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La Revolución es una Fiesta: The Democratization of Colombia at the Hands of the M-19

by

John J. R. Talman

Under the Direction of John Way, PhD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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2023

ABSTRACT

In 1985, Colombia faced national tragedy as the Palace of Justice began to burn deep into the night of November 6th. With numerous people dead and a nation in the midst of crisis, the Siege of the Palace of Justice showcased the challenges faced by a nation wrapped in conflict. Colombia is an example of one nation that was not focused on the international dynamics of the Cold War. Colombia faced its own perils domestically following the events of World War II. Due to political infighting, guerilla movements became the primary vehicle for political expression from the 1960s through the 1980s in Colombia that echoed warring political ideologies of the Cold War. Much of the political violence could have been avoided, but the Colombian government was unable to operate proactively because of the political instability of the mid to late 20th century.

INDEX WORDS: M-19, Jaime Bateman Cayón, Colombia, Guerilla Warfare, Palace of Justice, Cold War

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2023

La Revolución es una Fiesta: The Democratization of Colombia at the Hands of the M-19

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

M-19.....	Movimiento de 19 de Abril (April 19 th Movement)
ANAPO.....	Alianza Nacional Popular (Popular National Alliance)
PCC.....	Partido Comunista Colombiano (Colombian Communist Party)
M-L.....	Liga Marxista-Leninista de Colombia (Marxist-Leninist League of Colombia)
ELN.....	Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)
EPL.....	Ejército Popular de Liberación (Popular Liberation Army)
AD/M-19.....	Alianza Democrática M-19 (Democratic Alliance M-19)

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Thesis

Thunderous applause echoed throughout Bogotá as Gustavo Petro was elected president of Colombia in July of 2022. News of the election of the first left-wing president in Colombia's history spread around the world, but the international press reduced an important part of his biography to a mere footnote—Petro's involvement in an organization known as the M-19. While this detail appeared incidental to international commentators, Colombians understood its significance. The M-19, the 19th of April Movement, was a nationalist guerrilla organization. From its formation in 1974 to its transformation into legal political party in 1990, the M-19 joined better-known militant forces such as the FARC, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, in a struggle to overthrow the government by force of arms. At seventeen years old, Petro became a combatant and soon rose to a leadership position. In 1985, the state arrested and tortured him, keeping him in prison for a year and half. Just like his 2022 election and the nation's sudden swing to the left, Petro's life story speaks to the turbulence of Colombia's political history.

This thesis examines the instability of Colombian politics through a close reading of the M-19's militant actions, and the state's response, in the first half of the 1980s. It also provides a general history of the M-19, which formed as a result of the Colombian elections on April 19, 1970. Members of the left-wing Alianza Nacional Popular (ANAPO) party felt that the elections were fraudulent. Members of ANAPO were divided on how to advance following the election, and several of them broke away from the party and formed El Movimiento de 19 de Abril (M-19). To show that they wanted to enter into revolutionary conflict with the Colombian

government, the M-19 sent members to steal the sword of Simón Bolívar, the liberator and founding father who had won the wars of independence.

After this powerful symbolic act, the M-19 became one of the most notorious guerilla movements in Colombia. Overall, it was a nationalistic organization with the desire to see political reform. Its leaders emphasized the importance of democratic processes in Colombia and how democracy was the future of the nation, although their individual ideologies varied from espousing a welfare state to embracing Marxist-Leninist principles. The political atmosphere in which M-19 took up arms was the result of La Violencia, which was an era marked by political violence where opposing parties engaged in physical combat against one another in an attempt to achieve political dominance, most especially in open civil war between 1948 and 1958. La Violencia led to the disenfranchisement of left-wing political groups and their supporters. Like other guerrilla armies, the M-19 rose in response to this political oppression of the left and operated to defend disenfranchised Colombians.

The M-19 carried out various acts of violence during the years they operated believing that through actions, their voices would be heard by politicians in Colombia and abroad. This thesis focuses particularly on two guerrilla sieges in order to analyze the complex political landscape. The most famous of these occurred in 1985, when the M-19 laid siege to the Palace of Justice in the Plaza de Bolívar in Bogotá, an act known as La Toma del Palacio de Justicia. To understand how the Colombian government reacted to the M-19 during this event, it is important to examine a similar act of violence committed by the M-19 five years earlier. In 1980, the M-19 occupied the Dominican Embassy in Bogotá in a siege called La Toma de La Embajada de Dominicana. The M-19 held hostage many ambassadors who represented countries throughout the Western hemisphere, including the United States.

These sieges, like the history of M-19 in general, have received little attention in the historical literature on Colombia. My thesis demonstrates that the M-19 has long been overlooked as a political and guerilla movement in Colombia, and argues that its origins can be traced to the turmoil and state of civil war that began in the 1940s. The Siege on the Dominican Embassy and the Siege on the Palace of Justice are evidence of the heightened fractured political state of Colombia after La Violencia. In this examination, I show that the Colombian government mishandled the M-19 as a guerilla movement and that the government pushed M-19 to attack the Dominican Embassy and the Palace of Justice in Bogotá five years apart. In addition to this, I argue that the M-19 is an underappreciated and understudied guerilla movement in twentieth-century Latin American history. It has been falsely accused of destroying the Palace of Justice, and of doing so on behalf of Pablo Escobar, the notorious narcotics cartel kingpin. Its underlying devotion to democratizing Colombia, albeit by violent means, has been overlooked. By recentering the M-19 in Colombian political history, I demonstrate that it was possible for a guerilla movement with communist ties to influence political change in a conservatively dominated government during the Cold War.

This was the dream of the M-19's founder, Jaime Bateman Cayón. The idea was that a rogue political movement operating in opposition to the Colombian could advance democratization. If revolution was the means by which democratization may flourish, then revolution is the only option, Bateman felt. He once stated, "La revolución es una fiesta," which translates to, "The revolution is a party."¹ This idea that the revolution was a party meant that there were many partygoers. In effect, Bateman wanted to be the primary host of a party that was

¹ Germán Castro Caycedo, "Cómo es el M-19," *Nuevo Día*, Fall 1983, 82.

comprised of guests from across Colombia's mid-twentieth century history who came together across a few generations in unity against the oppressive right-wing politicians in Colombia. A party will not function if there is no common purpose for the partygoers to come together.

Bateman and the M-19 were able to unify various political movements which led to the democratization of Colombia. Colombia owes much of its democratic nature to the work of M-19 as they overcame the caustic political landscape that resulted from La Violencia.

Historiography and Context

This work fits into a larger historiography on Latin America during the Cold War. Greg Grandin's *The Last Colonial Massacre* uses the conflict in Guatemala as the center of a discussion of the bloodshed between left-wing and right-wing political parties throughout Latin America.² Grandin's work posits that Cold War tensions caused tragic political polarization and a move toward violent extremes on both the right and the left, an issue also explored in this thesis. I also examined several texts that focused on specific moments that pertained to Cold War Latin America. One of those texts was Piero Gleijeses' *Conflicting Missions*, which examines why the Cold War in Latin America can be viewed as a transnational history.³ Anna Clayfield's *The Guerilla Legacy of the Cuban Revolution* helped me to understand how far Fidel Castro's influence extended outside of Cuba.⁴ Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spencer's *In from the Cold* contains tightly focused case studies of events and actions during the Cold War, such as the two sieges I examine in this work. Joseph and Grandin's *A Century of Revolution* influenced

² An excellent summary, which includes extensive detail on U.S.-Latin American relations, is found in Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006).

³ Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

⁴ Anna Clayfield, *The Guerilla Legacy of the Cuban Revolution*, (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2019).

my stance that the M-19 falls under the classification as an understudied movement, along with groups such as the Montoneros of Argentina and the Uruguayan Tupamaros.⁵

As regards Colombia and its armed conflicts, this work makes a scholarly intervention in two related bodies of work: those that cover La Violencia and those that address M-19 specifically. La Violencia is the name for the era of political civil war that took place in Colombia from 1945-1970.⁶ The historiography of La Violencia showcases that Colombia endured decades of political turmoil perfect for creating organizations such as M-19, whose founders were dissatisfied with the Colombian political structure. One such text is Robert Dix's *Colombia: The Political Dimensions of Change*. Dix argues that Colombia's political dynamics from 1945-1960 represent the most volatile years of the country's history. Dix's work is heavily referenced in other secondary literature regarding twentieth-century Colombian history. While Dix's text is an important examination of Colombian politics, the text was published prior to the formation of M-19 as a guerilla movement. My research will emphasize that M-19 developed as a result of the political turmoil of the La Violencia era in Colombia.

Another work that has shaped my understanding is Richard Maullin's *Soldiers, Guerrillas, and Politics in Colombia*.⁷ Maullin emphasizes guerilla movements such as the FARC, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo (Revolutionary Armed

⁵ See Pablo Brum, *The Robin Hood Guerrillas: The Epic Journey of Uruguay's Tupamaros*, (CreateSpace, 2014), Lindsay Blake Churchill, *Becoming the Tupamaros: Solidarity and Transnational Revolutionaries in Uruguay and the United States*, (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2014), and Richard Gillespie, *Soldiers of Perón: Argentina's Montoneros*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982) for further information related to similar guerilla movements to the M-19.

⁶Robert H. Dix, *Colombia: The Political Dimensions of Change*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 360.

⁷ Richard Maullin, *Soldiers, Guerrillas, and Politics in Colombia*, (Lexington: Heath, 1973), 1-4.

Forces of Colombia - People's Army) and the ELN, Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army), which were major guerilla movements in Colombia during the twentieth century.⁸ Maullin's work does not include a study on M-19, the group that I focus on for my research. Maullin emphasizes the FARC's involvement with political and social events in twentieth century Colombia. My research complements Maullin's by highlighting the impact of M-19 on Colombia in the twentieth century, arguing that M-19 was just as formidable as the FARC.

There are only a handful of studies that have been published on M-19's activities prior to 1990. M-19 disarmed in 1990 and signed an official peace agreement with the Colombian government. The current literature maintains a significant gap in regards to M-19's history as a guerilla movement. The most prominent research that I have found regarding M-19's political history is an academic article co-published by one of the former members of M-19, Vera Grabe Loewenherz. Grabe's article, "M-19's Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics," explores the political dimensions of M-19 as a political movement. Grabe emphasizes the transition of M-19 from a guerilla movement to a political party through the series of negotiations that took place after the Siege on the Palace of Justice.⁹ While Grabe's article emphasizes the importance of M-19's transition from guerilla movement to political party, Grabe does not mention the motivation for M-19's siege on the Palace of Justice.¹⁰ My research will define M-19's motivation to lay siege on the Palace of Justice.

⁸ Maullin, *Soldiers, Guerillas, and Politics in Colombia*, 27-49.

⁹ Mauricio García Durán and Vera Grabe Loewenherz, Otty Patiño Hormaza, "M-19's Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics." *Berghof Series* no. 1 (2008): 7.

¹⁰ Durán, Loewenherz, and Hormaza "M-19's Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics," 21.

My work also contributes to a historiography on Colombia's violent politics, represented by Marcos Palacios, author of *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875-2002*. Palacios argues that the violence that swept through Colombia over the entirety of the twentieth century was primarily a product of poor political decisions by the warring political parties in control of the government.¹¹ Palacios does make mention of M-19 in his text. Importantly, Palacios does not emphasize the role of M-19 in Colombia in the twentieth century. Palacios mentions the siege on the Palace of Justice, but does not elaborate on its importance to the history of Colombia. My thesis explores how M-19's actions as a guerilla movement cannot be understood outside of the context of Colombia's internal political conflicts, which unfolded in a nation marked by increasingly polarized political ideologies that were both deeply national on one hand and tied to the global Cold War on the other.

Sources and Methodology

The sources that underpin this work most notably include a combination of government documents and periodicals. I have examined intelligence documents from the United States' Central Intelligence Agency and legislation passed by the Parliament of Colombia. I have compiled intelligence documents from the United States, which had close political ties to Colombia; in fact, a United States Ambassador was one of the hostages in the siege on the Dominican Embassy. These sources have primarily come from the Freedom of Information Act database compiled by the Central Intelligence Agency. I also examined Colombian legislation that directly dealt with M-19 as a guerilla movement. The Colombian legislative documents can

¹¹Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875-2002*, (North Carolina: Duke University Press Books, 2006), xi-xiv, 190, 206-208.

be located on their government database websites. The documents that I analyzed pertain to the relationship between M-19 and the Colombian government in the 1980s. I have consulted two newspapers for my research, *El Tiempo* and *El Espectador*, two newspapers from Colombia. There are no online databases for *El Tiempo* or *El Espectador* prior to the late 1980s. I visited the Biblioteca Nacional Luis Angel Arango and the Archivo General in Bogotá to examine what news articles stated about the events of the Dominican Embassy Siege in 1980.

I also examined the work of American journalists that were in country at the time of the attacks. The two American journalists that I emphasize in my research are Joseph Treaster of the *New York Times* and Ana Carrigan, who is a reporter for *The Nation*. The two primary American newspaper databases that I used for my research are the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. Both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* have a digital archive that is free to access.

The primary question directing my research is, “How did the M-19 play an important role in Cold War politics in Colombia?” This question has been at the forefront of my mind as I have examined the events in 1980 and in 1985. I formulated this question after reading the aforementioned statement from the founder of the M-19, Jaime Bateman Cayón. Bateman stated, “La revolución es una fiesta,” which translates to, “The revolution is a party.”¹² There were many organizations and figures in Latin America who claimed to be revolutionary throughout the Cold War, but why, I ask, is M-19 not examined as a part of this collective? To explore this question, I have developed several sub-questions for my research. First, “What motivated M-19 to lay siege to the Dominican Embassy and the Palace of Justice?” Second, “Could examining the changes in M-19’s leadership help to explain the differences between these two sieges?”

¹² Germán Castro Caycedo, “Cómo es el M-19,” *Nuevo Día*, Fall 1983, 82.

Finally, “How did the dynamics of Colombian Politics leading to the 1980s provide context as to why the M-19 came into existence, and who were M-19’s social and political supporters?”

I attempt to answer these questions by tracing M-19’s history and closely examining the Dominican Embassy Siege in 1980 and the Palace of Justice Siege in 1985. This study contributes a comparative analysis of how the government of Colombia responded to the embassy siege in 1980 and to the Palace of Justice siege in 1985 to the literature. My methodology utilizes political and social analysis using primary source government documents and newspapers. Understanding that both sieges were hostage situations, I examine how the Colombian government responded to both incidences and show that the latter siege in 1985 was more violent due to the political and social environment of the era.

Outline of Chapters

The first chapter of this thesis provides a political background of Colombia from 1945. It examines three key topics. The first is La Violencia, the period of polarized political violence which led to the oppression of many Colombians. The second is the political role played by Jorge Gaitán, a political candidate who began to unite Colombia, a project that ended with his assassination in 1948. The third is the rise of guerilla movements in Colombia. This brief review of the historical narrative, built from primary and secondary sources, contextualizes the rise of M-19 within the instability and violence of Colombian politics in the twentieth century.

The second chapter analyzes the M-19’s leaders’ actions and motivations during the first half of the 1980s. It contributes to the scholarly literature through the examination of several key moments in the M-19’s early history: the Cantón Norte Heist and the Siege on the Dominican Embassy. This chapter draws upon reports collected from *El Tiempo* and *El Espectador* in addition to intelligence reports from the United States Central Intelligence Agency. The chapter

culminates with an analysis of events surrounding the death of the founder of M-19, Jaime Bateman, examining the personal testimonies of the leaders of the M-19 obtained from the Biblioteca Nacional Luis Angel Arango in Bogotá. My reading of these documents unearths what I believe was the true motivation for attacking the Palace of Justice in 1985, correcting a narrative that holds that the attack was inspired by the M-19's connections to the narcotics trade in 1980s Colombia, and in particular to the drug kingpin Pablo Escobar. I argue against this interpretation. The documents show, I hold, that the military's unjust attacks on the M-19, in violation of the Corinth Accords of 1984, were the real reason that the group attacked the Palace of Justice in 1985.

The third and final chapter of my thesis closely examines the Siege of the Palace of Justice in 1985 and its aftermath. This chapter examines what happens to the M-19 after the Siege of the Palace of Justice and how they made eventual peace with the Colombian government. This chapter demonstrates that the M-19 was successful in its goal to enact political change in Colombia as they traded success for their own demise as a movement. Chapter three exemplifies that the M-19 operated better as a revolutionary movement rather than as a political organization due to the amount of time the organization functioned as a guerilla movement. The M-19's old habits truly did die hard when the organization transitioned into a political movement.

Gustavo Petro's ascent to power is evidence that the M-19's influence has been felt even in the shadows of twenty-first century Colombia. The M-19 worked tirelessly to show that the change for a different attitude in the political movement led to a drastic change in the composition of the organization. Although the M-19 does not operate as it once did, the support for the organization has not diminished and the fiesta that Bateman described still goes on.

Although countless young Colombians may not directly know Jaime Bateman, they do hear his ideals from Petro's campaign. Time will tell how Colombia's youth respond to Petro's time in office. Nonetheless, it is important to examine how someone like Petro became president through the analysis of Colombia's most influential guerilla movement, the M-19.

1 WHEN DID THE PARTY START?: THE M-19'S REVOLUTION IN THE CONTEXT OF COLOMBIA'S TURBULENT HISTORY

1.1 Introduction

The rise of the M-19 reflected years of political violence in Colombia. To understand the complex political environment in which M-19 was born, it is critical to understand the era of La Violencia. La Violencia represented a stark contrast between the different ideals of the Conservative and Liberal Parties of Colombia. The internal conflict in Colombia did not begin with La Violencia, however, but began decades earlier. The Conservative Party of Colombia was formed in response to a conflict known as the War of the Thousand Days, which lasted from 1899-1902.¹³ In 1902, Colombia reconstituted its governance and has operated under this form of government to the present day. The Conservative and Liberal Parties continued to be an integral part of Colombian politics well into the twentieth century. The new style of government did not begin smoothly. Conflict between the parties began when the Liberal party criticized the economic dealings of the Conservative Party, which began when Panama gained independence from Colombia in 1903. By 1930, the Liberal Party gained control of the Colombian government. The Liberal Party held the presidency from 1930 until 1946, when a Conservative president was elected.

It is important to note that the Conservative and Liberal Parties of Colombia operated as conglomerates of smaller political movements within Colombia. Smaller movements would function alongside one another to have someone represent them within their party affiliation. Although political factions were not numerous until the late 1960s, both the Conservative and Liberal Parties worked as the defining political delineations throughout La Violencia. In this

¹³ Robert H. Dix, *Colombia: The Political Dimensions of Change*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 77, 341.

chapter, the issue of political division is explored through Colombia in the post-war years. Colombian history post-World War II represents a nation searching for internal peace at the end of international conflict. The political infighting provided a clear path for M-19 to grow as movement. Without the political turmoil in Colombia from the 1940s to the 1970s, M-19 would not exist.

1.2 Colombia after World War II and the Beginning of La Violencia

September 2nd, 1945 marked an end to a long six years of international turmoil. The Japanese surrendered on the deck of the USS Missouri less than a month after the United States unleashed nuclear weapons onto the battlefield. As World War II came to a close, another war began to arrive along the horizon. The Cold War conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union involved “hot” wars in most of Latin America. In Colombia, Cold War conflict was layered upon a history of serious political infighting, violence, and instability. Colombians witnessed great political upheaval which led to vacuums of power in their government.

Colombia experienced this political violence despite significant economic growth. From 1945- 1953, Colombia maintained a high level of imports, which came as a result from the rise in coffee prices.¹⁴ In addition to this, Colombia’s rate of economic growth remained among the highest in Latin America for the era. Coffee remained as the primary export of Colombia from 1945-1953. At the time, Colombia was the world’s largest producer of mild coffee, which was essential for commercial blending. Colombian political leaders had been involved in the National Federation of Coffee Growers (Federación Nacional De Cafeteros de Colombia) and depended heavily upon the success of the coffee market. As a result, Colombia’s economy was highly

¹⁴ Office of the Historian. “National Intelligence Estimate.” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957, American Republics: Central and South America*, Volume VII. NIE 88-56. April 10, 1956, 43-44, 46.

dependent upon the fluctuations in the international coffee market.¹⁵ Coffee remained as a primary export of Colombia throughout the Twentieth century.¹⁶ While the economics of Colombia created a unique opportunity for the country to unite, the favorable economic environment was not enough to unify the Colombian people.

Colombia experienced a period from 1945-1965 labeled, “La Violencia,” literally “The Violence.”¹⁷ This period is best defined by Marco Palacios wherein he states, “[La Violencia] refers to some twenty years of crime and impunity facilitated by political sectarianism (1945-1965), which dislocated the lives of tens of thousands of families and communities.” Some historians have likened this era to a civil war within Colombia, especially in the years of open hostilities between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party from 1948 to 1958.

The early period of La Violencia dates to the immediate postwar years, when the Conservative party won the presidency after a period of Liberal dominance that dated back to 1930. Mariano Ospina Pérez, who became president of Colombia in 1946, came from a family long associated with the Conservative party. Ospina’s grandfather and uncle were both former presidents of Colombia. As a young adult, Ospina studied abroad. Ospina’s travels took him across the Southern United States and Western Europe; specifically, Ospina studied temporarily at Louisiana State University.¹⁸ After travelling the world, Ospina returned to Colombia to initiate his political career. Ospina held a variety of public office positions until he was elected to

¹⁵ Office of the Historian, “National Intelligence Estimate,” 43.

¹⁶ Robert H. Dix, *Colombia: The Political Dimensions of Change*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 24-25.

¹⁷ Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875-2002*, (North Carolina: Duke University Press Books, 2006), 138-39.

¹⁸ “Mariano Ospina Pérez,” *Sitio de archive de la Presidencia 2002-2010*, last modified 2011, <http://historico.presidencia.gov.co/asiescolombia/presidentes/52.htm>.

the position of senator in 1922. In 1926, Ospina was nominated to the position of Minister of Public Works, which he held for eight months. In addition to his time as a public servant, Ospina was heavily involved in the coffee production industry in Colombia. Prior to becoming president, Ospina was the manager of National Coffee Federation of Colombia, even earning the nickname, “man of the coffee growers.”¹⁹

In opposition, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was the face of the Liberal Party. Gaitán represented a populist strain in Colombian politics because of his push to encourage political participation from constituents. Gaitán was not a stranger to the political arena. In the mid-1930s, Gaitán was the mayor of Bogotá. From 1940-1941, Gaitán was the Minister of Education and pushed for literacy reforms.²⁰ From 1943-1944, Gaitán was the Minister of Labor. It was during these five years that the people of Colombia gravitated towards Gaitán due to his consistent remarks against private fortunes and state power.²¹ Gaitán was politically and economically populist, which gained him favor with the people of Colombia.²² He represented the embodiment for social and political change within Colombia. To increase support for his political causes, Gaitán increased his attention on the working class of Colombia. He was a unique politician because, unlike his opponents, he criticized his peers for not working together to better Colombia politically and economically. Gaitán called for the politicians of Colombia to unite for the sake of redeeming Colombia democratically.

¹⁹ Robert H. Dix, *Colombia: The Political Dimensions of Change*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 43-44.

²⁰Richard E. Sharpless, *Gaitán of Colombia: A Political Biography*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978), 96-97.

²¹ Marco Palacios. *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875-2002*, (North Carolina: Duke University Press Books, 2006), 140.

²² Sharpless, *Gaitán of Colombia: A Political Biography*, 3, 130-132.

By 1947, Gaitán was the leader of the Liberal party in Colombia. Amid Gaitán's rise in prominence, the political violence escalated with the elections in 1947.²³ This is most evident in political killings initiated by the Conservative Party. The elections cost the Liberal Party one-fourth of their municipio councils in the country. Municipio councils represented municipalities that were controlled by mayors throughout Colombia.²⁴ This forced many supporters of the Liberal party underground to find safe haven from supporters of the Conservative party as they became targets of political violence. Matters were made worse with the assassination of Gaitán. Gaitán was assassinated on April 9th, 1948. While there was not a clear suspect at the time of who assassinated Gaitán, the Liberal Party blamed the Conservative Party for the assassination. Fueled by his remarks to avenge his death, Gaitán's supporters, the *nuevabrileños* (the new brilliants), led calls for insurrection. Gaitán's followers took to the streets of Bogotá and countless towns across the country. The calls for political violence and insurrection only continued to escalate until the 1950s, when La Violencia went into full swing.

1.3 La Violencia

The 1950s represented a shift in the era of Violencia. Laureano Gómez became president of Colombia in 1950 and was one of the most popular Conservative party figures in Colombia. Once in power, Gómez focused his effort on increasing his popularity with the religious community to achieve political success. He wanted to focus the people of Colombia around pre-established community figures rather than raising new political figures. Gómez's plan proved ineffective as even politicians with religious ties were denounced by religious

²³ Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875-2002*, (North Carolina: Duke University Press Books, 2006), 141-142. 146.

²⁴ Robert H. Dix, *Colombia: The Political Dimensions*, 175.

communities for stirring up further supporters of *Violencia*.²⁵ The lack of support and trust from the religious community for politicians led to further division within Colombia.

La *Violencia* was an expression of the division between political parties in Colombia. The parties themselves experienced further division among their own members. For the Liberal Party, the supporters divided themselves into the *Gaitanistas*, *Santistas*, and *Lopistas*. The Conservative party was divided into *Laureanistas*, *Ospinistas*, and *Alzatistas*. The groups were named for the leader that they most closely associated their political ideology. Amid the infighting, over 50,000 Colombians died as a result of political violence alone. After 1950, La *Violencia* migrated to the eastern plains of Colombia. There, the fighting did not occur between supporters of any one particular politician, but instead was initiated by several paramilitary and guerilla groups. It was in this region that peace talks began, initiated by Laureano Gómez. For the first time since the start of La *Violencia*, the political parties were able to institute a bipartisan truce wherein both sides agreed to an end to the political violence.²⁶

A major component of the armistice required both parties to end their support of guerilla groups. While the armistice proved to be a progressive step towards unifying the political arena of Colombia, the agreement only lasted for a year. In 1952, the Colombian army lost ninety-six soldiers in an ambush led by plains guerillas. The Conservative government used the attacks as an impetus to pursue major figures in the Liberal party. It was during this time that the fighting increased in the plains and pushed civilians out of their towns and villages. Despite their negative effect, the guerillas gained support among the people of Colombia for their political stance, ending the Gómez administration. Various guerilla groups and their leaders became the center

²⁵ Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875-2002*. (North Carolina: Duke University Press Books, 2006) 147-148, 157-163.

²⁶ Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence*, 157-159.

for political support over the course of the 1950s. While the Colombian government sought to retain control and eliminate the guerilla groups, the guerillas retained popularity.²⁷

1.4 The Rojas Administration

Political matters changed after the Rojas coup in the fall of 1952. Gustavo Rojas Pinilla had been a part of the Gómez administration as the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of Colombia and served under former President Roberto Urdaneta Arbeláez.²⁸ Rojas had been in the Colombian military since his youth attending military school. He had been a part of the Colombian military throughout World War II and witnessed much of the changes in the post-war era. Rojas' involvement in the military was crucial following the assassination of Gaitán as he was one of the captains sent to quell calls for insurgency from Gaitán's supporters. He was seen as a strategic and intelligent military leader by both the Conservative and Liberal parties. Both parties sought Rojas out to end La Violencia and unify the fractured country. Rojas assumed command of the Colombian government as a military dictator from 1953 to 1954. He was appointed president of Colombia from 1954 to 1957.²⁹

Rojas represented a dramatic new direction for leadership within Colombian history. He was observed as the first leader since the start of La Violencia to be supported by both the Conservative and Liberal parties. It is important to note that during his presidency, Rojas did not appear to take a political stance to support one party over the other. As stated previously, this political position worked to his benefit as he received support from both the Conservative and

²⁷ Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence*, 160-163.

²⁸ Robert H. Dix, *Colombia: The Political Dimensions of Change*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 113-119.

²⁹ "Gustavo Rojas Pinilla," Britannica. last modified, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Gustavo-Rojas-Pinilla>.

Liberal parties. While he did not publicly side with either party during his presidency, this does not mean that he was void of political opinions. The Colombian military was predominantly Conservative at this time, but Rojas was clever to remain neutral. This plan did not work in Rojas' favor, however. The parties used his neutral stance as a means with which they could control him, forcing him to change his opinion if his administration appeared to favor one party too heavily.³⁰ This growing pressure only led to further political violence.

Numerous guerilla movements continued to resist the government, and were branded as a serious threat by the Rojas administration. Drawing on Cold War rhetoric, Rojas labeled all guerilla movements as Communist and claimed that they were assisted by foreign Communist powers. On the contrary, evidence shows that the guerillas at the time were fractured in their political beliefs comprised of disgruntled Conservatives, Liberals, bandits, and some Communist party members. This is not to say that fear of communism was completely unfounded, however. The Colombian Communist Party (PCC, *Partido Comunista de Colombia*) supplied specific guerilla movements with supplies and armaments to maintain their control in specific Colombian states. Despite this fact, the atmosphere of political violence owed more to Colombia's history of conflict than it did to new Cold War divisions.³¹

Economic problems during Rojas's time in office also contributed to violence and instability. The global price of coffee began to fall in 1954, and by 1956 the country was in the midst of a serious economic downturn. The primary economic sector hit by the downturn in 1956-1957 was agriculture, specifically coffee. As coffee was the primary export of Colombia, many coffee producing families attempted to remediate issues that they faced by taking drastic

³⁰ Office of the Historian. "National Intelligence Estimate." Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957, American Republics: Central and South America, Volume VII. NIE 88-56. April 10, 1956, 26, 31, and 36.

³¹ Office of the Historian. "National Intelligence Estimate," 31, 36-37, 47-48; Palacio, 164.

actions. As David Mares cites, “coffee growers attempted to separate discussions of the main exchange rate from the coffee exchange rate and domestic support price.” It is evident that coffee growers had a direct impact on the economy because, “the government subsidized the domestic coffee program when international prices fell.”³²

The rapid collapse of economic prosperity among coffee growers meant that Rojas’ administration took the blame for the collapse. As a result, Rojas utilized his position as military leader and president to silence all who opposed his administration through violence.³³ Rojas went so far as to institute secret police to suppress any opponents. He prohibited party assemblies and prevented politicians from conducting on campaign tours to gain local support.³⁴ Rojas began to lose support from the Colombian people as well as both political parties. Rojas was put in power to unite the divided Colombians. Instead, he utilized his position and military knowledge to terminate all opposition to those in power, thereby cultivating further hatred of the government in the minds of the Colombian people. In effect, Rojas operated his secret police in a manner similar to the guerilla movements.

On May 10th, 1957, Rojas faced his own coup as five Colombian military leaders removed him from office.³⁵ Rojas willingly withdrew from office following the announcement of the formation of the military junta. The five generals assumed command of Colombia. Rojas

³² David R. Mares, “State Leadership in Economic Policy: A Collective Action Framework with a Colombian Case,” *Comparative Politics* 25, no. 4 (2016): 455-473, https://www.jstor.org/stable/422036?seq=4#metadata_info_tab_contents.

³³ “Gustavo Rojas Pinilla,” Your Dictionary, last modified 2021, <https://biography.yourdictionary.com/gustavo-rojas-pinilla>

³⁴ Office of the Historian. “National Intelligence Estimate.” Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957, American Republics: Central and South America, Volume VII. NIE 88-56. April 10, 1956, 25.

³⁵ Jonathan Hartlyn, “Military Governments and the Transition to Civilian Rule: The Colombian Experience of 1957-1958,” *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 26, no.2 (1984): 256.

assumed that the junta would allow him to return to power eventually because he had close ties to several of the generals who attained power through the junta, but this never came to pass.

Rojas avoided public attention until 1962, when he held a failed campaign to become president of Colombia once more.³⁶ In the periphery, guerilla groups continued to initiate violent attacks against one another and the Colombian military in the vacuum of power left by the coup of the Rojas government.

1.5 The National Front: A Solution to La Violencia

The Conservative and Liberal parties recognized the need for a more unified approach to governing Colombia. They had attempted to initiate unity through the Rojas administration as he represented a figure supported by both parties. Since this proved impossible, the Conservative and Liberal parties came to a truce to collaborate with one another once more. Their coalition was known as the National Front (*Frente Nacional de Colombia*). The idea originated when the leader of the Liberal party, Alberto Lleras Camargo, and the leader of the Conservative party, Laureano Gómez, met in Spain in 1956.³⁷ It was in Spain that Gómez and Lleras discussed the removal of Rojas from the presidency. Under the National Front, the two parties planned to share power for sixteen consecutive years. During the sixteen-year period, the office of the president might alternate between representatives of the two parties, while also equally dividing seats in the executive cabinet, the national legislature, provincial assemblies, and municipal councils.³⁸

³⁶ Despite Rojas's reputation as a notable general, many members of the Colombian military elite, who tended to support the Conservatives, were dissatisfied with his leadership. Dix, *Colombia: The Political Dimensions of Change*, 298; Hartlyn, "Military Governments and the Transition to Civilian Rule," 264.

³⁷ "Declaration of Sitges," Britannica, last modified 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Declaration-of-Sitges>.

³⁸ Britannica, "Declaration of Sitges."

Following the removal of the Rojas administration, Lleras became the first of four presidents to operate under the National Front in 1958.

The National Front was successful in its first several years of operation. The issue with the National Front was that it provided power solely to the Conservative and Liberal parties.³⁹ This was the most logical decision under the agreement as the two parties were the largest at the time; however, the National Front coalition did not allow for the third-party movements to be a part of the national governing process. To operate as members of the government, politicians needed to be aligned with the Conservative or Liberal parties. The idea of this system was to maintain political balance, but it had the opposite effect, forcing third-party political groups to choose a specific political party to join. These smaller factions retained their political ideologies, however, destabilizing the two big parties. Unsurprisingly, the constricted options for gaining power through electoral politics also fueled the growth of guerrilla movements in the nation.

1.6 The Rise of the FARC in the 1960s

There were still active guerrilla groups at the beginning of the national front, as well as organized leagues of bandits. Ironically, while the government made no distinction between bandits and guerrillas, viewing both as common criminals, it began to adopt guerrilla tactics to combat these groups.⁴⁰ In the first half of the decade, the government was somewhat successful in its efforts, and by 1966 there were only a handful of guerilla movements that operated as miniature movements without clear goals.

The most important of the new guerilla groups was the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). In 1964, Manuel Marulanda and Jacobo Arenas founded the FARC as a

³⁹ Dix, *Colombia: The Political Dimensions of Change*, 129,134-139.

⁴⁰ The Colombian government classified bandits and guerillas in the same category. As they became desperate, the bandits engaged in cattle rustling, theft of coffee crops, protection rackets, kidnapping, and armed robbery. Although their goals were political, some guerilla movements also survived by means of localized crime. Central Intelligence Agency, *Current Intelligence Weekly Report: Special Report "Banditry and Insurgency in Colombia,"*2, 4.

Marxist-Leninist guerilla group. Marulanda and Arenas formulated the FARC to represent the rural population's interests following the end of La Violencia in 1958.⁴¹ Marulanda already had a notorious reputation as a bandit, even bearing the name "Tirofijo," which translates to "Sureshot."⁴² Marulanda had been involved with the Colombian Communist Party, the PCC, prior to establishment of the FARC.⁴³ The group formulated as a result of the actions taken by the PCC. The PCC created groups to help those who felt neglected by the Colombian government during the events of La Violencia.⁴⁴ On May 27^t, 1964, the Colombian military attacked Marulanda and his supporters. In response to this, Marulanda and Arena met with guerillas from other regions of Colombia to hold the "First Guerilla Conference."

The First Guerilla Conference was a concerted effort made by several guerilla groups to unite and become a unified organization called the Southern Bloc. The Southern Bloc had three primary initiatives as an organized group: promoting land reform, advocating for better conditions for those in the countryside, and acting as defenders of communities of their followers from the Colombian government. It was not until the Second Guerilla Conference in 1966 that the guerillas adopted the name of FARC. While at the Second Guerilla Conference, FARC decided that in addition to being the primary defense of its communal supporters, the FARC would also provide educational and medical services to their loyal communities while also

⁴¹ "Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)," Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford, last modified 2021, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/revolutionary-armed-forces-colombia-farc>.

⁴² Tim Padgett, "Colombia's Rebel Patriarch is Dead," *Time*, May 25, 2008, <https://web.archive.org/web/20100420144817/http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1809452,00.html?xid=feed-cnn-topics>.

⁴³ Central Intelligence Agency, *Current Intelligence Weekly Report: Special Report "Banditry and Insurgency in Colombia,"*4.

⁴⁴ "Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)," Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford, last modified 2021, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/revolutionary-armed-forces-colombia-farc>

training militants for combat.⁴⁵ Overall, the FARC established the blueprint after which future guerilla organizations would model their organizations.

It was not until 1966 that many guerilla groups were disbanded by the Colombian military. The military was successful in disbanding the guerillas through the removal of local support for the guerilla groups. This was accomplished by providing medical services and improving infrastructure for civilians.⁴⁶ This tactic proved useful in implementing government programs to replace the localized systems instituted by various guerilla groups. The Colombian government hoped to gain the favor of their people and show the disorganization of the guerillas. While a seemingly successful victory on the part of the Colombian government, this does not mean that local support for the guerilla groups were completely removed. In fact, the Colombian military even went so far to adopt the strategies of many guerilla groups to disband their opposition. As historian Marco Palacio notes:

This strategy was, in a sense, derived from the strategy of the most successful guerilla groups, whatever their ideology: win the confidence of the local population, gain intimate knowledge of local geography and society, wage war with small groups (as opposed to large conventional forces, as was the military's preference in the 1950s), and practice psychological warfare.”⁴⁷

This provided the Colombian government an advantage the era of La Violencia as they once again retained physical dominance over the fight for political control of the government.

⁴⁵ Stanford, “Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).”

⁴⁶ Palacio, 166.

⁴⁷ Palacio, 166.

However, guerilla groups were not brought to an end by the political actions of the Colombian military. In fact, many of the guerilla groups were either strengthened or created by the new militaristic tactics implemented.

Jaime Bateman Cayón, the future founder of M-19, joined the FARC in 1966 and soon gained favor with Tirofijo. Bateman remained in the FARC for five years, until 1970. Although he never rose to a significant leadership position in the guerrilla organization, his time in the FARC had a profound influence on his thinking. Bateman described that three of the leaders of the FARC influenced his ideology: Manuel Marulanda Vélez (Tirofijo), Jacob Arenas, and Ciro Trujillo. In Bateman's words, he learned a lot from these three men. Under the supervision of Tirofijo, Arenas, and Trujillo, Bateman worked in building the organizational side of the FARC over the course of the five years. When asked about his time within the FARC, Bateman believed that Tirofijo and Arenas were unknown influences in the group, who were underappreciated by the Colombian people.⁴⁸ The influence of the FARC upon M-19 and its founder, however, is clear; M-19 mirrored the FARC in many ways. From hostage situations to pursuing armed conflict, M-19 rose from the foundation of the FARC.

In 1966, the FARC expanded recruitment efforts to the central and southern regions of Colombia.⁴⁹ The expansion of the FARC and other guerilla movements terrified the Colombian government as more of the organizations showed support for the Cuban Revolution and communism.⁵⁰ Fidel Castro's influence was felt throughout all of Latin America and Colombia was not the exception. As in many other nations, there were tensions in Colombia between the

⁴⁸ Castro, *Cómo es el M-19*, 75.

⁴⁹ Maullin, *Soldiers, Guerrillas, and Politics in Colombia*, 29.

⁵⁰ Maullin, *Soldiers, Guerrillas, and Politics in Colombia*, 29.

established Communist Party and the Cuban-influenced guerrillas.⁵¹ The PCC was forced to choose between supporting the guerillas and initiating a Colombian revolution and attempting to change Colombia by political means. To prevent the possibility of becoming an echo of the Cuban Revolution, the PCC took measures to try and unify guerilla movements in the late 1960s, never fully supporting the FARC.⁵² The PCC attempted to become the central voice for Colombian guerilla movements.⁵³ The problem with their plan was the FARC rapidly grew and the PCC was forced to compete with the FARC to see whose strategy was the best for reshaping Colombia. While the PCC attempted to become the central voice for guerilla movements in Colombia, the FARC made strides to solidify the purpose behind the formation of their organization.

The FARC pushed to be recognized as an insurgency to establish a revolutionary people's government, stating that defensive action would be replaced with offensive action. The FARC produced a manifesto in 1966. The manifesto provided six points that outlined what the FARC wanted to change in Colombia and how they intended to change the nation. The manifesto was an expression of the FARC's dissatisfaction with the treatment of Colombians by the Colombian government and claimed that violence was the only solution to generate change in the nation. To show how serious they were about the use of violence to push for political change, the FARC stated that they wanted to attack "nerve centers of the country," in their manifesto of 1966.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Tensions between Communist Parties (which tended to favor a gradual transformation of society through democratic means) and Cuban-influenced guerrillas is discussed in Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre*.

⁵² Maullin, *Soldiers, Guerrillas, and Politics in Colombia*, 34.

⁵³ Maullin, *Soldiers, Guerrillas, and Politics in Colombia*, 31-32.

⁵⁴ Maullin, *Soldiers, Guerrillas, and Politics in Colombia*, 37.

The problem is that the FARC failed to attack critical locations such as infrastructure and government buildings as most of the fighting occurred in rural areas. Richard Maullin best describes why the FARC failed to make critical moves in the late 1960s. “Given the opportunities, one possible explanation for the lack of the offensive punch is that the FARC constituent bands were actually in retreat at the time of the insurgent movement’s formal organization,” he writes. Maullin further implies that the FARC was ineffective because it was poorly organized and needed to consolidate internally, despite the fact that it continued to operate as a military organization as they adopted uniform dress code and an organized military structure. “It would seem, then,” he states, “that the FARC’s greatest threat was in its potential for mobilizing an armed revolution, rather than its actual engagements in armed confrontations and military offensives.”⁵⁵

Despite its lack of organization, the FARC was one of the most notable guerilla organizations within Colombia and forever changed its history. The problems Colombia experienced in the 1960s created new problems for generations to come. The FARC, however, was only one of many guerilla organizations that formed as a consequence of La Violencia. As Colombia entered the 1970s, other guerilla organizations came to play a major and underappreciated role in Colombian domestic and international affairs.

1.7 The Origins of the M-19

In 1970, Colombia experienced a general election in which General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla once again failed in his bid to return to the presidency.⁵⁶ Rojas was supported by his own

⁵⁵ Maullin, *Soldiers, Guerillas, and Politics in Colombia*, 40.

⁵⁶ Mauricio García Durán and Vera Grabe Loewner, Otty Patiño Hormaza, “M-19’s Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics.” *Berghof Series* no. 1 (2008): 9.

political group known as the Alianza Nacional Popular, the Popular National Alliance (ANAPO). Rojas founded the ANAPO to join together extremists from both the Conservative and Liberal Parties. The ANAPO believed that the election of 1970 had been stolen from them. As a result, the ANAPO began to divide, and some of its members joined forces with the Comuneros (a wing of the Communist party of Colombia) to form what would become M-19.⁵⁷ The group found its name in the date of the lost election, April 19th, 1974.⁵⁸

M-19's political ideology was primarily nationalistic. The group defined itself as an armed protest movement in 1974 when one of its members stole Simón Bolívar's sword from the Quinta de Bolívar, the founding father's historic residence in Bogotá. The initial members stated that the sword would remain in their possession until the government agreed to become less corrupt.⁵⁹ The theft of Simón Bolívar's sword was a crucial and highly symbolic starting point for M-19. M-19 wanted Colombians to value their initial political traditions and ideals that were associated with Simón Bolívar.⁶⁰ In stealing the sword, M-19 declared that more needed to be accomplished through physical actions rather than political discourse. This set it apart from the ANAPO, which at the time was a party in crisis.

The death of Rojas Pinilla, ANAPO's leader and unifying force, in January of 1975 further divided the members of the political alliance. M-19 was in a position to recruit members from the fractured ANAPO. This trend only increased when Rojas' daughter, María, attempted to assume the leadership role over the ANAPO, but became conservative in her political outlook,

⁵⁷ "Gustavo Rojas Pinilla," Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, *Semana*, last modified 2022, <https://www.semana.com/especiales/articulo/quien-fue-el-general-gustavo-rojas-pinilla/37573/>

⁵⁸ Mauricio García Durán and Vera Grabe Loewner, Otty Patiño Hormaza, "M-19's Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics," *Berghof Series* no. 1 (2008): 10.

⁵⁹ Henderson, *Colombia's Narcotics Nightmare*, 44.

⁶⁰ García Loewner, and Hormaza, "M-19's Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics," 12.

further dividing the alliance.⁶¹ M-19, which was also recruiting members of the Communist party, continued to gain traction in the politically divided country.

M-19's founding members had diverse backgrounds, but all sought a new means to fight the Colombian government. Some notable founders of M-19 were Jaime Bateman, Álvaro Fayad (The Turk), Francisco Pizarro Leongómez, Luis Otero Cifuentes, Vera Grabe Loewenherz, Iván Marino Ospina (Ivan the Terrible). Jaime Bateman was the primary leader of the organization while the other founders were responsible for assisting in the operations of M-19.⁶²

A brief review of the life stories of two of the M-19's founders illustrates how La Violencia made an impact on the development of the M-19. Jaime Bateman Cayón and Álvaro Fayad had a close relationship when Bateman founded the M-19. Both men were children in Colombia throughout the height of La Violencia. The two men joined ANAPO just as many other young Colombians came together to show their support for more liberal policies and leaders in the country. Fayad was the one responsible for the theft of Simón Bolívar's sword in 1974. Both leaders played significant roles in the way that the operations were carried out concerning the public and militaristic faces of the M-19. The M-19's origin heavily reflects the influence of the FARC. Both organizations were founded by two men with a zeal for revolutionary change in their country. Both organizations utilized the oppression of left-wing political movements to gain support for their respective revolutionary movements. Both organizations made radical claims against the government in an effort to establish manifestos

⁶¹ García Loewenherz, and Hormaza, *M-19's Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics*,” 10.

⁶² García Loewenherz, and Hormaza, *M-19's Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics*,” 10-13.

against the hegemonic regime of Colombian politics while also admonishing the efforts of the work of figures that inspired their movements.⁶³

It is also important to understand how the M-19 was distinct from the FARC and other guerilla groups of the time in Colombia. Rather than solely resorting to violence, the M-19 used social and militaristic efforts to promulgate their cause. In the late 1970s, the M-19 sought to establish themselves as a political force in Colombia through grassroots activism. The M-19 associated themselves heavily with students and become involved with campus student movements. The M-19 believed that it was necessary to make connections with the common people. In doing so, the group linked themselves to political activism while taking notes from previous guerilla groups to implement strategic political violence. The M-19 adopted a combination of socialist-nationalist ideology as they gained favor with disenfranchised Colombians. Once they adopted a specific political ideology, the M-19 stood out among other Liberal factions within Colombia. The M-19 wanted to establish themselves as a movement not directly associated with violence, but to implement violence to enact socio-political change when necessary. This is best exemplified in their social interactions with the general public of Colombia. Rather than terrorize communities to gain local support like other guerilla movements, the M-19 spread political propaganda through pamphlets, public discourse, and interacting with students on campuses in major cities. The M-19 also wanted to align themselves with other guerilla movements to find common ground between their various causes.⁶⁴ The smaller movements had the capability to support smaller groups of disenfranchised Colombians. As alliances were established with different guerilla movements, the M1-9 had the opportunity to

⁶³ García Loewner, and Hormaza, *M-19's Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics*, 12.

⁶⁴ García Loewner, and Hormaza, *M-19's Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics*, 11-15.

unify smaller movements to fight cohesively for political change. To do so, the M-19 needed to solidify themselves as a serious physical force in Colombia.

The M-19 established their physical presence in violent ways, and established a pattern of operation that extended into the 1980s. To force social change in Colombia, M-19 relied on more violent means to pressure corporations and government. This was first exemplified when the M-19 kidnapped Hugo Ferreira Neira in 1977.⁶⁵ Neira was the general manager of Indupalma, a strike-bound palm company, whose workers went on strike for better labor conditions. Members of M-19 kidnapped Neira and held him hostage to attempt to force the company would improve the working conditions of the employees. Indupalma agreed to improve the working conditions and M-19 immediately released Neira from captivity.⁶⁶ The strategy of hostage taking would become a pattern for M-19 in their attempts to politically and socially reform Colombia. While M-19 was known for their kidnapping tactics, as were other guerrilla groups, it is important to note that they consistently released their hostages.⁶⁷ While the M-19 pursued revolutionary change in Colombia, their militaristic actions only brought them more attention and not always for the best.

1.8 Conclusion: Chapter 1

Political division based upon violence only leads to factionalism wherein new factions maybe more violent than their predecessors. This is the story of Movimiento 19 de Abril (M-19). It was both a product of its times, reflecting Cold-War polarization, and a product of Colombia's history of extreme political divisions and violence, as seen in La Violencia. The events of La

⁶⁵ García Loewner, and Hormaza, M-19's Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics," 11.

⁶⁶ Redaccion El Tiempo, "Sin Pistas De Asesinos De Directivo De Indupalma," *El Tiempo*, January 24, 1991. <https://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-14328>

⁶⁷ García Loewner, and Hormaza, M-19's Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics," 9-12.

Violencia triggered a political firestorm that pitted municipio against municipio. The expansion of political factions in Colombia led to further infighting and power struggles, as seen in the stories of the notable political figures examined in this chapter. Jorge Gaitán was a unifying figure who had the potential to bring about democratic change in Colombia. His death marked the depth of political strife within Colombia. Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, appointed to unify the nation, instead instituted a reign of terror. The attempts of the Conservative and Liberal parties to unite through the National Front failed. Meanwhile, Cold War polarization in the wake of the Cuban Revolution added new combatants to the field. M-19 was a product of all this historical change, and as such, this understudied organization serves as a window on Colombia's complex and violent political landscape. In the following chapter, we will explore the history of M-19 through some of their notable moments from 1970-1985. This examination of M-19 will culminate with the comparative analysis of two of their hostage taking situations, the Siege on the Dominican Embassy in 1980 and the Siege of the Palace of Justice in 1985.

2 CHAPTER 2: THE PARTY GAINS MOMENTUM: THE EVOLUTION OF THE M-19 TO BECOME A MAJOR FORCE IN LATE 20TH CENTURY COLOMBIA

2.1 Introduction

The M-19 has been memorialized as a radical guerilla movement in Colombian history. While the M-19 is remembered for their violent actions, the motivation behind these attacks is often overlooked. This chapter addresses this gap in the historical literature through a close analysis of the most notable era of the M-19 from 1979 to 1984. It was throughout this era that the M-19 became the group that most Colombians recognize. The early 1980s represented an era of turbulence for the M-19. While the 1980s include two of the M-19's most notorious moments, the Siege on the Dominican Embassy and the Siege of the Palace of Justice, the events between these two armed actions showcase the struggle that the M-19 faced as a movement. This chapters analyzes the evolution of the M-19 from its humble beginnings to being a well-organized and highly efficient guerilla movement. The chapter will examine what happened to the M-19 between the Siege on the Dominican Embassy and the Siege of the Palace of Justice from 1980-1984. It argues that the M-19's actions cannot be analyzed within the context of the sieges alone.

It is important to contextualize the M-19's violent actions and left-wing alliances within the norms of the time period. Violence was the primary means by which the M-19's message reached the general public. Without violence, news conferences were not held. In the eyes of the M-19, violence was necessary to spread the message of democratic reform in Colombia. This is understandable as political dominance had been achieved through bloodshed as a normal course of events in the nation since the time of La Violencia.

Throughout this chapter, it will be evident that the M-19 stood as a prime example of the Liberal Party's suppression by the Conservative Party of Colombia. This suppression forced the M-19 to look for international aid from leaders such as Fidel Castro. As the M-19 sought aid

from notable Communist leaders, it provided the Colombian and greater Western powers the chance to denounce Liberal political movements in the late twentieth century in hope of discrediting similar movements. The story of the M-19 must be examined to show that La Violencia at its end only birthed further political violence. Retaliation from both sides of the political spectrum created further tragedy for the people of Colombia. Division simply bred escalation and neither side sought to address political division outside of violence, at least on the surface.

2.2 The Evolution of the M-19

If the revolution that Bateman called for was to be a “fiesta” of groups that wanted to work together to bring about revolutionary change, then the fiesta needed a guest list. The M-19 developed connections with guerilla armies outside of Colombia to acquire skills and training in 1978.⁶⁸ The movement sought to import militaristic knowledge to increase their own tactics in Colombia and sent members to Cuba for military training, a move that also helped them to build relationships with other international guerrilla movements. The M-19’s founder, Jaime Bateman, famously met with Fidel Castro as a means of gaining political and social support. Fidel Castro’s bodyguard, Juan Reinaldo Sánchez, recalled one meeting between Jaime Bateman and Fidel Castro. It was during this meeting that Bateman presented Simón Bolívar’s sword to Castro. According to Reinaldo, the sword remained in the Castro’s possession until the 1990s.⁶⁹ Whether the sword remained in Castro’s possession remains in question, but the meeting between Bateman and Castro represents a significant turning point for the M-19. The M-19 established a

⁶⁸ García, Loewnerherz, and Hormaza, M-19’s Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics,” 14.

⁶⁹ Juan Reinaldo Sánchez, *The Double Life of Fidel Castro: My 17 Years as Personal Bodyguard to El Lider Maximo* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2014), 107-8.

relationship with one of the most infamous figures of the Cold War era. This partnership proved important for the future of the M-19 as the movement continued to grow. Although useful, this partnership also placed a target on the back of the M-19 and place them in the midst of international conflict. The M-19 did not rely on Cuba alone. They also sent members to work with the Peronist Montoneros of Uruguay and the elusive Fuerzas Armadas Populares Eloy Alfaro of Ecuador in the late 1970s.⁷⁰ These relationships gave the M-19 a place on the international leftist stage and also provided vital training. This is especially seen in their relationship with the Fuerzas Armadas Populares guerrillas, from whom they learned technical elements of warfare such as signal jamming.⁷¹

As the M-19 began to grow their military apparatus, they began to push other guerilla movements in Colombia to join their cause. Two unique partnerships that the M-19 had were those with the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Popular Liberation Army (ELP). The ELN was founded in 1964 and the ELP was founded approximately in 1967-1968. The M-19 gained support from the two groups by establishing a guerilla training school for mobilization and creating a coalition known as Fuerza Conjunta EPL-M19 (Joint Force).⁷² This offered the M-19 the opportunity to influence other revolutionary movements around Colombia.

Influence came at a cost for the M-19. No longer was M-19 the product of a fractured political faction, it now represented a complex organization with a rapidly growing reputation. In

⁷⁰ The Montoneros of Uruguay were based out of Argentina in the 1970s and 1980s. The Montoneros sought to destabilize the Argentinian government that was supported by foreign powers such as the United States of America. The Fuerzas Armadas Populares Eloy Alfaro were a left-wing group that operated out of Ecuador in the 1970s and 1980s. The organization based its ideals off of the former Ecuadorian general José Eloy Alfaro Delgado. Both the Montoneros and The Fuerzas Armadas Populares Eloy Alfaro operated similarly to the M-19, which made their alliance stronger.

⁷¹ García, Loewnerherz, and Hormaza, *M-19's Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics*,” 14.

⁷² García, Loewnerherz, and Hormaza, *M-19's Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics*,” 14.

effect, M-19 was able to accomplish what the FARC was incapable of doing. While the FARC established the First and Second Guerilla Conference, M-19 created a network in which the guerilla organizations unified from 1976-1978. The ability to connect different guerilla organizations together showcases the efficiency of M-19 as a movement. This is where the structure of M-19 proved beneficial. With the establishment of one sector that emphasized the social and the other that emphasized the militaristic, M-19 showed that guerilla movements could be organized outside of solely violent spheres. M-19 proved that although they prepared for violent confrontation, they were able to peaceably organize multiple guerilla movements to debate change in the nation of Colombia. It was not the M-19's fiesta alone as they invited everyone to be a part of their revolution.

The M-19's notoriety, however, increased with their violent activity. M-19 lacked supplies to maintain their growth as a movement. Jaime Bateman and Ivan Ospina established a plan to gain notoriety and supplies for M-19. In 1978, Bateman and Ospina concocted a plan to stage a heist the largest heist that in the organization's existence. To accomplish this, the M-19 needed to steal from a notable location that symbolized the power of the Colombian government while simultaneously holding valuables small enough to move quickly. The M-19 focused their attention on Cantón Norte, a military base located in Bogotá.

The plan to steal weapons from Cantón Norte represented a unique challenge to M-19. The primary issue that the group faced was how they intended on entering the base. Members of M-19 were unable to enter into the base without being recognized by the guards, especially if any of their leaders participated in the heist. Bateman and Ospina invented a new strategy to infiltrate the facility. M-19 members were instructed to dig a tunnel stretching from a home next to the military base into the armory. M-19 was successful in digging a tunnel into the facility.

Álvaro Fayad was the M-19 leader responsible for carrying out the heist of weapons. In total, it was reported that over 5,000 weapons were stolen from the base in the course of one night. The following morning, the Colombian military realized that the weapons had been stolen by M-19 and were able to recover the weapons from the guerillas not long after the heist. M-19 proved to the people of Colombia, the Colombian government, and other guerilla movements that they were prepared and capable of executing intricate operations in just one night.⁷³ At the same time, they were also growing more organized.

2.3 Seventh Conference

In 1979, the M-19 held an interorganizational conference known as the Seventh Conference in which the organization discussed its political goals. At this meeting, the M-19 expanded their political goals and redefined themselves as an organization. The group stated that their primary goal was the struggle for democracy. It was at this meeting that the members discussed their previously established goal of “socialism Colombian-style” and the need to broaden their political ambitions in their movement. According to Vera Grabe, one of the M-19’s founding members, they held this conference because, “We recognized that feature of democracy thanks to the reaction to the military offensive...from civil society, from the human rights struggle, which is quintessentially democratic.”⁷⁴ It was from this place of struggle that the M-19 saw the need to expand in their political outlook. It was throughout the early years of the M-19 that its members realized the importance of gaining representation within the government. No longer were efforts aimed to request politicians to formulate new policies, but to have politicians represent the organization and other groups that were marginalized. This led to Jaime Bateman

⁷³ Germán Castro Caycedo, “Cómo es el M-19,” *Nuevo Día*, Fall 1983, 61-63.

⁷⁴ García, Loewner, and Hormaza, *M-19’s Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics*, 15.

becoming a media figurehead for the M-19. Bateman went before members of the Colombian press and took questions from journalists about the M-19's actions.

In addition to changing their political outlook, M-19 also incorporated women as a part of their military apparatus of the organization at the Seventh conference.⁷⁵ Women had been a part of the movement since its inception in 1970. It was not until 1979; however, that women became an integral part of the fighting force in Colombia. The inclusion of women as a part of the military apparatus of the M-19 unsettled many supporters of the movement. The reason that the move unsettled many supporters was not only due to previously established gender roles within the M-19, but showed the expansion of the militaristic sector of the M-19. The M-19 represented anyone who felt oppressed by the Colombian government and their anti-democratic policies. While changes to the group did occur as a result of the 1979 conference, the changes made did not compare to those the M-19 would make the following year.

2.4 The Siege on the Dominican Embassy

The 1980s brought about a period of radical change for the M-19 and Colombia. The early 1980s saw the height of power for the newly elected president, Julio Turbay. His history with M-19 extends beyond the movement's existence. Turbay operated as the Minister of Mines and Petroleum after the coup of the Gustavo Rojas Pinilla administration. In 1978, Turbay was elected as president of Colombia and promised to offer peace to the warring factions in Colombia. As a member of the Liberal Party, Turbay held a unique position to politically establish rapport with the M-19. This potential advantage was forsaken with the implementation of the 1978 Security Statute. The statute came in response to the growing violence initiated by

⁷⁵ García, Loewner, and Hormaza, *M-19's Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics*, 13.

the M-19 and the FARC. The statute defines in great detail how much of what M-19 did was criminal. Each of the articles under the statute warrant offenders anywhere from one to thirty years in prison. Although the statute did not label guerillas as criminals, it did label their actions as criminal. For example, Article 3 of the 1978 statute prohibits the integration of gangs or armed groups of three or more individuals. Article 3 also states it is a crime for such groups to establish contributions under the pretext of guaranteeing defense or the rights of the people under subjugation.⁷⁶

Rather than attempting to make political connections to M-19, the Turbay administration committed human rights abuses. The statute allowed the Colombian military to detain, interrogate and judge suspected guerillas before military tribunals. The statute emphasized that the military could detain suspected guerillas and co-conspirators.⁷⁷ When Turbay permitted the military to have broad measures at their disposal, abuses occurred on various levels. Many civilians reported being abused by the military for minor offenses, some reporting that torture was implemented. Despite the statute of 1978 being in effect, the M-19 continued to operate as normal and carried on their mission to bring attention to the lack of representation to the needs of the organization which culminated to their greatest act in their existence.⁷⁸

On the morning of February 27th, 1980 in Bogotá, the Dominican Republic's Embassy held a celebration commemorating the Dominican Independence Day. The celebration called together delegates from across the embassies in Bogotá. The guest list included the ambassadors from Austria, Brazil, Costa Rica, Egypt, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Israel, Mexico,

⁷⁶ Turbay, Julio. Decreto 1923 de 1978 (September 6, 1978). 35101. <https://www.suin-juriscol.gov.co/viewDocument.asp?ruta=Decretos/1870140>

⁷⁷ Turbay, Julio. Decreto 1923 de 1978 (September 6, 1978). 35101. <https://www.suin-juriscol.gov.co/viewDocument.asp?ruta=Decretos/1870140>

⁷⁸ García, Loewner, and Hormaza, "M-19's Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics," 79-80.

Switzerland, the United States, Uruguay, Venezuela, and the Papal Nuncio to Colombia, Angelo Acerbi. With such a varied guest list, the celebration at the embassy was a prime target of attention of M-19.⁷⁹

Sixteen M-19 special forces members stormed the Dominican Embassy at mid-day. Luis Otero Cifuentes, one of the founders of the M-19 was responsible for the coordinating the siege on the embassy.⁸⁰ It is important to note that the guerillas were comprised of both men and women from the organization, such as Ligia Vasquez.⁸¹ This is important that women had an important role in the largest attack M-19 committed since their inception. This shows that women took part in the military training, and showed that the M-19 represented progressive gender ideology.

The guerilla's demanded fifty million U.S. dollars to be raised from the countries whose diplomats were held hostage. In addition to this, the guerillas announced that they wanted three-hundred and eleven political prisoners to be released from prison. By March 2nd, the M-19 released 28 hostages from the embassy. This event came in accordance with President Turbay initiating negotiations between the Colombian government and the M-19. The guerillas continued to slowly release hostages in hopes of gaining power in the negotiations with various political governments. Negotiations proved to be the most important aspect of the siege. Throughout the event, the M-19 ensured that they were portrayed with humanitarian causes at the forefront as they held news conferences with Colombia. Diplomats and the Colombian

⁷⁹ García, Loewner, and Hormaza, M-19's Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics," 79-80.

⁸⁰ "Las Cabezas caídas del M-19," *Semana*, last modified 2022, <https://www.semana.com/especiales/articulo/las-cabezas-caidas-del-m-19/7193-3/>.

⁸¹ Pérez, René "Así fue la toma de la Embajada Dominicana," *El Espectador*, last modified February 26, 2015 <https://www.elespectador.com/colombia/mas-regiones/asi-fue-la-toma-de-la-embajada-dominicana-articulo-546468/>.

government realized how well the M-19 positioned themselves in the eyes of the general public. This is especially true when examining Diego Uribe-Vargas's statement that the M-19 appeared as reasonably-minded protestors.⁸²

It is important to note that the guerilla^s did not have an escape plan when they seized the Dominican Embassy. Contemporary coverage in the newspaper *El Tiempo* indicates that the M-19 members perceived that the governments would demand for their ambassadors to be released.⁸³ The members of the M-19 responsible for taking the hostages attempted to negotiate with the Colombian government, but the patience of the government wore thin. It is important to note that Turbay's administration faced scrutiny in how they handled the hostage crisis. Turbay's previous decision to enact the Security Statute of 1978 came back to haunt him in the worst way possible. By imprisoning numerous M-19 figures, Turbay only angered the M-19 leaders for not taking the time to listen to their demands as a movement. Where Turbay was intelligent in the hostage crisis was through the use of The Organization of American States.⁸⁴

The organization operated with the goal to maintain, "an order of peace and justice, to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration and to defend their sovereignty, their

⁸² Shiraz, Zakia. "Diplomats Under Siege: The M-19 and the Dominican Embassy Takeover of 1980." *International History Review* 42, no. 5 (October 2020): 1049, 1054.

⁸³ Neira, Armando. "La Toma de la Embajada 40 Años." *El Tiempo*. February 2020, <https://www.eltiempo.com/politica/toma-de-la-embajada-de-republica-dominicana-asi-ocurrio-el-secuestro-hecho-por-el-m19-466528>

⁸⁴ The Organization of American States was an organization founded in 1948 with the purpose of maintaining unity among the Americas. With the exception of Cuba and French Guyana, every country of the Western Hemisphere is a member of the organization. The concept for the organization came about as a League of Nations of the Americas at a conference in Buenos Aires led by U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt. The organization was birthed as a result of the conflict of World War II and required members to contain conflicts within the hemisphere, when they signed the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (the Rio Treaty) in 1947. It is not surprising that the Organization of American States was created at this time as its creation coincided with the Bogatozo. The Bogatozo is the name for the riots that erupted after Jorge Gaitán's assassination and the initiating event to La Violencia.

territorial integrity, and their independence.”⁸⁵ The implementation of the Organization of American States rests upon the four pillars that the organization uses to approach matters in the Western hemisphere which are: democracy, human rights, security, and development. It was logical to send this organization in during the hostage situation as it involved members of many countries throughout the Western hemisphere and may sympathize with the intentions of the M-19. By taking the lead on the negotiations, the M-19 had a “seat at the table,” with larger foreign powers.

On April 27th, the guerillas left the embassy with twelve of the hostages under the supervision of the Organization of American States. The M-19 only received two and a half million U.S. dollars in exchange for the hostages and failed to secure the release of their three hundred and eleven imprisoned supporters. The M-19 was only able to guarantee safe passage from the embassy to Cuba where they received a grant of asylum from Fidel Castro. Once in Cuba, the remaining hostages were released, and the M-19 members remained in Cuba under asylum privileges. Surprisingly, none of the hostages taken were killed throughout the two-month long siege. The only death was one of the M-19 members during a stand-off with Colombian federal agents. In contrast, the M-19 gained favor with other guerilla groups and even the general public of Colombia for their actions during the siege. One article notes that the Colombian people at the Bogotá airport cheered in support for the guerillas as they fled to Cuba for asylum.⁸⁶ While they gained public support, the M-19 violated several articles from the 1978 Statute when they attacked the Dominican Embassy in 1980. Although the M-19 violated several

⁸⁵ “Who We Are,” Organization of the Americas, last modified 2022, https://www.oas.org/en/about/who_we_are.asp.

⁸⁶ Armando Neira, “La Toma de la Embajada 40 Años,” *El Tiempo*, February 2020, <https://www.eltiempo.com/politica/toma-de-la-embajada-de-republica-dominicana-asi-ocurrio-el-secuestro-hecho-por-el-m19-466528>

articles related to the statute prior to the siege, the events at the Dominican Embassy were particularly combative. The M-19's actions made them look worse than the FARC although none of the hostages died in the siege.

The siege of the Dominican Embassy in 1980 had a profound effect on the reputation of the M-19. The M-19 members were labeled as terrorists by several world leaders. In a letter addressed to Turbay, President Jimmy Carter of the United States wrote:

“I am deeply thankful that the siege at the Dominican Embassy has ended with the release of all the hostages. Your firm and patient leadership has achieved its goal: a dignified and peaceful solution. I am particularly grateful for your dedication to the hostages' safety and welfare during the long and delicate negotiations. As you know, the United States unequivocally condemns all terrorist acts. I am pleased that our two governments have been able to work so closely together in this common struggle. A continued united effort by all governments is vital if terrorist violence around the world is to be curbed.”⁸⁷

While this is only one reaction to the events at the Dominican Embassy, it is important to show how the world viewed the M-19 after the siege. The M-19 was not only a threat to the Colombian government, but also the efforts of nations such as the United States in their continued effort to rid the world of communism in the 1980s.

The aftermath of the Siege on the Dominican Embassy was a peaceful end to a tenuous two-month crisis. The M-19 members responsible for the siege remained in Cuba until they were pardoned by the Colombian government in the late 1980s. In truth, the siege on the embassy was one of the more peaceful crises to occur within Colombia's history in the 20th century. Nevertheless, the battle lines were drawn, and the government soon sought to connect the M-19 with a broader coalition of enemies of the state.

⁸⁷ Jimmy Carter, “Hostages in the Dominican Republic Embassy in Bogota, Colombia Letter to Colombian President Julio Cesar Turbay Ayala on the Release of the Hostages,” *The American Presidency Project*. (Santa Barbara, CA: University of California Santa Barbara, 2022) <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/hostages-the-dominican-republic-embassy-bogota-colombia-letter-colombian-president-julio>.

2.5 Problems Come in Many Forms

One such connection with other terrorist organizations is the assumed connection between the M-19 and the Colombian narcotics trade. The legacy of the M-19 is plagued by a unique association with the narcotics trade in Colombia. Over the last thirty years, there has been a strong association between the M-19 and the narcotics trade that has been popularized in media. To understand where the narrative of the M-19's narcotic association began, it is important to observe one of the most infamous figures of the Colombian narcotics trade of the 1980s, Pablo Emilio Escobar Gaviria. Pablo Escobar was noted for his success as one of the chief drug lords in Colombia in the 1980s, however, his fame does have an important political intersection with the M-19.

While Colombia was in the midst of the political turmoil, Pablo Escobar developed his own empire in the 1970s.⁸⁸ The establishment of a trade of illegal drugs was possible in light of the fighting between the Conservative and Liberal Parties. While most politicians focused efforts to secure votes, figures like Escobar focused their efforts to find customers for their illegal business. The popularity of cocaine in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s led to the expansion of cocaine production in Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia.⁸⁹ Colombia has the unique climate for cocaine production. As a result, Colombia became a primary center for the drug trade of cocaine in the twentieth century. Escobar established a network within Colombia known as the Medellín Cartel. The cartel expanded operations internationally and established contacts throughout the United States and Central America.⁹⁰

⁸⁸Mark Bowden, *Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw* (New York: Grove Press, 2001), 28.

⁸⁹ Suzanna Reiss, *We Sell Drugs: The Alchemy of US Empire*, (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), 24, 27.

⁹⁰ Mark Bowden, *Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw*, 38.

With the expansion of the Medellín cartel, Escobar frustrated many international governments, especially the United States as the drug trade became an epidemic. The United States sought to trap Escobar and extradite him in hopes of convicting him of his crimes on U.S. soil. This plan ultimately failed as Escobar cultivated popular support for himself throughout Colombia in the late 1970s. Escobar funded the construction of schools and hospitals to ensure the general public would view him as a man for the people. In 1982, Escobar ran for public office. Escobar aligned himself with the Liberal party and focused his campaign on the extradition treaty being cultivated between the United States and Colombia under the Turbay administration. Escobar managed to attain a position in the Colombian Chamber of Representatives in 1982. Escobar's appointment granted him immunity.⁹¹ This position allowed him to fight the extradition treaties in Colombia directly.

While Escobar held political office, his colleagues in the Colombian government attempted to find ways to remove him from office so that he might be arrested for his drug trafficking business. The government was successful when *El Espectador* published previous arrest records from his time as a young adult.⁹² When the Colombian people realized how Escobar made his wealth, Escobar resigned from political office for fear of scrutiny. Once he stepped down, Escobar opted for a more violent approach to kill political opponents. The killing spree showcased the desperation of Escobar to maintain control of his vast empire after This attempt showcases that Escobar understood the severity of utilizing his alliances throughout Colombia. This led Escobar to contact the major guerilla organizations within Colombia in the early 1980s to have connections with organizations such as the FARC. If the FARC could be

⁹¹ Mark Bowden, *Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw*, 31-40.

⁹² Mark Bowden, *Killing Pablo*, 50.

associated with terrorist figures such as Escobar, then the government needed an excuse to associate the M-19 with such figures. The Colombian government did not have time for such matters in the early 1980s, due to a great tragedy that befell the M-19.

2.6 The M-19 in Bateman's Words

In November 1982, Betancur's administration reached an amnesty agreement with the M-19 guerillas. The agreement was to last for nine months, but was interrupted by tragedy. In April 1983, Jaime Bateman died in a plane crash while in Panama. What made the plane crash tragic was the additional death of Colombian Senator Antonio Escobar, who negotiated the amnesty plan for the M-19 in 1982.⁹³ Historians have not discussed the M-19 in the years between the two sieges, which has caused confusion about the motivations and evolution of the M-19. Here, I begin my analysis of this important period with a reading of a 1983 interview that Bateman granted shortly before his death to the journalist Germán Castro, with whom he lived for three days.

Bateman's interview with Castro represented a moment for the M-19 to provide answers for the negative press they received since the Siege on the Dominican Embassy, and to counter the taint of the increasing connections between guerrilla groups, most notably the FARC, and the narcotics cartels. This interview cannot be viewed as the entire story as it only is a glimpse into Bateman's thoughts about the M-19, and as a press event, it shows his effort to shape public perception of the organization, its actions, and its goals. When read carefully and in the context of the historical record; however, this interview is an invaluable source. As one of the most

⁹³ Ray Perez, "Jaime Bateman, the leader of Colombia's largest guerilla group..." *UPI*, July 19, 1983, <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1983/07/19/Jaime-Bateman-the-leader-of-Colombias-largest-guerrilla-group/8302427435200/>.

detailed conversations with Jaime Bateman shortly before his death, it provides historians with a window on Bateman's perspective of the M-19 in this period between two of its major conflicts.

Importantly, Bateman explained the ultimate goal of the M-19's militancy was to end war and allow the nation to live in peace. He stated that:

Look, when they talk to you about revolution, don't be afraid of something that is very simple. The oligarchy has taught these peoples that revolution leads to disaster, and that the revolution is havoc. But the people think the opposite because, for them, the revolution is a great party. For us the revolution is not a matter of weapons, but of the masses, a matter of the people. Hopefully we don't have to use weapons. For us, weapons are not a matter of principle. Even more: we consider using them is sometimes painful. We are peaceful by principle because we love our people. We want to live in peace, live well and peacefully, moreover, because no one in the world likes war. The government takes the people to war; they force them into war. We are a revolutionary vanguard, and we interpret the sentiment of a people and for a long time we have been saying to this government, "for God's sake avoid war" and you see how they speak every day. This is a country at war.⁹⁴

Bateman stated that his movement was for the people that were disenfranchised by the Colombian government. He was frustrated that the government had attempted to suppress the M-19 and its attempt at political reform because the M-19 attempted to force change through violent means. Bateman did not want the citizens of Colombia to fear revolution because revolution necessitates change to the current system of government. Bateman saw the people of Colombia as necessary members of the fiesta that he described. The most important part of this excerpt was

⁹⁴ Germán Castro Caycedo, "Cómo es el M-19," *Nuevo Día*, Fall 1983, 82.

when Bateman stated that, from his perspective, the government was at war. This excerpt is vital to the history of the M-19 as it shows Bateman desired to go to war despite his supposed disdain of the use of weapons. It is evident that the M-19 were far from being pacifists, but this quote showcase that the M-19 felt like they had no other option but to fight.⁹⁵

Bateman had lived through La Violencia and understood the effectiveness of violence. Bateman received extensive training about guerilla organization from the FARC, but he organized the M-19 differently for the purpose of executing major attacks.⁹⁶ When Germán Castro asked Bateman about the events of the Siege on the Dominican Embassy, the answer revealed crucial details about the attack that the Colombian media and government had missed. There are several notable statements made in the interview about the Siege on the Dominican Embassy. First, the M-19 attacked the Dominican Embassy as a political statement, not as a means of getting supporters released supporters from prison and more importantly not to obtain a ransom payment. This is a crucial statement from the M-19 as the Colombian and other internationally involved governments such as the United States emphasized the importance of the ransom. To the M-19, the ransom and the hostages were a means for the organization to spread awareness for the human rights abuses made by the Colombian government against its people.⁹⁷

The second important point about the Siege on the Dominican Embassy revealed that M-19 had an informant in the Dominican Embassy. The informant provided details about the guests

⁹⁵ Germán Castro Caycedo, "Cómo es el M-19," *Nuevo Día*, Fall 1983.

⁹⁶ Although he was a young man at the time he served in the FARC, Bateman received extensive training in the organization of guerilla movements. It is clear that the M-19 was not only birthed out of the ANAPO movement, but the FARC as well. The marriage of the FARC/ANAPO ideologies created the perfect blend for Bateman to develop a unique guerilla movement. The ANAPO of the late 1960s were disgruntled with the political system of the country. Bateman had an innumerable sum of students ready to help him formulate the M-19 and avoid direct association with the FARC.

⁹⁷ Germán Castro Caycedo, "Cómo es el M-19," *Nuevo Día*, Fall 1983, 57-58.

in attendance at the celebration and provided the best time for the M-19 to take hostages. The third important point about the Siege on the Dominican Embassy is that the M-19 debated between attacking the Dominican Embassy or the Japanese Embassy. Bateman asserted that the Dominican Embassy became the target due to three factors: the location of the embassy, the political situation of the moment, and the needs of the organization at the moment.⁹⁸

The fourth important point was that the M-19 was meticulous in planning the attack. Bateman stated that the Siege on the Dominican Embassy required precise planning. When planning the attack on the Dominican Embassy, the M-19, “had calculated, with minutes and seconds, everything that was going to be done on February 27. Even -hear me well-, even the time the commandos got up, the time they had to spend to bathe, to shave, to cross certain streets, to enter the site.”⁹⁹ The Siege on the Dominican Embassy required strict planning of each moment to ensure success. The careful execution of the attack on the Dominican Embassy represents that the M-19 was not erratic when they made plans to take hostages or stage attacks.

The 1983 interview also contains clues that help in an analysis of the Siege of the Palace of Justice two years later. In particular, these clues relate to how M-19 was funded and to what extent they had relations with Pablo Escobar’s Medellín Cartel. The funding of the M-19 is an important topic to examine as it defines their level of dependency on external organizations. Economic profit as a Colombian guerilla group came as a result of ransom kidnappings, drug trafficking, or by other criminal means. M-19 followed in this pattern as outlined in chapter one where the group became proficient in ransom kidnappings. Yet, M-19’s association with drug trafficking cartels has not been explored. Some suggested that M-19 was funded by Pablo

⁹⁸ Germán Castro Caycedo, “Cómo es el M-19,” *Nuevo Día*, Fall 1983, 57.

⁹⁹ Castro, “Cómo es el M-19,” 57.

Escobar to do his bidding. Jaime Bateman agrees that M-19 did receive one million dollars from Pablo Escobar in the early 1980s. Escobar is listed merely as a supporter of M-19 in terms of its ideological and political goals. This is not unusual as Pablo Escobar held had connections with many organizations that were opposed to the Colombian government. In addition, both M-19 and Pablo Escobar heavily opposed extradition as it represented a threat to their operations and one that would have forced them to leave Colombia.¹⁰⁰

The true question is where did the M-19 obtain its funds for operation? Bateman's interview in 1983 offers clear answers as to how the M-19 received funding. Following the heist at Cantón Norte, many reporters wondered how the M-19 received funding for their ventures. Bateman explained that M-19 received funding through a specific system for money laundering and it was partially exposed after the heist at Cantón Norte.¹⁰¹ The M-19 enlisted figures within their support base to help provide funding for their organizational needs when they could not obtain funds through extortion or kidnapping for ransom. For example, two supporters of the M-19 Rafael and Maria Arteaga, Giraldo supported the M-19 with the establishment of a medical products store in a mall in Bogota.¹⁰² The couple would use the store as a legal business but the profits from the business would be funneled into financing the M-19. In the end, the use of everyday Colombians to provide for the financial needs of the organization showcase that the M-19 had a fundraising basin established within Colombia and did not need to rely on financial support provided by other guerilla organizations, much more narcotraffickers. This evidence showcases that the M-19 developed means of sustainability and gives credit to their ability to

¹⁰⁰ Castro, "Cómo es el M-19."

¹⁰¹ Castro, "Cómo es el M-19," 61.

¹⁰² Castro, "Cómo es el M-19," 61.

create financial systems. However, the use of money laundering showcases that the M-19's actions throughout the late 1970s to early 1980s indicate a growing criminal enterprise within the organization and not solely a rising political movement. Was it possible that the M-19 used different means to accumulate funds that were criminal in nature? Possibly, but the evidence listed in primary source documentation demonstrates that the M-19 operated as violent political activists rather than constructing a criminal enterprise.

The international relations of the M-19 also illustrate that the M-19 intended to build international connections and thus did not need to become dependent upon support from Escobar or other narcotraffickers. In his interview with Castro, Bateman stated that he traveled extensively in his early twenties. By the age of twenty-two, Bateman had traveled to the Soviet Union, the Czech Republic, and France. Bateman stated that he studied Marxism throughout his travels. This examination of Marxism led him back to his home country where he moved to Bogotá. Once Bateman arrived back in Bogotá, he then joined youth political movements until he joined the FARC.¹⁰³ Bateman already had international connections prior to the formation of the M-19. It was through their founder that the M-19 saw the importance of having international connections in their early years. Despite having a plethora of connections abroad, the M-19 were too reliant upon their organizational structure that tragedy nearly tore them apart.

Although the Siege on the Dominican Embassy represented a landmark moment for the M-19 as a guerilla movement, the M-19 did not commit larger acts of terror between the years of 1980 and 1985. The M-19 maintained contact with other guerilla movements within and outside of Colombia. Jamie Bateman Cayón grew more confident in the M-19's international ties and made frequent trips outside of Colombia to maintain relations with various organizations to

¹⁰³ Castro, "Cómo es el M-19," 78.

support the M-19's vision for Colombia. Everything came to a standstill in 1983, when Bateman's plane crashed in the southeast coast of Panama. The official cause of the plane crash is uncertain. The Colombian government feared that Bateman's death might push the M-19 to become more radical as Bateman now had the opportunity to be seen as a martyr following his death. After the death of Bateman, however, the M-19 did not unleash a major attack after the death of their founder. Between 1983 and 1985, there was not a major attack led by the M-19. The reason for this reduced presence of the M-19 came with the administration of Belisario Betancur.

2.7 The Death of Bateman

1983 was a tragic year for the M-19 as Bateman died in a plane crash en route to Panama.¹⁰⁴ Bateman's death remains a mystery as much is not known about the plane crash. According to reports of the time, charred remains were discovered after the plane crash. The problem with Bateman's death is the mystery that surrounds the plane crash. It was not until almost one year later that the plane was discovered in the jungle by Panamanian investigators. The investigators pinpointed the location of the plane crash using the last recording received from the pilot of Bateman's plane.¹⁰⁵

As previously stated, the problem with Bateman's death created a rift within M-19. With the death of their founder, the M-19 experienced instability and led the organization towards a bleak future. According to García Marquez, a reporter for *Semana*, the death of Bateman was a sensitive issue within the M-19¹⁰⁶ The issue of officially announcing Bateman's death was hotly

¹⁰⁴ Gabriel García Marquez, "Bateman: Misterio Sin Fin, Special issue," *Semana*, September 1983, 22.

¹⁰⁵ "Rescatado cadaverés," *El Tiempo*, February 1984.

¹⁰⁶ Gabriel García Marquez, "Bateman Misterio Sin Fin, Special Issue," 25.

contested. Nine weeks after the wreckage of Bateman's plane was found, the M-19 issued a statement that Bateman had died. With this in mind, the M-19 did not publicly declare who would lead the organization and claim the death of Jaime Bateman. This showcases a fundamental breakdown within the M-19. As Bateman described, the M-19 operated in a strict and organized manner. With the death of Bateman, the organization began to shift. Ivan Marino Ospina was named leader of the M-19 the year after Bateman's demise.¹⁰⁷

Ivan Marino Ospina represented a new style of leadership within the M-19. As stated in chapter one, various members of the M-19 held different positions to assist in the operations of the organization. Some members operated for political purposes while others operated for the militaristic purposes of the organization. Bateman was the best of both wings of the M-19. He was known for his ability to communicate the political needs of the organization and simultaneously possessed the militaristic knowledge to constitute guerilla warfare in Colombia. The problem is that none of his followers were able to achieve this balance within the organization after his death. Marino Ospina was a testament to this lack of balance. Marino Ospina, in conjunction with Alvaro Fayad, organized the militaristic sector of the M-19. Ospina was the last leader of the M-19 to learn about Jaime Bateman's death. Once Ospina received the news, he desired that the M-19 initiate dialogues with the Colombian government.¹⁰⁸

Both men were known to be prone to violence and executed the M-19's attacks with decisive bloodshed. Any infraction against the M-19 fell under the judgement of two of the M-19's more hostile leaders. Despite attempts at fulfilling the desire of Bateman to have dialogue with the Colombian government, the fallout of the Corinth Accords positioned the M-19 in a

¹⁰⁷ Gabriel García Marquez, "Bateman Misterio Sin Fin, Special Issue," 25.

¹⁰⁸ Gabriel García Marquez, "Bateman Misterio Sin Fin, Special Issue," 25.

place where the group responded with greater violence, which culminated with the Siege of the Palace of Justice. The M-19's lack of cohesive leadership after the death of Jaime Bateman meant the M-19 lost the central figure that possessed the ability that prevented the M-19 from extreme violence. Bateman, a former member and close friend of the founders of the FARC, was one of the most highly connected guerilla leaders in the 1980s. Without Bateman and his knowledge, the M-19 began to flounder and suffered because their actions became too violent, as evidenced by the Siege of the Palace of Justice. It is important to realize, however, that in 1984 there was one final attempt to prevent further violence. If it had worked, the siege of The Palace of Justice might never have occurred.

2.8 The Corinth Accords

In 1984, President Belisario Betancur held the executive office after Turbay left public office after receiving blame for allowing M-19 to hold the Dominican Embassy for two months. Betancur's administration was successful in creating the Acuerdos de Corintos (Corinth Accords) on August 24, 1984. The Corinth Accords were a peace agreement to be signed by multiple Colombian guerilla organizations with the intent to disarm and end the political violence in the nation. The Accords were signed by leaders from the Communist Party of Colombia (PCC), the Popular Liberation Army (EPL), and most importantly the M-19. In attendance were major leaders from the M-19, such as Iván Marino Ospina, Álvaro Fayad, Carlos Pizarro, Antonio Navarro, and Luis Otero.¹⁰⁹ This is important that these five men were present at the signing of the Accords because the organization did not have a true successor to the organization following Jamie Bateman's death. Iván Marino Ospina and Álvaro Fayad were

¹⁰⁹ Belisario Betancur, *Acuerdos de Corinto*, August 24, 1984, <https://ucdpged.uu.se/peaceagreements/fulltext/Col%2020180824.pdf>.

the primary figures to take control of the organization because they were present at the founding of the M-19 under the leadership of Bateman. It is also important that these men were present because they represented the militaristic wing of the M-19. While the M-19 was not shy of media attention, the M-19 was leery to permit anyone an audience with their leaders. This also represents a risky move by the leaders of the M-19 to attend the signing of the Accords as they were wanted by the Colombian government for the planning of the Siege on the Dominican Embassy among their other crimes. The Accords were a landmark moment in the history of the M-19 as it represented the possibility of peace that the leaders had hoped for, and the opportunity was too great to ignore.¹¹⁰

The Accords required that the M-19 cease all violent activity as of August 30th, 1984. Once the groups committed to the ceasefire, the government promised to commit to peaceful dialogue with the guerilla movement that signed the Accords. In addition, the president agreed to suspend all military action against the guerilla movements as a sign of goodwill in the peace dialogues.¹¹¹ The Accords also promised that the Colombian government would offer assistance to reestablish civility in Colombia and permit its citizens to have the freedom of expression and the right to assembly.¹¹² This was a major move by the Colombian government as it showed the willingness to allow for peaceful assembly by members of the Liberal Party. The government showed that progress could occur in the country following the bloody political civil war of La Violencia. M-19 now had the ability to spread its message of democracy following years of suppression by the Colombian Conservative government. The document represented the chance

¹¹⁰ Belisario Betancur, *Acuerdos de Corinto*, August 24, 1984, <https://ucdpged.uu.se/peaceagreements/fulltext/Col%2020180824.pdf>.

¹¹¹ Belisario Betancur, *Acuerdos de Corinto*, 1-2.

¹¹² Belisario Betancur, *Acuerdos de Corinto*, 2.

at peace between two warring factions that wreaked havoc across Colombia for two generations. Unfortunately, that chance was lost, as the following chapter describes.

2.9 Conclusion: Chapter 2

Jaime Bateman's vision for M-19 was to inspire greater discussions of democracy in a government dominated by the Conservative party for over a century—a goal to be achieved through an inclusive “fiesta” of revolution. The M-19 realized that they were not the only party necessary for effective revolution in Colombia. They needed the Colombian people to see that governmental resistance was possible. They needed other guerilla organizations to see the possible unity to effect change. The Colombian government needed to be forced to respond to M-19's demands.

The M-19's early history represents the desire of an organization to inspire dialogue from political organizations that had been marginalized by a restrictive government. The M-19 has been misinterpreted as just another violent guerilla movement within Colombian history, but I argue that it was unique in several respects. Within the violent context of Colombian politics, the M-19 can be viewed as a well-structured organization that consisted of people using a variety of methods to foment political change and democratic reform in the nation. The M-19's actions showcased that they were different from other movements such as the FARC. The FARC espoused Marxist-Leninist ideology and used extreme violence to achieve its goals, turning to narcotraffic as a way to fund its operations. The M-19, on the other hand, developed the best hybrid of a political and militaristic organization. Although warlike and technically criminal, the actions taken by Jaime Bateman and the M-19 brought attention to the organization. The M-19 was founded on the principal for changing the political dynamics of Colombia and made strides to ensure that the people of Colombia knew that the M-19's efforts to effect change were serious.

The tone of Bateman's interview in 1983 indicates that the M-19 might well have had the possibility of achieving peace with Belisario Betancur's administration. Bateman's tragic death in 1983, however, led to instability within the M-19 and established that violence was the immediate future for the organization. At the same time, as the next chapter explores, the government also became more violent, failing to live up to the terms of the peace accords. Most importantly, however, if there is one lesson to be learned from the interview with Jaime Bateman, it is that the M-19 was a resourceful and cunning guerilla organization with the support to be more powerful than the FARC and other guerilla movements in Colombia in the 1980s. Their reputation preceded them and continues to do so.

3 CHAPTER 3: THE PARTY CHANGES TONE, AGAIN AND AGAIN: THE M-19'S DARKEST YEARS, 1985-1990

3.1 Introduction

What makes an event, place, or group memorable? The M-19 is infamously remembered for their association with the Siege of the Palace of Justice. The carnage witnessed by countless Colombians in November of 1985 casted the M-19 as a group of villains in the historical narrative of Colombia. Most remember the Palace of Justice as a tragedy for the lives lost. While true, the Siege of the Palace of Justice was a tragedy for the M-19 as it nearly destroyed any potential that they had to operate in peace in Colombia. The destruction of the Palace of Justice represents more than the desecration of a national symbol, but the erosion of trust between the government and its people. The Palace of Justice stood as a symbol of truth and fell to the ground in a handful of days. The Siege of the Palace of Justice was inevitable as evinced by the events of the M-19's formation.

In this chapter, the narrative of the Siege of the Palace of Justice will be explored as a tragedy from the perspective of the Colombian government and the M-19. The chapter will also examine the aftermath of the siege and discuss why the M-19's reputation was so stained after the destruction of the Palace of Justice. As with many tragedies, there are often more questions than answers. This chapter hopes to clear the smoke that still rises from the ashes of the Palace of Justice. Like many tragedies, wounds have not healed since then. Many blame the M-19 for the destruction of the Palace of Justice. Others blame the Colombian government for the way that they handled the M-19 throughout the siege. It is important to examine what truly happened at the Siege of the Palace of Justice because what happened is far more problematic than the narratives purported by supporters of the M-19 or the Colombian government.

3.2 The Siege of the Palace of Justice

For over a year, the M-19 began the process of deescalating their violent actions in Colombia. The problem with de-escalation is that the M-19 still had skirmishes with the Colombian military following the signing of the Corinth Accords. Although Betancur wanted to bring peace to Colombia, members of the Colombian military did not believe that the M-19 needed to be offered peace.¹¹³ The military used paramilitary forces to assault and intimidate supporters of the M-19 and other movements suspected of Communist ties. The problem with peace accords is that they are great in theory, but are harder to fulfill when the accords tried to bring peace to two that were at war for almost four decades. Following skirmishes with the Colombian military, the M-19 resumed their violent activities.

The morning of November 6th, 1985 was calm and quiet as members of the M-19 prepared to enter the most tragic day in Colombian political history. At 11:35 AM, the M-19 members arrived in a motorcade of trucks, and entered the Palace of Justice through the basement of the building. The Palace of Justice is situated in the heart of Bogotá, D.C meaning that the M-19 struck directly at the heart of Colombian politics. This is crucial to understand as they had previously attacked locations in the periphery. To attack the Palace of Justice was to attack the head of the government. The M-19 quickly captured the Palace of Justice with swift ease and took everyone hostage as they seized each floor. The organization of the siege represented a calculated series of tactics that were built over many years of training. In total, the guerillas took three hundred people hostage including to twenty magistrates and twenty justices.

¹¹³ Human Rights Watch Arms Project, *Colombia's Killer Networks: The Military-Paramilitary Partnership and the United States* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1996), 50-55.

he M-19 quickly apprehended the President of the Supreme Court of Colombia, Alfonso Reyes Echandía. In total 300 people became hostages during the M-19's siege.¹¹⁴

The building was quickly surrounded by the Colombian military as officers began to analyze how to regain control of the palace. Over the course of November 6th, the Colombian military rescued over two-hundred hostages from the Palace of Justice amid the exchange of gunfire. Bullets rained from the roof top of the Palace of Justice as the M-19 fired upon the troops who tried to enter the palace through the front doors. This was achieved when the military introduced tanks and armored vehicles into the battle and broke down the entrance to the palace.¹¹⁵

Chaos continued throughout the day. The Red Cross tended to the rescued hostages in the middle of the siege.¹¹⁶ Many hostages were escorted across to the nearby Casa de Flores that was adjacent to the Palace of Justice to take cover from the gunfight. The M-19 demanded to have access to the Colombian media to broadcast their message of democracy to the whole nation. The M-19 sought to weaponize the very thing that their founder used to communicate with Colombia, the media.¹¹⁷ The actions taken by the M-19 showcase desperation as the organization struggled to negotiate with the government. The M-19 demanded that Betancur come to the Palace of Justice to treat with them directly.¹¹⁸ The M-19 knew that Betancur sought peace with guerilla movements, and wanted a new deal with Betancur to initiate dialogues again. To the M-19's

¹¹⁴ "Cronología del asalto," *El Tiempo*, November 7th, 1985, 9A.

¹¹⁵ "Cronología del asalto," *El Tiempo*, November 7th, 1985, 9A.

¹¹⁶ "Llamado a donantes de sangre," *El Tiempo*, November 6th, 4A.

¹¹⁷ "Cronología del asalto," *El Tiempo*, November 7th, 1985, 9A.

¹¹⁸ "Cronología del asalto," *El Tiempo*, November 7th, 1985, 9A.

dismay, however, the Colombian military was successful in regaining access to the lower floors of the palace on November 6th, putting an end to their hopes.

Throughout the night of November 6th into November 7th, the Colombian military waged war against the 35 guerillas. Tanks and armored vehicles were brought to the Plaza de Bolívar and the military fired ballistic rounds at the edifice of the structure.¹¹⁹ In the midst of the gunfire, a literal fire began to break out within the Palace of Justice. The fire burned for hours and caused severe damage to the interior of the building. Over 6,000 cases and evidence were destroyed in the fire. At 3:30 PM on November 7th, the fight at the Palace of Justice came to an end as the military recaptured the Palace of Justice.¹²⁰

On the night of November 6th, then President Belisario Betancur commanded the Colombian Military to take back the Palace of Justice with force, placing Colonel Alfonso Plazas in command of the operation. As one headline read on November 7th, 1985, Betancur stated, “We will not negotiate.”¹²¹ It is reasonable that Betancur refused to negotiate with the M-19, since the attack was a violation of the Corinth Accords. Betancur had no other choice than to defend a symbol of national order. The Palace of Justice stood not only as a symbol for justice, but the symbol of the institution of law and order within Colombia. On the afternoon of the 7th, soldiers successfully stormed and retook the control of the building.

At the end of the conflict, ninety-five people died in total between guerillas and hostages.¹²² Twelve of the magistrates of the court, including the chief magistrate were killed in

¹¹⁹ “Cronología del asalto,” *El Tiempo*, November 7th, 1985, 9A.

¹²⁰ “Cronología del asalto,” *El Tiempo*, November 7th, 1985, 9A.

¹²¹ “No negociaremos: el Gobierno,” *El Tiempo*, November 7th, 1985.

¹²² “No negociaremos: el Gobierno,” *El Tiempo*, November 7th, 1985.

the Siege on the Palace of Justice.¹²³ The Palace of Justice receive extensive damage to its interior structure and required extensive rebuilding.¹²⁴ President Betancur claimed full responsibility for the failure to stop the tragic event.¹²⁵ Betancur received condolences from presidents from around the world just as his predecessor did after the Siege on the Dominican Embassy.¹²⁶ The question is how did the of aftermath of the Palace of Justice differ drastically from the aftermath Siege on the Dominican Embassy in 1985. Much of the destruction came because of the failure to listen to the demands of a changing guerilla organization and the drastic policy changes of a new administration.

3.3 The Aftermath of the Siege of the Palace of Justice

The Palace of Justice siege is rightly remembered as one of the worst tragedies in the history of Colombia, but it has not been fully analyzed, as a close examination of the facts reveals. As it stands there are two distinct narratives of the Siege of the Palace of Justice. The first narrative states that the siege came as a result of the connections that the M-19 had with narcoterrorists that operated in Colombia in the 1980s, holding that the M-19 was influenced to take the Palace of Justice on behalf of Pablo Escobar. The second narrative states that the M-19 was aggravated by the actions of the Colombian government and took the Palace of Justice as a means to seek revenge. While there is a little bit of truth in each of these narratives, neither provides a thorough analysis of the history of the event.

¹²³ “11 magistrados muertos; 85 el total de las victimas,” *El Tiempo*, November 9th, 1985.

¹²⁴ “Destruído el Palacio,” *El Tiempo*, November 10th, 1985.

¹²⁵ “Dice Betancur, ‘Asumo la responsabilidad,’” *El Tiempo*, November 7th, 1985.

¹²⁶ “Solidaridad mundial con el president Betancur,” *El Tiempo*, November 9th, 1985.

The connection between the M-19 and narcoterrorists such as Pablo Escobar became more prominent in the literature with the 2018 publication of *Loving Pablo, Hating Escobar* by Virginia Vallejo, Escobar's mistress. Vallejo asserts that Escobar was the primary organizer of the Siege of the Palace of Justice. She states that the Palace of Justice was a primary target for Pablo Escobar in 1985 because Pablo Escobar desired to clean his criminal record. According to Vallejo, the Colombian government utilized a room within the Palace of Justice to contain thousands of documents related to Pablo Escobar's criminal activity. In essence, the Colombian government was building a case against Escobar and attempt to bring him to justice. Escobar was also fought attempts at extradition agreements between Colombia and the United States. If Escobar could remove the possibility of the documents from the Palace of Justice, then his record would be cleansed.¹²⁷

There are some problems with Vallejo's account regarding Escobar's criminal documents. First, the Palace of Justice was a primary location for housing criminal cases in Colombia of national concern. However, Escobar was not the only criminal in Colombia that had documents against them in that building. Another problem with Vallejo's analysis is that it fails to consider the leadership structure of the M-19. In 1984, Alvaro Fayad was the primary organizer for the M-19 as a movement following the death of Jamie Bateman. This is proven in an article published in 1983 following the death of Bateman wherein it describes Alvaro Fayad's involvement in the organization and being the right hand to Jamie Bateman prior to his death.¹²⁸ While Vallejo claims that she saw Fayad leaving the meeting, the majority of the conversation about the Palace of Justice refers to Escobar speaking with Iván Marino Ospina. While Ospina

¹²⁷ Virginia Vallejo. *Loving Pablo, Hating Escobar*, trans. Megan McDowell, (New York: Vintage Books, 2018).

¹²⁸ Gabriel García Márquez, "Bateman: Misterio Sin Fin, Special issue," *Semana*, September 1983, 29.

was a crucial figure in the M-19's organization in the 1980s, he was not positioned to become the primary leader of the M-19 following Bateman's death. While it is possible for the conversation to have occurred between Pablo Escobar and Ospina, there is no evidence to suggest that Ospina had enough influence within the M-19 to convince the organization to attack the Palace of Justice on behalf of Pablo Escobar. This is further proven as Fayad was often with Bateman to travel abroad to receive training in guerilla warfare tactics. Fayad's military knowledge provided him with better clarity to plan and stage the attack outside of the influence of the narcoterrorist.¹²⁹

The second reason why Vallejo's analysis falls short is seen in statements made by the Colombian government in later years and up to the present day. To be sure, the government blamed narcotraffickers at the time of the event; the assertion that the M-19 attacked the Palace of Justice at the request of narcoterrorists was claimed as early as two days after the siege. One of the Colombian ministers of Justice associated Escobar and the narcoterrorists of Colombia with M-19's attack on the Palace of Justice mere days following the tragedy. Minister of Justice, Enrique Parejo Gonzalez, insinuated on November 8th, 1985 that the M-19 attacked the Palace of Justice two days earlier under the direction of drug traffickers. While the association between narcotraffickers and M-19 was made immediately made by certain officials, it does not mean that this was the unanimous position of the whole Colombian government. In the same 1985 article in which these charges were leveled, more members of the Colombian government refuted the claims that the M-19 attacked the Palace of Justice at the behest of any narcotraffickers, much less Pablo Escobar.¹³⁰ To the present day, the Colombian government refutes claims that the M-

¹²⁹ Gabriel García Marquez, "Bateman: Misterio Sin Fin, Special issue," *Semana*, September 1983, 29.

¹³⁰ "Narcotráfico está detrás de ataque contra la Corte," *El Tiempo*, November 8th, 1985.

19 attacked the Palace of Justice in connection to with narcotraffickers or under the direction of narcotraffickers.¹³¹ There is serious reason to doubt Vallejo's thesis.

It bears adding that Pablo Escobar would not have worked alongside the M-19 in 1984 because the M-19 had attacked a member of a family that was allied with Escobar's Medellín Cartel. In 1981, the M-19 kidnapped Martha Ochoa. Martha's family was closely associated with Pablo Escobar. Once notified of the group responsible for kidnapping Martha, Escobar established a militia known as *Muerte a Secuestradores* (Death to Kidnappers).¹³² Far from being puppets of Escobar or operating on his behalf, M-19 was being hunted by the chief drug lord of Colombia. The idea that narcotraffickers, such as Pablo Escobar, were attached to the M-19 makes sense in theory, but a close consideration of the historical record indicates that a long-term or even highly influential relationship between the two is highly unlikely. It appears even more unlikely when the events of the siege, and the culpability for them, are subjected to careful scrutiny.

3.4 Who's to Blame?

An overlooked problem with the narrative of the Siege of the Palace of Justice relates to the issue of who caused the most destruction. The Colombian military was given strict orders not to negotiate with the M-19. Yet, the examination of one figure showcases the reason why the death toll was high. Colonel Alfonso Plazas was placed in charge of Colombian forces at the Palace of Justice on November 6th. Plazas was desperate to retake the Palace. Under his

¹³¹ CLIPS4TIPS, "THE M-19 AND THE COLOMBIAN JUSTICE PALACE SIEGE," (SEPTEMBER 15TH, 2020), ACCESSED SEPTEMBER 2020, [HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=JIYUKQRK2RQ&LIST=PLXCA_BCN_HDUQYEUVYCPOLKPO--QHWGD&INDEX=21](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JIYUKQRK2RQ&list=PLXCA_BCN_HDUQYEUVYCPOLKPO--QHWGD&index=21)

¹³²Mark Bowden, *Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw* (New York: Grove Press, 2001), 42.

direction, tanks were sent into the Palace of Justice in an attempt to remove the M-19 members as well as to unleash an artillery barrage on the Palace of Justice. Footage from the Palace of Justice attack shows clearly that structural damage to the building came as a result of the actions of the Colombian military. The idea that the M-19 intentionally burned the Palace of Justice is simply out of the question once the evidence is reviewed.¹³³

Colonel Plazas' record is further muddled by the crimes that were uncovered in 2010. The Colombian government sentenced Plazas to prison after he was convicted of forcefully disappearing eleven hostages throughout the Siege of the Palace of Justice.¹³⁴ The Colombian military also came under great scrutiny when it was discovered that they were also responsible for kidnapping hostages as well. Once the military sequestered the specific hostages labeled "specials" (especiales), the hostages were then intensely interrogated to the point of death. Once the specials were killed, the military returned the bodies to the Palace of Justice to frame the M-19. One of the individuals killed by the military was Magistrate Carlos Horacio Urán Rojas.¹³⁵ In framing the M-19 for the murder of multiple civilians from the Siege of the Palace of Justice, the Colombian government was complicit in the attack on the Palace of Justice. It is ironic that the same government that wrought division in the era of La Violencia insured that the M-19 stood in a negative light.

¹³³ Clips4Tips. "The M-19 and the Colombian Justice Palace Siege." (September 15th, 2020), accessed September 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JlyUkqrK2rQ&list=PLXCA_BcN_HdUQYeuZVycpolKpQ--qHWGD&index=21

¹³⁴ Staff, "Colombian Colonel Alfonso Plazas Vega Sentenced to 30 years for forced disappearances." *Latin America News Dispatch*, June 10, 2010, <https://latindispatch.com/2010/06/10/colombian-colonel-alfonso-plazas-vega-sentenced-to-30-years-for-forced-disappearances/>

¹³⁵ "The Palace of Justice Siege Uran, et al. v. Plazas Vega," The Center for Justice & Accountability, last modified 2022, <https://cja.org/what-we-do/litigation/palace-of-justice/>

While the extent of how many hostages went missing due to Plazas' actions is debated, Plazas was responsible for shifting blame upon the M-19 for the disappearance of hostages. This is another example of how the history of the siege was distorted and misrepresented by the Colombian government. This does not diminish M-19's wrongful action of taking hostages, but this information exemplifies the problem of the use of a black and white narrative for what occurred at the Palace of Justice. The evidence presented above makes it clear that significant blame for the tragic events of 1985 lies with the government of Colombia. So too does a close comparison of the Palace of Justice Siege with the Dominican Embassy Siege that preceded it.

3.5 Sieges in Comparison

Comparing the two sieges necessitates examining the political shift that occurred in Colombia between 1980 and 1985. Both Turbay (1978-1982) and Betancur (1982-1986) were members of the Conservative Party in Colombia, but their presidencies show stark contrasts within the party. Turbay was a diplomatic figure who desired to maintain the image of the Colombian government on an international level. His response to the Siege on the Dominican Embassy makes it evident that he wanted to maintain good standing with the United States in the midst of the Cold War. Turbay understood the United States was not happy with a political situation in Latin America where Fidel Castro was involved. The willingness of the Colombian government to bring in international aid to help assuage the hostage situation was wise on the part of Turbay. With an American organization acting as the intermediary, the Colombian government was not responsible for handling the negotiation process. The price for a wise decision meant that the people of Colombia viewed the Turbay administration as weak.

Betancur's administration represents the opposite end of the spectrum as he believed that the violence that occurred in Colombia needed to be dealt with domestically. Betancur's previous

attempts to broker peace with the M-19 and other guerilla groups utterly collapsed when he responded with extreme violence to the Siege of the Palace of Justice. It is understandable why Betancur responded in greater force to the M-19. Betancur had expressed sympathies of peace through the Corinth Accords of 1984. For the M-19 to attack the Palace of Justice after signing the Corinth Accords, it was not only an affront to Betancur's administration, but also to the peace of Colombia. Retaliation appeared to be the best form of action to subdue the violence within the Palace of Justice. Betancur did not have the advantage of utilizing the Organization of American States to broker negotiations during the Siege of the Palace of Justice because the OAS assisted in times of multinational crises. Since the second siege only pertained to domestic hostages, Betancur needed to utilize domestic peace keeping forces to handle negotiations. Another important point about the Siege of the Palace of Justice is that M-19 was more violent than when they attacked the Dominican Embassy in 1980. The use of dramatic force was justified; however, the destruction led to a loss of morale among Colombians. To retaliate in greater force did not mean that Betancur operated in the best interest of the people. Betancur's legacy as a tough-on-guerilla administration established his complete failure in the handling of the Siege of the Palace of Justice.

3.6 What Happened to the M-19 After the Siege of the Palace of Justice?

The lack of clarity around the Siege of the Palace of Justice created a maelstrom of tribulation for the M-19. The M-19 virtually went underground after the events of the Siege of the Palace of Justice. The organization restructured its leadership and worked again towards peace with the Colombian government with the appointment of Carlos Pizarro Leongómez as the head of M-19. Pizarro is crucial to the history of the M-19 because he was able to negotiate a pardon deal with the Colombian government to absolve the M-19 of all former crimes against the

nation and establish the M-19 as a political party in December of 1989. The discussions took place under the administration of Virgilio Barco Vargas (1986-1990). Vargas was a member of the Liberal party and made efforts to make peace with the M-19 like his predecessors. Peace was finally successful in 1989 because both the Colombian government and the M-19 had leaders who were not quick to implement violent means to harm one another.¹³⁶

A part of the peace agreement required the formation of a committee known as the Table of Analysis and Agreement. Members of this committee were comprised of citizens and government officials to negotiate with the M-19. In the end, the negotiations guaranteed several reforms. First, the negotiations agreed to pursue electoral reform in Colombia and allow for more diverse parties to emerge. Second, the guerillas were integrated back into society and pardoned of all crimes. Third, the negotiations established the National Peace Fund to operate programs to assist regions that the guerillas supported prior to the peace deal. Fourth, the M-19 had to submit to the Catholic Church to provide direction during the peace process. Fifth, the M-19 needed to demobilize and abandon the use of weapons.¹³⁷

Demobilization was a sea-change for the M-19, and it was not easily achieved. As previously discussed, half of the M-19's identity was built upon the philosophy of necessary violence to enact change. There were members of the M-19 who were hesitant to disarm because many of them had physically fought for the organization and that was all that they had known. Rosemberg Pabón was an example of one of these members who did not want to disarm initially. Pabón's influence was essential as he led the Siege of the Dominican Embassy. Pabón was present

¹³⁶ Mauricio García Durán and Vera Grabe Loewner, Otty Patiño Hormaza, "M-19's Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics." *Berghof Series* no. 1 (2008): 26.

¹³⁷ Durán, Mauricio García, and Vera Grabe Loewner, Otty Patiño Hormaza. "M-19's Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics." *Berghof Series* no. 1 (2008): 26.

at the peace dialogues in 1989 and was convinced to disarm once three hundred people from his hometown of Yumbo begged him to disarm and become their political leader.¹³⁸ Pabón relented and agreed to help in the peace dialogues. It was evident that the people of Colombia wanted change; even supporters of the M-19 realized the need to reduce violence in the country. The Colombian citizens pushed for the disarmament and placed significant pressure upon the M-19. The M-19 intended to fight to defend oppressed Colombians, but now they faced the reality that the people no longer wanted the M-19 to fight physically on their behalf. The peace dialogues were not only crucial for the establishment of a new phase for the M-19 as a movement. The peace dialogues opened the door for other guerilla movements to disarm and join the political process.¹³⁹ All of this occurred under the watchful eye of the Colombian media and people. News organizations documented the disarmament of the M-19 and the transition into their next phase as a political movement. It is ironic as the media played a central role in the M-19's history from the Siege on the Dominican Embassy and they also reported the final peace of the M-19. News organizations were present as Pizarro handed over his weapons to the Colombian government which marked a new era for the organization.

As the media reported on the M-19 throughout the negotiations, the news also broadcasted the murder of one of the M-19's members by a member of the Colombian police. Previously in 1983, M-19 retaliated against the Colombian government after their members were attacked amid peace negotiations which led to the Siege of the Palace of Justice. By 1989, the M-19 changed their approach and the Colombian government arrested the individual responsible for the attack on the M-19 member. The way that both the government and the M-19 responded to

¹³⁸ Durán, Loewenherz, and Hormaza "M-19's Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics," 27.

¹³⁹ Durán, Loewenherz, and Hormaza "M-19's Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics," 34.

this situation showcases the kind of reasonable responses that might have averted previous tragedies such as the Siege of the Palace of Justice. The violence that took place at the Palace of Justice was unnecessary and so many lives did not need to be lost. The M-19 had the potential to exist as an organization that strove for peace and discontinue the violence. In 1989, the M-19 wanted to exhibit that they had changed as an organization.¹⁴⁰

Once it was legalized as a political party, the organization rebranded itself with a new name, AD/M-19 (Democratic Alliance of M-19). The party's leader, Pizarro, wanted to run for elections to become president of Colombia in 1990. At this moment, the M-19 appeared to finally achieve what they desired for decades. However, the cycle of violence continued when Pizarro was assassinated in 1990. Pizarro was one of three presidential candidates to be assassinated during the 1990 election and the M-19 did not have a successful presidential candidate for the remainder of the 20th century. Despite Pizarro's death, the M-19 was able to continue forward once they fully disarmed and became involved in Colombian politics. Several members became senators and began to enact change within the government. However, the M-19 lacked cohesion after the death of Pizarro. Without proper leadership, the M-19 lost momentum, and political support for the party dwindled by the early 2000s. The M-19's years of positive influence were overshadowed by their dark past.¹⁴¹

3.7 Conclusion: Chapter 3

The tragedy experienced at the Palace of Justice can be simplified to the issue of leadership. Both the M-19 and the Colombian government were led by figures who sought violence as the final solution to their confrontation. It was only when the Colombian government

¹⁴⁰ Durán, Loewenherz, and Hormaza "M-19's Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics," 34.

¹⁴¹ Durán, Loewenherz, and Hormaza "M-19's Journey from Armed Struggle to Democratic Politics," 35.

decided to make peace with M-19 that circumstances changed. The reality is that the Siege of the Palace of Justice may not have happened if Jaime Bateman had not died in 1983. Bateman believed in necessary violence, but did not use hostage situations for more than the advancement of M-19's message. If Bateman's words about necessary violence were observed by the Colombian media, then there would not have been any association between the M-19 and narcoterrorists at the Siege of the Palace of Justice. The Colombian government was to blame for adding to the tragedy by torturing hostages at the palace. The Siege of the Palace of Justice was the image of a vengeful M-19, motivated by frustration towards the injustices made by the Colombian government. The M-19 adapted to their situation out of desperation.

Adaptation is an area that the M-19 excelled in at the beginning of their organization. They adapted skills and techniques from other guerilla organizations and were able to find the best ways to grow as an organization. When the M-19 adapted to become an official political organization, they had the opportunity to make changes in Colombian politics. The issue is that the M-19 lacked political experience because they spent much of their existence learning military tactics rather than political tactics. By the time that the M-19 became an official political apparatus, the personnel that had the skills to lead the organization politically had been killed or before they had the chance to lead the organization politically. It is understandable why the M-19 faltered from 1985-1991 because the organization was not ready to be a political apparatus alone. The structural organization of the M-19 necessitated a symbiotic relationship between political and militaristic only to be taken over by a militaristic focus.

While this era was not the final chapter of the M-19's history, it provides several notes that other guerilla movements can examine. Peace is not accomplished by following a pre-established model, but through the adaptation of strategies that best fit the situation the

organization. The peace agreements reached in 1983 and 1989 were both interrupted by the murder of M-19 members by government officials. Finally, the difference was in the way that M-19 and the Colombian government responded to tragedy. The greatest possible triumph for the M-19 of the mid-1980s was their ability to pave the way for future generations to learn from their mistakes.

4 CONCLUSION: WHEN DOES THE PARTY END?

Jaime Bateman once stated that the Revolution that the revolution he and his followers enacted was a party—a party in which a diverse coalition of rebels would work together to bring about democratic reform and a more just nation. The question is, “when does the party end?” At the time of this writing, the legacy of M-19 is still felt by modern Colombians. On June 19th, 2022, President-elect Gustavo Petro, a former member of the M-19, was elected to the office of President of Colombia. Petro stands as the first progressive candidate to assume the office of president in the history of Colombia. Petro has expressed a dramatic change to the way in which Colombia operates as a nation. Although Petro switched party affiliations from AD-M19 to Colombia Humana, his roots within the M-19 are deep enough that Colombians are beginning to revisit the history of the M-19 and the organization’s impact on the nation’s history. Petro’s win in the 2022 election echoes the call of his former leaders as they emphasized the importance of democracy within Colombia. Through this democratic system, the M-19 now claims a major victory forty-seven years after a small group began the movement when they stole the sword of Simón Bolívar in 1974. Is Jaime Bateman’s famous revolutionary fiesta finally coming to an end?

The future is uncertain for Colombia. The nation has been dominated by Conservative politicians for over a century. The election of a former member of the M-19 will create a dynamic shift within Colombia for decades to come. Jaime Bateman’s words have now entered social media platforms through the campaign of Gustav Petro. Videos of Bateman’s interactions with the Colombian media and Pizarro’s negotiations with the Colombian government are circulating once again. Young people in Colombia are now experiencing the story of the M-19 and Jaime Bateman in a new light. People around the world will watch as Colombia takes a new

step into the future. While the future of Colombia is uncertain, it is certain that the party goes on. The revolution that started at the Quinta de Bolívar where the sword of Simón Bolívar was stolen, will continue as the M-19 continues to live on through its political and social descendants. Of course, the revolution will be distorted as media about the M-19 has inaccurately depicted the history of the M-19. Nonetheless, the story of the M-19 will be heard as one of its members pioneers a new path for the legacy of the infamous organization.

Despite the calamity of La Violencia, the M-19 rose as a phoenix from the ashes. There are important lessons that can be learned from the M-19's history. The Siege on the Dominican Embassy and the Siege of the Palace of Justice showcase how the M-19 made attempts to show how important democratic changes were to the organization. The M-19 responded in violence because violence was the pattern that was established in Colombia since the end of World War II. The M-19 conformed to the pattern of violence that was common in Colombia in the 1980s.

The history of the M-19 is a history from below. Until 2022, the M-19 has been in the background of Colombian history. The Siege of the Palace of Justice will always mark the history of the M-19 as a tragedy. However, it is important that the M-19's full history is examined to show how the organization struggled with the political establishment to have their perspective presented on the national stage. The M-19 was an expression of the frustration of people who sought to revolutionize their nation during the violent turmoil of the Cold War. The M-19 is not merely a footnote in the history of Colombia, but an important part of Colombia's history during the Cold War.

As the history of the M-19 is explored in the coming years, it is important that the organization is examined as constantly evolving. The M-19 has always been about change, and it is evident throughout their history. Current analysts, looking to history, should expect the

unexpected. Jaime Bateman would never have imagined a member of M-19 becoming the President of Colombia less than 100 years after the movement's establishment. While the majority of its founders are no longer present, the descendants of the M-19 will shape Colombia's future and will have the words of Bateman to reflect upon. It will be fascinating to watch if Gustavo Petro reminisces on the words of his former leader. The legacy of Jaime Bateman and the M-19 now live in Gustavo Petro. The revolution is a fiesta, and the party is just getting started.

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