

CHAPTER V

ANTICLERICALISM AND MAINTAINING THE LIBERALS IN POWER, 1930-1946

In nearly all instances of eliminationist violence in the twentieth century, a minority was scapegoated by a majority, and the violence was generally one-way from perpetrator to victim/object. This was the case in Nazi-occupied Europe, where Jews and other political, religious, and ethnic minorities were objects of elimination by political, religious, and ethnic majorities. More recent examples also follow this pattern: in the 1970s, the Khmer Rouge eliminated suspected “bourgeois enemies” of their revolution; in 1994 in Rwanda, adherents of “Hutu Power” targeted the Tutsi minority, claiming that the elimination of these “cockroaches” would liberate their nation of a foreign invader so that the Hutus could attain their rightful national greatness; in Bosnia, Serbian and Croatian nationalists made similar claims against Muslims in the early 1990s. The situation in Colombia during *La Violencia* contrasts with these instances of eliminationist violence: both Liberals and Conservatives committed massacres and selective assassinations, and forced the displacement of rural populations, although even in Colombia, given that municipalities leaned toward one party or the other, a majority was killing a minority in most individual local cases of political violence.

Both sides also created their own discursive frameworks for eliminationist political violence based on conspiracy theories. As presented in the previous chapter, Conservatives had been motivated to fight against an international Judeo-Masonic conspiracy by eliminating the Liberals in their midst. In this chapter, we will examine

the conspiracy theory promoted by the Liberals, in which prominent Conservatives and militant priests were supposedly involved in a plot with Nazis and Falangists to take over the country and reverse the nation's march towards progress. This conspiracy theory provided the discursive framework for Liberal Party militants to commit acts of political violence, especially in the first years of *La Violencia*, culminating in the anticlerical actions of the rioters after Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's assassination on April 9, 1948. Rioters attacked churches, convents, and monasteries looking for arms, since Liberal rhetoric led them to believe that the priests had guns—they did not find one serviceable weapon, but nonetheless church buildings were destroyed across the country.

The conspiracy theory promoted by the Liberals was based on traditional anticlericalism, with roots in the nineteenth century. As the Church became increasingly allied with the Conservative Party, especially in the first decades of the twentieth century, many Liberals in the provinces repeated the claim that priests distributed arms to Conservatives at election time in order to prevent Liberals from voting. In the late 1930s, the claims of Spanish Republicans that the pro-Franco Catholic clergy used arms against the Republic were added to the preexisting anticlerical trope in Colombia. As Falangist cells sprang up in Colombia, the Liberal press postulated that the clergy, certain army officers, and Conservative politicians led by Laureano Gómez were conspiring against the legitimately elected Liberal governments. We have seen that certain clerics were very much involved in promoting *Falangismo* and the cause of Franco, but no coherent or long-lasting organizations emerged from their efforts, or those of the Spanish legation in Bogotá. However, certain incidents in the Colombian capital in 1944 and 1945 reconfirmed suspicions among Liberals of an armed clergy. First, a former Christian

Brother blew himself up in an unsuccessful attempt to plant a bomb in the Palace of Justice; then, in the following year, hundreds of homemade bombs were discovered stored in the choir loft of the cathedral in the center of the city. Liberal rhetoric, combined with these events, led many rank and file members of the party to believe that priests had stores of arms. This belief contributed to inspiring attacks on Church institutions on April 9, 1948.

The anticlericalism of Liberals was not only manifested in the promulgation of conspiracy theories. Once their party came to power in 1930, anticlerical Liberals pushed for legislation to end Church influence in public schools. These Liberals strongly believed that the Church and its intellectual backwardness were responsible for a lack of spiritual and material progress in Colombia. Liberal-controlled local, departmental and national governments ended contracts with religious communities who were running schools in government-owned buildings, and set up secular schools in their place. As we shall see, these actions were sometimes violent, and were met by a strong reaction from clerics, Conservatives, and even a good number of more moderate Liberals. In the end, the takeover of schools by the local and national government did not produce much of an improvement for the educational system, while the actions contributed to the rhetoric of suspicion between the two parties.

Liberal Violence during the Olaya Administration (1930-1934)

Although the election of Olaya in 1930 certainly animated the radical anticlericals of his party,¹ the Olaya administration carefully avoided conflict with the Church. With

¹ For instance, Ricardo Rendón, a political cartoonist who published extensively in El Tiempo in the 1920s and early 1930s, published many cartoons lampooning the Church and its relationship with the

their candidate enjoying some Conservative support, the Liberals eschewed using anticlericalism to animate the rank and file during Olaya's whirlwind campaign, and did not repeat the claim that priests maintained stores of arms for the Conservatives. Prominent Liberal Party leader and freemason Luis Eduardo Nieto Caballero (LENC to the readers of his influential newspaper column), while campaigning on behalf of Olaya in the city of Chinquinquirá, 140 kilometers north of Bogotá, publicly joked with the Dominican monks about their vast stores of arms—he did not believe it, and sought to educate Liberal peasants on the subject through humor.²

Nevertheless, Liberal-perpetrated violence in the early 1930s sometimes targeted the Church. After Olaya's election, many Liberals in the provinces used fraud and violence to successfully guarantee an electoral advantage over the Conservatives. Before 1930, the Liberal press frequently complained about the electoral fraud perpetrated by local and national Conservatives.³ Since 1886, many Liberals were in favor of electoral abstention as a way to protest against Conservative excesses.⁴ As seen earlier, the party's only official candidate during all of the years of Conservative rule had been War of a Thousand Days hero General Benjamín Herrera, in 1922. Herrera lost in the midst of massive fraud in the provinces. At the Liberal convention the following year, the Liberals were divided between abstentionists and collaborationists. Herrera decided to withdraw the party from the government until there were guarantees of electoral fairness

Conservative Party. Rendón's caricatures played an important role in Olaya's campaign. Germán Colmenares, *Ricardo Rendón: Una fuente para la historia de la opinión pública*, 2nd ed. (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo, 1998) 241-253; and Uribe Celis 173-189.

² Prada Rueda 115.

³ See, for example, the caricatures of Ricardo Rendón. Uribe Celis 173-189; Colmenares 95-179; and J. León Helguera, "Notes on a Century of Colombian Political Cartooning: 1830-1930," *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture* Vol. VI (1987): 274-277.

⁴ For example, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán participated in debates about Liberal abstention in 1919 as a member of the University Student Liberal Directorate. Sharpless 39.

on the part of the Conservatives.⁵ Shortly after implementing this policy, Herrera died, but non-collaboration continued and the Liberals abstained from participating in the presidential contest of 1926.

At the end of the 1920's, some Liberals preferred to continue with electoral abstention and non-collaboration, while others favored armed insurrection.⁶ As noted before, the party's impotence pushed some Liberals to join the nascent Revolutionary Socialist Party—the precursor to the Colombian Communist Party. Some of the more militant of both of these parties united to plan and execute a localized and ill-fated insurrection in July 1929.⁷

However, there were also Liberals who felt that “the best way to fight against Conservative fraud was to commit Liberal fraud.”⁸ After Olaya's election, many Liberals on the local level did exactly that, particularly along the border of the departments of Boyacá and Santander, some 200 miles north of Bogotá. First, mayors and governors created a partisan police force while gradually disarming and replacing Conservative policemen.⁹ Now armed, the Liberals took control of the electoral registries.¹⁰ The first major massacre of Conservative peasants by the Liberal police occurred in Capitanejo in the Department of Santander in December 1930, only four months after Olaya's inauguration.¹¹ Despite the efforts of the Liberals, the Conservatives were able to maintain a majority in the three legislative contests of 1931.¹² However, by maintaining

⁵ Molina 86-88.

⁶ Molina 224-226.

⁷ Archila 247-255.

⁸ Molina, 223.

⁹ Guerrero 125, 128.

¹⁰ Guerrero 137-140.

¹¹ Guerrero 144-147.

¹² Guerrero 171. These occurred in February for departmental assemblies, in May for the national Congress, and in October for municipal councils.

a policy of violence, the threat of violence, and disarmament of Conservatives throughout 1932, the Liberals were able to establish themselves as the majority party in Boyacá in the legislative contests of 1933.¹³ Fraud was also employed, taking advantage of a new electoral law that established identity cards for voting. The government sent more blank voting cards to towns with a majority of Liberal voters than to towns with a majority of Conservative voters. At times, Conservative enrollment for voting cards was impeded through the threat or the use of official or unofficial violence.¹⁴ These methods were used not only in Boyacá and Santander, but also in various other regions of Colombia, although only these two departments had an atmosphere of near-civil war, which forced thousands of peasants to relocate to Venezuela or other parts of Colombia.¹⁵

During the violence, two priests were murdered and several others were physically attacked.¹⁶ The Liberal press repeatedly took the side of their party; the more radical publications pointedly blamed the priests for whipping up opposition to the new Liberal government and thus provoking Conservative violence.¹⁷

Some Conservative politicians confronted Liberal abuses by first bringing them to the attention of the government and the general public. Before the return of Laureano Gómez to Colombia in 1932, younger, intransigent Conservatives led this fight, particularly the rightist *leopardos*, who gave speeches and lectures throughout the country in order to inform other Conservatives of the situation, sometimes inflaming

¹³ Guerrero 193, 197, and 198.

¹⁴ Guerrero 223-225.

¹⁵ For the Department of Tolima, see Henderson, *When Colombia Bled* 85-87, and for Quindío, Ortiz 55-57. Horgan describes the situation on the Atlantic Coast (250-256), in Antioquia (256-258), in Caldas (258-263), and in Cundinamarca (263-269).

¹⁶ Guerrero 110-214. "Molagavita," *Mensajero* Aug. 1931: 385; "De la Pastoral de Excmo. Sr. Obispo de Nueva Pamplona," *Mensajero* Mar. 1932: 109-111; Luis R. David, "Intención General: La paz de Cristo en el reino de Cristo," *Mensajero* Jan. 1933: 3-13; and Miguel Angel Builes, "Nuestros sacerdotes mártires," *Cartas* Vol. 2, 160.

¹⁷ Mora Díaz, *El Cruzado* 64-68, 76-79, 121-126, 188-191.

violent passions.¹⁸ The Conservative press in Bogotá published various articles and editorials; Gómez' own writings on the subject were published in Comentarios a un régimen in Bogotá in 1934.

In the end, a wider civil war did not break out because of the border incident in the Amazon with Peru in September 1932, which began Colombia's only war with a neighboring country in the twentieth century. The patriotic sentiments that this war inspired, marked by Gómez' own declaration of "Peace, peace at home, and war, war until the end on the borders," temporarily abated the partisan war that was heating up in Boyacá and Santander.¹⁹

The López Reforms (1934-1938)

With the election of reformist Alfonso López Pumarejo in 1934 and the election of an almost exclusively Liberal congress in 1935 (there was one representative from Colombia's diminutive Communist Party²⁰), the López administration looked forward to enacting needed reforms, pushing the country towards modernity and industrial development. They called their program the *Revolución en marcha* ("Revolution on the March"). Although it was more reformist than revolutionary, the mere use of the word *revolución* struck fear into López' opponents in both parties and encouraged the left. López felt that a certain amount of government intervention was necessary in order to both guide Colombia toward becoming a more "modern" and industrialized nation and to thwart political problems caused by social and economic inequalities. The measures

¹⁸ Guerrero, 135-136; and Abel 108.

¹⁹ The war with Peru ended in May 1933 with the help of the League of Nations. Abella 127; Horgan 519-520 and 525; and Álvaro Valencia Tovar, "Historia militar contemporánea," NHC, Vol. II, 319.

²⁰ Medófilo Medina, Historia del Partido Comunista de Colombia, Tomo I (Bogotá: Centro de Estudios e Investigaciones Sociales, 1980) 243.

proposed by his administration were ambitious and included various reforms. Suffrage was extended to all adult males in national elections (previously there were literacy and property requirements), an agrarian reform law was passed, the rights of labor unions were strengthened, the tax code was revised, and government intervention in the economy was sanctioned.²¹ Most of these reforms met with opposition, and not only from Conservatives—free trade *laissez-faire* Liberals were also against much of the program; led by Juan Lozano y Lozano, they established their own newspaper in Bogotá, La Razón, in order to fight against the changes in law, especially those affecting land ownership and labor organization. Eduardo Santos' El Tiempo was also less than enthusiastic in its support of the *Revolución en marcha*.²²

Alfonso López Pumarejo can be counted among the group of Depression-era American heads-of-state who dramatically increased government activism in order to manage their economies and initiate social reforms. Franklin D. Roosevelt in the United States, Lázaro Cárdenas in Mexico, and Getúlio Vargas in Brazil were the most outstanding examples of these leaders. Their activist governments stood in contrast to the more radical interventionist measures taken in many European countries at the time; to a certain extent, their programs were a reaction to the extremes on the right and on the left. López administration policies were particularly influenced (at least outwardly) by the 1917 Mexican Constitution and by Roosevelt's "New Deal."²³

²¹ Tirado Mejía, Aspectos 73-100.

²² Tirado Mejía, Aspectos 56, 197-213.

²³ Bushnell 185 and 189.

López felt that his government needed “to renovate the institutions that were...insufficient for a more developed and complex nation.”²⁴ The program was liberal in the sense that it sought to form citizens who could contribute to the growth of the nation. However, the paternalistic approach taken by his government also benefited the Liberal Party, providing patronage and votes for the party machine—which was in keeping with the general partisan strategy of López (and Gómez, for that matter). Since the 1920s, López had advocated one party in power and another in opposition. His support for the Olaya candidacy was a brief tactical move that was to set him up for the presidency in 1934. He attacked bipartisanship during and after the Olaya government, even more than he attacked the extreme left of his party and the rightist tendencies of the Conservatives under Gómez. Although López may have envisioned the establishment of a policy hegemony representing the progressive forces of Colombia, the deeply-ingrained patron-client system embraced his idea of politics for another reason: it shut out the opposition from the government, so that decisions made by the local, departmental and national government favored members of the party in power.²⁵ Additionally, a more activist government meant a larger bureaucracy, and more possibilities for awarding clients with political positions in the government.

In this context, among the most polemical actions of Liberal reformers were in the field of education. By directly attacking the Church’s longtime control over schools and curriculum—and, one may add, the decisions over who would be hired as a teacher, administrator, or maintenance worker in local schools—the López government was not only unleashing an ideological battle but a struggle over jobs, since the Church favored

²⁴ Alfonso López Pumarejo, “Mensaje presidencial al Congreso de 1935,” 12, cited in Tirado Mejía, Aspectos 12.

²⁵ Stoller 375-376.

Conservatives in its hiring practices, and was receiving some remuneration from the government in its operation of public schools.²⁶

Anticlerical Liberals saw the all-Liberal national government as an opportunity to harass the Church and lessen its influence.²⁷ Masonic lodges were recognized as legal entities,²⁸ while civil marriage and divorce was proposed and debated (but never passed).²⁹ As described in the last chapter, many reformers felt that it was time to change the concordat signed with the Vatican in 1887, which mandated Church approval for all school curricula and gave foreign missionaries a degree of political control over sparsely populated Colombian territories.³⁰ López sent a known freemason, Darío Echandía, to Rome as Colombia's ambassador in 1937, where as we have seen he spent the next five years negotiating the reform in the concordat.³¹

Colombian Freemasons: Little Influence and No Conspiracy

The Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory has been examined in the last chapter, but only briefly mentioned the influence of freemasonry (or lack thereof) in the Liberal governments. Many Liberal politicians were, indeed, members of the secret society. Since the nineteenth century, both in Europe and in Latin America, freemasonry was attractive to those who felt that the Church exercised too much temporal power and who

²⁶ Tirado Mejía, *Aspectos* 399-404, 411-418.

²⁷ The expressions "anticlericals" and "anticlerical Liberals" distinguish those Liberals who actively tried to pass legislation against the Church from those who desired to avoid conflict with the clergy by advocating a mild separation of Church and state or even by retention of the status quo. Anticlericals tended to be on the left on most issues, but not all leftists were actively anticlerical, nor were all anticlericals leftist or radical.

²⁸ Alfonso Romero Aguirre, *Un radical en la cámara* (Bogotá: Editorial ABC, 1941)137-160.

²⁹ Romero, *Un radical en la cámara* 1-113.

³⁰ "El Presidente insinuó en su discurso la necesidad de reformar el Concordato," *El Tiempo* 14 Jul. 1935 ("Recortes" Vol. A, Jesuit Archive, Curia, Bogotá [henceforth "Recortes"] A:26-27); "Acción constructiva y no represión engañosa," *Diario Nacional* 31 Oct. 1935 (Recortes A:33); and "La clase privilegiada," *Diario Nacional* 1 Nov. 1935: 4 (Recortes A:37). Page numbers are not always included in the Recortes collection.

³¹ "La designación de Echandía es un agravio inferido a la catolicidad," *El Siglo* 1 Mar. 1937: 1; and Fernán González, "Iglesia católica y el Estado colombiano (1930-1985)," *NHC* Vol. II, 377-381.

sought a separation of Church and state—the numerous condemnations of the society by the Church made it that much more attractive to anticlericals. This was also true in Colombia, but, as in the rest of the world, freemasonry did not represent an organized conspiracy against Catholicism (even though, for instance, the occasional anticlerical could proclaim that Colombia should change from being the republic of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to that of the Grand Architect of the Universe—the masonic designation for the Supreme Being).³² Some anticlerical Liberals in the 1930s were active freemasons, like Darío Echandía and Alfonso Romero Aguirre, but many of the most anticlerical politicians were not, such as Jorge Uribe Márquez, Diego Montaña Cuéllar, and Gerardo Molina. Furthermore, although one can safely say that nearly all freemasons were Liberals or of the political left,³³ the freemasons did not represent a coherent block within the party, nor did individual lodges lean one way or the other in the internal disagreements of Liberalism. For instance, the moderates Enrique Olaya Herrera³⁴ and Eduardo Santos³⁵ were freemasons, but Alfonso López was not—his brother Miguel was a mason of the highest degree, but actually worked against the *Revolución en marcha*.³⁶ On the other hand, many in the López government also belonged to the secret society—Darío Echandía, Alberto Lleras Camargo,³⁷ and Plinio Mendoza,³⁸ among others. Jorge

³² “Estrella” Respetable Logia Estrella de Tequendama No. 4 [Bogotá] (Estrella) Oct.-Nov.-Dec. 1944: 129. Internal masonic publication. All Colombian masonic magazines of this period employed continuous pagination.

³³ In my research, I have not encountered the name of one known Conservative in any list of Colombian freemasons.

³⁴ Logia Manuel Ancizar No. 14, Bogotá, Colombia, “Algunos masones famosos de Colombia y el mundo,” 7 Mar. 2005, <<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Atlantis/1824/O.htm>>.

³⁵ Estrella Oct.-Nov.-Dec. 1944: 140.

³⁶ Carnicelli, Tomo II, 402.

³⁷ Boletín. Órgano del Supremo Consejo del Gr. 33 para Colombia [Bogotá] (Boletín) Dec. 1943: 361-362. Internal masonic publication.

³⁸ Estrella Jan.-Jun. 1945: 362.

Eliécer Gaitán was not a freemason (although he also had a brother in the society),³⁹ while various activists within his movement were active in the lodges, such as Moisés Prieto⁴⁰ and Joaquín Tiberio Galvis.⁴¹ Even in naming all of these freemasons, one cannot readily judge the impact of the society on each of their actions, or even if their membership represented for them a lifelong inspiration or a brief enthusiasm of their youth. All of this illustrates that freemasonry did not have an organized influence within the Liberal Party in the 1930s and 1940s.

Still, after Olaya's election, the lodges did briefly try to publicly expound some of their ideas. The journalist and Liberal Party activist Luis Eduardo Nieto Caballero, a thirty-third degree Scottish Rite freemason,⁴² established a monthly Revista Masónica that was sold on the streets of Bogotá beginning in August 1931. The excitement of the times is captured in a note "To All Grand Lodges Throughout the World," published in English no less, in which the Colombian masons proclaimed that the "political situation, as well as deficiency in communications with the outside world, had us almost isolated in the past. This situation has changed notably in the past two years, and we have been able to start real work without inconveniences."⁴³ The magazine supported changes in education and in the relationship between Church and state;⁴⁴ it also enthusiastically published the constitution of the new Spanish Republic.⁴⁵ Nieto Caballero expressed with some humor that the Church was beginning to consider freemasonry with less fear

³⁹ Logia "Veritas Vencit," Cuadro lógico del período masónico del 24 de junio de 1937 al 23 de junio de 1938 E. V., Bogotá, 1 Jun. 1938.

⁴⁰ Boletín Dec. 1943 361-362.

⁴¹ Estrella Oct. 1943: 75.

⁴² Carnicelli, Tomo II, 402.

⁴³ "To All Grand Lodges Throughout the World," Revista Masónica [Bogotá] Nov. 1931: 55.

⁴⁴ Lorenzo Luzuriaga, "Ideas para una reforma constitucional de la Educación Pública," Revista Masónica Jan. 1932: 87.

⁴⁵ "La constitución española," Revista Masónica Jan. 1932: 103-104.

and condemnation—he even stated that perhaps the Jesuits and the freemasons could unite their forces in favor of Colombia’s progress.⁴⁶ However, in his Exposición sobre la Masonería in 1933, Archbishop Perdomo quoted the Revista Masónica frequently in order to show how masonic ideas were incompatible with Catholicism. The Revista Masónica ceased publication in 1933, perhaps because of the condemnation, perhaps because its ideas were also being expressed in other similar Liberal magazines (such as Acción Liberal, which appeared in 1932)—but also perhaps because the jurisdictional divisions among Colombian freemasons had come to a head at this time, causing bitter disputes within the society.

These disputes stemmed from the location and establishment of two Supreme Councils of the Thirty-Third and Last Degree in the nineteenth century—one in Cartagena and one in Bogotá. According to the international rules of Scottish Rite freemasonry—the most common rite in the world—each country should have only one Supreme Council (with the exception of the United States, which has two because of its geography), and it should be located in the country’s capital. The Supreme Councils are in charge of maintaining the regularity of the higher degrees of the rite within its jurisdiction, and deciding on where and how Grand Lodges are established in their country (these in turn maintain the regularity of the lower degrees of the rite, as practiced by the lodges under their respective jurisdictions). The first Supreme Council in Colombia was established in Cartagena at a time when it was not completely clear that Bogotá would be the capital. Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera decided to establish a second Supreme Council in Bogotá in the 1860s, causing a division in Colombian Scottish Rite freemasonry that lasted well into the twentieth century, with Cartagena’s Council

⁴⁶ Luis Eduardo Nieto Caballero, “La gran labor masónica,” Revista Masónica Sep. 1932: 113.

claiming supremacy because it was established first, while Bogotá's claimed national jurisdiction because it was in the capital.⁴⁷ The result were competing Grand Lodges throughout the country, with some claiming allegiance to one or the other Supreme Council—in the early 1930s, there were even three Grand Lodges in Bogotá, with the third, led by Darío Echandía, trying to split the difference between the other two.⁴⁸ Again, all of this confusion within Colombian freemasonry underlines the fact that the masons were too disorganized to mount an effective conspiracy against Christianity even if they had so desired, as claimed by Laureano Gómez and others.

The jurisdictional problem between the two Supreme Councils was finally resolved in 1938, through the intervention of John Henry Cowles, the Grand Commander of the Mother Temple of the Supreme Council of the Thirty-Third and Last Degree, of the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States—this was the first Supreme Council ever established (in 1807 in Charleston, South Carolina; it was moved to Washington after the U.S. Civil War), and its opinion has since been respected by international Scottish Rite freemasonry in matters concerning rituals and jurisdictions.⁴⁹ Significantly, the newspaper El Liberal, under the directorship of mason Alberto Lleras Camargo, first appeared on the date that the problem of the two Supreme Councils in Colombia was resolved: August 10, 1938.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, another journalistic attempt by the lodges along the lines of the Revista Masónica was not repeated, and although many Liberal

⁴⁷ Carnicelli, Tomo I, 30, 294-297, 345-357; Carnicelli, Tomo II, 44-46, 55,72, 83, 400-401.

⁴⁸ “Un Documento Masónico Del Ministro Señor Darío Echandía,” El Siglo 14 Apr. 1936: 1.

⁴⁹ “General Information: The Name,” The Supreme Council 33° Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Southern Jurisdiction, 7 Mar. 2005, <<http://www.srmason-sj.org/web/general-info/01.htm>>.

⁵⁰ The New Age [Washington, D.C.] Oct. 1938: 593-594; and Nov. 1938: 662. Published by the Supreme Council of the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States.

politicians remained active in freemasonry, it became less and less important to party intellectuals and activists.

Anticlerical Liberals Versus the Jesuits and the Concordat

Notwithstanding the influence of freemasonry or lack thereof, certain Liberals began to attack the Church after the establishment of an all-Liberal government in 1935. Inspired by the expropriation of Jesuit properties by the new republican government in Spain in 1931,⁵¹ anticlerical Liberals specifically targeted the world-famous religious community. When the Jesuit provincial in Colombia specifically invited Spanish Jesuits to come to Colombia in early 1932, the Liberal humor magazine Fantoches published a caricature of a woman—“Spain”—combing the priests from her hair; the priests, however, march straight for a ship “To Colombia.” Below the cartoon are comic verses, one which says

To clean the nation
of parasites that are
those who make hunger reign
they have placed like a comb
the new constitution⁵²

To imply that Jesuits were parasites causing hunger was a strong accusation, comparable to similar accusations made by rightists against Jews and freemasons. Taken to its extreme, such rhetoric can lead to eliminationist violence—what other way can one treat “parasites?”

Such language was not limited to the Bogotá press. Orientación Liberal, a newspaper in the very Conservative southwestern Colombian city of Pasto, expressed the

⁵¹ Jackson 59-62.

⁵² “Para limpiar la nación/de parásitos que son/los que hacen que el hambre reina/ se ha metido como un peine/la nueva constitución” Fantoches [Bogotá] 20 Feb. 1932 (Recortes B: 2).

same sentiments on the issue of expelled Spanish Jesuits coming to Colombia. This is noteworthy given that Pasto was a city famous for its clericalism and royalism—it was the last province in Colombia to be liberated during the wars of independence, and a city in which the closure of certain monasteries in 1839 sparked a protest that led into a nationwide civil war.⁵³ At the turn of the century, the bishop of Pasto, Spanish-born Augustinian Recollect Ezekiel Moreno, repeatedly declared that liberalism was a sin.⁵⁴

The editorial from Orientación Liberal, which was largely reprinted from the Cali weekly El Tábano, explained how the Jesuits were the most corrupt secret society in the world, in words similar to those used by the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy mongers. The editorial stated:

Governments that are sincerely alert for the stability of their democratic institutions and that, in some way, try to diminish the prison in which misery tries to drown the less-privileged classes, openly and energetically oppose the immigration of unproductive people and those who for their doctrines are a threat to concordance and an obstacle to progress.

In looking at the history of secret societies, including the nihilists of Russia, it is difficult to find one the equals the Jesuits in corruption and in danger for all peoples: a society that demands everyone's attention, completely interested in business and speculation, proud and puffed-up, hypocritical to the point that the words "hypocrisy" and "Jesuitism" are synonyms, and whose components, under a rule that cannot be appealed or debated, deny the nation from recognizing more duties than those that their society imposes, being disposed, as a consequence, to making all conceivable evils for fathers, brothers and friends when they need the A.M.D.G. [*Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*—"to the greater glory of God"—an abbreviation frequently used by Jesuits]

Their perverse intervention in the internal matters of nations where they have placed themselves, the spirit of discord that they have planted among the diverse social classes, the back-handed attempts against the individual and public interests, have obliged governments to decree their expulsion...

The editorialist goes on to note that the Jesuits were expelled from England in 1604, from France in 1764, and from Spain in 1767, and that Brazil had just refused entry of expelled

⁵³ Edgar Bastidas Urresty, Las guerras de Pasto (Pasto: Ediciones Testimonio, 1979) 130-138, 148-160.

⁵⁴ Ezequiel Moreno had less polemical attributes as well—he was declared a saint by Pope John Paul II in 1992. "Ezekiel Moreno y Díaz," Patron Saints Index 10 March 2005 <<http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/sainte43.htm>>.

Jesuits into their country.⁵⁵ If the freemasons were the conspirators for Colombian Conservatives and clergy, the Jesuits were the international cabal for anticlerical Liberals. If one replaces “Jesuits” with “masons” in this editorial—and A.M.D.G. with G.:A.:D.:U.:—and it would sound like an editorial written by Laureano Gómez during his campaign against the lodges ten years later. (G.:A.:D.:U.: being the abbreviation frequently used by freemasons in Spanish-speaking countries for *Gran Arquitecto del Universo*, the “Grand Architect of the Universe”).

The Jesuits, for their part, tried to put themselves above politics—their publications pointedly avoided mentioning either of Colombia’s two traditional parties throughout the 1930s. Their official silence on Colombian politics made them all the more suspicious in the eyes of Liberal conspiracy theorists. Additionally, the Jesuits planned for any secularization of universities by Liberal governments by reopening their own Universidad Javeriana in late 1930—the Spanish colonial government had closed the Javeriana when the Jesuits were expelled in 1767.⁵⁶ The new university began with classes in law; by 1933, they had established their own academic journal, the Revista Javeriana, and were organizing public conferences on a variety of themes.

⁵⁵ “Los gobiernos que con sinceridad velan por la estabilidad de sus instituciones democráticas y que, en alguna forma, procuran disminuir la presión con que la miseria trata de ahogar a las clases desvalidas se oponen abierta y enérgicamente a la inmigración de gentes improductivas y que por las doctrinas de que están imbuidas son una amenaza para la concordia y un obstáculo para el progreso.

“Recorriendo la historia de las sociedades secretas, sin exceptuar la de los nihilistas de Rusia, difícilmente podría hallarse una que igualara a la de los jesuitas en corrupción y en el peligro que entraña para los pueblos: sociedad absorbente (*sic*), netamente mercantil y especuladora, orgullosa y soberbia, hipócrita hasta el extremo de haber hecho sinónimas las palabras hipocresía y jesuitismo, y cuyos componentes, por una regla inapelable o indiscutible, reniegan de la patria no reconociendo más deberes que los que su sociedad les impone, estando dispuestos, por consecuencia, a hacer todos los males concebibles a padres, hermanos y amigos cuando así lo necesita el A.M.D.G.

“Su intervención perversa en los asuntos internos de las naciones donde han morado; el espíritu de discordia que han sembrado entre las diversas clases sociales, los atentados solapados contra los intereses individuales y públicos, han obligado a gobiernos serios a decretar su expulsión...” “Los indeseables: Los jesuitas invaden Colombia,” Orientación Liberal [Pasto] 8 Mar. 1932 (Recortes B: 10).

⁵⁶ Cagua, Restrepo 104-106.

When one of the Javeriana conferences treated the topic of education in 1934, the university was reprimanded in a resolution passed by anticlerical Liberals in the Bogotá city council. The resolution, presented by Diego Montaña Cuéllar and passed on October 16, claimed that the Jesuits were using the conferences as a means to discredit the Liberal reforms and to attack non-religious educational institutions. During the debate over the resolution, one council member, Elías Rodríguez, maintained that Laureano Gómez met with the directors of the Jesuits every evening in order to “receive orders on how he must attack the prominent men of the Liberal Party”⁵⁷—implanting once again the idea of a secret Jesuit plot against the nation. Montaña Cuéllar specifically blamed the closed intellectual system of the Jesuits and Church tutelage in public instruction for Colombia’s cultural and material backwardness—he even went so far as to claim that the movement for independence was made possible once minds were freed from the Jesuits after their expulsion in 1767. The council’s resolution was printed on broadsides, broadcast over the radio, and sent to the press and all legislative bodies in the country.

The action of the Bogotá city council sparked debates on the “religious question” throughout the country, with Liberals repeating the same claims as heard during the debate in Bogotá.⁵⁸ For instance, the city council of Barranquilla, on the Caribbean coast far from Bogotá, passed a similar resolution against the Universidad Javeriana the next month in support of the “manly” action of Bogotá council—the council also ordered their

⁵⁷ *El Tiempo*, 17 Oct. 1934; cited in Tirado Mejía, *Aspectos* 395.

⁵⁸ Diego Montaña Cuéllar, *Memorias* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional, 1996) 168-170. Montaña Cuéllar, was consistently on the left during his long career in Colombian politics. He also completed the requirements to enter the profession of politics in Colombia: he completed a law degree at the Universidad Nacional, (Montaña Cuéllar 101-107, 115-117) and served as consul general in the Colombian embassy in Santiago, Chile during the Santos administration (Montaña Cuéllar 194-205).

resolution sent to all other legislative bodies in the country.⁵⁹ For their part, Conservatives were waiting for just such an attack on the Church by majority-Liberal legislatures—it reconfirmed ingrained tropes that the Liberal Party was atheistic and bent on destroying Christian civilization. Moderate Liberals and the López administration, for their part, expressed the wish to avoid a civil war based on religion.⁶⁰

In June 1935, newly elected all-Liberal departmental assemblies and municipal councils were further animated by the Bogotá city council to declare to the national government their official desire that the concordat with the Vatican be reformed, if not rescinded. Legislators saw the concordat as an onerous and unpatriotic agreement that placed the nation under the dictates of a foreign government. Resolutions were presented in the departmental assemblies of Nariño, meeting in Pasto;⁶¹ of Cauca, meeting in Popayán;⁶² and of Boyacá, meeting in Tunja.⁶³ The resolution in the assembly of Caldas, in Manizales, received a special condemnation from Bogotá's militant assistant archbishop Juan Manuel González Arbeláez, who had served briefly as Manizales' bishop before being appointed to Bogotá the year before.⁶⁴ The debate was further complicated during these days by a report filed by government inspectors on conditions in the territories, which had been left to the management of foreign religious orders since the late nineteenth century under an agreement with the Vatican. The inspectors went

⁵⁹ "El Concejo aprobó anoche una moción contra la labor desarrollada por la Universidad Javeriana," El Herald [Barranquilla] 29 Nov. 1934: 1 (Recortes B: 6).

⁶⁰ Tirado Mejía, Aspectos 398.

⁶¹ "Un Gran Proyecto de Reformas tiene el señor gobernador," El Espectador 3 Jun. 1935 (Recortes B: 1).

⁶² "Cauca también busca resolución para reformar concordato," El Tiempo 7 Jun. 1935 (Recortes B: 9).

⁶³ "Texto completo de la proposición de la Asamblea de Boyacá sobre Concordato," El Diario Nacional 3 Jun. 1935 (Recortes B: 1).

⁶⁴ "Monseñor Juan Manuel González condena la labor irreligiosa de la asamblea de Caldas," El País [Bogotá] 8 Jun. 1935 (Recortes B: 10).

straight to the point: “the work of the missionaries is ineffective, foreign priests must be replaced by national priests.”⁶⁵

The most polemical attacks against the Church in late 1935 were made in the assembly of Tolima, in Ibagüé, by deputy Jorge Uribe Márquez—whose brother had helped organize the unsuccessful revolt in El Líbano in 1929.⁶⁶ Uribe Márquez’ declarations led the López administration to distance itself from the more radical anticlerical propositions.⁶⁷ A month later, however, in a speech given at a farewell banquet for outgoing Papal Nuncio Paolo Giobbe, López himself insinuated that the agreement with the Vatican needed to be reformed.⁶⁸ Certain Conservatives blamed the lodges for all of this anticlerical activity, citing a resolution made by a lodge in Bogotá in May 1935 in favor of a modification of the agreement with the Vatican. The resolution of the masons was probably a true document, but it did not indicate a vast conspiracy and was probably not a “circular” as claimed by Conservatives.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, it was another opportunity to blame an international masonic plot for provincial events in Colombia.

In late October 1935, the congress entered into a debate over Jesuit-held land (called El Techo) in southwestern Bogotá, claiming that the deeds did not have a legal basis; the attack was led by radical Liberal Cámara representative Jorge Uribe Márquez

⁶⁵ “Es ineficaz la obra de los misioneros: Los sacerdotes extranjeros deben ser reemplazados por nacionales, dicen Rueda Vargas y Ortiz Márquez,” El Espectador 8 Jun. 1935 (Recortes B: 11).

⁶⁶ María Tila Uribe, Los años escondidos: sueños y rebeldías en la década del veinte (Bogotá: CESTRA/CEREC, 1994) 72-73.

⁶⁷ “De Ibagüé: La Asamblea pide que el concordato sea modificado,” El Tiempo 2 Jun. 1935 (Recortes B: 2); “El gobierno liberal y la Asamblea Constituyente,” El Tiempo 3 Jun. 1935 (Recortes B: 2); Francisco Restrepo Jaramillo, “La constituyente y la Asamblea de Tolima,” El País 7 Jun. 1935 (Recortes B: 8); “Inicuos ultrajes contra el clero en la asamblea departamental,” El País 7 Jun. 1935 (Recortes B: 8).

⁶⁸ “El presidente insinuó en su discurso la necesidad de reformar el Concordato,” El Tiempo 14 Jul. 1935 (Recortes B: 26-27).

⁶⁹ Valerio Botero Isaza, “Denuncia del Concordato,” El País 5 Jun. 1935 (Recortes B: 6).

(politicians could hold various elected positions at once, thus Uribe Márquez was both a congressional representative and a departmental deputy). This time, Uribe Márquez proposed the dissolution of the Jesuit order as in Spain,⁷⁰ ending one speech lamenting that “we are not strong like Manuel Azaña in the modern Spanish republic,” in reference to the Spanish prime minister.⁷¹ The attack on the Jesuits resonated in the town councils of a few far-flung small towns, where resolutions were passed calling for the expulsion of the Jesuits from Colombia.⁷² The radical Liberal press was also in agreement. The humor magazine La Guillotina went even farther than Uribe Márquez, claiming that “foreign clerical associations like that of the Jesuits are the permanent octopus that sucks the blood of a credulous but honorable people.”⁷³ The image of the octopus was also used by Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theorists, with similar rhetorical results. The implication in this case was that the Jesuits were outsiders that had anti-patriotic tentacles everywhere.

Diario Nacional, the main mouthpiece of the left wing of the party at the time, was only slightly more diplomatic than La Guillotina:

We do not attack religion, rather we attack the privileges of those who live from religion. We think that the immense Catholic majority of this country is artificial, created by caste interests. We desire that the parish priests and ecclesiastical princes no longer continue political activities, in which they find themselves in an advantageous position, because

⁷⁰ “Uribe Márquez pidió la confiscación de los bienes de la Iglesia católica,” El País 31 Oct. 1935 (Recortes A: 34-35); “Uribe Márquez planteó al gobierno el problema religioso en Colombia,” El País 1 Nov. 1935 (Recortes A: 36-37); “Dijo ayer Jorge Uribe Márquez en la Cámara,” Diario Nacional 1 Nov. 1935: 1-2 (Recortes A: 38-39); “Este ‘Techo’ es sagrado,” La Guillotina [Bogotá] 2 Nov. 1935 (Recortes A:39); “El Dr. Anzola y el pleito sobre la hacienda de ‘Techo’,” El Tiempo 3 Nov. 1935 (Recortes A:43); and “Los jesuitas rectifican al R. Uribe Márquez,” El Espectador 4 Nov. 1935 (Recortes A:44).

⁷¹ “Debate político sobre ‘Techo’ hubo en la Cámara,” Diario Nacional 26 Oct. 1935 (Recortes A:43).

⁷² The towns were Salamina and Campo de la Cruz, respectively in the departments of Magdalena and Atlántico near the Caribbean coast, Galán in Santander, and Yotoco in Valle (southwestern Colombia). Stoller, 392, footnote 118.

⁷³ “El jesuitismo liberal,” La Guillotina 2 Nov. 1935 (Recortes A:40).

they appear as representatives of the divinity, developing their partisan propaganda against the legitimately constituted government.⁷⁴

This editorial also indicates the deeply held conviction among radicals that were it not for the priests, all of Colombia would vote for the Liberals, and the country would be on the road to progress. The column ends with a call to other Liberals to defend this thesis—but most mainstream politicians did not; López' Interior Minister, Alberto Lleras Camargo, declared that the government would not bait the Jesuits—his words were applauded in Eduardo Santos' El Tiempo.⁷⁵

Anticlerical Liberals Versus Jesuit Schools

Several departmental assemblies also ousted the Jesuits from government-owned schools, usually by not renewing contracts. This occurred in Ocaña in northeastern Colombia,⁷⁶ Bucaramanga in central Colombia,⁷⁷ and Medellín in the west.⁷⁸ Such actions were met with resistance, reorganization, and militancy on the part of the Church. The Jesuits constructed their own secondary schools in Bogotá⁷⁹ and in Bucaramanga, rather than remain dependent on the generous leases of government-owned buildings. In

⁷⁴ “No atacamos la religión sino los privilegios de Quiénes viven de la religión. Pensamos que la inmensa mayoría católica del país es obra artificial, creada por intereses de casta. Aspiramos a que no continúen las actividades políticas de los párrocos y príncipes eclesiásticos, que se encuentran en condición ventajosa, por aparecer como representantes de la divinidad, para desarrollar sus propagandas partidistas en contra del gobierno legítimamente constituido.” “Acción constructiva y no represión engañosa,” Diario Nacional 31 Oct. 1935: 4.

⁷⁵ “Triunfo del buen sentido,” El Tiempo 31 Oct. 1935: 4.

⁷⁶ Meléndez 50-58; and Augusto Gutiérrez and Carlos Espinal, “Los jesuitas y la enseñanza,” Daniel Restrepo, ed. La Compañía 344-345.

⁷⁷ “Agria discusión en la Asamblea de Santander S.” El País [Bogotá] 2 Jun. 1935: 1 (Recortes A: 1); “La Asamblea de Santander: Acalorados debates sobre contrato con los jesuitas,” El Espectador 4 Jun. 1935: 1 (Recortes A: 1); “El diputado Regueros ataca el contrato con los padres jesuitas,” El Tiempo 5 Jun. 1935 (Recortes A: 1); “Fue prorrogada por el gobierno la Asamblea de Santander del Sur,” El Tiempo 10 Jul. 1935 (Recortes A:21); and “Problemas de Santander: El contrato con los Jesuitas,” El Tiempo 3 Sep. 1935: 7, 15 (Recortes A:121).

⁷⁸ “Medellín: Colegio,” Noticias de la Provincia de Colombia [Bogotá] (Noticias) Nov. 1937: 272-273; and “Medellín: Colegio,” Noticias Mar. 1938: 286-287. Noticias was an internal organ of the Jesuit province in Colombia.

⁷⁹ “Bogotá: Facultad,” Noticias Nov. 1934: 55-56; and “Bogotá: Colegio,” Noticias Apr. 1936: 159-160.

Medellín, they purchased the government-owned building where they had been running their school, thus avoiding more serious conflict.⁸⁰

The Colegio de San Pedro Claver in Bucaramanga: Political Rhetoric and Marches in the Streets

The battle between anticlerical Liberals and the Jesuits continued in Bucaramanga in 1937, when the departmental government took back the building where the Jesuit Colegio de San Pedro Claver had functioned, and installed the public secondary school, Colegio de Santander, which had been operating in other rented buildings. In early 1937, the rector of the Colegio de Santander, Eduardo Rueda Rueda, sent a message to the newly-elected all-Liberal departmental assembly asking them to reconfirm the decision of the previous 1935 all-Liberal assembly to end the contract with the Jesuits, so that his school could have better installations. Rueda Rueda also accused the Jesuits of not preparing their students for national exams, inspiring further attacks on the Jesuits from the floor of the assembly. The Jesuits defended themselves from the accusations, but in the end, they were asked to evacuate the building, despite the fact that it was in the middle of the school year (which in Colombia follows the calendar year).⁸¹

Not even all of the Liberal families were willing to transfer their sons from Colegio de San Pedro Claver to the departmental school. Rector Rueda published a flyer in order to respond specifically to such Liberals, particularly to a “Liberal mother” who had expressed her concern in a local Conservative paper that the school lacked moral and religious instruction. Rueda stated that catechism, Church history, and apologetics were

⁸⁰ “Medellín: Colegio,” *Noticias* Nov. 1937: 272-273; and “Medellín: Colegio,” *Noticias* Mar. 1938: 286-287.

⁸¹ “Bucaramanga—Varia,” *Noticias* Jul. 1937: 254.

taught at the school in accordance with the law (curriculum decisions were—and are—made on the national level; the López government had not gone so far as to completely take religion classes out of public schools). In order to give the impression that the environment at the school was not anti-religious, Rueda further noted that no students had exempted themselves from religion classes (their right under the law). After quoting Pope Leo XIII on the importance of keeping religion out of politics, the rector of Colegio de Santander added:

In the actual political circumstances of the country, there exists—if I dare think it—a constitutional incompatibility with giving over the direction of official or semi-official schools to the Jesuits, not because they are Catholics but rather because the instruction that they give is essentially dogmatic, in other words, exclusively and obligatorily Catholic, while the state reforms of 1936, which I have noted, guarantee an ample liberty of conscience, which would be contrarily applied [by the Jesuits]...

With the transfer in these days to the building on Centennial Park, the first and perhaps the most important stage has ended of the campaign in favor of implanting the Colegio de Santander, a campaign against the Jesuit Fathers and the clergy in general, against the Conservatives, and against the resolved attitude or the irresolution, the indifference, the incomprehension and the pessimism of certain Liberal elements.⁸²

Rueda Rueda expressed the anticlerical Liberal desire that the Colombia could only advance culturally by taking the Church, and particularly the Jesuits, out of public instruction. However, his flyer also indicates that the Liberals were by no means united in this attitude, and that those who could, preferred to send their sons and daughters to private religious schools.

⁸² “en las actuales circunstancias políticas del país, existe—me atrevo a pensarlo—incompatibilidad constitucional en entregarles la dirección de planteles de educación oficial o semi-oficial a los Jesuitas, no porque sean católicos sino porque siendo la instrucción que ellos proporcionan esencialmente dogmática, esto es, exclusiva y obligadamente católica, la reforma estatal de 1936, que, como ya lo anoté, garantiza con amplitud la libertad de conciencia, sería contrariamente aplicada...”

“Con el traslado en estos días al edificio del Parque del Centenario queda felizmente terminada la primera y quizá más importante etapa de la campaña en pro del implantamiento del Colegio de Santander, librada contra los Padres Jesuitas y el clero en general, contra los conservadores y asimismo contra la actitud resuelta o la irresolución, la indiferencia, la incompreensión y el pesimismo de ciertos elementos liberales.” Eduardo Rueda Rueda, El Colegio de Santander y parte del señorío liberal (Bucaramanga: Editorial Marco A. Gómez, [July] 1937) (Recortes A: 112-113).

Not surprisingly, the local Conservative press commented that the opinions of Rueda Rueda expressed in the flyer were “crazy,” if not outright dangerous. One Conservative editorialist stated that Rueda Rueda’s comments reminded him of the events leading up to the Spanish Civil War: “it horrifies us to think of the circumstances surrounding the assassination of José Calvo Sotelo, at the hands of the lodges,” implying that freemasons had been behind the attacks on the Jesuits in Bucaramanga; rightists claimed that the lodges were behind the murder of Calvo Sotelo (1893-1936), the Spanish monarchist whose death sparked the Franco rebellion and the Spanish Civil War in July 1936, almost exactly a year before the polemics in Bucaramanga.⁸³

The Jesuits had already begun to collect funds for a new building for their school in Bucaramanga; the local bishop began the campaign with a generous donation of 2,000 pesos (approximately U.S.\$20,000 in today’s dollars),⁸⁴ and an additional 2,000 pesos was raised in a bazaar in May 1937.⁸⁵ On July 18, there was a solemn procession carrying the Blessed Sacrament from the chapel of the former school to a small chapel in a residential neighborhood. The act was a very physical representation of the school’s closure, and a strong act of protest, implying that the sacred had no place in a secular school. The Conservative newspaper Oriente claimed that the school’s chapel was the “first church in Colombia to be closed by official sectarianism.”⁸⁶ As in the Eucharistic congresses of the time, the event was a physical, spiritual and political movement involving men, women, and children in an organized hierarchical manifestation of the organic ideal of Catholicism. In the morning before the march, two women spoke on the

⁸³ “La amenaza del doctor Rueda Rueda,” El Escudo ? [Bucaramanga] July 1937 (Recortes A: 110)

⁸⁴ A rough calculation based on the price of a newspaper: 5 centavos in 1937, 1,200 pesos in 2005; current exchange rate is approximately 2,300 pesos to the dollar.

⁸⁵ “Bucaramanga—Varia,” Noticias Jul. 1937: 254.

⁸⁶ “La primera iglesia que cierra,” Oriente [Bucaramanga] 20 Jul. 1937: 1 (Recortes A: 116-117).

radio in favor of the Jesuits and their new school;⁸⁷ in the afternoon, the city's Catholic school students, all of the parish priests and many of the faithful took part in the procession.⁸⁸ Speeches were made by clerics and lay notables; at his turn, the

Conservative politician Francisco Puyana Menéndez expressed that:

The Catholic education of our youth has received a wide wound from which flows copious amounts of fertile blood; but we know that this bloodletting will rejuvenate the sterile lands that are forming because daily we see the wonders that a united and resolved collectivity can execute, when it is animated by the proposition of extinguishing the debris that wishes to present us as a false, conventional and absurd society.⁸⁹

In his speech, Puyana's use of the imagery of blood and the desire to "extinguish" those that oppose the "collectivity"—a word that is synonymous for "political party" in Colombia—can certainly be seen as part of the inflammatory rhetoric on the eve of *La Violencia*. Again, such expressions, repeated by respected politicians⁹⁰ over the years, contributed to inspiring eliminationist violence against the opposite party after 1946. The publicity of the event helped Jesuit fundraising efforts: a new building for Colegio de San Pedro Claver was finished in time for the new school year in 1939.⁹¹

⁸⁷ "Oración," *El Escudo* 21[?] Jul. 1937 (Recortes A: 109); and "Palabras de la señora doña Elvira Durán de Cadena en honor del Colegio de San Pedro Claver," *El Escudo* 21[?] Jul. 1937 (Recortes A: 109).

⁸⁸ "Programa para la manifestación de fe religiosa del domingo: Cómo se efectuará la solemne traslación del santísimo al barrio de Sotomayor," *El Escudo* 19[?] Jul. 1937 (Recortes A: 114); and "La gran procesión de desagravio y de exteriorización de fe," *Oriente* 20 Jul. 1937: 1 (Recortes A: 116-117).

⁸⁹ "La educación católica de nuestras juventudes ha recibido una ancha herida por cuya apertura corre copiosamente sangre fecunda; pero hemos de saberlo que esa sangría va a remozar los terrenos estériles que se están formando porque a diario veremos el prodigio que ejecuta una colectividad unida y resuelta cuando la anima el propósito de extinguir los escombros que quieren presentarnos como sociedad falsa, convencional y absurda." "Discurso del doctor Francisco Puyana Menéndez," *Oriente* 20 Jul. 1937: 1 (Recortes A: 116).

⁹⁰ Francisco Puyana Meléndez was respected like other Colombian politicians of the time, having fulfilled the proper requirements: he held an advanced degree in law, published his doctoral thesis, and was well-traveled. He served on various city councils in Santander, and was a Cámara representative in 1942. He held various positions in the Ospina Pérez government after 1946. Perry, 1952, 918.

⁹¹ Gutiérrez and Espinal 345-346; and "Bucaramanga," *Noticias* Nov. 1938: 299-30.

The Colegio de San Bartolomé in Bogotá: Anticlerical Action by the National Government

Less than two weeks after the procession in Bucaramanga, the López administration decided to take back the building in which the Jesuit Colegio de San Bartolomé had functioned in Bogotá, arguing that the nation needed to use it for its own educational purposes. The Jesuits were still constructing their school to the north of the city center, so they were allowed to remain until January 1, 1939—at least they would not have to move in the middle of the school year as in Bucaramanga.⁹² Conservatives, led by San Bartolomé alumnus Laureano Gómez and his newspaper El Siglo, declared the move an indication that the Liberals were finally “unmasking” their true motives:

Since their ascent to power the Liberal Party has tried to make Colombian soil unlivable for the soldiers of Christ. Tactical reasons have slowed the execution of their diabolical and “democratic” plans. Now their leaders judge that the time has come to pull off the mask and stone those who without a budget, without arms, without armies, with only their sacrifice, have built a nation like founders. The lodges forced the municipal councils to order the expulsion of the Jesuits, uncultured and demonic deputies have taken from them the schools in Ocaña and Bucaramanga, and in these moments the fauna of the capitol are working to expel them from the Colegio de San Bartolomé, which, along with the Rosario, the cradle of the republic. Liberalism has begun an attack against Catholicism by persecuting those that are its sword, its route to glory, its wise and strong vanguard.⁹³

This editorial from El Siglo claims that the Liberals, influenced by the lodges, had secretly planned to attack Catholicism since coming to power in 1930, beginning with the

⁹² “Volverá a la nación el edificio de S. Bartolomé,” La Razón 28 Jul. 1937 (Recortes A:102-103); “El edificio de San Bartolomé,” El Tiempo 30 Jul. 1937 (Recortes A:104); “Lo de San Bartolomé,” El Espectador 30 Jul. 1937 (Recortes A:106); and “Bogotá: Colegio,” Noticias Nov. 1937: 268-269.

⁹³ “Desde su ascenso al poder el partido liberal se propuso hacerles invivible el suelo colombiano a los militares de Cristo. Razones de táctica han demorado la ejecución de los planes diabólicos y ‘democráticos’. Mas sus dirigentes juzgan que ya ha llegado el tiempo de arrojar la máscara y lapidar a Quiénes sin presupuesto, sin armas, sin ejércitos, con sólo su sacrificio, han edificado patria como los próceres. Las logias atizaron a los concejos municipales para que pidieran la expulsión de los jesuitas, diputados incultos y endemoniados les quitaron los colegios de Ocaña y Bucaramanga, y en estos momentos la fauna del capitolio trabaja por expulsarlos del colegio de San Bartolomé, cuna, con el de Rosario, de la república. El liberalismo emprende pues un ataque a fondo contra el catolicismo al perseguir Quiénes son su espada, su ruta de gloria, su sagaz y fornida vanguardia.” “La Compañía de Jesús perseguida,” El Siglo 29 Jul. 1937: 4 (Recortes A: 103).

Church's vanguard, the Jesuits. Such rhetoric of a conspiratorial preconceived plot was exaggerated, but coming from the newspaper of the leader of the Conservative Party (and most probably written by him), it was believed by many rank and file Conservatives.

Another editorial in El Siglo during these days described how "the monopoly over education is the sure path for implanting laicism." For El Siglo, laicism was an affront to an almost uniformly Catholic people, and the road to ruin, citing the examples of the French Third Republic, revolutionary Mexico, and Republican Spain. "Mr. López is a prodigious agent of illiteracy and laicism," the editorial added, "attacking a Catholic people, importing Jewish professors."⁹⁴ Here, the connection is made again between what is going on in Colombia and events in the world at large; the López administration had contracted a Jewish professor to teach in the national pedagogical university. The use of "Mr. López" rather than "Dr. López" is also significant, since it reminds the reader that López did not possess an advanced degree. It did not help that López himself had declared to a Bolivian writer that he was "a guy who did not even have a secondary school diploma;"⁹⁵ this phrase was repeated frequently in El Siglo.⁹⁶ Such personal attacks were more elaborate in other editorials, but the point was clear: López had not fully completed the requirements of a professionalized politician in Colombia, and did not deserve to be president or to be respected.

El Tiempo reported that the Jesuits themselves had accepted the government's move without complaint, and that the Jesuit provincial went so far as to thank the administration for granting them more than a year's time to finish constructing their new school (although the provincial did question the utility of replacing one educational

⁹⁴ "Libertad de enseñanza," El Siglo 31 Jul. 1937: 4 (Recortes A: 108).

⁹⁵ "un pisco que no es siquiera bachiller," Argüedas 183.

⁹⁶ "El desahucio de San Bartolomé," El Siglo 28 Jul. 1937 (Recortes A: 104).

institution with another on the site, since the ends were the same).⁹⁷ The Liberal press tried to present Gómez' polemics as unjustified, pointing out that the law was on their side, since ownership of the building itself was established during a previous Conservative government.⁹⁸ The radical Liberal newspaper El Diario Nacional claimed that it was Gómez and the Conservatives, and not the Liberals, who were trying to incite a religious war in Colombia, publishing parts of a (supposedly secret) circular that Gómez had sent to municipal and departmental Conservative committees that ordered the defense of the Catholic religion, "which is gravely threatened by the Liberal government".⁹⁹ Again, both sides had their theories of secret plots being hatched by the other side; in this case, the Liberals depicted Gómez' campaign as a secret plot.

However, El Siglo may have come closer to the mark on the issue of San Bartolomé in claiming that the López administration simply wanted to make things difficult for Eduardo Santos, who was assured of being elected the next president in 1938.¹⁰⁰ By mid-1937, the split between *lopistas* and *santistas* in the Liberal Party was acute; ideologically it was between reformers and moderates, even though López himself had declared a "pause" in the reforms in December 1936. In April 1937, during the legislative elections, the López wing of the party had lost to the more moderate Santos wing. Darío Echandía was the *lopista* candidate for president, who, significantly, had been appointed Colombia's ambassador to the Holy See just before the vote. After the

⁹⁷ "Los jesuitas no creen que haya hostilidad del gobierno," El Tiempo 30 Jul. 1937 (Recortes A:104).

⁹⁸ "Volverá a la nación el edificio de S. Bartolomé," La Razón 28 Jul. 1937 (Recortes A:102-103); "El edificio de San Bartolomé," El Tiempo 30 Jul. 1937 (Recortes A:104); and "Lo de San Bartolomé," El Espectador 30 Jul. 1937 (Recortes A:106).

⁹⁹ "Laureano envía circulares secretas para provocar la guerra religiosa," Diario Nacional 30 Jul. 1937 (Recortes A: 106).

¹⁰⁰ "Para verdades...el presidente," El Siglo 30 Jul. 1937: 4 (Recortes A: 104); and "La cuestión religiosa," El Siglo 31 Jul. 1937 (Recortes A: 107).

electoral loss, Echandía withdrew his candidacy,¹⁰¹ and, as described in the last chapter, the former Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Bogotá would remain in Rome until signing a new concordat with the Vatican in April 1942. The problem of Colegio de San Bartolomé and the concordat were left to the Santos administration.

Liberal Fears of the Church Militant and of the Army: 1930s

Liberal conspiracy theorists also saw the face of fascism in the legions that the Church was supposedly organizing in *Acción Católica*. It is significant that the monthly Liberal intellectual magazine was named Acción Liberal in order to counteract *Acción Católica*.¹⁰² During the Spanish Civil War, the Colombian left remained convinced that elements within the Church were very much involved in the Franco uprising. It did not help matters that the Liberal government accused certain Conservative politicians in southwestern Colombia, along with a handful of retired military officers, of conspiring against the government on June 19, 1936, barely a month before July 18, when the military insurrection began in Spain. Several arrests were made, including that of retired army general Amadeo Rodríguez. Prominent Conservatives, including Laureano Gómez, flatly denied the existence of any conspiracy.¹⁰³ El Siglo spent the next days protesting the arrest of Rodríguez, and the government closed the Conservative radio station “Voz de Colombia” for broadcasting a speech in favor of disobedience to the government. In explaining the government’s actions on radio on June 23, Interior Minister Alberto Lleras Camargo blamed the Conservative Party’s policy of electoral abstention, which left

¹⁰¹ Tirado Mejía, Aspectos 207-208; Stoller 394.

¹⁰² Mora Díaz, Cruzado 205-209; and El Tolima Dec. 1936 (cited in Bidegaín 106, footnote 204).

¹⁰³ Winthrop S. Greene to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, 23 Jun. 1936, State 821.00 Revolutions/13, 10 March 2005, Wolf <<http://www.icdc.com/~paulwolf/colombia/greene23june1936.htm>>; and Tirado, Aspectos 290-295.

Conservatives with no alternative but armed uprising.¹⁰⁴ Rumors also placed certain clerics and Catholic organizations as part of the conspiracy. Amadeo Rodríguez further fueled speculation of a military-Conservative-clerical conspiracy by dedicating his book Caminos de guerra y conspiración (Paths of War and Conspiracy) to Archbishop González Arbeláez and Laureano Gómez, among others.¹⁰⁵ The retired general also claimed, with considerable sarcasm, that there was no plot, since the Liberals had governed so patriotically that there was no cause for a revolt.¹⁰⁶ Rodríguez would remain a militant force within the Conservative Party through the end of the 1940s.

It was understandable that Liberals could claim that the army was organizing a coup attempt: although Liberal governors and mayors saw to the “Liberalization” of the police forces under their control, the national government was not in a position to “Liberalize” the largely Conservative army officer corps without risking exactly what it sought to avoid: a military coup. Still, it was unlikely that career military officers would risk their salaries and pensions to launch a coup against a fairly popular government.¹⁰⁷ Under Minister of War Plinio Mendoza, appointed by López shortly after the uprising began in Spain, an even more “Liberalized” national police was organized as a counterweight to the generally Conservative army. The immediate threat of a coup was avoided in the 1930s; the Santos administration (1938-1942) wisely treated the army with more respect. Mendoza’s policies had repercussions during the second López

¹⁰⁴ The U.S. Embassy in Colombia felt that the threat was exaggerated on all sides. Green to Hull, 26 Jun. 1936, State 821.00/1099, 10 March 2005, Wolf <<http://www.icdc.com/~paulwolf/colombia/greene28june1936.htm>>.

¹⁰⁵ Amadeo Rodríguez, Caminos de guerra y conspiración (Bogotá: Editorial Centro, 1937) 4.

¹⁰⁶ Rodríguez 109-110.

¹⁰⁷ Greene to Hull, 23 Jun. 1936: 2-3.

administration (1942-1945) when talk of conspiracies was more common, the police more corrupt and a coup was actually attempted in Pasto in 1944.¹⁰⁸

The Massacre in Gachetá: The Discourse of *Anti-Convivencia*

As in 1934, the Conservatives did not field a candidate in the presidential election of 1938, claiming that there were no guarantees for a fair election, but Conservative leader Laureano Gómez also preferred Santos to López, and thought that the new president was sincere in his desire to re-establish electoral competition—what Santos called *convivencia*. The Conservative Party ended electoral abstention for the legislative elections of February 1939. In late 1938, Gómez praised the guarantees of the Santos administration during a campaign swing through the often-conflictive Department of Santander—no incidents had occurred at rallies in any of the towns and cities visited by the Conservative leader.¹⁰⁹ However, many Liberals were not ready for a *convivencia* with Conservatives just yet. As has been noted, on January 9, 1939, Liberals attacked Conservatives attending a provincial meeting in the public plaza of Gachetá, a rural town northeast of Bogotá, leaving nine dead and various wounded. The incident dominated both the Liberal and Conservative press in the weeks that followed, and was used effectively by Gómez to animate the Conservative rank and file on the eve of the March elections.

The incident in Gachetá was curious for a number of reasons. In the weeks leading up to the meeting, newspapers from both sides were reporting an increase in political violence in various places around the country, consistently blaming the other

¹⁰⁸ Henderson, *Modernization* 282-283.

¹⁰⁹ Henderson, *Modernization* 268; and Abella 145.

party. Shortly after Santos' inauguration in August, a new *lopista* newspaper was launched in Bogotá, El Liberal, replacing the radical Liberal Diario Nacional, which had closed a few months before.¹¹⁰ El Liberal, directed by López' former Interior Minister Alberto Lleras Camargo, quickly established itself as Colombia's third highest circulation newspaper (after El Tiempo and El Siglo).¹¹¹ The *lopista* paper was far less diplomatic in its partisanship than El Tiempo, and in the months following Santos' inauguration consistently expressed that Gómez could not be relied upon to maintain *convivencia*. For instance, a September 4 editorial explained how Gómez could not be trusted to keep his word,¹¹² on September 8 the newspaper claimed that political violence would be the result of the elections;¹¹³ and the combativeness of Gómez was compared to that of Nazi leader Hermann Goering on September 12.¹¹⁴ *Convivencia* did not serve Liberals, who had by that time enjoyed the benefits of three years of one-party government, and all that that meant for maintaining the Liberal patron-client network against the Conservatives. Attacking Gómez was a way to animate the Liberal rank and file and to break any agreement between Santos and Gómez.

The meeting in Gachetá was important to Conservative politicians from the Department of Cundinamarca, which surrounds Bogotá—El Siglo expected 10,000 Conservatives to attend.¹¹⁵ Although Gómez himself was not in attendance, several prominent Cundinamarca Conservatives were present: Jorge Leyva, Juan Uribe Cualla, and Amadeo Rodríguez. Leyva was a young lawyer from the Universidad Javeriana who

¹¹⁰ Cagua, Periodismo 197-198 and 212-213.

¹¹¹ Sáenz 97, endnote 22.

¹¹² "Cuidado con la lógica," El Liberal 4 Sep. 1938: 6.

¹¹³ "El Liberal visto al través del comentario del Dr. Serrano Blanco," El Liberal 8 Sep. 1938: 7.

¹¹⁴ "Hoy," El Liberal 12 Sep. 1938: 4.

¹¹⁵ "Diez mil conservadores se reunirán en Gachetá el 8," El Siglo 4 Jan. 1939: 1.

was influenced by the corporatist social ideas of the Jesuit Félix Restrepo; he was also a close friend of Gómez' son Álvaro.¹¹⁶ Juan Uribe Cualla was a longtime Conservative politician—he was a minority member of the Bogotá city council at the time of the imbroglio over the message sent to the Eucharistic Congress in 1935.¹¹⁷ Most polemical of all was retired army general Amadeo Rodríguez (nicknamed “Abaleo”—“shootout”), accused of conspiring against the government in 1936. All sides seemed to have been anticipating violence. On January 2, El Siglo reported an attack on Rodríguez in his home;¹¹⁸ on January 5, the paper reported on the planned sabotage of a Conservative meeting in another Cundinamarca town, Guayatá.¹¹⁹ Meanwhile, El Liberal reported on Conservative-perpetrated violence: on January 7, for instance, readers were informed that Popayán Conservative Guillermo León Valencia was calling for a holy war,¹²⁰ and that the Conservatives were “on the assault” in Barranquilla.¹²¹ The moderate Liberal newspaper La Razón reported on January 6¹²² and 8¹²³ that the government was increasing police patrols in Gachetá on the eve of the meeting, while President Santos' El

¹¹⁶ In addition to his advanced degree, Leyva also studied in Belgium and England, and served as director of El Siglo in 1949—fulfilling all requirements for entering the political profession in Colombia. Perry, 1952, 785. At the beginning of the National Front, he was “more Laureano than Laureano,” running unsuccessfully for president in 1958 as a Conservative against Liberal Alberto Lleras Camargo, who had the support of Gómez as part of the National Front agreement. Gabriel Silva Luján, “El origen del Frente Nacional y el gobierno de la Junta Militar,” NHC, Vol. II, 210. Leyva lost again in 1962, against the Conservative National Front candidate Guillermo León Valencia. Gabriel Silva Luján, “Lleras Camargo y Valencia: entre el reformismo y la represión,” NHC, Vol. II, 221, 224. A rumor in Bogotá claimed that Leyva was an illegitimate son of Laureano Gómez. Dr. J. León Helguera, personal interview, Nashville, Tenn., 27 May 2005.

¹¹⁷ Montaña 165. The well-travelled Uribe Cualla had a law degree from the Universidad Nacional, and was an editorialist in most major Conservative newspapers through the 1940s—another good example of the professionalized politician in Colombia. Perry, 1952, 1020.

¹¹⁸ “La Violencia,” El Siglo 2 Jan. 1939: 4.

¹¹⁹ “Los liberales intentan impedir la convención conservadora en Guayatá,” El Siglo 5 Jan. 1939: 1.

¹²⁰ “Pide Valencia hijo, en Claridad la guerra santa,” El Liberal 7 Jan. 1939: 1. Guillermo León Valencia was the son of former presidential candidate Guillermo Valencia and the second National Front president (1962-1964).

¹²¹ “Esta lista el conservatismo a dar el asalto definitivo para la reconquista del gobierno,” El Liberal 7 Jan. 1939: 6.

¹²² “Para evitar disturbios el 8 en Gachetá se aumenta guardia,” La Razón 6 Jan. 1939: 4.

¹²³ “Dos concentraciones conservadores hoy,” La Razón 8 Jan. 1939: 1.

Tiempo told readers that “the government assures tranquility in Gachetá.”¹²⁴ Given the partisan reporting on political violence and on the preparations for the meeting in Gachetá, Santos’ *convivencia* was in jeopardy even before the incident. The rhetoric that preceded the massacre itself made the murder of nine Conservatives seem like a self-fulfilling prophecy.

By all accounts, the Liberal attackers were at fault. In a radio address on February 23, Santos pledged to arrest the perpetrators and put them on trial¹²⁵—a process which, in the end, took years.¹²⁶ According to the rhetoric of Laureano Gómez and the Conservatives, the attack had proved that the Liberals intended to hold onto power through violence. The Conservative convention for the Department of Cundinamarca, meeting only a few days after the massacre on January 21, declared in favor of armed defense, and even violent preemptive *acción intrépida* (“intrepid action”) in order to prevent the Liberals from getting their way by use of arms. With the Spanish Civil War still in the news, the Conservatives were thinking in terms of the Franco rebellion in 1936, which they saw as a justifiable action against the spread of communism. Gómez endorsed the concept of *acción intrépida* and elaborated upon it in a provocative editorial in El Siglo on February 14. According to Gómez, if public authority would not or could not defend Conservatives, party members had a right to preemptively eliminate those who were plotting against them, along with those who materially aided the plotters. Although the national Conservative convention meeting a few days later did not endorse

¹²⁴ “El gobierno asegurará la tranquilidad en Gachetá,” El Tiempo 6 Jan. 1939: 1.

¹²⁵ Santos, “La administración Santos, los sucesos de Gachetá y la política de la ‘acción intrépida,’” Etapas 48.

¹²⁶ Henderson, Modernization 280.

Gómez' idea of preemptive elimination of political opponents,¹²⁷ the thesis was certainly invoked by Conservatives on the local level after 1946. Initially, President Santos immediately condemned Gómez' concepts in his radio address on February 23.¹²⁸ But the Liberal press repeated the phrase *acción intrépida* at election time throughout the 1940s—implying that Conservatives were secretly conspiring against Liberals and needed to be eliminated. Conservatives, for their part, trotted out the massacre in Gachetá during electoral campaigns, until *La Violencia* itself made the incident look minor by comparison. The rhetorical aftermath of the massacre had unforeseen long-term implications that went far beyond the death of nine unfortunate Conservative peasants in January 1938.

Anticlerical Liberals Versus the Dominicans: Taking a School in Chiquinquirá

Liberal fears of Conservative/clerical-led violence after the Gachetá massacre is best seen in the actions taken in Chiquinquirá in April 1939, when the government brought in the police to remove the Dominicans from the Colegio Jesús, María y José, claiming that it was a government building destined for a government-run school. The Dominicans had founded the school in the early nineteenth century, but in the 1860s the building, along with many other Dominican properties throughout Colombia (including their monastery in Bogotá), was appropriated by the anticlerical Liberal government of Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera. After the Conservatives returned to power in 1886, the school was legally returned to the Dominicans. The all-Liberal congress voted to suspend the 1886 law in May 1938; the bill was proposed by a Julio Roberto Salazar

¹²⁷ Henderson, *Modernization* 268-269.

¹²⁸ Eduardo Santos, "La administración" 47-59.

Ferro, a Liberal from Chinququirá,¹²⁹ who was frequently a member of the national Liberal directorate during the 1940s.¹³⁰ The school was legally run by a board of parents, even though the building was owned by the Dominicans. This board was not always in agreement with the Dominicans, and in 1936 had asked for help from the Ministry of Education to change the management of the school. Darío Echandía was minister, and, far from suggesting that the school be made public, recommended instead that the board contract another religious order.¹³¹ Among the Dominicans themselves, no friar seemed interested in being put in charge of the school. When the provincial named Juan de Dios Martínez the new rector in late 1937, Martínez pleaded that his name be withdrawn, citing that he had not been involved in education for ten years.¹³² Nevertheless, Martínez was made rector, and would witness the legal wrangling and the takeover in 1938 and 1939. Since the problem of the building specifically concerned the Dominicans, they pursued the matter through their lawyers in late 1938, bringing a case before Colombia's supreme court.¹³³

In February 1939, they expressed the hope that the court would rule in their favor,¹³⁴ and were thus surprised on the first day of Holy Week, Monday, April 3, when the local education commissioner, Carlos Martínez Sánchez, arrived at the school with an authorization from national Education Minister Alfonso Araújo to occupy the building.

¹²⁹ Ariza, Tomo II (1993) 1511-1517.

¹³⁰ "La obra de Salazar Ferro," Batalla 9 Feb. 1945: 5. Salazar was a professionalized politician: a lawyer who founded and directed the weekly El Radical in Tunja, he had traveled all over South America and worked in international law. Perry, 1952, 973.

¹³¹ Darío Echandía, Minister of Education, to Roberto Villamil, Presidente de la Junta de Patronos del Colegio de Jesús, María y José, 2 Dec. 1936, DA-SA, Sección Colegios y Universidades, Subsección Jesús, María, y José--Chiququirá, (JMJ), Caja 2, Carpeta 1, Folio 14.

¹³² Juan de Dios Martínez to Provincial Angélico R. Báez, JMJ, Caja 2, Carpeta 4, Folio 9.

¹³³ Luis Carlos Corral, Demanda ante Corte Suprema de Justicia, 9 Nov. 1938, JMJ Caja 4, Carpeta 2, Folios 1-11.

¹³⁴ Angélico Báez to Raimundo Mejía, 4 Feb. 1939, JMJ, Caja 2, Carpeta 2, Folio 25.

When the rector refused to hand over the keys, the municipal police arrived and took over the building, refusing entry to everyone, including members of the board of directors of the school. The next day, the few boarded students who were there were sent home (most had already left for Holy Week). The school was attached to the parish church, where the image of the Virgin of Chiquinquirá was kept—bricklayers arrived and sealed the door which united the two buildings. This particular detail was commented on days later in an official letter sent to the Senate of the Republic by the school’s board of directors:

Such a brick wall is a monument that proclaims and perpetuates an evident divorce between two ideologies, between two systems: it was correct to separate the institute from the Catholic Church; the invaders had to make a display of their morality without religion and their conscience without faith. On one side the Church that had the spiritual direction of education under its charge according to the constitution during the glory days of the school; on the other side the warriors and exponents of the new atheistic culture.¹³⁵

The symbolic act of bricking up the doorway between the school and the church was similar to that of carrying the Blessed Sacrament from the former Jesuit school in Bucaramanga to a chapel almost two years before, although this time, the act was performed by the State. The meaning of the act was the same—religion has no place in a secular state-run school. It expressed the hopes of the Liberals to form a new citizen without Church tutelage, while for Conservatives it represented “the new atheistic culture.”

While the situation in Chiquinquirá was further being clarified in Bogotá, the police allowed two Dominicans, the school rector and the parish priest, to stay in the building after sending home the students and bricking up the doorway on Tuesday April

¹³⁵ “Tal muro de ladrillo es monumento que proclama y perpetúa un evidente divorcio entre dos ideologías, entre dos sistemas: era preciso separar el instituto, de la Iglesia católica; los invasores Quiénes debían hacer alarde de su moral sin religión y su conciencia sin fe. De un lado la Iglesia que tenía a su cargo la dirección espiritual de la enseñanza por mandamiento constitucional durante los días gloriosos del Colegio; de otro lado los artificios y embelecocos de estos exponentes de la nueva cultura atea.” Junta de Patronos to the President and Honorable Members of the Senate of the Republic, no date (1939), JMJ, Caja 2, Carpeta 2, Folios 32-38.

4. But when the parish priest left to run an errand on Wednesday evening, he was not allowed back in. The following day, the rector claimed that he was too sick to leave, and so the parish priest was permitted to visit his Dominican brother, but only in the presence of police—it was obvious that the Liberals feared that the Dominicans would conspire to violently take back the building. Once the two Dominicans were together, they claimed they needed privacy so that one could hear the other's confession. The police refused this request, and even prohibited their use of the telephone. At one point, the two priests began speaking with each other in Latin, which only further infuriated the officers and other government functionaries who were present, convincing them that indeed the Dominicans were plotting. That evening, Martínez Sánchez, the local education commissioner, ordered the two Dominicans out of the building "...even if there were a thousand deaths..." Meanwhile, the police also forcibly entered the convent of the Dominican sisters, in order to take positions in the tower of the building.¹³⁶

The Liberals felt that they were preventing a Chinquirá version of the Franco uprising in Spain, making sure that the priests and nuns did not secretly organize a resistance against the "legitimately constituted authorities" and fire at the populace from their belfries. The Spanish conflict was certainly on everyone's minds—only a few days before the Nationalists had taken Madrid and the civil war had ended.¹³⁷ The day after the initial takeover of the school in Chiquinquirá, Martínez Sánchez sent a letter to the Dominican provincial, asking for his intercession with the two friars who were still in the building:

¹³⁶ Raimundo Mejía, "Relación verídica de los sucesos acaecidos sobre la violenta invasión y posesión del Edificio del Colegio de Jesús, María, y José," JMJ, Caja 4, Carpeta 2, Folio 30-31.

¹³⁷ Jackson 465-477.

It has not passed the minds of anyone in the Ministry, nor of the mayor, nor of any member of the commission that the manifestations of hostility against government measures on the part of the Reverend Fathers in charge of the school constitute a gesture of rebellion against orders dictated by legitimate authority; for this reason we solicit and hope that through your authority and unquestionable discretion, the friars will accede to the petition and abandon the building, turning over all of the keys with the object of making indispensable repairs.¹³⁸

By merely writing that no one had thought that the Dominicans were in rebellion against the government, Martínez Sánchez was indicating that all the Liberals involved in the incident had considered the actions of the friars to be a rebellion to some extent. Perhaps there was some basis to Liberal fears about the Dominicans of Chiquinquirá, since the students at their minor seminary wore a uniform similar to that of the Spanish Falange,¹³⁹ and the Dominican press was strongly pro-Franco. The police may have legitimately feared a standoff—obviously, Luis Eduardo Nieto Caballero’s jokes about armed Dominicans in 1930 were ignored by 1939, and the Liberal police were prepared for anything—not only armed priests, but apparently armed nuns as well.

On the day that the friars were finally evicted from the building, Thursday, April 6, the Dominican Alberto Ariza, editor of the Chiquinquirá newspaper Veritas, sent an angry telegram to President Eduardo Santos:

Your government order taking school private property; violently ejecting teachers, students; putting armed guard inside property; Father Rector sick; church, convent under siege. Is this what you mean by *convivencia*, guarantees? Only Russia, Mexico proceed so savagely. People extremely indignant; we protest farcical official culture.

¹³⁸ “Por el pensamiento del Ministerio, o del Alcalde ni por el de ninguno de los miembros de la Comisión ha pasado la idea de que las manifestaciones de hostilidad para determinadas medidas del Gobierno por parte de los RR. PP. a cuyo cargo se encuentra el Colegio, constituyen un gesto de rebeldía para órdenes dictadas por autoridad legítima; así, pues, solicitamos y esperamos de su autoridad y de su indiscutible discreción el breve acatamiento a la petición reiterada de abandono por parte de algunos Padres Dominicos del local del Colegio, haciendo el R. P. Rector previa entrega de las llaves de todas las dependencias con el objeto de efectuar reparaciones indispensables.” Carlos Martínez Sánchez, jefe de la comisión, and Nicolás Matallana Neira alcalde de Chiquinquirá, to M.R.P. Provincial de la comunidad dominicana, 4 Apr. 1939, JMJ, Caja 2, Carpeta 4, Folio 12.

¹³⁹ “Colegio Apostólico Dominicano,” Veritas 21 Feb. 1940: 1.

When Dominican Provincial Angélico Báez asked for a meeting with Santos on April 10, the President first demanded an apology for the disrespectful tone of the telegram, and for the fact that it was published in the press¹⁴⁰--indeed, a copy found its way into the Sunday edition of Gómez' El Siglo.¹⁴¹ The telegram reveals many aspects of the rhetoric of the period and its generation: the takeover of the school reconfirmed the opinion of *laureanista* Conservatives and militant clergy about the “true motives” of the Santos administration after the massacre in Gachetá; the incident was placed in an international context, comparing it to anticlerical Mexico and atheistic Russia; and El Siglo was more than willing to print inflammatory telegrams from angry priests to the President of the Republic. This last point cannot be overemphasized—the choices that the press made during these years were key to spreading violent rhetoric.¹⁴²

The Dominican provincial Báez, in his reply to President Santos, stated that he had first read the telegram in El Siglo, and that the ideas expressed by Ariza “were not shared by the community of which I am superior, and are sincerely deplored.”¹⁴³ Báez was perhaps expressing the feelings of many of his friars—although few if any Dominicans were Liberal fellow-travelers, they were by no means all Falangist supporters of Laureano Gómez. The building in Chiquinquirá was turned over to the government, which ran a secular school on the site until 1947—the courts decided that the Dominicans were indeed owners of the building in 1943, but the monks allowed the

¹⁴⁰ “Orden Gobierno suyo allanóse (*sic*) Colegio propiedad privada, lanzando violentamente profesores alumnos, poniendo guardia armada interior pieza Padre Rector enfermo, sitiando Iglesia, convento. Entiéndese así convivencia, garantías usted preconiza? Sólo Rusia, Méjico proceden tan salvajemente. Pueblo indignadísimo; protestamos farsa cultura oficial.” Eduardo Santos to Angélico Báez, 10 April 1939, JMJ, Caja 2, Carpeta 4, Folio 14-15. The text of the telegram is taken from this letter.

¹⁴¹ Báez to Santos, 10 April 1939, JMJ, Caja 2, Carpeta 2, Folio 28.

¹⁴² For instance, the inflammatory pastoral letters of Bishop Miguel Angel Builes of Santa Rosa de Osos in Antioquia probably would not have reached a national audience without the militant Conservative press.

¹⁴³ Báez to Santos, 11 April 1939, JMJ, Caja 2, Carpeta 2, Folio 26.

government to rent the building for several more years.¹⁴⁴ Before the judgment in their favor, the friars felt they needed to continue the school, using classrooms at their minor seminary. However, they still had the problem that no friar really felt like being rector—Martínez refused, and his replacement, Luis Ramón Miranda, spent three years in the post complaining that he did not want to be there.¹⁴⁵ Still, Miranda was also a bit of an independent spirit within the Dominican community, and a good example of an apolitical friar.

As rector, Miranda organized a school excursion by train from Chinququirá to Bogotá and then as far south as Calí, during the July-August vacation in 1941. He and the organizers designed a kind of scout uniform for the boys on the trip, which included a red bandanna around the neck. Photos of the excursion show Father Miranda happily wearing the bandanna himself, over his friar's robes.¹⁴⁶ He was most certainly among the very few members of the clergy in all of Colombia in 1941 to be sporting the colors of the Liberal Party—and red communist revolution; and this at a time when students at the minor seminary of his religious community were wearing blue shirts like Spanish Falangists—and like good Colombian Conservatives. The first stop on the school trip was Bogotá, where the boys had the opportunity to meet President Santos in a private meeting. Santos understood the political opportunity of meeting with the students of a school that his government had taken over two years before. He impressed the friar and his charges by spending more time with them than he usually did with a visiting school

¹⁴⁴ Pedro Martín Quiñones, letter to Tomás Vergara, 9 June 1943, DA-SA, JMJ Caja 2, Carpeta 2, Folio 52; and Contract between Education Minister Antonio Rocha and Dominican Provincial Alberto E. Ariza, 26 Apr. 1944, JMJ Caja 1, Carpeta 2, Folio 2-4.

¹⁴⁵ Luis Ramón Miranda to Junta de Patronos and Provincial Alberto Ariza, 19 Nov. 1940, JMJ, Caja 3, Carpeta 1, Folios 14-16; Ariza to Tomás M. Vergara, 28 Dec. 1942.

¹⁴⁶ Excursión y prospecto del Colegio de Jesús, María y José (Chiququirá: Imprenta de "Veritas," 1941), JMJ Caja 3, Carpeta 7, Folio 1086-1103; 3-4.

group, and by commenting that they were the best disciplined and most polite scout troop to pass through his office. Santos' words and actions were printed in the official album of the excursion.¹⁴⁷ The Dominican provincial, elected in 1940, was Alberto Ariza,¹⁴⁸ who had sent the hostile telegram to Santos in April 1939. Ariza forbade any more school trips in the immediate future.¹⁴⁹ These incidents show the divisions within the religious community itself, emphasizing that Liberal fear of a widespread clerical conspiracy were unfounded since those that they accused of conspiring were in internal disagreement on any number of issues, especially that of how involved the Church should be in partisan politics in Colombia.

While the Dominicans continued to run their school, the directors of the new public school in Chiquinquirá found ways to continue to irritate the friars as the new school year began in 1940. Chiquinquirá was part of the diocese of Tunja; the bishop, Crisanto Luque, had agreed with the government to provide a priest as religious instructor in the school—again, by law the Catholic religion was still taught in the public schools. Luque preferred to send a priest from a religious community rather than one of his diocesan clergy, and since the Dominicans were in Chiquinquirá, he asked that one of them be appointed.¹⁵⁰ The Ministry of Education officially named Dominican José de Jesús Farías to the position in May.¹⁵¹ However, the school was going to pay the religious instructor less than the regular faculty, and had a resolution from the Education Ministry that specifically gave the school permission to do so. Farías refused to work

¹⁴⁷ Excursión 4-5.

¹⁴⁸ Alberto Ariza, Los dominicos Tomo II, 1325.

¹⁴⁹ Miranda to Junta de Patronos, Dec. 1942, JMJ, Caja 3, Carpeta 1, Folios 20-24.

¹⁵⁰ Báez, "Asunto del Colegio Nacional," 1940, JMJ Caja 3, Carpeta 1, Folios 1-2; and Ariza to Crisanto Luque, 19 Aug. 1940, JMJ, Caja 2, Carpeta 3, Folios 3-4.

¹⁵¹ Emiliano Posada to José de Jesús Farías, 8 May 1940, JMJ, Caja 2, Carpeta 2, Folio 39.

under these conditions. The rector of the new school sent a letter to Farías with a copy of the government resolution; the embossed stationery he used was on bonded paper imported from the United States,¹⁵² of a much better quality than the paper used by the Dominicans or even by the bishop of Tunja. Apparently the school felt it should spend more on stationery than on a religious instructor—all of which added insult to injury, as far as the Dominicans were concerned. An agreement was finally made concerning the salary, and Bishop Luque ordered Farías to take the position in the school.¹⁵³

In the rhetoric of Laureano Gómez and the Conservatives, the takeover of the Colegio Jesús, María, y José was coupled with that of San Bartolomé to show how the national Liberal government was attacking the Church and bent on destroying Christian civilization. The Jesuits were unhappy with the loss of their school in downtown Bogotá, and were able to convince the government to give them one more year before turning over the building, until January 1, 1941, when their new school to the north would be finished. The new building was still not ready, but the Jesuits abandoned the site as required by law, unwillingly but without scandal. In July 1941, when Archbishop Perdomo attended a mass at the building—where a new government school was now installed—he was attacked by Gómez' newspaper for hypocrisy and for giving tacit approval to the “robbery” of San Bartolomé.¹⁵⁴ Gómez' rhetoric changed again in February 1942 when the new school opened. El Siglo ran a number of photos and extolled the more hygienic atmosphere of the plant in comparison with the old

¹⁵² Manuel Ignacio Vargas to Farías, 11 May 1940, JMJ, Caja 2, Carpeta 2, Folio 40.

¹⁵³ Báez, “Asunto,” and Ariza to Crisanto Luque, 19 Aug. 1940.

¹⁵⁴ “La misa de hipocritilla,” El Siglo 10 Jul. 1941: 4; Spruille Braden to Hull, 29 Jul. 1941, State, 821.00/1344 and Cárdenas, personal interview, Bogotá, 14 Jul. 2004.

building.¹⁵⁵ Then, during the debates over the new concordat in 1942, Gómez claimed that the Liberal administration took San Bartolomé in order to put pressure on the Vatican during the treaty negotiations.¹⁵⁶

In the end, education in Colombia improved little by Liberal efforts to rescind contracts with religious communities. Education spending rose somewhat during the López and Santos administrations, but the total number of students attending school as a percentage of the total school-age population remained stagnant during these years.¹⁵⁷ At the same time, enrollment in public secondary schools rose while that of private (mainly Catholic) secondary schools fell; but the total number of students stayed at about 30,000¹⁵⁸--out of a total population of about 9 million in Colombia.¹⁵⁹ The actions of the government in secondary education affected few students, while the political rhetoric generated by the school “robberies” did much to worsen relations between militants in the opposing parties, adding to conspiratorial accusations.

Coup Conspiracies, Real and Fabricated, 1940-1945

Gómez’ unabashed pro-Falangist (and pro-Axis) positions before and during the first years of the Second World War, along with his stand against the U.S. and his growing cynicism about the viability of democracy, contributed to the Liberal view that he would attempt a coup if given the chance. A comment to Liberal senators in the corridors of the congress in September 1940 about the legitimacy of preemptive *atentado personal* “personal attack” were repeated, along with *acción intrépida*, in the Liberal

¹⁵⁵ *El Siglo* 9 Feb. 1942: 4, 10.

¹⁵⁶ “El concordato,” *El Siglo* 12 Sep. 1942: 4.

¹⁵⁷ Helg, Gráfico no. 2, 309 and Gráfico No. 5, 311.

¹⁵⁸ Helg, Gráfico no. 3, 310.

¹⁵⁹ Helg, Cuadro No. 16, 198.

press over the next few years as proof that Gómez was capable of trying anything.¹⁶⁰ Talk of other military conspiracies occurred in the last years of the Santos administration—which coincided with Axis successes in the battlefields of Europe and Asia. However, the timing of public reports of coup plots often appeared at opportune moments for the Liberal Party. For instance, in August 1941 War Minister José Joaquín Castro Martínez made known that a military coup was being planned inside the Presidential Guard in Bogotá. However, none of the suspects were held for very long and were soon released for lack of evidence.¹⁶¹ The timing of the incident coincided with the national Liberal convention, which met ten days later to select an official candidate for president for 1942. Talk of a conspiracy to end democracy in Colombia was to unite Liberals against Conservatives and other anti-democrats. As a political tactic, the announcement of a plot failed: the convention was divided between *lopistas* and *anti-lopistas*;¹⁶² López was not declared the official candidate until months later. Among the non-commissioned officers supposedly involved in this plot was Francisco A. Pérez, an ex-boxer known as “Mamatoco”—his murder in July 1943 would be one of the most talked-about scandals of the second López administration.

During López’ 1942 campaign, the *lopista* daily El Liberal employed the tactic of depicting Laureano Gómez as a dangerous anti-government conspirator, claiming that he was plotting a coup with Falangists and militant clerics.¹⁶³ The paper published a photo of the Conservative leader receiving communion from the hands of Bogotá adjunct

¹⁶⁰ “El hijo de Laureano Gómez ofrece dar muerte al candidato Liberal,” El Liberal 2 Jan. 1942: 1.

¹⁶¹ Galvis and Donadio 285-291.

¹⁶² Braden to Hull, 19 Aug. 1941, State, 821.00/1348.

¹⁶³ “Urdaneta acusa la política de Gómez y lo recusa como censor—Laureano Gómez no rendirá las cuentas de la conspiración, dice,” El Liberal 3 Jan. 1942: 1.

archbishop González Arbeláez under the caption, “Receive communion and incite to rebellion.” The description under the photo continued:

Laureano Gómez, Falangist, devotedly takes communion from the hands of the adjunct Archbishop of Bogotá, while plotting personal attacks and civil revolts, with the support of General Franco, in the name of “Spain, Catholic and Imperial.”¹⁶⁴

This is but one example of the ongoing campaign by Liberals to depict Gómez as part of an international Falangist plot—even though the Falange in Colombia was so weak and divided, that Gómez did not have recourse to organize a conspiracy even if he so desired.

As described in the previous chapter, in the second semester of 1942 Gómez resorted to anti-masonic rhetoric to depict the Liberals and the López administration as dangerously connected to an international conspiracy. In the remaining years of the López administration, Gómez and the Conservatives fully took advantage of a financial scandal involving members of the López family to present the government as irreparably corrupt. Stock in a Dutch company, represented in Colombia by López’ son Alfonso López Michelsen after the German invasion of Holland in 1940, was traded at an amazing profit by López Michelsen, using insider information with the cooperation of the Colombian government. The trade was apparently legal, but the ethical appropriateness of it was questionable. As with the concordat, the financial scandal forced the government to defend itself in public hearings, giving Gómez and the *laureanista* Conservatives plenty of opportunities to depict the government as a den of thieves.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ “Laureano Gómez, falangista, comulga devotamente de manos del Arzobispo Coadjutor de Bogotá, mientras maquina atentados personales y revueltas civiles, con el apoyo del Generalísimo Franco, en nombre de la “España Católica e Imperial.” “La Falange y el Conservatismo: Como actúa e interviene la ‘España Imperial’ en nuestra patria por intermedio de Laureano Gómez,” *El Liberal* 5 Feb. 1942: 9.

¹⁶⁵ Henderson, *Modernization* 280-281. López Michelsen, who was president from 1974 to 1978, has defended his actions in 1942 as recently as 2001. Alfonso López Michelsen, *Palabras pendientes: Conversaciones con Enrique Santos Calderón* (Bogotá: El Áncora, 2001). López Michelsen, at 92, still writes a weekly column in *El Tiempo* and participates in political debates on a variety of themes.

López and his administration were also accused of being the intellectual authors of the murder of the ex-boxer Francisco A. Pérez (“Mamatoco”) by members of the police in July 1943—the same Pérez accused of plotting against the Santos administration in 1941. Pérez had worked as a physical trainer for the Colombian armed forces, and had been denouncing corruption in the police through his own small newspaper.¹⁶⁶ “Who Killed Mamatoco” was the constant question in El Siglo for the remainder of the López administration. For instance, when López returned from an extended stay in the U.S. in February 1944, the Liberal papers reported on the preparations for his public reception,¹⁶⁷ while El Siglo asked if he would finally tell why they killed Mamatoco,¹⁶⁸ the day after, the Liberal papers reported on the size of the crowds,¹⁶⁹ while El Siglo expressed disappointment that once again the case of Mamatoco remained unresolved.¹⁷⁰ The case even became the subject of a *vallenato* song during these years:

Mamatoco, Mamatoco died
 But not from pneumonia
 Nineteen stab wounds, *caramba*
 Given by the police, *caramba*¹⁷¹

The constant agitation by Gómez and other Conservative leaders created an atmosphere in which militant party members were convinced that the Liberal government was destroying the traditions of the *patria* through their corrupt, arbitrary, and anti-Christian actions. Liberals responded to these accusations by accusing the Conservative leadership

¹⁶⁶ Henderson Modernization 277-283.

¹⁶⁷ “Cómo se desarrollara la gran manifestación al Doctor López,” El Liberal 18 Feb. 1944: 1; and “Gigantesca manifestación: A las 3 PM llega López,” El Liberal 19 Feb. 1944: 1.

¹⁶⁸ “Por qué asesinaron a Mamatoco? El país espera que el señor López absuelva en su discurso de hoy esta pregunta,” El Siglo 19 Feb. 1944: 1.

¹⁶⁹ “Claman las muchedumbres: López al poder,” El Liberal 20 Feb. 1944: 1.

¹⁷⁰ “Tampoco en su discurso de Bogotá explicó el señor López por qué asesinaron a Mamatoco. ¿Por qué?” El Siglo 20 Feb. 1944: 1.

¹⁷¹ *Vallenato* is popular music from the Caribbean coast, played on accordion. “Mamatoco, Mamatoco se murió/ pero no de la pulmonía/ diecinueve puñaladas, caramba/ que le dio la policia, caramba” Margot Rodríguez Rivera, personal interview, Bogotá, Apr. 2004.

of plotting a coup with members of the armed forces and the clergy, under the tutelage of Nazi and Falangist agitators.¹⁷² Liberals depicted themselves as under siege; a new magazine published by the national committee was titled Batalla (“Battle”).¹⁷³

In 1944 and 1945, the Liberal administration indeed encountered certain clerics involved in armed plots against the government. The first time, in February 1944, came as an indirect result of the “Mamatoco” affair. A judge had accepted new testimony from a witness to the murder, and ordered the arrest of several higher-up officials in the police and the Interior Ministry.¹⁷⁴ The Liberal administration, claiming that the new testimony was fabricated, rescinded the arrest order and replaced the judge on the case.¹⁷⁵ Even El Siglo admitted that the new charges followed the claims they had been making in the previous months.¹⁷⁶ Gómez declared that Interior Minister Alberto Lleras Camargo had conspired to replace the judge even before the arrest order was issued; Lleras Camargo immediately sued Gómez for libel¹⁷⁷ and, for good measure, the Liberal press also once again accused Gómez of plotting a coup with Nazi and Falangist agents.¹⁷⁸ When Gómez appeared before the judge on February 9, he refused to make a statement, claiming that if the judge were being manipulated by the government, Gómez could not expect a fair trial, and if the judge were independent and honest, any declaration that

¹⁷² See, for instance, Enrique Santos (“Calibán”), “La Danza de las Horas,” El Tiempo 13 Aug. 1942: 4; Calibán, El Tiempo 19 Aug. 1942: 4; Calibán, El Tiempo 3 Sep. 1942: 4.

¹⁷³ Batalla 29 Dec. 1944: 1.

¹⁷⁴ “Basado en el dicho del acusado Hernández Soler, el juez Vargas ordena detener a ocho personas,” El Liberal 1 Feb. 1944: 1.

¹⁷⁵ “Destituído el Juez Vargas Orjuela,” El Liberal 4 Feb. 1944: 13; and “Para salvar a Echandía quitan a Vargas Orjuela,” El Siglo 4 Feb. 1944: 1.

¹⁷⁶ “De nuestra edición extraordinaria del día de ayer sobre Mamatoco,” El Siglo 1 Feb. 1944: 7.

¹⁷⁷ “Lleras Camargo denunciará por calumnia a Gómez y a de la Vega,” El Liberal 4 Feb. 1944: 1.

¹⁷⁸ “Agentes confidenciales de la derecha desarrollan actividades en Suramérica,” El Liberal 7 Feb. 1944: 1.

Gómez made would result in the replacement of the judge. The judge then placed Gómez under arrest.¹⁷⁹

That evening, Conservatives took to the streets of Bogotá and other towns and cities across Colombia, but despite some stone-throwing and fistcuffs with Liberals and union members, (and some small arms fire from the balcony of El Siglo), no one was killed.¹⁸⁰ Conservatives from all over the country sent telegrams to their national leadership and to El Siglo, declaring that they were ready to receive orders. Several proclaimed that Gómez was the Colombian Calvo Sotelo, a reference to the Spanish monarchist who had been arrested and murdered by republican police in Spain a few days before the Franco uprising in 1936.¹⁸¹ The metaphor of the Spanish Civil War was also used by the Liberals: the government, the Liberal Party, the Communist Party, and the labor unions immediately declared that democracy was under attack and needed to be defended from the Nazi-Falangists.¹⁸² The labor central *Confederación de Trabajadores de Colombia* (Confederation of Colombian Workers—CTC), founded under Liberal tutelage in 1936,¹⁸³ immediately resolved:

To invite the Colombian people to remain in permanent and public vigilance, until Colombia breaks its relations with Franco's Spain, López reassumes power, and the Nazi-Falangist reaction is eliminated for the public activities of the nation.¹⁸⁴

This talk of elimination and of an international conspiracy active in Colombia was the mirror image of Conservative comments during the same days. This rhetoric had both

¹⁷⁹ "Impresionante detención," Revista Javeriana Feb.-Mar. 1944: 14, 20.

¹⁸⁰ "HABLA EL GOBIERNO, El orden será mantenido, dice, inclusive con la ley marcial, 27 heridos en Bogotá, 15 en Cali por motines, anoche, oradores conservadores disparan sobre el pueblo," El Liberal 10 Feb. 1942: 1; and "El país al borde de la revolución, LAUREANO GÓMEZ EN LA CARCEL, y los asesinos de Mamatoco están libres," El Siglo 10 Feb. 1944: 1.

¹⁸¹ "Guerra civil implica la orden de detener al Dr. Laureano Gómez," El Siglo 10 Feb. 1944: 5.

¹⁸² "Habla el gobierno: El orden será mantenido, dice, inclusive con la ley marcial," El Liberal 10 Feb. 1944: 1; and "En defensa de la República," El Liberal 10 Feb. 1944: 4.

¹⁸³ Tirado Mejía, Aspectos 187-197.

¹⁸⁴ "La CTC protesta contra El Siglo y ofrece apoyo al Gobierno Nal.," El Liberal 10 Feb. 1944: 14.

long-term consequences when *La Violencia* began in 1946; as well as more immediate consequences.

The day after Gómez' arrest, the situation continued to be tense. In the afternoon, a judge decided that since Gómez was a member of a special government commission on foreign affairs, he was entitled to immunity as a government employee and should be released.¹⁸⁵ Before this happened, however, an former Christian Brother named Adolfo Guisa Matéus entered the Palace of Justice in Bogotá with a bomb destined for the judge who had had Gómez arrested on the previous day. The bomb blew up in the hands of Guisa Matéus, and the would-be assassin was the only victim of the terrorist act, dying a few hours later.¹⁸⁶

Over the next month, the incident in the Palace of Justice led to an intensive investigation as to who gave Guisa Matéus the bomb—the López paper El Liberal tried to make it into a Conservative “Mamatoco.”¹⁸⁷ Although certain clues led to *leopardo* Silvio Villegas, a member of the official Conservative Party leadership, nothing concrete ever came out of the investigation.¹⁸⁸ Nevertheless, given that Guisa Matéus had only left the order of Christian Brothers a few months before (after serving as a brother for nearly ten years), suspicion and criticism fell on the religious community and on other members of the clergy.¹⁸⁹

In July 1944, a far more serious plot, this time involving several army officers, was thwarted by the government, but only after the brief two-day kidnapping of President

¹⁸⁵ Gómez had permanently left the senate in late 1942, and thus did not enjoy congressional immunity.

¹⁸⁶ “Las últimas revelaciones del ex Hmno Cristiano que llevaba la bomba,” El Liberal 11 Feb. 1944: 1.

¹⁸⁷ “Contra la impunidad,” El Liberal 21 Feb. 1944: 4.

¹⁸⁸ “Villegas declara ante el juez,” El Liberal 2 Mar. 1944: 1.

¹⁸⁹ “El atentado terrorista: Complicado un religioso?” El Liberal 23 Feb. 1944: 16; and “Cuál era la consigna secreta del sacerdote U.U.?” El Liberal 25 Feb. 1944: 9.

López in the southwestern Colombian city of Pasto. The attempted coup had little support even within the army itself—only two other army units, in Ibagüé and Bucaramanga, halfheartedly attempted to join the revolt. The army and police remained loyal to the government, and, in contrast to their attitude in February, the Conservatives remained silent. When it became clear that the coup had failed, Gómez went into exile in Ecuador, and the government closed his newspaper for several weeks.¹⁹⁰

The coup attempt provided another opportunity for Liberals to expound on their Nazi-Falangist-Conservative-militant clergy conspiracy theory. Although the clergy was clearly not directly involved in the attempted coup, the Liberal press and the police suspected that students from the Jesuit Universidad Javeriana and, perhaps, the Dominicans were involved. Father Félix Restrepo, president of the Javeriana, categorically denied the involvement of students from his institution, and none were ever formally accused.¹⁹¹ Suspicion fell on the Dominicans for a different reason: the coup attempt occurred one day after the national celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the consecration of Colombia to the Virgin of Chiquinquirá, the miraculous image in possession of the order. A police detail was sent to the site in northern Bogotá where the Dominicans were constructing a new temple dedicated to the Virgin, but only found an old army helmet.¹⁹²

In March 1945, suspicion again fell on members of the clergy, but in a much more direct way: 800 hand-made bombs were discovered in the choir loft of the cathedral in

¹⁹⁰ “Vida nacional: Tentativa sediciosa,” *Revista Javeriana* Aug. 1944: 66, 68; “Regresa el presidente,” *Revista Javeriana* Aug. 1944: 70; and “Posición del conservatismo,” *Revista Javeriana* Aug. 1944: 70, 72.

¹⁹¹ “Proclama y adhesiones,” *Revista Javeriana* Aug. 1944: 68, 70; and Arturo Abella Rodríguez, “Crónica de la Universidad: Todavía el nazi-fascismo,” *Revista Javeriana* Aug. 1944: 96, 98. *El Siglo* was suspended for nearly a month; the newspaper immediately asked the government for an indemnization for lost revenues, which was granted by the Conservative Ospina Pérez administration in 1947. *Anales del Consejo de Estado, Año XXIX, 1946-1947* (Bogotá: República de Colombia, 1949) 448-510.

¹⁹² Prada Rueda 107-117.

downtown Bogotá, wrapped in newsprint from El Siglo; another 160 were also found in the possession of a student from the Universidad Javeriana.¹⁹³ While the Liberals proclaimed once again that the Conservatives were conspiring against the government in league with Nazi-Falangists, Gómez and El Siglo openly made fun of the incident, implying that either the police themselves had planted the bombs, or that communists were responsible for the arms stores—the cathedral was located in central Bogotá on the main plaza, near all major government buildings, and was an ideal place for the headquarters of a rebellion.¹⁹⁴ The government arrested another Christian Brother, Hermano Gilberto Antonio, who was caught carrying a package to the choir loft while the police waited.¹⁹⁵ Arrests of religious did not stop with the Christian Brother: the police also briefly detained three secular priests Daniel Jordán, Julio Ernesto Duarte, and Álvaro Sánchez, who were among the most well-known priests in Colombia. The three preached from the pulpit and wrote in El Siglo (among other publications) against a supposed communist threat to the *patria*. The three priests were almost immediately released for lack of evidence,¹⁹⁶ but their arrest reveals the extent of a belief in a wider conspiracy—or perhaps the spread of the idea of a conspiracy through prominent detentions. Later in the year, the detained Christian Brother was also released.¹⁹⁷

The day after the bombs were discovered, Archbishop Perdomo issued an immediate condemnation of those who had committed such a sacrilegious act “whatever

¹⁹³ “Bombas en el coro de la Catedral,” El Liberal 11 Mar. 1945: 1, 12; Ciento sesenta bombas tenía un alumno de la Javeriana,” El Liberal 12 Mar. 1945: 1.

¹⁹⁴ “Vida nacional: La conspiración,” Revista Javeriana Apr. 1945: 114, 116, 118; El Siglo 11 Mar. 1945: 1.

¹⁹⁵ “El Primado contra la subversión, Sanción canónica a religiosos que sean responsables,” El Liberal 12 Mar. 1945: 1, 8.

¹⁹⁶ “El Primado contra la subversión, Sanción canónica a religiosos que sean responsables,” El Liberal 12 Mar. 1945: 1, 8; and “Vida nacional: La conspiración,” Revista Javeriana Apr. 1945: 114, 116, 118.

¹⁹⁷ Prada Rueda 166.

the motive.”¹⁹⁸ His slight vagueness on possible motive was used to bolster the Conservative contention that either the police or the communists had planted the bombs. Still, there lingered a continued suspicion against the Church and its institutions, which would have an explosive effect on April 9, 1948.

The *Gaitanista* Political and Physical Movement

A few months after the incident of the bombs in the cathedral, on Saturday night September 22, 1945, at least 5,000 *gaitanistas* took to the streets of downtown Bogotá carrying torches in an impressive display of their political potential. The march was part of the *Semana de Pasión*—the Week of Passion—organized by Gaitán and his lieutenants as part of the presidential campaign of 1946. The week began on Sunday September 16 with Gaitán attending public events in various neighborhoods around the city, followed by several days of organizational meetings. The day after the torchlight parade, in the Plaza de Toros de Santamaría, the *Semana de Pasión* ended with a huge rally that culminated in one of Gaitán’s most impressive and impassioned speeches, after which he was proclaimed the candidate of the people by the assembled 40,000 *gaitanista* activists from all over Colombia.¹⁹⁹

One needs to make a distinction between rallies and marches. Both involve a degree of participation from the attendees, but a march involves much more physical action, encouraging the participant to feel their own physical power within the context of a political act. It physically personalizes for the rank and file the concept of “movement,” which, even in Spanish, can mean both a physical action and an active

¹⁹⁸ “El Primado contra la subversión, Sanción canónica a religiosos que sean responsables,” *El Liberal* 12 Mar. 1945: 1, 8.

¹⁹⁹ Braun 91-99; and Green 168-169.

political organization. At a rally, where people gather to hear speeches and respond to their leaders through applause and, perhaps, synchronized chanting and gestures, the concept of “movement” is less physically felt by the participant. The use of marches was part of Gaitán’s effort to make a direct appeal to the masses to participate in politics, over the heads of local *gamonales* and party bosses. Moving as part of an organized parade emphasized the organic nature of *gaitanista* ideals, which called upon even the most humble *gaitanista* man, woman, and child to become a part of the whole. *Gaitanista* marches emphasized that their leader was calling the *pueblo* to greatness, claiming for them the leadership of the country instead of asking them to simply vote for him. The message resonated with a large sector of both the rural and urban middle and working classes, who felt resentment and frustration toward their lack of control over their own lives.

The torchlight parade of September 22 was an excellent example of *gaitanista* organic symbolism—men and boys were organized in groups of about six hundred, carrying the banners of the *gaitanista* organizations of their neighborhoods and towns, along with the torches. The torches had a double meaning—symbolic of their own enlightenment within both the physical and political movement in which they were taking part, as well as of their potential to burn and destroy, to commit a sort of cleansing violence in order to rid their country of its ills.

The 6000 men and boys carried their torches down the main street of downtown Bogotá, the Carrera Séptima, passing by the Santo Domingo church where the Dominican chronicler Roberto Prada Rueda resided. The church was located only one block from the Plaza de Bolívar, the key gathering place of all political and religious rallies—both

the capitol building and Bogotá's cathedral were located along two sides of the open square-block of space. From this vantage point, the monk would also have been witness to at least two other parades during the *Semana de Pasión*: on Thursday, September 20, a two-hour motorcade of *gaitanistas* passed through the city center; and on the day of Gaitán's speech on September 23 a *gaitanista* march again passed down the Séptima on its way to the Plaza de Toros just outside of the city center.

One would expect a reaction to all of this activity from a chronicler as detailed and opinionated as Prada Rueda; surprisingly, however, he recorded absolutely nothing in his journal about this event, either before, during, or after. His entries during this week speak of the "Beginning of Peace" on September 19 (his emphasis), in reaction to the recent release from prison of the Christian Brother accused of storing bombs in the choir loft of the cathedral the previous March.²⁰⁰ For September 20, the day of the *gaitanista* motorcade, Prada Rueda recorded "Tranquility and peace inside and outside."²⁰¹

Prada Rueda's lack of interest in the *gaitanista* gathering is especially noteworthy since he commented on many other rallies and marches that occurred in Bogotá from 1944 and 1945, sometimes with very acid comments if they were supporters of President López. On February 19, 1944, he referred to the "*Bogotano* riffraff, the syphilis of Colombia" in describing those that, as he was writing, were marching towards the Plaza de Bolívar to greet López upon his return from the United States.²⁰² Commenting about a pro-López rally in the Plaza marking the one-year anniversary of the Pasto coup, Prada

²⁰⁰ Prada Rueda 166.

²⁰¹ Prada Rueda 166.

²⁰² Prada Rueda 94.

Rueda referred to the participants in both classist and racist terms: “the *alpargata*-shod and the Indians from the Sabana de Bogotá.”²⁰³

On November 3, 1944, Colombian communists paraded down the Séptima; Prada Rueda humorously told of how in the previous days the other monks in his community debated as to whether or not repeat their tonsure—the characteristic shaving of the tops of their heads—since if there was a communist uprising they would quickly be identified as clergy and summarily executed. The monks received their tonsure, and many quaked as the day of the communist parade approached. Still, the prior of the monastery refused the offer of a group of Conservatives to guard their buildings—a move that Prada Rueda wholeheartedly approved, writing that the “*godos*” (a somewhat disrespectful word for Colombian Conservatives)²⁰⁴ were ordered “*al tacho*” (his emphasis—meaning to go away) by the prior. The march, which Prada Rueda wrote about as it happened, occurred without incident.²⁰⁵ Prada Rueda himself even participated in an anti-communist rally organized by students on June 19, 1945, in which he had a seemingly minor encounter with a policeman’s billy club.²⁰⁶

The Dominican chronicler had to have known of the *gaitanista* gathering in September 1945 since he seemed to have read all of the major dailies—his journal contains news clippings from El Siglo, El Tiempo, and El Liberal, as well as references to El Espectador, La Razón, and the weekly Sábado. El Siglo was the best source on the

²⁰³ “alpargatones e indios sabaneros.” The *alpargata* is a woven slipper of indigenous origin that was typically used by the poor. The Sabana de Bogotá are the plains that stretch out to the west and the south of the city, in which several smaller towns are located. Prada Rueda 159.

²⁰⁴ *Godo* literally means “Goth,” in reference to the barbarians who invaded Spain at the end of the Roman Empire. The expression was used throughout Latin America against the Spanish during the struggle for independence. In Colombia, it came to be used as a derogatory expression against the Conservatives (who sometimes took it up as a badge of pride). It is still used today as a pejorative against even small “c” conservatives.

²⁰⁵ Prada Rueda 129-130.

²⁰⁶ Prada Rueda 155.

Semana de Pasión, since the Liberal papers generally chose to ignore Gaitán and his movement since he was splitting the Liberal vote,²⁰⁷ while Gómez delighted in the Liberal split while generally supporting *gaitanista* ideals since many of the movement's phrases were taken from the *laureanistas*. But despite this coverage, Prada Rueda deemed the *Semana de Pasión* to be sufficiently unimportant as to not warrant a comment in his chronicle. Indeed, he never even mentioned Gaitán until a month before the May 5 election.²⁰⁸

Although the *Semana de Pasión* and, especially, Gaitán's speech are rightfully remembered in the historiography as key events in the development and dissemination of *gaitanismo*, one needs to put this event, along with the entire *gaitanista* phenomenon, in the context of the times. For Prada Rueda, political marches down the Séptima and rallies in the Plaza de Bolívar were such common occurrences that the activities of the *Semana de Pasión* did not deserve a note in his chronicle. Even torchlight parades were not unknown in Bogotá in the 1930s and 1940s. Political speech was being written by all sides in the form of marches and rallies to such an extent that outside observers barely cared, while for the participants themselves the memory of being a physically active part of something greater than oneself still inspired years later (as seen in the interviews made by Herbert Braun and Arturo Alape with *gaitanistas* in the 1980s).

In the last chapter was a description of the Eucharistic Congress in Medellín in 1935, in which Bogotá assistant archbishop González Arbeláez famously pronounced against Liberal anticlericalism, offering the last drop of blood in defense of the holy Church. However, this particular meeting also marks the beginning of an important trope

²⁰⁷ Gaitán's movement had yet to establish its own Bogotá daily, *La Jornada*, which began in 1947. Cacua, *Periodismo* 217.

²⁰⁸ Prada Rueda 184.

in massed marching in Colombia in the 1930s and 1940s: the bearing of torches in a nighttime parade of the faithful. In the historiography, the torchlight march by *gaitanistas* in September 1945 is well-remembered, but Catholics had been marching with torches since at least since 1935; indeed, a Marian congress that was held in Bogotá in July 1946, less than a year after the *gaitanista* gathering, featured a night parade of men carrying lit torches²⁰⁹--such an act carried the same meaning for the participants as it did for the *gaitanistas* the previous September: the marchers were both enlightened and able to cleanse the nation of its enemies. The symbolism was deeply felt by many. During *La Violencia*, fire was used extensively to destroy buildings—and sometimes the inhabitants within. The most famous case of flame being employed was on April 9, 1948, after the assassination of Gaitán.

Anticlericalism and the Riots of April 9, 1948

Jorge Eliécer Gaitán and his movement did not actively harass the Church in its first years (1945-1947). Although Gaitán's previous attempt at popular mobilization in the early 1930s was specifically condemned by Perdomo as "materialistic" in a 1934 pastoral letter,²¹⁰ he was well-received by El Siglo and other Conservative publications in 1945 since he was essentially mouthing phrases found in Gómez' paper since the early 1940s (for a "moral restoration" against the "oligarchy") and his movement was splitting the Liberal Party (or, perhaps, even cleansing it from corruption).²¹¹ Although he was never an open friend of the Church, let alone the Church militant, Gaitán seems to have

²⁰⁹ Prada Rueda criticized the marching with torches on this occasion as "sport." Prada Rueda 195-196.

²¹⁰ Mora Díaz, Cruzado 253-260.

²¹¹ "Es arrollador el plebiscite nacional contra los desmanes de la oligarquía dominante," El Siglo 13 Feb. 1944: 1; "Unánime grito de guerra a los oligarcas," El Siglo 16 Feb. 1944: 7; Braun 81; and Henderson, Modernization 289-293.

taken Perdomo's 1934 condemnation to heart, and consistently avoided conflict with the hierarchy, even while he served as Eduardo Santos' Education Minister in 1940 during the "robbery" of San Bartolomé. Still, once he became the sole chief of the Liberal Party after his movement won the majority of Liberal votes in the March 1947 congressional elections, he was stuck with the anticlerical trope along with the clientelist baggage of a party that had enjoyed sixteen years in power.²¹² In 1945 and 1946, his movement sought Conservative votes; in 1947 and 1948, he vehemently attacked the Conservatives for violence in the countryside, while being depicted as a communist by the right-wing press.²¹³ Anticlericalism seeped into his movement's publications, but not necessarily into Gaitán's own speeches at the time.

When Gaitán's assassination on April 9, 1948, touched off rioting in Bogotá and throughout Colombia, Church institutions were attacked. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the first question for priests and nuns when the rebels arrived at a church, convent, or school, was "where do you hide the arms?" In Bogotá, the initial targets of anticlerical actions followed the logic laid out by Liberal conspiracy theorists since the late 1930s: the Universidad Javeriana, the new Jesuit high school north of downtown, and the cathedral—with the official archbishop's residence thrown in for good measure, despite Archbishop Perdomo's attempts to cooperate with Liberals at the expense of offending Conservatives like Laureano Gómez. On the morning of April 10, pro-rebel police attacked the Colegio de La Salle located a few blocks above the Plaza de Bolívar, looking for weapons—the school was run by the Christian Brothers, two of whom had

²¹² Braun 118-124; and Green 146, 245-250.

²¹³ Acevedo 192- 201.

been, it will be recalled, involved in conspiracies in 1944 and 1945.²¹⁴ However, no weapons were found, and the school was set on fire.²¹⁵

Throughout the country on April 9 and 10, rioters claimed that priests were firing on the crowds from church steeples; religious buildings were attacked everywhere. In the town of Armero (Department of Tolima), Conservatives seem to have put up a fight against rebels from the parish school; rioters believed that someone was throwing bombs from within the church itself. Once the rebels broke through and captured the parish priest, Pedro María Ramírez, the cleric was hacked to death with machetes and his body was dragged behind a truck to the city cemetery. The crowd was predisposed to believing in clerical involvement in conspiracies and in storing arms—Ramírez met his fate even though Liberals had searched the church grounds for arms hours before the shootout with Conservatives began.²¹⁶

After the April uprising, a flyer circulated in Medellín which blamed the Jesuits for the murder of Gaitán, claiming that every member of the order had to swear to slaughter all heretics. The flyer reprinted the words of the supposed oath:

²¹⁴ In their anticlerical fury, the rioters also burned the residence and offices of the papal nuncio. “Incendio y saqueo del Palacio Arzobispal,” Mensajero Jul.-Aug. 1948: 341-342; Félix Miranda, “Cómo se salvó la catedral,” Mensajero Jul.-Aug. 1948: 346-347; Félix Restrepo, “Incendio de la Javeriana Femenina,” Mensajero Jul.-Aug. 1948: 352-354; Neftalí Martínez, “El 9 de Abril en San Bartolomé,” Mensajero Jul.-Aug. 1948: 357-358; José Naranjo, “La prisión de los padres lazaristas,” Mensajero Jul.-Aug. 1948: 360, 362; T.A.M., “Asalto al asilo de San Antonio,” Mensajero Jul.-Aug. 1948: 369; H. Gonzalo Carlos, “Incendio y pillaje del Instituto de la Salle,” Mensajero Jul.-Aug. 1948: 378; “En el Colegio de Luna Park,” Mensajero Jul.-Aug. 1948: 390-391; José V. Echeverri, “Barrancabermeja.—Viernes Rojo,” Mensajero Jul.-Aug. 1948: 397-399; and Luis Niño, personal interview, Bogotá, June 2000.

²¹⁵ For their part, the Dominicans were spared the wrath of the rebels because they had sold their colonial church in downtown Bogotá to private investors two years before; the church—a colonial architectural gem—was demolished and a new office building was constructed in its place. The polemic that this move caused—it was condemned by El Siglo and El Tiempo alike—compelled the Dominican provincial to publicly declare that all priests and monks in the community were to completely refrain from any declarations on partisan politics, and were to cease all contact with politicians, including Laureano Gómez. Prada Rueda 196-230.

²¹⁶ Julio César Rivera, “El asesinato del R.P. Pedro María Ramírez Ramos Párroco de Armero (Tolima),” Mensajero Jul.-Aug. 1948: 392-394; Luis Antonio Ramírez, “Últimos momentos del P. Pedro María Ramírez,” Mensajero Jul.-Aug. 1948: 395-397; and Gonzalo Sánchez, Los días de la revolución: Gaitanismo y 9 de abril en provincia (Bogotá: Centro Cultural Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, 1984) 82-86.

I promise and declare that I will, when the opportunity presents itself, swear war without quarter, secret and openly, against all heretics, protestants and masons, as I am ordered to do: extirpate them from the face of the earth; not taking into account neither age, nor sex, nor condition and that I will hang, burn, destroy, boil, and strangle and bury alive these infamous heretics; I will open the stomachs and the wombs of women and will smash the heads of their infants on the wall with the end of annihilating this execrable race.²¹⁷

By the time this flyer was being read by residents of Medellín, the deeds described in the oath were chillingly being replicated by militants of both parties in massacres throughout the country. The vow continued:

I will store arms and munitions with the end of being ready for when the order comes or I am ordered to defend the Church, either as an individual or in the Pope's militia.²¹⁸

Again, the cry that an armed clergy was plotting against freedom. The flyer cited the U.S. Congressional Record (of February 15, 1913, page 3262) as the source of this oath.²¹⁹

Despite such propaganda after Gaitán's assassination, most Liberals quickly learned their lesson from the rioting on April Ninth, and generally stopped assuming that the priests had guns. Liberal guerrilla groups that sprang up during *La Violencia*, and remained active into the early 1960s, generally respected churches, convents and clergy in the towns and villages that they attacked,²²⁰ although Liberal peasants frequently believed that their parish priests participated in nightly massacres in rural Liberal neighborhoods.

²¹⁷ "Prometo y declare que haré, cuando la oportunidad se me presente, jura guerra sin cuartel, secreta y abiertamente, contra todos los herejes, protestantes y masones, tal como se me ordene hacer: extirparlos de la faz de toda la tierra; y que no tender en cuenta ni edad, ni sexo, ni condición y que colgaré, quemaré, destruiré, herviré, deshollaré, y estrangularé y sepultaré vivosa estos infames herejes; abriré los estómagos y los vientres de sus mujeres y con la cabeza de sus infantes daré contra las paredes a fin de aniquilar a esta execrable raza." *Quién mató a Gaitán?* (Medellín: Editorial Continente, Apr. 1948).

²¹⁸ "Me proveeré de armas y municiones a fin de estar listo para cuando se dé la orden o me sea ordenado defender la iglesia, ya como un individuo, o en la milicia del Papa." *Quién mató*

²¹⁹ In turn, the flyer also stated that the oath was reprinted from the newspaper *Luz Nazarena* [Aurora,] 1 Nov. 1946. *Luz nazarena* means "Nazarene Light;" the publication may very well have been Protestant. *Quién mató*.

²²⁰ "Death in the Countryside," *Time* Aug 6, 1951, 31, 33.

The priests themselves took an increasingly prominent stand against the partisan bloodletting,²²¹ culminating in the organizing activities of Father Camilo Torres in the mid-1960s, which ended in his death as a leftist guerrilla in the National Liberation Army in 1966.²²² Today, the Church still works in favor of human rights and has thus found enemies among both the paramilitary and guerrilla groups: sixty-five priests and other religious have been killed since 1984, including an archbishop of Cali.²²³

In the 1930s and 1940s, Liberal anticlericalism segued into a powerful conspiracy theory that had bloodier results, not in numbers of clergy killed, but in numbers of Conservative civilians murdered for being suspected of conspiring against national progress. Although the Liberal-Masonic-Communist conspiracy theory promoted by the right probably inspired more deaths and massacres (given that the Conservatives controlled the police and the army after 1946, and thus had more weapons), the tale of a Nazi-Falangist-clerical plot contributed to creating an atmosphere of suspicion and fear, which would explode in eliminationist violence after 1946.

²²¹ Ernesto León Herrera, author of Lo que el cielo no perdona (1954) and Germán Guzmán, one of the authors of La Violencia en Colombia (1962) were both Catholic priests who lamented the violence perpetrated by both sides.

²²² Broderick, Camilo Torres.

²²³ “65 miembros de la Iglesia católica asesinados en Colombia desde 1984,” Univisión.com, 14 Mar. 2005 <<http://www.univision.com/contentroot/wirefeeds/world/2051947.html>>.