

CHAPTER III

JEFES NATURALES: THE PROFESSIONALIZING PROJECT OF THE POLITICAL CLASS, 1880s-1940s

For political rhetoric to have its desired effect, it is not always sufficient that words and ideas simply “push the right buttons” of the targeted audience. Militants, activists, and politicians who promote particular ideas and debates also need to acquire a degree of respect from their listeners in order to be believed, otherwise they would be immediately disregarded as cranks.¹ In Colombia on the eve of *La Violencia*, political leaders that promoted the rhetoric of violence had achieved respectability in the eyes of the public by first presenting themselves as professionals whose specialized knowledge and expertise made them uniquely qualified to lead their parties and run the country. As experts, their rhetoric was more readily received by those who were outside of the political profession.

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, there was a constant effort on the part of Colombian public figures to prove their level of education by making classical references in parliamentary debates, discussing international issues and ideas in newspapers and

¹ It is possible to move from the fringe to the mainstream—Hitler’s increasing acceptability during the Weimar Republic was not only based on his rhetoric but also on his ability to project himself as a respectable public figure of bourgeois sensibilities. Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1889-1936* trans. José Manuel Álvarez Flórez (Barcelona: Península, 1999) 287-288, 305-307, 440-446; and Jackson J. Spielvogel, *Hitler and Nazi Germany: A History*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2001) 32-59. However, it is more typical that political leaders first establish public respectability before having their rhetoric accepted by a larger audience. In 1994, Hutu government and religious leaders who encouraged the genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda were seen by their followers as educated members of the middle class. Mamdani 189-196, 217-218, 226-233. In Latin America, authoritarian military governments were able to promote the “National Security Doctrine” after they had presented themselves to the public as a trustworthy alternative to messy and corrupt civilian politics. Guillermo O’Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1973) 100; Guillermo O’Donnell, *Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Argentina, 1966-1973, in Comparative Perspective* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1988) 39-71.

magazines, publishing their own books of essays and poetry, and giving elaborate and edifying speeches in public plazas. Travel and study abroad brought additional prestige and further evidence of a broad mind. A university education and a professional credential also emphasized to the public that a politician deserved to manage the nation. Although a good family name also helped in pursuing a political career, it was no longer always necessary, while a politician who did not meet these professional standards could not expect to get much further than a local elected office in a rural municipality. These professional “requirements” opened up politics as a career option for those who could attain a good education.

By the 1930s the political class gave the impression to foreign observers and Colombians alike that it was a meritocracy. U.S. author Edward Tomlinson, in New Roads to Riches in the Other Americas (1939), claimed that Colombia was “a country in which politics is the most advanced of the sciences,” exactly what professionalized politicians would want to hear, and apparently exactly what they told Tomlinson when he visited.² In 1941 in his book Inside Latin America, U.S. journalist John Gunther, claimed that “the country is one of the most democratic and progressive in the Americas.” Gunther’s book has a map under the front cover with brief descriptions of the countries he visited: “In Colombia, senators write poems, a newspaper man is president [Eduardo Santos, owner of the Bogotá daily El Tiempo, was elected in 1938], bootblacks quote Proust, and business men bewail the low price of coffee,” indicating how he believed that Colombian society had assumed most of the qualities of their leaders.³

² Edward Tomlinson, New Roads to Riches in the Other Americas (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1939) 119.

³ John Gunther, Inside Latin America (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941) 161.

Credentials, meritocracy, closure, expert knowledge, a generalist education, public service—these qualities were not only a part of the “professionalization” of Colombia’s political class, but also of the “professional project” of doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, and other practitioners of specialized occupations in countries throughout the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In Europe and North America, professionals became respected, honored, and privileged; Colombian public officials sought to achieve the same kind of respect, honor and privilege for themselves through the same means. They were largely successful in achieving the status they sought, and a broad professional education and study abroad are still important requirements for the highest positions in government. The success of the professional project of Colombian politicians also had its negative side: the “respectability” that politicians had built up for themselves by the 1930s and 1940s made their rhetoric more acceptable to the public, even as political debates descended into bitter accusations and conspiracy mongering on the eve of *La Violencia*.

While a good education served as a key for entering politics in Colombia, it also limited access to an already privileged elite and to those who would play by its rules—which still holds true in Colombia today. The opening of opportunities within the traditional political system for members of the middle class also helps to explain why Colombia’s two-party system lasted as long as it did. By the 1850s in most Latin American republics, liberal and conservative parties were organized by the socioeconomic elites. However, by the early twentieth century members of the educated middle class in rebellion against entrenched traditional oligarchies often formed their own political groupings under radical and populist banners (a phenomenon which will be

analyzed at the end of this chapter). In contrast, during this same period in Colombia, the middle class was subsumed into the pre-existing parties through a professional project. Instead of introducing new political movements, Colombia's middle-class politicians strengthened the existing system, maintaining the partisan *mística* which animated the party faithful.

The party-based patron-client ties extended to the smallest rural neighborhood, vertically organizing the parties to include all social classes. Colombian political parties served as intermediaries between the local population and the state; the local *gamonal*, even though he may or may not have had a diploma, still handed out favors and patronage to citizens, and gathered votes on election day.⁴ Flowery language in the legislative chambers of Bogotá and the provincial capitals was in some ways an attempt to whitewash a corrupted and corrupting political system based on electoral fraud and political violence.

There are several ways in which the development of an educated political class in Colombia is similar to the professional projects in Europe and North America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The prominence of lawyers and doctors in legislative bodies was seen in France and the United States as well as in Colombia. The fetishism of a good education paralleled that of Germany's educated middle class, the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Colombia's educated politicians were also comparable to those found in other Latin American countries. There were poets, essayists and professionals

⁴ Several works describe how clientelism functioned on the local level in Colombia during these years, particularly Sánchez and Meertens. Analysis and case studies of clientelism are also found in regionally-based studies of political violence in Colombia, such as Guerrero on Boyacá, Henderson, *When Colombia Bleed* on Tolima, Ortiz on the Quindío, and Roldán on Antioquia. A more general treatment is found in Martz, *Politics of Clientelism* 35-54; and Osterling 159-166.

in governments throughout the region,⁵ but as we shall see, in Colombia the skillful exercise of language seemed more like a requirement for public officials than elsewhere—part of the larger professional project of the political elite.

It is first necessary to outline certain models and theories about professionals and professionalization before describing the Colombian case more specifically, and then comparing it to similar narratives in other countries in Europe and the Americas.

The Rise of the Professions

The history of the professions in Europe and North America extends back to the guilds and the universities established during the Middle Ages. During the “great transformation” from an agricultural and feudal society to a more industrialized and centralized society in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, guild power was preserved by educated service-oriented occupations (especially in medicine, law, and the clergy). Unlike members of other guild occupations, lawyers, doctors and clergy were selling a “service” rather than a “product;” they were not easily replaced by machines, and were thus able to maintain their independence from the capitalist forces that transformed artisans (as well as a great many agricultural workers) into the industrial proletariat.

One of the ways in which professionals maintained their status was by building on their traditional relationship with universities. In many ways, the initial desire of

⁵ Eduardo Posada Carbó, ed., Wars, Parties, and Nationalism: Essays on the Politics and Society of Nineteenth-Century Latin America (London: U of London, 1995); Ivan Jaksic, ed., The Political Power of the Word: Press and Oratory in Nineteenth-Century Latin America (London: U of London, 2002) and Stuart F. Voss, Latin America in the Middle Period: 1750-1929 (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2002) 185-216. A more specific instance is the Bolivian writer Alcides Argüedas, who wrote extensively about race in his country, while serving in congress and various ministerial and diplomatic posts—his education, travel, and literary career was far from the norm among politicians in Bolivia. Antonio Lorente Medina, Alcides Argüedas: Raza de Bronce; Wuata Wara: Edición Crítica (Madrid: Allca, 1988).

professionals to associate with a traditional general education also served to distinguish themselves as gentlemen—separated from the hoi polloi by standards and credentials determined by their own professional organizations. Professionals achieved upper-middle-class status, and were able to maintain that position of privilege by convincing members of other classes of the necessity and worth of their knowledge and expertise.⁶

Since they were offering services for the public good (to better the health of patients, to represent clients before the law, to save congregants' souls), they were able to encourage a level of respect for their expertise throughout the larger society.

Professionals generally thought of themselves (and were able to convince others to think of them) as “social trustees”—a special class who were expected to use their skills and influence to protect, maintain, and promote “the public good”. They were connected to the community, maintaining and exemplifying both personal and public respectability and responsibility. Professionals were expected to preserve and maintain cultural values; which served as another reason for receiving a general education based on standards set for eighteenth-century gentlemen.⁷

Professionals also sought to establish a credentialing regime within their professions, ostensibly to guarantee the quality of service (much like the medieval guilds), but also to maintain exclusivity over who was and who was not accepted as a member of their professions. Lawmakers were frequently members of professions, so that nation-states found it expedient to officialize the exclusivity of professions in particular occupations, recognizing (and even encouraging) standards set by professional

⁶ Magali Sarfatti Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1977) 3-4, 17, 68-69, 241-242.

⁷ Eliot Freidson, *Professionalism: The Third Logic* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2001) 121-123, 217; and Steven Brint, *In an Age of Experts: The Changing Role of Professionals in Politics and Public Life* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994) 6-8, 15-17, 26-28.

associations. Frequently, state support led to closure of a particular profession, allowing only credentialed practitioners to offer their services.⁸

The university-educated professions in Colombia, from colonial times through the early nineteenth century, were limited to lawyers and clergy—universities simply did not offer much more in their curricula beyond law and theology. Under the inspiration of José Celestino Mutis, a first attempt at founding a medical school was made in 1802; the project became a reality after the wars of independence in New Granada in 1826.⁹ However, during one radical phase in the early 1850s, academic credentials for all professions were legally abolished briefly, and *caveat emptor* was the official government policy towards the practice of law, medicine, and other professions.¹⁰ By this time, however, the leaders of the two political parties were organizing what can be described as a “professional project” for politicians. Already in the mid-nineteenth century, a broad generalist education was necessary in order to prove one’s worthiness as a *jefe natural* (a “natural chief”) and become a politician.

The Professional Project of Colombia’s Political Elite

The emphasis on an academic background for those entering the Colombian political class built on a tradition of educated administrators stretching back to the late colonial period. Tensions in the government between university-educated lawyers and battle-hardened military officers emerged during and after the struggle for independence. In some ways, these conflicts extended through much of the nineteenth century.

⁸ Freidson 127-129; and Elliott A. Krause, *Death of the Guilds: Professions, States, and the Advance of Capitalism, 1930 to the Present* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1996) 1-25.

⁹ Néstor Miranda Canal, “La medicina colombiana de la Regeneración a los años de la segunda guerra mundial,” *NHC* Vol. IV, 258.

¹⁰ Jay R. Grusin, “The Revolution of 1848 in Colombia,” PhD diss., U of Arizona, 1978, 187-189.

However, by the 1870s, a handful of lettered men rose to prominence in both of the traditional political parties; at the same time they demonstrated their skillful use of language through the writing of poetry, novels and grammar books. After the bloody War of a Thousand Days (1899-1902), educated civilians were even more prominent within the political class, especially among those who were too young to have participated in the war. Despite the importance of organizations of veterans of the War of a Thousand Days, by the 1930s, few national politicians used the title “Colonel” or “General,” preferring the civilian “Doctor” (although local *gamonales* were not averse to using military titles).

In the century after the Spanish established their administrative capital in Bogotá in 1538, universities were founded by Dominicans and Jesuits; Bogotá has remained a center for education ever since. By the end of the seventeenth century, laypersons studying law outnumbered the religious in these institutions. As mentioned previously, the scientific expedition led by José Celestino Mutis at the end of the eighteenth century brought the values of enlightened scientific investigation to the capital of the viceroyalty. Several of Mutis’ students went on to become leaders in the independence movement; although many of them would perish in the struggle against the Spanish, their example left an impression on the educational traditions of the Colombian capital.¹¹

The result of the long independence struggle in New Granada was a government led by lawyers rather than military men. As described in the previous chapter, after defeating the Spanish in 1819 Bolívar established a central government in Bogotá to administer “Gran Colombia,” then went off to liberate Peru. His vice president, New Granadan lawyer Francisco de Paula Santander, was left in charge. When Bolívar

¹¹ Amaya 6-16, 29-30.

returned to New Granada in 1826, he reassumed the presidency, then established a dictatorship in 1828, in order to hold Gran Colombia together. The opposition in New Granada was led by Santander, (and in Venezuela by José Antonio Páez) and as described earlier, this factionalism eventually led to the establishment of the Liberal and Conservative parties in the 1840s. A period of civil unrest in the 1850s gave way to Liberal domination of the central government under an almost exaggeratedly federalist constitution from 1863 to 1886; Conservatives came to power and controlled the presidency under a highly centralized constitution from 1886 to 1930.

Whether Liberal or Conservative, members of the political class—those that debated in Congress and held political office—were referred to as the *jefes naturales*. The first step in becoming a *jefe natural* was a broad generalist schooling, which included learning to speak and write grammatically proper Spanish; some knowledge of Latin and other languages—especially French—was also helpful. Politicians needed to be familiar with the classics, as well as with contemporary philosophical debates in Europe. Even in the late nineteenth century, the requirement of a good education did not necessarily limit politics to a narrow wealthy elite, and it was not unknown for those of more humble means to enter politics by means of a good education. The story of Conservative president Marco Fidel Suárez (1918-1921) is exceptional, but indicative of this tendency: an accomplished Spanish and Latin grammarian, he was also the illegitimate son of a washerwoman.¹²

The emphasis on a good education among Colombian politicians began early in the history of the parties. In her study of the nineteenth-century Liberal Party, Professor

¹² Fernando Galvis Salazar, Don Marco Fidel Suárez, Biblioteca de Historia Nacional, Vol. CXXVI (Bogotá: Editorial Kelly, 1974) 25-36.

Helen Delpar shows that nearly all of 50 prominent Liberals were university-educated lawyers.¹³ It is not surprising that Liberals claimed Santander as their spiritual father—the Santanderian emphasis on law and constitutional government continued to be emphasized by Liberal lawyer-politicians.¹⁴

The idealistic Constitution of 1863 and the laws that were passed by the Liberal-controlled Congress reflect the desire of the well-educated Liberal lawyer-politicians to force Colombia into modernity by means of legislation, particularly seen in their promotion of public education and the strict separation of Church and State.¹⁵ A lack of government revenues greatly limited the government's ability to implement these ambitious programs—with few important exports and frequent civil wars, Colombia's economy was one of the worst in Latin America; again the takeoff of the coffee trade that would transform the economy and politics did not begin until the late 1880s.

Conservative politicians, for their part, were also studious—again they were mostly lawyers, but there were also several grammarians. Four Conservative presidents, serving between 1894 and 1930, published Spanish and Latin grammars: Miguel Antonio Caro (1894-1898), Juan Manuel Marroquín (1900-1903), Marco Fidel Suárez (1918-1921) and Miguel Abadía Méndez (1926-1930). Abadía Méndez also continued to teach at a law school during his presidency, following the example of one of the founders of the

¹³ Delpar 43-59.

¹⁴ Victor Manuel Uribe Uran, "Rebellion of the Young Mandarins: Lawyers, Political Parties and the State in Colombia, 1780-1850," PhD diss., U of Pittsburgh, 1993. Eduardo Santos, for instance, emphasized the rule of law and constitutions in a series of speeches commemorating the centenary of the death of Santander in 1940. Significantly, he hardly ever mentioned Bolívar. Eduardo Santos, Las etapas de la vida colombiana: Discursos y mensajes del Presidente Santos (Bogotá: Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 1946) 105-127.

¹⁵ Jaime Jaramillo Uribe, El pensamiento colombiano en el siglo XIX (Bogotá: Planeta, 1996) 179-214, 253-290.

Conservative Party, Mariano Ospina Rodríguez, president from 1857 to 1861.¹⁶ All four received their higher education in Bogotá; by the late eighteenth century, *bogotanos* were priding themselves on their erudite conversation and exquisite manners. Two of the grammarian presidents, Caro and Marroquín, were also corresponding members of the Spanish Royal Academy of Language, but had never traveled far from their birthplace in the Colombian capital—presidents of the only South American country with two coasts, both ended their days never seeing the sea—or even the Magdalena River.¹⁷

By the late nineteenth century, military service in the various civil wars also helped to establish a politician's devotion to the cause of the party, but even then, it was less important than a commitment to learning. Rafael Uribe Uribe, Liberal general in three civil wars (1885, 1895, 1899-1902), also wrote a grammar, conducted conferences on various political themes, and began his own newspaper in Bogotá. By the time of his assassination in 1914, he was one of the few politicians on the national level who was referred to as “general,” while he himself had long emphasized his civilian qualities.¹⁸

Writing grammar and spelling books indicates a desire to preserve the language; like many professionals throughout the western world in the late nineteenth century, Colombian politicians presented themselves as the proper custodians of culture and values, which for them included proper Spanish. The emphasis on grammar also shows the importance that language had in order to attain higher office. This particular value had its effect on the rest of Colombian society—since at least from the nineteenth century, Colombians, particularly *bogotanos*, have been known for the purity of their

¹⁶ Antonio Cacia Prada, Don Mariano Ospina Rodríguez: fundador del conservatismo colombiano 1885-1985 (Bogotá: Editorial Kelly, 1985) 33.

¹⁷ Malcolm Deas, Del Poder y la Gramática y Otros Ensayos sobre Historia, Política y Literatura Colombianos (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo, 1993) 31, 58 footnote 38.

¹⁸ Deas 25-26; Bergquist 81-82; and Melo, “De Carlos E. Restrepo” 222-223, 233.

spoken and written Spanish.¹⁹ Successful politicians needed to be able to make impressive speeches in Congress and on the hustings, as well as to turn a clever phrase in their writing, which was not always limited to political themes. In addition to his grammar, the Conservative president Marroquín also published several novels. Other politicians considered themselves minor poets—the words to Colombia’s national anthem were composed by President Rafael Núñez.²⁰ The unsuccessful Conservative presidential candidate Guillermo Valencia (1918 and 1930) had much more success as a poet, publishing several volumes that were well received in Colombia and abroad.²¹

The generation of politicians that came of age after the War of a Thousand Days (1899-1902) was less interested in grammar and more interested in journalism. The late nineteenth century saw an upsurge in press activity throughout Colombia, but particularly in Bogotá; newspapers were partisan, although several literary magazines also appeared.²² In the first decades of the twentieth century, shock at the loss of life during the recent war as well as the separation of the province of Panamá soon after, sobered party leaders to pursue less belligerent ways of political competition in order to maintain public peace—newspapers offered a pacific means to achieve these ends. Politicians also discovered that among the benefits of peace was a stronger economy, now based on the enormous success of coffee as an agricultural export. Members of this new generation of political leaders were called *centenaristas*, since their appearance coincided with the centennial of Colombia’s independence in 1910.²³ Their first public political act was

¹⁹ Uribe Celis 99-100. In recent years, the easily understood Spanish that Colombians speak has worked in favor of the export of Colombian soap operas to the rest of the Spanish-speaking world.

²⁰ Bushnell 143-144.

²¹ Andrés Holguín, “Literatura y pensamiento, 1886-1930,” *NHC* Vol. VI, 18-20.

²² Enrique Santos Calderón, “El periodismo en Colombia, 1886-1986,” *NHC* Vol. VI, 112-115.

²³ Uribe Celis 96.

forcing the resignation of Conservative president Rafael Reyes in 1909. As described earlier, the authoritarian Reyes “Quinquenio” signaled an end to armed conflict between the parties by including both Liberals and Conservatives in the government. Reyes’ resignation opened the political system to civilian politics. Under the bipartisan administration which followed, leaders of both parties cooperated in reforming the constitution to guarantee representation of the minority party in congress. Conservative presidents through 1930 followed a policy of appointing Liberals to cabinet positions and consular and diplomatic posts. The results were relatively pacific: within both parties, there were now more opportunities to become a career politician, as opposed to a career insurrectionist.

Too young to have participated in the civil wars, the *centenaristas* prided themselves on their ability to resolve their differences through debate and discussion rather than through war. The newspapers provided a means outside of the legislatures and the electoral campaigns for this new group of politicians to get their message to the public. Admittedly, even as late as 1945, Colombia had a literacy rate of about 60 percent²⁴—readers were few, but in poor neighborhoods in the cities and in rural villages, newspapers were often read aloud. The press also offered a stage for the *centenaristas* to demonstrate their own ability to use correct language and turn a clever phrase, as well as to present new ideas from academia and from abroad to their readers. In addition to verbal eloquence, the *centenaristas* added other requirements for becoming a professionalized politician in Colombia: an extended stay abroad and/or a graduate degree. These requirements have continued down to today.

²⁴ Roque Casas, Lo que usted debe saber de Colombia (Bogotá: Editorial ABC, 1945) 40.

These new prerequisites for becoming a professionalized politician continued the late nineteenth-century emphasis on the role of public officials as protectors and promoters of culture. Not only were politicians in charge of preserving language, but also in setting an example for the public through their discussion of ideas, literature, and poetry from Europe—the literary supplements of certain newspapers were surprisingly dense. Through the example of their own intellectual curiosity, this new generation of politicians sought to raise Colombia from its provinciality—debates in newspapers and in Congress now included references to European thinkers, sometimes in the original French, German, and English.²⁵ Such insistence on the Europeanness of Colombian politics would later have violent consequences, as an “it-can-happen-here” attitude developed in both parties during the Spanish Civil War in the late 1930s, and conspiracy theories from abroad were reinterpreted and applied to Colombian circumstances.

Although these new requirements for entering the highest levels of politics may have seemed to encourage the formation of an even more elite group of professionalized politicians, the sheer number of new opportunities for entering public office opened up the political system more than previously. Interestingly, very few political families from the nineteenth century provided politicians in the twentieth; public leaders were generally of middle- and upper-class origin, but were not all from the same tight elite of merchants and large landowners that had dominated politics previously. Secondary and university education was mostly private, and dominated by the Church, but these schools accepted the sons of both Liberals and Conservatives; the few secular schools only attracted Liberals, with the exception of the state-run Universidad Nacional in Bogotá and the

²⁵ Santos Calderón 115-118; and Uribe Celis 38-41.

Escuela de Minas in Medellín.²⁶ In some cases, politicians from opposite parties had known one another nearly all of their lives—by the 1920s and 1930s, leaders of both parties mingled together in the same cafés and exclusive private clubs in the provincial capitals and in Bogotá.²⁷

Although a graduate degree in law, medicine or engineering became a requirement for these professionalized politicians, this was a decision taken by them as a group, and not due to any pressure from professional associations of doctors or lawyers. Indeed, such associations did not really exist with any strength in Colombia—in “who’s who” books published in the thirties, forties and fifties, Colombia’s political leaders did not mention membership in Colombian professional associations in their autobiographies, although a few may have noted belonging to an international association. Colombian governments standardized credentials for professions in the 1920s and 1930s and established international accords for the exchange of acceptable credentials between countries.²⁸ Again, this was a project of congressmen and government ministers and not of professional associations—the politicians had their own reasons for standardizing the credentials they had earned for professions that many of them did not practice. Standardization assured the government leaders that they would have closure within the “profession” of politician, where confidence in the title “doctor” was often important in order to establish a *bona fide* prerequisite for holding higher office.

²⁶ Pamela S. Murray, Dreams of Development: Colombia’s Nacional School of Mines and Its Engineers, 1887-1970 (Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1997) 58-63; and Uribe Celis 99-113.

²⁷ Braun 16-17.

²⁸ In the 1920s, only engineers organized a professional association of any strength; by that time, the politicians had already set the standards for their own “profession.” Luis Eduardo Méndez, Guía del profesional colombiano (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 1937); Joaquín Ospina, Diccionario biográfico y bibliográfico de Colombia 3 vols. (Bogotá: Various, 1937-1939); and Oliverio Perry, Quién es Quién en Colombia, (Bogotá: Oliverio Perry, 1944, 1952, 1970).

By the second decade of the twentieth century, the political trajectory of a Colombian politician, regardless of social origin, followed a similar path. First, there was demonstrated political involvement during high school and university, followed by establishment in a profession and/or participation in journalistic activities. Political connections led to election to a municipal council, then departmental assembly, then congress, up to the presidency itself. Along the way, there were appointments to various positions in the executive branch, for as described in the previous chapter, under the highly centralized constitution of 1886 Colombian presidents not only named cabinet ministers and diplomats, but also appointed departmental governors, who in turn named mayors to the municipalities under their jurisdiction. These executive offices were thus controlled by the presidential party, making service to the party as important as service to the nation for office seekers.

With executive power concentrated in the presidency under the centralist constitution, the executive branch also controlled the local, departmental, and national police, in addition to the army. Despite power-sharing arrangements, the party that held the presidency thus controlled elections through fraud and the threat of violence. The well-educated politicians in Bogotá and the provincial capitals owed their positions to the support of a network of party operatives stretching down to the most remote villages. Local political bosses, the *gamonales*, organized votes or armed gangs, according to the needs of the national party. The *gamonales* were frequently large landowners or important local employers, but could also be other respected citizens, including parish priests. The *jefes naturales* often began as local politicians backed by *gamonales*, and generally followed the path from elected local official to Bogotá politician based on this

system.²⁹ Despite all of the “high culture” that the *jefes naturales* encouraged, the system was still based on patron-client relationships established in the nineteenth century along strict party lines. Liberal and Conservative politicians in Bogotá may have mingled in their clubs and cafés, but in small towns throughout the country, peasants of opposite parties would not hail one another on the street, and likely would have come to blows at election time.

Beginning in the late thirties, the increasingly violent political rhetoric was espoused by the very same *centenaristas* (and later “generations” of politicians that emerged in the twenties) who had prided themselves on bipartisan dialogue and *convivencia*. Although this theme will be examined in later chapters, suffice to say for now that *convivencia* basically suffered from a most basic inconsistency: it hardly existed in neighborhoods, villages, towns, or even small cities. Working with members of the other party did not give *gamonales* or their clients any political or socioeconomic benefit on the local level, while winning electoral competitions did—which only encouraged more fraud and violence. Ultimately, the politicians on top were the beneficiaries of this system as well, since they achieved their positions through the frequent elections. Defending the vertically-organized parties was inevitable for these politicians in the 1930s and 1940s—defense came in the form of maintaining the separate party nationalisms and, eventually, expounding conspiracy theories about the opposite party. The politicians also wanted to feel that their politics were connected to the international crises of the day, thus confirming their Europeanness.

²⁹ See, for example, the early career of Lucio Pabón Núñez, a politician from Norte de Santander, who achieved ministerial positions in the governments of Laureano Gómez and Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in the 1950s. Jorge Meléndez Sánchez, *Lucio Pabón: El nacionalismo católico en Colombia* (Bogotá: El Buho, 2004) 28-87. The same pattern will further emerge in the analysis of other politicians in this and succeeding chapters.

The political debates of the late forties effectively ended *convivencia*—Liberal leader Carlos Lleras Restrepo declared it over both in the public and private spheres in 1949³⁰—but the rupture only lasted for a few years, at least on the elite level. The professionalized politicians survived *La Violencia*; Gaitán was the only major party leader assassinated during the conflict—indeed, his was the only *magnicidio* (as Colombians call the assassination of an important public figure) during the entire period stretching from Uribe Uribe’s murder in 1914 and the killing of Liberal presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán by narcotraffickers in 1989.³¹ By 1953, most of the political class was able to work together to bring about the bloodless “coup of opinion” that ended the civilian government of the intransigent Conservative Laureano Gómez, replacing it with a military administration led by General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla. The Rojas government was unable to put an effective end to *La Violencia*; however, it was Rojas’ attempt to exclude the major figures of Colombian politics from a new bipartisan populist movement was what brought together former political enemies from both parties to oust him in another bloodless coup and form the bipartisan National Front in 1957.³² The

³⁰ Braun 198.

³¹ Safford and Palacios 336. The longevity and ongoing political activity of Colombia’s professional politicians is remarkable, almost excepcional. For instance, in 2004, former president Julio César Turbay (1978-1982) and former cabinet minister Hernán Echavarría Olózaga formed the political movement *Patria Nueva* to support the policies of current president Alvaro Uribe Vélez. Daniel Samper, “La rebelión de los “ex,” *El Tiempo* 11 Aug. 2004, 1-21. The 89-year-old Turbay was first elected to the Cundinamarca departmental assembly in 1939. Perry, 1952, 1012. Echavarría, born in 1911, was a minister in the second López government in 1943. Perry, 1952, 669. Despite ongoing political violence since the nineteenth century, no Colombian president has ever been assassinated. Presidential candidates are another story, particularly in the 1989 to 1995 period, in which not only was Luis Carlos Galán assassinated, but also the candidates of two leftist movements, Bernardo Jaramillo and Carlos Pizarro Leóngómez. Steven Dudley, *Walking Ghosts: Murder and Guerrilla Politics in Colombia* (New York: Routledge, 2004) 163-165. Alvaro Gómez Hurtado, son of Laureano Gómez and unsuccessful presidential candidate in 1974, 1986, and 1990, was assassinated under mysterious circumstances in December 1995. “Alvaro Gómez Hurtado,” *Colombianos destacados* 29 Mar. 2005 <<http://www.colombia.com/biografias/autonoticias/DetalleNoticia715.asp>>.

³² César Augusto Ayala Diago, *Resistencia y oposición al establecimiento del Frente Nacional: Los orígenes de la Alianza Nacional Popular, ANAPO, Colombia 1953-1964* (Bogotá: Conciencias 1996) 32-35.

same politicians were in power after *La Violencia* as before the conflict—a reality that contributed both to the formation of guerrilla groups and the development of general electoral apathy in the mid-1960s.

Since then, there has been no movement or political party that has threatened the hold that Colombia's professionalized politicians have over the elected civilian government.³³ If anything, the “requirements” for higher office—an advanced degree, travel abroad, and oratorical or journalistic ability—have been strengthened in recent years. As in the thirties, the system is vaguely meritocratic, open to those who fulfill the necessary requirements. In recent years, women who have been able to attain an advanced degree and/or study abroad have increasingly held high political office, becoming an “outside” group that is now “inside”—of the thirteen positions in the first cabinet of Harvard- and Oxford-educated President Alvaro Uribe Vélez, elected in 2002, six were held by women, including the ministers of foreign relations and defense.³⁴ However, the continued professionalization of politics in Colombia has also restricted higher political offices to bilingual members of the upper and upper-middle class; those unable to meet the “professional” prerequisites have few chances in the system.³⁵ The

³³ The politicians of the *Unión Patriótica* (UP), a more popularly-based party formed at the initiation of the FARC in the 1980s, hardly exhibited the qualifications of the profession as established in Colombia, but the success of this party was cut short by the massacre of thousands of its militants by military and paramilitary groups in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The UP cut its ties with the guerrillas when it was too late, so that the Colombian right felt that eliminating them was equivalent to eliminating the FARC. Dudley 45-64, 77-166.

³⁴ “Póker de reinas,” *Semana* 15 Jun. 2002, 15 Mar. 2005 <<http://semana.terra.com.co/archivo/articulosView.jsp?id=896>>.

³⁵ Since 2002, the development of a non-violent social democratic political grouping, the *Polo Democrático Independiente* (Independent Democratic Pole—Polo) seems to be having the electoral success and staying power to challenge the professionalized politicians and traditional political structure in Colombia. The Polo's greatest achievement has been the election of Luis Garzón as mayor of Bogotá—the second most important elected executive position in the country after the presidency. Garzón, the illegitimate son of a housekeeper, made his name as a union organizer, and does not have an education beyond high school, let alone study abroad. His rise challenges the current professional qualifications for a politician in Colombia. María Isabel Rueda, “Mucho Lucho,” *Semana* 22 Mar. 2003, 15 Mar. 2005 <<http://semana2.terra.com.co/>

professionalization of Colombian politicians in the twentieth century has given the impression abroad of a country run by a meritocratic political class. However, because of its exclusiveness and inability to articulate solutions to social and political problems, this class has never been successful in ending the political violence that has continued in Colombia since 1946.

Colombia's Professionalized Politicians: Examples from 1930 to 1953

The easiest way to see how this system worked in restricting and admitting politicians into the highest offices is to consider the stories of fifteen prominent politicians from the thirties and forties, six Conservatives, eight Liberals and one communist—eleven of whom were either presidents or presidential candidates. Their stories show how a combination of certain qualities and experiences, including proven rhetorical ability, graduate education, living and/or studying abroad, and journalistic activity, could propel a *jefe natural* of even a humble background to within reach of the presidency. These were professionalized politicians, accepted by their followers as protectors of the highest ideals of the party and the *patria*—they were successful products of a professional project begun by Colombian politicians in the nineteenth century. Many were also important in producing and legitimizing the political rhetoric which would contribute to inspiring the murderous actions taken by party militants during *La Violencia*.

As presented earlier, the period chosen for this sample, 1930 to 1953, is important in the political, social, and economic history of Colombia. This period began with a

archivo/articulosView.jsp?id=20241>; and “Izquierdistas de Colombia, Uníos!” *Semana* 27 Oct. 2003, 15 Mar. 2005 < <http://semana2.terra.com.co/archivo/articulosView.jsp?id=74176>>.

relatively peaceful transfer of power from the Conservatives to the Liberals in 1930, but ended with the parties in the midst of *La Violencia*, which began in 1946 when the Conservatives regained the presidency.

Briefly, the eleven Colombians chosen for this sample who either served as presidents or presidential candidates, in chronological order, are:

Enrique Olaya Herrera	Liberal	President	1930-1934
Alfonso López Pumarejo	Liberal	President	1934-1938, 1942-1945;
Darío Echandía	Liberal	Candidate	1937 and 1949
		Acting President	late 1943-early 1944
Eduardo Santos	Liberal	President	1938-1942
Carlos Arango Vélez	Liberal	Candidate	1942
Alberto Lleras Camargo	Liberal	Acting President	1945-1946
		President	1958-1962
Mariano Ospina Pérez	Conservative	President	1946-1950
Jorge Eliécer Gaitán	Liberal	Candidate	1946
Gabriel Turbay	Liberal	Candidate	1946
Laureano Gómez	Conservative	President	1950
Roberto Urdaneta Arbeláez	Conservative	Acting President	1951-1953

Since eight of the eleven are Liberals, I have added three other Conservatives, the rightist allies Eliseo Arango, Silvio Villegas, and Gilberto Alzate Avendaño, to bring more examples from this party to the sample, as well as to present a third faction within the Conservative Party during these years (the other two were led by Gómez and Ospina Pérez). The selected presidential group also represents different leaders of the three major factions that existed within the Liberal Party by the mid-forties. Additionally, we will examine the background and career of Gilberto Vieira, who was a prominent leader of the diminutive but active Communist Party during this entire period. The professional

project was not limited to the highest levels—government ministers and congressmen from all sides can be shown to follow the same pattern.³⁶

Rather than present each individual in chronological order according to their presidential runs, each will be presented more or less according to when each contributed to strengthening the requirements in the creation of the professionalized politician in Colombia. The family and educational background, rhetorical skills and involvement in journalism, and travel and study abroad will be considered as the chief requirements. We begin with Laureano Gómez.

Laureano Gómez

Gómez followed the course of the professionalized politician quite closely, and given his enormous influence in his party, which he led either directly or indirectly from 1932-1953, he was the model for other Conservative politicians to follow. His family was from the middle sector, and had moved to Bogotá from the Department of Norte de Santander near the border with Venezuela shortly before Gómez' birth in 1889; his father was a jewelry merchant.³⁷ Gómez was educated by the Jesuits at Colegio de San Bartolomé in Bogotá, an experience which left a life-long impression on the ideology of the future Conservative leader.³⁸ He completed doctoral studies at the Universidad Nacional in 1909—he is somewhat exceptional among Colombia's professionalized politicians for having a degree in engineering, rather than in law or medicine. However, before beginning his career, he had made an impression on Conservative leaders during

³⁶ In later chapters, the biographies of politicians mentioned in the text will be described in the footnotes in order to show their level of professionalization within the context of the professional project of Colombian politicians. See footnote 75 in Chapter Two for a description of Liberal politician Jorge Padilla.

³⁷ Henderson, *Modernization* 5-6.

³⁸ Henderson, *Conservative Thought* 29-32.

the protests against the Reyes dictatorship in March 1909; this fame was further strengthened by the impressive oratorical abilities that he demonstrated in an address he gave at Colegio San Bartolomé for the closing of the school year. Such addresses were attended by presidents and politicians at this time, and the best ones were printed and sold; political rhetoric was already culturally important in Colombia long before the turn of the century. Soon thereafter, Gómez' engineering career was permanently put on hold when he was asked by a Jesuit mentor from San Bartolomé to become the editor of a pro-clerical newspaper. He accepted the position and ran the newspaper until 1916—added to his reputation for exceptional oratory was a knack for writing polemical editorials. By 1911, Gómez was elected to the Colombian congress.³⁹ For the next two decades, this Conservative *centenarista* waged famous campaigns against the machine politicians of his own party, often in league with young Liberals such as his friend and future president Alfonso López. Gómez' vitriolic oratory in the Colombian congress and his own reputed personal integrity were key factors in the events leading up to the resignation of Conservative president Marco Fidel Suárez in 1921 over a small financial impropriety. Gómez briefly put to use his engineering skills when he served as the energetic minister of public works for two years during the administration of Pedro Nel Ospina.⁴⁰

Still, Laureano Gómez had not completed all requirements to enter the highest levels of Colombian politics; thus he went abroad with his young family to travel and study in Europe from 1929 to 1932. He was absent from Colombia when the Liberals regained the presidency in 1930; the subsequent administration of Enrique Olaya Herrera included Conservatives in the cabinet, and Gómez himself accepted a diplomatic post in

³⁹ Henderson, Modernization 67-70.

⁴⁰ Henderson, Modernization 137-147.

Germany, where he witnessed the rise of Nazism.⁴¹ As described earlier, after the 1930 election Liberals on the local level had implemented tactics used by Conservatives for decades: fraud and violence to guarantee electoral outcomes in key departments in order to ensure a Liberal lock on national elections. These actions led Gómez to return to Colombia in 1932 and accept a seat in the Colombian senate, where through the power of his oratory (along with astute organizational skills) he ousted pro-Olaya Conservatives from the party leadership; Gómez would dominate his party for the next two decades. Upset over the lack of electoral guarantees, Gómez declared Conservative abstention from all national elections from 1934 to 1939; lacking a position in congress to fight the Liberals, Gómez returned to journalism, establishing the daily El Siglo in 1936.⁴²

Gómez was not only a good example of a Colombian professionalized politician, but encouraged other Conservatives to follow his example, and included similarly formed professionalized politicians among his closest political and journalistic collaborators. Among the numerous *laureanista* Conservatives who followed the same educational and journalistic path as Gómez were Jorge Leyva (presidential candidate in 1958 and 1962), Belisario Betancur (president from 1982 to 1986), and Gómez' sons Alvaro Gómez Hurtado (candidate in 1974, 1986, and 1990) and Enrique Gómez Hurtado (currently a senator). Like other professionalized politicians, Gómez would also criticize Liberal leaders—or even dissenters in his own party—for not meeting the standards of the Colombian political profession: insufficient education, lack of exposure to foreign ideas, or poor grammar and usage (in any language); examples of this type of personal attack will be presented in the following chapters.

⁴¹ Henderson, Conservative Thought 81-83; and Modernization 191-195.

⁴² Henderson, Modernization 226-227, 233-234.

Gómez was among the most skillful politicians in his use of political rhetoric to keep the opposition off-balance while maintaining himself as the leader of his party in the face of internal dissension. He and his political faction—the *laureanistas*—engaged in particularly vehement conspiracy mongering; the tropes of anti-communism and anti-masonry that were constantly repeated in the *laureanista* press beginning in the late 1930s will be examined later. Coming from the mouths and the pens of professionalized politicians like Gómez, these tropes were more acceptable to the Conservative rank and file. The worst period of *La Violencia* coincided with his unopposed election to the presidency in late 1949 and his administration, which—as seen above—was cut short by a bloodless military coup in 1953.

Eduardo Santos

Although he served as president from 1938-1942, Eduardo Santos first made his mark as owner and director of El Tiempo, which he purchased from his brother-in-law in 1913. Santos, born in 1888, came from a land-owning family from Boyacá—not from the highest elite, but with a comfortable enough income for him to spend several years living in France after completing a law degree at the Universidad Nacional. Upon his return, he began pursuing a career in journalism and politics.⁴³ His paper soon had considerable influence within the Liberal Party; it also introduced art, literature, and political ideas from Europe—especially France—to his readers. By the end of the 1920s, El Tiempo had the greatest circulation and largest distribution of any newspaper in Colombia, featuring the most advanced technology in its production, and attracting a

⁴³ Perry, 1944, 235-236; and Germán Arciniegas, “Eduardo Santos,” NHC Vol. I, 350-351.

number of talented journalists.⁴⁴ Like Gómez, Santos and his paper strongly advocated the qualities necessary for entering the highest level of Colombian politics, and pointed to flaws among those in the opposition who did not meet those standards. These standards were not expected of workers and peasants, nor did Santos' politics seek any real change in the social status quo. Santos led the "moderate" *santista* wing of the Liberal Party, which preferred slow gradual change, if any. By the late thirties and early forties, El Tiempo began to present political competition with the Conservatives as a fight against a conspiracy of Nazi-Falangists and right-wing clergy; this conspiracy trope will also be further examined in a later chapter. Eduardo Santos wrote many of the editorials for his paper, while his brother Enrique, under the pen name "Calibán," maintained one of the most widely read daily columns in Colombia from the 1920s through the 1960s. As such, both contributed to forming and repeating Liberal rhetoric.

Among Santos' allies was the well-traveled and educated Germán Arciniegas, who served in a variety of ministerial and diplomatic posts from the thirties through the sixties—he was even a professor at Columbia University in New York in the late forties and early fifties, publishing in both English and Spanish.⁴⁵ Carlos Lleras Restrepo, another *santista* Liberal politician (but somewhat more reformist), served as finance minister and director of El Tiempo during the Santos administration. Trained as a lawyer, Lleras Restrepo developed a particular interest in economics and represented Colombia at the Bretton Woods conference in 1944. He went on to become the polemical leader of the Liberal Party during the first years of *La Violencia*, at which time he was particularly partisan and vitriolic in his rhetoric. He is known as the most activist

⁴⁴ Santos Calderón 112-115.

⁴⁵ Carlos Lleras Restrepo, Crónica de mi propia vida Tomo V (Bogotá: Stamato Editores, 1983) 27-28; Germán Arciniegas, The State of Latin America (New York: Knopf, 1952).

of the National Front presidents (1966-1970), implementing a number of financial and governmental reforms.⁴⁶ The legacy of Eduardo Santos is best seen in El Tiempo, which is still family-owned, and is still Colombia's most influential newspaper. Two grand nephews of Eduardo Santos are very involved in politics: Juan Manuel Santos has been a minister in various governments in the last decade; and Francisco Santos is the current vice president of Colombia.

Enrique Olaya Herrera

The Liberal who became president in 1930, breaking nearly fifty years of Conservative rule, was Enrique Olaya Herrera, who also typified the professionalized politician of the first decades of the twentieth century. As a young man, he served briefly as a Liberal soldier in the War of a Thousand Days, but by 1910, after completing his law degree and starting a newspaper like many professionalized politicians, he was a cabinet minister in the bipartisan government of Conservative Carlos E. Restrepo that replaced the Reyes dictatorship.⁴⁷ He established the important Diario Nacional in Bogotá in 1912—this newspaper was eventually purchased by Olaya's Liberal political rival Alfonso López Pumarejo in the 1920s and became the voice of radical and reform Liberals.⁴⁸ After serving as a cabinet minister, Olaya accepted various diplomatic posts in Conservative governments—he spent the 1920s in Washington as Colombia's ambassador to the U.S. He was chosen by the Liberals as their last-minute candidate in 1930 precisely because of his ties to Conservatives. To help guarantee the transition of

⁴⁶ Lleras Restrepo, Crónica Tomo I, 17-18, 155-160.

⁴⁷ Horgan 124.

⁴⁸ Braun 17; and Antonio Cacia Prada, Historia del periodismo colombiano (Bogotá: Fondo Rotatorio Policía Nacional, 1968) 197-198.

power on the national level, he formed a bipartisan government that included former president Carlos E. Restrepo.⁴⁹

Olaya's election in 1930 not only represented a change in party but also a change in generation: it was the first time that a *centenarista* became president. The Conservatives were split between older politicians: the poet Guillermo Valencia and former general Alfredo Vásquez Cobo. The 1930 election is also noteworthy as the last time any former general has run for president in Colombia as the representative of one of the two traditional parties.⁵⁰ Although Olaya's government included older Conservatives like Restrepo, it was essentially a government for the new generation of Colombian politicians—which is among the reasons that Gómez readily accepted the diplomatic post in Germany that he was offered. Still, Olaya was no reformer, and in policy he generally maintained the status quo ante, even with the Church (to the dismay of more radical Liberals). As mentioned before, political violence arose in certain departments when the Olaya government named Liberal governors, who in turn “Liberalized” the departmental police forces, guaranteeing election results through violence and the threat of violence—

⁴⁹ Horgan 132-135.

⁵⁰ Interestingly, Vásquez's son, Alfredo Vásquez Carrizosa, was a notable advocate for human rights through the 1990s; he was Colombia's Minister of Foreign Relations during the Pinochet coup in Chile in 1973, and organized safe conduct passes and flights for hundreds of Chilean dissidents. Fernando Cepeda Ulloa and Rodrigo Pardo García-Peña, “La política exterior colombiana (1946-1974),” *NHC* Vol. III, 52-53. Military figures participated in politics later on, most notably General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, who came to power in a bloodless coup that ousted Laureano Gómez from office in 1953; at the time he was hailed as a savior of Colombia. The initial general amnesty came close to ending *La Violencia*, but Rojas' Conservative leanings and anti-communist bent led to a return of bipartisan conflict by 1955. His military populism, coupled with mismanagement of the government, led to his ouster in the midst of peaceful civil protest in 1957. Jonathan Hartlyn, *La política del régimen de coalición: la experiencia del Frente Nacional en Colombia* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo, 1993) 81-91. Rojas ran legally as a Conservative under his own political grouping, the *Alianza Nacional Popular*—ANAPO, in the last National Front election in 1970—election results were controversial, but Rojas accepted his narrow defeat. Gabriel Silva Luján, “Carlos Lleras y Misael Pastrana: reforma del Estado y crisis del Frente Nacional,” *NHC* Vol. II, 251-256; and Ayala 34-71. Despite his rejection by professional politicians after 1957, Rojas initially impressed this group with his education: he held an engineering degree from Tri-State University, Indiana. Perry, 1952, 957.

despite the promise of a new generation of politicians, politics on the local level still functioned as before. This particular wave of political violence ended when Peru invaded Colombian territory along the Amazon; patriotic fervor and a quick victory by Colombian forces helped to end interparty armed conflict.⁵¹ Under the constitutional reforms of 1910, Colombian presidents could not succeed themselves; Olaya would have probably been the Liberal candidate again in 1938 if he had not died the year before in Rome, where he was serving as Colombia's ambassador to the Vatican.⁵²

Roberto Urdaneta Arbeláez

Urdaneta Arbeláez, like the slightly older Gómez, was also schooled at the Jesuit San Bartolomé, graduating in 1907. Unlike Gómez, he immediately went abroad to study in various universities in Spain. A *centenarista*, he was back in Bogotá in time for the fall of Reyes and the constitutional reform of 1910. Urdaneta completed a law degree at the Universidad Nacional in 1913, by which time he had already begun his political career as a member of the Bogotá city council—he then served as deputy in the Cundinamarca departmental assembly and as representative to the Cámara, eventually being elected to the senate in 1930. He served as director of the Conservative daily El Nuevo Tiempo and helped to found two other dailies, El País and El Deber,⁵³ thus completing the credentials for a professionalized politician in Colombia: study abroad, an advanced degree, and experience as a writer. Unlike many from this sample, Urdaneta came from “old money”—he was born into an old prestigious Bogotá family. He married

⁵¹ Henderson, Modernization 210-212.

⁵² Gustavo Humberto Rodríguez, Olaya Herrera: político, estadista y caudillo (Bogotá: Presidencia de la República, 1979) 225-228.

⁵³ Perry, 1952, 1014-1015.

into another elite family from the Valle de Cauca—his wife, Clemencia Holguín, was daughter of one ex-acting president, Carlos Holguín (1888-1892), niece of another, Jorge Holguín (1909, 1921-1922) and granddaughter of president Miguel Antonio Caro (1892-1898).⁵⁴

Urdaneta was more willing to cooperate with Liberals than Gómez, which was a source of friction between the two Conservative leaders throughout the 1930s and early 1940s. Urdaneta accepted the post of Minister of Foreign Relations in the Olaya government, in which he played an important diplomatic role during the war with Peru. He continued in the position during the first year of the López government, in order to bring the conflict to a peaceful end through the ratification of the Protocol of Rio—which Gómez had vigorously opposed (indeed, during a debate on the treaty in the senate, Gómez became ill and collapsed, taking nearly a year to fully recover).⁵⁵ After Colombian ratification of the Protocol, Urdaneta was appointed ambassador to Peru (not an unusual move given that the new government there had completed repudiated the administration that had invaded the Colombian Amazon), and stayed in that position until 1940, after which he served as ambassador to Argentina for two years.⁵⁶ He returned to Colombia in 1942, and challenged Gómez' polemical leadership of the party after the presidential election, in which Liberal Carlos Arango Vélez, who was supported by Gómez, lost to Alfonso López.⁵⁷ From 1945 to 1950, he was back and forth from Colombia and the U.S., at turns representing Colombia in the United Nations and serving as Interior Minister and then as Minister of War in the government of Mariano Ospina

⁵⁴ Arizmendi 260.

⁵⁵ Henderson, *Modernization* 210-212.

⁵⁶ Perry, 1952, 1015.

⁵⁷ "El Manifiesto Conservador," *El Espectador* 15 Jun. 1942: 4.

Pérez (1946-1950). He maintained this last position in the first cabinet of Laureano Gómez.⁵⁸

His experience as Minister of War seems to have radicalized his politics—he was convinced that the Liberals, especially Liberal guerrillas, were somehow in cahoots with communists. Despite his open opposition to the *laureanistas* less than ten years before, he was appointed acting president in November 1951 when Gómez again took ill; from this position, he was chief of state during some of the most difficult years of *La Violencia*. Less than a year into his presidency, for example, he did little when, on September 6, 1952, Conservative mobs in Bogotá sacked the newspaper offices of the Liberal dailies El Tiempo and El Espectador, and then burned the homes of Alfonso López Pumarejo and Carlos Lleras Restrepo.⁵⁹ It was the only time that widespread violence broke out in Bogotá during *La Violencia*, outside of the events surrounding the assassination of Gaitán on April 9, 1948.

Alfonso López Pumarejo

Olaya's successor was Alfonso López Pumarejo; he was elected unopposed in 1934 and proclaimed a more activist, reformist government under the slogan "Revolution on the March." Further Conservative abstention led to an all-Liberal congress and all-Liberal departmental assemblies in 1935, after which the national congress began implementing constitutional, agrarian, labor and educational reforms.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Perry, 1952, 1015.

⁵⁹ Carlos Lleras Restrepo, De la república a la dictadura: testimonio sobre la política colombiana (1955, Bogotá: Planeta, 1997) 418-424.

⁶⁰ Tirado Mejía, Aspectos 73-100.

López spent much of his youth and young adulthood abroad. His grandfather Ambrosio López was an important leader of the Bogotá artisans in the 1840s and 1850s (he founded the Sociedad de Artesanos in 1847).⁶¹ Political appointments and connections helped raise the family from the artisan class to a more comfortable status in one generation: the father of Alfonso López Pumarejo, Pedro A. López, was a Bogotá-based banker with interests in London; López attended Brighton College (a secondary school) in England. López did not complete his education, but went straight into managing his father's business affairs in New York when he was eighteen. When he came back to Colombia, he continued to work for his father, while at the same time entering politics around 1910.⁶² Although he had never graduated from secondary school,⁶³ his banking experience abroad and journalistic pursuits more than made up for not obtaining an official educational credential, which was usually necessary for becoming a professionalized politician in Colombia. Some claim that among the cultural influences he brought to the Bogotá political elite were suits tailored on Saville Row and a taste for expensive scotch.

In November 1929, before the Liberal convention of that year, López surprised the delegates by declaring that a Liberal would be elected that February as president of Colombia. During the convention, most Liberals were arguing over whether to support one of the two Conservative candidates—many of them had supported Valencia during his unsuccessful 1918 run, while others felt that backing Vásquez Cobo would reap more benefits for the party on the local level. However, a small group led by López favored

⁶¹ Robert H. Davis, "López Pumarejo, Alfonso," *Historical Dictionary of Colombia* 2nd ed. (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow P, 1993) 310-311.

⁶² Perry, 1944, 125.

⁶³ Alcides Argüedas, *La danza de las sombras* (1934; Bogotá: Banco de la República, 1983) 183.

dropping Liberal abstention and running one of their own. In late December, they decided that Olaya Herrera, then, as noted earlier, the ambassador of Colombia in Washington, would be the perfect candidate.⁶⁴ Since Olaya was already serving a Conservative government, and counted on the support of old Republican Conservatives like Carlos E. Restrepo, he was not so controversial as to cause Valencia and Vásquez Cobo to unite against a Liberal candidate. Additionally, the Conservative split was complicated by Ismael Perdomo, the Archbishop of Bogotá since the death in 1928 of Bernardo Herrera Restrepo. Throughout the first decades of the twentieth century, Conservative presidential aspirants, in order to be proclaimed the official candidate of their party, needed the approval of Herrera Restrepo, who as Bogotá's archbishop—Primate of Colombia—was the highest authority in the country's Catholic hierarchy. Perdomo was not comfortable with the political maneuvering and authoritarianism of his predecessor, and supported one or the other of the two Conservative presidential candidates in the months leading up to the election. Confusion and even disagreement with Perdomo's decisions split the clergy, making a Liberal victory that much easier.⁶⁵

López, however, was not in favor of power-sharing with the Conservatives and, like Rafael Uribe Uribe, believed strongly in a single party in power with a loyal opposition. Despite his involvement in the Olaya victory, he was immediately working against the new president as he positioned himself to be the Liberal candidate in 1934. When he accepted the nomination for president in November 1933, he publicly derided the Republicanism of two decades before, a further jab at the Olaya government. His

⁶⁴ Argüedas 92-94, and 103-104.

⁶⁵ Mario Latorre Rueda, "1930-1934. Olaya Herrera: un nuevo régimen," *NHC* Vol. I, 275-278; José Restrepo Posada, *La Iglesia en dos momentos difíciles de la historia patria* (Bogotá: Editorial Kelly, 1971) 47-79; and Father Eduardo Cárdenas, S.J., personal interview, Bogotá, 1 Jul. 2004.

campaign, as well as his government, was almost uniformly Liberal. Although his ideal may have been based on his up-close observations of the British and U.S. political systems, his partisanship did much in maintaining the two separate party nationalisms, and in inspiring the promulgation of conspiracy theories on both sides by the mid-1930s.⁶⁶

López' ideas about a partisan government were shared by his old friend the Conservative leader Laureano Gómez; as has been seen, the two had united two decades before against the official Conservative Party machine, represented by Marco Fidel Suárez.⁶⁷ After Olaya's election, López accepted diplomatic duties in London and had met his old friend Laureano Gómez in Amsterdam while he was there—the two united in opposition to the new government.⁶⁸ As noted above, with the official electoral machinery in the hands of the Liberals, Gómez and the party directorate opted for electoral abstention in the presidential election of 1934,⁶⁹ following the example of the Liberals in the 1920's. Additionally, this was also a way of indirectly supporting López, in a political tactic similar to that of Rafael Uribe Uribe in 1914, who supported the Conservative José Vicente Concha against the collaborationist Republicans in his own Liberal Party. Uribe, like Gómez in 1934, understood that a more partisan government, even of the opposing party, would serve to unite his party more than a collaborationist

⁶⁶ Richard Stoller, "Alfonso López Pumarejo and Liberal Radicalism in 1930s Colombia," Journal of Latin American Studies Vol. 27, Issue 2 (May 1995): 375-378.

⁶⁷ Tirado Mejía, Aspectos 68; and Thomas C. Tirado, Alfonso López Pumarejo, el Conciliador, (Bogotá: Editorial Planeta, 1986) 102-105.

⁶⁸ Arturo Abella, Laureano Gómez (Bogotá: Espasa, 2000) 122.

⁶⁹ Abel Carbonell, La quincena política Vol. I, (Bogotá: Editorial Cosmos, 1952) 247-249.

government.⁷⁰ Indeed, it would be Gómez, in his capacity as President of the Senate, who would administer the oath of office to López on August 7, 1934.⁷¹

After the election, which López won with an exaggerated voter turnout as a result of frauds committed by Liberals all over the country, Gómez continued supporting López with his attacks against Olaya. However, when Gómez began attacking Olaya's management of the recently concluded war with Peru, he created a difficult political situation for López. The war was a patriotic cause in which partisan struggles were forgotten in the name of national honor. Liberals, and many Conservatives, felt that the actions of Olaya and his government during the conflict were heroic—to say otherwise would seem to be an act of treason. López chose the support of his party over his friendship with Gómez in this debate; the Conservative leader felt betrayed by López, and began severely attacking his administration, using inflammatory rhetoric and invoking conspiracy theories to decry Liberal excesses, real or imagined. Although such tactics may have had something to do with the personal split between the two men, both were also committed to partisan competition. The rhetoric of two separate nationalisms, already present and functioning on the local level, also became the rhetoric of the two party leaders. Local patron-client relationships depended on animosity and competition between the two parties; if a lack of cooperation was seen at the top of the vertically-organized parties, the acrimony at the bottom of the political system was accentuated even more. Both López and Gómez favored the idea of a party in power vs. a party in opposition, with all in favor of the nation; but while the two men were leaders of the

⁷⁰ Melo, "De Carlos E. Restrepo" 231-233.

⁷¹ Tirado Mejía, Aspectos 68.

Liberals and the Conservatives, the parties in Colombia emphasized party loyalty more than patriotism in their rhetoric.

The reformist López was able to attract a number of young idealistic Liberals from the generation that came of age in the 1920s, who called themselves *los nuevos*—“the new ones.” Despite their “newness,” they changed little of the professional project that was already well-established by the *centenaristas* by the time *los nuevos* came on the scene; *los nuevos* distinguished themselves from the *centenaristas* for expressing a more reforming spirit.⁷² Among these young men were Darío Echandía and Alberto Lleras Camargo, who were both ministers in López’ cabinet and later served as acting presidents during López’ second administration from 1942-1946. Their stories further illustrate how the professional project functioned during these decades.⁷³

Darío Echandía

Darío Echandía’s rise in politics followed along the lines that have already been presented. Born into a middle-class family in a small town of Chaparral in the Department of Tolima in 1897, Echandía went to Bogotá to study law at the Universidad del Rosario. He impressed the priests there with his rhetorical abilities, but he was a staunch, progressive Liberal; like most Colombians, he inherited his party allegiances from his family and from his regional contacts. His law career was soon overshadowed by his rise in politics. After first impressing party leaders as a senator, Echandía was chosen to fill different ministerial posts in López’ first administration, becoming the

⁷² Uribe Celis 93-98.

⁷³ There were also Conservatives among *los nuevos*, inspired by European nationalists and Catholic social thought. Among these were the group known as *los leopardos*, who throughout the thirties tended to challenge Gómez’ leadership of the Conservative Party. Uribe 99-100. The *leopardos* will be described in more detail later in this chapter.

government's chief advocate for reform.⁷⁴ Echandía eloquently presented and defended the administration's proposals before congress, and was proclaimed to be the *lopista* candidate for president in 1938. However, the *lopistas* failed to win a majority among the Liberals in the legislative elections of 1937 and the Echandía candidacy was withdrawn—he was then sent to Rome to replace Olaya as Colombia's representative to the Holy See. Echandía's professional resumé had lacked a stint abroad; he stayed at the post for five years, returning to serve as a minister in the second López administration in 1942.⁷⁵ He served as president for several months in 1943-1944, when López went to the U.S. to accompany his sick wife (as well as to avoid growing political and financial scandals surrounding himself and his family).

After Gaitán's assassination on April 9, 1948, Echandía led a group of Liberal politicians to the presidential palace in order to negotiate a solution to the rebellion on the streets with Conservative President Mariano Ospina Pérez. The result was a bipartisan cabinet with Echandía in the highest post. The arrangement lasted a year, when the Liberals left the government in an atmosphere of increasing violence throughout the country. Echandía became his party's nominee for president, but decided to abstain from the elections because of a lack of guarantees—thus Laureano Gómez was elected unopposed.⁷⁶ In the National Front governments, he served as acting president and again as ambassador to Rome.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ José Ignacio Arciniegas, Vida y pensamiento de Echandía (Bogotá: Senado de la República, 1979) 9-10; and Perry, 1944, 63.

⁷⁵ Perry, 1970, 132.

⁷⁶ Braun 142-146, 178-184; and Catalina Reyes Cárdenas, "El gobierno de Mariano Ospina Pérez: 1946-1950," NHC Vol. II, 30-32.

⁷⁷ Alfredo Vásquez Carrizosa, El Concordato de Colombia con la Santa Sede, julio 12 de 1973 (Bogotá: Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 1973) 94, 265-271.

Echandía does not seem to have personally generated much of the inflammatory rhetoric from these decades; rather, his actions themselves were often polemic, beginning with his ministerial posts in the first López government. Being named to the ambassadorship in Rome after the death of Olaya was also controversial, since it was generally known that he was an active freemason, and the papacy had condemned freemasonry. As we shall see in a later chapter, this fact was used against him by Gómez during the senate debates over ratification of the new concordat with the Vatican that Echandía had signed in 1942.

Alberto Lleras Camargo

Alberto Lleras Camargo was born in Bogotá in 1906; his father managed *haciendas* for large landowners from the Colombian capital. Despite his upper middle-class origins, he was descended from a politically active family; his grandfather Lorenzo María Lleras, a prominent journalist, cabinet minister and founder of a small school for Liberal youth in Bogotá in the mid-nineteenth century. On his mother's side, his grandfather was Sergio Camargo, a Liberal general during the various interparty civil wars from the 1860s through the 1880's.⁷⁸ Lleras Camargo began his career early, following the path of the professionalized politician. Before leaving secondary school, Lleras Camargo had proven himself as a journalist; upon graduation, he took a job at a Liberal newspaper and never completed a university degree. To further improve his prospects as a professionalized politician, he worked abroad as a journalist for several years, first in Argentina, then in Spain. Upon his return, he briefly directed an

⁷⁸ Alberto Lleras Camargo, *Mi gente*, 2nd ed. (Bogotá: Banco de la República, 1976) 20-87; and Robert H. Davis, "Acosta, Caro, and Lleras. Three Essayists and Their Views of New Granada's National Problems, 1832-1853," PhD diss., Vanderbilt U, 1969, 167-242.

unsuccessful evening paper for Eduardo Santos, but his reform politics led him into the López wing of the party and he became López' closest political advisor.⁷⁹ When López left office in 1938, Lleras Camargo founded and directed El Liberal, which became the third most-read newspaper in Colombia, after El Tiempo and El Siglo.⁸⁰

El Liberal was the most partisan (and thus most anti-clerical) of the Liberal dailies in the late 1930s and 1940s, taking the side of left Liberals after the closure of the even more radical Diario Nacional in mid-1938.⁸¹ As such, El Liberal was especially active in promoting the Nazi-Falangist conspiracy theory, in which Laureano Gómez and the *laureanistas*, along with militant right-wing priests and army officers, were plotting a coup under the tutelage of foreign agitators—this conspiracy theory will be examined in detail in a later chapter.

Upon López' reelection in 1942, Lleras Camargo reentered government service; when López resigned in 1945 due to scandals and lack of support in congress, Lleras Camargo became acting president for a year, presiding over the election of 1946. After his brief presidency, he founded the influential newsweekly Semana (which, like Lleras Camargo himself by that time, was much less partisan than El Liberal). He lived in Washington as president of the Pan-American Union and became the first president of the newly-founded Organization of American States in 1948. Later, he negotiated the National Front accords with his former political enemy Laureano Gómez, serving as the first president under the power-sharing agreement (1958-1962).⁸²

⁷⁹Villar 25, 380-414.

⁸⁰Sáenz 97, footnote 22.

⁸¹Cacua, Periodismo 197-198, 212-213.

⁸²Villar 430-436; and Hartlyn 81-91.

Eliseo Arango, Silvio Villegas, and Gilberto Alzate Avendaño

Among *los nuevos* developed a subgroup of young Conservatives who called themselves *los leopardos* (“the leopards”). The founder of the group was Eliseo Arango, who also fulfilled the requirements of a professionalized politician. Arango came from Manizales, the largest city in the rich coffee-growing region that lies between Bogotá and Medellín. He read widely, becoming especially interested in European nationalist intellectuals, such as Charles Maurras. He became friends with fellow *leopardo* Silvio Villegas while in secondary school; the two went on to study law together at the Universidad Nacional in Bogotá. Upon their graduation in 1924, they published a “Nationalist Manifesto” for Colombia, advocating a hierarchical elitist society that would eliminate the messiness of democracy and herald a new era of progress and prosperity while maintaining traditional structures and values. Arango went on to become a representative in congress, while Villegas returned to Manizales to direct the local newspaper, La Patria. Arango then spent a year abroad, studying at the Sorbonne; upon his return, he was appointed the minister of education in the last months of the Conservative administration in 1930—his connections with Liberal *nuevos* made his appointment serve as a transition to the Liberal administration of Olaya Herrera. Liberal excesses in the early 1930s led Arango to withdraw from political positions and become an essayist, editorialist, and professor at two of Bogotá’s Catholic universities, the Rosario and the Jesuit Javeriana.⁸³

Villegas, meanwhile, had returned to Bogotá to establish another newspaper in 1928 to support the presidential campaign of Guillermo Valencia. The paper folded after

⁸³ Perry, 1944, 16; Juan Lozano y Lozano, Mis contemporáneos Tomo I (Bogotá: Ediciones “Tierra Firme,” 1944) 72-76; and Juan Carlos Ruiz Vásquez, Leopardos y tempestades: Historia del fascismo en Colombia (Bogotá: Javegraf, 2004) 132-136.

the election, and after serving briefly in congress, Villegas and other *leopardos* took their verbal campaign against Liberal electoral abuses to the countryside.⁸⁴ Villegas once again went back to Manizales and La Patria in 1935; by this time, the *leopardos* as a group were chafing under the iron rule that Laureano Gómez exerted over the Conservative Party, characterized by them as a “discipline fit for dogs.” While Gómez had mandated an electoral abstention for national offices by party members in 1934, Villegas and Gilberto Alzate Avendaño (a younger colleague at La Patria) formed the fascist-inspired *Alianza Nacional Patriótica* (the National Patriotic Alliance—ANP) in 1937 and ran an electoral slate in Manizales for the 1939 legislative contest. Gómez decided to lift Conservative electoral abstentionism for these elections in order to maintain himself in control of the Conservative Party (he also believed that the new president, Eduardo Santos, would extend electoral guarantees to the Conservatives). Villegas was elected to congress as a representative of the ANP, but soon returned to the Conservative fold. His relationship with Gómez was frequently “on again-off again” throughout the forties, fighting alongside Gómez against López in 1943, yet establishing a Conservative newspaper in Bogotá to compete with Gómez’ El Siglo in 1944.⁸⁵ As such, Villegas and Alzate Avendaño were both important generators of anti-Liberal rhetoric, backing up and extending the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory that claimed that the Liberals wanted to destroy Christian civilization in Colombia. When Ospina Pérez became president, both Villegas and Arango accepted diplomatic posts; Alzate Avendaño maintained an *anti-laureanista* newspaper in Bogotá, and eventually became

⁸⁴ Guerrero, 135-136; and Christopher Abel, Política, Iglesia y Partidos en Colombia (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional, 1987) 108.

⁸⁵ Perry, 1944, 274.

one of the ideologues of the Rojas dictatorship, serving the regime as its representative in Franco's Spain.⁸⁶

Although Arango, Villegas, and Alzate Avendaño never campaigned for the presidency, they served as congressional representatives, ministers, and diplomats, and were often mentioned as possible presidential candidates well into the 1960s—Alzate Avendaño perhaps came the closest to running for the highest office, but died suddenly in 1960 before he could contest a National Front election. They were a particularly literary group: Alzate wrote cinema and jazz criticism,⁸⁷ while Villegas published prose-poems⁸⁸ as well as justifications for neo-fascism such as There are No Enemies to the Right in 1937.⁸⁹

Carlos Arango Vélez

Carlos Arango Vélez, a dissident Liberal candidate in 1942, also possessed an impeccable résumé for a Colombian professionalized politician. One of *los nuevos*, he was educated at the Universidad del Rosario, received a law degree from the Universidad Nacional, and went on to post-graduate study in criminal law in Rome with Enrico Ferri (1856-1929), an internationally famous advocate of legal positivism. Upon his return, he entered politics. In the early thirties he joined Jorge Eliécer Gaitán (see below) in an unsuccessful attempt to form a leftist political party—the two men had in common their studies in Rome.⁹⁰ Arango Vélez was also involved in journalism: in 1937, he was

⁸⁶ Héctor Ocampo Marín, Gilberto Alzate Avendaño (Armenia: Lito-Editorial Quingráficas, 1977) 101-115.

⁸⁷ Alvaro Salom Becerra, El ocaso en el cenit: Gilberto Alzate Avendaño (Bogotá: Ediciones Tercer Mundo, 1985).

⁸⁸ Silvio Villegas, Ejercicios espirituales (Bogotá: Revista Universidad, 1929) and Canción del caminante, (Bogotá: Litografía Colombia, 1944).

⁸⁹ Silvio Villegas, No hay enemigos a la derecha (Manizales, Colombia: Arturo Zapata, 1937).

⁹⁰ Perry, 1944, 15; and 1970, 21-22.

director of the radical Liberal Diario Nacional,⁹¹ supporting the anti-clericalism espoused by that paper. Even after 1942, Arango Vélez frequently supported the traditional Liberal nationalism, speaking at ceremonies honoring Benjamín Herrera and Rafael Uribe Uribe.⁹²

His unsuccessful bid for president in 1942 was as the leader of *anti-lopistas*, which illustrates the frequency with which Liberal and Conservative leaders were able to work together—despite his leftist past, Arango Vélez was supported by Laureano Gómez and the bulk of the Conservative Party as well as by progressive Liberals. The Liberal rank and file, led by their *gamonales*, would have none of it, and López, with the support of Santos' El Tiempo, was reelected handily. This tendency towards bipartisanship also appeared in the personal life of Arango Vélez: his daughter married Misael Pastrana Borrero, a close advisor and personal secretary of Conservative president Mariano Ospina Pérez;⁹³ Pastrana Borrero was elected president in his own right in 1970, and his son Andrés Pastrana Arango served as president from 1998 to 2002.

Gilberto Vieira

Although he was a leader of Colombia's miniscule Communist Party, the story of Gilberto Vieira illustrates the importance of fulfilling the requirements of a professionalized politician in Colombia even for leaders of non-traditional parties. Vieira's family was from the provincial upper middle class; his father was a Conservative military officer. Despite his background, Vieira demonstrated an active interest in communism while still in secondary school. Colombia's Communist Party was

⁹¹ Perry, 1952, 542.

⁹² "Homenaje al General Herrera se realizará el domingo próximo," El Liberal 2 Mar. 1944: 1.

⁹³ Perry, 1952, 889.

organized after the dissolution of the Revolutionary Socialist Party in the late 1920s. The Revolutionary Socialists united various far left tendencies under one movement and included labor organizers as well as members of the “intellectual left”⁹⁴ (such as 1946 Liberal presidential candidate Gabriel Turbay—see below). Indeed, Vieira fell more in the latter category, and, after traveling to the Soviet Union, helped organize the Communist Party in 1930 on what remained of the Revolutionary Socialists.⁹⁵ The communists created an electorate through labor organizing as well as by leading peasant takeovers of the lands of large haciendas in certain municipalities near Bogotá; this electoral base allowed for the election of one or two communist representatives to congress for most of the thirties and forties. Having more in common with other professionalized politicians than with rank and file voters, Vieira easily accepted and implemented the cooperative Soviet “Popular Front” strategy in 1935. Left Liberals gladly received Communist support, and even seemed to feel more progressive and modern in following the example of European center-left politics; Vieira addressed the crowd from the balcony of the presidential palace in Bogotá on May Day, 1936. As in the Popular Fronts of Chile and Cuba, the Colombian Communist Party probably supported the much more moderate Liberal Party for too long, backing official Liberal candidate Gabriel Turbay against the more progressive dissident Liberal Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in the 1946 elections.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Colombia, Treinta años de lucha del Partido Comunista de Colombia (Bogotá: Ediciones los Comuneros, 1960) 11-18.

⁹⁵ Medófilo Medina, Historia del Partido Comunista de Colombia Tomo I (Bogotá: Centro de Estudios e Investigaciones Sociales, 1980) 163-169; and Perry, 1944, 272.

⁹⁶ Comité Central 32-87; Medófilo Medina, “Los terceros partidos en Colombia. 1900-1960,” NHC Vol II, 279-282. Chilean Communists supported a Popular Front government until they were unceremoniously kicked out of the cabinet by a Radical Party president in 1948. Simon Collier and William F. Sater, A History of Chile, 1808-1994 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) 242-251. Cuba’s Communists supported Fulgencio Batista during his first elected government (1940-1944), receiving cabinet posts in his

Also, like many Colombian professionalized politicians, Vieira established and kept alive a daily newspaper in Bogotá from 1942 to 1946, spending precious party funds in the process.⁹⁷ His paper, along with Lleras Camargo's El Liberal, was important in maintaining the accusation of a Nazi-Falangist-Conservative conspiracy at work in Colombia, adding to the inflammatory rhetoric of the times. Vieira's ties to the Liberals were also personal: his sister Gabriela was married to prominent *santista* Liberal Germán Arciniegas.⁹⁸

Mariano Ospina Pérez

Mariano Ospina Pérez, a moderate Conservative from a distinguished political family, won the 1946 elections. His political pedigree was impeccable: his grandfather Mariano Ospina Rodríguez founded the Conservative Party in 1848 and served as president of Colombia from 1857 to 1861; his uncle Pedro Nel Ospina was president from 1922 to 1926. Still, Ospina Pérez followed the path of twentieth-century professionalized politicians: after completing engineering studies at the Escuela de Minas in his native Medellín, he went on to graduate studies at Louisiana State University, the University of Wisconsin, and the University of Liège in Belgium. Upon his return to Colombia, he was involved in the establishment of the bipartisan *Federación Nacional de Cafeteros* (Fedecafé) in 1927, the business association of the coffee-growers, which bought coffee, set prices, negotiated international agreements, and provided benefits for

administration; Batista still counted on Communist support well into the 1950s. Louis A. Pérez, Jr., Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution (New York: Oxford UP, 1988) 277-278, 281.

⁹⁷ Cacia, Periodismo 215.

⁹⁸ Memo to Davis, Wright, and Bonsal, 27 Mar. 1943, U.S. Department of State Document (State) 821.00/1479, Records of the Department of State relating to Internal Affairs of Colombia, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

their members, from small to large landowners. Ospina Pérez was president of Fedecafé throughout the 1930s, while at the same time staying involved in Conservative Party politics, accepting a seat in the senate in 1939.⁹⁹

Like the Liberal Olaya in 1930, Ospina drew on his previous bipartisan experience and invited Liberals into his government in 1946; but as mentioned earlier, 1946 was a repeat of 1930 inasmuch as political operatives of the president's party on the local level assumed police powers in order to form an electoral lock through violence and the threat of violence. Under these conditions, Ospina was president during some of the worst years of *La Violencia*, and seems to have been unable to control the phenomenon. Ospina barely survived the uprising in Bogotá after the assassination of Gaitán on April 9, 1948, and (as noted above) wisely organized a new bipartisan government with Darío Echandía and other Liberal professionalized politicians, who were also shaken by the events. Although this arrangement also failed within a year, Ospina's attempted collaboration with the Liberals led to a falling out with the more reactionary Laureano Gómez, who was elected unopposed as president in 1950. Ospina backed the bloodless coup led by General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla that ousted Laureano Gómez from office in 1953. The *ospinistas* were the last major party faction to abandon the Rojas dictatorship and join the National Front in 1957.¹⁰⁰

Among the professionalized politicians that came from this wing of the party was Misael Pastrana Borrero, who served as Ospina's secretary during his administration and was elected the last president of the National Front (1970-1974). Pastrana Borrero, who

⁹⁹ Perry, 1970, 301.

¹⁰⁰ Ayala 63-71; Hartlyn 81-82; Bushnell, Colombia 201-204, 214.

also studied law in Rome,¹⁰¹ was also very involved in journalism, and started a TV news program in the 1980s that featured his son Andrés as the anchor. This experience served as a launching pad for Andrés Pastrana's own political career, which culminated in his election to the presidency in 1998; the younger Pastrana also studied briefly at Harvard, completing the requirements for a Colombian professionalized politician.

Jorge Eliécer Gaitán

The stories of the other two candidates in the 1946 election, Liberals Jorge Eliécer Gaitán and Gabriel Turbay, also demonstrate the importance of the professional project for Colombian politicians at the beginning of the twentieth century, and how two outsiders could become insiders by following the rules of the system. Jorge Eliécer Gaitán always presented himself as a maverick “tribune of the people” from his early days as a lawyer and politician. Born in 1898 in Bogotá, he came from relatively humble origins—his father was a minor Liberal Party activist who sold used books; his mother was a primary school teacher. His was a lower-middle-class family that frequently experienced hard times; still, Gaitán studied with a scholarship at various secular Liberal high schools and received his law degree from the Universidad Nacional in 1924. He had a penchant for oratory, even in high school, and in 1917 was sent by the campaign of Guillermo Valencia to small towns near Bogotá to drum up Liberal support for the unsuccessful Conservative candidate. Gaitán pursued his law career with some success, frequently representing working-class clients, along with many wealthy ones. He paid his own way to study criminal law with Enrico Ferri in Rome in 1927-28. Having thus fulfilled the basic requirements for a professionalized politician, he returned to Colombia

¹⁰¹ Perry, 1970, 310-311.

in 1928, and reentered politics with increased vigor from a seat in the Colombian congress.¹⁰² In each of the governments of the “Liberal Republic”, he was appointed to positions of responsibility: he served as Olaya’s special representative before several Latin American governments during the brief war with Peru, was an activist mayor of Bogotá during the first López administration, and was a cabinet minister in both the Santos and second López administrations.¹⁰³

He was a capable administrator and a brilliant political organizer, who emphasized more than any other party leader that the cultural values of the professionalized politicians were to be extended to the lower classes. During his brief attempt to form a leftist third party in the early 1930s, he was famous for promoting hygiene among the peasants, passing out soap at his political rallies.¹⁰⁴ The failure of his third party was not due to his tactics but to the difficulty of organizing any political grouping outside of the traditional parties—he returned to the Liberal fold with surprising quickness in 1935.¹⁰⁵ Ten years later, he organized a populist faction within the Liberal Party itself, forming *gaitanista* cells in poor neighborhoods and villages throughout Colombia. He essentially set up his own party hierarchy in competition with the traditional Conservative and Liberal patron-client systems. Gaitán became head of his party after the 1947 legislative elections when his faction won the majority of the victorious Liberal vote, despite the fact that Gaitán came in third in the 1946 presidential

¹⁰² Braun, 39-47, 56-57; and Sharpless 29-60.

¹⁰³ Braun, 59, 67-76; and Sharpless 61-70; 85-100.

¹⁰⁴ Braun 64.

¹⁰⁵ Braun, 62-67; Sharpless 71-84.

contest. Gaitán was assured of winning the presidency in 1950, but his political career was cut short by his assassination.¹⁰⁶

Gaitán's rhetoric often took advantage of existing tropes within Liberal nationalism, and his campaigns certainly invoked the names of Benjamín Herrera and Rafael Uribe Uribe—for instance, one *gaitanista* campaign poster from 1947 featured his image alongside those of the two Liberal heroes.¹⁰⁷ Gaitán, never a friend of the Church, was nevertheless inconsistent in his use of anti-clericalism; for instance, he avoided the theme as he tried to woo Conservative votes during his 1946 presidential campaign. After becoming head of the Liberal Party in 1947, his newspaper, La Jornada, used anti-clericalism in its imagery of the Conservatives.¹⁰⁸ His influence as a martyr of the Colombian left cannot be underestimated—as already noted in the first chapter, few historians criticize his actions even today. His movement was so closely organized around his own personal charisma that it quickly dispersed after his assassination.

Gabriel Turbay

The other Liberal candidate for presidency in 1946, Gabriel Turbay Abounador, was another outsider who, by fulfilling the requirements for becoming a professionalized politician, rose to the highest positions in his party and in the Colombian government. Indeed, Turbay probably had more success in politics than Gaitán up to 1946. Turbay was automatically an outsider for being the son of Lebanese immigrants in a country where ideas of racial and ethnic purity still reigned among the elite classes. His parents owned a store in the provincial capital Bucaramanga, in the Department of Santander.

¹⁰⁶ Braun 77-136.

¹⁰⁷ Green, photo 12, 151.

¹⁰⁸ Green, photo 6, 136.

He studied in a Jesuit high school, but was attracted to the more progressive ideas of the young Liberals and socialists in Bogotá, where he went to study medicine at the Universidad Nacional. After receiving his degree, he entered politics by way of the cafés and newspaper offices of Bogotá in the 1920s; he was one of the architects of Olaya's victory in 1930. He went on to occupy seats in his departmental assembly and in congress, proving himself as an exceptional orator. A director of the Liberal Party for most of the 1930s, Turbay also served as foreign minister in both López administrations, and as ambassador to the United States during the Santos years.¹⁰⁹ Thus, Turbay fulfilled all the requirements of a professionalized politician; unlike Gaitán, Turbay was even accepted as a member of the exclusive Jockey Club in Bogotá. Well-educated, articulate, serving his party and his country at home and abroad, Turbay had spent two decades preparing himself to be president, even though in 1946 Liberals like Eduardo Santos presciently bewailed, "If only his name were Juan Ramírez."¹¹⁰ He had not anticipated that the Colombian electorate was ready for the populist alternative offered by Gaitán, nor that the Conservatives would field a candidate only a few weeks before the election. Even though he outpolled Gaitán, he was personally devastated by the election results, gave up his political career, and moved to Paris, where he died—heartbroken—a little over a year later.¹¹¹ His was the frustration of a professionalized politician who had carefully cultivated himself for his country's highest office, only to have it snatched from him at the last minute.

¹⁰⁹ Ospina 783-784, Perry, 1944, 253-254.

¹¹⁰ Braun 105. The Conservative campaign against Turbay almost always derided him for his ethnic background. See, for instance, Juan Roca Lemus, *El Camino de Damasco (Parábola de Gabriel Turbay)* (Bogotá: Editorial Kelly, 1946); the front cover shows Turbay wearing a fez and riding a camel.

¹¹¹ Braun 110.

Conclusion: Professionalized Politicians, 1930-1953

The story of the rise of each of these fourteen politicians shows how deeply ingrained the professional project for Colombian politicians had become in the first decades of the twentieth century. Politicians built upon traditions from nineteenth-century Colombian politics. Santander began a tradition in Colombia of rule by educated leaders; especially after 1864, civilians rather than military figures made up the bulk of the political class, including those who reached the presidency. By the end of the century, education was expressed in a near-obsession for correct and creative speech. The beginning of the twentieth century saw an end to the tradition of warrior-politicians with the opening of elected and appointed offices within the political system for members of both parties. A new generation of professionalized politicians arose that eschewed civil war, and required of their profession a graduate education and experience living abroad, as well as demonstrated creativity in writing (through a journalistic career) and/or in oratory in congress or on the hustings during electoral campaigns. They were able to convince the electorate that they were *jefes naturales*, prepared to defend the ideals of party and country, and hold the reins of power in Bogotá. At the same time, by opening their profession just enough to satisfy the ambitions of the educated middle class, other bourgeois political movements that were seen in other parts of Latin America did not arise in Colombia.

Comparisons with European Models

Colombia's professionalized politicians of the thirties and forties sought respect and legitimacy by claiming that their expertise and education made them qualified to

participate in public life and govern the country. In many ways, the professionalizing project of Colombia's politicians shares characteristics with similar projects mounted by certain European governing classes in the late nineteenth century. The emphasis on education is like that of the German educated middle class, the *Bildungsbürgertum*, while the creation of a political class with bourgeois values is comparable to a similar project in the French Third Republic at the turn of the century.

The German *Bildungsbürgertum*

Beginning in the middle of nineteenth century, the educated middle class in Germany began to see themselves as the “general estate” described by Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) in Philosophy of the Right (1821). This “estate” represented the “general interests of all members of society but also represented the interests of the state;”¹¹² it was the steady force of a nation, and the source of its greatness. The *Bildungsbürgertum*, which included not only members of the traditional professions, but also others who completed a university education, came to see itself as that “general estate.” The responsibility of directing the nation led the *Bildungsbürgertum* to advocate extending education to other social classes, setting up both professional and vocational schools. At least outwardly, the material well-being of this class was seemingly less important than the quality of their education and personal culture. Members of the *Bildungsbürgertum* demonstrated their higher learning through an appreciation of art,

¹¹² Kenneth F. Ledford, From General Estate to Special Interest: German Lawyers, 1878-1933 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) 9.

literature, and music, as well as the use of classical references in public speech.¹¹³ They saw themselves as protectors of German high culture.

The emphasis on education by the *Bildungsbürgertum* is similar to that of the Colombian political class. We have seen that through their newspapers, Colombian politicians introduced the ideas and culture of Europe to their readers—this exercise also showed their supposed cosmopolitanism. The influence of the German example on Colombia, however, was at best indirect—studious Colombians preferred residence in France and Italy, even England and the United States, over study in Germany. Still, the influence of the German educational system was in some ways unusually strong in Colombia. Beginning in the latter nineteenth century, the Colombian government invited German missions to suggest improvements in the Colombian educational system and hired German instructors for their normal schools¹¹⁴—the word “kindergarten” is as familiar in Colombia as it is in the United States. But given that these Colombo-German contacts were limited to the public school system in a country where the Church played a predominant role in education (especially after 1886), German missions to Colombia reveal more about the ideas of the governing class than the influence of German instructors.

The shared values of the *Bildungsbürgertum* and of Colombia’s political profession inspire the same larger questions: how could the Holocaust occur in the land of Beethoven? How could *La Violencia* happen in a country where politicians write

¹¹³ Ledford 1-10; David Blackbourn, “The German Bourgeoisie: An Introduction,” *The German Bourgeoisie: Essays on the Social History of the German Middle Class from the Late Eighteenth to the Early Twentieth Century*, David Blackbourn and Richard J. Evans, eds. (London: Routledge, 1991) 2-17; and Konrad H. Jarausch, “The German Professions in History and Theory,” *German Professions, 1800-1950*, Geoffrey Cocks and Konrad H. Jarausch, eds. (New York: Oxford UP, 1990) 6-7, 16-17.

¹¹⁴ Helg, *La educación* 25-26; Safford and Palacios 237-238.

poetry? The assumption in such inquiries is that “high culture” is so powerful that it can deter political and social violence. Perhaps the examples of Germany and Colombia serve more to show the opposite: that “high culture” has no effect on political culture. Indeed, it sometimes seems to mask political and social problems so that the middle and upper classes (and foreign observers) can ignore them.

The French Political Class at the Turn of the Century

It has been argued that the nineteenth century in France was the “bourgeois century,” characterized by the rise of the middle class from the Revolution of 1789 through the revolutions of 1830 and 1848. The establishment of the Third Republic after the disaster of the Franco-Prussian War ushered in nearly seventy years of governance by bourgeois politicians—many of these political leaders were doctors and lawyers, well-educated with a sense that they deserved to govern due to their own expertise. Not all bourgeois were alike, and up until 1898 the Republic was ruled by more conservative politicians from the wealthy upper middle class; from 1898 to 1914, Radical Party politicians with the support of the *bonne bourgeoisie*—the middle middle class—dominated the governments.¹¹⁵

The example of France had a direct influence on Colombian professionalized politicians, who, especially after 1910, were anxious to set up a similar bourgeois-led government. Despite the moneyed background of many Colombian political leaders, the French bourgeois standard of professionals as politicians became the norm in Colombia

¹¹⁵ Roger Magraw, *France 1815-1914: The Bourgeois Century* (New York: Oxford UP, 1986) 245-254; Philip Nord, *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth Century France* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995) 15-47 and 115-138; and Theodore Zeldin in Gerald L. Geison, ed., *Professions and the French State, 1700-1900* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1984) 23.

as well, as the title “doctor” became attached to the names of congressmen, ministers, and presidents. Additionally, by the 1930s several Colombian dailies, including the Liberal El Tiempo and the Conservative El Siglo, received international news through different French news organizations. French political ideas became popular in Colombia; young Conservative intellectuals such as the “*leopardos*” claimed Charles Maurras as a spiritual father, while the first López administration embraced the Popular Front idea shortly after the Léon Blum government came to power in France (1936-1937). Members of both parties invoked French intellectuals and examples from French history in their speeches and writings. For instance, during one of the most important events in France during this time, the fall of the Third Republic and the German occupation in 1940, Liberal Francophile Eduardo Santos, then president of Colombia, expressed his shock and dismay at the French collapse,¹¹⁶ while the Conservative Laureano Gómez, who had also lived in France, predictably blamed the Third Republic for the catastrophe and expressed his sympathy for the new Vichy regime.¹¹⁷

Despite being based on bourgeois values, neither the French nor the Colombian political classes could withstand severe crises. Whether it be a German invasion or *La Violencia*, there was more to running a country than simply claiming professional expertise.

¹¹⁶ Eduardo Santos, “Texto del mensaje del Presidente Santos [20 Jul. 1940],” Eduardo Santos: obras selectas, Jorge Mario Eastman, comp. (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 1982) 269-270; “La lección de Francia,” El Tiempo 18 Jun. 1940: 4; and “El sentido del sacrificio,” El Tiempo 21 Jun. 1940: 4.

¹¹⁷ “La verdadera Francia y la Francia legal,” El Siglo 14 Jun. 1940: 4; and “La ‘Troisième’ ha muerto,” El Siglo 18 Jun. 1940: 4. On the day that France capitulated, El Siglo published a photo of Charles Maurras, under the caption “A Great Patriot” (“Un gran patriota”) and a photo of Léon Blum under the caption “One of the causes of the defeat of France” (“Uno de los causantes de la derrota de Francia”). El Siglo 2nd edition 17 Jun. 1940: 8.

Comparisons with the Rest of Latin America

In forming their professional project, Colombian politicians had few models from Latin America from which to draw. The politicians of the “oligarchic democracies” that appeared at the end of the nineteenth century in most of the region, notably in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, employed a form of the professional project in order to reconfirm their own legitimacy, which was still based on their connections to land, to commerce, and to traditional families. Colombia’s political system did not compare with most of those in the rest of Latin America in the twenties, thirties, and forties. Despite considerable electoral fraud, Colombian political leaders still had to appeal to voters and party faithful in order to rise in politics. Presenting themselves as “professionals” helped politicians to establish a degree of legitimacy that was unnecessary in many other countries in Latin America, where social class or military service were usually more important than education, travel, and erudition. Elections occurred with considerable frequency in Colombia, a situation matched only by Brazil (to 1930) and the southern cone countries of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. It is informative to consider Colombia in light of the political experience of other Latin American nations. Even if no elections were held, ruling elites elsewhere still had to establish their legitimacy in order to maintain themselves in power, just as they had to do in Colombia.

In several countries, military-backed dictatorships simply preserved their legitimacy by maintaining a monopoly over the means of violence: this was the case, for instance, in Venezuela, under General Juan Vicente Gómez (1908-1935);¹¹⁸ in Mexico

¹¹⁸ Manuel Caballero, Gómez, el tirano liberal: vida y muerte del siglo XIX (Caracas: Monte Avila Editores, 1993).

during the long rule of General Porfirio Díaz (1876-1910),¹¹⁹ and in Nicaragua under the U.S. occupation (1915-1933) and later under the Somoza family (1933-1979).¹²⁰ Later in Mexico, a generation of politicians was formed by its experiences during the decade of revolution (1910-1920). Still, to 1940 military service on the winning side was the first requirement for any aspiring Mexican politician—other aspects were less important.¹²¹

Other Latin American countries, from the late nineteenth century onward, maintained rigid “oligarchic republics”, in which economic and social elites maintained political power, not allowing “outsiders” to share in ruling the nation. In many ways, the Colombian political system resembled the “oligarchic republics”: restricted suffrage based on literacy and property requirements with most politicians coming from merchant or large land-owning families. Legitimacy for a politician in most “oligarchic republics” (such as those found in Brazil, the southern cone, Central America, and Ecuador) came mainly through being a member of one of the traditional families—a moneyed elite that could trace its ancestry back to colonial wealth and power. Although political leaders from oligarchic republics were frequently well traveled and reasonably well educated, it was much more important in Colombia for politicians to demonstrate oratorical or writing ability than in other Latin American countries. Oligarchic republics did not witness their political leaders publishing grammar books, novels, and poetry, nor were they involved intimately in journalistic pursuits.¹²² These activities were so important for Colombian

¹¹⁹ Paul Garner, Porfirio Díaz (Harlow, Eng.: Pearson Education, 2001) 111-115.

¹²⁰ John J. Tierney, Somozas and Sandinistas: The U.S. and Nicaragua in the Twentieth Century (Washington, D.C.: Council for Interamerican Security, 1982).

¹²¹ See, for instance, Peter H. Smith, Labyrinths of Power: Political Recruitment in Twentieth Century Mexico (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979); Adrian A. Bantjes, As if Jesus Walked the Earth: Cardenismo, Sonora, and the Mexican Revolution (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1998) 4-6, 29-32.

¹²² José Murilo de Carvalho, “Brazil 1870-1914—The Force of Tradition,” Journal of Latin American Studies, Vol. 24, Quincentenary Supplement, (1992): 145-162; Joseph L. Love and Bert J. Barickman, “Rulers and Owners: A Brazilian Case Study in Comparative Perspective,” Hispanic American Historical

politicians, that ability with language offered an opening for “outsiders” to enter the political system. We have already noted how Marco Fidel Suárez, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, and Gabriel Turbay were able to rise in their parties despite their outsider status due to more humble social and economic circumstances.

In certain cases, members of the organized opposition to military and oligarchic governments in other Latin American countries demonstrated some of the civilian traits seen among Colombia’s politicians. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, radical parties sprang up, especially in the southern cone, representing the aspirations of a rising educated middle class of administrators and traditional professionals—doctors, lawyers, teachers, and engineers. These movements demanded a wider role for the middle class in politics, and just like Colombia’s professionalized politicians, radical leaders often claimed that their education made them more worthy of managing the country than the entrenched elite. Some of these radical parties came to power in the ‘teens and twenties, led by Arturo Alessandri in Chile¹²³ and Hipólito Irogoyen in Argentina.¹²⁴

As a result of the move to professionalize militaries throughout Latin America at the turn of the century, progressive-thinking sons of the middle class found new opportunities to rise politically. Within a few decades, the lower ranking officer corps sometimes led coups in favor of the middle sector and against the traditional oligarchy, most notably in the Brazilian *tenente* movement in the 1920s,¹²⁵ the uprisings in Chile in

Review, Vol. 66, No. 4 (Nov. 1986): 743-765; and Michael J. Gonzales, “Planters and Politics in Peru, 1895-1919,” Journal of Latin American Studies, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Oct. 1991): 515-541.

¹²³ Patrick Barr-Melej, Reforming Chile: Cultural Politics, Nationalism, and the Rise of the Middle Class (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2001).

¹²⁴ David Rock, Politics in Argentina, 1890-1930: The Rise and Fall of Radicalism (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975).

¹²⁵ Frank D. McCann, “The Formative Period of Twentieth-Century Brazilian Army Thought, 1900-1922,” The Hispanic American Historical Review, Vol. 64, No. 4 (Nov. 1984): 737-765.

1931,¹²⁶ and in the movement led by Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina in 1945.¹²⁷ The Colombian military also professionalized after the War of a Thousand Days, but remained very small, as was the tradition in Colombia since the government of Santander in the 1830s. The army was generally for members of the Conservative Party (particularly the officer corps), which meant a further cut in funds during the Liberal governments of the thirties and forties—inspiring a certain amount of saber-rattling, and an attempted coup in July 1944. Not until the coup of Rojas Pinilla in 1953 did the military play an important role in politics;¹²⁸ it is notable that Rojas, as an outsider, favored populist policies modeled on those of Perón in Argentina.¹²⁹

Populist movements began to appear in the twenties and thirties throughout the region, representing a coalition of middle class forces with urban workers and artisans; this occurred first in Peru, with the rise of Raúl Haya de la Torre and the APRA.¹³⁰ These movements placed more of an emphasis on personal merit rather than on a family name for entering politics. In Colombia leaders had already established their legitimacy through the means heralded by the populists, without necessarily agreeing with the populist platform. Only the *gaitanista* movement in the mid-forties, with its emphasis on the personal charisma of a single leader, can compare to other civilian-led Latin American populist parties. Indeed, *gaitanismo* was part of the populist wave in the region in the 1940s, which included Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina, Rómulo

¹²⁶ Michael Monteón, *Chile and the Great Depression: Politics of Underdevelopment, 1927-1948* (Tempe, AZ: Center for Latin American Studies P, Arizona State U, 1998).

¹²⁷ David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina: The Nationalist Movement, Its History, and Its Impact* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993) 87-138.

¹²⁸ Helguera, "Changing Role" 355-356.

¹²⁹ Ayala 21-63.

¹³⁰ Stein, *Populism in Peru*.

Betancourt in Venezuela,¹³¹ and Getúlio Vargas in Brazil.¹³² Of all of these movements, however, that of Gaitán was the only one based within the framework of a pre-existing political party, indicating the durability of Colombia's political system. The professionalized politicians in Colombia could accept, and, to a large extent co-opt, a political maverick like Gaitán.

The other major opposition movements found throughout Latin America at this time were the various anarchist, socialist, and communist parties and labor unions, which began to appear in the first decades of the twentieth century. Many left-wing leaders were labor organizers and came from the working class, although some could claim a university education or, as in the case of Luiz Carlos Prestes in Brazil, a military background.¹³³ Still, leftists did not have to "professionalize" in order to claim legitimacy among the working class; their participation in politics and in certain governments was as proletarian leaders of proletarian parties. We have already seen how communist leader Gilberto Vieira came from the upper middle class, and was accepted by many professionalized Colombian politicians as one of their own; in Colombia in the thirties and forties, communists were in many ways co-opted as the left wing of the Liberal Party.

It cannot be denied that radical, populist, and communist movements in the rest of Latin America influenced the members of the Colombian political class to a certain extent.¹³⁴ Still, in other countries, these other groupings generally developed as class-

¹³¹ Luis Ricardo Dávila, El imaginario político venezolano: ensayo sobre el trienio octubrista, 1945-1948 (Caracas: Alfadil Ediciones, 1992).

¹³² Thomas E. Skidmore, Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964: An Experiment in Democracy (New York: Oxford UP, 1967).

¹³³ Anita Leocádia Prestes, A Coluna Prestes (São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1990).

¹³⁴ For instance, when prominent *apristas* Pedro Muñiz and Carlos Showing published an explanation of their political movement in Bogotá in 1932, their work was financially supported by Liberal leaders Jorge

based parties, with leaders who reflected the aspirations of their members. Colombia's parties were always vertically integrated to include all social classes, but this alone does not explain why other parties were not able to challenge the hegemony of the two traditional parties. Part of the reason that the parties have lasted as long as they have lies in the success of the professional project of Colombia's politicians to be open just enough to include members of the middle sectors who in many other countries formed "outsider" political groupings that antagonized the traditional oligarchy and occasionally came to power. Again, a case in point in Colombia is that of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, who failed in organizing a leftist third party in the 1930s only to discover in the 1940s a more effective means of organizing a movement within the Liberal Party framework. It was a framework that Gaitán understood and of which he was a member—for he also had successfully completed the requirements for becoming a professionalized politician in Colombia.

Conclusion

In many ways, the professional project of the Colombian politicians was an enormous success, implanting the idea that the political class was legitimate due to its education and expertise, demonstrated in impressive oratory and writing. It also helped preserve the two-party system established in the 1840s, which was nevertheless based on clientelistic ties. By effectively coopting would-be middle class radicals and populists, the professionalized politicians ensured their own continuance in power. Proof of this is found in the power-sharing National Front arrangement, which was established in 1958 to

Eliécer Gaitán and Julio Roberto Salazar Ferro. Gaitán and Alberto Lleras Camargo sponsored a motion in the Cámara expressing support for Haya de la Torre after he was jailed in Peru in July 1932. Pedro Muñiz and Carlos Showing, Lo que es el aprismo (Bogotá: Publicaciones del P.A.P, 1932) 226, 230.

end the partisan violence that had left nearly 200,000 dead. By dividing all government bodies equally between Liberals and Conservatives and alternating the presidency for four terms, the National Front was successful in ending interparty conflict; it was equally successful in maintaining in power the same politicians who were in charge when the civil war started in the late 1940s. Oddly enough, this last aspect was generally accepted by most Colombians in the same way that they had accepted their politicians as *jefes naturales*, along with the rhetoric that these respected “experts” produced, on the eve of *La Violencia*. With the National Front, the politicians left behind the violent partisan rhetoric of the thirties and forties (which will be examined in the following chapters); after 1957, they spoke more of cooperation and *convivencia* with members of the opposition. They blamed *La Violencia* on the uneducated mostly peasant protagonists, who supposedly were unable to understand the sophistication of political debate and instead reacted to conflict with the basest, most brutal violence.¹³⁵ The different guerrilla groups that formed in the mid-1960s thought differently about the political class—after all, how could 200,000 die yet the same people remain in power?

Although the requirements of the professionalized politician in Colombia remain the same, an interesting development in the last decades is the establishment of political family dynasties, as the children and grandchildren of many of the professionalized political leaders of the 1930s and 1940s play an active role in Colombia’s elected governments even today: the predominance of last names such as Santos, López, Gómez, Lleras, and Pastrana sometimes make today’s headlines read like those of 1949. Despite this, even these politicians need to have an advanced degree and to have studied abroad in order to reach the highest positions in government and politics.

¹³⁵ This explanation is repeated by Bushnell, *Colombia* 206.

Still, like any professional project, the system is too closed. As important as an education is to forming effective leaders, credentials are not enough to bring effective government to Colombia, nor, indeed, peace to a country that has witnessed constant guerrilla and paramilitary activity since 1946. The Colombian electorate is as much to blame as the politicians themselves, for, as in any professional project, it is the acceptance of the claims of professional expertise by the general population that form the base for the existence of “professionals,” whether they are doctors, lawyers, or politicians. At this point in its history, it can be easily argued that Colombia needs active and engaged citizens more than it needs professionalized politicians, just as it needs a rhetoric of peace rather than one of mistrust.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Again, the phenomenon of the professional politician may finally be challenged by the Polo, the new non-violent social democratic grouping that has had recent electoral success. But it is not the station of a historian to make too many predictions about the future.