspokenly pro-Franco elements like Belisario Betancur, chief of propaganda for the National Union government, editor of 9 de abril and chief of publication of La Defensa, alarmed Liberals.[2] Each party accused the other of paralyzing the National Union. The events of 1948 allowed extreme Conservatives slowly to dislodge their more conciliatory copartisans from major offices, and in 1949 the intransigents were endorsed by the appointment as Governor of Eduardo Berrío González, the son of the old Berrío, but a man lacking his father's talent for compromise. The party was now shot through with rivalries. Factionalism was so pronounced that the Conservative Committee of Santa Rosa de Osos demanded a strengthening of La Defensa and a boycott of El Colombiano. Berrío even made a broadcast against his predecessor accusing him of assisting a wave of guerrilla subversion in Galilee and Urrao. Mediation by a proven old hand, Luis Navarro Ospina failed;[3] Liberalism, reduced to hopeless disorganization, kept a position of neutrality. Gómez, in trying to establish a Laureanista machine in Medellín, alienated all Conservative factions without uniting them against himself. El Colombiano was briefly suspended for disclosing censored information in 1951 and for supporting

1. El Colombiano, 11 Feb., 1949.
2. Semana, 31 July, 1948.
3. Semana, 31 July, 1948, 11 June, 8 Oct., 1949, 22 July, 1950; El Colombiano, 6 Mar., 1949.

the Ospina candidature in 1953.[1] Conservatives splintered until, in 1952, the Governor abandoned the traditional mayoral system and substituted appointed juntas in each municipality.[2] Old presuppositions had finally broken down. Conservatives were demolishing the traditions they claimed to represent, and dabbling in untried systems of municipal government.[3]

Antioqueño Conservatism was as firmly entrenched in the early 1920's as in the mid-nineteenth century. Family alliance remained the primary binding-force of Conservative politics. Churchmen continued to intervene in choosing political candidates and influencing election results. In one particular aspect the context of power had changed radically since the 1890's. Central power was now more pronounced. The relative strength of the national and provincial capitals had increased. The influence of the state could be felt - if sometimes fleetingly - at a municipal level. In the late nineteenth century Conservatives could remain dominant at a municipal level while Liberals had command of the state. The growth of state patronage meant that this was no longer the case in the 1930's. Liberal government in the 1930's - especially after the injection of trade unionism in Antioqueno politics - demonstrated that Conservative influence could be reduced, if not eradicated, in many municipalities. The price that individual Antioqueño Conservatives paid for increased influence in national politics was diminished control in Antioquia. Antioqueños, like Eduardo Zuleta Angel and Francisco de Paula Pérez had weight in government circles but could not carry votes. Accessibility and visibility of the leader were always necessary to sustain Antioqueño political clienteles. As distance grew between leaders and

1. Giraldo Londoño, op. cit., pp. 325, 385-6.
2. El Siglo, 22 Jan., 1952.
3. Organización Conservadora, Resoluciones Nos. 3 y 4 de 1953 del Directorio Conservador de Antioquia (Medellín, 1953).

villages, the municipalities increasingly lacked a mouthpiece. The socially and physically mobile had access to press and radio in Medellín. A gap between a regional elite now forming part of a national elite and losing part of its regional peculiarity, and a regional following and sub-elite groups that clung to regional forms and traditions. But those immobilized by local commitments had no means of articulating their resentment at the relative pauperization of the municipality and its personnel. The municipal press - except for some parish newspapers - had been eliminated by a more competitive bus-delivered Medellín press. Migration had reduced the effectiveness of local influence as a means of government. The presence of national and departmental governments in the municipality was foreign and not always felt. When national and regional politics were seriously destabilized, in-fighting for posts between extremist backwoodsmen increased, and there was no agency capable of halting violence. As the events of the late 1940's and early 1950's demonstrated, central power could not afford to ignore municipal conflict. In a limited sense, violence in Antioquia vented frustrations at the slow erosion of local sovereignties and local privileges which, in the view of their adherents, amounted to the demolition of an idiosyncratic Antioqueño culture that merited in unqualified defence. The cacique was reminding Medellín of his existence and his capacity to create embarrassment. Mobile, motorized counter-violence reminded the cacique of the superior coercive strength of his competitors.[1]

3. The Santanders

The Santanders were very different from Antioquia. They were overpopulated but lacked a convenient outlet for demographic growth. To the North-East and South lay the densely inhabited Táchira, Boyacá

1. See especially Hemel Ramírez B., El diablo estuvo aqui, (Medellín, 1956). Ramírez enumerates episodes of violence in horrific detail but without partisan colouring.

and Cundinamarca; on the West was the Magdalena basin, rendered uninhabitable by climate and disease; to the East were the unpoliced and climatically hostile Llanos where quinine, an imperative for survival, was desperately short. Migration was therefore an admission of defeat, not a source of inspiration. The Santanders turned in on themselves. Competition for limited land and water resources fell easily along lines of cleavage by family and kindred that had origins in the nineteenth century. The Santandereano economy was particularly depressed. The coffee zones of both Santanders benefited from the boom in the product but neither reaped the extensive benefits from coffee received by Antioquia. Most local agriculture was characterized by minifundismo and oppressive sharecropping that made for rural poverty and landlessness. Artisan manufactures that had supplemented low rural incomes during the nineteenth century had long been in decline, and were further demoralized by the manufacturing competition of Bogotá and Medellín. The heyday of tobacco in the nineteenth century was recalled nostalgically. The economies of remote towns like Málaga, Pamplona and Barichará were very precarious and made for very small local markets.[1] Only the departmental capitals, Cúcuta, of North Santander, and Bucaramanga, of South Santander, experienced some expansion founded in administrative activity, the coffee trade and an uncertain tobacco revival.[2] The businessman was not the local hero he was in Antioquia. Social prestige went, instead, with military prowess: force, it could be argued plausibly, had been more successful than negotiation in securing local aspirations.

Communications, too, were different in the Santanders from Antioquia. Both lacked a central focus of the kind provided by the Valley of Medellín. They possessed, instead, two North-South roads, that acted as economic axes.

1. For an account of misery in the Málaga area, see Blas N. Muñoz, La ruina de un pueblo (Bogotá, n.d.).
2. Diego Monsalve, Colombia cafetera (Bogotá, 1929) passim; Roberto Pineda Giraldo, "Las regiones económicas del Departmento de Santander," Economia colombiana, 5 (May, 1955), 375-96.

Foreign travellers who emphasized in the 1890's and 1910's the safety of travelling in Colombia made a point of excepting these roads from the general rule: they were known to be permanently out of government control. The towns that stood on them possessed a tradition of competition for local power and privilege. None asserted its cultural and economic pre-eminence like Medellín and Popayán. Communications were still slow in the 1930's: in 1931 the journey from Bogotá to Cúcuta took one day by car to a point beyond Bucaramanga, three days by horse or mule across mountains and moor and half-a-day by car down to Cúcuta.[1] The lowland, sugar-producing zone of Ocaña was a further three days journey by mule from Cúcuta.

The Santanders lacked physical cohesion, economic unity and a sense of a peculiar collective destiny. There was no system of trust based in family economic operations. The coffee organization was too small to be exemplary. Much of the Santandereano elite of the nineteenth century had emigrated to Bogotá, leaving a set of loosely related local power structures without a collective identity that could be expressed at a departmental, even less a national level. Perhaps the only shared cultural sentiment was one of pessimism, of fighting against impossible odds and of futility.[2] In consequence the Santanders had no clearly defined regional interests that could be projected in the national arena.

As a result of the lack of a tradition of inter-party conciliation, the Republican movement made no impression in the Santanders. The word "hegemony" carried more significance when applied to the Santanders before 1930 than in other regions. Central government, from the Concha administration onwards, was too alert to the dangers of political partisanship in South Santander to permit a departmental police force:

1. FO. 371/15088/A 4755/4735/11/1 July, 1931/Dickson to Henderson.
2. This is well expressed by Manuel Serrano Blanco, La vida es así - conferencias en tono menor (Bucaramanga, 1953).

it was the only department where the police was an agency of central, not departmental government.

After over three decades of exclusion from office in the siege-like situation of the Santanders, Liberalism, for all its capital-city camouflage of tolerance and relativism, enshrined a set of absolute values as much as clerical Conservatism did. Party intemperance marked the transition of power in 1930. The prevailing Bogotano vocabulary of conciliation did not percolate to the Santanders where by January, 1931, Conservatives were already speaking of Liberal tyranny without laws or guarantees.[1] Conservative allegations of violence and forced migrations were reinforced by a passionate pastoral letter of Bishop Afanador y Cadena of Pamplona: "It can be said without exaggeration, that in García Rovira province where perversity reached even sacrilege with the assassination of the parish-priest of Mogalavita, that things have reached the point of war and extermination. Many defenceless persons have fallen at the blow of the dagger or of the authorities.....Others...have had to abandon their families and take refuge for entire months in the mountains, in order to avoid falling into the hands of the police...Various sons of García Rovira have had to banish themselves...with their hearts shattered by grief on seeing their little homes reduced to ashes, their brother sacrificed treacherously, the countryside razed and the neighbourhood in a state of desolation and ruin...."[2] The pastoral letter removed one element of doubt: the bishop would not act as mediator between the government and clerical-Conservatives. The Depression exacerbated the situation: a resigning Liberal Secretary of Hacienda in North Santander claimed that a bankrupt departmental government was dominated by a Conservative group intent on clinging to power.[3] Provocation was not unilateral. In the elections of January, 1931, the party clash was so intense that the

1. El Tiempo, 9 Jan., 1931.
2. Ibid., 7 Jan., 1931.
3. El Tiempo, 16 Jan., 1931.

president of the electoral council of Umpala and Málaga shot at the vice-president.[1] The Liberal Assembly of South Santander unanimously adopted what El Tiempo described as a "socialist programme" in March 1931. Unspectacular from a European perspective, it was daring from that of Bucaramanga, and 'red' Liberalism from that of Málaga, consisting, as it did, of proposals for accident security, an eight-hour-day, and modern syndical legislation.[2] Olaya rebuked both parties for allowing electoral competition to "attain a character of madness and frenzy", adding that he had seen no evidence that candidates of either party were concerned about problems of social welfare, the economy and public administration.[3] Gaitán, angling for leadership of the Liberal party in the Santanders blamed the clergy for violence, alleging that clerical bosses had led shouts of "Viva Cristo Rey!" "Viva la Religión!" "Viva la Iglesia!"[4]

The same allegations recurred: embezzlement in public administration, electoral fraud, partial justice, forced migrations, departmental indebtedness, crooked juntas municipales de catastro forcing peasants off their land.[5] Violence became endemic during the elections of December, 1931. The Conservative Minister of Government, Agustín Morales Olaya, exchanged telegrams with the parish priests of Málaga (Daniel Jordán)[6], San Andrés, Mologovita and Macarivita in the hope of securing the political neutrality of the clergy, but without success. The Nuncio too enjoined a godly tranquillity. Morales Olaya visited Garcia Rovira and, as a gesture to Conservatives, suspended the entire police force, leaving the Assembly to build a new one. The assassination of an Olayista Conservative was accompanied by a wave of house-burnings and Conservative discussion of "declaring war" in various villages.[7] Local politics were further de-

1. Ibid., 25 Jan., 9 Feb., 1931, 14-22 Aug., 1932; El Pais, 17-20 June, 25 Aug., 1932.
2. El Tiempo, 19 Mar., 1931.
3. Ibid., 28 Mar., 1931.
4. Ibid., 7 Feb., 1931.
5. Ibid., 19 Mar., 14 Dec., 1932, 22 Jan., 1934.
6. See, above, pp. 171-81.
7. El Tiempo, 15-20 Dec., 1931.

stabilized by violence in contraband along the Colombian-Venezuelan frontier: presumably jealousies revolved around the allocation of profitable posts in the frontier police service.

Reports of violence in the Santanders were, in 1931, received in Bogotá, with indifference. The Santanders were distant and little-known and their political behaviour was regarded as irrational and wilfully eccentric. The hasty despatch of military reinforcements was widely considered to constitute the only initiative available to central government. Violence, in 1932 with an overspill in Western Boyacá, provided contentious material for El Pais, which tried even to establish a connexion between the oil contracts for the Catatumbo area and the repression of Conservatives. El Pais played for circulation. It held plainclothes policemen responsible for assassinations in Málaga, reported Conservative deaths and mutilations in Arboledas and alleged "a reign of Liberal terror" in Piedecuesta and Bucaramanga and a Liberal proposal to suppress Sucre, a Conservative municipality.[1] A comparative analysis of El Tiempo with El Pais for the month of April, 1932, does not permit synthetic interpretation. But instability now seemed endemic. The Assembly in Bucaramanga refused to receive the secretaries appointed by one Governor until he sacked the police chief. El Tiempo reported that the president of the Assembly, Marco Ruiz, had to restore calm with a pistol in his hand when a Conservative leader, Juan Cristobál Martínez, editor of the newspaper El Deber, threatened a Liberal with a revolver.[2] North Santander was calm for as long as the army remained: but its withdrawal and replacement by partisan police was interpreted as an act of provocation by Conservatives. The parish-priest of Sardinata even travelled by mare over the mountains to collect armed Conservatives.[3]

Capital-city interest was renewed by the revelation by a Liberal

1. El Pais, 22 Mar., 5, 20 Apr., 1932.
2. El Tiempo, 2-5, 10, 22, 30 Apr., 1932.
3. El Pais, El Tiempo, 13-17 June, 1932.

Minister of War that the Conservative governments had distributed seventy thousand rifles in the Santanders. Further scandal was caused by the news that the customs-post at Cúcuta had made only four pesos, sixty centavos in a month. The Conservative Morales Olaya insisted that the only large rifle cache found in Eastern Colombia consisted of two hundred and sixty rifles held by the Dominicans in Chiquinquirá.[1] Father Jordán responded from Málaga to Liberal charges: "....If Pius IX, Benedict XV, Padre Restrepo and Monseñor Castro Silva were parish priests in the Santanders and Boyacá, today they would be the object of parliamentary rages, the tonsured bandits and the turbulent parties responsible for life without peace in one third of the republic.... The blame is not ours that the Catholic parish is the maternal shelter of the campesino and the acid that dissolves campaigns."[2]

The government exploited the mood of national solidarity produced by the Leticia war to issue a decree (No. 1493 of 1932) declaring that all arms in the Santanders and Boyacá be delivered to the chief of national police or the highest political authority, except in cases where the Minister of War had given authorization the same year.[3] Certainly the antagonists in the Santanders did hang fire. The scope of violence remained confined to small areas: Conservatives, lacking a concerted plan and a unitary departmental leadership, seemed implicitly to recognize that Liberalism had now entrenched itself and further resistance was suicidal. In the elections of February, 1933, Liberals captured North Santander for the first time; and El Tiempo reported that the Conservative party was in such disarray in South Santander that it abstained.[4] In North Santander the Governor reported that the co-operation of priests could result in immediate pacification: he said that those in the province in

1. El Tiempo, 20 Aug., El Pais, 25-26 Aug., 1932.
2. El Pais, 2 Sept., 1932.
3. Ibid., 16 Sept., 1932.
4. El Tiempo, 6, 14 Feb., 1933.

Ocaña belonging to the diocese of Santa Marta helped to reduce political ~~fric~~tion, while those in the diocese of Pamplona did not, and pointed to the inactivity of Bishop Afanador when given a detailed account of armaments held by a parish priest.[1] Elections in June, 1933, were relatively free of violence. But the Conservative party in South Santander was divided between supporters of candidates chosen by the departmental directorate headed by Agustín Noriega and supporters of those selected by the national directorate headed by José Arturo Andrade in alliance with Laureano Gómez whose attacks on the Olaya government's record in the Santanders had had some local resonance. The net result of division was total Liberal representation of South Santander. Talk of joint mediation by Gómez and López came to nothing.[2]

The Santanders, from 1934 to 1946, descended into a period of unresolved but latent friction. The construction of a highway from Bogotá to the Venezuelan border during the Leticia War accelerated both troop and bandit movements. South Santander continued to have remarkably high rates of violent crime, vengeance being the primary motive of homicide.[3]

Improved transport made for better information in Bogotá during the transfer of power between 1946 and 1948. This unleashed local vengeance which the Bogotano press projected onto the national plane and exploited relentlessly. Events in North Santander remained sufficiently distant for the parties to indulge in mutual allegations of adulterated news and fall back on imprecise phrases like "hundreds of dead". In January, 1948, the Gaitanista Jornada issued a daily role of Liberal dead, until, it alleged, bodies were decapitated to prevent identification. With the oncoming of the Pan American Congress in 1948 El Siglo hinted of

1. El Tiempo, 3 Mar., 6 May, 1933.
2. Ibid., 20 June, 1933, El Pais, 2 Feb., 1934.
3. Juan Maria Aguilar, "La criminalidad en el Departmento de Santander", Anales de economía y estadística, iii, (Feb., 1940), 33-40.

Venezuelan 'Communist' infiltration in North Santander and Communist preparations to rise to power over a divided Liberal party.[1] The phenomena of 1931-3 recurred inversely between 1946 and 1950. An alarmed El Tiempo quoted El Debate of Málaga: "We need a militarized Conservatism. In each vereda comandos of reservists must be formed and trained daily. The same goes for the obrero classes. This is the only way of getting us respected...."[2]

The politics of the Santanders were essentially stationary. It was not the "modernizing" features of the 'revolution on the march' that made a local impression but its traditional anti-clerical radicalism: equally it was old-style godo reaction, not a more modern derechismo or Falangism that appealed to Conservatives in the 'revolution in order'. To be made comprehensible to a heavily illiterate society politics had to be expressed simply: a vocabulary of affirmation and nihilism appealed to both parties, and was reinforced in a society lacking more general loyalties by appeals to personal and family honour. Only coercion produced the uneasy balance of the 'twenties and late 'thirties: and it was easily upset. Neither party was associated with a policy of optimistic looking to the future. The Liberal party, as much as the Conservative, represented a projection of personal and family interests concerned with self-entrenchment rather than social change. The prime function of government was not understood to be the maintenance of public order but the imposition of an absolute and partisan ethic by an exclusive group claiming a historically validated absolute truth. Shifts in local power were associated with the fluctuations in strictly local economies that created strains that an inefficacious machinery of local government was incapable of resolving. From the War of the Thousand Days onwards local and personal feuds persisted; and scores were settled in periods of transition of

1. El Siglo, 24 Jan., 4 Feb., 1948.
2. El Tiempo, 27 Jan., 1949.

power when the coercive strength of the national and departmental government was in doubt. A system of mutual exaggeration and recrimination where all instruments of government were conceived as partisan spoils made it impossible for one party to take seriously promises made by the other of reasonable guarantees. The localization of political activity obstructed effective representation of the Santanders in Bogotá, and meant that the alliances of Santandereano Congressmen were tenuous and uncertain. No universally respected figures or institutions could act as intermediaries in moments of conflict. Violencia, indeed, was halted in the Santanders in the 'sixties only by an alliance of capital-city Conservatives and Liberals deciding to assert the coercive superiority of the central government at the local level. The habit of partisan conflict was so deeply ingrained that this action did not arouse a realignment of local Conservatives and Liberals against Bogotano interference.

3. Conclusions

The strength of peripheral areas vis-à-vis central government was slowly eroded in the early twentieth century. By the 1930's the periphery could no longer compete on the same terms as in the nineteenth century. Central budgets were growing at a speed unequalled by the departments and the municipios. There was no question, as in the nineteenth century, of mounting a regional revolt and looking for allies amongst other aggrieved regions. Not only were peripheral areas unable to compete in terms of armaments but clearly identified regional leaders were sorely lacking: elite migrations from the 1810's onwards decapitated departmental leaderships, for example, in Cauca.

The context of regional politics changed considerably. Diversification of regional interests into the nation - plus aviation - fostered a national upper-class consciousness, where none before could exist. The first loyalties of regional leaders were slowly refocused as many of the established regional families, especially from Antioquia, set the tone

and shaped the orientation of the new national elite. Regional interests were partly overridden by multi-regional producer groups, for which the National Federation of Coffee Growers was the organizational prototype. More recently developing regional interests - in particular, those of the Valle - broadened out and encompassed interests outside the Valle with such speed that there was little consciousness of a specifically regional interest. Any differences between Cali and Medellín were smoothed out under the auspices of the national commodity federations. A predicted political triangulation of interests - Bogotá, Medellín and Cali - did not occur.

Local grievances persisted and were deepened by the growing disparity between central and local resources. The stability of local power-structures was repeatedly threatened by police arbitrariness, judicial partiality, violent fluctuations in the local land and livestock markets. The localities increasingly lacked the means of articulating grievances at the centre. The growth of the cities meant the gradual displacement of rural representation in Congress. The local press was hit by paper shortages in the Second World War and by central and departmental newspaper competition. Violence became, in many areas, the only means of registering resentments.

Perspectives

The military coup of 13 June, 1953 seemed a turning-point at the time.[1] It broke an established pattern of civilian government. It highlighted the collapse of elite relationships both between the parties and within the Conservative party. There was a crisis of national civilian leadership. Until 1949 civilian politicians, once thought to have been eclipsed, made frenzied reappearances that reasserted their claim to public attention: after the election of Gómez no civilian succeeded in capturing the mood of the moment: López, Santos, Ospina, Alzate and others tried and failed. The ideological posturings of civilians seemed empty. Regional balancing, always precarious, was now impossible: municipal government collapsed; local nuclei of the parties survived in some areas but their superstructure was shattered and their identity questioned. It was not the first time that one party had seemed to melt away, leaving only a sentimental reserve, while the other provided the focus for subsequent re-creation: but it was the first time that both evaporated together. And neither social classes nor economic interest groups were powerful enough to act as the bases of new political alliances. The Church faced parallel problems of internal dissolution and external relationships. The army emerged as the only credible institution: it was disciplined, it connected centre with periphery, and it had acquired some experience of government. It was accepted by elite Liberals as the least partial of institutions and by many elite Conservatives as a predominantly Conservative institution that would maintain Conservative policies.

In retrospect the coup represents less of a climacteric. The parties were more robust than some of their leaders believed. The

1. See Vernon Lee Bluharty, Dance of the Millions: Military Rule and the Social Revolution in Colombia, 1930-1956 (Pittsburgh, 1957) and John D. Martz, Colombia: a Contemporary Political Survey (Chapel Hill, 1962).

performance of the military government provoked a civilian reaction amongst Liberals and Conservatives. Liberal and Conservative aspirants to office resented exclusion by military ministers, governors and alcaldes: and they came to redognize that they might displace the military regime if they went into alliance. Alliance with Liberals had grave implications for the Conservative party. It meant the slow conversion of Gómez to the previously Ospinista view that national identity rested in the co-existence and interaction of two traditional and complementary parties. It meant too the slow withdrawal of Conservative support for the military government and emphasis upon the desirability of an impartial army. It meant the reconstruction of the party around the same leaders but without the Falangist ideology that offended Liberals. From the vantage-point of the Rojas regime few Conservatives looked back on the years 1946-53 as an age of glory: though Rafael Azula Barrera did continue to depict Colombia of the period 1910-30 as the only authentic democratic experiment in Spanish America.[1]

Political priorities had hardly changed since the 'twenties. Public order, public works and the public debt remained the main concerns of government. The Violencia did not convince the leadership of either party that dramatic social change was urgent. Both parties were prepared to entertain the possibility of extensive provision of relief. Both considered mounting special welfare programmes to combat specific malaises that undermined social order. But philanthropy was still largely left to the Church, despite its increasing inability to meet social problems; and it was practised for social-theological reasons and not economic ones.

The apparatus of policy-making was meagre. Statistical material and economic information were incomplete and unreliable. The information available to government had improved considerably - road and railway

1. De la revolución al orden nuevo: proceso y drama de un pueblo (Bogotá, 1956), p. 484.

surveying, cadastral inspections, an industrial census - and built on the reforms of the government of Pedro Nel Ospina.[1] Foreign expertise was treated, in the 'fifties', as in the 'twenties, with an exaggerated deference. By the early 'fifties, government had a wide range of devices to tamper with the economy - savings banks, taxes, exchange controls and import quotas, credit controls, pensions schemes, government autonomous agencies and other public investment: but these fell short of an effective set of instruments of economic management. Knowledge of economics was still a rare commodity. The few competent economic policy-makers capable of building a policy rationale fell into two clear, if crude, categories: those, who eschewed party politics, and those who accepted ministries but stood back from the cut-and-thrust of electoral management and party debate. Economic policy-making was yet to be adequately studied. It remains unclear how far the successes that governments claimed were due to imaginative economic policy. Take, for instance, Colombian performance in import substitution in the 'thirties: it is not demonstrated how far success can be properly attributed to the collapse of Colombian capacity to import and how far to a support programme for coffee and to a government-inspired shift of investment from the export sector to the domestic industrial and staple-foodstuffs sectors.

Party organization did not change dramatically. Both the structure and financing of the parties were improvized in the late 'fifties as in the late 'twenties. They reorganized, during the Rojas government, along the informal lines to which they had been accustomed in the 'thirties. The parties were too poor and the leaderships had still too many competing duties - law, teaching, estate management, banking - to keep up more than a rudimentary organization. Despite the dimensions of the challenge to the party leaderships during the late 'forties and 'fifties their membership changed insubstantially. The electorate was still kept spellbound

1. See, above, pp.

for short periods by strong personalities: the emergence of Guillermo León Valencia, as a Conservative leader of the front rank during the Rojas regime, testified to the continued drawing-power of a boasting, flowery rhetoric combined with a quasi-military prowess. Leadership remained contingent upon shifting support in Congress, vigorous activity in the country, acceptance by an unpredictable and narrowly defined 'public opinion' and confident self-projection. The attitudes of the leaderships changed slowly: conscious of their precariousness, they lost some of the frivolity and leisurely pace of the 'thirties, and took more care in estimating the impression that their actions made on the political periphery.

A permanent national press and radio increased the intensity of political competition by putting it on an all-round-the-year basis without radically altering the content of debate. Leaders of both parties used new techniques to shore up established practices. López and Gaitán used the vocabulary of class warfare to forge political clienteles. Gómez used the radio to project a vision of society where modern technology had no place. The vocabulary of Lopismo created an illusion of substantial change in the mid 'thirties: that of Falangist experiment created a hallucination of backward movement in the ea.ly 'fifties. Each had an unsettling effect - but neither a permanent one. Central government remained city-based and city-bound: legislators for a rural milieu had little experience in pioneering, horseback government. They continued to depend on a tradition of a relationship of obligation and favour that recurred throughout the political structure. The leaders worked hard in the late 'fifties to reconstruct the old clientilistic patterns. The pattern of the 'twenties - of parallal clienteles in each department bidding for favours, coexisting in a constant flux of friction, alliance, fission and realignment - persisted into the 'sixties. New institutions, like trade unions, were better adjusted to the practice of co-option than to that of class struggle.

The experiences of disruption taught the party leaderships that the precarious equipoise of successive governments depended upon the preservation of a consensus within the national leaderships. They were careful, therefore, during the rapprochement of the late 'fifties, to avoid repeating the style of opposition of the 'forties: the opposing party was no longer treated as a touchy foreign power, subject to constant lampooning and relentless erosion of its self-confidence.

The silencing of political debate between and within the parties in 1953 was only a transitory phenomenon. The Violencia destroyed much of the prior respect for abstract political speculation. Even the exponents of Falangism in 1949 put a higher priority upon workable political arrangements than idealized politics. The National Front was publicly dramatized as a daring experiment in coalition government. It was not. It was a hesitant attempt to revive and institutionalize the governing arrangements that had broken down in the late 'forties. It lay in the civilian consensual tradition of Núñez, Restrepo, Olaya and Ospina: it was different in only one respect - that the leaderships of both parties worked with more thoroughness and consistency to see that it worked.

Appendix One

The Press

The press constituted a further element in keeping the public order. Superheated newspaper debate was regarded by the governments of the Conservative "hegemony" after 1910 as a convenient safety-valve. Restrepo, for example, claimed that national crisis had in the 1890's and 1900's been precipitated by the press legislation of Caro and the censorship of Reyes: these had broken a 'republican', 'national' mode of politics.[1] Conservatives, like Concha, even hired out their printing presses to Liberals.[2] The Bolivian ambassador was impressed by the degree of freedom enjoyed by the Colombian press: even those revelling in exposing the private life of Abadía Méndez were not rewarded with prison.[3]

Coffee prosperity provided the advertising that sustained the press during the lulls between election campaigns and major political debates. Conservatives established the first enduring newspaper in Bogotá, El Nuevo Tiempo. Its influence, however, declined in the 'twenties. To Conservative businessmen flourishing in boom conditions it represented the retrogressive pietism of the generations of Caro and Suárez. Many capital-city Conservatives preferred a Liberal newspaper, El Tiempo. Acquired in 1913 by Eduardo Santos, a shrewd businessman whose brother and collaborator, Enrique, had editorial experience in Tunja and an extensive network of contact in Boyacá, El Tiempo gave extensive coverage of day-to-day political infighting in Bogotá and international news taken from the wires. It built up a network of local correspondents, usually members of municipal Liberal directorates, who acted as agents and

1. Carlos E. Restrepo, Orientación republicana (Medellín, 1930) i, 60-1, 97-105, 128-9.
2. José Manuel Pérez Sarmiento, Reminiscencias liberales, 1897-1937 (Bogotá, 1938), p. 48.
3. Alcides Arguedas, Obras completas (Madrid, 1959), ii, 731.

identified with a newspaper in which, periodically, they read their own account of events.

Conservative leaders, more interested in office than in the press, were indifferent to the press. The Bogotano Conservatives were anyway at a severe disadvantage. They did not have the large, readymade capital-city readership, through which El Tiempo first established itself. They lacked entrepreneurial flair, failing to exploit railway expansion and the growth of motor transport to extend their influence beyond the Bogotá area. They were slow to adopt new printing technology and sales techniques, crime reportage and gossip columns. The circulation of El Tiempo expanded till in 1929 it reached some 30,000 on weekdays and up to 50,000 on Sundays. That of El Nuevo Tiempo stagnated at 15,000. El Tiempo claimed with some justification, to be the most dynamic political institution in the 'twenties. Ambitious members of a younger generation, like Alberto Lleras, saw the press as a means of rapid political ascent: and only took to party and congressional activity after building a journalist reputation.

The boom of the 'twenties allowed the appearance of other, more ephemeral newspapers. Even a Liberal tabloid, Mundo al día, with a circulation of 20,000 rising to 40,000 on Saturdays, appeared briefly: it did not survive the Depression. A more enduring daily of Medellín origins, El Espectador, moved operations to Bogotá: it appeared, at first, as an evening newspaper. Its editor, Luis Cano, was on good personal terms with Santos, with whom he agreed on most political issues. On religious issues El Espectador was less circumspect than El Tiempo and was prohibited by the Church until, in 1930, it publicly recanted of its hostility towards the religious clauses of the 1886 Constitution. Its circulation, then estimated at 15,000, was expected to rise.[1]

The Church came to the help of the Conservatives by contributing

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1. The statistics come from Arguedas, op. cit., ii, 881.

to the financing of El Debate, which, unable to attract more than 3,000 readers, was starved of advertising and forced to fall back on denunciations of El Tiempo and El Espectador as "simple financial enterprises" and scandalmongers. It publicized archepiscopal condemnations of the "bad press" and reminded the clergy of its duty to combat newspapers propagating doctrines condemned by the Church. After a Rendón cartoon of the Magi, deplored by Perdomo as a "Voltairian parody", El Debate stigmatized the Santos brothers as Lutheran heretics, political hypocrits responsible for "a class of publications" that was "one of the worst dangers" to the Church and the republic.[1] El Debate did not enlarge its circulation.

The influence of El Tiempo was enhanced by the closure of El Nuevo Tiempo in 1931: its claim to be the pre-eminent Colombian newspaper was unchallenged. El Tiempo now assumed a double posture: as the staunch upholder of the Liberal cause through the doldrums of the 'twenties and as the guardian of national respectability. El Tiempo sought to influence appointments: Olaya told the U.S. minister that it soured when he retained a Governor of Atlantico of whom it disapproved.

Aviation accelerated press distribution during the 'thirties: in 1932 El Tiempo claimed to arrive on the day of issue at Bogotá, Girardot, Ibagué, Tunja, Honda, Neiva, Bucaramanga, Barranquilla and Cartagena and on the next day at Cali, Popayán, Santa Marta and Manizales; and the building of the Carretera Central meant that within a day it arrived at Cúcuta and the Venezuelan frontier. The increase in hydroplanes on the River Magdalena meant that El Tiempo could reckon to double its circulation on the Coast.[2]

A Conservative rival to El Tiempo had also to consider the

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1. El Debate, 30 Jan., 23 Oct., 1928, 7, 8 Jan., 1929.
2. El Tiempo, 1 Jan., 1932.

provincial Conservative dailies in major provincial cities: La Patria in Manizales, Diario de la Costa in Cartagena, El Colombiano in Medellín and Diario del Pacífico all survived the Depression, though sometimes with changes of management. Their accumulated readership and knowhow was as much an obstacle to any new Bogotano Conservative newspaper as El Tiempo and El Espectador. The briefly prominent Berrista faction founded El Pais in 1932 to provide an alternative Conservative newspaper in Bogotá; but Conservative disunity meant that it was easily blackened as a factional, not a party organ. It drew a simple picture of Liberals organizing illegal militias that dissolved Conservative hunger-marches, of "red guards" that responded to "military demagoguery" and of Liberal repression in the Santanders preluding a comparable repression nationally.[1] In its early editions El Pais played on memories of the War of the Thousand Days and quoted at length the violence committed by Liberals against Conservatives since 1849. Until the outbreak of the Leticia crisis El Pais read as if there were a permanent, latent civil war which El Tiempo was trying insidiously to obscure. It recommended the placing of parties on a paramilitary footing, and gave prominence to views that parliamentarianism was outworn and street agitation was imperative.[2] It appealed to backwoods purity against the contamination of Conservative Olayistas in Bogotá - "decrepit survivals of certain antique vices, encysted on the party for momentary benefits, enterprises ruled by those who reached a position by dint of sacrifices of the electorate, but without root in provincial life, which is what sets apart the orientation and perquisites of the collectivity."[3]

El Tiempo responded with self-conscious moderation: it would not lower itself to the 'extremist' tactics of El Pais to defend its circulation. El Tiempo fostered an atmosphere of reassurance, smoothing

1. El Pais, 22, 24-27 Feb., 4-5 Mar., 1932.
2. Ibid., 19, 22 Mar., 5, 16 Apr., 11 June, 1 Sept., 1932.
3. Ibid., 10 June, 1932.

over differences and discussing the phenomena that El Pais ranted about in a vocabulary of calculated understatement: allegations that the government of Cauca was organizing penal colonies for its opponents, the entry of armed police into the Antioqueño assembly, rivalries in Caldas that culminated in the movement of the assembly from Manizales to Pereira.[1] The Depression produced a rash of small newspapers, like the Communist Verdad Obrera, which acquired a circulation of 2,500 in 1932 but was quashed during the Leticia crisis on the grounds that it was antipatriotic. But none began to challenge the position of El Tiempo.

El Tiempo remained optimistic throughout the Leticia crisis, insinuating inconsistency and alarmism among its Conservative competitors. The tone of El Pais changed after the Leticia crisis. It poked fun at the 'revolution on the march', and suggested a foreignness in the reform programme of López, headlining "our neighbouring Liberal Republic", but never attempting a sustained critique of it. The Berrista group seemed moderate by comparison to the Laureanista Conservatives who, dissatisfied by El Pais, launched their own El Siglo in 1936. Within months El Pais closed.

To attract circulation and to unite the party El Siglo took a militant position which El Tiempo dismissed airily as provocative intransigence. But Gómez was less easily cowed than the Berristas: Santos had met his match. El Tiempo was not initially alarmed. It continued to combat its opponents with lukewarmness, not hostility. It took care to manoeuvre opponents in both parties into positions where they could be publicly discredited while Santos stood aloof as a bastion of a blameless morality. The ever-present shadow of Santos was widely resented: El Tiempo was said to be omnipotent - not to be praised or quoted in it was damaging to the reputation of a politician; not to he reproduced in the Sunday supplement

1. El Pais, 7 Mar., 6, 8 Apr., 1932, Juan Lozano y Lozano, Ensayos críticos (Bogotá, 1934), p. 242.

suicidal for a poet. A frustrated Liberal accused Santos of being unctuous and patronizing, of "...showing a false Jesuitism."[1] For many Liberals El Tiempo had become a revered source of knowledge. For El Siglo its dulcet tones and blithe generalizations about liberty and peace represented the poison of sweet reasonableness: the Santista faction was the main beneficiary of the mood of complacency that El Tiempo induced.[2] The flayings of El Siglo during the Concordat debate hurt it more than they hurt El Tiempo in the eyes of the elite: but, assisted by imports like Tarzan, Batman and Donald Duck, they helped to sustain the circulation of El Siglo at a figure where it could afford to remain in existence.[3] And they reinforced the belief of some Liberals, Lopistas, Aranguistas and later Gaitanistas that El Tiempo was overpowerful, and that its claim to act as a political arbiter and to decide the rules of the political game deserved stiff resistance.

El Siglo lost a sense of balanced direction in the 'forties. It seized on the most petty trifle and inflated it into an example of the "lie of revolution" and "theoretical democracy". It attacked the oligarchs ferociously, blazoning on its front page, "Today to make money, very much money, it is neither necessary nor convenient to work. It is enough to be encrusted in the band of oligarchs to be turned into a millionaire."[4] Conservative distaste at the practices of El Siglo was reflected in the refusal of the provincial Conservative press of more assured circulation to endorse or imitate its tactics and in the foundation of an alternative Conservative newspaper in Bogotá, El Nuevo Tiempo, which soon submerged for lack of readers or advertisers.

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1. José Edmundo Leyva, Restauracion! (Santiago de Chile, 1949), pp. 109 ff, 171.
2. See, above, pp. 22-41
3. El Siglo kept going between 1950 and 1953 partly thanks to official advertising. Marco Rodríguez La gran prensa en Colombia (Bogotá,n.d.) pp. 107-108.
4. El Siglo, 1 Nov., 1943.

Newspaper war reinforced party jealousies during the Ospina government. Azula Barrera made a representative Conservative criticism of El Tiempo: it was "contradctory in its concepts, voluble in its actions, tendentious in its information, exclusive even in its merely artistic and literary manifestations"; he said it constituted a modern despotism that arrogated mass representation to itself and imported from the United States a system of manufacturing public opinion.[1] The press provided something of a barometer of the fluctuations in relations between the parties. Each newspaper accused the other of censorship and contrivance of news: constart slanted reportage of repetitive detail aggravated partisanships. Even El Colombiano the most restrained of Conservative newspapers, became raucous in 1949, and El Tiempo lost its tone of superior sobriety, so that Echandía, Minister of Government in 1949, reproved both: "the most respectable newspapers in the most respectable hands...(have) contributed in a scandalous manner to making that climate of violence more candescent with information and comments which, in the majority of cases, do not correspond to reality...."[2]

Politicians were quick to grasp the persuasive potential of radio. López, lacking a press outlet, in the 'thirties, used microphones in the palace to bypass the magnates. His ministers broadcast regularly. Gómez opened a series of broadcasts on Conservative doctrine in a vocabulary cruder than that he used in Congress: "The attempt that Olaya Herrera made to end the lives of thousands of Conservatives can be repeated."[3] The importance attached to broadcasting in the 'thirties was underlined by a brief debate in 1936 after the minister of posts imposed a fine on La voz de Colombia for violent vocabulary.

The potential of broadcasting increased dramatically during the

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1. Azula Barrera, op. cit., p. 102.
2. El Tiempo, 5 Mar., 1949.
3. El Siglo, 20, 30 Mar., 18 Apr., 1936.

Second World War. Technical improvements meant the submergence of local stations and the introduction of nationally networked programming.[1] Radio played a decisive part in the 1946 elections. While the press worked almost unanimously against Gaitán, the radio had the opposite effect. While El Tiempo was now - as far as the available statistics can be depended upon - read by 300,000 Colombians, Ultimas Noticias was listened to by one million. The Conservatives could afford to launch the Ospina candidature at the eleventh hour: with national radio coverage he had only to give two speeches.[2]

By 1951 Ultimas Noticias claimed three million listeners, while only El Tiempo, El Espectador and possibly El Siglo could claim over 100,000 copies daily. Yet radio could not compete with the prestige of the Bogotano press: it did not have the elegant columnists, the eloquent leader articles, the range of international contact or the proximity to government and capacity to influence its decisions. Censorship was applied to both press and radio during the Violencia. The suspicions of Conservatives that the programmes Onda libre of a Boyacense radical Liberal, José Mar, and Ultimas Noticias were fomenting violence seemed confirmed by the use of pirate stations by agitators during the '9 April'. Thoroughgoing action was taken to suppress "subversive" broadcasting.

The argument that for all its inflammable potential an unrestricted press was a guarantee of public order prevailed till 1949: and subsequent events seemed tovindicate it. Censorship, if anything, enhanced the reputation of the press, though only from 1955 did it recover the influence it wielded in the 'forties. When the government of Rojas Pinilla collided with the media, the established press, and not the radio, formed the nucleus of resistance. El Tiempo, El Espectador, El Colombiano and El Siglo projected themselves nationally and inter-

1. W.O. Galbraith, Colombia - a general survey (2nd ed., London, 1966), p. 55.
2. Sabado, 2 Aug., 1947.

nationally as defenders of a civilian republican tradition against a tyrannical military dictatorship. When El Tiempo was accused by Rojas of acting "above the state", the press responded with an energetic campaign of protest and underground pamphleteering; and mobilized international press support in Latin America and the United States to discredit his government.[1]

1. Eduardo Santos, La crisis de la democracia en Colombia (Bogotá, 1955), esp. p. 19; Fernando Gómez Martínez, Mordaza (Medellín, 1958?); Documentos para la historia. La clausura de El Tiempo y otros hechos colombianos (broadsheet, Bogotá, 1958); Colombian Journalists reject Stahlman's interventionism: They show Red Influence on I.A.P.A. (reprint from El Caribe, 4 Aug., 1956, as pamphlet, Ciudad Trujillo, Dominican Republic, 1959), esp. p. 17.

APPENDIX II

An election in a town in Santander

This is a translation of an article entitled "Hindus and Muslims" published by Semana on 11 June, 1949 in which a member of the editorial staff wrote of his experiences in an election in a municipio in Santander. It is interesting not only for the picture of the election that it gives but also for its betrayal of the attitudes of a perceptive and informed observer from Bogotá.

"An editor of Semana was present at the elections in a Colombian municipio of 30,000 inhabitants, in the centre (cabecera) of which live only from three to four thousand people. His impressions were as follows:

We arrive at Bucaramanga on Saturday morning. We had been due to be present at the elections in a municipio about a couple of hours from the capital. At the entrance to the Hotel Bucarica we run into an eminent politician who has come from Bogotá to see to his election costs. This smiling, very well dressed politician with a most prosperous air was all we could see in the city of pre-electoral activity.

That same afternoon we decided to make a journey to inspect the municipio that we had agreed to visit. We left behind us the hills of Bucaramanga and made our way through a narrow canyon until we arrived at our destination, the centre of a municipio, three thousand souls, nestling, like almost all the pueblos of Colombia, in the lap of the mountainside.

There was no lack of evidence of 'municipal assistance'. The square and a number of streets had a thick layer of cement. In the centre of the plaza, a semi-destroyed bust of the 'man of laws' (Francisco de Paula Santander) already gave away the political affiliation of the place. On one side was the municipal palace, a house of three storeys, also constructed wastefully with cement, but unpainted, uncleaned,

unswept since the day it was completed. Straight ahead was the Church in a semi-Romanesque, semi-Byzantine style with rococo adornments and painted in egg yellow.

The military alcalde, a young officer of the Colombian armed forces, had arrived that morning. He did not know why he had moved from the town of Galán to here, because, according to him Liberals and Conservatives were almost equal in numbers in Galán and 'hated each other to death'. In our pueblo there were no problems of any kind: 'there was not a godo (Conservative) left'.

The municipal registrar, a Conservative, had hardly occupied his job for a week. Highly prudent - and he needed to be in the circumstances - he gave the impression of fulfilling his duty as far as his knowledge of the job allowed. On our arrival, the problem in hand consisted in finding a Conservative to sit on the electoral jury. The Liberals had not taken possession: some could not be convened because they lived so far away and others had 'not known' of the meeting.

Apart from the military alcalde and fourteen soldiers, two presidential delegates and two members of the electoral court were keeping a close watch on the elections. The Conservative presidential delegate was taking his functions very seriously. He was a young student from the Javeriana (the Jesuit university) and son of a politician from Santander of some importance. He was wearing a guayabera (rural style of) shirt and, when he crouched, the shape of his revolver which he held in his belt shone through.

But from where was he to bring out as few as twenty-five Conservatives to make up the juries of the twenty-five tables of the town? The young Conservative suggested bringing them from Betulia, a corregimiento where the process of cleaning up has had the contrary effect, and not a Liberal remains. But the idea was rejected because, as one of the Liberal directors said - in a tone which might have been either

cynical or candid - 'People from Betulia don't come down this way, nor do soldiers bring them tied up'.

As it was evident that there was nothing to do and that the pueblo offered no guarantees of convenience and cleanliness, we resolved to return to Bucaramanga to spend the night.

On the following day, armed with a safe-conduct made out by the Governor, we returned again to our municipio. At the roadblock soldiers stopped us. 'Nobody can pass; not from half-an-hour ago. The safe-conduct won't do because it is not signed by the Captain.'

Again to Bucaramanga to authenticate the pass. The captain was irritated. It was nine and voting had not begun. 'We get up at two or five in the morning if it is necessary', he said, 'but these departmental employees haven't shown their faces at nine.'

We return with the pass authenticated and with a lieutenant who made it possible to get through the roadblock. But one hundred metres on other soldiers detained us.

'That's not a pass.'

'Show them the safe-conduct signed by the captain.'

'You can't pass. They told me not to let anybody through and warned me that if a car came not to let it pass.'

Fortunately, the lieutenant was not far back and we could soon pass. When we arrived at our municipio it was already late, but voting had only just begun. The alcalde told us there were difficulties in making up the juries with Liberals alone; that they had neither tables nor seats. Evidently, the change in the electoral system has caused an upheaval and disorganization has been worse than on other occasions.

The plaza was already full of peasants brought down from all the veredas to fulfil their civic duty. They crowded round the door of the mayor's office and of the schools all trying to get in at the same time. It occurred to us to explain to them the system of queueing but they did

not understand it and continued not to wait their turn. Not even the intervention of soldiers with bayonets fixed succeeded in making a good line. Half-an-hour later, as if by magic, the line was perfect and stretched out across the whole plaza. They themselves had discovered the advantage of going one at a time and had lined up in order, many of them for the first time in their lives.

There being nothing more to see we went to chat with the local bosses. The majority belonged to 'La Pesa', an organization of slaughtermen, who were, at the same time, directors of local politics.

'We are very united', says one of them, 'but here we respect the Conservatives. If they have gone, it is because thay have chosen to: not because we have thrown them out. Pay attention to the fact that you have not heard one viva to the Liberal party.'

It was true. At two in the afternoon the plaza was cleared and everybody had voted quietly. The men from 'La Pesa' went on informing us. 'Here we used to have a model priest whom all we Liberals liked. But it happens that they named him for Betulia, a corregimiento on the way to Matanzas, and they have organized the paperos there.'

'What are paperos?' we ask.

'They are peasants from the cold country', they answer us. 'They are all Conservatives and all cultivate potatoes. It is they that have made people vacate the fincas of El Playón.'

'That's true', said another, 'we have them well out of the way there. Not one comes down from the ridge. Those who have suffered much are those in the no man's land, all those that had fincas over there next to the ridge that separates north from south. It was over there that they killed two men and wounded a woman and child last week.'

'But who killed them, the Conservatives?'

'That's not known,' says another man. They killed them to rob the sancocho (meal) they had prepared.

'And the army, what's it do? Hasn't it caught the assassins?'

'They say they are here to pacify and don't have orders to pursue. They record the crime, bury the dead, and that's all. And if they wanted to do more they couldn't with so much mountain and so many glens.'

Don Eusebio intervened. He is seventy-eight and was at Palonegro (a decisive battle in the War of the Thousand Days).

'In those days people were more civilized. Prisoners were respected. At that time there was only one general that would burn everything, General Luis E. González. He was a demon. But now they are all like that.'

'But are you excused if you throw Conservatives out of here if they threw you out of other municipios?', we asked them. 'You make voting very convenient without Conservative juries, but over in Mogavita they get their own back.'

'Ah!', says one of the La Pesa group. 'We do not throw them out, they go.'"

APPENDIX III

Declarations of party affiliation

These give a limited idea of the extremes that electoral coercion might take in isolated areas. But it is unclear whether they were faked, exacted under duress or volunteered

a) The first comes from La Idea, El Líbano, Tolima, 20 Nov., 1913.

Protest

I, José Reyes, from the neighbourhood of Santa Teresa, declare: I have belonged to the Conservative party which I served with my person and goods from an early age; but seeing that this party, after twenty-seven years of managing the destinies of the country, far from making it progress has done nothing but impoverish and ruin it with an unaccustomed inconsistency; seeing that public liberties have become derisory, and that the pretended rights of citizens remain at the mercy of policemen and caciques; seeing that even the Holy Religion of Christ is exploited and debased by those that say they are defending it; seeing that morality, law, liberty, all are rolling to the abysm pushed by the ineptitude and bad faith of the Conservative party; seeing all this, I have resolved to separate myself from that party to return to the bosom of the Liberal party which is the single social force capable of saving the patria and bringing us with a secure life to the tranquillity and wellbeing which free pueblos enjoy.

Líbano, November 22, 1913.

Petitioned by José Reyes Domingo Zambrano,

Witness Raimundo Botero".

b) The second comes from Pluma Libre, Sincelejo, Bolívar, 24 Oct., 1913.

"I am the son of Liberal parents. No member of my family has dishonoured its name by calling himself Conservative. By tradition, by conviction and by doctrine, I have communicated with the ideas that the

fine Liberal Cause, which alone can save the Republic from the disgraceful abjection, to which the Conservative party with its disasters and treacheries has lowered it. If in the elections of May, of the present year, I voted with the Conservatives, a thing which has weighed upon me many times, it was because Conservative gentlemen made me lose the use of reason, giving me spirits to drink. Only in that state of madness could I commit such an offence, that in the page of my humble existence, forms a black blemish. My conscience rebukes me for this fault and I seek the absolution of my fellow Liberals (copartidarios) making, as I do, an act of Liberal faith. I have already demonstrated its sincerity in the elections of the fifth of the present month, defying Conservative sovereignty. And let it be clear that when I was offered the sum of five dollars for my vote that indignantly I turned both the proposed figure and the doubting of it down. I am a decided Liberal, then. Hear me well, runtanos.'

Sincelejo, October, 1913.

Julio Almario D.

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