Blood and Fire

La Violencia in Antioquia, Colombia, 1946–1953

MARY ROLDÁN

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Duke University Press Durham and London 2002

Printed in the United States of
America on acid-free paper ♾
Designed by Rebecca Giménez
Typeset in Adobe Minion by
Tseng Information Systems, Inc.
Library of Congress Cataloging-
in-Publication Data appear on
the last printed page of this book.
Publication of this book was made
possible by a subvention granted
by the Hull Memorial Publication
Fund of Cornell University.

Frontispiece: Urrao, August 1953. To heal the wounds of three years of partisan strife, the parish priest of Urrao organized a collective Catholic burial of Liberal and Conservative casualties of *la Violencia*. The priest kept careful notes in the parish registry of deaths that were the direct result of *la Violencia* and after the military coup of June 13, 1953, instructed his parishoners to collect the remains of their dead relatives scattered outside the town limits. The coffins are child-sized.

About the Series

History and immigration are changing the principles and assumptions of Area Studies programs that were set up during the Cold War. Mary Roldán's superb study of hegemony and violence in Colombia is not just another study in which Latin America is the object observed from the United States. When Roldán explicitly states in the epilogue that "during two long stretches" of her investigation, between 1989 and 1992, "I lived in my parents' apartment in downtown Medellín in the heart of Medellín's commercial district," she brings to the foreground the phenomenological and existential dimension of her study. While Area Studies project the "objective" and "disembodied" perspectives of the social sciences, Roldán's investigation builds on the existential and phenomenological while using the scholarly tools of the social sciences. By enriching her analysis with her personal and emotional investment in the issues being explored, Roldán works to correct the shortcomings of Area Studies, particularly those that detach the researcher from the local history of his or her investigation.

Blood and Fire is an outstanding historical description and interpretation of a fundamental period in the history of Colombia and of Latin America (1946–1958). It is also a theoretical contribution to the understanding of the State beyond existing theories, mainly based on paradigmatic examples of the European State. State building in Latin America was simultaneous with state building in Europe during the nineteenth century, but while in Europe many states were imperial, in Latin America all the states were neo- or postcolonial. In Latin American state building, the notion of "internal colonialism" is essential, and Roldán makes good use of it. By so doing, she also inscribes her work in a Latin American tradition of critical social thought that goes back to the late 1960s. In this regard Roldán introduces a second significant change in relation to Area Studies. She builds upon the theoretical legacies of critical social thought to show that Latin America is not only a place for the cultivation of violence, but a place where critical thought can flourish.

About the Photographs

The inclusion of recent photographs of displacement and violence in a book about *la Violencia*—a phenomenon that took place some fifty years earlier—may seem like a peculiar choice to many readers and so requires some explanation on the part of the author. When my editor, Valerie Millholland, first approached me about providing photographs to accompany this text, I demurred. Most of the existing images of the period were ones used to fan partisan hatred by one group against another and were almost without exception lurid representations that exploited the victims and titillated the viewer but contributed little to a deeper understanding of the complexity and human sorrow of violence. On a research trip to Medellín in June of 2001, as this book was about to enter into production, I happened upon an exhibit of works by Jesús Abad Colorado in the recently renovated Museo de Antioquia. I was so moved by his photographs of the current conflict in Antioquia and by the fact that nearly all of them were taken of displacements and violence occurring in the very same towns most affected by violence during the period I study in this book, that I resolved then and there to approach the photographer about the possibility of using some of his photographs to accompany this text. Little did I know that in addition to being an extremely gifted visual storyteller, Jésus Abad Colorado wrote narratives to accompany his photographs that in their basic outlines mirrored almost exactly the stories I recount here. It is the hope of both the photographer and myself that the conscious association of these images of recent violence in Antioquia with a written narrative of events taking place half a century earlier will invite readers to draw connections between past and present violence. Perhaps the anguish of recurrence these images bring to mind may lead to a greater understanding of the historical roots of conflict in Colombia. That is certainly our wish and motivation.—*Mary Roldán*

Jesús Abad Colorado received his journalism degree from the University of Antioquia in Medellín, Colombia. Between 1992 and May of 2001 he

worked as a photojournalist for the regional daily newspaper, *El Colombiano.* His work has appeared regularly in national magazines and social research books. He coauthored the book *Relatos e Imágenes, El desplazamiento Forzado en Colombia,* and his photographs have been exhibited both in Colombia and abroad.

Contents

Acknowledgments

Over the years, many individuals and institutions have contributed to and supported the research and writing of this manuscript. In Colombia I would like to thank the employees at the Archivo de la Gobernación de Antioquia for allowing me to consult the governor's correspondence and other regional government materials in 1986 and 1987; the Centro Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in Bogotá and its Director Gloria Gaitán; the Fundación Antioqueña de Estudios Sociales in Medellín; the library and newspaper collection at the Universidad de Antioquia, Medellín; the research collection at the Instituto de Estudios Regionales at the Universidad de Antioquia; the Salón Antioquia in the Bibliotéca Pública Piloto in Medellín; the Bibliotéca Luis Angel Arango in Bogotá; the Bibliotéca Nacional in Bogotá; the Archivo de la Alcaldía Municipal de Urrao and that town's Parish Registry and Casa de la Cultura; and Froilan Montoya Mazo's personal archive in Medellín. Dr. Montoya Mazo, who has since died, also very kindly introduced me to and obtained interviews for me with several *gaitanista* leaders of the *Violencia* period and with several Liberal ex-guerrillas. Colombian colleagues and friends too numerous to name have also provided hospitality, affection, and intellectual guidance, among them: Jorge Pérez, Maria Mercedes Botero, Alvaro Tirado Mejía, Jorge Orlando Melo, Victor Alvarez, Beatriz Patiño, Patricia Londoño, Constanza Toro, Ana Lucía Sánchez, Jesús María Alvarez, Maria Teresa Uribe de Hincapie, Gonzalo Sánchez, and Mauricio Romero. I could not have completed the research for this book without the assistance of several students from the Universidad de Antioquia, among them: Gloria Granda, Rodrigo Arango, and Mario Gaviria. Many thanks to Gustavo Ochoa for his excellent map-making skills and to Fernando Mejía for many hours of tedious data entry.

Several colleagues and institutions in the United States also supported my work since its initial emergence as a Ph.D. dissertation at Harvard University. The Tinker Foundation provided summer research support during three summers as did the Radcliffe President's Fund, the Committee on Iberian and Latin American Studies, the history department,

and the Sheldon Kennedy Traveling Research Fund at Harvard University. Financial support was also provided by a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Grant. I could not have asked for a more intellectually demanding adviser or mentor than John Womack Jr. He was never satisfied with easy explanations, always prodded me to push my research and fine-tune my interpretations further, and, though I sometimes proved stubborn or resistant to his good advice, I recognize that he shaped the way I think about history in profound and intangible ways. As an assistant professor at Cornell University I received support from the Society for the Humanities Summer Research Fund, the John T. and Catherine D. MacArthur Foundation Peace Studies Research Fund, and the Latin American Studies Summer Faculty Research Fund.

My colleagues at Cornell have been unfailingly supportive. For good meals, helpful readings, critical thoughts, and kind words, I wish to thank: Tom Holloway, Walter LaFeber, Sandra Greene, Rachel Weil, Itsie Hull, Shirley Samuels, Billie Jean Isbell, Tom Volman, Lourdes Benería, Bill Goldsmith, Barbara Lynch, Debbie Castillo, and Mary Jo Dudley. I want to single out Tom Holloway for help above and beyond the call of duty. Tom read my dissertation when I arrived at Cornell, told me what he thought was good in it and what had to go, then looked me in the eye and asked, "Where's the blood?" It took me two years to figure out how to face the "blood" of Colombian violence and then some more years to get to the middle of it, but I am very grateful to Tom for forcing me to face my inner demons. When Tom read the completely revised manuscript in its entirety and emitted a gruff, "great stuff," I went off and cried from sheer relief. I particularly want to thank Catherine LeGrand who has been the kindest of friends and the most generous of colleagues. She has given me unfailing intellectual encouragement, provided gently critical but probing comments of my work, and, whenever I lost faith, applied cleverly flattering remarks so I would press on. I also wish to thank Lisa Dundon, Richard Stoller, Jim Brennan, and Jeff Rubin. Michael Jiménez died before this book went to press. I wish to acknowledge here what a special being he was and the great honor it was to have been his friend. Several graduate students have provided a fertile environment for the discussion of thorny theoretical issues and comparative problems over the years, among them are Estelle Tarica, Brett Troyan, Leslie Horowitz, Anne Brophy, Angela Wilson, and Michelle Bigenho.

The writing of this manuscript was made possible by the generosity

of COLCIENCIAS and their program "Movilidad de Investigadores," the Centro de Estudios Regionales Cafeteros y Empresariales (CRECE) in Manizales and its Director, Dr. Cesar Vallejo Mejía, and Planeación Nacional in Bogotá. These three institutions provided the financial support and time away from teaching necessary to the completion of this book. Thank you. Valerie Millholland was a patient, encouraging, and wonderful editor. This book might never have reached the publication stage without her prodding, and the enormously helpful criticisms of Duke University Press's anonymous readers. Whatever errors and omissions remain are solely my responsibility.

Finally, I wish to thank my dear friend, Margarita Crocker, for unflagging moral support over many years and my husband, Christopher London, who is my best intellectual partner and the person who always sees the point of what I do even when I lose faith. Bearing and raising children has given me a new perspective on violence and work. I hope Lucas and Sophia will forgive their mother for remaining glued to a computer for nearly two years and not infrequently declining to go outside and play.

Blood and Fire

Peque, July 2001. When a guerrilla commander told her to flee in the wake of a paramilitary attack, the elderly woman in this portrait refused, commenting, ''I've been running since 1950.''

Introduction

For many people violence and Colombia are synonymous. Colombia (map 1), after all, produces the bulk of the coca processed into cocaine and shipped to the world's largest consumer of drugs, the United States, and suffers the crime and corruption that result from this illicit trade. Colombia is also home to the oldest guerrilla insurgency in the Western Hemisphere; the country that accounted for half of the world's kidnappings in 2000; the place where paramilitaries inscribe bloody messages on the bodies of their largely peasant victims; a land the U.S. media likes to refer to as "twice the size of France"; a land over which the central state exerts little authority; and a formal democracy where a handful of elite families are thought to monopolize control of the media, politics, and the nation's (licit) economy. Until recently, the Colombian city considered to represent the apex of lawlessness was Medellín, the capital of the northwestern province of Antioquia and, for the better part of two decades, the financial center of a global narcotics enterprise known as the "Medellín cartel."[1]

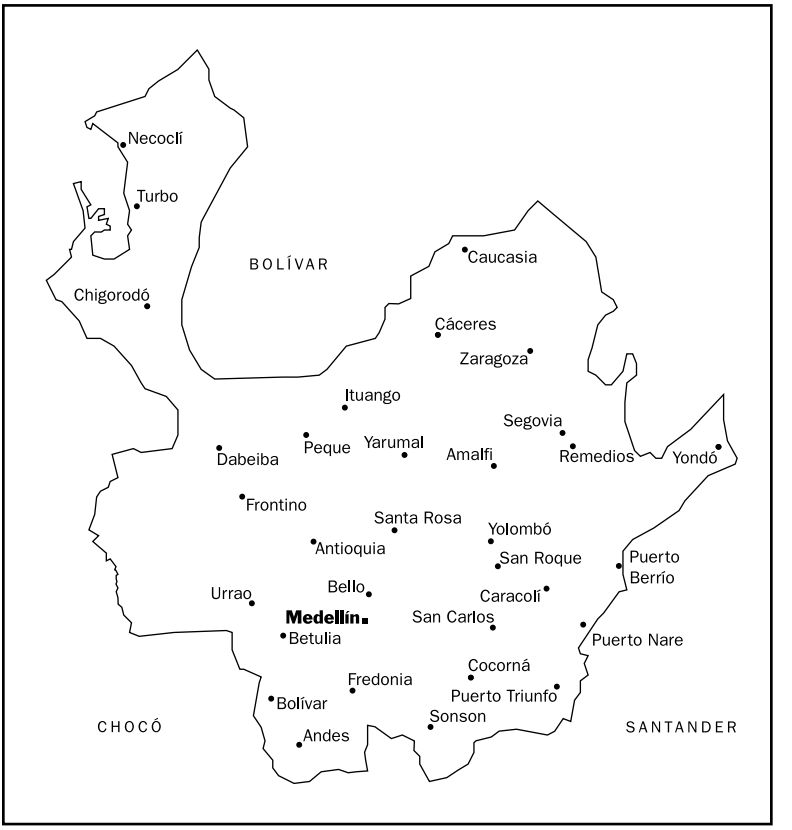
This book is not directly about narcotics or Colombia's contemporary crisis. Instead, it examines the experience of the department of Antioquia (see map 2) during the first seven years (1946–1953) of a civil war that was spurred by a struggle for power between members of the Conservative and Liberal parties and that has come to be known simply as *la Violencia* or "the Violence."[2] Initially, I did not intend to draw parallels between the period of *la Violencia* and contemporary Colombia, but I came to see that recent and past periods of violence are inextricably intertwined. I can pinpoint the day I ceased to regard *la Violencia* as something entirely distinct from current, daily, lived Colombian reality. I was sitting in my office preparing the last lecture of the spring semester for my survey course on modern Latin America. In a moment of procrastination I checked my email. There was a message from a friend in Bogotá—a fellow *violentólogo* at the National University[3]—telling me that a colleague from the University of Antioquia in Medellín had just been assassinated at point-blank range by three hooded individuals who carried guns with

Map 1. Colombia. (Source: Charles Bergquist, *Labor in Latin America: Comparative Essays on Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, and Colombia* [Stanford University Press, 1986])

silencers. My friend had omitted the name of the murdered professor, but I knew the moment I read the message, with a certainty I cannot explain, that it was Hernán Henao, a man with whom I had collaborated for several months on an interdisciplinary seminar devoted to analyzing violence in Medellín and thinking about peaceful ways to end it.

This was not the first time someone I knew had been killed. During one particularly horrible period in the early 1990s, it seemed as if there was a funeral every week, sometimes more, of a professor, journalist, student, or human rights advocate. People called each other frequently to tell their loved ones that they were on their way home, had just arrived at the office, or were leaving to run an errand because otherwise ordinary delays were cause for mortal fear. Despite this familiarity with violence, Hernán's death plunged me into a deep depression from which it took months to recover. I wandered the halls of my building that day howling with pain. I replayed over and over again in my imagination the sight of Hernán agonizing in a pool of blood in the campus office of the Instituto de Estudios Regionales (INER), every inch of which was as familiar to me as my own house. I remember feeling anger, fear, numbness, disbelief. I couldn't think why anyone would kill Hernán, an academic whose life had been devoted to discussing and anguishing over a way to negotiate a space for tolerance, mutual respect, and plurality in an increasingly polarized society, but who had never himself advocated violence or taken part in violent activities. Neither Hernán nor any of the other professors affiliated with INER believed that the massacres, forcible displacements, or persistent violations of human rights that take place daily in Colombia were attributable to a single cause. Hernán and others had reached out to the victims of violence of the right and left, regardless of ideology, and offered them solace, education, and programs to help rebuild their lives. His murder seemed utterly senseless.

In the midst of feeling betrayed and vulnerable, I suddenly realized the point of terror and how it worked. I mean that I realized it in every fiber of my body, not as an intellectual abstraction. I had just finished a preliminary version of this manuscript and felt that I simply couldn't face thinking about violence any longer. I fantasized about setting it aside, as if by doing so I could set aside the reality of violence, too. And then the realization struck me. I knew that even if I could never absolutely establish the trajectory by which violence had occurred or the exact motivations behind it, even if I could not swear to the existence of an objective "truth"



Map 2. Department of Antioquia and its municipalities. (Source: Instituto Geográfico Augustín Codazzi)

about historical events, I nonetheless had to try to trace, with the greatest precision I could muster, the complicated, murky, sometimes contradictory, and seemingly unrelated events that led to violence. The only way to overcome my own terror was to refuse to be silenced.

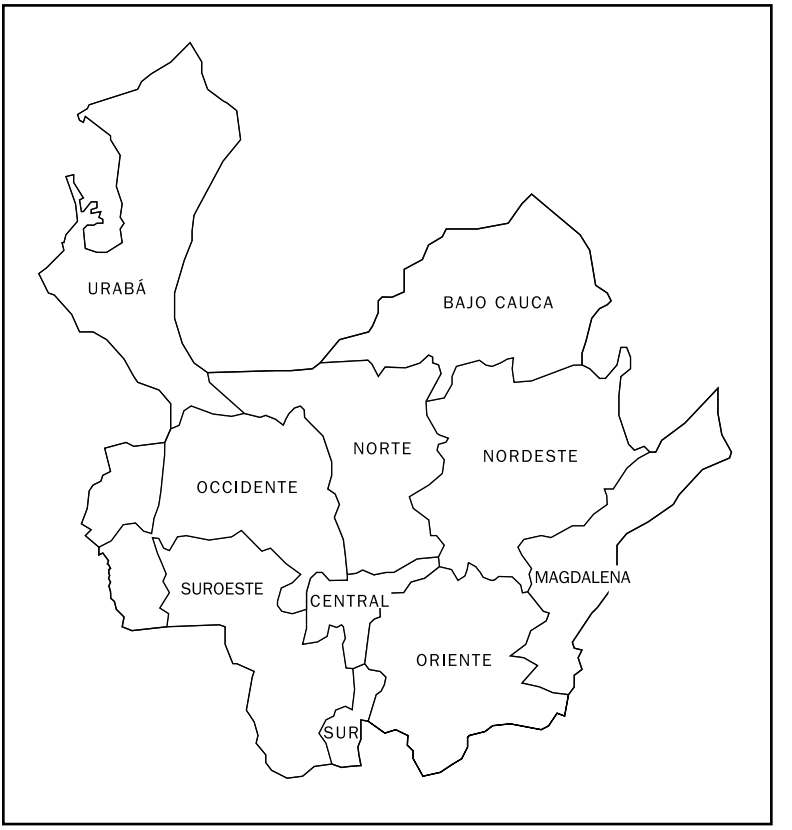
This book is the result of that realization; it is the outcome of a conviction that what has happened in the past is crucial to understanding what is happening today and that refusing to accept that most violence is inchoate, random, or inexplicable is a moral obligation. It is also a small tribute to the people whose insistence on uncovering unwelcome truths in the face of extreme threat has been a cause of constant inspiration to me. My awareness of links between past and present conflict, however, should not be understood as a belief that violence in Colombia is somehow inherent,

unique, inevitable, or static. On the contrary, if the case of *la Violencia* in Antioquia is at all representative of Colombian violence as a whole, then what is significant about this study is the discovery of how selective and concentrated supposedly generalized violence has been, and to what degree factors such as ethnicity and race, cultural differences, class, and geography have shaped the evolution, trajectory, direction, and incidence of violence in Colombia over time. The historical act of glossing *la Violencia* as a generalized phenomenon gives short shrift to the memories of those who refused to take part in violence and to the memories of its true victims, the thousands of unnamed rural folk who died and whose voices have been silenced or forgotten. Hernán Henao dedicated himself to elucidating the causes of violence and the identity of its victims, and in its own way this book tries to carry that legacy forward.

La Violencia in Antioquia

Two hundred thousand Colombians are estimated to have died as a result of violence between 1946 and 1966. Over two million others migrated or were forcibly displaced from their homes and towns, the majority were never to return. The impact of *la Violencia* was so great that it provoked Colombia's only twentieth-century military coup and led later to an unprecedented agreement between the leaders of the Liberal and Conservative parties to alternate control of the presidency and share political power for nearly twenty years.

Of the Colombian regions hardest hit by violence, Antioquia ranked third in the total number of violent deaths registered nationally between 1946 and 1957, as approximately 26,000 of the province's inhabitants are estimated to have died as a result of the Violence. In 1951 nearly 14 percent or 1,570,000 of Colombia's total population of 11,500,000 lived in Antioquia. Thus, there was a regional, per capita casualty rate of nearly 1.7 percent over the time period.[4] In other words, many deaths occurred in Antioquia, but because the overall regional populations of other severely affected provinces were much smaller than Antioquia's, the impact of casualties in these other provinces was even more pronounced.[5] Antioquia also registered the eighth highest number of migrations as a result of violence in Colombia (117,000 or 6 percent of the national total of migrations caused by violence). But, again, in regional terms, the seven provinces that led the nation in total migrations as a result of violence



Map 3. Administrative subregions. (Source: Instituto Geográfico Augustín Codazzi)

had populations significantly smaller than Antioquia's and therefore experienced a much higher proportional displacement of their population.[6] What makes the case of Antioquia during *la Violencia* significant is not the number of casualties or migrations that occurred as a result of violence, but rather where violence took place in the province and why.

In this book I draw on previously untapped sources such as regional and municipal government archives, judicial testimony, parish death records, and interviews to tell a story that echoes the findings of researchers tracing the trajectory of violence in other Colombian regions between 1946 and 1953 and also challenges them. Despite ranking third as the department most severely affected by violence, Antioquia was not beset by widespread violence nor was the violence most pronounced or concen-

Map 4. Peripheral municipalities. (Source: Instituto Geográfico Augustín Codazzi)

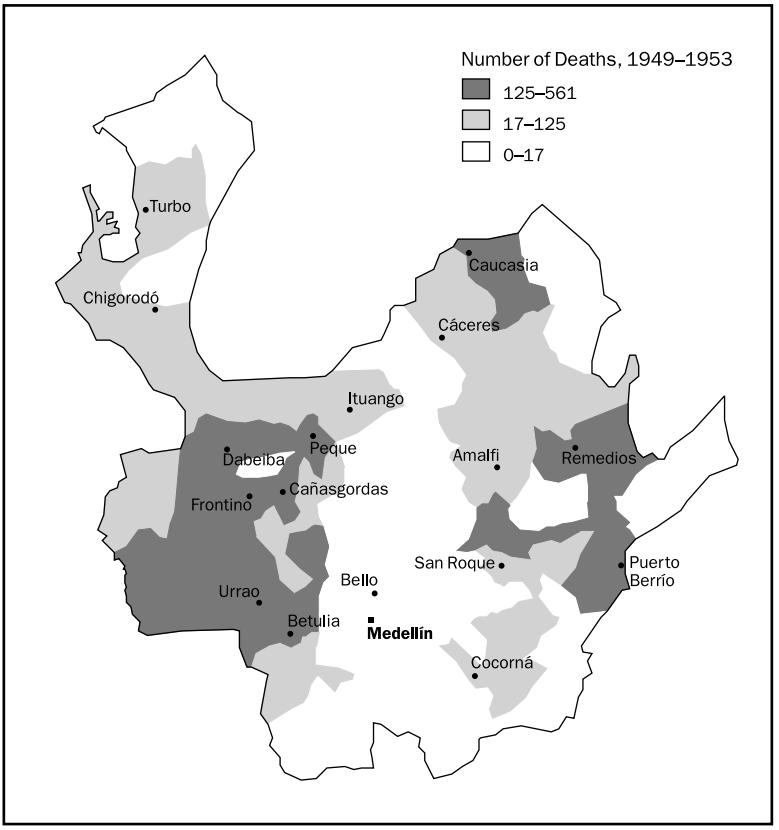
trated in the coffee-producing municipalities of the southwest as has historically been thought.[7] Instead, violence proved most severe in Antioquia's geographically peripheral zones where land tenure, production, labor, and the state's authority were markedly different from the dominant paradigm in Antioquia's centrally settled municipalities. In Antioquia, the earliest stage of *la Violencia* (1948–1953) affected in indelible ways those areas situated in the department's geographic periphery such as the tropical lowlands of Urabá, the Bajo Cauca (lower Cauca Valley), and Northeast and Magdalena Medio (middle Magdalena Valley), but not Antioquia's coffee sector or centrally located municipalities. (See maps 3 and 4.)

Violence-related death statistics provide a crude index of the spatial

and temporal dimensions of Antioqueño violence. The total number of officially registered deaths in Antioquia during the years of *la Violencia* varied only slightly between a low of 22,210 (1948) and a high of 25,125 (1951).[8] But deaths in three categories: "homicide," "unspecified or ill defined," and "other violent deaths" rose significantly between 1948 and 1951, and then declined until 1959. In 1951 the cumulative total of deaths encompassed by these three categories peaked at 10,212, accounting for nearly 41 percent of all the deaths registered in that year.[9]

Death statistics collected by Antioquia's governor's office (for internal purposes, not public dissemination) give a more precise picture of regional violence.[10] Before 1949, the regional government did not keep a separate statistical record of deaths specifically related to violence, but government records and interviews with survivors suggest that violence was largely sporadic between 1946 and 1949 and concentrated in centrally located towns where the total number of violence-related deaths was low.[11] Three quarters (twelve of sixteen) of the officially registered deaths specifically listed as the direct consequence of violence by the governor's office in 1949, for instance, occurred in centrally located towns. By 1950, however, the pattern of sporadic, centrally concentrated deaths shifted. Deaths explicitly deemed the result of violence numbered in the hundreds by 1950 and were concentrated in Antioqueño towns located in the furthest southwest (Urrao),[12] western Antioquia, and in the far eastern portions of the department (the Northeast, Bajo Cauca, and Magdalena Medio). Core area towns such as Medellín, the industrial towns near Medellín (such as Bello or Envigado), the coffee-producing south and southwest, the near east (*oriente*) and the immediate north-central subregions, in contrast, reported very few violence-related casualties between 1950 and 1953.[13] In fact, half of the more than four thousand violence-related regional deaths officially registered between 1949 and May 1953 took place in just five municipalities (Dabeiba, Puerto Berrío, Urrao, Cañasgordas, and Remedios), all of them located on Antioquia's periphery (map 5; also see appendix A.1, A.2.)

Of all the violence-related deaths tallied by the regional government, 43 percent occurred in western Antioquia and Urabá, 20 percent occurred in the southwest, 14 percent in the Magdalena Medio region, and 13 percent in the northeastern section of Antioquia. With the exception of the highly populated southwest, all of the areas with the highest percentage of casualties were also the least populated in Antioquia. Also, of all



Map 5. Deaths due to violence, 1949–1953. (Source: Instituto Geográfico Augustín Codazzi and Archivo Privado del Señor Gobernador de Antioquia, 1953, vol. 9, "Informe sobre la acción del bandolerismo de 1949 a mayo de 1953," Medellín, May 1953)

the officially registered deaths from violence occurring between 1949 and 1953, half occurred in a single year, 1952. Just one town, Puerto Berrío, accounted for nearly a quarter of these. The selective and concentrated nature of violence is even more striking when deaths related to violence are measured as a percentage of local population. Based on the census of 1951, only one quarter of 1 percent of Antioquia's population suffered violence-related deaths between 1949 and 1953, but Puerto Berrío in the Magdalena Medio lost 6 percent of its population to violence while Caucasia in the Bajo Cauca lost nearly 4 percent of its inhabitants. Western towns such as Urrao, Dabeiba, and Cañasgordas, moreover, lost be-

tween 2 and 3 percent of their populations to violence during a three-year period.

The "official story" of violence represents it as a widespread, generically partisan phenomenon waged indiscriminately between Liberal and Conservative rural folk, but the official record uncovers a violence remarkably limited in scope and far more varied in impulse. How are we to account for the geographic and temporal specificity of violence-related deaths in Antioquia? Why were towns located on the margins of the department the sites of most severe and prolonged violence? Why were the majority of towns in the coffee heartland (the southwest), which were equally Liberal and where it has always been supposed that the violence in Antioquia was centered, so much less violent than towns on the periphery? Is it possible that factors in addition to partisan differences influenced the severity of violence and shaped a more pronounced concentration in specific geo-cultural areas? Did the objectives of violence shift over time and were they dependent upon factors peculiar to local rather than generalized national circumstances? If so, how would we have to rethink our conceptualization of the relationship between partisan politics and violence in Colombia?

Antioquia was Colombia's most populated, Conservative, and economically influential department at mid-century. The province was also —and had been for some decades— one of Colombia's largest regional producers of coffee for export, the nation's main producer of gold, and the national leader in industry, commerce, and finance. Antioqueños were sometimes less likely to occupy national political office than the inhabitants of other Colombian provinces, but Antioquia's voters were numerous and the province's men of capital dominated powerful private producer associations such as the National Federation of Coffee Growers (FEDECAFE), the National Federation of Merchants (FENALCO), and the National Association of Industrialists (ANDI), entities instrumental in shaping Colombian economic and social policy.

In a country where Liberal and Conservative differences were thought to define individual identity and to have caused the majority of Colombia's violent struggles since the nineteenth century, moreover, Antioquia was perceived as both a political maverick and as reluctant to take up arms in the name of politics. Indeed, there was little in Antioquia's past to suggest that it should have become an area hard hit by partisan violence during *la Violencia*. Neither the province of which Medellín is the

capital nor Medellín itself was associated with violence in the Colombian imaginary. A stereotype existed of Antioquia and its inhabitants, but it was one that characterized *paisas*[14] as the nation's sharpest businessmen and pragmatic technocrats, a region of aggressive colonizers who were also fiercely Catholic. A prolific lot, Antioqueños figured in the national imagination as the people who opened and peopled Colombia's southwestern frontier, who came to embody coffee cultivation and culture in the early twentieth century, and who gave rise to a society characterized by a sense of strong regional identity, large families, and small property holders. Many a joke was made targeting regional inhabitants as too obsessed with making money to spare the time to take part in politics. When forced to choose between going to war over political differences and arriving at a negotiated solution that would preclude social unrest and allow business to continue unimpeded, the region's inhabitants were perceived as usually opting for the latter. What happened then by mid-century to make Antioquia an important locus of violence?

To those familiar only with the recent history of Colombia or Antioquia, the association of violence with both the country and the region might seem self-evident. As David Bushnell ruefully notes in the introduction to his recent synthesis of Colombian history, "Colombia is today the least studied of the major Latin American countries, and probably the least understood."[15] In contrast to many of its neighbors, Colombia has rarely suffered from dictatorships, boasted no powerful military, managed its finances conservatively, and displayed no conflict based on ethnic differences. Moreover, except for the brief appeal of Liberal populist leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in the 1940s and the military government of General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in the mid-1950s, Colombia rarely fell victim to the sway of populist or authoritarian politics. By the mid-twentieth century, the persistence of identification with the same parties that had oriented individual political affiliation since the nineteenth century at the expense of supposedly more modern forms of political expression reinforced the idea that Colombia was somehow unique and that there existed no common frame of reference with which to compare events in Colombia to those in the rest of Latin America. This has relegated the phenomenon of *la Violencia* to a kind of historical limbo much written and obsessed about by Colombian specialists but regarded by other Latin Americanists as an aberration peculiar only to Colombia.

At first glance *la Violencia* does appear as a throwback to an earlier

age of caudillo civil wars and peasant atavism that confirms the notion of Colombia as out of step with other "modernizing" nations in the region. The bulk of the killing during *la Violencia* took place in rural areas, and peasants constituted the majority of casualties. Victims were often tortured, dismembered, and sexually mutilated, and women were frequently raped in front of their families. These conditions alone, however, are insufficient to distinguish conflict in Colombia from that typical of the rest of Latin America. But, while national political struggles, personal feuds, agrarian unrest, and clientelist competition informed conflicts in other Latin American societies, these had either taken place in the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries, involved war with another nation, or occurred in the context of suppressing an indigenous population.[16] Alternatively, violence occurring in Latin America in the post-*Violencia* years was explained as leftist insurgency or anticommunist state terrorism waged in defense of national security and democracy.[17] There seemed to be no Latin American precedent for a conflict in which those killing each other were citizens of the same state who attacked one another because of partisan differences and who did so with a savagery rarely seen outside the context of racially or ideologically motivated wars.[18] In other words, what distinguished the Colombian *Violencia* from twentieth-century violence occurring elsewhere in Latin America was that it was fought in terms of mid-nineteenth-century political partisanship not modern political or social objectives. There were of course comparably brutal and complex cases of civil conflict in other parts of the world to which *la Violencia* might be compared, but this required attributing the same symbolic and innate power to Colombian partisan differences as that attributed to religious and ethnic and racial differences present elsewhere.[19]

But cultural, religious, and ethnic and racial differences did exist in Antioquia and were fundamental features of how violence unfolded in the region. Indeed, it is the argument of this study that *la Violencia* in Antioquia can only be understood against the backdrop of profoundly perceived differences between geo-cultural areas internal to the province, and that these differences were often as critical as, or more so, than partisan factors in determining the intensity, incidence, and trajectory of violence in the region. To make clear how the Antioqueño experience of *la Violencia* differs from historical interpretations of the phenomenon, and the significance of these differences for the study of violence

in Colombia more generally, I have divided the remainder of this introduction into three parts. First, I provide a brief overview of Colombian politics and society in the decades preceding *la Violencia*. I then summarize the various interpretations and regional case studies that form the core of *Violencia* studies from the 1970s to the present in order to provide a comparative basis for a consideration of the issues raised by the Antioqueño experience of the Violence. Lastly, I lay out a theoretical framework for thinking about the relationship between geography, politics, ethnicity and race, class, and violence and explore the reasons why these issues, rather than partisan identity alone, shaped the course of mid-century conflict in Antioquia.

Politics and Society in the Decades before *la Violencia*

Initial attempts to make sense of *la Violencia* sought an explanation in the peculiarities of Colombian political history. Like Liberals and Conservatives elsewhere in nineteenth-century Latin America, Colombian political parties were divided into opposing camps of protectionists and free traders, centralists and federalists, and pro- and anti-clerical feeling. The significance of specific issues to the determination of individual political understanding and comportment differed to some degree from region to region, depending on the availability of resources, the structure of land tenure and production, kinship relations, accidents of history, and myriad other intangibles. An Antioqueño Conservative of moderate stripe, for instance, might simultaneously embrace both free trade and federalism (positions more typically associated with the Liberal party) and yet strongly support the Catholic Church (a position more typical of pro-clerical Conservatives). What set Colombia's parties apart from Liberal and Conservative parties in other Latin American countries, however, was the Colombian system's ability to foster a deep identification between the parties and the vast majority of its citizens.[20] The Colombian parties attracted individuals of all classes, regions, and racial and ethnic origin and, in the absence of a well-developed sense of national identity, scholars have argued, party affiliation shaped the average Colombian's sense of self and belief from the nineteenth through the twentieth centuries.[21] Identification with one of the two parties also persisted in Colombia long after Liberal and Conservative parties elsewhere in Latin America disappeared or gave way to multiparty systems.

Policy and ideological differences between Liberals and Conservatives fueled most of the repeated nineteenth-century civil wars for which Colombia became famous, although the majority of the so-called civil wars occurring in Colombia before the War of the Thousand Days (1899–1902) might more accurately be described as skirmishes. The ostensible catalysts of such "wars" were not insignificant—the suppression of convents, the abolition of slavery, the empowerment of artisans, struggles to seize control of the central government, and so on—but they rarely engaged more than a small percentage of Colombians in actual physical combat. Civil war casualties were for the most part also relatively few, although the destruction and confiscation of property affecting a particular individual, clan, or interest group could become the basis of long-standing resentment that cemented partisan identity. In the end, however, despite a reputation for chronic disorder, nineteenth-century Colombia does not appear to have been noticeably more violent than other Latin American countries of the time.[22]

In 1880 Liberal Rafael Nuñez won control of Colombia's presidency and, with the support of the Conservative party revoked many of the political and social reforms passed during several decades of Liberal political domination. The revised Constitution of 1886 replaced state autonomy with strict centralism, converted previously elected offices into a hierarchically determined system of government appointments, established literacy requirements for male suffrage in national elections, and restored the preeminence of the Roman Catholic Church in matters such as public education.[23] A severe downturn in the export price of coffee during the second half of the 1890s as well as growing discontent among Liberals over their political exclusion eventually sparked the outbreak of the War of the Thousand Days, the last and greatest of Colombia's nineteenth-century civil conflicts.[24] In contrast to the limited engagements characteristic of earlier struggles, the war produced more than 100,000 casualties, a large number of maimed and displaced people, and the irrevocable loss of Panama.[25]

There were fears that, if the war were allowed to continue, further territorial dismemberment (beyond the already dramatic loss of Panama) would occur and Colombia's economic future would be compromised at the very moment when coffee seemed to promise a way out of economic stagnation. Ultimately, these fears converged to bring fighting to an end. General Rafael Reyes, Colombia's first twentieth-century military

ruler and the man behind the elimination of the most exclusionary policies associated with the Regeneración (as the Nuñez regime was known), came to power in 1904. Reyes enjoyed the overt support of the moderate faction of the Conservative party known as the Historical Conservatives—many of whom were Antioqueño capitalists—and the tacit support of many Liberals.[26] Reyes institutionalized minority representation in Colombia's various legislative bodies and promoted policy initiatives that proved crucial to the support of domestic industry and the export economy, especially the coffee sector. Although a combination of factors led to Reyes's quick fall from grace, he laid the basis for a period of economic expansion within a climate of relative bipartisan cooperation that characterized what has sometimes been called the *pax conservadora* of 1904 to 1930.[27]

Several aspects of coffee production helped it to emerge as a focus around which members of both parties and numerous regional interests could cooperate to set aside the partisan antagonisms that had undermined national political stability during Colombia's first century of independent existence. First, by the 1920s significant sectors of the population of both historically Liberal and Conservative regions were associated with coffee production or its commercialization. Second, coffee was grown by both large landowners in the eastern and central regions as well as by small and medium-sized property holders in the central cordillera (among them Antioquia and the regions its inhabitants colonized to the south). Charles Bergquist has argued persuasively that these circumstances ensured that "a large proportion of the Colombian body politic identified with the political economy of the export-import interests in control of the government after 1910" and that smallholders "fully endorsed the liberal political ideology, social conservatism, and pro-export economic policies of the new order."[28]

Despite continued differences between Liberals and Conservatives, consensus emerged between businessmen and coffee growers from 1910 to 1930 regarding the importance of and need for state investment in infrastructure and economic development. During these years many of the elite leaders of both parties intermarried, attended the same schools, and dominated regional and national politics.[29] The 1920s in particular witnessed unprecedented private and public expenditure on an ambitious program of public works and education. But investment and economic growth did not benefit all Colombians during the heady years

that came to be known as the Dance of the Millions. The Conservative coalition of coffee growers, export merchants, and industrialists that had dominated Colombian political fortunes for more than two decades toppled in 1930 amid rumors of fiscal mismanagement and accusations that they sacrificed the lives of Colombian workers to U.S. interests during the 1928 United Fruit strike in Santa Marta.[30]

During the presidential election of 1930, the Conservative party split and lost to the Liberal opposition. The change from one political administration to another in Colombia typically meant the substitution of one party's members for those of the other in patronage jobs and government positions. When Liberal Enrique Olaya Herrera was elected president (1930–1934), violence broke out in several regions of Colombia where Liberals unleashed their long-suppressed resentment on the Conservative opposition. Indeed, while many scholars consider the assassination of Liberal populist, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, on April 9, 1948, as the seminal event that catalyzed *la Violencia,* the factors that led up to the Liberal leader's death and the emergence of severe unrest in its aftermath can in part be traced to the changes occurring in Colombia during the 1930s and 1940s.

Industrial employment and unprecedented public works investment had begun to transform Colombia from a predominantly rural to an increasingly urban country in the early decades of the twentieth century. In 1925 a third of Colombia's population was classified as urban whereas by 1951 nearly half of the nation's inhabitants lived in urban areas. Rural migration to cities was only temporarily interrupted by the contraction of employment during the period of economic recession between 1928 and 1932.[31] The effects of urban growth—pressure on public services, the increased cost of living, and the emergence of an increasingly vocal underclass—were felt in cities such as Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, and Barranquilla.[32] Urbanization thus coincided with both the shift to a period of Liberal government after nearly fifty years of Conservative rule in 1930 and the emergence of popular demands for expanded political recognition and participation. These profound national changes were reflected in the administration of Liberal Alfonso López Pumarejo who allied with sectors of his party to shift Liberal policy in a more progessive and socially inclusive direction in 1934.

Alfonso López Pumarejo's Revolution on the March (1934–1938) was a more modest version of the Cárdenas administration that came to power

in the same year in Mexico and the progressive Popular Front governments that sprang up in other parts of Latin America during the 1930s. López initiated social legislation, abolished literacy requirements for suffrage, and extended legal recognition and rights to workers and peasants.[33] As he expanded the functions of the state, López also centralized its power, elevating the state into a mediator between conflicting social and economic interest groups.[34]

Agrarian unrest had become acute in several Colombian regions in the years immediately preceding López's rise to power.[35] In some areas, colonists hoping to escape the effects of economic downturns in the 1920s migrated in search of regions with supposedly abundant public lands only to find that these had been swallowed up by recently established large-scale commercial agriculture and cattle ranches. Conflicts in these areas emerged between landless folk competing with each other and with powerful capitalist landowners. In other areas, previously unorganized rural workers mobilized to protest changes in tenancy laws, dismissals, and poor wages on plantations.[36] To resolve the problem of growing agrarian unrest and to preclude economic disruption in regions where struggles over land were most severe, López initiated Law 200 of 1936. The law declared that property had a social function and sought to mediate competing claims to public lands while providing titles to those petitioners who could prove they had resided on and made improvements to the land. López did not intend to undermine the principle of private property in Colombia nor was it his intent to do away with large landowning.[37] Although agrarian unrest diminished after Law 200's passage, the land reform law confirmed only a limited number of squatter claims, making the validity of petitions not initiated before 1934 much more difficult to prove.[38] Reaction to the law, in any case, rested less upon its actual impact than upon the elite's perception of its threat.

When taken in conjunction with López's recognition and legalization of labor organizations such as the Confederation of Colombian Workers (CTC), and his introduction of organized labor into the once restricted arena of elite politics, his social policies fueled resentment among men of capital like those in Antioquia.[39] In addition, López's toleration of Communist leaders—many of whom headed important labor unions (affiliated with the newly created CTC) in strategic sectors such as oil, transportation, and mining—led the more reactionary members of both parties to repudiate the López administration as dangerously radical.[40]

The nearly hysterical alarm evinced by the nation's entrepreneurs and industrialists over López's championing of working-class interests and his extension of state authority between 1934 and 1938 formed a critical backdrop to the vituperative red-baiting that helped incite partisan violence in the forties and is only understandable when set against the background of growing capitalist investment and economic expansion taking place in the decade preceding the outbreak of *la Violencia.* Colombian industry, for instance, embarked upon a period of expansion that led it to grow in real terms at an unprecedented rate of 10 percent per year between 1932 and 1940. Nowhere was the impact of industrial growth more clearly felt than in Antioquia, especially in the industrial hub around Medellín where textile mills and other light industries formed the core of the local economy.[41]

At the end of López's term, the Liberal party sought out a candidate who might halt the momentum of López's revolution and reassure elite interests. They found their champion in Eduardo Santos, a prominent businessman and the patriarch of Colombia's family-owned, largest circulation daily newspaper, the Bogotá-based *El Tiempo.* During his presidency (1938–1942) Santos muzzled labor unrest, put down strikes, and deflected popular demands so as to curtail the movement of labor his predecessor had nurtured and encouraged.[42] Despite the distrust he generated among members of the elite, however, Alfonso López remained a charismatic political leader and he returned to power in 1942 with the support of the very groups whose interests he had defended during his first presidency. But López's second term in office proved a disappointment to his more progressive supporters. Disagreement within the Liberal party, increasingly fierce Conservative opposition, and the intensification of rural partisan conflict culminated in 1944 with a failed military coup led by disgruntled army officers.[43] When López was finally forced from office in 1945 and Liberal Alberto Lleras Camargo assumed the presidency in May, the conservative social trend already apparent in the later years of Liberal government became more pronounced. One of Lleras Camargo's first acts as president was the dissolution of a long and bitter strike led by the Magdalena Transport Workers (FEDENAL), perhaps Colombia's strongest and most militant union, and the only one with a closed shop.[44] Lleras Camargo also implemented Law 6 of 1945 regulating collective bargaining agreements in Colombia. While the law confirmed the social services and benefits labor had won under Alfonso

López Pumarejo's Revolution on the March, it also marked a critical shift in the relationship that had been established between labor, the Liberal party, and the state in the mid-thirties. The law strictly defined the criteria for a legal strike, outlawing strikes in the *sector público,* that is, for workers employed in public works, transportation, communication, and municipal and state government (the source of most patronage hiring). These were precisely those sectors of the workforce that were most vocal and most dependent upon an alliance with the Liberal state for their well-being.[45] Failure to comply strictly with the labor code's criteria for a strike became the basis for dismissing workers' demands, however well intentioned or legitimate they might have been. Popular and working-class interests, already battered by declining real wages, unemployment, and harassment, were further weakened by the loss of state advocacy on their behalf.[46]

In addition to the growth of the urban population, industrialization, and the incipient political empowerment of an organized working class, an emergent middle sector of professional politicians of non-elite origin had also gradually come to demand greater political participation in the national political arena during the 1930s and 1940s. Some of these professional politicians identified with the program embraced by the parties' traditional elite leadership, but others used populist appeals and criticism of bipartisan elite rule to expand their electoral support and confirm their political participation in party directorates and the national government. The divide between the political culture of *convivialismo* (as elite bipartisan political rule was called) and the new politics of mass inclusion was embodied in the figure of Liberal populist Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. A dark-skinned man of humble birth, Gaitán symbolized not only the rise of a growing nonwhite, urban popular core in Colombian society, but also the rise of non-elite politicians emboldened by the extension of education and suffrage that had taken place during the previous two decades.[47] The urban lower class and the aspirants to political power among the provincial middle-class or petit bourgeois sectors linked their fortunes together to press for an opening of the political sphere. The clash between the popular forces represented by young, up-and-coming politicians of both parties and an elite concerned with reasserting the exclusionary, paternalistic rule of pre-1930 Colombia came to a critical climax in the presidential campaign of 1946.

The Liberal party split over the candidacies of Gabriel Turbay Ayala

(the party's official candidate) and the dissident, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, and lost the election to the moderate elite Conservative, Mariano Ospina Pérez. Partisan conflicts like those experienced in the early thirties, when power changed from Conservative to Liberal hands, once more emerged at the municipal level. Conservatives excluded from participation in government patronage and elected offices during the previous sixteen years of Liberal hegemony celebrated the defeat of the Liberal opposition with acts of intimidation and physical harassment in a number of Colombian departments. Although Ospina himself campaigned on a bipartisan political platform that promised the inclusion of Liberals in his cabinet, gubernatorial offices, and municipal government positions, his stance encountered considerable opposition from extremists within the Conservative party and the Liberal followers of Gaitán. When the Liberal party won the congressional elections of 1947, the basis of Ospina's National Union compromise dissolved.[48] Tensions between the Conservative government and the opposition escalated steadily from that point on, reaching a climax with the assassination of Gaitán by a mentally disturbed gunman in Bogotá on April 9, 1948.

The Bogotazo, as the popular uprising in response to Gaitán's assassination came to be known, left the nation's capital a smoldering mass of ruins; churches and public buildings were transformed into heaps of rubble; trolley cars were derailed and burned; stores looted; the city's sidewalks overflowed with the debris of broken glass and ruined merchandise. Meanwhile, decomposing corpses hurriedly thrown in piles in Bogotá's central cemetery seemed to give material testimony to the existence of an anonymous, dangerous crowd that had captured the elite imagination and provoked increasing anxiety of an impending attack upon elite privilege by a ragged, bloodthirsty army of the nation's excluded.[49] Surrounded by a burning and looted city and unsure of just how many troops or individuals might come to his defense, Ospina nonetheless resisted Liberal demands that he hand over power.[50] Instead, the president purged the police of Liberals (many of whom had turned against the government and collaborated with the rioters), reshuffled the cabinet and once more attempted to establish a bipartisan government. The administration also implemented modest reforms of the social security system, established price controls on basic food items, and sponsored a U.S. economic mission to examine the nation's development policies and make recommendations on how best to maximize the state's effi-

ciency.[51] But Ospina's attempt to shift attention away from partisan issues to less controversial technocratic matters proved unsuccessful. The Conservative party leader, Laureano Gómez, and his followers (known as *laureanistas*) led a violent bid for the presidency during 1949 that further ignited already combustible partisan animosities in Colombia's countryside. In the wake of growing incidents of partisan unrest, Ospina Pérez declared a State of Siege, and in November 1949 the president closed the congress indefinitely.[52] Congress would remain inactive for the next nine years.

A surreal quality enveloped Colombia between 1950 and 1953. As violence raged in rural areas and multiple groups under local and regional leadership terrorized the countryside, in Bogotá, Laureano Gómez ruled seemingly removed from the din and clamor of widespread strife.[53] In urban areas such as Medellín, moreover, business went on as usual; business, in fact, boomed. In 1950 the president of the National Association of Industrialists could coolly declare that Colombia's economy had never been better, repeating his assertion on the eve of the military coup in 1953.[54] Insisting that violence was in check, denying its severity, and blaming its existence upon isolated, depraved bandits, the national government seemed oblivious to its inability to assert its authority outside Bogotá and the nation's principal cities. By 1952 tentative attempts at bipartisan dialogue between the more moderate members of the parties, many of them representatives of prominent economic interests, were under way. Several months later a military coup—Colombia's first and last during the twentieth century—backed by significant civilian and elite support put an end to Laureano Gómez's presidency on June 13, 1953.

The military dictatorship that came to power under the leadership of General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in 1953 and which ruled Colombia until 1957 initially succeeded in reducing partisan tensions in Colombia.[55] The government pardoned Liberal guerrilla groups and removed some of the more hated Conservative local leaders who had been in charge of mobilizing paramilitary groups against the Liberal opposition in rural areas. After a brief respite, however, partisan-motivated violence gave way to common criminal delinquency, social banditry, and incipient, radical peasant leagues. Rojas Pinilla's growing ambition, moreover, frightened the very civilian elite forces that had initially supported the general's military coup. In 1958 power reverted once more to civilian rule and, in an unprecedented attempt to simultaneously put an end to violence and

preclude future military intervention, leaders of the Liberal and Conservative parties agreed on a power-sharing arrangement known as the National Front. What had begun as partisan conflict in the countryside took on a distinctly social and economic cast by the later years of the 1950s, giving rise in some areas to the nucleus of what would constitute insurgent, leftist guerrilla groups in the 1960s. It appeared that *la Violencia* had not ended, but simply evolved.

Interpreting *la Violencia*

In the 1960s social scientists took up the challenge of understanding *la Violencia* and devised numerous theories to explain it. These alternatively attributed violence in Colombia to conflicts provoked by the transition from a "premodern" to a "modern" society, to exaggerated aggression fueled by status deprivation, or to rivalries between patron-client systems in which peasants blindly followed the dictates of an elite leadership or party boss.[56] While the patron-client analysis offered clues to the seemingly national scope of violence, it failed to explain why, if disputes originating among an elite leadership in Bogotá could incite the most distant citizen to take up arms, significant areas within Colombia remained untouched by *la Violencia.* Other than through some vague "quasi-religious" appeal, how were ideology and party allegiance actually disseminated and understood?

New scholarship in the 1970s shifted the focus of work on *la Violencia* in other directions. The power of the state, the expansion of the political arena, the rise of new political actors and leaders such as Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in the decades preceding *la Violencia,* and the quest for alternative forms of economic and political mobility were issues increasingly singled out as playing important roles in the development of the violence.[57] As scholars grounded their research in region-specific studies, moreover, it became apparent that while partisan conflict provided the initial catalyst to violence, and perhaps even a seemingly logical framework in which to understand the intensity of the conflict, reliance on the notion of inherited party hatreds was insufficient to account for the divergence and specificity of violence. *La Violencia* resembled the Mexican Revolution in the way that historians might agree that the latter phenomenon was set off by Porfirio Díaz's decision not to seek reelection, but they might not agree on the composition of those fighting, their exact objectives once

violence got under way, or the long-term implications of the revolution. *La Violencia* has similarly proven to be an extraordinarily heterogeneous and complex phenomenon.[58]

Indeed, recent studies of *la Violencia* raise as many questions as they answer. They reveal, for instance, how little is actually known about the workings of Colombian politics at the local, regional, or national levels or about the internal organization of the parties themselves. Were the parties monolithic?[59] How did understandings of partisan affiliation differ among individuals belonging to different classes, regions, or ethnic and racial groups?[60] Was it really true that partisan affiliation took precedence over any other kind of identity in Colombia?[61] If not, what shaped people's beliefs, actions, and sense of identity? Even less was known about the nature of the Colombian state, how strong or weak it was or whether a central state existed at all. Was power centralized in the state to such a degree, as some researchers argue, that competition between the parties for its control could set off national unrest of the scope of *la Violencia*?[62] Or was the problem just the opposite? Perhaps no central state existed or it had so tenuous a presence in most areas of the national territory that it proved helpless to control conflict between omnipresent political parties when it broke out?[63]

Then there were the social and economic implications of *la Violencia.* Was violence the response of a frightened elite to the mid-twentieth-century expansion of the Colombian electorate and the rise of middle-sector politicians?[64] Had the rise of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán and his political movement introduced class struggle in Colombia? Did *gaitanismo* represent a threat to the exercise and workings of traditional politics in Colombia?[65] Did the spread of popular uprisings in the aftermath of Gaitán's assassination and their subsequent repression constitute the seeds of a failed social revolution?[66] Was violence waged under traditional party banners to deflect attention away from or to justify crushing other latent sources of conflict such as struggles over land, declining opportunities for social mobility, and growing worker unrest?[67]

Two very influential analyses of the violence posited that *la Violencia* was the result of excessive partisan clientelism and the growing competition between two monolithic parties to control access to the central state. Paul Oquist argued that as the central state grew in the 1930s competition between Conservative and Liberal leaders to monopolize access to the state's largesse and influence became increasingly urgent. Ac-

cording to Oquist, the struggle to achieve "hegemonic" control of the Colombian state unleashed violence that led to its partial "breakdown."[68] French sociologist Daniel Pécaut, on the other hand, argued that the state's power to build a sense of national identity or act as a suprapartisan arbiter of conflict between different sectors of Colombian society had been eclipsed by the persistence of two "subcultures."[69] These subcultures were defined by individual identification with either the Liberal or Conservative party. Since only partisan affiliation could guarantee individual material needs and physical survival, any conflict between the parties inevitably resulted in widespread conflict. The use of force, over which the Colombian state had never achieved complete monopoly, in turn, Pécaut suggested, became more dispersed among competing corporate interests as partisan competition to control the state intensified.

Various scholars gave greater empirical precision to the hypotheses of violence put forth by Oquist and Pécaut. Herbert Braun, for instance, focused on the urban rather than the rural manifestations of violence, more specifically, on the prelude to and aftermath of Gaitán's assassination in Bogotá on April 9, 1948. In much greater detail than Pécaut, Braun laid bare the insular, aristocratic, aloof character of political exchange in pre-Gaitán Colombia. Braun argued that elite members of both parties coincided in their social views and interests, and political decision-making took place not in congress, but over shots of whiskey at Bogotá's exclusive gun or jockey clubs.[70] The critical question always present in the minds of Colombia's elite, and roused to hysterical urgency by Gaitán's persona, Braun argued, revolved not around ideological differences but rather around the issue of how to deal with the lower classes.[71] Gaitán challenged the insularity of gentlemen's politics precisely by reveling in his plebeian and mixed-race origins and by manipulating his identification with and appeal to the popular classes into a major political movement.[72] Braun did not believe, however, that the basis of violence was the insurrectionary or revolutionary content of Gaitán's message to the poor. On the contrary, in Braun's estimation, Gaitán had a fundamentally petit bourgeois attitude toward the masses, admonishing them to bathe and act responsibly and to overcome their socioeconomic condition through hard work and education, not class struggle.[73] Braun suggested that the overreaction of a dominant class terrified by its own prejudices against a lower class it had long demonized and its misconception of Gaitán's political message led it to dangerously raise the stakes of political ex-

change. The divisive and vituperative rhetoric employed by the elite had the unintended effect of promoting and legitimizing violence among the parties' nonelite membership rather than reasserting the political system as it had existed before Gaitán's mobilization of the popular classes. While Braun noted that Liberal and Conservative elites were equally opposed to Gaitán, he blamed Conservatives more than the Liberals for the inception of violence. Braun argued that Conservative efforts to shore up an eroding electoral position led the party to unleash violence in order to recuperate the loyalty of the popular classes, and he implied that Conservatives embraced Christian Socialist rhetoric when addressing workers only as a political ploy to undermine Gaitán's movement. While the effort to substitute Liberals in office was certainly a critical factor in fomenting violence, Braun may have been too cynical in assuming that the adoption by some Conservatives of a kind of Christian Socialist position vis-à-vis workers was nothing more than posturing.[74]

Braun's theses were quite compelling, but he limited his study to Bogotá, leaving unanswered the question of whether or not and in what manner Gaitán and the reaction he elicited among Bogotá's politicians affected the emergence and nature of violence outside the capital. Meanwhile, Gonzalo Sánchez, Carlos Ortíz, and scholars such as Jaime Arocha, James Henderson, and Darío Fajardo gave specificity and concrete meaning to the abstraction of battles waged in the capital by examining the day-to-day patterns of violence in several Colombian regions.[75] In looking at political culture from the "bottom" up, these scholars also reintroduced the relationship between socioeconomic conditions and violence that had faded from the discussion of *la Violencia* since the early allusions to such a link in the days of patron-client analysis.

Gonzalo Sánchez argued that an analysis of Gaitán and his movement was the necessary starting point for understanding *la Violencia.* Like Braun, Sánchez also believed that the issue of lower-class mobilization or political incorporation was at the very heart of *la Violencia.* In sharp contradiction to Braun, however, Sánchez insisted that Gaitán had introduced the question of class into the Colombian arena, and that Gaitán's movement constituted a first attempt at a revolutionary challenge to the established Colombian economic and political system. For Sánchez, April 9 marked a critical turning point in Colombian history. Answering the question left in suspense by Braun, Sánchez insisted that Gaitán's movement had profoundly affected Colombian society at all levels, con-