

The Politics of Wheat: Hegemony and Everyday Forms of State Formation in Colombia
Rebecca Tally
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Flour prices rose dramatically at the end of the 1950s in Colombia. Scarcity was not the cause. At least, that is what the bakers of the Asociación Nacional de Fabricantes de Pan (National Bread Makers' Association, or ADEPAN) claimed in 1958. According to ADEPAN, the true cause of rising flour prices was speculation. The bakers claimed that the nation's millers, in conjunction with the national agency charged with overseeing prices for basic goods, worked together nefariously to keep flour prices high. Holding the bakers' raw material back from the market ensured that prices increased. The bakers warned that this practice could have dire consequences if it continued: they threatened to stop making five-peso loaves, which were the most affordable option for Colombia's poor. They also indicated that consumers of every economic strata would feel the pain, as all loaves would become smaller, while prices would increase. But, these were only worst-case scenarios, and the bakers insisted that their concern for the public good (meaning here the availability of affordable bread) would prevent them from taking such actions. Rather than hurting their fellow citizens, the bakers would sacrifice their personal profits first.¹

But high-minded rhetoric is one thing. Action, of course, is another. A year later, in 1959, the Instituto Nacional de Abastecimientos (National Supply Institute, or INA) accused bakers of cheating consumers by adding more yeast to their dough, reducing loaf size, and increasing cost – all of which decreased bread's nutritional properties. ADEPAN did not deny the charges, but defended its member bakers by referring to the rising cost of their basic raw material. To ensure adequate bread supply, INA and ADEPAN met and hammered out an agreement lowering the cost of both flour and loaves.² Unfortunately, it seemed that speculation continued, as did questionable baking practices. In 1961, public criticism of the baking industry increased; some even claimed that as makers of a crucial food product, the bakers were essentially public servants. As ADEPAN had spent years cultivating an image of the bakers as good citizens, the organization's representatives did not criticize or deny that claim. Instead, they turned it around, agreeing that bread-making was a public service, and wondering, therefore, why the national state had not taken more steps to protect the industry and ensure that it had the resources necessary to provide its essential services.³

These subtly shifting meanings of "public service" illustrate a crucial aspect of state formation and practice, specifically, the achievement and maintenance of hegemony over popular sectors. Hegemony has played a key role in explorations of the state in Latin American history, except in Colombia. Its state is assumed to be weak and to lack legitimacy, making hegemony an irrelevant topic. But examining the language of popular groups reveals their adherence to *convivialismo*, a term which sums up the "rules" of political culture in Colombia. If popular groups are following these rules, are they not demonstrating the hegemony of the state? This paper examines the idea of hegemony in Latin American historiography, some of the reasons why it has not been widely adopted as an explanatory framework in Colombia despite the adherence of popular classes to *convivialismo*, and a specific case where the idea of hegemony could be useful for understanding the Colombian state.

¹ "Noticias breves," *El Panadero Colombiano* (hereafter *PC*) No. 9 (July, 1958): 4. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

² "El pan al peso," *PC* No. 20 (Dec., 1959): 29.

³ "Informes rendidos al VII Congreso Nacional de 'ADEPAN' por su Directivos y Fiscales: Informe de Don Francisco Montoya como Presidente de la Junta Directiva Nacional de ADEPAN' – Sesión del 6 de Abril," *PC* Nos. 26-27 (May-Jun. 1961): 22-24.

Latin American Nation-State Formation – History & Historiography: A Brief Overview

While the variety of large and small nations that comprise Latin America differ significantly, they do share some broad historical parallels, making rough generalizations about the historiography of the “Latin American state” possible. For example, two main models for understanding the state and its formation characterize Latin American historiography. The first combines Weberian “monopoly of violence/rational-legal authority” and Foucaultian “governmentality,” perhaps best exemplified by Scott’s high-modernist state working to make the people and territory it controls “legible.” The second model combines Gramscian “hegemony” with Thompsonian “moral economy,” to describe the crucial role that popular groups play in creating and maintaining states, processes made possible when the people grant the state “legitimacy.” In other words – and in one of the broadest generalizations ever – the two main models used to explain the history of the Latin American state are complementary oppositions: top-down and bottom-up.

Another generalization regards the modes that modify these two models: negotiation and consent on one hand, violence and coercion on the other. Scott, for example, doesn’t claim that “state simplifications” and “high modernist ideologies” in and of themselves automatically led to “the most tragic episodes of state-initiated social engineering.” Tragedy in those cases also required authoritarian states and weak civil societies.⁴ But, it is important to remember that not all state attempts to mold the population for productive purposes or to create a modern society (however each state defined that slippery term) necessarily entailed violence and coercion. Sometimes persuasion and negotiation were just as important. Over the last few decades, historians of Latin America have offered numerous examples of both modes at work in the top-down model. Thus, for example, stories of the Brazilian national army attacking peasants resisting new forms of land tenure in the Contestado region are juxtaposed with other stories of the Brazilian national radio station attempting to incorporate popular groups into the president’s vision for a “New State” through state-produced programming.⁵ Frequently, these two modes existed simultaneously; public health campaigns often straddled this line.⁶

⁴ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 4-5. Latin American historiography is replete with examples of state violence in the name of restructuring land tenure and labor practices in rural areas, in order to pave the way for capitalist forms of production. The same is true for populist and labor movements in urban areas. An extremely small representative sample includes: Todd A. Diacon, *Millenarian Vision, Capitalist Reality: Brazil’s Contestado Rebellion, 1912-1916* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991); Gastón R. Gordillo, *Landscapes of Devils: Tensions of Place and Memory in the Argentinean Chaco* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Deborah Levenson-Estrada, *Trade Unionists against Terror: Guatemala City, 1954-1985* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

⁵ Bryan McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil: Popular Music in the Making of Modern Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Diacon, *Millenarian Vision*, op.cit. Cultural production is, of course, one of the most important “non-violent” methods states use to build nations, create legitimacy for the state and its projects, and propagate its own vision of the nation-state. This includes establishing national museums, supporting artists and musicians, writing textbooks, preserving archeological sites, and a host of other activities. See, for example: Jens Andermann, *The Optic of the State: Visuality and Power in Argentina and Brazil* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007); Clara Isabel Botero, *El redescubrimiento del pasado prehispánico de Colombia: viajeros, arqueólogos y coleccionistas, 1820-1945* (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2006); Rick A. López, *Crafting Mexico: Intellectuals, Artisans, and the State after the Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Renán Silva, *República Liberal, intelectuales y cultura popular* (Medellín: La Carreta Editores, 2005); Mary Kay Vaughan & Stephen E. Lewis, *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Matthias vom Hau, “Unpacking the School: Textbooks, Teachers, and the Construction of Nationhood in Mexico, Argentina, and Peru,” *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (2000), 127-154; Daryle Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

⁶ For example, states fingerprinted suspected criminals, confined “wayward wives” to special “houses of deposit,” exiled male transvestites to remote areas, and sent the army into neighborhoods that refused vaccination campaigns. It also created educational programs and produced advertisements and other promotional materials. See: Katherine Elaine Bliss,

Similarly, both modes – negotiation and violence – manifested themselves in the “bottom-up” model as well. Indeed, accounts of rural rebellion or urban riots abound, although they usually ended in tragedy for peasants, workers, and other discontented groups, making them incomplete or ineffective descriptions of bottom-up models (and instead confirming the effectiveness of violence in the top-down model of state formation).⁷ But, stories of negotiation, of moments when peasants, rural workers, laborers, slaves, etc., attempted to define the parameters of legitimate state action through non-violent means are also evident.⁸ And as will be discussed in greater detail below, these two modes are closely interrelated in the bottom-up model, being that violent uprising lays bare the political subjectivity of subaltern classes, exposing their understandings of the state and the basis of its legitimacy.

Tension between these models and modes is evident in the trajectory of Latin American historiography over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Before the 1960s two main threads dominated historical scholarship within Latin American nation-states. One emphasized national heroes, major political leaders or parties, civil or external wars, and national economic history told without a specific conceptual or methodological framework. The other centered on “the social question” – a concern for the marginalized masses who dominated the populations of most Latin American countries. The “social question” emerged toward the end of the nineteenth century, partly as a reaction to the disruption caused by capitalist forms of production.⁹ It also drew from “soft eugenics” to argue that the lack of education, decent housing, and health care – not racial inferiority – led to crime and disorder in the growing urban slums.¹⁰ Debates over the social question helped spur a number of important historical and sociological analyses of the role that popular

Compromised Positions: Prostitution, Public Health, and Gender Politics in Revolutionary Mexico City (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005); Donna Guy, *Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires: Prostitution, Family, and Nation in Argentina* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990); Robert McKee Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan, and Michelle Rocio Nasser (eds.), *The Famous 41: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico, 1901* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003); Jeffrey D. Needell, “The Revolta Contra Vacina of 1904: The Revolt against ‘Modernization’ in Belle Époque Rio de Janeiro,” *Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 67, No. 2 (1987), 233-269; Julia Rodríguez, *Civilizing Argentina: Science, Medicine, and the Modern State* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

⁷ Jennie Purnell, *Popular Movements and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico: The Agraristas and Cristeros of Michoacán* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

⁸ See, for example, Gastón R. Gordillo, *Landscapes of Devils: Tensions of Place and Memory in the Argentinean Chaco* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Thomas Miller Klubock, *Contested Communities: Class, Gender, and Politics, in Chile’s El Teniente Copper Mine, 1904-1951* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Joao Jose Reis, “‘The Revolution of the Ganhadores’: Urban Labour, Ethnicity, and the African Strike of 1857 in Bahia, Brazil,” *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (May 1997), 355-393. In Mexico, the success of labor unions in organizing workers went hand-in-hand with an increase in state power. One particularly example of this is the role that the Mexican labor movement played in spurring President Lázaro Cardenas to expropriate the Mexican oil industry in 1938 – a move which dramatically increased the state’s presence in the Mexican national economy and also brought in new revenues for state expansion. See Myrna I. Santiago, “Revolution from Below: The Oil Unions, 1924-1938” in Santiago, *The Ecology of Oil: Environment, Labor, and the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1938* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁹ Richard Weiner, *Race, Nation, and Market: Economic Culture in Porfirian Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004); Florencia E. Mallon, “Decoding the Parchments of the Latin American Nation-State: Peru, Mexico, and Chile in Comparative Perspective,” in James Dunkerley, ed., *Studies in the Formation of the Nation State in Latin America* (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London, 2002), 13-53: 14. In Brazil there was a parallel “national question,” which focused on the rural hinterlands.

¹⁰ On “soft eugenics,” see Nancy Leys Stepan, *“The Hour of Eugenics”: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991). See also: Santiago Castro-Gómez, “¿Disciplinar o poblar? La intelectualidad colombiana frente a la biopolítica (1904-1934),” *Nómadas*, Vol. 26 (Abr., 2007), 44-55. On the “social question” see Alberto Mayor Mora, *Ética trabajo y productividad en Antioquia* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 2005, 4th edition); Anadelia A. Romo, “Rethinking Race and Culture in Brazil’s First Afro-Brazilian Congress of 1934,” *Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Feb., 2007), 31-54; Barbara Weinstein, *For Social Peace in Brazil: The Remaking of the Working Class in São Paulo, 1920-1964* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

groups had played in the development of Latin American nation-states, albeit tinged with the racist or classist conceptions common at the time and lacking the voices of the marginalized themselves.¹¹

After 1959, “the social question” was subsumed into more revolutionary understandings of the state, largely (although not wholly) inspired by the success of the Cuban Revolution. Connections between capitalism and coercion took center stage. For the next twenty years, states across the region were often depicted as monolithic entities solely serving the interests of “the bourgeoisie.” These states oppressed peasants and workers to help capitalists extract labor. They also perpetuated the region’s subordinate position in the global market, by facilitating resource extraction by multinational companies (a phenomenon called “entreguismo” which loosely translates as “compliantly delivering”). This connection between Latin American states and global capitalism became the central focus of Dependency Theory, which grew initially as a critique of the import substitution policies in place in many Latin American countries between the 1950s-1970s.¹² *Dependistas* drew a strong division between “state” and “society,” where the state was conceived as a powerful entity that controlled people’s lives, but did not consult or include them in decision-making. Many of their analyses focused on overcoming such states. Thus, exploring the ways that popular groups were involved in the construction of the state were not academic projects that analysts cared to engage.¹³

Several factors converged in the 1980s and early 1990s to shift historiographical direction. As Marxist revolutions faltered and communist states began to crumble, strongly ideological forms of analysis fell by the wayside. Social history uninspired by the revolutionary fervor of previous generations began to dominate, with deep and careful attention to the lives and historical contexts of

¹¹ Perhaps the best example of this genre is Gilberto Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), which was first published in 1933 and helped create the Brazilian national “myth of racial democracy.” See also, José Carlos Mariategui, *Seven Interpretive Essays on the Peruvian Reality* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), first published in 1928. In addition, although seemingly a triumphal tale of military conquest, Euclides da Cunha’s 1902 account of the Brazilian army’s campaign to put down a massive rebellion in the late nineteenth century exposed urban middle classes to the privation and neglect experienced by the vast majority of Brazil’s rural residents. His account helped spark efforts to expand the presence of the state into the hinterland. See da Cunha, *Rebellion in the Backlands* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944). Similar themes were explored in fiction during this time period. Representative samples include Azevedo’s account of an urban slum in Rio, Gamboa’s tale of the urban underworld in turn-of-the-century Mexico City, and Rivera’s depiction of the brutal working and living conditions of Colombia’s rubber plantation workers. See Aluisio Azevedo, *The Slum* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Federico Gamboa, *Santa: A Novel of Mexico City* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010); José Eustasio Rivera, *The Vortex* (New York: Putnam, 1935).

¹² The basis of this critique was both conceptual and concrete. Conceptually, many dependency theorists saw capitalist forms of production as inherently inimical to the interests of workers, whether they were controlled by foreigners or nationals. Concretely, dependency theorists strongly objected to the fact that much of the capital used to finance domestic industrial development came from the IMF, the World Bank, the IBRD, and the Ex-Im Bank, which perpetuated Latin American subordination to the global North rather than overcoming it. See, Fernando Henrique Cardoso & Enzo Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); Peter Evans, *Dependent Development: The Alliance of Multinational, State, and Local Capital in Brazil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); Andre Gunder Frank, *Latin America: Underdevelopment or Revolution: Essays on the Development of Underdevelopment and the Immediate Enemy* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969); Thomas H. Moran, *Multinational Corporations and the Politics of Dependence: Copper in Chile* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974). “Dependency theory” among historians did not always automatically mean critique of North Atlantic powers. In many respects this form of analysis represented an improvement on previous forms of scholarship, which tended to attribute Latin American underdevelopment to cultural explanations, racial inferiority, or colonial legacies. Dependency theorists, on the other hand, paid close attention to the strong relationship between economics and politics, particularly the ways that Latin America’s late nineteenth century explosion into the world market as exporters of agricultural commodities and raw materials affected domestic political alignments. See, for example, Charles W. Bergquist, *Coffee and Conflict in Colombia, 1886-1910* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1978).

¹³ On the shift to revolutionary understandings of states, see Mallon, “Decoding the Parchments,” op. cit.: 14-17.

popular actors, including peasants, workers, women, slaves, and indigenous peoples.¹⁴ Some Latin Americanists began to incorporate insights from Subaltern Studies, inspiring lively debate regarding the applicability of postcolonial critiques to countries that had been independent for more than one hundred fifty years as well as the efficacy of post-structural analysis in and of itself.¹⁵ In Latin America, post-colonialism had particular resonance in the years leading up to the quincentenary of Columbus' "discovery" of the Americas, which many indigenous groups described as the beginning of five hundred years of continual colonial rule.¹⁶ Historians began paying much closer attention to indigenous agency and the historical narratives of indigenous peoples partially as a result of the dialogues surrounding that important anniversary.¹⁷

In addition, the debt crisis of the 1980s brought severe social and economic suffering in Latin America. This continued into the early 1990s, owing to the structural adjustment programs the World Bank demanded before it would provide assistance to prevent complete financial collapse. Privatization and other neo-liberal reforms picked apart and reduced the size of various Latin American states, bringing questions about the nature of state-society relations into crucial focus.¹⁸ As neoliberal states disappointed popular actors throughout the region, the question of legitimacy captured analysts' attention, who began examining how citizens participated in the construction of Latin American nation-states.¹⁹

¹⁴ Technically, works of "new social history" appeared alongside more revolutionary analyses beginning in the 1960s. Many of these now constitute part of the "canon" of Latin American studies, if such a canon could be said to exist. These include works such as James Scobie's close examination of changes in land tenure, social organization, and economic conditions in the Argentine countryside resulting from intensive European immigration and deep trade between Britain and Argentina, Verena Martinez-Alier's exploration of race, social class, and marriage in Cuba, and Katia M. de Queirós Mattoso's detailed portrait of the daily lives of Brazil's enslaved population, first published in French in 1979. See de Queirós Mattoso, *To Be a Slave in Brazil, 1550-1888* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986); Martinez-Alier, *Marriage, Class and Colour in Nineteenth-Century Cuba: A Study of Racial Attitudes and Sexual Values in a Slave Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974); and Scobie, *Revolution on the Pampas: A Social History of Argentine Wheat, 1860-1910* (Austin: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of Texas, 1964). Examples of the deep social histories of the 1980s include: Catherine LeGrand, *Frontier Expansion and Peasant Protest in Colombia, 1830-1936* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986); John Tutino, *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico: Social Bases of Agrarian Violence, 1750-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986). And then there is the monograph that has inspired countless undergraduates to pursue doctoral studies in Latin American history – Peter Winn's first-hand account of Chilean mill workers struggling to take control over their company during Chile's short-lived "experiment" with socialism. See Winn, *Weavers of Revolution: The Yarn Workers and Chile's Road to Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

¹⁵ See Gilbert Joseph, "On the Trail of Latin American Bandits: A Re-Examination of Peasant Resistance," *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (1990), 7-53; Florencia E. Mallon, "The Promise and Dilemma of Subaltern Studies: Perspectives from Latin American History," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 99, No. 5 (Dec., 1994), 1491-1515; Richard Slatta, "Bandits and Rural Social History: A Comment on Joseph," *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (1991), 145-151. This also led to the other monograph that has helped buttress the ranks of graduate students focusing on Latin American history – Florencia Mallon's exploration of the role that peasants played in state formation. See Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

¹⁶ Museo references...

¹⁷ Mallon, *Peasant and Nation*; Eric Van Young, *The Other Rebellion: Popular Violence, Ideology, and the Mexican Struggle for Independence, 1810-1821* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001). One of the most masterful analyses of indigenous history relied on Nahaut language sources and revealed extensive indigenous cultural survival decades after the arrival of the Spaniards: James Lockhart, *The Nahuas After the Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth Through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

¹⁸ Mallon, "Decoding the Parchments," 19-20. See also, Lesley Gill, *Teetering on the Rim: Global Restructuring, Daily Life, and the Armed Retreat of the Bolivian State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

¹⁹ In addition to the various strands of historical and historiographical change in the 1980s, the publication of *Imagined Communities* ignited interest in nation-building among Latin Americanists, even though many disagreed with aspects of what Anderson wrote about creole patriotism. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); Sara Castro-Klaren & John Charles Chasteen (eds.), *Beyond Imagined Communities:*

Into this mix of historic and historiographic trends came a pithy phrase that summed them all up and grew to dominate how many Latin Americanists understood the state. It first appeared as the title of a 1994 volume on state-making in revolutionary-era Mexico. *Everyday Forms of State Formation* combined two, apparently distinct, conceptual frameworks for thinking about power and the state: Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer's concept of "state formation" and James Scott's examination of "everyday forms of peasant resistance."²⁰

Corrigan and Sayer proposed the now-familiar notion that states were not real, but rather, ideas, masks, ultimately, that hid power by naturalizing what they termed "moral regulation."²¹ In this naturalizing process, these forms of regulation became so obvious and taken for granted they were essentially invisible.²² For Corrigan and Sayer, these processes involved a massive cultural transformation over several centuries. Importantly, however, although this several-century process was an inherently cultural one, they agreed with Weber that force and coercion undergirded it.

Where Corrigan and Sayer took the bird's-eye view of the state to understand power and social relations, Scott took the local and particular as his starting point. Scott's peasants also wear masks; in their local worlds, traditions of reciprocity among unequal members of a community (peasants and landlords for example) regulated the exchange of goods and the payments of rents. Avoiding starvation was paramount, and as long as the powerful did not violate unwritten rules regarding reciprocity by attempting to extract more than their fair share, peasants would keep their masks on – engaging only in "everyday forms of resistance" – activities that would not threaten their lives, such as subtle deception, evasion, sabotaging machinery or work processes, etc.²³ If the powerful violated the unwritten rules, and peasants potentially faced starvation as a result, then they revolted, removing their masks and revealing their notions of power relations in their societies.

The editors and contributors to *Everyday Forms of State Formation* combined these two concepts to reach a conclusion that would have sounded familiar to Antonio Gramsci: the governors ruled with the consent of the governed. The former incorporated some of the aspirations and desires of the latter in order to gain legitimacy; with some of their demands met, the latter agreed to the socio-political contract and only contested abuses within the terms of that pact. This was hegemony – Gramsci's concept of how the powerful in a given society perpetuated their rule. Two words most strongly characterized the conception of everyday forms of state formation as the volume's contributors developed it: process and negotiation. The state was conceived as a "process"

Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth Century Latin America (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Claudio Lomnitz, "Nationalism as a Practical System," in Miguel Angel Centeno & Fernando López-Alves (eds.), *The Other Mirror: Grand Theory through the Lens of Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 329-359.

²⁰ Gilbert M. Joseph & Daniel Nugent (eds.), *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994); Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution* (New York: Blackwell, 1985); James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976). As William Roseberry noted in an essay in *Everyday Forms*, both of these concepts originated with E.P. Thompson. See, Roseberry, "Hegemony and the Language of Contention," Joseph & Nugent, *Everyday Forms*, op. cit., 355-366. See also, E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966); and *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture* (New York: The New Press, 1993).

²¹ Ideas which they borrowed from their advisor, Philip Abrams. See, Abrams, "Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State (1977)," *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Mar., 1988), 58-89.

²² The similarities to Elias' "civilizing process" and Foucault's "governmentality" should be apparent. See, Norbert Elias,

²³ Scott more fully examined the masks and non-violent methods that peasants (and other subaltern groups) use to survive unequal power relations in his two well-known works: *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) and *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

– an entity in constant construction.²⁴ There was no definitive end point where the state was formed and then statically remained so. Maintaining power required continual reaffirmation of the rules of the pact. Contributors to the volume rejected the notion that hegemony was a permanent thing.²⁵ Instead, the governors only perpetuated their hegemonic rule when they included popular classes in the project of state formation.²⁶ Thus, for example, one of the reasons that Mexico’s post-revolutionary program of land reform seemed to enjoy such widespread popular acceptance by peasants and indigenous groups, even though participation in the program required sometimes onerous state oversight, was that, in implementing the program, the post-revolutionary state affirmed long-standing discourses regarding the rights of communal land holders to manage land use among themselves – in other words, giving them some degree of autonomy within the state.²⁷

Another example illustrates an important aspect of hegemony as the contributors to *Everyday Forms* understood it: the popular sector did not represent one unified block and competing demands among different popular groups gave governors the opportunity to essentially “divide and conquer” – as long, of course, as they included some of their favored actors’ demands or desires in the state’s projects. Thus, Mexico’s post-revolutionary state grew in strength owing to the expansion of federal public schools in rural areas, not simply because of the increased presence of the state, but because these new schools shifted power arrangements in local areas. Small villages that previously needed to send their children to municipally-controlled schools in distant towns found, with federal school expansion, that they were no longer subordinated to those municipalities, a phenomenon which increased their adherence to the national state.²⁸

An integral aspect of these processes of continual (re)formation of state hegemony was negotiation. This referred to more than simply disagreement and discussion about the distribution of public goods or the amount of resources states could extract (in the form of taxes, for example). Instead, negotiation referred to disagreements over meanings, symbols, categories and the concepts and modes of interacting that undergirded the state and society. Here the contributors to *Everyday Forms* departed from Subaltern Studies; where the latter conceived of an autonomous popular culture, in which popular groups formulated their own consciousness separate from the state or ruling authorities, the former assumed that popular culture reflected the ideas of the rulers, but not slavishly.²⁹ Thus, state formation (or the achievement of hegemony) required negotiation over meaning, and in the process ruling and popular groups mutually constructed each other. A popular slogan during the Mexican Revolution, for example, was *tierra y libertad* – land and liberty. At the conclusion of the violent phase of the revolution, Mexicans enacted one of the most progressive national constitutions the world had yet seen. Article 27 focused on land and put in place the framework that would be later used to implement one of Latin America’s most extensive land reform programs of the twentieth century. But, *land rights* had multiple meanings. Land distribution

²⁴ This applied equally to popular culture, which was also seen as constantly “under construction.” See, Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent, “Popular Culture and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico,” in Joseph and Nugent (eds.), *Everyday Forms*, 3-23: 17-18.

²⁵ This was one of Gramsci’s main points. See, Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 1971); William Roseberry, “Hegemony and the Language of Contention,” in Joseph and Nugent (eds.), *Everyday Forms*, 355-366.

²⁶ See, for example, Florencia Mallon, “Reflections on the Ruins: Everyday Forms of State Formation in Nineteenth Century Mexico,” in Joseph and Nugent (eds.), *Everyday Forms*, 69-106: 70-71.

²⁷ Mallon, “Reflections on the Ruins,” 73-74.

²⁸ Elsie Rockwell, “Schools of the Revolution: Enacting and Contesting State Forms in Tlaxcala, 1910-1930,” in Joseph and Nugent (eds.), *Everyday Forms*, 170-208: 186-190.

²⁹ Joseph and Nugent, “Popular Culture and State Formation”: 21-22; Daniel Nugent and Ana María Alonso, “Multiple Selective Traditions in Agrarian Reform and Agrarian Struggle: Popular Culture and State Formation in the Ejido of Namiquipa, Chihuahua,” in Joseph and Nugent (eds.), *Everyday Forms*, 209-246: 210.

occurred through an institutional mechanism known as *ejido* – a form of communal land use that harked back to the communal land rights indigenous groups had enjoyed during the colonial period and into the nineteenth century after independence. Article 27 stipulated that all land belonged to the state and was granted to the *ejidos* in the form of *dotación* – a grant, a gift, one that the Namiquipans (residents of a rural municipality in the Mexican state of Chihuahua) interpreted as a signal of *ejido* subordination to the state. Namiquipans had suffered severe encroachments on their communal lands in the decades prior to the revolution and they believed that the state needed to offer the *ejidos* land in the form of *restitución* – restitution. When the post-revolutionary state attempted to organize an *ejido* there, in the form of a *dotación*, the Namiquipans refused – rejecting state control over their communal lands and instead announcing that they would adhere to the former colonial pact (which had granted them a much greater degree of autonomy).³⁰ However, they did this using the language and laws of the post-revolutionary state. Their formal rejection relied on interpretations of Article 27 of the constitution.³¹ It was only when the national state agreed to the term *restitución* that an *ejido* could finally be formed in Namiquipa.³² Thus we see the process of negotiation at work – ultimately, the state achieved its objectives, but it did so by negotiating with the peasants over the terms of their unequal pact.

Everyday Forms of State Formation ignited discussions about the history of the state in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America.³³ There was never, of course, full acceptance of this framework as the best way to describe the state, even the Mexican one. There were a number of reasons for this, but the most important one to consider here was raised in *Everyday Forms* itself: the fact that, myths aside, the national Mexican state was not as all-powerful as it seemed. Various contributors noted the varying degrees of strength among national, regional, and local powers, and the significant internal and external divisions that threatened national stability. One contributor later described the Mexican national state as essentially “Swiss cheese,” owing to the unevenness of its control throughout the national territory, the factions that divided it, and the dizzying array of demands placed on it.³⁴

In fact, in many ways *Everyday Forms of State Formation* raised more questions about the strength of the state than it answered. “How profound is profound?” Alan Knight asked in his essay, referring in that case to the degree of radical change actually wrought by the Mexican Revolution (not much in his estimation, ultimately).³⁵ Knight wrestled with this question over the next decade, focusing it on the post-revolutionary state.³⁶ Both revisionists and neo-Gramscians made the mistake, he concluded, of discussing the state without actually defining it or giving any “benchmarks

³⁰ Nugent and Alonso, “Multiple Selective Traditions”: 234-235.

³¹ Ibid: 239.

³² Ibid: 224-225.

³³ Ana María Alonso, *Thread of Blood: Colonialism, Revolution, and Gender on Mexico's Northern Frontier* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995); Jennie Purnell, *Popular Movements and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico: The Agraristas and Cristeros of Michoacán* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Mary Kay Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997). For the rest of Latin America, this was primarily a phenomenon among U.S.-based Latin Americanists. See, for example: Elizabeth Dore, “Property, Households, and Public Regulation of Domestic Life,” *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Oct. 1997), 591-611; Greg Grandin, *The Blood of Guatemala: A History of Race and Nation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

³⁴ Alan Knight, “Weapons and Arches in the Mexican Revolutionary Landscape” in Joseph and Nugent (eds.), *Everyday Forms*, 24-66; Mallon, “Reflections on the Ruins.” (Also, Knight’s Swiss cheese reference here)

³⁵ Knight, “Weapons and Arches”: 31.

³⁶ Alan Knight, “Cardenismo: Juggernaut or Jalopy?” *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Feb., 1994), 73-107; “The Modern Mexican State: Theory and Practice,” in Centeno & López-Alves, *The Other Mirror*, 177-218; “The Weight of the State in Modern Mexico,” in Dunkerley, *Studies in the Formation of the Nation State*, 212-253.

that could indicate relative strength or weakness.³⁷ But how does one “measure” a state? Knight suggested that a number of factors should be considered: 1) a bare bones determination of “state power” measured by its ability to “collect information...influence people and control resources”; 2) civil society, since dense civil society usually equated with strong states (as groups organized themselves often to secure state resources); 3) the connections between the state and the economy; and 4) legitimacy.

The problem, for Knight, was that defining measurements for these was not so easy – even if accurate numbers were available and those numbers actually represented manifestations of state power. One could count the number of civil servants, for example, or calculate the revenues of state-run banks, or analyze national budgets, and that certainly could give you a rough estimate of the size of a given state. But, that necessarily tell us about their legitimacy, effectiveness or ability to control resources. Measuring civil society is even more challenging, since it involves counting membership in private organizations, which may or not have records placed in accessible archives and might not reflect actual membership. Plus, did paying dues to an organization automatically make one an active member? Determining the state’s relationship to the economy seems more straightforward, at first glance, since one can look at taxation, railways, communications infrastructure, and regulatory mechanisms. But, often, these things told you more about the ways that the private sector benefited from state activity, rather than the strength of the state itself. And finally, how do you measure legitimacy? Longevity is certainly one crucial method – continual coups certainly don’t suggest great confidence in the ruling regime. Determining state autonomy would be an even more effective measure he concluded – knowing if the state acted more on its own, or in response to societal pressures could tell you something about the state’s legitimacy. But, again, how do you parse this out and how do we determine whose voices in society exert greater pressure on the state? Knight ultimately reached a two-part conclusion that differed somewhat from that of *Everyday Forms of State Formation*. First, we can’t really “know” the state with any confidence, we can only make our best guesses based on the available evidence. Second, based on that impressionistic evidence, Knight asserted that the Mexican state was “...more notable for its endurance and longevity than for its effective control over society – a society which is much more varied and recalcitrant than often imagined and which, furthermore, has often itself been ‘strengthened’ by ‘modernization,’ along with the state.”³⁸

But despite its drawbacks and problems, for many historians, the idea of *Everyday Forms of State Formation* became a common framework, to the point that it did not need to be discussed explicitly, as its underlying assumptions seemed so well-known.³⁹ Even those who disagreed needed to grapple with those assumptions.⁴⁰ And in recent years, there has been growing disagreement. This model is often characterized as ignoring violence and coercion, even though that was never the case.⁴¹ But, as violence grew in Mexico in the 2000s (and, increasingly, apparently, state violence, as

³⁷ Knight, “The Weight of the State in Modern Mexico”: 213-214.

³⁸ Ibid: 252.

³⁹ Helga Baitenmann, “Popular Participation in State Formation: Land Reform in Revolutionary Mexico,” *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Feb., 2011), 1-31.

⁴⁰ Benjamin Smith, “‘Defending Our Beautiful Freedom’: State Formation and Local Autonomy in Oaxaca, 1930-1940,” *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Winter, 2007), 125-153; Smith, “Inventing Tradition at Gunpoint: Culture, Caciquismo, and State Formation in the Región Mixe, Oaxaca (1930-1959),” *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (2008), 215-234.n

⁴¹ Nugent and Alonso indicate quite clearly that “state formation...encompasses processes through which the identities of subjects of the state are constructed via media of moral regulation, quotidian administration, and ritual, as well as through manifest, concrete oppression.” See, Nugent and Alonso, “Multiple Selective Traditions”: 210-211. And Knight, in a discussion of local and regional challenges to national state power, succinctly reminded readers that violence was always present: “In some villages the Cardenistas [adherents to President Lázaro Cárdenas] were the cocks of the walk, it

the 43 missing students reminds us), the role of coercion and violence in state-making came once again to the fore.⁴² Analysts revised previous assessments of the 1940s and 1950s as a relatively “peaceful” time in Mexico, arguing that the state’s weakness in various parts of the country allowed local violent actors to control local populations.⁴³

To summarize this very short overview of how the history of the Latin American nation-state has been analyzed, four main points are important to remember. The first is that there is no one way to study and understand “the Latin American state” – or any state, really. A recent volume examining nation and state formation in Latin America illustrates this. It relies on a variety of conceptual and theoretical frameworks, drawing from a diverse range of scholars. Weber is not dead in Latin America; neither is Charles Tilly. This plethora of approaches reflects the second conclusion: it is imprecise to speak of states as “weak” or “strong” as these terms reify a certain constellation of state activities and capacities at specific moments in time, when, in reality, states are dynamic, with expanding and contracting capacities at different moments in time, and across institutional entities. At any given moment, one part or aspect of a state may be “strong,” while another less so, and this could potentially change in any number of ways depending on circumstances. Third, to define a given state as “weak” assumes that a “strong” ideal exists elsewhere. Concretely, scholars often compare Latin America’s supposed weak states with the North Atlantic’s supposed strong ones. However, it is mistaken to assume that European or North American states developed their capacities sooner, more effectively, more permanently, or with less difficulties than any of Latin America’s and that, ultimately, in many ways, the processes of nation- and state-formation in all these areas shared many similarities, including periodization.⁴⁴ Finally, and in slight contradiction to the previous conclusion, while broad similarities exist, the particularities of each Latin American nation-state affect how observers understand the history of its state. While this is not a surprising conclusion for any historian – we all know that context matters – it is important

is true, but in many they were not – they were isolated, vulnerable, and, in several cases, ultimately dead.” Knight, “Weapons and Arches”: 51. An example of the assertion that the “post-revisionists” ignore violence appears in Benjamin Smith, *Pistoleros and Popular Movements: The Politics of State Formation in Postrevolutionary Oaxaca* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

⁴² The phrase “the Colombianization of Mexico” emerged in the 2000s to describe the growth in kidnappings and murders connected to the drug trade. Many Mexicans, however, rejected this pithy phrase, pointing out that Mexico had no guerilla groups attempting to take over the state, and that much of the violence in Mexico was fueled by the proliferation of illegal firearms through the porous northern border. See, for example: Mauricio Cárdenas and Kevin Casas-Zamora, “The ‘Colombianization’ of Mexico,” Brookings Institution, September 21, 2010 (<http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2010/09/21-colombia-mexico-cardenas-casaszamora>, accessed 1/9/15); Sarah Miller Llana, “Mexico Car Bomb: ‘Colombianization’ of Mexico Nearly Complete,” BanderasNews, July 19, 2010 (<http://www.banderasnews.com/1007/nr-colombianization.htm>); Renee Scherlen, “The Colombianization of Mexico: The Evolving Mexican Drug War,” Paper at the Southern Political Science Association, New Orleans, LA, January 8-11, 2009 (http://libres.uncg.edu/ir/asu/f/Scherlen_Renee_2009_the_colombianization.pdf). On the possibility that it was the police who “disappeared” the forty-three students, see Randal Archibold, “43 Missing Students, a Mass Grave, and a Suspect: The Police,” *The New York Times*, October 6, 2014 (http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/07/world/americas/43-missing-students-a-mass-grave-and-a-suspect-mexicos-police-.html?_r=0).

⁴³ Tanalís Padilla, *Rural Resistance in the Land of Zapata: The Jaramillista Movement and the Myth of the Pax Priísta, 1940-1962* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); W.G. Pansters (ed.), *Violence, Coercion, and State-Making in Twentieth Century Mexico: The Other Half of the Centaur* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

⁴⁴ Miguel A. Centeno and Agustín E. Ferraro, *State and Nation Making in Latin America and Spain: Republics of the Possible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Also, as noted in a previous footnote, while Latin Americanists have challenged many of Benedict Anderson’s ideas about how print capitalism contributed to nation-building in post-independence Latin America, they have praised him for remembering to include Latin America at the dawn of nationalism in the early nineteenth century. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

to point out, because outside observers often tend to lump Latin American countries together in imprecise ways, lacking insight and nuance.

Hegemony and the Colombian State

That last point is relevant here. While *Everyday Forms of State Formation* came to frame how many U.S.-based Latin Americanists understood historical processes of state formation, it did not spread evenly across the region as the most useful framework for explaining the state. National myths and histories structure the historiography of nation-states in particular ways; in Colombia, the notion of hegemony in relation to popular culture and the state has had little resonance. Indeed, up until recently, the Colombian national state has rarely received explicit analysis of its historical formation.⁴⁵ This largely derives from the common assumption that it is weak, failed, fragmented, or ineffective.⁴⁶

Such claims are based on a number of characteristics: incomplete territorial control, regional disunity, inability to provide security in many parts of the country, the delegation of official functions to a plethora of semi-public institutions, lack of legitimacy among popular sectors. The explanations for these characteristics are equally varied: the challenges Colombia's intense topography posed to nation-state formation, insufficient national economic development (which would enrich state coffers, allowing it to expand), subordination of the state to a small group of private interests, exclusion of popular actors from formal mechanisms of democracy (giving them no voice in national governance).⁴⁷ These issues are too large to treat all of them at length here. For

⁴⁵ Much of this is focused on the "high modernist" state and its attempts to construct the nation-state through mapping, racial discourses, cultural production, food, and sports. See, Clara Isabel Botero, *El redescubrimiento del pasado prehispánico de Colombia: viajeros, arqueólogos y coleccionistas 1820-1945* (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2006); Alberto G. Flórez Malagón (ed.), *El poder de la carne: Historias de ganaderías en la primera mitad del siglo XX en Colombia* (Bogotá: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2008); Alfonso Múnera, *Fronteras imaginadas: La construcción de las razas y de la geografía en el siglo XIX colombiano* (Bogotá: Editorial Planeta Colombiana, 2005); Jorge Humberto Ruiz Patiño, *La política del sport: élites y deporte en la construcción de la nación colombiana, 1903-1925* (Medellín: La Carreta Editores, 2010); Efraín Sánchez, *Gobierno y geografía: Agustín Codazzi y la Comisión Corográfica de la Nueva Granada* (Bogotá: El Áncora Editores, 1999); Renán Silva, *República Liberal, intelectuales y cultura popular* (Medellín: La Carreta Editores, 2005); Miguel Ángel Urrego, *Intelectuales, estado y nación en Colombia: De la Guerra de los Mil Días a la constitución de 1991* (Bogotá: Siglo del Hombre Editores, 2002). Popular sectors and popular construction of the nation-state remain understudied, as do popular actors not connected to violent civil conflict. One historian explicitly decried the fact that the armed left has received far more attention than the unarmed left; there is still much we don't know about the leaders and members of popular political movements, labor unions, community organizations, etc. See, José Abelardo Díaz Jaramillo, "Del liberalismo al maoísmo: encuentros y desencuentros políticos en Francisco Mosquera Sánchez, 1958-1969," *Anuario colombiano de historia social y de la cultura*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (2011), 141-176.

⁴⁶ See, for example: Marco Palacios, "Colombian Experience with Liberalism: On the Historical Weakness of the State"; Eduardo Posada-Carbo, "Reflections on the Colombian State: In Search of a Modern Role," in Posada-Carbo (ed.), *Colombia: The Politics of Reforming the State* (London: ILAS, University of London, 1998), 1-17.

⁴⁷ On the subordination of the state to private interests, see Eduardo Sáenz Rovner, *La ofensiva empresarial: Industriales, políticos y violencia en los años 40 en Colombia* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1992). The connection between geography and lack of national economic development figures prominently in many analyses. The transport and communication problems the mountainous terrain posed ensured that nineteenth-century Colombia consisted of nothing more than disarticulated and self-sufficient regional economies. High transport costs gave regions no reason to specialize economically, thus thwarting inter-regional trade and national integration, which weakened national state formation and economic development until well into the twentieth century. See, María Teresa Uribe de Hincapié & Jesús María Álvarez, *Poderes y regiones: problemas en la constitución de la nación colombiana. 1810-1850* (Medellín: Universidad de Antioquia, 1987); William Paul McGreevey, *An Economic History of Colombia, 1845-1930* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971); José Antonio Ocampo & Santiago Montenegro, *Crisis mundial, protección e industrialización: ensayos de historia económica colombiana* (Bogotá: CEREC, 1984). Historians did not exaggerate the immensity of the problem geography posed.

our purposes the most important one to consider is exclusion. The roots of political exclusion in Colombia lay in its combination of formal democracy and political culture.

The two-party system emerged early and intense partisanship was a defining feature of Colombia's political system. Political parties and the church were the only two institutions with a truly national presence in the nineteenth century.⁴⁸ In broad strokes, the Liberal Party emphasized secularization, federalism, free trade, and the expansion of political rights; the Conservative Party focused on protecting Church privilege, centralizing state power, strengthening "traditional" rural economies, and preserving long-standing social hierarchies. However, ideology within the parties was very fluid.⁴⁹ Both parties counted large landowners, merchants, and industrialists among their ranks; indeed, the early industrialization of the department of Antioquia was organized primarily by members of the Conservative party.⁵⁰ In addition, popular groups also joined the parties, and although there were some broad, and perhaps predictable affiliations among certain social sectors (indigenous groups tended to align with the Conservative Party, Afro-Colombians with Liberals), these were not rigid, and among the already-fluid category of *mestizo* (those of mixed race, which includes the vast majority of the population), there was no definitive basis for party alliance at all.⁵¹ There were regional patterns (Conservatives in Antioquia and the highlands of Boyacá, Liberals on the coast), but even that was not absolute. What was strongly characteristic, however, was intense partisanship once affiliation was made.

Such partisanship inspired many of Colombia's nineteenth century conflicts, as well as the massively destructive War of a Thousand Days at the turn of the twentieth century (1899-1902). A period of Radical Liberal control between 1861 and 1885 saw one of the most intense forms of federalism in the Americas. Renamed the United States of Colombia, its nine states were practically sovereign nations, tied together with the thinnest of institutional connections. As an example of its extremeness, the main legislative body was renamed the "Senate of Plenipotentiaries," and its senators behaved as if they were delegates at an international conference.⁵² Predictably, such extreme

Numerous nineteenth century observers recounted the difficulties of travel on the Magdalena River (the main artery connecting highland Bogotá with the Caribbean coast) or the poor conditions of the roads, many of which were only accessible by mule or human carrier. A small sample of the numerous descriptions of travel difficulties on the Magdalena include: Bushnell, *Making of Modern Colombia*: 58-59; Helen Delpar, *Red Against Blue: The Liberal Party in Colombian Politics, 1863-1899* (University of Alabama Press, 1981): 15; McGreevey, *An Economic History*: 249-251; Gustavo Montañez, "El Istmo de Panamá y Colombia: de puente natural a juego geopolítico de la unión," in Heraclio Bonilla & Gustavo Montañez (eds.), *Colombia y Panamá: La metamorfosis de la nación en el siglo XX* (Bogotá: UNAL, 2004), 125-154: 131. On road conditions and the effects they had on transportation costs, see: Bushnell, *Making of Modern Colombia*: 74-75; McGreevey, *An Economic History*: 245; Jorge Orlando Melo, "Las vicisitudes del modelo liberal, 1850-1899," in José Antonio Ocampo (ed.), *Historia económica de Colombia*, 4a edición (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1994), 119-172: 127-128.

⁴⁸ Delpar, *Red against Blue*, 15.

⁴⁹ Bushnell, *Making of Modern Colombia*: 103-104.

⁵⁰ Delpar, Bergquist,

⁵¹ Sanders, Appelbaum, Sowell, Bergquist, Green

⁵² Bushnell offers a dramatic portrait of its extremes: "The name of the country was now changed to Estados Unidos de Colombia, but the states received much more sweeping power than in the Anglo-American model. The states were nine in number... These states retained all powers not expressly delegated to the central authorities, and the specified national functions were closely circumscribed. Thus, for example, the national government had responsibility only for 'interoceanic' transportation routes. The states received the concurrent right to establish their own postal systems, and several did in fact proceed to issue their own stamps. The upper house of the national Congress was aptly termed 'Senado de Plenipotenciarios,' as if its members were the emissaries of sovereign nations. The president was chosen on a basis of one state, one vote; and the states were free to establish the requirements for voting in national as well as local elections. (A majority took this opportunity to retreat from universal male suffrage... and to reinstate literacy or socioeconomic qualifications. Lastly, but hardly least, any amendment to the constitution required the approval of all nine states." See, Bushnell, *Making of Modern Colombia*: 123-124.

federalism resulted in increasing fragmentation and the threat of disunion. Change came in 1884, when dissident Liberals, aligned with Conservatives, gained the presidency and declared the constitution null and void. A new constitution restored central control, the country was renamed the Republic of Colombia, and states became departments. Within a few years, the Conservatives dominated this alliance, inaugurating the period in Colombian history known as the “Conservative Hegemony” – Liberals would not regain the presidency until 1930. While most of the measures enacted during the Liberal regime were reversed almost immediately, one aspect had long-lasting impact in Colombia. Under the federalist system, states enfranchised their population as they saw fit; most of them abolished universal male suffrage by adding literacy and property requirements.⁵³

The first fifteen years of the Conservative Hegemony is also known as the Regeneration and during this period, majoritarian rule was the order of the day. The winning party of congressional elections received between 95-99% of the seats, regardless of the actual electoral outcomes. By 1899 Liberals were fed up with their political exclusion. The civil war that resulted brought immense loss of life to Colombia, an estimated 2.5 percent of the entire population. The War of a Thousand Days only ended when it threatened to evolve from a political conflict among party leaders, to a social conflict after popular actors began to organize on their own.⁵⁴ The fact that the U.S. took advantage of Colombia’s internal chaos to excise Panama from the national territory also encouraged the warring factions to call a truce.

The conclusion of the War of a Thousand Days saw the emergence of both written and unwritten rules designed to curb the worst effects of partisan conflict and allow the country to modernize (which at that time meant building railroads and improving communications infrastructure). For peace and prosperity, party leaders knew that they needed to work together. This did not mean that partisanship disappeared. To stave off its worst effects, in 1905, the Conservatives agreed to an electoral reform that reduced the size of their bloc in the National Assembly. This increased national stability, by guaranteeing the Liberal Party a specified number of seats. No matter the election results, “the incomplete vote” stipulated that congressional seats be divvied up with two-thirds to the winning party and one-third to the runner up.⁵⁵

The incomplete vote, did not, however, grant full male suffrage. That would not come until 1929 (and female suffrage not until 1954). Ultimately, the incomplete vote mitigated the worst excesses of the Regeneración, when majoritarian rule essentially excluded Liberals from the National Assembly. But, it only opened the doors for the political elite. As Mazzuca and Robinson noted, “The incomplete vote made possible the incorporation of an oligarchic opposition into an oligarchic government.”⁵⁶

At the heart of this limited power-sharing arrangement was the Colombian concept of “convivialismo” – a political concept with roots in the independence era – a time when Simón Bolívar and some of his contemporaries questioned how quickly political rights should be granted to subaltern groups.⁵⁷ Politics was seen as an honorable activity, something reserved for those with high

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Bergquist, who emphasizes the importance of the socio-economic aspects of the entire conflict, even among party elites.

⁵⁵ This was the “incomplete vote” – a combination of both majoritarian rule and proportional representation. No matter what the election results, congressional seats would be split so that the winning party had two-thirds and the runner-up one-third. This increased Liberal representation. In 1929, this system was eliminated and replaced with the “quotient system” – closer to proportional representation. Sebastián Mazzuca and James A. Robinson, “Political Conflict and Power Sharing in the Origins of Modern Colombia,” *Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 89, No. 2 (2009), 285-321.

⁵⁶ Mazzuca & Robinson, “Political Conflict and Power Sharing”: 316.

⁵⁷ Sanders, Uribe Uran, Lasso --- Victor Uribe-Uran, *Honorable Lives: Lawyers, Family, and Politics in Colombia, 1780-1850* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000).

social standing.⁵⁸ High birth and inherited wealth determined who had honor in the eighteenth century and such ideas still circulated in the early nineteenth. This began to change in the independence era, however, and the idea of honor evolved until, by the early twentieth century, it referred more to behavior, comportment, and education. Although Colombia's "best families" still figured prominently among those considered honorable, the ranks had expanded to include individuals with obscure origins in rural areas – the descendants of merchants and traders who had earned enough to buy their sons' educations in Paris or New York (at St. John's, now Fordham University).⁵⁹

Nevertheless, while many could gain an education, not everyone was considered honorable enough to participate in politics. Only those with elevated speech were deemed worthy. Oratory and poetry became the markers of a true gentleman. The intellectual pursuits of many of Colombia's major political figures in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries rivaled those of the great philologists, linguists, and poets of their age: adaptation of a geology book for popular readers, translations of Herbert Spencer, a 376-page dictionary of Spanish Gallicisms, not to mention the numerous books of poetry and expository writing.⁶⁰ Although many of these works were designed to provide moral uplift through education for popular classes, the real audience was what they considered their social equals. Colombia's political class in the early twentieth century spent a great deal of time performing for their peers – declaiming about political ideals and moral living at salons and social clubs, in coffeehouses and literary societies.⁶¹ Many saw themselves as public figures who could uplift Colombia's masses simply through their good example. Thus, they never took off their masks. Their entire lives were orchestrated and planned to showcase their moral superiority. As one member of this class noted, "I am an arrogant gentleman, even when I am buttoning my pants."⁶² When observers called Bogotá the "Athens of South America," they had these men in mind.⁶³

Importantly, it did not matter if one was Liberal or Conservative – poetry and oratory transcended political party. This was *convivialismo* – such men believed that their social position gave them much more in common with the elite members of the opposition party than with the popular members of their own. Therefore, as gentlemen, they had an obligation to work together for the betterment of their country. The unwritten pact that brought the incomplete vote to life rested on the assumption of shared superiority. Giving up the opportunity to completely dominate the legislature would maintain political peace, but it could only happen because the fundamental binary these men constructed fell along class lines rather than political ones. Party was important, social class far more so. (This binary also mapped very neatly onto Colombia's racial divisions, an aspect of this phenomenon they obscured, but which became more visible in subsequent decades.)

This political system excluded popular actors. At least, it did so formally. Governance, and even voting itself, was restricted to a select few. But, the underlying social rules that gave substance to this politically exclusive system touched everyone in society. *Convivialismo* did have a popular

⁵⁸ Uribe-Uran

⁵⁹ Herbert Braun, *The Assassination of Gaitán: Public Life and Urban Violence in Colombia* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985): 25; Frank Safford, *The Ideal of the Practical: Colombia's Struggle to Form a Technical Elite* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976): 147-159.

⁶⁰ Ricardo Arias Trujillo, *Los leopardos: Una historia intelectual de los años 1920* (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2007): 8-9; Bushnell, *Making of Modern Colombia*: 143-144; Malcolm Deas, *Del poder y la gramática y otros ensayos sobre historia, política y literatura colombianas* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1993): 25-51. As Bushnell notes, "Men of letters produced learned essays and clever conversation on almost any subject except the deprivations suffered by the Colombian masses, and they excelled above all, in the writing and recitation of poetry on every conceivable occasion." See, Bushnell, *Making of Modern Colombia*: 163.

⁶¹ Arias Trujillo, *Los leopardos*: 32-44

⁶² Braun, *Assassination of Gaitán*: 26.

⁶³ Ibid: 25; Bushnell, *Making of Modern Colombia*: 163.

component. The emphasis on language, on the proper way of speaking and communicating with fellow citizens did not end at the door of the salon, coffeehouse, or bookstore. The gentlemen inside those salons believed that politics was something that happened behind closed doors, and that the street was a place of formality and respectful interaction with everyone, of all social classes. But, while the street may not have been the site of overt political discussion, the social glue that held the fragile Colombian nation-state together was embedded in every interaction that occurred there. The street, defined here broadly to mean the day-to-day interaction among all social classes, was filled with performers, acting out the social rules.

The rules were not just that everyone be treated with respect. Everyone also needed to demonstrate their place in the social hierarchy and communicate with each other in ways that recognized those social gulfs. This was expressed in deferential language – people in any position of authority, for example, were called “doctor,” whether or not they had a medical degree (or any degree for that matter).⁶⁴ It was common to speak of other people’s *pobreza* (poverty) and the difficult circumstances of their lives, and doing so confirmed the social distance between the speaker and the object of discussion. Popular actors were very familiar with the “elaborate” and “illustrious” language among those higher in the social hierarchy, and they deployed that same language even while affirming their inferior social status. During the “National Folklore Survey” in the 1940s, for example, when teachers throughout the country were asked to send information about local customs to the Ministry of Education, teachers responded with beautifully phrased, respectful letters that clearly demonstrated their social position. They “lamented the [unfortunate] cultural state of the *campesinos*,” and did so with language that reinforced their subordination:

I am pessimistic about the lifelessness of my sentences,’ one writes. Another asks the indulgence of those who read her words, ‘being that the place where I live and my limited mental gifts don’t permit more.’ They write of their “modest aptitudes,’ of [the fact] that they don’t have ‘true enlightenment,’ and only the ‘meager knowledge of a humble teacher.’ Another concludes by saying: ‘Please allow me to present to you my humble work, free of the accoutrements of the orator or the poet.’ ‘Thus I fulfill my responsibility,’ another writes. Another expresses that it had been a pleasure ‘to complete this duty you asked of me.’⁶⁵

In all these examples, we see the tension between the appropriation of the poetic and oratorical forms of speech of those at the top of the social hierarchy and the reaffirmation of that hierarchy through the ideas those words express. One can imagine these writers pulling out their dictionaries and laboring over their letters, being careful to choose the words that would allow them to be taken seriously, but also, to construct sentences that indicated that they recognized that they occupied a lower rung on the societal ladder. Or perhaps, and more likely, these words and what they expressed came naturally, no dictionary needed.

Careful and courteous speech did not operate in just one direction, however. Colombia’s popular classes were deferential, but they were not meek.⁶⁶ They treated those above them in the social hierarchy with courtesy and respect; they expected courtesy and respect in return. There was a hierarchy in society, they recognized that. But, that did not mean that they were stripped of dignity.

⁶⁴ Herbert Braun, “De palabras y distinciones: Hacia un entendimiento del comportamiento cotidiano entre los colombianos durante la Violencia de los años cincuenta,” in Rubén Sierra Mejía (ed.), *La restauración conservadora, 1946-1957* (Bogotá: UNAL, 2012): 14, 19.

⁶⁵ Ibid: 39-40.

⁶⁶ Ibid: 22-23.

This meant that all Colombians were hyper-vigilant about how they were being treated. And they were sensitive. Slightings, disrespectful tones, harshness, or carelessness in language were taken as serious affronts. The care that Colombians higher in social hierarchy took when speaking to those in lower positions was remarked upon by a North American visitor to Colombia in the 1940s, who noted that Colombians “spoke to the *campesinos* with the elegance of a Chesterfield.” Landowners required so much tact when speaking to “peons,” they “would be perfectly suited for the highest levels of international diplomacy.”⁶⁷

To return to our earlier discussion of the moral economy of the peasant, we see in this an example of reciprocity. But here the unwritten rule extends to an entire society, including people who may not have a specific, long-standing relationship with each other (landlord and tenant farmer, for example). This brings us back to the notion of hegemony. We see here a society in which everyone seems to agree on the social pact – we will all treat each other with respect and perhaps even deference, as long as we recognize the social hierarchy and our place in it.

But, what did those on the lower social rungs in Colombia get out of this? Recall that Scott’s peasants also acknowledged a power differential in their societies. As long as the landlords asked for a similar proportion of their harvests every year, the peasants did not challenge the rents they were required to pay. In years of good harvest this sometimes meant that peasants ended up giving away a significant portion of what they reaped, allowing the landlord to make significant profits off of their labor. This was tolerable, as long as the landlord recognized when peasants had lean years and did not demand the same proportion as always. Reciprocity in this case meant that the landlord be aware of the peasant’s situation, and, even more importantly, be willing to sacrifice some of his own profits to ensure that they did not starve.

Similar situations certainly applied in some rural areas of Colombia. But, the expectation of courteous treatment among the various levels in the social hierarchy extended beyond the countryside to the villages, small towns, and major cities throughout the country. Popular actors understood that the social hierarchy meant that those in authority also had obligations. The social pact as they understood it meant that they would not challenge the power of those at the top, as long as the needs and problems of the lower sectors were recognized and, when necessary, rectified. Indeed, much of the violence in mid-century Colombia occurred precisely because of the loss of communication between the city and the country – the feeling that the countryside had been abandoned. During Colombia’s mid-century violence, the church was often involved in local conflicts between Conservatives and Liberals, with local church leaders taking one side or the other and sometimes encouraging violent actions and reprisals against neighbors, even from the pulpit. The citizens of C6mbita, in the department of Boyac6a faced just such a situation in 1949. Parishioners had asked the Bishop of Tunja (Boyac6a’s capital) to replace this local priest, but had no answer. A group of them, including women then wrote to the Archbishop in Bogot6a, asking that he intercede with the bishop. Their letter contains the same language of poetry and deference, but also a reminder of the Bishop’s obligations to the people.⁶⁸ Thousands of letters, with similar language and tone, addressed to the President of the Republic or one of the various Ministers fill the boxes at Colombia’s national archives.

Thus, *convivialismo* in early twentieth Colombia comprised a complex set of social rules that tied most Colombians to the national state, as “weak” as that state might have been, if measured by capacity or territorial control alone. Strongly enforced hierarchies, cooperation, courtesy, and reciprocity – these aspects helped maintain a political system that, by definition, formally excluded popular actors. For the first two decades of the twentieth century, this system seemed relatively

⁶⁷ Ibid: 34.

⁶⁸ Ibid: 46.

stable, and didn't result in any significant political protest among popular groups.⁶⁹ It began to fray, however, in the 1920s. The closing of the coffee frontier (after several decades of colonization into new areas of Colombia) increased land pressure, generating more significant tension between large landowners and smallholders or tenant farmers.⁷⁰ In some cases, these tensions erupted into forms of everyday violence against peasant farmers (putting up fences on their properties, denying them access to local forms of credit, challenging the legality of their titles and deeds – if they had them to begin with) or, in worse cases, much more brutal forms of violence (assault, destroying crops, burning homes, etc.). When attempts to rectify these situations through the regular channels of deference, supplication, and reminders of the state's obligation to protect its citizens seemed to have no effect, the sense of abandonment many peasants felt spurred them to organize more visible (and less courteous) forms of protest than they had ever done before.⁷¹

Similar processes happened in cities. Growing industrialization and urbanization created new social groups who began to make more demands on the state. Strikes, protests, and calls for more public housing and public transportation rocked Bogotá and Medellín. Although newly-organized anarcho-syndicalist and communist movements helped inspire these actions, even more important in the Colombian context was the sense that workers and new city residents were being ignored by city leaders and industrialists. The fact that the latter demanded deference, but did not recognize the problems and concerns of those who granted them that deference was explosive.⁷²

But things were changing at the top. A new generation of party leaders from both sides of the aisle also believed that political and social reforms were necessary (although there was a wide

⁶⁹ That we know of – the first two decades of the twentieth century are the most understudied of Colombia's national history.

⁷⁰ A myth of Colombian history is that coffee colonization in Western Colombia, an intensely mountainous region, where there was little conflict over land, at during that time period, in relation to other parts of the country, led to the development of a highly democratic society in those rural areas. There is a fairly significant literature on the issue of coffee colonization in Colombia (opening up new lands for coffee production) and the impact this had on political life in the coffee zones, in terms of democracy and political participation, with a marked transition from celebratory to critical. See, Nancy P. Appelbaum, *Muddied Waters: Race, Region, and Local History in Colombia, 1846-1948* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Keith H. Christie, *Oligarcas, campesinos y política en Colombia: aspectos de la historia socio-política de la frontera antioqueña* (Bogotá: UNAL, 1986); James J. Parsons, *Antioqueño Colonization in Western Colombia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968, 2nd edition).

⁷¹ Catherine LeGrand, *Frontier Expansion and Peasant Protest in Colombia, 1830-1936* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1986).

⁷² Ann Farnsworth-Alvear, *Dulcinea in the Factory: Myths, Morals, Men, and Women in Colombia's Industrial Experiment, 1905-1960* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); David Sowell, *The Early Colombian Labor Movement: Artisans and Politics in Bogotá, 1832-1919* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992). One strike in particular played an outsize role in disrupting the political system and eventually dismantling the Conservative Hegemony. In October 1928, 25,000 United Fruit Company banana workers went on strike in the town of Ciénaga on the northern coast. The national state typically sent in the army to suppress strikes and this was no exception. However, nothing before matched the carnage here; on December 5, between two and four thousand strikers organized a protest at Ciénaga's railway station. Although the president declared a state and siege and set a curfew, strikers refused to leave the station when the army arrived in the middle of the night and read them the orders to disperse. The precise chain of events from that point is still a mystery, but a bloodbath followed. No one knows the exact number of strikers killed by the army that night – wildly divergent estimates range from seven to four thousand. Safford & Palacios, *Fragmented Land*: 281-282. This is a mythic event in Colombian history, immortalized by Gabriel García Márquez, who may have helped disseminate the wildly inflated numbers of killed in the massacre. See, Eduardo Posada-Carbo, "Fiction as History: The Bananeras and Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (May 1998), 395-414. Although the strike occurred during an era of anti-imperialism, protest over U.S. control over Colombian oil fields and banana plantations, and debates over President Marco Fidel Suárez's (1918-1921) doctrine of aligning with the "pole star" – a recognition of U.S. economic dominance in Latin America – the fact that the army had been called out to protect U.S. interests shifted the focus of protest. Anti-government and anti-military discourse quickly replaced anti-imperialist, furthering destabilizing a conservative regime already divided over how to respond to the challenges of the 1920s.

gulf in how the understood the problem and its solution, with the main new voice of the Conservatives calling for a return to Hispanism, Catholicism, and traditionalism, since he believed that crass capitalism lay at the core of Colombia's problems; up-and-coming Liberals proposed a social reform program more akin to the populist reforms sweeping throughout Latin America at the time).⁷³ In 1930, the Conservative party split over these questions, allowing the Liberal Party to gain the presidency for the first time since 1885. For the next sixteen years, four different Liberal presidents oversaw various reforms, some much bolder than others. Alfonso López Pumarejo (1934-1938) launched a comprehensive program of land, labor, social, and political reform, called *Revolución en marcha* (Revolution on the March). Like his political cousin President Lázaro Cárdenas in Mexico (also elected in 1934), López Pumarejo faced significant opposition from business leaders, industrialists, large landowners in some parts of the country, the Catholic Church, and, of course, the Conservative Party. And like Cárdenas, this opposition slowed the implementation of his reform program, leaving the popular classes even more frustrated. The subsequent Liberal president focused more of his attention on U.S.-Colombian relations and protecting commercial and industrialists' interests during the slowdown in global trade during World War II.⁷⁴ When López Pumarejo returned for a second term in 1942, he relaunched the *Revolución en marcha*, but much more timidly than before, attempting to enforce some of the existing reforms rather than implement new ones. But, even those small steps ignited significant protests from the leaders of the business and commercial sector.

In 1944, the Asociación Nacional de Industriales (ANDI, National Industrialists' Association) was established to protect those interests. This organization quickly rivaled the Colombian Coffee Growers' Federation and its power to influence state policy. As far as López Pumarejo, opposition to his reforms grew so strong, he resigned, leaving an even younger Liberal, Alberto Lleras Camargo, to finish his term. By this point, the Liberal Party had become horribly divided and this allowed the Conservatives to regain the presidency in 1946.

What divided the Liberal Party was not López Pumarejo. A rival Liberal leader, Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, had ignited the fervor of the popular imagination and upended the entire party. López Pumarejo's reforms were ultimately politically motivated – he was one of twentieth-century Colombia's most partisan politicians, and recognized that in an era of mass politics and universal male suffrage, incorporating popular sectors could ensure electoral victories for the Liberal party.⁷⁵ Gaitán, on the other hand, was far less wedded to the Liberal line, expressing his dissatisfaction with its tepid reformist program by starting his own short-lived party in 1933.

Indeed, Gaitán is the closest thing Colombia has ever had to a populist leader. He exploded onto the national stage, in the wake of the massacre of striking banana workers in 1928, when he organized various vigils and spoke out against the use of the army to put down the strike. He held various political positions in the 1930s and 1940s, including mayor of Bogotá, but was really after the presidency. Liberal party leaders feared his populist views and for that reason did not nominate him as party in 1946. But, his popularity was growing and it seemed likely that he would be the Liberal Party candidate in 1950.

It wasn't just Gaitán's populist positions that distanced him from the entrenched party elite. He had obscure origins, the child of a single mother, but had worked hard, received various scholarships, became a lawyer, and spent some time studying in Italy. The problem was that,

⁷³ James D. Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia: The Laureano Gómez Years, 1889-1965* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000); Álvaro Tirado Mejía, *Aspectos Políticos del primer gobierno de Alfonso López Pumarejo (1934-1938)* (Bogotá: Editorial Planeta, 1995); Trujillo, *Los leopardos*.

⁷⁴ That president was Eduardo Santos, the great-granduncle of Colombia's current president, Juan Manuel Santos. See, David Bushnell, *Eduardo Santos and the Good Neighbor, 1938-1942* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1967).

⁷⁵ Tirado Mejía, *Aspectos Políticos*.

although he was as cultured as any of the gentlemen who ran both parties, he didn't look like them. His skin was darker, his features more vaguely "afro-indigenous" and this prevented his full acceptance into Bogotá's exclusive social clubs.

Gaitán talked about this in his political discourse; he made a distinction between the *país político* and the *país nacional*. The political country consisted of party elites who talked exclusively among themselves and lived in relative luxury, while ignoring the problems of the poor. Meanwhile, the national country – everybody else – suffered, ignored and abandoned by both parties and the state, struggling to survive and unable to make their voices heard. Note the echoes of the social pact under *convivialismo*, and, more specifically, how that pact was being violated. The elites, the *país político*, had obligations to those they considered their social inferiors, obligations they were ignoring. Gaitán tapped into the anger this generated, organizing massive marches in the streets of Bogotá. The most spectacular was on February 7, 1949. The *Manifestación del Silencio* (the Silent Protest) was organized to protest government inaction in the face of growing violence in the countryside. Over 100,000 people joined Gaitán in the Plaza Bolívar (Bogotá main plaza) to mourn the dead. Braun offers an evocative description of the meaning of this protest:

“Gaitán carefully inverted the liturgy of the public plaza. The words were few and somber. He spoke for scarcely five minutes, selecting each word with the utmost care. The multitude became an active participant in the demonstration, expressing its collective voice in silence. Gaitán's speech was filled with religious language. He did not speak to the *convivialistas* through the crowd. Instead, the crowd spoke through him to the politicians: ‘Señor Presidente Ospina Pérez. Under the weight of a profound emotion I address Your Excellency, interpreting the wishes and the will of this immense multitude that hides its burning heart, lacerated by so much injustice, under a clamorous silence, to ask that there be peace and mercy for the nation.’”⁷⁶

This was the most exquisite expression of Colombia's social pact. Fancy words had failed to move the president to action; supplication had gotten the people nowhere. Now they would demonstrate their continued adherence to the terms of the social hierarchy by silencing themselves completely in the hope that this would spur reciprocity in the form of justice and peace in the countryside.

The pact fell completely apart when a phenomenal outburst of violence erupted after Gaitán was assassinated on April 9, 1948. A massive wave of rioting, looting, and destruction known as the *bogotazo* obliterated a huge chunk of downtown Bogotá: governmental offices, newspaper buildings, the colonial museum, countless storefronts – all were burned to the ground or looted. At that point, the *convivialistas* at the top of the social hierarchy saw a crowd, as Lombroso would have defined it, a mob, a group of people with whom there was no negotiation. For the next five years, the workers and urban crowds were repressed; those in the countryside were left to their own devices.

La Violencia, Colombia's twenty-year period of partisan-based violent civil conflict that left an estimated 200,000 people dead in rural areas – and countless more displaced – began two years before Gaitán's assassination; his death only increased the chaos and destruction in the countryside. Liberals and Conservatives killed each other, but the underlying causes were socioeconomic, not partisan. Meanwhile, from the safety of the city, party leaders and the state looked on, but did nothing to quell the violence. If anything, they incited more of it. This was especially the case between 1950 and 1953 under the presidency of Laureano Gómez, a fiercely partisan Conservative, with fascist tendencies. Under his rule, paramilitary forces proliferated in the countryside. Their

⁷⁶ Braun, *Assassination of Gaitán*: 127.

targets were Liberals, but Gómez also attacked dissenters within his own party. When he was ousted in a military coup in 1953, surprisingly few Colombians objected. Despite a century of adherence to the formal mechanisms of democracy and an unbroken record of peaceful presidential transition, many considered Gómez, at worst, an insane lunatic, at best, a rabid partisan who happily fanned the flames of political conflict that kept people murdering each other in the countryside. Thus, Colombians greeted his ouster with a collective sigh of relief.⁷⁷

The military man who replaced him, General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, promised to return the government to civilian rule as quickly as possible. But, first, he worked to stabilize the country, and this included opening the doors to freer trade. While popular sectors lauded this move, as it lowered the price of consumer goods, industrialists who had counted on the protectionist measures of the two previous Conservative administrations protested vigorously.⁷⁸ Within a short time, however, the tables turned, both politically and economically. The state of siege implemented in the wake of Gómez's ouster was not lifted, newspapers were censored, and Rojas Pinilla began distancing himself from business leaders and other civilian elites. After the National Constituent Assembly rubber-stamped an extension of his rule until 1958, students and others began protesting military governance more openly. Reprisals and campaigns of suppression quickly followed.⁷⁹ Then he mismanaged the economic situation when coffee prices fell, creating a full-blown crisis. By 1956, the U.S. was pressuring him to devalue the peso. Rojas Pinilla refused and cut government spending instead. But by October of that year, Colombia had defaulted on its IMF loans, which tanked its credit rating on the global market, worsening the economic situation.⁸⁰

It was in the midst of this violence and economic chaos, during Rojas' military rule that a group of bakers decided that they needed to organize to defend their interests. Over the next several years they employed a variety of discourses to persuade the state implement and enforce favorable policies. All of these discourses reflect the spirit of *convivialismo*, and thus, their adherence to the social pact regarding respect, deference, and reciprocity. Although these bakers had only mixed success doing defending their interests, their deployment of *convivialista* discourse illustrates the ways that popular groups granted the Colombian state legitimacy, and thus counters those who claim that the state is weak because it excludes so many of its citizens.

Artisan Bakers, Public Service, and the State in Colombia

When seventy-three bakers from across Colombia established the baking association in April 1956, they had two primary objectives. First, they wanted the national state to renegotiate a PL 480 contract with the United States in order to increase wheat flour imports. Second, they wanted to ensure that the National Supply Institute (INA), which regulated the importation and distribution of staple goods, granted them the exclusive right to oversee distribution of both national and imported wheat flour among the nation's bakeries. They achieved the second objective within months of their founding, and quickly indicated that member bakeries would receive preferential rates. As one can imagine, this served to increase membership; at its peak four years later, the organization boasted over 1,000 member bakeries around the country.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Actually, in many quarters, it was practically jubilation. Some called him the "Second Liberator." See, Silvia Galvis & Alberto Donadio, *El Jefe Supremo: Rojas Pinilla en La Violencia y en el poder* (Medellín: Hombre Nuevo Editores, 1988): 259-262.

⁷⁸ Saenz Rovner, Anos 50; Safford & Palacios, *Fragmented Land*: 323.

⁷⁹ Galvis & Donadio, *El Jefe Supremo*: 281-312; 345-372; Safford & Palacios, *Fragmented Land*: 321-322.

⁸⁰ Safford & Palacios, *Fragmented Land*: 324.

⁸¹ "Harina americana," *PC* No. 2 (Dec., 1957), 2; "La labor de Adepán en 1958," *PC* No. 13-14 (Nov.-Dec., 1958), 18-19; "Controles necesarios," *PC* No. 16 (Feb., 1959), 5.

Achieving the first goal, on the other hand, was more difficult. Revived global trade at the conclusion of World War II had boosted Colombia's coffee exports, which increased foreign reserves, and helped enhance industrialization. Global coffee prices rose in the first half of the 1950s, spurring one of the several "coffee bonanzas" that Colombia experienced periodically in the twentieth century. As a result, the Colombian economy's upward trend continued. But, as the saying reminds us, what goes up must come down. Unfortunately, a drop in global coffee prices in 1955 couldn't have come at a worse time for Colombia, as this was precisely when Rojas Pinilla began to exacerbate the country's economic woes.

In the midst of all this, the bakers struggled with the unsteady supply of flour. During the short interlude of trade liberalization, imports of wheat flour from the United States increased, first through regular commercial channels, and then through PL 480. The U.S. congress enacted Public Law 480 in 1954 as a means to develop overseas markets for U.S. agricultural commodities. That, of course, is the charitable way of describing the program; critics claim it was simply a mechanism for dumping U.S. farm surpluses on underdeveloped countries. The program did have components built into it that allowed the U.S. government to claim that it was a development assistance program.⁸² And for many countries with insufficient wheat supplies, this was a relatively cheap way to acquire much-needed grain. (At least it was cheap in the short-term.)

Rojas Pinilla signed Colombia's first PL 480 contract in June 1955, agreeing to purchase the equivalent of US \$1,600,000 of wheat, which turned out to be 63,000 tons or approximately one-fourth of the wheat consumed in Colombia that year.⁸³ Despite Colombia's growing economic crisis, a second agreement, for a larger amount, was signed in December.⁸⁴ By June 1956, however, the financial crisis was so bad that negotiations for a new contract stalled. Colombia proposed to purchase a massively increased quantity of wheat; the U.S. counter-proposed to sell a much smaller amount of PL 480 wheat and flour, payable in dollars – and only if Colombia agreed to purchase the rest that it required, along with a variety of other products, through regular commercial channels.⁸⁵

In this context, the bakers met and established ADEPAN. Whether it was their lobbying efforts or the looming flour shortage, Colombia accepted the U.S.' terms that same October.⁸⁶ Over the next few months, ADEPAN and INA worked together to distribute the flour that arrived.⁸⁷ But, when the time came for a new contract in June 1957, Colombia was reeling from a major political

⁸² A PL 480 contract stipulated that the recipient country would agree to purchase a specific quantity of crops available through the program at a price set by the United States as well as an equivalent quantity in subsequent years through regular commercial channels. The attraction for recipient countries was that the U.S. allowed PL 480 purchases to be made with those countries' national currencies, letting them preserve their foreign exchange reserves for other imported goods and materials. Moreover, these currencies were held in special accounts, to be dispersed back to the recipient countries in the form of mutually agreed upon development assistance programs. (That most of this "assistance" ended up supporting multinational companies or subsidiaries of U.S.-based corporations is a story for a different day.) Finally, a clause in these contracts indicated that the U.S. could demand payment in dollars if circumstances so warranted

⁸³ "Second Progress Report on Public Law 480" (Washington: House of Representatives, 84th Congress, 1st Session, Document No. 216, July 12, 1955), 6; Jorge A. Beltrán B., "Factores económicos y sociales relacionados con la sustitución de trigo en pan y pastas," *Revista del Instituto de Investigaciones Tecnológicas* No. 97 (Sep.-Oct., 1975), 8-21.

⁸⁴ "Third Progress Report on Public Law 480" (Washington: House of Representatives, 84th Congress, 2nd Session, Document No. 294, January 12, 1956), 3.

⁸⁵ AGN, RP, Secretaria General, Correspondencia/Ministerio de Agricultura, 1956, B 288, F 41, f24.

⁸⁶ AGN, RP, Consejo de Ministros, Correspondencia/Actas de Sesiones, 1956, B 145, F 1, f28.

⁸⁷ The entire amount in the agreement did not arrive, however. The available documentation is unclear on why this was so – whether the supplies were simply not available in the U.S., or whether the political situation in Colombia had led the U.S. to hold back its shipments, perhaps in conjunction with the forces plotting an overthrow of Rojas Pinilla. See "The Seventh Semi-Annual Report on Activities Carried out under Public Law 480, 83D Congress, As Amended, Outlining Operations under the Act during the Period July 1 through December 31, 1957" (Washington: House of Representatives, 85th Congress, 2nd Session, Document No. 323, February 4, 1958), 30.

transformation: a military overthrow of Rojas Pinilla and the installation of a temporary ruling military junta. The ouster was orchestrated by a coalition of the two major parties, in conjunction with military leaders. The seeds of this coalition, initially known as the “Frente Civil” (Civil Front), were sown in Benidorm, Switzerland in 1956, when Laureano Gómez and Alberto Lleras Camargo met and began the negotiations that eventually produced the “Frente Nacional” (National Front), a power-sharing arrangement designed to quell continuing partisan violence and return the country to civilian rule. The military junta that replaced Rojas Pinilla organized a national plebiscite in December 1957, giving the public the opportunity to reject the pact; it passed, although not without opposition from popular groups, third parties, and dissident factions within the two main parties. Unlike the incomplete vote or the quotient rule (proportional rule, enacted in 1930), which only applied to the national legislature, this power-sharing arrangement extended to the presidency itself. The Liberal and Conservative parties agreed to alternate control over the presidency for four presidential terms. Cabinet positions were to be evenly split among the two parties. Third parties were not made illegal, but they were not allowed to participate in elections. When Colombians decry the anti-democratic nature of their country’s political system, it is usually to this arrangement that they refer.⁸⁸

When Lleras Camargo took office in August 1958, his inaugural speech spoke of conciliation, cooperation and rehabilitation. He called on the business community to make sacrifices for the public good. Business leaders had fully participated in ousting Rojas Pinilla and helping Lleras Camargo gain the presidency; among other things, they had encouraged workers to go on strike to further destabilize his regime. Lleras acknowledged the business leaders’ assistance, but that did not prevent him from reminding them that popular sectors had also helped promote domestic industry by accepting higher prices under the protectionist policies of previous administrations. It was time for businessmen to return the favor, he admonished. He outlined a variety of steps they could take to help stabilize the economic situation, and exhorted them to put the welfare of the nation ahead of their bottom lines. Not only did they have a duty as citizens to work for the public good, but they also needed to recognize that others had already sacrificed for them: what the people want to see, he declared, was “...that industry begins to reciprocate the gigantic effort the Nation has done to create and sustain it.”⁸⁹ When the president himself used the term “reciprocate,” deploying the language of respect and social hierarchy, he revived the hopes of Colombia’s suffering masses. The first year of his term was one of great excitement and expectation for significant social reform.

Privately, he met with groups of business leaders to come to an informal “gentlemen’s agreement” to help achieve economic stabilization. ADEPAN participated.⁹⁰ At the time, it was still an umbrella organization. Its membership included everything from large-scale, mechanized bread-making companies to small, family-run artisanal bakeries, and everything in between, although there wasn’t much of an in-between; at its peak membership of approximately 1,000 member bakeries, only about eighty of them could be classified as “large” or even “medium” scale.

The descriptions of the baking industry in ADEPAN’s monthly magazine, *El Panadero Colombiano* (*The Colombian Baker*) strongly indicate that in the organization’s early years, it was those eighty members who controlled it. Articles about labor relations, business administration, bakery

⁸⁸ Mauricio Archila Neira, *Idas y venidas, vueltas y revueltas: Protestas sociales en Colombia 1958-1990* (Bogotá: ICANH, 2003): 90-91; César Augusto Ayala Diago, *Resistencia y oposición al establecimiento del Frente Nacional: Los orígenes de la Alianza Nacional Popular (ANAPO), Colombia 1953-1964* (Bogotá: UNAL, 1996): 128-129.

⁸⁹ Alberto Lleras Camargo, *El primer gobierno del Frente Nacional, Tomo Primero (mayo de 1958-agosto de 1959)*, (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 1960): 53-77.

⁹⁰ “Adepán ofrece su colaboración a la política económica del gobierno,” *PC* No. 19 (Aug., 1958): 10-11.

hygiene, and quality control filled *El Panadero's* pages.⁹¹ Authors consistently referred to the baking industry's "100,000 "workers."⁹² ADEPAN's nutritionists extolled the virtues of bread in the diet and offered recipes and tips for housewives on fine dining and calorie control.⁹³ They also wrote racist articles about the connection between the consumption of wheat bread and the emergence of "Western civilization" (defined in one particularly egregious case, as "the white races").⁹⁴ "Society pages" featured photos of the bakers at charity events (one of them with the president and archbishop of Colombia).⁹⁵ All of this served to present an image of ADEPAN's leaders as "gentlemen" – cultured, civilized, concerned with progress (of both the baking industry and the nation as a whole) and more than willing to work cooperatively with other groups in society to achieve these goals.

Their cooperativeness was implicitly contrasted with another group in society – the nation's millers, represented by ASEMOL, the Asociación Nacional de Molineros (National Millers' Association). ASEMOL occupied much of the bakers' attention. Aside from the various articles cultivating an image of the bakers as cultured and cooperative gentlemen, the other issue that dominated *El Panadero's* pages was speculation. Through omission and subtle insinuation, the bakers slyly hinted that the millers were the culprits. Recounting cooperative efforts among ADEPAN, INA, and other industrial associations to control prices, for example, *El Panadero* was careful to include lists of all the meetings' attendees (ASEMOL was always conspicuously absent) and decry the fact that unless all parties got involved in such cooperative efforts, they would not succeed.⁹⁶

These attacks on ASEMOL indicated the tenuous position the "gentlemen bakers" occupied. Although they conceived of themselves as equally cultured and as members of the same social class as the millers, they were not necessarily members of the same powerful economic class. None of ADEPAN's member bakeries were members of ANDI, Colombia's powerful industrialists' association. Several of ASEMOL's millers were.⁹⁷ Thus, for ADEPAN's gentlemen bakers, their image as cooperative was essential to achieving their aims. They knew their place in the business hierarchy, and like those who knew their place in the social hierarchy, if they wanted the state to control millers speculative practices, they needed to demonstrate their *convivialista* spirit. That they also praised INA for its "spirit of cooperation" makes plainly evident their understanding of local political culture – effusively praising an arm of the state for doing its regulatory job harkens back to the deployment of the poetic language that signals both acknowledgement of the unequal social hierarchy and a reminder of the reciprocal obligations of those in the more powerful position.⁹⁸

Subtle deployment of *convivialismo* came to an end toward the end of 1959, when the eighty large-scale, mechanized bakeries broke off and established their own organization (FIP, the Federation of Industrialized Bakers). *El Panadero Colombiano* offered no explanation for this split,

⁹¹ Panadero citations

⁹² Panadero citations

⁹³ "Hoy tenemos que enseñar a los niños para que sean buenos clients mañana," *PC* No. 4 (Feb., 1958): 10; Ana Quintero, "Nutrición para niños," *PC* No. 8 (Jun., 1958): 25-26; "Cocina de Ana Quintero," *PC* No. 9 (Jul, 1958): 28-29; "Nutrición para niños, Serie IV," *PC* No. 10 (Aug., 1958): 25-26; "Nutrición para niños, Serie VI, Necesidades Alimenticias de los Niños Escolares," *PC* No. 11 (Sep., 1958): 25-26; "El maní y su valor en la alimentación," *PC* No. 15 (Jan., 1958): 29-30.

⁹⁴ Panadero citations

⁹⁵ "La campaña de ADEPAN," *PC* No. 2 (Dec., 1957): 18; "Noticias breves," *PC*, No. 8 (Jun., 1958): 4.

⁹⁶ "Una lucha sin tregua," *PC* No. 11 (Sep., 1958): 10; "Sentido de cooperación," *PC* No. 12 (Oct., 1958): 5. Only once did ADEPAN compare itself directly with ASEMOL. See, "La cooperación del INA en 1958," *PC* Nos. 13-14 (Nov.-Dec., 1958): 20-21.

⁹⁷ *Atlántico 50 años: Un homenaje al departamento del Atlántico en el primer cincuentenario de su fundación* (Medellín: La Corporación Cívica de Barranquilla, 1960) unpaginated.

⁹⁸ "El Ina contra la escasez y los altos precios," *PC* No. 10 (Aug., 1958): 15.

simply announcing it in a small notice at the end of one of its issues. Disagreement over the distribution of flour played a role. But the “identity” of the organization changed dramatically as a result.

The organization’s name remained the same. However, it previously purported to speak for the entire baking industry, starting with the fact that it referred to itself as an “association” of businessmen in an industry with “100,000 workers.” After the split, it no longer presented itself as the representative of the entire baking industry, calling itself instead a “union” whose membership consisted primarily of “home-based artisans.”⁹⁹ *El Panadero* began to emphasize “modesty” over “modernity.” Photo essays illustrated the precarious situation of most bakers – tiny spaces with old fashioned brick ovens and beat-up equipment, only one or two employees, female family members “helping out.”¹⁰⁰ Fine dining, recipes, connections between bread and civilization – all of that disappeared from its pages. It did continue to print information about bread and nutrition, but most of it seems to have been provided by the Millers Federation of the United States, who became important allies of the organization in the early 1960s.¹⁰¹

Moreover, where the “gentlemen bakers” expressed their ideas about the state in subtle ways, the “artisan bakers” were much more direct, making explicit statements about how they understood the relationship between state and citizen. There were three main elements in their conception of the state: 1) mediation –the state was society’s referee, working with competing private interests to set fair rules that did not place an undue burden on any one group in society, and then acting as the guarantor that everyone played by the rules; 2) social welfare – while maintaining a healthy climate for business was important, the state had a particular responsibility to ensure that society’s wealth did not concentrate in a lopsided manner, leaving the vast majority hungry and struggling for survival; 3) hierarchy – while the idea of state as “referee” suggested a relationship among equals, the artisan bakers also recognized that they were ultimately supplicants, reliant on state protection.

The bakers often combined various elements. For example, recall the agreement ADEPAN and INA reached at the end of 1959 regarding the price of flour and loaves of bread. This agreement also stipulated that bakers would conform to certain standards, meaning that they would not make loaves of bread with excessive air pockets caused by overuse of yeast. To ensure that member bakers abided by this stipulation, ADEPAN began a “quality control” campaign. The organization’s leaders relied on three potentially persuasive arguments. Profit was one of them – making good quality bread would help bakers maintain customer loyalty and their bottom lines. Bakers’ responsibilities as citizens was another. One editorial reminded member bakers that they were participants in a social contract among themselves, the state, and the rest of Colombia’s citizens. The state had not been dictatorial in making these stipulations, the editorial indicated. On the contrary, the state had negotiated in good faith with ADEPAN, bargaining with them for the good of the nation as a whole. This meant that bakers now had a responsibility to keep their end of the bargain; the editorial exhorted member bakers to remember that “...every price reduction that the State makes for the [baking] industry should reverberate to the benefit of the consuming masses.”¹⁰² Here the bakers demonstrated two of their main ideas about the state – it was acting as a mediator and also ensuring social welfare. It was also evoking the underlying rules of *convivialismo* regarding reciprocity.

ADEPAN’s other argument to convince member bakers to lay off the yeast combined all three elements in their conception of the state, resulting in a complicated appeal to class solidarity.

⁹⁹ Luís A. Rodríguez, “Una aclaración a ASEMOL,” *PC* Nos. 22-23 (Feb.-Mar., 1960): 21.

¹⁰⁰ Panadero citation. (photoessay)

¹⁰¹ Panadero citations (sports & nutrition; bread & protein; US millers).

¹⁰² “El pan al peso,” *PC* No. 20 (Dec., 1959): 29.

Essentially, the bakers should conform because of their privileged position in society – even though they were themselves struggling artisan bakers. It was not the state, ADEPAN argued, but the bakers themselves who claimed that their industry was “...a social service...the best way to help the people.” The bakers, in other words, could sacrifice profit to benefit others in society, putting them in a privileged position. However, it was a precarious one. After all, while the bakers were clearly noble in their intention to help others, they were themselves in need of state protection. The editorial noted the ridiculously thin profit margins of a small-scale, family-run bakery. Indeed, it was economic insecurity that gave ADEPAN’s bakers such a “...large dose of social sensibility” in the first place. But, the state needed to remember that the bakers were not capitalists who would profit enormously from a price reduction for flour. Moreover, the bakers needed assurance that such price controls would continue. Without such a guarantee, it was unfair to ask bakers to sell loaves for one peso, something INA had requested, but which ADEPAN had refused. Moreover, if the baking industry was now to be considered a public service, and one-peso loaves therefore a public good, then the State needed to fund the studies to determine how to provide them to consumers/citizens, without breaking the backs of the bakers.¹⁰³

Mediation, social welfare, and hierarchal social relations are all evident in this argument. One can see here many elements of *convivialismo* as well. During 1960 and 1961 ADEPAN made many similar claims. Paradoxically, this was a time when *convivialismo* seemed to have broken down. Remember that the maintenance of courteous interactions that affirmed the social hierarchy could only continue if those lower in the hierarchy felt that the obligations this recognition implied were being upheld. If they were not, courtesy and respect were denied.

Bakers referring to their organization as a “union” reflected more than just a transformation in ADEPAN’s membership. The relationship between civil society and the state had changed dramatically from 1958 to 1960. Although economic stability at the macro level had returned, the land, labor, and social reforms Lleras Camargo had promised seemed nowhere in sight. Social unrest and strikes grew. Lleras Camargo publicly continued to make calls for sacrifice on the part of the business class, arguing that while it made no sense for a national state to redistribute wealth by appropriating private property, it was also “essential to demand more intense, active, and generous solidarity from the more fortunate economic classes.” He condemned those with an “abusive amount of personal property” who “created an uproar” at any mention of reform.¹⁰⁴

Lleras Camargo also criticized those who disregarded the demands of striking workers by claiming that they were nothing more than communist agitators. He defended the right of workers and others to protest abusive conditions.¹⁰⁵ But for ADEPAN, and many other popular sectors, such statements of solidarity by the president did not absolve the state. One of ADEPAN’s bakers specifically accused the state of ignoring people’s problems to focus instead on whether or not unions were taking their orders from Fidel Castro.¹⁰⁶

The rise in social agitation reflects the breakdown of *convivialismo*. Despite Lleras Camargo’s defense of workers, it seemed that both the state and the business sector were ignoring their obligations to society. Strikes reflected workers’ frustration. Since it seemed that neither wealthy landowners, industrialists, nor the state were holding up their end of the bargain, workers felt no reason to continue to speak with courtesy or deference.

Of course, we must remember that when people refer to “the state,” they often mean a specific agency or entity. The “gentlemen bakers” didn’t criticize the state, partly because, during the

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Lleras Camargo, “Instalación del Congreso,” in *Primer Gobierno Frente Nacional, Tomo segundo*: 451-486; 482-483.

¹⁰⁵ Archila Neira, *Idas y venidas*: 91, 93, 369-370, 443.

¹⁰⁶ Hernán Villamarín Gutiérrez, “El costo de la vida,” *PC* Nos. 26-27 (May-Jun., 1961): 4-5.

time they controlled ADEPAN, relations were good between the organization and INA, the state agency that regulated the distribution of their primary raw material. After 1960 this was no longer the case. Where ADEPAN previously counted INA as an ally in the battle against speculation, it now saw the organization either turning a blind eye to market manipulation by the millers, or actively, if secretly, working with them.

At first ADEPAN tentatively criticized INA, claiming that its failure to ensure a level playing field was caused by either the incompetence or the laziness of its low-level employees, insinuating that the man at the top was not corrupt, just a little careless in supervising his subordinates. Of course, they had brought these problems to his attention, but he had failed to act. His “official indifference” forced the bakers to go above his head, and send their complaints directly to the President himself as well as the Ministers of Agriculture and Economic Development.¹⁰⁷ They did note a tendency on the part of state agencies to take action when “the powerful organizations convulse” but to ignore the problems of everyone else, but this was still a vague critique, rather than a specific one lobbed directly at INA.¹⁰⁸

A year later, the bakers of ADEPAN pulled no punches. They had lost hope that INA would ever help them keep speculation under control. This was not because INA was an incompetent organization. On the contrary, the problem was the man at the top, INA’s director, Enrique Vargas Nariño. They claimed he was personally responsible for the corruption at INA and demanded his resignation. They called him a “ususer,” a “monopolist,” and a “dealer in hunger.” They declared him *persona non grata* not only to the bakers, but to the entire Colombian nation.¹⁰⁹ He had “lost the masses,” one baker asserted, harking back to the importance of poetry and oratory in public discourse, since this was a play on the Spanish word “masas,” which meant both “dough” and “the masses.”¹¹⁰ That he was nothing more than a common criminal was made explicit when another baker asserted that he would soon “be on the run,” owing to the fact that ADEPAN and FIP (the industrial bakers) had joined forces because his excessive corruption was so horrific.¹¹¹

The saddest words came from one of ADEPAN’s most committed members, who claimed that he had held back from speaking out about INA’s injustices because he was “excessively Frente-Nacionalista,” but he could no longer keep silent. “Either the law applied to everyone,” he said, “or it applied to no one.”¹¹² Clearly, he believed in the project of conciliation and cooperation that the National Front implied and his disappointment was deep. All of this clearly shows the breakdown of *convivialismo*. Bakers had been willing in the past to speak in polite ways that recognized their place in the hierarchy, while still asserting their demands. Years of “official indifference” and the state’s failure to fulfill its obligations blasted courtesy away.

¹⁰⁷ “Carta económica: Otra suplica al INA,” (text of a letter from ADEPAN’s Board of Directors to Enrique Vargas Nariño, Director of INA, undated), *PC* Nos. 22-23 (Feb.-Mar., 1960): 2, 6.

¹⁰⁸ “Declaración de principios del VII Congreso: ‘ADEPAN’ fija su política al estado,” *PC* Nos. 22-23 (Feb.-Mar. 1960): 31-32.

¹⁰⁹ Panadero citations: Villamarín Gutiérrez, “El costo de la vida.” “Informe del Doctor Jamie Angel” “Informe sobre Adepositos”

¹¹⁰ “El INA y contrapunto” Several bakers, in fact, wrote poems and parodies lamenting the poor state of their relations with INA.

¹¹¹ Ibid. *El Panadero Colombiano* also filled its pages with references to others who criticized INA, such as the Society of Colombian Agriculturalists, who claimed that INA’s collusion with the millers harmed Colombian wheat growers. See, “Conocemos los objetivos legales del I.N.A. y su organización,” *PC* Nos. 24-25 (May-Jun., 1960): 35-36; “Noticias que nos interesan,” *PC* No. 21 (Jan., 1960): 14-15.; Rafael R. Camacho, “Para donde va la agricultura colombiana?” *Revista Nacional de Agricultura* 53 (Dec., 1959): 5-6; Hernán Villamarín Gutiérrez, “Una política panadera,” *PC* No. 21 (Jan., 1960): 5-7. It also reprinted a manifesto by striking bank workers, demanding that INA more effectively regulate consumer prices. See, “Que el INA regule precios piden entidades gremiales,” *PC* Nos. 26-27 (May-Jun., 1961): 70.

¹¹² “Informes rendidos, Francisco Montoya”

Conclusion

As sad as this was for the bakers, for us, it demonstrates the process of hegemony at work. Recall that a crucial aspect of hegemony was negotiation over the meanings of symbols, words, and the rules of the game. Subaltern groups accepted the rules of the game, as long as the “governors” recognized a relation of reciprocity in addition to hierarchy and acceded to some of the former’s demands. *Convivialismo* fits this description well. The bakers here negotiated with the state over the meanings of “public service” and did so while following the rules of Colombian political culture, regarding courtesy and deference. When the state failed to continue following those rules (by being indifferent and therefore rejecting reciprocity), the bakers left courteous words aside.

But even with their insults, the bakers still affirmed the important role of the state. Like the Namiqipans in post-revolutionary Mexico, they recognized the state’s legitimacy when they protested. Here the bakers objected to the state’s indifference by reminding the president, some of the ministers, and the director of a public agency of their official duties. Complaints about laws that were unenforced were complaints that assumed that the law “applied to everyone.” This is not a state lacking legitimacy. On the contrary, it is the ultimate arbiter among different social groups.

And further, when “the state” did not seem to be fulfilling its duties, it wasn’t “the whole state” that the Colombian bakers rejected, but rather, one agency, and one individual in particular. And they rejected him because he was not fulfilling the duties of a representative of the state. He was failing to do what the state was supposed to do. The abstract idea of the “Colombian State,” divorced from specific individuals and agencies, was never illegitimate.