

**WORSHIPING LEADERSHIP: MORALITY, REVOLUTIONARY VALUES, AND
THE POLITICS OF *MAGNICIDIO* (ASSASSINATION) IN THE CASE OF CAMILO
TORRES AND FABIO VÁSQUEZ WITH THE ELN, COLOMBIA 1963-1978**

Juan Carlos Sánchez Sierra

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Timothy W. Luke, Chair

Ilja A. Luciak

Moses E. Panford

Brett L. Shadle

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ABSTRACT

This research explores cult formation and sect-like worship in the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN), around the figures of both the priest and guerrilla fighter Camilo Torres (1929-1966), and Fabio Vásquez, leader and founder of the group in 1963-1978. I examine the relationship between authority and obedience that shaped political leadership in Colombia since the late 19th century. In particular, I consider how collective moral and individual values become ritualized in daily practices and moral discourses fostered by leaders that promoted drastic social change along Colombian history. This analysis of authority and obedience facilitates interpretations into how leaders create allegiances and legitimize violence as a strategy to bring about change in Colombian politics. I argue that the politics of *magnicidio* demonstrates how the formation of leadership is hampered by the use of selective violence, as a strategy to dismantle or deter political opponents from participation. This happens in both mainstream politics and within insurgent groups. In this vein, I argue that by approaching the figure of Camilo Torres and the reverence to his memory, it is possible to understand the importance of leadership and authority both in a guerrilla group, and in social mobilization, particularly the student movement, intellectual sectors, and the youth. I sustain that reverence to Camilo Torres has been fostered primarily outside the ELN. Although the ceremonies around his figure and the revolutionary project progressively furnished the group with a consistent pattern of belief for individual and group interaction, his leadership in the groups was not substantial. I demonstrate how Camilo Torres surrendered to the leadership of Fabio Vásquez in an attempt to become a suitable *guerrillero*. I argue that beyond claims for Camilo Torres' political legacy, guerrilla fighters in the ELN used his thought to challenge and undermine Fabio Vásquez' personalistic leadership in 1967-1974. Although the figure of Camilo Torres created internal cohesion, the ELN's re-conceptualization of the revolutionary project used his life only as a paradigm of commitment, sacrifice and revolutionary redemption, ignoring the priest's political ideals and assertions on social justice, charity and love. I conclude by exploring Camilo Torres' thought and actions in order to demonstrate how the ELN selectively interprets his legacy, and thereby justify the last months of his life to legitimize radical left leaning fighting.

For Claudia, Gloria, Adriana and Juan David

Una patria sin héroes es una casa sin puertas
Gabriel García Márquez
El Otoño del Patriarca

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INTRODUCTION

This research explores various social and political factors involved in the formation of leadership in Colombia. It also examines how relations of authority and obedience are mediated through values that consolidate patterns of morality for social groups supporting a leader or political project. Although I make an analysis that starts in the late 19th century, the interpretations centers in the case of the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (National Liberation Army, hereafter ELN),¹ and specifically the role played by Camilo Torres and Fabio Vásquez. I study how within an insurgent group, disputes for leadership reflect the predicaments that hamper the Colombian political system. In order to explain this, I explore the trajectory of several political figures, with regard to how they propose moral principles and values, in an attempt to draw popular support and parallel the structure of authority that historically legitimize the political regime with the help of the Catholic Church. While counterbalancing the establishment's mechanisms of popular obedience, political alternative leaders engage in disputes, not only against the regime, but also against other leaders, what promotes the use of violence. These themes allow me to propose an interpretation in which I explore the form how the assassination of leaders (hereafter *magnicidio*) has become an effective instrument to deter alternative groups and leaders to transform the political system. I call this mechanism the 'politics of *magnicidio*'. I consider necessary to explore this phenomena in the specific case of a guerrilla group, since the systematic elimination of leaders is a symptom, not only of the

¹ The *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* ELN (National Liberation Army) was formed in 1963, and started operations in a rural clandestine front in 1964. Composed by a large number of urban militants, it grew to several small *focos* guided by the *Foco* insurgent strategy. After 1967 the group faced a crisis that led to the internal annihilation of many of its members, especially those in a 'political/intellectual' branch. The strength of the military branch was at its highest when an attack organized in 1973 by the state's National Army left only a small number of militants (30 active rural *guerrilleros*), in what became known as the Anorí debacle. When the internal crisis touched bedrock, some militants promoted a slow re-composition along a new set of ideological, leadership, and strategic approaches to the revolutionary project. A closer observation of the early years can disclose interesting clues about the early organizational strategies and stages, named *embryonic institutional formations*. See, Juan Carlos Sánchez Sierra, "Discourse, Practices and Historical Representations in two Guerrilla Groups: Colombia and Angola (ELN and MPLA), 1956-1986," in *War and Peace in Africa: History, Nationalism, and the State*, edited by Raphael Njoku and Toyin Falola (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2010).

mechanics of political participation, but also the tendency to destroy the opposition in order to sustain and legitimize the existence of a mainstream structure of authority. This happens both in the response of the establishment to opposition, and within the opposition itself. In other words, given the fact that the ELN is by nature an opposition group, it is interesting how within its clandestine universe the same practices that pervade the national political system are reproduced. Beyond the natural orientation of a guerrilla to use violence as a mechanism to gain power, internally the organization also witnessed situations in which the politics of *magnicidio* served as an instrument to legitimize the influence of a leader.

Commitment and political belonging to an ideological doctrine resemble the adoption of a religion. On the one hand, political ideologies operate as systems of belief, making the reverence for both leadership and a line of thought to resemble a cult. On the other hand, sectors in opposition to the mainstream resemble a sect, particularly for the characteristic marginalization of their leaders and political goals. Clandestine revolutionary struggle is characterized by extreme conditions of life—loneliness, deprivation, fear, anxiety, uncertainty about life, a political system of belief, dogmatism—that enhance the adoption of moral worldviews in order to justify action and thought. These relations of authority and obedience depend on the moral principles exhibited/imposed by the leader. This research approaches the relation between leadership formation, cult of personality, and moral mechanisms for controlling social/individual behavior, where the system of values sustain daily interaction, in what can be called a ritualization of everyday life. Considering that political struggle implies power relations, the balance between authority and obedience causes a necessary liaison between allegiance to a leader and the adoption of moral principles for daily interaction.²

² This research is a continuation of the study on political representations and discursive practices, where I suggest the necessity for studies on rituals of power within insurgent groups, in “Discourse, Practices”, 289-295. The research establishes a constructive dialogue with recent contributions to the study of rituals and symbolic representation in guerrilla research related to the topic explored here. See: Mario Aguilera, “La Memoria y los Héroes Guerrilleros,” *Análisis Político* 49 (2003): 3-27; Carlos Cárdenas and Carlos Duarte, “Fusiles de Madera: Rituales de Paso y Procesos de Inserción Simbólica en la Guerrilla Colombiana,” *Maguaré* 22 (2008): 293-338. This article is a synthesis of their monographic work *Con los Muchachos: Aproximación a una Comunidad Guerrillera desde la Antropología*

In this dissertation I will assess to what extent the ELN has generated a cult around Camilo Torres. I see that the cult-like reverence to Camilo Torres formed primarily outside the group. For that purpose, I studied internal documents,³ narratives —either critical or apologetic— created by *guerrilleros*,⁴ sympathizers or journalists close to ELN,⁵ and by people around Camilo Torres.⁶ I argue that reverence to Camilo Torres's thought was marginal at least until the mid-1980's, in the ELN. It resembles sometimes more like a sect, considering that it contradicted the leader Fabio Vásquez. Camilo Torres' legacy of thought and action has been dislocated from effective mechanisms to implement his values beyond symbolic attachment to political representations. Crucial aspects of his thought, such as the importance of education, the dialogue between science and religion for changing popular consciousness, charity, and effective love, were sidelined despite serving as core

Simbólica y la Etnografía de la Comunicación. (Undergraduate Thesis, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2001). This dissertation also dialogues with the work completed by Alejandro Sánchez Lopera and Mónica Zuleta, who investigate the importance of Camilo for the left-wing movements in Latin America. I intend an alternative approach to the moral and values in the ELN. See, Alejandro Sánchez Lopera, "Ciencia, Revolución y Creencia en Camilo Torres: ¿una Colombia Secular?," *Nómadas* 25 (2006): 241-258; Alejandro Sánchez Lopera and Mónica Zuleta, "Aspectos del Devenir Militante del Revolucionario Colombiano durante los Setenta," *Nómadas* 30 (2009): 74-91; Alejandro Sánchez Lopera, "Camilo Torres Restrepo: la Posibilidad de una Moral Insurgente," in *Genealogías de la Colombianidad. Formaciones Discursivas y Tecnológicas de Gobierno en los Siglos XIX y XX*, edited by Santiago Castro-Gómez (Bogotá: Editorial Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2008).

³ Source from the ELN were made available by Carlos Medina in the early 2000, and some others were gathered at the British Library. ELN, *Compendio Insurrección* 1-38 (Unknown place of publication, mimeographed, circa 1972); ELN, *Simacota, Periódico Político Interno* 12, (Unknown place of publication: mimeographed, circa 1981); ELN, *Conclusiones Asamblea Nacional 'Comandante Camilo Torres Restrepo'* (Unknown place of publication: mimeographed, circa 1986); Olga de Caycedo, *El padre Camilo Torres o la Crisis de Madurez de América Latina* (Barcelona: Ediciones Aura, 1972).

⁴ For the purpose of clarity, in this dissertation I will use the following words in order to denominate degrees of belonging to the ELN. Guerrilla will be used indistinctly to refer insurgent groups, based on irregular warfare. *Guerrillero(s)* means necessarily the individuals involved in the ELN with permanent presence in the rural war front. Whenever it is necessary, I will make a distinction for their precedence, meaning *urban guerrillero(s)* those who were born or reared in cities, large municipalities, or provincial capitals, etc. *Rural guerrillero(s)* are those born or reared in the countryside. I use *guerrillero*, or its plural *guerrilleros*, always in italic. In order to avoid redundancies, I might abbreviate by using *urbanos*, *rurales*, rural *guerrilleros*, or urban *guerrilleros* in both cases meaning *guerrillero(s)* with the correspondent backgrounds. Militant is a follower and/or supporter of the group, whose activities are either public, or not explicitly clandestine (semi-clandestine). In this case I will use the word to refer supporters of the student movement, and militants of traditional parties such as the Liberal, Conservative, or Communist. In cases where I explore the ELN's logistic support in urban settings, I may refer them as semi-clandestine units, or urban networks, or urban logistic support. In the case of supporters to the cause of the ELN without a clear commitment to their rural war fronts or urban networks, I use the word *simpatizantes* (or sympathizers). However, there existed urban sympathizers with linkages to the semi-clandestine networks, but the information is not proved due to the clandestine nature of such liaisons.

⁵ ELN and Milton Hernández. *Rojo y Negro: Historia del ELN*. (Nafarroa: Txalaparta, 2006); Jaime Arenas, *La Guerrilla por Dentro. Análisis del ELN Colombiano* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1971); Carlos Arango, *Yo Vi Morir a Camilo* (Bogotá: Colombia Nueva, 1982); Medardo Correa, *Sueño Inconcluso. Mi Vivencia en el ELN* (Bogotá: Findexarrollo, 1997); Walter Broderick, *Camilo Torres Restrepo* (Bogotá: Planeta, 1996); Walter Broderick, *El Guerrillero Invisible* (Bogotá: Intermedio Editores, 2000); Norberto Habegger, *Camilo Torres: el Cura Guerrillero* (Buenos Aires: A. Peña Lilo Editor, 1967); Cristina de la Torre, "Nacimiento del ELN, Revelaciones de Ricardo Lara Parada," *Revista Trópicos* 3-7 (1980); Oscar Castaño, *El Guerrillero y el Político. Entrevista con Ricardo Lara Parada* (Bogotá: Oveja Negra, 1984); Marta Harnecker, *Unidad que Multiplica: Entrevistas a Dirigentes Máximos de la UCELN* (Quito: Ediciones Quimera, 1988); María López Vigil, *Camilo Camina en Colombia* (Iafalla: Txalaparta Editorial, 1990).

⁶ Gustavo Pérez Ramírez, *Camilo Torres Restrepo: profeta para nuestro tiempo* (Santa Fe de Bogotá: Cinep, 1999); Camilo Torres Restrepo, *Camilo Torres, el cura que murió en las guerrillas: el itinerario del padre Camilo a través de sus escritos, su acción y su palabra* (Barcelona: Ed. Nova Terra, 1968); Eduardo Umaña Luna, *Camilo vive: su memoria, su obra, su actualidad*. (Barranquilla: Fundación Editar, 1996).

ideas in his idea of political change. In Colombia, political leaders create systems of morality in order to attract supporters. Camilo Torres is an example of that common feature. In other cases of political leadership since the late 19th century, political campaigning is accompanied by fundamental values that are inherent to their political project. In this research, I introduce examples such as Rafael Uribe Uribe, Rafael Reyes, and Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. In the case of Camilo Torres, his practices of sacrifice and martyrdom have been glorified by the ELN's leaders. His figure reinforces values favoring cohesion and individual commitment. The political instrumentalization of his image occurred after his death in February 1966 and especially after the internal crisis in 1973-1978. Camilo Torres' legacy became an element for cohesion based on an interpretation of his late ideas, mainly those that he made public in 1964-1965. His image helped the ELN to consolidate a cohesive set of values, which enabled *guerrilleros* to endure clandestine insurgent life⁷. However, the cult of his ideas and actions barely sustains its dialogue with the ELN's system of belief based on Marxism-Leninism as its main ideological revolutionary project.

The leadership of Camilo Torres cannot be understood without an analysis of Fabio Vásquez. He was the military leader and creator of the ELN, who considered Camilo Torres an important asset in luring new militants to join the group. He was representative of rural relations of obedience and authority needed a strong leader. I argue that political violence through *magnicidio* had decimated peasant leadership since the late 19th century. I consider that the ELN formed a

⁷ The form how ritual practices became substantial for internal cohesion and consolidated the ELN's hierarchy will be studied in detail in chapters 4 and 5. See also Sánchez, Sierra "Discourse, Practices," 305-309. An excellent example was Domingo Laín, who inspired by Camilo Torres' example, decided to give up his ecclesiastic career in Spain, and became *guerrillero* in the ELN in 1969. He was aware of his disadvantages in the rural warfront, but constantly tried to catch up with the military training, enduring hardship, and showing how his commitment was stronger than any adversity. Every day after he taught class, he and his pupils gathered to narrate the feats of the ELN's martyrs, and other heroes accommodated in the revolutionary *pantheon* for their ceremonial commemoration. The informal meetings inscribed martyrdom, sacrifice and commitment, as characteristics of group belonging. For a narrative on Domingo Laín's life and the decision to become a *guerrillero*, see Broderick, *El Guerrillero*, 55-70; Details about Domingo Laín's ritual insurgent life, and death, in Ion Arregi, *Los Sueños Intactos: el Cura Pérez* (Madrid: Tercera Prensa-Hirugarren Prentsa, 1998), 74-102, 165-184; . Arango, *Yo vi Morir*, 197-228. The life and death of Camilo Torres has been reconstructed in relation to the social and political bonds created in the area of his death, in Jorge Meléndez Sánchez, *...Y Abi Cayó Camilo* (Bogotá: El Buho, 1996), 181-189. The epilogue of this book is a clear example of how Camilo Torres legacy is still a strong feature among intellectuals in public universities in Colombia, to the level of creating a cult-like relation to his thought and actions. For a study on the use of the ritual *Baptism of fire* in the ELN, see Sánchez Sierra, "Discourse, Practices," 313-31.

personalistic cult around Fabio Vásquez, making Camilo Torres and other alternative leaders more marginal. This research attempts to contrast these forms of leadership, and how in the ELN the clash between the rural and urban worldviews occurred. The ELN's internal system of justice was an instrument used by Fabio Vásquez and his loyal followers, in order to bolster the rural *guerrilleros*'s worldview, while purges affected mainly urban *guerrilleros*. The analysis proposed here highlights the factors that determined the formation of their leadership. I also assess what factors influenced popular support to Fabio Vásquez, considering local and regional principles of morality, and how allegiance to his personality grew into a cult-like worshiping.

In the case of Camilo Torres, I study how the urban setting was transformed by the advent of a global youth culture, and how the Universidad Nacional de Colombia became a laboratory where initiatives for social change gained support, what represents a synthesis of the contradictions that hamper the student movement and the left in the 1950s and 1960s. For many in Colombia, the *Frente Unido*⁸ was the movement that would have created change after the bipartisan exclusionist pact of the elites —*Frente Nacional*— to hold on power after *La Violencia*⁹. Camilo Torres' death was another tragic moment for the left wing in Colombia and another step towards a debacle for the ELN's internal hierarchy.

In order to demonstrate this argument, I propose an analysis of leadership formation in Colombia. I find a correlation between notable politicians and how they proposed systems of values that incorporated moral worldviews and practices that attracted social support in a society reluctant

⁸ The *Frente Unido del Pueblo* was an organization that integrated myriad political sectors supporting Camilo Torres. Formed in the early 1960's, its existence was consistent only until Camilo Torres integration to the ELN in late 1965. After that moment, the group disbanded rapidly because of leadership disputes based on ideological grounds. Its organ, also named *Frente Unido*, was particularly considered the platform for the group, making Camilo Torres its main editorial pen. See, Francisco Trujillo, *Camilo y el Frente Unido* (Bogotá: Orión Editores, 1987); Broderick, *Camilo*, 234-251. The author downplays the whole project of *Frente Unido*, considering that Camilo Torres barely could control the group and individual initiatives of student leaders. About the organ, Broderick suggests that most issues were printed without a full proofread from Camilo Torres, and his minimal interest and understanding on ideological debates impaired his control over what was published. In this dissertation I made little use of the organ *Frente Unido*, except for those articles written by Camilo Torres.

⁹ In this research I refer as *La Violencia* the non-declared civil war that caused widespread political violence in Colombia, in 1948-1954, after Jorge Eliecer Gaitán's assassination in April 9th, 1948.

to embrace both radical change and secular systems of belief. Ideologies are adopted in Colombia in a visceral and quasi-religious form. Mainstream politics and insurgent rebellion have similar characteristics to systems of belief that rely on moral interpretations of the world. I will explore the relation between such systems of belief, leadership, and the proposition of moral standards for political support. I intend to integrate historical evidence in order to explore the intersections between political authority, social obedience, leadership and the worshiping of leaders. Further research is necessary in order to propose theoretical frameworks for analyzing power in terms of authority, obedience, and the formation of systems of belief that promote a cult of personality. This dissertation only seeks to explain, in a detailed historical analysis, the transitions in leadership centering on the interpretation of Camilo Torres in the ELN. The ultimate goal is to extricate particularities in the Colombian case for future theoretical research.

This dissertation is organized in two main sections. The first part, from chapter 1 to chapter 3 is an historical analysis of the contexts in which political leadership was formed. In chapter 1, I study the close relation between politics and religion, and how education became the setting for implementing Catholic values in the late 19th century. I explore the leadership of Rafael Uribe Uribe, and Rafael Reyes, and how their political thought and practices constituted a rupture for traditional patterns of authority/obedience in Colombia. In chapter 2, I study the Catholic Church, and the close relation that the institution had with the mechanics of the political system regarding elections and patterns of morality. I present the crisis of the epoch characterized by Conservative governments—in 1886-1930—in terms of symbolic unity, regime strategies to cope with the crisis, and how the mutual cooperation between civil rule and religious authority failed during presidential elections in the late 1920's. By studying the leadership of Bernardo Herrera Restrepo, a Catholic bishop who rose to the ecclesiastic top ranks during the rule of Conservative governments, I shed light upon the formation of a Conservative intellectual field that was only paralleled in terms of

leverage with power by Liberal intellectuals after the 1930's, and particularly in the late 1950's. In chapter 3, I explore the conformation of new political arrangements between the emerging economic elites, and the obedience of popular sectors in the regional political landscape. Although I do not explore in detail *La Violencia*, I intend to bridge the patterns of authority that functioned during the Thousand Days civil war, and *La Violencia*, by analyzing the moral implications of symbolic stereotypes and how they inspired degraded forms of violence whilst disrupting military obedience to political leaders in Bogotá. I characterize the politics of *magnicidio* as a practice aimed to dismantle opposition sectors that endanger the traditional bipartisan regime.

From chapter 4 to chapter 11, I explore the ELN leadership in a dialogue both with the social setting that nurtured popular allegiance to their radical projects, and the individual forces that enabled types of leadership to represent their worldviews and political initiatives. I center the research on the influence of Fabio Vásquez and Camilo Torres, although other notable leaders come onto the scene. In chapter 4, I study Fabio Vásquez's leadership in the context of the aftermath of *La Violencia*, and the broken bonds between rural popular sectors and the political elite. His leadership was based on close connections to peasant's lifestyle, and the reanimation of traditions of struggle and loyalties historically manipulated by *caudillos* and central authorities against popular interest. In chapter 5, I portray how the ELN divided since its early years, and how internal disciplinary measures brought about an escalation in executions of *guerrilleros* who criticized Fabio Vásquez. This trend arose during the political debates to resolve its problem. The crisis of authority is presented in the context of intense ritualization of daily activities, and the separation between rural and urban insurgents. The chasm between *guerrilleros* based on their background lead to purges that express the lack of dialogue between the urban and rural world in Colombia. In chapter 6, I start an analysis of Camilo Torres' life, and the contexts in which his leadership skills were formed, nurtured and transformed. I explore the formation of middle class aspirations and how his life was marked by

the economic decline of his family. The analysis of urban stereotypes during the Conservative rule in the early 20th century, studied in chapters 1 and 2, helps me to identify the barriers and symbols of status that distinguished Camilo Torres and his family from the popular sectors. In chapter 7, I characterize Camilo Torres' early thought in terms of morality, and I speculate about the correlation with his father's influence in national debates on education and progress. I link his interest for charity and love, with leadership skills and a critical standpoint in relation to the Catholic Church's traditional collaboration with Conservative rulers.

In chapter 8, I explore the influence played by intellectuals in the 1950's and early 1960's, and how radical options attracted the youth into radical political allegiances. It is also a history of intellectual representatives for the growing middle classes, their anxieties and expectations in the transition after *La Violencia*, the same epoch in which Camilo Torres entered the ecclesiastic career, and decided to study sociology in Europe. In chapter 9, I return to analyze Camilo Torres' interest in the Catholic Church and its role in society, especially the place that ecclesiastic authorities gave to values such as charity and sacrifice. In both chapters 7 and 9, I elaborate an analysis of the crisis of the authority in the Catholic Church. These chapters also portray philosophical and theological elements debated during the emergence of the Liberation theology. In chapter 10, I examine how Camilo Torres' influenced the youth while he was tenured at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia. I describe the debates he had with the Catholic Church and left-leaning political factions, and how these marked his career and commitment to establish a direct bond with poor population in both rural and urban settings. Chapter 11 is a snapshot of the short period in which Camilo Torres entered the ELN, and how such a radical decision can be understood as a stage in his continuous exploration of possibilities to bring about change and social equity through action. In this chapter, I explore the moral aspects that signaled how his actions could serve as a paradigm for insurgent

commitment. The conclusion combines elements of each chapter, shedding light upon the documents that show the ELN's relation to Camilo Torres' thought and action.

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CHAPTER 1

POLITICAL REGIME, LEADERSHIP AND THE CRISIS OF AUTHORITY, 1880'S-1920'S

The main ideological distinction between Liberals and Conservatives in Colombia was the role each group assigned to the Catholic Church in the defining national goals, individual values, and institutional strategies for social cohesion. In an attempt to pacify former disputes among political parties, the Constitution of 1886 led the elites to close ranks around allegiances operating since the colonial epoch.¹ During *La Regeneración*,² the Constitution was written and approved by a Conservative majority intertwining institutions of the state with the Catholic Church. The bond between the Catholic Church and public institutions was reinforced through a Concordat signed with the Vatican in 1887. The Conservative regime promoted the social control of morality through a dogmatic morality instilled by Catholic education. The support given by ecclesiastic leaders became fundamental for the ruling political regime. This was evident in the manner in which education became a mechanism to transmit ideological principles to maintain social order, and political

¹ For a study on the colonial roots of political divide in the 19th century, see Marixa Lasso, *Myths of Harmony: Race and Republicanism during the Age of Revolution, Colombia 1795-1831* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007). The author sustains that a myth of racial equity fostered rebellion against the Spanish crown, leading military leadership as autonomous initiatives for self-determination. She explores the form how in the 1830's, the myth of equity was progressively substituted by rejection and cultural marginalization, based on racial myths and separation from administrative, military and economic leadership. A comparative analysis of racial distinction in the late colonial epoch and during the tumultuous years after independence presents the form how myths were instrumentalized to gain autonomy whilst stereotypes were increasingly instilled in the population by elites after independence, in Aline Helg, *Liberty and Equality in Caribbean Colombia, 1770-1835* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

² *La Regeneración* (1885-1930) also known as the *Hegemonía Conservadora* (hegemonic rule of the Conservative Party) started after several civil wars removed the Liberal Party from power, leading to suppression of the Rionegro Constitution. The main leaders during *La Regeneración* transition were Rafael Nuñez and Miguel Antonio Caro, who shared the presidency during the first fifteen year of hegemony. I will refer to the political moment as the *Hegemonía Conservadora*, and to the framework of morality and values instilled during the epoch as *La Regeneración*. The Rionegro Constitution (1863) organized the country along federalist administration, and promoted economic laissez-faire, and dismantled religious privileges in both education and land tenure. This Constitution characterized the so called *Olimpo Radical* (Radical Olympus), a Liberal dominated epoch (1863-1886) right before *La Regeneración*. During the *Olimpo Radical* each Department had its own Constitution, currency, and educational system, whilst the central government commanded a laicization of state affairs by expelling Jesuits from the country. Conservative staunch policies during *La Regeneración* were bound to reverse legislation that expropriated land in 'unproductive hands'. This policy also affected ecclesiastic groups that were the largest private landowner.

practices —such as elections and discourses— that led priests to exercise influence upon public opinion during electoral decisions in late 19th and early 20th centuries.³ In this section I will explore how education bolstered social control, and its influence in shaping political leadership. I argue that by studying politicians that were not part of the mainstream during *La Regeneración*, it is possible to understand how the Catholic Church imposed a pattern of morality that made it necessary for incoming leaders to promote similar approaches. I will focus on propositions for moral control made by politicians, and how violence became a tool for promoting political change. The cases of Rafael Uribe Uribe and Rafael Reyes will be presented as examples of how the regime restricted alternative options, bringing about political violence and disruptions in the bonds of obedience and authority that the leaders had with the population.⁴

1.1. THE CHURCH AND THE STATE

In the Constitution of 1886, it was established that public education was meant to be ‘organized and lead accordingly with the Catholic religion’,⁵ and implemented through ecclesiastic decisions instead of secular legislation. The Concordat established that ‘public institutions will be organized in conformity with the dogma and morality’ ruled by the Catholic Church. Its strict regulation was possible by a systematic ‘revision of the texts used in educative institutions’.

³ For studies on religious influence during *La Regeneración*, see Fernando Guillén, *La Regeneración: Primer Frente Nacional* (Bogotá: Carlos Valencia Editores, 1986), 45-49; Ana María Bidegáin, “El Debate Religioso en torno al Establecimiento de la Constitución de 1886,” *Texto y Contexto* 10 (1987): 169-174; for the relation between state and church, Alvaro Tirado Mejía sustains that the state was subjected to the church, whilst Miguel Urrego claims that the epoch was namely an example of a theocratic order, based on the imposition of the Church’s will and ideals upon civil government. Álvaro Tirado Mejía, *Aspectos Políticos del Primer gobierno de Alfonso López Pumarejo, 1934-1938* (Bogotá: Procultura, 1981), 382-386; Miguel Ángel Urrego, *La Creación de un Orden Teocrático durante La Regeneración* (Master Thesis, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1990), 4-9.

⁴ For studies on the early struggles for power between Liberals and Conservatives, that do not center on stereotypes and nationhood myths, see Helen Delpar, *Red Against Blue: The Liberal in Colombian politics, 1863-1899* (University of Alabama Press, 1981); Eduardo Posada-Carbo, “Elections and Civil Wars in Nineteenth-Century Colombia: The 1875 Presidential Campaign,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 26:3 (1994): 621-649; John Martz, “Party Elites and Leadership in Colombia and Venezuela,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 24: 1 (1992): 87-121; Helen Delpar, “Aspects of Liberal Factionalism in Colombia, 1875-1885,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 51:2 (1971): 250-274; Helen Delpar, “Road to Revolution: The Liberal Party of Colombia, 1886-1899,” *The Americas* 32:3 (1976):348-371. The works cited before regarding early racial distinctions are critical of these works for the rapid assumption of minimal autonomy among subaltern groups based on racial and cultural elements.

⁵ República de Colombia, *Constitución Política* 1886, Article 41.

Ecclesiastic authorities had the obligation to assess the quality of schools and universities, and uniformity of the material taught. This created a safe environment for ecclesiastic pedagogy. The ‘government will avoid that scientific, literature and other fields of instruction teach ideas that contradict the dogma, undermining respect and veneration due to the church’.⁶ An example was how civil affairs became ecclesiastic domain, including issuance of birth certificates, cemetery administration and registration of most public activity. For instance, citizenry had to be registered in local parishes, and marriages could only be valid if blessed by a Catholic priest. Most regulations contained in the Concordat persisted until the late 20th century, fostering subordination to ecclesiastic authorities. Although economic limitations were a hurdle for gaining access to an ecclesiastic education, it was one of the safest mechanisms for social mobility.⁷ Whilst elite families inculcated in their younger generations the importance of an ecclesiastic career, poor families envisioned for their offspring an opportunity to enter the ecclesiastic path in order to gain social status at the local level.⁸

The Catholic Church’s crucial influence in education bolstered binary separations in society. Among the most important distinctions —Liberals/Conservatives, whites/*mestizos*, rich/poor— the common link was the role played by each sector in maintaining moral principles in harmony with the religious dogma. These binaries were reflected in society in the relations of power and subordination. In the 19th century these distinctions also operated as a foundation for obedience to authority, generally observed as showing deference to what the Catholic Church regarded as

⁶ Concordato de Colombia con el Vaticano, *Conferencias Episcopales*, Bogotá: Editorial Seleccion, 1908-1953, 522-523. Article 13. Cited in James Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia: The Laureano Gómez Years, 1889-1965* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 451.

⁷ Social Mobility institutions such as the military were barely organized until the early 20th century, and it was regarded as marginal since the 19th century for its autocratic nature. See, Eduardo Pizarro, “La Profesionalización Militar en Colombia (1907 - 1944),” *Análisis Político* 1 (1987): 29-55. Saúl Rodríguez, “Aquí comienza la excelencia! Apuntes sobre la conscripción y democracia en la Colombia Contemporánea,” in *De Milicias Reales a Militares Contrainsurgentes: la Institución Militar en Colombia, Siglos XVIII al XXI*, ed. César Torres del Río (Bogotá: Editorial Universidad Javeriana, 2008). Military officials were excluded from access to an elite standing, making ecclesiastic education almost the unique effective mechanism for social mobility even for wealthy families. Families with privileges and connections had better chances to incorporate its members in the ecclesiastic elite.

⁸ José David Cortés, “Regeneración, Intransigencia y Régimen de Cristiandad,” *Historia Crítica* 15 (1997): 3-4.

legitimate and morally correct. Respect to authority was deeply embedded in principles of morality taught at schools. For instance, Catholic schools taught that ‘in the name of God’ children should ‘believe the truth, love what is good, admire what is pure, respect and love parent’s authority, being good and chaste, loving and forgiving mutually, maintaining good costumes and behaving well, being conscious, faithful and laborious’ avoiding ‘what is bad and corrupt’.⁹ The worldview offered in religious education was laden with such moral perceptions, and bolstered acrid relations to opposing values. Political leadership was closely intertwined to systems of value and patterns of morality. Throughout this research I will explore cases in the late 19th and 20th century. For the subject matter of this chapter, the Liberal Party embodied negative values contested by the Church. Liberalism was regarded as a dangerous ideology for the social stability and well-being, creating negative stereotypes.¹⁰

1.2 DIVIDE WITHOUT RULE: WARFARE AND POLITICS AT THE END OF 19TH CENTURY

During the *Hegemonía Conservadora*, political parties accommodated their forces and discourses to the Constitution of 1886. Nevertheless, such a juridical framework did not contribute to a fluid dialogue among elite sectors, promoting instead increasing isolation of the opposition and instability for the regime. By the mid-1890’s, the end of Rafael Nuñez and Miguel Antonio Caro’s presidential

⁹ Cited in *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰ Gloria Mercedes Arango, *La Mentalidad Religiosa en Antioquia, Prácticas y Discursos 1828-1885* (Medellín: Editorial Universidad Nacional, 1994). This book presents the links between regional ecclesiastic hierarchies, and discourses used to maintain power in society, based on an interesting methodology for discourse analysis in ecclesiastic archives. The author suggests that ‘The Catholic Church has been cautious to maintain popular religiosity under control (...) its apparatus, or institutional religiosity is paramount for social control, and includes or excludes popular religious manifestations in emergency in order to ensure what is coming from below’. This is a unique analysis of religious ritual practices in the early 19th and how liturgy, mass and priests’ homilies were bounded to bridge political and religious affairs as powerful mechanisms for social control.

terms revealed a crisis of leadership in the conservative party. Both leaders of *La Regeneración* left an institutional legacy to the nation, but could not avoid the fragmentation of Conservative unity.¹¹ The formation of an opposition sector within the Conservative Party was rooted in both economics and ideology. The flourishing of coffee production in the 1870's, increased both private benefits and public revenues generated after bonanza prices in 1880's that bolstered opposition sectors to pressure the regime for policies bound to protect coffee growers.¹² Prosperity benefited both Liberals and Conservatives who invested in what seemed the most suitable crop for international trade. The growing economic interest had an effect on the ideological foundations heralded by traditional parties, particularly in the policies required to protect economic activities. Charles Bergquist explains Conservative Party's factionalism as an outcome of increasing interest in capitalism inspired by laissez-faire economics.¹³ In fact, the Congressional majority pursued policies designed to debilitate the opposition —Liberal Party— regardless of growing disaffection even among Conservative entrepreneurs. However, plummeting coffee prices pushed coffee entrepreneur's interests —generally connected by the economic realities of production but not necessarily by political proclivities— to advocate central government policies oriented toward stabilizing the monetary chaos, regulating foreign currency exchange rates, and reconsidering taxes imposed on the coffee trade and the import of commodities.¹⁴

¹¹ The Conservative party was divided in two main sectors. The Nationalist Conservatives, formed by the ruling groups ideologically hard-line against any opportunity to Liberal Party members to access the Congress, bureaucracy, or expansion of their economic activities. The Historic Conservatives' faction instead was committed to a more flexible adoption of the ideology envisioning benefits of protectionist policies for economic growth to foster internal growth via capital reinvestment in industrial production. The Historic Conservative faction was formed by landowners and urban leaders that also envisioned coffee as the product to ameliorate public finances. They considered economic volatility brought by unsound policies 'the most dangerous disease for the nation' because 'a political economy should be decided in the benefit of the nation and no in retaliation to the Liberal Party'. Salvador Camacho Roldán, "Sociología: Discurso en Sesión Solemne de la Universidad," in *Escritos Varios: Estudios Sociales, Intereses Americanos, Agricultura Colombiana* (Bogotá: Librería Colombiana, 1892), 648.

¹² For an economic and political analysis of the formation of Colombian oligarchy and the coffee elite in the mid-19th century, see Marco Palacios, *Coffee in Colombia, 1850-1970: an Economic, Social, and Political History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 25-54, 77-99.

¹³ Charles Bergquist, *Coffee and Conflict in Colombia, 1886-1910* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1978), 51.

¹⁴ Coffee growers invested their earnings in the expansion/ improvement of coffee production, and the commercialization of imported commodities for urban consumption. The importance of opposition's formation within the Conservative Party was the growth of pressure from sectors organized around specific productive activities. The opposition among Conservatives to *La Regeneración*, and their alliance with moderate Liberals was the birth of contemporary *gremios* (guilds).

The central government dismissed the claims. Instead, it approved taxation for coffee producers —ranging between 1.2 and 1.6 pesos per each 60kg sack¹⁵—, ignored claims for currency control and inflationary emissions of banknotes, and maintained the monopolies in production and commercialization of tobacco. It was a catastrophic move for the burgeoning sector that faced rough challenges.¹⁶ In 1895-1896, reactions from Conservatives and Liberals were immediate, brewing political uncertainty in both the legislative and executive branches. When coffee elites saw their wealth and prospects of profitability decline, opposition to the regime seemed an acceptable option in the light of common economic interest. In 1897's presidential elections, Liberals and Historic Conservatives failed to create lasting alliances around a leader against Nationalist Conservatives. The regime —dominated both politically and ideologically by Nationalist Conservatives— set in motion the efficient electoral machinery built since 1886 that layered the foundations for the party's hegemony. In that form, the Nationalist Conservatives secured the election of their candidate, setting the opposition and Nationalist Conservatives in clear economic and political disadvantage at the Congress defining economic policies.

Both Conservative ideologues and Liberal opposition members lacked notable leaders able to accommodate economic policy whilst maintaining stability for growth. Scholarly research demonstrates how modernization started to require reforms in the economic administration that clashed with religious values that constituted an obstacle for growth and productivity.¹⁷ In fact, during congressional debates Nationalist Conservatives portrayed Liberals and Historic Conservatives using pejorative stereotypes exploiting private life practices and social origin to undermine the importance of their economic activities. For instance, in a congressional session Jorge Holguin, part of the Nationalist Conservative ruling majority in Congress, criticized the influence of

¹⁵ Bergquist, *Coffee*, 56.

¹⁶ The effects of these policies in coffee export sector, in Palacios, *Coffee in Colombia*, 121-140.

¹⁷ See, Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875-2002* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 214-233; Salomón Kalmanovitz, *Economía y Nación: Una Breve Historia de Colombia* (Bogotá: Editorial Norma, 2003), 177-187; José Antonio Ocampo, *Colombia y la Economía Mundial, 1810-1930* (Bogotá: Siglo XXI Editores, 1984), 38-42.

foreign cultures on Liberals and entrepreneurial Historic Conservatives. These were seen as ‘an aristocracy that lives in the midst of luxury, constantly traveling around Europe’.¹⁸ For the ruling Nationalist Conservative faction, they were exposed to a vicious lifestyle and ideas that deformed Catholic values, promoting many elite members to be pointed out as cosmopolitan Liberals prone to sinful thoughts and illicit life. Entrepreneurial visionaries and Liberals were reduced to minimal participation in both Congress and bureaucratic administration. Rafael Uribe Uribe, the single Liberal Party member in Congress, responded to such criticism saying that coffee traders traveled ‘with money honorably earned in arduous labor, not with the proceeds from extortion and graft’.¹⁹ Debates characterized by mutual accusations delayed measures to stop the effects of externalities on the coffee sector. The Liberal Party, almost entirely stripped of its power in the central government, was impeded from proposing initiatives to ameliorate the looming economic chaos. Most Liberal leaders expelled from government returned to private entrepreneurial activities. The fact that Historic Conservatives and Liberals saw possession of the presidency as the key strategy to reversing or, at least minimizing, catastrophic economic policies, led to a fierce dispute over designating a new president in 1897. The aftermath of the dispute over the designation of the president in 1897 was the radicalization of the opposition fed by the increasing discontent with the Nationalist Conservative leadership. *La Regeneración* required regional client-patron networks that responded harmoniously to electoral mandates from Bogotá. The aftermath was the opposition’s radicalization, and the funneling of their ideological discomfort through the formation of groups bound to promote acts of violence. Vacillations in the ruling elite responsible for selecting

¹⁸ Cited in Herderson, *Modernization*, 89. For an interesting study on provincialism in Colombia, and its effects on political leadership and intellectual production, in Gustavo Cobo Borda, *La Tradición de la Pobreza* (Bogotá: Carlos Valencia Editores, 1980). The author argues that Colombia produced bland critical trends of thought namely for the regime’s reluctance to open to the world, at the time that cultural production in Europe and USA was overwhelming. He compares the country’s elite to Spanish ultra-religious influence in academic spheres across the 19th and early 20th century. See similar arguments in the analysis by the 1930’s socialist leader Ignacio Torres Giraldo, “Introduction,” *Los Inconformes: Historia de la Rebelión de las Masas en Colombia*, vol. 1 (Bogotá: Editorial Latina, 1973); German Arciniegas, *El Estudiante de la Mesa Redonda* (Bogotá: Plaza & Janes Editores, 1982) originally published in the early 1930’s.

¹⁹ Cited in Bergquist, *Coffee*, 55.

presidential candidates enabled the formation of armed factions that redefined traditional electoral disputes in bloodshed. In addition to this, the previously symbolic use of harsh criticism laden with moral condemnations that emanated from the Catholic Church toward the opposition underwent a consolidation within the political discourse. From the late 19th century Colombian public life was engulfed in a downwards spiral of violence that ushered in the Thousand Days civil war.²⁰

1.3 OUTSIDER PALADINS OF MORALS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: RAFAEL URIBE URIBE

The analysis of outsider²¹ politicians will offer a general perspective of leadership crisis and how alternative political chiefs built authority within both the traditional parties and society. After military participation in civil wars Rafael Uribe Uribe (Liberal) and Rafael Reyes (Conservative) entered top political positions during the *Hegemonía Conservadora*. They were entrepreneurs committed to enlarging their wealth. They had a successful career in the top echelons of political parties climbing the rungs of the political ladder often without regard to ideological classifications or partisan allegiances. The unconventional political positions they occupied are useful for understanding the breaking of traditional relations of obedience and authority and how they influenced national politics during the Thousand Days civil war (1899-1902), and immediately after during a hiatus that enabled a national recovery after the secession of Panama. It also sheds light on

²⁰ This civil war was the largest during the first century of independence in Colombia. For an insightful analysis of the conflict, see Gonzalo Sánchez and Mario Aguilera, *Memoria de un País en Guerra: Los Mil Días, 1899-1902*. (Bogotá: Planeta, 2001); in this work the authors reconstruct narratives of the conflict from rural the points of view, studying particularly factions organized by partisan leaders despite minimal popular representation in the system. This critical assessment shed light upon the regime's fragmentary nature. For a study of intellectual circles and its influence in the political imaginaries of the elite during the conflict, see: Miguel Ángel Urrego, *Intelectuales, Estado y Nación en Colombia: de la Guerra de los Mil Días a la Constitución de 1991* (Bogotá: Universidad Central-DIUC-Siglo del hombre Editores, 2002), 52-82. In this work the author establishes continuity in the conditions that shaped leadership in opposition to insurgent alternative political struggle. For the author, the aftermath was reflected in policies for national reconstruction that disenfranchised the vast majority of the population.

²¹ Here I will consider outsiders, those politicians playing either a marginal role in mainstream institutions and decision making, or those whose ideas do not represent a dogmatic standpoint or institutionalized schemas for popular indoctrination. The cases of Rafael Uribe Uribe and Rafael Reyes are significant since they emerged from the sidelines during *La Regeneración*, and their thought never reached a systematic doctrine. Their ideas became influential, particularly after the end of the Thousand Days civil conflict, for economic recovery. Their importance was also for a moral corollary in their ideas, and how they persist in social memory as marginalized heroes, despite official history diminishing their height. It is necessary to mention that leaders fostering patterns of morality as outsiders generated cult-like forms of reverence that in this dissertation will be distinguished as sects, because of their non-mainstream condition.

the reverence to leaders that, despite not belonging to the political mainstream, fostered patterns of morality widely accepted by popular sectors.

Rafael Uribe Uribe, was born in the municipality of Valparaiso, southern Antioquia, and was part of a family that undertook agricultural enterprises —some successful, others disastrous— in their *hacienda* during successive economic booms of quinine, tobacco, and coffee. He completed his education in Medellín, the capital of the department, and swiftly became attached to the military defending the Liberal regime from a conservative insurrection in 1875. By the 1870's he had already taught law, contributed articles to political journals, and wrote extensive treatises on political economy, morality and ideological affairs. As a designated diplomat in Brazil in the early 1880's he studied coffee production, contributing to innovative strategies for coffee enterprises and furthering agricultural alternatives that he initially implemented at his own *hacienda* 'Neerlandia'.

Although the combination of military and intellectual activities made him a dynamic political leader, capable of attracting people to his side in war and peace, the ruling elite, —particularly Bogotá's Nationalist Conservative sector— refused his participation in electoral campaigns and limited his influence in the Congress. In reminiscence, Laureano Gomez²² mentioned how he attended Rafael Uribe Uribe's congressional debates whilst studying in Bogotá. He admired his speeches and considered him the best orator in early 20th century. Laureano Gomez' esteem for Rafael Uribe Uribe can be explained because he was also considered by the elite as an outsider, lacking a lustrous political *casta* (caste). Years later Laureano Gómez became president, and one of the best orators in Colombia, using skills honed during debates with his elite companions in school, who saw Rafael Uribe Uribe as an undesirable politician isolated by the powerful sector of

²² Laureano Gomez was a conservative politician from Boyacá province, born in 1889 in a humble family, and often considered the most radical right wing politician in the epoch of *La Violencia* (1948-1953). He reached the national Presidency in 1949. His political ambitions were displayed early whilst studying at the Jesuitical school 'Colegio San Bartolome', when he attended public congressional debates. See Herderson, *Modernization*, 31

Nationalist Conservatives.²³ Like Jorge Eliécer Gaitán and Laureano Gómez in the 1930's and 1940's, Rafael Uribe Uribe captivated the masses in the late 19th century, and silenced the ruling elite with his charisma. In addition to oratory, moral propositions for shaping society were additional features used by politicians climbing the slippery rungs of Colombian's system of authority. Before approaching this aspect, it is necessary to present Rafael Uribe Uribe's thought intertwined moral principles related to labor, productivity and political liberalism.

After the *Olimpo Radical*²⁴ he was briefly jailed due to his opposition to the Conservative government. This capacity to stand out in different fields gave him legitimacy amongst the lower and upper classes to proudly command a political position and defend it with dignity, before the Thousand Days civil war. The Conservative regime accused him of sedition for the 'vicious effects' his speeches and lectures caused in Medellín's youth, disrupting its orderly society. After the Thousand Days civil war, he was excluded from the Congress although his discourses were recognized as a prominent Liberal voice, virtuous scholar and talented fighter. Rafael Uribe Uribe established a dialogue between the elite and lower sectors increasing his regional allegiance. Despite repeated military defeats, he was appointed for public office after the political crisis during the Panama secession.

It is important to highlight the influence played by his writings, speeches and discourses shaping moral attitudes among Liberal partisans. The first of such elements was his enthusiasm for traveling. Often exiled for short periods of time, Rafael Uribe Uribe's travels were alternatives after political defeats. Traveling gave him a solid education and a pragmatic comparative scope. Such cosmopolitanism was rejected by the Catholic Church that accused him of being a mason and

²³ Ibid, 31-33.

²⁴ For a synthetic analysis of religion, politics and economics during the *Olimpo Radical*, see, Fernán González, "Iglesia y Estado desde la Convección de Rionegro hasta el Olimpo Radical 1863-1878," *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura* 15 (1988): 91-102.

atheist.²⁵ The second aspect —his anticlerical perspectives— served as a shield for such accusations. For instance, he considered that the strict attachment to moral rules determined by the religious institutions blocked the progress of the nation, contributing to a decline in national productivity. Finally, his staunch anticlerical attacks against ecclesiastic authorities helped to launch a moral framework for Colombian society. The main aspects of his propositions revolved around values learned through education. Education constituted the core of his confrontational discourses against values nurtured by Conservatives since 1886.²⁶ He promoted the secularization of the Universidad Nacional, which he considered to be ‘a scientific, modern, evolutionary, unifying, and public institution oriented towards action’.²⁷ In 1909 he proposed substantial innovations to the public educational system. This was a direct criticism of the Catholic education promoted during *La Regeneración*, which he proposed directly to a hostile Congress used to innuendo when addressing political opponents.

In Rafael Uribe Uribe’s proposal for a new educational setting, references to the influence of science and culture were inherent criticisms of Conservative morality exposed as ‘careless of the intrinsic conditions in the country’ since the education ‘does not work neither in the specialization nor the adaptation of abstract principles to the particularities of Colombian milieu’.²⁸ Values fostered during *La Regeneración* were hand in hand with 1887’s Concordat, and predominantly used abstract metaphysical reflections. In other words, reflection required orientation by ecclesiastic representatives, otherwise the individual was jeopardized by sinful thoughts inculcated by secular thinkers.²⁹ If the Constitution of 1886 commanded that education had to be religious, and the

²⁵ Ivonne Suárez Pinzón, “La Construcción Histórica y Literaria de Dos Personajes que Solo son Uno: el Famoso, pero un Tanto Desconocido Rafael Uribe Uribe, Arquetipo del Coronel Aureliano Buendía,” *Revista Facultad de Ciencias Humanas* 1 (1977): 158.

²⁶ For a compilation of his political discourses, see Rafael Uribe Uribe, *Documentos Políticos* (Maracaibo: Imprenta Americana, 1901).

²⁷ Rafael Uribe Uribe, *Discursos: Labor Parlamentaria* (Medellín: Imprenta Departamental, 1980), 343.

²⁸ Rafael Uribe Uribe, *Obras selectas*, vol. I (Medellín: Imprenta Departamental, 1979), 351-353.

²⁹ Cited in Helwar Figueroa, *Tradicionalismo, Hispanismo y Corporativismo. Una Aproximación a las Relaciones Non-Sanctas entre Religión y Política en Colombia (1930-1952)* (Bogotá: Editorial Boaventuriana, 2009), 64-65. Figueroa explains how during the 19th Century Neo-Thomistic thought was followed by parish priests who used Jaime Balmes’ texts as their main source for scientific interpretation of the Catholic dogma. Balmes was a monarchist Spanish priest cited often by the early intransigent conservatives in Europe and Latin

Concordat instilled values and moral principles ruling society, Catholic morals were legitimized by the alliance between law and education. This alliance between institutions of power and knowledge was quintessential to galvanize national unity. In other words, any private or governmental agent contradicting Catholic values endangered social stability exposing the nation to sin and instability.³⁰ The Church condemned Rafael Uribe Uribe's writings and speeches regardless of the actual issues affecting the population such as the national tendency to alcoholism. This tendency, which manifested itself in heavy drinking by the general population, had been customary in towns and cities since the epoch of Spanish colonial rule. In the late 19th century, the correlation between drunkenness and political homilies during Sunday's liturgy, made the people more susceptible to buying into the messages propagated by the Catholic Church, which influenced their votes during elections.³¹

The Church downplayed such criticism since national revenues depended on the state's monopoly on alcohol production, and public investment in education had to go directly to ecclesiastic vaults. Actually, the church used its moralist leverage to promote punishment for consumers of *chicha*, a traditional indigenous fermented beverage made from corn that escaped the state's regulation. The relationship between alcoholism and moral decay was a central argument in Rafael Uribe Uribe's debate with Catholic moralists campaigning against his participation in politics simply because he was a Liberal. Rafael Uribe Uribe went to the extent of writing an essay named

America. He said that 'The truth is the reality of things. When we know what they are, we reach the truth; otherwise, we fall into error. Knowing that there is God we know the truth because actually god does exist (...) The truth in every science is intransigent and intolerant by its very nature; if it is tolerant it is no longer truth but doubt and lies'. See also, Jaime Balmes, *Escritos Políticos* (Madrid: Imprenta de la Sociedad de Operarios del Mismo Arte-Universidad Complutense, 1847).

³⁰ This explains the reluctance to accept a free operation of Jesuits in the Country throughout the 19th and early 20th century. See, Urrego, *Intelectuales*, 74-79, 93-96. The pragmatism and educational commitment of their religious order was only allowed to create intellectual influence after the 1930's. See also, José David Cortés, 'La Expulsión de los Jesuitas de la Nueva Granada como Clave de la Lectura del Ideario Liberal Colombianos de Medios del Siglo XIX', *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura* 30 (2003).

³¹ In Colombia, like in every country in Latin America, elections are organized on Sundays, and it has been traditional to vote right after attending the Catholic mass. For a study in social segregation, political use of stereotypes and alcoholism, see the research on politics and chicha by Marta Saade Granados and Oscar Iván Calvo, *La ciudad en Cuarentena. Chicha, Patología Social y Profilaxis* (Bogotá: Ministerio de Cultura, 2002). For an study on alcoholism, religiosity and its effects in political practices since the colonial epoch in Gilma Mora de Tovar, *Aguardiente y Conflicto Sociales en la Nueva Granada, siglo XVIII* (Bogotá, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1988).

'*Liberalism is not a sin*', in a diatribe against conservative intellectuals then fascinated by journalism and the incorporation of newspapers.³² During *La Regeneración*, conservative intellectuals developed the idea that liberalism was a serious threat for the society, in a form of eschatology that focused on the hatred and fears for its ideologues. Whilst the pulpit served to make public negative conceptions about liberalism, journalism became a tribune for elite and educated members of the upper classes in urban settings.

An example of how the ideological stereotypes were contested in the late 19th and early 20th century was Rafael Uribe Uribe's effort to deter slender appreciations about Liberals embedded in the instructional material used at schools. His debate was against dangerous stereotypes taught at religious institutions, showing how liberal values were not antagonistic to Catholic principles. By proposing a new set of values —progress, work, discipline, respect for the law— desirable for Colombian progress, he shifted the focus of ideological divide away from moral connotations towards pragmatic strategies to improve social productivity. Breaking truisms taught at schools and embedded in the public mentality, he attempted to drive public discussions to highlight the negative effects of political intolerance. His initiative to promote upward mobility broadening the public sphere through education clashed against the prevalent religious principles of morality. His charismatic leadership, however, contributed to gather Liberal partisans around principles of communality, labor integration, discipline, and Catholicism.

The social values instilled in the public by Rafael Uribe Uribe can be explained by considering two elements of his discourse: education and top down socialism. Both were intertwined

³² The origin of the debate was the publication of Felix Sarda y Salvany, and its use as the main source of arguments and derogatory accusations against Liberals used by the conservative elites of Latin America. In Colombia, entrenched in conservative thinking was the influence of Spanish intellectuals involved in the defense of both monarchy and Catholic values. See, Felix Sardá y Salvany, *El Liberalismo es Pecado: Cuestiones Candentes* (Bogotá: Imprenta Torres Amaya, 1896). In the late 19th century the Rafael Carrasquilla, *Ensayo Sobre la Doctrina Liberal* (Bogotá: Imprenta de Luis Holguin, 1899) had reached three editions in less than five years in a country where literacy was the privilege of a few. Rafael Carrasquilla was a high-rank priest in Bogotá, engaged directly in the education of the ruling elite at the Jesuitical Colegio San Bartolomé., where the elite studied. His book was a close adaptation of Felix Sardá y Salvany ideas. See, Henderson, *Modernity*, 64.

in his conception of a path towards progress. In one of his debates for educational reform he claimed that 'It would be convenient that the University becomes the center of intellectual life and moral orientation, and among its functions it is included the uprooting of negative influences that can hinder economic development at provinces'.³³In his vision, education should be public and ingrain values promoting competitiveness and growth. The combined elements should subsidize structural deficiencies of the regime by relying on the abilities of the people served by social and economic development: 'I'm far from considering the state as infallible (...) Although positioned at the top endowed with power, its obligation is to maintain an equilibrium between the clashing aspirations of social classes, in order to avoid that one sacrifice the other'.³⁴In other words, there was neither a privileged social group called to lead the process, nor cultural distinctions operated strategically as values that provide status and *mutatis mutandis* sustain power relations throughout the nation.

It is interesting to notice that Rafael Uribe Uribe's idea of people's sovereignty depended on such balance, axed in education because 'to talk about popular sovereignty in a country of ignorant people is a pure abstraction'.³⁵ He also considered that ignorance was not only promoted by the educational institutions, but also by journalism. He thought that journalists have a social role, but it was hampered by official spokesman who systematically concealed truth. In his opinion, journalists should stand 'beyond public assemblies' as a high honor for its people, because a journalist is 'the one called to establish checks on power; the one that better communicates authorities' excesses against the citizenry; the one that places itself in balance with law to oppose the ruling classes; (...)

³³ Uribe, *Obras Selectas*, 353.

³⁴ Ibid, 33-36

³⁵ Cited in Ivonne Suárez Pinzón, *Rafael Uribe Uribe, Personalidad, Vigencia y Proyección Cultural* (Medellín: Edinalco, 1990), 162.

the press is an effective beacon shedding light upon the scientific and moral order; for all this it must function without any obstacle'.³⁶

The role of education relied upon individual initiatives framed by values such as a strict discipline, love to labor, pride for manual activities, entrepreneurship, and the driving need to excel at any endeavor. His moral convictions relied on the pragmatism of such values, and included a combative standpoint in defense of liberal principles and a practical sense of life. For instance, by suggesting that coffee cultivation required a particular type of rubber to grow along the plantations providing shadow for the plants, he was envisioning the growth of the product's market internationally and how Colombia could compete with Brazilian rubber plantations. Nevertheless, that was an unheard proposal submitted by the time his works were pointed out as subversive. His rubber production plan was eroded by Conservative representatives of the clan Arana, a family that monopolized rubber production. They deterred peasants from cultivating rubber trees along with coffee plants, and banned any initiative that 'follows the dubious suggestions of an atheist'.³⁷

In the same vein, his position against the United States complicated his relationship with the upper crust represented in the National Congress. He denounced United States' policies in 1896 as despotism from a 'colossal that absorbs all around itself'; the Monroe Doctrine and the looming issue of Cuban and Puerto Rican secession from Spain at the end of 19th century were part and parcel of its increasing regional influence.³⁸ A few years after, when the disputes among Colombian elite factions led to the Thousand Days civil war, and Panama gained recognition as an independent nation sponsored by the United States' expansionist strategy, most of the elite reacted to condemn the imperialist inference using the same tone of Rafael Uribe Uribe six years before. The ominous offense promoted more remorse and commiseration than actual decisions leading towards national

³⁶ Rafael Uribe Uribe, "Restricción de la Prensa. Discurso y Parte Política," *El Liberal*, January 28, 1911, 2-3.

³⁷ In relation to Rafael Uribe Uribe's work on rubber production, see '*Victimas de la Casa Arana*' cited in Suárez, "La Construcción,".

³⁸ Cited in Bergquist, *Coffee*, 98.

unity. Political debates were an opportunity for Rafael Uribe Uribe to remind the ruling elite at the National Congress about the inherently immoral and regrettable hatred that inspired public administrators. He suggested that they were obeying orthodox positions to dismiss his cautionary claims when he predicted the catastrophic secession of Panama.³⁹

In fact, Rafael Uribe Uribe profited from his tarnished name among Conservatives to turn the tide on his favor. An early condemnation as immoral and socialist allowed him to turn the accusations into an opportunity to explain his political platform:

Instead of rejecting it, I accept the accusation as a State Socialist and claim it from now on as a title. I am not a partisan of socialism from the bottom up that denies property, attacks capital, erodes religion, subverts and corrupts the legal regime in shameful campaigning. I declare that I profess a top down socialism for the multiplicity of the State's functions (...) The procedural foundations are based on practical initiatives, not the denial of dreams. The goal is to leave all moral and religious truths standing, the constitution of family, the need for government. Neither property is attacked in itself, or equality impossible. The rebellion against the established order is not preached. The socialism pretends only a new political economy. The social problem is entirely economic and does not require solutions beyond that domain.⁴⁰

It is necessary to notice that based on 1886's Constitution, the Colombian regime's stability depended on the balance between national sovereignty and a moral foundation organized both individually and collectively. By the 1900's both aspects were in crisis. First, the national sovereignty was broken in a moment in which society was exhausted after civil war. Second, the drift in leadership led outsiders to become central actors in political affairs, namely Rafael Uribe Uribe and Rafael Reyes. Rafael Uribe Uribe proposed political principles that seemed sound for reorganizing both economics and politics. He was an unlikely leader from the elite's point of view. His relation to the elites was tainted by their strategies to deter leaders from gaining support, and his capacity to persuade local fighters to join his insurgent army and fight for liberalism. At the core of this ambiguity was the regime's deficient grasp on a national military, barely institutionalized during the

³⁹ Cited in Henderson, *Modernization*, 42.

⁴⁰ Uribe, *Obras Selectas*, 29-46.

19th century.⁴¹ Violence was inherent to political change in Colombia when used as a strategic mechanism in the clientele/patron system of allegiance and subordination.

In fact, such violence turned against Rafael Uribe Uribe in 1914 when a couple of drunken artisans attacked him with axes on his way to a meeting in the Congress. This *magnicidio* (assassination of notable politicians)⁴² silenced the only voice that the opposition had allowed to express divergent points of view during *La Regeneración*. For the elite, the benefit of this *magnicidio* was the consolidation of a Congress with a minority of moderate Liberals prone to submit to the regime and its religious morality, and the limitation of entrepreneurial leaders in the national and regional sphere. For the disenfranchised population, *magnicidio* represented the end of hope for gaining representation in mainstream politics. Reverence to outsider politicians has been marginal to the symbolic rituals of civil power, making the cult of personality to resemble the clandestine nature of a sect. I argue, in the final chapters of this dissertation that the reverence to Camilo Torres within the ELN resembles also a sect, because of its marginality and incapacity of his thought to transcend and become the mainstream. A similar situation happened to Rafael Uribe Uribe and his ideals. If he had a central role in a strictly conservative environment, it was due to the elites' setbacks that delegitimized their rule after the Thousand Days civil war, and the transitional presidency of Rafael Reyes (1904-1909). Even though his ideas were not applied, he was appointed as a plenipotentiary Minister, not for the content of his ideals but for the clairvoyance of his endeavors.⁴³

⁴¹ The military was composed by privately driven interest, coerced peasants subtracted from the agricultural production, or indebted sharecroppers whose chances in looting were greater than any cash crop in their small plots. Neither conscription represented a guarantee for social climb, nor did military institutions represent a secured source of income. For an analysis of the fighting forces during 19th century's civil wars, Gonzalo Sánchez claims that military leadership in partisan factions was almost exclusive for elite members, and the decline of their leadership caused an intense politicization of popular sectors, particularly peasants in the early 20th century. By the 1940's, at the brink of the civil conflict generally known as *La Violencia*, Elite's leadership was in shambles compared to the scenario fifty years before. See, Gonzalo Sánchez, "Los Estudios Sobre la Violencia: Balance y Perspectivas," in *Pasado y Presente de la Violencia en Colombia*, ed. Gonzalo Sánchez and Ricardo Peñaranda (Bogotá: CEREC, 1991).

⁴² In chapter 3, I will explore the form how political violence and *magnicidio* became an important strategy for the regime to suppress opposition and inhibit the formation of leadership, severing alternative forms of allegiances and obedience as well.

⁴³ Henderson, *Modernization*, 79.

1.4 **BREAKING ALLEGIANCE: AUTHORITY AND OBEDIENCE DURING RAFAEL REYES' “*BELLE ÉPOCHE*”**

Ambitious to increase his wealth, Rafael Reyes engaged in coffee production without knowing the ruin that was haunting Colombia's destiny on the eve of 20th century. Born in Boyacá, a province in the central mountainous region normally recognized as an obedient extension of Bogotá's elite, he was a Conservative without educative credentials to boast the highest office that he assumed in the middle of national debacle in 1904. Like Rafael Uribe Uribe, intense traveling as an official representative and for personal business made him a man of practical affairs. He participated in two civil wars, which gained him popularity particularly for his opportune arrival to drive Conservative forces to defeat their Liberal political foe. He was also famous for the enthusiasm he transmitted to troops that historically had been engaged into warfare by force. That was notable for the Conservative regime that envisioned Rafael Uribe Uribe's experience with provincial people as crucial in order to break the Liberal's efforts to disaggregate national unity. One of the Liberal Party members' strategies was to foster secessionist movements within regional elites, by debilitating linkages between bureaucrats in forgotten provinces and the central government. Initially working for personal business in the southern province of Cauca, Rafael Reyes was sent in 1885, before *La Regeneración*, to fight and regain popular and elite allegiance in Panama. Such success made him an economic consul for Colombian business until 1895 when a Liberal rebellion made his presence necessary to retake military leadership, with successes that enlarged the shadow he cast upon weaker leaders—mainly intellectual politicians—in the Conservative Party.

His stature was obstructed, however, by the ruling Nationalist Conservative sector. They sent him abroad on commissions, a common practice to keep away insidious players in the political game. However, his intermittent presence in Colombia never hindered his power in the provinces. It was a combination of other situations that kept him aside on the political landscape by the end of

19th century. First, leaders in Bogotá had an interest in keeping him away from the Historic Conservatives, which was a major reason why he served as a diplomat on commissions abroad. Second, the regime was very reluctant to accept a leader formed out of academic institutions and military exploits, particularly during the political scramble around presidential election in 1897. Finally, personal affairs compelled him to return to private business in order to address his waning wealth due to economic drift in Colombia. This last factor triggered fears among the Nationalist Conservatives who considered that he might be attracted to join petitions from Liberals and Historic Conservatives. In fact, as Charles Bergquist explains in detail, the arrangements of the elite in 1896-1897 to preserve the ideals of *La Regeneración* positioned Rafael Reyes as an instrumental player in the legitimation of José Marroquín's candidacy during the election in 1897.⁴⁴ This instrumentalization by Nationalist Conservatives strengthened his bond to dissident sectors, including moderate Liberals.

The electoral results reflected the capacity of the Nationalist Conservative —majority in the Congress— to fraudulently manipulate the system and accommodate the province's result as necessary for maintaining bureaucratic control of the central administration. For Rafael Reyes the electoral outcome also showed how the Historic Conservative's claims for sound economic policies were fair. The inconsistent emission of banknotes in 1890's was affecting the productive elites at the price of unproductive bureaucrats without a positive outcome in national investment and taxation.⁴⁵ Coffee prices plunged affecting his private interests. Additionally, Colombia's international image was that of an indebted country where the reinvestment of public revenues in infrastructure was uncertain if not nonexistent. Rafael Reyes saw international trust in the Colombian political caste wane rapidly. These factors made him to move from simply a moderate support to Historic

⁴⁴ The results of 1897 elections were the following. Manuel Sanclemente, 1606; José Marroquín, 1693 votes; Rafael Reyes received just 121, Whilst Foción Soto and Miguel Samper, Liberal candidates, received only 324 and 318 respectively. For a detailed analysis of 1897's elections, see Bergquist, *Coffee*, 62-88.

⁴⁵ About the economic crisis, taxes addressed coffee productive farms increasing the sector's instability; See Palacios, *Coffee*, 130-134; Bergquist, *Coffee*, 52-56, 60-62.

Conservatives, to become the faction's leader. His loyalty to central orders from the Conservative Direction was broken in the outburst of 1899's civil war when Rafael Reyes, 'the conqueror of the impossible' rejected orders from the Defense Minister in Bogotá who called him to lead the fight for their cause. 'I'm not a pump for putting out fire' was his answer.⁴⁶ His response was not unexpected. Rafael Reyes was a former presidential candidate vanquished in elections clouded by fraud in provinces that celebrated his nomination, hero of former civil wars on the side of the winners, owner of a wealth earned amidst personal sacrifices,⁴⁷ and supported by popular alliances at the local level.⁴⁸

His disobedience can be interpreted as an early symptom of the crisis in the traditional patterns of political authority, and the liaisons at the local/regional level with both partisan factions prone to participate in civil wars, and electoral barons. It is important to notice that even as Rafael Reyes severed partisan bonds of allegiance to the elite in Bogotá, he supported initiatives oriented toward maintaining the Party's control of the executive and Congress. The effect of authority's perturbation was likely to bring onto the scene a brutal warfare debased from ideological principles, due to the lack of widely recognized regional authorities.⁴⁹ I argue that political violence was product

⁴⁶ Henderson, *Modernization*, 54.

⁴⁷ Rafael Reyes lost the mobility in one of his arms due to a tropical disease. His wife also was affected by successive diseases that led to her death before the Thousand Days civil war erupted. Cited in Bergquist, *Coffee*, 60.

⁴⁸ For instance, in a discourse pronounced in Santa Marta in front of the local commercial elite, Rafael Reyes —before making a detailed analysis of the resources to exploit in the region and a report of economic growth during his government— excused himself for how he approached his political supporters as instruments for warfare by 1895, suggesting that it was part of the wrong attitude omnipresent by the epoch that led to the Thousand Days civil war. Rafael Reyes, *Misión de Rafael Reyes Presidente Titular de la República a los Departamentos de la Costa Atlántica y Antioquia* (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 1908), 86.

⁴⁹ See, Sánchez, "Los Estudios," 37; see also, Gonzalo Sánchez and Donny Meertens, *Bandits, Peasants and Politics: The Case of 'La Violencia' in Colombia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001). For regional studies of *La Violencia*, see Mary Roldán, *A Sangre y Fuego: La Violencia en Antioquia, Colombia, 1946-1953* (Bogotá: ICAHN-Colciencias, 2003); Carlos Miguel Ortiz, *Estado y Subversión en Colombia: La Violencia en el Quindío Años 50* (Bogotá: CIDER, 1986). This assertion on political violence and authority sheds light on scholarly research that establishes top-down and bottom up explanations of violence. I consider that scholarly research overlook leadership and authority in a detailed analysis. For instance, Gonzalo Sánchez' analysis on insurgent is based on the argument that during the Thousand Days civil war, both regime and opposition formed irregular military forces through death threats on peasant communities, land-related debts, or plain coercion. This mechanism was the corollary of rural relations of production, based on the *hacienda* system and client-patron personal relations. These factors caused minimal popular interest in political affiliation, but the tendency to articulate irregular forces to bring about political change continued until the late 20th century. Elite leadership of insurgent forces in provinces weakened in the first half of 20th century. This fostered popular obedience to oligarchic requirements increasingly dependent on electoral mechanisms. Regional systems of suffrage linked local authorities —*caciques and electoral barons*— by sponsoring their political careers, and increasing their wealth. When the economic liaison was disrupted in 1948 (beginning of *La Violencia*), electoral barons had

of a new balance between authority and obedience, no longer between electoral *caciques* and elites in Bogotá, but between local leaders and entrepreneurial sectors that were decimated by Nationalist Conservative policies since the late 19th century. At the center of this unstable balance of forces were the interests of embryonic guilds, who held power momentarily in the 1904-1909 hiatus during the *Hegemonía Conservadora*, and layered the foundations for economic modernization in an acrid conservative context.

My dissertation is an attempt to explore violence —or leaders that enticed people to participate in violent struggle— by connecting obedience and authority, and how early leaders fostered business and electoral power whilst standing on marginal doctrines that justified economic development through alternative systems of values. The moral foundation of the Colombian love affair with political violence can be traced back by studying values heralded by those outside the political mainstream. Rafael Reyes had bolstered allegiances throughout his life, and his distance from the countryside in the late 1890's disrupted his linkages with new generations dissolving the older relations of patronage and subordination.⁵⁰ In other words, during the Thousand Days civil war he avoided direct involvement in the conflict and entered the political scene to subtly undermine the moral system that the oligarchy proudly exhibited as blessed by the Catholic dogma. This was a victory of both entrepreneurial vision and strategic action that cannot be studied under the lens of partisan allegiance, or the traditional system of authority in Colombia.

Despite the regime's disappointment with Rafael Reyes' decision, it was not perceived as sable-rattling that endangered the bond between military leaders and the establishment. I argue it

local power to create irregular forces (banditry) to use violence re-balancing the system in their favor, and no necessarily for the benefit of central authorities in Bogotá.

⁵⁰ If Rafael Reyes had to organize an army, the obvious reaction was the use of his *haciendas* workers and followers. In rural areas people had to articulate to different activities to endure the economic constrains. The civil war of 1899-1902 was a dispute in which he had little political capital invested, and higher chances to lose what the economic decline left from his wealth. Even if the Nationalist Conservatives offered him the presidency after the war, their reluctance would spark dissent. His decision was strategic, promoting the Historic Conservatives to moderate their hatred to Liberals, establishing alliances with Liberal leaders interested in ending of warfare, and conceding to Rafael Uribe Uribe —leader of the Liberal forces— an opportunity to become part of the national reconstruction as his plenipotentiary minister.

was a transition signaling a generation of leaders that fought in the fields and climbed towards upper stages in the political system by facing personal risks in military campaigns. His act of disobedience was not a perturbation of military order, but the lack of order and weakness of authority itself.⁵¹

Although the Conservatives won the Thousand Days civil war in 1902, political fragmentation was unsettling. In that context Rafael Reyes and Rafael Uribe Uribe grew as leaders of both Liberals and Conservatives. The secession of Panama occupied congressional debates and executive mandates, while divisions hampered its functions. Rafael Reyes earned the Conservative candidacy, and easily won the presidency in 1904. From the perspective of the rule of intellectuals during *La Regeneración*, Rafael Reyes' presidency was innovative, establishing a different approach to the executive in terms of pragmatism, personal authority and social support. After the early dismissal of his reforms, he decided to close the Congress and through acrid articles published in newspapers portrayed the Nationalist Conservative leaders as dead cows along the road toward Colombian reconstruction.⁵² For the first time since the Constitution of 1886 and the *Hegemonía Conservadora*, he included Liberals as his aides, making for instance Rafael Uribe Uribe his advisor and plenipotentiary minister.⁵³

Provinces responded to his economic recovery plans by giving him the possibility of governing through executive decrees. The international context for national recovery after the civil war and secession of Panama reflected parallel trends throughout Latin America. Economic growth was driven by the increasing demand for raw materials in Europe and the United States.

Authoritarian regimes seemed to be the ultimate formula to stability. Germany, United States, Mexico, Argentina and Colombia had presidents or dictators with an agenda based on a restriction

⁵¹ The establishment's legitimacy was defended by harshly coerced and non-professional individuals whose lives were disputed abruptly. Military conscription for the regime's defense generally organized forces taken from public unskilled workers, whilst politicians joined the effort using sharecroppers and peasants linked by debt or coercion to their haciendas. This made lower rank fighters barely linked to ideological disputes, making often allegiance a matter of leader's opportunism, charisma, or the circumstantial tint of the regime. See, Saúl Hernández, "Algunas Consideraciones sobre el Servicio Militar y Democracia en Colombia," in *Perspectivas Actuales de la Seguridad y la Defensa en Colombia y en América Latina*, ed. Alejo Vargas (Bogotá: Editorial Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2008), 25-47. The author explores how during Rafael Reyes' presidency the military was finally institutionalized, by the efforts of emerging wealthy sectors interested in peace for increasing agricultural production and foreign investment.

⁵² Cited in Henderson, *Modernization*, 57.

⁵³ Bergquist, *Coffee*, 66-72.

of democratic institutions and the boost for economic modernization. Rafael Reyes had been approached by Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz, and followed his advice for attracting foreign capital and investors to build infrastructure. Although *La Belle Époque* was a moment in which Rafael Reyes shined as a capable outsider in power, it also demonstrated the inability of the Colombian elite to convene an agenda based on common interests, stability and productivity. The gateway for incoming social sectors gaining economic privilege —via commercial, military or political success— was opened. New cohorts of entrepreneurial leaders active in industrial and agricultural business were eager to establish new rules in the political game setting the foundations for guilds, and their cohesive interest pressured Colombian government to respond with legislation bounded to enhance the prosperity hiatus. Congressional derogatory references to opposition members or the neglect of popular sectors were attitudes momentarily abhorred during Rafael Reyes presidency.⁵⁴

Rafael Reyes also formalized financial politics by nationalizing gold reserves as a strategic tool to avoid detrimental inflation. In a polemic move he decided that to fight to get back Panama was unnecessary, which caused vivid responses from ultra-nationalist sectors. He assumed that the territory was, in fact, taken by what seemed to be the new power in the hemisphere, employing a strategy in which Colombia was presented as the victimizer of a population needed of freedom. This point of view was introduced in his inauguration speech, not as a reason for fighting a lost cause, but to reassume the control of the national destiny, when the United States ‘considered (Colombian) people of an inferior civilization’.⁵⁵ Rafael Reyes was influenced by Rafael Uribe Uribe, to express discomfort with United States intervention in 1903. Rafael Reyes also condemned the secession as a crime disregarded by the international community that actually applauded the intrusion in national

⁵⁴ Colombia enjoyed a long awaited stability. Foreign investment helped to balance the national budget, whilst the emerging bourgeoisie enjoyed flexible economic policies aimed to bolster agriculture for export, reinvestment in industries and infrastructure, and monetary stability for merchants of imported commodities. Trust in the international market improved, visible in new direct investments in agricultural business, and new international companies brought electricity, sanitation and public transportation for the largest cities. Transportation network for coffee export was built, upgraded or completed after the abandon caused during the civil war. For a complete perspective on the economic growth, and its political background, see Palacios, *Coffee*, 198-226.

⁵⁵ Henderson, *Modernization*, 55.

affairs as part of a necessary and ‘transcendental service to universal civilization’.⁵⁶ What Rafael Reyes was about to disclose was a standpoint to rehabilitate national pride based on a strict administration of public affairs, in order to reestablish sovereignty by diminishing the influence of politicians obstructing Congressional decisions. The process began to display overtones of moralization when, after closing the National Congress’ sessions, he publicly called former Conservative Party fellows ‘obstructionist and rebellious criminals’, and sent some to work in prison in the southern tropical forest, a place where he worked in the early 1890’s, and ‘where the pride of work and honor of manhood’ could be learned from ‘people that really build daily the nation despite hardships posed by the environment’.⁵⁷

In his discourses Rafael Reyes mentioned how a new breed of entrepreneurs had the opportunity to lead the nation towards prosperity and progress. Rejecting past mistakes brought about by warfare and intransigency, he wanted to put an end to the brain drain caused by war. For the president, political warfare expelled citizens who ‘successfully founded happy industries and business abroad’. In the initial years of his government he decided to lure them to return to Colombia because ‘the descendants of these workers of the civilization and progress exist today throughout the country (...) and all of them understand that their obligation is not to migrate, as their ancestries had to do it, but to dedicate to make peace and use their capacities and energies to make great and happy the land of their fathers’.⁵⁸ The text was part of a report commissioned to assess untapped resources, part of a trend to govern using managerial strategies based on administrative pragmatism and efficiency. The innovation was the combination of a strong moral support for government’s actions —transparency and lowering corruption— and the use of detailed

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Reyes, *Misión*, 13.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 4.

information gathered and systematized by a specialized bureaucracy trained in techniques for effective administration.

Management practices were structured around relations of subordination that utilized mechanisms to fix labor to the *hacienda* system and had existed since the colonial epoch. Rafael Reyes' enthusiasm for a modern style of management articulated private and public interest by bolstering policies that benefited the *gremios* (guilds) to increase budgetary stability and productivity. It was the moment in which guilds, through industrialists, landowners, merchants and coffee growers started to influence the political economy of the nation in a quest for political power.⁵⁹ It was the heyday for a cohort of active civil servants. Formerly separated from the top spheres of decision making, during Rafael Reyes' *Quinquenio* (A presidential term extended from four to five years) a broad range of responsibilities were given to middle rank bureaucrats. In the private sector, top rank managers started to substitute outdated systems of labor, changing patterns of subordination and labor obedience in factories and public works in concession.⁶⁰ The modernizing process of production broke labor relations between peasants and landowners, with the detrimental effect of displacement of the peasants to shanty towns. The initiative of settlement in agricultural frontiers grew, but in a matter of years landowners swallowed colonizer's lands once again.⁶¹ This led to recruitment of a generation eager to climb the social ladder thanks to flourishing business. The

⁵⁹ For a thorough understanding of the emergence of guilds in Colombia, see Keith Christie, *Oligarcas, Campesinos y Proceso Político en Colombia: Aspectos de la Historia Sociopolítica de la Frontera Antioqueña* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1986); Frank Safford, *The Ideal of the Practical: Colombia's Struggle to Form a Technical Elite* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976). For a complete and amusing study on the guilds during the first half of 20th century, see Eduardo Saenz Rovner, *La Ofensiva Empresarial: Industriales, Políticos y Violencia en los Años 40 en Colombia* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1992); Eduardo Sáenz Rovner, *Colombia años 50. Industriales, Política y Diplomacia* (Bogotá: Editorial Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, 2002). During Rafael Reyes government, Antioquia's entrepreneurial population enjoyed the benefits of low and stable inflation, growing foreign markets, and improving productivity. Capital accumulated from coffee export promoted textile industry in Medellín thanks to tariffs to foreign textile manufactures. Further agricultural products such as sugar cane received subsidies that the entrepreneurs returned. The economy was doing so well, that in 1907 coffee growers gave one peso for each sac produced and exported with public subsidies, in order to be invested to improve transportation in the main fluvial route. Cited in Henderson, *Modernization*, 59.

⁶⁰ It is necessary to mention that Rafael Reyes, and Rafael Uribe Uribe fostered the consolidation of the military through advise from German specialists in both military and public administration. For details on management and entrepreneurship, see Ocampo, *Colombia y la Economía*, 144-218. The author studied economic expansion in 1900-1914 based on and serial data gathered in commercial archives in London, Hamburg, and New York, crossing the information with diplomatic reports that show how trust created a safe environment for business during Rafael Reyes' presidential term.

⁶¹ Catherine Legrand, *Frontier Expansion and Peasant Protest in Colombia, 1850-1936* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986).

state also required literate workers for its many productive projects, and the administrative impulse sent by the president by dividing the country's large territorial administrative entities into smaller and more manageable units.⁶²

An example that will be explored in detail in chapter 6 is the case of Camilo Torres' parents. Calixto Torres Umaña and Isabel Restrepo were from landowner/merchant lineages that heralded the moral conviction that work and discipline and deferred gratification resulted in social recognition, in a society that dismissed initiatives beyond the morality imposed by the Catholic Church. They were bred in provincial families that dismissed ecclesiastic education as conventional and traditionalist, and moved to Bogotá to link to political and intellectual elites in the early 1910's.⁶³ They were brought up in this epoch, and they were a vivid example of strategies used by wealthy lineages to legitimize their claims for political power. Landowners and merchants were eager to invest fortunes in their offspring's education. For instance, and it will be explained in more detail in chapters 6 and 7, they preferred to access cultural status markers through education abroad.

The interesting aspect of this attitude was how widespread it became, and the increasingly positive reception among the middle class and even popular sectors.⁶⁴ Economic leadership became dynamic, and meetings became ceremonial arrangements to join state administrators and citizens — generally notable industrialists, merchants and landowners. The emergence of Rafael Reyes as a hero was expressed by Pedro Vélez —among many other voices— the leader of the *gremio* of 'constant fighters in the commercial field' as follows

I'm fortunate today, having the honor to welcome in name of the merchants of Cartagena to the Nation's highest chief, who come back to the city no to rise military forces but to awake the energies

⁶² The goals of a new territorial division was to reorganize departmental revenues, weakening regional power, accommodate new voices necessary in the economic dynamic of coffee production, and encourage regional economic development. More significant for the political stability was the principle of minority representation in the legislative bodies of the nation, which opened space for the new regions in Congress, and bestowed positions in the government to Liberals in an attempt to institutionalize opposition representation in the government. Bergquist, *Coffee*, 226-227; see also Henderson, *Modernization*, 62.

⁶³ Broderick, *Camilo Torres*, 29-54.

⁶⁴ Ricardo López, "A Beautiful Class, and Irresistible Democracy: the Historical Formation of the Middle Class in Bogotá, 1955-1965," (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 2008).

of our fellow citizens to use them for the betterment of the nation through labor that redeem and dignify. ⁶⁵

Presidential popularity among the economic sectors grew, benefiting entrepreneurial sectors considering the deep crisis looming several years before the Thousand Days civil war. The bond of trust and confidence was also reflected in the following excerpt that shows how allegiance and political authority were linked to personal approaches that the president had developed with entrepreneurial people in earlier stages of his career. The bond that links friendship and respect, marks also the distance to a revered leader, as a matter of legitimacy and appreciation

I met him then, and I should manifest without hesitation that my great impression for his actions has growth with the years, and that I will refer to those values even if I don't have had the honor of a deep friendship with him. For me, Reyes is not is not a distant hero, because heroes are necessary to be seen from afar. Instead I consider him one of my friends.⁶⁶

The innovative leadership styles of both Rafael Uribe Uribe and Rafael Reyes built political authority in close connection to economics during the Colombian transition towards modernization. Democratic liberties were partially suspended but most presidential decisions were widely popular. They were outsiders acclaimed as natural leaders of popular factions neglected from power. In 1914 Rafael Uribe Uribe was assassinated and his legacy stood as a reminder of the pervasive effects of war. Rafael Reyes saw the opportunity to perpetuate himself in power and amended the constitution in order to make possible a re-election. A few months later, in 1909, after taking office for a second term, silently he left the country with his family in a self-imposed exile. For the first time in Colombia's history, the necessary environment for a bourgeoisie to flourish existed, and the opposition was shunned due to the popularity of political leaders.

The radical strategy of *magnicidio* served to put aside popular leaders, or those with an agenda for social justice, causing the rapid vanish of support and the burial for their principles of collective

⁶⁵ Reyes, *Misión*, 78

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 82.

morality and individual behavior. The crushing of leadership also affected the possibilities of the lower classes to undertake efforts to find political space or claim for representation. The popular sectors lacked the instrument to gain access to positions of influence, and the regime impeded efforts from middle sectors or the very elite attempting to raise their hand against the oligarchy or the morality imposed by the Church. In the aftermath of cyclic violence, as I will present in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, Fabio Vásquez and Camilo Torres contrasted a panorama marked by marginal popular leadership. The aspect of weakening authority and popular obedience to the regime, and the emergence of new leaders is linked to the next chapter's study of religious leadership, intellectual positioning in powerful stations, and how the electoral machinery was intertwined with the Catholic Church's bonds to the government.

CHAPTER 2

ICONS, MYTHS AND POLLS: CONSERVATIVE STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP

‘Aunque todo rastro de su origen había desaparecido de los textos, se pensaba que era un hombre de los páramos por su apetito desmesurado de poder, por la naturaleza de su gobierno, por su conducta lúgubre, por la inconcebible maldad del corazón con que le vendió el mar a un poder extranjero y nos condenó a vivir frente a esta llanura estéril sin horizonte de áspero polvo lunar cuyos crepúsculos sin fundamento nos dolían en el alma’.¹

Gabriel García Márquez, *El Otoño del Patriarca*

For Conservative leaders such as Rafael Nuñez and Miguel Antonio Caro, the conception of public opinion and its relation to suffrage was central during the *Hegemonía Conservadora*, making paramount the liaison and coordination between regime authorities and the Catholic Church. In order to sustain a political regime that relied on elusive social support, the Church played a central role promoting values that the Conservative Party heralded. National symbols reinforced a system of values legitimizing the status quo and elites in power. I intend here to elaborate elements for a study of political leadership and how its crisis brought about strategies of political worshiping to religious elements in civil rituals. The intertwining allegiances to both secular and religious authorities sheds light upon the relations of authority and obedience, expressed in electoral support to the ruling class, and a popular sense of national belonging. I argue that worship to outsider politicians fostered sect-like practices of attachment to political figures that constituted the popular aspirations disregarded by the regime’s mainstream, or the politics of *magnicidio*. Assassination of leaders enhance a quasi-

¹ ‘Although all trace of his origins had disappeared from the texts, it was thought that he was a man of upland plains because of his immense appetite for power, the nature of his government, his mournful bearing, the inconceivable evil of a heart which had sold the sea to a foreign power and condemned us to live facing this limitless plain of harsh lunar dust where the bottomless sunsets pain us in our souls’.

religious form of attachment. The weaknesses of the regime's leadership and fluid institutional allegiances fostered particular attachment to alternative leaders and their image as hero-like figures, as it will be studied in chapters 3 to 5. In this chapter, I will present the case that civil consecration was used as a strategy during the Thousand Days civil war to strengthen national unity at a moment of the traditional elite's waning leadership. The adoption by civil authorities of a religious cult, centered on a rather unknown religious symbol —the Sacred Heart of Jesus— helps to explain how the political regime in crisis required icons to instill allegiance to the ideal conservative nation. Similarly, the *Cachaco* will be shown as a false mythical representation for what national leadership was supposed to be, and how elections became a democratic ritual hijacked by Conservative thinkers, politicians and ecclesiastic authorities to bolster their grip on power. Finally, the ecclesiastic leadership of Bernardo Herrera Restrepo will be studied as an example of how elections and civil rituals served the *Hegemonía Conservadora*, making conservative thought the intellectual fabric of the political regime.

2.1 FALSE HEROES: THE WORSHIPING OF *CACHACO* AND THE FORMATION OF POLITICAL CULTS AND SECTS

The *Hegemonía Conservadora* had an effect in shaping patterns of national identity. Whilst public civil ceremonies moved to a private realm, *La Regeneración* embedded religious rituals at the core of Colombian secular culture, intertwining political displays of power and authority with a religious liturgy that celebrated the regime's bond with Catholic faith.² The performance of civil and

² Germán Colmenares, *Partidos Políticos y Clases Sociales* (Cali: Universidad del Valle, 1997). The author sustains that symbolic privileges helped Colombian elites to establish a political regime dominated by parties that enshrined nationhood in a selective class differentiation based on cultural binaries between civilization and barbarism. For Jaime Jaramillo Uribe, the ideological profile of both the Conservative and the Liberal parties was instilled and nurtured in a monolithic perception of culture and civilization that enhanced the Catholic Church's role organizing society along symbolic elements of unity. Jaime Jaramillo Uribe, *El Pensamiento Colombiano en el Siglo XIX* (Bogotá: Planeta Colombiana Editorial, 1996). These general interpretations have been predominant in Colombian historiography since the 1970's. In the 1990's monographic works undertook the demonstration of their assertions in close

religious rituals enhanced distance between elites and popular sectors, an opposite outcome in the context of nationalism. The use of status markers bestowed power and recognition to elite members, what included the use of language, education, imported commodities, traveling and leisure activities. Popular sectors instead were struggling with basic survival, illiteracy, and hardships that set them apart from the ruling class. However, distinctions were not predominantly based on socioeconomic factors. For instance, Nationalist Conservatives were reluctant to accept notable families from provinces other than Bogotá. In terms of suffrage, Colombian democracy needed restrictions to its main ritual of renovation and purge. Elections were restricted to literate wealthy whites able to demonstrate possession of a business. This excerpt written to exalt Rafael Nuñez —president between 1886-1892 and 1892-1894— shows how cultural and political stereotypes played a central role shaping the idea of public opinion, suffrage, and the ideas about political opponents

The wind propelling the national ship driven by Rafael Nuñez had the fairest notion of what is public opinion, and so he proceeded to pay homage to it. He did it by listening to public opinion oracles. Those oracles are god's voice when expressing the people's will instead of the wants of a mad mob, or the ignorant and passionate men whose words fall often published by obnoxious presses. Rafael Reyes heard the public opinion, not the one shaped by exasperate cries of popular people, or dictates aired in abhorrent newspapers, but the one build by the vote of honorable educated.³

The capital city had gained fame through the 19th century for its citizens' arrogance, and the despotic nature of its leaders. Bogotá historically had a majority of liberal voters and was a stronghold for artisan protests in mid-19th century, but became in the 1880's a symbolic center for Conservative elites displaying their power and cultural superiority. They considered themselves whiter and wiser, an upper crust apt for governing the nation. The urban spirit of *La Regeneración* was conservative and provincial, and its leaders were engulfed in the assumption that Bogotá had the cultural capacity and legitimacy to lead the nation out of barbarism. For instance, Miguel Antonio

examination of symbols used to enhance Colombian nationalism. A good example was a research discussed in this chapter by Cecilia Henríquez, *Imperio y ocaso del Sagrado Corazón en Colombia* (Bogotá: Altamir Ediciones, 1996). More recently, the research of Miguel Angel Urrego bridged symbolic nationhood and the formation of intellectual spheres. His work will be examined in this chapter.

³ República de Colombia, *Homenaje a Rafael Nuñez and Carlos Holguín* (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 1894), 14.

Caro, president in 1894-1898, was proud of his culture learned without traveling beyond Bogotá's hinterland during his entire life span. He promoted journalism and a pristine use of language. He created and positioned the *Academia Colombiana de la Lengua Española* (Colombian Academia for Spanish Language) in Bogotá as a beacon for cultural conservatism and ideological corollary irradiating hispanicist values. He read in its inaugural discourse at the Academia that

The people speak the language they inherited by tradition, ignoring the treasure they have making it poetry and plebeian idioms unconscious of their acts. That is reasonable for common people, not for intellectuals. For the vulgar people that are natural, and it is not necessary to make any effort trying to understand how that happens. Although language has intimate bond shaping nationality and signal degrees of civilization for each society, and philology is fundamental for national intelligentsias, nothing parallels the importance and transcendence of moral and political affairs.⁴

During the Conservative hegemony the idea of urban intellectual, detached from common people and mundane affairs, became a common stereotype for people from Bogotá. The *cachaco* — an appellative for people born in Bogotá— was associated in provinces with a racist snobbish elite, eager to spend or steal public funds, and prone to autocratic rule. Both Miguel Antonio Caro and Rafael Nuñez built national symbols, for instance selecting the martial rhythm and lyrics for the national anthem that portrayed a glorious past and epic feats that lacked popular anchors to people's tragic linkages to national formation.⁵

Bogotá's elite became widely recognized as eager to enhance intellectuals' role in the country. Intellectuals and politicians became stereotypical of the *cachaco*, and their influence on conservative government declined in the 1930's, when Liberals took control of the presidency, and pragmatic businessman gained the role as advisers to the executive. The *cachaco* was a weak national referent. As Miguel Ángel Urrego points out 'from the Constitution in 1886 emerged political centralism and in

⁴ Miguel Antonio Caro, *Del Uso en sus Relaciones con el Lenguaje* (Bogotá: Imprenta Echeverría Hermanos, 1881), 5-7. Discourse Read during Inauguration of the Academia Colombiana.

⁵ Probably the most complete available for this topic research on nationalism and symbolism, is Cristina Rojas, *Civilization and Violence: Regimes of Representation in Nineteenth-Century* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2002) the author explores how oligarchic initiatives to educate people in the Catholic faith were bound necessarily to maintain cultural distinction based on the assumption that barbarism and civilization impeded a rapid civilization, what resulted in a continuous mobilization of popular sectors into episodes of irregular warfare, or coercing people into recognition of symbolic markers to preserve society segmented.

cultural domain a myth was reactivated, one in decadence and without possibilities to integrate the nation: Bogotá as the South American Athens, founded in the fiction of Bogotá's *cachaco* as a national archetype (...) embodying a regional type of national essence, although in Colombia this was in a reactionary and reductionist idea of national essence', The author continues providing insight into the cultural formation of this mythical intellectual individual shaped 'differently to other Latin American countries. In Colombia there was not political or philosophical reflection, and the idea of *cachaco* does not recreate symbolically the nation. It simply was the use of an image that does not express elite's values, and has not cultural referents to the reality of our country (...) The *cachaco* portrays as national a representation of the popular that is namely classist and racist'.⁶

Although *La Regeneración* aimed to redefine national values in opposition to the ideals that inspired Liberal leaders during the *Olimpo Radical*, Conservative elite leaders accessed powerful positions despite a lack of popular support for their integrative political agendas. The faith as element for social integration implied a return to colonial political features that Liberals abhorred. The *cachaco* barely mirrored citizenship ideals, instilling instead a democratic setting that displaced popular sectors.⁷ The underclasses played an instrumental role fighting battles they never waged, with leaders that barely interpreted their national belonging expectations. The response to popular participation during the 1810-1819 independence wars was to maintain the masses' anonymity,

⁶ Miguel Ángel Urrego, *Intelectuales, Estado y Nación en Colombia: de la Guerra de los Mil Días a la Constitución de 1991* (Bogotá: Universidad Central-DIUC-Siglo del hombre Editores, 2002), 55-57. For a complete review of recent studies on the formation of nationalist myths and its personification see his work, Miguel Angel Urrego, "Mitos Fundacionales, Reforma Política y Nación en Colombia," *Nómadas* 8 (1998). The author explains how three main types of myths —myths of origin, combat, and destiny— nationalist was encrypted and consolidated through the multiple Constitutions proclaimed during 19th century. In his work *Sexualidad, Matrimonio y familia en Bogotá 1880- 1930* (Bogotá: Ariel- Fundación Universidad Central, 1997). Miguel Angel Urrego examines the form how nationalist narratives filtered through moral discourses used in households and schools.

⁷ The specific topic of *Cachaco's* culture has been explored by Amada Pérez in her undergraduate and master thesis, where the ideal values of conservative politicians became paradigms of behavior, see "Modernización y Nostalgia: Crónica Urbana y Ciudad en Bogotá Durante el Cuarto Centenario de Fundación, 1938," *Memoria y Sociedad* 6 (2002): 39-60; Amada Pérez, "La Invención del 'Cachaco' Bogotáno: Crónica Urbana, Modernización y Ciudad en Bogotá Durante el Cuarto Centenario de Fundación, 1938" (M.A. Thesis, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 1999); also Amada Pérez, "Representaciones y Prácticas sobre los Pobladores del Territorio Nacional. Imágenes de Civilización y Barbarie. Colombia, 1880 – 1910" (M.A. Thesis, El Colegio de México, 2006). The author used chronicles and journals to demonstrate how the *cachaco* social model was fitted to fulfill political representations for Bogotá's elite to legitimize their authority in a national scale. Her analysis is closely linked to an early study of Miguel Angel Urrego on *Cachaco* culture and its influence as nationalist formative myth in Urrego, *Sexualidad*, 33-40.

casting a shadow upon the insurgents declining to feed their claims for remuneration, social recognition and veteran's pensions.⁸ In benefit of *criollo* leaders was the agreement between political parties to wither military institutions in order to avoid popular unrest that jeopardized oligarchic control of the state. However, the discourse used by elites throughout the century was devoid of meaning for the masses, without elements to lure them into participation in political affairs except the defense of religious values.⁹ The state was the public corollary to shared ambitions for freedom, self-determination and equity. The dreamed nation withered in civil wars characterized by clashes of impoverished peasants, whilst elite leaders hijacked honors and spoils after each battle. The use of peasants coerced into the military for partisan clashes inhibited popular support for the regime that exceeded the ability of the symbolic elements that Conservative leaders proposed to build the national arena.¹⁰ In addition, political rhetoric was administered and monopolized in the capital city by arrogant leaders reluctant to interact with their people, rendering them incapable of understanding the popular predicament. The Thousand Days civil war exposed these fragilities, shaking the oligarchic system both in Congress and along the battlefields.¹¹

The nation lacked a unifying discourse, and civil ceremonies celebrating nationality were segmented along political lines. Also, popular allegiance to a common past was in constant dispute. I

⁸ Adolfo Atehortúa, "Los Estudios Acerca de las Fuerzas Armadas y la Formación de su Profesionalidad," *Revista Sociedad* 5 (2002); Adolfo Atehortúa and Humberto Vélez, *Estado y Fuerzas Armadas en Colombia 1886-1953* (Bogotá: Editorial Tercer Mundo, 1994) 29-37. Part of his argument is that the early disenfranchising of military members happened as a result of delayed payments, and patrimonial detriment during war that affected peasants owning mid-size and small plots. Atehortúa links the process with the process of land concentration in most productive areas in Colombia.

⁹ For instance, Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, a military/guerrilla leader—depended on what result had every civil war he started—wrote a geographical treatise that described Colombian geography and territories where the culture and productivity were impeded by climatic conditions, rugged geography, and cultural difference of the dwellers. In his description, he classifies groups after a large analysis of fauna and flora. They deserved adjectives such as 'savage natives', or 'peoples with good character for labor'. The image of indigenous populations is interesting, considering that many joined partisan insurgencies. 'It is possible to find nations in state of savagery (...) those dwelling the southern slopes in Tuquerres correspond to Andean-Peruvian origin, and are similarly pusillanimous to the central range's Muiscas'. Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, *Memoria sobre la Geografía, Física y Política, de la Nueva Granada* (New York: Imprenta de S.W. Benedict, 1852).

¹⁰ Saúl Rodríguez Hernández, "'Centinela? Alerta. Quién Vive? Colombia' El Carácter Militar de la Guardia Colombiana (1863-1885)," *Memoria y Sociedad* 16 (2004), 76-81. The author argues that during the 19th century, popular attachment to the military was minimal for the intrinsic segregationist nature of the institution. He demonstrates the marginal role of the military institutions, and suggests important elements for further research on the processes of incorporation of young people into institutions, particularly considering the symbolic aspects that create belonging and bolster spirit of corps.

¹¹ For details in aspects of social and political nature during the civil war, see Henderson, *Modernization*, 1-25; Berquist, *Coffee* 67-83; Palacios, *Between Legitimacy*, 48-91.

argue in this research, that the formation of systems of values for notables and heroic figures was part and parcel of such fragmented narratives, and similarly to the establishment, as they tailored moral principles for their followers. The form how leaders were worshiped was similar to the subordination in a sect, considering that political alternatives were not mainstream and sparked retaliations against their followers, for their betrayal to the regime's rituals of cult. Contested versions of the past include insurgent historical discourses, peasant historical narratives, partisan viewpoints of feats and their relation to nation making, and the official version of Colombian history.¹² They bolstered figures playing roles in feats that led to traumatic results instead of glorious moments. In other words, in Colombia heroes were either invented by the regime, or became representative figures in the popular political imaginary through tragic defeats. Alternative leaders destined to integrate the national pantheon ended their political careers after their disruptive *magnicidio* completed an omen-like narrative of tragedy that accompanies every political mobilization promoting social change. Such narratives fostered ceremonies and consecration to dead leaders that insurgencies reactivated in order to gain social support. Through the years, these discursive practices have worked to create the idea that politics are necessarily deceptive, triggering nostalgic sentiments that legitimized authorities —both the status quo and insurgent leaders— to manipulate people's obedience and commitment to violence. I will explain this processes in detail in the next chapter, in a section called the politics of *magnicidio*. The narratives of a leader's assassination and the consequent defeat of their political projects enhanced nostalgic narratives and worshiping based on

¹² I do not restrict further narratives, such as those that indigenous and afro-colombian populations have created, and instrumentalize for political reasons. In this research I will only reference former research completed on the topic. For studies on historical narratives, definitions and theoretical debates related to methodologies used to interpret them, see Cristóbal Gnecco and Martha Zambrano, *Memorias Hegemónicas, Memorias Disidentes. El Pasado como Política de la Historia* (Bogotá: ICANH-Universidad del Cauca, 2000); Joanne Rappaport, *The Politics of Memory. Native Historical Interpretation in the Colombian Andes* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 14-29; Bettina Ng'weno, *Turf Wars. Territory and Citizenship in the Contemporary State* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007) 5-17; Recently Colombia has witnessed an increase in the use of historical narratives by subordinate sectors, in order to gain legal claims and protection of fundamental right based on identity. For a critical analysis of the process, see Christian Gros, *Políticas de la Etnicidad: Identidad, Estado y Modernidad* (Bogotá: ICANH, 2000). My undergraduate research was an early contribution to the study of insurgent historical narratives, in Juan Carlos Sánchez Sierra, "El Discurso Histórico del ELN, 1963-1986" (Undergraduate Thesis, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2003) 6-11.

traumatic experiences instead of epic achievements, or narratives exalting effective social inclusion, popular integration, bonding to and/or compassion for social predicaments. The ritualization of narratives and leaders formed cults and sects that differentiated by the relation to patterns of morality that legitimized their leadership.

The politics of *magnicidio* and the narratives promoted during the process of social mobilization have caused revolutionary discourses —as well as alternative political visions— to orient their projects to fulfill needs, rather than instilling values. Revolutionary projects seem to fulfill mundane expectations instead of larger metaphysical ideals. I suggest that this phenomenon has influenced leadership formation and the form how notable politicians —that become heroes and martyrs— portray social causes in systems of values in their revolutionary projects.¹³ Heroes were not created out of victories in impressive struggles, but in the murky field of deception. Civil wars along the 19th century were indicators of privileged leaders' adventures, rather than disputes for shared values and disputes bound to social improvement. This particularity in the shaping of heroic figures influenced leaders' actions since the 19th century.¹⁴ Leaders pursuing recognition created substitutive values that individualized achievement beyond the political sphere of the *res publica*

¹³ An example of this is the constant use of heroic memories by political alternative groups in order to legitimize their discourses and gain social support. The Colombian Communist Party (Partido Comunista de Colombia/henceforth PCC), for instance, was reluctant to accept Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's political role with the masses reaching situations of clear disapproval or rejection in the 1940's. However, after his assassination in 1948 Communist leaders and intellectuals used his name and claimed his legacy for political campaigning and indoctrination in ideological of new recruited militants. The second example was Camilo Torres, and again the PCC, that became an obstacle for Camilo Torres activism in the late 1950's and early 1960's, and during his integration to the ELN and ulterior assassination, was ready to point out culprits not without making use of his legacy despite years of harsh criticism to Camilo Torres campaigning against electoral participation. This aspect will be studied in more detail in chapter 10. See, Nicolás Buenaventura, *Por la Democracia y el Socialismo. Estudio del Programa del Partido Comunista de Colombia* (Ediciones Suramérica, Bogotá, 1977); Ulises Casas, *La Rebelión Latinoamericana. De Tupac Amará y José Antonio Galán, al "Che" Guevara y Camilo Torres Restrepo* (Bogotá: Ediciones Bandera Roja, 1976); Partido Comunista de Colombia, *Proletarización. ¿De dónde Venimos, hacia donde Vamos y hacia donde Debemos Ir?* (Medellín: 8 de junio Editores, 1975). For a study of these historical narratives and the instrumentalization of leaders' legitimacy, in Sánchez Sierra, "El Discurso", 74-80.

¹⁴ Rojas, *Civilization*, XX and 117-125. The author suggest that 'subjects and historical events are constituted in representation', and the regimes of representations are constituted as well around a lack, 'as something that there is always missing'. I suggest that the politics of *magnicidio* offers an example of such circumstance, in which the assassination of notable leaders is the feature that makes leadership a constant void, a grey zone prone to instability. The bonds of allegiance between people and leaders are predisposed to be brutally severed, and then historical narratives about heroes and leaders tend to incorporate the nostalgia of their martyrdom, even before their assassination. The case of Camilo Torres predisposition to a heroic, martyr-like death, and the pursuit of such ritualization of life and death are central in this dissertation. The effect has been types of leadership marked by paternalism that seems to substitute bonds of protection, trust and autonomous self-determination that the state should protect/guarantee, in a context where the state does not offer a solid foundation for popular support, making necessarily allegiance to elusive forms of power and authority.

portrayed in exemplary attributions of splendid personal achievement. These characteristics of the political landscape in Colombia shaped political imaginaries bringing about non-traditional patterns of authority/obedience to celebrate personalistic leadership based on pragmatism, instead of allegiance based on abstract values. I will explore these elements in the dissertation, emphasizing the case of the ELN and alternative popular expressions that shaped insurgent's leadership and political discourse. For this chapter, an historical context of the fragile symbolic universe of Colombian nationalism will shed light upon the relationship that the regime created with the people using a religious integrative symbol for redemption, and how the ecclesiastic authority gave a hand to the Conservative regime to maintain its grasp of power, at least until the failure of the electoral mechanism in 1929-1930.

2. 2 POLITICAL REGIMEN AND INSTITUTIONAL CONSECRATION: THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

A good example of Conservative initiatives to activate symbolic elements to galvanize national unity was the use of religious iconography to build popular support of the regime. Colombian consecration to The Sacred Heart of Jesus during the Thousand Days civil war shows how secular narratives of heroism were excluded from the repertoire of strategies to enhance national unity and popular worshiping. The Catholic Church in hand with Conservative leaders imposed by decree a mandate for national devotion to a religious icon in 1902. The goal was to reanimate a hopeless society, and to align scattered elites under a sacred bond. In Colombia, the cult to the Sacred Heart had had a limited impact, sidelined by the cult to Virgin Mary. The cult to the Sacred Heart had become influential in Europe, particularly within conservative sectors that

supported the monarchy or aristocratic parties in France, Belgium and Spain¹⁵. The experience in France to restore social order after the Franco-Prussian war and the Commune in 1871 fostered social support to military leaders, obedience to the requirements of the regime, and a pious proclamation of national unity that integrated France around a Constitutional arrangement. Cecilia Henríquez describes that '*La Débauche* —as became known the Prussian invasion— mobilized pious efforts that ended with a proposal from civilians for a National Vow to the Sacred Heart in order to put an end to the French predicaments. In 1872 Paris' archbishop counting with adhesion from deputies and the ecclesiastic leaders, accepted the vow, that was accepted in 1873 in the national Assembly, declaring the public benefits of a temple to consecrate the symbol in Montmartre, that started to be built in 1874 and was completed in 1891'.¹⁶ In France, the icon functioned because the foreign danger of invasion inhibited internal disputes placing social forces at discretion against the invader. Another favorable aspect was the viability of the icon to operate on a regional scale, and the liaison created between popular religiosity and national efforts to mobilize a unified military.

The case in Colombia was not even comparable. Adoption of Sacred Heart of Jesus as a national icon in June 1902 was a political gesture that started without civilian involvement. Its adoption was an effort of Bernardo Herrera Restrepo, arranged to integrate elite factions around a symbol of unity, solidifying linkages between ecclesiastic authorities and secular administrators.¹⁷ It was a top-down imposition. Popular desperation with warfare also played a central role for the rapid embrace of the image, taken as the national moral rector. In an introduction to an historical analysis of this consecration, Jaime Jaramillo Jiménez suggests three main reasons that made relevant civil consecration of a religious symbol. 'First, in a cognitive level, the process offers interpretations of social, natural and spiritual realities in the country in a crucial moment of uncertainty and

¹⁵ Raymond Jonas, *France and the Cult of the Sacred Heart; an Epic Tale for Modern Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 91-115.

¹⁶ Cecilia Henríquez, *Imperio y Ocaso del Sagrado Corazón en Colombia* (Bogotá: Altamira Ediciones, 1996), 64.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 115-123.

disenchantment with the political regime. Second, the operation of this type of symbols necessarily foregrounds systems of values because they express facts, and how things should be. Finally, this example of social representations expresses norms that legitimize, prohibit or stigmatize behaviors'.¹⁸ Although Cecilia Henríquez does not approach in depth these levels of analysis, her work shows how both civilian and religious authorities ritualized the image in an attempt to combat liberal anticlerical movements by incorporating the idea that the Conservative ideals were 'linked to the defense, restoration or acceleration of Jesus Christ's social kingdom on earth'.¹⁹ The goal was to deter popular support to Liberals by enhancing religious power on mundane political affairs, in a counterrevolutionary effort to stigmatize as sacrilege liberal thought and action.

Despite not having a significant symbolic trajectory in Colombian religious traditions, the Sacred Heart of Jesus' meaning surpassed supernatural and mystic features proper of religious emblems, gaining civil acceptance, first among elite supporters of the regime, and later among the population.²⁰ The strategy used for civil consecration was to promote a social consensus, reconciliation in the form of a *Voto Nacional* (National Vow) that received rapid approval from the urban elites in both Conservative and Liberal parties. Its consecration was also associated with the restoration of the legal order after civil war. Religious devotion took several months to attract membership to the rites sponsored by dioceses throughout the territory gaining influence among popular sectors. The call for a plebiscite to legally bless the consecration gave to both the government and the Catholic Church's initiative a new air of charismatic populism thanks to the use of rhetoric favoring peace, unity and a consensual political ground. Reconciliation also became leitmotiv to link both people and government through religious worshiping and civil values of unity, identifying the icon with peace and patrimony for the people. Acclaimed by the people following

¹⁸ Jaime Jaramillo Jiménez, "Prologue," in *Imperio y Ocaso*, iii.

¹⁹ Ibid., 19.

²⁰ Edgar Ordóñez, "Tú Reinarás, este es el Grito," *Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico* 44, 34 (1997).

the guidance of their religious leaders, five months after consecration to the Sacred Heart, the Conservative forces defeated the Liberals, proof for non-believers that consecration of the nation to Sacred Heart's supernatural powers granted protection. It showed as well that subsequent pilgrimages and praising of the imagery would be effective for the national unity under the aegis of a religious blessing.

The consecration also envisioned devotion at a regional level in order to deter Liberal Party's lure of subordinated populations. Almost by decree, the nation started to belong to a certain extraterritorial entity in which sovereignty was defended and enforced by ecclesiastic institutions. In the regions along the Atlantic coast, for instance, the cult had limited efficacy, but in the rest of the country it rapidly became an object of reverence.²¹ In fact, Liberals joined the cult despite the widespread myth of their natural atheism and anticlericalism. Colombian society had lost hope and needed a jump start in order to begin its recovery. The regional allegiance to the civil and religious authorities was uneven, and the national unity was broken by one of its weakest links. One year after consecration, the apparent miracle of peace became an omen of evil times to come when the secession of Panama seemed to reflect the fragility of consecration.²² Although peace was progressively restored, and political hatred gave way to mourning in both sectarian forces after the territorial loss, popular redemption through civil ceremonies became central to consolidate national unity despite the artificial mysticism created around the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It was functional though, considering that the Thousand Days civil war did not promote national heroes, and instead eroded popular reverence to the regime.

The strength of religious belonging cemented Colombian identity was invigorated in 1910 whilst celebrating the first centenary of independence. The government had prepared festivities in

²¹ Henríquez, *Imperio*, 34-48.

²² Oscar Quintana Mendoza, *Mecanismos Políticos para la Religión: la Consagración al Sagrado Corazón de Jesús en Bolívar 1892-1902* (Undergraduate Thesis, Universidad de Cartagena, 2002), 17.

which Catholic rituals converged with civilian ceremonies. However, funerary ritual magnificence became a symptom of the regime's mournful bearing. It is curious that funerals were portrayed in literature in 19th century journey narratives of travelers, whilst little attention was given to public ceremonies organized for revering political feats, civil achievements of the nation, or national ephemerides.²³ The celebrations around the images and the *Voto Nacional*/Sacred Heart sanctuary — a large cathedral in process of construction a few blocks from the National Cathedral, made from worshippers' donations— became a predominant example of elite's control over popular devotion. Here it is important to understand how both political and religious spheres were intertwined. The consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus as a symbol of unity was an initiative of Bogotá's archbishop Bernardo Herrera Restrepo, but required legal enforcement beyond ecclesiastic approval, considering that the symbol had no traction in popular religious mysticism, and for its integration to the Catholic liturgy it had to be prompted in a common effort involving priests, teachers, and acolytes at ecclesiastic institutions. The archbishop, as the main ecclesiastic authority in the capital city, did not have to struggle convincing public administrators about this plan. It was a cult picked by the ecclesiastic top ranks and their preferences, and imposed in a moment of grievance and anxiety for the whole society. What is interesting about this institutionalized cult is how the Catholic Church used efficient mechanisms to create rapid popular consent, and the connections that educational and doctrinarian mechanisms created for the political regime making religious proselytism in the name of the Conservative Party. A few years later, in 1930, democratic decisions

²³ For a complete chronicle of the cultural, academic, and religious public life in Bogotá in the 1890's, see José María Cordovez Moure, *Reminiscencias Santafé y Bogotá* (Bogotá: Imprenta Telegrama, 1893). The most interesting aspect of chronicles written by foreigners and provincial leaders was the constant reference to funerals in the city, making them the most inspiring rituals that take place in the city. See also, Salvador Camacho Roldán, *Escritos Varios: Estudios Sociales, Intereses Americanos, Agricultura Colombiana* (Bogotá: Librería Colombiana, 1892); Ernst Röthlisberger, *El Dorado: Estampas de Viaje y Cultura de la Colombia Suramericana* (Bogotá: Banco de la República, 1963), originally published in German in 1898. In Cordovez Moure's chronicle the author describes the few theater groups that visited the city and the poverty of the shows. These were exclusive spectacles where 'non sancta people is unwelcome'. The book also includes interesting descriptions of religious ceremonies, and how these outnumbered public civil ceremonies. Private life receives a closer attention regarding customs of the elite, such as gatherings where literature and philosophy were debated 'amidst the finest European manners'. The people were mostly portrayed in derogatory and paternalistic terms, pointing out how dull and plain was the city. For instance, indigenous ancestry was something that among the cultured elite 'many deny as their descendants, even though they should be proud'. *Ibid.*, 35 and 64.

about the ruling class had to instrumentalize the same networks of obedience and indoctrination during presidential elections. That moment marked the end of the *Hegemonia Conservadora*, due—in part—to the death of Bernardo Herrera Restrepo, the backstage hand pulling the strings of public decision-making. His leadership and political involvement, which I will analyze in the next section, will shed light upon the construction of popular loyalty to the mainstream cult to the regime.

2.3 RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP: BERNARDO HERRERA RESTREPO AND THE CONSERVATIVE INTELLECTUALS

The archdiocese of Bogotá has operated since the colonial and early independence years as a platform for political positioning of the elite, electoral activism, and partisan proselytism. Considered the highest ecclesiastic rank before the Vatican's consideration for cardinal designation, Bogotá's Cathedral was a pulpit that merged both the value of a political stage and the sanctity of national devotion to Catholicism. During the 19th century it was occupied by the most selected members of the local elite that often mixed familiar bonds inextricably with presidents, ministers and economic notables generally linked to Spanish ancestry. Although the national ecclesiastic seminar—a building besides the Cathedral—was a selective educative institution for preparation of young priests to follow the ecclesiastic career, by the early 20th century only a few members of the elite—including Camilo Torres' family—were considered to have economic buoyancy to dispute its top ranks. Ecclesiastic formation for bishops and cardinals included education in Rome or Paris—very selective, economically demanding, and politically influenced—, good performance whilst occupying middle-rank positions, and liaisons to local traditional elites.²⁴

Bogotá's archdiocese was crucial during electoral transitions in Colombia. The political and administrative power stemmed from the orders it transmitted across the ecclesiastic body,

²⁴ Cortes, "Regeneración," 9-10; Figueroa, *Tradicionalismo*, 41-43.

reinforcing conservative rule, in order to decide people's suffrage. Born in Bogotá in 1844, Bernardo Herrera Restrepo received in Paris and Rome seminary instruction in Theology in the 1860's. Before that, he studied at the Saint Bartholomew's Jesuitical School in the same class with the future architect of *La Regeneración* and president Miguel Antonio Caro. Both competed for the top ranks in the class, fostering mutual respect and intellectual dialogues.²⁵ One year after completing his education in Europe, in 1871, upon arrival to Bogotá, Bernardo Herrera Restrepo was appointed as regent for the Council's Seminary, where he implemented instructional reforms in both the curriculum and the theological guide used by the main institution for education of Colombia's clergy. By 1883 he had already led the Sacred Hearth Congregation in Bogotá, a position from which he was ordained as archbishop of Medellín's diocese in 1885.²⁶ His ecclesiastic administration was a dynamic force in organizing parishes in distant territories where the state never made presence.

The success of the enterprise made him the most suitable candidate for the highest religious office in Colombia. In 1891, he was appointed as archbishop of Bogotá. In 1898, a year before becoming cardinal, his participation in politics evolved into a twofold strategy.²⁷ On the one hand, securing the electoral machinery for the Conservative Party in areas where political participation allowed it to maintain congressional majority and presidential nomination. On the other hand, by taming electoral crises through public announcements, particularly during homilies, and in meetings with congressman. Although the church ruled as inappropriate ecclesiastic intervention in politics, this initiative was heralded during every outburst of civil unrest during *La Regeneración*. Bernardo Herrera Restrepo sustained the 'convenience for those on charge of sacred causes, to abstain completely from political passions in order to avoid suspicious interferences from ministers of the

²⁵ Isabel Hernández Normán, *Miguel Antonio Caro: Vida y Obra* (Bogotá: Instituto Caro y Cuervo, 1968), 36.

²⁶ Juan Botero Restrepo, *Breve Historia de la Iglesia Colombiana* (Medellín: Copiyepes Editores, 1983), 64.

²⁷ For biographical information on Bernardo Hernando Restrepo, see Congreso Eucarístico, *Primer Congreso Eucarístico Nacional*, (Bogotá: Escuela Tipográfica Salesiana, 1914), 12-18; José Restrepo Posada, *Apuntes para la Historia del Seminario Conciliar de Bogotá, 1840-1940* (Bogotá: Editorial Centro, 1940), 104-128. For the history of his intervention in local politics in both Antioquia and Cundinamarca, see Juan Botero Restrepo, *Breve Historia de la Iglesia Colombiana* (Medellín: Copiyepes Editores, 1983), 69-71.

Catholic Church²⁸. The bishop was able to maneuver a double agenda during electoral campaigning, favoring Nationalist Conservative candidates in regions and municipalities, particularly in Antioquia, Boyacá, Santander and Cundinamarca.²⁹ These regions were electoral strongholds for the conservative regime, making the bishop a fundamental asset and hero-like defender of the Conservative cause during the 1897 elections. He created local/regional religious alliances among acolytes in areas where the state's domination was apparently endangered by the Conservative Party's schism in two main factions.

During his tenure as bishop in the archdiocese of Medellín, Bernardo Herrera Restrepo had influenced the configuration of ecclesiastic education whilst eroding secular institutions formed during the *Olimpo Radical* in the 1870's.³⁰ The strategy of cooptation in provincial territories included meticulous regulation of priest nomination to gain administrative control in areas poorly staffed by the state. In this strategy, the next step was the implementation of the Concordat principles in order to keep moral order. Protected by the state, and building in education the main instrument to solidify the alliance between Conservative party and Catholic Church, Bernardo Herrera Restrepo's legacy and influence became predominant in Antioquia. The department represented the most suitable territory for the ideal of a society based on the strict preservation of Catholic values.

The region was perfect for visionaries' experiments such as Rafael Uribe Uribe, only that liberalism was shunned by Antioquia's leaders as a characteristically popular political tendency characteristic for dark-skinned people from the lower lands of Cauca and Chocó, with a minimal sense of responsibilities upon their actions, in need of authoritarian rule, and prone to lust, illicit

²⁸ Bernardo Herrera Restrepo, "Pastoral de Corpus 1897," in *Pastorales, Circulares, Decretos y otros Documentos: 1885-1900* (Bogotá: Imprenta San Bernardo, 1912), 35-37.

²⁹ Luis Javier Ortiz, *Fusiles y Plegarias: Guerra de Guerrillas en Cundinamarca, Boyacá y Santander, 1876-1877* (Medellín: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2004).

³⁰ Luis Javier Ortiz, *Obispos, Clérigos y Fieles en Pie de Guerra. Antioquia, 1770-1880* (Medellín: Editorial Universidad de Antioquia, 2010), 67-76.

activities, and liberalism.³¹ Antioquia's elites organized relations of production along extended familiar bonds and settlements established in the mid-19th century. The region was highly influenced by these racial and political stereotypes. Civil authorities included among their strategies for social control, mechanism of coercion intertwined with *haciendas* relations of domination/production. These relations of subordination also supported political networks among new settlers. Although the state had a poor administrative grasp in the region, by the 1870's the Catholic Church became central representative of local authority. However, colonization was a rather disorganized process. Until 1886, the Liberal regional government had low territorial control, and gaining access to new productive lands was a painstaking ordeal. With the flourishing of coffee and tobacco production, transportation and communication had connected the region through Catholic missions, at the expense of a certain disdain toward central authorities for the minimal investment in the region.³² The thousand Days civil war eroded regional allegiance to the central authorities, what increased violence and retaliations among political factions.

Bernardo Herrera Restrepo's authority did not wane after the Thousand Days civil war. Instead, its efficacy proved to be polyvalent as he mobilized political influences to restore the popular faith in the Colombian future setting the nation under the aegis of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He also promoted followers of the faith that could pass from passive worshipping at mass, to active partisan holding arms and defending Catholic values at the warfronts.³³ During his ecclesiastic administration he gained the necessary institutional authority to stabilize the regime in crisis due to the disputes among politicians. Until 1928, his mandate was the touchstone during Conservative

³¹ Fernán González, *Poderes Enfrentados. Iglesia y Estado en Colombia* (Bogotá: CINEP, 1997), 212-214. Henderson, *Modernization*, 43-46, Bergquist, *Coffee*, 87-101.

³² Luis Javier Ortiz, *Aspectos Políticos del Federalismo en Antioquia: 1850-1880* (Medellín: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1987); for a complete analysis of Antioquia's colonization, and the influence of religion among settlers, see James Parsons, *Antioqueño Colonization in Western Colombia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968); Bergquist, *Coffee*, 195-207. A study written in the heyday of colonization, and interesting for its content in values instilled to the people in Antioquia, in Jorge Isaacs, *La Revolución Radical en Antioquia: 1880* (Bogotá: Imprenta de Gaitán, 1880).

³³ Luis Javier Ortiz, *Ganarse el Cielo Defendiendo la Religión: Guerras Civiles en Colombia, 1840-1902* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2005).

Party's drifting leadership, making him often the final stage for candidates' approval. He personally communicated provincial bishops of presidential candidacies that deserved Catholic approval or dislike. His approval worked as a pronouncement that passed from private chambers in the Congress, to public pulpits in cities and provincial parishes. Information filtered from the Cathedral's administrative offices located in the Archdiocesan Seminary, to local bishops and priests, and then to acolytes. Acolytes translated for the people the synthetic messages delivered at mass — by norm given in Latin—, and passed on to civil authorities and average people attending mass. These were the strings that, wisely pulled, articulated and mobilized the gears of power in Colombia. Political decisions made in Bogotá passed from civil institutions to the church, and depending on the necessities they could become a call for war, or a subtle mandate for the provincial election of civil administrators at the local level.³⁴ These invisible strings constituted the network bonding power, authority and allegiance in Colombia. They were exalted in religious worshiping that bolstered the divine and moral nature of the establishment. Alternative political movements attempting to counterbalance the *Hegemonía Conservadora*, had to furnish at least a well-articulated discourse, sound in terms of practices that galvanized values, in order to parallel or set in motion and effective opposition.

³⁴ Scholarship research on electoral mechanics during the 19th century tends to complement larger studies on early 20th century political culture. The main works until the 1990's were: John Martz, *The Politics of Clientelism: Democracy & the State in Colombia* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1997). The author creates a general theoretical reflection that uses Colombian case of clientele and electoral practices as a necessary stage in political modernization, corporation consolidation, and something that western democracies embody but customize in a rhetoric that inhibits Latin America to transit its own path to social modernization. Francisco Leal Buitrago and Andrés Dávila, *Clientelismo: el Sistema Político y su Expresión Regional* (Bogotá: IEPRI-Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1990) where the authors elaborate a sociological framework to explain clientelism and corruption based on the assertion that the state had a weak presence over the national territory. The example used is Tiberio Villareal and his electoral allegiances in the northern coast. Finally Medofilo Medina, *Juegos de Rebeldía: la Trayectoria Política de Saúl Charris de la Hoz (1914-)* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional -CINDEC UN, 1997) presents the northern coast political practices with references to lineages or political *castas*, and how exclusion from parties depended on racial, educational and economic aspects. Resent research with regional scope provides further elements to the topic particularly in the understanding of political contention and agency. Nancy Appelbaum, *Muddied Waters: Race, Region, and Local History in Colombia, 1846-1948* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003) explores the frictions between Antioquia and Cauca, and how racial identities operated in parallel to political exclusion and clientelist dynamics in the coffee-growing areas engulfed in provincial elites in factional disputes between Liberals and Conservatives struggling provincial elites. James E. Sanders, *Contentious Republicans: Popular Politics, Race, and Class in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004) who studies agency in the mid 19th century, and sustains that political in Southern Cauca decisions happened in a context of negotiating subordination. I will critically assess this argument in the light of political representation in the 1930, as agency cannot be used to interpret authority/obedience in a national scope. These works center on political practices and discourses, but barely illustrate how the Catholic Church sustained regional electoral dynamics before *La Regeneración*.

Early in his ecclesiastic career, Bernardo Herrera Restrepo received homage in the cultural conservative journal *El Repertorio Colombiano*,³⁵ from an active group of intellectuals involved in politics and discussions on theology. They considered that religion helped to galvanize the political hegemony in concert with the Church. In the awakening of journalism in Colombia, conservative intellectuals became enthusiastic readers of texts brought from Europe. Many of the circulating books that nourished the Conservative youth were part of Bernardo Herrera Restrepo's personal library —donated to the Conciliar Seminary and protected during the Thousand Days civil war at his home. Young intellectuals were concerned by the crumbling of the Conservative Party, and envisioned a necessary renovation of its doctrines. They wanted to diminish the negative effects of Nationalist Conservative factions in power. The influence of Bernardo Herrera Restrepo deserved an apologetic text about his work in Medellín. The unsettled young intellectuals contributed for the journal with several essays on social Darwinism. Their ideas expressed in *El Repertorio Colombiano*, discussed European Conservative thinkers —particularly Joséph de Maistre—, and were critical of empirical scientific analysis promoted by liberals demonstrating how the missionaries' intervention in politics led to mass murderous attacks against native populations in Paraguay, Argentina and Peru. Conservative thinkers supported missionary work because 'Their enterprise for civilization left an eloquent testimony of the Cross in desserts and forgotten indigenous reductions for our savage tribes'.³⁶ The origin of the article, written by Miguel Antonio Caro, was to criticize the poet Jorge Isaacs, who had published an ethno linguistic dictionary of native languages in northern Colombia, where indigenous communities were endangered by the cultural imposition of doctrines by Jesuits and mendicant Catholic orders.³⁷

³⁵ *El Repertorio Colombiano* XIII (1887): 458-477.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 6

³⁷ Jorge Isaacs, *Estudio sobre las Tribus Indígenas del Magdalena antes Provincia de Santa Marta* (Bogotá: Imprenta de Echeverría, 1884).

Miguel Antonio Caro's critique addresses risks posed to Catholic values by the diverse social and cultural composition of Colombian society. The publication became a beacon for young conservative followers, who made efforts to enlarge 'the church leverage among conservative intellectual circles by illuminating and innovative path towards civilization'.³⁸ The initiative encompassed theories necessary to explain inequity and justify social distinctions in Colombia.³⁹ Most of the publication is dedicated to envisioning perspectives for the amelioration of the moral structure in territories where the Catholic doctrine was in process of expansion. In particular, the labor of missionaries and parochial priests was celebrated as the heroic efforts to bridge the social gap that kept the nation from civilization and stability. In general, the goal of the group was to foster the strict use of doctrines and strategies to enlarge the grasp of the faith and its institution in communities prone to surrender and give allegiance to the Liberal Party. For this research, it is necessary to see how Liberal intellectuals were disregarded and became object of mockery or bigotry. Jorge Isaacs had a Judeo-Spanish background, and his entrepreneurship —bound to recover his fortune lost at conservative lootings during the 19th century civil wars— promoted initiatives similar to the work of Rafael Uribe Uribe. He was considered locally a heroic man by peasants and settlers able to use his help clearing land for productive agriculture. His areas of influence were the indomitable tropical jungles in the southern territory of Caquetá, and scorching deserts in La Guajira, in the northern coastline. However, conservative intellectuals criticized his work as a concealed strategy to open access to foreign ideologies, and spread it among those peoples incapable of good judgment, and distant from god's hand.⁴⁰

³⁸ Ibid., 309.

³⁹ Rojas, *Civilization*, 11-17.

⁴⁰ Jorge Isaacs dismissed his critics saying that 'to do all this things, risking my life all the time living among barbarous tribes destroyed by pests, challenging storms, living without food... All this seems to me more effective that to write cheap poetry to amuse the sensitive public for free. What do you think about my common sense? Some said that the Muses are upset with me, that they treat me with disdain. Bullshit, what is necessary is to give up poetry for a moment...the nation is in ruin, and what it needs is to be helped, not necessarily the help that brings about to crown with laurels poets'. In Jorge Isaacs, *Soñé Vagar: la Poética Correspondencia Inédita de Jorge Isaacs*, ed. by Leonel Góngora (Bogotá: Puntos Gráficos, 1991), 26. He was a poet, and wrote what is still considered the first modern

The intellectual life in Bogotá bolstered groups that educated in the middle of the Thousand Days civil war grew to occupy administrative positions during the conservative decline in the 1920's. The example of exaltation to Bogotá's archbishop represents the spirit of the epoch among conservative young elite members eager to become the next generation of politicians. They became known as the *Generación del Centenario*, a non-formal group that included leading intellectuals, political and economic figures that either from the Liberal or Conservative Party, were educated within the precepts of *La Regeneración*. By the second decade of the 20th century they had gained notoriety, and some of their members such as Alfonso López Pumarejo, Laureano Gómez, Mariano Ospina Pérez, Luis López de Mesa, Eduardo Santos and Enrique Olaya Herrera became presidents or ministers. Although many of them were committed to liberal ideologies, in general their perceptions about social organization were deeply conservative, if not reactionary. Their families became the economic elite and those engaged in business fostered guilds that flourished after the 1930's. Although the divisions between Liberals and Conservatives persisted, new alliances complicated the distinctions within the national oligarchy.⁴¹

Scholarly research about the conservative ideologues in Colombia in late 19th and early 20th century has been centered in *Los Leopardos* (The Leopards), a group of conservative intellectuals eager to discuss European texts from the extreme right and who wanted a change in national politics based on a discourse that explicitly called for intransigence and intolerance.⁴² Their approach was not that innovative, since in 1887 such standpoint was part of the concluding remarks in the analysis of social Darwinism in Colombian provinces, where the author criticized liberalism as 'a frightening

national novel, but in his epoch was harshly criticized by the conservative writer Rafael Pombo, who recently was disclosed by historian as having committed flagrant plagiarism of poems by minor French writers in the late 19th century.

⁴¹ Javier Ocampo, *Colombia en sus Ideas*, Vol 3 (Bogotá: Fundación Universidad Central, 1999), 178-231; Gerardo Molina, *Las Ideas Liberales en Colombia, 1915-1934* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo, 1974), 56-69, 108-117.

⁴² Cesar Ayala, *El porvenir del Pasado: Gilberto Alzate Avendaño, Sensibilidad Leoparda y Democracia. La Derecha Colombiana de los Años 1930's* (Bogotá: Fundación Gilberto Alzate Avendaño -Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2007). This research is probably the best work on intellectual history for the first half of the 20th century, and it is rooted in a deep analysis of politicians in the 19th century. See also José Ángel Hernández, "Los Leopardos y el Fascismo en Colombia," *Historia y Comunicación Social* 5 (2000): 221-227.

philosophy [that] made fashionable a false principle by which tolerance ought to the others should be extended to all genre of ideas and opinions'. The discourse of intransigence and intolerance was in the very fabric of conservative thought that celebrated electoral, moral and administrative victories of the main ecclesiastic representative in Colombia. Later, during the decline of the Conservative regime in the late 1920's, the lack of consensus in the Conservative Party to select a candidate for the presidency triggered reactions among young anti-liberal intellectuals and priests, as well as those in the top ranks of the church, who envisioned a necessary refurbishment of both the electoral machinery and the Conservative leadership. In general, they considered that the Conservative Party foundational ideals had to be reconsidered as well as the approach to the voters.

2.4 GOD'S CHOICE: FROM THE ALTAR TO THE POLLS

Until 1928 campaigning for elections was based on client-patron mechanisms very supportive of the Conservative Party. Decisions made in Bogotá, at the National Congress or the Conservative Directory, reached the archdiocese, and from there went via telegraphic messages to regional bishops, municipal parishes and local priests. The messages were considered orders that required urgent attention. It was a well-defined network of allegiance that included political leaders—in Bogotá and provincial cities—, and local electoral barons, in harmony with bishops, priest and acolytes. The system helped conservative elites to affirm their candidate's control of central administration and congressional representation, and reflected the perception of the ruling class about popular suffrage, public opinion, and the uneducated people

Support because national consciousness follows the legitimate candidate despite allegations that it is the people that elects, because the electorate has to be lead like in any association. In consequence, nobody can refuse the National Directory's decision using the popular sovereignty as an excuse. It is truth that the people elect, but it is also truth that the people need to be lead into the proper path. The National Directory is the unique head in this case.⁴³

⁴³ *El Debate*, Editorial "Las Elecciones Presidenciales," February 1930: 3.

The National Directory of the Conservative Party became intersection between public's choice, religious influence and the political system. The ideas of Rafael Nuñez presented at the beginning of this chapter prevailed at the end of the *Hegemonía Conservadora*. At the local level — municipalities and ecclesiastic administrative divisions were one and the same across the national territory— orders trickled down to Catholic followers via pastoral messages, gossip, and Church's bells chimes. The mechanism also functioned since the 1860's in order to hastily organize military forces to respond attacks, or organize raids against Liberals. Hatred of dangerous political opponents to the Conservative cause was at the center of Catholic priests, and endured until the last years of the *Hegemonía Conservadora*

Unfortunately, Dr Guillermo Valencia is now, like in 1918, recommended by masonic lodges. There is undeniable evidence giving testimony. Such negative recommendation makes me thing about legions of enemies of god and the Church, meaning an openly hostile threat to the religion. This makes impossible to vote for the notable candidate, no matter how catholic we believe he is.⁴⁴

The combination of religious and political mass gathering legitimized the electoral system. The Liberal Party was unable to create similar mechanisms where harmoniously mobilized social support bolstered political authority and popular obedience. Antioquia, the conservative stronghold of the regime —particularly for the Nationalist Conservatives faction until the 1920's— based its electoral reliability on the effectiveness of the system. This network of allegiance, obedience and authority was built progressively by the Catholic bishop Bernardo Herrera Restrepo since the 1880's. The *Hegemonía Conservadora* ended in 1930, when vacillations from the archbishop Ismael Perdomo—who succeeded Bernardo Herrera Restrepo after his death in 1928—in selecting a presidential candidate ended the hegemony of the party.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ *El Nuevo Tiempo*, Editorial, "Los peligros de la fe," January 7, 1930: 3.

⁴⁵ Medófilo Medina, "Curas, Obispos y Elecciones 1929-1930," *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura*, 18-19 (1990-1991): 185-204.

The presidential campaign in 1929-1930 was the corollary of the Conservative Party crisis, when archbishops and priests used telegraphic wires to transmit decisions taken by the Conservative National Directory to regional/local spheres of electoral influence. Ismael Perdomo was an egregious follower of Bernardo Herrera Restrepo's political and religious strategies. Although the Church held control of mass political opinion by using the pulpit, it failed to communicate consistently and on time the name of the new candidate for elections in 1929-1930.⁴⁶ The blame was transferred to the Archbishop, who still today is perceived as the culprit of the collapse of the *Hegemonía Conservadora*. The origin of the inconsistency was, however, the fragile arrangements between possible candidates.⁴⁷ In fact, telegraphic communications —the only means for communication between departmental cities and municipalities— reflected more the vacillations and swings of central decisions —taken by the national Directory, congressmen, and the president—, rather than the erratic pulsations coming from Ismael Perdomo's fingers at the post office. The Conservative candidate lost, and gave space to the first Liberal president in more than four decades.

In this chapter, I introduced factors that hampered political change in Colombia during the *Hegemonía Conservadora*, and the strategies used to counterbalance a crisis of authority faced by the regime. The use of stereotypes to hamper popular support to the liberal Party enhanced hatred and violence as a normal reaction to initiatives to oppose the Conservative Party. At the end of the regime, in 1930, the generation of liberal leaders had been educated in a Conservative environment that hampered the attempts for rapid reformations to the regime in the 1930s. The *Hegemonía*

⁴⁶ Both Guillermo Valencia and Alfredo Vásquez Cobo were Conservative candidates. The following excerpts taken from Medófilo Medina's article help to understand the regime's vacillation upon decision at the eve of election. The church had pronounced that 'in our judgment, the unique mandatory means for us Catholics, we declare that it is necessary to support Guillermo Valencia's presidential candidacy and to deposit our vote for him, forgetting about personal sympathies —no matter how fair and deserved they are—, disagreements or problems we might have....' (from *El Espectador*, January 24, 1930). Medina, "Curas, Obispos," 190. The double agenda during the election broke the usual coordination among ecclesiastic authorities in the provinces. "The diocesan prelate announces to the faith followers that my opinion has not changed regarding the support to the popular candidacy of the general Vásquez Cobo, which is the only one that offers guarantees for us. It has been said that the people has the exclusive constitutional right to elect the president of the republic' (from *El Espectador*, January 28, 1930). A few days later, an order changed the decision: 'I inform you excellent highness that I derogate the inform 22 for its counterproductive effects, and had invited the followers of the faith to suffrage for Vásquez Cobo, who for his popularity has better possibilities to win, considering the common danger we are facing' (from *El Espectador* February 7 1930). Medina, "Curas, Obispos," 191.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 185-187.

Conservadora was sustainable, despite its legitimacy's crisis, thanks to the manipulation of symbols for national unity, which became consecrated by the Catholic Church. Similarly, the *cachaco* as a prototype representing national culture barely registered the variety of social sectors that constituted the vast majority of the population. The exaltation of Bogotá's elite impeded the formation and consolidation of popular leadership, making necessary for the opposition to create clandestine rituals for allegiance to their chiefs. Finally, civil and religious ceremonies proclaimed a regime that disregarded political alternatives and their symbols.

CHAPTER 3

POLITICAL VIOLENCE, LIBERAL REPUBLIC, AND THE POLITICS OF *MAGNICIDIO* (ASSASSINATION)

Across its history, political violence has been endemic in Colombia. As I mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2, historiography has debated the role of leadership in commanding insurgent opposition during civil wars in the 19th century, making the Thousand Days conflict the breaking point of political and military allegiances. After the economic recovery during Rafael Reyes' presidency, the *Hegemonía Conservadora* stabilized until social unrest grew in areas controlled by foreign companies on charge of banana production and oil extraction. The military response to social protest and the increasing isolation of leftist ideologies from influence on the political landscape radicalized the political positions heralded by leaders marginalized from decision making institutions in the late 1920's.

In this chapter, I will elaborate an analysis of such leadership and how radical opposition grew since the 1930's. The establishment closed ranks against leftist and populist leaders, and in regions such as Tolima, Antioquia, Valle del Cauca and Cundinamarca peasant settlers were dispossessed of recently colonized land in attacks launched by landowners. The escalation of selective political violence affected peasant league organizers, union leaders and students involved in urban demonstrations against the conservative regime. In particular, the left used the threat to national sovereignty to point out how Colombian factory workers protesting harsh working conditions were assassinated in massive numbers by the national army. The substitution of Conservative rule for a Liberal leader, did not change dramatically the incidence of widespread violence in the provinces, fostering alternative political movements whose ideological innovations

were completed by leaders as spearheads for ruling parties that betrayed people's demands. In this section, I introduce the leadership of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, and how he created the political party *Union Nacional de Izquierda Revolucionaria* (National Leftist Revolutionary Union, hereafter UNIR) that disrupted bipartisan political monopoly, and dismembered moderate militants from the traditional left organized around the *Partido Comunista de Colombia* (Colombian Communist Party, hereafter PCC). I explain how stereotypes nurtured during the 19th century, pervaded political debates causing fear of the opponent. Despite clear elements on morality contained in the discourse of the opposition to the Liberal regime, and a moderate perception of socialism, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's assassination represented a symbolic destruction of the popular movement. Here, I explore symbolic forms adopted in the destruction of the enemy/opponent, and how this constituted what I call the politics of *magnicidio*, shaping violence in Colombia since the early 1940's.

3.1 EMERGING LEADERS, FLOURISHING POLITICS

The end of the *Hegemonía Conservadora* opened the political system for transformations that fulfilled delayed expectations in economics, culture and social modernization. The country had experienced fast growth and bypassed disastrous damages in the first years of an international recession. Like most Latin American nations, Colombia initiated a process of industrialization producing manufactures, and commodities that required basic processing of rough materials. Industrialization was also possible for technological transformations started in the mid-1920's in Europe and United States that allowed national industrialists to buy used machinery and take over markets abandoned by industrialized nations. In terms of consumption, the last years of the *Hegemonía Conservadora* witnessed large scale public and international investments, in addition to the payment from the United States of reparations for the secession of Panama.

Although the economy was growing, the benefits of the process were unevenly distributed in society. The index of distribution was a dismal reflection of the inequality that crisscrossed the country, and layered the principles for social dissent and resentment towards the establishment. Probably those who felt the least difference after the ruling party changed were the popular sectors. The rural sector was disrupted by landowner strategies to gain access to lands recently settled in waves of slash and burn colonization sponsored by the state or by the initiative of peasant leagues. Sectors that were kept at the margin of economic modernization experienced a rapid process of ideological integration enhanced by governmental repression during a strike launched in Ciénaga, Santa Marta, in 1928, which the regime resolved by massacre, martial law, military measures, and the validation of foreign influence in local/national affairs insofar as they conflicted with business agendas.¹

The massacre of the united Fruit Company's banana workers in Ciénaga, legitimized working class radicalization, and pushed ideological factionalism toward coordinated efforts. Liberal and Conservative elites dismissed popular claims, and limited the maneuvering of both socialists and communist from political campaigning and electoral participation.² From the side of peasant leagues, radical groups became active in settlement processes in areas of agricultural frontier, providing support to their claims in legal suits held in Bogotá and departmental capitals. Whilst bipartisan allegiance progressively withered in rural areas, peasant radicalization became centered on claims for titles and transportation improvements, making the PCC its main political mechanism for representation. Peasant claims made necessary the use of judiciary that tested their patience due to

¹ Mauricio Archila, "Masacre de las Bananeras," *Revista Credencial Historia* 117 (1999): 14-15.

² For the main elements of the massacre interpretation in the scope of a crisis of the *Hegemonía Conservadora*, see Mauricio Archila and Leidy Torres ed., *Bananeras. Huelga y Masacre* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2009), 8-11. An overview of the correlation between increasing popular mobilization and re-composition of Liberal alternatives beyond the traditional Liberal party, see, Daniel Pécaut, *Orden y Violencia: Evolución Socio-Política de Colombia 1930-1945* (Bogotá: Norma, 2001). 362-375. The author argues that the Liberal capture of power promoted mobilizations based on initiatives for social structure's modernization. The Massacre in 1928 was a touchstone in the conservative decline, and promoted popular attachment to left leaning alternatives, what bolstered the Liberal candidacy of Enrique Olaya Herrera.

the naturally sluggish functioning of the system. Indigenous movements in Cauca, for instance, used the same legal platform to find out that they were excluded from the constitutional arrangement, a situation that demonstrated how the elites closed ranks to protect common interest while facing increasing claims from popular sectors, in spite of their deeply entrenched ideological differences.

The student movement slowly emerged as well. The small number of university students made it marginal when compared to working class or peasants, but their spontaneous actions triggered reactions in urban settings. Radical students joined the *Partido Socialista de Colombia* (Colombian Socialist Party, henceforth PSC) or the PCC, and contributed to provide political cadres, and spreading alternative interpretations of the national history. The rebellious youth in the 1920's and 1930's galvanized alternatives for social mobilization in the 1940's, in a critical stance to bipartisan monopoly of the political landscape. The process was entwined with the rapid assimilation of ideas that the country disregarded for decades. Intellectual circles gathered at universities, coffee shops, and social clubs. They enjoyed the advantages of liberal thought as a status marker. Bearing the symbols that separated European or North American cultural values served as a mechanism for distinction, and also expanded the variety of ideological options that were inhibited during *La Regeneración*. It is necessary to mention that intellectual circles were often hermetic for popular leaders, due in part to the marginal role for public or ecclesiastic institutions in enhancing popular education, and factors that limited public access to books, information or cultural experiences such as languages, traveling, and participation in intellectual activities perceived as leisure. This aspect impeded leaders to climb to the upper echelons of authority and political power.

Liberals in power were initially identified by Conservatives in the opposition with the fear that they were likely to dismantle the Constitution, stripping the Catholic Church of its influence over population. However, the Liberal Party's agenda was never committed to such initiatives considering that Enrique Olaya Herrera formed a government including moderate leaders. The

national unity was not endangered either. Symbols were maintained, and the government was chiefly concerned with protecting the interests of the emerging industrialist class, maintaining financial stability, and finding a solution to drifting commodity prices in the export market, particularly coffee. Despite being separated for nearly forty years from positions of power in the state, Liberals showed the necessary skills for the administration of government, making radical initiatives feared by conservatives an unnecessary step. At the local and provincial level, Conservatives maintained their bureaucratic strongholds and the Congress became the institution where debates suppressed direct confrontation.

The test for the symbolic mechanism of national cohesion emerged during a short war with Peru, in which popular animosity and political maneuvering harmoniously led the nation to defend its sovereignty, reinforcing myths and sentiments that were never proved to respond a foreign attack. At the Congress Laureano Gomez cried for 'Peace, internal Peace. War, War in the frontier against the felon enemy' In fact, the deployment of military forces and ceremonies of celebration helped to integrate recently graduated military officers that studied at the national Military Academia with the trajectory of heroics that the nation lacked and was resented after intestine civil wars until the early 20th century.³ Medófilo Medina explains that 'the conflict had the effect of an antidepressant in the most intense moment of economic crisis'.⁴ Colombia had but a small regular military force organized by both Chilean and Swiss commissions in the 1910's. The military experts declared that 'barely can be useful for parades during civil ceremonies or marches'.⁵ The military required an event to consolidate its institutional grasp in society, and to proof its capacities to defend civil and religious values beyond partisan divisions. At that time, soldiers had scarce attachment to

³ The international conflict became an stimulus for middle ranks to gain notability in the military forces during the conflict, and promoted immediate climb in the hierarchy, see Alvaro Valencia Tovar, *Conflicto Amazónico: 1932-1934* (Bogotá: Villegas Editores, 1994), 5. See also Guillermo Plazas Olarte, "Conflicto con el Perú 1932-1934," in *Historia de la Fuerzas Militares de Colombia*, ed. Álvaro Valencia Tovar, (Bogotá: Planeta, 1993), 34.

⁴ Medófilo Medina, "El Conflicto Amazónico de 1932-1935, Ejemplo de Unidad y Autoestima," *Revista Credencial Historia* 119 (1999).

⁵ Aline Helg, "El Desarrollo de la Instrucción Militar en Colombia en los Años 20: Estudio del Impacto de una Misión Militar Suiza," *Revista Colombiana de Educación* 17 (1986): 23.

the force, and their dismal training led to minimal sense of affect for the institution. The military forces also had a weak spirit of corps, and conscription sparked thoughts of shame and personal misery, instead of feelings of pride, and deep commitment to a national identity

Every year, only a small proportion of the recruitment quota is fulfilled, and those chosen are poor indigent natives and those non-militants of the party in power. People with affluence are tacitly excluded from military service. A white will not talk to an indigenous, and will never live under the same roof of subjected to the same law that a colored man.⁶

The war against Peru became a good referent for national identity, and served conservative military leaders moved to position themselves alongside the pantheon of national glory. Medófilo Medina refers the incident as a catalyst for national unity, ‘a sense of national indignation spread rapidly. The President Enrique Olaya Herrera acted with energy and intelligence. He strengthened his decadent “national unity” by calling former presidential candidates to responsibilities of first order’.⁷ The former presidential candidate Alfredo Cobo Vásquez was appointed chief of the military expedition, led military exercises displaying military power for local elites near Bogotá, and trained a fleet equipped by boats purchased in Europe to retake Leticia, the southern town invaded by the Peruvian military, by launching a head-on campaign. Guillermo Valencia, alternative Conservative candidate in 1930’s elections was appointed plenipotentiary minister for the Foreign Office to attend the crisis. However, the president also demonstrated his superior authority over military generals and barred Alfredo Cobo Vásquez’s use of excessive force planned to claim a faster victory using a squad of hydroplanes.⁸ The influence of foreign military missions creating educational institutions and training officials in tactics and strategy bolstered an internal hierarchy. However, the popular opinion about the military institution lacked referents different to its partisanship and irregularity.

⁶ Ibid., 27.

⁷ Medófilo Medina, “El Conflicto,” 74.

⁸ Plazas, “Conflicto con el Perú,” 36-38.

The war against Peru undermined the common idea that military leaders were only landowner *caudillos*,⁹ creating an impression, at least within the upper and middle classes, that social climbing could be effective through the national army or the police. This also happened as a result of government's justifications for increasing expenditures on an institution dismissed by leaders throughout the 19th century. Elites formerly reluctant to be taxed for nourishing the military forces that could overthrow civil government, started to justify the institution as the brightest alternative to disastrous effects of widespread looting and banditry during civil war.¹⁰

Internal diplomatic documents showed later that the 'operation for re-conquering the territory' and 'defend national integrity' was excessive, and the president dismissed the United States intervention. In fact, the occupation happened as a result of radical left wing activist groups in Peru pushing for a nationalist response from the military to rebel against a dictator on his way out of power.¹¹ In Colombia, the crisis caused a nationalist response supporting the Liberal regime. At the same time, the government was able to refocus the internal political debate that increasingly barred laws proposed by the executive in the congress, by accusing the PCC of antinationalism. The Liberal government proclaimed that the PCC's leaders did not support the military operation and the nationalist campaign launched in Bogotá and the southern territories. This shifted public opinion to condemn the radical opposition for antinationalism.

Whilst the establishment's legitimacy strengthened during the crisis with Peru, and certain social forces aligned to support military officers in defending national sovereignty, dissent intensified

⁹ A general definition for *caudillo* is the charismatic military leader on a horseback. In Colombia they were not exactly that. Instead, I prefer to adopt the definition that Orlando Fals Borda used in the 1970's. 'They are promoters of a particular type of authoritarianism that filled the political void. Those who employed a strong hand because they believed that the majority of Latin America's inhabitants were not prepared for out and out democracy. The real caudillo was not content with local power and sought national influence, though he was seldom able to pass power on to his chosen successor. Caudillos and their 20th century descendants executed the important function of integrating national and regional politics, and transcending local economic and political interests', Orlando Fals Borda, *El Presidente Nieto*. Cited in John Green, *Gaitánismo, left Liberalism, and Popular Mobilization in Colombia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 175.

¹⁰ Eduardo Pizarro, "La Profesionalización Militar en Colombia (1907-1944)," *Análisis Político*, 1 (1987).

¹¹ Adolfo León Atehortúa, "El Conflicto Colombo-Peruano, Apuntes acerca de su Desarrollo e Importancia Histórica," *Revista Historia y Espacio*, 29 (2007), 42 – 55.

among other social formations, enhanced by left leaning opposition. This is an interesting perspective to explore political leadership at the beginning of the *Republica Liberal*. Civil and military leaders defending the regime, received increasing criticism from voices in academia and intellectual circles that debated since the 1920's the bipartisan monopoly of political power. Gerardo Molina suggested that the epoch was inspired by a 'socializing liberalism', in which coexisted two lines of thought. The first bourgeois, and the second popular. The socialist writer continued saying that 'the first [was] a Catalogue of individual and political rights, and the second envisioned an egalitarian society'.¹² John Green says —citing Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's correspondence in 1924— that intellectuals such as Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, Luis Tejada, and José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo, were opening their "sails" to Rafael Uribe Uribe's liberalism. These leftist activists and writers interpreted Rafael Uribe Uribe's thought as a 'proletarian revindication before the invigorating winds of social transformation'.¹³ The epoch abounded in ideological mergers from rather few sources and intellectual influences, in what Isidro Vanegas called the vulgarization of socialism, when 'scarce socialist literature that only became known by a wider public'. The author continues saying that 'some intellectual groups used means for diffusion, considering the repression of the Conservative regime to leftist propaganda'.¹⁴

One of the arguments sparked after the conflict with Peru was that the public budget invested in the military was instrumentalized for the protection of elite's interest, whilst the soldiers were ordered to repress social protests at any cost. The purchase of machine guns with public funds to defend monopolistic interest of the United Fruit Company, flagrant violation of workers' rights in their banana plantations, and the massacre that officials and military concealed from the public contradicted constitutional principles of respect for private property, citizen's protection and the

¹² Molina, *Las ideas Liberales*, 130.

¹³ Green, *Gaitánismo*, 53.

¹⁴ Isidro Vanegas, "Los Estudios sobre el Socialismo Temprano en Colombia: una Versión de la Izquierda," *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura* 27 (2000): 119 – 162. John Green makes an interesting analysis of the left and Liberal influences in the 1930's, and how they fostered a particular political platform in Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. See, Green, *Gaitánismo*, 55-57.

defense of the national sovereignty. A similar argument was made against the Standard Oil Company and their reluctance to submit to national laws on labor whilst exploring and extracting oil from wells in Barrancabermeja. The predatory activities and excesses of both the United Fruit Company and Standard Oil Company empowered social movements to protest in the provinces to against the government's disregard for their allegations.¹⁵ Strategic exploitation of resources became central for sustained economic growth and public budgetary stability. These are central aspects for a state. However, leftist activists opposed foreign influence or subjugation by imperialist mandates that threatened national sovereignty, and proved the elite's betrayals to their own people. The elimination of a popular movement reflected elite disaffection with the people, and the importance that business' leverage gained in the first decades of 20th century. Foreign companies brought investments that favored elite's wealth, making the popular protests an obstacle to their interests. However, by decimating the movement in a massacre the government's legitimacy waned. People's allegiance declined. In the next sections, I will present how massive massacres perpetrated to deter popular mobilization, were replaced by selective and symbolic murder. This became a strategy to maintain political rule without weakening the entire structure of power and subordination in Colombia. The process, I argue, transformed radically the relation between the people, their leaders, and the rituals that cemented political allegiance.

3.2 THE LIBERAL REPUBLIC: THE BUILDING OF POPULAR LEADERSHIP

The increasing pressure from popular sectors towards inclusion and participation with social equity was evident in urban and rural areas. Social policies implemented in the mid-1930's by President Alfonso López Pumarejo extended the right to vote to a larger electoral census, started

¹⁵ Mauricio Archila, *Cultura e Identidad Obrera: Colombia 1910-1945* (Bogotá: Cinep, 1991), 37-52.

land reforms, and allowed workers to organize with certain political autonomy.¹⁶ However, land and labor reforms were attacked and dismantled in the late 1930's by the Congress, with the guilds pushing for less autonomy and legal protection for peasants and factory workers.¹⁷ In the 1940's it became evident that the regime lacked the ability to transform itself. The emergence of popular sectors in urban areas, and the deferral of land reforms radicalized their claims and the repressive measures employed by the government to maintain social order. In this context, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán represented an innovative style of leadership based on large social support, in opposition to the elite's concealed arrangements to keep power at any cost.¹⁸ His participation in mainstream politics —Bogotá's major in the 1920's, and leader of the UNIR,¹⁹ a dissident branch of the Liberal Party— contrasted with a tradition of *caudillos* and electoral barons who ruled the country through the Liberal and the Conservative Parties.

The singular leadership of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán can be explained by the following characteristics. Firstly, his appeal to urban sectors marginalized from mainstream politics, who wanted to gain an advantageous standing after the extension of electoral rights in the 1930's. Before suffrage laws changed, his figure grew so fast that it was necessary for the Liberal Party to appoint him in an administrative position considering his electoral influence. Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was

¹⁶ Richard Stoller, "Alfonso López Pumarejo and Liberal Radicalism in 1930's Colombia," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 27: 2 (1995): 367-397. For instance, the right to vote since the Constitution of 1886 was only for citizens. Citizenship was restricted to males with a trade or profession, literacy, a yearly income of 500 pesos or possessions exceeding the amount of 1500 pesos. Elections were indirect for president, senate, and direct for councils, departmental governments and chamber of representatives. The Congress (Senate and representative Chamber) elected president after nominations of candidates and regional suffrage. In 1910 a constitutional reform allowed citizens' direct suffrage for president. The country had this electoral regime until 1936 when male universal suffrage was declared, and indirect election of the senate was kept. See, Fernando Guillén, *El poder político en Colombia* (Bogotá: Punta de Lanza, 1979), chapter 4, on the mechanics of Colombian political system.

¹⁷ An analysis of changes of the political system in the first half of 20th century in Herbert Braun, *The Assassination of Gaitán: Public Life And Urban Violence In Colombia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), chapter 2.

¹⁸ An analysis of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's movement in relation to leadership and bonds with the opposition in Arturo Alape, *El Bogotazo: Memorias del Olvido* (Bogotá: Fundación Universidad Central, 1983), 23-26.

¹⁹ The UNIR was created in 1933 after Jorge Eliécer Gaitán separated from the Liberal Party. Initially it was mainly a movement that congregated followers of his strong opposition to the moderate Liberals after their inclinations to favor Conservative Party in congressional alliances. When the Liberal Party attempted to isolate the group the group established ideological principles that merged populism and elements of fascism, learned by Gaitán when he became influenced by political writers and the fascination with mass mobilizations in the fascist Italy of the 1920's. See, Green, *Gaitánismo*, 25-38.

appointed Bogotá's Major.²⁰ For moderate Liberals, such decision was uncomfortable but necessary, otherwise their party could not vanquish the Conservatives in 1930, and would have lost the presidency in 1934. Secondly, his movement represented a socially integrative political program. During rallies, his supporters included peasant sectors, unionized workers, and radical Liberals disbanded from either the PSC or the PCC. The crowds he attracted were a clear signal of declining support to the traditional parties that would have a destabilizing power during presidential campaigning.²¹

Thirdly, his movement —called *Gaitánismo*— represented an ideological crucible where liberalism, socialism and fascism merged in a political project claiming for practical solution to national issues. The UNIR started to work for reforms and social justice based on a nationalist platform.²² Elite leaders —Conservatives and Liberals— considered him a threat to their historical domination. Specifically, *Gaitánismo* endangered *caudillos'* capacity to mobilize electoral and militarily rural supporters to promote/respond during outbreaks of violence. *Gaitánismo* also jeopardized the regime's structure of leadership, because the authority and obedience that held together peasants and *caudillos* was losing influence at the local level. Also, political factionalism that historically legitimized violence as the ultimate mechanisms for achieving its goals was not in the UNIR's and *Gaitánismo's* political program.²³ When Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's movement was labeled revolutionary and illegal, it

²⁰ Cordell Robinson, *Jorge Eliécer Gaitán and his Socio-Political Movement, 1930-1948* (PhD Dissertation, Indiana University, 1971), 6-10.

²¹ Braun, *The Assassination*, 11-17; Alape, *El Bogotázo*, chapters 3 and 4. Further research on Jorge Eliécer Gaitán and his movement, in Richard Sharpless, *Gaitán of Colombia: a Political Biography* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1978).

²² Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's movement also gave transitory institutional and ideological coherence to popular expressions that failed to consolidate as social movements. For instance, spontaneous insurreccional peasant protest and embryonic popular urban protest congregated in UNIR making it a transitory political platform. See, Sánchez, *Gaitánismo*, 16; Green, *Gaitánismo*, 72-78. For a synthesis of Enrico Ferri's influence in Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, see Green, *Gaitánismo*, 48-55. The Italian criminologist created a vernacular approach to social Darwinism that was partially implemented in Italy during the early years of the Fascist regime. For Enrico Ferri Darwinism offered elements for scientific interpretation of reality that bolstered the organization of society along systemic principles parallel to organic formations.

²³ For an analysis of *caudillos* and its transition to settings predominantly modern and marked by urban protest, in Mario Aguilera and Renán Vega, *Ideal Democrático y Revuelta Popular: Bosquejo Histórico de la Mentalidad Política Popular en Colombia 1781-1948* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia –CEREC, 1998); Medófilo Medina, *La Protesta Urbana en Colombia en el Siglo XX* (Bogotá: Aurora, 1984) suggests that transition towards urban protest demonstrates political modernization fostering the formation of an urban proletariat. Another interesting analysis in Mario Aguilera, *Insurgencia Urbana en Bogotá: Motín, Conspiración y Guerra Civil 1893-1895* (Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Cultura, 1996) where the author suggest that caudillo authority's decadence weakened the political

was not because of violent acts committed by its followers, but for the popular dismissal of bipartisan commands to close ranks against Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. His leadership and the UNIR obstructed the government's capacity to impose its functional style of law and order.²⁴ Finally, the UNIR served as an institutional participatory mechanism expressing popular needs in the Congress. Jorge Eliécer Gaitán envisioned UNIR as an opportunity for establishing a social agenda whilst debilitating the bipartisan model of state.²⁵

Traditional elites closed ranks by banning his entrance to selective social clubs. Also, smear campaigns used newspapers and outspoken politicians —Liberals and Conservatives— to engage in public diatribes marked by stereotypes about his skin color and humble origin, as well as disdain for his supporters. Elite's references to 'the people', —*guaches*, *plebe*, *populacho*, all derogatory words— portrayed *Gaitánistas* as debased human beings. Elite politicians considered themselves to be civilized by enjoying leisure activities at coffee shops, clubs and intellectual circles where they could exhibit status symbols. Popular sectors lacked basic education or refined taste —for them even bland food was uncertain everyday— and they spent their time and energy on survival. Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's goal was to close the socioeconomic and cultural chasm through the implementation of policies to bring dignity to the living conditions of poor urban dwellers. The goal was to erode the elite's negative perceptions about the poor by uprooting poverty and bringing about a new mentality among the people.²⁶ During his term as Bogotá's Mayor (1936-1937) he wanted to ameliorate the hardships of life experienced by peasants crowded into shantytowns after being displaced by violence in rural areas. He was obsessed with cleanness and personal grooming, rules that he applied to his

system during the first decades of 20th century. In the transition violence became common coin in the accommodation of actors and structures.

²⁴ In the 1930's the revolutionary leitmotiv was used indifferently by Liberals, communists, fascists groups. For the decline in caudillo politics, see Green, *Gaitánismo*, 6-11; Braun, *The Assassination*, 75-98, 105-109; Roldán, *A Sangre*, Chapter 1; english version in *Blood and fire: La Violencia in Antioquia, Colombia, 1946-1953* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

²⁵ Pécaut, *Orden y Violencia*, Introduction.

²⁶ In Daniel Pécaut's book about this epoch, the importance of exclusion and sectarianism in shaping a political system that was both functional and based on the concomitant use of violence, is central for the argument that political parties shaped subcultures that constituted identity elements, often stronger than the sense of national belonging. See: Pécaut, *Orden y Violencia*, 47-48.

life and transmitted it to his supporters. During political rallies he gave away soaps, toothpaste and tips for personal presentation. Further initiatives included improvement programs for public services and sanitation in Bogotá, changes in manners abhorred by the upper classes, and a wide range of norms for civility.²⁷ His emergence as a leader was an opportunity for *mestizos* to gain notability in mainstream politics.

For the historian Herbert Braun, one of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's goals was to establish a moral framework for upward mobility. If people would climb the social ladder successfully, the effect of his programs would impact the formation of middle classes pursuing education, technical training and a better organized and more conscious working class. The attempt to expand a morality that would consolidate a middle-class envisioned mass politics based on an informed and capable electorate, in which popular sectors would benefit from long awaited reforms.²⁸ Jorge Eliécer Gaitán played a central role defining new boundaries of leadership and social obedience in the Colombian political landscape. The oligarchy's intolerance and reluctance to opening up the regime to populist movements restrained political alternatives in a moment in which Latin America was swept by movements proposing social progress and modernization based on equity —regardless of the direction in which the 'revolutionary' wheel of progress spin. The populist option was violently uprooted in Colombia, assuming that any form of radical liberalism concealed a communist threat. Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, similarly to Rafael Uribe Uribe, was assassinated in what seems to be another example of plots and retaliations from Liberals and Conservatives.

For the purposes of the analysis of leadership, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's political platform was a middle point between socialist ideals and liberal values. Using a populist agenda, charismatic personality and active political campaigning throughout the country, he reactivated popular interest in political affairs. For the general analysis of this dissertation, I argue that Colombian leaders,

²⁷ Braun, *The Assassination*, 28-35.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 60, 72-82.

including Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, Camilo Torres and Fabio Vásquez, assumed that their personal experiences could function as paradigms for the population. This was possible in the light of an overwhelming moral domination of the Catholic Church through political discourses that exhibited a pattern of morality, and clear mechanisms for its implementation in society. This will be explored here, and in further chapters when studying insurgent leaders. The way people follow a leader's path is mostly dependent on the capacity for portraying it as a standard example in which the individual can use his/her capabilities and together promote social change.

3.3 JORGE ELIÉCER GAITÁN: LEADERSHIP AND MORAL LIBERALISM

One of the most outstanding leaders opposing the regime was Jorge Elicer Gaitán, a *mestizo* lawyer from Bogotá, who climbed educational and administrative rungs in order to become one of the most renowned lawyers in Colombia. He defended labor activists and victims of the 1928 banana workers' massacre in Ciénaga. Other political activists had gained popularity in their struggle for political causes. However, what distinguished Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was the adoption of democratic mechanisms —elections, political parties, and public administration— to instigate a deep change in Colombia. His idea of liberalism combined elements of fascism, particularly the ideas of Enrico Ferri, his mentor in Italy during a specialization in law. For the Italian ideologue 'society has parallels to natural functions and organic life (...) order and progress can be described through the metaphor of health: conflict and destruction are diseases and epidemic'.²⁹ For Jorge Eliécer Gaitán such metaphor resembled society insomuch as 'society is an organism that tends to a state of equilibrium'. He considered that in a social context, politics can concentrate action 'in the concept of

²⁹ Ibid., 45

social change, based on altering individual behavior and attitudes'.³⁰ 'The great majority of Colombian population had exhausted its energies, atrophied its capacities, stupefied its senses and wasted its force nourishing a glutton minority allowing them to live the leisure life of the idle'.³¹

Political practice, he thought, was necessarily oriented to ameliorate individual conditions, reflected in social progress. This made it necessary to find a middle point between liberalism and socialism, an allegory that Herbert Braun considers to be the core ideological element in his early thought. The tension between liberalism and socialist ideas was resolved by his conviction that social change happens in convulsions that in order to become less traumatic, require a type of evolutionary revolution. Revolution was based on economic and social improvement, which makes necessary the state's interventionism to establish equilibrium. His socialist ideas differed from the Marxist left though, as he considered capitalism 'part of the natural order'. However, capitalism's progressive principle is obstructed by the unjust relations between capital and labor, whereby exploitation hampers the distribution of wealth.³² The contradictory social relations that capitalism brings about in the social organism are connected to expressions of injustice and domination. On the one hand, elites gain control of power and wealth by a sustained use of force and violence. On the other hand, the necessary reaction of the working class is to struggle. In other words, because capitalism is intrinsic to the evolution of society, the disease that weakens the social organism is the escalation of such struggle.

In this research, I start an analysis of cult formation that takes place without the direct influence of the worshiped leaders. The elevation of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's thought to a systematic ideology is partially product of his followers' efforts after his death. In intricate discussions about his writings, scholars have produced new interpretations that go beyond his original thought. His

³⁰ Ibid., 47

³¹ Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, *Las ideas Socialistas en Colombia* (Bogotá: Centro Jorge Eliécer Gaitán-Facultad de Derecho, Universidad Nacional, 1984), 243.

³² See, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, *Escritos Políticos* (Bogotá: El Ancora Editores, 1985), 22-40.

followers have been lured by his increasingly objectified thought.³³ The case of Camilo Torres is similar, as the argument will make evident in the following chapters.

The political project of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán fulfilled moral necessities that gave it strength and allowed it to endure after his death. His charisma also attracted followers, as much as his own life reflected the initiatives of hygienic, social climb and moral behavior he wanted for the masses. The social and political context in which leadership emerges results in myriad interpretations and disputes over accurate synthesis, systematization, and praxis, particularly when thought is linked to a system of values bound to transformative politics. Ideological revolutionary aspirations in the 1930's and 1940's—at least socialists, communist and liberal ideologies used the word revolution in their discourses— heralded values inherent to ideological worldviews and negotiated such as material tangible achievement. There existed a liaison between ideas and morals that Jorge Eliécer Gaitán and Rafael Uribe Uribe inspired during their lifetime. However, they were not totally under control of the mysticism that resulted from the trauma caused by their deaths, along with the nostalgia of its reminiscences. 'All the *campesinos* [peasants] have a portrait of Gaitán in their homes, and daily they tend it with a mystic that approaches adoration'.³⁴

The bond with conflict, however, seems to be linked to the context of political closing of alternatives to gain space and become democratically eligible. During the 1930's and 1940's, narrow political channels for dissent opened the way to radical options funneled by charismatic politicians that seemed entitled to represent masses without necessarily fostering suffrage.³⁵ Although Rafael

³³ A good example in the case of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was the book edited by the Liberal Party, *Ideario Político de Jorge Eliécer Gaitán: publicación ordenada por las directivas liberales como homenaje a la memoria de Jorge Eliécer Gaitán en el Tercer Aniversario de su muerte* (Bogotá: Editorial Cahur, 1951). The Liberal Party was generally reluctant to his thought, and after his death, uses him as a symbol to link its ideology to popular causes.

³⁴ John Green, "Vibrations of the Collective: The Popular Ideology of *Gaitánismo* on Colombia's Atlantic Coast, 1944-1948," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 76, 2 (1996): 283.

³⁵ For instance, one of the motives for leftist groups divisions in the late 1920's and early 1930's was the spontaneous initiatives to overthrow government without a clear vision of state organization, strategies for economic transition, and the assumption that marginalized factory workers would react to class for general strikes. In 1930 the PCC emerged as a clear distinctive organization that followed Marxist Leninist pro-soviet interpretations of revolutionary theories. They opposed namely spontaneous efforts from

Uribe Uribe and Jorge Eliécer Gaitán were linked to political parties, their ideas were banned from spaces for political. The nature of Colombian leadership until the 1930's seemed to reflect an assumption that as long as political leaders could guarantee material gain for their followers, support was granted. The left was certainly opposed to such leadership styles in Colombia, but internal splits crippled their initiatives and instead bolstered class differentiation —most leftist leaders belonged to middle classes or elites. In the 1930's and 1940's leftist alternatives were divided which enabled the emergence of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán and the pragmatism of his contentious campaigning. *Gaitánismo* heralded both individual values and a coherent vision of society in response to popular disenfranchisement.³⁶ He embodied the characteristics of a pragmatic leader whose discourse pushed for material and moral improvements, democratic rights, and social justice, based on a close understanding of the popular predicament. It is necessary to continue an examination of the context that made possible quasi-religious commemorations of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's memory and how the popular unrest erupted at the moment of his assassination.

3.4 THE POLITICS OF A LEADER'S ASSASSINATION: *MAGNICIDIO* AS A RITUAL OF DEATH

Three months before his death in 1948, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán promoted a rally through Bogotá's main street repudiating the increasing political violence in provinces throughout the country. Symbolically planned as a mute mobilization of followers holding candles and torches, the masses' subtle rumor was perceived by the Conservative elite as a volcanic tremor of revolutionary insurrection. Popular sectors were swollen by feelings of pride encouraged by the leader in a speech that asked for inclusion for the people

Colombia Socialist party (henceforth CSP) that followed anarchic-sindicalist revolutionary strategies more into Mikhail Bakunin's revolutionary strategy. See, Vanegas, "Los estudios," 119-162.

³⁶ Braun, *The Assassination*, 64-71; Green, *Gaitánismo*, 43-44. I will explore these features of his discourse in Chapter 8.

I speak to you interpreting the will and desire of this immense multitude that hides in silence their passionate hearts wounded by so much injustice, to request you peace and merci for the nation. Mr. President, quietly, with emotion and serenity, these people filling the square request from you to exercise the mandate given by the people to bring about public peace. (...) We are not cowards; we are descendants of brave men that annihilated tyrannies occupying this holy territory. We are capable of sacrifice our lives in order to guard Colombian peace and freedom! Mr. President, Stop the violence. We want the defense of life, it is the popular claim. Instead of unleashing this furious might, it is necessary to make use of their capacity for labor in the benefit of Colombian progress. Mr. President: our flag is black for mourning over our fallen, and the silence of this multitude is a mute cry claim from you: Treat us and our mothers, wives, offspring and property in the same way as you want your mothers, wives, offspring and property to be respected!³⁷

There was fear as well. The tension surrounding a possible repetition of the massacre of banana workers in Ciénaga 1928 increased, transforming the enthusiasm into a bitter combination of fear and hope. The elites vacillated in their hold of political power and social control, and that anxiety was transmitted to regions where conservative leaders had launched attacks against peasants in order to take their land. Mary Roldán explains that ‘in its first stage, violence was selective and sporadic, addressed against Liberal public workers aiming to ensure electoral fraud would favor the regime, and making of intimidation a tool to gain advantage for the Conservative Party’.³⁸ Throughout the country, *La Violencia* had started in the early 1940’s, making rural areas a silent battlefield by slowly decimating the popular movement. The transition from Liberal to Conservative rule in 1944 enabled retaliations and an increasing use of force under the aegis of the legitimacy of the government to once again gain influence in the provinces. The process deterred Liberals from participating in the state administration. In 1948, the protest in Bogotá positioned Jorge Eliécer Gaitán at the zenith of his public career, sending signals to the political sectors across the national geography about the massive support to the Liberal dissident leader. It was also an expression of the growing possibilities and expectations for change in a regime used to slow transitions through the sluggish mechanisms of bureaucratic bribery and electoral manipulation.

³⁷ Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, *Discourse of the Silence*, given in Bogotá, Bolívar’s Square, January 7, 1948.

³⁸ Roldán, *A Sangre y Fuego*, 66.

Mariano Ospina and Laureano Gómez —President, and chief of the Conservative Party, respectively— fostered a dehumanized perception of the political opposition that motivated visceral retaliations. The most common expression of retaliation was leader’s assassination in rural areas, and that means chief of popular organizations, but also heads of traditional families. Families that lost their leaders have been a fundamental element unrecognized by historians and political scientists. The response from conservative supporters was also brutal, symbolic, and harmful to people’s feelings and sensitivities. In both cases, debased perceptions of the political opponent catalyzed violence. Although during electoral campaigns and bureaucratic transitions in provinces in the 19th century, both Liberals and Conservatives used symbolism and harsh stereotypes to identify political affinities and distinctions, the increasing popularity of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán and his emergence in 1946 as the Liberal Party’s natural leader, polarized the society and fostered rampant intolerance.

On April 9th, 1948, at noon on the main street in central Bogotá, Juan Roa Sierra shot the Liberal leader four times, and was immediately captured and kept from passers-by that wanted to take justice in their own hands. Jorge Eliécer Gaitán died minutes later in a hospital. His assassination ignited reactions in Bogotá that in a few minutes turned the city —in preparations for holding the 9th Panamerican Conference— into a charred pile of rubble. Spontaneous violent actions destroyed a significant part of the center of the city, churches, and infrastructure. Public buildings were incinerated, looting ensued, and crime went out of control. The government assumed every crime to be a political act of retaliation against the conservative elite. This legitimized the use of excessive force by the military. In a matter of hours Liberal insurrection ensued reaching rapidly the provinces.³⁹ His assassination triggered fear and anxiety in the masses, and thereafter most reactions to political threats were intended as measures for protection. In other words, retaliations against

³⁹ For studies on April 9th in the regions, and the spread of insurrectional violence, see Gonzalo Sánchez, *Los Días de la Revolución: Gaitánismo y 9 de Abril en Provincia* (Bogotá: Centro Gaitán, 1983); Apolinar Díaz Callejas, *El 9 de Abril de 1948 en Barrancabermeja: Diez Días de Poder Popular* (Bogotá: El Labrador, 1988).

landowners, and the vengeance of Liberal groups became the main strategy to defend political positions, intimidate the opponent, or deter them from further violent action or electoral participation.⁴⁰ Electoral barons in provinces reacted by organizing private forces to support the police and army, or simply became a political police ready to preserve the interest of conservatives.

Symbolic destruction of the opposition leader became a common practice. From forced disappearance of students and union leaders, to the public spectacle of assassination of the leader (*magnicidio*) of an emerging popular movement, the annihilation of social movement's heads was a strategy to disband its members and fragment the group. However, the expected internal disputes for leadership resulting after the *magnicidio* never occurred, political obedience of the political organization disbanded and transformed often into organized forms of banditry. Popular allegiance to political figures never unified again in Colombia. Leadership lost the bond with political principles of obedience and morality. The elites were unable to gain popular obedience, enabling local electoral leaders to organize spontaneous hordes in launching attacks against any opposition member living within their community, creating chaos and rapid displacement of peasants to urban areas. Selective assassination had become the norm in politics in the 1940's, and after Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's assassination the process increased exponentially. The police, guardians of the order and loyal to conservative leaders, were unable to contain the irritated Liberal supporters, in spite an imposed curfew and strict martial law to restore order in the following days.⁴¹ The problem grew when the private forces —paramilitaries— started to act without direct command from the Conservative

⁴⁰ Roldan, *A Sangre y Fuego*, 36-40.

⁴¹ The analysis of politicized police in the regions during *La Violencia*, is closely related to the Catholic Church and its influence in political parties, see Darío Betancourt and Martha García, *Matones y Cuadrilleros: Origen y Evolución de la Violencia en el Occidente Colombiano 1946-1965* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo, 1990); Javier Guerrero, *Los Años del Olvido: Boyacá y los Orígenes de la Violencia* (Bogotá: IEPRI, 1991); Gladys Rojas, "Protagonismo de la Iglesia en el Experimento Totalitario en Boyacá 1946-1950," in *Movimientos y Partidos: Política y Violencia en la Historia de Colombia* Javier Guerrero, (Tunja: UPTC, 1995). For the study of early instrumentalization of the police as a paramilitary force favouring the interest of conservative leaders, see, Helwar Figueroa, "Clérigos, Parroquias y Chulavitas. Norte de Boyacá. 1930-1946," (Undergraduate Thesis, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1999).

Party leaders, and violence was used as an effective means to gain control over land regardless of a peasant's political adscription.⁴²

Studies about *La Violencia* have shed light upon the particular forms that the violence took, in terms of its political orientation, economic effects on productive sectors, and the institutional instability originated after April 9th, 1948.⁴³ The emotional manipulation has been examined regarding class and racial distinctions of popular sectors and elites based on cultural privileges, since they functioned as status markers of 'civilization'. Symbolic mechanisms used in the heyday of political violence are of interest for this research, particularly regarding how leaders exalted violence in order to eliminate political opponents. For instance, Laureano Gomez fostered negative portrayals of the Liberal masses, funneling hatred

The Colombian Conservative party has a program and a doctrine. It defends a set of principles. Under the Conservative doctrine, from one frontier to the other, every Colombian knows why he is a Colombian, shares the same ideas, and serves the same principles. Facing the Conservative party there is another block, the Liberal Party, an amorphous, unformed, contradictory mass. Our basilisk walks with feet of confusion and insecurity, with legs of abuse and violence, with an immense oligarchic stomach, with a chest of ire, with Masonic arms and with a small, diminutive, communist head that nonetheless is the head⁴⁴.

The manipulation of popular emotions happened at a moment of increasing uncertainty. Violence became widespread in rural areas. Political hatred met the de-humanization of the popular sectors, making the claims raised during the 'March of Silence' a pale symptom of social drift. Another important aspect of the radicalization of political opposition was the concomitant use of violence, not as expulsion or assassination. Massive annihilation of the opponents was committed using symbolic strategies to cause panic in the population. Myriad styles of mutilation, rape, and other types of atrocity became a tool to inflict psychological damage on peasant families, and were

⁴² For an study on the linkages between insurgent forces, political violence, and peasant's subordination to both Liberal and political leaders, in Sánchez and Meertens, *Bandits, Peasants*, chapter 2.

⁴³ For a complete literary review on the topic, Carlos Miguel Ortiz, "Historiografía de La Violencia," in *La Historia al Final del Milenio: Ensayos de Historiografía Colombiana y Latinoamericana* ed. Bernardo Tovar, (Bogotá: Editorial Universidad Nacional, 1994).

⁴⁴ *El Siglo*, June 27, 1949, 4.

used as effective instruments to disperse political supporters of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán.⁴⁵ María Teresa Uribe explains how a semantic of terror was an expression of years of derisory portrayals for the opponent, the other. An important factor for violence was the inherent justification for murders, based on a morality that visualized political and religious beliefs in strictly binary entities without linkages or space for negotiation of Symbolic practices of mutilation were meant to inflict terror.

Through a semantic operation fed by political hatred, human beings are transformed into inhuman creatures, Others to be killed and butchered. At the same time, the dismembered bodies are the ultimate generators of terror. If the Other can be thought of as a hen or a chicken, it is quite easy to cut into pieces. Thus, for the perpetrators there are no moral dilemmas, because in their terms nothing human is hurt; the dead do not have human qualities. Consequently, there is no systematic degradation or dehumanization in the executioner's mind because only the animality of the Other is present.⁴⁶

Historically, political violence increased during electoral processes. After Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's assassination it became carnage, concealed by the anonymity of rural isolation, and the fear of further retaliations that spiraled until the mid-1950's. Colombia became a battlefield for sectarianism and religious intransigence.⁴⁷ Many conservatives understood the destruction of the opposition's leaders and supporters as part of a Holy War. The spread of civilization, and the defense of moral Catholic principles, constituted a divine mandate. The liberal revenge also paralleled sacred overtones of a ritual destruction of the enemy. Peasant settlement areas were

⁴⁵ María Victoria Uribe, *Matar, Rematar y Contramatar. Las Masacres de la Violencia en el Tolima 1948-1964* (Bogotá: Cinep, 1990).

⁴⁶ María Teresa Uribe also synthesizes symbolism behind mutilations operated in ritualistic annihilation of the enemy. '*La Violencia* wasn't simply about killing Others; their bodies had to be dismembered and transformed into something else. The objective behind these cuts was to disorganize the body, depriving it of its human nature and turning it into a macabre allegory. What belonged inside the body was placed outside it — the fetus in a pregnant woman was extracted and placed on her midriff; men's tongues were exhibited like neckties by pulling them out through a hole cut in the trachea— and insides were replaced with what belonged outside—the fetus was replaced by a rooster, and men's testicles were stuffed in their mouths. They also placed on top what belonged on the bottom—dead men's penises were cut off and placed inside their mouths mouths—and, conversely, displaced what belonged on top to the bottom—a head would be removed and placed on the corpse's arms. In the "flower vase" cut, which produced an absolute inversion of the folk anatomy, the corpse's head, arms, and legs were cut off, the thorax was emptied of its contents, and the limbs were then stuffed inside the thorax like flowers in a vase. Two other cuts drew on food preparation techniques and are especially worth noting. The first of these was called *bocachiquear*, a verb normally used to designate the oblique cutting of a species of fish (bocachico) for easier cooking. The second, *picar para tamal*, describes the action of dicing the meat that fills corn tamales'. See María Victoria Uribe, "Dismembering and Expelling: Semantics of Political Terror in Colombia," *Public Culture* 16: 1 (2004): 95 and 88-89.

⁴⁷ For an study on conservative thought and religious intransigence in Figueroa, *Tradicionalismo*, Chapter 1; for a state of the art on religion and politics see María del Rosario Vásquez, "La Iglesia y la Violencia Bipartidista en Colombia (1946-1953) Análisis historiográfico," *Annuario de Historia de la Iglesia* 16 (2007): 309-334.

portrayed as a hot bed for communists, social unrest, and individual decay. It was exemplified in economic backwardness and tendencies to miscegenation. Anonymous victims made leadership elusive and clandestine operations a norm for the growing opposition. This stimulated continuous repression and assassination of political figures, especially those followers of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. The common thread that links violence, leadership and authority in Colombia is the importance that '*magnicidio*' gained as an instrument to change the political landscape. It became a strategy for domination, because it could transform radically popular suffrage, hampered social support to leaders, or simply was a tool to instill fear. Considering that the myth of national unity failed, as well as values placed within a larger framework of morals and political belonging, I argue that *magnicidio* is an important political feature to explore rituals exalting heroics and social values, in so much as it influenced popular attachment to alternative leaders, the hopes on their projects for political change, and the social values attributed to political commitment.

The politics of *magnicio* has been studied particularly by journalist, centering in the recent phenomena of intersections between drug trafficking, the ideological erosion of revolutionary insurgencies, and the contamination of politics with scandals of money laundering and corruption. Scholarly research is still inhibited to research contemporary variants of the conflict, considering the numerous assassinations of intellectuals, journalist, and activists in the 1980s and 1990s. However, the problem has grown out of control without provisional explanations of possible consequences of criminal barons who gain social support by exhibiting a clear disdain for law, political institutions, and the mechanisms of the civil society to cope with violence. Their effect in the youth has been subject for narratives and literature, and its roots are still unknown. In this research, I propose an approach that sheds light onto the intersections between leadership and political commitment, and the form how in the pursuit of honor and recognition the youth in peasant communities, and urban settings are subject to their influence. The middle ground between the assassination of indigenous

leaders during the Spanish occupation, and the consolidation of the national identity is the span of time studied in this research. Although it is not comprehensive, I do offer elements of analysis for further research on the politics of leaders' assassination, and how political violence, became part and parcel of the daily practices in Colombia.

The origins of *magnicidio* as a strategic political tool can be detected as early as the assassination of José Antonio Galán in Santander in late 18th century, leader of a movement that unleashed the independence movement at the regional level. In the process, the leader was beheaded and his head and limbs were displayed throughout the region to deter future traitors to the Spanish administrative authorities. The attempts to eliminate Simón Bolívar and other leaders during the independence insurrection share the common feature of systematic elimination of political opponents as a metaphoric beheading of a popular movement. Such brutality is also evident in the elite's complicity in Rafael Uribe Uribe's assassination in 1914. In the 1930's and 1940's assassination of local political leaders inhibited group's ability to galvanize political projects to confront the elites. The symbolism of *La Violencia* is plentiful of atrocities committed against peasant families and wealthy landowners. It was a mechanism to deliver a message of terror, where anonymity and impunity completed the necessary process of shutting down any initiative opposed to the regime. The effect of this strategy was a meager formation of alternative movements, generally scattered or fragmented by internal disputes of power. In fact, alternative radical movements, and moderate left leaning initiatives reflected similar practices, probably less gory, but no less symbolic.

In this section, I introduced the liberal transition into power and the defeat to their reforms in favor of popular causes. By approaching the figure of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán I offered an explanation to the emerging leadership in the 1930s, that exhibited political projects with systems of morality to counterbalance the leverage of the Catholic Church, and the Conservative party. The form how political alternatives radicalized, and their leaders became revered by popular sectors was

presented in close relation to the use of violence as a mechanism to destabilize their attempts to gain power from liberals and Conservatives. Finally, in the contexts of increasing political violence, I propose an interpretation of leadership in the light of their assassination, presented as the instrumentalization of violence to cause terror, or the politics of *magnicidio*. The game of personalized authority was almost annihilated, until the late 1950's and the 1960's when new popular beacons emerged from the margins of obedient institutions celebrating the pristine nature of Colombian political regime.

In Chapters 1 and 2, I presented how leaders characterized their participation in the political scene through principles of morality in order to gain attention from the population and diminish criticism from the Catholic Church and the ruling elites. I also explored how violence was part and parcel of the political system, in which leadership was central to the consolidation of the bonds of authority and obedience. Popular political participation was the exercise of allegiance to the leaders, their patterns of morality, and the defense of ideological beliefs.

CHAPTER 4

FABIO VÁSQUEZ: LEADERSHIP AND PERSONALISM IN THE EARLY ELN, 1963-1965

Political recognition for outsiders had few antecedents in Colombia. Considering the cases studied in the last three chapters, that included leaders such as Rafael Uribe Uribe, Rafael Reyes, and Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, it is possible to understand how the Colombian regime was tailored in acquaintance and exclusion. This fostered stereotypes, political violence and relations of authority that often reflected more devotion than actual trust. In rural Colombia, the elites created strict systems of inclusion/exclusion—in chapter 2, I presented the case of elections in the late 1920's and how in a vacillation whilst operating them, the *Hegemonía Conservadora* gave power back to the Liberal Party—in order to maintain a safe grip to power. Meanwhile, the peasant community also established mechanisms of exclusion in order to safely maintain their political structures. Whilst the elites regarded peasant political formations as primitive and bound to barbarism, peasants perceived the elite as prone to brutality and injustice. In both cases, culture, acquaintance, and shared experiences helped to form political universes that attracted and expelled each other based on reciprocal fears.

The study of peasant communities illustrates interesting nuances for this analysis, namely the recognition of patterns followed by individuals and communities whilst building obedience to authorities. In this section, I explore how insurgent projects gained support in rural areas, and the type of leadership fostered after *La Violencia*. The case of Fabio Vásquez in the ELN portrays how allegiance and leadership crystallized in Colombia. I suggest that Fabio Vásquez organized the ELN by appealing to a growing discomfort with traditional political parties and the increasing mistrust for

left leaning groups. By mobilizing traditions of struggle and fostering alternative allegiance to forms of leadership that were obscured/prosecuted by the establishment.

4.1 ESTABLISHING A REVOLUTIONARY PROJECT

Fabio Vásquez traveled from Cuba to Colombia in 1963 with a clear mission: to organize a guerrilla warfront following the *foco* premises he witnessed and learned from the Cuban Revolution.¹ The *Brigada Proliberación Nacional José Antonio Galán*, the early name of the ELN, was the initial exercise following the Cuban revolutionary insurgent strategy.² The decision to start insurgent operations at a specific area took several months in which discussions were held in La Habana and Bogotá, with strategic military support from former Cuban fighters eager to share their successful experiences—in 1962 they were filled with pride after defeating Fulgencio Batista’s forces and stopping the US invasion at the Bay of Pigs.³ The areas considered for guerrilla *foco* incubation were San Vicente de Chucurí in southern Santander, the Tensa Valley in Miraflores (Boyacá), and the San Lucas Sierra in southern Bolívar.⁴ Every area had privileged characteristics for guerrilla warfare. Rugged geography that allowed clandestine mobilization, struggles for land between peasants and landowners, and traditions of rebellion expressed in spontaneous episodes of violence and peasant dissent. As explained by Jaime Arenas, ‘the chosen area had mountains, thick jungle, water availability, and access for supplies, it was also close to several villages with peasants with former

¹ The *foco* strategy or *focalism* was theorized by Régis Debray after the victory of Cuban rebels in 1959 based on small groups of armed rebels whose high revolutionary consciousness will help to spread dissent against the ruling regime sparking general insurrection. These armed rebels launch guerrilla warfare in attacks characterize by aiming strategic points of the establishment in order to destabilize it. The *guerrilleros* will be the vanguard of this type of insurreccional mobilization that takes place initially in rural areas, spreading afterwards to urban settings. For a critical assessment of *focalism* in the ELN, in Arenas, *La Guerrilla*, 173-178.

² Ibid., 16. Among the 27 students that traveled to Cuba, about eight members were separated to receive a strenuous training, among can be included Victor Medina Morón, Roberto Reina, Espitia, Ricardo Lara and Martinez, see Castaño, *El Guerrillero*, 59, 64.

³ Harnecker, *Unidad que Multiplica*, 31-32.

⁴ Ibid., 38-40; López Vigil, *Camilo*, 112. Arenas, *La Guerrilla*, 16, 42.

guerrilla experience that included cooperation with Liberal guerrilla groups'.⁵ Finally, the embryonic ELN already counted with support from militants and *simpatizantes* (sympathizers), whose capacities were fundamental in order to reactivate political disobedience and to gain social support for the emerging guerrilla group.

The *Magdalena Medio* was chosen after José Ayala⁶ and Heliodoro Ochoa,⁷ who introduced Fabio Vásquez to the rural area of San Vicente de Chucurí. It was a municipality where anti-government peasant revolts in 1929 took place both rejecting land appropriation by landowners and supporting protest of oil industry workers.⁸ These events burdened the region's dwellers with a reputation for being a pro-Communist hotbed. In the late 1950's, peasants were engaged in organizing political struggles after a wave of disenchantment swept across social groups that saw their plight endangered after *La Violencia*. By the early 1960's, San Vicente de Chucurí and the surrounding municipalities had a strong political affinity to political leaders with ideological dissonances with the bipartisan elite's arrangement —*Frente Nacional*—, and the PCC. The PCC was already considered an illegitimate political representative of the peasants, after their decision to participate in parliamentary elections despite peasant repression and harsh repression to its militants.

An interesting aspect for the selected area that began the insurgent project was its divergence from initiatives undertaken by the PCC and its youth group *Juventud Comunista* (Communist Youth, henceforth JUCO). Housed at Universidad Nacional de Colombia in Bogotá and the Universidad Industrial de Santander (henceforth UIS) in Bucaramanga, student movement leaders engaged in the

⁵ Arenas, *La Guerrilla*, 42. See also, Harnecker, *Unidad*, 39. José Solano Sepulveda was a *guerrillero* with Rafael Rangel during *La Violencia*; Hernán Moreno Sánchez was a renowned Liberal chief in the *vereda*—local administrative unit— where the organization ELN started'. Medina, *ELN*, 32.

⁶ 'Another important man was José Ayala, who was a militant of Rangel's insurgent group; there was the Luque family, and the Camacho family. They maintained bandit's practices, and some guerrilla—like activities, mostly in the Robin Hood style.' Medina, *ELN*, 32. Local integration of political groups overlapped administrative units (*veredas*), familiar bonds, and relations based on labor and acquaintance. See Sánchez Sierra, "El Discurso", 17-30.

⁷ Heliodoro Ochoa was a particular case of commitment in the ELN. He was a student nurtured in rural areas of Santander, and was a renowned school teacher in the region. He left the urban life behind contributing to the group intensively. His attitudes of detachment to mundane life are widely used within the ELN to show the example of how revolutionary values have to be intrinsic to quotidian life. Medina, *ELN*, 34; Arenas, *La Guerrilla*, 130.

⁸ Arenas, *La Guerrilla*, 130-131. See also, Alejo Vargas, *Magdalena Medio Santandereano. Colonización y Conflicto Armado* (Bogotá: CINEP, 1992), 27-46.

late 1950's and early 1960's in an exploration of rural areas envisioning the formation of peasant supporters for the PCC's political struggle.⁹ The political work included peasant's engagement in clandestine structures for self-defense, and political education. It was a naturally supported attempt considering the damage caused by spontaneous vindictive attacks from Conservative landowner factions, and bandits taking over peasant properties during *La Violencia*. This approach also fell upon peasants that decided to return to their lands after being displaced. Repression also affected students from universities, who served as legal aides for their juridical battles in Bogotá. The PPC help in suit claiming for titling rights over land occupied by settlers since the early 20th century had limited efficacy, and instead triggered landowner's revenges and pressures to the student movement.¹⁰

In spite of these efforts, during the second half of the 1950's, political disputes in the left caused deep divisions, in which peasant communities —formerly assisted in legal claims during their return— were left without support, exposing them to landowner's retaliations. Areas such as Sumapaz in southwest Cundinamarca, southern Tolima, and La Macarena in Meta, became the PCC stronghold.¹¹ However, since the late 1950's, areas in the mid Magdalena valley were abandoned by leftist activists, or plainly rejected engagement from *simpatizantes* from the PCC.¹² Fabio Vásquez was familiar with these processes of disenchantment in the PCC and the *Movimiento Revolucionario Liberal*

⁹ These initiatives were ephemeral after military operations of the army, or captures of the leaders and urban structures. As Jaime Arenas portrayed them 'Serious military mistakes and false political appreciations brought about painful losses' for the radical left detached from the PCC. 'Sectarism, dogmatism, whistleblowers, opportunism, lack of tactical knowledge and capacities resulted in defeats to several revolutionary organizations. For instance, the guerrillas of Tulio Bayer in Vichada, Federico Arango in the Territorio Vásquez (Magdalena Mid valley), an guerrilla *foco* created by Antonio Larrota in the south and the MOEC's in Urabá, Bolívar and Antioquia. Also, the initiatives of the PCML in the Valle del Cauca, and San Pablo (Antioquia). Divisionism and crisis were also a factor for the extinction of the PCML and followed the Juventudes del MRL JMRL and the MOEC'. In Arenas, *La Guerrilla*, 12. For an analysis of the regional influence of the PCC in the late 1950's and early 1960's, see Eduardo Pizarro, *Las FARC 1949-1966. De la Autodefensa a la Combinación de Todas las Formas de Lucha* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo-IEPRI, 1991), chapter 2; Elsy Marulanda, *Colonización y Conflicto: las Lecciones del Sumapaz* (Bogotá: Editorial Universidad Nacional-IEPRI, 1991), 131-160.

¹⁰ Ibid., 14-17. Cadres in the ELN confirm this during interviews given in the 1980's, see Harnecker, *Unidad*, 44-45.

¹¹ After attacks launched by the army to peasant communities with self-defense communities the radicalization of their claims gave birth to the FARC. '...it was the epoch of the Plan Lazo, en Marquetalia, El Pato, Rio Chiquito and Guayabero, against the peasant self-defense groups, it was the epoch of the attack to the student movement, the crucial moment of disputes between oil workers and ECOPETROL. In the entire country you could breathe a tense atmosphere of conflict'. Medina, *ELN*, 49.

¹² ELN and Hernández, *Rojo y Negro*, 46-47. Arenas, *La Guerrilla*, 24.

(Revolutionary Liberal Movement, henceforth MRL)¹³ hard-line in the area. He also had contact with student leaders who approached peasants creating a stronger bond, particularly as a result of connections between the supporters of the student movement in Bucaramanga, and unionized oil industry workers in Barrancabermeja. Their affinities were exploited by Fabio Vásquez as he knew better the experiences of parachute research of the PCC, and the ulterior abandonment of communities occurred in 1958-1959. The left wing movement was shocked by internal splits, and after the assassination of Antonio Larrota in 1961, the student movement scattered. The influence of the semi-clandestine structure of the MOEC grew, and became one of the predecessors of the ELN in the region.¹⁴

4.2 THE WELCOMED OUTSIDER

The leadership of Fabio Vásquez combined several characteristics that privileged his contact with local chiefs. He endured *La Violencia* in his homeland of Quindío, where his father—a Liberal leader owner of an average coffee farm—was killed by ‘*pajaros*’—conservative factions—and his family was displaced.¹⁵ He also had a brief experience with bandits in an attempt to avenge the death of his father. His brothers encouraged him to avoid further contact with Guadalupe Salcedo’s guerrilla strategies for envisioning a broader political project. Fabio Vásquez’s brothers considered that the revolution ‘should not be that way, it is this way [creating a political group], it is necessary to

¹³The MRL had two main tendencies. First, a branch that departed from the Liberal Party wanted to organize an institutionalized opposition to the *Frente Nacional*. The second, a hard-line of liberals that combined ideas from the *Gaitánismo* in the 40’s, militants of the Socialist Party, and moderate Communists. The MRL hard-line fluctuated, but was representative of claims for land reform and land occupations, and by the 1962 its members joined insurgent initiatives, and particularly became part of the ELN. See César Ayala, *Resistencia y Oposición al Establecimiento del Frente Nacional: los Orígenes de la ANAPO* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1996), 174-186.

¹⁴ About the selection of the region to hatch the initial warfront ‘The last and most convincing argument of Fabio was that the Magdalena Medio zone had been the battle field of the working class since the 1928 massacre of worker of the United Fruit Company’. In Broderick, *Camilo*, 252.

¹⁵ ‘Son of a humble working family, with peasant roots, he had a strong character, a well-defined and attractive personality’. Arenas, *La Guerrilla*, 22.

correct the direction'.¹⁶ His previous experience gave him a political name and recognition, and also a high esteem particularly for his personal sacrifices rearing his family. He took care of his family whilst completing his education, which led him to be a school teacher and renowned union leader.¹⁷ Fabio Vásquez also knew most Liberal leaders in the provinces, which enabled the group to count on support from networks in a wide geographical range¹⁸. He was acquainted with peasant's perception of Bogotá's arrogance towards provinces that endured the harshest days of *La Violencia*, and how the disregard evaporated in times of elections. In other words, Fabio Vásquez understood the cooptation of peasant organizations to benefit the elites, and the form how the elites had ignored their claims for peace, and respect to their property.

Fabio Vásquez was an attractive figure for the peasants for his individual trajectory. 'Fabio was a man with a great magnetism, he had a career in commerce, he was already structured, he fought against the 'worms' in Escambray, he was in Cuba during the events of Playa Girón, he had spoken to 'El Ché'... he told us these stories, but without boasting, without grandiose eloquence. He was a man with moral authority for conducting a group'¹⁹. Without betraying his peasant descent, he kept solid bonds with students and teachers leading political agendas in Bucaramanga, and he established a constant dialogue with his brothers Manuel and Antonio Vásquez²⁰ and Victor Medina.²¹ They were intellectual and political leaders of the growing student movement in Bogotá at Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Additionally he bolstered collaboration and close friendship

¹⁶ Medina, *ELN*, 27.

¹⁷ Arenas, *La Guerrilla*, 22-23; *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ For instance, Nicolás Rodríguez recalls how during the initial march in mid-1964, Liberal peasants hosted them, in most cases old friends and political allies of Fabio Vásquez, or at least acquainted 'We stayed there throughout the day chatting with Mr. Gonzalez. He was very enthusiastic having his sons in the guerrilla, what made him remember the epoch when he was a *guerrillero* with Rafael Rangel. Mr. Gonzalez spoke a lot with Fabio Vásquez that day', in Medina, *ELN*, 51. In other cases, the movements of the groups depended on recommendations among neighbor peasants.

¹⁹ López Vigil, *Camilo*, 112.

²⁰ Manuel Vásquez was leader of the *Federación Estudiantil de Colombia* (Colombian Student Federation, henceforth FEC). Harnecker, *Unidad*, 45.

²¹ Victor Medina was part of the PCC, and formed the branch for Santander/Bucaramanga. He started the local JUCO and soon his activism raised him to be chief of the regional section. During his participation with the student movement Medina published '*La Chispa*' (The spark) and 'Galán', this last the regional journal for the communist youth in Santander named after the regional hero during the independence struggle in the late 18th century. He also was engaged in agitation, gathering resources, meetings and in close alliance with the MRL – JMRL, besides educative workshops for JUCO militants and union leaders. See, Arenas, *La Guerrilla*, 15.

with leaders of the *Union Sindical Obrera* (Workers Syndical Union, henceforth USO), and unionized teachers in Santander. Since the late 1950's Fabio Vásquez was supporter of the movement led by Antonio Larrota, and the character of his political activism changed dramatically after his assassination in 1961, an event that he claimed as the touchstone in the radicalization of the popular movements in Santander and Bogotá.²² The assassination of Antonio Larrota, is an example of how *magnicidio* marked the path towards armed struggle for opposition groups, and the form how peasants in San Vicente de Chucurí regarded morality. It is an example that provides an insight of the importance that his leadership started to represent in both urban and rural Colombia. At the beginning of the 1960's, Fabio Vásquez had become an opposition leader engaged in constant social interactions, without electoral interest, and increasingly critical to the PCC.²³

He had an attractive personality that helped to enroll peasant leaders in political action, without leaving aside the communities that saw him grow as a leader. Fabio Vásquez was regarded as a people's man, an outspoken and sharp-tongued visionary that could interpret peasant's ambitions and frustrations, and translate them in a discourse that expressed the rural condition in terms of dignity and radical transformation. 'We get used to the eloquent personality of Fabio: he was funny, making gracious jokes, poking the other, making 'chistes verdes' [jokes with sexual content], he was all the time playing around with us, he used to go and work with the peasants on the fields, in that

²² Radical *guerrilleros* of the epoch linked to social bandits such as Pedro Brincos, and were dismissed often by Antonio and Manuel Vásquez for the danger they represented to safe linkages to peasant communities, since their unplanned actions bolstered massive counterterrorist operation of the Army. This hint determined the route of Fabio's project 'in that epoch, 1959, the MRL attracted the rebellious youth, that's probably why Fabio went to operate with them.... It was Manuel Vásquez who told him: man, that's not the way; it is probably on this way (...) fostering clandestine and well prepared operations' Medina, *ELN*, 27 and 31. Thereafter, Fabio Vásquez corrected the path for Luis José Solano Sepulveda and Hernán Moreno, explaining them that the goal was to 'strengthen forces before the enemy discovers us, to define a revolutionary profile in order to overcome the struggle between Liberals and conservatives' in Medina, *ELN*, 31. The Juventudes del MRL (Youth of the MRL) 'were progressively constituted an autonomous and independent position and made official their political standpoint in 1962 during the first Congreso Nacional bounded to create influence with the masses (...) The JMRL were formed mostly by students from universities and a few peasant and working class representatives', in Arenas, *La Guerrilla*, 19. About the MOEC and FUAR, and the radical MRL branch, see Sánchez and Meertens, *Bandits*, 83-85.

²³ The PCC was constantly prosecuted in the epoch, and its participation in elections was radically limited to arrangements with the traditional political parties. The arrangements with Liberals were perceived as a betrayal, and angered militants that either joined the MRL, or radicalized moving to the rural areas to create insurgent *focos*. Their success was very limited, and fostered a rejection to both Communist strategies for popular integration, and attempts for guerrilla groups formed by students without military experience. Medina, *ELN*, 28-30; Harnecker, *Unidad*, 46-50. About the PCC's strategy since the 1950's see Pizarro, *Las FARC*, 21-39.

moment all this was definitive.’ The peasant’s predicament included the elite’s perception of their life and culture as prone to barbarism. Instead, Fabio Vásquez gained the local populations allegiance with the reactivation of historical legacies of struggle. The ELN’s *guerrilleros* discovered a common bond with the heroic past as a possibility to overcome adversity and a responsibility for the continuity of their struggle: ‘we are a continuation of Simon Bolivar, Gaitán and here we are going to set the first stone, and then the next generations should come and look and afterwards decide what they can do. We did our part’.²⁴ In this context, whilst the region promotes anti-establishment insurgencies, the role of *guerrillero* and peasants in order to recover the dignity and honorability required for revolutionary activity. It was a validation of traditions of struggle that exalted ‘the skillful action of the *guerrillero* that hits, avoids the enemy, hits again, will always be validated. It was for our indigenous populations rebelling against the Spanish; it was for the slaves escaping their masters; José Antonio Galán used this method of fight in the Comuneros’ struggle as well as Bolívar’s forces that had a large guerrilla group; and the guerrillas during *La Violencia*, it is the same story. Then, we gather a historical legacy, every time more and more framed within a political project’²⁵. Insurgent warfare became a highly regarded activity where each individual could claim to have the moral values the elite had stripped from them through discourses of segregation, the undermining of non-urban cultures, and political initiatives consolidated by communities engaged in the culture of the land. Fabio Vásquez reactivated such legacies, reestablishing the legitimacy of insurgent struggle as morally correct in defense of peasant’s rights to land and a normal life.

Belonging to a guerrilla group became an attractive alternative for a disenfranchised youth barred from education and productive rural labor. The region of San Vicente de Chucurí experienced a blockage due to their links to Liberal guerrillas and bandits that did not turn their

²⁴ Medina, *ELN*, 42.

²⁵ López Vigil, *Camilo*, 136-137

arms during negotiations with the government of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla.²⁶ What was necessary for the communities was a leader, a person that could refocus their political anxieties and their legacy of political struggle. The assassination of political leaders was also a common practice since the late 1930's, especially in regions where radical dissent fostered organized responses to violence. The politics of '*magnicidio*' at the local level were predominant in Santander, besides the traumatic period in 1958-1961 when repression was used to contain social uproar and student radicalization. For that matter, one of the harshest critics of the early ELN —Jaime Arenas, a student movement leader who joined the group after Camilo Torres' death, and who defected from the rural front of struggle to find death at hands of a squad in Bogotá in 1971 after a trial for treason— explained how Fabio Vásquez was an accurate paradigm for local communities in order to consolidate leadership. He 'belonged to a humble and laborious family with peasant roots. No matter how weak was his health, his will made him overcome pain. With decision and enthusiasm he pushed forward the armed struggle to a level of contagiousness that gave him rapidly trust'.²⁷ He rapidly blend in with the locals, and received their approval, respect, confidence, and progressively loyalty and obedience. It can be said that Fabio Vásquez created the cult to his personality, as much as the peasant populations were susceptible to promote such type of allegiance based on authority.

The notability reached by Fabio Vásquez in the 1960's was represented in authority at both the local and international levels. His leadership included connections with leaders abroad that embraced the group for its training and offering arms and supplies. His brothers constructed a political platform that consistently kept the project away from the factionalism within left-leaning organizations of the epoch. By the epoch of the Cuban Revolution, Manuel and Antonio Vásquez had represented Colombian student's movement at international summits, and held an acrid debate

²⁶ Alejo Vargas, "Tres Momentos de la Violencia Política en San Vicente de Chucurí: de los Bolcheviques del Año 29 a la Fundación del ELN," *Análisis Político* 8 (1989): 41-44.

²⁷ Arenas, *La Guerrilla*, 22-23.

with the JUCO since 1958, when the *Unión Nacional de Estudiantes Colombianos* (National Union of Colombian Students, henceforth UNEC)²⁸ became the battlefield for allegiance of students at universities and public schools. The attribution of authority to Fabio Vásquez, particularly in relation to the position of the PCC, resulted from his effective interaction with various left-leaning and Liberal sectors from a wide territorial spectrum in Colombia. Also, his capacity to show results in terms of actions —*i.e.*, organized mobilizations, strong support to union demands and clandestine logistical backing for political raids in Bogotá and Bucaramanga.²⁹ In other words, Fabio Vásquez was surrounded by political leaders building more resilient organizations to face in Colombia the challenges imposed by the endemic divisionism in the international left. The result was a strengthening of Fabio Vásquez's political leadership at the local and regional level, increasing his leverage among the representatives of innovative tendencies in revolutionary warfare in Latin America.³⁰

Fabio Vásquez broke with the urban debates and consolidated peasant allegiances by steering politically their communitarian organizations. For instance, he exploited the evidence of bipartisan alliances in the *Frente Nacional* and the incapacity of the PCC to convey their expectations for a broader, functional and cohesive peasant movement. The overestimation of the working class as the

²⁸ The UNEC integrated under the same umbrella Liberal and communist leaders of the student movement, was formed in 1957 during the 1st National Student's Congress, in the context of the assassination of a student in a protest against the dictatorship of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in Bogotá. It is important to notice that this early organization refused the intervention of the military and the church in the definition of university government, proclaiming university's autonomy. For a complete study of the 1950's in terms of political opposition to the *Frente Nacional*, and the wide range of political groups, see Mauricio Archila, *Idas y venidas. Vueltas y Revueltas. Protesta Social en Colombia 1958-1990* (Bogotá: ICANH-CINEP, 2005), Chapter 1; Mauricio Archila and Jorge Cote, "Auge, Crisis y Reconstrucción de las Izquierdas Colombianas (1958-2006)," in *Una Historia Inconclusa. Izquierdas Políticas y Sociales en Colombia*, ed. Mauricio Archila (Bogotá: COLCIENCIAS-CINEP, 2010). A detailed narrative of the epoch, and the formation of a dictator into a populist alternative due in part to the lack of leaders and minimal allegiance to traditional parties in Ayala, *Resistencia*, 46-107.

²⁹ Leopoldo Múnera, *Rupturas y Continuidades Poder y Movimiento Popular* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1998), 167-211. In 1959-1961 the UNEC did not resisted the ideological debates and internal disputes and tore it apart scattering groups that were not under the JUCO-PCC umbrella. The radicalization of left leaning groups in the late 1950's can be considered an example of how weak allegiances within/among opposition groups reflected inherent factionalism, and how leftist parties never consolidated authority. See Mauricio Archila, "¿Utopía Armada?, Oposición Política y Movimientos Sociales Durante el Frente Nacional," *Controversia* 168 (1996). The JUCO coordinated the FUN, leaving the Vásquez brothers as pariahs blamed for factionalism —in fact, the split resulted from the intolerance of the JUCO for groups that did not adopted the line of PCC of mass mobilization. Fabio López suggest that factionalism can be considered in a close study of political culture in Colombia, that he undertakes partially in, López de La Roche, Fabio, *Izquierdas y cultura política: oposición alternativa?* (Bogotá: CINEP, 1994).

³⁰ Vargas, "Tres momentos," 48-50.

main revolutionary actor was another of his arguments. With the time, his strategy proved to be wrong. In the voice of one of the former militants of the ELN, the internal crisis was triggered by that initiative, and the underestimation of urban work and the classes that characterize it:

Elevated by the war-like conception that made them confuse a part with the whole, they made a class analysis of the left both sectarian and romanticist. In that way a thesis sustaining that poverty and the hostility of their milieu, peasantry was the most revolutionary social class and the less conformist. The fact that revolutionary struggle had mainly a rural setting gave greater importance to the peasantry and overestimated their role, causing a disregard to the working class and petty-bourgeois sectors (students, professionals, white-collar workers etc.) In the specificities of guerrilla warfare it is true that peasants play a central role, because that phase of warfare is developed in their natural milieu. However, to conclude that that because of this it is the most revolutionary class was a mistake.³¹

The framework of rural resistance progressively evolved into a well-organized network of self defense mechanisms integrated by a common perception of resistance as a legitimate motivation for irregular warfare. The liaisons were based on person-to-person communication to build trust, and create a stronger position against the central committees of both the PCC and Liberal Party. Without bashing the political work made by regional structures of the PCC involved in the peasant's occupation of land taken by landowners during *La Violencia*, the peasant communities layered the social foundations for the ELN detached from their 'institutionalized opposition'. By 1960, it was already clear that the MRL was moving from a radical political platform, into an alliance with *Frente Nacional*. In fact, peasants linked to Fabio Vásquez in San Vicente de Chucurí galvanized their alliances rapidly taking the initiative to start insurgent attacks, what draw attention and take by surprise the disperse leftist sectors in peasant protests and support to the student movement in Bucaramanga.³²

³¹ Arenas, *La Guerrilla*, 159. The consequences of this overestimation brought about a deep internal crisis when the group was growing beyond the local bonds connected by Fabio Vásquez in 1966, and will be studied in the next chapter.

³² Fabio Vásquez has been generally portrayed as an opportunist by the left in Colombia, particularly for the strategic moves he made in the early 1960's in order to create the ELN, and by surrounding Camilo Torres with ELN *simpatizantes* and semi clandestine *guerrilleros*, just before the priest became a *guerrillero* in October. His rapid climb to leading positions in the national political landscape suggested opportunism, but also his disdain for the urban debates that distracted the creation of the movement's vanguard. The Cuban support to his cause was in part due to the form how other groups were crippled by divisionism in 1960. In the other hand, politics is about opportunity.

The subtle work of Fabio Vásquez was, however, a process of natural construction of both relations of authority and obedience in rural areas. Fabio Vásquez understood the rural universe better than over-theorized students and urban JUCO militants sent to the countryside in commissions to organize support for the PCC. He also represented the individual expectations of the peasantry and the crystallization of their values. Although Fabio Vásquez's tall build was something strange among peasants in Colombia, that made him rather attractive for young peasants who saw him initially as a stranger, and also for women who were predominant after the significant prosecution and assassination of male peasants during *La Violencia*. The allegiance bestowed by Heliodoro Ochoa and José Ayala to Fabio Vásquez broke the mistrust for an outsider. Progressively he became a role model. He had a great capacity for work at the fields, and also undertook simple tasks that peasants considered degrading for their leader. Although it might have seemed as a form of sacrifice, Fabio Vásquez was nurtured in precarious conditions, making hard labor and discipline everyday routines of a normal life. What Fabio Vásquez's attitude stimulated was a sense of togetherness that urban political leaders —particularly from the PCC and the JUCO— were unable to build.

Finally, since *La Violencia*, leaders of peasant organizations were prosecuted and assassinated, rearing a generation of youth without a clear bond to leaders, even within the familiar sphere. The figure of father in the rural setting was neither weak, nor lacked leadership, but often inexistent. It was common that families were led by widows of *La Violencia*, and peasant leaders were isolated, or placed on check military authorities. The case of Nicolás Rodríguez is representative:

My father, and other leaders of the region thought it was right to follow Fabio's plan developing the armed struggle, and they helped him in many ways doing political work. (My father contributed giving advice, discussing with Fabio and other companions precedent phenomena that happened in the region, the historical legacy and social basis there, the Liberal struggles and other difficulties during *La Violencia*. My father for example, in that epoch (1948-1956) had to abandon the area, he was prosecuted for a long time, and they kept him in jail for cooperating with Rangel's guerrilla.³³

³³ Medina, *ELN*, 33.

For the peasant youth, most memories were about epic feats of heroes back in time, transmitted through oral narratives. Fabio Vásquez represented the contemporary corollary of their struggle, in a moment of intense pressure by the military. His presence was also an opportunity for innovation in the act of storytelling because it was no longer clandestine or reserved for the intimacy of their inner circles. The austerity of the daily sessions for narrative remembrance refreshed their hopes and memories of episodes that disrupted their lives, and connected experiences of Fabio Vásquez's traumatic youth with rural *guerrilleros* as well. He was a peasant that shared their predicament. He knew political codes and mourning rituals used by peasants in remembrance of their people. They shared hatred for the elites—their enemy—the sorrow, and reactivated memories and legacies of struggles that many thought were dormant.³⁴ For Fabio Vásquez the sole remembrance was burden that they could pull together, and having a leader on the same level of experience was encouraging the community of San Vicente de Chucurí for action.³⁵ For peasants, Fabio Vásquez was likely to represent the materialization of their expectations embodied. In summary, He was a leader with the ability to alleviate the wounds left by *La Violencia* in peasants' self-esteem.

4.3 GALVANIZING THE FIRST WAR FRONT: THE EPIPHANY OF BELONGING AND INCLUSION

Peasant bonds of reciprocity helped Fabio Vásquez to form a solid warfront, to sustain it without serious logistic problems the first months, all without the inconvenience of a military

³⁴ A good example on how these narratives were shared by peasants regardless of the political group they belonged to, in Arango, *Yo Ví*, 65-82. Similar narratives compiled by the author in Carlos Arango, *FARC, Veinte Años: de Marquetalia a La Uribe* (Bogotá: Aurora, 1985). See also, Alfredo Molano, *Trochas y Fusiles* (Bogotá: IEPRI-Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1994); Alfredo Molano, *Los Años del Tropol: Relatos de La Violencia* (Bogotá: Oveja Negra, 1985).

³⁵ Correa, *Sueño Inconcluso*, 171-172.

apparatus enticed solely by theoretical prescriptions. The nature of the initial *foco* allowed him to train them as a single body that was cohesive, self-protective, and resilient amid the scarcities of rural clandestine conditions. The recognition of his leadership activated traditions of rebellion that bridged insurgencies from the colonial epoch in the Santander region, to the Liberal bandits fighting at the end of *La Violencia*. Fabio Vásquez's warfront also articulated former struggles that took place in a variety of scenarios, from the southern plains to the cold foggy mountains of Sumapaz. The narratives that galvanized internal identity linked experiences of rebellion, including slave maroon subversions in the littorals and indigenous resistance in the mountainous southern territories. The liaison with the past, and the abilities to build a vanguard in the present, gave legitimacy to the ELN's leader. For instance, if compared to the weak military institutions organized by the elites in order to protect national sovereignty and the fragile regime, rural insurgent's tenacity involved a sense of belonging that did not required conscription, outlandish symbolic paraphernalia, or schemas of homage and honor customized for the purposes of internal authority — here considered as subordination and discipline. They consolidated a symbolic system, a hierarchy to distribute authority, and mechanisms to sanction disciplinary faults.

The symbols of power and justice were played within the ELN in a ritualistic form, in order to oppose the elements that the elites established as referents for national unity and culture. One example was the incorporation of peasants in military institutions. Feelings of shame and neglect that historically peasants had experienced when conscription knocked at their doors, did not condition Fabio Vásquez formation of a rural warfront. Instead, the initial *foco* was formed by proud fighters envisioning their access into the pages of history. *Guerrilleros* engaged in the warfront in 1964 combined very young militants besides well experienced insurgents.³⁶ Nicolás Rodríguez represents a

³⁶ The founders were: from nuclear families in Cerro de los Andes three boys from Santa Helena del Opón, Salvador Afanador 'Silverio', Salvador Leal 'Saul', and Domingo Leal 'Delio' who died in 1966 in Patio Cemento, besides Camilo Torres. There are two boys from Simacota who belonged to Rafael Rangel Liberal guerrilla; they were nephews of the famous 'Gonzalez', a guerrilla chief in

good example from which to elaborate on the factors involved in the decision of becoming a *guerrillero*. In his case ‘Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista —aka ‘Norberto’, or ‘Gabino’— perceived that belonging to the ELN was an honor, a historic sacrifice of the individual for the community, and a warranty for enhancing a family’s image within a community. As much as the individual felt special and privileged, parents were honored by the participation of their offspring in the revolution. It represented a call to integrate the list of insurgents in the pantheon of subordinated peoples’ history —the history known and accepted by the peasants— in Colombia.³⁷ Among the multiple situations that every day clandestine life brought about, it is important to consider the form in which Fabio Vásquez disclosed the violent nature of the project to the younger insurgents. The epiphany of Nicolás Rodríguez with the finding of a gun and supplies is useful in order to understand how the leader ritually disclosed the revolutionary project in front of the eyes of a young peasant, creating a bond of trust and engagement implied in joining the ‘*grupo de Fabio*’ (Fabio’s group).

Before the initial *foco* started clandestine operations, Fabio Vásquez and his closest allies secretly gathered supplies whilst young peasants trained in order to endure the physical fatigue of walking through the jungle. The initial march of the groups was scheduled for July 1964.³⁸ Boxes with supplies were kept in a hut at Nicolás Rodríguez’ home. The changes in the community caused curiosity in Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista, who recently had returned home after a short and rather traumatic stay in Bucaramanga where he was studying at a public school. Fabio Vásquez was a strange figure for Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista. Fabio Vásquez also intrigued the young boy for his secrecy. However, he witnessed how people respected him, particularly other young boys living in

Hato. They were Jorge Gonzalez ‘José’, Pablo Emilo ‘Guillermo’, and their sister Paula Gonzalez, ‘the blond Mariela (La Mona Mariela), the first woman in the ELN. The rest of the boys belonged to three *veredas* (local administrative unit): Rionegro, La Colorada, and La Fortuna. In the first was José Solano Sepulveda ‘Leonardo’, who recruited Salomon Amado Rojas ‘Segundo’; Pedro Rodríguez, ‘Policarpo’, and Avelino Bautista, Abelardo’. José Ayala recruited in La Colorada to Manuel Muñoz ‘Miguel’, who defected after Simacota and were captured and sent to jail for illicit association. Finally, the people from La Fortuna: Ciro Silva Conrado’, Pedro Gordillo ‘Parmenio’, Hernán Moreno ‘Pedro David’ and myself Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista ‘Norberto’. Medina, *ELN*, 35-36.

³⁷ Correa, *Sueño Inconcluso*, 172.

³⁸ Arenas, *La Guerrilla*, 42-43.

the same area. Kids and youngsters, as well as more mature peasants obeyed and spoke enthusiastically about activities organized by Fabio Vásquez. Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista could not understand the allegiance they owed to Fabio Vásquez. The initial relation of mistrust started to change when Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista became lured by the enticing figure of the leader. He was unable to gather further information among his friends. His curiosity brought about a situation that endangered secrecy rules set within the community. When he disclosed Fabio Vásquez' plans, the situation influenced the rest of his life.

'When I return home I realized that there were boys doing exercises different to the normal routines we do in school. Fabio was directing them, in a small playground where they run, jump, jumped with a rope. Fabio was with them most of the time. I went and watched, and after some time I also was doing the same exercises with them. (...) One day, one of the guys was drunk, he was riding a peasant's horse and crossing a bridge when the horse throw him to the ground causing him some scratches, and he came back crying for the pain and fear, and as soon as he saw 'Carlos' (Fabio Vásquez's clandestine name), he told him:

-Give me a sanction, ground me comrade, but I will kill that fucking horse.

When he said 'give me a sanction', I was intrigued. Another day we were completing the routine of exercises when suddenly Fabio dropped a gun. I saw but make as if I had not seen anything. At the end of the exercise I told him:

-Why don't you show me how to use the gun?

-What do you mean? What gun?

-Take it easy, I'm not a whistleblower, show it to me

-It is not a gun, ok? And you should not tell that to anybody.

He told me that no but that yes at the same time. Then he started to prove me: what do I think about studying? About life? He asked me for topics such as Fidel Castro, asking for what they taught me about it... Pedro Gordillo was trying to keep the secret, especially because I was too young and talkative, they did not want me to know. My mom had a sewing machine (...) then a day I saw she was doing strange things: cloths, green shirts, green pants, red and black flags...

-Mom, what are all these things?

-Nothing, it is for a comedy show in San Vicente

-But there are more tailors than here mom

-Boy, in a closed mouth flies don't enter! (making a gesture)

After some days of intrigue, Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista found at his house a room with boxes, and he asked for further answers:

-Man, I know there is something going on, I saw Fabio has a gun...

-Well, I will tell you, but don't tell anything to Carlos or anyone that I told to you, Keep on playing as if you don't know

And then he explains to me that the goal was to go to the mountains to fight against the government, against the rich, as Fidel did in Cuba... Pedro Gordillo had 19 or 20 years, he was not the guy to explain me in depth the matter of those plans. Then I started to imagine, because I had read books about the heroic campaign of Bolivar, about the Comuneros' insurrection with José Antonio Galán... and I imagined that we were a few, gathered some arms, and we arrived to a place where more men joined us and so we gave way to a warfare that who knows where it will end up...

A day I told Fabio that I knew. He already had talked to my parents about my disposition to enter the war front. My father told me:

-If I say go, and then you don't like it and you can't keep up with it, you would blame me. If I say don't go, stay here, you would blame me when sadly you will watch the others leaving with him.
-That is too hard boy —said mom—, look how when you go for school after a week you want to come back. In that war you cannot come back whenever you want, that is very serious...
I was obsessed with the suffering I'd have to go through. It was bullets, combats, hunger, heavy rain, walking through the night. I liked films about cowboys. For me it was a life of adventure. My father called my attention once:
-Listen. If you decide to struggle, you must be faithful until the death. Victory is not just turning the corner. If you decide to struggle, that becomes your life. It is not like in a movie, it won't be easy. In this struggle there are not heroes that come, fight, vanquish and then return home... This struggle is for the rest of your life.
I had fear, but it was also tough to stay alone in San Vicente. Then a day I told Pedro, and thereafter I spoke to Fabio.
-Count me on?³⁹

In this case, Fabio Vásquez's group created intense engagement in a peasant community, particularly in the youth, creating a sense of unity as a necessary measure to guarantee protection for the insurgent project. Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista access to the group provides an example of revolutionary mysticism, in which the truth about drills, discipline and increasing loyalty to Fabio Vásquez was kept secretly in order to enhance protection for the *foco*. Although the common activities changed, and Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista noticed it rapidly, he started to follow their actions but needed to understand the purpose of these new activities, attitudes, and spirit of communality.⁴⁰ The mysticism attributed to the *foco*, was necessary for the clandestine condition necessary for the group to survive the early stages. Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista received an initiation to the group that strengthened a bond of trust with Fabio Vásquez.⁴¹ The authority that Fabio Vásquez gained within San Vicente de Chucurí enabled him to receive support from people that barely knew him. Local peasants integrated around his political aspirations, after bridging legacies of struggle and sufferance.⁴²

This excerpt also allows us to understand the importance of values that revolution attempt d to reestablish, such as honor and recognition. The conversations that fostered Nicolás Rodríguez

³⁹ López Vigil, *Camilo*, 38-40.

⁴⁰ Arango, *Yo Vi*, 21-27, and 61-76.

⁴¹ Broderick, *El Guerrillero*, 30-35; Harnecker, *Unidad*, 36-41. López Vigil, *Camilo Camina*, 43, 156-165.

⁴² Arenas, *La Guerrilla*, 96-104

Bautista integration to the early ELN exalted the importance of commitment, integrity, and heroics. Despite his young age, it is clear that the decision was taken in a wider context of sociability in which his decisions were conditioned by a larger historical narrative. In rural contexts this contributed to the continuous ritualization of individual actions that galvanized authority and obedience to the ELN's leader. Urban *guerrilleros* such as Camilo Torres, Victor Medina, or Domingo Lain, who entered the group later, lacked such identity features. They wanted to sublime their experience in the warfront by learning and enduring quickly hardships and deprivation proper to rural life.

Another perspective that marks rural identity, and influenced the ELN was the involvement of children in the warfronts. The use of children in guerrilla warfare can be explained from their point of view, and how it should be assessed without judging the situation by using the vision from urban, intellectual or ethic frameworks

Children's incorporation to the guerrilla was interpreted in those years as part of the revolutionary romanticism and irrefutable proof of the force and justice boosting revolution. To show young boys with guerrilla uniforms and carrying weapons sparked enthusiasm in the hearth of the youth and also many adults. It was so horrifying and unfair the system that even children felt obligated to fight it.⁴³

In the same way, youth in Colombia was a category that did not exist in the 1960's.⁴⁴ In the rural context, youth does not reflect a type of consumption or attitudes towards parents, institutions or a life style. Instead, peasants consider that children are required to be involved in productive activities at an early age, and their rebellion is less a pose than the desire and capacity to live an autonomous life without relying on paternal support, institutional adscription, or affective independence. In that case, in rural areas it is normal to find people that live independent from their parents at eighteen, and start a family with autonomy and economic stability. Education and schooling age classification changed dramatically the relationship between age, productivity and

⁴³ Correa, *Sueño Inconcluso*, 171.

⁴⁴ Mauricio Archila, ed., *Una Historia Inconclusa, Izquierdas Políticas y Sociales en Colombia* (Bogotá: CINEP, 2009), 5; Fabio López de la Roche, *Izquierdas y Cultura Política ¿Oposición Alternativa?* (Bogotá: CINEP, 1994), 26-27; Ruiz, *Sueños y Realidades*, 41-43.

autonomy. Peasant children going to school became often a burden for poor families that relied on their cooperation in daily activities.⁴⁵

For Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista, entering the ELN opened a new lifestyle and gave him recognition among local inhabitants who perceived his bravery as something to parallel. This research does not attempt to enter the topic of where youth begins and when it is accurate to allow children to make political decisions. However, it is necessary to bear in mind the factors explain how such decision were considered correct in that moment, and to what extent it provides insight into deeper elements of leadership, loyalty, and ritual practices in rural and clandestine contexts. Insertion to the group was exalted as a moral commitment with revolution. Fabio Vásquez initially controlled incorporation and provided each militant with a *nom de guerre* within the ELN, as a mark of their new role in clandestine life

Everyone was given the name from that moment on, there was a list. A boy name Ciro became 'Conrado', Jorge was 'José', Pedro Gordillo was 'Parmenio', He named me 'Norberto'...
-Forget about your usual name and use now the name of war.
Fabio then gave us a discourse, that we were the continuity of Bolivar and Galán's struggles. I got the goose bumps!!!⁴⁶

This moment was crucial for Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista, and became his initiation to the individual sacrifices that commitment with revolution implied. Mixed feelings of fear, anxiety and responsibility opened his path to insurgent life. Entering Fabio's group changed Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista's life forever. Probably, he adopted such decision and the new revolutionary personality whilst thinking more as part of a community than as a detached individual.⁴⁷ The ritual act of

⁴⁵ Javier Sáenz Obregón, Óscar Saldarriaga and Armando Ospina, *Mirar la infancia: pedagogía, moral y modernidad en Colombia, 1903-1946* (Medellín: Colciencias-Universidad de Antioquia, 1997) Vol 1: 140-156. The author argues that youth is a differential element to understand how the political system has incorporated citizenship into the national Project, and in the 1950's the process escaped from the elites control because of the accelerated demographic growth of Young generations, their capacity to cope political spaces, and the form how they entered the realm of decisions ousting Gustavo Rojas Pinilla dictatorship, and giving approval to Alberto Lleras Camargo as the first president of *Frente Nacional*. Although the analysis does not reach the epoch of insurgent struggle, the authors provide thoughtful elements to understand intergenerational exchanges in Colombia.

⁴⁶ Medina, *ELN*, 42. For a study in the symbolic aspects behind naming rituals and revolutionary baptism, see Sánchez Sierra, "Discourse, Practices," 307-309.

⁴⁷ For an study on the bonds of rural allegiance and how the ELN initially created connections that made from a peasant the incorporation to the *fovo* a matter of honor and responsibility, in Sánchez Sierra, "El Discurso Histórico," 22-29. The rituals of

integration and baptism gave Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista a particular place in the group since he was initiated by the leader, and the community that hatched the initial revolutionary *foco*.⁴⁸ Fabio Vásquez had singled him out in an attempt to differentiate his insertion as part of the political group that generally was formed by intellectuals or students in semi-clandestine operations. His allegiance to the leader until the late 1970's was a strict relation of obedience that lasted until the group separated Fabio Vásquez' from responsibilities of leadership and command in 1978.⁴⁹

Finally, for *guerrilleros* the rituals of initiation became a platform for direct exchange with the leader, and climb onto command positions. Internal rituals helped to consolidate the transmission of power, as an experience that was passed on. This ritualized exchange of experiences operated as an initiation into the values of revolution.⁵⁰ *Guerrillero's* obedience was constantly reactivated in the transmission of the mystic behind the initiation in revolution and participation in secret clandestine actions. In other words, rituals become the vow to revolutionary commitment as both a political and historical responsibility. It is not gratuitous that whilst the group was at the lowest point of its crisis, Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista became the axe of the organization because he experienced symbolic moments for the organization, and witnessed several stages of Fabio Vásquez's leadership.⁵¹ The experience of Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista served to other insurgents in the ELN as an example of surrender to the leader's power, and respect/reverence to traditional values for the revolutionary struggle. Considering his experience in the ELN, he had a privileged standpoint to decide about the future of the group during the crisis.⁵² His experience had made him the most suitable candidate to

detachment, inclusion and liminality in guerrilla incorporation parallel sacrifice and suffering with individual sublimation, see Cárdenas and Duarte, "Fusiles de Madera," 309-317.

⁴⁸ Medina, *ELN*, 35.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 130-135. Harnecker, *Unidad*, 50-52. López Vigil, *Camilo*, 50-56.

⁵⁰ Sánchez Sierra, "Discourse, Practices", 315-324; Cárdenas and Duarte, "Fusiles de Madera," 314-317.

⁵¹ A complete narrative about the years of Fabio Vásquez separation from the ELN's command, in Broderick, *El Guerrillero*, 115-137. The version of Nicolás Rodríguez and Manuel Pérez in, Medina, *ELN*.

⁵² López Vigil, *Camilo*, 10, 159-162.

replace Fabio Vásquez because he climbed to the highest echelons of authority as a witness of the organization's evolution.

In this chapter, I presented both political and social factors that made possible the emergency of the ELN in rural areas of Santander. In the light of Fabio Vásquez' leadership it is possible to understand how rural insurgent *focos* ended up reproducing practices characteristic of the establishment they were bound to fight against. The processes of inclusion for *guerrilleros* played a central role establishing a symbolic liaison between the ELN, rural traditions of rebellion in Colombia and Santander, and the confidence in the leadership that could orient peasants to overcome decades of oppression and political subordination. The ritualization of daily actions, the assumption that sacrifices were necessary steps for individual sublimation into revolutionary life, the adoption/imposition of symbolic *noms de guerre*, and the aura of mysticism and secrecy around the creation of the initial warfront, they all suggest the important bond that Fabio Vásquez created with rural insurgent fighters in the early years of the ELN. In the next chapter, I will contrast their experiences and how internal exclusion to opponents of rural worldviews caused and increasing disregard for urban lifestyle. The initial strategies for protection of the revolutionary project became, as it will be presented in the next section, a justification for isolation and execution of urban *guerrilleros* in the name of revolution and rural warfront's stability. In order to solidify bonds of allegiance that constituted the structure of power and internal authority, the ELN adopted mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion where leadership was fundamental. In the next chapter, I explore how such leadership operated, and to what extent it brought about an internal crisis that impaired the group from a sustainable, harmonious and constructive political dialogue with other social movements.

CHAPTER 5

CULT FORMATION: FABIO VÁSQUEZ AND THE ELN INTERNAL CRISIS 1967-1974

The ELN's consolidation in the rural area of San Vicente de Chucurí depended on the close relation between peasant community, and the group's hierarchy. More than the rugged geography, it was the peasantry that constituted the hideout for the ELN after every operation, or during attacks launched by the national army. Another factor for its successful start was Fabio Vásquez's strong leadership, and the impact of his charisma among peasants and supporters. It is necessary to assess such influence in the communities, and how the leadership grew into practices that resemble a cult, to the point that loyalty became the main condition for belonging to the ELN during its first years. Alternative leaders also surrendered to his influence, making any attempt to criticize him a threat to the hierarchy, and the insurgent *foco* itself. Opposition to Fabio Vásquez's line of thought/action became a deviance, and a variety of strategies were implemented to deter criticism to the mainstream path for recognition and hierarchical climb in the ELN. Those initiatives to diverge from the mainstream only consolidated after Fabio Vásquez' separation from the ELN, making possible to air further opinions about revolution. I argue, initially here, and in the last chapters of this dissertation, that internal opposition in the ELN can be studied in the light of the distinctions between cult and sect, this last considered as marginal, clandestine and needed of recognition by the mainstream in the group. In other words, the cult to Fabio Vásquez helps to explain how further attempts to discuss a political line of thought or strategy, became marginal, and were obscured and prosecuted. I suggest that the distinction between a regularized cult to Fabio Vásquez's leadership helps to understand

how Camilo Torres influence in the group was minimal and rather instrumental for the purposes of sustaining a revolutionary project based on military rather than political standpoints.

5.1 SHARED AUTHORITY: THE DIVIDE WITHIN THE ELN

From its early days, the ELN was composed by a significant number of urban *simpatizantes* in semi-clandestine structures, and urban *guerrilleros* involved in the rural areas given the growing pressure from the national army. They were engaged in intellectual activities and logistics, besides agitation, propaganda, and the creation of ideological documents for the group¹. Urban *guerrilleros* also made part of both the founders and the early command of the ELN. Fabio Vásquez traveled to Cuba with the help of academic fellowships that were granted to some of the most outstanding leaders of the student movement in the 1960's, and at least seven of them joined him swearing to bring revolution to Colombia.² As I mentioned in chapter 4, Fabio Vásquez corrected his political trajectory thanks to suggestions from his brothers, both leaders of the student movement. Finally, in the early 1960's, Fabio Vásquez' openness to the contributions from urban leftist sectors was a proof of reciprocity with the student movement, that respected his activism and the successful creation of a rural vanguard.

In terms of leadership, Fabio Vásquez faced few challenges to his capacity to maintain internal cohesion in the ELN. The initial warfront was cohesive, and its members had a close bond with him, learning the basics of guerrilla tactics and the reasons for their struggle. Aspects such as chores and discipline were adopted without problem by the *guerrilleros*:

¹ About the *Manifiesto de Simacota*, first public statement of the group, Nicolás Rodríguez said "The elaboration of the Manifiesto was recommended to workers of the city after discussions held between Fabio and Victor Medina ... then existed a necessity to show what the ELN thought, what was its purpose, how is the considered the development of social, economic and political processes" in Medina, *ELN*, 65.

²Sánchez Sierra, "Discourse, Practices," 281-284.

We had shifts as watchers and cooks. Hunting, forced marches, gymnastics every day; there was an hour disposed for alphabetizing for those without literacy, and for the group in general elementary lessons of political science

Besides, the early ELN's revolutionary liturgy was controlled by Fabio Vásquez.

These activities were meant to crystallize *guerrilleros*' belonging to the project through rituals and a scale of revolutionary values.³

The love affair between the leader of the ELN and urban elements contributing to its cause, however, did not last much. In 1964, Victor Medina entered the rural warfront as his last option to avoid prosecution by authorities. As Fabio Vásquez was preparing the insurgent *foco* for its first action, he introduced Victor Medina as the second in command. Urban operations of the Army were close to capture him in Bucaramanga and Bogotá, a situation that placed the ELN's urban logistics at risk. Fabio Vásquez was away from the *foco* while this was occurring. He left the rural warfront in order to personally supervise the safe delivery of supplies —canned food, medicines, ammunition, etc—, from Santander and Bogotá to the Cerro de los Andes, the hideout of the ELN in Santander's rugged mountains. Fabio Velasquez' absence, coupled with the *foco*'s exposure to the Army's operations, impaired Victor Medina's from completing the normal rituals of entrance and initiation as the second in command. The process traditionally promoted in a ritual marked by mysticism, necessary to enhance subordination and allegiance for the new commander as a revolutionary leader. Instead, the insertion of Victor Medina was informed through a letter read aloud to the *guerrilleros*. It seemed more an imposition

This is the second in command'. Then neither assembly nor democracy, no Leninist principles of organization; Medina has arrived and he is the second in command. Then OK! ... What would we say? ... We already understood the idea, as a comrade said, that we were kind of brutes and the chief were those who actually know. Then we thought 'hey, it is the arrival of Medina, How good, he is the second in command.'⁴

³Broderick, *Camilo*, 253

⁴Medina, *ELN*, 44.

The remembrance of Victor Medina's arrival does show the form, but not the effect of his presence. Although Victor Medina never represented a serious threat to Fabio Vásquez's authority, the *foco* experienced perturbations for the particular differences between urban and rural lifestyle. From the beginning, he was less outspoken than Fabio Vásquez, and dedicated most of his time to intellectual activities. Given his academic orientation, he helped to elaborate political premises for the group, proposing educational tasks uncommon in the quotidian interaction with Fabio Vásquez. Victor Medina's communication with the *guerrilleros* was also curtailed by his incapacity to express his goals and perceptions of the insurgent project in a comprehensive form to peasants with minimal education, and concerned primarily with military training

Medina expressed himself very well and taught us, but he had a hard time trying to make us understand his talks, it was difficult for him to place on the same level like us, because of the language, his eloquence, he was rather retracted and secluded (...) compared to Fabio, Victor was more distant, silent, with typical attitudes of urban people.⁵

Victor Medina decided to isolate himself from group's activities such as storytelling and military drills, what was perceived by rural *guerrilleros* as a display of laziness and disdain for their routines. This became a lasting stereotype among peasant guerrilla militants, about the *urbanos*.

Fabio Vásquez established meetings in order to assess outcomes and mistakes during insurgent actions.⁶ Although initially they included only the leader and mid-rank cadres, with time meetings happened more often, and without the presence of the leader. One of the reasons for Fabio Vásquez' absence in the warfront was the necessity to solve problems in the urban structures. He wanted to raise funds and represent the group abroad. By the end of 1965, the internal meetings had become more a habit for sustaining internal sessions where criticism gained relevance as a safety valve to release insurgent's tensions. Also the meetings were used for the validation of allegiances,

⁵Ibid., 45

⁶ Rafael explored critically in the 1980's these meetings in an interview with Martha Harnecker: "We had assemblies in the war fronts, but fundamentally they were for analyzing issues of the fighters, internal problems; disciplinarian assemblies and not with a political character, no discussing a political line, the selection of a direction, the evaluation of the project in general. This type of analysis was reduced to the command, and decisions were taken by the first responsible cadres in the organization". Harnecker, *Unidad*, 57.

due the scarce combats that might had contributed to diversifying the internal hierarchy. Loyalty to Fabio Vásquez helped to substitute values of bravery, and instead granted bottom-up mobility for the affinities with the leader. ⁷ However, a particular tendency that displayed the conflict between urban and rural factions was the reluctance of rural *guerrilleros* to engage in academic/intellectual activities, unless they were directly promoted by Fabio Vásquez. For a revolutionary structure bounded to transform a national political structure, the ELN ‘...lacked a political apparatus, it was isolated from the masses and their anguishing issues, it was a guerrilla misinformed, without combats, and the organization wasted its time and efforts sorting tactical problems: getting food, cloths, equipment. Both the prospection of zones and the research of their dwellers were minimal. The search for a place to stay overnight, etc. became fundamental problems for the group creating a tactics-ism mentality. It made of tactics-ism and survival the goal in itself.’⁸ Despite an intense political agenda that included urban agitation and proselytism at universities and industrial unions, the ELN started to create a cloudy image of intolerance towards those cadres that did not envisioned peasantry as the revolutionary vanguard.⁹ Outside the warfront, the ELN had gained support among intellectuals at public universities, and urban progressive groups opposed to the PCC and the *Frente Nacional*. Many progressive groups were disenchanted with the PCC after the disclosure of purges and mass murders in the Soviet Union, which seriously eroded PCC’s legitimacy.¹⁰

⁷ One strategy to show discomfort with urban *guerrilleros* presence in the warfront was the avoidance and dismissal of academic tasks.

⁸ Arenas, *La Guerrilla*, 153

⁹ Evidence of mistrust that existed between student movement and semi-clandestine representatives of the ELN, can be found in Ruiz, *Sueños y Realidades*, 125-136; Broderick, *El Guerrillero*, 196-197; Trujillo, *Camilo y el Frente Unido*, 28-35; Arango, *Yoví*, 23-26. A close examination of the division of the student movement caused by disputed between leaders and semi-clandestine cadres of the ELN and the PCC, in Libardo Vargas, *Expresiones Políticas del Movimiento Estudiantil, AUDESA 1960-1980* (Bucaramanga: Universidad Industrial de Santander, 1996), 65-80.

¹⁰ The historiography of the left requires further analysis approaching the leftists’ *modus vivendi*, an how it was a type of youth culture that overlapped the emergence of middle classes, the social and political recognition to the youth, symbolic disputes for legitimation in society. Hint on the topic have been suggested, regarding the possibility of a left divided more by the ferrous brawls brought about by such disputes than the very ideological chasms that existed. Again, as in the case of *La Violencia*, it is in literature were initially are exposed interesting and traumatic tendencies. Two fantastic books condense subjectivities that could promote further research on the leftist trends in the epoch: Antonio Caballero, *Sin Remedio* (Bogotá, Oveja Negra, 1984), María Eugenia Vásquez,

After Simacota's siege, during an assessment meeting, Victor Medina was blamed for two mistakes. Firstly, he gave an incorrect sign of alert for the group in order to withdraw from the operation area. Secondly, He apparently gave clues to the military about the meeting point after the attack. This was a critical piece of information needed to reorganize the forces after launching the attack. His mistakes apparently brought about a disorganized withdrawal of the *guerrilleros* to the hideout. The situation worsened because of the scarcity of resources, particularly food supplies needed to restore energy to the *guerrilleros*. However, more serious for the schema of authority was a debate between Victor Medina and Fabio Vásquez on how to use violence.

I learned thanks to comments that between Fabio and Victor some cracks emerged. (...) Medina said that we should not shoot the police, that it is necessary to intimidate them, to make them surrender, and only if they react to that, then it is necessary to shoot them (...) Fabio said that it is necessary to enter the village combating. If the police surrender, then their lives will be respected, but we cannot come to intimidate them because they are armed. (...) Secondly, Fabio said that during the withdrawal, probably for the nerves, medina started to shout! We are going to Santa Ana! (...) I did not hear that, but that was among the charges made against Medina in the evaluation of Simacota's siege.¹¹

That was a serious threat for the group, but also a great opportunity to galvanize internal bonds of allegiance to Fabio Vásquez. For rural *guerrilleros*, Victor Medina's faults endangered a year-long work of carefully planned combats, which started since Fabio Vásquez' arrived to San Vicente de Chucurí in 1963. In an analysis of the situation, Manuel Pérez considered that

The main element against Victor Medina was that in that moment every *guerrillero* wanted to fight, they needed to fight, and Medina's attempt was to deter them from that goal envisioned for so long time. He was slowly learning very slowly the tricks of combat, he had significant limitations for that

Escrito para no Morir: Bitácora de una Militancia (Bogotá: Ministerio de Cultura, 200). Also, the work *Sueño Inconcluso* by Medardo Correa already cited in this dissertation.

¹¹ Medina, *ELN*, 58. Nicolás Rodríguez mentions another element of interest, that emerged during the evaluation, and led to disdain for urban *guerrilleros* for the apparent fear to combat in the crucial moment: "There was a moment in which Fabio affirms that Medina told him –'man, this is too venturous, we are without cover, let's go back' and this happened when the group was already detected by an sub-official" Fabio had the sly and decision for going on, sort out the problems and to maintain in the fact that there is risk involved, that's what it is about. (...) Fabio perceived that it was fundamental to do the action, for it would be a political element for cohesion to start striking first'. After the withdrawal, there was confusion and the mule burdened with supplies was confused and they brought one laden with raw coffee and unnecessary things. We reached the re-gathering point in Santa Ana in a bad condition after walking three weeks without stopping, and very little food. Whilst slaughtering a cow bought to a peasant in Santa Ana, the enemy detected us saw us and we had to disperse. Think about it, it was just the day after the siege'. *Ibid.*, 59.

matter, then his decisions were affected by that condition (...) Fabio was more enthusiastic about clashing with the enemy whilst Medina had a problem in the treatment to the people, a bad management of differences, immature comments, many elements that polarized the comrades.¹²

The situation worsened when, for the first time, the command of Fabio Vásquez was questioned. The evaluation gave space for the progressive refusal to obey the second in command, particularly from the rural *guerrilleros*. They wanted a sort of punishment for the mistake, but Fabio Vásquez temporarily alleviated this internal tension by not taking actions against both Victor Medina and other *urbanos*. *Guerrilleros* from urban contexts increased their anxiety for defending their legitimacy to maintain positions of leadership, and gaining respect for educational routines, as they represented their contribution to the group. It was the first symptom of a distinction that endangered the ELN's internal cohesion. After Fabio Vásquez return to the *foco*, the friction was resolved momentarily, and the leaders oriented their efforts to arrange details for the further military actions in 1966. It is necessary to mention that Camilo Torres entered the ELN at this point, in late 1965. He was marginal to the situation, although he witnessed the pervasive effects of the urban/rural –political/military division, he adopted a conciliatory attitude, and instead of taking positions, started to demonstrate how a combination of rural and urban features could be a major benefit for the group. He wanted to learn from the peasants, and also to instruct the illiterate.

During his short stay in Cuba, Fabio Vásquez was ashamed for misconduct of some of his commissioned trainees. After a painstaking process of gathering funds and concealing his identity recently disclosed in the *Manifiesto de Simacota*, the leader was looking forward to present the advances of his group to the revolutionary authorities, from whom he expected to receive not only a warm welcome, but also weaponry for enlarging his military capacity. Cuba demanded Fabio Vásquez' presence as necessary, to explain the young trainees' misconduct. Upon arrival in Cuba, 'a big buzz was waiting for him [Fabio Vásquez] because those punks had insubordinate, and one of

¹² Medina, *ELN*, 174.

them even dared to ask for political refugee at the United States embassy, Imagine that!. They were in mutiny and the Cubans said: we will not put up with these pricks, and immediately they asked for Fabio's presence'.¹³

The danger of army's operations after Simacota's siege, and the contact between the leaders of recently formed Maoist group *Partido Comunista Marxista-Leninista* (Marxist-Leninist Communist party, henceforth PCML) —Francisco Garnica and Uriel Barrera¹⁴— and Fabio Vásquez, gave birth to political commissions conceived for the expansion of the exercises of rural vanguard formation. The separation of the initial warfront in several groups with tasks varied their range of social contact alleviating the pressure after the dismantling of urban clandestine structures. It was an opportunity to dissuade the military operations of the army as well, whilst advancing political work.¹⁵ Finally, an attack launched to the warfront dispersed the group, sending *guerrilleros* in small groups to hide from the army for several days. In fact, the army started to celebrate the dissolution of the ELN. In that action Manuel Vásquez, brother of Fabio Vásquez had to definitively enter the warfront since the army was on his search. One commission lead by Victor Medina was sent to Barrancabermeja, to make urban progress in logistics and agitation. Gossip reached the urban semi-clandestine groups telling that the split between the leaders was clear, and based on political perspectives on guerrilla's role in warfare.

In the successive attacks launched against the group during 1965, before the consolidation of new smaller *focos*, Victor Medina's group experienced an attack that consolidated his weakness in military affairs:

¹³ Medina, *ELN*, 47.

¹⁴ Calvo Ocampo, Fabiola, *Colombia: EPL, una Historia Armada*. (Madrid: Ediciones Vosa, 1987), 73-77; for an overview of the formation of the PCML and the Maoist schism in the PCC, see Archila, "¿Utopía armada?" 44-61.

¹⁵ Medina, *ELN*, 60.

Medina left a bad impression in the combats in Cruz de Mayo. Medina does not assume his role of command and withdraw the group before expected plan, leaving two death people and one wounded. A comrade of Medina, without his authorization, on his own and ignoring the risk, returns with another and together they rescue the wounded that happened to be José Solano Sepulveda. They withdraw with him to the hide. In an ulterior analysis Medina was accused for abandoning the injured and his own combating personnel. Although the situation was not assessed entirely, a dense atmosphere with laden commentaries against the second in command became obvious'.¹⁶

The mistakes of Victor Medina, and disciplinary issues that emerged in 1965-1967 caused an impression/perception that 'many political contradictions were faced as personal problems'.¹⁷ The division within the ELN in fact synthesized the issues with the relations of subordination and obedience in the country, only that enhanced by clandestine life conditions. The *guerrilleros* with rural background perceived the urban *guerrilleros* as inheriting the arrogance of the cities in relation to the provinces, also characteristic of educated people's scorn towards peasants. The analysis of the crisis is necessary in order to unveil two main aspects for the organization. Firstly, consolidation of internal mechanisms for judging and punishing severe faults, undesirable behavior or mistakes committed by militants. Secondly, in order to understand how insurgent justice instilled a radical moral framework for the ELN. These aspects will shed light on how enacting justice and sacrifice caused dramatic scenes of martyrdom, benevolence and implacability within the ELN. I argue that internal excesses judging *guerrilleros* eroded the legitimacy of Fabio Vásquez authority. These critical elements will be considered by looking at traumatic phenomenon surrounding Fabio Vásquez decline as leader.

¹⁶Ibid., 62.

¹⁷Harnecker, *Unidad*, 58.

5.2 GROUP CONSOLIDATION AND RITUALS FOR PERSONALISTIC AUTHORITY

*The detours that happened leave values, mythic sentiments, symbols that transcend positively the limitations generated by narratives and memories that not only mean something for the guerrillero, but also constitute their past. That is the foundation of their history, their culture of warriors, and also reaches the population and become part of their imaginaries, legends that funnel inconformity and nourish with exemplary presence the body of the organization.*¹⁸

After the accusations to Victor Medina during the attack to Simacota, the increasing frictions among *guerrilleros*⁹ due to the anxiety for Fabio Vásquez's acceptance, started to cripple the ELN. The solution quickly led to the use of sessions of internal criticism, as a practice necessary to reestablish bonds of confidence. The tension between *urbanos* and *rurales* grew. However, the crisis was exacerbated due to the scarcity of supplies, anxiety for new military operations, and sorrow for *guerrilleros* fallen in the first actions. The crisis was thought to be sorted by a constructive approach to rivalries: 'In most cases, and given the character of the organization and its necessity to hatch and survive, it was impossible to open spaces of political debate, in other words, critical questions were silenced for the sake of consideration about practical activities of operative nature. And when political contradictions were explored, they were neither analyzed with the necessary depth nor conclusive correctives were used. Often these issues were treated vertically because of the overwhelming support to the chief [Fabio Vásquez]'.¹⁹

An example of this was the reluctance to embrace alternative sources of legitimation exhibited by urban *guerrilleros*, such as the close relation to unionized leaders, student movement, or

¹⁸ Medina, *ELN*, 187.

¹⁹Harnecker, *Unidad*, 58. About vertical obedience, 'One of the mistakes that led to the crisis was the personalistic direction. Among other things, the superior responsible always appointed who will be responsible for any other group, and the same for its subordinates... everything was too vertical. Fabio was the one that decided. And when he was not present, it was reproduced a top-down schema, pure vertical obedience. The principal cadres gave their opinions, but it was the responsible who decided everything', in López Vigil, *Camilo*, 130.

simply affinity among *guerrilleros* from urban or semi-urban settings.²⁰ Instead, Fabio Vásquez became less and less confident about those that did not start with him during the first march in July 1964. *Guerrilleros* without a kinship tie to the initial rural framework deserved subtle or explicit disregard from the leader. This explains the progressive decay of renowned leaders such as Jaime Arenas, Ricardo Lara Parada, and Victor Medina.²¹ The first two died after they defected the ELN, at hands of ‘commissions’ sent to avenge their betrayal after defection. The later, Victor Medina, died after an internal *consejo de guerra*²² that ordered his *fusilamiento* (execution by firing squad), which was a painful decision made by the majority of the *guerrilleros* under the direct influence of the leader Fabio Vásquez.

Their exclusion bolstered a leadership that seemed to guarantee the ELN’s sustainability only under the influence of Fabio Vásquez. The guerrilla’s chief acted as the ultimate controller of the insurgent liturgy. Internally, rituals for revolutionary sublimation bolstered moral principles, fundamental in the construction of allegiance to Fabio Vásquez’ authority. His leadership determined the early application of norms and mechanisms of justice as a ritualization of revolutionary commitment and obedience. *Guerrilleros’* obedience conformed to codes of conduct and practices envisioned to consolidate the internal hierarchy, based on the assumption that the rural worldview was better and more revolutionary as it was necessarily articulated to the sacrifices experience during *La Violencia*. Such legacy of sacrifices was a source of moral examples that solidified in peasant revolutionary values. In other words, the peasant vanguard crystallized

²⁰Arenas, *La Guerrilla*, 119-122. López Vigil, *Camilo*, 41-43, 66-79; Medina, *ELN*, 47-56, 187-191.

²¹Arenas, *La Guerrilla*, 65-80; Correa, *Sueño*, Chapters 2-4; Medina, *ELN*, 108-117.

²² A *Consejo de Guerra* was an internal trial used to assess and punish misconducts or possible betrayals from militants in the ELN. The origin of its use in the ELN is not clear, but after Simacota’s siege several peasants were assassinated by the group, making it its first *fusilamiento* death squad on record, at least on the information studied for this research. For this case, is very likely that the decision was taken by Fabio Vásquez, after consulting other *guerrilleros*. However, the *consejos de Guerra* seems to have become a mechanism to resolve crisis, and they resemble quotidian meetings and assemblies used to maintain the cohesion in the warfront. Medardo Correa offered an interesting description of one in 1971-1972, and also the emotional reactions the decisions caused, particularly in relation to the motto NUPALOM (*Ni Un Paso Atras, Liberacion o Muerte/ No step back, freedom or death*). “Transformed the assembly into a revolutionary trial, we moved to the defendant’s seat six or seven people linked to the complot against revolution. They received pressure to accept the charges, telling them that my confession was exemplary. One of the incriminated in an emotional outburst swore for all the revolutionary martyrs that never crossed his mind the idea of abandoning the armed struggle, and in a brave move asked me publicly if I recall any proposition for defecting’ Correa, *Sueño*, 133.

mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion built upon the moral perception of rural lifestyle as privilege. This moral dimension was in opposition to values and lifestyles proper of urban settings. The characterization of the ELN's moral framework will make more explicit this process.

In the early years of the ELN, the revolutionary moral was based on several elements that gave consistency to Fabio Vásquez leadership. First, it entailed the individual capacity to maintain at any cost the revolutionary vow NUPALOM (*Ni un Paso Atras, Liberación o Muerte / No step back: freedom or death, hereafter NUPALOM*). Second, it involved the requirement of sacrifices to prove commitment to the revolutionary cause.²³ Finally, it implied preserving the personalist leadership of Fabio Vásquez, as a warranty of unity and success. Now, it is necessary to discuss how the application of justice within the group operate, because it demonstrates how the ELN's moral framework was differently used to judge individual actions. In the early 1970's, such differential application played a central role in the group's crisis. In a closed social system where honorability was bolstered by belonging to a lineage of revolutionaries, the acceptance of Fabio Vásquez' authority fostered attempts to shape each *guerrillero*' individuality, to the leader's image. Also, the celebration of martyrdom and sufferance became a principle for revolutionary morality. *Guerrilleros* without these sources of legitimacy —primarily the *urbanos*—were in a clear disadvantage.

The internal gatherings used for criticism emphasized the preservation of the revolutionary *foco*'s vitality, in which unity around a leader bolstered the strength of the group. The ELN was still a small group and their actions were based on the element of surprise, high mobility, and safe clandestine hideouts. However, the increasing number of urban militants that had to enter the clandestine warfront made the *foco* —by the epoch Fabio Vásquez organized two additional groups, in commissions necessary to avoid military operation that endangered the existence of the group—

²³About the vow NUPALOM and its use as a principle of justice, I argue that it was an example of embryonic institutions shaping the project of revolutionary power since its formation, and used for interaction with rural communities. See Sánchez Sierra, "Discourse, Practices," 298-302, 308-313.

heavy. Most *urbanos* and recently integrated *guerrilleros* required a long training in order to learn how to hide, walk silently, prepare a post, and camouflage. The group was growing but the capacity of launching attacks against the Army was limited. Most *guerrilleros* had to be unarmed, and the pressure upon peasant communities grew. The urban semi-clandestine networks of *simpatizantes* had to resist, leaving a minimal possibility to supply the group with food, medicines, propaganda and further strategic information for their mobilization through the jungle. The slow adaptation of *urbanos* to clandestine life, and the constant mobility lead, to mistakes perceived by the leader and his followers as attempts to hamper the *foco*'s growth. In terms of the revolutionary moral, it meant low commitment and a breach of the NUPALOM oath that constituted the basic norm for internal judgment.

5.3 CODES AND NORMS: INSURGENT JUSTICE AND THE RITUALS

*...we had an attitude to build upon elements such as heroics, sacrifice, and absolute detachment, all with the certainty that the triumph was close.*²⁴

Discipline in the ELN was enforced through a vague corpus of norms and codes. Although evidence of a disciplinary code in the ELN is elusive, during the research for this dissertation the sources show that there existed both tacit and explicit rules. The group submitted to the warfare notions of the Cuban Revolution, and its leaders became worshiped as deities: their experience was the example, the truth, the law. Even before the death of Ernesto 'El Ché' Guevara, his motto '*Ni un paso atrás*' was highlighted as analogue to José Antonio Galán's cry of war '*Lo que ha de ser que sea*' (what has to be, has to be). The last is a motto about the inevitability of violence, during radical political transitions. Since both The Comunero rebellion and Cuban Revolution echoed a tradition

²⁴ Medina, *ELN*, 187.

of struggle, the ELN's call for justice and upheaval combined their cries of war to make the motto of the ELN. NUPALOM. The motto makes explicit the main and most radical rule that individual have to comply with in order to belong to the group: once you are in, you cannot escape the call of revolution. In the 1960's the commitment to the revolutionary cause of the ELN was centered in this indeclinable vow, and the implacability of revolution to anyone betraying the principle:

...in the guerrilla code defection was contemplated as a betrayal, so a defector had to be *fusilado*. I said at the beginning that we took probably too literally the slogan: "No step backwards, freedom or death". This means that if you defect, and stay out of the guerrilla, there is no other option but to comply with the condemnation.²⁵

We took the motto "freedom or death" too literally, No step backwards, freedom or death, from here nobody can leave, we all knew it: If I weaken in my commitment hit me in the head, I did commit myself and this is seriously, this is not fucking around, here we are going to die, here we came to fight, nobody can slip away and show the ass.²⁶

Although the norm was of general application, its effect in the ELN had differences. Its enforcement was a matter of concern for mid-rank cadres and commanders, for the danger to drain the groups force. However, it was also a strategy for low rank *guerrilleros*, who instrumentalized it in their attempts to climb within the hierarchy. "That moralist attitude of considering the revolutionary performance through the lens of heroics impeded a 'normal' life, because in warfare the conception of heroics leads to abandon of family, friends, job, everything... as a decision of absolute detachment and surrendering to the very dynamics of insurgent war and life. All that sacrifice was justified by the assumption that the triumph was close, despite we talked about Prolonged Popular War'.²⁷ Only by showing these characteristics a *guerrillero* could display to the leader his capacities. When the ELN was minimally engaged in fighting, quotidian exchange was the unique space to gain notability. Since the revolutionary sublimation could not happen in the marsh of war, the meaning of everyday acts offered new spaces for the symbolic consolidation of authority and rule. During

²⁵Ibid., 68.

²⁶Ibid., 42.

²⁷Ibid., 187. Quotes in the original publication.

exercises, the burdensome mobilization of kitchen utensils, daily chores such as cooking and guard overnight, all became moments to exploit both the commitment of the militants, their allegiance to the internal hierarchy, and the capacity of a cadre/leader to make a *guerrillero* to obey. The intense agenda of Fabio Vásquez did not allow for constant interaction, and middle ranks—*responsables*, or responsible cadres— often profited this principle of obedience for their own gain. By enhancing the vertical hierarchy, daily routines brought about intragroup strains, and the *urbanos* were at disadvantage due their natural weakness for enduring clandestine hardships.

The group also witnessed the harsh mechanisms used to punish *guerrilleros* that endangered the *foco*. The point of view of a staunch critic of the ELN helps to understand how excesses from the leaders were poorly scrutinized by the *guerrilleros*. ‘Six days after withdrawing from the siege of Simacota, the guerrilla chief ordered to annihilate two peasants of that zone, Salomon Buitrago and Nelson Sandoval, fact that occurred in the site ‘Penjamo’’.²⁸ It is still unclear what motivated the penalization, but the initial effects of revolutionary justice were applied upon members of the peasant communities. This event solely did not unleash *consejos de guerra* against group members, but displayed the argument between Fabio Vásquez and Victor Medina on how extreme the limits to reach for defending the insurgent *foco* should be. The decision was supported in the paradigmatic experience in Cuba, where ‘there is a passage when a revolutionary commander requests the *fusilamiento* for a fighter because he slept during its shift as post guardian. There, that was considered correct’.²⁹ When the guerrilla gave interviews in the 1980’s and 1990’s, some leaders reflected upon the importance of understanding internally the conditions that lead to those processes. ‘Those were facts that analyzed carefully do not leave us with moral judgments, but with the need for a reflection

²⁸ Arenas, *La Guerrilla*, 52-53.

²⁹ Medina, *ELN*, 133.

in the light of its specific setting, what allows to understand them better. This does not deny critical judgments and political connotation for the facts'.³⁰

The intense level of commitment created a stiff set of values that in quotidian practices became normative moral prescriptions by which mistakes were harshly exposed, criticized and punished. Such values were first, surrender to the leader's authority, second, sacrifice to the circumstances to prove commitment to the cause, and finally abandonment of mundane life.³¹ The case of surrender can be understood, for instance, in cases where the death penalty was used to punish to *guerrilleros* for faults, regardless of the severity of their mistakes. The case of a *guerrillero* in 1969 executed for stealing and eating *panela* (an energetic brown sugar bar)³² was played as a parallel to a similar situation in Cuba. In the case of the ELN, 'it was not just that he was punished by the fact of eating *panela*, but the circumstances in which the group was living in that moment, and in the framework of a specific political conception, where at the end, to eat a chunk of *panela* triggered an analysis that made the person to deserve the death penalty'.³³ The measures of punishment, lead the group to sustain a stiff moral that seemed inherent to revolutionary commitment, making death an intuitive choice, as it represented a proof of surrender and commitment to revolution. Another example was Fernando Chacon's suicide in 1972. In this case, his burial represented a form of rejection to the uncompleted ritual of sublimation in what was supposed to be a revolutionary example of sacrifice for the sake of honor to the internal system of justice:

He was not executed during the judgments of Anacoreto, he saved his life because of the pressure from the army. He killed himself before a new assembly gathered and confirmed the decision upon his life. At least the guerrilla could not say he died as a traitor or a counter-revolutionary. He was buried in an anonymous hole.³⁴

³⁰ Medina, *ELN*, 67.

³¹ The mythic figure of the *guerrillero* also explained their separation from the people. As it was mentioned before, the ELN started to reduce its contact with the people, based on an assumption of the transcendence of their actions: 'In that epoch the guerrilla character was mythic, a great hero that for the dimension of his commitment and surrender was attractive and draw attention from the people, reason why he will be listened by others and his message will reach all the country', *in* Medina, *ELN*, 187.

³² Sánchez Sierra, "Discourse, Practices," 327.

³³ Medina, *ELN*, 133.

³⁴ Broderick, *Camilo*, 337.

Revolutionary death implied a ritual of morality for the group. Each victim of the insurgent justice was perceived not as an excess of the implacable nature of the mechanism, but a moral contribution for the ELN's narrative, laden with snapshots of epic sacrifices. They were virtuous examples for the future generations to learn the values of revolution. The system of values in the ELN was created by Fabio Vásquez, based on the traditional norms valid in peasant communities. Closer to a system of customary law —different to the regime's system of law—, it was activated in everyday activities at the warfront. The case of abandonment was particular for urban *guerrilleros*, for they had to give up a life of comfort and undertake the quest for revolutionary sublimation.³⁵ Deprivation in the warfront was almost total. From food scarcity to the lack of salt or soap for hygiene, *guerrilleros* had to ignore their drive for consumption.

The case of Medardo Correa, an urban *guerrillero* that entered the warfront, tells us how he repudiated all the privileges previously enjoyed. Deprivation then was another source of sublimation that reached overtones of sacrifice, allowing the individual to make up even past excesses. Medardo Correa gave up 'All that was related to my former life, family, studies, personal relations, petty-bourgeois habits. All those privileges were reduced to disposable trash'. The goal was not only to become part of the revolutionary project, but also to die if necessary, because 'the immolation of revolutionaries is the first step to ascend towards the highest point of glorification'. Detachment and sublimation in revolution sparked pompous expressions about the cleansing power of revolution 'I had to take a bath in the purifying waters of revolution in order to gain a place in the scenario of history'.³⁶

More important needs for human survival, sexual drive also promoted the exercise of the ELN vaguely underwritten system of law and pride. The punishment for eating a bit extra *panela*, can

³⁵Medardo Correa refers this distinction saying that Fabio Vásquez explained to him the crisis in these terms: 'You have to know *paisa* that our experience with peasants has disclosed a truth: that workers and intellectuals petty-bourgeois cannot understand the vanguardist and revolutionary condition played by poor peasants, considering the specific conditions of the country (...) it is a situation that urban people cannot not assimilate with their petty-bourgeois vices'. Correa, *Sueño*, 95.

³⁶ Correa, *Sueño*, 63.

be contrasted to the drive for sexual satisfaction. The following excerpt exemplifies the dangers involved in abstinence, and how desperation risked the ELN's bond to peasant communities:

At the beginning work [with the peasant communities] was great, but brought some problems with the population: there started the parties, booze drinking, affective problems, which was one of the serious ones and still it is today. Then women did not enter the guerrilla, because of the high requirements of heroism and detachment. We started to have issues there with the people, and with alcohol happened some disrespect to the peasants. (...) some peasants grew resentful with the guerrilla because they found out that some *guerrilleros* asked their women for sexual contacts. Mistrust grew, and the problem was that not only the guerrilla lower ranks did it, but also comrades responsible for warfronts.³⁷

For instance, the punishment to Ricardo Lara Parada, one of the highest ranked *guerrilleros* with urban background happened under the presumption of sexual affairs:

We have always been respectful of couples and affective relationships. Then Ricardo, in order to cover up his deviances started to promote among comrades the search for other men's wives, what caused a difficult situation within the group and a strain in the bond with the community. That the army does that, is OK, we understand that, it is part of the criminal spirit that characterizes them, but a *guerrillero* doing it, having under his responsibility fifteen or twenty fighters (...) it is an example of very low moral and political level. (...) Someone with the theoretical and structural elements to understand what is good and bad, and the respect that must be kept for the mass (...) With man like this, like Ricardo, one does not have any future, we cannot build a world of dignity and respect.³⁸

From the values cultured within the ELN, commitment was the cement that held together the group. Although Fabio Vásquez knew that military training and mimicry of insurgent actions helped to release pressure,³⁹ the group required a safety valve in order to diminish the intense disputes that clandestine life was bringing about. The solution was the strict supervision of

³⁷ Medina, *ELN*, 181-182.

³⁸Ibid., 115-116. It is curious how the interviewed suggest that for peasants it could be valid, what makes necessarily harsher the punishment. Ricardo Lara Parada, in what is perceived by many as a set-up judgment, was sentenced to death penalty for betrayal to the revolution, and a commission was sent to kill him. The application of justice for urban fighters was harsher in appearance, namely because they escaped to big cities to avoid prosecution, and publicly made statements about the ELN, trying to attract attention from the media, to deter group's mercenaries from bad publicity. A similar case happened with Jaime Arenas. In both cases the urban *guerrilleros* were condemned for criticizing the political line of Fabio Vásquez, and during their trials accusations of belonging to the CIA emerged.

³⁹ The *EscuelaPalito* (Wooden stick training was a mimicry of combat created by the leaders of the ELN to maintain the expectation for confrontation with the enemy whilst each *guerrillero* had the possibility of practicing tactical movements, without a real gun machine. The *escuelapalito* was established by 1967 as the ritual transition between a recently clandestinized *guerrillero*, and a fighter fully active in operations. In the training a piece of wood simulated the form of a gun machine, and the *guerrillero* had to learn how to clean it, hold it, and care for it as the main element for its survival in case of a combat. The piece of wood was replaced by a real gun machine after an operation where the goal was to disarm a soldier. This ritual was part of the 'baptism of fire' for *guerrilleros*, and was laden with symbolism and ceremonies for the transition from normal life to revolutionary belonging. Details about this ritual in Sánchez Sierra, "Discourse, practices," 317.

individual discipline by a creation of norms that tacitly crystallized moral perceptions of the actions performed in the warfront. The pressure from outside was similarly overwhelming to the internal disputes. Commitment as an insurgent value in the ELN was present in almost every internal activity, and justified harsh punishment to any fault, making necessarily intense the experience of living the compromise of NUPALOM. Each *guerrillero* had to contribute as much as possible to the stability of the group, what ritualized for instance the ‘baptism of fire’,⁴⁰ a process by which *guerrilleros* gained the right to use a gun taken from the enemy during a combat. In this type of ritual action, Pedro Gordillo ‘Parmenio’, Camilo Torres, and Domingo Lain died. The case of Heliodoro Ochoa is interesting in relation to individual commitment with the group.

He belonged to the group since its foundation, and was very important for establishing contacts in the area where the *foco* was implanted (...) he had participated in risky urban actions, and escaped from jail in Pamplona. Within the guerrilla he showed great tenacity, not accepting or using an arm, because he wanted to be able to use one that he himself seized from the enemy. He was sent into a trial in the ELN, and never asked for mercy, directing himself the death squad that shoot him after the *consejo de guerra*, and digging his own grave.⁴¹

The case became notable for the group because Victor Medina was also sentenced to death during a trial for treason and lack of commitment. In 1971-1972 the group was at the lowest point of its crisis, particularly for the internal division between those in favor of Fabio Vásquez, and those critical of the overestimation of force and violence, without a deep political construction of the revolutionary project. The use of violence, that was the motivation for a clash between Fabio Vásquez and Victor Medina during Simacota’s siege, had evolved into a chasm that distanced the top commanders. The ritual of initiation involved skills in combat, regardless of their political or intellectual capacities. Another aspect criticized was ‘the compulsive management of time, because it caused a narrow view of life. Time was reduced to a mentality in which it was necessary to think 24/7 about revolution: time for waking up, time for eating, time for studying, time for cleaning the weapons, time for hygienic, time for erasing footprints, time for sleeping, time for guarding the post.

⁴⁰Ibid., 302-330.

⁴¹Arenas, *La Guerrilla*, 130.

There was no time for other thoughts, neither for love, recreation or leisure'.⁴² The revolutionary moral depended on the capacity of each militant to express commitment in terms of surrender, commitment, and detachment. The ultimate goal was to gain a place in the ELN's pantheon besides an historical character, and the satisfaction of principles imposed by the leader. This excerpt synthesizes such aspiration

Heliodoro Ochoa asked not to be blindfolded, and to be allowed to give the instructions to the death squad ordered to accomplish the final decision of his fusilamiento. In the middle of such stressful situation a comrade made a shot by mistake and Heliodoro asked him to act with more serenity. (...) it was a tough moment, very painful especially because he was left with the idea that revolutionary justice was unavoidable. There were tears and anguish. The anecdote of Heliodoro Ochoa instructing the death squad left an anecdote of dignity, bravery and serenity.⁴³

The symbolic dispute for recognition was not limited to the life within the warfront. At some point when the pressure from army's intelligence became unbearable, Fabio Vásquez decided that it was necessary to send to Cuba commissions for further training in communications and the use of explosives. Expecting not to have shameful cases of misconduct, the group awaited their return and sent Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista to pick them up and bring them to the warfront, but 'Sandino, one of the arriving *guerrilleros*, try to kill himself at Bogotá's International Airport. He cut his veins making effective the commitment with the motto of fighting until death. He did it in order to avoid the enemy capturing him'.⁴⁴

The internal mechanism of justice that strengthened Fabio Vásquez' authority within the rural warfront of the ELN complemented ritualized aspects of clandestine life. Besides the mysticism in the incorporation to quotidian activities, the most striking fact for the leaders was how to maintain the intense passions awakened after the siege of Simacota, considering that the National Army was deployed and made it difficult to organize successful actions during 1965-1966. The deep

⁴² Correa, *Sueño*, 176-177.

⁴³ There was something significant in this trial: given the facts, they were interpreted by the condemned, particularly by Heliodoro Ochoa, as making merits for the death penalty (...) This attitude was recurrent in other executions, when the condemned ratified as valid the decision to apply the maximum punishment'. Medina, *ELN*, 97-98.

⁴⁴Ibid., 47.

commitment transformed individual decisions into reflections on how to preserve the group, leave a mark in the organization's history, and create a moral experience for the next generations of *guerrilleros*, all in the form of dramatic sacrifices. Camilo Torres was also involved in these practices, making his legacy a corollary of martyrdom and insurgent sublimation. Death seemed to be a compulsion in the guerrilla, particularly when the context legitimized the manipulation of symbolic elements, such as the use of NUPALOM's motto. As the sources show, Fabio Vásquez did not attempt to diminish this practice or diminish its damage in the military strength of the group. The vague revolutionary code involved these extreme practices, and they strengthened Fabio Vásquez's power at the top of the hierarchy. The isolation of opponents from both the group and the hierarchy through the radical mechanism of *consejos de guerra*, the use of gossip and innuendo, and the systematic elimination of dissent at hands of death squads were the symbolic script necessary for building a revolutionary group. The all-encompassing and vaguely defined norm of NUPALOM shows the contradictory nature of revolutionary processes, combining elements of violence and individual aspirations for sublimation.

5.4 FROM RITUALS TO CULT: THE CHALLENGES OF A COLLAPSING AUTHORITY

The erosion of individuality implied the radical detachment from traditions that regardless of how significant they were for each *guerrillero*, supposedly endangered the fundamental values of the ideal insurgent fighter. For instance, the harsh criticism to 'bourgeois practices' were eradicated, including religious beliefs, and marks of individual/collective identity. As it was mentioned before, an example was the adoption or imposition of an alias, in line with rituals of initiation, such as the 'baptism of fire'. Fabio Vásquez was the officer of the revolutionary liturgy. It was not a coincidence

because they galvanized his authority enhancing a cult of his personality. He had selected a *nom de guerre* to represent the high character of his leadership. Even his brothers revered glorious rebels,

The *nomes de guerre* assumed by the three brothers were revealing: Fabio Vásquez adopted the name 'Alejandro' (no doubt it was after Alexander the great), Manuel Vásquez was 'Geronimo' (Honoring the indigenous chief), and Antonio, the youngest used the pseudonym 'Emiliano' (after Zapata).⁴⁵

The homogenization of the *guerrilleros* under the influence of the leader bolstered the formation of a system of belief, in which a moral framework activated in quotidian activities, consolidating obedience to the leader's command, contributed to the formation of a cult of his personality. When a *guerrillero* reproduced the obedience and enshrined Fabio Vásquez's authority, the gratification was expressed in belonging to the mainstream and a recognized position in the hierarchy. The cases in which *guerrilleros* could choose their alias were sporadic, and based on the primary sources studied for this research, it appears to be the case only for Fabio Vásquez and his brothers. Liminality bounded for inclusion in the ELN sparked enthusiasm among the *rurales*, generally for their attachment to la lineage of former insurgent leaders in different settings of political violence. During the first years, the vow of obedience to the ELN's leader Fabio Vásquez is evident since he generally picked the *nom de guerre* for *guerrilleros* incorporated. The new name represented a mark of full citizenship in the recognition of subordination to the leader and the revolution.⁴⁶ However, for the *urbanos* such historical linkages were less clear, and their names lacked the transcendental representation of a revolutionary caste as the kin rebuilding the new society. This aspect limited the influence of Fabio Vásquez among *urbanos*' belonging to the group. The case of Medardo Correa, who entered the ELN coming from an urban structure, but displayed stiff

⁴⁵ Broderick, *El Guerrillero*, 174.

⁴⁶ An example in which Fabio Vásquez allowed the *guerrillero* to select a name was during Medardo Correa's incorporation to the clandestine warfront. He had an urban leadership background. This is he form how he narrated it: '-Correct, and how do you want to be named in the group? (...) As I had already thought about it, I answered immediately.

-Anibal, comrade. I have noticed that many bear the name of historical characters: you are 'Alejandro', the great Macedonian general; Manuel is Jerónimo, the famous North American cacique; Antonio, your other brother is Emiliano, the Mexican *guerrillero*. There are many Guadalupes, José Antonios, etc. I want to be named Anibal (Hannibal), no for boasting a similarity to the Carthaginian general, but because I'm from that City in Southern Colombia'. Correa, *Sueño*, 99.

radicalism for the rural moral, helps to highlight the values that Fabio Vásquez wanted to see among his followers. In order to display his radical surrender to the principles of rural insurgent morality, he repudiated his former life and privileges before becoming a *guerrillero*:

The year 1973 was close to an end, and during my stay in the guerrilla I barely remember once celebrating Christmas. We generally skipped that celebration because they were considered silly petty-bourgeois stuff and just to mention it would be considered a symptom for defection from our moral insurgent order. We had to think revolution 24/7.⁴⁷

When I had a chance to meet again my friend from childhood, José Antonio Niño. We started participating in activism during our youth, and now he was very close with Fabio Vásquez in another warfront. I thought the meeting would have the same intensity. That night, when we met, I tried to give him an effusive hug, and suddenly I felt his cold distance separating us, he had interrupted me from hugging with his huge hands, and his words were cold like marble: 'Comrade, such display of affection is incompatible with our condition of *guerrilleros*. I'm glad to see you, but it is necessary to avoid such petty-bourgeois emotional outburst.⁴⁸

Paisa, I know there is much confusion about the execution of traitors such as Victor Medina, Heliodoro Ochoa and Julio Cesar Cortes. They push the group to an abyss hidden behind false political discrepancies. They caused havoc and mistrust about revolution among the guerrilla fighters. They created an opposition against me and comrades whose honesty is certain. They were enslaved to their petty-bourgeois condition and hatred against *guerrilleros* from peasant background. They also were jealous for those few urban *guerrilleros* that assimilated completely the peasant mentality.⁴⁹

Urban *guerrilleros* barely understood that level of interaction, what curtailed their initial bond to the leader, the hierarchy, and the codes of internal power. Another element contributed in the formation of a cult to Fabio Vásquez. The central values celebrated within the organization were not linked to an ideology, nor were the principles of conduct preferred by the leader included in an ideological dogma or code of conduct. Instead, the early ELN based its system of belief on the practices set in motion by the leader. In other words, the early mechanisms of power were not linked to a line of thought but to a conduct. This explains the tenacity of rural *guerrilleros* in the defense of the leader, his actions, his thought, instead of a corpus of thought and practices, was bound to justify a change of the political system.

A final element can be added to the analysis of cult of personality in the ELN. It is related to the double agenda used to assess the behavior of the leaders. The internal struggle for power and

⁴⁷ Correa, *Sueño*, 36.

⁴⁸Ibid., 88.

⁴⁹ Correa, *Sueño*, 99.

recognition progressively instrumentalized exchanges of authority and allegiance, from abstract revolutionary values to commoditized status markers. Status markers included access to commodities, enjoyment of better food, alcohol, parting, and particularly the possibility to have sexual relations. The lower rank's obedience was built upon values that the leaders did not necessarily honor. It was already mentioned the case of Ricardo Lara Parada, and how the abuse of his position of power to access sexual favors from peasants caused a *consejo de guerra* and the final decision of his execution after he defected from the rural warfront in 1969-1970. It was not that the factors of honor and allegiance lost symbolic power. Instead, the very struggle to climb within the internal hierarchy required submission to a secondary leader, or by silently allowing those with some authority to overlook the internal codes of conduct and in that form gain access to immediate gratification and short term privileges. When this system of internal hierarchical mobility was broken, the stiff mechanism of allegiance to a unique leader caused schisms. Such schism do not reflect, however, ideological motivations, as it has been generally explained in the case of the ELN. Although existed cases of false accusations for personal retaliations, and complots brewed in the opposition between *rurales* and *urbanos*, the use of the mechanism of insurgent justice —*consejos de guerra*— played a decisive role as a strategy to bend the internal norms in favor of one of the factions disputing the leader's favoritism.

In order to explore and elaborate this point, I will use the case of sexual contacts and double standards in morality at the top level in the ELN, and how the *consejo de guerra* and executions by firing squad were used as a expedite strategy to change the balance of power in a warfront, in favor of those who were able to play the strategy first. Fabio Vásquez and other top-rank leaders enjoyed private parties in the warfronts. They also made up commissions in order to go to rural areas to have sexual intercourse with peasants, or enjoyed better food, longer hours of rest, better conditions of life, or enjoyed richer meals than the regular food for the lower rank *guerrilleros*. On the one hand,

privileges are normal in contexts of subordination and disputes for honor and recognition. On the other hand, the issue is not only about soap, salt and tasty soup. In the ELN, the leaders broke the tacit norms endangering the security of the group, and made decisions in order to enjoy privileges in a life that was supposed to be frugal —and reward sacrifices. Whilst the *guerrilleros* were skipping dinner for the sake of preserving supplies, leaders often did not give example with their attitudes. In the eyes of the *urbanos* that was unacceptable, and often their complaints against *rurales* and middle rank cadres addressed such privileges. The double moral agenda that pervaded the hierarchy in the ELN was an evidence of how everyday personal frictions grew to a critical point. Similarly to other examples of revolutionary movements divided for the sake of internal power dispute, the common solution was to conceal personal disputes as ideological differences, or simply by twisting the norms to a point in which the opponent could be barred from further action. In chapter 7, I will explore how this was similar to the divisions in the student movement, where recognition and status was a motivation stronger than ideological matters.

Ricardo Lara Parada had participated in *consejos de Guerra* before becoming responsible for a commission in northeast Antioquia in 1971. In the process ‘Ricardo makes mistakes giving to the group a lifestyle inappropriate for the respectful and disciplined guerrilla life’.⁵⁰ Gradually, they lose control over norms of security and the task of guarding several kidnapped industrialist gave a hint to the local authorities about the insurgent presence in the area. In the assembly at Campo Linea, the assessment of Ricardo Lara Parada’s actions showed that ‘a state of decomposition, demoralization, and lack of revolutionary fervor’ pervaded the commission he led.⁵¹ Internally, the group included young rural *guerrilleros*, with little experience, and the leader had command of an operation important for the finances of group. Activities such as allowing partying, booze drinking, and the formation of small groups engaged in the activities. The effects were immediate in the behavior of the warfront.

⁵⁰ Medina, *ELN*, 110.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 111.

Firstly, the leader's absence allowed lowering the internal norms. Besides, discipline was relaxed for the bond created between the leader and the sector that enjoyed drinking alcohol. Secondly, Ricardo Lara Parada made meetings in which the non-drinking *guerrilleros* were isolated, including Manuel Pérez, a Spanish priest who harshly criticized the leader for his misconduct. 'Self-criticism was used as a shield by Ricardo Lara to conceal his deviancies, until a moment in which nobody else believed him, and then he defected'.⁵² Finally, in the ulterior *consejo de guerra* against the commission, the leader was able to turn the mechanism of insurgent justice in order to punish *guerrilleros* that were opposed to his attitudes. For instance, he was able to blemish Manuel Pérez' image to the point of a condemnation to death that was delayed by an attack launched by the Army.

Several elements are of interest in this analysis. The ELN initially was overconfident in the perceptions of the leaders, what allowed for a double agenda to operate in terms of discipline and the use of mechanisms of revolutionary justice.⁵³ The mistrust to Manuel Pérez was due to his inclination for strict preservation of moral principles, what set him far from the leader Fabio Vásquez. Manuel Pérez was closer to the ideas of Camilo Torres and other *urbanos*, what set him in opposition to the mainstream of leadership in the ELN. Ricardo Lara Parada prepared his version to be consistent to the appreciation of Fabio Vásquez, in order to avoid punishment or recriminations.⁵⁴ Finally, the existence of a double agenda collided with the interest of urban *guerrilleros* to furnish the group with a fair system to diminish the negative effect of personalism, and the cult to Fabio Vásquez' personality.⁵⁵

I think that many critics are right in their interpretation that the ELN has been bounded to moral rather than political elements to interpret internal processes, as a result of the undeniable weight that Christian thought –beyond the influence that Camilo had played in the group– has had defining the organization. In the early years, before Camilo became our ideological leader, the group was absorbed in heroics, altruism, and the ambition of ascetics that contributes to the moral aspect, and in many

⁵²Ibid., 117.

⁵³Sánchez Sierra, "Discourse, Practices," 322.

⁵⁴Broderick, *El Guerrillero*, 18-29. This section contains *the consejo de guerra* that was made against Manuel Pérez, in which the future leader of the ELN was condemned to execution by Fabio Vásquez's allies in a warfront.

⁵⁵Arenas, *La Guerrilla*, 146-159. Medina, *ELN*, 54-62, 160-174.

ways project our strategy. I think that Christian moral has contributed, consciously or not, to overcome the crises we have experienced.⁵⁶

This is a central element considering that Camilo Torres entered the ELN and his influence was minimal for the sharpening of the internal political and military dispositions of the leaders. Instead, he was marginal, instrumental, and probably only fully evaluated in the late 1970's, long after the group decided to expel Fabio Vásquez as a leader –and himself to retire in Cuba–, and search for alternatives to reanimate the original political project. If Nicolás Rodríguez suggests that the seed of the ELN's moral framework preceded Camilo Torres, and we accept his marginal role in the group, where actually the cult to his figure, life, thought and actions actually emerged? In this chapter I studied the formation of a cult-like movement around Fabio Vásquez, and the context of disputes and difficulties in which Camilo Torres passed rapidly three months, before he died as a *guerrillero*, after a long life as a priest, a student and a politician.

In this chapter, I described the trajectory of Fabio Vásquez as leader of the ELN, in the light of factors such as indiscipline, divisions promoted by the *guerrilleros'* origin, and the application of harsh mechanism of evolutionary justice. Through evidence, I showed the form how opposition to the leader became equated to a rupture of the allegiances that integrated the internal system of authority, setting against the grain any alternative opinions about the role of the ELN in local/national/ideological debate. I propose the interpretation of such internal polarization between *rurales* and *urbanos*, as the epiphany of broader national process in which mainstream politics become banned, and their leaders end up prosecuted. Considering that both in Colombia and the ELN leadership is intertwined with the implementation of a pattern of morality and systems of belief, I argue that the relation between established authority and opposition, is similar to worshiping for a

⁵⁶Ibid., 108. Also of importance is a comment about revolutionary moral, that offers clues about how the ELN changed its orientation 'If one is really revolutionary it is necessary to demand from oneself, both the leader and the low ranked, if one is not ready to improve every moment then, What socialism? What new system? What new values? What new man?' Ibid., 116.

recognized cult, and the belonging to a sect. In the next chapters I will explore how Camilo Torres' leadership became object of a cult, whilst in the ELN barely reached a symbol for sect overshadowed by the cult to Fabio Vásquez. The events here analyzed happened in the same epoch that Camilo Torres entered the ELN as a *guerrillero*. His incorporation occurred under the aegis of the leader's sphere of influence, what led Camilo Torres to complete the rituals of initiation, sublimation, and finally martyrdom. Despite his status of leadership in the public political life, he entered the group as a marginal urban *guerrillero*, marginal to internal mainstream hierarchy and consciously performing the symbolic phases to become a rural *guerrillero*.

CHAPTER 6

CAMILO TORRES: EARLY YEARS AND INFLUENCES

In the Same way that San Vicente de Chucurí allowed Fabio Vásquez's to grow as a peasant leader for the ELN, the urban elite of Bogotá was the cradle for Camilo Torres. In the crisis of leadership after *La Violencia*, and the demise of formerly consecrated popular leaders, in the capital city the elites experienced a crisis of identity that involved the disorganized growth of its population, the emergence of opposition groups challenging the traditional parties, and the decline of popular participation in religious activities. In this section, from chapters 6 to 10, I will start presenting how Camilo Torres became influential by building a religious, political, academic and moral persona. Although it is not intended as a biographical approach, here I intent to explore features of his character, such as leadership skills, and interest in mysticism and martyrdom. In this chapter, I explore his family, childhood in Colombia and Europe, and early academic influences that marked definitively his path towards an academic and scientific formation.

6.1 FAMILY AND SOCIAL SETTING

Educated in elite schools in Bogotá, Camilo Torres completed his basic education after a sinuous trajectory that offered him a cosmopolitan view of the world. Before entering the Universidad Nacional de Colombia in the same cohort with Gabriel García Márquez and Leopoldo Vilar Borda, Camilo Torres already bore symbolic markers that separated him from the common people in Bogotá. He was proficient in several languages —French, English and German—, and had traveled in Europe and the USA. However, the initial education was traumatic, and disrupted by familiar and personal issues. His mother Isabel Restrepo, was one of the most significant figures in

both the individual development of Camilo Torres' personality and his moral principles. She belonged to a traditional family linked to power positions and public life since the late 19th century. In 1915 she married Karl Westendorp, an older German businessman, who died five years later leaving her with two sons and a significant fortune. Isabel Restrepo belonged to an entrepreneurial family identified with Liberal politics and anticlerical conceptions, both characteristic among late 19th century emerging commercial and landowner elites. Families that grew rich in economic booms during the 19th century, moved from provinces into urban settings to attain status. Isabel Restrepo's family fostered regional rebellions in Valle del Cauca and Antioquia, leading factions formed in their haciendas: 'her ancestry, both the Restrepo and the Gaviria, were diehard anticlerical. Her father died giving medical service during the Thousand Days civil war, (...) and her great-grandfather 'Papa Cuco' lost three times his fortune waging war against the *godos* [Conservatives]'.¹

Isabel Restrepo's father, for example, belonged to one of the earliest generations holding professional degrees, what gave them both economic stability and social status. Such achievement was product of effective investments during the 19th century, particularly in sugar and coffee production, besides the profitability that political militancy brought about for landowners at the regional level. However, the decline of her lineage came as a result of the defeat to Liberal factions during the Thousand Days civil war

Papa Cuco's days of glory were over by the end of 19th century when he owned a retail store with franchises in Tolima, and he traveled to Europe to buy in Hamburg and Marseille. (...) Papa Cuco supported his party during the civil war. When it started, he had three loaded ships with merchandise overseas that departed Hamburg recently. Authorities were informed that Mr Gaviria considered investing his fortune in the war. The government troops then destroyed his stores and upon fleet's arrival the merchandise was confiscated. One again he was ruined.²

¹ Juan de la Cruz Gaviria, a.k.a. "Papa Cuco", was an example of how Liberal families oriented their offspring to become part of the Catholic Church in order to gain political legitimacy for their fortunes, 'his libertarian and individualistic spirit broke the political conventions of the family, and as the younger son in the family they envisioned him from the ecclesiastic affairs. He was sent to the seminar, but he was often looking beyond the enclosure imposed, felt in love and gave up the religious life'. Broderick, *Camilo*, 30- 31.
² Ibid., 32-33.

The fortune of Isabel Restrepo was fluctuant, considering the risky political commitments made by her family. Years later, in 1915, her first marriage happened when she barely had 15 years and after her husband's death she moved with her offspring to Hamburg. She established the city as her home, whilst traveling with them throughout Europe. At that time, she spent a significant portion of the inherited fortune in luxuries. During one of the travels, she met Calixto Torres Umaña, a Colombian medical doctor completing a specialization in pediatrics in Germany. Compared to her first marriage, when she received all type of attentions, gifts and care from her elder husband, Calixto Torres did not complied to her caprices. The particularities of her marriages were summarized in an interview given in 1968:

I'm not sure what you understand by marriage happiness. In reality, Colombian women have content with little and confuse happiness with any other thing. Honestly, when I was about to marry Calixto, I had completed studies of nursery in Germany, besides secretarial skill I had. In fact, I wanted to be his professional partner, but you can understand colleagues are not precisely the best wives. I wanted to be scientist to help him and be by his side. (...) Men aren't meant to be mean, they are just too focused on work, and for men their profession is paramount.³

Although from an elite family, Calixto Torres Umaña was obsessed with work and the influence it could have on completing a public agenda. Although his fortune was less instable than that of his wife's parents, the political isolation that had affected Liberals after the end of the Thousand Days civil war had impact in his public affairs, making his profession the main source of income. In intellectual terms, Calixto Torres Umaña belonged to a generation of disenfranchised intellectuals that had had little opportunity to participate in public administration positions since the 1880's. Although notable Liberal figures such as Rafael Uribe Uribe had opened a little space for their deliberation in congress and ministries, Liberals were marginalized from public life. This can

³ Caycedo, *El Padre*, 152. For Orlando Villanueva, one of the sociologists that have completed research on Camilo Torres' thought and political activism, 'Isabel Restrepo belonged to a family of free-thinkers, and had a iconoclast personality. After her separation, she consecrated herself to her offspring's education.' See, Orlando Villanueva, *Camilo: Acción y Utopía* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional, 1995), 32.

explain the low profile he had as an anticlerical Liberal, and the importance given to his profession as the field to guarantee social notability and economic buoyancy.⁴

Professionals in Colombia were a small and selective group necessarily linked to the elite, thanks to the limitations that the Church had imposed, since the 19th century, in the access to primary and secondary education.⁵ The distinction between educated and uneducated also was representative of a connection to the city, and to spheres close to power. Such power was represented in the Catholic Church, government, or prosperous economic activities. Camilo Torres' parents had a mark of distinction, considering that Isabel Restrepo and Calixto Torres Umaña were completing studies abroad. This element identified them as part of the elite, and particularly oriented to affairs that were no longer linked directly to fortunes made in agricultural investments or commercial activities. Their lifestyles and political standpoints also contributed to consolidate that space within the elites. Their entourage represented an advantage the liberal platform for liberal and anticlerical points of view, expressed both in Isabel Restrepo's behavior, and Calixto Torres Umaña's contributions to educational policies. In both cases Camilo Torres received such influence, which he synthesized during his academic life in a coherent political platform.

Before exploring the influence of Calixto Torres Umaña in his son's vision of education, it is necessary to mention that Colombia had a very small middle class that could have undertaken/substituted the myriad activities that few professionals had to engage in. By the early 20th century, the government has to staff its institutions but had a limited disposition of people with administrative skills and academic credentials. Private businesses were deeply affected by the scarcity

⁴ An interesting study of the intellectual life of the early 20th century suggest that the decline in Liberal deliberation bolstered a process of reflection that was kept at the margins of political policy and decision making. In spite of this, their writings became the foundation for the transition towards Liberal governments in the 1930's and until late 1940's, a process interrupted with the eruption of bipartisan violence. See, Hernández, "Los Leopardos y el Fascismo," 225.

⁵ Yvon Le Bot declared in a what is considered the synthesis of radical liberal critique to the educational mechanism in Colombia that 'the failure of 19th century's reformation to the education and the triumph of a clerical and hispanicist in 1886-1930, make Colombian education to be fundamentally dominated by colonial inherited traits', in Yvon Le Bot, *Educación e ideología en Colombia* (Bogotá: Editorial La Carreta, 1985), 36. His analysis contains an important quantitative and qualitative interpretation of the transformation of education, but serves as a repository of what in the epoch constituted the most elaborated platform to criticize conservative politics pervasive of education during the *Hegemonía Conservadora*.

of professionals in medical, educational, commercial and particularly technical affairs. Political distinctions made even worst the dismal availability of professionals to run the state and private business. For instance, Calixto Torres Umaña was a medical doctor, but only entered public life after the *Hegemonía Conservadora*. His wife, although engaged in lavish leisure-like life style, was a predominant figure in the social life of Bogotá's elite. She was a women *avant la lettre*, considering her wealth, cosmopolitan view of the world, and the form in which she broke taboos such as marriage, religious affairs, and the affective bond to her partners.

Although her involvement in politics was sporadic, Isabel Restrepo was outspoken and bounded to the enjoyment of life's delicacies, such as traveling, mingling with the upper crust society in clubs and social activities. She was committed to a close supervision of her son's education. Considering the conservative structure of the Colombian educational system, the most outstanding element of Isabel Restrepo's relation to Camilo Torres, was the disdain for his religious education. Although her anticlerical stances did not affect Camilo Torres' interest for social issues and charitable activities, it hampered his admission to schools. The decision of avoiding the catholic sacraments —baptism, confirmation, communion— to their sons was mainly a default option, since private schools required them for every child at their institutions. 'Camilo started school in the German School but it was closed because of the war. Then, he started in Quinta Mutis, where he was more dedicated to sports than to studying, leading teams as a captain, so he passed that academic year with low grades. Then I moved him to the Liceo Cervantes, where he finished high school. Then, I enrolled him to Universidad Nacional'⁶.

In Colombia it is not normal, for members of the elite, to change schools even less during the early 20th century. Belonging to an educative institution represented a central moment for socialization, an experience that stays with the individual for life. Changes may impair a kid's

⁶ Caycedo, *El Padre*, 155.

entrance into society, or be demonstrative of familiar issues.⁷ Camilo Torres change from schools happened as a result of the political tendencies of his parents, and the institution's reluctance to challenge the ecclesiastic institutions that granted their permission for running a private school. Isabel Restrepo also contributed to the instability of the education of her offspring with her defiance to the Church. Priest and elite members Bogotá criticized her quick recovery after the death of her first husband, and her marriage to Calixto Torres Umaña, a well-known anticlerical Liberal. Isabel Restrepo had also a perilous reputation for the moral of their institutions.

We [Isabel Restrepo and Calixto Torres Umaña] separated when Camilo was eight years old. (...)When we separated I spent all my life dedicated to my sons. In that epoch in Colombia a separated woman normally received negative perceptions.⁸

The pressure on Camilo Torres' parents is a good example of how the elites and power institutions, namely the Church, had strict mechanism of exclusion. It also sheds light on the daily struggle to maintain their social position through a front, despite the decline of their wealth. Later in this research it will be necessary to return to the non-pious Isabel Restrepo, and how she accepted the death of her son, and the importance that it might had played in the formation of a political cult, particularly among intellectuals who Camilo Torres the compelling reflection of their predicament.

6.2 EDUCATION FOR PROGRESS: THE FATHER'S INFLUENCE:

Calixto Torres Umaña was part of a family regarded as both heroic and educated. His professional work deserved the appointment as dean of the Medical School at Universidad Nacional for his contributions modernizing the program and the practice of his specialization. Although the Liberal background of his family was notorious, and 'the intellectual formation essentially

⁷ Broderick exaggerates the influence of Isabel Restrepo in Camilo Torres' education. However, his analysis of the criticism from Bogotá's elite is the element that probably better explains Camilo Torres changes of school see Broderick, *Camilo*, 38-44.

⁸ Caycedo, *El Padre*, 153.

anticlerical',⁹ his personality was debated between the implied assumptions of an anticlerical background, and his personal orientation towards more conservative and moderate standpoints. Walter Broderick portrays him as a dark and minimized figure, in order to cause an effect and make more obvious the differences he had with Isabel Restrepo for the readers of his work: 'Stingy and scrupulous, whiny for every small problem. Despite his professional success he was never happy. All his life he attempted to appear as an anticlerical but could not detach from conservative traditions (...) he was an atheist of the 19th century'.¹⁰

Camilo Torres' Australian-Irish biographer overemphasizes his father defects. However, in the long run he missed the fundamental effect that Calixto Torres Umaña had on Camilo Torres, particularly in the definition of moral perceptions in relation to practical knowledge, and his decision of studying sociology in the 1950's. In a more accurate analysis of his father, Orlando Villanueva highlights how Calixto Torres Umaña 'had a concern with educational efficacy, the lack of preparation of students, and the importance academia offering solutions for national issues'.¹¹ In the same Liberal tradition of Rafael Uribe Uribe and Rafael Reyes, Camilo Torres' father envisioned a society where the fundamental premises of productivity and rationality depended on the individual ability to critically assess actual problems, providing solutions with social benefits. In other words, for Calixto Torres Umaña, the role of public education was at the forefront of any governmental strategy envisioning progress. For Calixto Torres Umaña, progress was beyond the materiality of economic benefits. Instead, success should bring about individuals bounded towards spiritual perfectibility, who are able for critical reflection, and the use of their capacities for implementing pragmatic solution.¹²

⁹ Villanueva, *Camilo: Acción*, 28.

¹⁰ Broderick, *Camilo*, 38.

¹¹ Cited in Villanueva, *Camilo: Acción*, 28. The author cites and insert an essay written by Calixto Torres Umaña, "Problemas Universitarios," *Revista Universidad*, 45 (1927): 249.

¹² In what might be considered an anecdote, I was in Bogotá in May 2008, and by chance went to my *alma matter*, when the funeral rites of Eduardo Umaña Mendoza took place at the Department of Law. Eduardo Umaña Luna was a relative of Camilo Torres, and

For Calixto Torres Umaña, the individual's capacities are inherent, so they can take advantage of them. Such skills have to be fostered through education. His defense for free public education was polemical since it involved principles of functionalism. He expressed it in these terms: 'a form to make students to contribute to better the education they receive is through a system of fees, in an inverse relation to their capacities, so those with high capacities pay nothing or very little, and those with low performance have to pay a high proportion of the educational expenditures'.¹³ In spite of little popularity for this proposition, it was based on the idea that 'selectivity is a principle that should be bolstered at educative institutions, because the efficacy of a university is measured in the quality of the professionals it produces'.¹⁴ At the center of this proposal was the idea that for the national progress it was required people trained in technical subjects, in order to achieve progress. As Orlando Villanueva explains, 'This supremacy of experimental and objectivity over theoretical thinking was typical of positivist thought, and influenced Camilo' even before he started advanced studies in Sociology. The ideal of Calixto Torres Umaña was to enhance the strengthening of educational institutions ruled by teachers engaged in the preparation for future necessities in society.

For Calixto Torres Umaña, 'professors at universities are there not just evaluating, not event repeating lessons or other people's thoughts, but mainly a teacher of himself, a prosecutor of truths, creator of research schools, mainly here [in Colombia] where it is imperative to create an autonomous science'.¹⁵ This can be considered an early evidence for Camilo Torres' interest in

defended a similar 'social humanism' as Camilo Torres father and the *guerrillero* priest as well. It is important to notice at least two elements. Firstly, the professionalization of sociology in the 1960's and the ideological tint of the departments of law, social Sciences and political Science in Universidad Nacional de Colombia, all were closely linked to Umaña's analysis of progress and how a moral compromise determines intellectuals' professional performance and commitment with their society. Secondly, that the Umaña family is a clear example of the decline of economic power of lineages engaged in critical thinking during the 20th century, considering that they had a close relation to the high spheres of power since the 19th century, and they now belong to the increasingly marginalized intellectual field. During his funeral, the ELN made homage to Eduardo Umaña Luna, which included the commemoration of a discourse he read in deep sorrow for the university's student body after the assassination of his son Eduardo Umaña Mendoza in 1998, when I was completing my undergraduate studies. Although the ritual witnessed will not be included in the dissertation, it proves the ELN's leverage at the Universidad Nacional, and how important are rituals in the activation of belonging for the group in terms of death and memory.

¹³ Villanueva, *Camilo: Acción*, 30.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

collaborative work, and integral to both research and action. Orlando Villanueva suggests that Camilo Torres' obsession with empirical data collection supporting any of his political initiatives, was part of the scientific legitimacy that North American sociology seemed to attribute to research able to demonstrate with concrete and measurable evidence hypotheses about Colombian underdevelopment, poverty and class differentiation. For Camilo Torres, his thesis in Catholic University of Leuven had 'the fundamental value of approaching him to the understanding of Colombian issues and the national reality (...) an study that from a sociological perspective attempts to demonstrate that poverty in Bogotá is so obvious and overwhelming that can be demonstrated through statistical methods (...) where he cites use of authors from both the positivist and functionalist schools'.¹⁶ Camilo Torres was also influenced by his father's conviction that participatory teaching was the ground for socially engaged analysis. This assertion was paramount for the commitment of professional coming from academia, and envisioning people's progress.¹⁷

At the core of Calixto Torres Umaña's reflection was an idea of progress that is unattainable through stagnated institutions. He considered that schools and institutions were incapable of critical thought and collaborative interaction between students and instructors. The same themes became part of Camilo Torres' campaigning during his graduate studies in Belgium, where he envisioned the creation of research groups, as mechanisms to engage workers and students in a prolific dialogue without vertical distances that differentiate people by educational credentials and standards.¹⁸

In 1927, the epoch of his proposal, Calixto Torres Umaña was part of a minority that could not satisfy the demand for technical and academic requirements. The accelerated urban growth crippled Colombia from economic progress, what inhibited changes of the social structure. The need for professionals and trained instructors to staff academic institutions was always a limitation

¹⁶ Ibid., 50.

¹⁷ Calixto Torres Umaña, "Problemas Universitarios," op,cit in Villanueva, *Camilo: Acción*, 32.

¹⁸ Ibid., 34.

for the growth of public educational institutions.¹⁹ In consequence, the dismal impact of technical training and scarcity of professionals, limited the country's capacity to modernize people's lifestyles. The university's budgetary difficulties hampered its ability to bolster economic growth, without trained people in both technical and professional fields.²⁰ For instance, the scarce technical support impaired industrial sectors to invest in machinery, making expensive technological transformation, for the demand of foreign technical support. Two decades later, among the reasons for 'the crisis of technical education and its rudimentary stage' in Colombia, Eliseo Arango blamed 'the despicable treatment given to manual labor and to those dedicated to it. In Colombia, it is predominant in every social sector, an aristocratic classification of professions, which promotes certain indifference for the training in manual techniques, arts and trades'.²¹ In the 1920's and 1930's, these conditions made professionals in every field of knowledge a rarity, allowing them to gain access to privileges, and to claim a space besides the elite. This process pointed out by Calixto Torres Umaña and Eliseo Arango was related to the crisis of national elites. The crisis was a result of the transition and adaptation of their economic portfolios to new activities. The reinvestment of capital from traditional fortunes —brewed in extensive agriculture and commercial activities— into industrial setups was profiting the crisis in USA and Europe, rather than representing actual prosperity.²² Although the economic condition of Camilo Torres' family was critical, it was not necessarily a general trend. I will not explore the economic situation of the elite in the 1920's and 1930's.

¹⁹ In the field of secondary education, the ministry of education developed in the 1930's an infrastructure to supply such demand of professional. 'Establishments for industrial education and arts & trades, besides agricultural education. In terms of teacher's education, in 1928 existed 28 normal schools with roughly 900 students and with an infrastructure barely sustainable. By 1933, the Ministry of education closed down the establishments built new ones that by 21942 counted 15 establishments and 2200 students'. In Le Bot, *Educación e ideología*, 34.

²⁰ Gonzalo Cataño, *Historia, Sociología y Política: Ensayos de Sociología e Historia de las Ideas* (Bogotá: Universidad Pedagógica Nacional-Plaza & Janés Editores, 1999), 45.

²¹ Cit. Le Bot, 43. The excerpt was taken by Le Bot, from Eliseo Arango, *Memoria* (1949): 68. Eliseo Arango continues his argument as follows 'Given that recruitment for secondary education happens almost exclusively in the middle classes and elites, the explanation for the deficient technical educative structure is confirmed: these classes are not interested in making their offspring qualified technical workers. About lower class offspring, they do it with a strong sense of hope for social mobility (...) The fundamental obligation of the state is to cater preferably a diffusion of industrial learning, arts and trades, as an strategy for retribution and popular education, for in that form disenfranchised sectors are provided with the fortune and necessary means to reach a fair well-being'.

²² José Antonio Ocampo and Santiago Montenegro, *Crisis Mundial, Protección e Industrialización. Ensayos de Historia Económica Colombiana*. (Bogotá: Fondo Editorial CEREC, 1984), 17-30.

however, it is interesting to observe the strategies that they implemented in order to preserve their position in the context of a growing urban population. Within the elites existed symbolic markers of status, that were used to minimize the rapid decline of their lineages and social influence. In this context, rumors, educational exclusion, and disregard for activities that Isabel Restrepo practiced, explain the marginalization of Calixto Torres Umaña as a consultant and intellectual expert on the subject of education. Even though Camilo Torres' family had an accurate management of status markers, such as the *cachaco* accent, manners, and cultural interests, taste and cosmopolitan life-style, besides a well-known liberal behavior, their economic decline and anticlerical stances accelerated their marginalization from influential roles in Bogotá's society.

6.3 *CACHACO* ELITE'S, MIDDLE CLASSES AND PROFESSIONALS

In Colombia, speaking like a *cachaco* has been identified as a mark of status. *Cachaco* is the name given to a person born and cultured in the capital city of Bogotá. More recently the word may also identify those raised in the capital city, as a result of demographic growth. There is a temperament, attitude and life-style that characterize them. Distinctive Colombian stereotypes associate the *cachaco* with Bogotá's elite, a white educated urbanite, someone self-centered and withdrawn who dismisses provincial and rural life as characteristic of a lower culture and social status.²³ This notion identifies the opposite to regional idiosyncrasies including popular culture and folklore. Even climatic aspects underscore the *cachaco*, as a character that cannot stand tropical temperatures and the annoyances associated with non-temperate regions. The *cachaco* is the identification of the ruling elite with an identity of cultural values enshrined by Spanish rulers during

²³ Braun, *Assasination*, 15-17. Further elements for the manipulation of cultural and racial stereotypes to enhance the capacities of 'Cachacos' to rule, in Laureano García Ortiz, "Los Cachacos de Bogotá," *Boletín Academia Colombiana de Historia* (1936): 126-129; Augusto Ramírez Moreno, *Los Leopardos*, (Bogotá: Editorial Santafé, 1935), 209-224.

the colonial epoch, cast in the context of the modernization of Bogotá. Another informal denomination for people from the capital is *rolo*, which means people born in Bogotá from non-native parents. *Rolo*, however, has a negative connotation for sly people with tendencies to thief. *Cachaco*'s cultural identity, however, represents a minority, that held political power in a greedy and rather kleptocratic manner. This stereotypes contrast with the vast rural and tropical territory inhabited by *mestizos* that do not deny their mixed racial descent. There are no studies portraying *cachaco*'s leadership values in relation to politics and segregation, and how it encompasses a cultural status. My research is by no means an attempt to understand the meaning of the term or its stereotypical features. However, I suggest some analytical points to explain cultural attributes that underscore rural/urban opposition in the ELN, and Colombia in general. *Cachaco*'s political standing became a well administered status indicator for white people entering the city during *La Violencia*, who climbed the social ladder without the burden of having to prove a legitimate place in the capital's traditional elite. In other words, *Cachaco*'s politics is intrinsic to the operation of *magnicidio* to deter popular leadership from emerging and claiming power and/or representation.

The preservation of the symbolic markers of status in Bogotá was useful to keep people from provinces at safe distance, especially those with a considerably different diction, accent, and lifestyle. This distinguished the growing urban space as *cachaco*'s turf. After *La Violencia*, people displaced from rural areas disrupted the capital's demographic growth. The process transformed the use of stereotypes among elites in order to preserve their distinctive status markers. Elite groups centered on interaction within their circles for maintaining their exclusivist practices. One of the characteristics of elite circles has been snobbism. The Colombian elite has been accused of bestowing recognition to foreigners based on the assumption that their origin alone is proof of status and culture, rather than any contributions they may potentially make to Colombia's educational structure. Foreigners enjoy privileges among *cachacos*, granted by their disdain for any

technical training, because *‘esos gringos como saben!’* (These gringos, they know better!). This situation is present in the aura surrounding foreign technicians, beautifully portrayed by Gabriel García Márquez in both *One Hundred years of Solitude* and *The Autumn of the Patriarch* in which Europeans and North Americans, Lebanese and Gypsies become influential for performing basic trades that may well be considered standard in their home countries. Foreigners can actually create a “privilege zone” uncommon in other countries in the region. This is ambiguous for a city that boasts a cosmopolitan worldview, and can be explained by the minimal arrival of foreigners in Colombia during the 19th and early 20th century.

The domestic scarcity of professionals has formed a mentality enshrining and privileging those who possess knowledge fundamental for national growth. It is an attitude that still ignores locals who possess the same knowledge. Colombia lacked the human factor that Rafael Uribe Uribe, Rafael Reyes and Calixto Torres Umaña considered the touchstone for progress and modernization. By the 1950’s, Camilo Torres engaged progressive educational promoters, into a proposition that aimed to resolve Colombia’s disrupted path to progress. Similarly, Camilo Torres fostered his proposition of education and professional pragmatic values in order to overcome inequality. The educational aspect was a hurdle impairing Colombia’s transit to the improvement of its population is a predominant topic for the initial writings of Camilo Torres. This issue constituted one of the central elements in his perception of the moral solutions for Colombian backwardness. These elements will be examined in more detail in the following chapters. What is interesting here is the form of how professionals that generally constituted middle classes in other nations had a different status and political interest in Colombia.

Studies about Latin American middle classes seem to concentrate in the influence of ideological mechanisms —democracy, development, modernity—, and how social groups assimilate

them in order to gain leverage within the political regime.²⁴ There are evidences that proof the importance of early urbanization, its connection to the emergence of an industrial sector bounded to export commodities, and the promotion of domestic consumption. Case studies help to identify the topic beyond the economic determinism that seems to encapsulate inter- and intra-class exchange. Early studies seemed to concentrate in the southern cone countries for their capitalist economic dynamic that accelerated urbanization, and the early organization of middle classes that gained access to education in social struggles along the first half of the 20th century.²⁵ In contrast, the Mexican experience demonstrates complexities originated in racial distinctions and process of democratization that took place later in the 20th century.²⁶ The cases of Peru and Colombia, however, were not determined by state-led strategies to bolster education or industrialization during the rule of authoritarian regimes.²⁷ In Colombia, local capital reinvested in the industry was no correlated to the middle class growth, and the elites renounced to reduce the social chasm between rich and poor.²⁸ For the interest of this research, middle class formation is of significance thanks to discursive strategies that enhanced distinctions and positions of privilege.

In Colombia, the middle class that enjoyed a better education claimed and reserved for themselves a space by the side or even above the political elites, a process that became evident in the early 1920's. In a long time awaited study about the role played by middle classes in the democratization of the political system, Ricardo López sheds light upon this problem drawing attention on factors that shaped a political culture for this social sector. The historian's goal in his dissertation is to demonstrate that the formation of a middle class in Colombia exceeds common

²⁴ Fernando Rocchi, *Chimneys in the Dessert. Industrialization in Argentina during the Export Boom Years* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 9-14 and 204-233.

²⁵ An interesting state of the art in relation to the formation of middle classes in Latin America, and it's almost ubiquitous and never re-dimensioned linkage to typical features of modernization (industrialization, urbanization, educative reform) in: Brian Owensby, *Intimate Ironies: Modernity and the Making of Middle-Class Lives in Brazil* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999) 14-46.

²⁶ Dennis Gilbert, *Mexico's Middle Class in the Neo-Liberal Era* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2007).

²⁷ David Parker, *The Idea of Middle Class; White-Collar Workers and Peruvian Society* (College Station: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

²⁸ Eduardo Sáenz Rovner, *Colombia Años 50: Industriales, Política y Diplomacia* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2002), 12-15.

explanatory factors such as urbanization, industrialization and occupational diversification. Instead, the middle classes nurtured a contested field for a democratic project of class-based hierarchical rule in which ‘middle classes located themselves above elites as well as the working class and the peasantry in order to govern them democratically’.²⁹ López examines how middle class played a paramount role creating a ruling system tuned to the United States’ ideological requirements during the Cold War by following the ideal of a so-called-middle-class-nation. The result was a set of values instilled and constantly reproduced among professional and educated sectors in the capacity to make the dream of development and democracy come true. His argument, cast in a theoretical dialogue with subaltern studies and historiography about middle classes in Latin America, Asia and the United States, neglects simplistic explanations based on either the imperialist impositions emerged in the 1950’s, or the identification of localized strategies for political contention. Among the sources he uses, it is of interest the approach to recommendation letters written by/for professionals in order to enter public jobs. One of his conclusions is that

Professionals were hierarchically constituted as the best governors who would be able to guide, revive, activate, vitalize, and organize ‘every human capacity of society’. In the Colombian context, the National Front administrations appropriated these transnational discourses by selecting and training middle-class professionals as a democratic requirement to overcome *La Violencia* and, more importantly, to establish peace. These middle-class professionals, furthermore, would become the representatives of state rule and thus obliged to educate and prepare both the elites and the laboring classes on how to live harmoniously and peacefully.³⁰

He offers an interesting point to connect the factors that contributed to the moral aspirations of professionals in the 1920’s and 1930’s, with the expectations of youth in the 1950’s and 1960. First, the notion of youth emerged in the epoch, and consisted of a generational group that through education and job search assumed the role of promoting economic growth with their

²⁹ López, “A Beautiful Class”, 3.

³⁰ Ibid., 108.

capacities.³¹ Ricardo López studied job applications from young people educated in the institutions that were created between 1930 and 1965.³² They afterwards claimed to be the national intellect, ‘those who are able to put it to work in the interest of the nation... intelligence is for those who use it’.³³ Second, a youth that was debated between the belonging to a democratic and pro-establishment path, or one that critically assessed the elites and their negative influence in national affairs — particularly, the form how the elite instrumentalize violence. This aspect includes youth generations that might not be in the age range that today we perceive as youth, but since their spaces of sociability, political engagement, intellectual training, and action, it is necessary to group them for the analysis under the category of youth. The study of the youth and their political incorporation to decision making, agitation and activism, as well as their frontal exposure to the luring force of status disputes based on popular culture, leisure and consumption, will be studied in detail in the next chapter. In this section it is necessary to conclude with the elements that in Camilo Torres’ family influenced his decision to choose an ecclesiastic career, and how status disputes might have motivated his devotion for service, detachment and sacrifice.

6.4 ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL STRUGGLES

The case of the Torres Umaña’s family also helps as an example to understand how the disputes for economic stability not only depended on a traditionally wealthy lineage, but also in accurate decisions bound to reproduce wealth through productive investments. The ineffective attempts of business run by Isabel Restrepo and Calixto Torres Umaña demonstrate the fragility of

³¹In the 1950’s educational enrollment grew more than 300%. In the 1960’s, the range of students attending schools was in the 70-78 %. Since the 1950’s illiteracy declined at a rate of 25 % every decade until mid-1960’s. Aline Helg, *La Educación en Colombia: Una Historia Social, Económica y Política, 1918-1957* (Bogotá: CEREC, 1986) 234-236.

³²Ricardo López consulted institutions for training middle rank clerks, bureaucrats, and professionals such as nurses, social workers, accountants, secretaries, architects, designers, and technicians in fields related to agricultural economics and urban development. López, “A Beautiful Class,” 65, and note 99.

³³Ibid., 247-250.

local wealthy lineages, and how a crisis that particularly affected Camilo Torres' family required innovative strategies for both survival and sustaining status.³⁴ The waning fortune that Isabel Restrepo inherited from a German businessman, not only evaporated in an unreflective trend of lavish expending in Europe used to keep up with a lifestyle without any collateral productive activity. Similarly, Calixto Torres Umaña's failed attempts to increase the family's economic capital with the remnants of that German inheritance crippled the family from enjoying a comfortable life. The unlikely wealth waned, bringing about the rupture of the marriage and cumbersome conditions that certainly affected Camilo Torres during his early youth. In order to preserve appearances and keep a symbolic space where recognition was a standard form of retribution, it was necessary to make efforts, which included keeping up a front. For instance, Isabel Restrepo left Colombia in order to make ends meet, escaping also the attentive sight of Bogotá's elite's. While Calixto Torres Umaña distanced himself from his children it is interesting to note that Isabel Restrepo proudly sustained the family through diverse strategies.

I had to educate them with all my effort, I was no longer a wealthy woman because I gave all my money to Calixto and he spent it making business that never flourished, obviously, as a scientist, he did not know how to make business.³⁵

In the struggle for staying afloat economically, Camilo Torres' family perceived education as an strategy to maintain social status, whilst Isabel Restrepo envisioned diverse strategies to maintain social respectability within the elite, without the initial profligacy characteristic of years of reckless spending in Europe. One of the features of Camilo Torres' biography that Walter Broderick does

³⁴ Before Camilo Torres birth and when the relation with Calixto Torres showed cracks for economic issues, 'With her two brothers she invested Calixto's money on top of the remaining money that Wesendorp inherited her, in buying the elegant Ritz Hotel on the main street in Bogotá. After Camilo Torres birth, she moved to one of the rooms with all the family as she assumed the management of the hotel'(...) 'the Ritz was a good investment for social relations, but economical was doomed in part for Isabel's extravaganza'. (...) 'The hotel's fame gave an opportunity to Calixto Torres Umaña to be representative of the League of Nations in Geneva' (...) 'although the marriage was weakening, Isabel collaborate to his husband's lab experiments, as an aide and receptions, and also drawing plates for his publications'(...) 'conflicts were caused by economic penury and lead Isabel to decide to move into Brussels for the inexpensive cost of life there, and soon after to move to Barcelona, uprooting the children from their schools' (...) 'In 1934 they decided to give a final opportunity to their marriage returning to Bogotá, but constant disputes for Calixto stinginess and innuendo generally triggered by the bankruptcy of Ritz Hotel. In 1937 the couple finally agree for a separation'(...) 'Two final business attempts were initiative of Isabel Restrepo: the making of fine hats sold as 'French genuinely imported' to wealthy friends, and a dairy farm'. In Broderick, *Camilo*, 38 and 51.

³⁵ Caycedo, *El Padre*, 153.

not explore —or instead uses to critically evaluate Isabel Restrepo’s role in influencing his youth— is how she was constantly aware of a space of intense symbolic disputes without losing the legitimacy that her elite background attributed to her actions. Despite the crisis that her lavish lifestyle in Europe caused, and the subtle rejection that his sons experienced in elite circles in Bogotá,³⁶ she stood for the anticlerical position, and was consequent with it. In Bogotá Isabel Restrepo did not find a propitious role, for instance, her begging for economic investments, rapidly succumbed to what she attributed to be punishment from a conservative macho culture characterized by women surrendering to their husband’s will.

6.5 RELIGIOUS VOCATION AND ECCLESIASTICAL CALL

The divorce and his parent’s disputes left a mark during Camilo Torres’ youth, particularly from clashes between parents related to custody of the children. It is obvious that Isabel Restrepo wants to underscore her influence in the boy, particularly evident in comments made during the interview that are been used in this dissertation. She wanted to parallel his youth to her formative years, explaining that he ‘was rebellious, the most rebellious among my sons’ (...)‘Camilo’s character was similar to mine, because I also had a joyful character, cheeky and active, I was expelled from schools. Probably it was because I also was the youngest daughter, I used to play mostly with my

³⁶ In Colombia, the system of schools established in the late 1920’s and until the 1950’s, became the network of the contemporary oligarchy, through schools were access was reserved for a few, and the principles of the Catholic Church were progressively transformed for the elements of more liberal education. The model of the *Gimnasio Moderno* —Modern Gymnasium—served as a model for education that based on a British style of liberal college, proposed to give to the student an integral education. The emergence of schools that were not as traditional as the natural breeding institutions for the elite —i.e, the San Bartholomew— became notorious, and nourished the formation of cultural movements and also circles of inclusion exclusion in the elites, that constituted turfs for disputes of the legitimacy. A good example of the transformation of elite’s disputes from the battle fields in the 19th century, to less harmful clashes is presented in the thesis of Federico Benninghoff, “Cuanta Tierra Civilizada hay en Colombia? Guerras, Futbol y Elites en Bogotá 1850-1910,” (Undergraduate Thesis, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2001). See also a Master thesis that explores elite schools as fields for symbolic competitions reflected in a mimesis between football soccer and political warfare among factions of the oligarchy in Jorge Ruiz, “La Política del Sport: Elites y Deporte en la Construcción de la Nación Colombiana, 1903-1925,” (MA Thesis, Universidad Javeriana, 2009).

brothers, fighting. Naturally, I learned how to defend myself.³⁷ However, Isabel Restrepo was quite indifferent to integrating her son's pious tendencies with the influence of his father or the Catholic faith. Despite her strong sense of anticlericalism, he was introduced to elite circles that she frequented. Her critical views of the Catholic Church impeded her to accept the fact that Camilo Torres was curious about social differences. At school he socialized with other people and made efforts to help them through charitable commitments. She explains that attitude as a natural feature of her son's character 'When he was a boy he used to give away everything to poorer friends. On Sundays he used to empty my cupboard and give food to poor families, and with the money I gave him normally for Sunday's cinema, he purchased gifts for kids in working class neighborhoods'.³⁸ In fact, she goes through stages of denial and almost resents how school friendships may have sparked Camilo Torres' religiosity. 'He was not very interested in religious vocation. It started when he met the Montalvo family, then Ministry of Justice and now [1968] Colombia ambassador in the Vatican. With the Montalvos, Camilo met the Dominicans priests'.³⁹ She sent subtle messages to her son, about the inaccuracy of a religious life:

He was sentimental and humanitarian; he was the most catholic of the family. He asked me once: Why you sent me to church on Sundays and no to my brother? I said: Because you believe, then if you don't go then you commit a sin. Your brother does not belief, and then there is not sin.⁴⁰

Her innuendo was ineffective. Among the reasons for such bitter answers and memories, the gossip about Camilo Torres affective life provide further elements of analysis on how her mother created part of the myth about his sanctity, purity and detachment from mundane affairs⁴¹. In the book in which Olga de Caycedo published an extended interview with her, it is obvious that several

³⁷ Caycedo, *El Padre Camilo*, 154.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 155.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 156. See also, Broderick, *Camilo*, 52-53.

⁴¹ 'There is a gossip about Camilo's vocation. People say Camilo was in love with one of the Montalvo's daughters, and that explains his visits, and that he went to the Seminar after she broke his heart. That's false since he was only 17 years old; his entrance to the seminar was for pure vocation. The girl had entered the convent to become a nun when Camilo was already a priest. It is false.' In Caycedo, *El Padre Camilo*, 156 .

chapters aimed at debunking a myth, end up leaving a robust sense of mysticism making Camilo Torres resemble a new Messiah. Versions from friends suggest that among the reasons for Camilo Torres' vocation was the decision of Montalvo's daughter to become a nun.⁴² The dates are confuse, but Walter Broderick confirms that this affair played a part in Camilo Torres' incorporation into an innovative group of priests engaged in social work and charitable actions with the Dominican order in Bogotá.

They were from humble families and they wanted to engage boys from wealthy families to their seminar in Chiquinquirá. Since Camilo was brilliant, they wanted him. I dislike this episode of our lives. Camilo was 18, and a minor could not decide. I inscribe him in the Conciliar Seminar, against my own will, and I told him that if he wanted to be a priest, he should stay there until 21, and then he could make his decision in order to complete his studies. That is how his religious vocation started.⁴³

The goal of my research is not to peruse his intimate life, although the reputation of his charisma was in part as a result of certain success and curiosity that Camilo Torres caused among women. The influence of Teresa Montalvo, Camilo Torres' high school girlfriend, it is clear that with her, he witnessed the innovative work of the Dominicans. His close relations with the Montalvo family allowed Camilo Torres to understand aspects that, from his point of view, were negative for the Catholic faith. First, Isabel Restrepo's predicament was due to harassing attitudes of the elite, always measuring her acts through a narrow moralist world view. Characteristically, the Catholic Church influenced the opinions of people through gossip, creating the idea of a woman driven by desire, immoral and bound to satisfy her economic needs using her attractive physical appearance. 'Her critics prosecuted her and judged without mercy her public displays of affection with a top-ranked military officer during a soiree in Bogotá'.⁴⁴

⁴² 'That is not true, because Camilo was 17 years old then, and his entrance to the seminar was not for amorous deceit but for pure conviction. When the girl entered the convent Camilo had already become a priest. She is now a nun. I would not oppose such marriage, there was no reason. It was a good family, very distinguished. The truth is that they never were more than friends. What might actually had influence Camilo's vocation was the friendship with the sons of Mr Montalvo. They have reached now a high position in the church, they are brilliant priests'. Ibidem.

⁴³ Ibid., 155.

⁴⁴ Broderick, *Camilo*, 53.

Second, the minimal contact that the Church had with the people. He discovered that in the Liceo Cervantes, in 1946, his school influenced families with economic distress to keep unnecessarily lavish lifestyle for the sake of keeping appearances up. Such recognition came probably after realizing that other religious congregations had a different stake in terms of social commitment and the indoctrination of the lower classes. His school was Jesuitical, and by the same epoch he discovered on the one hand the work of the Dominicans, and on the other the apparently committed interaction between working class people and the *Union Universitaria* (University United). This last group was a mechanism for infiltration of unions ‘fostering parallel syndicalism with the excuse of making social work’. His participation in this group was harshly criticized by Luis Villar Borda, his friend at the Universidad Nacional and a contender in debates about faith, politics and student engagement in social mobilization.

In the action of the Dominican priests Jean Baptiste Nelly and Gabriel Blanchet, Camilo Torres closed bonds with the Montalvo family.⁴⁵ They were establishing social work by involving young intellectuals with initiatives to enlarge academic efforts that included study groups, and charity visits to poor communities. This was a completely new tendency compared to the traditional service of the congregation to serve the needs and interest of the upper classes.⁴⁶ Before his decision to enter the congregation, he had written that Dominicans had ‘a broad philosophical criteria that gives to this religious community a neat cultural profile’.⁴⁷ Camilo Torres was enthusiastic, and knowing his parents head-on clash with his decision of an ecclesiastic life, he opted to explain his decision in a letter left at home the day of departure.⁴⁸ The university did not fulfill his initiatives of hands-on action. For him, the political discussions among students were too arid for his eager interest in the commitment for justice, progress and education as fundamental elements in the moral formation of

⁴⁵ Trujillo, *Camilo y el Frente Unido*, 12-13.

⁴⁶ Caycedo, *El Padre*, 64-65.

⁴⁷ Camilo Torres, *Cristianismo y Revolución*. Documentos Editados por Oscar Maldonado y Guitemi Olivieri (México: Ediciones Era, 1970), 82.

⁴⁸ For the text of this letter, see Caycedo, *El Padre*, 77. An analysis of his separation from Isabel Restrepo in Broderic, *Camilo*, 54-57.

citizens. His emotional life was not among his central concerns, and the intrigues of ecclesiastic distinctions were not a hurdle to start an ecclesiastic career. The Dominican welcomed eagerness to create the same type of research groups that his father envisioned as the backbone of progress. In other words, the faith seemed to offer ‘not a clerical fetishism of superstitions, but a rational manifestation of beliefs’.⁴⁹

Camilo Torres had found an space to interact with the disadvantaged whilst learning the moral principles that could bridge the gap between poor and rich. He had to reconsider the decision for the Dominican religious community in Chiquinquirá, and opted for the Diocesan seminar in Bogotá. That was the only arrangement that his parents settled for. Indeed they had to settle for it, because Camilo Torres had a deep conviction that exploring the Catholic faith his pious acts of charity and love would become initiatives for real change. The decision was the synthesis of both his father’s perception of progress, and his own interest for charity. The decision seemed absurd for his parents, but indeed Camilo Torres had made his choice based on the balance of his personal life and the orientation that he wanted to give to his future.

In conclusion, for the analysis of distinctions between urban and rural, Camilo Torres represents the combined status of a *cachaco*, the unsettled youth, the aspiring middle class aspiring for a renovated set of values, and finally claiming for recognition of popular sectors predicament. Although this is an all-encompassing leadership that was bound to integrate multiple social sectors, Camilo Torres was never considered a representative of the rural nation. This single fact imposed for him a necessary secondary position in the ELN in 1965, and explains his obsession with the rural *modus vivendi* in order to redeem from a despicable elite condition he did not choose. The moral guilt characteristic of the Catholic faith was present in such aspiration to salvation, emancipation and detachment from the mundane world.

⁴⁹ Broderick, *Camilo*, 57.

CHAPTER 7

CAMILO TORRES' AUDIENCE: THE YOUTH IN THE 1960'S AND 1970'S

Although the political program of Camilo Torres combined agitation among rural and urban populations marginalized from mainstream politics, it was the youth from cities supporting his actions, and particularly students, who shaped the crowds following his raids in the 1960's. They cheered his enthusiasm for breaking rules set by the elite and the Catholic Church. Camilo Torres' emergence as a political figure was simultaneous to a national transformation in which the youth gained a place under the political spotlight. It was an active population in a sleepy country progressing at a sluggish pace after *La Violencia*. Young people became an active and growing population increasingly involved in activism and agitational politics. Young students reflected socioeconomic distinctions of the country, but labeled new trends for society's movements towards social change. Besides political activism, they entered —mainly the privileged— universities or reached middle school, grew as consumers and became attracted to the symbolic schemas of social competition for sumptuous consumption or status. Either in radical activism, exploring countercultural worldviews, or maintaining a status quo that nourished the elite, the youth started to gain paramount spaces in electoral decisions, social mobility and institutional transformation.

In this section, I explore the followers of Camilo Torres and those factors that promoted interest and commitment to his actions and political standpoints. Initially, I analyze the transformation of Colombia towards a modern political landscape where cities gained significant leverage during elections. New politically active sectors were led by intellectuals that became active in the public scene through new media, or working with the already existent radio or magazines.

Modern life brought about novelties in of popular culture and consumption. The growth of urban dwellers and younger generations involved in politics was reflected in the educative system, and particularly universities, where Camilo Torres drawn attention. This chapter explores the general context in which Camilo Torres prospered as a new style of politician, a unconventional priest, and member of the exclusive educated elite, in the light of embryonic popular culture and patterns of consumption that can be read against the ideological whims that shaped politics in the 1960.

7.1 PARTIAL INCLUSION VERSUS COMPETITIVENESS: THE YOUTH AND THEIR CHALLENGES

In the late 1950's, a large population with a decisive electoral power had recently migrated from rural areas to dwell in the more anonymous life of urban areas. Crowded in shantytowns around the main cities, urban life had become a hideout for peasants that needed to evade rural partisan violence or were left without anything during landowners' retaliations and bandits' actions against their lands.¹ Displaced peasants constituted the necessary cheap labor for a recovery driven by burgeoning cities. After *La Violencia*, most peasants —illiterate, or with basic skills— were recruited to work in factories, or in public works as infrastructure builders in Bogotá, Medellín and Bucaramanga. Concomitant with the fast growth of poverty in the cities, the middle class profited the prosperity brought about by a new trend towards economic stability. Colombia experienced a significant growth of the middle class, allowed by the maturity of the first generations that enjoyed earlier efforts to expand education through massive programs of public schools, during Gustavo Rojas Pinilla dictatorial intermezzo.² Education became the guarantee to enter spheres of influence, and a mark of status. The system of public schools was enhanced by a network of secular and

¹ López, *Izquierda y Cultura*, 29-35.

² Helg, *La Educación*. The author explores the form how education became in the 1950's an alternative for social mobility, and the influence of political intervention in education during the regime of Dictator Gustavo Rojas Pinilla.

religious elite schools appeared. Elite school progressively became essential for their sociability, to complement already existent social clubs and intellectual circles. All were mechanisms for intralite competition, extraclass distinction, where disputes among traditional oligarchies were expressed as rivalries resolved in sport competitions for recognition and status.³

The study of middle class formation in the 1950's and 1960's in Colombia is quite recent. Ricardo López offers analytical elements on how the pursuit for job security and fulfillment of familiar aspirations shaped their political standpoint, in both the national context, and in the relations to the United States as a cultural, political, and moral model to follow in Latin America. By understanding the middle classes it is also possible to have a glimpse into the transformations that of other social groups experienced. The values of the middle class became a benchmark in the democratic definition of the nation after *La Violencia*. Colombian political projection was bounded to resemble values of capitalist democracies, namely, the successful example of the United States.⁴ However, the ideological suitability of this project was far from perfect, considering the increasingly autonomous aspirations of the youth, and new ideological sources blossoming to fit their rebellious attitudes. A similar trend was perceived in the elite youth, that fostered liberal radicalism, a anti-establishment attitude against the *Frente Nacional* as its temporal idiom.

At the same time of the ideological diversification and its impact on the youth, competition for social notability happened at different levels, and can be traced back in a study of the institutions of social mobility. Recently educated generations disputed public jobs for a growing bureaucracy needed of qualified civil servants. In the 1960's and 1970's, the state intended to enlarge its capacity to influence society through administrative bureaucracies in provinces and rural territories.⁵ Besides, the growing effort to alleviate internal warfare constituted a significant budgetary share, in part

³ Ruiz, "La Política del Sport," 75-80.

⁴ Ricardo López centers his analysis in the growing influence of the United States as a paradigm of education during the post war years. The importance of imaginaries for social mobility enhanced a democratic and capitalist path, evident in the pursuit for status symbols proper of the American way of life. López, "A Beautiful Class," 6-17. See also, López de la Roche, *Izquierdas y Cultura*, 70-76.

⁵ Pécaut, *Orden y Violencia*, 165-171. For an exam of job search strategies among middle classes, see López, "A Beautiful Class," 74-86.

helped by the United States that subsidized strategies for development that initially envisioned efficient bureaucrats, a modern military, besides projects for development in agriculture, ranching and industrial innovation. This implied the expansion of the number of officials, sub-officials, and lower ranked members of the police, army, navy and air force. Their training also required instructors, in addition to the growth of public universities in both the capital and provincial cities that were necessary to staff local bureaucracies.

The Alliance for Progress was the corollary of the middle class and elite mentality of the epoch. It highlighted in policies goals aspiring to have a democratic regime and the enjoyment of the material benefits of middle class lifestyle. United States authorities in charge of developmental programs recommended an immediate revision of the structures of land tenure and income, and strategies to overcome the inherent inequity of the regime via an extension of the voting mass, services for the public and the building of facilities for health, education, transportation and a vision of urban prospects for satisfying a massification of cultural standards.⁶ Although such standards were not explicit, the United States model of consumer culture became the model to follow based on a combination of sound economic policies and individual achievement as a recipe for success. In Colombia, both the public and private sectors supported the transition towards modernity and development by creating jobs for trained people. Such jobs were in line with the premises of the *Frente Nacional* of equal distribution of bureaucracy, and a mathematic definition of expansion and contraction of the public payroll as the booty for electoral quotas. Public sector jobs required both the skill and political leanings to warrant the obedience and stability of the regime. In spite of high levels of unionized public workers, the regime maintained a safe grasp of bureaucratic allegiance via

⁶ The enthusiasm that the oligarchy had with the Alliance for progress deserved jubilee and exclamations such as ‘astonishing’, ‘unbeatable’ and ‘revolutionary’. A journalist of the epoch assessed critically elite’s surrender, considering their reluctance to apply reforms that were necessary. He said that ‘the cautious North American observers have concerns. They have good reasons to mistrust Latinos, and their historical legacy of heroes. “The North American aid will not be useful –said Business week- if in Latin America fundamental reforms needed are not established, since they are necessary in order to guarantee the productivity of the funds there sent”,’. Alberto Zalamea, *La Nueva Prensa 25 años después 1961-1986* (Bogotá: Procultura, 1986), 73.

a politicization of the public payroll, the infiltration of unions, and the consequent control of their collective-bargaining. On the other hand, booming private enterprises created jobs for industries and services, mostly relying on people trained by the government. The private sector's necessary liaison with oligarchic groups in control of the government enabled them to privilege private interest.⁷ This hampered the Alliance for Progress' agenda to marginally impact the oligarchic interest in detriment of the popular sectors. Both land reform and distributive structure's process of transformation were postponed, making that investment bounded for developmental programs trickled down to the larger bucket of the elite, only to fertilize the ground for social unrest.⁸

The extension of voting rights to all men in 1936, and the inclusion of women in electoral census in 1957, the youth was kept out of the common strategy used by the regime to prevent social discontent. Expansion of the right to vote was envisioned by the regime during former critical moments as a mechanism to dissipate opposition's pressure since the second half of 19th century, and in the first half of the 20th century it addressed concerns from social movements emerging after society's modernization.⁹ The youth was disregarded from voting until 1975 when a constitutional amendment led to change from 21 to 18 the age for voting and political participation. This decision helped to contain almost two decades of popular claims that might have altered the composition of the *Frente Nacional* to include alternative movements after *La Violencia* impasse. This strategy explains the regime's mechanism of partial inclusion.

First, with the only exception of the 1936 electoral reform, when male suffrage became universal, every electoral reform represented a decision made with an intention to enlarge the voting population. It was done to manipulate decisions in favor of the regime, initially with the dictator

⁷ For a complete analysis on the private sectors and their involvement in government during the epoch, see Saenz, *Colombia Años 50*, 158-170.

⁸ Sánchez, *Bandits*, 146-150. Ricardo López explores the imposition of US imperialist vision of governance in, "A Beautiful Class," 28-36.

⁹ For a synthesis of the transition towards modernization, and the opening avenues for social movements in the 1950's, see Archila, *Idas y Venidas*, 9-14; see also in Archila, *Una Historia Inconclusa*, 40-48.

Gustavo Rojas Pinilla (1957), and then in 1975 to legitimize an extension of the *Frente Nacional* until the 1980's.¹⁰ The *Frente Nacional* constitutionally limited candidacies from both Liberal and Conservative parties to run for public office. Second, the political parties had lost leverage since the late 1948 after decimating the UNIR from his leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, and the isolation of its claims in the political scene. Finally, in the 1960's, the youth emerged with a rebellious spirit to transform the political structure. This process was regarded from the beginning as impossible using electoral strategies. The isolation of the Communists Party was an example. The failure of the Dictatorship to create mechanism for negotiation with the students at the height of their protest in 1956-1957, and betrayal of the democratic transition thereafter with the *Frente Nacional*, caused the ambiguous come to political status of the student movement. The new generations had to struggle for representation in a disruptive and often ambiguous political realm.

Electoral disputes in society were not linked to the collective bargaining of the working class, peasant leagues and embryonic student organizations. Instead, they increasingly served to legitimize the regime with the infiltration of unions and student movements, and the distribution of bureaucratic quotas to bribe their leaders. The levels of abstention had been higher than the actual voting population, despite efforts bounded to create an all might electoral authority by the use up to date technologies since the mid 1960's. The outburst of student rage changed the dictatorship of Gustavo Rojas, and cheered with hope the return to democracy in 1958. However, the reluctance to 'transform the obsolete social and political structure ruling the nation' worked for changes that could create a society 'where the people could enjoy their fundamental rights'.¹¹ This situation brought into the spotlight a student movement and youth political expressions that heralded democracy, tolerance and autonomy for their movements. These were not far from the demands made from the United States to commit to investing for development, but not necessarily on the same path of national

¹⁰ Daniel Pécaut, *Crónica de dos décadas de política colombiana, 1968-1988* (Bogotá: Siglo XXI Editores, 1989), 2-6.

¹¹ Ruiz, Sueños, 4.

sovereignty and independence from foreign intrusion. However, the oligarchy refused both claims by not transforming its regime, and the use of emergency solutions such as the perpetuation of ‘exceptional measures’ to govern during crises. This factor betrayed the initial popular optimism with the *Frente Nacional* after ousting Gustavo Rojas from power in 1957. Radical expressions rapidly identified the response as a proof of an attempt to perpetuate the traditional parties in a political monopoly concealed with democratic concessions. It was the heyday for a wide range of Liberal groups against the regime such as the MRL and MOEC, and more radical attempts among the peasant and student movement that open the path for incoming guerrilla groups.

7.2 GROWING POLITICAL RECOGNITION

Alternative parties mobilized by non-traditional groups —namely students and workers— has being explained as a result of urban modernization and the necessary transformation of workers and students in expectation for political bargaining.¹² Their ideological platform was chosen from the international influences in Europe and Latin America, and autochthon expressions of nationalism that gather traditions of protest existent since the 19th century.¹³ They also combine claims for national autonomy, class consciousness and identity. This analysis can be contrasted to processes of popular incorporation/participation into the political mainstream. Looking beyond the ideological tint of political parties, it led to the dramatic aftermath of *La Violencia*.¹⁴ The minimal impact of elections in transforming the system, and the arrangement of the elites to play by safe

¹² In a state of the art for studies on Latin American labor movements, Mauricio Archila suggest that political bargaining has become overwhelming in the scope of analysis, leaving aside aspects of culture and popular consciousness, making necessary a reconceptualization of the thematic beyond the ideological gaze that fostered studies based on both dependentist and developmentalist. In Mauricio Archila, “Cultura y Conciencia en la Formación de la Clase Obrera Latinoamericana, un Ensayo Historiográfico,” *Historia Crítica* 1 (1989): 69-82.

¹³ Leopoldo Munera, *Rupturas y Continuidades: Poder y Movimiento Popular en Colombia 1968-1988* (Bogotá: IEPRI, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Cerec, 1998), 193-195. Archila, *Idas y Venidas*, 9.

¹⁴ Pécaut, *Orden y Violencia*, 36-37; Archila, *Cultura e Identidad*, 164-166.

rules on a common turf, became traits that shaped the opposition's practices. It was characteristic for a nation where the collapse of the state was the corollary of the minimal institutionalization of political affairs.¹⁵ Another element to consider is the traumatic effect of *La Violencia* and former episodes in political conflict in shaping a new imaginary for leadership.¹⁶ Neither the working class, the students nor peasants had until the 1960's a long standing popular leader. This determined that Jorge Eliécer Gaitán loomed as a sole figure to commemorate, celebrate, dispute, ritualize, sanctify. Given these elements and a tendency for the youth to use desperate and violent measures to draw government's attention, social movements in the 1950's and 1960's were necessarily bound to rapid radicalization, limiting even more the efficacy of their collective bargaining.¹⁷

In this research, I want to assess a factor that has not being considered by scholarly work on social movements and political transition in the mid-20th century. A motivation for young people incorporation into political participation was the recognition that comes with it. Here I consider recognition as power relations were reciprocity is differential and implies a bond of authority that deserves regard and respect. This provisional definition is meant to highlight the form how recognition is linked to the consolidation of values that become indicators of power and authority and are celebrated/played/practiced/ritualized in common interaction via the sharing respect and allegiance. I do not suggest that the social movements were created out of an individual whim for recognition. The goal is to assess the influence that the pursuit for recognition had during the years in which Colombian society became bombarded by cultural production that rewards individualism and gives the possession of status markers central leverage in all social interaction. The nature of

¹⁵ This is the central argument in Paul Oquist, *Violencia, Conflicto y Política en Colombia* (Bogotá: Instituto de Estudios Colombianos, 1978). This research was the first systematic analysis of *La Violencia* made by a northamerican researcher without direct involvement with military or developmental agencies in the 1960's. The influence of academics linked to military, developmental or intelligence operations in Colombia bolstered since the 1960's criticism to their research, making their work to be rapidly disregarded.

¹⁶ Although Herbert Braun does not centers in the fragilities that *La Violencia* promoted in the formation of leaders in Colombia, his work is a fundamental contribution to the study of political conflict and the perceptions of the opponent, and how leaders become the focus of derogatory asertions, in Braun, *The Assasination*, 89-97.

¹⁷ Pécaut, *Orden y Violencia*, 135-137.

political revolutionary platforms was affected by the dialectic forces that pulled people together and apart in the 20th century. It is an interesting feature to consider, as an alternative explanation for divisionism in the left, the lack of communication between countercultural movements and leftist groups, and finally in the political positioning of the youth in the second half of the 20th century.

The growth of universities opened spaces for debates where critical to the regime became predominant among individual belonging to social sectors anxious for political representation. Since the 1950's participation in politics increasingly became a status marker for radical protesters, critics of the cultural enclosure, or people determined to be incorporated in the mainstream. In the same epoch, Mauricio Archila found a correlation between the increase in urban protest and a decline of their attachment to unions or traditional mechanisms for representation within social movements.¹⁸ These trends indicate both the opening of new spaces for proliferating ideological nuances and justification for disputes for political leadership. The competition for political visibility gave protesters political voice, multiplying the claims for leadership of their movements, and internal divisions.¹⁹ It was not only characteristic of the left, but also to the liberalism where individual decisions, personalism and the crumbling of coherent collective political projects fragmented into factionalism. The MRL is the classic example, but also individuals that departed from the hierarchy should be included. Since more people had access to education, their political leverage increased, making protests a field battle for the leadership of a group instead of a cohesive mechanism to respond state's repression.

¹⁸ In a quantitative and qualitative research Mauricio Archila demonstrates how a combinations of strategies was necessary in social movements to gain attention and bargain claims to decision makers. The institutional channels for negotiations had been severed during *La Violencia*, and Gustavo Rojas Pinilla dictatorship postponed the recovery of social bonds of allegiance to institutional mechanisms for collective negotiation, in Archila, *Idas y Venidas*, Chapters 2 and 3.

¹⁹ Elements on leadership in both radical movements and the left, in Mauricio Archila, "¿Utopía Armada? Oposición Política y Movimientos Sociales Durante el Frente Nacional," *Controversia* 168 (1996): 41-44; López, *Izquierdas y Cultura*, 106-112, 159-163. It is necessary to mention that these author describe problems of leadership namely within an ideological framework of analysis, without approaching aspects such as individual disputes for recognition, or the importance that the youth started to play in the 1960's.

It is not necessary to downplay ideological loyalty in defining political identity. The research here presented is the result a close examination of ideological transformation in a guerrilla group, for comparison with a similar experience in Africa, which discloses the ambiguities in the process of ideological conversion. The ideological sphere of analysis in the leftist and guerrilla groups in Colombia requires integrative hypothesis that set former research on the so called ‘structural’ aspects that create conditions for political conflict and social unrest, with everyday aspects of individual decision and collective response to stimuli that comes from the so called ‘cultural’ sphere. This research is not intended as an inauguration of such integration, and does not propose a theoretical apparatus for the topic. The goal is to propose some elements of analysis, and set in motion a discussion.

Prior scholarly research into the student movement does incorporate theoretical analysis that envisions the understanding of culture and identity within these groups. These are provocative efforts that call for a continuation the debate. I consider they lack an understanding of forces that pushed youth to make decisions in the epoch.²⁰ Their common ground is a persuasive use of E.P. Thompson, in terms of the cultural factors that cause social movement to integrate. Also how the form how such features then get reflected, contested and transformed in the process of political struggle. However, neither the work of E. P. Thompson nor the empirical material has been detached from the ideological elements that surround them. I would argue it is not only, natural, but also plausible, for a historian to make research efforts to bring about a transformation in the material and spiritual conditions that keep us from a better life. However, in the fertile soil of historiographical debate, the over-determination of ideology impedes our effort to go beyond the

²⁰ For this scope of analysis regarding the student movement, see Ruiz, *Sueños*, 35-40. In the same form as Mauricio Archila, Daniel Pécaut and Fabio López de la Roche, Manuel Ruiz, studies the student movement centering in ideological factionalism. These works, besides the research by Leopoldo Múnera constitute the backbone of contemporary historiography on social movements in Colombia. However, it is necessary that in the future similar scholarly research shift emphasis on the classic distinction between cultural and ideological Marxism —the distinction that divided the Marxist left in Europe in the 1970’s— to look at political leadership and fragmented radicalism in the light of individual search for status and recognition at every level of activism or agitation.

guidelines of the epoch studied. In other words, detaching our research from the old disputes of the left does not liberate us from other epoch's burden. How can we be aware of our predicament if we still carry other epoch's burden by being militants of arid disputes?

For instance, E. P. Thompson argues that a hurdle in the understanding of both class consciousness and revolutionary political practice is the excessive attention to minor ideological splits. The suggestion brought him into a debate with Louis Althusser in the 1970's over lines within Marxism, ideology studies, the perception of theory in relation to reality. The hot potato of socialism was a reflection of the capitalist nightmares. In the context of young Colombians political participation, and the formation of sectors Balkanized by ideological nuances, it is necessary to elaborate an analysis of the forces that pulled young people into action. What was their conception of research or perceptual interaction with the world? It can be considered an important differentiation between leftists and hippies. Finally, what impulses might have led their political decisions? It is clear that social movements in Colombia crystallized thanks to common bonds that sustained their interests, bargaining and perception of the world, but most studies do not dissect necessarily complex motivations that triggered or impeded decisions. This thesis does not deny the influence of individual experience, familiar sufferance, and altruism. However, the forms in which the youth rapidly aligned in many symbolic disputes for status is latent in the study of the ELN and Camilo Torres. At the end, the boundaries were trespassed due to the natural impulse to have leadership, notability, recognition and allegiance in a group.

In conclusion, it is necessary to move beyond ideological explanatory certainties that overshadow concrete daily needs that forced experienced individuals to engage in political activism, agitation, and radical action in the crucial decades of the 1950's and 1960's. Youth culture and identity were shaped by several forces. Firstly, the lure of social recognition, which in the 1950's and 1960's seemed to be radical by nature. Secondly, discovering the inner forces that shaped the

Colombian cultural synthesis and how the youth could universalize this legacy in the epoch of cultural massification was very important. Finally, the attraction of consumption and material success as evidence of development in a context that legitimized the pursuit for economic well-being as part and parcel of democracy and freedom.

On the one hand, there was an interest among students in belonging to something beyond their familiar lives. It was inherently linked either to the Cold War's political divide, or the overwhelming trends that globalized consumption of status markers. On the other hand, the youth was bound to enter with *élan* into the culture, the politics, and social spheres of radical interaction. Although these factors do not deny the ever swinging pendulum of left and right, communism and democracy, the exploration of such features helps determine actions, thoughts and decisions of Camilo Torres' supporters. These factors provide a snapshot of the situational factors that influenced the student movement in the epoch of Camilo Torres' ascension to the political landscape. When Camilo Torres interpreted youth's whims and frustrations, and brought his personal dilemmas into contact with their anxieties, his personality rose to the position necessary to crystallize as a cult.

7.3 MIDDLE CLASSES' PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL

In the late 1960's intellectual debates peppered national newspapers and magazines. It was the highest point of an international student movement with widespread revolts that was seen as an omen of a revolutionary turn in western democracies.²¹ Marta Traba and Alberto Zalamea were beacons for this new generation, which both criticized the establishment, and assessed ideological

²¹ Ayala, "La Nueva Prensa," 64-66. For an study on the manipulation of public opinion and the form how the *Frente Nacional's* regime instilled stereotypes of the opposition, Cesar Ayala the author used a sophisticated methodology of Critical Discourse theory to study the role of the main newspaper and cartoons.

agendas for social movements. They were among the most outstanding voices that can offer us a glimpse of the dilemmas that occupied the expectations of youth and professional workers. Alberto Zalamea engaged in debates with politicians and intellectuals, criticized radical standpoints that loomed disastrous after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, and predicted the defeats to spontaneous insurgent *focos* enticed by *Guevarismo*. Marta Traba funneled the formation of a countercultural movement, as well as a standpoint from which the left received the unheard feedback about their actions. Awareness of their debates, however, was limited. Access to media had grown steadily since the 1930's. Yet, despite the outstanding figures that reflected the fight against illiteracy and lack of education, only small fractions of the urban populations were tuned into the discussion through magazines, newspapers, radio and television.²² Those who owned a radio keep it as a treasure, a mark for status, often a provider of political clairvoyance during years of uncertainty. Radio bridged the gap of communication between the cities and rural areas. During the dictatorship of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, its use for educational purposes became a flagship program for the fight against illiteracy in Latin America. Written media grew more diversified as well. Regional newspapers appeared, and the voice of middle classes was fostered by private interests that included guilds, university groups' periodical publications, and journals issued by intellectual circles that could afford their existence.²³

In April 1961 Alberto Zalamea created *La Nueva Prensa*, a publication giving space to alternative voices for debates on politics, philosophy, literature and economics. The publication was envisioned for exposing issues that the official press did not wanted to express through mainstream

²² Lina Ramírez, "El gobierno de Rojas y la Inauguración de la Televisión: Imagen Política, Educación Popular y Divulgación Cultural," *Historia Crítica* 22 (2001): 131-156; María Isabel Zapata y Consuelo Ospina de Fernández, "Cincuenta Años de la Televisión en Colombia. Una era que termina. Un recorrido historiográfico," *Historia Crítica* 28 (2005): 105 – 126.

²³ Colombian intellectuals used in the 1950's magazines to promote an exploration of alternative solutions to the lack of political understanding among groups. In the same vein artists and writers used magazines, many of them with a disrupted history that reached only a few issues, but that still have a place in the intellectual formation of the national modernity. There are not researches that undertake a close examination of magazines oriented for these purposes. In the 1960's many combined aesthetics and politics, being Mito the most cited and relevant in the fields of literature, philosophy and opinion. López includes a short section about this review (López, Fabio, 32-35)

newspapers. *La Nueva Prensa* was oriented by its editorial board to inform ‘merchants, small and big industrialists, students, professionals, owners of small economies and employees of private and public institutions’ for ‘there those that did not feel represented in the new establishment of the *Frente Nacional* could expose their opinions’.²⁴ Middle classes did not have an outlet where their interests were paramount, which made the journal rapidly accepted among professionals. While intellectuals grew more interested in social concerns, but it did not mean that they were public intellectuals. Alberto Zalamea, Marta Traba, and Camilo Torres were the earliest examples of academics transcending the private realm of academia and intellectual discussions, in part, thanks to wide publicity that was made around their ideas and political career.

Through *La Nueva Prensa* Alberto Zalamea bolstered a nationalist language centered in the capacities of the people without harassing individuality, and the need for move Latin American countries towards a common project. The goal of such regional integration was to change power relations and to counterbalance intrusions of the United States into national affairs.²⁵ Alberto Zalamea thought was representative of the interests and tendencies of center left and center middle class sectors that initially gave attention to the movement of *Frente Unido* and Camilo Torres. Nevertheless, he harshly criticized insurreccional groups that perceived Cuban revolution as a paradigm. For him, the *foco* theory and its application in radical mobilization in Colombia brought about a constant threat to movements using the notion and legacies politicians that used the concept before, proponents of ‘revolution’ in a moderate form, such as Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in the 1930’s and 1940’s, and in the early 20th century Rafael Uribe Uribe —as was discussed in chapters 1 and 3. For Alberto Zalamea, the supposed *foco* insurrection was something that ‘nobody knows where it is coming from, where does it go. A revolution lacking directive cadres and without objective

²⁴ Ayala, “La Nueva Prensa,” 61.

²⁵ Alberto Zalamea, *La Nueva Prensa 25 Años Después 1961-1986*, vol. 1 (Bogotá: Procultura, 1986), 6-9.

conditions for its making in a naturally antirevolutionary country'.²⁶ Alberto Zalamea debunked diehard supporters of the Cuban Revolution as well as the rigid administration of the Catholic faith. His message was not, however, a religious vow of allegiance. He thought the Church had delayed reforms, which led to the decline in its followers, and more massive support to socially-minded priests engaged in communitarian charity activities. He also criticized revolutionaries by explaining the deep differences between Cuba and Colombia, and how there 'the Catholic Church always was weak, different to Colombia where the church influences all the population' causing the structural existence of 'religious forces that resist revolutionary efforts'.²⁷ He also maintained that the Cuban revolution trivialized fundamental debates, causing vain debates that expressed leftist leaders' incapacities to look beyond their own island. He criticized the left for *extranjeroizante* —a form of leftist snobbism— and worried about its internal problems that hindered their capacity to offer answers to national problems. He noted that 'having doctors and technicians solving Cuban, Soviet, Chinese problems, they protest for the imprisonment of intellectuals in Algiers, Turkey and so on, they protest in the squares for Castro, Chou En-Lai, Lumumba and El Ché, but never making an intervention in the Colombian affairs'.²⁸

La Nueva Prensa and its editorial board stopped giving support to Camilo Torres when his thoughts became increasingly radical, particularly legitimizing the use of violence to bring about change. In early 1965, Camilo Torres' integration into the armed struggle was confirmed after the publication of a proclamation explaining how he became a *guerrillero* in the ELN. *La Nueva Prensa* started to give a strong support to the ANAPO (*Alianza Nacional Popular*/ National Popular Alliance), the *rojismo*,²⁹ led by Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, saying it deserved all that can be rescued is

²⁶ Cited in López, *Izquierda y Cultura*, 127.

²⁷ Zalamea, *La Nueva*, 43.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 248, 198. See also López, *Izquierda y Cultura*, 29.

²⁹ The ANAPO was formed between 1961 and 1964, after a process of ideological consolidation that intersected the renovation of its leader Gustavo Rojas Pinilla. The platform of the groups was populist, nationalist, and oriented to alleviate popular participation after

‘authentic popular nuclei such as nationalism and the arduous and deceived masses that find in the *rojismo* a light of hope’.³⁰ Before its support for ANAPO, *La Nueva Prensa* heralded a nationalism shifting from ineffective tendencies: ‘In Latin America a prejudice exists that tends to blame all our predicaments to the United States. There is also a prejudice in the contrary that awaits everything from the Washington government. We deny participation in either one. We are confident that the concept of the ‘good neighbor’ will be broad and concrete. Less governmental help and more private investment. Less UN intervention setting commodity prices. These are the pillars for an efficient, ambitious policy that creates understanding among our countries’³¹. An interesting element in this appreciation for accurate nationalism is the moral blame given to political movements, and how an accurate nationalist perception was necessary to accomplish the ‘*Patria Grande*’ —Great Fatherland—, a political ideal introduced in one of the magazine’s first issues in October 1961 in *La Nueva Prensa*.³²

La Nueva Prensa and Alberto Zalamea represented the political expectations of a wide spectrum of Liberals that actually participated in elections, in a crucial moment in which the political parties were shifting their ideological tint but without real participation in the regime. Fabio López suggests that the youth of the epoch had to overcome the political moderate positions that narrowed political spaces, since ‘The representations of the left about democracy, oligarchy, military and relations with the USA configured and developed in relation to the representation that the elites had of these realities’.³³ The youth wanted to rebel against those oppressive conditions, and their negative effects. The commitment to capitalism and state led political economy was the tone that the middle classes perceived as accurate in an epoch of uncertainty and increasing upwards mobility for

the *Frente Nacional* that severed opposition from electoral competitions. For the history of ANAPO and its movement (*rojismo*, after Gustavo Rojas) see, Ayala, *Resistencia y Oposición*.

³⁰ *La Nueva Prensa*, 140, Dec 1965, 18.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

³² Zalamea, *La Nueva*, 87-88.

³³ López, *Izquierda y Cultura*, 10.

professionals and students. Nevertheless, in the ears of students, these programs echoed violent crush of their protests in 1956-1958, and the concomitant betrayal of their claims and expectations. Hence, the nationalism of *La Nueva Prensa* was discarded as reformist. The occupational/generational groups targeted in *La Nueva Prensa's* discourse were overwhelmed by increasing numbers of students disenchanted with political platforms that only merged tradition and reformism. With no jobs to defend, and a reluctance to accept the establishment as it was, radical alternatives gained more momentum and broad support.

Radical insurgencies growing in rural areas and an central establishment reluctant to change represented the extremes of an increasingly polarized political debate played in a setting where moral and status markers were constantly in dispute. The *Frente Nacional* commitment to defend the values that the Catholic Church stimulated within political groups a pluralization of the moral spectrum formerly monopolized by the Church. Youth, middle classes, insurgencies, all had to encompass worldviews where values had to be heralded and defended. It is necessary to see this in more detail, particularly in the case of radical students engaged in radical political activism, and those enticed by the Cultural Revolution, that envisioned in the pursuit of love and freedom a universal trend that would legitimize the values of a hippie lifestyle.

7.4 CULTURAL REVOLUTION: MARTA TRABA AND COUNTERCULTURE.

Marta Traba had married in the 1950's Alberto Zalamea, the journalist committed to criticize the regime. She was an Argentinean art critic, who created at the Universidad Nacional a museum for contemporary art. She also led seminars oriented to explore aesthetic features of Latin American reality. Her agenda was promoted initially through radio and television programs, and it often was backed by elite groups interested in bringing the international artistic scene as a mechanism to

maintain their status through symbols of distinction. However, her programs shocked traditionalist sectors of the elite, particularly those intertwined with the Church and the Conservative party. Approval and support from students demonstrated how thrilled they were with the push-back from the establishment. She considered that ‘pedagogy was the mechanism to move forward, climb socially. Criticism is the method to debunk reactionary forms of thought’.³⁴ The importance of such pedagogic tasks established a common ground with Camilo Torres’ ideals, and his conception of education’s role in society for building values for both individual and community.

Youth interest in contemporary aesthetics and highbrow culture emerged parallel to the increasing urbanization and the transformation of values that it encompasses. Urban sociability relied on circles where people sharing the same cultural codes shared experiences after travels and study. The university opened the door to information that the country was not aware of since the 1940’s during *La Violencia* a Gustavo Rojas Pinilla dictatorship. Both the establishment and the Catholic Church were blamed for the enclosure of the country. Fabio López suggests that urbanization and secularization modified the collective imaginaries in Colombia during the 1960’s.³⁵ It was not only the emergence of new discourses with Marxist approaches that found a privileged audience in middle class urban students prone to radical mobilization, but also an ‘avalanche of theories for breaking the narrow cultural models and isolated provincialism that endured for centuries in the country’³⁶ Illiteracy was drastically reduced and secondary education was democratized, ‘By the end of the 1950’s more than 30% of the population was illiterate, by the early 1980’s the figure dropped to a 15%, to the point that holding credentials became less a symbol of prestige and is now a requisite for being recruited and become part of the working class in petty

³⁴ Cecilia Correa de Zapata, “Marta Traba (1930-1983),” in Diane Marting, *Escritoras de Hispanoamérica. Una guía Biobibliográfica* (Bogotá: Siglo XXI Editores, 1991), 543-554.

³⁵ López, *Izquierda y Cultura*, 80.

³⁶ Fernán González, Preface to Fabio López, *Izquierda y Cultura*, Pg 10

jobs. The number of students at universities went from 23.000 in 1960 to 356.000 in 1983'.³⁷ That was the turf for Marta Traba's initiatives to make flourish cultural avant-gardes, enabling young students and intellectuals to openly discuss proliferating worldviews that were in vogue in Europe, North America, and cultural centers in Latin America such as Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires, Mexico City and Caracas. The art critic was a *Frente Nacional* opponent, claiming that art was a tribune for youth's expression, and a barometer of the nation's tolerance for free social expression. Marta Traba had a significant presence in radio, TV and written media, fostering artists and students to engage in a struggle for to individual's expression and *status quo*'s resistance.

The terms of political contention here were generally quite acrid. When Marta Traba surged against politicians, sheltered in the respect to foreign intellectuals and tenured faculty at the Universidad Nacional, she suggested that 'the unique cultural expression alive in the country is the one formed by independent theatre companies and its itinerant actors, the writers that do not win the Esso Prize, in other words, groups giving dignity to young people. Culture is promoted by those who wisely resist and endure establishment pressure giving birth to the most distinctive elements of a sub-culture in front of the smiles of alienated supporters clapping and celebrating official culture'.³⁸ In fact, this was symptomatic of her constant call for a cultural revolution, beyond ideologies, one that set free the individual. However, both her language and topic were barely understood beyond a small privileged sector of the upper crust, namely, those that had the chance to attend college pursuit of then considered non-productive professions.

The call for emancipation, however, was addressed to all the youth. It attracted many followers as the countercultural movement became a lifestyle, a sub-culture, a type of presence in the urban life. Expressions she used, such as 'sub-culture' and 'alienation', were not common for

³⁷ Alvaro Tirado, "Del Frente Nacional al Momento Actual: Diagnostico de una Crisis," in *Nueva Historia de Colombia* (Bogotá: Planeta, 1989), 403.

³⁸ *Espectador*, June 8, 1969, 3, cited in López, *Izquierdas y Cultura*, 14.

people, and their obscure meaning were rapidly associated to modernity and the life it brings about. Urban sectors were eager to embrace counterculture and contemporary artistic expressions, as they were indicators of social status and enabled relaxed norms of daily behavior. The university became the free zone for shocking artworks that sparked reactions, particularly from the Catholic Church

In Bogotá you could feel the active spirit bounded to experiments. It was the epoch o la Mama Theater, Panic-Theater, Theater of the Absurd, Antonin Artaud, it was the beginning of La Candelaria, Fernando Arrubla's 'The Tricycle' caused a big impact, besides the radical political theater. In terms of cinema, we watched "The Battle of Algiers", "To Die in Madrid", and in literature a must was Herman Hesse and his book Steppenwolf, and naturally Albert Camus.³⁹

It is not difficult to understand the concerns caused a theatrical group brought by students from Universidad Javeriana [a Jesuit private university] from a festival in Manizales. Some of its actors played their roles completely naked. The epoch was full of this type of challenges, and there was disposition to assume them.⁴⁰

Excommunication became a tool for punishing misconducts, and countercultural tendencies caused students expulsion from academic institutions. Youth people were aware of how 'the obsolete forms of social mobility proposed from the ecclesiastic culture and traditional bipartisan division', justified moralism and punishment to chastise behavior perceived as inappropriate by the authorities.⁴¹ Although the Catholic moral was considered old fashioned, students at university flocked to hippie-like practices and countercultural attitudes. Values such as equity, freedom, respect for the body, a discovery of pleasure, and the opposition to any form of hierarchical classification, were considered as the natural essence of youth's new spirituality.

One of the aspects that separated counterculture youth expression from political activism was the moral degradation implied in 'marihuana and drugs consumption; a symptom of revolution in daily practices during those years'. Despite a justification on the spirituality and that 'linked to a mystical lineage that people wanted to recover (the Arahua, Herman Hesse) and reinvidications for religious transcendental experience', leftist militants in the cities considered it as 'a romanticized

³⁹ López, *Izquierda y Cultura*, 73.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

escaping gate from an over organized industrial labor world (...) Hippie lifestyle suffered a transition towards a consumerist logic that degraded the traditional mysticism expressed in ideas such as the access to god after taking acid. Hippie movement became a cultural industry losing its authentic countercultural contents'.⁴² Normally distinction between hippies and rebels has been assumed as based on socioeconomic stratification, and a degradation of the principles of revolution. However, the counterculture represented a particular type of revolution that was not based on values related to a specific ideological ground. While political activists envisioned a return to the values of community and detachment from materialism to ingrain collective forms of organization, production and leadership, hippies preferred an individual reflection that required a return to basic forms of organization, where sensitivities were not distorted by modern society's hierarchic subordination.

With Marta Traba's favor for counterculture, women also gained a different reception during their integration to public life. The university became a privileged tribune for equal rights claims.

In the epoch another field for cultural re-definition is linked to a transformation in women's role in society, and the values historically attached to such role. With a lot of resistance women entered massively universities. Before it was normal the rejection to women going to university. In my class we were one hundred and eighty students and only ten women, and when one of them entered the classroom, they were received with whistles. (...) Then our girlfriends started to leave chastity, and often their mothers were obsessed with making any sacrifice for the preservation of their virginity (...) our generation was probably to have changes in sexual initiation: no longer the brothels that were left more for politicians and perverts. Most of my fellows had the fortune —often for them a defeat— to have sexual intercourse for the first time with their girlfriends.⁴³

New attitudes to the body and to nakedness emerged in those days of rupture. We needed bodies, mostly bodies. Fear to the naked body had to disappear. Colombia is a pious country mad for nakedness, because nothing we fear more than what we really like.⁴⁴

Rethinking women's roles in society was a breaking point in the sustainability of the political activist groups, as I will argue in the next section. Counterculture instead opened a perspective from

⁴² Ibid., 10.

⁴³ Ibid., 74.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 75. Another interesting comment on women was given by Alberto Zalamea, refereeing to women that fancied the North American and European trends of consumption and style they observed or learned from the media. It is necessary to mention that the 'coca-colos' were the young people deeply into trendy attitudes: 'The Coca-Cola girls entered the provincial history of our culture that with them won in beauty and humor what had lost with egocentric self-satisfaction bohemia and dusty gentlemen from 'El Automático' [a coffee shop that was center for literary debates particularly from the upper crust] and its decadence. Bogotá was a whole party, or at least we were young and we thought we had the world surrendered at our feet' in Zalamea, *La Nueva*, 24-25.

which freedom was associated to their capacity to decide about their bodies, sexuality and nurturing. Both counterculture and urban political activism at universities represented a sexual liberation, in a rather repressed society. The corollary of these youth rebellions affected directly the outspoken art critic. Marta Traba was targeted by the very sectors she criticized and in 1969 was expelled from the country in a decision made by the president, regardless of her job and family after fifteen years being settled in the country. The reason was her public statement in contradiction with Carlos Lleras Restrepo mandate for the Universidad Nacional Campus' militarization, the interruption of academic activities in order to dissolve student protests, and private comments she made comparing the *Frente Nacional's* regime to harsh dictatorships. Beyond this expression of political intolerance, the government disliked her constant attacks to institutions that legitimized government. Her wide popularity among students was seen by the authorities as vicious, prone to sexual irresponsibility, and disrespectful of the law that made the university a nest for radicalism and moral degradation.

The affair Marta Traba was widely debated by the public that was divided between her proclivity to support contemporary artists and cultural innovation. Her influence in the formation of counterculture movement in Colombia has been recognized since the 1970's. She promoted awareness of radical art produced in the 1920's and the avant-gardes of late 19th century in Europe banned from academic institutions and art schools for obscenity, iconoclasm and linked to radical leftism. The notions of high culture and popular culture became common coin at universities, particularly among students of fine arts, that wanted to define a Colombian aesthetic, since Marta Traba demonstrated that the only clue of modernist painting or sculpture were not necessarily the product of artist with a young spirit or representative of the vast majority of the population.⁴⁵ However, the liaison between consumerism and popular culture in Europe and the United States

⁴⁵ Alvaro Medina, *Procesos del arte en Colombia* (Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Cultura, 1978); Ivonne Pini, *En Busca de lo Propio: Inicios de la Modernidad en el Arte de Cuba, México, Uruguay y Colombia 1920-1930* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2000); Marta Traba, "Artes plásticas contemporáneas," *Arte Colombiano, Suplemento Especial de la Revista Lámpara* 3 (1961),4.

imposed a divide in the recently self-discovered youth. The country was barely catching up with the enticing force that attracted people to compulsive purchasing of commodities, either for the inherent satisfaction in its use, or for the help those products could offer.

7.5 BETWEEN CONSUMPTION AND REBELLION: THE DILEMMA IN THE 1960's.

The privilege of urban lifestyle and middle class status reduced the scope to the movements that wanted to represent in arts and politics the ambitions of the majority. Both revolutionaries and hippies assumed a stand towards consumption that promoted status conflicts. The cultural and political attitudes of rebellion assumed by the middle class and elite youth were based on the type of status markers that legitimized their political or cultural bargaining. At university, only few had access to enjoyment of privileges such as radio or updated magazines. For instance, Rocío Londoño—an outstanding leader of student movement in the 1970's closely linked to the emergence of the Department of Sociology at Universidad Nacional—mentioned in an interview given to Fabio López, how elements proper of American popular culture were perceived as part of the strategies to entice the youth into distractions from what really was necessary for the country:

this was the epoch of Radio15, Club of the Clan, the broadcasting of Teletigre a TV channel were from 5 am until late night American TV programs were shown: Gilligan's Island, Bewitched, The Beverly Hill Billies, etc. These and other imported programs played a central role in the introduction to Colombian society of a model that rewards autonomous individuality.⁴⁶

Only a small fraction of people could actually enjoy such programs, and at universities they represented a mark of submission to the regime, foreign influence, and in radical jargon 'pervasive petty-bourgeois elements proper of urban life'.⁴⁷ Consumption then becomes an important factor that determined individual choices, group practices, and the definition of values. When youth made

⁴⁶ López, *Izquierda y Cultura*, 74.

⁴⁷ Correa, *Sueño*, 94.

use of elements to display social positioning, and the pursuit of status gained importance in everyday interaction among hippies and leftists, the values of consumerism became a moral conditioner for group belonging and internal recognition. In fact, from radical and moderate leftist groups, as well as from hippies and countercultural expressions, refusal to consumerist attitudes was inherent to the formation of values necessary for inclusion and belonging. Although the perspective on consumption among both political activists and counterculture followers was of almost generalized disaffection, it does not mean that there was not consumption. Even more important, the consumption that they had, no matter how small it was, it was in essence aimed towards gaining status within their groups. Their consumption, no matter how emphatically they refused consumerism, was built in opposition to values assigned to the possession, purchase or use of elements in industrial capitalist democracies. More importantly, it was necessary to identify belonging either one subculture of the 1960's. The values assigned to consumption would build differently individual status as much as the commodities provided status, making it consumption, but for a different political orientation compared to mainstream culture and the *status quo*. Maria Eugenia Vásquez offers an interesting example of how the tension between these two revolutionary positions intersected at the university:

In that epoch people at university saw in Camilo Torres, the priest *guerrillero*, an example of being 'consistent', committed for life to a cause, a call for direct political practice in opposition to theoretical debates. At the same time, the emergence of insurgent groups in Latin America reinforced the idea of insurreccional direct participation with the masses. Radical positions differentiated from moderate ones in the rejection to electoral participation and changes brought about from institutionalized platforms. Destruction of the system was the radical leftist slogan, and the university should accomplish a role intellectual vanguard educating revolutionary cadres. There were other students in the vogue for hippie lifestyle, rock, marihuana and free love, but even among them to be a revolutionary was an ineluctable characteristic. To be revolutionary, to believe in change, to give the life for to people's interests, these ideas were intertwined, crossed and overlapping on campus.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Vásquez, *Escrito para no Morir*, 65. The author of this book entered the Universidad Nacional to study anthropology, and decided to enter the M19, an urban guerrilla formed in 1976. Her testimony has been widely recognized as the deep psychology exploration of the elements of insurgent life and the decision represents to become *guerrillero*.

Consumption of industrial products was denounced and motivated criticism and attacks among students at universities. One reason was the effect it had in the process of discovering of both spirituality and idiosyncrasy. In the cases of political groups, it represented a debasement of consciousness and revolutionary morals. However, within the university those engaged in either side privileged attitudes, attires, lifestyles, professions, cultural interest, and fascination for figures representatives of their choices. Bad or good, proper or inappropriate, the symbols resembled a battle for moral principles. Competition for status was split by moralist binaries as well. Either the adoption of a radical political perception and claim for political change, or to bring about revolution in the form of a cultural opening to new trends, both arguments were oriented to make collapse the establishment's cultural or institutional pillars.

The division that Eugenia Vásquez clearly distinguishes between the interests of the hippies, as a revolution that explored the individual levels of consciousness that the structures of power had hidden from our quotidian perception, and political revolution, considered in terms of the opposition to the system or its concrete forms of exploitation. In each case the youth clustered around an ethos that identified them immediately on campus or the street. To be a young person implied a pose, the familiarity with some styles, tastes and places to visit, conversation topics, forms of loving and committing to friendship and sentimental relationships. Eugenia Vásquez even talks about an urban geography that helped her to recover memories while writing her testimony. In the case of the militants of the left, there was a clear agreement about the paradigms to revere. The association with a name often represented an ideological nuance and allegiance within the sub-culture.

The university was an space with graffiti claiming for making love, not war, Criticism to the war in Vietnam and other claims for socialist revolution instead of a caricature of it: freedom or death!; 'El Ché' with his sad-seductive gaze was watching us from the main campus' building, It was an important revolutionary imaginary. Camilo was present, Ho was shouting heroic proclamations,

Comrade Mao was walking over the waters of the Yang-Tse and Enver Hoxa smiling from the last pamphlet published on rice paper.⁴⁹

Commitment to revolution implied high standards of behavior, ranging from academic achievement, detachment from vain materialist elements, and work for causes that were strictly related to political agitation. When the groups started to divide into infinitesimal allegiances to the Marxist truths, mechanism to keep on check other militants became very rigid 'It was the epoch of sectarianism. Each group declared itself as owner of the absolute truth'.⁵⁰ Gossip, ghettoization, and destruction of reputations were common. Moving away from the dogma was dangerous for individual recognition, but it was always a source for recognition. One only required complying with other sects' rituals, their leaders, codes and theoretical reverences. One example, which involves both politic swings and the importance of sexuality, might suggest that in the 1960's and 1970's sex had a leverage attributing symbolic capital and status

Moritz Ackerman, the best agitator of the student movement had arrived into Bogotá after he was expelled from Universidad del Valle. His passionate discourse after the assassination of a comrade in Cali mobilized thousands of students from the Universidad Nacional. He was one of the stars of Trotskyism in Valle. Suddenly, one day Moritz wake up being a *mamerto* [Pro-Communist party student leader]. Many people confirm that such change was produced after a night of love with Marilú Posso, a diva of the JUCO. The truth is that in a meeting was decided he will represent our Socialist Tendency in a student assembly that took place at the Sociology Department. He accepted. There, we spoke, and after a discourse where he turn to support the PCC and the outmoded Trotskyism. Moncayo Luna and I started to cry, with the souls broken by a stab of betrayal. Everybody was against the JUCO. But they were prepared, stick, chains started to appear. From nowhere appeared 'The Plague', they were against the JUCO, and someone hit Moritz with the belt, he started to bleed and his shirt was drenched in blood. Carlos Pizarro, a JUCO leader took him out, he had already asked to get into the FARC. Someone started to wave a gun, everybody dispersed. Moritz was banned; he could not enter anymore the Universidad Nacional.⁵¹

Student movement was full of similar betrayals, and such very personal affairs interfered with mobilization during protests. The historiography of the left has kept aside the problematic of

⁴⁹ Vásquez, *Escrito para no Morir*, 66.

⁵⁰ Ibid., Literature offers another version: '– But to understand what, fuck! –Now Escobar waived his hands violently whilst talking as well. - What you are telling me to understand? Mao? Tao? Buddha? The guru Maharishi? Reverend Moon? Well-adventured Trotsky? All say the same, all have reason'. In Caballero, *Sin Remedio*, 226.

⁵¹ Vásquez, *Escrito para no Morir*, 78-79. About Marilú Posso, the poet Harold Alvarado Tenorio said that 'with her sole attributes and virtue she put the JUCO under her thumb the main leaders of JUCO during fifty years'. Consulted in February 24, 2011 in <http://www.haroldalvaradotenorio.com/cronologia.html>.

personal sexual life of leaders, its effects in the stability of the groups, and the impact it might had in ideological commitment and quotidian decision making. Within the ELN, for instance –another void in the study of guerrilla movements— the internal crisis was intertwined with flings of the leaders and the appreciation of such conduct as immoral and inappropriate. It is necessary to highlight the gray zone of sexuality and both political and cultural revolution, since the youth was obviously determined by such crucial aspect of individual life.

Recognition to the leaders was not only reserved for the youth, despite the clear tension that in the 1960's university students created with elder generations. There existed a close relation to professors, and reciprocity included the anxiety from students to receive recognition or to become illuminated by the promoter of a line of thought or action. 'For me Vasco was the mentor. He taught me how to study with an oriental patience and under implacable standards. (...) I had to be a good student and consequent in everyday practice'.⁵² In the 1960's and 1970's several teachers were kept in a high regard by their students, including Camilo Torres and Orlando Fals Borda. Another case was Luis Guillermo Vasco, who fostered in the Department of Anthropology at Universidad Nacional de Colombia a collective project of research and pedagogy. The case is interestingly associated with Maoism. Its influence at the university, and within radical groups that took the decision to form guerrilla groups, led to the conversion of students that preferred to establish a different relation to peasant and indigenous communities. Professor Luis Guillermo Vasco became a beacon for students, who instead of heading out to join guerrilla rural vanguards, opted for participatory action in rural areas, and a deep understanding of land related issues in Colombia. In this case, Eugenia Vásquez gave testimony of how students made efforts to draw the professor's attention,

Vasco taught General Anthropology in first semester; his critical insight and active social commitment posture were influential in our formation. One of our companions from the Andino

⁵² Vásquez, *Escrito para no Morir*, 67.

School, Nana, she wanted to approach Vasco but couldn't despite the intelligent questions she made in his class. One day she found a version of the Military writings by Mao in a German version, and sat where the teacher could see her. The effect could not be better. After that day she found a better way to communicate with him.⁵³

It is interesting how a student coming from an elite high school needed to prove her commitment and sincere interest, in opposition to Eugenia Vásquez, who came from a school in the provinces, and had shared the same spaces of sociability with Nana after starting the program in Anthropology in the early 1970's. For the upper classes, revolution also became an enticing call to action, and its incorporation into groups implied denial/detachment from privileges. This implied a change in lifestyle. In the fashion of the epoch, the use of particular fabrics also identified individual choices and political commitment. The use of a tie, plain colors, a suit, or expensive clothes were proof of an interest for sumptuous consumption, bearing status markers in order to climb *through* the status quo ladder, and by consequence a dissonance with revolutionary values. For instance, the use of '*ruana*' a wool poncho used by peasants in Bogotá's hinterland to protect from low temperature, was characteristic among leftist leaders to show compromise with the peasant protest, and at some point indicative of a specific ideological leaning

-That one is Bertha Quintero, a brave woman she battle the police with her hands...

-That one is Guido Gomez, accused of throwing a Molotov bomb to a girl in the face. He was in prison for a while...

-The one with the maxi *ruana*, Jaime Caicedo, *mamerto*.⁵⁴

Jaime Caycedo was a student political leader, and his recognition was for the influence he had in the JUCO, and the struggles against Maoists, Trotskyists, probably harsher than against the army or police. The use of humble clothing implied a *modus operandi* that started with the proletarianization of socioeconomic conditions. An individual, who had a background that enabled him

⁵³ Ibid., 68.

⁵⁴ *Mamerto* has been a derogatory nomination used to identify a militant of the PCC. There existed an ethos for each group. For instance, among Maoist, the total detachment from elements of the consumerist society led to the minimal use of soap and deodorant. Ibid., 63.

to enjoy privileges such as studying without worries for a job, and other cultural capital, set them apart from the majority of students. For elite students, the process implied that proletarianization almost made mandatory the use of old clothing similar to the ones used by disenfranchised people.

An example of the case was found in literature, in a work by Antonio Caballero

– Yes, said Escobar: take off that *ruana*. I don't understand: I guess it is as the journals explain the left's sin against nature. The fireplace is lit, like every bourgeois, because we are bourgeois. However, you have on the *ruana*, because the people use *ruana*, only that they use it precisely because they do not have a fireplace at home.⁵⁵

Generally student movement leaders were from a privileged background, creating distinction.

The case of Eugenia Vásquez was slightly different. She came from a household with a single mother, and her mother was a public sector worker. When she started college, she had customs that in province are normal, such as clothing for hot weather, and a laid-back lifestyle. In Bogotá things changed, not only for the strict discipline imposed by Luis Guillermo Vasco, but also in order to comply with normal practices in radical political activism. The case of specific attire, and moral recriminations she received, portrait the influences that shaped politically engaged people:

- Comrade, did you come here to find husband or to make revolution?
I decided to leave clear my revolutionary vocation. I stopped using make up, I exchanged knee boots for rugged ones, the mini-skirt for jeans that glued to my body for using it over and over. The only thing I did not stopped using were the color beads. I buried in the past The Beatles, Woodstock, Music from Joan Baez and vibrant rhythms that I danced endlessly in parties under black lights in discotheques of the epoch. Instead of listening Radio 15 for listening "Chewing gum mouth",

⁵⁵ Another interesting comment was found in Antonio Caballero's novel *Sin Remedio*, particularly about upper class the detachment from cultural interests, 'proletarianization' and elements of popular culture [notice the use of puns to mock high culture and revolutionary elements of culture]:

-My girlfriend from Cali. You don't know her. Well, if she does not like the Beatles we can choose something else. Something from here? You have salsa? Do you want music for 16th century clavecins? Telemann? Bella Bartok? Jazz? Fruko y sus Tesos? Zuleta Brothers? Chavela Vargas? Gardel? Rolling Stones? Brahms? Flamenco? Vivaldi?

-You have something from Julio Iglesias? She is from Cali; she must have something from Julio Iglesias.

-No, she does not; she is not the type that you think.

-Beethoven –read Patricia. I can stand this. Daddy always whites his eyes listening Beethoven. Reactionary old man "For Elise" Did you know my mom plays 'For Elise' on the piano? I can't stand it. Chopin, my mom also plays it.

-Shopan –Corrected Escobar.

-Don't be a prick Ignacio, that's how Daddy pronounces it. Shopan. Can't stand it.

-I'm not a prick, I'm an internationalist proletarian.

-Come on! That is not Internationalist proletarianism. It is Imperialism. Shopan! And the Beatles! The Bits!

-Don't be silly, how can you consider the Beatles or Chopin to be Imperialist? Imperialism is something different.

-Cultural imperialism –Said Patricia.

-Don't be stupid. That stuff of anti-imperialism is OK, but in music is ridiculous. Do you want to listen New Cuban trova? We don't have any of that. Caballero, *Sin Remedio*, 78 and excerpt from 292(The play with misspelled words referring popular culture are in the original text).

'Yesterday', and 'Rain Drops', I tuned Toledar News every morning, because I had to be well informed about the country's reality. In the dorm we tuned Radio Habana, 'transmitting from Cuba, territory Free of America.'⁵⁶

For Eugenia Vásquez, the standards of commitment implied sacrifices, a disciplined life and a detachment from former interest that could raise questions about her actual interest in belonging to political groups. Her musical interest combined music normally listened by hippies, and rhythms consumed by people from another subculture that privileged dancing, drinking and partying — activities that are very idiosyncratic in the coastal regions. She was not into anti-establishment music or blue collar clothes before her militancy started. However, she changed her fashion for new clothing associated with the working class, and then gained a reputation among comrades, to the point that she entered the top ranks in part for her capacities. She declared that her beauty made her attractive to many political leaders. She was a cadre with responsibilities in which she showed serious qualities and revolutionary commitment. The strict maintenance of a good revolutionary reputation did not inhibited youth from enjoying their presence in the groups. In fact, students' anxiety was how to enter the groups, gain recognition and to climb their sub-cultural hierarchies. There existed strategies, practices that became the youth's cultural codes, sine qua non integration could happen.

We sold Proletarian Voice and red tribune, we distributed Marxist Critique, Barricade and Red Sun and Fusil, we listened ballades, salsa, tango, we liked Violeta Parra, Carlos Puebla, Victor Jara, Ana y Jaime, we gasped with Neruda, De Greiff and Benedetti, we attended theater by La Candelaria, the TEC, and the Free Theater, we held meetings at the cafeteria, or the chess room, dropping our bodies on the Freud Garden's turf, It was fashionable to have beard, boots, *mochilas* [handbag made by indigenous people using natural materials], jeans color beads.⁵⁷

The youth anxiety about trying to find a space in society within groups that granted status, the goal of rebelling against the privileged class, and adopting working classes' attitudes and clothing, were signs of the strategies oriented to gain recognition.

⁵⁶ Vásquez, *Escrito para no Morir* 70.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 66.

7.6 IMMORAL HIPPIES, MORALIST REVOLUTIONARIES

Beyond the ambiguities of elite youngsters playing revolution pointed out by Antonio Caballero in his novel —that cost him the reputation among leftist intellectuals who perceived him as a critical outsider who did not know anything about internal processes—, the student movement in the 1960s allows an analysis of moral features that distinguished political revolutionaries and counterculture followers. Besides the pursuit for recognition and status within organizations, there existed tacit norms that separated hippies from revolutionaries, despite of having the common goal of transforming long standing political and cultural structures.⁵⁸ Although hippies and revolutionaries shared the university, its role as an institution for the fostering of knowledge was not necessarily reflected in their daily practices.⁵⁹ In both cases, the number of graduate students was small, and the length of studies marked public education with the predicament of eternal undergraduate programs as an effect of protests, budgetary shortages, among other difficulties.

The following excerpt help to exemplify the distinctions made by individuals who lived the epoch, and how youth's worldview distinguished their practices as an approach to knowledge

Differently to leftist opposition groups concerned with the problem of power and characterized or an interest in politics, hippie groups were centered in quotidian life. The leftist youth and hippies were close, they might have known each other, be friends, but they all were not in the same stuff. They were differentiated precisely or their radical standpoint in relation to power: hippies did not accept hierarchies, and both church and political parties were discarded from their universe of interest and concerns. Whilst the '*nadaistas*' [an artist group that combined iconoclast attitudes Dadá style, and existentialist and intuitive expressionism in poetry and painting] were intellectuals, hippies were realist, hands-on, they wanted to experience life. That is why is so difficult to trace back hippies in documental sources. Hippies developed essentially a feminine sensitivity: unity, solidarity, love, nature, mother-earth, the importance of quotidian life. They were supported in the pacifist ideal, the return to nature, the interest or ethnic communities, indirectly hippies showed an interest or landscapes, national geography, spaces related to the pre-Columbian cultures where you could find

⁵⁸ Ibid, 65.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 60-72. About youth trends in the 1960's and 1970's, see López de la Roche, *Izquierdas y Cultura*, Chapter 1. See also a study of musical trends and the orientation of lyrics in reference to a similar distinction between politics and counterculture in Hernando Cepeda, "Los Jóvenes durante el Frente Nacional. Rock y Política en Colombia en la Década del Sesenta," *Tabula Rasa* 9 (2008): 318-322. The author also contributes to the distinctions between high culture and popular culture using a combined analysis of the sociology of consumption, taste and its reflection in the cultural production in the 1960's and 1970's.

archeological testimony of past civilizations. Sites like San Agustín, Tierradentro, la Miel, Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta constituted privileged spaces for hippies.⁶⁰

Leftist militants entered academic programs to understand Colombian reality, and used Marxism as the methodology for interpreting the need for revolution. Although students consumed Marxism in a variety of theoretical combinations, the lack of alternatives to understand reality also inhibited the growth of a common language for understanding, triggering the typical criticism and discard of alternative viewpoints on how to transform Colombia social, political, and culturally. Skeptical to alternative views, hippies and revolutionaries constituted subcultures disputing allegiances in the epoch that Camilo Torres became chaplain and professor. The common ground that Camilo Torres was able to create among one and other sectors depended on three factors. Firstly, his role as a priest was not disrespected by the students, and by gaining their attention, he was able to make them focus on achievable goals that allowed multiple strategies to become reality. Camilo Torres pacified the harsh disputes in the student movement momentarily, evident in mobilizations and participatory actions in urban and rural areas. Secondly, the reason for such respect was that he was at the middle point between generations. He had the capacity to understand their codes, their anxieties, their expectations. Either hippies or revolutionaries, students were barely one generation from parents deeply committed to the Catholic faith, which preserved some of the authority that ecclesiastic representatives had within society. However, Camilo Torres had status markers that set him apart. This allowed him to transform conflicts in his favor, and to captivate an audience. Finally, although countercultural movements were not particularly close to Camilo Torres, after his death they heralded his cause without any hesitation.

In the early 1960's, the leftist groups were unclear about a project to transcend stages of revolutionary struggle, and Camilo Torres lacked a unique ideological platform to enter university

⁶⁰ Cited in López, *Izquierdas y Cultura*, 74.

debates. His access to the university's public debates was possible, for the pragmatism of his goals, and specially the fact that there were not clear leaders in the student movement. Repression affected students, workers, public sector unions, and the peasant movement; collective bargaining was directly manipulated by pro-establishment syndicates.⁶¹ In a context of weak movements and weak leaderships, the sectors gathered in order to achieve attainable goals settling ideological controversies under an apparently neutral leader: Camilo Torres. The left did not re-unite around Camilo Torres; they did not give up their traditional factionalist battles either. This was the concern of Camilo Torres and his aides from the student movement. His popular followers from shantytowns experienced increasing threats from government intelligence agents and the military. Fabio Vásquez offered him a visit to his rural warfront in Santander with the attempt to engage him in clandestine struggle in the ELN. The visit coincided with *Frente Unido's* rapid fragmentation in 1964.⁶² Some initiatives for re-composition of Camilo Torres had another opportunity after his death in 1966, but the disputes for his legacy and the ashes of the Organ promoted a complete separation among factions. Even today, during marches and anniversaries of Camilo Torres' death, the divisions are evident in manners by which they assemble, disperse, and agitate during ceremonies for revolutionary consecration of their martyr, hero and forgotten leader.

Camilo Torres provided a moral justification for maintaining the division between countercultural revolution, and leftist revolution. His lack of consumption of status symbols, and his detachment from markers of privilege gave to his image a pure aura of proper revolutionary choices and the ethical consistency necessary to keep up a revolutionary morality that he created along his career. In the next chapters, I will explore in detail his interest for sacrifice, martyrdom, and the increasing interest in death as the ultimate ritual for revolutionary sublimation. It is important to

⁶¹ Archila, *Idas y Venidas*, 208-210; Pécaut, *Orden y Violencia*, 138-140; Múnera, *Rupturas y Continuidades*.

⁶² For a detailed study of the events that promoted the collapse of Frente Unido, see Ruiz, *Sueño*, 187-213. Francisco Trujillo reports that Camilo Torres returned to Bogotá after the visit as a Sympatizer of the ELN, or as Walter Broderick suggest, a *guerrillero* in commission in the city. See, Trujillo, *Camilo y el Frente Unido*, 54-62. Broderick, *Camilo*, 284-290.

mention here that Camilo Torres' actions provided the ELN, and student leaders following him, an air of purity and superiority. The left and countercultural expressions both colonized the University in for competing for status. Enjoyment of life, autonomy and freedom was relatively safe on campus. Such isolation, and the repression launched later since 1965 by President Carlos Lleras Restrepo, enhanced the disputes after Camilo Torres' death the same year. The establishment saw his death as a political success. It was a lesson for those capable of resisting organized power. The university was the field for symbolic competitions, in which Camilo Torres had elements of messianism and sacrifice that were acceptable for a leader. . Yet, these qualities did not interfere with the micro-disputes that leftist leaders had for recognition. They also barely reached the hippies hypnotized by the transcendental truths they saw in an autonomous youth. Clearly, the "revolution" was mesmerized in its own narcissist reflection.

CHAPTER 8

CHARITY AND REDEMPTION:

CAMILO TORRES AND THE SHAPING OF A REVOLUTIONARY MORALITY

Walter Broderick suggests that Camilo Torres' sudden decision to start an ecclesiastic career in ecclesiastic ranks was an strategy to distance from his mother.¹ It might seem a contradiction, considering that he spent the rest of the book tailoring Camilo Torres' heroics against the silhouette of altruism and love for people. In a similar vein, Orlando Villanueva and Gustavo Pérez, probably the scholars that better know Camilo Torres life and thought, explain his decision as part of a personal interest to link social service and the teaching of values based on ideals of charity and love.² In this section I will explore his interest and trajectory as a Catholic seminary student, and the form how this process —despite detaching him from the direct experience of *La Violencia*—, lead to both his decision to study sociology in Europe, and the strengthening of commitment with charity and social work.

In his contact with the youth, journalists, and the student movement, Camilo Torres became a notable public intellectual. In the last chapter, I presented examples of intellectuals such as Alberto Zalamea and Marta Traba, whose figure was unusual for the public, perceived as distant from common people, with little ties to the population. In this chapter I suggest that Camilo Torres was an initial example of what can be named a public intellectual. I explore such image in terms of his political platform, loquacity in media, and particularly the projects of participatory research he lead.

¹ Broderick, *Camilo*, 80 and 128.

² Gustavo Pérez, *Camilo Torres Restrepo: Profeta para Nuestro Tiempo* (Bogotá: Indoamericana Press-CINEP-CODECAL, 1996) 90-107 and 130-147.

Scholarly research on Camilo Torres provides interesting insight in theories that explain the role of intellectuals in society and their distances and affinities with the masses.³ I will not discuss their contribution, and prefer to introduce an overview of his life in the light of Leadership. I explore Camilo Torres emergence as a leader in Europe and Colombia, and how that determined his public career. I argue that his efforts to organize strategic projects for education, participatory research, and political discussion, emerged in contradiction to the traditional authority of the Catholic Church. The clash with the religious institution caused an impact in the population, particularly among young people—an aspect that I will explore in more detail in chapter 10. He also held symbols of status and behaved in a form that distinguished from the rest. These characteristics were powerful in a front of an anxious youth seeking a powerful figure of leadership. These characteristics made him visible in the political landscape, for the values and moral coherence of his principles. It was by heralding criticism against the Catholic social doctrine that charity, love and individual mysticism became values he considered central for priests, attracting support from professionals as well. He fostered a new type of humanism that integrated religious beliefs and a scientific approach to reality where truth could be empirically demonstrated. For that purpose I explore the formation of the *Equipo Colombiano de Investigación Socio-Económica* (Colombian Team for Socio-Economic Research, henceforth ECISE) and his participation in the 1960's in the *Instituto de Administración Social* (Institute for the Social Administration, henceforth IAS), a committee on charge of land reform and educational transformation, as a board member. In both spaces he explored educational and legal strategies to instill necessary values to foster social change in Colombia. I also elaborate an argument that explains Camilo Torres' powerful image as a magnetic personality that represented, as in the case of Fabio Vásquez for peasant *guerrilleros*, the aspirations of the youth.

³ Although I do not center my argument in this aspect, I include part of its discussion in the next Chapters. I link it with scholarly research on the paradigm of *cachaco* in Bogotá, and the form how the first half of the 20th century was marked by the emergence of alternative intellectual perspective. For further perspectives on the topic, see Sánchez Lopera, "Ciencia, Revolución," 243-248; Urrego, *Intelectuales*, 42-65; López de la Roche, *Izquierdas y Cultura*, 48-54.

8.1 FROM THE SEMINARY TO EUROPE: DETACHMENT FROM NATIONAL REALITY

In 1946, When Camilo Torres entered the Universidad Nacional to study law; the student movement was not formed by the young generations that received him thirteen years after in 1959 with a mix of reluctance and curiosity as priest for the campus' chapel. During his short stint at University in 1946, students were older than him, and most were involved into debates between Liberals and Conservatives, enticed by Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's charisma and his populist political project. He did not found a clear linkage to concrete social experiences in which his compassion and social concerns could meet satisfactory answers or pragmatic efforts. Affective life also seemed elusive, since his only known relationship did not seem to transcend ulterior concerns he had about life, love and charity. He opted for an alternative that seemed to be the most effective approach to develop a clear commitment to people, social work, and altruism⁴. The sudden decision of joining the religious seminary in September 1947 parallels the radicalization of his discourse during his last year of political activism, right before entering the ELN's warfront in 1965⁵. In both cases, Camilo Torres took radical decisions to solve personal crises, and to scape narrow alternatives to social problem needed of practical solutions. When he made the decision to become a *guerrillero*, and detached from the public aura gained in the early 1960s, it was under the certainty that insurgent struggle could become a learning experience for understanding the Colombian rural predicament. As much as his life transformed when he became a seminar student and surrendered to faith in 1946, in the warfront in 1965 he humbly reduced himself to a state of abject poverty, ignorance and

⁴ 'From an early age he had good sentiments. If somebody came to our door begging for money, he would be upset if we declined them: How you dare to say no to them, here is my food? I'm not hungry and can eat later'. From an early age he loved the poor (...) He had a tremendous sense of charity' In Luis Ibañez, "Camilo Nació el Día que lo Mataron. Entrevista con Isabel Restrepo," *Revista OCLAE*, s.f. 44.

⁵ When Isabel Restrepo was asked about the origin of Camilo Torres radical standpoints against the church, she said: '-No, I think he had them before. Perhaps such influence came from Louvain Catholic University; it is a very advanced university despite having the name catholic. Also its sociological studies and, most important, the contact with people, with the misery and such absurd situations.' 'Camilo started with his revolutionary ideas in Lovaina'. In, Caycedo, *El Padre*, 157.

dispossession. Although they are substantially different instances of his life, they show how Camilo Torres was prone to radical decisions that can be explained by his persistent idealization of social causes, and the solutions considered as valuable. In both cases, his decisions fulfilled deeply embedded aspirations to redeem people from subjugation, ignorance and poverty, through personal sacrifice.

In the late 1940s, Camilo Torres was student at the Conciliar Seminary in Bogotá, political violence spread throughout the country. At the ecclesiastic institution, he was detached almost completely from the effects of *La Violencia*, a situation that affected his perception of the role of the church in Colombian society. In 1954, Camilo Torres completed studies at the seminary, and was ordained as a catholic priest. Soon after that, he traveled to Europe to study Sociology in the Catholic University of Leuven. In these years, he was a rather marginal witness of the student movement's radicalization, the decay of popular allegiance to traditional parties, and the first dictatorial hiatus that seated Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in power in 1953.⁶ Despite such isolation from reality, he was committed to a close study of the Catholic social doctrine trying to understand the decline in people's interest for the religious liturgy. At the Seminary, he saw how ecclesiastic leaders became increasingly detached from commitment to social causes. Similarly to his interest during high school, Camilo Torres organized Seminary peers into charity activities. There he showed the depth of his commitment, and early capacities for leadership:

The father José Restrepo, one of his teachers, had a house in the hill as a type of orphanage for kids without home (called in Bogotá gamines). Many fellow students at the seminary used to go there to entertain them and educate them. However no one was as assiduous or enjoyed as much in their company as Camilo did. Even father Restrepo thought seriously of him as his successor.⁷ He had observed a few humble houses in the hills right behind the seminary, dwelled by families of people working as flint stoners at nearby quarries. Camilo requested permission to visit them in order to give them religious instruction. Although it was an unusual request, it was granted by the seminary rectors. From that moment on, Camilo climbed during the hour for recreational activities after lunch, and helped a widow with her offspring, in an improvised home made with tin, old wooden boards,

⁶ For an analysis on the student movement and the institutional crisis in the 1950's, see Ruiz, Manuel, *Sueños y Realidades*, 25-36; Pécault, *Cronica*, 29-56; López, *Izquierdas y Cultura*, 36-51.

⁷ Broderick, Camilo, 79.

and card box. Despite controversies for his fellows regarded him as eccentric, giving him the nickname of *Camiloco* [Crazy-Camilo]. He thought it was the beginning of his apostolate.⁸

These activities can be explained as strategies to satisfy personal intellectual questions, and to diminish the anxiety caused by the isolated lifestyle at the Seminary. Firstly, by creating a study group he showed interest beyond the regular doctrinaire studies offered at the ecclesiastic educational system. The group read texts related to the Catholic social doctrine. In the 1920's Colombia observed the emergence of alternative intellectual circles that made both autonomous attempts to diversify official narratives instilled by the church during half century of strict control of educative institutions.⁹ The impact of conservative intellectual trends was observable in schools and universities, especially among members of the upper classes. In spite the economic decay of his family, they offered an open intellectual environment that inspired his concerns. Secondly, his promotion of extracurricular charitable activities was a strategy to develop effective action. Through charity activities Camilo Torres familiarized with problems such as poverty and illiteracy, and the abandonment of both the Church and the government. Since the 1930's a strong feeling of popular disenchantment with the Church concerned ecclesiastic authorities, making necessary to thigh measures at the local level. This implied the habilitation of parochial priests to regain people's obedience. Manuals were widely distributed, and became the guidelines for religious practices, for instance in peasant communities and urban popular sectors.¹⁰ Camilo Torres was aware of these

⁸ Ibid., 78.

⁹ Hernández, "Los Leopardos", 221-223.

¹⁰ It was until the 1960's that the first official ecclesiastic meetings centered in the solution of peasant disenchantment in Colombia. In the 1950's the initial Congress on rural life took place in Manizalez (1953), Santiago de Chile (1957); Primer Congreso Catolico de la Vida Rural, Bogotá (1959) In Colombia, pioneer texts such as Juan Botero, *Justicia conmutativa y contratos*, (1961), and the *minutes of the Primer Seminario Nacional Sobre la Reforma Agraria para Curas Parrocos* (1964) introduced the earliest concrete resolutions for the crisis of liturgy. The delayed response to religious detachment caused an intense activity in Colombia to optimize efforts and catch up with the rest of Latin America. The CELAM (*Conferencia Episcopal para América Latina / Latin American Episcopal Conference*), created in Brazil in 1955, became the platform for theological discussion of the catholic crisis in the region, and gave birth to groups that fostered rather radical standpoints against ecclesiastic detachment from social initiatives. Until the 1960's the CELAM was active mostly in intellectual discussions and grassroots level creation of *comunidades de base* (Base Communities), that served to articulate the Theology of Liberation. Its leverage within the ecclesiastic hierarchy was reduced, and in the late 1968s the groups was increasingly isolated, until 1972 when the CELAM changed its orientation towards conservative interpretation of the theology. The main strategies before mid1960's were the strengthening of liturgy, plans for priest to undertake rural collective communitarian discussions

processes, and acted beyond the regular vows of obedience in a religious seminary. Since the 1950's, ecclesiastic leaders implemented programs to increase popular affiliation with the Church, particularly in rural areas where liturgy lost its influence. The fear was to allow communities to autonomously congregate without church's supervision.¹¹

These activities set him apart in the Seminary. Camilo Torres showed characteristics of enthusiasm and leadership, but without clear political interest or prejudices or interest. The same attitude marked, for instance, his incorporation in charitable activities with the *Acción Católica* (Catholic Action) besides the Montalvo Family. The *Acción Católica*, a subsidiary group of the *opus dei*, deserved criticism to Camilo Torres from friends at Universidad Nacional.¹² Beyond the sectarianism that marked Colombia in the late 1940's, his interest was to make something for the poor, the ignorant and disadvantaged. A closer analysis of the interest of his group of study will provide elements to understand moral principles contained in his social work. His ideas on developed into a political perception that conflicted with the Catholic social doctrine.

8.2 CATHOLIC SOCIAL DOCTRINE: INTELLECTUAL INTERESTS AND CRITICISM TO THE DOGMA

From his early intellectual interest, Camilo Torres was at safe distance from Marxism.¹³ If his primary interest was a 'decided commitment to participate in social work',¹⁴ he emphasized the

on local issues, and distribution of handbooks for moral behavior calling to close ranks against socialist ideologies. Although these manuals were not traced back, Congress minutes and memories make reference to their use. It is necessary to mention that in Colombia similar strategies used in the 1940's were effective, particularly because political allegiance was intertwined to the religious affinity with the conservative party. See, Guillén, *El Poder*, 245-312. González, Fernán, *Podere Enfrentados*, Chapter 3, Figueroa, *Tradicionalismo*, 29-54. The first Episcopal conferences, that served as sources for these initial meetings centered in the rehabilitation of catholic liturgy, in CM-CIDOC, *Cathedra, Revista de Cultura Eclesiástica*, Vol IX, X, 1956, (861 / 92.271). In the collection of CELAM documents reviewed at CM-CIDOC, it is evident that the groups was regarded since the late 1968s as a rebellious tendency lead by middle class young priests, that led to a decided strategy for the formulation of innovative plans to incorporate youth's dialogue with the ecclesiastic traditional authorities. Restrepo, Javier Darío, *Golconda*, Introduction.

¹¹ Marulanda, Elsy, *Colonización*, 94-99; Figueroa, *Tradicionalismo*, chapter 2; Vargas, *Magdalena Medio*, 34, 143-161.

¹² Villanueva, *Camilo*, 28, 36.

¹³ Broderick, *Camilo*, 41.

¹⁴ Villanueva, *Camilo*, 33.

religious mandate for sacrifice and dismissed political motivations.¹⁵ Teresa Montalvo, who met Camilo Torres during his transition from school to the Seminary, said that ‘he was a very religious boy, something miraculous considering the environment in which he was raised not the most pious for that epoch. I remember him going to mess at noon in La Veracruz [a parish in central Bogotá, assigned to Camilo Torres after his return from Belgium], and when the priest raised the sacramental bread, he used to kneel in front of everybody in order to give example’.¹⁶ Walter Broderick interpreted Camilo Torres devotion, self-humiliation and sacrifices as ‘situations fostering abandonment and spiritual poverty. It was the cult to heroics as if being defeated and humbled by the capacities of the poor helped him to ridicule the rich and powerful’.¹⁷ Heroics imply moral commitment to a cause that transcends individual interests, where politics and faith. Leadership requires levels of commitment based on exemplary lessons, a central source of morals. Camilo Torres’ actions, transformed his religious aspirations into a political agenda. I argue that Walter Broderick’s interpretation of Camilo Torres sacrifices are intimately linked to the author’s predilection for radical revolutionary priests in Colombia. His analysis of heroics and sacrifice require a closer examination, that links to further features of Camilo Torres’ experience, particularly in relation to the youth. This perspective has received little attention by scholarly research. It is dubious that Camilo Torres consciously perceived his actions as heroics. It cannot be demonstrated using Walter Broderick’s apologetic speculations. In other words, it is necessary to move beyond emotional exaltations, and verify the origin of Camilo Torres acts of sacrifice. I propose to study them in the context of individual sublimation and revolutionary redemption during the heyday of

¹⁵ Broderick, *Camilo*, 42.

¹⁶ Pérez, *Camilo Torres*, 80-81.

¹⁷ Broderick, *Camilo*, 87.

youth's involvement in politics.¹⁸ Such analysis allows me to presume that these rituals practices of detachment and sacrifice are intertwined to the nature of religious and political activism.

In the large bibliography available about his life and death, Camilo Torres' leadership capacities have been underestimated. In this dissertation I attempt to demonstrate that his pragmatic and intellectual ambitions were intertwined, making moral assertions on education, religious values, and love, the fundamental elements for understanding his activism/research agenda. His commitment to charitable activities, the concern for education, and vision of liturgies as core rituals for redemption through the enlightenment of a truth —scientific or religious— become the corollary of Camilo Torres mysticism.¹⁹ With that in mind, it is necessary to assess his progression towards an increasingly secularized perception of social work, and charity, and how such experience became an instrument for repulsion to the Church's social doctrine, regarding the minimal commitment to love and charity.²⁰ These aspects marked his path as a public intellectual in Colombia.

At the seminar, with Gustavo Pérez Ramirez, Camilo Torres formed a group for study of scholastic philosophy and the social doctrine of the Catholic Church.²¹ It was oriented to understand the Church's social doctrine after Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. In the encyclical, the Church made public its position against the growing influence of socialist ideas among industrial workers. The encyclical, titled '*Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor*', was intended to offer 'some opportune remedy for the misery and wretchedness pressing so unjustly on the majority of the working class'. The highest ecclesiastic authorities wanted to avoid social 'mischief increased by rapacious usury,

¹⁸ Probably the most intense ritualization of Camilo Torres' life was undertaken in the work by Pérez, *Camilo Torres*. The author makes a great effort to consolidate the myth about his life, purity and social commitment. Another interesting example is the variety of interviews and analysis published in Caycedo, *El Padre Camilo*. The case of Carlos Arango, is an fictional narrative based on information gathered among followers of Camilo, in Arango, *Yo VÍ*; see also Horacio Bojorge, *Retrato de Camilo Torres* (México: Grijalbo, 1969); Fernando Soto Aparicio, *La Siembra de Camilo* (Bogotá: Plaza & Janes, 1971).

¹⁹ Medina, *ELN*, 66-70. Arango, *Yo VÍ*, 174-177.

²⁰ Broderick, *Camilo*, 127-140; Caycedo, *El Padre Camilo*, 80-87, 128-131; Trujillo, *Camilo y el Frente*, 26-33.

²¹ Pérez, *Camilo Torres*, 94.

which, although more than once condemned by the Church', was 'still practiced by covetous and grasping men'. Leo XIII's encyclical aimed to 'remedy these wrongs' by fostering the elites to have a better political grip. The goal was tackling 'the socialists, [who are] working on the poor man's envy of the rich, [that] are striving to do away with private property, and contend that individual possessions should become the common property of all, to be administered by the State or by municipal bodies. They hold that by transferring property from private individuals to the community'.²² In 1891, when the encyclical was issued, the Belgian paradigm of ecclesiastic interaction with workers had already developed mechanisms to 'overcome/compensate effects of individual liberalism, and to tackle social revolt',²³ diminishing abuses from industrialists. Influenced by the principles of Louis Rutten's work, Belgian priests in the late 19th and early 20th century became a role model for priests across the world. The encyclical and works written by the Belgian priest were selected by Camilo Torres for the study group.

Initially, the study group was surreptitious. Despite the noble attempt to explore the 'integral humanism' that became the kernel of his theological standpoint, the Seminary was a space bounded to limited theological innovation. It was with help of Vicente Andrade Valderrama, and José Gómez, both in the administrative direction of the Seminary, that the initiative was accepted and supported, no with an arrangement for making such studies —and further charitable activities that seemed appropriated— during breaks, or free time during weekends. In the same epoch, Vicente Andrade Valderrama was a Jesuitical priest that promoted religious initiatives in the light of the Social Catholic Doctrine. He was an active advocate of impeding socialist ideologies from gaining influence upon labor unions.²⁴ For that matter, he was active in the Catholic social action, an initiative

²² http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum_en.html. Consulted Feb 27, 2011.

²³ Marcela Pronko, "La Doctrina Social de la Iglesia y la Formación de los Trabajadores," in *Universidades del Trabajo en Argentina y Brasil: una Historia de las Propuestas de su Creación; entre el Mito y el Olvido* (Montevideo: CINTERFOR, 2003), 33.

²⁴ Vicente Andrade Valderrama contributed in the 1940's to the creation of 'El Colegio Campestre', an elite school that based on Jesuitical principles of organization, fostered an educative schema with a Liberal purpose. This school besides the 'Gimnasio

bounded to limit the influence of the *Confederación Colombiana de Trabajadores* (Colombian Workers Confederation, henceforth CTC) for its clear leftist and communist leanings.²⁵ Besides an enthusiasm for writing on topics related to Social Catholic Doctrine, since 1944 the priest Vicente Andrade Valderrama was committed to the creation of the *Unión de Trabajadores de Colombia* (Colombian Workers Union, henceforth UTC). Twenty years later, when Camilo Torres was already a political figure respected by the youth and *Frente Nacional's* opposition, Vicente Andrade Valderrama defined both theological and mundane guidelines in an attempt to settle the ground for land reform under the close supervision of the Catholic Church. He wrote a suitable definition of the Catholic social doctrine 'The Catholic Church, as depository of revealed truths and the moral, to which every social and economic activity should be subject, and the teaching of such mandatory principles and norms constitutes the so called social doctrine of the Church'²⁶. These were concepts that the Church barely debated. The same argument was sustained by Vicente Andrade Valderrama since the 1950's in *El Catolicismo*, a journal written by leading ecclesiastic intellectuals that since the

Moderno', became the educational platform for the growing demand for education with a standards distinguished from public schooling system. For further elements on how schools became spaces for collaboration and competition among elite members, see Ruiz, "La Política del Sport," 24-32, 56-62. López, "A Beautiful Class," 28, 50.

²⁵ Archila, *Cultura e Identidad*, 220-243; Pécaut, *Orden*, 246-306. For transformations in the relations state-unions in the 1960's, see, Pécaut, *Crónica*, 39-46, 73-85.

²⁶ Vicente Andrade Valderrama's paper was featured in the event. Among the principles for the catholic church related to land tenure, can be highlighted: 'Agrarian reform is aimed to a fair distribution of land so it can serve to elevate life standards for those who cultivate it' (...) 'Property is a natural right; the propriety of the right to life in relation to the right of property makes that in extreme case, when necessary, peasants can take the necessary land, without violating the property rights. Property has a Social function. In consequence, it is the social function of land property what creates obligations and limitations. Based on John XXIII, the function is intrinsic and inherent, what means that the need to live in dignity and comfort for every man, is conditioned by the needs of the family and in from these rights is determined human solidarity'. (see, *Primer Congreso Católico de la Vida Rural*) 'The state, besides defending the right to property, should guarantee that it accomplishes its social function, and should supervise the process in conformity with its mission'. 'Problems of property and moral norms in the Colombian case: 'Occupation of 'baldíos' (unoccupied land). Morals and law always have recognized as an original proof of property the occupation, and in spite some land in the national territory have not an owner, they are 'baldíos', and then they belong to the State. However, this is not been enough to validate upon them the natural right to their occupation, despite the accomplishment of legal requirements for receiving the protection from positive law. In these cases, when over occupied land no property claims can be proved, their occupation does not affect the rights of others and ownership by the occupier can be legitimately granted by the competent authority' In *Memorias del Primer Seminario Nacional Sobre la Reforma Agraria para Curas Párrocos*, Bogotá, 19-24 Octubre, 1964, 13-15. It is necessary that future scholarly research analyze the doctrines present in the ecclesiastic discourse, and how it was contradicted by practices and political decisions. Although Camilo Torres was familiar with these doctrines, his contention was for the incapacity of making them effective

government of Laurano Gomez constituted a tribune for the philosophical definition of the moral doctrine of the state.²⁷

Camilo Torres launched the study group with further readings. For instance, Louis Rutten's texts where propositions for centralized governmental strategies oriented to benefit the working class. His texts were influential in Belgium, where technical institutions had a mandate to offer education as a 'value attributed to the individual to enhance its productive capacity' making education to be regarded as 'a national social asset'. The progress that would come after the transition would be reflected in both industries and workers, making the first more competitive, so the second could enjoy greater welfare benefits. Catholic University of Leuven became an example for Camilo Torres, where the 'masterminds that delineated and channeled the Belgian social Catholic movement, gave space for a case hardly comparable to any other in the Catholic world' irradiating pragmatic principles that he envisioned as a coherent strategy to implement in Colombia.²⁸ Camilo Torres was also familiar to the work of Omer Buyse, who that founded both the University of Labor in Charleroi, and the Belgium Peasant League in 1903. The classic example was the Flemish Bourenbord, foundational touchstone of many socio-Christian political organizations in Europe. Although these authors were not explicitly mentioned in the academic work of Camilo Torres, Gustavo Pérez Ramírez confirmed in interviews given to Orlando Villanueva, Eduardo Umaña Luna and Walter Broderick, their enthusiasm for Louis Rutten and Omen Buyse's work, and how they dedicated most of their lives to organize Christian syndicates and professionals in guild-like groups linked by Catholic values.

In the Colombian context, Juan Botero became the beacon of the Christian Workers Movement, and his *Manual del Trabajo* (Work's Manual) was read in Camilo Torres study group as

²⁷ Villanueva, *Camilo*, 65; Torres, *Cristianismo y Revolución*, 207.

²⁸ Pronko, "La Doctrina Social", 34.

well.²⁹ They also studied the work of Andres Basset, in a publication famous for its outreach in the definition of ecclesiastic's inference in civil claims for land.³⁰ For instance, in the 1960's the publications of Juan Botero and Andres Basset became referential handbooks in processes of land expropriation, particularly when the parts called for ecclesiastic intervention during law suits. Despite these rhetoric references to the peasant's right to property, and the importance of social well-being, the Catholic Church was committed to protect landowners' right over land taken from peasants, settlers and sharecroppers.³¹ The misguided use of such guidelines, and theological rhetoric references made by both Andres Basset and Vicente Andrade Valderrama, were evidence of how the ecclesiastic hierarchy worked for the interest of powerful families, and not for the disadvantaged. Although there is not explicit evidence of the criticism that Camilo Torres might have made to the use of Andres Basset's handbook, it is interesting how during his debates with the Catholic Church's in the 1960's, Camilo Torres dismissed its traditional rhetoric. In the 1950's, such references he studied were crippling the effective advancement towards land reform policies. Dismissing such theological source, he made direct references to the Bible, combined with his own perspective on the subject matter. This is one of the first documents that show clues on how Camilo Torres was radicalizing

The mission of the priest is completely supernatural. He should life from the divine life, and his life is instrument for transmitting it. However: "For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people" (Hebrew 5:1-3) The priest should be in the world, even though he might not belong to that world. He must cry, with those who cry and enjoy. He must perform the Lord's incarnation taking the whole commitment for a responsibility with mankind's destiny.³²

²⁹ Botero, Juan, *Justicia conmutativa y contratos* (Bogotá, Colombia: San Juan Eudes, 1961).

³⁰ Villanueva, Camilo; Orlando Villanueva, *Camilo: Pensamiento y Proyecto Político* (Bogotá: Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, 2007), 36-38.

³¹ About the contradictory rhetoric of the church regarding land reform, and its impact on the professionalization of Sociology in Colombia see, Sánchez Lopera, "Ciencia, Revolución," 242. The author emphasizes on how an ambivalent rhetoric led to the radicalization of faculty members at the Department, and the beginning of pedagogic projects for participatory research. Villanueva, *Camilo, Acción*, 171-182.

³² *El Catolicismo*, Junio 28, 1962; cited in, Torres, *Cristianismo y Revolución*, 207.

This document was central during his detachment from the Catholic Church in the 1960s. The tone of the editorial is clearly undermining the foundation of the Catholic social doctrine, addressing political and religious authorities in Colombia with an unprecedented tone from a member of the Church. The text was published in *El Catolicismo*, and constitutes an attack to the ecclesiastic principles of truth formation and its doctrine in both moral and practical terms. Regarding land reform, Camilo Torres' had doubts about the Catholic social doctrine and role of the priesthood. In his text, written with a clear sociological insight, the tone of his criticism heightened. The document was the result of several works, including a thesis written for Catholic University of Leuven,³³ an article on poverty,³⁴ and a text on rural poverty.³⁵ However, the early inspiration for such criticism to the Catholic social doctrine were not included among the texts used for his thesis in sociology.

Camilo Torres research was highly influenced by the mentoring and friendship with François Houtart, an Abbe who was teaching sociology at Catholic University of Leuven as well. The creation of ECISE was a continuity of François Houtart's FERES (International Federation of Institutes for Social and Social-Religious Studies), created to coordinate initiatives led by priests in Latin America on education and participatory research. The importance of this initiative was the notion of development, promoting '*technological civilization*'. Development was supposed to avoid the imposition of values that could disaggregate peasants' lifestyle in regions experiencing massive urban migration. The Catholic Church's role in development was to instruct 'technological values which would enable them to solve their problems'.³⁶ In his thesis, Camilo Torres made an effort to cite multiple empirical references that scientifically legitimized his data and research findings, in order to demonstrate social

³³ Aproximación estadística a la realidad socioeconómica de la ciudad de Bogotá, in Torres, *Cristianismo y Revolución*, 110-115.

³⁴ Investigación sobre la asimilación de la familia inmigrante a la ciudad in *Ibid.*, 181-184.

³⁵ La violencia y los cambios socio-culturales en las áreas rurales colombianas, in *Ibid.*, 227-269.

³⁶ Matthew O'Meagher, "Before Liberation Theology: Catholicism, Development, and the Christian Revolution in Latin America, 1959-68," *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies* 3, 2 (1997), 61-62.

inequality and its effects in rural life.³⁷ He was trying to substitute the Catholic social doctrine as a divine source of truth, and replace it for empirical corpuses of data, scientifically gathered and studied, and presented in the formal language of sociology.³⁸ From his point of view, social knowledge was integral to theological doctrines. By dismissing traditional theological sources used by the ecclesiastic authorities in Colombia, he contended not only the value of its truths, but also the social and divine scope of the doctrine. Ecclesiastic authorities in Bogotá did not anticipated his contentious perceptions on the Church's social doctrine. This explains why Camilo Torres used a theological tone in the editorial. The goal was to point out the moral, political and theological crisis of the Catholic social doctrine.

Camilo Torres went even further in his corrosive analysis of the Catholic Church regarding social matters. In this document, he criticized the role of priest in society, in terms of a moral deviance:

[Writing about the priest's role] Although their mission is specifically supernatural, exist the imperative of charity: "Christ's charity is urging us". The measure of Charity is god's people needs. That explains why there existed bishops with temporal powers as both judges and princes. This explains why missionaries have occasionally to exercise medicine. Law is for man, and not man for law. (...) therefore, many priests ought to assume temporal functions, either in sciences or education. In this last field their intervention is easier to explain. Education for been integral should open for supernatural, despite its terrain is purely temporal.³⁹

The Catholic social doctrine barely reached the large peasant population —compared to the working class hired at industries. Ecclesiastic relation to the population was at odds considering

³⁷ Orlando Villanueva deducts that based on Camilo Torres interest in empirical analysis, and his formation as a sociologist combining social theories and methodologies to interpret data; his effort was fundamentally to empirically demonstrate poverty in Bogotá, and how it is inherent to the social system that hampers in cycles their social mobility. The same explanatory circularity was part of his political platform later in 196 when he was part of the *Instituto de Administración Social* (Institute for Social Administration). There, explaining the structures for underdevelopment, Camilo Torres use a circular logic, where an economic, demographic, cultural, political. In CM-CIDOC FOL 320.9861/c1837, fol 123-125. Some excerpts from this text will be analyzed regarding the nature of charity and leadership in the formation of political movements for Camilo Torres. See also, *Tertulia sobre la Reforma Agraria*, CM-CIDOC, F01 261.83 T6936c f 8-10.

³⁸ Camilo Torres influence in the professionalization of sociology in Colombia is the topic studied by Mónica Zuleta and Alejandro Sánchez Lopera, "La Batalla por el Pensamiento Propio en Colombia," *Nómadas*, 27 (2007), 124-141; see also a general analysis centered in the influence of Orlando Fals Borda, who was a close friend of Camilo Torres and one of the first sociologist educated in USA, interested in participatory research and who helped him to enter the department as a Faculty member, in Alexander Pereyra, "Orlando Fals Borda, Orlando Fals Borda: la Travesía Romántica de la Sociología en Colombia," *Crítica & Emancipación*, 1, 2 (2009), 211-247. See also, Fals Borda, *Orlando, Ciencia Propia y Colonialism Intelectual*, (México: Nuestro Tiempo, 1970), 22-32.

³⁹ Torres, *Cristianismo y Revolución*, 207-208.

that by centering theological debates on urban and industrial affairs misguided the solution of the main social issues brought about during *La Violencia*. By dismissing pastoral work in rural areas displaced people had to rely on the minimal welfare offered by the government in shanty towns. This factor stimulated abandonment to the Catholic faith, or at least a reduced participation in its rituals, probably the only contact between priests and communities. The fact that Camilo Torres addressed these problems in his early sociological research might suggest that he perceived theological doctrine, and particularly *Quadragesimo Anno* –Pius XI’s encyclical issued in the early 1930’s, as examples on how the circumscription to a unique theological source reduced the Colombian ecclesiastic hierarchy’s capacity to understand the popular predicament. Although Camilo Torres has been considered as derisive of Marxism in the epoch, it is unlikely that his attitude was product of deep convictions or a result of actual theoretical readings. He was sensitive to practical achievements for social causes, and leftist groups were crippled by the dogmatism of their convictions. It was the proof of the ineffective dialogue between theory and reality. When Walter Broderick explains that ‘he ridiculed their mentality and determinism expressed in articles published in reviews’.⁴⁰ it is unlikely that Camilo Torres had read the theories that motivated their confrontations. How could that be good for the betterment of people, if the initial effect is hatred and ideological fragmentation? Such hatred and divisionism was what he found at Universidad Nacional, and certainly might have caused a perception that leftist mentality deluded people, impairing to coordinate efforts for effective solutions to social dilemmas.

A similar delusion affected the Church. The Catholic social doctrine was not oriented to the solution of peasant’s difficulties, and the masses crowded in shanty towns were not even able to get a job and a regular salary to be at least incorporated within the social categories that the encyclicals were concerned for. Working class’s collective bargaining became a matter of concern for the

⁴⁰ Broderick, *Camilo*, 41.

government for the obstruction they could cause in the national productivity. However, the majority of the urban popular sectors did not have access to the competition for the jobs they required in order to be unionized. The integral humanism proposed by Camilo Torres in the late 1950's was oriented to increase education, namely technical training, as it was the most likely ladder for climbing out of abject misery. Ideological disputes divided the working class, and internally unions reproduced hierarchies and privileges. In conclusion, both Marxist theories and theological doctrines were disconnected from actual political action; they could not address or resolve crucial social.

Already in Belgium, Camilo Torres read enthusiastically the foundational texts of integral humanism, particularly the work of Jacques Maritain. It had gained special audience for rehabilitating St. Thomas Aquinas in a dialogue between philosophy and theology.⁴¹ At Catholic University of Leuven Jacques Leclercq had a good reputation after creating the *Centre de Recherches Sociologiques* in 1955, for the study of the discipline and its intersections with politics and philosophy.⁴² His courses were followed by Camilo Torres. The dialogue between normally differentiated fields of knowledge was also an alternative to existentialist questions that in the 1960's were addressed within an epistemology that privileged hermeneutics.⁴³ Instead, the integration of politics, sociology and philosophy aimed to transform theology by modernizing its philosophical ground.⁴⁴ It was an initiative to move beyond speculative metaphysics without denying the role that faith and morals had played in social organization. It was an intellectual milieu propitious for Camilo Torres' vision of popular redemption.

⁴¹ Jacques Maritain and Raissa Maritain, *Oeuvres Completes, 1947-1951* (Fribourg; Paris: Editions Universitaires Fribourg/Edition Saint Paul, 1990).

⁴² Some of Leclercq best known work in Latin America, also translated into English are *The religious vocation* (New York: Kenedy , 1955) *The Christian and World integration* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1963); *Introduction a la Sociologie* (Several editions).

⁴³ Maritain, *Oeuvres*, 757-764.

⁴⁴ Emmanuel Gerard and Paul Wynants, *Histoire du Movement Ouwrier Chretien en Belgique* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994), Chapters 3-4.

Charles Moeller was another contributor to *Cité Chretienne*, the *Revue Thomiste* and the *Revue Philosophique de Leuven* since the 1950's. The wide range of topics he discussed included studies on common elements that clustered Judaism, Protestantism and Catholicism under the all-encompassing banner of humanism. It was a dialogue sparked internationally by the Declaration of Human rights in 1948, and that momentarily inhibited the divisions that set Europe in conflict in the first half of the 20th century. The prolific literature and exchanges that fostered new tendencies in France, Belgium and Italy were flagships, in opposition to trends that instilled dogmatic and intolerant perceptions of Catholicism in both Spain and Portugal. Charles Moeller was one of the most influential teachers during Camilo Torres' studies at Leuven. His general work was bound to 'disclosing the synergy between humanism and faith, in order to attain a united world beyond moralist constrains and crippling ideological standards'.⁴⁵ At Leuven, Camilo Torres clearly was influenced by many different voices contributing to a renovation of humanism.

In the 1960's Camilo Torres influence in the professionalization of Sociology helped to heighten his figure at Universidad Nacional. Former studies about Camilo Torres intellectual formation have not offered an explanatory overview of the place that theological debate had in the epoch.⁴⁶ In the process of refusing Catholic principles that justified peasant's dispossession of land by landowners, the Catholic social doctrine was contradicted by ecclesiastic practices and the moral shelter that oligarchy had for their actions. Considered in general terms, the work of Andrés Basset and Vicente Andrade Valderrama served as a theological platform for the ecclesiastic's disregard for peasant claims for a land reform in Colombia. Years later, part of Camilo Torres' argument against the Church was the support given to the systematic elite' obstruction to reforms, and how local priests discouraged peasants claiming for their rights. In this case it is evident that Camilo Torres

⁴⁵ Charles Moeller, *Man and Salvation in Literature* (South Bend: Notre Dame University Press, 1970); *Modern mentality and evangelization*, Vol 1 (New York: Alba House, 1968).

⁴⁶ See, Ruiz, *Sueños y Realidades*, 117-145; Villanueva, *Camilo, Acción*, 11-26. Mario Aguilera et al, *Camilo Torres y la Universidad Nacional de Colombia* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2002),15-18.

formation as a sociologist, did not affect his conviction that the Church had to undertake serious steps to break the vicious cycle of poverty. Instead, by adopting sociological research methods he wanted to provide scientific explanations for poverty, and by the same token giving legitimacy to concrete decisions bounded to bring about change. His vision of social transformation was revolutionary, but opposed to Marxism. Instead of the Marxism as a corpus of methods and explanatory concepts, Camilo Torres' considered that sociology could be articulated to strategies such as charity, love and personal sacrifices. These were elements that he did not find either in Catholic social doctrines or the interest of leftist academics engaged in political activism at the University.

Camilo Torres seminary life has being object of study, reprint, controversy and cult. However, there is not analysis explaining how his intellectual interest was enhanced by the decision to undertake professional studies in Belgium. I argue that such connection is possible to understand in the analysis of values he defended, and his vision of education. Both aspects were linked to his father idea on educational reform, proposed and discussed in the 1920's and 1930's.⁴⁷ Camilo Torres contention with the Catholic Church was beyond the theoretical elements of doctrinaire theology. His rejection to theory and celebration of practice also was influenced by his father's conception of education. I will explore how Camilo Torres' political agenda was compatible to his theological reflections, bounded towards the constitution of an integral humanism. Such standpoint inspired his life, actions, decisions, sacrifices, and was a cornerstone in the dialogue he established in the 1960's with the youth.

⁴⁷ Broderick, *Camilo*, 106-116; Villanueva, *Camilo: Pensamiento*, Chapter 3; Villanueva, *Camilo, Acción*, 57-77.

8.3 FROM EUROPE TO COLOMBIA: BUILDING LEADERSHIP

In parallel to the process of writing a research thesis in order to graduate from Catholic University of Leuven, Camilo Torres created a network of Colombian academics ready to contribute in the transformation of the country, using what they had learn abroad. Based on former communications with student leaders in each city, Camilo Torres was able to join and commit efforts from students unsatisfied with the political affairs after *La Violencia*. They shared a critical perspective of the restrictive political system in Colombia, and the necessity for an expansion of popular participation in political affairs. They had common liaisons with religious communities promoting revisionism of the Catholic social doctrine, sharing the expectation of returning to Colombia to bring about social change. In June 1956, the *Equipo Colombiano de Investigación Socio-Económica* (Colombian Team for Socio-Economic Research, henceforth ECISE) was created and started to circulate its project. It was planned as a resource for young Colombian intellectuals living abroad. Common shared features were the commitment with social change, and an interest to engaging education and political action for the improvement of social conditions in the country. By the end of that year, Camilo Torres had already engaged in representatives for ECISE in Bogotá, Caracas, Paris, London, Berlin and Leuven.⁴⁸

The choice for a degree in sociology was in part the natural decision regarding his familiar background, namely his father perception on education, social projection of though in action, and the ambition to demonstrate empirically the predominant crisis in Colombia. Catholic University of Leuven of was critical to the Catholic social doctrine, making Camilo Torres a central figure in the debate in representation of Latin America. Until the 1950's it was common that Colombian students at the Catholic University of Leuven, and other European programs in theology —particularly in

⁴⁸ Torres, *Cristianismo y Revolución*, 21. In his journey to Bogotá to collect data for the thesis, he met in every one of these cities with a leader and representative of committees for ECISE. The only committee that did not continued in the effort led by Camilo Torres was the one organized in Berlin.

Paris and Rome— were part of national elites, and heralded staunch conservative perspectives about the Catholic doctrine in tandem with powerful oligarchies. In Europe, priest from Colombia arrived with an aura of privilege, particularly those studying in Rome or Paris. Although Camilo Torres was born in an elite family, his parents struggled to maintain him in institutions that could grant both status and connections for his future. The following excerpt sheds light upon Camilo Torres' life when entering the ecclesiastic career:

Seminary students came from a variety of backgrounds, reflecting the social pyramid. The wide base was formed by young boys from peasant or working class families. The narrow top was formed by members of wealthy families from Bogotá, most of them known by Camilo. There he met the Montalvo, siblings of her ex-girlfriend, and some others had studied at Liceo Cervantes, besides several cousins and relatives from several branches of his family. Most young boys in his cohort were pre destined to succeed, coming to the seminary with an imaginary aura in their luggage. In between both social groups represented by the student's body, existed a small number of boys that were neither poor nor wealthy. The seminary youth in the middle ranks had a secured life in comfortable positions as church ministers, but could not reach such ecclesiastic responsibilities without help from the top ranks.⁴⁹

Camilo Torres' increasing notability was the result of continued efforts organizing activities at school, charitable groups, churches, the seminary, and finally in Europe. Every space gave him an opportunity to put enthusiasm to work. He was already recognized as a leader, and his ambition was to bolster ECISE beyond the limited perspective of re-linking the young professionals into the job market in Colombia. ECISE emerged as a young professional's pact to resolve issues such as the quality of Colombian education, the necessity of immediate changes in the political structure in Colombia, and the uncertainty sparked by the dictatorial term of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla.⁵⁰ The ECISE aimed to open up a dialogue in Colombia, where the educated middle and upper middle classes would undertake reformations to ameliorate the main problems affecting Colombia. Camilo Torres was able to commit professionals to work and maintain the network in order to 'coordinate the institutions open to collaborate in our program' by pushing forward the ECISE's four main

⁴⁹ Broderick, *Camilo*, 62. Teresa Montalvo made a comment that reflects how important social connections were to find good placement within the ecclesiastic institutions: 'what might have caused Camilo's vocation for priesthood was the friendship with my male sons. They are now priests and one came recently (1968) for the International Eucharistic Congress, as personal secretary of Paul VI in, Caycedo, *El padre*, 156.

⁵⁰ López, "A Beautiful Class," 109-196.

goals. Pedagogy and social work were frontline strategies to reverse the pervasive effects of *La Violencia*. Some excerpts of ECISE's proposal will shed light about its range of action, goals and strategies.

Project for the ECISE – June 1956

I. Already discussed principles upon which we have already agreed:

- 1, The most important crisis in our country is the Crisis of the Human Element
- 2, The most effective form to solve it is the union of the youth around central elements: the science in its social effects, and social service without interest for retribution.
- 3, the stages for acquisition and realization of these former two aspects (Science and social service), are the following:

- Scientific and ethical formation
- Research about the realities of the country
- Solutions for the problems investigated
- Implementation of such solutions found. (...)

II. Organizational project for achieving the former principles.

- 1, To gather individual in all activities who agree with our principles, both in Colombia and abroad.
2. Coordinate institutions ready to cooperate accordingly with our phases and with the same spirit that inspire the movement.⁵¹

An aspect of interest in the project was its clear statement of 'putting into practice the project by all legal means within our range of capacities'.⁵² Furthermore, certain tone of surreptitious strategy can be sensed in the goal of taking over institutions:

We will intent to coordinate all administrative and political organisms. Wherever we might find resistances, we will attempt to infiltrate our members in such organisms, in order to orientate them towards our patriotic and scientific goals.⁵³

Although not as radical as Fabio Vásquez's group *Brigada Proliberación José Antonio Galán* in 1963, both the early ELN and the ECISE emerged from decided efforts to transform traditional structures. They aimed different goals, appealed different social sectors, and used different mechanisms, but were based upon the conviction that the establishment would reject their altruist efforts. The foundational document reflects professional's anxiety to capture and control the academic field upon return.

⁵¹ Torres, *Cristianismo y Revolución*, 61.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 62.

⁵³ *Ibidem.*

Taking positions at universities and policy-making institutions was not necessarily a difficult aspect of the agenda. The ECISE included people that did not need to orchestrate particular strategies to gain access to power positions. Ricardo López explored the possibilities for jobs in Colombia in an exacting analysis of the labor market in the 1950's and 1960's, and how strategies used by jobseekers were correlated to their skills, technical training, educational level, patronal requirements, and the obvious connections to insiders. In that case, any student abroad would not have problem to find immediately a well remunerated position either in the public or private sectors. The group of enthusiastic professionals was not radical or proto-revolutionary. They shared the anxiety to enter the trend of transformation and gain recognition, the undeniable commitment to altruist causes, and moderate perceptions about social action.⁵⁴ It can be said that ECISE gathered some of the best educated Colombians with almost granted space in the status quo. Although the group dissolved in a matter of years, Camilo Torres retained recognition abroad, particularly among Christian and democratic-reformist, and upper middle class professionals. It bolstered his network that in the late 1950's and early 1960's helped to promote groups in Colombia, such as *Movimiento Universitario de Promoción Comunal* (University's Movement for Communal Promotion, henceforth MUNIPROC), and strengthened his leverage in the IAS, the *Escuela Superior de Administracion Publica* (Advances School for Public Administration, henceforth ESAP), and as a board member in the *Instituto Colombiano para la Reforma Agraria* (Colombian Institute for Agrarian Reform, henceforth INCORA).

Camilo Torres envisioned ECISE as a mechanism for establishing an agenda oriented to bring about development through equity and democracy in Colombia, by instilling catholic values envisioned in fundamental transformations to its social doctrine.⁵⁵ ECISE was not a proto-revolutionary group. In the contrary, it was a group of middle class professionals integrating their

⁵⁴ Archila, *Una Historia*, Introduction, 46-49. Múnera, *Rupturas*, 158-175; López, *Izquierdas y Cultura*, 29-43.

⁵⁵ Torres, *Cristianismo y Revolución*, 65

experiences abroad. Camilo Torres actually perceived that in Europe, Colombian students were dispersed and often suffering depression for the distance to their families, besides dismal linkages to the Consulates. Compared to other Latin American sectors their animosity and insight should be organized and set in motion.⁵⁶

The international environment for academics was open and favorable. Since the 1950's Latin America experienced a transition towards increasing autonomous committed to social transformation. In other words, intellectuals embodied a new type of leadership, giving to upper middle classes an opportunity to organize strategies of institutional cooptation, and Camilo Torres' ECISE was an example. The intellectual trend was initially a platform to distance from Cold War ideological dictates and theoretical recipes for rapid development based on Marxist, Keynesian or Neoclassic models. The phenomenon of intellectual detachment from the metropolis and their theoretical orthodoxies grew in educational projects and the inspiration of younger generations eager to assume central roles defining a trajectory towards development.⁵⁷ Whilst Camilo Torres might had envisioned solutions for Colombian problems from the ivory tower of European academia, his criticism to the establishment was activated in a participatory fieldwork, and confirmed by the failures he observed in the Catholic social doctrine.

His political and intellectual standpoint transformed progressively from the leadership role taken with ECISE,⁵⁸ where he envisioned the necessary bridge to build between the moral aspects of academic knowledge, and the consolidation of values proper of religious communities, professional

⁵⁶ Broderick, *Camilo*, 100-102.

⁵⁷ Sánchez Lopera, "Ciencia," 241-258. See also, Alejandro Sánchez Lopera, Mónica Zuleta, "La Acción de Camilo Torres y el Frente Unido en la Colombia Urbana de los Años Sesenta," *Nómadas*, 23, (2005), 216-220.

⁵⁸ In 1959, when Camilo Torres returned and found space within administrative and academic positions in Bogotá to launch his plan, he saw the decline of ECISE. Walter Broderick wrote cited his words: 'Short term needs for individual promotion overwhelmed our global goal and concerns. Our generation starts to occupy directive positions to replace the precedent leaders (...) Our generation will leave a mark in history as another one that reacted after seen unfulfilled its expectations, but when received crumbs from the power structure, like a dog, stopped barking and found warm under its shelter'. Cited in Broderick, *Camilo*, 156. He replaced ECISE with MUNIPROC, and at the Universidad Nacional managed to gain control of local *Acción Comunal* (Communal Action) in some neighborhood to start his plan. *Acción Comunal* was the strategy of the government to institutionalize social action at the local level in favor of the regime. The priest initiative was positively regarded by students and workers, and criticized by the press and the Presidency.

sectors, and ecclesiastic leaders. The practice of such values became a moral mechanism to evaluate individual and collective action. The moral nature of the *integral humanism* implied the ritualization of Camilo Torres activism, making his life a constant example of sacrifice and commitment. Individual sacrifices were inherent to the process of teaching moral principles through their incorporation in daily life. Camilo Torres life style was about to become a paradigm of political commitment. Whilst emerging as a system of belief that was not based on theoretical abstractions but in practice, political praxis became the cornerstone for understanding the world.⁵⁹ He shared experiences with social movements and started a struggle with the Catholic Church and the ruling elite. In the process, fieldwork and participatory action and research became the best sources for empirical analysis.⁶⁰ Knowledge implied commitment; otherwise it would not be morally compliant to higher social aspirations.⁶¹ Simultaneously, in Colombia research and public intellectuals found at public academic institutions a fertile soil to discuss solutions for national issues. Camilo Torres was fascinated with empirical sociology and its linkages with religion and political activism.⁶² The church was in a deep reflection of its social Doctrine, giving him space to operate until the early 1960's when the Vatican II ecumenical council ended.

In the next chapters I will introduce the form how scholarship and political activism transformed Camilo Torres' leadership in the 1960's. Considering that the University had become his platform to launch initiatives for engaged social research, I will explore the form how combining science and religion became a path to social knowledge, and how in Colombia the administrative decisions taken to resolve the causes of political violence —particularly in terms of land reform— gained support from the student movement. Policies aimed to distribute land resulted narrow to

⁵⁹ Sánchez Lopera, "Camilo Torres," 147-150.

⁶⁰ Sánchez Lopera, "Ciencia, Revolución," 250-254.

⁶¹ The essays and articles he wrote in 1961 are a source for the understanding of how he perceived participatory action as a methodology for scholar research, and individual emancipation. See, Torres, *Cristianismo y Revolución*, 145-179.

⁶² For critical analysis of his contribution to the professionalization of sociology at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, see Pereyra, "Fals Borda," 224-227. Zuleta, "La Batalla," 128-135. Apologetic narratives about his relation to the students, faculty and the university's community in general in Umaña, *Camilo Vive*, 23-50; Pérez, *Camilo Torres Restrepo*, 266-280.

provide long standing solutions for the peasant's predicament. Camilo Torres's participation in the boards debating the problem, made clear that negotiation and reform had minimal possibilities to bring about change in Colombia. These concrete realities promoted his radicalization, and his leadership, altruism and mysticism for political engagement ended up funneling insurgent struggle after a productive involvement with the youth at Universidad Nacional in Bogotá.

CHAPTER 9

SCIENCE VERSUS THEOLOGY: KNOWLEDGE, SOCIOLOGY AND THE MORALITY S OF REVOLUTIONARY ACTION

In chapter 7, I introduced Camilo Torres as one of the first public intellectuals, making use of the concept in order to point out his political commitment and bonding with popular sectors that lacked political representation until the first half of the 20th century. In this Chapter, I introduce further elements on the role played by politicians grounded on both political activism and innovative styles of participatory research. Initially, I present how Camilo Torres debated the distinction between science and theology with the Catholic social doctrine, and how the aftermath was an increasing separation of the Church's responsibility to address the popular predicament of poverty and social injustice. I present how his discourse was bound to criticize the catholic theology that promoted a liturgy without mechanisms for social improvement and amelioration of life on earth. This debate is presented in this chapter in the light of Camilo Torres' investigation on the origins of violence and inequity in Colombia. His involvement in the debate on land reform increased his political and academic interest in the examination of structural problems affecting rural life. This debate became a platform used by Camilo Torres to perform a ritual of detachment and redemption that fostered his participation in rallies and insurgent struggle. I argue that revolutionary redemption legitimized his decision to learn directly from the ELN all about rural life, and his paternalistic vision about peasants led him to reproduce in his discourse and practices the moral vision that former political leaders had about the subordinate sectors. I will close this chapter with a description of similarities in both Camilo Torres and Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's discourses on poverty and social amelioration, and how this might suggest that Colombian leaders patronize peasant communities.

9.1 CAMILO TORRES AND THE MORALITY OF SOCIAL RESEARCH: SCIENCE VERSUS THEOLOGY

Marxism is not an instrument of government for ruling groups to obtain the consent and to exercise the hegemony over subaltern classes; it is the expression of these subaltern classes that wish to educate themselves in the art of government.

Antonio Gramsci¹

Camilo Torres' interpretation of the causes of inequity and violence in Colombia were built upon his research findings after completing a thesis for Catholic University of Leuven. The liaison between knowledge and moral became a central element in documents he wrote in the epoch. In the document where the goals of ECISE were established, he started to elaborate a general explanation of the factors that limited the capacity to understand and find rational solutions to the political crisis. In the document, he said that 'the most important crisis factor in our country is the crisis of the human element', reason for envisioning 'the union of the youth around basic goals: the sciences, social interest for improvement, and an disinterested service for society' as the most effective strategy to 'find a solution for this crisis'.² The ECISE had to formulate analysis about the issues that shaped Colombian crisis, by using particularly research methods from social sciences. Camilo Torres was clear explaining the roots of the issue as both epistemic and moral

It's been a long time since these problems have been studied; however, today it has been more precisely defined and divided the field of study. Its division between speculative social sciences, and positive social sciences has clarified and improved its methods. Sociology is considered a positive science based on observation, and for its independence from social philosophy, which is a normative science. In that form, most social research made by people with diverse ideologies, can and should converge if they have made rigorous use of the tools of such science.³

¹ Cited in, Leonardo Salamini, "Gramsci and Marxist Sociology of Knowledge: An Analysis of Hegemony-Ideology-Knowledge," *The Sociological Quarterly*, 15, 3 (Summer, 1974), 365.

² Torres, *Cristianismo y Revolución*, 91.

³ *Ibid.*, 92. In the same text, the following excerpt offers more evidence: 'considering that these sciences —when they are positivists— are based on research, it is necessary to explore to what extent an investigation is valid and find out alternative options to make it worthwhile. It is also indispensable to consider possible deficiencies in both theological and scientific knowledge in order to defend their viewpoints in a field opened to both forms of understanding' *Ibid.*, 93.

In moral terms, his concerns were compatible with the Catholic Church's preoccupations on popular disengagement with liturgy, and likely influences of atheist ideologies to social movements

...the fact that a big and ever growing part of mankind (the working class) belonging to the Christian civilization, is progressively detaching from both mentality and practices proper of the religion. This fact would be enough motivation for any person concerned not only for Christendom's diffusion, but also any spiritual motivation, to become concerned by the phenomenon, negative for the separation from the Christian faith, and the adhesion to a materialist system.⁴

For Camilo Torres, ideologies fostered divisions and detachment from reality. Similarly, theology was important only when linked to social work. His transition from a non-ideological standpoint, to a political platform based on participatory research and social work, can be understood in a review of ECISE's epistemic and moral grounds.⁵ In this document, his assertion was in line with the Church, and envisioned the use of methods to activate social groups into a better understanding of reality, since 'social questions dovetail perfectly with Christian questions'.⁶ Theological subjects studied in Leuven allowed him to envision sociology as 'a science for helping mankind on behalf of god, through humanitarian actions'.⁷ This social work could not be expressed in other form than disinterested service and charity. For its efficacy, it was necessary to commit to 'service for the well-being of the common people, even at the cost of individual well-being'.⁸ It means that Camilo Torres's charismatic personality stood upon both sacrifice and service, considered as inherent to religious commitment, and deeply entrenched in a moral structure integrating science, action and belief. These are the principles for his notion of Christian love, and fundamental in what he called 'integral humanism', a combination of social practices and

⁴ Ibid., 95.

⁵ The church rejected priest intromission in political affairs, especially when agitation was detrimental of ecclesiastic or elite interest. However, Camilo Torres considered that his charitable actions and social work undertaken besides students in slums and rural areas was not in contradiction with his religious vow. He favored the Church's option for the poor's cause, what sparked reactions from religious authorities in Bogotá. 'I think that the church, in its official doctrine says that the spiritual solution is the best for mankind's predicament. However, the doctrine does not refuse economic, political and social solutions to such predicaments. In the other hand, the church proclaims simultaneous actions in each one of these realms and condemns unilateral actions taken in spiritual affairs for social issues. That is the place for charity in the faith. Other very different thing is that in practice, for our human weaknesses, this orientation is not followed'. Ibid., 66.

⁶ Ibid., 92.

⁷ Ibid., 90.

⁸ Ibidem.

religious/political ideas oriented to alleviate poverty. For him it was necessary to overcome the clean-cut dualism that hampered social work and charitable service from technical training and scientific research. A religious understanding of the world is ‘unconceivable if detached from science and technic’,⁹ because sociological thought was bound to the service of god.

These comments on theology, service and charity were read during a Conference in Bogotá in 1959 where the role of priests coordinating chapels at university’s campuses was envisioned as a strategic for the rehabilitation of morality taught in the educational system. This event had little impact among students, reluctant to accept priests without clear standpoints that distinguished them from typical ecclesiastic members using the Universidad Nacional as a platform to climb the Catholic Church’s hierarchy.¹⁰ After approaching directly the social movements, he understood why workers supposedly affected by a moral debasement had stop attending mass and refused both liturgy and religious rituals. Camilo Torres experienced the military occupation of the Universidad Nacional’s campus, as a result of increasing repression of popular protests across the country.¹¹ The bond between Camilo Torres and his audience galvanized when classes became more evidently oriented to explore the national crisis. He held debates with die-hard leftist students, and used these moments for explaining his moral principles.¹² Lured by his rhetoric, students started to surround him. Delivering mass he stepped down the altar and discussed with students, in a display of flexibility with the catholic rituals.¹³ Camilo Torres displayed in his lectures the commitment with the rural and urban communities that he studied while writing his master’s thesis. He also had sincere compassion with the students captured by the Army and intelligence forces during protest in 1956-

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ On the initial student’s reluctance to accept Camilo Torres within the university’s community, in Broderick, *Camilo*, 139-154; Villanueva, *Camilo, Acción*, 91-101.

¹¹ Ruiz, *Sueños*, 117-124.

¹² Trujillo, *Camilo y el Frente Unido*, 28-31.

¹³ Broderick, *Camilo*, 127-133.

1958.¹⁴ During a protest at the gates of the campus, radical students asked him what he thought about popular mobilization against soaring prices for public services, circumstances that led to radical actions such as buses set on fire and streets picketing

-I know you did these protest in solidarity with the working class. However, students should have more effective methods to help both the working class and the less privileged people.

-What type of methods?

I propose every one of you to go and offer your knowledge with the workers.

The rumor passed on and many started to discuss the possibility to make the institution a Working class University.¹⁵

His hectic agenda caught attention from students, professors and administrative directors. Every day before dawn, and using a scooter, Camilo Torres commuted across the city to provide religious services and teach disenfranchised rural workers in Tunjuelito, a slum in the southeast of Bogotá. Both the press and the student movement became attracted to his magnetic personality and hectic activities. In the epoch few intellectuals or priests were committed in charitable affairs or social work. Commitments with ECISE —already in decline— and administrative positions in important boards that decided policies on land reform (INCORA), public administration (ESAP) and education (Faculty position at the Sociology Department in Universidad Nacional) filled his agenda. With MUNIPROC, Camilo Torres recognized the negative effect of becoming bureaucratized, or defending small gains in the promotion of his ideals whilst losing contact with a bigger plan for social change. Classes and activism in slums became a great opportunity to create a moral cushion for his educative project. Social work at the grassroots level allowed him to ask his students for methods to better organize their struggles for fundamental rights. It was an open path for political instruction, besides handbooks created by the government for distribution in *Acción Comunal* (Communal Action) that instructed to attach to a strict religious morality. In other words,

¹⁴ Ruiz, *Sueños*, 122. Villanueva, *Camilo, Acción*, 85-94.

¹⁵ Broderick, *Camilo*, 147.

MUNIPROC became a political platform for building up opposition at the local level, while engaging students with the population.

Camilo Torres thought that ‘charity is service to the people, and one of its most privileged mechanisms is its linkage to science’. University’s students were eager to follow his postulates, making MUNIPROC an alternative mechanism that rapidly positioned itself in social work, but not necessarily with ideological burdens that on campus could have impeded its progressive growth. MUNIPROC activism was mostly oriented to a charitable service, linked to religious and political perspectives heralded by Liberation theology apostles across Latin America. The idea of charity and love to the people became a central in his sermons in the altar, lectures in classrooms and discourses communal centers.

A dose of altruism is necessary in order to become concerned with social issues. For that altruism to become a practical principle, its foundations have to be solid and constantly nourished. Considering that Christian mysticism is based on love to the others, altruism is a necessary outcome of social bond based on social differences. The degree of altruism can also reach a level of heroism as the history of the Christian church can demonstrate.¹⁶

Combining religion and sociology, the attractive of such commitment was not only the comfort that youth activist felt helping underclass people, but also the practical application of knowledge in society. Perhaps more important for his increasing popularity at the university was some sort of status that his followers experienced, especially for groups that found themselves increasingly misrepresented by radical movements and countercultural followers. For moderate students, the need for a moral balance was urgent. ‘In spite all our studies, it is there, among the poor and humble people, where we will find greater values than ours,’(..)‘After the work with the poor, it has been social work besides university students the one that better fulfills my expectations’.¹⁷ His activism reconciled both individual expectations and social mandates within a

¹⁶ Torres, *Cristianismo y Revolución*, 92.

¹⁷ Broderick, *Camilo*, 152, 154.

pattern of morality for political action. The relation between morality and the youth has been disregarded in social analysis for the difficulties to measure it. In the 1950's, the first generation that survived the bloody years of *La Violencia* was growing into political activities, and surely they had concerns about what moral decisions were taken at that time, and how they could avoid to repeat the same mistakes. Moral decisions were both a burden and a challenge. In this research, I consider that this factor caused youth's anxiety. *La Violencia* inhibited young generations from expressing their vision, implemented through alternative strategies to bring about change. The anxiety for moral concerns was evident in aspects different to the declining attendance to Catholic rituals. It was evident in the impossibility to alleviate a society resented after its self-destructive nightmare. Although anxiety can be taken here as a discrete variable for understanding politics, it is very likely that a young priest was able to communicate alternative perspectives to a generation exposed to binary discourses of extreme oppositions, without a no reconciliation dialogue in sight

Besides human reasons for Christian love, the source of such sentiment [love expressed as altruism] consists of a supernatural life in grace that gives man —despite its weaknesses— impetus and constancy. That is why in a catholic country like Colombia, in order to resolve social problems, it is necessary a religious formation.¹⁸

Activism practiced through *Acción Comunal* triggered reactions from both the establishment and the radical left. The growing impact of Camilo Torres in rural areas near Bogotá's, Valle del Cauca fostered the perception of his movement as an opposition to the government, and the leftist 'mainstream' —the PCC—. Peasants and students linked with enthusiasm to his innovative political approach to community work. There, young people following Camilo Torres 'studied and wrote essays about social and theological problems. They get involved into social work in Tunjuelito and new projects that Camilo started in different popular zones of the capital city'.¹⁹ In Latin America his example had a profound impact. In the late 1950's, religious grassroots activism linked alternative

¹⁸ Torres, *Cristianismo y Revolución*, 92.

¹⁹ Broderick, *Camilo*, 170.

political expressions with traditional social movements in an attempt to bring about structural change. In the process, religious liberalization, professionalization and intellectual foreign influences opened deliberation about the necessary coordination of popular unrest towards concrete goals.²⁰ Deliberations gave space to the worldviews of students, unionized workers, peasants, and even the indigenous movements in Peru, Colombia and Bolivia. However, political change was hampered by the incapacity to reach agreements for unity towards collective mobilization against and negotiation with the establishment.²¹

Whilst fostering popular consciousness, activist leaders became entangled in ideological disputes based on assumptions over class division. This factor generally fractured rural communities or urban sectors interested in gaining leverage.²² The case was nothing new for rural communities in the 1960's. The PCC experienced a crisis of its rural networks, as they were severed from contact with urban student leaders. This aspect has been explained as a combined result of organizational problems, conflicts in campaigning agendas, and particularly after the Sino-Soviet split, for the PCC reluctance to agree upon divergent conceptions about the path towards socialism.²³ It is necessary to reflect on the type of intellectual that usually influenced students at universities, and how Camilo Torres established a new style.²⁴ Besides subjects on morality, he taught how to lead collective processes, something unfamiliar for students, politicians and other intellectuals.

²⁰ Marulanda, *Colonización y Conflicto*, 45-63; José Jairo González Arias and Elsy Marulanda Álvarez, *Historias de Frontera: colonización y guerras en el Sumapaz* (Bogotá: CINEP, 1990), 12-14.

²¹ The process of radicalization of Camilo Torres thought was well synthesized by Walter Broderick, 'If Camilo wanted that his written works on Christian charity would become effective, it was necessary that such Christian values determining economic planning, what in underdeveloped societies meant a change of power structures. As he said "Structures will not change without a pressure from the masses, a pressure that will be peaceful or violent depending on the ruling minority's attitude". In the same text Camilo recognized that Marxists were the vanguard in struggle for change, and then it was necessary to collaborate with them'. Broderick, *Camilo*, 258.

²² Documents written as part of boards on land reform and educational reform, in Torres, *Cristianismo y Revolución*, 145, 147-148, 285-289. His analysis happened in the epoch that he was a tenured professor in the Sociology Department, and until 1963, when his debate with Bogotá's archbishop obliged him to leave momentarily his involvement with the student movement. Although he was not involved in the debate in the university, his followers influenced activism and participatory research in areas that would privilege their interest. The division was primarily between Maoist and Communists, and the social vanguard that would lead revolution.

²³ For an exam of the experiences in the 1970's on how ideological divisions marked political commitment and individual decisions, in Vásquez, *Escrito para no Morir*, 75-82.

²⁴ On the luring force of Camilo Torres and how the youth was attracted to his lectures and marches protesting at the university, see Villanueva, *Camilo Acción*, 182-195; Broderick, *Camilo*, 174-179, 195-201.

9.2 INTELLECTUAL LEADERSHIP: FROM PATRONIZING TO POLITICAL SELF-ENGAGEMENT

By the 1950's, Colombia had been exposed to the innovative influence of a growing number of intellectuals that used the academic field as a platform for promoting critical thinking and social change. The precedents for academic professionalization of disciplines appeared by hand of foreign researchers that since the 1920's entered the country escaping the war and economic crisis in Europe. Although it was a very limited number of intellectuals, they were accepted and rapidly assimilated by educated elites, and the government gave them *carte blanche* for setting up research institutions.²⁵ The process was led more by their curiosity than funding, making professional remuneration rather symbolic. To be an academic was however interesting, for the social status represented in intellectual recognition.²⁶ The opening of an intellectual milieu in the 1930's was possible with Liberal governments and technocratic leaders in both government and private industries. However, the influence of scholars to both ecclesiastic and political leaders was limited to ultramontane conservative thinkers from Spain.²⁷

By the 1960's those foreign intellectuals —Ernesto Guhl, Juan Friede, Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff, among others— were positioned at universities and institutions that created an embryonic environment for cultural diversification, particularly in the fields of humanities and social sciences. Intellectuals like Camilo Torres that studied abroad during the years of *La Violencia*, returned eager to facilitate national recovery. The European model of public intellectuals caused enthusiasm among scholars, who saw a possibility to access positions of influence in academia and political life. An example was the creation of the Sociology Department at the Universidad Nacional

²⁵ Sánchez Lopera, "Aspectos del Devenir," 76-80; Pereyra, "Orlando Fals,".

²⁶ Fabio López points out symbolic aspects that determined the national intellectual milieu and the flourishing or withering of social analysis, where he included the political culture of rapid assimilation of foreign models, or the incorporation of stranger interpretations to fit our reality. See, López de la Roche, *Izquierdas y Cultura*, 27-31.

²⁷ Hernández, "Los Leopardos," 222-226.

de Colombia. German Guzman —a Jesuit priest—, Orlando Fals Borda, and Camilo Torres promoted the initiative, and in 1959 the program was approved and ready to be launched.²⁸ By 1962 an intellectual committee was appointed to complete a research on the causes of *La Violencia*, publishing the first scholarly analysis based on a contemporary approach to a subject. The emergence of the academic program opened positions for scholars recently arrived and educated in USA and France. The case of Camilo Torres was particular, since there was not inconvenient for hiring him, despite his ecclesiastic appointment as a priest on charge of the chapel on campus. In 1960 Camilo Torres became professor at the same Department, and a flock of students started to write new analyses similar to his thesis in Leuven. Camilo Torres himself tutored several of these undergraduate theses.²⁹

Two elements are necessary to highlight in the relationship between intellectuals, and social movements, in the light of Camilo Torres leadership in the early 1960's. First, the marginal contact that intellectuals had with popular struggles was evident, considering their minimal acquaintance with participatory collaboration. Second, the distinction that academic background gave to intellectual leaders was never broken, enabling both liberals and leftist to claim legitimacy for popular representation without a consistent knowledge of the masses. Camilo Torres was able to bridge the gap between accredited intellectuals and social groups critical to the government. As

²⁸ Camilo Torres invited Theodor Caplow for conferences in Bogotá, whilst Orlando Fals Borda had a complete team of North American researchers. Walter Broderick explains the process as follows: 'With Camilo's help, Orlando Fals gathered every sociologist they could find to create teamwork, but it was not easy to find Colombians with formal credential in social sciences. Therefore, they decided to request foreign teachers to come and join the team, making the Sociology Department a nest for North American sociologists that found university's doors opened'. He proposed the following criticism to sociologic studies professionalization in the 1960's 'Camilo was neither critical of functionalism as the mainstream tendency, characteristic among his North American colleagues, nor skepticism to the single solution they gave to every social problem —increasing productivity— dismissing issues inherent to capitalism's structure', Broderick, *Camilo*, 157. The text here mentioned is Camilo Torres, "Consecuencia de la Programación Económica para el Apostolado en los Países Subdesarrollados," in CIDOC F01 261.83 / T6936c f 14-19.

²⁹ The empirical research completed for this dissertation included a revision of every undergraduate thesis written in the years 1960's-1980's, in search for evidence of cult formation around Camilo Torres figure. A characteristic of the theses written under his supervision was the topic of rural poverty, student's world view, and social stratification. The common link among these theses is how leadership is generally impaired by the minimal training of the society. For instance, the case of rural leadership and low technical training is presented as one of the motivations for productivity decline and displacement to shanty towns in urban areas. The analysis of classes and how institutions impeded social mobility was another prime topic of research among Camilo Torres students. See, Magdalena León, "Bases para el Estudio de la Estructura Institucional de Colombia," (Undergraduate Thesis, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1962); Rodrigo Parra, "Análisis de las Actitudes de Estudiantes en un Seminario Mayor Colombiano," (Undergraduate Thesis, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1962).

Herbert Braun explains, with Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, the *pueblo* entered the political landscape with an unanticipated strength, making for the regime the resource of violence a necessary strategy to guarantee elites not from losing grasp of power at hand of the growing mass of *mestizos* claiming for representation.³⁰ In that process of understanding *La Violencia*, it was evident that racial and cultural distinctions shaped their perception of the other. Jorge Eliécer Gaitán opened the door to an increasing participation of *mestizos* in the political culture, from the margins of subordination.

In this context, Camilo Torres tailored his explanation for Colombian poverty as a result of the crippling incapacity of the government to provide for its people, the Church's reluctance to improve their living conditions on earth defending their rights, and the central idea that the national predicament was a problem in the 'human element'. This notion is similar to the conception of inequity for Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, and the perception he had about the people he led as needed of education. Herbert Braun's study of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's socialist ideas in the 1930's and 1940's offers a good insight of his worldview. He suggests that in Colombia, political projects are envisioned as system of values. Educational equity is a form of inclusion marked by sociocultural distinctions. He argues that Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's political project was bound to 'enlist the support of the rich and the well-educated, by taking education out of the classroom and directly to the people'. For the North American historian, this 'campaign of scientific vulgarization' reflected Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's belief in the primacy of education as well as his distrust of 'the vague theorizing, and the sophisticated use of abstract ideas constantly encouraged both at home and in school'.³¹

Gaitán organized a series of lectures delivered by experts on various social and economic subjects (...) Gaitán wanted the university students to wander the city, including the prisons, and later through the entire country, to share with the workers in their own homes "the juicy fruits of science".³²

³⁰ Braun, *The Assassination*, 9-12.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 43

³² *Ibid.*, 43-44.

The importance of sharing such science would revert in a society based on new system of social classes, envisioned by Jorge Eliécer Gaitán as the main goal of his political project oriented to bolster a petit bourgeois society. Gaitán's socialism was rooted in the organic metaphor of positivism, where

The cooperation of all for the betterment of society can be possible, only when all the parts functioned together as integral parts of the social organism. Only then the social body can be healthy and progress.³³

Social change depended from an effort from the politician teaching proper behaviors for the masses, so they could be regarded differently by the elites. Although he claimed to share the same origin and blood creating a bond of identity with the people, his discourse was often peppered with derogatory expressions portraying the masses. He gave during his rallies soap, etiquette clues, and was obsessed with personal presentation, to the point that his demise as mayor in Bogotá happened for the Bus driver's refusal to cooperate in his initiatives that included good manners and the use of a uniform. 'When Gaitán was thinking about social change, he could only see individuals reshaping their attitudes and taking charge of their lives. From that vantage point Gaitán made moralistic and emotional pleas to the pueblo to be honest, decent, hard-working, and proud, and offered it the assistance of the state in its efforts.'³⁴

Whilst Camilo Torres belonged to an elite in decadence, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán belonged to a climbing social sector. Whilst J. E. Gaitán was part of the first generation of non-elite *mestizos* with professional credentials, Camilo Torres had to cling to his personal capacities due to the economic decline experienced by his family. Herbert Braun explains correctly that 'although Gaitán's analysis was internally coherent, it was not without the tensions characteristic of his middle position. These

³³ Braun, *The Assassination*, 52.

³⁴ Ibidem.

tensions arose mostly in his ideas on meritocracy'.³⁵ Practices such as studying, praying and working were based on individual ethics that instilled values. These values were not detrimental of the elite's mentality or eroded status quo' morality. Instead he wanted to make visible the popular patterns of morality in order to avoid their neglect from politics. Jorge Eliécer Gaitán exhibited such discourse in political rallies and, promoted educational efforts during his speeches. The ensemble of his political initiatives was bound to create a movement ready to transform the political system.³⁶

Herbert Braun interprets Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's thought as 'opposed to all hierarchies that did not rest on an ethics of work', making meritocracy a world opened for every citizen that envisioned a change in lifestyle. In other words, meritocracy was both a moral and political field where 'They [the people] would be judged by their work, their responsibility to their families, and the moral reciprocity of their social relations'. Tolerance from the elite for popular sectors did not require a 'deep transformation of both mental and cultural practices', instead it was integral part of what he considered the fabric of 'culture and experience' because he believed deeply in 'the political ideas of service and sacrifice'.³⁷

Although Camilo Torres intended to bridge the gap between elites and popular sectors through charity and social work, engaging middle and upper middle classes followers into his movement. His discourse was also peppered with derogatory terms used to explain people's lack of consciousness about their issues. This impaired them to resolve them, or to act according to well defined goals. By engaging himself in social work with students in Tunjuelito, Camilo Torres softened his criticism to popular sectors, and particularly factory workers. However in a document he prepared for the IAS, it is evident how social analysis led him to use caustic and even pejorative adjectives to define rural populations

³⁵ Ibid., 53.

³⁶ The Colombian historiography has approached the image of his leadership by looking primarily his rhetoric, and how influenced traditional politicians, in a Latin American context impacted by populism. For a study of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's influence in the political culture of the 1940's, see Green, *Gaitánismo*, 40-43.

³⁷ Ibid., 52-54.

Because our peasants, for their ignorance do not appreciate the benefits of hygienic, disease prevention and the relationship between health and good nourishment, their consumption of soap, shoes, medicaments and proteins, is insufficient. Because our peasants, for their ignorance, do not understand the advantages of rational and technical exploitation of natural resources, fertilizers, improved seeds, fungicides and tools (...) Both ignorance and scarce cultural elements promote as well a lack of consciousness and political maturity. For that reason not always will choose accurate people for higher administrative positions; it will not exist an efficient educative policy compatible to the milieu needs, and then cultural insufficiency will promote more ignorance for the people.³⁸

With his students, Camilo Torres was creating a movement for social representation criticizing the methods used by the traditional political parties during electoral campaigns. This evolved into an initiative for popular abstention at the polls. His criticism to rural popular sectors was also oriented to critically assess political campaigning and the passive role of peasant communities allowing the elites to manipulate their suffrage

Democracy aspires to meet its foundations in decisions made by voting majorities, but in our country the basis of democracy stand upon the pillars of an inorganic suffrage by amorphous and illiterate masses that easily rise to public administration opportunists and demagogues that know how to exalt their primary instincts, and on power are not interested in inconvenient transformation of the mass into a cultured, conscious and responsible people that backed their candidacies.³⁹

The intense discourse he used was used as a mechanism to call attention from the IAS board, where academic advice was given to the Ministry of Agriculture. Camilo Torres was frustrated with the minimal interest from the elites to resolve the rural crisis, and the early 1960's peasant communities were target of military counterinsurgent operations bound to limit the impact of insurgents and radical members of the PCC. Since the 1930's the elites had caused peasant

³⁸ CIDOC 320.9861 C1837, 'Las Estructuras del Subdesarrollo', Preliminary report presented to the *Instituto de Administración Social*. P.128. It is necessary to make a heuristic analysis to this document to consider to what extent it was written by Camilo Torres. During Camilo Torres political activism in Bogotá, student leaders accompanied him in order to gain influence in the movement he started to lead. He dismissed ideological tendencies but was difficult to avoid their instrumentalization, particularly when publishing articles in *Frente Unido*, a newspaper that appeared in 1963-1964. The text here referred was found in Mexico, among other mimeographed documents that he wrote during his participation in IAS. It was written in collaboration with Eduardo Bernal, a union leader who collaborated with MUNIPROC and in participatory research work in Cali, Valle del Cauca. In other edited volumes of Camilo Torres work this document is edited, generally presenting only some sections. See, Torres, *Cristianismo y Revolución*, 307-315. After reading different sociological analysis he authored, I consider this document to be authentic. It is unlikely that Camilo Torres would have approved this document without Reading it or intervening in its production, and his actions were clearly centered in the leverage that IAS had creating rural policies for land reform. His agenda was heavy, but is not likely that he dismiss this document. In case the document is not authored by Camilo Torres, I propose two alternative interpretations to its content. First, it shows to what extent political leaders used Camilo Torres work as an instrumental platform to mobilize efforts, as it happens in the case of the ill-fated party *Frente Unido*, and its published newspaper *Frente Unido*. Second, it is evidence of the effort of Camilo Torres followers after his death to conceal documents where his opinions were aired.

³⁹ CIDOC 320.9861 C1837, "Las Estructuras del Subdesarrollo," 129.

displacement to shanty towns in Bogotá, Medellín and Cali, without any compensation for their land, and minimal opportunities for education, health and jobs. For the elites, rural barbarism was still a predominant stereotype for a rebellious peasantry. Camilo Torres summarized the issue in these words

The elites have an attitude of impermeability and superiority in front of the popular classes, characterized by wealth that comes from sources such as property and a socio-professional position (...)The social questions that elite classes have about the proletariat are namely of a paternalist content.⁴⁰

He was not different to the elites, as well as Jorge Eliécer Gaitán patronized the people. This document constituted the plan for rural solutions to the crisis, where Camilo Torres was the advocate of peasant's cause. However, he seems to reproduce the same paternalist terms that he criticized from both the elite and the Church. The document was written as a guideline for activists supporting Camilo Torres in agitation of working class and the student movement. It was constructed as an analysis of vicious circles that inhibited social movements from effective action. As I mentioned in the introduction, in this dissertation I take distance from typical analysis of both Jorge Eliécer Gaitán and Camilo Torres, which envision their political legacy in the light of socioeconomic 'class' analysis. On the one hand, Camilo Torres minimally used the notion 'class' during the formation of his distinctive political platform, as he to diminish any possible association to leftist ideological political platforms. When it appears, it is in the last months when he radicalized as exposed to military pressure and became rapidly surrounded by semi-clandestine *guerrilleros* of the ELN. On the other hand, I consider that the over determination of class distinctions might cloud a transversal analysis that focus on youth's anxieties and political expectations, and how in their awakening and the emergence of leadership cradled in their spaces of interaction, a fundamental element of social climb and snobbism might divert the analysis. I recognize the importance of this

⁴⁰ Ibid., 131.

feature, and how former research has elaborated important analysis, taken into account during this research.

The research project for ECISE that I analyze here was written in 1962. It shows two additional elements in relation with the goals of the group. First, Camilo Torres had radicalized his discourse, not by approaching Marxism —the language might suggest the opposite, but he read Marxism only marginally—, but by reproducing the tone of political leaders he was surrounded by. Second, this internal report contains the analysis that positioned charity and love at the center of the strategies for moral recovery in Colombia. In other words, it was a blueprint for the proposition of his idea of integral humanism. He explained such strategy in religious, political and moral terms

The breaking of vicious circles

3. Supernatural intervention embodied in human needs in our days

The church's function to elevate mankind considered in its integral form, body and soul, envisioning eternal salvation. For that reason, the church's intervention in socio-economic issues should be made through 'the formation of a Christian personhood 'based on a charity efficient and embodied in the concrete needs of humanity'. The Church as to intervene in the breaking of the above mentioned vicious circles in different forms. In the supernatural domain, the church must intervene officially. In the mixed domains (between state and church), the church must intervene accordingly to the state and other temporal institutions; in the exclusive temporal domain, the church should intervene indirectly through its members, through Christendom, through men elevated to supernatural dignity. In conclusion, the church's intervention always aims man's redemption with the society in which god's providence has decided to place him.⁴¹

It seems clear that during the early 1960's the dislocation between rural and peasant movements was central in production of analysis and political activism. Camilo Torres, who assumed an open position in relation to social disenfranchised sectors, could not avoid expressing neglect for the cultural and socioeconomic roots of peasant poverty. What was unique was the form how he elaborated a system of morality that lead him towards an increasing interest for the peasant experience. He grew into the ambition of understanding peasant's life, to the point that he entered the ELN's warfront in 1965, in rural Santander, and started from the bottom up the formulation of a revolutionary strategy. It was a dramatic and radical decision, but consistent with an approach and

⁴¹ CIDOC 320.9861 C1837, Las Estructuras del Subdesarrollo', 133.

experience of life that he could not understand from the ‘*academic castles*’. In the perspective of his moral point of view, it was a legitimate field to continue charity and love among the most needed, and the ultimate field for individual sacrifice.

No doubt that a subtle discourse on charity and social work helped to lift him to the status of a charismatic figure. I avoided referring him into the already classic theoretical framework of Antonio Gramsci because the organic intellectual transcends the conditions of the masses in order to portray two levels of cognitive representation. The first, is ideological, and referring a worldview. The second, organizational, in terms of a tool kit practices to achieve certain goals. I consider that the concept of ‘organic intellectual’ reduces the scope of analysis to reflections that necessarily subordinate political action to ideological features. The fact is that Camilo Torres was not pursuing to encapsulate the movement in forms of organizational strategies and mechanisms of action. Firstly, in terms of ideological reflection, Camilo Torres lacked a secular ideological framework, and it was his aides who instrumentalized his pragmatic efforts for party-related purposes. Considering how social work initiatives became his benchmark, it is necessary to mention that he did not organized communities but instead learned from their own patterns of interaction and organization. The efficacy of this perspective is difficult to measure, because students linked to radical groups sided with Camilo Torres in 1962-1964, and initiatives of moderate student’s groups became subordinated by those with stronger leadership. In fact, social groups’ leaders following Camilo Torres were effective mobilizing sectors in contention with traditional authority, but it is difficult to distinguish how each one participated in protests, mobilization, or what they pursued at the moment. My argument is that as much as the ELN leaders did, student leaders instrumentalized Camilo Torres’s success to gain popularity. This was evident in how they hijacked his journal and movement *Frente Unido*, for publishing their own documents, and to climb the rungs of student leadership. His theological point of view was intertwined with political aspirations, and parallel to

scientific convictions. As much as any ideological group is attached to a leader, worshipping to Camilo Torres figure became part of a struggle that guaranteed redemption and revelation, the first as emancipation from oppression, the second as a type of scientific knowledge. Although science has been demonstrated to play a central role establishing functional truths, making it an ideological mechanism, and theology plays in Colombia the same role, it is necessary to point out that the ideological body of thought claiming for Camilo Torres' legacy was fundamentally poisoned as an opposition to the establishment. This made it unacceptable for the Church and traditional sectors in academia.

Secondly, in the case of political action, organic intellectuals become beacons to orchestrate the stages for social struggle as a result of a clairvoyance of the goals and the means. In the case of Camilo Torres the organic initiative was the instrumentalization of *Acción Comunal* to operate in favor of the popular movement, and the arrangements that the student movement was able to create in a context of volatility and internal ideological disputes. In this case, the leader becomes instrument of a popular expression, organized in a bottom up form, and under shared values that underneath their political representations. Fed up with political clashes, the student movement found in Camilo Torres the most suitable leader to integrate for effective action, making the leadership a secondary subject to the emergence of the movement, and promoting a late recognition that fostered after his death his nomination as hero and martyr, even by its enemies.

In this chapter, I have introduced the problematic that intellectuals and politicians experienced proposing analysis of Colombian reality from the ivory tower of intellectual privileges, and how revolutionary leaders were inherently affected by a patronizing vision in relation to peasant communities ready for revolutionary mobilization. In the context of political projects that envisioned a drastic change in the structure of classes, both Jorge Eliécer Gaitán and Camilo Torres visualized the population from the distant space of urban and intellectual life. Since their political

projects envisioned systems of morality, the methodology to follow in the incorporation of social change implied a head-on clash with the mentality of elites reluctant to social change. It also fostered a clash with the system of morality that the Catholic Church built during centuries of religious domination. The innovation in Camilo Torres' morality and political action was the dialogue between science and theology as an alternative ideological framework to counterbalance leftist worldview. It was in part due to his formation as a sociologist, the crisis of the social Catholic doctrine during the late 1950's and 1960's, and the fragilities within radical leftist sectors. In the next chapter, I explain the dialogue that such revolutionary vision stimulated at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, the space that received Camilo Torres during the heyday of his political activism.

CHAPTER 10

CAMILO TORRES' POLITICAL SPACE AT UNIVERSITY

After the 1950's, the Colombian youth became influential in politics. It was evident in institutional discourses and ideological shifts to comply with their demands. The student movement challenged the status quo, and institutions such as the Catholic Church. The growing criticism to the Catholic social doctrine, led by the Liberation theology, met with further initiatives linked to development programs sponsored by the United States' Alliance for Progress. Counterinsurgent strategies launched in the late 1950's, became the main mechanism for contention of radical movements that expressed popular disaffection with the *Frente Nacional*. As an ally of the United States, Colombia's obedience to the ideological impositions of the Cold War legitimized protests organized by the PCC and radical alternative groups that envisioned in guerrilla fighting a suitable strategy to transform the political system. In this chapter, I will explore how during the years that Camilo Torres intertwined with students and radical activists at the Universidad Nacional in Bogotá, his followers influenced transformations in the traditional principles of morality. Initially, I explore how the Catholic Church's reluctance to include the claims from young priest caused an internal crisis that bolstered Camilo Torres political project as it incorporated an alternative system of moral principles. The audacity of the youth to activate communicative mechanisms, grassroots activism, and moral concerns with the reactionary Catholic Church's, launched Camilo Torres as a national popular leader. I also present the form how Camilo Torres' political program fulfilled claims exposed during student protests, and how bonds of reciprocity at the University served filled the void left by a lack of unitary leadership. Despite deeply entrenched ideological differences, radical sectors present in the political debate, and activism on campus, mobilized by the leader, pushed him

to break his bonds of allegiance to the ecclesiastic hierarchy. I conclude this section presenting the form how the PCC opened a discussion on religion and morality, in part as an strategy to gain leverage during the last months of Camilo Torres public life, during hectic days of social unrest that led him to start a clandestine life as a *guerrillero* in the ELN.

10.1 THE CATHOLIC SOCIAL DOCTRINE IN CRISIS

In Latin America, examples such as the enthusiastic effort of Raul Silva Henríquez distributing relief aid in Chile in the 1950's through the international agency Caritas became a benchmark of how ecclesiastic authorities could satisfy social problems denounced by the youth.¹ In Colombian rural areas, Catholic priests engaged as well in social work with increasingly reluctant peasants, in order to preserve the Church's leverage at the local level. Through *Acción Cultural Popular* (Popular Cultural Action, henceforth ACPO) broadcasting programs were aimed to 'Improve peasant's life in five main aspects: health, literacy, mathematics, economics, labor and spirituality, without separating them from their productive units by increasing instead their knowledge in agriculture and animal husbandry'.² In 1961, such initiative in Colombia motivated and study by Camilo Torres, celebrating the effectiveness of educational broadcasting for the betterment of rural life.³ However, in urban areas a double tendency was evident. On the one hand, the growth of public and private schools enabled an expansion of catechization, making allegiance to the religion predominant if not mandatory. On the other hand, and despite a nominal belonging of the population to the Catholic religion, communication between ecclesiastic authorities and followers

¹ O'Meagher, "Before Liberation Theology," 57-58; for an study of these initiatives in the context of strategies for development, and particularly the case in Chile and Brazil, see David Lehmann, *Democracy and Development in Latin America: Economics, Politics and Religion in the Postwar Period*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1990, p. 107

² Cartilla ACPO, in <http://www.banrepcultural.org/blaavirtual/revistas/credencial/octubre1999/118accion.htm>, consulted March 6th, 2011.

³ Camilo Torres wrote a paper about the benefits of broadcasting in rural areas in order to improve their technical training, and to activate political integration, in "Las Escuelas Radiofonicas de Sutatenza-Colombia," Torres, *Cristianismo y Revolución*, 171-180.

declined particularly in the transition between secondary school and the search for secure jobs. Whilst the working class youth was growing at distance from Catholic religiosity—a matter of concern that enhanced strategies to bolster the liturgy—, in public and private universities middle classes contributed with a significant number of students disenchanted by the ideological disputes that impaired their movement from effective action.⁴

Since the early 1960's, the Church envisioned religious education in parallel to with charity activities at the local and grassroots levels, in order to maintain god's herd under control. The process took long time to establish and was contemporary to both the II Vatican Council and the radicalization of priesthood coming from middle classes. It was also the epoch in which Camilo Torres' political influence increased. It does not mean that crowds of youngsters reluctant to religion automatically joined his movement. The institution was under scrutiny after the call for the II Vatican Council in 1962, relaxing the mechanisms for internal discussion of problems, and broadening the strategies to cope with the crisis. Since 1957 Camilo Torres had sparked varied reactions by making public apparitions that draw attention and caused enthusiasm in Bogotá's religious community.⁵ Although he did not anticipate the crisis of the Church, he promoted a new vision of the relation between the priest and the Catholic doctrine. Among the strategies implemented by the ecclesiastic hierarchy to gain back followers, significant changes took place, particularly in the liturgy. The use of Latin to deliver mass became sporadic in the mid-1960's, and priests started to face people during the rite. Harsh discipline applied by members of the Church either in confessional or secular schools was under revision, making drastic punishment and mistreatment uncommon in the late 1970's.⁶ These changes had an impact in quotidian relations

⁴ Ruiz, *Sueños*, 148-165.

⁵ Broderick, *Camilo*, 220-234.

⁶ González, *Podere Enfrentados*, 59-65.

between religious authorities and believers. However, the Catholic Church's attempt to expand its influence to the masses constituted a matter of constant discussion in their internal meetings.

The II Vatican Council aimed to redefine the scholastic dogma, the traditional use of Latin during liturgy to foster lay people participation. The impulse was also envisioned for a renovation of the theology founded on strictly differentiated realms of sacred and profane. This rethinking of temporal and mundane affairs opened the path for 'recognition of quotidian life, labor, and politics as part of the service to god and to the people, and the recognition of the historical nature of the Church'.⁷ In Colombia the II Vatican Council sparked initiatives from young middle class priests who envisioned the opportunity to be heard. The goal was to disclose the ambiguity between an ecclesiastic vow of poverty and the Church's arrogant elitism. The international context included the anti-colonial struggle, the flourishing of youth culture expressions, criticism to racism and foreign occupation, the Cuban Revolution and the criticism to the Vietnam War. Until the 1950's, the Church was not concerned with the mundane affairs, despite fresh views within seminaries and theologians, whose criticisms were backed by extra-institutional dialogues such as the work of Louis Joséph Lebreton and Emmanuel Mounier. Their postulates gained momentum and compelled notorious members that formed the earliest generation of Liberation Theology promoters.⁸

The increasing number of priest that caused impact among younger generations was linked to the initiatives of the Alliance for Progress, and development agencies that dovetailed with the plans of the Catholic social doctrine. For instance, cracks of division showed when Jesuits started to include in their activities intense communitarian work. Another friction happened when European priests, mostly from Belgium, joined efforts from North American protestant ministers, Catholic priests and lay people to transform productivity to escape poverty. Foreign religious activists'

⁷ Samuel Silva Gotay, *Teología de la Liberación Latinoamericana: Camilo Torres* (México: UNAM, 1970), 9.

⁸ For an assessment of theological debates and the early initiatives in Colombia to contribute with the Liberation theology, see a collection of essays and the minutes after ecclesiastic meetings of priests supporting a transformation in the Catholic Church, in MUNIPROC, *Golconda: EL Libro Rojo de los Curas Rebeldes* (Bogotá: Editorial Cosmos, 1969).

brought about mixed reactions of support and rejection. Opponents to developmental initiatives, such as Ivan Illich, saw a cultural imposition in the path towards development in Latin America. Foreign religious representatives received support from Helder Câmara who at some point said ‘Thanks God for the new type of gringo’ considering that ‘the Alliance [for Progress] was in harmony with Christian social doctrine’.⁹ Other priests from Europe had a close liaison to American churches and became suspicious, as in the case of Roger Vekemans, criticized in the late 1960’s and 1970’s by the radical left, that denounced him as an aide for development agencies and CIA covered operations.¹⁰ A line of continuity between Communists and Camilo Torres in Colombia became presumable, despite clear statement of rejection in pamphlets published by the PCC and JUCO.

It is necessary to explain the emergence of ecclesiastic initiatives to involve the youth in political activities. In Latin America, journals such as the jesuitical *Mensaje*, in Chile, promoted a dialogue regarding the revolutionary moment and how the church should react to an increasingly rebellious youth. Similar precedents existed in Colombia, in *Revista Javeriana*, where the fast growing Jesuitical interest in scholarship centered at the Universidad Javeriana, served for debates on the Church’s role maintaining social order. In *Revista Javeriana*’s issue of September 1955, several articles were dedicated to understand the phenomena. Articles such as ‘Peace and Atoms’, ‘Morals and Life’, ‘The Social Question’ and particularly ‘The dilemma of Socialism’ announced the problematic that the church faced. The articles passed almost unnoticed, or at least ecclesiastic leaders did not pronounced negatively regarding this topic. The thoughts of Jesuitical priests received little attention from other congregations, making their call for attention an isolated effort. Seven years later, however, all these issues were at the center of the II Vatican Council in Rome.

⁹ Cited in O’Meagher, “Before Liberation,” 63-64.

¹⁰ Partido Comunista de Colombia, “El instituto lingüístico de verano,” *Documentos Políticos* (May-June 1972), 99, 92; “El instituto lingüístico de verano, agencia de penetración imperialista,” *Documentos Políticos* 116 (sep-oct 1975), 39-51. The other side of the story in Roger Vekemans, s.j. *Roger Vekemans DC-CIA. Autopsia del mito Vekemans* (Caracas: Universidad Católica del Táchira, 1982).

Interest in doctrinaire reformation started to grow among upper middle classes, professionals and students. Normally in close relation to the Church, they found that the church delayed response to increasing moral concerns would stimulate alternative moral conceptions out of Catholic supervision. Middle classes were skeptical to both the left and the establishment, for representation of popular moral aspirations. They did not seem an appropriate reflection of their democratic and capitalistic values.¹¹ In the late 1950's and early 1960's, in *Encuentros*, a Jesuitical journal published in Chile, further sources of skepticism came from the rather liberal use of the word 'revolution'. Although the Chilean priesthood wanted to express the pace of changes occurred in society, it triggered fears for an ideological sympathy with Marxism, which could pollute the ecclesiastic institution in Latin America.¹² The lax use of concepts made necessary in the late 1960's a conceptual revisionism. An accurate link to sociological categories was necessary, in order to avoid miring religious affairs with profane conceptions of the world.¹³ The youth that embraced Camilo Torres at the university had ambiguous feelings about the moral orientation of leftist discourses. They started to perceive a hesitant attitude in the Church in reformulating its social doctrine, in a context of profound change and political turmoil.

10.2 YOUTH AND MORALS, THE CHURCH'S DISCURSIVE CHANGE

The youth was marginally mentioned in former encyclicals. In the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in 1891, they were barely mentioned at a similar instrumental level besides 'women who have the right to working conditions in accordance with their requirements and their duties as wives and

¹¹ López, "A Beautiful Class," 149-152.

¹² O'Meagher, "Before Liberation," 54. Another work that caused a similar reaction was. François Houtart, *Los Cristianos en la Revolución de América Latina* (Guadalupe, Buenos Aires, 1966) and Emmanuel Mournier, *Revolución Personalista et Communautaire* (Paris: Editions Montaigne, 1935) CIDOC f804.33

¹³ Enrique Dussel, "Sobre la Historia de la Teología en América Latina," in *Liberación y Cautiverio Debates en Torno al Método de la teología en América Latina Encuentro Latinoamericano de Teología*, ed. Encuentro Latinoamericano de Teología (México: Martires de la Conquista, 1975), 19-69.

mothers'. Regarding labor exploitation and the danger that capital could represent to distract young people from normal education and catholic instruction, the encyclical said that 'they have rights to demand working conditions in which physical health is not endangered, morals are safeguarded, and young people's normal development is not impaired'.¹⁴ For the II Vatican Council, the wider philosophical spectrum of concerns addressed changed the instrumental role they played. In his encyclical on education, John XXIII said

It is indispensable, therefore, that in the training of youth, education should be complete and without interruption, namely, that in the minds of the young religious values should be cultivated and the moral conscience refined in a manner to keep pace with the continuous and ever more abundant assimilation of scientific and technical knowledge. And it is indispensable, too, that they be instructed regarding the proper way to carry out their actual tasks.¹⁵

This positioned the youth at the core of ecclesiastic concerns for a moral and educational crisis that endangered the Catholic faith. In Latin America the new generations were targeted in order to limit the criticism sparked within the ecclesiastic ranks, particularly in pastorals that gained and increasing tone of rebellion. In 1955, the *Conferencia Episcopal para América Latina* (Latin American Episcopal Conference, henceforth CELAM) was created in an spirit for reformation in order to modernize the Church. It progressively became the beacon of young and Liberal bishops committed to drastic changes oriented to ensure Catholic influence in every level of social life.¹⁶ However, their progressive standpoint was not completely supported by Paul VI during the II Vatican Council, limiting the impact of radical claims particularly from Gustavo Gutiérrez, and other promoters of the Liberation theology. In the preparation of the Second CELAM conference, in Medellín 1968, the Roman Church appointed strategic bishops to put a halt to the movement. In the

¹⁴ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, 1891. Consulted on april 15th 2011.

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum_en.html.

¹⁵ John XXIII, *Encyclical Mater et Magistra*, 1961. Consulted on april 15th 2011.

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater_en.html.

¹⁶ O'Meagher, "Before Liberation", 67; Dussel, "Sobre la Historia," 44-46. Javier Darío Restrepo, *Golconda: La revolución de las Sotanas, 25 años después* (Bogotá: Planeta, 1995), 81-95.

meanwhile, the conference had to reflect and introduce adjustments to dogmatic features, perceived by conservative bishops as detrimental of The Vatican interests. In line with the orientations agree in the Vatican II, the majority of bishops in Latin America sided with the progressive change in liturgics, stimulus for a closer relation to the lay, and reforms envisioned promoting enthusiasm in the youth. In the Preparation for the Second CELAM conference, the common goal was to ‘Make a deep reflection in search for the most precise form to renovate the church in line with the contemporary transition experienced by Latin America’. In the particular commitment of the Latin American Catholic Church, the conference was not radically bounded to make a vow for the advocacy for the poor, but in a moderate tone to ‘Make a deep reflection bounded to understand the peoples of this continent [Latin America] and its elites, that in process of mutation in their living conditions, and their values, require an adaptation, evangelization and education in the faith, that should be made through catechesis and liturgy’.¹⁷ Finally, the goal was to maintain the CELAM, but moderating its increasingly radical tone after initiatives of what seemed to be a rebellion of young priests across the region.

Along with similar theological lines of thought at the top ranks of the II Vatican Council in Rome, progressive bishops in the CELAM’s Conference were committed to make the preferential option for the poor as an initial step towards a revolutionary transformation of the Church. However, at the end of the II Vatican Council, CELAM leaders linked to Liberation theology in Brazil, Peru, Chile and Colombia were either sidelined or substituted by less reformist bishops. By the early 1970’s the formerly radical organization had become a conservative stronghold for bishops opposed to doctrinaire innovations introduced in the early 1960’s. However, the discourse that both the CELAM and the II Vatican Council held, showed an effort to engage in dialogue with other religious communities such as Jewish, the Greek Christian Orthodox church, and protestant

¹⁷ CELAM, “Documentos preparatorios de la conferencia,” *CELAM Consejo Episcopal latinoamericano* 2,14 (1968): 14.

churches. The preparation of the CELAM was considered by other religious leaders as making ‘sincere and serious’ commitments ‘for cooperation between our religions’ to work in the benefit of tolerance and understanding, in a ‘beautiful expression of the growing spirit of supernatural identification that unite us more day after day’¹⁸

The CELAM created commissions for preparation and discussion of documents in an all-encompassing agenda. One of the commissions was dedicated to envisioning a better dialogue with the youth. The preparatory commission on charge of the topic established that ‘In the contexts of dramatic transformations in Latin America, the youth constitutes the most numerous group as a social body with its own ideas and values inspired by the desire to create a more just society. This is a positive contribution that both the Church and the society must address’. Before the publication of results after the conference, further articles suggested how education was envisioned as the central element to foster dialogue between the Church and the youth.¹⁹ In order to consider youth’s claims for immediate reforms, it was necessary to re-establish a bond of respect to ecclesiastic and secular authorities that existed and was broken thanks to a radicalization of their collective political bargaining. The tone of such dialogue aimed an intergenerational understanding as the foundation for negotiation and pacification of their protests. ‘The position of the church in terms of the education should be open to dialogue to nourish itself with the values that they, the youth, perceive

¹⁸ CELAM, “I Conferencia Continental Judeo Católica, Bogotá, agosto 21-22,” *CELAM Consejo Episcopal latinoamericano* 2,14 (1968): 4 and 6; “Los observadores de la Conferencia. Mensaje de la Iglesia ortodoxa a la II Conferencia,” *CELAM, Consejo Episcopal latinoamericano* 2,14 (1968): 8.

¹⁹ The first initiative to establish a ecclesiastic framework to debate the issue of rebellious youth, that was later used in the II CELAM Conference and the Seminary for Youth and Social Formation in Latin America, was the ‘Episcopal Colloquium about University’s Pastoral’ held in Buga (Valle del Cauca) in February 1967. One year after Camilo Torres death, the gathering’s purpose was to re-habilitate the bond with the youth, severed after harsh criticism from the ecclesiastic authorities in 1962-1966. The large social movement that Camilo Torres mobilized in the period 1962-1965 was formed by myriad social sectors that mixed ideological affinities. His separation from the church in 1964, and death in the ELN’s warfront had strained/severed the relation between the Church’s authority and university’s community, progressive sectors of academia, and middle class students that considered that his radicalization was the result of the Church stubborn position towards his demands.

as worthy for the future and that promote an atmosphere of understanding of young people, both among themselves and with adults'.²⁰

The social responsibility for stability, change and the Catholic values held by the church was the essence of youth's coming into scene. Paul VI, at the end of the II Vatican Council, said that 'you [the youth] should take the example and lessons from parents and teachers to build the future society. You can either save it, or be destroyed with it', this was a comment underscored by the Jesuit priest Alberto Jiménez, in an article that ushered in the commission on youth and religious doctrine in 1968-1969. He continued saying that

The young Christians cannot be a simple spectator of drama in which he is the main actor. The world is convulsed, and the new context demand new propositions and an attitude to resolve them. The youth cannot be conformist for they had made possible a change of mentality that determines society's future. Tomorrow's society will be what today's youth want it to be.²¹

By the epoch of the Second CELAM Conference in Medellín, Camilo Torres had already died in the warfront holding the arms of the radical leftist ELN. It is interesting how the priest Alberto Jiménez bridged some of the elements that Camilo Torres had discussed in his 'Message to the Youth' in 1962²². During the years of the II Vatican Council in Rome, Camilo Torres

²⁰ CELAM, "Mensaje del Concilio Vaticano II, a los jóvenes," *CELAM Consejo Episcopal latinoamericano* 2,14 (1968), 3.

²¹ The priest Alberto Jiménez was responsible for the commissions on 'Youth and Doctrinaire Renovation' in the Seminary for Youth and Social Formation in Latin America that took place in May 1969 in Bogotá. Excerpts from it are available in: CELAM, "Sociedad y Juventud Latinoamericana," *CELAM, Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano* 2, 20 (1969), 3. The topic of youth and the formal dialogue to be established was since late 1968 and until 1974 a constant in the organ of the CELAM. In the same issue that Alberto Jiménez commented on the youth, the results of the Second CELAM Conference were included. Some interesting excerpts were the following: "The Church considers that the youth is a constant renovation of life and mankind, discovering in the youth a reflection of itself: "the Church is the real youth of the world". The discourse that the priest used was close to Camilo Torres' ideas for the youth, or at least used similar notions such as conformism and social redemption in action. It is obvious that Alberto Jiménez did not want youth political outburst, but instead a commitment for change through the church. It is evident in how theological elements of the doctrine were interpreted differently by Torres and Jiménez. Here is an example of the persistence in the distinction between mundane politics and supernatural perceptions of individual religiosity: "The Youth: Sign of faith. The youth is the sign of faith because faith is the scatological interpretation of existence, and in the nativity the evangelic essence of novelty is recovered". In other words, the ontological fate of the individual was not detached from metaphysical mandate encrypted in the dogma, making political activism and mundane action unnecessary, if not inoperative. Both texts were published in the same issue, along with Alberto Jiménez article.

²² The case of the notion conformism will be studied in the next section in this chapter.

progressively distanced from the Church, for his clear commitment with a political cause.²³ His political standpoint was an early expression of what the Liberation theology heralded after his death. However, his ideas for proselytism with the youth were taken and refashioned in a similar discourse of dialogue that clearly inhibited radical positions and *de facto* extremism.²⁴ Liberation theology, for instance, had taken distance from Camilo Torres postulates on violence and the inherent liaison between socialism and an innovative vision of social catholic doctrine targeting social justice and the radical transformation of power structures in Colombia.

10.3 CAMILO TORRES AND THE STUDENT MOVEMENT AT THE UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL

It is necessary to return to the early 1960's in order to understand how Camilo Torres became the outspoken leader of a student movement jeopardized by ideological divisions and a limited space for upwards mobility. As I suggested above, Camilo Torres was representative for students without a clear commitment with socialism, communism or the traditional bipartisan alternatives. It was possible thanks to his integrative political platform that enabled contributions from middle class students disenchanted with leftist divisionism. The movement included individuals who wanted to contribute with their voices to open up spaces for the youth, beyond extreme choices such as the countercultural movement, or leftist extremism. Radical youth expressions broke moral conventions, smashing values that were not necessarily uncomfortable for important sectors at the university. This situation was similar in broader urban and rural contexts in

²³ Documents presented during the Second CELAM Conference in Medellín, in Restrepo, *Golconda*, 25-40, 64-71; MUNIPROC, *Golconda*, 77-98. An analysis of the division of the movement of priest supporting Liberation theology, and those reluctant of radical positions, in Samuel Ruiz García, "Condicionamientos Actuales de la Reflexión Teológica en Latinoamérica," in *Liberación y Cautiverio Debates en Torno al Método de la teología en América Latina Encuentro Latinoamericano de Teología*, ed. Encuentro Latinoamericano de Teología (México: Martires de la Conquista, 1975), 91-103. A reflection about the Conference and its effects in Colombia, in Broderick, *Camilo*, 240-244; Villanueva, *Camilo, Proyecto*, 33-42.

²⁴ Dussel, "Sobre la Historia," 50-54.

Colombia. It was already explained how radical youth was a rather exclusive and distinctive upper crust that found a fertile soil at the university. Youth culture blossomed in characteristic expressions, but not necessarily all were represented in leftist thought, sexual openness, or transcendental individualism. The movement that identified with Camilo Torres's leadership, perceived in his platform the predicament of their quotidian life, and the moral aspirations that both political radicalism and countercultural hippies seemed to default in. Here I want to underscore the specific aspects that made him attractive for the youth —no his moral standpoints, or the bearing of status markers that attributed him characteristics of leadership and personal achievement— especially regarding his character and defense of their quotidian concerns and struggles.

The first element to point out is Camilo Torres' capacity to understand how leadership was a critical absence in the youth's political education. Without making an effort that contradicted his perception of social service and academic commitment, his actions had a positive reception in an environment that denied any involvement with the Church. When he arrived in 1959 to lead the Universidad Nacional campus' chapel, he was immediately identified by radicals as a status quo servant. Initially, his liturgical services were sabotaged. If students went to see him, it was initially for curiosity considering how young and tall he was, his gentle manners and the fact that he smoked a pipe. After several months and some clashes with radical leftist students, he grabbed their attention, his classes were audited by a growing mass of students, and his debates ended up addressing quotidian concerns of students that were left down by the student movement.²⁵ The student's reception of the young and outspoken priest increased, when he pointed out the misfortunes that

²⁵ Initially Camilo Torres was pointed out by Communists, Trotskyites and Maoists as the representative of their enemy, and dismissed for his lack of political clarity. Today it is quite normal to hear comments —in low voice, of course— saying how poor was his capacity to organize movement, his partial bond to the peasantry, the condition of upper middle class populating his commitment with internationalism, and as a sociologist his low quality work. In general, these comments were bolstered by his skepticism to ideological platforms, and the minimal importance attributed, for instance, to Marxism as a tool for proper sociological analysis. In the late 1950's and early 1960's, almost every thesis written at the Sociology Department, and the School of Humanities of Universidad Nacional was either identified with Camilo Torres/Orlando Fals Borda participatory research perspective, or consisted of a discussion of Marxism, in its ample variety of assertions.

crippled their movement: ‘unfortunately, the “show” that students give during their meetings and assemblies, their protests. These are examples of a herd without a shepherd’.²⁶ Camilo Torres understood that the leaders of groups represented figures of power. It was not necessarily their fault, since both professors and administrative cadres played a dismal role of leadership or solidarity

I find students completely abandoned to their fate, their criterion, their immaturity. Professors and administrative personnel directing the university think they do not have any take in their meetings in an attempt to resolve problems. Nevertheless, after their abandoned disciples take immature decisions and make censurable mistakes, teachers and administrative point out with their implacable judgmental finger those they consider the culprit, or those they consider bothersome for their comfortable positions.²⁷

Here I consider necessary to foreground two elements. First, the form how he fleshed out students concerns, particularly regarding the forms of authority that endangered their efforts and activism. In his response to the establishment he was able to make clear how the institutions were at safe distance from the student body, a separation fostering punitive reactions, instead of collaborative contributions. It was a legitimate criticism to the student movement, based on a direct interaction that gave him respect, deference, and enthusiastic support. In the epoch, any other professor or administrative cadre at the university would not dare to air the issues affecting the student movement, or disclosing the ballast condemning it to failure. The second element is that Camilo Torres managed to express his anger and anxiety without endangering his public image. He did it in the main national newspaper, owned by the oligarchy, where editorial after editorial, he was thrown into a debate with the high ecclesiastic hierarchy. *El Tiempo* questioned his legitimacy to represent the faith at the university, and a moral conflict between his political enthusiasm for the student predicament, and owed allegiance to the Catholic Church. Camilo Torres made favorable a situation that would have sparked a different reaction from another student leader, exposing clearly

²⁶ Torres, *Cristianismo y Revolución*, 204.

²⁷ Ibidem., The context for this comment was the intervention that Camilo Torres made on behalf of several students spelled from the university during protest in Bogotá. He was asked to step down from the Campus Chapel as well, and sent to a different parish in the city, leaving him without teaching obligations, and only as a board member in the IAS

the student predicament, and administrative issues within the educative system. He was in his turf; he understood the codes of the people in power. He went on his rant

What is been criticized are the methods used: violence, strike action, the protests. If we find that the goals are fair, but that methods fail, why the directives never take the initiative to achieve the goals using institutionalized and normal methods? If we take this statement as a fact, we can ask ourselves —considering that professors and directives normally don't worry about fundamental problems at university, and do not take initiatives to resolve them—, why when students try to find solutions they don't try to guide their action providing alternatives about the methods to be used?²⁸

Another two elements are necessary to highlight. First, mechanisms of exclusion inherent to the academic field, and the effects that conformism bring about at the university. The first was a taboo that the student movement could not manifest for the fear to punishment from university's administrative authorities. It is similar to the predicament that crippled student protests a few years later, in the spring of 1968 throughout France. This kept dissociated students and bureaucrats from a common bargaining standpoint, and became manifest in ideological divisions and criticism to the radicalism of student protests. The university was in the 1960's a battlefield for those that inhibited their claims to gain access to comfortable positions for research, jobs, and administrative ranking. The priest also pointed out economic interest that crippled university because 'An ever-growing and increasingly inefficient bureaucracy makes the budget inoperative in addressing resources for paying better qualified directives'.²⁹ Administrative and faculty inner circles promoted distinctions along lines of continuity, based on traditional divisions between intellectuals and workers, professors and deans, students and professors. This hierarchical organization that separated intellectuals from workers during collective bargaining caused ideological default cracks, systematic isolation of disciplines and research at universities, and universities functional for the schema of political/social exclusion. As Camilo Torres commented, 'Department's autonomy generally means a Directive Council composed and organized along friendship bonds, selected by subjective rather

²⁸ Ibidem.

²⁹ Ibidem.

than objective criteria —except the student’s representative, who breaks the group’s homogeneity—and that depends for its action on how to administer pressure from other groups outside the university’.³⁰

When Camilo Torres pointed out these flaws in the internal structure of the University, he was not making public a recent discovery, nor resented his removal from the Sociology Department’s. He spelled out the daily struggle for notability and recognition that was also fundamental in the necessary re-definition of the institution as a guarantee for social mobility. The University as a battlefield for recognition would bring students into a narrow perspective of immediate gratification, and contributed to shape conformism based on material gain, instead of the defense of higher aspirations or values. Although present in his participation in protest and student meetings, this public tribune answering questions to *El Tiempo* was an opportunity to create public concern about the fragilities of the educative system, and how divisionism hampered the role of education promoting people for their qualities and intellectual value, instead of the proximity to figures of power or political allegiances.

It would be interesting to make a study about the “rosca” (the inner circle) functioning in each department. The “rosca” will not operate neither against any of its members, nor against one of the groups exercising pressure upon the directive council. It makes it insecure, instable, without any internal criteria based on objective selection/promotion methods. It depends on people instead of established operational patterns’.³¹

For the student movement, Camilo Torres’ measured and concise terms used to answer to the journalist was a clear indicator of his commitment and clairvoyance during the university’s crisis. It also exposed the form how student mobilization failed to build leadership beyond default lines that legitimized the establishment’s repression.

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ Torres, *Cristianismo y Revolución*, 205.

The second aspect to highlight is the form how conformism constituted an strategy to pacify protest during moments of instability, without considering structural reforms to the ill-fated educative system. The suggestion for a radical change to the internal administrative structure that sustained such classification, and the question for effective research productivity was an initiative supported by Camilo Torres, and backed by students. It caused discomfort in sectors of the faculty and directives.³² Beyond the constant use of proclaims and repetitive discourse filled with ideological magnetism —a discourse often emptied of concrete elements to negotiate alternatives for action—, the priest honed support after discussing what differences could bring about innovative styles of leadership within the student movement. The problem of conformism was important for its close relation to radical standpoints and violent protests, and was used by Camilo Torres as a central element to activate sectors of the student body to claim for change, both at the university and in society.

Utopian nonconformism is a type of sentiment based on social solidarity, altruism, juvenile solidarity, not sustained in studies or knowledge showing us that anti-conformism is not only a nice thing, but also a necessary fact for the nation that needs radical structural transformations. Another type of nonconformism comes from frustration, and happens when student's living conditions including housing, nourishing, and difficulties to have access to books. To these two types of nonconformism: utopian and from frustration it is attributed that students lose interest induced by emotional factors or interests that bring them into conformism. When they get their credentials and envision the need for a job, professional promotion urges them to gain prestige, and then the utopian nonconformism disappears in most cases.³³

By the same token, conformism and nonconformism were words used in 1968-1969 by the ecclesiastic hierarchy to entice the youth into the rehabilitation of the church after the Second CELAM Conference. Despised by the Church in 1965, Camilo Torres gave up his religious commitment and started a political rally visiting cities and municipalities where his audience grew. Not only young people backed him. He was the leader redeemed by the people, despite the establishment's disapproval. His critical vision for a student movement that could bypass the

³² Ibid., 200.

³³ Ibid., 348-349.

ephemeral nature of its concerns served for positioning his moral considerations beyond common elite classifications that considered students as a desensitized upper layer in society³⁴. Probably the most interesting aspect of his leadership, what that he set a dialogue with student's everyday reality, making them parallel to problems exhibited by the political system and the socioeconomic distinctions that maintained Colombia in a non-declared civil war.

10.4 COMMUNISM AND MORAL: THE EFFECT OF CAMILO TORRES IN THE PCC

Similar to the effect that Camilo Torres had in the Catholic Church, promoting a discursive shift addressing the youth's concerns, the PCC made an interesting transformation in its discourse refocusing in relation to the generations that were supposed to enjoy the sweet fruits of its revolutionary project. The Student movement was controlled by the JUCO's leaders and cadres since the late 1950's, making them in part responsible for the movement's divisionism, and the reluctance of sectors within the university's community to integrate with Camilo Torres' activism. The priest wanted direct interaction in classrooms with the masses, and in communities chosen for participatory research. However, JUCO activists made their best efforts to undermine the initiatives. Despite he called himself a revolutionary in the 1960's,³⁵ and that word was immediately associated to the operations of the PCC, neither Camilo Torres nor the communist leaders of the student

³⁴ The radicalization of Camilo Torres is evident in 1965, in his message to the Students, where he points out once again the fragilities of their mobilization, regarding the personal attachment to the struggle and how the pursuit of status symbols and immediate gratification pervades the revolutionary goals. 'Students are a privileged group in every underdeveloped country. These nations can only sustain graduated students from schools and universities at a really high social cost.' (...) 'We know that the effect of political agitation can be lost if there is not a follow up organizing the struggle for the siege of power. One of the causes for the transitory and superficial character of student's contributions to revolution is the lack of personal commitment in the economic, and familiar struggle' (...) 'Their nonconformism is generally emotional (sentimentalism or frustration) or purely intellectual. This explain why at the end of their studies nonconformism disappears or is hidden, so a rebellious student becomes a professional bourgeois that in order to purchase bourgeoisie's status symbols sell his consciousness in Exchange for an elevated remuneration', in Torres, *Cristianismo y Revolución*, 551-552. It is necessary to mention that Camilo Torres was not an intense reader of Marxism, but at the end of his public political career, in 1965, his discourse reflected a clear orientation to the highly ideological rants he criticized within the student movement.

³⁵ "I said that I'm revolutionary: as a Colombian, sociologist, Christian, priest. I think that the Communist party has authentic revolutionary features, then I cannot be anti-communist neither as a sociologist, a Christian, nor as a priest", in Torres, "Mensaje a los comunistas," in *Cristianismo y Revolución*, 527.

movement made official attempts to dialogue or establish a common agenda. The JUCO had created both the FUN and the FEC as hierarchical umbrella organizations for controlling/influencing divergent ideological expressions at the Universidad Nacional.³⁶ The leverage of the PCC/JUCO was tailored through the absorption of small groups, and the predominance of its leaders during meetings and protests. Camilo Torres was skeptical for their leadership capacities and the poor capacity to articulate sectors that had to prove ideological loyalty to the Communist line of thought. Factors such as divisionism, acrid competition for recognition, inoperative leadership, and the ideological preferences of the JUCO, all crippled the student movement possibilities to become a political alternative. Sectarianism caused interest among students that opposed the communist option, particularly moderate sectors that declined the insurgent option. Since 1963, radical student groups envisioned Camilo Torres as an alternative, considering how radical guerrillas formed by students were frustrated initiatives easily annihilated by the Army in unlikely hideouts in the jungle.³⁷

Besides the capacity of Camilo Torres to establish a dialogue between sectors engaged in complex disputes, the lack of a platform created a unique opportunity to make a collaborative effort to propose common points of interest, and to orient the struggle to effective initiatives bounded to negotiations with the university directives and the government. Camilo Torres' followers were not organized in a unique and homogenous organic body with hierarchical segmentations. This impaired it to be perceived as a legitimate opponent to the JUCO, making it an easy prey for the Communist leader's youth leaders to disband their meetings. JUCO leaders also point out Camilo Torres's political platform as reformist, pro-establishment and bounded to satisfy petite-bourgeois interests

³⁶ Ruiz, *Sueños*, 147-152.

³⁷ I discuss the conditions that opened the way for the new left in 1962-1963, in Sánchez Sierra, "Discourse, Practices," 287-304. Security difficulties for leftist activists in Carlos Medina Gallego, *Al Calor del Tropol*, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, *Crónica de una Década* (Bogotá: Alquimia Ediciones, 2002), 20.

that heralded a conformist moral.³⁸ Within the University's communist publications criticized the priest, exploiting facts such as his rhetoric, elite familiar background, and his relation to dubious theological writers that in Chile and Peru were regarded as collaborators of the CIA. I will not discuss such important body of discourses used by the JUCO/PCC in order to dismiss Camilo Torres leadership. Surely it tells more about the Communist strategies to isolate and punish uncomfortable obstruction to their political interest. Instead, I prefer to detect what changes are perceivable in *Documentos Políticos* (Political Documents), the main organ of the PCC, where its cadres cast their ideological framework shedding light upon the path to follow.

The publication appeared in the 1950's, and constituted a space for ideological discussion where intellectual cadres transmitted and translated the dictates of the Soviet Communist Party. The most common topic in the early issues was Leninist strategies for the party's organization, innovations about revolutionary vanguard, and served to position a standpoint during the Cuban revolution against spontaneous insurgencies that endangered political agitation in rural areas considering the usual harsh military responses threw by the army against peasant self-defense groups. From its pages, the *mamertos* —as communist were called by most political alternative groups— draw the imaginary lines of division for the Colombian communist revolution. They revered the accomplishments of pro-soviet revolutions, criticized Maoism, spelled out the perversions of French Communist intellectuals, and destroyed any initiative to support internationalism or any subtle notion that might seem linked to Trotskyism.³⁹

In 1965, however, things started to change. The editorial board gave less space to slightly modified narratives of Colombian history visualized from the Marxist preferential balcony —a norm since the first issues— in order to present rural programs that involved the student movement with

³⁸ An analysis of the clashes among factions' leaders during preparations for the largest popular strike in 1962, that included the JUCO and other political groups in Ruiz, *Sueños*, 162-168. An analysis of the divisions caused by the JUCO in the student movement in Archila, "Utopia," 46-48.

³⁹ The difficult relations between Maoists, troskoists and mamertos, in Vásquez, *Escrito para no Morir*, 70-76, 84-89.

activism. The initiative was parallel to the consolidation of peasant resistance that gave birth to the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, henceforth FARC), and gave an opportunity to student leaders to publish critical essays against the Cuban *foco* insurreccional strategy. In 1966 Diego Montaña Cuellar, one of the most prolific pens in the PCC, participated in a seminar titled “Dialogue between Communists and Catholics” at the Jesuitical Universidad Javeriana. The importance of the lecture was the opening of a thematic that gained momentum after Camilo Torres’ death in the ELN. Two main concerns opened the path for such unlikely seminar. First, the consolidation of Liberal ecclesiastic sectors that despised the Cuban revolution whilst heralding the necessary transformation of traditional structures in terms of land tenure, wealth distribution, and educational reform. Second, the fragmentation between moderate and radical supporters of the Liberation theology, reflected in the political perspectives of priests studying the II Vatican Council and the social Catholic doctrine. The ecclesiastic division was enhanced by the unexpected decision of Camilo Torres to join the ELN in late 1965, what positioned radical pro-Cuban groups at the forefront of popular struggle. In February 1966, the announcement of his death during a combat against the army hampered the enthusiasm making the illusion pro insurreccional *foco* bubble to burst in deceit.

In the article “What is the Marxist Moral?”, Luis Mirnaya studied the dualism of idealist morals, from the perspective of Roger Garaudy. This last French author, demystified the power of Christendom to liberate its people, based on a study of medieval theology — particularly Aquinas— that points out slavery as an example for this dilemma. As Luis Mirnaya notes, Roger Garaudy explained ‘the impossibility that idealist morals might led to a complete realization of mankind. Moral doctrines that seek in heaven the rules that regulate conduct, are necessarily sustained by the legitimation of class distinctions. In other words, the ideal of transcendence as exterior to human nature and superior to humanity itself, rely on a behavior that does not endanger the established

order'. Luis Mirnaya synthesizes well the relevance of John XXIII's encyclical for communists, saying that 'Pacem in Terris' moved the theological debate from an eternal domain, to one historical, from a individual moral, to a moral both political and civil'.⁴⁰ In another article, authored by Orlando Millas, elements on this ideological shift are presented. In "Integrated Action between Catholics and Communists",⁴¹ he explains for Communist readers in Colombia, how Chile became an example of leftist unity. He was based on a thesis about the struggle for people's consciousness, calling for unity despite differences, and making continuous references to the work of Jesuit priest linked to the Theology of liberation, and particularly Roger Vekemans who started an effort bounded to consolidate political integration inspired by Theillard de Chardin. Roger Vekemans' initiative only became reality after the work of Luis Alberto Corvalán as secretary of the Chilean Communist Party. He argued that, 'the consecration of a new type of sanctity different to the one proposed in the Christian model, in which every effort in service to the people promotes a dynamic that leads to revolutionary reforms',⁴² then, 'it is unpractical to fall into endless discussions and religious debates that foster hatred, and instead to promote advancement in a popular struggle uniting sectors no matter what their thought is'.⁴³

From these debates, it is interest to observe the philosophical approach how Colombian Communist leaders progressively adjusted a dogmatic position on materialism, by identifying a bond with the catholic theology. The linkage was a common root shared with humanism, and how 'in our time it is a fallacy, a mystification, every assumption that does not confers to humanism the liberator purpose of setting free mankind'. The Church in turn proposes that 'man is a social being. Society must allow the accomplishment of mankind's spiritual nature that implies god's existence. There is not possibility to achieve a society without classes as Communism proposes. In the Communism,

⁴⁰ Luis Mirnaya, "Que es la moral Marxista?", *Documentos Políticos* 52 (1965): 82-84.

⁴¹ Orlando millas, "La Acción Conjunta de Communistas y Católicos," *Documentos Políticos* 55 (1965), 26-47.

⁴² Ibid., 38.

⁴³ Ibidem.

workers are subordinated to a rulers' despotism. Dictatorial regimes that deny mankind's spiritual nature and its projection in god, denies mankind's dignity"⁴⁴ Although the goal was to achieve a dialogue, because "The essential now is mankind's peace as a common link of good will, the call is for collaboration in spite ideological divergences and differences between social systems".⁴⁵

From that moment on, myriad articles were published in *Documentos Políticos* regarding two main subjects. Firstly, the foundations theoretical for a Marxist morality, based on a close examination of materialism and the terms how a Leninist organization of power would allocate a non-religious approach to systems of belief that does not conflict with the loyalty to the proletarian state-party. Secondly, an analysis of the Chilean experience in terms of revolutionary efforts, and how it galvanized in interclass cooperation despite fundamental distinctions between religion and ideological doctrinarian Marxism. Roger Garaudy became a theoretical guru for interpreting the intersections between religion and politics. He contributed with several articles translated for *Documentos Políticos*. His ideas gained interest among debates in the PCC and JUCO. Considering the difficult dialogue that Camilo Torres had within the Universidad Nacional with leaders of the PCC and JUCO, and the gradual incorporation of this debate in the main organ of the group, I argue that communist leaders understood how strategic was to adapt their discourse to the interest of people that joined him. Instead of activism or charitable work, the communist used Camilo Torres' movement as a springboard. More specifically, the communist student leaders instrumentalized his efforts to gain recognition during political debates on campus and through their published articles in *Frente Unido*. This expresses two colliding forms of leadership that barely created a constructive dialogue. With his death, every organization had a claim on Camilo Torres' legacy, and eroded the basic organization reached by the *Camilismo*.

⁴⁴ This was a comment made at the Universidad Javeriana by a Jesuit priest that debated with the intellectual communist leader Diego Montalla Cuellar, "Diálogo entre Comunistas y Católicos," *Documentos Políticos* 61 (1966):73,75.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 69.

In February 1966, Gilberto Vieira —then president and intellectual guide of the PCC, and also editorial coordinator of *Documentos Políticos*— wrote an obituary titled ‘The Priest Camilo Torres, Hero and Martyr of the Popular Revolution in Colombia’. This acceptance to Camilo Torres into the Colombian revolutionary *pantheon* was an important moment in the configuration of a cult to his image and ideas, especially by his detractors during years of activism at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia. He became worshiped by all revolutionaries, for his memory and heritage was there to serve as an example of paradigmatic commitment, and hero-like lifestyle.

Meanwhile, the ELN was enclosed in its own dilemma, since the urban sympathizers turned their back against the group. In this chapter, I presented further elements on the theological and ideological debates in the 1960s, explaining how Camilo Torres was an instrument for leftist radicals at the Universidad Nacional. His standpoints sparked hostile reactions from the ecclesiastic hierarchy, what led to his separation from the institution and a total engagement with the popular movement that rapidly formed around his project. I also further the analysis of leadership, in the light of strategies used by leaders of the student movement to gain power by siding with Camilo Torres in a context of increasing disenchantment among middle class students that supported him and felt underrepresented by radical leftist or countercultural groups.

The form how the PCC shifted its discourse has been introduced in this section as well, explaining how theological elements and the example of Chile fostered discussions about morality and religion by Communist intellectuals. These factors are central for understanding how outside the ELN Camilo Torres became worshipped in a cult, while within the ELN the group he never became a relevant leader. I have shown in the last chapters the form how Camilo Torres represented a leadership separated from the ecclesiastic authority. His elite origin was also an attractive feature that demonstrated the extreme conditions of social injustice in Colombia. Finally, within the Universidad Nacional, Camilo Torres represented an integrative leadership during the years of factionalism and

schisms. In addition to explanations sustaining that the student movement, and in general the radical left, was divided for ideological motivations, I argued in these sections how leaders incorporated elements of morality to attract youth's attention. In the same form as countercultural pursuit for freedom and revolutionary aesthetics fulfilled the youth's interest to become a leading social sector in the public sphere, processes for a the individual's revolutionary sublimation legitimized their ideological discourse about social justice. The leaders required systems of revolutionary morality to gain audience, and thereafter obedience, in order to promote standpoints to justify political activism and radical change.

CHAPTER 11

CAMILO GUERRILLERO

It was already introduced the formation of Fabio Vásquez' leadership in the municipality of San Vicente de Chucurí, and how it crystallized an insurgent group in 1963-1964. The *guerrilleros* and local peasants perceived him as their, and defended him despite his mistakes and misjudgments. As I presented in Chapters 4 and 5, Fabio Vásquez' leadership haunted *guerrilleros urbanos* setting them in a secondary position. Elements such the over determination of Fabio Vásquez' leadership, harsh mechanism of revolutionary justice, and the extreme ritualization of daily activities bolstered internal principles of morality that enhanced Fabio Vásquez leadership and a personalistic cult.

In this chapter I argue that Camilo Torres did not have the possibility to contribute with his point of view in discussions and decisions related to internal issues of the ELN, what impaired him from making important assertions about internal political aspects. Despite being a recognized national leader, in the warfront he could not counterbalance Fabio Vásquez's control of the group's hierarchy. His integration to the warfront as an average *guerrillero* was part of a personal attraction for radical decisions, counting among them his incorporation to religious life. These drastic changes of life style can be explored as a personal conception of sacrifice as the ultimate evidence for political and religious commitment. I argue that Camilo Torres considered both knowledge and action as inextricably intertwined, what led his deeply entrenched beliefs to promote actions similar to ritual sacrifices. In other words, for Camilo Torres sacrifice necessary for revolutionary sublimation and redemption after a life of privileges. These actions were considered clear evidence of commitment to the revolution, and shaped the principles for belonging after his death.

11.1 REVOLUTIONARY REDEMPTION: SUBLIMATION AS A FORM OF LIBERATION IN CAMILO TORRES' ACTIONS

The short presence of Camilo Torres' in the ELN warfront, first as a visitor in June 1965, and later in October as a *guerrillero*, was contemporary to the increasing tension between *urbanos* and *rurales*, and marked a decline that reached its lowest point in 1973. Standards used for measuring *guerrilleros* morality and individual commitment were radical. One step back could mean execution by firing squad. Despite challenges faced by the ELN to maintain the *foco*, Camilo Torres took the decision and joined the rural warfront. The strict discipline, the impossibility for defecting, and clashes between *urbanos* and *rurales*, all were a concern when he entered the ELN. The ELN's internal crisis did not determine his purpose of learning and sharing knowledge envisioning a life as an exemplary *guerrillero*. It was the recognition in public political campaigning and social research that showed him that the problems of poverty and violence had an origin in the rural areas. In other words, the guerrilla was an opportunity for Camilo Torres to evolve into a revolutionary being, by giving and sharing fraternal love with guerrilla fighters committed to change radically Colombian society. Also, it was an opportunity to go beyond charity. Commitment with experiencing deprivation from material privileges, the clandestine warfront was a perfect scenario for exposing himself to sacrifices as he once expressed to a journalist,

-If I am an authentic follower of Christ it is impossible not to be a revolutionary as he was. I want to be an authentic follower of Christ.

-What do you understand for being a revolutionary?

-It is to try to reform social and human structures, in both natural and supernatural realms, envisioning more social justice.¹

The urban militants that helped him to enter the clandestine warfront explained the internal situation as both fraternal and critical. In one hand, a sense of communality sharing the

¹ This document was written by Camilo Torres immediately after being discharged by Bogotá's Archbishop Luis Concha, from the position he held at the Universidad Nacional. Originally published in June 1962, in *El Tiempo*. See, Torres, *Cristianismo y Revolución*, 199.

revolutionary ideal was present. In the other hand, the obvious difficulties of clandestine life and a clash between *urbanos* and *rurales* constituted the main feature of concern for the leaders. Positive aspects were predominant during his initiation. The group was consistent, with strong tellurian bonds, articulated to urban logistics, and on the verge of numerous insurgent actions against the regime. For Camilo Torres, learning about the group from newspapers and gossip among social leaders portrayed an image of success, communality, and obvious limitations as a result of counterinsurgent military pressure.

In the early 1965, Fabio Vásquez became a notable revolutionary leader surprising with his organization the student movement, peasants, the PCC, and the government in particular. Siding with him were numerous intellectuals, students, unionized factory workers, union leaders and school teachers in Barrancabermeja —oil production capital in Colombia in that epoch. Even some sectors of the congress were sympathetic to the political platform launched in Simacota's siege. Camilo Torres was also at the zenith of his public political career. He started a 'visit to regions throughout the country, with a political plan, a well and defined discourse'² that reported a wide social support only endangered by the establishment's 'threats and repression that posed concerns on Camilo Torres' life'.³ The early contacts of Camilo Torres and the ELN's leaders were successful after a cautious approach made by student and semi-clandestine leaders, linked to the insurgency. They started to protect him during rallies following orders from Fabio Vásquez. In an interview to Isabel Restrepo, she said this

- Camilo considered at some point to search for a secure refuge?
- Out of the city, out of Bogotá... No.
- But he gives the idea of being looking for a refuge
- Refuge perhaps, escaping from danger
- What danger?
- Dangers that existed, threats, not for he was coward, not to hide, only for continuing his work better.⁴

² Medina, *ELN*, 66.

³ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁴ Caycedo, *El Padre Camilo*, 161

The ELN's secret strategy of protection to Camilo Torres created a strict circle of close friends and relatives, to surround him at all times. The goal was to deter supposed plans of intelligence to isolate him and control his activities and daily routines. His mother was a close ally during political rallies, but ignored that urban sympathizers of the ELN guerilla were in charge of his protection

Did you know when he entered the rural warfront, the guerrilla?
No, he never mentioned that he took that decision. I do doubt it because we knew that the best platform to be listened was Bogotá. It was also the best place to direct the masses following everywhere; the mass was large and grew every day. There was a moment in which he was surrounded, they did not allow him to speak, the police followed him everywhere, hitting him with their sticks, threatening him to send him to prison; he was really trapped in a violent circle and he was fearful that because of that the masses could be hurt.⁵

In fact, the first visit he made to the warfront in mid-1965 was planned and accomplished in secret. He only knew the plan when taken out of Bogotá in a car, on his way to visit the insurgent *foco*. It was so secretly kept, that during his first visit to the warfront he was not introduced to the rest of the *guerrilleros* by his name. He only was presented as an urban sympathizer in political commission. This information gave a low profile to the visit

It was a rapid interview that lasted two days and one night. They [the leaders and Camilo Torres] spent their time talking. We, as lower rank *guerrilleros* did not know officially who he was. Only after some gossip and guessing some of us deducted he was the rebellious priest, but in the epoch the visit had not the transcendence attributed in our days.⁶

Scholars had made little efforts to interpret the early significance of the meeting. Carlos Medina, Walter Broderick, and Carlos Arango center their attention in the natural success to coordinate efforts from radical social movements. The secrecy of the meeting with Fabio Vásquez is crucial to understand his role in the ELN, and Fabio Vásquez's perception about his entrance to clandestine insurgent warfare. However, it was a meeting marked by several imbalances that it is

⁵ Caycedo, *El Padre Camilo*, 167.

⁶ Medina, *ELN*, 66

necessary to mention. First, Fabio Vásquez and ELN urban sympathizers pushed their meeting into a situation that the former priests could not decline. At the moment, mid 1965, his political agenda was hectic and few people had influence in his decisions, but in the days that he was informed of the convened meeting in a rural clandestine area, his choices were minimal. One can guess that his curiosity for the radical leftist guerrilla recently emerged in Santander, was taken as an unavoidable opportunity to strengthen forces namely for the *Frente Unido*, but the urban ELN semi-clandestine *guerrilleros* disregarded the student leaders surrounding him for the intense disputes for political recognition everyone had. Fabio Vásquez himself considered *Frente Unido* a broken party, and his supervision of the urban sympathizers was to exploit the weaknesses of the *Frente Unido* to attract support for the ELN. In the epoch, Camilo Torres attracted crowds like no one organization could since Jorge Elécer Gaitán before his assassination

Camilo was the man that after Gaitán was able to embody in his thought and action people's struggle. There were other leaders such as Alfonso López and the MRL. They betrayed people's expectations and wanted to appear as representatives of their interests.⁷

Second, there are some characteristics that might make the meeting to seem a middle point between consent and kidnapping. Although his interest for visiting the ELN's in its hideout, was taken as a privilege, the form how it was arranged was irregular. In case he would have refused to meet them, he certainly would become a threat—or even enemy—for the ELN. Guerrillas in its early stages tend to close ranks to protect the clandestine *foco*, and vanguardism normally promoted a clean-cut distinction between friend and enemy. The chances for a refusal were minimal, but the question is on the form how it was arranged and what would happen if he declined the invitation. The elements that made Camilo Torres a suitable candidate for incorporation to the ELN will be presented in later in this dissertation, in the context of the relation between revolution, death and sacrifice.

⁷ Medina, *ELN*, 76

Finally, by inviting Camilo Torres into Fabio Vásquez's milieu, the last had a clear advantage that influenced the perception of the group received by Camilo Torres. Conditions proper of clandestine life, and the uncertainty after a quasi-kidnapping meeting could have predisposed him for a more open reception of what the group offered. The former priest was also predisposed to contemplate rural political strategies of political mobilization, and grew into the recognition of revolutionary actions as necessary—if not mandatory—to bring about change. In terms of leadership, Fabio Vásquez' reluctance to recognize Camilo Torres movement as equally relevant, particularly for its urban, intellectual, middleclass and bounded to solidary features, served as the setting for an imbalance of power that predisposed Camilo Torres under his sphere of direct influence.⁸

Camilo Torres was conscious of the leverage he gained, and seized an opportunity to make a big and influential headline for the movement, that would revert internally and externally. It is impossible to deny the overwhelming pressure that the establishment forces were posing upon Camilo Torres political career. On top of this, his initiative to depart to Europe in September 1965 was a decision that pushed for a rapid strategy from the ELN's sympathizers to create conditions that made indeclinable the propositions to enter the clandestine *foco*. Camilo Torres was not an innocent player in this decision. His announcement to return to Belgium was probably an strategy to measure the strength of his movement, the support to his leadership, and from that certainty make a definitive decision about what to do to activate the support towards effective political change. In fact, as much as Fabio Vásquez played a strategic card to entice the leader to play on his side, Camilo Torres perceived in the rural warfront the opportunity to expand his understanding and activism to a level he had explained with the analytical instruments of a distant expert.⁹ Entering the warfront was a chance to meet the ultimate goal of sacrifice and commitment for a growing leader, and a

⁸ Broderick, *Camilo*, 281.

⁹ Arango, *Yo Vi Morir*, 98-101.

meticulously planned strategy to orient the social forces towards what seemed a revolutionary stage. Camilo Torres' decision was a wrong calculation. Instead, Fabio Vásquez benefited from his move to the guerrilla.

I disagree with scholars that consider that Fabio Vásquez accepted Camilo Torres as an outstanding political leader. Although Fabio Vásquez made an effort to open a space for him, the paternalist leadership he created in the rural warfront gave a secondary place to education. The same happened to Victor Medina. In the photos that circulate widely of the ELN and Camilo Torres, he appears sharing and smiling. However, internally the *rurales* were reluctant to participate in indoctrination, or political education. Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista expressed how *rurales* perceived the *urbanos*. Here he refers to Camilo Torres, his leadership and subordination

He has clumsy in his movements, very clumsy for assimilating clandestine warfront mobility, but with effort and tenacity he was ready to overcome his limitations. He wanted to be one more in the group. He did not want to be a protagonist, not to be the chief, he was not pursuing something. Instead, all his efforts were bound to acquire experience to articulate properly to the group.¹⁰

The same had happened to Victor Medina. I mentioned in another chapter how Manuel Vásquez entered the group, and his role in education was to some extent an isolated effort, marginalized from leadership, he was 'responsible for the study but in a rather informal way. Camilo assumed a similar role in the ELN, responsible for education, alphabetization, and cultural acts, to prepare *guerrilleros* for chats with peasant population'¹¹. Nicolás Rodríguez explain the capacities of Camilo Torres once again

Probably not in the operative or military terrain, but namely in the political one, in the bond between the ELN and the people, Camilo was a point of reference, communication and identity between the people and the organization. He was the figure, the leader. That was perhaps what Camilo Torres death meant for the organization: it was a notable figure that disappeared tragically, that just after arriving had opened huge perspectives for popular struggle.¹²

¹⁰ Medina, *ELN*, 70.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹² *Ibid.*, 76.

However, almost every research written about the ELN had demonstrated obsessively how the ELN discarded education and disconnected from popular linkages. The excuse given is the intense military pressure from the army, leader's mistakes abusing from peasant populations, and the lack of interest from the powerful majority of *rurales* backed by Fabio Vásquez.¹³ Camilo Torres' subordination became also evident in the form how the ritual of revolutionary baptism happened. Fabio Vásquez decided for him, and upon arrival to the warfront, he had no choice. It might seem a marginal fact, and as explained by Carlos Medina and Walter Broderick, caused by the necessity to maintain secrecy and protect both leaders from exposition to military counterintelligence. However, as I explained in an earlier chapter, the *nom de guerre* had a significant role shaping individual integration to the group and allegiance to the leader

Years ago, when Camilo dreamed of been a Dominican priest, he had guessed what name to adopt during the ceremony. Now, beginning as a different type of novice, he was baptized Argemiro. He imagined that getting used to it will come with time. One of his friends, Hermías, a young medical doctor from Bogotá, had changed twice its name in a matter of months. First he was Hermes, then Hernando.¹⁴

The insurgent identity depended on the leader's decisions. In the excerpt, both *guerrilleros* were urban and bounded to educational tasks. Camilo Torres became just another militant, learning from scratch every detail of insurgent activities, hardships and pleasures. It was not only his desire, but Fabio Vásquez condition to accept his presence in the rural warfront; otherwise integration would be impossible, or crippled by a bad initiation experience. Even though it was what he wanted, pledging allegiance to Fabio Vásquez' authority, was compliance with his leadership, and acceptance of military and rural principles upon political and intellectual initiatives. Academic initiatives were central in their daily routine, but they were already subordinated within the ELN, and secondary to military training, strategic planning, and indoctrination. Their initiatives for education were accepted,

¹³ Juan Carlos Sánchez Sierra, "Los Estudios sobre el ELN, un Balance Historiográfico," in *Pensatiempos*, ed. Juan Camilo Biermann (Bogotá: Editorial Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2002), 184-194.

¹⁴ Broderick, *El Guerrillero*, 380.

but burdened with negative connotations since experienced *guerrilleros* dismissed studying and political discussion. Subordination meant acceptance to the arrangements that sustained internal hierarchy, and to Fabio Vásquez paternalism.

Camilo Torres empathy to other *guerrilleros* privileged their political perspectives for its close relation to exploitation, violence and disenfranchisement. He wanted to learn from them. the separation from privileges that urban middle class provided became an obsession. The narratives from militants that witnessed his commitment to teaching and learning strategies of survival, military tactics, and an interest for developing the dexterity to walk and move efficiently in the jungle like any other rural *guerrillero*. Although Camilo was obviously a privileged militant, he rejected any predisposition to separate him from the flock. Instead, the consulted narratives show how he lowered his political profile in order to receive the training as a regular insurgent. Fabio Vásquez considered this a suitable condition, since he wanted to avoid future clashes similar to the one with Victor Medina. For instance, he gave to rural *guerrilleros* the opportunity to express their thought in his personal proclaim, a document meant to inform the public opinion about his decision to join insurgent struggle

Camilo met with all of us and explained: I have to explain to the people the reasons for entering the guerrilla, why I'm here with you, why I choose this path, why I became *guerrillero*. He wrote a draft, and read it with us.¹⁵

When he used to refer socio-economic underdevelopment, they [ELN *guerrilleros*] helped him to understand that the expression was inaccurate, and that the most suitable concept to use was 'national dependence'. In summary, they lead Camilo to sharpen his language in the political platform until making it a more precise declaration with a clearly belligerent tone.¹⁶

¹⁵ Medina, *ELN*, 70-71.

¹⁶ Broderick, *Camilo*, 275.

11.2 REVOLUTIONARY LIFE: CAMILO TORRES, ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

Camilo Torres had surrendered to a rural leadership, to patterns of authority and obedience that he was not familiar to, and that implied the radical assumption of life and death in and for revolution. Combined efforts from ecclesiastic leaders engaged in political activism brought about a growing interest in the connections between Christendom, Marxism, revolution and violence. Camilo Torres expressed in 1962 the correlation between Christian religion, individual commitment and revolutionary goals, opening a debate that equated apostolate to revolutionary leadership. This messianic attributes linked Christ's actions to revolutionary leadership. His political activism became a justification for the use of violence

We are in a revolutionary moment... the legal paths are closed because the oligarchy is ready to fight a war to death against our people. Therefore we have to organize ourselves for a fight against the enemy by attacking the system using superior forms of struggle.¹⁷

Ricardo Lara Parada, a social leader in Barrancabermeja with little discipline in religious affairs, offered the following explanation in an interview in the 1980's

I have always considered that the true followers of Christ had the obligation to struggle by the side of the weak and not to cooperate in the miserable exploitation imposed by the dominant classes. I consider that prayers asking the underclass people to resign and wait for paradise were a distorted version of real Christendom, a pray oriented to postpone elemental people's rights and to sponsor exploitation from minorities in power.¹⁸

Religious rituals and the doctrine became subject to revisions, and legitimized activism. The innovation in the political perspectives of catholic followers caused reactions in Europe, where Camilo Torres' sacrifice attracted three priests — Domingo Lain, Manuel Pérez and José Antonio Jiménez— to engage in social work in Cartagena. They separated from the Church, and in the early 1970's joined the ELN, inspired by Camilo Torres' mythical feats, and the impact that his death

¹⁷ Broderick, *El Guerrillero*, 374.

¹⁸ Castaño, *El Guerrillero*, 14-15.

caused. This excerpt shows how the Bible's reinterpretations changed the idea of violence in the context of sacrifices made for the benefit of religious commitment

We (Domingo Lain, Manuel Pérez and José Antonio Jiménez) were accused of being communists, and it was like an inquisitorial trial. The topic of violence also emerged in the process:

-Maybe you want to become *guerrilleros*?

-We have not suggested that.

Anyway, we started to read the Old Testaments how the Israelites' violence was normal when they left Egypt and Jesus using violence to spell out merchants from the temple.¹⁹

It is interesting how the bible became subject of interpretations bounded to legitimize violence and religious goals as set beyond the promise of afterlife salvation. This is how Walter Broderick interprets the transition, studying Manuel Pérez, who became in the late 1970's the political leader of the ELN

If you read carefully the Bible, it is nothing but a narrative about a long process of liberation struggle; therefore processes of mass murder happened as in the case of Egypt's firstborn children'. Manuel Pérez shrugged and accepted violence as part of god's plan. Those children were offspring of the people's oppressors and were predestined to mass murder. It was simply something that had to happen.²⁰

These elements help to understand how religious leadership and political action intertwined in Camilo Torres' life as a *guerrillero*. Individual sacrifice begins in personal perception of revolutionary life as the ultimate opportunity for self-improvement. Manuel Pérez' life became an example that increasingly shaped a cult for Camilo Torres, insomuch as he embodied sacrifices and commitment in its highest level. In his transition from public to clandestine life he gave hints about the importance of sacrifice as a personal decision in which 'We have to commit ourselves full time with our lives, our blood, our sacrifices and labor in this prolonged and difficult struggle for the definitive liberation of our nation'.²¹ Beyond material deprivation, revolutionary sacrifice meant a separation from the types of love we grow into, in order to achieve a higher level of social

¹⁹ López Vigil, *Camilo*, 87.

²⁰ Broderick, *El Guerrillero*, 57-58.

²¹ Broderick, *Camilo*, 374.

commitment. Revolution meant a change of life, the birth of a New Man, morally conscious of their historical role. Everything that constitutes an obstacle for our revolutionary fight —our credentials, our work, our well-being, even our families—, it is necessary to abandon in order to surrender ourselves fully to a struggle for seizing power until our death'.²² These new values made the New Man suitable to give *amor eficaz* (effective love) by creating bonds that shared the foundation of religious mysticism, and revolutionary conviction in social equity.

In the context of insurgent life, an obvious element seemed to be a norm for survival 'In combat exist rules, it is to die or to kill, and one normally do not want to allow other to kill you easily'.²³ Nicolás Rodríguez gave this answer in the context of a situation of compassion in war, when a *guerrillero* has to face the need to eliminate an enemy. It is a matter of life or death, as the motto NUPALOM imposed. However, in the context of creating values, Camilo Torres had an attitude bounded to shape individual values that enhanced the revolutionary experience, making every *guerrillero* a hero and owner of a mystic allure.

Camilo was a man we recognize for a firm purpose to become a *guerrillero*, someone who considered the condition as vital for playing his revolutionary role. During the time he shared we us he assumed the perspective of assimilating the organization's experience gaining capabilities in the military, tactical and operative aspects to face the enemy. He considered it more than a thing to do, it was as a moral obligation, to put all what he could at reach for the organization, his knowledge, capacities and worth.²⁴

These attributes might have heightened his place in the group, but internally there existed a leader that exalted different capacities as necessary for recognition. Rural *guerrilleros* dismissed urban attitudes as distinctive, jeopardizing internal cohesion and tactical mobility. Even though Camilo Torres was a prominent political leader, his turf was the university, urban areas, and students. Bonds with Victor Medina and Manuel Vásquez were natural, but his efforts were intended to fit the conditions that the ELN considered as necessary to ensure the *foco's* survival. He wanted to learn

²² Ibidem

²³ López Vigil, *Camilo*, 182.

²⁴ Medina, *ELN*, 69.

from radicalized peasants by extreme exploitation. However, in the warfront he represented a danger, and probably a contender for Fabio Vásquez leadership. There are not evidences that proof how Fabio Vásquez placed Camilo Torres in check, but considering his strict control of the group, and cadres' subordination, this situation is very likely. In addition to this, most of the evidence used in this research portrays Camilo Torres from the point of view of the lessons he gave during his short life as *guerrillero*, but no urban *guerrillero* survived the epoch to provide an alternative picture of what he actually experienced

Besides Hermías Ruiz and Julio César Cortez, Camilo Torres was an extraordinary man. He was enthusiastic, active in everything, even in chores often dismissed as too mundane for a top rank member, he helped in the kitchen, he liked bringing Wood for the bonfire and cooking, bringing water, he helped to dig holes for trash; he also liked to teach the young *guerrilleros*.²⁵

All these militants, besides Victor Medina and Julio César Cortez died and cannot provide such alternative perception. Letters that Walter Broderick used for his biography of the revolutionary priest suggest that he stoically assumed physical burdens and intense exercise as part of the sacrifices to become rapidly a *guerrillero* as any other rural insurgent. Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista mentions how Camilo Torres said: 'I'm conscious that I cannot be a bother from the operative and military point of view, I have to overcome my condition of novice, or *urbano*'.²⁶ It will be impossible to measure the possible effect that his commitment with revolution, and the cause charity, love and sacrifice subsidized the physical suffering. The case is that in the eyes of those who met him in the warfront, he displayed only positive characteristics

Camilo was a man with a straightforward conduct, manners and behavior quite worthy, a simple man, hard worker, passionate for learning, decided, with an accessible personality, and big capacities for human relations (...) Camilo is in the group the most interested and committed to learning, and after five months in the rural warfront he knew how to walk, how to serve as a guard, to withdraw from a position, he had assimilated the basic things.²⁷

²⁵ Broderick, *Camilo*, 72

²⁶ Medina, *ELN*, 70.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 70

However after his death the group needed almost ten years to consecrate its political revolutionary project to serve some of Camilo Torres goals. It is necessary to mention that in a former analysis of the ELN political discourse it was quite visible the use of rather little of Camilo Torres' ideas heralded in 1956-1964. Instead, the internal publication of the group exalted ideas he expressed in the last months of public life —when he had become more radical and used a language peppered with Marxist and radical left leaning concepts. Besides, the platform he wrote with help of rural *guerrilleros* in the first weeks after entering the ELN barely addresses the elements that constituted his public discourse of 1956-1964.²⁸ If the ELN assumed Camilo Torres as its martyr and moral leader, it took also some time to consecrate a warfront to his memory, but particularly, it was necessary that Fabio Vásquez leadership imploded, leading to his separation from the group in 1974, in order to internally open the possibility to envision the priest as a visionary. In fact, the ideas and texts that the ELN worships claiming the blood and memory of Camilo Torres barely correspond to the last days of his life. Even though he was closely supervised by ELN urban sympathizers and the newspaper *Frente Unido* gathered semi-clandestine cadres of the ELN urban structures, the guerrilla group does not make clear references to central public elements of Camilo Torres' legacy.

Many of ELN's *guerrilleros* anecdotes about Camilo Torres are inspired by his higher aspirations to shape a New Man capable of sacrifice, love, and social work. Instead, the reminiscences of his ideal emphasize his eagerness to learn how to fight as a rural *guerrillero*, instead of his political ideals

²⁸ About the use of public documents in the ELN as a mechanism to portray internal stability, in Sánchez Sierra, "El Discurso Histórico," 12-17, 63-71. In my research on discourses and representations in the ELN, I argue that the ELN transformed its ideological discourse in the late 1970's and early 1980's using Marxism Leninism. Before that epoch ideological documents were marginal for internal belonging, and as I have demonstrated in this dissertation, those engaged in theoretical discussions were primarily endangered by the personalistic leadership of Fabio Vásquez.

In his dreams, envisioning his future, Camilo spoke about learning how to ride a horse, becoming a great rider going to the southern plains, that he considered an extraordinary area for its revolutionary value.²⁹

For rural *guerrilleros*, only to express the incapacity of a fighter to ride properly a horse is a matter of laugh, and considering a love story in Latin America for heroes savvy in equestrian arts, probably Camilo Torres was not necessarily the type of leader to worship. The national resonance of his death created internally a spasm. The pendulum of his public proclaim after entering the ELN, return in the opposite direction creating harsh criticism, skepticism, and dismissal from every political movement. 'Nobody talked. *Guerrilleros* cried in silence and prayed lowering their voices. I had to breathe deeply when I realize that without clear vision of the impact of that lost, it would not be easy for the group to continue the struggle. I gathered the people and told them that it was necessary not to abandon the crusade that Camilo wanted to foster until the last consequences. We had to honor his memory struggling without rest, with more impetus, to know how to allow his spirit to guide us, and with his lively image to reach the victory'³⁰. A leader comparable to Jorge Eliécer Gaitán died, in a group that garnered recognition for spontaneous actions and support from the youth.

11.3 THE MYSTICISM OF DEATH: RITUALS AND MESSIANIC REDEMPTION

An interesting aspect of Camilo Torres' life is the form how heroics became his lifestyle, creating a personal mysticism around political action, religious commitment, and the characteristic values for a Christian revolutionary. Beyond aspects of charity and compassion, and how these practices evolved into rituals of sacrifice for self-redemption from an elite life style, Camilo Torres

²⁹ Medina, *ELN*, 71.

³⁰ Castaño, *El Guerrillero*, 17.

created an image in which death became part of revolutionary individual transformation. His mother, Isabel Restrepo, expressed the idea with these words

Well, when he spoke about fighting until death, he was convinced, as I was, that he would be killed. I told him many times: 'Camilo, you are a precursor like Antonio Nariño [a hero during independence wars], for that, they will kill you. (...) Mom, I'm certain that it will be, but I have the hope that they will allow me to do something before getting killed, like creating consciousness among people, showing them that they have rights and also have compromises. I want to educate popular leaders ready to take power, but not as it comes, but after having the opportunity to educate themselves and acquire knowledge like any other elite person so the people can govern wisely the country.'³¹

In the context of the ELN it was appropriate, considering how NUPALOM constituted a call for heroics upon which revolutionary moral and individual values became intrinsic to a *guerrillero's* life style. Martirdom and self-inflicted sacrifice were features necessary for recognition and promotion. In Colombia, students, intellectuals, and priests regarded his life as an example. 'Obviously Camilo was not a normal guerrilla fighter. His death fostered many Colombians to follow his footsteps. It is, to follow his struggle, to vanquish or to die with a weapon in hand'.³² Although the ELN declined rapidly due to the intensity of internal disputes and leader's reluctance to bridge the distances that weakened its hierarchy, Camilo Torres memory became ritualized at public universities, particularly the Universidad Nacional. Although intellectual sympathizers withdrew their support to the insurgent group, the ELN still was a leading force at universities, where the youth received ideological guidance during protests. The establishment increased popular repression and isolated insurgent semi clandestine structures. This obliged urban sympathizers and semi-clandestine cadres, to become rural *guerrilleros*. Otherwise they had to face the regime's harsh repression, selective assassination, or military tribunals on charges of conspiracy, sedition and rebellion. Intellectuals perceived with skepticism the orders given by the ELN's commander, aiming to enlarge rural warfronts. The transitory leaders in the warfront considered that such orders were given despite the group's internal crisis. Fabio Vásquez's reluctance to accept advice from leaders of the social

³¹ Caycedo, *El Padre Camilo*, 185.

³² Castaño, *El Guerrillero*, 18.

movements was taken as proof of the waning participation of urban political *guerrilleros* in both decisions and strategic planning.³³ By the early 1973 the ELN had lost influence due to the emergence of alternative strategies in the Communist Party co-opting students to make clandestine agitation in rural areas, without a necessary participation in military attacks. Rural insurgency was left to the FARC that grew as the military branch, and faced counterinsurgent strategies launched by the military.³⁴ The rapid urbanization of Colombia bolstered alternative radical groups active in the cities, whose actions and spectacular attacks attracted support from student's leaders, and galvanized in the urban nationalist guerrilla M19.

After Camilo Torres' death, and in spite of the repulsion created among former supporters, the ELN attracted militants who envisioned the group as a privilege space to create political platforms that linked both religion and politics. The Spanish priests who learned about his activities in the 1960's also were radicalized under Francisco Franco's dictatorship, and read theological works written in the same vein of Camilo Torres inspirational studies in Leuven.³⁵ Manuel Pérez, Domingo Lain and José Jiménez Comin were inspired by Camilo Torres' paradigmatic life and death. His Catholic commitment was envisioned as a political and social cause. His dedication to overcome every obstacle posed to his ideals as important factor that attracted them to the experience of the ELN whilst doing social work in the Dominican Republic. Camilo Torres' heroic death and became an example of martyrdom that they wanted to follow. In fact, Domingo Lain is probably the vivid

³³ For an insight of Fabio Vásquez relation to non-clandestine organizations, see Arenas, *La Guerrilla*, 118-120; Medina, *ELN*, 76-79; López Vigil, *Camilo*, 193-194.

³⁴ Pizarro, *Las FARC*, 148-170.

³⁵ An important link between the ELN and international insurgent groups committed to liberation movements was based on the Spanish Basque territory. The ETA supported and trained urban commandos, and opened spaces in Europe for ELN leaders. The liaison started in the 1960's with help from French and Spanish ELN sympathizers who shared similar ideals, in the context of European colonial decadence that served the ETA as a justification to reanimate claims for territorial autonomy and political self-determination. Documents written by Camilo Torres, and ELN *guerrilleros* were published in the 1980's in Tafalla (Navarra), and the connections are still today strong. See, Roberto Sancho Larrañaga, *Violencia Política, Guerrilla y Terrorismo: una Perspectiva Comparada de Colombia y España, ELN y ETA, 1959-1982* (M.A Thesis, Universidad Industrial de Santander, 2000). The role that Spanish priests played in the ELN was the result of community level efforts in the Basque territory from Liberation theology sympathizers, inspired by the movement in Latin America. See, Broderick, *Camilo*, 238-246; Restrepo, *Golconda*, 17-49.

example of complete surrender to Camilo Torres' role model, in what seems to be a ritual process of self-imposed martyrdom

Domingo Lain published a message as anticipated on the 15 February, 1970 the day that Colombian people celebrates the fourth anniversary of the physical death of a great leader for the people, a celebration of a spirit of struggle and faith. It was a proclamation with a grandiloquent and personalistic tone, on the same vein of Ché Guevara speeches.³⁶

His life in the ELN warfront was very similar to Camilo Torres insurgent experience.

Domingo Lain made great efforts to become a dexterous *guerrillero*, whilst teaching and learning. It seems to be a conscious process of life and death imitation, what might suggest the psychological effects of religious and political commitment as assembled in a revolutionary cause supported in a type of heroics and sublimation that incorporated death as its corollary

For Manuel, the celebration after returning from a log period in which he was lost in the jungle without any contact was short. He was informed that a month before, the 20th February, near the site 'El Bagre', during a clash with the national army, Domingo Lain attempted to pick up a rifle from a death soldier. He died as a hero, they said, in similar circumstances to Camilo Torres death.³⁷

A final aspect is necessary to highlight in the case of Camilo Torres and the importance of his personality and sacrifices. In 1968, with his death still fresh in the *guerrilleros'* memory, and resented by criticism to 'his negligent attitude and disastrous effect in a youth exposed to subversion',³⁸ the Catholic Church and political leaders used his death as an example to exhibit the damage that revolution was causing to political alternatives confronting the *Frente Nacional*. It was a threat for the religious traditional moral structure supported by the Church. Skepticism grew among his followers, confused by his sudden decision to join the ELN, and his dramatic death. Political alternatives seemed to be severed once again from leadership, and alternative moral patterns oriented to achieve social justice. His mother started a process of rehabilitation of Camilo Torres' image and memory. She had witnessed his growth as a charismatic leader, and was a handy confident

³⁶ Broderick, *El Guerrillero*, 167.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 297.

³⁸ *El Tiempo*, editorial after confirmation of Camilo Torres death in the ELN rural warfront, March 1966.

ready for listening about his fears and anxieties. She gave several interviews, but the one published by Olga Caycedo reflects an initiative to create a myth despite the acrid response from the establishment. In the book, there are three main aspects that should be highlighted. First, an attempt to support with empirical evidence —namely interviews to close Camilo Torres' allies— the uncertainty about his death. The central goal was to find out where his body was buried, and why the government never gave back his mortal remains for Christian burial. For instance, political leaders with wide recognition claimed that photographic evidence published by the press did not correspond to Camilo Torres' body, and his burial site is unclear for the government and military, for the intention to inflict pain to the family and supporters by denying proper mourning rituals, or a site for worshipping.

Second, the intimate life of the leader was exposed as a curiosity, considering the intense attraction he caused among women in Bogotá during his services as priest, and professor. Concerns about likely liberal attitudes that might have led to sexual contact became gossip. This was particularly regarding the early 1962, when students invited him to parties. There, he drank alcohol and discussed politics and taboo topics with the youth. In Colombian society, sexuality was a taboo topic as the Church imposed restrictions to intercourse without marriage, and a priest involved in such practices was unthinkable. Although in Olga Caycedo's book no conclusion is reached, the yellowish section opens the question of Camilo Torres' celibacy and his vow of chastity to the Church, as necessarily in contradiction to natural drives and all type of fantasies he inspired in Bogotá's uptight society. A sense of virginity also emerges, considering that women speculated about his sexuality and attractiveness, combining admiration similar to the taboo topic of sexual arousal that Christ causes among women with a Catholic background.

Finally, the comparison between Camilo Torres and Jesus Christ is a good example of initiative for transcending his political and theological platform. Features of his behavior since a

young age such as compassion and charity, and his rapid progression towards a defined combination of thought and practices, reveal to what extent his life concluded in the rural insurgent theater, where he could play his role embodying characteristics that blur the difference between political and religious thought.

I don't want to compare Camilo to Jesus Christ, I'm not that pretentious, but you know well that if Jesus would not die in the Cross, there will not exist Christendom. If Camilo would not sacrifice himself in the name of his ideals, as he probably did, then there would not exist *camilismo*. That is why I think that Camilo was born the day he was killed.³⁹

I want people to receive Camilo's message of justice. I don't want them to talk about me. He gave us a heritage that ought to be heard by everybody. He wrote with his own blood the word love, love for mankind as Christ did for people with disabilities, mean people, students, factory workers, peasants, people with spiritual flaws, every one that needs help. I want his memory to be respected for he was a hero; he died knowing that his death was a blood contribution for mankind. He was conscious of that. I don't want Camilo's ideas to become misinterpreted by saying that he had communist, liberal or conservative ideas. He was not. He was only a Christian. I want everyone to recognize that he was a martyr in the catholic sense. With time they will place him in the altar for being the first martyr of catholic transformation. However that is something that I don't want to see. I don't want Camilo to become canonized that would be a great offense to his memory.⁴⁰

In his book, Walter Broderick dismisses initiatives to redeem Camilo Torres' leadership through a biography where he narrates the process that lead to his sanctification. Both Walter Broderick and Olga Caycedo missed the point by portraying the structural causes that enabled a leader to become controversial and subject to religious depictions. Whilst Walter Broderick's biography is intended to debunk the myth of Heroic Camilo Torres, in order to elaborate a balanced profile of a political figure, the result is an intimate narrative of how popular sectors revere charisma and political vision, embodied in a politician. He does it through interpretations that connect revolution with salvation, and scatology with redemption. In conclusion, heroic narratives that build Camilo Torres' cult outside the ELN, reflect the social conformism with fragmentary patterns of authority. Their narratives about Camilo Torres sacrifices are marked as well by a nostalgic tone and images of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán and Rafael Uribe Uribe embraced at the margins of mainstream

³⁹ Caycedo, *El Padre Camilo*, 165

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 169

historical accounts on politics. No matter how marginal effect it had in relation to the powerful official narrative of national heroes, the cult to his legacy emerged outside the ELN, and included moral visions, inspired educational practices, and individual values. Within the ELN, instead, his figure promoted attitudes that bolstered Fabio Vásquez's leadership. No educational practices or moral perspective based on his thought were effective after his death. In this chapter, I explored the few months that Camilo Torres was *guerrillero*, and how it was a marginal stage in his political career, at least in what refers to the reproduction of political platform for social change or revolution. It was prolific in examples of morality, including sublimation and redemption, sacrifice and martyrdom, which combined his religious and political convictions. The ELN instrumentalized these lessons for future insurgent generations to engage in revolutionary struggle. Political opposition in Colombia seems to have adapted to the habit of *magnicidio* as the culmination for leadership, but also instrumental heroic narratives based on the reminiscences of a dream that never came true. In the conclusion to this dissertation I will present further evidence on the instrumentalization of Camilo Torres image within the ELN, the form how his followers passed from being a prosecuted sect, to become the leadership of the ELN, and how his thought did not reached the level of ideological principles, but instead his practices galvanized into the ideal skills for *guerrilleros*.

CONCLUSION

FROM A SECT TO A CULT

'The New Man was nothing but the revolutionary man, making the ultimate goal of every individual to be a revolutionary, making it also the main goal of all mankind. It was the same sacred version but with a paradise on earth. Anyway, revolution still was a religious proposition customized with mundane features. Revolution does not kill gods as Nietzsche did, but instead it replaces them for flesh and bone gods'.

Medardo Correa, *Sueño Inconcluso*.

After Camilo Torres' death in 1966, the ELN experienced a rapid decline due to internal factionalism and attacks from the Army that decimated its force and mobility. The period between 1966 and 1970 was marked by increasing isolation, reduction of influence to popular sectors in both the countryside and urban centers, and declining of support among intellectuals at universities, union leaders and peasant activists. The deployment of urban sympathizers with the rural clandestine warfronts increased the number of *guerrilleros* that counterbalanced rural insurgents.

Urban comrades came to reinforce the José Antonio Galán warfront, most of them from Bogotá. In the process they discover a disorganized guerrilla, and started a process of questioning different aspects, such as the dynamics that both political and military sectors of the organization clashed. They started to question as well to what extent executions were necessary. Finally, the minimal work with community, separation with the masses, and the problem of internal democracy.¹

In the previous chapters, I presented how Fabio Vásquez' cult of personality undermined urban *guerrilleros'* initiatives for education, political reflection and interaction with peasants and union leaders. I also explored how Camilo Torres represented an innovative type of leader combining radical standpoints in both politics and religion, and a legacy of practices that bolstered moral perceptions about revolutionary struggle. After his death, the ELN took several years to decisively embrace the legacy of values and ideas left by the rebellious priest. The *Guerrilleros'* silence after

¹ Medina, *ELN*, 195.

Camilo Torres' death was an epiphany of how his thought and blueprint of actions represented a path for revolutionary struggle only that was overshadowed by Fabio Vásquez; grasp on internal allegiance. It also led to the impossibility to speak up divergent opinions of what was bringing the group into its own demise.

Once Camilo died and considering the transcendence of his work and heroic death in combat, the ELN commander bestowed him the posthumous rank of Commander. Privately and after an analysis most mistakes were accepted. Afterwards we realized what went wrong, we learned in the flesh and paid with our own blood that cost us

Camilo's life. However, it is necessary to say that the ELN initially only limited to an official recognition of Camilo's death, an exaltation of his memory, and that was it.... Nothing else. Today Camilo is a universal symbol for the people's movements across the world fighting for national liberation. Many have tried to fudge his legacy by making him a myth and a legend.²

Camilo Torres performed his ritual death in the group convinced that the rural vanguardism of the leaders was an accurate interpretation of revolution. In fact, he set himself in insurgent life, playing a necessary script for redemption for its urban upper-class privileges. Such an attitude exacerbated his suffering as a necessary self-inflicted martyrdom. It is necessary to make this point very clear. The ELN did not surrender to Camilo Torres explicit rituals of commitment and devotion to revolution, it was the opposite. He went to perform them, and died in the attempt to sublimate these ideals as a revolutionary. His sacrifice legitimized, instead, a cult to Fabio Vásquez's personality and its implications for the ELN's lines of thought and conduct. It meant sacrifice, exaltation of death, and suffering as part of heroic revolutionary feats.

After his death, the ELN experienced many difficulties that stretched out until the mid-1970's. During this time, Fabio Vásquez' grasp on power became deadly, and progressively declined namely for rivalries it fostered. Another factor for the questioning of his leadership was the increasing objections it caused among urban *guerrilleros* that entered the warfront after Camilo Torres' death. Worshiping the priest's memory was important moral support for a few *guerrilleros*, but not a desirable ceremony for the whole organization, considering the prevalence of practices that

² Arenas, *La Guerrilla*, 102

enhanced allegiance and reinforced Fabio Vásquez's leadership. In other words, there was not a cult to Camilo Torres within the ELN. It was a marginal set of practices lurking in the form of a sect. However, it flourished against the grain of Fabio Vásquez' mainstream leadership and became a matter of concern for the leader and rural *guerrilleros*. Increasing internal executions by firing squads grew in 1967-1973. They were ordered to deter defections and schisms, but paradoxically brought about further attempts to divide the group. The ELN's leaders were pit against each other, often using the divisions to resolve personal intrigues, which increased the feeling of suspicion between leaders and average *guerrilleros*. 'Until that moment, the political work we promoted was only with the purpose of find support for the guerrilla, instead of initiatives to develop an organization of and for the people, defending their interests. We failed doing it both in rural and urban spaces'.³

In the second half of 1973, the national army deployed at least three divisions of soldiers specially trained to apply counterinsurgent strategies. At the same time, Manuel Vásquez was implementing small commissions to reconnect the ELN with peasant communities. In skirmishes with the military, the ELN lost ground and access to strategic trails for rapid mobilization. The *guerrillero* that better knew the terrain defected and started working as a whistleblower for the national army. The rural terrain was difficult. The group barely knew it, and a large river became a treacherous gulch between a known territory and area inhabited by few peasants. The area was namely occupied by miners. For the ELN they 'were instable in relation to the territory, then dangerous for the guerrilla's interests'.⁴ In October, the ELN was surrounded by troops supported by aircraft. Together, they launched an attack in the rural area of Anorí (Antioquia), in southeast Antioquia. The group disbanded, and many *guerrilleros* died or were captured.⁵ Those that survived had little possibilities to re-contact the warfronts. While the national army celebrated the complete

³ López Vigil, *Camilo*, 131

⁴ Medina, *ELN*, 119.

⁵ For a reconstruction of the Anorí operation, see Medina, *ELN*, 118-135; López Vigil, *Camilo*, 78-90, 160-72.

destruction of the group, rural peasant networks served to reconstruct the group slowly. Dispersion served to dissuade the Army, and the group started to reorganize a small *foco*. Their first task was to evaluate mistakes that caused its defeat and to envision a solution to the crisis.

In early 1974, As soon as the military operation decreased, Fabio ordered to regroup in Anacoreto, department of Antioquia. There the evaluation was supposed to start, to analyze the aftermath and responsibilities for Anorí. He arrived, and urban commissions called 'Bertulfos' also joined the meeting (...) one of the problems was that we did not considered to find the origin of the problems. Instead, we pursued to assign responsibilities based on assumptions and suppositions.⁶

Fabio Vásquez had survived the attack, but his brothers died. He was the single leader that survived the attack. Ideological differences among *guerrilleros* were found to be the main reason for the weak response from the group.

At this moment the Anacoreto Assembly occurs. It was a difficult moment for the group. Fabio was sick, military pressure from the enemy was constant. The moral burden of Anorí was unbearable. A significant reduction of the rural warfronts in terms of size occurred. We were just about eighty *guerrilleros* in total. The crisis makes us try hard to find solid solutions to internal problems without delay.⁷

Urban semi-clandestine *guerrilleros* lost contact with the group, and were unable to provide them with food, medicine, news, or a simple voice supporting their efforts to avoid the ELN extinction. That was used as an excuse for their prosecution

The witch-hunt started to punish aspects such as the inability of 'Bertulfos' to send ammunition and the messy accounting they had after purchasing arms, instead of questioning why the group entered an unknown area with little to nothing social support.⁸

After this meeting, the group experienced an intense symbolic process of near self-destruction. For Nicolás Rodríguez, Fabio Vásquez 'had not capacity or political insight to dig deep into the root of the problem.(...) The leadership also wanted to make interpretation beyond facts, for instance trying to get answers in intentions to explain the motivations for a chain of mistakes'.⁹It

⁶ Medina, *ELN*, 191

⁷ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 130

⁹ *Ibid.*, 133.

was the justification for diminishing power of urban *guerrilleros* once again. The ‘Bertulfos’ were assassinated after a rapid trial, accelerated after a second attack launched by the army. The answers to the Anorí disaster were never found, and the group moved rapidly into a new dispersion, this time into a larger geographical area. Instead of a solution for evident divisions, the mechanism of executions was used again to decimate even more the urban structures. Two elements must be underscored. First, the defeat led to a massive loss of lives and cadres that made necessary to preserve every *guerrillero* not only as an effective soldier, but as a hero of the movement. Although the group commemorated the attack in their exaltation of as martyrs and heroes, survivors were set in a similar situation. Instead of suspending the practice, Fabio Vásquez applied it with little guidance from the group, almost as a personal decision, awakening further concerns and doubts among *guerrilleros*. Second, the intermittent presence of Fabio Vásquez with the group. On the one hand, because the warfronts dispersion scattered *guerrilleros* in small commissions that were mobile and easy to camouflage within rural communities, he took time off to recover from a stomach ulcer. ‘Fabio was always sick. His ulcer was indeed a problem. In that moment, there was barely one commander in the group. We were fearful that he can be captured whilst traveling to Cuba to get medical treatment, although it was normal that insurgent leaders from everywhere traveled to learn new experiences from the Cuban Revolution. He asked us and we thought about his temporary departure. We agree on it for he was a heavy burden for the security of the *foco*, his health, so we envisioned he could establish a type of leadership despite the distance, through radio communication’.¹⁰ Within the ELN, rumors suggested that the group was left alone, without leadership momentarily, which increased the sense of loneliness, desperation and doom for the revolutionary project.

¹⁰ Medina, *ELN*, 133-134.

Guerrilleros were bound to support the leader out of fear. For instance, Medardo Correa sheds light upon the anxiety driving the ELN during the 1974 crisis with regard to the growing concerns about Fabio Vásquez practices, and a likely trial for his responsibilities in the Anorí aftermath

-With that mentality comrade, you would forgive even Hitler. Here we have only one culprit and he cannot be forgiven What authority will allow us to stand up in front to the guerrilla base (lower ranks)?

- That might be truth –I answered him- but Was Fabio acting alone? In a political and military trial he might be condemned to death, but at the moment of a historical judgment, nobody in the ELN will get out without a share of the things that happened here.

- Take it easy, the historical judgment is for others to. We must act now, in the present, and in case we don't do it as it has to be, probably the history will not absolve us.¹¹

After internal discussions and the crisis of Fabio Vásquez's leadership, notable *guerrilleros* envisioned a chance to take over the group. Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista and Manuel Pérez had leverage in the ELN, and the departure of Fabio Vásquez opened a dialogue that marginalized the leader. This distance allowed the disclosure of problems that endangered the revolutionary project. Not many of Camilo Torres ideas, however, served this purpose. Still, his martyrdom kept the morale of the group on a high level. Enduring critical levels of deprivation was possible, in part, due to the idea of sacrifice for revolution. Camilo Torres was the example, in addition to Ernesto 'El Ché' Guevara, and many other revered historical martyrs. Although the division between *rurales* and *urbanos* prevailed, the new leaders envisioned a hierarchical reform in which both military and political branches could operate coherently, under the aegis of common agreements.

The decline of Fabio Vásquez' control on everyday activities at the warfront created distance that permitted a growth of Camilo Torres' presence as both a representation of militancy, and the embodiment of a paradigm that crystallized his life as the moral ideal for revolutionary life. Both *rurales* and *urbanos* stopped competing for acceptance/recognition from a leader who based

¹¹ Correa, *Sueño*, 223

internal upward mobility on favoritism. Another important aspect in the transition of leadership was naturally the distance that a death figure has in relation to everyday aspects of clandestine life. While Fabio Vásquez became a target of criticism for his negative attitudes, serving as a scapegoat and safety valve during the crisis, Camilo Torres was remembered with myriad positive attributes. It is easier to idealize what is distant, dreamed, barely remembered, and narrated in reminiscence that institutionalize his practices into myths. Fabio Vásquez became more human, his rigid rule and personalistic ambitions became more visible. His departure to Cuba was a good opportunity to realize allegiances that had become burdensome. In his messages through radio communications, *guerrilleros* found how authoritarian and disentangled he was from everyday hardship in the ELN. When Fabio Vásquez left the group in order to receive medical treatment in Cuba and Bogotá, the group used his ideal image to reinforce the necessary values to revitalize the struggle despite their worsening conditions in the field. If recognition emerged in the ELN in the process, it was from a common acceptance of commitment and martyrdom inflicted by the hardship of the crisis, not only by the conviction that deprivation would enhance revolutionary commitment.

Differences between *guerrilleros* existed, but the mechanism of revolutionary discipline through executions no longer caused anxiety in the group. Divisions marked the debate, and after years of discussions and a progressive separation of Fabio Vásquez from responsibilities in the ELN, the group started to rethink revolution with many intense emotions and a clear sense that they were following a path of martyrdom signaled by the legacy of their heroes. In 1974-1978, the organization minimized its armed actions. Most activities were put into the internal debate, and it helped to reorganize its hierarchy based on new revolutionary premises. Internal discussions also lead to formal separation among factions

The José Antonio Galán warfront was completely polarized. It is the initial *foco* of the ELN, making then official the internal division. Around twenty comrades —with urban origin— grouped in an organic expression under the idea that it was necessary to start a wide range mass movement in order to start legal political struggle, withdrawal from insurgent clandestine life, and a closing to the Project

ELN. This expression was called '*Replanteamiento*' (...) Later on, another tendency emerged from within '*Replanteamiento*' with the same vision of creating a revolutionary movement based on masses organized along popular agitation and activism. This tendency recognized mistakes in the popular work developed by the ELN, but does not propose extreme measures such as a renunciation to the historical project of the ELN, his was called '*Replanteamiento JP*'.¹²

As I argued in chapters 4 and 5, Fabio Vásquez' leadership relied on the strict application of the motto NUPALOM. In the ELN, discipline and belonging were a matter of life or death. Obedience to Fabio Vásquez also determined upwards/downwards mobility in the ELN. However, during the internal crisis the historical value of such experience was valued no longer for heroics, but for the images of martyrdom that fostered internal morale during hard times. Although the group was still debating its ties to armed struggle and extreme violence, its clandestine activities required strict security measures for the *foco*. In turn, anxiety levels fell quickly, and paranoia became less influential in the leaders' decisions. The relaxation of internal constraints to express non conformity eroded the legitimacy of Fabio Vásquez legitimacy to some type of authority, and his role as a commander abroad was considered internally as a definitive suspension from any direct intervention in the group. To resolve the crisis, the group agreed about changing deep seated assumptions about revolutionary struggle. The ELN tailored its ideological platform to fulfill the expectations of its militants, articulating divergent visions of revolution, and integrating them in a vision of how to organize power. In other words, it was a proposal of moral and ethical frameworks for individual and collective action and thought

A process of organic and political re-organization took place, setting popular agitation and popular warfare at the center of our strategic goals. The proletariat was claimed as the vanguard, and popular insurrection was still central in the revolutionary process. Guerrilla warfare was considered the engine for revolutionary consciousness, and mechanism to defend advancement in mass agitation. Urban structures have an essential role to play in the siege of power, and revolution through violent means was a principle adopted. In that form started a period in late 1978 that we call of internal political and organic re-structuration.¹³

¹² Medina, ELN, 191.

¹³ Medina, *ELN*, 200-201

In addition to Camilo Torres' emergence as a recognized paradigm, an important element that proves my argument in this dissertation, is how within the ELN, internal hierarchy became organized along precise features such as military achievement, political capacities, and reciprocal recognition of leadership. These allegiances were sanctioned through a strict process determined by the centralized representative body for the insurgent group. Before 1974, there was not much internal upward mobility. Designation as leader, cadre or commander depended on Fabio Vásquez's decisions. The result of this process was a disruption of subjective personal allegiances, and a more objective hierarchical organization. This change optimized the capabilities of each *guerrillero*, making necessary, for instance, individual decisions on what branch —political or military— to climb. 'While we sustained a military structure, we started to grow as a political group'.¹⁴ This re-established the revolutionary influence of the urban cadres. The group started to value individual skills and specialization, what bolstered the strength of its organization in cities and rural areas. It was no longer necessary to impose the condition of clandestine submission in the warfront to achieve *guerrillero* status,

That was another important perspective change. For member of the organization it is no longer necessary that everybody proofs to be capable to cross a dump or pull the trigger. Even for peasant *guerrilleros* that was no longer necessary. In rural areas ELN *guerrilleros* have several different functions: health, education, political activism, propaganda ... and combat. No everyone had to be a heroic *guerrillero*.¹⁵

This strategy enlarged the ELN scope of influence through commissions engaged in social agitation, urban or rural education, international contacts, financial affairs, urban logistics, and proper insurgent military training. In this form, the ELN divided its strengths between different baskets, instead of risking all *guerrilleros* in clandestine activities. The result was greater efficiency, mobility, and spectacular growth between 1978-1990 from about 150 *guerrilleros*, to more than 3000 thousand

¹⁴ López Vigil, *Camilo*, 131

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 133

—not counting urban semi clandestine structures and sympathizers, that still provided most of its support in the urban setting.¹⁶ Another aspect that became important was research. The understanding of the movement's crisis was the recognition of former mistakes, 'We did not make that social analysis, we did not get information of every day politics, social and political behavior, and in general the system, how it operated',¹⁷ and the conceptualization of their origin. Solutions were conceived in collective writing, and enthusiastic participation in debates. The group reactivated the links with a legacy of leaders shunned during Fabio Vásquez' epoch. As a *guerrillero* indicated, 'We lacked a strong theoretical formation; we never used Marxist analytical methodologies despite having comrades in the National Direction with a good grasp of both theory and interpretation of politics such as Manuel Vásquez, Victor Medina and other *guerrilleros* that came from the student movement'.¹⁸ The group started also to 'plan how to bring about consciousness during agitation. It was the epoch of writing handbooks, talks, envisioning with the masses what could be created (...) We even started to make extraordinary things, like completing sociological research in the areas, characterizing local communities, their problems, contradictions, we received help from sociologists how knew research methodologies. We were meticulous, with card box files, something huge!'.¹⁹

The cult of Camilo Torres initially grew abroad, in Catholic circles in Europe and Latin America,²⁰ and among intellectual sectors at the Universidad Nacional who had contact with him during his last years of public and private life. Another important source of elements that have

¹⁶ Andrés Peñate, "El sendero estratégico del ELN: del idealismo guevarista al clientelismo armado," in Deas, Malcom, Llorente, Maria Victoria Uribe, Reconocer la Guerra para Construir la Paz (Bogotá: CEREC - Ediciones Uniandes, 1999).

¹⁷ Harnecker, *Unidad*, 35.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 32

¹⁹ López Vigil, *Camilo*, 132.

²⁰ For a complete list of newspaper's note on Camilo Torres last days of life, and obituaries, see Valentina Vorremans, et, al. *Camilo Torres, un símbolo controvertido*, CIDOC, dossier 12, Cuernavaca, Mexico, 1967. 153 pgs. In the documents found in the CIDOC at El Colegio de México, I found multiple references to Camilo Torres death, the most important were the following, but it is not an exhaustive list. See, Vicente Andrade, *Rebel priest in Colombia*, September 1965. Oscar Maldonado, "Camilo Torres, gehorsamer rebell (without further information, 1967); *America Latina Rural*, 'Aunque equivoco el Camino, el padre camilo torres murió defendiendo la justicia social,' Mexico DF, Marzo 1966, No 5. Pg 3-5. Hildegard Luning, *Padre Camilo Torres, Priester und Guerillero, Eine personenbeschreibung* (Suddeutscher rundfunk, kirchenfunk juni 1968. "Camilo Torres. Problemes economicques et politiques," *Cristinisme Social*, Septiembre-octobre 1966, 74 No 9-10, pg 549-560. Hougart, francois, et,al *Cercle des etudiants colombiens a louvain*, texte del conferences prononcées pendant une reunión autour la vie de Camilo torres," Mimeografied document, May, 1966.

strengthened a cult is the large literature on the topic, making *Camilismo* a suitable thematic that marked academic research in the late 1960's and 1970's.²¹ They clustered in circles, and became a beacon for the youth supporting factions of the student movement. It has been the university's youth across the country that explicitly uses Camilo Torres' legacy. His incorporation to the ELN movement is still the most debated aspect of his life. It is a topic that still divides student organizations and leftist intellectuals. Disputes at universities for the legacy of Camilo Torres broke apart the *Frente Unido*, making the cult a combination of memories and reminiscences without political leverage beyond intellectual circles. Followers of Camilo Torres were sidelined for the acrid reception to any initiatives linked to any justification of violence, or the use of discourses that rang alarms for a revolutionary call to arms. The cult of Camilo Torres increased after his death, which continued key elements of martyrdom, redemption and absolute commitment.

His legacy for thought/action has been present in student activism and radical political agitation, making the University's campus in Bogotá a symbolic space for his remembrance.²² Every year at the Universidad Nacional, the reception for the first cohort is associated with the '*tropel*' (the word actually means street fight, but refers violent student's protest), the first student protest each semester. It is a ritual of initiation to university life that includes parades in symbolic spaces, recruitment, distributing pamphlets, and road blocks on the highways that surround the campus. Students dressed in plain clothes and balaclavas throw stones, and sprayed revolutionary graffiti. New students are 'baptized' amidst clouds of teargas thrown by the police repelling protester's havoc.²³ If you smell tear gas, you have been baptized as a new student in Colombia's largest public university. Even if you do not participate in politics, the ritual is completed at every public institution for superior education. Cult formation outside the insurgent clandestine life of the ELN

²¹ Soto, *La Siembra*; Correa, *Sueño*.

²² Vásquez, *Bitacora de una militancia*, 67-75.

²³ A narrative that represents the handbook of radical student mobilization on campus is Medina, *Al calor*. Widely available on line.

might be an overwhelming task, considering the myriad organizations that exhibit or appropriate Camilo Torres, while combining him with their other ideological affiliations. Although it took almost a decade to overcome Fabio Vásquez' orthodox vision of insurgent vanguard, Camilo Torres' political ideas never became part of the group's mainstream ideology.

In the years after Camilo Torres' death, the ELN *guerrilleros* were engaged in solving both everyday hardships that come with clandestine political life, and managing to avoid dangers brought about by hierarchy and the split between *rurales* and *urbanos*. Although *guerrilleros* from an urban origin were enthusiastic about Camilo Torres' legacy and Fabio Vásquez's brothers —Manuel and Antonio Vásquez— attempted to balance their distinctions with rural vanguardism, the ELN's leader had a strong grip of internal power. This subordination to political affairs was reflected in internal documents.²⁴ Poorly edited until the late 1960's, the early internal documents that circulated to spread the ideological doctrine included the *Simacota Manifesto*, a set of Programmatic Principles, and interviews. These mimeographed documents were never organized for regular publication.²⁵ In *Insurrección* (circa 1971), the first edited volume of documents produced by the ELN since 1964, the early ideological documents are arranged in chronological order. One section is oriented to outline the main aspects that identify Camilo Torres' leadership and legacy. It is not coincidental that the section is preceded by an article titled "The Heroic *Guerrillero*" that exalts Ernesto Ché Guevara as a paradigm of revolutionary devotion and action, which for his 'spirit of sacrifice' is a lesson for life. Heroes are paralleled to symbols for unity and hope, considering that 'even after their death, these symbols irradiate the light of an aurora that shows the path for Latin American' struggle for

²⁴ About authorship, the ELN's documents published until the early 1970's were contributions from urban sympathizers and semi clandestine members, with experience in political analysis and ideological. However, within the ELN Manuel Vásquez was generally committed to the writing and distribution of ideological doctrine,

²⁵ The scarce interest of Fabio Vásquez to preserve the group's ideological line was in part the result of distances with Jaime Arenas, who wrote in 1966 the programmatic Principles, and that were used until 1974 s the ideological front of the group. Jaime Arenas defected the ELN and was assassinated with seven shots in the back, later in March 1971s by an ELN commission in Bogotá.

liberation'.²⁶ Heroic *guerrillero*'s memory 'LIVES, as a luminous example. LIVES as a hope of redemption for the naked, hungry and exploited masses'.²⁷ The homage to the Heroic *guerrillero* ends with a capitalized 'NUPALOM'. Then it follows the 'Glorious example' given by Camilo Torres, where his life and acts are summarized in two mimeographed pages that center on his final days in public life, when he called for mass electoral abstention, and justified guerrilla warfare. Under the title 'Homage to Camilo Torres', an eight line paragraph states that 'the ELN pays homage to the leader in the fourth year after his assassination to ensure the continuity and evolution of his revolutionary thought'.²⁸ It is necessary to mention that his thought was not present in the document. Instead, reminiscences of practices he repeated —like many other fallen *guerrilleros*, proof of his sacrifice for revolution— are predominant in the document. The ninth line in the paragraph repeats NUPALOM, but this time with an exaggerated exclamation mark. The homage spans through four pages, followed by a detailed criticism to Chilean transition towards socialism by Salvador Allende —six pages where the achievement of electoral success is interpreted as impossible in Colombia, continued by an enthusiastic defense of rural revolutionary guerrilla warfare, showing how the ELN and similar insurgencies in Peru and Bolivia represent vanguards for continental revolutionary struggle. The document concludes with an interview of Fabio Vásquez, that explores Colombian history and the advancement of popular forces in pre-revolutionary Colombia. He gets twenty pages, and closes with the motto NUPALOM, again capitalized.

The ELN leader answered questions on tactics, the Cuban Revolution, rural activism and traditions of insurgent fighting in Colombia. A question about Camilo Torres death produces an interesting response, where he stated that 'the glorious meaning of his death holding a weapon, in an offensive operation —this is false— struggling for the national liberation of his country has been

²⁶ ELN, *Insurrección*, Organo del ELN, 43.

²⁷ Ibid., 66. For an analysis of the documents produced in 1971-1986. See, Sánchez Sierra, "El Discurso Histórico".

²⁸ Ibid., 70

misinterpreted. History is written by its people, its martyrs, men like Camilo Torres. The clear example he gave has been left upon the mind and heart of millions of slaves... rebels that will dig the definitive grave for imperialist capitalism. His sacrifice was not useless and other revolutionaries suggest, the sacrifice of martyrs is not in vain...'.²⁹ After that answer, he starts a rant against other revolutionary movements that criticize the ELN spontaneous strategy for action, and the application of *foco* insurreccional strategy. It was an answer mainly addressed to the PCC, based on references made to electoral participation and the attempt to manipulate Camilo Torres' memory after his death. It is truth that the PCC used his martyrdom as an excuse to demonstrate the fragilities of guerrilla warfare, but Fabio Vásquez wasted an opportunity to disarm his critics by making explicit comments on how he regarded the rebellious priest's leadership and ideas as suitable for the ELN. Considering that the group had had at least four years to reflect upon its allegiance to Camilo Torres legacy, this document —certainly the most complete documentary compilation for the initial fifteen years in the ELN, that I am aware of— is a pale effort for a cult even if it just forming. Instead it shows how important was Fabio Vásquez, and to what extent the ELN had sidelined a political line of thought in the first years of struggle.

By 1981, the Internal Organ 'Simacota' shows some initial evidence of change. It was the moment of re-composition after the setback in Anorí, and Fabio Vásquez' separation from the ELN's National Direction. Although Camilo Torres played a different role in that moment for the group —symbol of revolutionary martyrdom—, the ELN was not including him among its main theoretical, philosophical or moral inspirations. That document marks the transition towards a more ideologically integrated view of the Colombian revolution and the role played in it by the ELN, among other radical forces. It starts with an extended description of Colombian historical formation,

²⁹ Ibid., 131.

the ELN's history. Chapters three through six are centered on strategy and tactics, based on multiple theoretical sources, particularly expressed as a doctrinaire adoption of Marxism-Leninism

Every militant in the organization should have a knowledge of Marxism Leninism, three main aspects; philosophical, political economy, and socialist theory on organization. Only through analytical and research tools we will be able to vanquish capitalism without falling into deviant empiricism, dogmatism, or subjectivism that come with a weak theoretical formation.³⁰

It is impressive how the group explores ideological lines of thought, considering the reluctance to study Colombian reality in the late 1960's. The document also recounts a quite detailed explanation of how a revolutionary state should organize political power, and what type of relations the ELN should promote, with the masses and the enemy. The ELN started to envision Marxist theory³¹ as a source for clairvoyance and action

it is not enough revolutionary commitment if it has not a direction given by theory. Scientific rationalization of experience of working class struggles and oppressed peoples is called 'revolutionary theory' or more commonly Marxism-Leninism'. 'The control of Marxist science is only achieved as long as each fighter consciously assimilates the accurate perception of the world and uses dialectics as its analytical method. Marxism Leninism requires a total understanding of materialism, and partial attempts are unpractical. The insurgent that follows Marxism with the goal of transforming his own society at the same time that the revolutionary process transforms him progressively.³²

No clear evidence to adopt Camilo Torres as a central figure for the group, and religion is mentioned except in terms of its cultural influence upon the people and their allegiance/obedience to the ruling elites. Along with the text, a few lines exalt his moral influence for the group, where he is mentioned with the first heroes and martyrs in the siege of Simacota and Anorí. However, nothing is said about his ideals of social justice, effective love or charity. The document does cite moral premises. Yet, in line with the most desirable status of *guerrilleros*, individuals are expected to interpret the revolutionary moment by their surrender to the necessities of the group as their revolutionary beacon for radical change

³⁰ ELN, *Simacota, Periódico Interno del ELN*, October 1981, 206

³¹ In a former research I demonstrate how the ELN started to actually used Marxist categories in its conception of political power, economic transformation of production, and social structure, considering that it had a national liberation discourse, no far from the myriad example in the third world since the late 1950s. See Sánchez, "Discourse, Practices," 300-310.

³² *Ibidem*.

The morality of a guerrilla fighter is determined for the interest of the revolutionary struggle in which he is committed. It conditions his “private” life to both the people’s and the organization’s interests, fighting against selfish individualist manifestations in his life within the organization and his personal life. The insurgent must demonstrate love for the people and comrades, showing honesty, loyalty, fraternity and simplicity in opposition to negligence, sectarianism, liberalism, vanity, and drive for recognition. The personal life of a guerrilla fighter has to be constantly exposed to criticism and self-criticism³³

The moral vision for the ELN *guerrillero* was integrated in the political and ideological platform twenty years after Camilo Torres’ death. It was in 1986, after the first National Congress of the ELN, that the group made a more thorough assessment of Camilo Torres’ importance for individual commitment, and the intersections between his revolutionary thought and Christianity. In the Congress’ minutes, a chapter titled ‘Marxism and Christendom’, established the form how he stood against the traditional Church, and contributed to the ELN with a new line of thought. Three factors favored the integration of Camilo Torres’s influence upon the group. First, the section resulted after numerous discussions from *guerrilleros* recently enrolled in the ELN. The groups came from leftist sectors disbanded in 1981-1982, during harsh military repression to urban left leaning groups after the implementation of the National Security Doctrine during Julio Cesar Turbay’s presidency. Second, conditions imposed by internal factions in order to pledge allegiance to the ELN, namely, the inclusion of Camilo Torres influence on the mass line for the group. Finally, that their initiative to incorporate to a strong guerrilla presence was conditioned by a clear statement of allegiance and respect for Camilo Torres’ legacy. Camilo Torres’ ideas constituted an alternative approach to humanism linking the main philosophical influences of the group, and the renewed hope to garner fresh support from the reactionary sectors of society

Camilo’s criteria and emphasis on what unites us and fraternal debate, belongs to the revolutionary tradition of MARX and LENIN, for whom to divide the masses for religious or metaphysical matters was to divert them from their fundamental path towards a head-on struggle, favoring their enemy instead (...) no doubt that Marxists and Christians, particularly in the philosophical field, have differences and contradictions. However, it is evident as well that in the interaction between socialist

³³ ELN, *Simacota, Periódico Interno del ELN*, October 1981, 207.

and Christians the future of Latin American Revolution inhabits. Ché Guevara said it, when Christians decide to join the process, Latin American revolution will be unbeatable.³⁴

The vision of how to see Camilo Torres was inserted into the conclusions of the ELN's National Congress. Internally his followers had to surpass hurdles, and despite the decline of Fabio Vásquez influence, his ideas were not completely accepted in the group. Nominally, the Congress was an homage to Camilo Torres, but in practice he was beyond playing a major role in the mainstream of the ELN's ideological agenda. For instance, in 1983-1984, with the excision of both the *Comision Nacional Camilista* (*Camilista* National Commission) and the *Tendencia Camilo Torres* (Camilo Torres' Tendency), the group adopted a more expansive influence than just his memory in order to diminish the likely influence that other non-insurgent organizations could take by heralding his ideas and name. Camilo Torres's name represented a constantly disputed legacy, but until the 1990 the group did not make efforts to demonstrate a clear articulation between Christianity and Marxism beyond the forced adoption of his ideas in order to avoid schisms. In 1990, the ELN organized a Second National Conference, in which adopted the name *Union Camilista Ejercito de Liberación Nacional* (Camilist Union, National Liberation Army). In part, I followed compromises signed in 1987 with the Coordinadora Nacional Guerrillera (National Guerrilla Coordinator) —an attempt to coordinate / integrate military operations and common political agendas among radical leftist guerrillas, into a single revolutionary program. The insurgents' integration with small *Camilista* insurgencies, and their participation in peace negotiations in Tlaxcala (Mexico) and Mainz (Germany) with César Gaviria's government (1990-1994), was a momentary organizational opening to embrace smaller groups. The negotiations failed. So in 1997 the group returned to its former name ELN. Without regretting for it, Camilo Torres was a strategic brand for momentary episodes of revolutionary negotiation across the boundaries of the ELN.

³⁴ ELN, *Asamblea Nacional Camilo Torres Restrepo: Conclusiones* (Without Information: Mimeographed copy), 161.

This research has demonstrated how the formation of Camilo Torres cult did not emerge within the ELN. In chapter 11, and in this conclusion, I have shown how his image was instrumentalized to consolidate the group around strong motivations for individual belonging and deep commitment to a cause that requires risking one's life for abstract ideas. This research does not deny concrete factors that cause revolutions. Instead, I attempted to explain how revolutions use symbolic ideas to bring about strong support, without making use of classic explanations that belong to ideological interpretations of historical causality, or socioeconomic class distinctions. I presented in this dissertation how Camilo Torres' life has promoted myriad narratives that help to position his name beyond ideologies. The mythic narratives about his life have been nurtured by processes of self-inflicted suffering that play an important role to demonstrate revolutionary commitment. The growth of his political image in public life was presented in chapters 8 and 9, where I shed light upon the crisis of leadership after *La Violencia*, and how Camilo Torres enticed followers in the late 1950's and early 1960's, particularly at the Universidad Nacional where the student movement barely represented the political agendas of moderate sectors and middle classes. In order to portray the general landscape of political culture in Colombia in the years of Camilo Torres flourishing career, the initial chapters depicted the enthusiasm of the youth for participating in politics in order to establish a system of morality that declined from the late 19th century and until the years 1948-1957. The sectarian conflict between the traditional parties eroded the morality that fostered popular support. This led to a crisis of leadership, the emergence of alternative patterns of morality, and its systematic blockage through selective *magnicidio*, or assassination of leaders.

This research integrates aspects of symbolic belonging and its crisis evident in the imposition of ceremonies for national unity, the appeal of *cachaco* as a stereotype of culture and socioeconomic success, in relation to the disruption of political leadership since the years of Rafael Uribe Uribe, until the blossom of *mestizo* politics with Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. I explored in Chapter 1, 2 and 3 how

popular allegiance to ruling elites since the 19th century corresponds to the top-down imposition of principles for morality that instrumentalized education and religious beliefs in order to sustain traditional parties ruling the state. These aspects, underscore dramatic violence, not only when launched against popular leaders, causing momentary insurrection in cities and the countryside, but also in the selective decimation of families by the assassination of household heads, and local leaders. The life of Fabio Vásquez is an example of that type of disruption, although this research does not attempt to touch upon aspects that might suggest an inference for retaliation against the death of his father at early age. Further research is necessary regarding that intimate level of commitment to warfare, revolution or social change. Instead, I argue that the politics of *magnicidio* is the asymmetrical distribution of a murderous strategy to deter political participation among popular sectors, and to impose fear and anxiety through violence played out in a symbolic form. It is not a new element in the Colombian political culture. In this research, I trace the politics of *magnicidio* back to the 19th century, in order to demonstrate that it is not a recent product of drug trafficking and terrorism in the late 20th century.

The cult to Camilo Torres flourished out in the group ELN. However, the ELN instrumentalized his image, to balance popular support and maintain consistence with a discourse that justifies violence in a country used to such pattern of action. His leadership —as I presented in chapters 2 and 3— gained supporters amidst the crisis of traditional relations of authority and obedience standing since the 19th century. The traditional patterns of authority and obedience transformed dramatically during *La Violencia* . I present the example of civilian consecration and false paradigms of nationalism used for representing national unity. The crisis of the traditional parties and religious practices were signals of a general crisis in the principles for national cohesion.

Leadership has been treated in this dissertation as a reflection of the distinctions that mark society. In chapter 4, I explained the origins of peasant's reluctance to participation in politics after

La Violencia, and in chapter 5, I analyzed the case of Fabio Vásquez's leadership, as the option that best fulfilled the necessities for peasants in the early 1960's. His strong connections to the student movement made possible a dialogue between different political imaginaries that were set in motion towards revolution in 1963-1964 by the ELN. In chapters 4 and 5, I also introduced the factors that determined leadership at the warfront, including the importance of bonds of trust, mobility, and support from a strong leader. The tensions that eroded the ELN in the first ten years of insurgent warfare reflect the same factors that inhibit political dialogue between rural and urban sectors in Colombia. In chapter 7, I presented the importance that cultural life had already in the 1960's, when the youth started to promote rapid social change through different mechanisms —electoral abstention, disobedience, revolt— classically used by the traditional political parties.

Either the youth or the intellectuals in urban sectors were integrated in the earlier lines of thought and command espoused by the ELN. On the other hand, urban Colombia persistently neglected rural life, as it was shown in chapter 9. The cases of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán and Camilo Torres represent the incapacity of integrative leadership. Although Camilo Torres had a patronizing perception of the masses, this change during the last years of his life as his activism and commitment for social justice eroded his allegiance to the Catholic Church. That change sparked national enthusiasm for the prominent role he represented among youth and dispossessed sectors in urban Colombia. His contributions to the ill-fated land reform in the late 1950's and early 1960's, and the emerging studies in sociology at Universidad Nacional completed by some of his closest intellectual friends, showed him that the weight of rural violence and structural poverty was what crippled peasant communities. They could not enjoy progress and well-being. He wanted to experience directly the burden of such predicament. So, in 1965, he entered the guerrilla group that seemed most suitable for articulating his ideas and set them into action.

The argument here assessed political leadership in relation to social values and fluid political allegiances. Although the establishment has had continuous control over the population, its power has been constantly disputed, contested, subverted. I have shed light upon types of hierarchical leadership since the late 19th century, within the state, the Catholic Church, intellectual circles, middle classes and revolutionary groups. The goal was to bring about elements that connect authority and obedience by portraying the erratic outcomes of political arrangements based on material inequity, legal neglect and cultural stereotypes. This dissertation then explored how innovative leadership articulated new systems of values, fostering practices to launch new moralities. To summarize, Colombia's social support for political projects depends on the moral framework of the people that support it. The leaders that propose such innovations to the power structure in Colombia are generally sidelined. They are outsider politicians, and any social recognition of their legacy fosters cult-like reverence. In revolutionary groups, ritual practices incorporate principles of belonging that bestow an imaginary of redemption. Ironically, it works out in exactly the opposite way. The establishment has deployed subtle educative mechanisms that impose faith as a mechanism for galvanizing allegiance and values that then fulfill elite's needs to wield power without risk of revolution.

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