The London School of Economics and Political Science

Aquí como allá: Colombian transnational identities, the Spanish Civil War and its legacies

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Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

I warrant that this authorisation does not, to the best of my belief, infringe the rights of any third party.

I declare that my thesis consists of 100,896 words.

Abstract

This thesis aims to globalise Colombia's early twentieth-century history by offering a transnational account of how local interactions with the Spanish Civil War and its legacies impacted the country's nation-building process in the 1930s and 1940s. Colombia was undergoing what has been described as its first foray into modernisation when fighting erupted across the Atlantic. There was intense interest in Spain amongst large swathes of Colombian society and across the political spectrum. However, the perceived parallels between the two nation's contemporary politics as well as the weight of their historic ties, ensured that many Colombians also understood their own national and international aspirations through the prism of Spanish events. These groups and individuals then imported ideas, rhetoric and even people from Spain to construct multiple and competing visions of Colombia's future. In response, the Liberal government reformulated a nineteenth century narrative of Colombian insularity into one of Colombian exceptionalism which they used to claim that their nation-building project was free from any foreign influence and therefore downplay the significance of the Spanish Civil War.

The myth of Colombian exceptionalism has long shaped how historians understand the country's 1930s and early 1940s. This thesis aims to change the narrative by uncovering the diverse ways in which a broad range of Colombians interpreted Spanish events; interacted with news, ideas and people from the peninsula; and applied these multiple understandings to their local, national and regional contexts from 1936 to 1945. Drawing on research in four countries across nineteen archives and five oral histories, it argues that the history of early twentieth-century Colombian nation-building cannot be understood without reference to developments outside the country's borders. In turn, using the Spanish Civil War as a lens to examine Colombian politics and society during this period reveals a greater plurality than has hitherto been recognised.

Contents

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Ana María and María Antonieta Busquets, Judit Gómez and German Téllez, and I want to thank them and their families for sharing their stories with me and for making me feel so welcome.

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List of abbreviations

ACC – *Acción Católica Colombiana*
ANP – *Acción Nacionalista Popular*, Colombia
ARE – *Acción Republicana Española*
BIS – Basque Intelligence Service
CCF – Congress for Cultural Freedom, USA
FET-JONS – *Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista*
JARE – *Junta de Auxilio a los Republicanos Españoles*
JEL – *Junta de Liberación Española*
Leopardos – *Legión Organizada para la Restauración del Orden Social*, Colombia
MEE – *Ministerio de Estado*, Spain
MEN – *Ministerio de Educación Nacional*, Colombia
MOOPP – *Ministerio de Obras Públicas*, Colombia
MRREE – *Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores*, Colombia
OSS – Office of Strategic Services, USA
PCC – *Partido Comunista de Colombia*
PCE – *Partido Comunista de España*
PSOE – *Partido Socialista Obrero Español*
SIN – *Servicio Interior de Noticias*, Colombia
SIS – Special Intelligence Service, USA
UNEC – *Unión Nacional de Estudiantes Conservadores*, Colombia

Map of Colombia

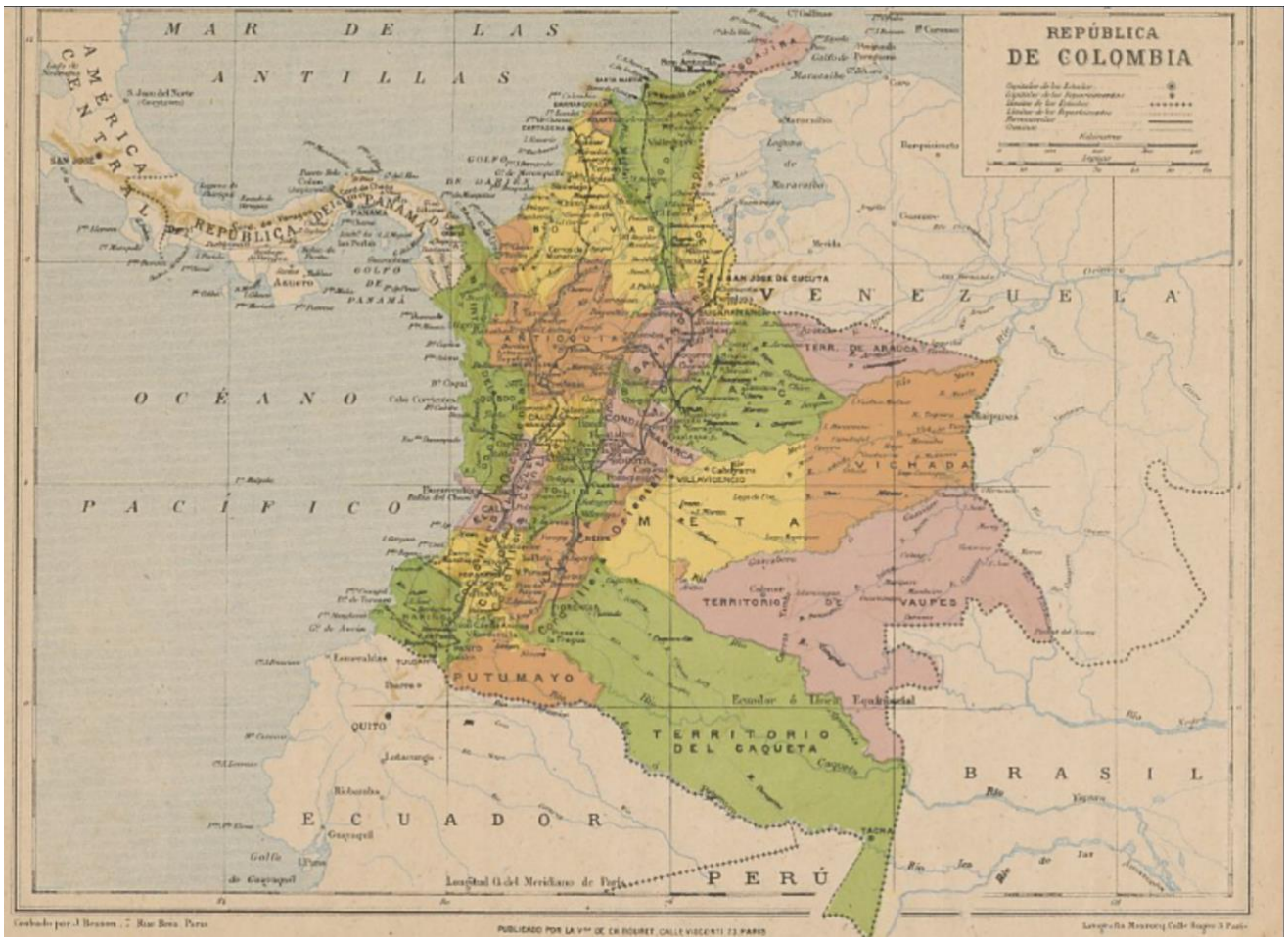

Figure 1: Map of Colombia, 1930. La Mapoteca Digital, Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia. https://catalogoenlinea.bibliotecanacional.gov.co/custom/web/content/mapoteca/fmapoteca_197_fnavas_89/fmapoteca_197_fnavas_89.html

Introduction

In September 1936, the Colombian president and leader of the Liberal party, Alfonso López Pumarejo, gave an interview to the new Bogotá daily newspaper *La Razón*. In it, the president referred to 'two characteristics of the Colombian people'. The first, he explained, was their 'tendency to assume everything foreign as their own and even sometimes place it above our own issues without stopping to think first whether the matter in question suits our character and corresponds to our reality'. The second issue, according to López, was the population's 'overactive imagination which, together with their lack of insight, creates an atmosphere of restlessness, exaggeration, gossip and deceit'.[1] The interview had been set up so that the president could elucidate his government's attitude on its social policy, but these scathing comments published in the ensuant news story belied the real motive behind the move. López took the opportunity to forcefully deny the existence of a 'Popular Front' in Colombia – something he described as 'an exotic movement' – and, in so doing, stake the claim that his government was free from foreign influence.

Even as López downplayed the direct importance of external events, however, the motive for his comments was unfolding 5,000 miles away across the Atlantic. The Spanish Civil War had erupted two months prior and immediately captivated the attention of wide swathes of Colombian society. This was the 'matter in question' that the president referred to. As part of this intrigue, groups and individuals on the left of the Colombian political spectrum looked to the Popular Front government in Spain – a coalition of centrist and leftist parties – and called for their own version at home to confront the growing opposition from Conservative and Catholic groups. This opposition, in turn, pointed to what they saw as the violent excesses of the Spanish regime – including burning churches and assassinating right-wing individuals – to claim that López and his supporters were attempting to do the same in Colombia. Hence the president's rush to refute the applicability of Popular Front politics in the country.

Such assertions about the supposed insularity of Colombian politics from foreign influence have not been limited to the early twentieth century.[2] Rather, López's statements represent one more step on the path to constructing a myth of Colombian exceptionalism that for a long time shaped how the country understood itself and was understood. As a result, despite the clear implication that developments in Spain did in fact exercise significant influence in mid-1930s Colombian society, relatively little work has been done to comprehensively examine its impact in the country. This thesis will remedy this historiographical oversight by uncovering the diverse ways in which a broad range of Colombians – from political leaders to marginalised groups, diplomats to trade unionists – interpreted Spanish events. It examines how they interacted with news, ideas and people from the peninsula; and then how they applied these multiple understandings to their local, national and regional contexts from 1936 to 1945. It will argue that the history of early twentieth-century Colombian nation-building cannot be

[1] Quoted in *El Espectador*, 18-09-1936, p.1. All translations my own.

[2] Frédéric Martínez, *El nacionalismo cosmopolita: La referencia europea en la construcción nacional en Colombia, 1845-1900* (Banco de la República, 2001).

understood without reference to developments outside the country's borders. By using the Spanish Civil War as a lens to examine the country's politics and society at this critical moment, I reveal a deep engagement with international events and a greater plurality within Colombia than has hitherto been recognised in the 1930s and early 1940s.

Paralelismos

Across Latin America, economic growth in the early twentieth century brought growing and increasingly well organised working classes which, coupled with financial instability in the aftermath of the First World War and the Great Depression, gave rise to heightened labour militancy. The international proliferation of socialism and Bolshevism following the Mexican and Russian Revolutions also impacted Latin American societies as immigration from Europe as well as movement across the Americas fostered familiarity with socialist, communist and anarchist principles.[3] Colombia, too, felt these winds of change and the nineteenth-century tradition of artisan demands for incorporation into the republican system gave way to workers' calls for more structural changes.[4] Nascent communist parties both benefitted from and helped foment this growing labour movement. The Marxist *Partido Socialista Revolucionario* appeared in 1926, becoming the *Partido Comunista de Colombia* (PCC) in 1930 and undergoing a process of 'Bolshevisation' following its incorporation into the Communist International (Comintern).[5] Although still comparatively small, the PCC expanded in size and influence during the early 1930s and was responsible for important action across rural and urban areas.[6]

Against this international and national backdrop, in August 1930 and following over forty years of Conservative-led rule, the Liberal party returned to power in Colombia under President Enrique Olaya Herrera. The new regime came in on a platform of 'modernisation' which its leaders defined as greater industrialisation and wider political participation accompanied by social and educational reform to create a 'civilised' population with a strong sense of Colombian identity. This has led to the period from 1930 to 1946, when three Liberal presidents governed for four successive terms, being known collectively as the 'Liberal Republic'. However, many of these initiatives had their roots in the 1920s when the Conservative governments sought to capitalise on the coffee boom. Olaya was himself wedded to turn-of-the-century ideas of coalition governments, having served as minister in Washington under the outgoing government. He repaid the favour by appointing several

[3] Teresa Meade, *A History of Modern Latin America. 1800 to the Present* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010). p.175
[4] David Sowell, *The Early Colombian Labor Movement: Artisans and Politics in Bogotá, 1832-1919* (Temple University Press, 1992).
[5] Lázar Jeifets and Víctor Jeifets, "El Partido Comunista Colombiano desde su fundación y orientación hacia la "Transformación Bolchevique"," *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura* 28 (2001).
[6] Medófilo Medina, *Historia del partido comunista colombiano* (Centro de Estudios e Investigaciones Sociales, 1980). Chapter 2

Conservatives to important ministerial and other positions in his administration.[7] It was only when López came to power in 1934 that Colombia saw a shift to more overtly partisan politics with a distinctly socialist tinge. The new president seemed to understand that if his country were to become 'modern' it would need to be seen to respond to the needs of its many impoverished and disenfranchised citizens.[8]

When he assumed the presidency, López recognised the potential for serious social unrest and many of his actions as president were aimed at containing the labour movement and keeping it under the auspices of the Liberal party.[9] He thus instituted his *Revolución en Marcha*, a radical project that aimed to increase working-class participation in politics and society as well as reforming Colombia's electoral, tax and land distribution systems and its constitution. The constitutional reform, in particular, became highly controversial as it sought to radically alter the relationship between church and state. For this programme López drew upon socialist ideology and, after the Comintern's 1935 call for its members to seek political coalitions with non-communist parties in order to combat the rise of fascism, had the backing of the PCC. However, the *Revolución* was an explicitly Liberal project, and the president never formally recognised the communists' support.[10] Historians have subsequently debated the effectiveness of López's reformist programme, but in the mid-1930s it gained the approval of huge sectors of the rural and urban working classes who felt that their voices were being heard for the first time.[11]

As well as enhancing political aspirations, López's government – and the Liberal regime more broadly – also endeavoured to change notions of citizenship. It championed a discourse of *mestizaje* that, like similar movements in Mexico and Brazil, exalted the indigenous aspects of Colombian identity.[12] Similarly, the successive Liberal administrations passed several reforms that advanced women's rights, such as giving them autonomy over their own property and granting them access to higher education.[13] In reality, the policies did little to change these groups' position in society: *mestizaje* was an elite discourse that tended to essentialise Colombia's Indigenous populations and the Liberal Congress repeatedly voted down bills to introduce women's suffrage. However, they did provide an opportunity for traditionally marginalised sectors of society to push for greater inclusion.[14]

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[7] David Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself* (University of California Press, 1993). p.181

[8] Alvaro Tirado Mejía, *Aspectos políticos del primer gobierno de Alfonso López Pumarejo* (Instituto Colombiano de Cultura, 1981). pp.9-17

[9] Daniel Pécaut, *Política y sindicalismo en Colombia* (La Carreta, 1973).

[10] Óliver Mora Toscano, "La reforma laboral implementada durante el segundo gobierno de Alfonso López Pumarejo," *Apuntes del CENES* 35, 61 (2016).

[11] Mauricio Archila, *Cultura e identidad obrera: Colombia 1910-1945* (CINEP, 1991).

[12] Brett Troyan, "Re-Imagining the "Indian" and the State: Indigenismo in Colombia, 1926–1947," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 33, 65 (2008).

[13] Magdala Velásquez Toro, "La República Liberal y la lucha por los derechos civiles y políticos de las mujeres," in *Las mujeres en la historia de Colombia. Tomo I: Mujeres, Historia y Política*, ed. Magdala Velásquez Toro (Norma, 1995).

[14] Charity Coker Gonzalez, "Agitating for Their Rights: The Colombian Women's Movement, 1930-1957," *Pacific Historical Review* 69, 4 (2000); Francisco Javier Flórez Bolívar, "Celebrando y redefiniendo el mestizaje: raza y

At the same time as it generated expectations from below, the *Revolución* met with stark resistance from various groups led by the Conservative party and the Catholic Church. These two institutions, which had been formally intertwined since the 1886 constitution turned Colombia back into a confessional state, shared similar concerns about the Liberal regime but also had their own distinct causes for complaint. The Conservatives, who had been shocked by the violence that long-oppressed Liberals in Boyacá and Santander had unleashed against local Conservative groups following their victory in 1930, also objected to López's explicitly partisan rule which effectively shut them out of national politics. To protest against what Conservatives saw as an unfair situation, party leader Laureano Gómez announced a policy of electoral abstention in 1935 and took to attacking government policy in the press rather than debating it in Congress.[15] For their part, the Catholic hierarchy strongly opposed the Liberal reforms that sought to separate church and state and wrest public education away from religious control. This, too, had historical precedents: Colombia had been the first Latin American nation to establish a secular state under the Liberal government of 1863, although this only lasted 23 years. Catholics adopted a belligerent attitude towards the López government that was seeking to replicate this move, and they used their vast institutional machinery to attack the president and his ministers.[16]

Behind these immediate anxieties lurked what was considered a deeper, more threatening issue: communism. Colombians had been alerted to socialist ideologies since the Mexican Revolution which, although it did not produce a socialist government, certainly mobilised many adherents to socialism, particularly in the Villista and Zapatista armies. But Colombia was still under Conservative rule in the first decades of the twentieth century, so socialism did not appear to be a pressing concern. Even after the Bolshevik Revolution, the incipient nature of Colombia's working class tempered any real fears that a similar movement could happen there, although sporadic instances of social unrest would invariably provoke discussion about and measures to impede the 'communist threat'.[17] In the mid-1930s, however, a Liberal regime was promising to modernise the country by enhancing popular participation and transforming notions of citizenship, and a new president was adopting revolutionary rhetoric to drum up support from the working classes. The dangers of 'communism' suddenly seemed very real to those sectors that believed in a hierarchical society governed by Catholic values and geared towards the maintenance of social order. In Colombia, as elsewhere, anti-communism rose not necessarily in direct response to communism itself, but rather out of a wider constructed fear of distributive policies and challenge to existing hierarchies.[18]

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nación durante la República Liberal, Colombia, 1930-1946," *Memorias: Revista Digital de Historia y Arqueología desde el Caribe* 37 (2019).

[15] James Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia: The Laureano Gómez Years, 1889-1965* (University Press of Florida, 2001). pp.308-28

[16] Ricardo Arias, "Estado laico y catolicismo integral en Colombia. La reforma religiosa de López Pumarejo," *Historia Crítica* 19 (2000).

[17] Mario Alberto Cajas-Sarria, "El derecho contra el comunismo en Colombia, 1920-1956," *Izquierdas* 49 (2020).

[18] For an overview of interwar anti-communism: Marla Stone and Giuliana Chamedes, "Naming the Enemy: Anti-communism in Transnational Perspective," *Journal of Contemporary History* 53, 1 (2018).

The Spanish Civil War – which broke out in mid-1936, two years into López's presidency – magnified these issues and imbued them with new meanings. It became both a reason for heightened opposition to the Liberal regime and an issue with which to attack the Colombian government. However, the interest in Spain outlined above did not come from nowhere; the two countries' tightly connected histories ensured that, for many, the Spanish conflict seemed neither foreign nor irrelevant. Following centuries of colonial rule, independence leaders in Spain's former American colonies sought to separate themselves politically and administratively from Spain but ended up preserving many of the economic, racial, gender and cultural hierarchies that Spaniards had used to consolidate their rule across the continent. Though the process played out unevenly across nations and between parties – Conservatives continued to celebrate their Spanish heritage, for example, whilst Liberals attempted to overcome it – the general result of independence was highly racially-, gender- and class-stratified societies where inclusion and participation were mediated by perceived whiteness (i.e. Spanishness) and masculinity.[19] These structures remained intact well into the twentieth century meaning that, even as Republican leaders attempted to construct national identities, they still defined these nations either explicitly or implicitly in terms of their relationship to Spain.[20]

In the Colombian case, the superficial parallels between recent political developments and those across the Atlantic compounded this sense of historic entanglement. In April 1931, nine months after the Liberals returned to power in Colombia, republican forces in Spain united to overthrow King Alfonso XIII and establish the Second Republic. These developments were applauded across Spain's former American colonies, but ruling Colombian Liberals were particularly enthused to see Spain enter its own Republican era and began to imagine new possibilities for their country's future relationship with its former coloniser. The new Spanish constitution, which looked to reform the country politically, economically and socially, reflected Liberals' modernising plans for Colombia. However, these reforms provoked the ire of conservative and Catholic sectors in Spain who saw their interests threatened by policies such as the legalisation of divorce, land expropriation and the separation of church and state. The violent reaction and counterreaction from both sides of the political spectrum destabilised the new Republican government and polarised the country.[21] In turn, various Colombians began to express anxieties about the Liberals' own reformist experiment.

The concerns grew louder following the election of the Spanish Popular Front in February 1936. Although the new government won the popular vote, it did so by a small margin and amidst widespread accusations of electoral fraud – accusations that mirrored those levelled

[19] On the maintenance of colonial structures in post-independence Latin America: John Charles Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America* (W. W. Norton, 2006).
[20] Rebecca Earle, *The Return of the Native: Indians and Myth-Making in Spanish America, 1810-1930* (Duke University Press, 2007).
[21] For more on Spain's Second Republic: Henry Buckley, *The Life and Death of the Spanish Republic* (I.B. Tauris, 2013); Stanley Payne, *Spain's First Democracy: The Second Republic, 1931–1936* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993); Paul Preston, *Coming of the Spanish Civil War: Reform, Reaction and Revolution in the Second Republic* (Routledge, 1994).

during the Colombian elections that brought López to power two years earlier. The presence of socialists and communists in the Spanish government terrified observers across the Atlantic who were already worried about their own president's seeming flirtation with left-wing groups and ideologies. Spanish women's increasingly discernible involvement in left-wing political movements following the new government's decision to grant them full emancipation in 1931 also served as a worrying precedent for those who opposed greater women's advancement in Colombia. Compounding these fears, the Popular Front was unable to stem the anti-clerical violence that erupted in Spain following the election results and which reminded many Colombians of their own experiences following the Liberal victory in 1930. As a result of these apparent similarities, Colombia already had their eyes on the peninsula when, on 17 July 1936, a failed military coup in Spain turned into a protracted civil war. There, traditional, conservative and Catholic sectors coalesced to form a bloc that became known as the Nationalists and pitted themselves against the forces who remained loyal to the Spanish government and united under the Republican banner. Across the Atlantic, Colombian society seemed to divide in a similar manner.[22]

However, politics in Colombia did not split as smoothly down party lines as the country's bipartisan political system would suggest. Although the strength and persistence of the Conservative and Liberal parties meant that no other political group would reach power, the bipartisan system caused various factions to appear within these rival blocs. This was particularly true in the 1930s and 1940s when two opposing ideologies – fascism and communism – swept the globe. In Colombia, the history of colonialism shaped how the ideological struggle between communism and fascism played out. The country's experience of independence – in which the *criollo* Simón Bolívar liberated Nueva Granada from Spanish rule but then established a regime which preserved imperialism's unequal structures and repressive systems – meant that men of European descent continued to govern a diverse population. Early twentieth-century attempts to challenge this hierarchical and exclusive social order were therefore lumped under the banner of communism whilst the extreme right, although challenging the idea of a republican political system, sought to defend the cultural and societal norms of the postcolonial era.

As the president's reformist project unleashed aspirations from below and provoked attacks from the right, moderate Liberals (understood here as adhering to traditional liberal principles of individualism and freedom but less interested in radically altering their country's hierarchical and exclusive structures) began to question the expediency of introducing revolutionary rhetoric into Colombian politics. The combination of pressure from within and from without eventually forced López to halt his reformist programme in December 1936, and ultimately resulted in the election of Eduardo Santos in 1938. The new Liberal president adopted a much more conciliatory attitude towards Conservatives and was much less tolerant

[22] For more on the immediate causes of the Spanish Civil War: George Esenwein and Adrian Shubert, *Spain at War: The Spanish Civil War in Context, 1931-1939* (Longman, 1995); Paul Preston, *The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution and Revenge* (HarperCollins, 2006); Francisco Romero Salvadó, *The Spanish Civil War: Origins, Course and Outcomes* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

of the Colombian Left (defined as socialist and communist groups – anarchism was not a significant force in 1930s Colombia) which sparked a backlash from sectors of the latter who had been emboldened by López's *Revolución*.[23]

Similarly, the extreme right grew increasingly dissatisfied with Gómez's abstentionist stance which they felt was relegating the Conservative party to obscurity. Inspired by the violent tactics of right-wing authoritarian ideologies, they began to call for direct action (i.e. insurrection) to overcome what they saw as the revolutionary policies of the Liberal regime. Although a small Colombian fascist movement did appear briefly, much more impactful were the so-called nationalists who combined fascist tactics with Conservative ideology to mobilise the masses and reignite the party's desire to seize power. The latter have been referred to as fascists at the time and since but, in fact, they largely rejected the label, rooting themselves in a domestic authoritarian tradition combined with Pan-Hispanism. Indeed, as we will see in chapter five, some rightists joined forces with Spanish Falangists in pursuit of closer ties between Colombia and Spain. The nationalists temporarily formed a separate political group but quickly rejoined the Conservative folds as the party, partly in response to these events, lurched further to the right.[24] Amidst all of these developments, the spectre of the Spanish Civil War and its perceived implications for Colombia loomed large.

This thesis will trace the many echoes of the Spanish Civil War and its legacies in Colombia. It will show how competing ideas about nationhood in the 1930s combined with Colombians' understandings of the civil war in Spain in ways that were transformative to both. These novel interpretations, in turn, produced significant impacts across politics, culture and society. Following the trend set by a growing body of literature on the conflict's long shadow in the Hispanophone Atlantic which will be discussed in more detail below, I use the Spanish Civil War as a lens to interrogate Colombia's early twentieth-century nation-building project. Far from jarring with Colombian realities, public (and occasionally private) discussion of Spanish events reveals the different hopes and anxieties that existed amongst broad sectors of the population over their country's past, present and future. By uncovering these multiple accounts, the thesis seeks to understand the ways in which diverse Colombians conceptualised and articulated their nation's identity at home and as part of the wider world. In doing so, it challenges the long-standing narrative of insularity during the 'Liberal Republic' and reveals the increasingly contested nature of Colombian politics and society at this time.

This thesis thus contributes new understandings of, firstly, Colombia's relationship to international, transnational and global currents of the 1930s and 1940s. Secondly, it sheds new light on Colombia's political system, often thought of as constituting two hegemonic blocs centred in Bogotá. As I show, the political landscape was increasingly fractured as different groups applied different understandings of the global onto the local. Thirdly, this research highlights the gendered nature of citizenship underpinning the Liberal project, something that

[23] W. John Green, *Gaitanismo, Left Liberalism, and Popular Mobilization in Colombia* (University Press of Florida, 2003).

[24] César Ayala Diago, *El porvenir del pasado: Gilberto Alzate Avendaño, sensibilidad leoparda y democracia. La derecha colombiana de los años treinta.* (Fundación Gilberto Alzate Avendaño, 2007).

has been missed in the scant historiography on gender in Colombia during this period. Finally, it uncovers the significance of anti-communism as a political current in Colombia during this period, thereby inserting the country into existing works that examine the extent to which Latin America experienced an early Cold War.

The Spanish mirror

This thesis represents the first integrated and consolidated account of Colombian interactions with the Spanish Civil War and its legacies, alongside the impact the conflict had on national politics and society, international relations and transnational identities. I argue that different interpretations of events in Spain developed in response to both the events themselves and other groups' competing interpretations. Further, by putting developments during the war years into conversation with Colombia's experience of Republican exile, I show how conflicts over Spain's meaning during the war years also conditioned official and popular responses to the potential arrival of Republican refugees as the fighting drew to a close. Colombians' understanding of the Spanish Civil War and its significance for them also shaped their interactions with the exiles from Spain who did manage to enter the country. Foregrounding the wider impact of these multiple and varied interactions, this thesis argues that the existing literature has failed to properly account for the extensive and profound impact of the conflict in Colombia. In turn, it posits Colombia as a more significant centre of the 'global Spanish Civil War' than has hitherto been acknowledged.[25]

Despite the fact that Álvaro Tirado Mejía labelled the Spanish Civil War as probably the foreign event with the greatest impact on Colombian politics, the topic has received scant historiographical attention.[26] Few historians outside Colombia have taken up this thread whilst Colombian scholars have either glossed over the conflict altogether or made vague nods to its impact in the country without explaining how or why this occurred (Tirado's book is exemplary – despite his bold statement, he dedicated no more than a few pages to summarising Colombia's experience of the conflict). David Bushnell was the first historian to devote an entire chapter to the topic, and did a lot to lay the basis for future studies into the effect of the Spanish conflict in Colombia. However, his reliance on national (as opposed to regional and local) Liberal newspapers – the same newspapers that propagated López's interpretation of the conflict's impact – led him to conclude that these effects were more imagined than real, and that early twentieth-century Colombian history is better explained by domestic circumstances than European events.[27]

[25] Scholars interested in international histories of the Spanish Civil War are increasingly highlighting its global impact, arguing that the conflict and its reception across the world illuminates broader themes of religion, colonialism, revolution and internationalism. For an overview: Robert Schaffer, "The Spanish Civil War in "World History" Textbooks: Limitations and Possibilities," *World History Connected* 19, 1 (2022).
[26] Tirado Mejía, *Aspectos políticos del primer gobierno de Alfonso López Pumarejo*. p.344
[27] David Bushnell, 'Colombia', in: Mark Falcoff and Fredrick Pike, eds., *The Spanish Civil War, 1936-39: American Hemispheric Perspectives* (University of Nebraska Press, 1982).

In the past fifteen years, scholars with greater access to official Colombian and Spanish documentary sources have clearly shown how, even if the conflict's greatest impact in Colombia was on political imaginaries, this certainly had very real repercussions within the country. José Hernández has illustrated how the similarities between Colombia and Spain made the conflict resonate amongst Colombians whose preference for one side or another reflected their own political ideologies.[28] However, Hernández's book fails to address the implications of this for domestic politics and society. Taking up this thread, other scholars have focussed on the Spanish Civil War's role in fuelling political polarisation in early twentieth-century Colombia. Thomas Williford and Javier Guerrero-Barón argue that events in Spain helped create a discursive framework in which partisan violence became increasingly acceptable in the lead up to *la Violencia*.[29] Although demonstrating how globalising Colombia's history can help contextualise domestic phenomena, neither author focusses solely on the Spanish Civil War and their top-down focus obscures the way in which elite discourses were received and contested by other groups.

The role of the press is important in explaining how this political polarisation was able to occur. The expansion of communications in the early twentieth century meant that the press played an important role in Colombian society and, with few Colombians having direct access to reports from Spain, news media became the main source of information on the war. Contemporary Colombian newspapers reflected the ideological positions of their owners who tended to be political leaders. Stories from Spain were therefore interpreted and presented in terms of local events and for domestic political purposes, and the resultant commentary has unsurprisingly become one of the main source materials for those interested in studying the conflict's impact in Colombia. Perhaps because of the vehemence with which Conservatives used Spanish events to attack the Liberal government, the Colombian Right (Conservatives, members of the Catholic hierarchy and ultra-nationalist groups) has largely been the preferred subject of these historical works.[30] A doctoral thesis by Ciro Becerra, in which he examines *El Tiempo*'s reaction to the first few months of fighting, is the exception to this rule.[31] Yet voices from the other side of the political spectrum are noticeably absent from these analyses. By focussing solely on one political group or faction, the existing literature has been unable to account for how reactions to the Spanish Civil War developed in dialogue with each other and how different groups were also interpreting news from Spain through the prism of contested local realities.

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[28] José Angel Hernández García, *La Guerra Civil Espanola y Colombia: influencia del principio conflicto de entreguerras en Colombia* (Editorial Carrera 7a, 2006).

[29] Thomas Williford, *Armando los espíritus: political rhetoric in Colombia on the eve of La Violencia, 1930-1945* (Vanderbilt University, 2005); Javier Guerrero Barón, *El proceso político de las derechas en Colombia y los imaginarios sobre las guerras internacionales 1930-1945* (Lemoine Editores, 2014).

[30] Helwar Hernando Figueroa Salamanca, *Tradicionalismo, hispanismo y corporativismo: Una aproximación a las relaciones non sanctas entre religión y política en Colombia (1930-1952)* (Editorial Bonaventuriana, 2009); César Ayala Diago, "Trazos y trozos sobre el uso y abuso de la Guerra Civil Española en Colombia," *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura* 38, 2 (2011).

[31] Ciro Eduardo Becerra Rodríguez, "Receptividad en la prensa colombiana de la Guerra Civil Española durante los primeros meses del conflicto. Periódico El Tiempo" (Universidad de León, 2015).

Aside from Hernández, none of the above works cover the history of Republican exile despite the fact that, as elsewhere, this was the immediate legacy of the Spanish Civil War in Colombia. Separate studies of these individuals' experiences and trajectories have been undertaken by various Spanish and Colombian scholars. Amongst the former, there is a tendency to highlight the exiles' contribution to their host country as part of a wider push to recover the memory of Republican exile.[32] Though helping place Liberal reforms within a transnational context, the emphasis on contribution has obscured the meaningful interactions that exiles had with Colombians which in many case conditioned the level of impact they were able to have in the country. To a certain extent, Colombian scholars have opted to examine these conditions of possibility, most notably Renán Silva as an extension of his interest in the 'Liberal Republic'. He emphasises the political harmony between Liberal officials and the majority of exiles that both allowed the latter to arrive in the first place and ensured their success once in Colombia.[33] Yet Silva does not consider how this sense of ideological affinity was constructed as part of Colombians' response to the Spanish Civil War nor how it also served to exclude many other refugees who were not considered ideologically attuned to the Liberal project from entering the country.

By consolidating these two histories, this thesis argues that Republicans' attempt to get to, and subsequent arrival in, the country both helped reinforce identities that had been constructed over the past two-and-a-half years and contributed to the formation of new ones. I use Republican refugees as a lens to understand immigration policy and, in turn, how this reveals approaches to inclusion, exclusion and citizenship in Colombia. At the same time, I illustrate how these exiles in many cases became transnational actors making tangible the renewed ideas of Spanish-Colombian kinship that had arisen as a result of the civil war. Colombia thus became a centre within which transnational identities such as *Hispanidad*, Pan-Americanism and *Hispanismo* were formulated, debated and practiced.

Here, the issue of how we define 'refugee' and 'exile' is thrown into stark relief. Definitions of the two terms are fluid and contested both by the individuals themselves and historians who study forced migration.[34] Given the terminology used by many of those who felt compelled to leave Spain in their communications with Colombian consular and diplomatic officials, I use the term 'refugee' to describe those who applied for Colombian visas. However, when dealing with the experience of those who went to Colombia and remained tied to Republican organisations, I have opted to use 'exile' to reflect their political identities. Where

[32] María Eugenia Martínez Gorroño, *Españolas en Colombia: la huella cultural de mujeres exiliadas tras la guerra civil* (Fundación Españoles en el Mundo, 1999); María Eugenia Martínez Gorroño, "La educación en la Colombia liberal de los años 30 y 40: la trascendente contribución del exilio español consecuencia de la Guerra Civil 1936-1939," *Migraciones y Exilios* 4 (2004); María Eugenia Martínez Gorroño and Juan Luis Hernández Álvarez, "El impulso educativo, cultural, científico, deportivo y socioeconómico que significó el exilio español republicano en Colombia. Una significativa aportación al progreso," *ARBOR* 185, 739 (2009).

[33] Renán Silva, "La inmigración docente como posibilidad histórica: el caso de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1930-1950," *Revista Sociedad y Economía* 15 (2008); Renán Silva, "Política cultural e inmigración docente en el marco de la República Liberal," *Historia y Sociedad* 24 (2013).

[34] Soledad Lastra, ed., *Exilios: un campo de estudios en expansión* (CLASCO, 2018); Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

applicable, I have indicated when the individuals themselves have questioned these identities, using this as a platform to interrogate the terms more deeply.

Colombia in the world

By tracing various Colombians' interactions with Spain, this thesis aims to globalise Colombia's 'Liberal Republic', adopting an understanding of global history that examines the intersection between the local and the global.[35] What follows is an account of how Colombians formed national and transnational identities in the context of international developments and through a process of cross-border exchange. I prioritise an approach that localises the global by focussing on local actors and processes and examining the extent to which they were shaped by a multiplicity of cross-border interactions.[36] To tell this story, I draw on methods of international and transnational history which illuminate Spanish-Colombian diplomatic relations as well as the transnational exchange of news, ideas and people between Colombia and Spain. In doing so, I contend that different Colombian identities developed in the 1930s and early 1940s in conversation with events occurring across the Atlantic in a country that was widely understood to have a significant connection to the Hispanophone Atlantic. These identities, in turn, shaped the ways in which diverse Colombians imaged their relationship with each other and the rest of the world. I therefore challenge the myth of Colombian exceptionalism that evolved during this period, arguing instead that the country's leaders were deeply concerned with international events and its people were entangled within global currents.

Colombia's alleged 'exceptionalism' has been described positively in terms of Colombia's strong electoral tradition, relative political stability and enduring democracy; and negatively with reference to its chronically weak state, pronounced regionalism and continual violent partisan conflict. Such descriptions have been shaped by and helped further the image of Colombia as a 'country apart': both different from other Latin American nations and seemingly cut off from them and the rest of the world. Colombia's apparent divergence from regional trends has been particularly pronounced since the 1900s, and so many scholars historically emphasised the importance of understanding twentieth-century Colombia on its own terms.[37]

Of course, this does not mean that Colombia has been presented as completely isolated from broader processes. Accounts of the coffee and narcotics booms recognise how the country's integration into licit and illicit global markets has strongly shaped the development of the nation-state.[38] Historians of the Caribbean region, in particular, emphasise the

[35] Sebastian Conrad, *What is Global History?* (Princeton University Press, 2016). This is one of three approaches that Conrad categorises as 'reactions to the challenge of the "global"' in pp.6-11.
[36] Tanya Harmer, "Towards a global history of the Unidad Popular," *Radical Americas* 6, 1 (2021).
[37] Michael LaRosa and Germán Mejía, *Colombia: A Concise Contemporary History* (Rowman & LIttlefield Publishers, 2012). p.218
[38] For example: Marco Palacios, *Coffee in Colombia, 1850-1970: An economic, social and political history* (Cambridge University Press, 1989); Lina Britto, *Marijuana Boom: The Rise and Fall of Colombia's First Drug Paradise* (University of California Press, 2020).

circulation of people, investment and ideas from abroad.[39] A new body of work has begun to explicitly study Colombia in a global context, revealing how plebian consumers in the country altered world trade in the nineteenth century; how developmental projects in mid-twentieth century Colombia facilitated the rise of the US welfare state; and how a Colombian middle-class identity grew out of transnational discussions about democracy.[40] Yet very little work in a similar vein has been done on the 1930s and early 1940s, a notable oversight when we consider that this was a moment of significant ideological and political upheaval in both Colombia and across the world. Indeed, a newly released volume which seeks explicitly to explore 'how Colombia illustrates fundamental questions about the modern histories of the Americas' only has one chapter on these two decades that explicitly looks at how Colombians interacted with the outside world, the topic of which will be discussed below.[41] Inspired by the aforementioned works, this thesis seeks to understand how processes of state-building and identity formation during this period were shaped by international events and instances of cross-border exchange.

The 'Liberal Republic' has overwhelmingly been the subject of inward-looking histories, in part because, as we saw at the beginning of this introduction, its originators constantly stated that they were crafting a distinctly Colombian modernity. For many years, the historiography largely focussed on politics and was therefore extremely critical of the four Liberal governments' ultimate failure to modernise Colombian society in the face of intense external opposition to and internal skittishness about the consequences of reform.[42] More recent studies have attempted to remedy this view by drawing upon social and cultural histories to introduce more nuanced accounts of the period.[43] Collectively, these accounts show how the successive Liberal governments did manage to innovate in the field of culture and on social issues, even if these initiatives resulted in the essentialisation rather than the incorporation of the popular masses and thus served to reinforce unequal power relations.

To varying degrees, the authors of works on the 'Liberal Republic' place national developments in their international context. They find that many educational achievements were the joint endeavour of Colombian intellectuals and foreign professors; that Liberals'

[39] For example: Marixa Lasso, *Erased: The Untold Story of the Panama Canal* (Harvard University Press, 2019). Catherine LeGrand, "Living in Macondo: Economy and Culture in a United Fruit Company Banana Enclave in Colombia," in *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. LeGrand, and Ricardo D. Salvatore (2020).

[40] Ana María Otero-Cleves, *Plebeian Consumers: Global Connections, Local Trade, and Foreign Goods in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Cambridge University Press, 2024); Amy Offner, *Sorting Out The Mixed Economy: The Rise and Fall of Welfare and Developmental States in the Americas* (Princeton University Press, 2019); Ricardo López-Pedreros, *Makers of Democracy: A Transnational History of the Middle Classes in Colombia* (Duke University Press, 2019).

[41] 'Preface: Colombia Revisited,' in: Lina Britto and Ricardo López-Pedreros, eds., *Histories of Solitude* (Routledge, 2024). pp.xxv; Francisco Javier Flórez Bolívar, George Palacios, and Ana Milena Rhenals Doria, "Darkening José Vasconcelos: Nation, Mestizaje, and The Cosmic Race in Black Terms, Colombia, 1930–1946," in: Britto and López-Pedreros, eds., *Histories of Solitude*.

[42] For example: Daniel Pécaut, *Orden y violencia. Evolución socio-política de Colombia entre 1930-1953* (Norma, 2001); Paul Oquist, *Violence, Conflict, and Politics in Colombia* (Academic Press, 1980).

[43] Rubén Sierra Mejía, ed., *República Liberal: sociedad y cultura* (Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2009).

desire to create a 'popular culture' arose out of an international environment in which it seemed that America would be the new beacon of Western democracy; and that the government's failure to deepen democracy in Colombia was remarkably similar to other global experiences of democracy and the Liberal state. However, the main scale of analysis for such studies remains national as they attempt to rescue or historicise some of the Liberals' main and enduring achievements and legacies.[44]

Placed into conversation with the above works, this thesis shows that the Spanish Civil War occurred at a time when the Liberal government was trying to construct a static idea of 'popular culture' seen as folkloric and rooted in national traditions. The widespread interest in Spain clashed with their attempts to reformulate Colombian identity around a distinctly local axis, which helps explain why López hastened to downplay the significance of 'exotic' movements in the country. However, as we will see, separate political groups had different ideas about what was foreign in a Colombian context. By using the development of the Spanish Civil War as my starting point to examine these processes, I elucidate the global dimension of Colombian identity formation in the early twentieth century. Notions of what 'local' meant were subject to outside influence, either by emulation or rejection, and consolidating a 'national' sense was also a way of projecting that nation externally. In short, Colombian exceptionalism during the 1930s and early 1940s was a Liberal construct that aimed to elide foreign influence whilst also providing a basis from which to situate the country internationally. It allowed Liberals to proclaim the authenticity of their nation-building project whilst also serving to marginalise popular groups who drew on international as well as local references for their national imaginaries.

Plurality

In examining these popular and regional groups' engagement with the Spanish Civil War, this thesis adds a new lens from which we can understand the plurality of Colombian politics and society in the 1930s and 1940s. It shows how politics was contested and driven from the regions as much as from the centre.[45] Across Colombia, groups and individuals did not just accept the exceptionalist narrative from Bogotá but also drew on international influences for their own political movements. Viewing wider society through this prism also reveals the workings of multiple and overlapping sites of sociability where the global met the local. Finally, by examining the numerous and conflicting interpretations of Spain's significance for contemporary Colombia, I contend that partisan identities were not the sole means by which Colombians understood their surroundings. This invites us to look beyond the Liberal-Conservative binary which characterises much of the historiography on the country's early

[44] Renán Silva, *República Liberal, intelectuales y cultura popular* (La Carreta, 2005); Catalina Muñoz Rojas, *A Fervent Crusade for the National Soul: Cultural Politics in Colombia, 1930–1946* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2022).
[45] Olga Acuña Rodríguez, *Construcción de ciudadanía en Boyacá durante la República Liberal 1930-1946* (Colección Investigación Uptc, 2010); Britto, *Marijuana Boom*.

twentieth century to recognise other political tendencies and groups that existed during this period.[46]

Colombia has long been understood as a fragmented nation even if that 'fragmentation' was a top-down discourse that sought to naturalise racial hierarchies in geographical and spatial terms. Over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, political and economic leaders in Colombia's main industrial, coffee producing and administrative hubs constructed the idea of a 'progressive, white/*mestizo*' centre and a 'backwards, Black/Indigenous' periphery to legitimise their own position atop the sociopolitical hierarchy.[47] This has led to assumptions that national politics was 'done' in Bogotá by *mestizo* elites whilst the racialised regions simply followed the centre or were out of the state's reach. At the same time as they associated political rule with whiteness, these elites also linked it to masculine authority and so denied women the right to vote and relegated them to the domestic sphere.[48] As such, Colombian women were largely considered apolitical actors in the country's nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Alongside this geographical fragmentation and gendered public-private spheres, Colombian politics is overwhelmingly viewed as a two-party system. As Liberals and Conservatives dominated government until the early 2000s, political developments are largely interpreted through this binary lens, with specific policies or ideas being attributed to either party.

Scholarship exploring the strategies employed by regional and popular groups to promote their own vision of democratic citizenship has therefore reframed our understanding of the state's role in society and the parameters of national inclusion and exclusion. In the early twentieth century, against a global backdrop of economic and ideological change and within a national framework of significant social reform, culture became a significant site for contestation, negotiation and accommodation. Catalina Muñoz-Rojas has examined how Colombian civil society's engagement with the Liberal regime's cultural policy pushed the four governments to widen the terms of inclusion by demanding access to culture as a right.[49] Whilst these groups sought to define their place within pre-determined definitions of national identity, others attempted to redefine that identity entirely. Francisco Flórez effectively shows how Liberals' exaltation of *mestizaje* during the 1930s provided the opportunity for Afro-Colombian intellectuals from the Pacific and Caribbean regions to demand that Black, Indigenous and European cultural expressions be given equal weight in this new conceptualisation of the Colombian nation.[50] Not all regional reimaginings of identity

[46] The leading political history of modern Colombia divides chapters covering the period 1849 to 1946 according to periods of Liberal and Conservative rule. Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*.
[47] Nancy Appelbaum, *Muddied Waters. Race, Region, and Local History in Colombia, 1846-1948* (Duke University Press, 2003).
[48] In this, Colombia's experience paralleled that of other Latin American nations. Nara Milanich, "Women, Gender, and Family in Latin America, 1820-2000," in *A Companion to Latin American History*, ed. Thomas Holloway (Wiley Blackwell, 2010).
[49] Catalina Muñoz-Rojas, "Cultural Politics from Below: Crafting Citizenship in Colombia, 1930-1946," in: Britto and López-Pedreros, eds., *Histories of Solitude*.
[50] Francisco Javier Flórez Bolívar, *La vanguardia intelectual y política de la nación: Historia de una intelectualidad negra y mulata en Colombia, 1877-1947* (Planeta, 2023).

championed greater inclusion, however. Ann Farnsworth-Alvear's groundbreaking study of gender relations in Antioquian textile mills during the first half of the twentieth century found that, at a time when López was looking to strengthen and centralise the state around a more secular and inclusive society, textile mill owners managed to implement their own Catholic, conservative and exclusionary vision of Medellín's industrial development which served to marginalise women from the workforce.[51]

Drawing upon these approaches, this thesis examines the national alongside the regional sphere, and both elite and non-elite interpretations of the Spanish Civil War. National actors include Liberal and Conservative leaders in Bogotá, legislators who debated policy in Congress and national newspapers. Those operating at the national level engaged practically and ideologically with the Spanish Civil War and the Republican exiles who came to Colombia in its aftermath but largely denied that they were inspired by these developments. Yet groups and individuals in towns and cities outside of Bogotá adopted the ideas, rhetoric and practices of the two warring factions and applied them to their local settings to both oppose domestic rivals and challenge the narrative coming from leaders in the capital. For the regional sphere, I focussed largely on groups and individuals in Antioquia, the Caribbean coast and Valle del Cauca because these were regions with large urban centres (and therefore active press industries) but that represented Colombia's geographical and social diversity.

Elites are understood as those who were either involved in policymaking, able to contribute to public debate, or both. Non-elites, on the other hand, represent popular groups who, despite being largely excluded from public debate and, in the case of women, denied full citizenship, often amplified the conflict's impact in Colombia by engaging in verbal or physical disputes over its significance in a local context. The term 'public debate' naturally assumes that there is a shared and accessible space within which such discussion occurs. Jürgen Habermas theorised that this arena was the 'public sphere' in which all individuals not involved in politics could come together to debate societal issues thereby constituting a common rationality that shaped and limited state action.[52] However, this rather narrow definition was based on eighteenth-century Western Europe and assumed perfect democracy. Colombia in the 1930s revealed a very different backdrop. As this thesis shows, national, regional and 'incipient' or 'plebeian' public spheres operated both in dialogue with and separate from each other when it came to discussion of Spain and its relevance for Colombian nationhood.

To differentiate between elite and non-elite sectors, I use 'Liberal' and 'Conservative' to refer to groups and individuals (either central or peripheral) who were involved in party politics and framed their support for either of the Spanish belligerents in terms of their political membership. In contrast, 'liberal' or 'conservative' represent members of wider Colombian society who expressed left- or right-wing views respectively but may not have been

[51] Ann Farnsworth-Alvear, *Dulcinea in the Factory: Myths Morals, Men and Women in Colombia's Industrial Experiment, 1905-1960* (Duke University Press, 2000).
[52] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (The MIT Press, 1991).

members of the two main political parties. As we will see, 'communist' was a term used frequently in 1930s Colombia even if the individual concerned was not a PCC member. To avoid further mischaracterisation, I use the lowercase term in all instances. By examining Colombian engagement with the Spanish Civil War from these multiple angles, I show how partisan identities were not the sole means by which Colombians understood their surroundings. The existence of cross-party convergence and intra-party tensions over Spain's significance that I uncover encourages us to see the divisions that existed within the Liberal and Conservative parties, as well as between them.

(Post)colonial histories

Viewing Colombia's early twentieth century through the prism of Spain sheds new light on the colonial legacy in the Hispanophone Atlantic. As already stated, Colombia's particular experience of decolonisation heavily shaped its post-independence social order. Discussions of race veiled in the language of regional difference and constructed notions of women's apoliticism contributed to a long history of denying Colombia's stark racial differences and persistent gender inequalities. In this context, I contend that discussions of the Spanish Civil War were also, at least in part, coded discussions of race and gender. By examining Colombian commentary of and responses to the conflict, I expose the malleability of ideas regarding gender and race as well as the practical implications of this. In doing so, I add a new dimension to understandings of the conflict's impact across Spain's former American colonies.

Scholars have for several years been debating how best to integrate Latin America into global histories that, in charting processes of globalisation or decolonisation, have largely ignored regional developments and, in turn, been eschewed by historians working in the region.[53] They argue that embracing global history would both help overcome the prevalent Eurocentrism within the trend and allow Latin Americanists to build multi-dimensional narratives of national histories by understanding how the continent was also shaped by the outside world. In particular, scholars from within Latin America have proposed a decolonised global history which would expand the geographic and temporal scope of postcolonialism, traditionally understood as the Asian and African experience of the mid-twentieth century, as well as reveal the complex global processes of exchange that resulted in the concept of the Latin American nation state within a hierarchical geopolitical organisation. Regional debates over nationhood, at the same time as they developed within a global framework, also helped shape the international system at different times and in diverse ways.

One particularly innovative response to the call to integrate Latin America into a broader vision of postcolonialism has been to view the region's twentieth-century history through a

[53] Matthew Brown, "The global history of Latin America," *Journal of Global History* 10 (2015); Fernando Coronil, "Latin American postcolonial studies and global decolonization," *Worlds & Knowledges Otherwise* 3, 3 (2013); Gabriela de Lima Grecco and Sven Schuster, "Hacia una historia global descolonizada: Una perspectiva Latinoamericana," *Esboços* 30, 55 (2023); Pablo Palomino, "On the Disadvantages of "Global South" for Latin American Studies," *Journal of World Philosophies* 4 (2019).

'Spanish lens'. Scholars opting for the (post)colonial route (so called because the Latin American experience illuminates certain sectors' desires to maintain aspects of colonialism) have demonstrated how, despite the relative weakness of formal ties between Spain and its former American colonies following independence, the former's continued struggle to dismantle colonial structures and practices ensured that the Spanish example remained relevant, at least to some groups, well into the twentieth century. Analysing these (post)colonial imaginaries can help elucidate some of the internal issues within individual countries and the region as a whole, as well as demonstrate how Latin Americans in many cases were not sidelined but instead participated actively in global movements such as anti-fascism, decolonisation and 'Third Way' politics.[54]

The best examples of such works do not just detail the Hispanophone Atlantic's interactions with Spain but place them in the context of local developments. Thanks to those works that have looked at the Spanish Civil War in particular, we now understand how the conflict became a mirror in which the fears and aspirations of various Latin American intellectuals were reflected;[55] how pro-Republican activity within Cuba both continued and transformed previous activism against national dictator Gerardo Machado;[56] how Republican exiles in Mexico contributed to revolutionary projects in Mexico;[57] and how the political polarisation that the conflict provoked in Argentina helped shape the country's politics over the next decade.[58]

Building upon the techniques used in these works, I show how the Spanish Civil War also reformulated notions of race and gender in 1930s Colombia. As the Liberal regime claimed to be building a more inclusive society and opposition groups fretted about the potential consequences, and as women, Indigenous groups and Afro-Colombians used the Spanish Civil War to push for greater recognition at home, ethnic and gender identity became associated with support for either of the warring factions. In turn, this reinforced Liberals' belief that Colombian women should not be granted greater political rights and drove them to block the arrival of 'Republican masses' in the conflict's aftermath. The former is particularly significant as it challenges the prevailing notion that women were increasingly empowered during the 'Liberal Republic'. Exploring Liberal leaders' response to the Spanish Civil War therefore shows how they were reluctant to dislodge Colombia's postcolonial structures even as they espoused the horrors of Spanish imperialism and claimed to be modernising their country in part by redefining notions of citizenship.

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[54] Daniel Doncel, "Antifascist Atlantic: Anticolonial imaginations and the Spanish Civil War," *Atlantic Studies* (2024), https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/14788810.2024.2365588; Max Paul Friedman, "A Latin American Third Way? Juan José Arévalo's Spiritual Socialism, 1916–1963," *The Americas* 81, 1 (2024).

[55] *Hispanoamérica y la guerra civil española*, Calambur Editorial, 10 Vols. (2012-2021)

[56] Ariel Mae Lambe, *No Barrier Can Contain It: Cuban Antifascism and the Spanish Civil War* (University of North Carolina Press, 2019).

[57] Kevan Antonio Aguilar, "From Comrades to Subversives: Mexican Secret Police and 'Undesirable' Spanish Exiles, 1939–60," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 53 (2021).

[58] Luis Alberto Romero, "La Guerra Civil Española y la polarización ideológica y política: la Argentina 1936-1946," *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura* 38, 2 (2011).

Early Cold War

This thesis also shows the overwhelming power of anti-communism in early twentieth-century Colombia, and its particular link to religion. In recent years, historians have looked at the local origins of Latin American anti-communism to counter the notion that it was a product of US intervention.[59] By bringing the local into conversation with the global, I argue that anti-communism was also forged in response to international events that predated the Cold War and had nothing to do with the superpower conflict. Moreover, I show how anti-communism was not just embedded amongst elites but was also part of daily life. Colombia in the 1930s experienced the 'politicisation and internationalisation of everyday life' that Greg Grandin and Gilbert Joseph argue characterised Latin America's Cold War.[60] In uncovering this history, I contribute a new perspective to debates regarding the periodisation of Latin America's Cold War.[61]

Scholars have increasingly applied the Spanish lens to the region's late twentieth-century. Kirsten Weld has used this approach to reinterpret two significant instances in Latin America's Cold War – the revolutions and counterrevolutions in Guatemala and Chile. She argues that the motivations and ideologies behind the actions of both reformers and reactionaries had their roots in the Spanish struggle of previous decades.[62] Such interpretations are not just the product of retrospective analyses. Contemporary Latin American actors explicitly drew on Spain's example to challenge the ideological dichotomy of the Cold War as exemplified by Daniel Kressel's article on Juan Carlos Onganía's ideological dialogue with the Franco regime to institute a post-fascist modernity in Argentina as an alternative model.[63] Collectively, these studies are important counterweights to largely US-centric international histories of the period, and they highlight the need to take seriously Spain's continued relevance for its former American colonies.

Greg Grandin, meanwhile, has argued that the twentieth-century cycle of reform and reaction in the region was a product of repeated attempts to dismantle postcolonial structures and expand democracy, and the reactions this elicited, most obviously from the USA. He therefore proposes seeing the period from the Mexican Revolution onwards as part of the

[59] Paulo Drinot, "Creole Anti-Communism: Labor, the Peruvian Communist Party, and APRA, 1930–1934," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 92, 4 (2012); Rodrigo Patto Sá Motta, *On Guard Against the Red Menace: Anti-Communism in Brazil, 1917-1964* (Liverpool University Press, 2020).

[60] Greg Grandin as quoted in Gilbert M. Joseph, "What We Now Know and Should Know," in *In From the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser (Duke University Press, 2008). p.4

[61] For those who argue for a longer-term understanding of Latin America's Cold War see: Greg Grandin and Gilbert M. Joseph, eds., *A Century of Revolution: Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence During Latin America's Long Cold War* (Duke University Press, 2010); Tanya Harmer, "The Cold War in Latin America," in *The Routledge Handbook of the Cold War* (Routledge, 2014).

[62] Kirsten Weld, "The Spanish Civil War and the Construction of a Reactionary Historical Consciousness in Augusto Pinochet's Chile," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 98, 1 (2018); Kirsten Weld, "The Other Door: Spain and the Guatemalan Counter-Revolution, 1944–54," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 51 (2019).

[63] Daniel Kressel, "The "Argentine Franco"?: The Regime of Juan Carlos Onganía and Its Ideological Dialogue with Francoist Spain (1966–1970)," *The Americas* 78, 1 (2021).

continent's 'Long Cold War'.[64] As we have seen, during the early twentieth century Colombians were grappling with their own colonial legacy, especially as it pertained to race and gender. However, the country also experienced some of the more widely acknowledged aspects of Latin America's late twentieth century, namely the growth of anti-communism. A combination of new, radical rhetoric from the López regime; the Colombian government's perceived connections to Republican Spain; and widespread mobilisation in support of the Spanish Republic drove the Colombian Right in general, and Catholics in particular, to embark on an anti-communist campaign that spanned the national, regional and local levels. In this way, Colombia in the 1930s offered a preview for how the Cold War would unfold across the continent.

Methodology

This thesis draws on research in four countries across nineteen archives and five oral histories. In order to establish the breadth of discussions of the Spanish Civil War, Republican refugees and their relevance for Colombia, I have chosen to focus on the presence and substance of debate rather than the stories of those who gave it voice. This means that a multitude of historical actors appear only fleetingly in the narrative. Where a particular individual is strongly associated with an idea or event, I have included biographical information to situate this within their personal experiences and trajectory. The exception to this overarching approach is chapter 7 which, as I will discuss in more detail below, explicitly uses a biographical lens to draw out some of the lived experiences of Republican exile in Bogotá.

The scope of this work presented several practical and intellectual challenges, especially given I was studying a period in which leaders were denying any foreign influence on their national project. Accordingly, there were very few overt references to Spain in political speeches, congressional debates and policy discussions. However, the diplomatic and consular records of the Colombian Legation and various consulates in Spain did provide insight into the various problems and opportunities that the Spanish Civil War and Republican refugee crisis created for the López and Santos governments. When considered in dialogue with other sources relating to Colombian foreign policy, particularly the annual reports of the *Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores* (MRREE) and written accounts from the British and US ambassadors, both presidents' stance on Spain allowed me to elucidate how they were attempting to position their country regionally as well as to consider the strengths and limitations of these attempts.

To understand how public opinion interpreted Spanish events and their significance for Colombia, I turned to the press. In doing so, I followed a recent methodological turn towards interrogating periodicals as a way to comprehend everyday political discourse.[65]

[64] 'Introduction' in: Grandin and Joseph, eds., *A Century of Revolution*.

[65] Leslie James, "Blood Brothers: Colonialism and Fascism as Relations in the Interwar Caribbean and West Africa," *The American Historical Review* 127, 2 (2022); James Sanders, *The Vanguard of the Atlantic World:*

These newspapers, many of which were owned by important political figures, became the forum for political debate between Conservatives and Liberals, and all the factions within, during a time in which Congress was almost exclusively Liberal. Moreover, as chapter 4 shows, the journalists were aware that they had a readership beyond the literate. In many cases, then, they adopted a different tone and style than they would in official forums or published works. All this meant that whilst discussion of Spain's relevance was muted at the official level, it abounded in the press in a manner that was often combative. The task of bringing out this debate was facilitated by the fact that press production during this period was extensive both in the number of newspapers and their range of views. Indeed, most political, trade union, religious and cultural groups had their own publication. Taken alone, each individual publication does not say much about the importance of the Spanish Civil War for public debate during this period but, when analysed as a collective, the range and extent of interest in the conflict across the political spectrum and throughout Colombian society is striking.

Very few periodicals from early twentieth-century Colombia were digitised when I was carrying out my research, which meant sitting with physical copies of the various newspapers and magazines I consulted in the *Hemeroteca* at the Biblioteca Nacional in Bogotá. To extract information about Colombian perceptions of the Spanish Civil War and Republican refugees, I identified editorials and commentaries that either discussed the conflict directly or analysed national developments through the lens of what was happening in Spain. I then read these pieces within the larger context of each publication's news stories and opinion pieces to interrogate how different political factions and societal groups understood the Spanish events and applied them to their own situations. In this way, I could trace how local interpretations of the conflict and its immediate legacies both reflected and reinforced previous political positions, and also became a tool with which to attack opposition forces at every level and within as well as between parties.

This analogue approach provided a number of advantages, including an appreciation of just how much space was dedicated to coverage of and commentary on the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath when compared to other international (and sometimes even domestic) events occurring at the time. It also enabled me to identify maps and images that may have otherwise been missed if using keyword searches to find written pieces, but which clearly played an integral role in presenting and disseminating information about Spain and its significance to a wider audience. Such visual material proved a valuable source base for chapter 4's discussion about the manipulation of Spanish events for ideological and commercial purposes.

Of course, in a country where illiteracy rates were high in the early twentieth century, newspapers are an imperfect source for ascertaining how society as a whole received and interpreted news about events in Spain. However, recent histories of the public sphere in Colombia have shown how oral transmission of written material helped broaden the public

Creating Modernity, Nation, and Democracy in Nineteenth-Century Latin America (Duke University Press, 2014).

sphere and establish new sites of sociability.[66] Certainly, innumerous reports about local events and conflicts related to the Spanish Civil War attested to the fact that, even if the individuals involved in such incidents did not read the newspapers that were publishing their story, they were clearly aware of what was happening in Spain at least to the extent that they felt it applied to their own situations. These stories proved useful in understanding how popular groups who did not have their own publications to express their views engaged with the conflict and physically manifested its impact in Colombia.

Despite this 'reading against the grain' of press reporting, newspapers could only provide so much insight into how wider Colombian society interacted with the Spanish Civil War and its immediate legacies, particularly amongst Liberals who were trying to downplay its significance. The archive of the Spanish Legation in Bogotá, held at the Archivo de la Administración in Spain, was key to delving deeper into how popular sectors understood the conflict and its relevance for them. It conserved hundreds of letters, manifestos, resolutions and leaflets from groups and individuals across Colombia who forwarded messages of solidarity to the Spanish government, sent donations for Republican troops, volunteered to fight for the Republic and organised aid and propaganda campaigns for the Spanish Republic. Given the minister in Bogotá was a representative of the Spanish government, these documents did not contain much information about pro-Nationalist initiatives amongst the Colombian public. However, Conservative and Catholic leaders were much more active in their support for the Spanish Nationalists than their Liberal counterparts were for Republican Spain. Right-wing publications thus contained similar, if not quite equal, information about pro-Nationalist campaigns including donor lists, religious services for Nationalist troops and updates on Colombians who were fighting with the Nationalist forces.

For the later chapters on Republican refugees to and then exiles in Colombia, I used MRREE files to track visa requests from Spain. By combining documents from the Immigration and Consular departments, as well as port arrival records, I was able to identify those whose requests had been successful and had subsequently arrived in Colombia. I also interviewed the son of Hernando Téllez, Colombian Consul in Marseille from 1937 to 1938, to ask about his father's experience in assisting Republican refugees who were seeking Colombian visas. I then accessed the personal documents of some of the more prominent arrivals in party and trade union archives across Spain as well as institutional archives in Colombia from which I deduced their experience of exile. However, because these individuals were political and labour leaders, they were almost exclusively men. As oral history is a useful method to overcome silences in the archive, such as the marginalisation of women's voices, I interviewed three women from Spain who had arrived in Colombia as babies or young children during the early 1940s and were able to shed light on the interplay between gender and exile.[67] Affirming a recent trend towards using biographical lenses to understand lived experiences of moments

[66] Luis Gabriel Galán-Guerrero, "Circulating Political Information in Colombia: Written and Oral Communication Practices in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 55 (2023).
[67] Patricia Leavy discusses how oral history has been a useful tool for feminist historians: Patricia Leavy, *Oral History: Understanding Qualitative Research* (Oxford University Press, 2015). pp.4-5

of political turmoil, in conducting these interviews I sought to comprehend how these women and their families exerted agency within shifting contexts.[68]

To identify the four participants outlined above, I used the snowball method through a descendant of Republican exile with whom I was already in conversation and who I also interviewed. Following a discussion of the aims and purpose of my dissertation, these individuals gave their consent for me to share their stories and were grateful for the opportunity to speak about them.[69] The women in particular wanted to emphasise the admirable ways in which their families navigated the extremely difficult situation of leaving their home country for unknown lands. They also sought to reflect on the ways in which the exile communities that formed strove to maintain their cultural identities and traditions. That these women spoke so openly about a topic that has been a taboo subject both politically and culturally within Spain is likely due to the passage of time. Francisco Franco, the leader of the Nationalist forces who established a 36-year dictatorship at the end of the Spanish Civil War, died in 1975. It also reflects the fact that they were very young when their parents came to Colombia and so did not necessarily assume an exile identity, even as they were impacted by the phenomenon of Republican exile, which is something that will be discussed in greater detail in the final chapter. Finally, the women's willingness to discuss their experiences is probably also the result of their geographical distance from Spain. This is significant because that country's transition to democracy following Franco's death required a 'Pact of Forgetting' which means that it is only in recent years that the country has begun to confront the legacies of the Spanish Civil War and the Francoist regime. In contrast, those outside of Spain fought to keep their Republican identities alive in the conflict's aftermath and, following the death of the Spanish dictator, to recuperate their Spanish nationality.

These interviews, being so few and so geographically bound, are not representative of the entire exile experience. However, their accounts did permit me to grapple with questions of exile experience, identity and memory. Whilst clearly subject to issues of recollection, particularly when relating the experiences of their parents, I cross-checked all factual details with information provided in the aforementioned government archives. The mixed-methods approach outlined above enabled me to combine a macro-narrative of Republican exile in Colombia (the numbers who applied for visas, how many arrived, the general difficulties they encountered) with a micro-level analysis of how this was borne out in individuals' personal lives. This, in turn, invites us to reflect on the plurality of exile experiences and identities.

By bringing together a diverse source base to examine Colombia in the 1930s and early 1940s, I combine a transnational conceptual framework and a granular local analysis of the relationship between Spain and Colombia. In doing so, I contend that the Spanish Civil War lens offers the opportunity to interrogate the political, social and cultural history of Colombia in this crucial period.

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[68] For example, in a Latin American context: Timo Schaefer and Jacob Blanc, "Life history and cultures of militancy in Latin America's Cold War," *Radical Americas* 8, 1 (2023).

[69] Research Ethics approval was sought from LSE for these interviews. REC ref. 496011

Chapter outline

As this thesis shows, Colombian interpretations of the significance of the Spanish Civil War did not remain constant throughout the late 1930 and early 1940s. Nor was there one shared understanding of the conflict's relevance for Colombia. Instead, multiple, competing ideas emerged at different times, in separate locations and across different spheres, and always in conversation with local developments. This required a structure that is thematic as well as chronological. The first two chapters therefore focus mainly on the first few months of war. Chapter one looks at Colombia's political and diplomatic response to the outbreak of war in Spain to highlight the tensions between the international and the domestic in Colombia in 1936. It shows how Spain became a significant international issue, despite not being traditionally considered by historians a foreign policy priority. Chapter two asks why Colombian elites were so captivated by the Spanish Civil War, centring local interpretations of the conflict within critical debates about how to construct a 'modern' Colombia which in many ways were discussions over how to tackle the country's perceived colonial legacy.

Chapter three moves on to consider how the Spanish Civil War intersected with the growing factionalism within the two main political parties in 1937, arguing that these divisions and their impact cannot be understood without reference to the way in which Liberals and Conservatives, and the tendencies within them, understood the conflict. Further interrogating the centre-periphery dichotomy, chapter four explores how popular discussion of the Spanish Civil War from 1936 to 1939 reveals the operation of various public spheres in Colombia. Accordingly, rhetorical battles over Spain's significance that played out in the national and regional spheres became the physical struggle of popular groups who applied their understanding of the conflict to their local realities.

Chapter five drives the narrative forward by analysing both how the changing nature of the Spanish Civil War and Colombian politics in 1938 impacted both Colombia's policy towards Spain and the impact of Spanish events back home. It focusses on the country's Aid Spain movement and the change in Spanish-Colombian relations following Eduardo Santos's ascension to president. Chapter six zooms in on one particular aspect of Santos's foreign policy that had significant implications for the many Republican refugees that were forced to flee Spain following the victory of the Nationalist forces in March 1939: immigration. It shows how the racialised interpretations of the conflict explored in chapter two fed into a schema adopted by Liberal officials who came to see the Republican 'masses' as 'undesirable' immigrants. Moving into the post-war period, chapter seven considers the experiences of several of the Republicans who were permitted to come to Colombia and thus spent part or all of their exile there. Their individual stories illustrate how, despite the difficulties that stringent immigration laws imposed on their arrival and reception in the country, exiles from Spain were able to develop meaningful links with local actors in ways that benefitted Colombians and Republicans alike.

Chapter 1 – Balancing the international and the domestic in López's Spanish policy

In mid-1937, Foreign Minister Gabriel Turbay told Congress that 'two transcendental events… had captivated this Ministry's attention' over the previous year.' He was referring to the Inter-American Peace Conference that took place in Buenos Aires in December 1936 and the Spanish Civil War. The former would have been a more natural starting point given that it concerned inter-American relations and had been attended by then-Foreign Minister Jorge Soto del Corral. However, the incident that Turbay chose to highlight first was the Spanish Civil War or, as he labelled it, 'the Spanish revolution.' Indeed, he held the two events up in stark contrast, declaring that Spain's descent into ideological conflict underscored how Europe was unable to overcome its historic divisions whilst the American nations' commitment to peace had enabled them to come together in an 'atmosphere of cordiality'. Despite these regional distinctions, Turbay did concede that 'American countries cannot be indifferent to the Spanish struggle' because it was in their interest that Spain remained 'strong, independent and respected' as the 'former mastermind of their race and their representative in Europe'.[1] In doing so, he underscored the constructed historical connection between Spain and its former American colonies that helps explain why the civil war became such an important issue in Colombia.

The interest in Spain that the inauguration of the Second Republic had sparked in Colombia ensured that there was a captivated audience across the Atlantic when hostilities erupted five years later. Both events provoked a re-imagining of the colonial relationship that split along party lines and also evoked the country's struggle for independence. This chapter will open with an examination of the different Liberal and Conservative understandings of their connection to Spain and how these both shaped and were shaped by the two parties' response to the outbreak of fighting on the peninsula. It furthers Lina del Castillo's argument that the 'colonial legacy' was a construct from Colombia's post-independence period but suggests that this legacy was continually remade well into the twentieth century as significant events provoked Colombians to re-examine their relationship with Spain.[2]

The Spanish Civil War also had very practical implications for Colombia in 1936. The intense public and press interest in the conflict led to calls from all sides of the political spectrum for the government of Alfonso López Pumarejo to act. When combined with the imperatives of wartime activity for the Colombian diplomatic officials and consular agents who were on the ground in the European nation, this forced the Liberal president to come up with a policy towards his country's old colonial power. A combination of ideology and politik inclined López's government towards the Spanish Republic. However, aside from the stark

[1] República de Colombia, *Memoria del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores al Congreso* (Imprenta Nacional, 1937). p.III

[2] Lina del Castillo, *Crafting a Republic for the World* (University of Nebraska Press, 2018).

reality that Colombia had neither the resources nor the international standing to offer much more than messages of solidarity to the Republican government, several domestic constraints ensured that this rhetorical support never solidified into material aid.

This chapter will show how the shifting tension between the international and domestic contexts in the mid-1930s created difficult parameters for action which shaped López's stance on the Spanish Civil War. The result was a policy that was not clearly defined and that left considerable scope for individual action. This, in turn, illuminates both the internal dynamics of the López government and how its leader conceived of Colombia's position on the world stage. The administration's Spanish policy ultimately revealed the futility of López's drive for greater continental unity as his government's actions in Spain on many occasions seemed to contradict his own express desire for joint regional action in the international sphere. The chapter therefore challenges assumptions about Colombia's insularity in the 1930s by using López's stance on Spain as a means of exploring how he attempted to situate his country within a broader international system.

The outbreak of war

Following independence, all the Spanish-speaking republics in the Americas debated the continued importance of their old colonial ruler. Generally, opinions were split along partisan lines with Conservatives aiming to preserve Hispanic traditions whilst Liberals found inspiration elsewhere. Yet, when news broke that Spain had become embroiled in a civil war in 1936, the continent's entire political society was immediately captivated, and Colombia was no exception. The two political parties there expressed deep concern for and connection with Spain in ways that both replayed the wars of independence and provoked a reimagining of the old colonial relationship.

The renewed interest in Colombia's ties to Spain had actually begun five years earlier, following the establishment of the Second Spanish Republic in April 1931. Like many of their regional contemporaries, Colombian Liberals had distanced themselves from Spain after independence and instead sought spiritual and political influence from the French Revolution and British liberalism. They even created an image of an exclusive and backwards Spanish Empire to justify their own nation-building projects of the mid-nineteenth century.[3] This 'black legend' contrasted sharply with Liberal republicanism in post-independence Colombia that equated democracy, at least rhetorically, with expanding citizenship to all adults regardless of race, literacy or property ownership.[4] After 1931, however, Spain had cast off its monarchy and entered its own Republican era. The two countries once again shared political systems and spiritual values but this time it was by choice, not imposition. The López government seemingly recognised this when, during the 1936 constitutional reform process, the president drew direct inspiration from the 1931 Spanish constitution in allowing the state to expropriate

[3] del Castillo, *Crafting a Republic for the World*.

[4] James Sanders, "Atlantic Republicanism in Nineteenth-Century Colombia: Spanish America's Challenge to the Contours of Atlantic History," *Journal of World History* 20, 1 (2009).

private property for reasons of 'social utility,' expanding suffrage and establishing free, secular education.[5] This undermined López's own assertion later that year about his government's rejection of foreign models.

Conservatives, on the other hand, still felt indebted to Spain throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They believed that two of the fundamental bases of Colombian society – Catholic religion and the Spanish language – were important legacies of the colonial period, and that Spain still had much to offer in spiritual and cultural guidance.[6] In this, Conservatives adhered to the doctrine of *Hispanismo* developed by Spaniards such as Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, but they also combined it with national lore. In particular, by celebrating the independence hero Simón Bolívar who had himself reintroduced several imperial policies during his two-year dictatorship to save the fledgling republic from dissolution, the most infamous being the 'Indian tribute'.[7] Maintenance of order thus became a key principle of Conservative conceptualisations of democracy. Although they were not opposed to the establishment of a Spanish Republic in theory, in practice they witnessed what they interpreted as a nation descending into chaos in an abhorrent abandonment of traditional Spanish values.

For both groups, the Spanish Civil War provided further opportunities to re-evaluate their country's relationship with Spain and they again divided along party lines. Liberals immediately came out in favour of the Spanish government which they saw as inherently democratic and therefore in tune with their own political values. This sentiment was conveyed by both houses of Colombian Congress when, during the installation of parliament in 1936, they adopted resolutions of solidarity with Republican Spain. The message from the Chamber of Representatives, passed on 22 July, intended to 'register with enthusiasm the victories obtained by the popular forces and reaffirm [representatives'] faith that the basic principles of the current political regime will pave the way for the Spanish people's glorious future.'[8] Two days later, senators approved a motion which expressed their 'admiration and sympathy for the heroic struggle that the Spanish government and people are undertaking in defence of democracy.'[9] The Conservatives had announced a policy of electoral abstention in 1935 making Congress overwhelming Liberal save a few socialist representatives. Although we will see how congressional members were not always in agreement about what the Spanish Republic represented, their messages of support can in a general sense be read as reflective of the López government's attitude towards Spain.

The twin notions of *el pueblo* [the people] and democracy were key to understanding the López administration's support for the Spanish Republic because the rhetorical basis of his reformist programme was also the construction of a more democratic and inclusive Colombia. This worked on two levels: by publicly supporting a government fighting on behalf of 'the

[5] Tirado Mejía, *Aspectos políticos del primer gobierno de Alfonso López Pumarejo*. p.345
[6] Figueroa Salamanca, *Tradicionalismo, hispanismo y corporativismo*.
[7] Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*. pp.50-73
[8] Included in letter from Manuel del Moral Aloe to Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs, 24-07-1936. Archivo General de la Administración, Sección 10, No.15 (hereafter AGA 10(0015)) Caja 54/3108/0002
[9] República de Colombia, *Anales del Senado*, vol. 2 (1936). p.23

Spanish people', the president and his allies sought to legitimise their own *Revolución* with its emphasis on popular participation. At the same time, the Spanish Republic's apparent struggle for 'democracy' made it the rightful government in the eyes of leading Liberals and thus the object of their support. For many of the congressmen who presented these motions, the Spanish president Manuel Azaña embodied Republican Spain's democratic ideals. Cundinamarca senator Maximiliano Grillo made this clear when he explained that he had added his name to the Senate's message because he believed Azaña was a 'genuine liberal'.[10] As 'liberal' was not a term that could be directly applied to 1930s Spanish politics (liberalism had been discredited since the early 1920s and Azaña himself was a leftist Republican) Grillo's statement demonstrated how, from a very early stage, Colombian Liberals were framing their pro-Republican sentiments in domestic terms.[11] By invoking a sense of solidarity with Spain, these congressional messages also reflected the party's reconceptualisation of a more horizontal relationship between the two countries.

These new visions of Spanish-Colombian kinship also played out in the press. At the 1936 Inter-American Peace Conference, Colombian delegates participated in a five-minute silence for Spain during the closing ceremony. The daily news columnist of leading Liberal daily *El Tiempo* celebrated the gesture which he felt revealed the deep links between the two countries 'not only from the historic unity of yesterday, but for the solidarity of tomorrow.'[12] He thus encapsulated his party's belief that recent events on the peninsula had changed the old colonial relationship into one of fraternity. Certain Liberals took this idea even further, arguing that Colombia's policy of international peace and continental solidarity now made it more advanced than its previous coloniser. Baldomero Sanín Cano, an intellectual who had been minister to Spain during the 1920s, saw the strongest evidence of this inverted relationship in the Spanish Civil War. Also writing in *El Tiempo*, he compared the Spanish Nationalists to 'the type of men who just over a century ago upheld Spain's right to govern these American lands' because colonial subjects were deemed incapable of ruling themselves by democratic principles. Yet the former now disavowed these same principles and, in so doing, encouraged American nations to follow suit. Rather than listen to 'European reactionaries', Sanín felt that 'Colombia, whose freedoms have overwhelmed any violent urges... is better equipped and in a more suitable position to give Europe [advice on democracy].'[13] Such discourses reflected a wider American view that the 'New World' represented peace and prosperity in the face of European decadence.

Notwithstanding the perceived ideological affinity between the Colombian and Spanish regimes, several prominent Liberals raised concerns about the 'extremist' nature of the Republican forces. Grillo measured his admiration for the Spanish government with trepidation about its reliance on socialists, communists and anarcho-syndicalists. According

[10] Colombia, *Anales del Senado*. p.23
[11] On the discrediting of Spanish liberalism: Francisco Romero Salvadó and Angel Smith, eds., *The Agony of Spanish Liberalism: From Revolution to Dictatorship 1913–23* (Palgarve Macmillan, 2010).
[12] *El Tiempo*, 24-12-1936, p.5
[13] *El Tiempo*, 13-12-1937, p.4

to the senator, a leftist government was more of a threat to Spain because 'at least fascists establish order' whilst red dictatorships of Latin origin are nothing more than disorder taken to the extremes.' Here, Grillo appeared to be drawing on stereotypes about the 'passionate' and 'violent' nature of the Hispanic 'race' which will be discussed further in the next chapter. For him, then, the motion represented 'a protest against the Spanish soldiers and officers who rebelled against [Spain's] institutions' rather than unconditional support for the Spanish government.[14] Enrique Santos, a columnist in *El Tiempo* who used the pen name Calibán and was also the brother of future president Eduardo Santos, similarly supported Azaña and his republican sentiment. However, writing about the popular violence experienced in Republican-held cities at the end of July, he warned that clashes between communists and the government would be replicated across Spain 'once the revolution is defeated' leading to an 'inevitable struggle' against 'the extreme wing of the Popular Front'.[15] Clearly, not all Liberals had the same views about the Spanish Republic. For these two individuals at least, the possibility that the Left could take control of democratic systems represented a more chilling prospect than rightist victory.

Even with these moderating voices within the Liberal party, leading Conservatives were extremely critical of the congressional messages which they saw as proof of an 'internationalist chamber' led or exploited by leftist representatives.[16] As with their political rivals, Conservatives' own reactions to the Spanish Civil War flowed naturally from their interpretation of Spain and Colombia's historic ties and the conflict allowed them to articulate this connection anew. Colombian Conservatives also linked Spanish military leaders to their country's imperial past but, unlike Liberals' negative assessment of both, they believed that the military rebellion represented the renewal of Hispanic culture and greatness. This exaltation of *Hispanismo* involved a certain invocation of Spanish colonialism in the Americas which Conservatives viewed as both a reason for and product of Spain's historic power. In particular, the party's official newspaper *El Siglo* compared the Spanish Nationalists to the *conquistadores*, declaring that 'the soldiers that are currently waging war with the same courage that they did four centuries ago in the inhospitable jungle of America symbolise eternal Spain.'[17] Whilst Conservative leaders were not engaging in or advocating for new forms of imperialism, they saw the *conquistadores* as the founding fathers of their Colombian nation. Given that the party defended the country's Hispanic heritage, its members were therefore considered direct descendants of these conquerors. In turn, this bound Conservatives to the Spanish rebels who were the symbolic inheritors of Spain's imperial past and, naturally, the subjects of Conservative support and affection during the civil war.

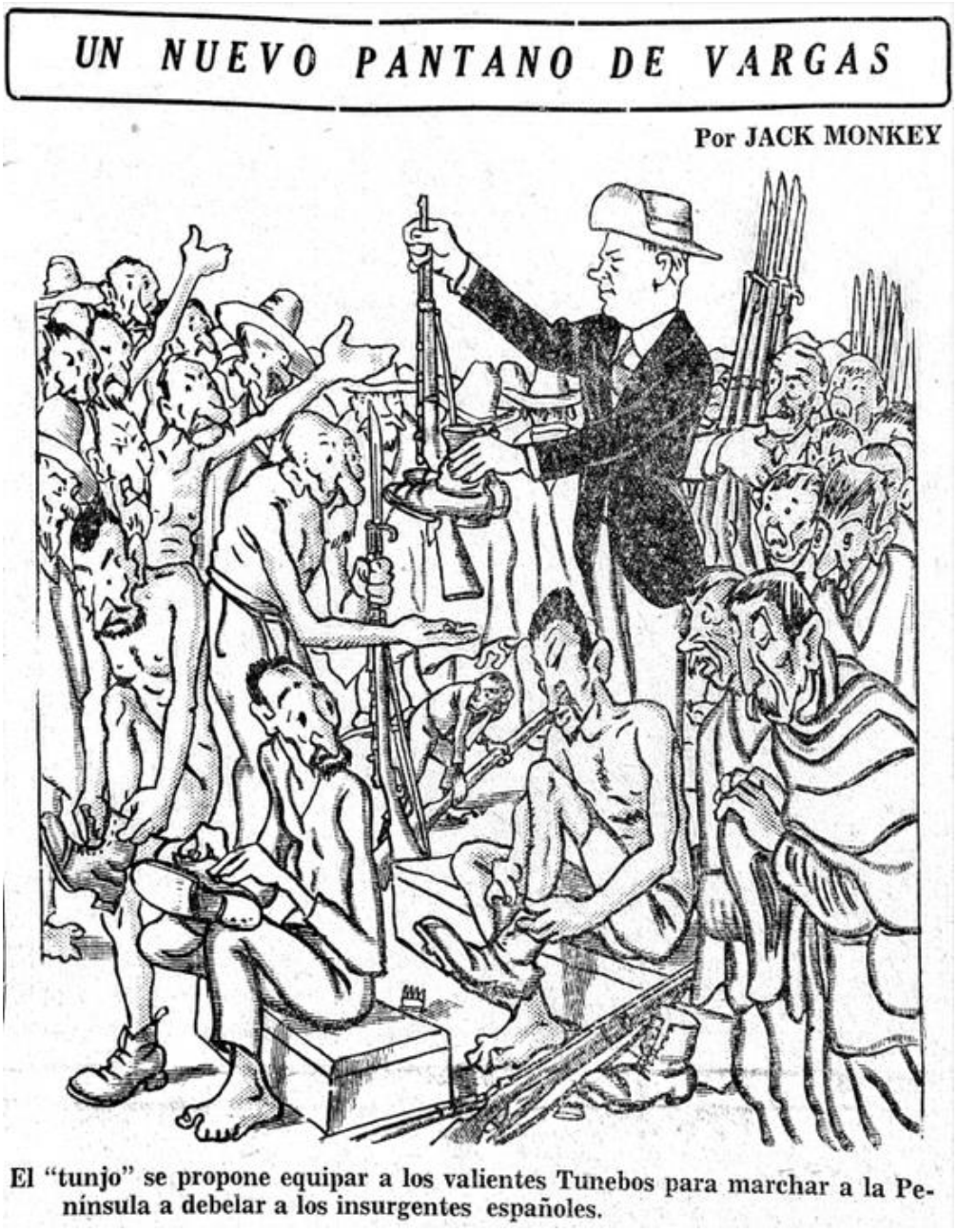
Even though congressmen from all Liberal factions presented the motions of support, the notion that leftists were behind the initiative gained traction in the Conservative press. *El Siglo*'s political commentator declared that the 'extraordinary messages' demonstrated how

[14] Colombia, *Anales del Senado*. p.23
[15] *El Tiempo*, 31-07-1936, p.4
[16] *El Siglo*, 23-07-1936, p.3
[17] *El Siglo*, 21-07-1936, p.5

the 'Liberal Republic has transplanted the Spanish problem onto our country'. According to this logic, López's reformist programme sought inspiration from the Spanish Republic which in turn was controlled by Soviet Russia through the Popular Front government. The messages from Congress were therefore seen to imply that the two chambers adhered to the Soviet cause which 'ultimately proves that the government's policy is not autonomous'. Moreover, given Conservatives' view that the military rebellion was a justified uprising against the chaos caused by implanting Soviet systems in Spain, congressional support for the Spanish Republic showed how 'the governing men [in Colombia] identify with the ideas and practices of the barbarism that until recently reigned on the peninsula'.[18] The implicit conclusion of this argument was that any move to overthrow López's government would be equally defensible.

As well as commentary, Conservatives used images to communicate their stance on the Liberal government and Spain. The 1930s were a 'golden age' of political caricatures in Colombia, with the images considered a novel and effective way of exercising opposition.[19] When it came to Spain, no newspaper published more caricatures than *El Siglo.* In an emblematic example from immediately after the outbreak of war, caricaturist Jack Monkey (Pepe Gómez, brother of Conservative leader Laureano Gómez) depicted the representative for Tunja, Rafael Vargas Páez, handing out rifles and boots to male members of Colombia's Tunebo (now U'wa) community under the title 'Vargas's Next Swamp'. The caption read: 'The "tunjo" proposes equipping the valiant Tunebos to march to the Peninsula to crush the Spanish insurgents'. This was undoubtedly a direct attack on Vargas for suggesting that Colombia send material as well as moral support to the Spanish Republic. However, the caricature also provided a graphic representation of Conservative attacks on the Liberal government's pro-Republican stance and their racialised view of their own country and the Spanish conflict. The latter point will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter but, for now, the image showed the naked Tunebo men, depicted as a homogenous mass, being given rifles, clothes and boots by a well-dressed, whiter Vargas. By imagining these seemingly 'primitive' men being conscripted into the Republican forces, Jack Monkey suggested that the latter were made up of non-Hispanic draftees rather than Spanish patriots volunteering to defend their country. He thus essentialised Colombia's Indigenous populations whilst simultaneously reinforcing right-wing narratives about the 'foreign' nature of the Spanish Republic.

[18] *El Siglo*, 24-07-1936, p.3
[19] Beatriz González, "El mito del poder de la caricatura," in Sierra Mejía, ed., *República Liberal*.



El Siglo, 26-07-1936, front page.

Linking López to foreign influences enabled Conservatives to unite around what they stood against. On the same day that *El Siglo*'s commentator condemned congressional support for Republican Spain, its editorialist went even further in assessing the implications of the messages. He explained how 'the government and the Liberal congress's only aim is to establish communism in Colombia' by highlighting the supposing similarities between Colombia and Spain, including that 'López is the precursor of communism in Colombia, like Azaña is in the Spanish Republic.'[20] Such assertions found support in the fact that López's government had entered into an uneasy alliance with the PCC in its attempt to mobilise the working class.

[20] *El Siglo*, 24-07-1936, p.3

The *El Siglo* journalist was not alone in his view that the president was allowing alien ideologies to infiltrate Colombian politics just as the Spanish president had done. Under the title of 'Let us look at Spain', Boyacá Conservative Joaquín Ospina Ortíz denounced López and his ministers as '*caudillos* of the Popular Front' who led 'red forces' comprised of 'socialists and communists undertaking the collective crime that their doctrines order'.[21] Significantly, Boyacá was a region of intense Conservative tradition and had been subjected to violent, enforced liberalisation during the presidency of Enrique Olaya Herrera. Other Conservatives were more concerned about the president's attitude towards their party. Commenting upon López's speech in Congress on 20 July 1936, in which the president vowed not to roll back on his *Revolución*, an editorialist in Medellín's leading Conservative daily *El Colombiano* wrote that the address revealed 'the parallels between our politics and that of Spain.' The author's main issue, aside from 'the idiocies and cruelty being committed' in Colombia, was López's condemnation of the 'blatant and dangerous Conservative opposition'. This, he believed, exemplified how 'persecution of the right is carried out with the same violence' as in Spain.[22] Regardless of what they saw as the main point of contention, all Conservatives could hold up Spain as a mirror for Colombia's future should López's government remain in office. At the same time as the civil war offered an ominous preview of radical reformism gone too far, it also provided a reflection of what awaited López should he continue with his own reformist programme.

A diplomatic incident

Despite opposition attacks, the López government continued its pro-Republican stance during the first few months of the war. Colombia refused to accord belligerent rights to the Nationalists because it would mean, in the words of Turbay, 'Exonerating itself from its obligations and responsibilities towards the legitimate government with whom it has relations'.[23] The government therefore dealt only with representatives of the Spanish Republic. This position contrasted with that of many of the country's neighbours whose official 'neutrality' tended to mask anti-Republican attitudes on the part of the government. In Ecuador and Argentina, for example, popular pro-Republican activity was suppressed by the authorities even as they maintained their official neutrality with regard to events in Spain.[24] Similarly, Chile refused to openly take sides in the Spanish conflict even though there was sympathy for the Nationalists from within the government that reflected concerns about the emergence of Popular Front politics in the country.[25]

[21] *El Siglo*, 03-08-1936
[22] *El Colombiano*, 22-07-1936, p.3
[23] Gabriel Turbay to José Espalter, 10-09-1937 in Colombia, *Memoria de 1937*. p.325.
[24] Niall Binns, *Argentina y la guerra civil española: la voz de los intelectuales* (Calambur, 2012); Niall Binns, *Ecuador y la guerra civil española: la voz de los intelectuales* (Calambur, 2012).
[25] Matías Barchino and Jesús Cano Reyes, *Chile y la guerra civil española: la voz de los intelectuales* (Calambur, 2013).

Other countries rapidly dispensed with any pretence of neutrality and cast their lot in with General Francisco Franco who had become commander-in-chief of the Nationalists following the death of José Sanjurjo in July 1936. These included Uruguay, which broke relations with the Spanish Republic in September 1936 after the murder of two of its citizens by popular militia,[26] and Peru, which recognised Franco's regime in May 1938 following a diplomatic dispute with Republican Spain over asylum seekers in the Peruvian Legation.[27] The notable exception to this trend was Mexico which, under President Lázaro Cárdenas, was one of the Spanish Republic's most active supporters and the country to which Colombia's stance was frequently compared.[28] However, the position of Mexico and Colombia also contradicted the broader international view, reflected in the Non-Intervention Agreement, where 'neutrality' meant recognising the belligerent status of both sides and thus affording them the same rights.

López even maintained diplomatic relations with the Spanish government despite several serious incidents in summer 1936. The most serious of these was the news in August that popular militias had murdered several Colombian citizens in Spain. The stories published across Colombia contradicted each other, and sometimes themselves, demonstrating the confused nature of reporting during the first months of the war. The first suggestion of the incident came on 11 August when Colombia's internal news service (SIN) related rumours in Bogotá that 'various' Colombians had been killed in Spain.[29] Over the next few days, different national and regional newspapers printed inconsistent reports about the incident based on radio messages from Spain and statements from the Colombian governments.[30] The inconsistencies in the story drove speculation and encouraged biased interpretations, like the SIN identifying the perpetrators as 'socialist' when the Spanish communiqué only mentioned 'militias'.

The full account of what happened on 7 August would remain unclear until the end of the month when the Colombian Consul General in Barcelona, Ignacio Ortiz Lozano, provided his report to the press and the government.[31] In this official account, Carlos Uribe Echeverri, Colombian Minister to Spain, had dispatched seven monks from the Brothers Hospitallers of Saint John of God order and their escort to the General Consulate in Barcelona so they could be repatriated to Colombia. However, they never arrived at the consular building; instead, they were apprehended on arrival by local militia who seized the eight Colombians and took them to a makeshift prison in Barcelona. Early the next morning, they were executed on the basis that their Colombian identification cards were fake, and their bodies were deposited at

[26] Niall Binns, *Uruguay y la guerra civil española: la voz de los intelectuales* (Calambur, 2016).
[27] Olga Muñoz Carrasco, *Perú y la guerra civil española: la voz de los intelectuales* (Calambur, 2013).
[28] For example the Madrid press named Colombia, USSR, Czechoslovakia and Mexico and Spain's 'only loyal friends' in 'Amigos Leales,' *Heraldo de Madrid*, 10-08-1937.
[29] *El Heraldo*, 12-08-1936, p.1
[30] For example: *El Espectador*, 12-08-1936, p.1; *El Heraldo*, 13-08-1936, p.1
[31] *El Espectador*, 29-08-1936, p.1

the morgue in Barcelona's *Hospital Clínico*. It was there that Ortíz – whom a local militiaman had informed about the men's whereabouts – was able to identify the victims.[32]

By the time the consul released his story, the event had already caused significant uproar in Colombia. The national government reportedly provided police security for the Spanish Legation in light of 'the mood' in Bogotá,[33] whilst in Medellín 'certain sectors' called for a public protest against the murder of their compatriots.[34] Two months later, news broke of another Colombian murdered in Spain.[35] The incident, which had actually occurred at the end of July, involved Aníbal Jesús Gómez who was a noviciate of the Claretian religious order travelling with thirteen Spanish colleagues from Ciudad Real to Madrid. When the train stopped at the first station, a local 'mob' shouting 'death to all monks' forcibly removed the group from the carriage and took them away to be shot.[36] Following reports of this second event, two male residents in Bogotá wrote a letter to the MRREE requesting that the government take all Spaniards arriving in Colombia as hostage in retaliation for the murder of eight [sic.] Colombians in Spain. This, they believed, would satisfy the 'national decorum'.[37] It is not known whether the ministry sent a response, but the episode exemplifies the impact that news of the incident had on wider Colombian society.

The government subsequently sent a protest to the Spanish *Ministerio de Estado* (MEE), but it did not suggest a break in diplomatic relations with Spain. Instead, the MRREE announced in a communiqué that it would await 'detailed information about the crime before taking measures to defend our national honour'.[38] Indeed, López's supporters presented the Spanish government as largely blameless for population violence. *El Espectador* published an editorial in which it recognised that 'the barbarous attack... has provoked a natural sense of pain and indignation amongst Colombians' and admitted that 'the republican and democratic government' had lost control of its forces. However, the author called for a calm and proportionate response.[39] Luis Eduardo Nieto Caballero, a close friend of López, was even complimentary of the Spanish government's reaction to the event. He believed that its 'sincere and sympathetic' response matched the 'arduous [...] indignant [...] satisfactory protest' of the Colombian government and that the incident 'should not create a distance between Colombia and the *madre patria*.'[40] Nieto maintained this stance during the subsequent diplomatic negotiations between the two governments about compensation for the killings. Writing in response to public calls for diplomatic ties to be severed, he did not

[32] Informe del Cónsul, 30-09-36, AGN, DAPFRE, Despacho Señor Presidente (hereafter AGN.DAPFRE.DP), Caja 67, Carpeta 25
[33] 'Más detalles sobre el sacrificio de los ocho colombianos en España', *El Estado*, 14-08-1936
[34] *El Heraldo de Antioquia*, 01-09-1936, p.1
[35] 'Otro sacerdote es fusilado por los milicianos', *El Espectador*, 06-10-1936
[36] Nicolás Mediano to Jorge Soto del Corral, 14-10-1936. Archivo General de la Nación, Fondo Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Sección Diplomática y Consular (hereafter AGN.MRE.DC), Transferencia 8, Caja 283, Carpeta 26
[37] *El Espectador*, 22-10-1936, p.6
[38] *El Tiempo*, 13-08-1936, p.1
[39] *El Espectador*, 13-08-1936, p.3
[40] *El Gráfico*, 22-08-1936, p.749

hold back in his condemnation of the crime or his criticism of its perpetrators but reminded his readers that the Republican authorities neither ordered nor pardoned the killing. For Nieto, the Spanish government was as much a victim of the 'men so removed from civilisation' as Colombia, and so maintaining relations with the embattled Republic was a question of honour.[41] The López administration thus stood firm in its support for Republican Spain despite significant diplomatic crises.

Again, this position stood López apart from other Latin American governments for whom lesser incidents had sparked larger rifts with Republican Spain. In addition to the aforementioned incidents with Peru and Uruguay, the Chilean government's refusal to release Nationalist supporters who were sheltering in its Madrid Legation severely threatened its diplomatic relations with the Spanish government.[42] López's response was the practical articulation of his pro-Republican stance which his government had assumed immediately after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War and which it continued to defend even as popular violence in Spain seemed to spiral out of control and impact Colombia's own interests. This stance was shaped by the López administration's ideological disposition as well as its understanding of the contemporary relationship between Colombia and Spain, even if often in opposition to regional and international positions.

Tensions within the Liberal party

As the debates over congressional messages of support to Spain revealed, not all Liberals were unconditionally supportive of the Republican government. News of several Colombians killed in Spain at the hands of left-wing groups widened and deepened concerns amongst certain moderates. On the same day that *El Tiempo* first published the story, its editorialist wrote that the incident 'cannot be justified nor excused.' The victims were 'seven poor young boys' who, the author stressed, represented the very classes that their killers claimed to protect. The perpetrators were described as 'anarchists' and 'extremists', and their crime was 'an eternal stain on Spanish history.'[43] The new emphasis on the threat of the popular militias rather than the democratic nature of the Spanish government represented a turning point in moderate Liberal perceptions of the Spanish Civil War. A group of congressional members made this point explicitly when, during calls to protest against the murder, they linked the move back to the previous message sent to Azaña's government. The representatives declared that their former position assumed that the Republic's patriotic campaign would not degenerate into a true massacre.[44]

Several Liberal commentators even withdrew their support for Republican Spain. In a more extreme example, Calibán concluded that the incidents in Barcelona denoted the death of the Republic. If the government won, he asserted, 'communists and anarcho-syndicalists, now

[41] *El Gráfico*, 03-10-1936, p.1001-2
[42] Barchino and Cano Reyes, *Chile y la guerra civil española*. p.27
[43] *El Tiempo*, 13-08-1936, p.4
[44] *El Heraldo de Antioquia*, 15-08-1936, p.1

armed to the teeth and in complete control, would wipe away even the memory of democratic institutions the day after their victory and impose a ferocious dictatorship.' Comparing the situation to the French Revolution – which Colombian Liberals celebrated as being the starting point for their own political ideology – the columnist noted that, in France, the people did not take part in any of the revolutionary atrocities. In contrast, Barcelona's *Generalitat* provided weapons to around 30,000 'anarchists and ruffians' which was why 'the Catalan capital is witnessing horrors never seen in Paris even during the bloodiest days of the revolution.'[45] This romanticised view of the French Revolution demonstrated how Calibán reinterpreted the past to justify Liberals' historical influences whilst condemning the contemporary 'excesses' of Spanish Republicans. Unlike López and his allies who saw Republican Spain as democratic despite the murder of several Colombians by popular militias, moderates believed that the event proved that the Spanish government had been overrun by extremists and was no longer fighting for democracy. As such, the fraternal ties between Colombian liberalism and Republican Spain were severely threatened.

For Conservatives, news of the murder of several Colombians in Spain largely served as further ammunition with which to attack the López government. On 13 August, *El Siglo* led with a story on the 'Eight Colombians Murdered by the Spanish Popular Front' which criticised the López administration's 'late protest' against 'the state of barbarity that Spain has arrived at under the reign of the Popular Front.' The author linked this tardiness to government support for the Spanish Republic expressed in the congressional messages three weeks prior, thus implying that López was partially responsible for the death of his citizens in Spain.[46] The following day, the newspaper even republished the Chamber of Representatives motion under the title 'Colombian Parliament Applauds the Spanish Popular Front' and alongside stories relating to the diplomatic incident.[47] For the remainder of the Spanish conflict, Conservatives continued to bring up the murder of Colombians in Spain, and the government's response to it, as evidence of the Liberal regime's failings.[48]

There is also evidence that some Conservatives recognised and attempted to aggravate the split amongst Liberals over support for the Spanish Republic. Two days after the story of the murdered Colombians surfaced, *El Siglo*'s editorialist addressed moderates, claiming that they were committing a 'grave error' by 'believing that liberalism is in power'. Instead, he declared, the 'strong communist organisation that just consolidated itself in the Medellín trade union congress... is now the master of the country's destiny'.[49] Here, the author referred to the second national workers' congress held in August with the support and participation of the López administration. One of the principal outcomes was the creation of the Colombian Trade Union Confederation made up of liberal, socialist and communist representatives.[50]

[45] *El Tiempo*, 12-08-1936, p.4
[46] *El Siglo*, p.1
[47] *El Siglo*, 14-08-1936, p.1
[48] For example: 'Lo que se olvidó decir', 17-10-1936; 'Beligerancia y neutralidad', 11-09-1936; 'El enviado del Gral. Franco', 31-01-1938. All in *El Siglo*.
[49] *El Siglo*, 15-08-1936, p.4
[50] Archila, *Cultura e identidad obrera*. p.298

Further exemplifying Conservatives' proclivity to weave together domestic and Spanish events, the editorialist warned that this meant the 'red committees' and 'communist crimes' being witnessed in Spain 'will be reproduced amongst us'. Indeed, he pointed out how Colombian Congress 'remained silent in the face of the Medellín tragedy' just as it 'could not formulate' a protest against the murder of eight Colombians.[51] (Actually, Congress did protest against the incident in a secret session on 13 August.) The Spanish Civil War thus provided an opportunity for the articulation of shared ideas and concerns amongst certain sectors of the Liberal and Conservative parties in 1930s Colombia. In this way, the conflict became more than just a rhetorical tool for Conservative attacks on the president; it also offered the means to delegitimise López by building cross-party opposition to his policies.

One particularly effective way in which Conservatives aimed to fuel moderate Liberals' discontent was by constructing the image of a 'creole Popular Front' that they claimed the president was trying to install in Colombia. The combination of López's worker-focussed programme and the push from the Comintern for Popular Front governments in the mid-1930s encouraged leftist groups in Colombia to call for a domestic version. In turn, members of the Colombian Left established Popular Front committees in several cities, and there was even a fleeting National Directorate established in June 1936.[52] Although the government never associated with these ephemeral local committees, the 'creole Popular Front' became a phantom that haunted political discussion. In the exclusively Liberal Senate, for example, Jorge Gartner stated that he believed the Popular Front to be the greatest danger faced by contemporary liberalism because it was made up of extremist groups who imported foreign theories.[53] Gartner's warning reflected wider Liberal anxieties about increased communist influence in Colombian politics. Though such concerns pre-dated the Spanish Civil War – the apex of a national Popular Front is often seen as the Labour Day celebration in May 1936 when López delivered an address from the balcony of the presidential palace accompanied by trade union representatives – Conservatives exploited the opportunity that the conflict presented to exacerbate pre-existing Liberal concerns about the path of revolutionary politics in Colombia.

In early August 1936, *El Siglo*'s 'Alusiones' columnist announced that 'Popular Front representatives in Colombia, whose headquarters are located in the premises of the ministry for national education, have set to work'.[54] The next chapter will explore Conservatives' opposition to López's education reform in more detail but the significance of this claim rests in the fact that it stemmed from moderate Liberals' protests in Congress against a courier at the *Ministerio de Educación Nacional* (MEN) who had been issuing propaganda in favour of Darío Echandía's (the education minister) presidential candidacy.[55] Although leading Conservatives had drawn general parallels between Colombian and Spanish politics since the

[51] *El Siglo*, 15-08-1936, p.4
[52] Medina, *Historia del partido comunista colombiano*. pp.295-8
[53] *El Tiempo*, 25-08-1936, p.7
[54] *El Siglo*, 01-08-1936, p.5
[55] *El Colombiano*, 31-07-1936, p.3

outbreak of fighting in Spain, it appears that they began to raise the spectre of a 'creole Popular Front' specifically in response to Liberal misgivings over certain members of López's administration.

Certainly, Conservatives used the term frequently when discussing the government's response to the murder of its citizens in Spain. On the day it first broke the story, *El Siglo* published it alongside another front-page report about Colombian mobilisation entitled 'The "popular front" is arming itself in Colombia'. In this report, the journalist explored the government's decision to expand the armed forces claiming that the 'tranquillity of the Republic has disappeared thanks to the work of... the Republic of the Popular Front.' If the visual connection to the Spanish story was not obvious enough, the writer concluded that 'whilst the Popular Front hands out the Republic's weapons, Conservatives are still being persecuted all over the Republic and our compatriots are murdered in Madrid by the forces of the Spanish Popular Front.'[56] Conservatives thereby employed the 'Popular Front' as a rhetorical device to accentuate divisions within the Liberal party.

Directores:
LAUREANO GOMEZ
JOSE DE LA VEGA
Gerente:
JESUS NARANJO VILLEGAS

EL SIGLO

Ocho colombianos han sido asesinados por las milicias rojas en España. La Legación de nuestro país es atacada a balazos por el frente popular. Es la respuesta del gobierno de Azaña a las felicitaciones del congreso colombiano.

Registrado para el curso libre de porte en el servicio postal interior. Licencia No. 416 de 13 de enero de 1936.

AÑO I — DIARIO DE LA MAÑANA — BOGOTA, JUEVES 13 DE AGOSTO DE 1936 VALOR 5 CENTAVOS NUMERO 192

OCHO COLOMBIANOS ASESINADOS POR EL FRENTE POPULAR ESPAÑOL

El "frente popular" está armándose en Colombia

UNA ENTREVISTA CON PRIMITIVO CRESPO
EL CONSERVATISMO SE ENCUENTRA BAJO LA IMPRESION TONIFICANTE DE LA GRAN MANIFESTACION DEL 25 DE JULIO EN CALI, ACRECENTADA HOY CON EL ESPECTACULO MARAVILLOSO QUE CONSTITUYO LA DEMOSTRACION DE MANIZALES

Trataban de abandonar el país, en un tren especial

Plinio está vistiendo a sus huestes con el uniforme militar

El Ministerio de Gobierno verdadera casa editorial

EN EL VALLE, EL PROBLEMA POLITICO ESTA EN LA FRAUDULENTA CEDULACION LIBERAL, QUE ASUME PROPORCIONES MUY ALARMANTES

Al son de "La Cucaracha" acabó el congreso sindical

Las garantías que ofreció el gobierno resultaron ilusorias

Su departamento de publicaciones es un paraíso burocrático

Quieren nutrir el ejército con el frente popular

LA VERGUENZA DE TUQUERRES, DONDE HACE EL SECTARISMO LIBERAL VICTIMAS ENTRE DAMNIFICADOS DE IDEAS CONSERVADORAS

Un cuadro acusador para el ministerio de hacienda pública

Dos ministros hacen genuflexión ante el obrerismo reunido

Un comunicado dado por el Mtro. de relaciones Exteriores sobre el caso

Se ignora el nombre de las víctimas de este nuevo crimen comunista

El Siglo, 13-08-1936, front page.

Conservatives found fertile ground for their attempts to delegitimise the López government. Following their traditional adversary's example, moderate Liberals began to explicitly link the Colombian and Spanish situations. In late August 1936, Eduardo Santos gave a speech to Senate about the demands of the Medellín Trade Union Congress in which he suggested that

[56] *El Siglo*, 13-08-1936, p.1

the proposition to nationalise Colombian banks exceeded even the policies of the Spanish Popular Front. He also criticised another motion put forward by the Bavaria drinks manufacturers union for the government to form workers militias on the basis that 'we can already see the results of [this measure] in Spain'.[57]

Other moderates drew on the example of the Spanish Popular Front overridden by leftist extremists to highlight the dangers of the Colombian government's perceived slide to the left. Reflecting in September 1936 on 'Spain's experience', prominent anti-López Liberal Juan Lozano y Lozano ascribed the violence under Spain's Popular Front to the promises made to the working class at the expense of other citizens combined with imprudent measures and doctrinal concessions to communism that struck terror into the conservative forces. Given the context of government reformism and fierce Conservative opposition, Lozano's exploration of the Spanish crisis mirrored his perception of Colombian politics. He did not use the word 'Spain' or 'Spanish' once in this short analysis, and he warned that 'a politician has to appreciate the reality of his people and his race.' As Spaniards and Colombians share the same blood, Lozano furthered, words 'that would leave an English man cold [...] provoke true torment within a Spaniard or an inhabitant of the tropics'. [58] The conflation of Spaniards and Latin Americans (often described as 'tropical') appears to be an ominous warning about the López regime's incitement of the masses. Conservative constructions of the 'creole Popular Front' arising out of the Spanish Civil War thus transformed moderate Liberals' perceptions of revolutionary politics in Colombia from a minor nuisance to a serious threat. The deliberate use of the term 'creole' – referring historically to people of Spanish descent born in the Americas – reinforced the sense of danger by suggesting that López had imported his style of government directly from Spain where its consequences were clear for all to see.

The seeming coalescence between moderate Liberals and Conservatives even sparked sectors of the former to call for a return to the republicanism of the early 1910s. Santos, in particular, was a key proponent of this idea. In October 1936, he became president of the National Liberal Directorate and immediately began informal conversations with Gonzalo Restrepo Jaramillo, a prominent Conservative from Antioquia, about possible cooperation between the two parties.[59] Restrepo opposed his party's policy of electoral abstention and in his book on Conservative thought, published in July 1936, he expressed his belief that 'In the face of growing Moscow influence, those men who represent a different creed must sooner or later join forces'.[60] It was presumably Restrepo's emphasis on collaboration as a means to prevent communist infiltration into national politics that encouraged Santos to enter into discussions with him. Given that partisan politics was a key tenet of López's political thought, the move represented the practical articulation of Santos's rhetorical opposition expressed in August.[61]

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[57] *La Defensa*, 21-08-1936, p.1
[58] *El Heraldo*, 23-09-1936, p.4
[59] M Paske Smith to Anthony Eden, 28-10-1936. The National Archives (hereafter TNA), FCO 371-19776
[60] Quoted in *El Colombiano*, 26-07-1936
[61] On López's approach to partisan politics: Richard Stoller, "Alfonso López Pumarejo and Liberal Radicalism in 1930s Colombia," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 27 (1995).

Laureano Gómez remained steadfast in his determination to abstain from electoral politics and blocked any form of cooperation between the two parties. Writing to Restrepo shortly after he met with Santos, he declared that 'there is no democratic sentiment in this country as sincere... as that professed by Conservatives'. However, raising the spectre of the Spanish anarchists, Gómez felt that 'Liberalism contains a leftist terrorism that does not tolerate any obstruction of the so-called *revolución en marcha*'. Accordingly, he could not accept any alliance between the two parties.[62] The broader implications of this for the Conservative party will be discussed in chapter three, but what is notable here is how Spain provided an example for both those who supported and those who opposed collaboration between Liberals and Conservatives. The Spanish Civil War thus served as the prism through which opponents of the López regime viewed Colombian politics in late 1936.

Architects of foreign policy

The external attacks from opposition forces and internal tensions within the Liberal party created a sense of stasis in López's Spanish policy which left considerable scope for individual action. This charge was first levelled by José Umaña Bernal in the Chamber of Representatives who, when asking the foreign minister about his government's stance on Spain, declared that he was unsure whether the government or its diplomat in Madrid had ultimate control of policy.[63] Certainly, Colombian representatives in Spain did not hesitate to exploit the absence of official guidance to take their own position on the war which, in many cases, reflected local circumstances and personal characteristics. The case of Madrid is exemplary. The Spanish capital, where the Colombian Legation was based, was a Republican stronghold where armed militias emerged and incidents of mob violence occurred, particularly the burning of churches, convents and religious schools and the execution of their inhabitants. The Colombian diplomatic representative in Madrid changed shortly after the outbreak of fighting illustrating how, in the context of geographical and political continuity, different positions could be taken on the Spanish Civil War depending on individual ideological sensibilities.

Carlos Uribe Echeverri was just finishing his term as minister on the eve of the war. His communications during the conflict's first month convey the impression of a general lack of government control and specific targeting of the diplomatic community by left-wing militia, but he made his anti-Republican views explicit when he abandoned the Legation in mid-August 1936. In a telegram to Soto, he justified his suggestion for a temporary successor, Gabriel Melguizo Gutiérrez, on the grounds that, as an 'intimate friend of Communist leaders', he would be able to expedite diplomatic proceedings between the two countries.[64] Two days later, reports circulated that Uribe had sought refuge in the US Embassy because 'The Spanish government only listened to powerful diplomatic missions.'[65] The conflation of the

[62] 'Los únicos demócratas', *El Siglo*, 29-10-1936, p.3
[63] 'El gbno. español está dispuesto a pagar indemnización a Colombia', *El Heraldo de Antioquia*, 15-10-1936
[64] Uribe to Soto, 15-08-1936. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 8, Caja 283, Carpeta 25
[65] Melguizo to Soto, 18-08-1936. Caja 283, Carpeta 25

communists with the Spanish government illustrated Uribe's ideological opposition to the Spanish Republic whilst his public criticism of their lack of guarantees revealed his contempt. Given that these communications came only days after the murder of eight Colombians in Barcelona, this event no doubt heavily shaped the minister's actions. Nonetheless, Uribe denied issuing such statements and claimed that his message had somehow been corrupted. Soto, meanwhile, took the incident seriously enough to highlight these inconsistencies during an update to Congress about the government's Spanish policy.[66] As a result, various representatives sent a letter to Uribe requesting a detailed report of his actions in Spain. They also concluded that he should return to Colombia as soon as possible and present himself before the Senate.[67] The final section of this chapter will explore the domestic implications of this case.

On 20 August, Melguizo took over the Madrid Legation and he immediately called Uribe's initial story into question, emphasising that the Spanish government had provided him with all necessary safeguards and advising a cool levelheadedness when analysing events in Spain.[68] His concern about what he perceived as false news continued throughout the war as the Colombian press reported on events from the peninsula, and he took care to defend his hosts whenever such reports were brought to his attention by the MRREE. Melguizo's language also reflected his deference towards the Republicans; whilst he referred to the Spanish government as 'noble', he constantly used terms such as 'rebels,' 'fascists' or 'enemy forces' to refer to the Nationalists. In a war where the use of language was an integral part of how the warring factions contested and legitimised their claim to Spanish leadership before the international community, Melguizo's choice of words showed his clear adhesion to the Republican side. Though Uribe's comment about his successor's friendships was an over-exaggeration disputed by Melguizo himself,[69] the two representatives clearly had very different takes on the Spanish conflict despite occupying a similar role in the same place.

Melguizo was an interim *chargé d'affaires* and never officially assumed the role of Colombian Minister to Spain. However, that the López administration allowed him to continue acting as such for the duration of the war indicates that it wanted to facilitate greater support for the Spanish Republic amongst its diplomatic and consular officials. Indeed, the MRREE had initially named Carlos Lozano y Lozano as Uribe's replacement but decided it would be preferable to keep Melguizo in place until the situation in Spain eased.[70] Further, whilst the government forced Uribe to account for his actions in Spain, it continued to approve and praise Melguizo's diplomatic efforts such as his initiative to require the Colombian families

[66] MRREEE to Colombian Minister in Washington, 09-09-1936. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 1, Diplomáticos Colombianos y Extranjeros Julio-Sept 1936
[67] *Diario del Pacífico*, 16-10-1936, p.1
[68] Uribe to Soto, 18-05-1936. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 8, Caja 283, Carpeta 25
[69] Melguizo to Soto, 17-09-1936. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 8, Caja 283, Carpeta 25
[70] MRREEE to Lozano, 05-08-1936. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 1, Departamento Diplomático, Diplomáticos Colombianos y Extranjeros Julio-Sept 1936

residing in Madrid who declined repeated repatriation offers to sign a document absolving the government of responsibility if anything happened to them.[71]

The most notable of Melguizo's efforts was his deft negotiations to secure an indemnity payment from the Spanish government for the aforementioned murder of various Colombians in Spain. Although this was ultimately a positive result for the López administration, the diplomat's seemingly unilateral navigation of what was admittedly an extremely difficult situation was the stimulus behind Umaña's question about who controlled foreign policy. Throughout the negotiations, Melguizo appeared to take matters into his own hands rather than responding to government orders. For example, whilst impressing upon Republican authorities the importance of a swift payment to preserve good relations with Colombia, he simultaneously encouraged the MRREE to accept a lower amount to ensure that there were no more delays. Notwithstanding the obvious tensions provoked by the murders and the evident impatience of the Colombian government to secure a payment, the diplomat constantly reassured the MRREE that the Spanish authorities were genuinely interested in resolving the issue and doing all they could to investigate the crimes. He accompanied all forwarded communication from the MEE with comments in this vein and even made sure to send telegrams of their responses to the Colombian protests alongside the official copies mailed to the MRREE, presumably to ensure their swift receipt by the government in Bogotá.[72]

Despite vacillations from the Spanish government and suspicions on both sides, Melguizo's persistence and deft handling ensured the matter was finally completed on 26 February 1938 when the Spanish government paid 250,000 Colombian pesos (roughly USD$3,000,000 today[73]) to the families of the victims.[74] Diplomatic relations were maintained throughout and Colombia was the only nation to receive such an indemnity from Republican Spain even though similar instances occurred with other foreign nationals.[75] In recognition of his work in securing the indemnity payment, the Colombian government awarded Melguizo an *Orden de Boyacá* – the highest peacetime decoration in the country.

Melguizo's activity illustrates how in many instances López's Spanish policy was a reaction to the updates his government was receiving from its on-the-ground representatives rather than a broader strategy that guided consular and diplomatic activity. These diplomatic agents who, lacking an overarching framework, made their own decisions based on personal interpretations of Spanish events are therefore key to understanding the formulation of Colombian foreign policy towards Spain during this period. Their reaction – both rhetorical

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[71] MRREEE to Melguizo, 30-03-1937. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 8, Caja 283, Carpeta 27

[72] AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 8, Caja 283 Carpeta 26

[73] This, and future calculations, are based off the exchange rate of 181.50 pesos to USD$100 quoted by Climent to José Giral in a telegram on 08-01-1938. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3171. I used https://www.inflationtool.com/us-dollar/ to calculate the present-day value, accurate as of 27-09-2024.

[74] Melguizo to Turbay, 26-02-1938. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 8, Caja 283, Carpeta 30

[75] In December 1937 the Republican government paid its Belgian counterpart one million francs in compensation for the death of its diplomat Jacques Borchgrave who had allegedly been executed by members of the International Brigades a year prior. However, this was because the victim was a government representative. Julius Ruiz, *The 'Red Terror' and the Spanish Civil War: Revolutionary Violence In Madrid* (Cambridge University Press, 2015). p.285

and practical – to the Spanish Civil War also highlighted the government's inability to impose coherence on the way its diplomats acted on the ground. Moreover, whilst these actions may have helped further Colombia's support for the Spanish Republic, they often contravened López's broader foreign policy objectives. In this way, the example of Colombian diplomatic action in Spain supports recent findings that an examination of on-the-ground functionaries can reveal how international politics often functioned at the intersection of high-level policy priorities and grass-roots action.[76]

Americas first?

Although the Spanish Civil War did become an important issue for the Colombian government in 1936, López's principal international concern in the early 1930s was promoting inter-American cooperation. All his most important diplomats were in American countries, including his brother in Washington. Furthermore, in December 1936, as the struggle continued in Spain, the Colombian delegation presented López's project for a League of American Nations at the Inter-American Peace Conference based on the president's belief that the Americas needed their own system of continental solidarity for the organisation of peace.[77] This was an attempt to counter US hegemony in the region as the president hoped that the new organisation would replace the Pan-American Union. According to Soto's statements in Senate during September 1936, the move was inspired by 'principles of equality of all [American] states' which 'have guided [Colombia's] international actions and which influence her greatly'.[78] We have already seen how López's continued support for Republican Spain contrasted sharply with other Latin American nations' stance thus contradicting the foreign minister's claims that regional concerns framed Colombia's international activity. However, Melguizo's actions in Spain further revealed the tensions between his government's Spanish and broader foreign policies.

Part of the justification Soto gave for a separate continental organisation was that American international legislation was 'much in advance of world legislation'.[79] One of the major legislative issues discussed in the Inter-American Conferences of the late 1920s and early 1930s was that of asylum which had been codified in the Havana and Montevideo treaties of 1928 and 1933 respectively. Spain quickly became a testing ground for this new American understanding that diplomatic agents were permitted to offer refuge to individuals accused of political crimes, and all Latin American nations upheld the right to asylum during the Spanish Civil War. Initially, the MRREE seemingly ordered Uribe not to apply this right because Spain had not signed the American treaties. In October 1936, however, it instructed Melguizo to tell the MEE that Colombia, too, would employ the American understanding of

[76] Sue Onslow and Lori Maguire, *Consuls in the Cold War* (Brill, 2023).
[77] República de Colombia, *Anales de la Cámara. 4a Trimestre* (1937). p.XII
[78] M Paske Smith's Memorandum on Colombian Foreign Policy, 06-10-1936. TNA FO 361-19778
[79] Memorandum. TNA FO 361-19778

the right to asylum.[80] This change of heart was probably because the government was being attacked at home and abroad for refusing to offer political asylum to persecuted individuals, but it was also in keeping with López's broader wish that American action be unified.[81]

Despite lamenting the difficulty of adhering to the MRREE's initial orders, Melguizo did not seem to make any real attempt to implement the new policy. He told the International Red Cross in October 1937 that there were only five asylum seekers (defined as men between eighteen and forty-five years) in the legation,[82] and the only recorded individuals who Melguizo accepted during his tenure were two elderly Spanish women in July 1937.[83] Indeed, in September the national press published reports from Madrid that Melguizo refused to offer asylum to Spanish rightists,[84] and the diplomat complained regularly about the trouble caused by the refugees and made every effort to have them moved from the Legation as soon as possible.

Melguizo was even critical of the way that other Latin American nations handled the matter of asylum. On 6 May 1937, the Spanish authorities broke into the Peruvian Consulate and arrested around 360 asylees and the vice-consul following reports that they were using a secret radio to communicate with the Nationalists.[85] Three weeks later, the MRREE ordered Melguizo to support the Peruvian government's protest against the arrests, which the diplomat explained that he had already done during a meeting of the diplomatic body in Madrid earlier that month. During the same meeting, however, he had complained that 'These matters would not arise if the Heads of Mission were here [in Madrid] and in control of their premises' (the Peruvian minister had been living in Biarritz for the six months preceding the event).[86] The Colombian representative thus left the diplomatic community in no doubt about his disdain for the diplomat whom he also blamed for the whole incident. Melguizo's decision to wait until three weeks after the meeting to inform his government of his actions confirmed his tendency to proceed unilaterally. However, this time it was in opposition to Colombia's drive for continental solidarity.

There is plentiful evidence that the diplomat believed by minimising problems of asylum he was facilitating the rapid resolution of the indemnity issue, and this exemplifies the paradox that the Spanish Civil War represented for the López regime. The president, by allowing his diplomats free reign to interpret his Spanish policy, gave them scope to act in ways that positioned Colombia further away from its neighbours at a time when he was calling for

[80] MRREE to Melguizo, 23-10-1936. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 8, Caja 283, Carpeta 26

[81] Melguizo refers to 'instructions' from this date in his letter to Soto on 17-09-1936, and also observes how the Colombian Legation's refusal to offer asylum has been labelled selfish especially given that other Hispano-American Legations had opened their doors to many people. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 8, Caja 283, Carpeta 25

[82] Letter to Marcel Junod, 12-10-1937. Centro de Documentación de la Cruz Roja Española, C ESCI-272 Listas de asilados en las oficinas diplomáticas de Madrid, 10021

[83] Melguizo to Soto, 28-07-1937. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 8, Caja 283, Carpeta 28

[84] *La Prensa*, 31-12-1937, p.34

[85] Minutes from the meeting of the Diplomatic Body, 08-04-1937. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 8, Caja 283 Carpeta 27

[86] Melguizo to Soto, 29-05-1937. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 8, Caja 283 Carpeta 27

greater continental unity. Spain, then, became an uncomfortable problem for López as it both intruded upon and complicated his regional policy. This, in turn, reveals how it was not only López's Spanish policy that lacked consistency but also his wider foreign policy and attempts to position Colombia internationally. More broadly, it also illustrates the fragility of his idea of inter-American harmony and regional cooperation as the president's inability to impose coherence on his diplomats' on-the-ground activity made Colombia appear to be acting alone in Spain rather than in the interests of the Americas.

Uribe returns

López's continued support for the Spanish Republic also impacted him closer to home as Colombians who had been living in Spain returned to tell captivated audiences about the chaos and terror of the civil war. Following the outbreak of hostilities, the Colombian government made logistical and financial provisions to repatriate its citizens. It spent around 61,000 pesos evacuating Colombians from Spain, and the first group of 54 repatriates arrived aboard the *Orazio* at the end of August 1936.[87] Colombian newspapers were keen to publish the stories of what these individuals had witnessed on the peninsula, and in their accounts the recent arrivals tended to blame the 'Popular Front' for the horrors of the war. There were clear reasons for this anti-Republican bias: the repatriates had all chosen to be evacuated from large, Republican-held urban centres and were largely wealthy and/or conservative. Though it is hard to ascertain their political position from the available documentation, a report in a Medellín newspaper suggested that the Colombian community in Spain mostly comprised religious people from Antioquia.[88] Those who spoke to journalists were not explicitly religious, but included 'a distinguished medic'[89], 'a distinguished Antioquian family'[90], and someone who had studied in both Buenos Aires and Madrid.[91]

Carlos Uribe Echeverri was the most prominent of this group of arrivals, and certainly the one who caused the most political repercussions. As well as being the ex-minister to Spain, Uribe was also an important Liberal from Antioquia whose name had even been proffered as a future presidential candidate. We have already seen how his reported abandonment of the Colombian Legation in Madrid was surrounded by controversy, but this was only the beginning of what would become a much larger political issue in Colombia. Uribe, who had spent six years abroad, first in Brazil and then Spain, frequently applied his insights from these foreign countries to the Colombian situation. In 1936 he released the book *Nuestro problema: producir* in which he compared the Brazilian and Colombian coffee markets and advised how Colombia could learn from its western neighbour.[92] Then, writing for the Colombian press just before the Spanish Civil War, Uribe discussed the strike movement in Spain. Whilst

[87] 'Memorandum', 30-06-1938. AGN.MRE.DC, Caja 283, Carpeta 30
[88] *El Heraldo de Antioquia*, 12-08-1936, p.1
[89] *El Tiempo*, 30-08-1936, p.1
[90] *El Espectador*, 04-09-1936, p.1
[91] *El Tiempo*, 04-09-1936, p.1
[92] Carlos Uribe Echeverri, *Nuestro problema: producir* (M. Aguilar, 1936).

acknowledging that strikes were the exercise of a recognised right, he felt that Spanish trade unions appropriated them for political purposes rather than acceptable economic reasons. According to the ex-minister, this was noteworthy for Colombians seeing as 'similar events have and might occur' in their country.[93]

Unsurprisingly, then, when Uribe arrived unexpectedly in Barranquilla on 5 November, he immediately compared the contemporary Colombian situation to that of war-torn Spain. He told a correspondent from local newspaper *El Heraldo* that his experiences had led him to believe that 'communism is the worst enemy' because 'it is a threat against the fatherland and against democracy.' The ex-minister further asserted that the Popular Front was a communist development which is why he would be combatting it in Colombia.[94] He did not expand on what experiences in particular led him to this position, but this chapter has already suggested that the murder of several Colombians in the Republican zone confirmed Uribe's suspicions about the Spanish government. As a result of this outburst, the Conservative press celebrated the ex-minister as 'the only decent mind in the Liberal party'.[95]

From Barranquilla, Uribe immediately boarded a plane to Rionegro, Antioquia where he conducted an informal interview with one of Colombia's most prominent correspondents, Orlando Perdomo. The subsequent story, published in *El Espectador* and *El Diario*, caused sensation across the country. Uribe attacked López's land reform bill as 'Sovietising' because it would increase production without expanding markets, and he labelled the clause on land expropriation in the constitutional reform project as 'communist'.[96] Evidently, the ex-minister was correlating Colombia to Spain based on what he had seen before and during the war. However, this implied a stark criticism of the López administration and may also have been partially motivated by the government's public censure of his actions in Madrid. Whatever the reasons, Uribe's assertions once again revealed the deep divisions within Colombian liberalism over the significance of Spanish events for domestic politics.

Uribe denied the story, but a report in Cali newspaper *El Relator* the day after Perdomo's interview had already described how the ex-minister would refute anything that was published from the off-the-record conversation.[97] Letters published between Uribe and moderate Liberal Fabio Lozano y Lozano reiterated the sentiments expressed in the Perdomo interview.[98] Then, in a later broadcast over *Colombia Hablada*, the ex-minister called for Conservatives to return to the urns so that, together with moderate Liberals, they could find a way to confront the communist and leftist forces and avoid a replication of what was happening in Spain.[99] The government had certainly taken the original report seriously because it forced Uribe to step down from the role the National Liberal Directorate had conferred upon him to lead Antioquian liberalism.

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[93] 'Cuestiones sociales de España', *El Heraldo de Antioquia*, 18-07-1936
[94] *El Heraldo*, 06-11-1936, p.1
[95] *El Colombiano*, 07-11-1936, p.5
[96] *El Espectador*, 20-11-1936, p.1
[97] *El Relator*, 07-11-1936, p.1
[98] 'El Grito de Socorro', *El Siglo*, 18-11-1936
[99] *El Estado*, 19-11-1936, p.1

Conservative commentators, for their part, pinpointed the incident as the beginning of a Liberal split. A political commentator in Medellín's daily *La Defensa* characterised it as a 'struggle between two opposing tendencies: civilisation and barbarity' with the ex-minister's supporters representing the former and López's proponents embodying the latter.[100] This chapter has argued that the fracturing of the Liberal party occurred months earlier, but the polemic surrounding Uribe's return served to further accentuate and make public the tensions within Colombian liberalism. The Spanish Civil War thus continued to be a key reference point for understanding and communicating national politics.

Conclusion

Looking at López's Spanish policy in 1936 highlights the tensions between the international and domestic, and how Colombia was grappling with both its internal identity and its position on the world stage. The president tackled issues of what supporting one warring faction or another would mean for his domestic politics and whether their action in Spain should be an extension of continental alliances or a chance to go it alone. For the López regime, ideological outlooks and internal alliances shaped its stance on the Spanish conflict. In particular, the reformist programme of the Second Spanish Republic and the president's own *Revolución* for which he implicitly counted on PCC support. Meanwhile, strong domestic opposition from Conservatives and even some members of López's own party limited the potential for action. To add to the confusion, the 'revolutionary' situation in Spain in the early months of the war made it harder for the president to justify and defend his support for the Spanish Republic. As a result, his administration followed a muddled and reactive policy towards Spain within which diplomatic officials and consular agents had large scope to act as they saw fit thus compounding the sense of disjuncture.

López's unclear stance on Spain also had implications for his broader foreign policy objectives, particularly as they pertained to regional cooperation. The president's diplomatic priority was encouraging greater American unity but, as a result of the incoherence outlined above, his administration's actions in Spain were often in contrast to the rest of the continent. Colombia's experience of the Spanish conflict reveals how, when foreign policy is weak, individual diplomatic and consular representatives have more space to take their own action which can be detrimental not only to specific policies in particular countries but also to wider international objectives. This, in turn, creates not only a disjointed foreign policy but also a fragmented general statecraft. Spain therefore became a crucial political and diplomatic issue for Colombia in 1936, even as it was not traditionally considered an international priority. The next chapter will examine in more detail exactly why the Spanish Civil War acquired such significance for the country's political and intellectual elites.

[100] 'Nacimiento o Defunción', *La Defensa*, 21-11-1936

Chapter 2 – Imaginaries of Spain in political debates about national modernity

Part of the reason why the Spanish Civil War became such an important issue in 1930s Colombia was because political leaders were already engaged in critical debates about what their nation should be. Spain was, in many ways, at the heart of these debates. Both Liberals and Conservatives adhered to a hierarchical vision of society that had developed from the colonial period and been consolidated in the late nineteenth century. In this view, common across Spain's former American colonies, masculine authority and whiteness were the two driving forces of modernity.[1] However, Colombian elites' understandings of this 'colonial legacy' and how to overcome it in creating a 'modern' nation differed, especially when it came to the role of the Catholic Church. For many Conservatives, Colombia's particular path to modernity depended on its ability to maintain Catholic traditions in a period of global immorality.[2] Liberals, on the other hand, believed that the Church's continued presence in Colombian political life was obstructing the country's attempts to become modern.[3] The centrality of religion to debates around modernity set Colombia apart from its regional neighbours, many of which were engaged in similar conversations around inclusion and exclusion but had all managed to separate Church and state during the previous century.

The Liberal regime's attempts to modernise Colombia opened it up to intense criticism from Catholic and Conservative sectors of society. Here, longstanding understandings of Spain's historic role in Colombia intersected with contemporary interpretations of the Spanish Civil War and its relevance. Traditional groups drew parallels between the Liberal reforms, particularly those implemented by Alfonso López Pumarejo, and Republican policies that they believed led to the eruption of fighting across the Atlantic. In response to these fervent attacks, certain Liberals began to claim that rightist Colombians were plotting their own uprising similar to the *coup d'etat* that sparked the civil war in Spain. Such accusations found support in Colombia's long history of internecine conflict as well as more recent instances of right-wing subversion and, in this way, Spain became a prism through which different Colombian elites viewed their country's past, present and future. At the same time as they weaponised Spanish events to use against each other, leading Liberals and Conservatives advanced a narrative of democratic exceptionalism which posited that civil war could never happen in a modern Colombian nation. Though a significant expression of peaceful intent in a country whose history is often defined by violence, leaders' denials that they were seeking to emulate Spanish events in Colombia also represented another step towards the construction of an isolationist myth.

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[1] Nancy Appelbaum, Anne Macpherson, and Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt, *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America* (University of North Carolina Press, 2003).
[2] Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*.
[3] Arias, "Estado laico y catolicismo integral en Colombia."

The presence of various women from the peninsula who national and local governments invited to advance cultural and educational projects confirmed to Conservatives and Catholics that the Liberal and Republican regimes were one and the same. In particular, theatre actor Margarita Xirgú and pedagogue Enriqueta Séculi became centres of controversy as they were seen to be embodying the moral corruption of the Spanish Republic and transporting it to Colombia. The gender of these two individuals also took on heightened significance in the context of national debates around the role of women in society. Although certain political figures had suggested reforming laws on women's rights during the previous period of Conservative rule, there was a real sense that the new government was going to do more to further women's advancement.[4] Yet Liberal leaders proved reluctant to grant greater political power to Colombian women.

Similarly, the installation of a new Liberal regime marked the moment when the government moved away from exalting Hispanic heritage as the basis of national identity and towards celebrating *mestizaje* amongst its population.[5] However, this was couched in paternalistic rhetoric that sought to appropriate parts of Black and Indigenous culture whilst excluding those groups from visions of a 'modern' Colombia.[6] The incoming Liberal administrations thus generated significant expectations and concerns about gender and racial equality in the country which provoked new and renewed debates about the status of different groups in Colombian society. Given that these debates were embedded in the wider discussions around the colonial legacy and modernity, commentary on Spanish events was refracted through these debates, simultaneously being framed within and helping frame elites' views of their own national projects.

To tease out these complexities, this chapter will explore how Colombian reports and commentary on Spain transported the language, ideas and confrontations of the civil war onto domestic soil. These were then adapted to the already fractured national setting in a way that ensured their impact upon national politics. The main subject of analysis here will be the national public sphere which included leading Liberals and Conservatives as well as their newspapers. However, Colombia also had powerful regional elites who contributed to national politics by occupying seats in Congress, participating in the National Liberal Directorate and/or establishing regional newspapers that were in constant conversation with the national dailies printed in the capital. Equally, in a period during which Colombian Catholics saw themselves threatened, various religious figures and publications that traditionally occupied themselves with local or transnational issues also commented frequently on government policy. This chapter will therefore consider regional and religious publications that discussed Spanish events as they related to the national setting. In doing so, it contributes to a growing body of literature that advocates for multi-sited, transnational

[4] Velásquez Toro, "Las mujeres en la historia de Colombia." p.190
[5] Flórez Bolívar, "Celebrando y redefiniendo el mestizaje." pp.98-9
[6] Muñoz Rojas, *A Fervent Crusade for the National Soul*. pp.127-62

histories of twentieth-century Latin America.[7] Unlike the majority of these works, which have focussed largely on the Cold War, here it is argued that Spain was a crucial point of reference for Colombian elites in the early twentieth century.

Critiques of the Liberal project

Given that López's reforms seemingly targeted an aspect of the perceived colonial legacy that traditionalist groups held dear – namely, Colombia's strong Catholic tradition – Spain became an important lens through which opposition forces viewed the Liberal programme of the late 1930s.[8] Two projects in particular drew criticisms from Conservative and Catholic opponents: constitutional and educational reform. Both of these were actually rather moderate. López rejected calls from the Left to issue a completely new constitution and his government did not seek to exclude Catholics from the education system.[9] Yet this did not prevent an intense backlash from opposition forces who objected to proposals about civil marriage, divorce, fewer legal privileges for clerics and religious and academic freedom (the first two were ultimately left out of the constitutional reform bill). The Conservative leader led the attacks. Laureano Gómez had made it clear since his appearance on the Colombian political stage that Catholicism and *Hispanismo* were two closely linked tenets of his nationalist thought. He therefore vehemently opposed the reforms which, in his opinion, disregarded these facets of Colombian national identity by seeking to secularise the country and thus dismantle one of the key pillars of its Spanish heritage. Gómez even established *El Siglo* in February 1936 as a platform from which to attack López's *Revolución*. Reflecting Conservatives' belief Spain was undertaking its own struggle to defend the Catholic tradition, he regularly drew on the Spanish Civil War to proclaim the dangers of government policies.

Writing in his newspaper at the end of July 1936, two days after López told Congress that he would push ahead with reforming the constitution, Gómez paralleled the move to anti-clerical policies in Mexico following the revolution, including the suppression of Church powers and promotion of secular education. He, like many other Conservatives, saw constitutional reform as a direct attack on Church authority which had been enshrined in Colombian law since 1886. However, linking the policy to Spain, the Conservative leader claimed that the 'revolutionaries' who conceived of such ideas were 'the same in Mexico, Spain, Russia and our homeland.' In Colombia, as in Mexico and Spain, 'the Catholic Church is a powerfully uniting link, defender of the people, comfort for the needy, endless source of

[7] Weld, "The Spanish Civil War and the Construction of a Reactionary Historical Consciousness in Augusto Pinochet's Chile."; Weld, "The Other Door."; Antonio Aguilar, "From Comrades to Subversives."; Daniel Kressel, "'"The Argentine Franco?": The Regime of Juan Carlos Onganía and Its Ideological Dialogue with Francoist Spain," *The Americas* 78, no. 1 (2021).

[8] Lina del Castillo discusses how mid-nineteenth century Liberals attempted to overcome what they saw as the 'colonial legacy' of Catholicism which provoked a backlash from Conservative and Church officials who began a process of reconfessionalisation that lasted into the twentieth century. del Castillo, *Crafting a Republic for the World*. pp.263-306

[9] Arias, "Estado laico y catolicismo integral en Colombia."

integrity.' By reducing the Church's power, he argued, López threatened national unity and legitimacy. Gómez then cited the Spanish conflict as a model for what happens in a traditionally Catholic country which is subject to 'an atheist, murdering government that has driven the country to war in order to liberate itself or die'.[10] Following this logic, Mexico inspired López's *Revolución,* but Spain was a case study in the terrible consequences of such a programme (Gómez did not refer to Mexico's Cristero wars). He was not alone in this view: *El Colombiano*'s editorialist identified both the Spanish Civil War and constitutional reform as 'significant turning points that oblige all Colombians to find the way of their soul'.[11] Conservatives therefore believed that the constitutional reform project exposed the intrinsic connection between Spain and Colombia.

The government's educational programme, which sought to establish more public schools as a counterweight to the high number of religious institutions, was a direct consequence of the constitutional reform bill's guarantee of academic freedom. Accordingly, Gómez levelled equal wrath against education policies. In the same July editorial, he furthered that the Colombian government was following the Mexican example of 'corrupting the youth, starting in the peripheries' by recommending that teachers implement a secular teaching plan and aiming many of their interventions at rural communities.[12] As with constitutional reform, López's educational programme was seemingly inspired by the Mexican Revolution. Spain, however, proffered a vision of the disastrous consequences of this programme, as Gómez explained nine months later. Making explicit the link between López's educational reform and the Spanish Civil War, he told attendees at the fourth anniversary celebration for his magazine *Revista Colombiana* that 'the Ministry of Education's propaganda is identical to that spread in Spain before the civil war'. In Spain, 'officials, leftist press and the Ateneo [de Madrid] took away a part of the Spanish people which has instead turned them into murderers: the sacred belief that contained any outbreak of infernal passion.' Similarly, in Colombia, the MEN was working 'to annihilate Colombian culture' by 'destroying beliefs of the national soul, replacing them with vague, maudlin and universalist ideologies'.[13] It was precisely the secularising nature of López's reforms that Gómez felt was paving the way for future conflict given that the Catholic faith worked to dampen violent tendencies amongst the population.

Gómez's diatribes against the López government also demonstrated the importance of the Mexico-Spain-Colombia triumvirate for right-wing political imaginaries. Although Mexico was a much closer example of what López was trying to do in Colombia, it had occurred during a period in which the country was still under Conservative rule and so the Mexican Revolution and subsequent Cristero Wars, whilst shocking, did not present any imminent danger. The Spanish Civil War, on the other hand, erupted when Colombia was going through its own period of political transformation hence it appeared as a much more appropriate example for opposition forces to hold up as a model for Colombia's future. To bridge the geopolitical gap,

[10] *El Siglo*, 27-07-1936, p.3
[11] *El Colombiano*, 26-07-1936, p.3
[12] *El Siglo*, 27-07-1936, p.3
[13] *El Siglo*, 11-04-1937, p.4

Conservatives cited Mexico as a chilling parallel for the Colombian case whose horrors could be seen most immediately in Spain. The discursive link was made easier by the fact that Mexico's president was trying to fulfil the Revolution's socialist ideals and his was the only other Latin American government that provided any public support for the Spanish Republic. The Colombian Right therefore drew on both the Mexican and Spanish cases when warning of the dangers of López's *Revolución*. In November 1936, for instance, José Mejía Mejía of *El Colombiano* wrote that 'the lesson from the peninsula arrives at a historic moment' because Colombia, along with Mexico, 'have been marked [...] as a pair of fledgling republics for the cultivation of communism.'[14] Like Gómez, he believed that Colombia was succumbing to leftist systems, just as Mexico already had, but that Spain evinced the consequences of this transformation.

As the Liberal reforms sought to limit the power of the Catholic Church, religious figures were also staunch critics of government policies, and they too used the example of Spain to fuel their opposition. Unlike their Conservative allies, however, Colombian Catholics' interest in the Spanish Civil War went beyond a belief in the spiritual connection between the two countries. They felt a direct link to Spain as a function of the transnational networks established by the Catholic Church since the sixteenth century. Adapted to the modern era, Colombian Catholic newspapers maintained constant correspondence with other religious publications in the Americas and Europe, sending and receiving copies of editions which discussed the Spanish conflagration. Further, although communications were heavily affected by the war, members of Catholic orders in Colombia got updates from fellow missionaries in Spain. Finally, many clerics within the country had come from Spain either as missionaries or as a result of anti-clericalism in the early 1930s, and these individuals helped communicate the idea that the Spanish conflict was also Colombia's problem.

The sense of direct connection to Spanish events sparked the Colombian episcopacy to send a message to Spain on 12 October 1936. Not coincidentally, this was also the *Día de la Raza* in Colombia. The prelates expressed their admiration for 'the heroic sacrifices' of the Spanish clergy and Catholic people; protested against 'the horrendous crimes' being committed in Spain; and prayed that peace soon be restored in Spain so that it could 'continue demonstrating to the world the traditional examples of Catholicism'. They felt empowered to send this message on behalf of all religious people in Colombia as well as 'the Colombian nation in general which glorifies itself by being a faithful lover and submissive daughter of the Catholic Church'.[15] Although the message did not explicitly relate Spanish events to the Colombian context (save the protest against accusations in the foreign press that Colombia 'sympathised with the communist practices' in Spain) by claiming to speak for the nation the episcopacy implicitly signalled their hostility to Liberal reforms which were seemingly incongruous with national realities.

Though many Colombian Catholics *did* directly discuss the implications of the Spanish Civil War for the country, one figure in particular stands out for his constant and impassioned

[14] *El Colombiano*, 13-11-1936, p.3
[15] Cited in *La Prensa*, 07-12-1936, p.3

commentary. Fray Francisco Mora Díaz was a Colombian member of the Dominican Order. Born in Cundinamarca in 1891, he spent much of his adult life in the neighbouring department of Boyacá, one the sites of acute violence following the Liberal victory in 1930. Perhaps as a result of this first-hand experience of partisan excesses, he was a fierce critic of the Liberal regimes, especially that of López. There is no concrete evidence that Mora spent significant amounts of time in Spain but, as a member of the Colombian clergy, he undoubtedly came across some of the many Spanish priests in the country and he would have had contact with other Dominicans across the world, including in Spain.[16] Certainly, in 1938 he published the book *Los Macabeos Españoles* alongside two other Dominican priests, Spaniards Ignacio Menéndez and Antonio Carrión. The title referred to the Maccabees who rebelled against the Seleucid empires' attempts to forcibly assimilate Jews into their pagan culture during the second century. The book therefore reflected the idea, widespread amongst the Colombian religious community, that the Spanish conflict was a just war, and the first chapter was dedicated to defending the 'holiness' of the Nationalist 'crusade'.[17]

Mora founded several Catholic newspapers in Colombia, the most well-known of which was *El Cruzado* of Tunja which ran from 1932 to 1942. Although he had left the directorship of this publication before 1936, he was still a frequent collaborator and chose Spain as the topic for many of his contributions. Given his firm grounding in Colombian realities, his analysis of the conflict tended to focus on its implications for his home nation. Mora's main contribution to the aforementioned volume, for instance, was an essay exploring 'The Spanish Crusade Viewed from America' in which he drew parallels between the Spanish and Colombian situations and criticised the Liberal government's attitude towards Francoist representatives in Colombia. This attitude, Mora believed, was influenced in large part by the supposedly 'false news' about Spain published in Liberal newspapers.[18] Many of his own articles, then, were expressly aimed at countering opposition narratives by publicly deriding the journalists who wrote them as well as attacking Republican Spain and lauding the military generals. Mora's preoccupation with the Liberal press earned him the title of 'rabid Dominican priest' in *El Liberal* and drove Luis Eduardo Nieto Caballero to label the priest a 'candidate for the madhouse'.[19]

Using the Spanish Civil War as a tool to attack the Liberal regime was nothing new. However, in many of his essays, Mora did advance a novel thesis inspired by his interpretation of the conflict: that of an international Liberal-Masonic-Communist conspiracy against Colombian Catholicism. Fears of an international anti-Catholic plot were widespread amongst Colombia's religious community throughout the early twentieth century,[20] but the eruption of hostilities in Spain seemingly radicalised Mora in this regard. Writing in August 1936, he

[16] Fray Jorge Caro, *Bonanza y Tempestad. Estudio Biográfico del Ilustre Padre Dominico Fray Francisco Mora Díaz* (Nelly, 1974).
[17] Padre Ignacio Menéndez, Padre Antonio Carrión, and Fray Mora Díaz, *Los Macabeos Españoles* (Editorial El Cruzado, 1938).
[18] Menéndez, Carrión, and Díaz, *Los Macabeos Españoles*. pp.82-161
[19] *El Liberal*, 14-10-1938, p.5; *El Gráfico*, 05-09-1936, p.827
[20] Williford, *Armando los espíritus*. pp.148-216

declared that the 'Spanish war is essentially religious' because both sides defined themselves either as fighting for God or against God. On the one hand, the Right would return Spain 'to an integral, pure and firm Catholicism' whilst, on the other, 'the admirers of Lenin' raise up 'the [Masonic] Square as a symbol of ignominy'.[21] By tying the Spanish Republicans to communism and freemasonry, Mora followed the same logic as the Spanish Nationalists who spoke of their country facing a 'Jewish-Freemason-Bolshevik' threat to its religious identity which itself was an adaption of the wider Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory promulgated by Catholics since the nineteenth century.[22] Two of the main architects of this myth – the journalist José María Pemán and general Gonzalo Queipo de Llano – were much revered amongst Colombian rightists who disseminated Pemán's articles and Queipo's infamous radio broadcasts across Colombian publications and airwaves.

Although Mora himself expressed antisemitic views, the idea of a Jewish conspiracy did not resonate in a country with a relatively small Jewish population.[23] So, to make the international conspiracy relevant for a Colombian audience, he posited liberalism as its domestic anchor. The fact that many of the Liberal leaders, including the president, were suspected Freemasons greatly facilitated his efforts. In 1937, the priest published an article titled 'Back atheists and communists' in which he discussed the upcoming elections for the Liberal candidacy. Mora expressed his belief that 'Whoever is going to represent our nation must be the closest expression of the people's ideals: God and Homeland.' Given that '99 per cent of Colombians are Catholics', any future president must be 'the most genuine exponent of these religious sentiments.' In this context, a 'mason in the presidential seat would be like an Ethiopian governing the Italians'. This sentence constituted a direct attack on one of the candidates, Darío Echandía, who was the former Grand Master of a dissident Grand Lodge in Bogotá. By levelling such an accusation, Mora also explicitly linked the López regime (which Echandía was ideologically and practically associated with) to Freemasonry. As well as being alien, the priest continued in a clear allusion to Spain, such an individual would also bring 'inevitable' religious persecution and 'corollary' holy war. Finally, linking the supposed Masonic Liberal regime with international communism, he proclaimed that any 'disciple of Stalin and Marx is a social threat and [...] traitor' before concluding that Colombia needs 'a president who can reColombianise our homeland' and that Colombians, learning from Mexico and Spain, 'will not allow... foreign powers to control our territory.'[24] The idea that Colombia was witnessing a global anti-Catholic plot was therefore not inherently linked to Spanish events, but the fact that the Liberal government supported the 'communist' Republic confirmed, in Mora's eyes, its adherence to the Bolshevik-Communist conspiracy directed against Catholics that was being propagated from Spain.

[21] '"El hijo del trueno" vencerá', *Veritas*, 12-08-1936
[22] Paul Preston, *Architects of Terror: Paranoia, Conspiracy and Anti-Semitism in Franco's Spain* (HarperCollins, 2023).
[23] For example: *El Pueblo*, 21-01-1939, p.4
[24] *Diario del Pacífico*, 19-03-1937, p.2

Front cover of Fray Mora Díaz, *Chispas del Yunque* (Editorial "El Cruzado", 1939).

In two books, published in 1939 and 1942, Mora made the link even more explicit. The front cover of *Chispas del Yunque* showed a monk bringing a hammer down on an anvil with 'Liberalism, Masonry, Communism'. In one of the essays, Mora discussed the leaked document supposedly from the Masonic Lodge in Tequendama which called for persecution against the co-adjutor Archbishop of Bogotá Juan Manuel González Arbeláez, Catholic unions and rightist Spaniards in Colombia. The piece included a warning that 'Colombia is following the path of its mother Spain step by step.'[25] Mora thus saw himself as the front-page figure, destroying the Liberal-Masonic-Communist conspiracy by exposing its manoeuvrings and cautioning against the implications. Notwithstanding the false claims, Thomas Williford has argued that such rhetoric contributed to a discourse of eliminationist violence which reached its peak, with disastrous consequences, in *la Violencia* of the mid-twentieth century.[26] If that is the case then, for Mora, the Spanish Civil War greatly facilitated the radicalisation of this discourse of 'Otherness'. Certainly, the theory of a Liberal-Freemason-Communist plot was picked up and

[25] Fray Mora Díaz, *Chispas del Yunque: artículos polémicos y discursos académicos* (Editorial El Cruzado, 1939). p.386
[26] Williford, *Armando los espíritus*.

promulgated by other Catholics and Conservatives across the country during the late 1930s, including Gómez. Further, Mora's case demonstrates how such discourses were constructed within a transnational framework where events and ideas from abroad were interpreted by individuals within Colombia and remodelled according to the local context.

Colombian exceptionalism

The ferocity with which Conservatives and Catholics used events from Spain to attack the Liberal project compelled some individuals to claim that right-wing groups in Colombia were planning their own insurrection inspired by the Spanish Nationalists. Reports of right-wing subversion were not new – several Conservative leaders and generals had been arrested in April 1936 following a foiled plot – but the allusion to Spain was an innovation that further demonstrated how the civil war infiltrated Colombian political imaginaries. The left-wing, self-declared 'revolutionary' Cali newspaper *El Crisol* reported in early August that Conservatives were mobilising against the Liberal government encouraged by the 'bloody crime' of the rebels in Spain. To combat this, the editorialist proclaimed: 'all of us who truly love democratic ideals are obliged to assume an attitude of expectant vigilance'.[27] What had sparked the comment were Conservative meetings across the country to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the 1886 constitution where party leaders gave fervent speeches condemning the constitutional reform which the Senate had just approved.

At the Bogotá event on 5 August, participants allegedly entered the venue shouting 'long live [Emiliano] Mola [leader of Nationalist forces in northern Spain], Franco, Laureano Gómez, the Spanish revolutionaries and Colombian conservatism.'[28] Two days later, the British minister in Bogotá reported home that López was concerned about the political repercussions of his policy and had even 'gone so far as to reorganise the army to oppose any attempt by conservatives to raise concerted protests.'[29] Paske-Smith sent an update the next day which claimed that War Minister Plinio Mendoza Neira 'had obtained the promise of five thousand rifles from Mexico, and had ordered one of Colombia's two destroyers to sail from Cartagena for Buenaventura on the Pacific coast'.[30] The latter move actually caused a minor crisis in the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office because one of the vessels was manned mainly by Royal Naval personnel and so, throughout August and September, officials debated whether it would be acceptable for British forces to help suppress civil unrest in a foreign country.[31]

Liberal accusations of Conservative plots drove General José Domingo Arango to publicly declare 'the impossibility of a civil war in Colombia'. However, this was not due to a lack of political will (Domingo described himself as 'ultra-conservative' but 'not a politician') but rather because army 'officials were well-trained in loyalty'.[32] Indeed, in late August the

[27] *El Crisol*, 06-08-1936, p.4
[28] *El Tiempo*, 06-08-1936, p.1
[29] Paske-Smith to Eden, 07-08-1936. TNA FO 371-19776
[30] Paske-Smith to Eden, 08-08-1936. TNA FO 371-19776
[31] TNA FO 371-19776
[32] *El Siglo*, 17-08-1936, p.8

government were able to scupper plans by a retired general to organise an armed revolt after some of the soldiers he attempted to recruit informed their superiors.[33] Gómez, who was widely suspected to be behind the scheme, kept quiet in the aftermath of these reports but his supporters denied that the Conservative party was conspiring against the government.

A Conservative newspaper in Cartagena, *Diario de la Costa*, published a series of editorials at the start of August discussing the prospect of a civil war. The author stated that he could not fathom a Conservative rebellion because revolutionary agitation had been confined to the extreme left.[34] According to him, López supporters were the ones threatening internal strife, not their political opponents. Four days later, the same editorialist claimed that 'Civil war is a material and moral impossibility, because the Conservative party is not in the mood'.[35] He did acknowledge in another editorial published the next day that his co-partisans did have a tendency to celebrate the triumph of the Spanish rebels as if it were their own, but he warned that this was a 'false notion of the Spanish case which does not have possible parallels with our national politics.'[36] The author thus repeated Domingo's view that Spanish events could not be replicated in Colombia, but this time it was because Conservatives had no desire to respond militarily to Liberal intransigence.

In turn, Liberal leaders scrambled to deny opponents' claims that the Spanish conflagration had any immediate relevance to their own political agenda. Again, these contentions were not new. As we have seen, the Colombian president and his ministers regularly criticised the application of foreign ideas to domestic realities, arguing that they were alien both to the Colombian character and its social, political and economic situation. However, given the high level of interest in Spain, the civil war became the international event that Liberals were most often forced to refute the relevance of. The earliest example came immediately after reports that Conservatives were preparing for civil war. On 8 August, during a speech to commemorate the final independence battle, López told his audience that 'Whilst Christian civilisation appears torn apart in scenes of horror and battle cries, Colombians should swear on the memory of our heroes that their disputes and differences will only be concluded by democratic and intelligent means'.[37] The timing of his words made it clear to spectators that the president was referring to Spain. *El Espectador*'s editorialist certainly concluded that the speech established López's 'firm and serene decision to conserve for [Colombia] that which has seemingly succumbed definitively in the Spanish inferno and is man's most perfect conquest: democracy.'[38]

Other members of López's government followed the president's lead. During the Senate debate on the Medellín Congress, in which Santos had criticised certain proposals for their excessiveness, Interior Minister Alberto Lleras Camargo complained about the constant evocation of Spain. He contrasted the Colombian government to its Spanish counterpart

[33] Paske-Smith to Eden, 20-08-1936. TNA FO 371-19776
[34] 'Insurgencia de las derechas', *Diario de la Costa*, 09-08-1936
[35] 'La paz y el pueblo', *Diario de la Costa*, 13-08-1936
[36] 'El caso de España', *Diario de la Costa*, 14-08-1936
[37] Quoted in *El Espectador*, 08-08-1936, p.4
[38] *El Espectador*, 08-08-1936, p.4

'where Liberalism and leftist Republicanism were a minority', and asked 'Where is the cruelty, death, disorder, illegality and vacillation' in Colombia?[39] In doing so, likely to mollify those who were drawing parallels between the two, Lleras also deemphasised his government's support for the Spanish Republic by appropriating the language used by its critics.

The president and his ministers were also joined in their endeavour by non-government figures who also downplayed any supposed parallels between the Colombian and Spanish situations. In December 1936, the intellectual and future director of *El Tiempo*, Germán Arciniegas, dedicated an entire editorial to refuting the idea that his party was inspired by or concerned with anything other than domestic issues. Colombian liberalism, he asserted, was as far removed from communism and fascism as it was from the tendency to interpret current events through the lens of foreign politics.[40] As Spain was the only country in which Colombians saw the battle between these two ideologies playing out, Arciniegas implied that Spanish events had no impact on Colombian politics and that the very suggestion of this possibility was anti-liberal. Accordingly, leading Liberals continued to express similar messages in both official statements and the national press for the duration of the Spanish war.

By negating the idea that Spanish events could be repeated in Colombia, both Liberal and Conservative leaders responded to the accusations of opposition forces. For Liberals, the denials were an attempt to counter Conservative assertions that they were imposing foreign systems and ideas in Colombia. Conservatives in turn espoused the impossibility of civil war in Colombia as a reaction to claims that they were planning their own insurrection. In a more abstract sense, these patriotic and pacifist discourses also propagated a notion of Colombian democratic exceptionalism. Important sectors of both conservatism and liberalism seemed to truly believe that conflict would never erupt between them despite their insistence that opposition members were provoking or plotting violence. The impossibility of civil war thus arose from the fact that each party was supposedly committed to Colombian democracy, even if their understandings of what constituted that democracy varied considerably. Ultimately, *la Violencia* that broke out at the end of the next decade exposed their fateful error. However, political leaders in 1930s Colombia, facing accusations of inciting civil strife, not only denied the veracity of such claims but questioned the very idea that such conflict could occur in a nation with such strong democratic values and systems. In a century punctuated by official and unofficial civil war, and as Robert Karl argues with relation to the 'forgotten peace' of the late 1950s/early 1960s, it is important to rescue these moments of different possibilities for Colombia's future.[41]

[39] *El Heraldo de Antioquia*, 03-08-1936, p.1
[40] *El Tiempo*, 10-12-1936, p.4
[41] Robert Karl, *Forgotten Peace: Reform, Violence, and the Making of Contemporary Colombia* (University of California Press, 2018).

Transnational agents of controversy

Conservative and Catholic claims that the Liberal government and Republican Spain were intrinsically connected were bolstered by the fact that the government relied on Spanish cultural ambassadors to further its reformist project. Though these individuals attempted to separate their mission in the country from events back home, to many Colombians they became the embodiment of their country's strife and so their actions were viewed through the lens of what was happening in Spain. One of the most impactful of these – both in terms of her fame and the polemic surrounding her presence in Colombia – was the Catalan theatre actor Margarita Xirgú. She arrived in early November 1936 as part of a Spanish theatre troupe who were touring Latin America and had been invited to Colombia by Education Minister Darío Echandía. It was this link to the López administration that transformed Xirgú's tour into a source of controversy within Colombia. Although certain Conservative commentators expressed their excitement about the upcoming visit by 'a glorious artist... of universal fame', it did not take long for the right-wing press to criticise Xirgú's presence.[42] On 8 November, for instance, Carlos Ariel Gutiérrez reported that the troupe's debut had a 'tiny audience' given the 'high prices of the venue' and expressed his desire for 'public performances at affordable prices'.[43]

Xirgú's tour had the aim of bringing modern European theatre to a Latin American audience which meant adapting classic plays by Lope de Vega as well as performing newer works by Federico García Lorca. The latter was particularly significant as he was a homosexual whose recent death had been attributed to the Spanish rebels, something which they (and their Colombian supporters) were still denying. Although Xirgú refused to be drawn into conversation about the civil war during her time in Colombia, she did express her admiration for President Manuel Azaña which indicated her Republican leanings.[44] Perhaps because of this association, anti-fascist groups reportedly used the troupe's performances as an opportunity to circulate leaflets protesting against Lorca's death at the hands of 'fascists' and calling on Colombians to 'fight against murderous fascism'.[45] The next chapter will discuss local anti-fascists in more detail, including the way they were connected to 'immoral' women, but for now the combination of these factors made the actor a target for attacks by the Colombian Right, who saw in her the physical manifestation of Republican Spain in their country. At the same time, reports of political material circulating during her shows led to accusations that Xirgú was intervening in Colombian politics, something that was expressly forbidden to foreigners and considered unsuitable for women. Indeed, an *El Siglo* contributor denounced Xirgú for 'forgetting her artistic duties' and instead 'combatting fascism, which is a means of spreading communist propaganda'. Although the author did not make specific reference to

[42] 'Margarita Xirgú', *Diario de la Costa*, 15-10-1936
[43] 'Debuto Margarita Xirgu en Bogotá', *Diario del Pacífico*, 10-11-1936
[44] 'Entrevista con Margarita Xirgu', *El Siglo*, 11-11-1936
[45] 'Una temporada de propaganda', *El Siglo*, 04-12-1936

Xirgú's gender, it is clear that the 'artistic duties' he referred to were more in keeping with his idea of womanhood than the actor 'placing herself at the service of certain ideas.'[46]

One specific incident incensed Conservative observers more than any other and also strengthened their accusations that López's educational reform was leading Colombia down the same path as Spain. In late November, the MEN arranged for Xirgú's troupe to hold a free performance of a Lorca play for children in Bogotá aged between six and twelve. *El Siglo*'s political commentator, who deplored the group's 'continuous communist propaganda' in the form of plays that presented immoral themes, declared that he could 'remain silent' as long as 'performances are limited to the Coliseo's [Theatre] regular audience'. However, this new move by Echandía necessitated a firmer response to prevent the city's children from becoming 'guinea pigs for corrupting dissemination'. The author was particularly incensed by the fact that the performance would take place 'without any parental oversight' which reflected Conservatives' belief that families should be primarily responsible for the education of their children. Framing the incident within the right-wing notion that López's educational reform was threatening the nation's future, he declared: '*El Siglo* was right when it labelled the office for public education as the centre of national corruption… Mr Echandía… is now trying to poison the minds and hearts of the nation's youth.'[47] Moreover, it was the presence of a pro-Republican Spaniard performing the works of progressive playwrights to unsuspecting children at the request of the education minister that seemed to confirm the immoral and corrupting nature of the Liberal regime. The religious newspaper *El Pueblo* went even further than its Conservative colleague, proclaiming that 'we censure this theatre for all society, not exclusively for children'.[48] Xirgú's Colombian tour thereby became another means for rightists to attack the López administration.

Equally scandalous for Conservatives and Catholics was the Antioquian government's decision in January 1937 to appoint Catalan pedagogue Enriqueta Séculi Bastida as head of the *Instituto Central Femenino* in Medellín. The institute had been established in 1935 as a product of the reforms that allowed women access to higher education, and it became a bastion of secular education following the 1936 constitutional reform. The school was therefore already a point of contention between Liberals and Conservatives before Séculi arrived to assume the directorship, having been recommended to the departmental government by the Colombian consul in Barcelona.[49] Although Séculi also avoided discussing the Spanish Civil War publicly, she did draw parallels between her native and host regions immediately after arriving in Medellín, telling a correspondent at *El Diario* that Antioquians were 'profoundly and nobly regionalist like [Catalans]. For us Cataluña is Spain, just like how for you Colombia cannot be explained without Antioquia.'[50] This innocuous remark set the

[46] 'Una temporada de propaganda', *El Siglo*, 04-12-1936
[47] *El Siglo*, 25-11-1936, p.3
[48] *El Pueblo,* 05-12-1936, p.9
[49] Lucy M. Cohen, *Colombianas en la vanguardia* (Universidad de Antioquia, 2001). pp.172-5
[50] *El Diario*, 21-03-1936, p.3

tone for Colombian perceptions of her role in the city, with local commentators interpreting Séculi's actions through the prism of events in Spain.

The right-wing press remained remarkably silent about the presence of a Catalan teacher until the end of April when the Education Sub-Director for Antioquia, Cecilia López Restrepo, was unexpectedly dismissed. Séculi immediately hired López as the institute's treasurer-secretary and publicly criticised the departmental government for humiliating her. This move drew scathing attacks from both Liberals and Conservatives who accused the pedagogue, like Xirgú before her, of intervening in Colombian affairs.[51] Séculi resigned as a result of the backlash, but the incident served to draw attention to the fact that a woman from Republican Spain was responsible for carrying out educational reform in Antioquia. This was unthinkable for local Conservatives and Catholics given that Spanish events served as an example for many of what secular education could lead to. Further, as a woman, Séculi came from a group that was precluded from political participation in Colombia. Accordingly, she soon became the target of opposition attacks.

The day after her resignation, Medellín's Catholic Action radio station declared that Séculi's arrival had represented the import into Colombia of 'the iconoclastic fury of Largo Caballero's red Spain.' Another religious newspaper claimed that the Academy was turning its female students into alcoholics by serving wines imported directly from Spain 'land of communists and Séculis Bastidas'.[52] The latter comment was particularly shocking given Conservatives' view that women were the paragon of morality and virtue. Séculi thus became the prime focus for local right-wing critiques of Liberal policies whilst her presence seemingly confirmed that the López administration was transporting the Spanish problem onto national soil.

The most controversial of Séculi's actions was the plan to redesign the Academy which involved moving statues of Jesus and Mary as well as one of Simón Bolívar from the central college green. Commenting retrospectively upon this decision, a contributor to *El Siglo* using the pseudonym Mary-Luz asserted that it proved Séculi carried 'the barbaric memory of the unstoppable hoards' and had 'communist blood boiling in her veins'. Invoking the women soldiers who will be the subject of the next section, Mary-Luz proclaimed that the 'militiawoman teacher not only attack[ed] Colombia's religious feeling, but also the country's sovereign majesty.' She also suggested that Séculi would replace the statues with 'the bloody figure of her compatriot Azaña', accusing the pedagogue of bringing the Spanish Civil War to Antioquia. However, as with Xirgú, it was Séculi's link to Colombian officials that made the case especially significant. Mary-Luz argued that because the pedagogue was 'imported by the National Government', her attack against Colombian religious and patriotic sentiment was 'the logical consequence of the demoralising education enforced by the Ministry for Education and Propaganda'.[53] Notwithstanding the fact that Séculi was hired by the departmental

[51] 'Sucursal de La Defensa', *Diario de Antioquia*, 20-05-1937
[52] Quoted in 'Culinario e Iconoclasia', *Diario de Antioquia*, 15-05-1937
[53] 'Ecos de España', *El Siglo*, 01-06-1937

government, the journalist implied that she was proof of the indistinguishable character of the Spanish and Colombian governments.

As a result of this backlash, more than the incident itself, there were public calls for Séculi's expulsion from Colombia.[54] However, the departmental government allowed her to remain on as an adviser at the institute in a move that was sharply criticised by right-wing observers. A columnist at local Conservative newspaper *La Defensa* wrote that the decision meant Séculi could 'carry out her communist manoeuvrings and the responsibility will land on a Colombian teacher'.[55] At the same time, students at the institute were outraged that their director had been forced to resign so they declared a sit-in strike and held a protest demonstration at the governor's office where they were reportedly joined by trade unionists and pupils at other schools in Medellín.[56] In this sense, Séculi's presence did provoke tensions between progressive and traditional forces in Medellín that in some way reflected the ideological divisions in Spain although they were articulated around domestic issues. Yet it was not her doing; the polemic surrounding the pedagogue became a microcosm for Colombian (mis)appropriations of the Spanish conflict for their own purposes. The episode also showed how events from Spain had regional as well as national reverberations, something that will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Both Xirgú and Séculi were invited to Colombia because of their progressive ideas which reflected the modernising impulse of the López administration. In the eyes of Conservative observers, however, these same ideas linked the women to the barbaric and irreligious Spanish Popular Front. Such connections seemingly confirmed right-wing suspicions that the government was enacting an anti-religious programme. Further, that the two women were working directly with Colombian youth, and young women in Séculi's case, served as evidence of the Liberal regime's corrupting nature. The fact that they were women themselves served to heighten the sense of alarm. López and his ministers were therefore seen to be physically and spiritually transporting the Spanish Civil War onto Colombian shores by inviting Republican representatives to adopt policies and programmes being employed in Spain.

"La miliciana"

The intensity of the controversy around Xirgú and Séculi needs to be understood in the context of the ongoing debates about the place of women in Colombia. By the start of the 'Liberal Republic', women's empowerment was firmly on the agenda across the Americas. The Inter-American Commission for Women was established in 1928, with Colombia as one of seven nations represented on the board, and subsequently sparked various transnational networks across Latin America that developed a particular *feminismo americano*.[57] The next year,

[54] In July 1937 an individual reportedly wrote to *El Tiempo* with this demand, as referenced by R Gaucho in 'Ondas', *La Defensa*, 13-07-1937

[55] 'La Técnica Catalana', *La Defensa*, 13-07-1937

[56] *El Siglo*, 23-05-1937, p.1

[57] Katherine Marino, *Feminism for the Americas: The Making of an International Human Rights Movement* (University of North Carolina Press, 2019).

Ecuador became the first country in the region to grant women the right to vote, followed by Brazil (1932), Uruguay (1932) and Cuba (1934). In Spain, the Second Republic significantly advanced the position of women, including by passing universal suffrage in 1931. As Colombians looked to these developments, and certain women actively participated in them, women's rights became a key political issue in the 1930s.

Leading figures from both the Liberal and Conservative parties proposed various projects for women's advancement from greater access to education to full political rights. In 1930, for instance, the Conservative interior minister under Olaya Herrera, Carlos E. Restrepo, proposed a bill that eventually led to Law 28 of 1932 which allowed married women to administer their own finances. There was also an important conservative women's movement that joined the struggle for greater access to education in the early twentieth century. Their activism contributed towards Decree 227 of 1933 which provided the legal basis for women's enrolment in universities.[58] This conservative feminism framed women's rights within a Catholic discourse that heralded the importance of traditional gender roles in maintaining the family unit as a key foundation of national society.[59] Consequently, Colombian rightists were greatly troubled by Liberal reforms that threatened to upend the status quo by giving women increasing autonomy outside of their homes.

As López's revolutionary programme was an attempt to modernise Colombia by imbuing politics with some level of social awareness, he could not ignore the issue of women's advancement. His government passed significant reforms that granted women the right to occupy public roles and allowed them to enrol at university for the first time. However, women were ultimately unable to assume public positions because they were not yet full citizens.[60] López's *Revolución* was also explicitly gendered; the main subject of government reforms was the working-class *male*. The president passed universal male suffrage in 1936, but women were not given the right to vote until 1954 even if the almost exclusively Liberal Chamber of Representatives debated legal equality between sexes during López's presidency. Outside of the legislative sphere, Liberal journalists in the late 1930s frequently expressed their misgivings about increased female participation in Colombian society, such as lamenting that the growth of radio technology permitted women to involve themselves in politics which represented a 'grave danger' to their 'youth, tranquillity and even their beauty'.[61] In this way, at the same time as they promoted a vision of a 'modern' Colombia that recognised women's contributions to broader society, Liberals upheld the dichotomy of a masculine political sphere and a feminine domestic sphere.

Works on Latin Americans' perceptions of the US 'flapper' in the 1920s have shown the transnational dimensions of regional debates about the relationship between gender, national

[58] Cohen, *Colombianas en la vanguardia*.
[59] Lola G. Luna, *El sujeto sufragista, feminismo y feminidad en Colombia 1930-1957* (La Manzana de la Discordia, 2004).
[60] Norma Villarreal Méndez, "Movimientos de mujeres y participación política en Colombia, 1930-1991," in *Historia, género y política. Movimientos de mujeres y participación política en Colombia, 1930-1991*, ed. Lola Luna and Norma Villarreal (Universidad de Barcelona, 1994). pp.87-9
[61] *El Tiempo*, 01-03-1937, p.5

identity and modernity.[62] Colombian discussions of the Spanish 'militiawoman' offer an equally useful case study to interrogate the gendered dynamics of nation-building in the 1930s. Given the levels of international interest in the Spanish Civil War, which also coincided with the development of modern photojournalism, reports and images of the women soldiers who took up arms to defend the Republican government quickly spread around the globe. Studies into the reception of the Spanish Civil War in other parts of the Hispanophone Atlantic have emphasised how the 'Republican woman' became a spectre for Conservatives and Catholics.[63] Although this occurred in Colombia too, a review of the national press reveals that leading Liberals were also remarkably vocal in this regard. Many stories from Spain in Liberal newspapers, even those not explicitly related to the topic, were accompanied by photos of Spanish militiawomen adding a certain sensationalism to the reporting. The images in turn were published alongside captions that emphasised the women's physical appearance rather than their military contribution thus reducing them to objects of desire rather than an effective fighting force.


MILICIANAS EN EL FRENTE

Estas dos milicianas, coquetonas, hacen guardia en el frente, cerca de Huesca. No parece que el enemigo esté muy cerca, por el aire tranquilo de las muchachas. De otra parte, parece que los milicianos catalanes no tienen mucho entusiasmo para combatir fuéra de Cataluña, en donde no hay enemigo. Las sonadas expediciones contra Zaragoza no dieron resultado ninguno. Las tropas nunca pasaron de los alrededores de Huesca. Las primeras tentativas les costaron demasiada sangre. Cuentan que una de las columnas enviadas en los dias en que en Barcelona sólo se hablaba de reconquistar a Zaragoza, compuesta de dos mil hombres, quedó reducida a cinco. La segunda y la tercera columna fueron también exterminadas. Los expedicionarios se tornaron prudentes. Las milicianas no resultaron al fin sino elemento decorativo, peligroso sólo para los prisioneros. La intervención de las mujeres es lo que le ha dado a la guerra el carácter salvaje que tiene.

El Tiempo, 27-09-1936, front page. The caption begins 'These two flirty militiawomen are keeping guard on the front near to Huesca.'

[62] Cecilia Tossounian, "The Argentine Modern Girl and National Identity, Buenos Aires, 1920-40," in *Consuming Modernity: Gendered Behaviour and Consumerism before the Baby Boom*, ed. Cheryl Krasnick Warsh and Dan Malleck (UBC Press, 2013); Maria Montserrat Feu López, "The U.S. Hispanic Flapper: *Pelonas* and *Flapperismo* in U.S. Spanish-Language Newspapers, 1920–1929," *Studies in American Humor* 1, 2 (2015).
[63] For example: Binns, *Argentina y la guerra civil española*. p.65

The first published critique of the 'militiawoman' appeared in a Liberal newspaper less than three weeks after the eruption of hostilities in Spain. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it was penned by a woman. Emilia Pardo Umaña, author of the society pages in *El Espectador*, wrote in early August that Spanish women taking up arms in their country's conflict were 'fools' because women's duty in war was to care for children and tend to crops and animals, not to fight. According to the journalist, 'Women should, above all, know that they should never kill. They are responsible for life, and it is not okay that they are learning to take it away.'[64] Pardo, who admittedly was a self-confessed Conservative and later moved to the society pages of *El Siglo*, therefore drew on traditional discourses of femininity in her condemnation of women soldiers in Spain. Her view that women were the harbingers of peace reflected the international trend of women organising for peace, most obviously the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom established at the end of the First World War. Pardo, however, was much more conservative in her conceptualisation of women's role. In articulating notions of womanhood that confined women to domestic duties, she prefigured the views of many of her Conservative counterparts but did so from a distinctly Liberal platform.

Taking up the argument that women's place was not on the battlefield, several Liberal men questioned the strategic value of Spanish female fighters. Armando Solano dedicated one instalment of his regular column in *El Tiempo* to 'The Militiawoman'. In it, he declared that these figures intrigued and captivated the Colombian public because 'women's battalions' were 'a creation of the Spanish war'. Spain was not the first instance where women fought alongside men – Colombians would have been aware of the *adelitas* in Mexico and the Women's Battalions in Russia – but Solano's insistence on the point perhaps reflected the novelty of widespread visual coverage of Spanish militiawomen in Colombian newspapers. Naturally, he furthered, this interest led to speculation over the military importance of women soldiers with some believing that 'female actions have helped boost men's fighting spirit and exaggerate their courage.' Proffering his own view, Solano argued that women's participation could actually damage the Republican war effort because their presence on the battlefield risked confusing and unsettling their male counterparts, especially in Spain where 'an old spirit of gallantry' still prevailed. His commentary centred around what women's presence may mean for other men on the battlefield rather than their potential military contributions, presumably because it was unthinkable that women could be good soldiers in their own right. This was not an uncommon position in the 1930s when there was widespread consensus on the presumed male monopoly on the right to arms.[65] The view also heavily informed arguments against political rights for women because it assumed that they would be unable to lead on matters of war.

Solano then compared the situation on the peninsula to that of Spanish America, asserting that contemporary American customs could not accommodate women fighters because 'military valour' was one of 'the few superiorities that [men] can still claim over women' who

[64] *El Espectador*, 07-08-1936, p.9

[65] For example: Dorit Geva, *Conscription, Family, and the Modern State: A Comparative Study of France and the United States* (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

were 'cowardly and weak'. Whilst Latin Americans could accept the militarisation of 'Saxon' women who were more 'masculine', his article continued, 'their' women were 'inseparable from grace, tenderness, frailty and mercy'.[66] Although northern European and US women were not widely reported to be fighting in Spain, Solano probably chose to contrast 'Saxon' women with their 'Latin' counterparts because of the relative advances in women's rights across Anglo-Saxon nations. By associating the former with typically masculine traits, he could, by extension, justify his government's decision not to grant voting rights to women in Colombia who were much more 'feminine' in his view. The fact that Solano was discussing women soldiers in Spain – a country that had just recently passed female suffrage – lends credence to this interpretation. Although he rushed to reassure readers that ruling Liberals were prepared to admit women into the civil service and even into politics, Solano's fascination with the 'militiawoman' reflected his party's fears about what women's advancement might mean for men's position and masculine identities in a 'modern' Colombia.

Though voicing similar ideas about the unfeminine nature of Spanish 'militiawomen', Conservatives differed in their judgement about the significance of the figure for Colombia. Another journalist in *El Siglo*, using the pen name Marina, argued that the behaviour of Spanish women had 'disconcerted the entire world' because 'No one could have believed that the female heart could shelter such cruel instincts.' According to her, women should be 'the channel for peace' but instead were 'helping to fan the flames of war and lending themselves to destroy lives and devastate homes'. This was particularly pertinent in Spain which, like Colombia, remained a 'bastion of Catholic religion and a quintessentially Christian nation' and so the 'dangerous influence of Russian doctrines... can be the only explanation for such a repugnant phenomenon'. For Conservative women, the 'militiawoman' was not a threat to masculine identities as Solano suggested, but rather was an affront to their notion of femininity. Marina called on her American peers to learn from the errors of Spanish women and instead form 'a united front where [they] work to achieve peace'. She recognised that 'a great responsibility weighs on women' because, as 'bearers of humanity', they should ensure that motherhood prevents rather than facilitates conflict. Whilst Spanish militiawomen engendered violence by becoming active combatants, American women would 'instil in children... the horror of war' in order to 'sweep away the seed of fraternal hatred from American soil.'[67] In the context of growing debates around the place of women in a 'modern' Colombian society, the Spanish 'militiawoman' therefore became a rhetorical 'Other' around which conservative Colombian women could articulate their own feminine ideal.

Although conservative women certainly lent legitimacy to anti-Republican rhetoric, they were not alone in presenting the 'militiawoman' as abnormal. In *El Siglo*'s 16-page special edition dedicated to the Spanish Civil War, the editorialist claimed that the 'sacred land of Isabel *la Católica* and Saint Teresa of Aguila has been dishonoured by the MILITIAWOMAN, repugnant, unnatural creation of communism.' In doing so, he blamed the left-wing ideology for the perverted subversion of the Catholic and Hispanic feminine ideal in Spain. The

[66] *El Tiempo*, 24-10-1936, p.4
[67] *El Siglo*, 17-09-1936, p.5

editorialist described this transformation in physical as well as metaphorical terms: the militiawoman's 'soft voice' turned to 'shouts of rage' and the 'eyes that illuminated the passion of the *paladines* [the soldiers of the Spanish reconquest]' now incited 'brutal explosions of hate'. By fighting for the Republican government – the supposed symbol of communist power in Spain – women soldiers had 'effaced the noble, the sweet, the saintly figure of the Christian woman' and replaced her with the 'brutal' and 'vile' Republican woman who renounced all traditional feminine virtues. The allusion to the *Reconquista* introduced a new aspect to the debate because it suggested that, by defending a cause that was so far removed from Hispanic traditions, the 'militiawoman' had forsaken not only her gender identity but also her national heritage. This logic reflected and reinforced Conservative views about the alien nature of the López regime. The editorialist warned that the same secularising and immoral reforms paving the way for the 'militiawoman' in Spain were forming the basis of López's revolutionary programme in Colombia, and so the appearance of a similar gender-defying and foreign figure could appear at home.[68] Indeed, right-wing newspapers often employed warlike imagery and lexis to highlight the involvement of 'communist' or 'leftist' women in Liberal electoral or political campaigns.[69]

Other sectors, particularly socialists and communists, were more complimentary of women soldiers in Spain because their involvement attested to the Colombian Left's own ideas about the Spanish Popular Front's 'fair' and 'democratic' nature which will be covered in the next chapter. It also reflected their domestic political platforms and international aspirations given that both parties had been founded based on increased guarantees for women and the feminist discourse of the Comintern was strong during the early twentieth century.[70] Accordingly, the PCC celebrated prominent Republican women such as Dolores Ibárruri (the famous communist figurehead better known as la Pasionaria) and Francisca Solano (a soldier imprisoned and executed by Nationalist forces), and it frequently republished Spanish propaganda posters that glorified militiawomen. This was in keeping with the Comintern's increased emphasis on mobilising communist women in antifascist movements including the Popular Front. In Colombia, 'popular' feminism, though not officially organised, was most often expressed through labour agitation in women's workplaces and, as chapter four reveals, these women used anti-fascist rhetoric from Spain to articulate their demands for better conditions.[71] Communist and socialists' international drive for women's advancement thus fed through to the domestic policies of the Colombian Left which, in turn, shaped their response to women's participation in the Spanish Civil War. At the same time, their public exaltation of Republican women helped legitimate their position at the forefront of the campaign for women's rights in Colombia.

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[68] *El Siglo*, 10-11-1936, p.4. Emphasis in original

[69] For example: 'Mujeres de Vanguardia', *La Defensa*, 03-04-1937, p.3

[70] Velásquez Toro, "Las mujeres en la historia de Colombia." p.188; Florence Hervé, Natalia Novikova and Kristen Ghodsee's contributions to Francisca de Haan, ed., *The Palgrave Handbook of Communist Women Activists around the World* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2023). pp.33-95

[71] On women's labour agitation: Villarreal Méndez, "Movimientos de mujeres y participación política en Colombia." pp.72-96

Debates around the position of women in Colombia, heavily conditioned by contemporary Catholic understandings of women's social role, took on heightened importance in light of events in Spain. Public discussion of the 'militiawoman' revealed the various notions of womanhood that existed in early twentieth-century Colombia at the same time as the figure became a rhetorical tool to justify or challenge Liberal policies in general and on women's rights in particular. Yet, whilst Liberal and Conservatives' understandings of the feminine ideal differed, they both agreed that the characteristics they associated with the 'militiawoman' were an anathema to a 'modern' Colombian nation. With the help of the Spanish Civil War, they developed a vision of national modernity that necessarily excluded women from political life because of fears about how this might impact what they perceived as the 'natural' social order.

"La luna del África"

Another issue of concern for Colombia's early twentieth-century political elites, which was also reflected in their discussion of Spain, was that of race. Throughout the post-independence period, Latin American leaders, intellectuals and landholders/industrialists grappled with the ethnically diverse populations and strict racial hierarchies that were the legacies of colonial rule. In Colombia, these groups constructed a cultural geography of race that placed Antioquia and its 'white' population atop the social hierarchy.[72] By the twentieth century, as eugenics spread across the Atlantic, the same elites attempted to define their cultural constructions of race in scientific terms.[73] Nowhere was this more apparent in Colombia than during a series of conferences organised in 1920 to discuss Miguel Jiménez López's theory of racial degeneration. According to the medic, who was also a prominent member of the Conservative Party, the Colombian 'race' was in a process of decline due to a combination of the country's inhospitable climate and the 'vices' associated with a long history of 'miscegenation'. Two broad blocs emerged from this debate: those who, like Jiménez, associated Colombia's perceived backwardness with the presence of non-white groups and those, such as future Liberal foreign minister Luis López de Mesa, who were more optimistic about their multiracial population.[74] In seeking to categorise the country's different ethnic groups, both groups adapted international discourses of scientific racism to their national context which helped frame future debates about Spain.

The conferences set out the two different but interlinked approaches to Colombia's 'race problem' in the early twentieth century. Conservatives exalted Colombians' European heritage as the sole basis for the construction of a national 'race', whilst Liberals believed that a certain amount of racial mixing was acceptable and even encouraged. Both stances implied

[72] Peter Wade, *Blackness and Race Mixture: The Dynamics of Racial Identity in Colombia* (John Hopkins University Press, 1995).
[73] Nancy Leys Stepan, *"The Hour of Eugenics": Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Cornell University Press, 1991).
[74] Catalina Muñoz, ed., *Los problemas de la raza en Colombia* (Universidad del Rosario, 2011).

a marginalisation of non-white groups as a pre-requisite for progress, and this translated into broad support for assimilationist policies. By 1930, when the Liberal regime had been installed in Colombia, these notions of race converged with the new government's attempt to redefine notions of citizenship. The result was an official discourse of *mestizaje* that celebrated ethnic and cultural mixing in the country at the same time as it essentialised Indigenous communities and marginalised Afro-Colombian identities.[75]

These ideas were by no means unusual in early twentieth-century Latin America. Liberal elites and other groups advocating for a more inclusive Colombian identity drew explicitly on José Vasconcelos's theory of *la raza cósmica* when promulgating their own visions of a *mestizo* nation in the early twentieth century.[76] Given the fact that the Spanish Civil War broke out amidst these intense discussions about race in Colombia, Liberals and Conservatives also viewed the conflict through a racialised lens. The two groups' commentary not only reflected their national imaginings but, because of a shared belief in the importance of their Spanish origins, also had significant implications for their visions of a 'modern' Colombia.

Writing five days after the outbreak of hostilities, Armando Solano asserted that the Spanish conflict 'recalls previous ones and shows that the Iberian spirit remains constant through the centuries.' Citing the Carlist wars and the Asturian revolution of 1934, he predicted that the current conflict would bring about 'monstrous spectacles of inhumanity' based on the 'passion' of the Spanish 'race'.[77] This view, repeated in many Liberal publications across Colombia, hinged on the theory that repeated migrations throughout Spain's history (from Africa, Asia and the Middle East) made contemporary Spanish people warriorlike, cruel and prone to violence.[78] This set them apart from the rest of Europe and made Spain, in racial terms, more similar to contemporary America which itself had been the meeting point for different populations. In some ways, then, Solano's assertions can be seen as a continuation of Liberals' reimagining of the colonial legacy which, as the previous chapter showed, constructed a more egalitarian relationship between Colombia and Spain. However, the article also exposed the tensions within Liberal attempts to construct a *mestizo* nation. It betrayed certain insecurities about the potential consequences of their project because the view that racial mixing could lead to violent conflict took on heightened significance in a country with its own history of recurrent civil strife. Moreover, by continuing to categorise different ethnic groups into distinct racial 'types', Solano's initial response to the Spanish Civil War underscored the persistence of discrimination within the Liberal party despite its official celebration of *mestizaje*.

Leading Conservatives, in contrast, viewed the conflict as a resurgence of the heroic Hispanic tradition that had led to the creation of the Colombian 'race'. The day after Solano's piece in *El Tiempo*, *El Colombiano* published an editorial which praised the military rebellion as 'a glorious patriotic endeavour'. Under the title 'Spain and Colombia', the piece opened:

[75] Troyan, "Re-Imagining the "Indian" and the State."
[76] Flórez Bolívar, "Celebrando y redefiniendo el mestizaje."
[77] *El Tiempo*, 22-07-36, p.4
[78] For example: 'Por Que El Pueblo Español Se Dedica A Exterminarse?', *El Espectador*, 01-08-1936, p.5

'From this country which has also been ruined and martyrised by the left, we are following the progress of the Spanish right with enthusiasm and hope.' The reason for this, the author divulged, was that the Spanish rebels were fighting for 'the resurrection of the spirit of gallantry' in Spain which had been converted into 'an appendix of black Africa' by the Popular Front government. Here the editorialist cited Hermann von Keyserling who, shaped by the Spanish 'black legend' that circulated amongst contemporary European empires, had argued in 1928 that the country bore more resemblance to the African continent than it did to Europe.[79] Where the Baltic philosopher was sympathetic towards cultural difference, however, the editorialist took a pejorative view towards non-European populations. Indeed, the addition of the word 'black' to Keyserling's original analysis seemingly reflected Conservatives' fears about the effects of Colombia's racial constitution on its political system. Seeing as the editorialist believed that the Spanish insurgents represented the true Hispanic traditions, the African element could only be attributed to the 'exotic and inappropriate collectivist tendencies of the popular front'.[80] At the same time as they worried about the effect of Afro-descendant populations on national progress, Conservatives discursively linked these groups to a style of government that they claimed López was trying to install in Colombia. Although the editorialist did not mention the Comintern in this piece, his view that Blackness and communism were linked may have been influenced by the organisation's drive to recruit Black workers, most recently evinced by the Cuban Communist Party's campaign for Black self-determination in parts of the island.[81]

As the editorial suggests, ideas about race had taken on new meaning in 1930s Colombia. Conservatives felt that the Liberal regime was dismantling all the traditional Hispanic institutions upon which their nation was built. Whereas Conservatives in the previous decade were preoccupied with the racialised communities who impeded national progress, they now voiced anxieties about the danger of Liberal reforms for Colombian identity. As a way to marry these concerns, they began to articulate a racialised discourse of Liberal 'Otherness' which linked race to partisanship. The Colombian Right often described or depicted Liberal leaders according to their physical or ethnic characteristics as a way to emphasise this difference. Gabriel Turbay, who was of Syrian descent, was '*el turco*' and Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, whose skin was darker than most elites, became '*el indio*'. Leading Conservatives thus expanded their notion of 'race' to include characteristics that had nothing to do with ethnicity – namely, party affiliation – but to which they ascribed racialised identities in order to belittle and delegitimise their political opposition. Though it may have begun with them, this trend was not limited to Conservatives. In the 1946 presidential campaign, Gaitán's supporters argued that Turbay's Syrian heritage made him foreign and therefore not fit to be president.[82] Chapter six will explore the policy implications of Liberals' adoption of racialised political discourses.

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[79] Hermann von Keyserling, *Europe* (Harcourt, Brace & Co, 1928).
[80] *El Colombiano*, 23-07-1936, p.3
[81] Barry Carr, "Black Immigrants, Politics, and the Labor Movement," in *Making the Revolution: Histories of the Latin American Left*, ed. Kevin Young (Cambridge University Press, 2019).
[82] W. John Green, "Left Liberalism and Race in the Evolution of Colombian Popular National Identity," *The Americas* 57, 1 (2000).

An editorial in *El Siglo* in October 1936, three months after the eruption of hostilities in Spain, expounded the rationale behind this innovation. It was titled 'Barbarity *en marcha*' in reference to López's reform programme and, as this title suggested, it used racist logic to undermine the president and his supporters. The author claimed that 'American Aboriginals come from Asia' which birthed a 'race' characterised by 'indolence, passivity and submission' when subjugated, as in Colombia, but 'cruel, despotic, barbarous' in power. The Spanish *conquistadores*, on the other hand, were 'brave, invincible, heroic'. [83] The editorialist thus applied Orientalist thinking – understood as a way for the West to structure and have authority over the 'Orient'[84] – to assert the superiority of European colonialists over Indigenous populations. Such frames of reference would have been readily accessible to Colombian Conservatives who, as we saw, were familiar with the work of Keyserling, one of Europe's foremost Orientalists in the early twentieth century.

Combining this largely European construct with local ideas of race, the editorialist argued that Colombia's mix of Spanish and Indigenous heritage meant that the national 'race' displayed both the positive and negative characteristics associated with Spain and 'Asia' respectively. However, he believed that the propensity towards either 'Asian' or 'Spanish' attributes was contingent on the particular circumstances of any historical moment. For example, 'Colombian independence was a civil war between Spaniards and their descendants' because of the bravery of the independence leaders like Simón Bolívar. In contemporary times, however, when Soviet Russia (also seen as Asiatic) set its sights on Colombia 'It found the fertile ground of liberalism'. That, in the editorialists' view, explained the violence in Boyacá and Santander after Liberals came to power in 1930 and the 'partisan passions' of Popular Front supporters under López.[85] Conservatives embodied 'Spanish' values whereas Liberals of the new regime were more 'Asian' and, by extension, Indigenous.

Following this logic, Conservatives were able to discursively tie themselves to the Spanish Nationalists and the López government to Republican Spain. Colombian rightists could therefore look to Nationalist Spain for inspiration on how to restore their own country to its glorious, Hispanic past. Indeed, with the example of Spain explicitly in mind, the editorialist asked: 'Does Russia have enough Asian blood in our mixed race to equip us with its despicable people and submit us to communism?' He ended his editorial by expressing his wish that 'the Spanish blood that we carry will one day be capable of reacting against the barbarity that is heading our way.'[86] The Spanish Civil War thus facilitated the articulation of a new Conservative discourse of 'race' that was concerned with far more than skin colour.

By conceptualising 'race' as something that also encompassed political views, Conservatives were also able to maintain their support for the Spanish insurgents despite the awkward fact that the latter relied on colonial troops for their purportedly 'Spanish' crusade. For their part, rather than rejecting the logic of racist associations, Liberals accepted and used

[83] *El Siglo*, 25-10-1936, p.3
[84] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Vintage Books, 1979).
[85] *El Siglo*, 25-10-1936, p.3
[86] *El Siglo*, 25-10-1936, p.3

them to counter Conservatives' claims of Spanish racial purity. Erasmo Valencia, a rural leader and director of Bogotá workers' newspaper *Claridad*, scorned the rebel forces as 'black and brown fascist bandits'. Though this could have alluded to the black- and brownshirts of fascist and Nazi regimes, it can also be understood as an implicit reference to the Moroccan soldiers who made up the regular troops [*Regulares*] in Franco's Army of Africa. Certainly, Valencia went on to condemn Hitler and Mussolini – who were openly assisting Franco – as 'hunters of black men in African forests' who wore 'shirts made of Ethiopians' skin'. By relying on Italian and German support, then, the Spanish Nationalists 'dishonour the lands of Cervantes'.[87]

Similarly, the daily news columnist in the pro-López newspaper *El Liberal* declared that Franco 'brought Moors [sic.] to his country, assisting them in the reconquest that they had never imagined'. Evoking racist fears of white women being raped by men of colour, he remarked that the Spanish general wanted to 'improve the race' by mixing 'Spanish maidens with barbaric Moroccans.'[88] By emphasising the purely ethnic characteristics of the Spanish conflict, Colombian Liberals undermined the notion that Nationalist Spain was heir to a 'true' Hispanic tradition. In doing so, they paralleled Spanish Republicans' 'Othering' of Moroccan troops during the civil war, further revealing the contradictions within their own racialised discourse of inclusion and exclusion.[89]

Despite the obvious limitations of Liberal *mestizaje*, some of López's supporters were key figures in the push for greater racial equality at home. Diego Luis Córdoba, for example, was a socialist member of the Chamber of Representatives and an Afro-Colombian from Chocó. He was a staunch supporter of the Republican cause, advocating for more official support for the Spanish government in Congress and speaking at many pro-Republican events across Colombia. He was also vocal about the inequalities faced by Colombia's Black population. In May 1938, with the Spanish war still raging on, he held a conference at the Heredia Theatre in Cartagena during which he discussed the oppression of Afro-descendant people.[90] However, as Blackness was made invisible in Colombia's national arena, Córdoba's theories were poorly received by Liberals and Conservatives alike who claimed that in the Bolívar department 'there is no colour discrimination... amongst the intellectual, official and professional workforce'.[91] Scholars of African Americans who fought with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in Spain have illustrated how these individuals framed their involvement as a way for them to combat the racial prejudices that they experienced at home.[92] It is therefore reasonable to assert that Córdoba's support for the Spanish Republic was in part a reflection of his experiences of racism in Colombia. Certainly, the Conservative press often invoked his heritage when they discussed his pro-Republican activity. For example, *El Colombiano*'s

[87] *Claridad*, 14-01-1937, p.1
[88] *El Liberal*, 09-11-1938, p.5
[89] Elisabeth Bolorinos Allard, "The Crescent and the Dagger: Representations of the Moorish Other during the Spanish Civil War," *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 93, 6 (2016).
[90] Quoted in *El Figaro*, 28-05-1938, p.1
[91] *El Figaro*, 28-05-1938, p.1
[92] Danny Duncan Collum, *African Americans in the Spanish Civil War: "This Ain't Ethiopia, But It'll Do"* (G K Hall, 1992).

political commentator used the title 'Africa's moon' to discuss Córdoba's proposition to the Chamber that Colombia should offer its services to the Spanish government.[93]

Colombian notions of race developed within a global framework where Spain, during the late 1930s, was an important reference point. Competing groups interpreted the Spanish Civil War as a battle between Hispanic civilisation and communist barbarity, on the one hand, and Western democracy and imperialist dictatorships on the other. Accordingly, the conflict helped construct new ideas of race that linked ethnicity and skin colour to particular styles of government and political ideologies. Press commentary on Spain also shines a spotlight on the paradox of *mestizaje* in Colombia. Liberals' association of racial mixing with violence and Moroccan troops with barbarism undermined their claims to be constructing a 'modern' nation around an 'authentic' identity that celebrated Colombia's Indigenous past. It revealed how they, just like the Conservatives whose exclusive national vision they claimed to be overturning, still adhered to white supremacist notions of modernity that associated non-white groups with backwardness. The contradictory and simultaneous use of race to denigrate political opponents and define (at least rhetorically) more inclusive notions of citizenship points to its malleability in this period.

Conclusion

Spain deeply impacted Colombian political imaginaries in the mid-1930s at the same time as pre-existing ideological positions conditioned how different leaders reacted to the civil war. The level of sympathy for either of the warring factions in Spain was intrinsically linked to the discursive battles over the meaning of national identity and modernity in Colombia, which were themselves heavily shaped by the country's postcolonial history. The Spanish conflict therefore serves as a lens to examine the tensions that existed within and amongst leaders of the two traditional parties in the 1930s over what the Colombian nation was and what it should be.

By examining the ways in which Colombian elites wove events from Spain into their debates about a 'modern' nation, it is also clear that the country during this period was not so 'exceptional' in a regional context. Their gendered and racialised interpretations of Spanish developments reveal discourses and practices that have appeared across the Americas at various points throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This helps resituate Colombia in a broader continental history of nation-building, even if some of the debates are notable for their lateness. Whilst this chapter has broadly maintained the partisan divide when considering Colombians' response to the Spanish Civil War, Liberal and Conservatives' commentary on race and gender illuminates some of the fears that they shared over who could best contribute to modernity in the country. This idea that differing visions for the Colombian nation existed within as well as between parties will be developed in the next chapter on the impact that the conflict had on regional politics.

[93] *El Colombiano*, 23-07-1936, p.3

Chapter 3 – Contestation, radicalisation and polarisation: the Spanish example in regional politics

As war raged on in Spain, its effects across the Atlantic continued to be felt deeply. At the end of 1936, General Franco had been appointed supreme commander of the Nationalist troops. However, their failed attempt to capture Madrid in November 1936 made it clear that the war was not going to be over before the end of the year. By 1937, emphasis had therefore shifted to the outskirts of the capital and other regions in Spain. Meanwhile, in Colombia the split in the Liberal party widened following the death of ex-leader Enrique Olaya Herrera and subsequent campaigns for a new presidential candidate. Similarly, rifts started to appear in the Conservative party as previously staunch members were increasingly drawn towards the extreme right. As with other domestic political events in the mid-1930s, these developments were refracted through the lens of the Spanish Civil War and gained new meanings as a result. These tensions were not just visible in the national sphere but also played out with much greater intensity in the regions.

Colombia's geographical and environmental diversity, as well as its administration division, makes it difficult to speak of a countrywide experience by focussing solely on the national sphere in Bogotá. Although the 1886 constitution had established a centralised political system in the country, distinct regional spheres continued to develop somewhat independently in a continuous process of contestation and collaboration with their national counterpart. Nowhere was this more obvious in than in the highly decentralised press industry.[1] Figures from 1939 demonstrate that, although *El Tiempo* was by far the largest newspaper in Colombia with 46,000 copies printed per edition, regional newspapers like the Liberal *El Relator* in Cali (23,000 copies) had a wider readership than national publications such as *El Siglo* (22,000) and *El Espectador* (17,000). Other newspapers that had smaller, but still significant, circulation figures included the Conservative dailies *La Prensa* in Barranquilla (12,000) and *Diario de la Costa* in Cartagena (6,000), as well as Liberal periodicals *El Heraldo* in Barranquilla and *El Diario* in Medellín (both 6,000).[2]

This point has been missed in the existing literature on Colombia's response to the Spanish Civil War which has focussed mainly on national elites. Such studies have painted a picture of Liberals who were rhetorically supportive of the Spanish Republic, but largely apathetic towards its ultimate fate,[3] or Conservatives whose support for Nationalist Spain automatically

[1] Eduardo Posada Carbó, "Newspapers, Politics and Elections in Colombia, 1830-1930," *The Historical Journal* 53, 4 (2010).
[2] 'Report on Latin America, 1939' The National Archives (hereafter TNA), INF 1-751
[3] Hernández García, *La Guerra Civil Espanola y Colombia*; David Bushnell, "Colombia," in *The Spanish Civil War, 1936-39: American Hemispheric Perspectives*, ed. Mark Falcoff and Fredrick B. Pike (University of Nebraska Press, 1982).

translated into a desire to pursue similar tactics against the Liberal government.[4] The Conservative and Liberal parties are therefore presented as largely homogenous blocs in their attitudes towards Spain. Yet the political landscape in 1930s Colombia suggests a much more complex picture. Interest in the conflict was not limited to those directly engaged in international statecraft or national policymaking. Broader Colombian political society was also enthralled by what was happening on the peninsula and those in the regions often had different understandings of the war's significance for their country. The aim of this chapter, then, will be to uncover these diverse and often competing interpretations of Spanish events that existed within the two main political groups as well as between them. It will argue that inter-regional and intra-party conflicts over Spain's significance shine a spotlight on the plurality of Colombian politics and the contested nature of the country's early twentieth-century nation-building process.

We have seen how prominent national figures and newspapers largely denied that the Spanish conflagration had any immediate relevance for their own political aspirations. When we decentre the narrative, a different picture emerges. Using regional coverage of the Spanish conflict, this chapter will explore how Colombians outside the centre asserted the war's significance in a domestic context. Such assertations, though superficially responding to perceived parallels between the Colombian and Spanish situations, were also a reaction to the pro-Republican or pro-Nationalist rhetoric of local opposition groups. News and events from Spain thus became both justification for domestic political positions and ammunition against the stances adopted by rival groups. By engaging in discursive battles over the meaning of Spanish events, regional Colombians manifested their impact on Colombian society at the same time as leaders in Bogotá were negating the war's importance. In illuminating these subtleties, this chapter contributes to recent Colombian scholarship which argues that regional publications in the early twentieth century were much more active than their national counterparts in socialising readers in partisan politics.[5] Foregrounding the political consequences of this process, it contends that regional actors were as important as leaders in Bogotá in the nation-building process.

An examination of regional coverage of the Spanish Civil War also reveals that these partisan politics were by no means limited to traditional conceptualisations of conservatism and liberalism in a Colombian context. This chapter therefore contends that Liberal-Conservative binaries are insufficient to fully understand 1930s Colombian politics. Although national politics for the most part remained bipartisan, party members and allies in the regions had different ideas about what political systems and ideologies were most appropriate

[4] Ayala Diago, "Trazos y trozos sobre el uso y abuso de la Guerra Civil Española en Colombia."; Guerrero Barón, *El proceso político de las derechas en Colombia y los imaginarios sobre las guerras internacionales*.
[5] Álvaro Acevedo Tarazona and Juliana Villabona Ardila, "Prensa y violencia. El deber y el conservatismo en Santander (1930-1946)," *Justicia Juris* 12, 1 (2016); Álvaro Acevedo Tarazona and John Jaime Correa, *Tinta roja. Prensa, política y educación en la República Liberal (1930-1946)* (UIS, 2016); Álvaro Acevedo Tarazona, "Prensa, política, "civilización" y violencia en la República Liberal (1930-1946). Vanguardia Liberal de Bucaramanga y El Diario de Pereira," *Reflexión Política* 19, 38 (2017).

to deal with what they saw as the pressing issues of the time. Diverse conceptions of 'liberal', 'conservative' and 'democracy', as well as nascent ideas of 'anti-communism' and 'anti-fascism', existed in Colombian political society before July 1936 but developed new significance in response to events in Spain. Introducing a more comprehensive version of the Colombian response to the Spanish conflict thus illuminates how, in a period where debates around Colombian national identity have mostly been viewed as a function of bipartisan domestic politics, different notions of society and what it meant to be Colombian co-existed *within* the two main parties and were also related to what was going on outside of the country's borders.

Liberal party splits

The fissures within the Liberal party that had re-emerged after August 1936 threatened to split the party completely following the death of Olaya Herrera in February 1937. The ex-president had been chosen as the next Liberal candidate for the presidential elections in 1938. As someone who represented the more moderate wing of the party but whom López did not oppose for leadership, he acted as a unifying force for Colombian liberalism. After his unexpected death in Rome, a new Liberal candidate had to be chosen. Darío Echandía – the education minister who had been the subject of right-wing attacks for his supposedly immoralising programmes and links to Freemasonry – was the first to throw his hat into the ring, promising to defend the work of the López government. Shortly after, Eduardo Santos announced that he would run, following a request from several moderates in Congress whose cause he would seemingly champion. The two candidates therefore represented the two different factions within Colombian liberalism. Unsurprisingly, given press and political activity over the previous months, the aggravation of political tensions was matched by a heightened tendency to conflate the Spanish and Colombian situations.

In a conference about the upcoming congressional elections which would serve as a referendum on the Liberal candidacy, the Conservative Augusto Ramírez Moreno called the two contenders 'Darío Largo Caballero' and 'Eduardo Azaña' in reference to the Spanish prime minister and president respectively.[6] Yet it was not just journalists who viewed the elections through the lens of the Spanish Civil War; supporters of each candidate often imbued their political campaigning with references to Spain. On 22 February, the National Confederation of Transport Unions and Local Labour Federation held a rally in Barranquilla to promote Echandía's candidacy. Demonstrators reportedly carried portraits of the education minister alongside Manuel Azaña, Francisco Largo Caballero and Alfonso López Pumarejo. The five speakers at the event called on workers to demand that the government offer its moral and material support to the Spanish government, and they ended their speeches with the cry 'long live Echandía, future president of Colombia.'[7] Echandía's supporters clearly saw their backing of López's programme and their support for Republican Spain as two sides of the same coin.

[6] *El Espectador*, 17-03-1937, p.4
[7] 'El comunismo realiza una demonstración', *El Siglo*, 25-02-1937

However, they did more than draw on the Spanish example to promote their own candidate; in their opposition to Santos they also adopted the phrase '*No pasarán*', made famous by Dolores Ibárruri in a speech at the start of the civil war.[8] In doing so, they cast moderate Liberals as reactionary forces attempting to overthrow a democratic regime thereby putting the party division into starker relief.

Allusions to Spain also permeated Santos's campaign trail. Immediately following the declaration of his candidacy, Santos stepped down from his role as director of *El Tiempo* to be replaced by Germán Arciniegas. On 2 March, the new director published an editorial outlining the newspaper's position in light of the takeover. Arciniegas reassured readers that *El Tiempo* would 'remain a liberal tribune, pure and simple' with 'the same spirit inspired by its previous director.' Accordingly, he made clear that the newspaper would continue as a mouthpiece for moderate Liberals and that it would support Santos's candidacy. Indeed, Arciniegas believed that liberalism – specifically Santos's branch of liberalism – was the only way to resolve current tensions in Colombia. For the first time, *El Tiempo* explicitly stated that Colombia 'might be very close to the edge of anarchy' which it interpreted as 'the doors of fascism or communism'. Santos – the champion 'of democracy and of justice' – was the country's only hope to prevent it from falling into one of those extremes.[9] Although Arciniegas did not mention Spain during the editorial, the civil war was clearly on his mind when he spoke of a battle between the two ideological extremes. Through this allusion he implied that Echandía's presidency would drive Colombia towards the latter, raising the spectre of Spanish events to discredit Santos's rival.

Santos referred more explicitly to Spain during a speech he gave at Bogotá's Municipal Theatre on 3 March to outline his programme. He devoted most of the ninety-minute address to domestic events but did pause to reflect on the civil war instigated, in his view, by the Republican government which thoughtlessly unleashed a socio-political revolution that was unacceptable to many conservative sectors of society.[10] Given the context of the speech, Santos was evidently reminding the Colombian public about the possible dangers for the country if López's *Revolución* was continued under Echandía.

After a bitterly contested electoral campaign, the results reflected overwhelming support for Santos and his candidacy was officially confirmed at the National Liberal Convention in July. For López's allies, it was a crushing defeat that they compared to recent Republican losses in Spain. In Congress, Senator José Combariza voiced pro-Echandía Liberals' disappointment at the election results but expressed their determination to continue the ideological struggle. He ended his intervention by declaring: 'Rightist forces took Málaga from us, but we are still resisting in Madrid'.[11] Through this wordplay – Málaga and Madrid are both municipalities in Colombia as well as cities in Spain – Combariza paralleled his faction's struggle to that of the Spanish Republic. Yet, continuing the trend set on Echandía's campaign trail, Santos and his supporters were now imagined as the enemy, not Conservatives.

[8] 'A ganar la primera batalla', *El Crisol*, 25-02-1937
[9] *El Tiempo*, 02-03-1937, p.4
[10] 'La lección de España', *El Siglo*, 05-03-1937
[11] *El Heraldo de Antioquia*, 14-04-1937, p.5

The indignation of such responses heightened moderate Liberals' fears of leftist extremism in Colombia. *El Tiempo*'s editorialist described how communist agitators had been taking advantage of the result to assert their control over trade unions. In language remarkably similar to that used to describe the extreme left in the Spanish conflict, he asserted that the Trade Union Confederation was attempting to exploit workers for political gain. Discussing a circular sent by the organisations to its members imploring them to take action to impede the resignation of President López following the election results, the writer denounced it as 'an eloquent display of how the agitators who want to politicise unions manipulate the facts and even introduce the revolutionary language of international parties in order to incite workers into a battle that is completely at odds with their own interest.'[12]

As a result of the elections, López's *Revolución* came to a definitive end. He had already announced a pause in the programme the previous December after intense opposition threatened to destabilise public order. Following April 1937, however, moderate Liberals began to act as if the administration change had already taken place and from Congress made it impossible to pass any more government bills. Though many factors contributed first to the pause in, and then to the end of López's reformist drive, Colombian perceptions of Spanish events played an important role in delegitimising the president and his government project. As we have seen, it was also a way for Liberals to articulate the differences in their party which, in turn, fomented greater animosity between the two camps. The tensions within Colombian liberalism in the late 1930s cannot therefore be understood without giving due recognition to both factions' discursive use of the Spanish Civil War to promote themselves and discredit their in-party rivals.

Anti-communism

The split amongst Liberals that played out at the national level was both amplified and assisted by regional assertions of Spain's significance for Colombia. Liberals in the regions were more likely than their national counterparts to proclaim that the conflagration would soon reach Colombian shores. For moderates, this translated into a growing fear of communism across the country. Many raised concerns during López's administration, such as Roberto Acebedo Angel of the Colombian Phosphorous Company in Pereira, Risaralda who believed that the president's concessions to trade unions meant that Colombia 'will soon reach Spain's terrifying state.'[13] However, similar warnings became more prolific following the decision to appoint Santos as the next Liberal candidate, the individuals who proffered them presumably feeling emboldened by the prospect of a more moderate leadership. Writing to the president-elect before his inauguration, Juan Daniel González from La Mesa, Cundinamarca highlighted what he perceived to be the key issues facing Colombian liberalism. He focussed on communism first, declaring that the ideology had become more ingrained as a result of

[12] *El Tiempo*, 27-05-1937, p.4

[13] Letter to Eduardo Santos 01-09-1936. Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango, Archivo Eduardo Santos, Correspondencia Varia (hereafter BLAA.ES.CV), Caja 3, Carpeta 2

López's 'excessive tolerance for agitators who have condemned to history the principles of authority and property'.[14]

These local moderates' growing conviction about the tangible threat that communism posed in Colombia can be partly attributed to two factors, both of which were closely related to events in Spain. Firstly, we have seen how Colombian Catholics were staunchly anti-communist. Around the time of the Spanish Civil War, they turned this ideology into a political and social campaign. Responding to the international Catholic Action movement as well as Pope Pius XI who encouraged the organisation of lay Catholics to help disseminate religious principles and ensure their implementation in daily life as a way to tackle communist advances, the Colombian episcopacy established *Acción Católica Colombiana* (ACC). Although they founded the organisation in 1933, it was after the October 1936 episcopal conference that it began functioning in earnest. In line with papal encyclicals, the ACC encouraged priests to disseminate messages 'that shape and enlighten believers' Catholic conscience with clear lessons on the most common mistakes and social rights etc.'[15] The emphasis on 'believers' proved significant in a country where the majority of people defined themselves as Catholic irrespective of political affiliation.

Given the historically poor reach of the Colombian state, the Church held particular sway in the country's rural areas. Though these regions were predominately Conservative as a result, Catholic influence did not preclude the existence of Liberal voters. Certainly, in the mid-1930s the Liberal press frequently published accounts of regional partisans who attended their local churches and requested absolution from the parish priest.[16] In addition, although Liberals and Conservatives disagreed about the relationship between Church and State, most Colombians saw Catholicism as an integral part of their national identity. Moderate Liberals outside of urban centres would therefore have attended church and been on the receiving end of their local priests' diatribes against communism which, as this section will reveal, became an integral part of the Church's anti-communist campaign in Colombia.

Rural areas quickly became the centres for this campaign. In October 1937, the Diocese of Pamplona and San Gil in Santander worked with a group of Catholic university students from the Javeriana University in Bogotá to undertake the First Santander Catholic Workers Week. Expounding the rationale behind the initiative, student Alonso Pinzón wrote that 'Peasantry is the main social class in the country when it comes to production of wealth... whoever has *campesinos* on their side... will have [...] the Nation's destiny in their hands.' However, he disparaged Catholics for 'abandoning and neglecting' these individuals, placing them 'in imminent danger of falling into anti-Christian networks'.[17] Pinzón's adoption of class-based arguments referring to rural populations can be understood as an adaption of papal dictates on the need to reaffirm the Church's presence amongst the working classes. From the mid-

[14] González to Santos, 25-07-1938. BLAA.ES.CV, Caja 7, Carpeta 4

[15] Jorge Fernández Pradel, *Acción Católica. Doctrina y realización* (Escuela Tipográfica Salesiana, 1935). p.16

[16] Mentioned in Juan Climent Nolla, 'Colombia. Quarterly Report. 1937 Num. IV', Oct-Dec 1937. AGA 10(0015)) Caja 54/4755

[17] Archivo Histórico de la Arquidiócesis de Nueva Pamplona (hereafter AHANP), Cofradías, Grupos Apostólicos y Delegaciones, Caja 4, Carpeta 1

1930s, then, the Colombian Church resolved to strengthen its anti-communist propaganda and organisation with the countryside designated as the main area of intervention. In this way, Colombian Catholics adapted the Catholic Church's transnational anti-communist campaign – which was largely focussed on urban settings where communism was thought to thrive – to local realities.

Catholics' fears that they were losing control over their traditional sphere of influence were driven to a certain extent by the Spanish Civil War. The collective letter of Colombian bishops in 1936, a communiqué that would have been shared across all dioceses and read out in every parish, focussed on the issue of communism which 'threatens to destroy society by undermining its fundamental bases: God, Nation, Family, Property.' This open intervention into national politics ostensibly responded to the constitutional reform project that 'enshrines a secular state' into law. However, the prelates only devoted the first few paragraphs of the pastoral letter to the bill. Instead, they focussed the majority of their analysis on communism, especially how 'the spectacle of desolation that the noble Spain, fertile mother of nations' was testament to the terror and violence that communist systems could inflict on Catholic countries. Seeing as Colombia also fell into this category of nation, and reforming the constitution was 'the first step' towards communism, the bishops felt it their duty to warn Colombian Catholics.[18] Events in Spain had helped convince Catholics about the dangers of communism at the same time as they seemingly held up a mirror to domestic realities.

The message of this and other episcopal communications trickled down to local priests who began to refer explicitly to Spain in their own discussions about the communist threat in Colombia. In Santa Marta's *La Hoja Parroquial* – a weekly publication handed out in parishes across the diocese during Sunday mass – local priest Luis García wrote that the Spanish conflict revealed to the world the true face of communism, and that the city's 'good and order-loving people' must contemplate the horrific vision so that they could confront 'the unprecedented wave of barbarity that threatens the entire world and Colombia in it.' Building on the idea that Colombian Catholics needed to take concerted action against communism at home, he then called on his parishioners to 'not be fooled! Join together to prevent the entry into our nation of the most perfect incarnation of the infernal spirit.'[19] Having established that Colombia was at risk of heading down the same path as Spain, Church authorities mobilised their extensive network of priests to drum up support for the anti-communist cause amongst the wider Colombian public.

One key figure in this regard was Fray Eugenio Ayape, a Spanish member of the Augustinian Recollects who had come to Colombia to undertake his ecclesiastical career. He received his priestly ordination from the Colombian Nuncio Paolo Giobbe in January 1930, and, by the start of the civil war, he was in charge of the Suba parish in northwest Bogotá.[20] Like many of his colleagues, Ayape regularly contributed to religious and cultural publications. From this platform, he made clear his views on the conflict which furthered both Spanish and

[18] *Veritas*, 16-12-1936, p.4
[19] *La Hoja Parroquial*, 13-09-1936, p.1
[20] Ángel Martínez Cuesta, "Breve semblanza del P. Eugenio Ayape," *Mayéutica* 26, 62 (2000). pp.304-5

Colombian right-wing narratives about the two warring factions. In one such article published in October 1936, Ayape declared that, whilst the 'entire world has its eyes fixed on Spain', it was his duty 'as a Spaniard and priest' to condemn those who claimed that 'Spain has lost its Christian and gallant sensibility'. Given that the article was aimed at a Colombian audience, this was a clear jibe at local observers of the Spanish conflict. The priest then claimed that 'true' Spain was embodied in the 'gallant phalanges of young soldiers who wear the scapular on their sleeve and hold the sword in their hand'. He saw these soldiers as 'the Maccabees who wish death on the enemy of God's people... the descendants of Cid Campeador... the sons of the good don Quijote'.[21] Ayape thus employed the familiar Conservative trope of linking the Nationalists to Spain's literary and heroic past, as well as the religious interpretation of the Spanish Civil War as a holy war against godless communism. He published many more articles expressing similar ideas during the conflict, as well as several poems and one book, *Sangre de España*, released in 1939 to defend the Francoist cause in Colombia.[22]

From his position as parish priest, Ayape had an additional platform to spread his views on Spain: the pulpit. Although Suba is now one of the largest localities in Bogotá, encompassing both urban and rural areas, in 1936 it was a small town separate from the capital. It represented an ideal centre for the Church's new anti-communist campaign and Ayape who, like many of his contemporaries, saw Spain as the latest example of communist terror made the civil war and its lessons for Colombia a central theme in many of his sermons. In one such address at the Church of Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria on 25 September 1936, the priest expounded the reasons why he believed the conflict was so important for his Colombian audience. However, the purpose of the sermon was not explicitly to discuss the Spanish Civil War, rather it sought to commemorate the Catholic festival for Our Lady of Mercy, patron saint of Barcelona in Spain and 'governess' of Pasto in Colombia.

By using the occasion to discuss developments across the Atlantic, Ayape drew clear parallels between his native country and Colombia. He began the address by explaining how Spain in the thirteenth century was owned by 'Saracens' (a word used to describe Muslims) who were 'irreconcilable enemies of Catholicism'. The country's Catholic residents who were 'enslaved' by these 'infidels of the half-moon' prayed to God for salvation and were compelled to establish the Order of Our Lady of Mercy to 'liberate the faithful from the ominous bonds of the infidels.' Comparing the consolidation of Catholic Spain to contemporary events, the priest declared that 'twentieth-century barbarians have tried to submit Spain to their yoke' by disregarding 'Christ, who is the legitimate owner of her history, blood, language and life'.[23] He thus historicised the oft cited but poorly explained exaltation of Spain's Catholic tradition, currently under threat of corrupting communism.

[21] *Revista de Estudios Eclesiásticos*, pp.375-9

[22] Fray Eugenio Ayape, *Sangre de España. Espíritu y virtud redentora de la Cruzada española* (Tipografia San Agustín, 1939).

[23] 'Oh mamá, ¡salve a España!', Archivo General de los Agustinos Recoletos, Fondo Eugenio Ayape, Caja J16, Sermons Cuaderno 5, pp.63-4

Ayape moved on to describe how the shared devotion to the Virgin Mary in Spain and Colombia bound the two nations together in a spiritual community. He explained how *María* also became the 'Ruler of America' because God had watched over the Spanish 'discovery' of the continent. This shared heritage meant, in the priest's view, that Colombians could not remain indifferent to the attack on Spain's Catholic tradition. He thus invited the congregation to join him in asking the Virgin to look on Spain which was 'displaying to the world an example of extreme strength' by combatting 'the infernal seven-headed dragon that we call communism'.[24] In doing so, Ayape implied that Colombian Catholics could contribute to a Nationalist victory – which was also their victory – by engaging in acts of prayer in what was seen as the spiritual rear-guard.

The general ideas of this sermon were typical of others given in Colombia, both by local and Spanish clerics, so Ayape's case demonstrates how priests used the pulpit to disseminate the Church's anti-communist messages amongst local communities in the late 1930s. To do this, they often pointed to the Spanish Civil War as evidence for the dangers of communism as well as inspiration for how to combat it. Through collective acts like praying for the Spanish Nationalists, the priests also made tangible the sense of connection to Spain that was being propagated in the press. This process helps explain why anti-communism and the insistence that Spanish events were being replicated in Colombia appeared more forcefully in the regions than in the national sphere.

Anti-fascism

The second factor that fuelled a turn to the right of local moderates was the anti-fascist activity of leftist Liberals and left-wing groups in the regions. These two blocs had previously operated separately and even in opposition to one another, but they increasingly found their interests aligned as Popular Front politics ascended in the international arena and divisions within the Liberal party worsened at home. By 1936, they became the lifeblood of the Colombian Popular Front which, though never officially supported by the central government, did become a local reality in various regions.[25] Although these groups saw themselves as promoters of the López regime, through their actions they constructed counternarratives for Colombian liberalism that in many instances were influenced by their interpretation of events in Spain.

Leftist Liberals were supporters of the López government who, observing the slide to the right amongst Conservatives and moderate Liberals, were horrified by what this might mean for Colombian democracy. Although a few rose to prominent positions in López's government, they made their presence known more in Congress where they held an important number of seats as representatives of their respective localities. In turn, the regional groups who had voted them in manifested their ideological stance at the departmental level. These groups supported the Republican government because it was a democratically elected government that defended Spain's freedom and sovereignty which also reflected their support for López

[24] 'Oh mamá, ¡salve a España!', pp.66-77
[25] Medina, *Historia del partido comunista colombiano*. Chapter 3

whom they saw as the leader of the Colombian masses. Conversely, the Spanish revolution that led to the civil war represented the repudiation of popular will. Pro-López commentators in the regions therefore viewed the conflict as a battle between democracy and anti-democracy.[26] Barranquilla's *Frente Liberal* was exemplary of this trend and, perhaps uncoincidentally, released its first edition on 26 July 1936. In its opening manifesto, the newspaper made clear that it was supportive of López's government because the latter pioneered 'revolutionary Colombian Liberalism' and López was the one Liberal president who truly gave impetus to the popular majority. Any move to halt the *Revolución* would therefore be 'the worst crime against... those who have the ability to impose their will'.[27]

Another piece in the same edition turned to the Spanish Civil War and described the situation in similar terms. The author wrote that Manuel Azaña's government had 'the unconditional support of the working masses' and so the Spanish rebels were 'the greatest disgrace against the proletariat and collective aspirations'.[28] These similarities possibly drove the newspaper to support a Popular Front in Barranquilla, which commentator Carlos Martín Leyes described as a necessary, temporary step to revitalise liberalism in the Colombian Atlantic and guard against Liberals who seek coalitions with Conservatives rather than stimulate their working-class base.[29] Martín himself became a leading member of the Atlantic's Popular Liberal Front. For some leftist Liberals, events in Spain helped justify the formation of Popular Fronts but they saw these as localised initiatives aimed at ensuring the Liberal party's survival in the regions rather than communist-led coalitions designed to protect democracy as a precursor to revolution. Even as they claimed to support López's government in Bogotá, then, the Liberal left established regional alliances that directly challenged the president's own interpretation of Colombian politics.

After it became apparent that Hitler and Mussolini were supporting Franco, the Spanish Nationalists also symbolised foreign invasion and dictatorship for leftist Liberals. They vociferously condemned the Spanish general for selling Spain to 'International fascism' and believed that Germany and Italy's assistance was a means for them to claim the Spanish territory as their own. Given the Liberal left's view that Spanish democracy was at stake in the civil war, Conservative support for the Nationalist cause proved that they were the anti-democratic force in Colombian politics. More seriously, however, they believed these networks of pro-Francoist sympathisers could pave the way for a fascist invasion of Colombia. Julio Campo González, a Liberal from Giradot, claimed that the triumph of the Spanish insurgents would mean the death of 'the rights of man' and bourgeoise democracy in Spain as well as the conquest of Latin America. In a clear nod to local pro-Nationalist groups, he declared that Americans would therefore be committing 'a crime against humanity and

[26] For example: 'Democracia y antidemocracia', *El Espectador*, p.4
[27] 'Partido de gobierno', *Frente Liberal*, p.3
[28] 'La contrarrevolución española', *Frente Liberal*, 26-07-1936
[29] *Frente Liberal*, 26-07-1936, p.3

civilisation [...] by supporting or even sympathising with the rightists in this moment so decisive for freedom.'[30]

Left-wing groups took this argument even further. They did not have significant representation at the national level – two socialist senators who ran on Liberal tickets, one socialist representative and, after 1937, one communist representative – so mobilised local groups to push for change. Like leftist groups in Europe and elsewhere in the Americas, they understood the Spanish conflagration in both international and local terms.[31] Following the Comintern line, left-wing Colombians believed that the democratic and progressive Popular Front government was victim to a counterrevolution by reactionary forces supported by international fascism. Their support for the Spanish Republic was expressed explicitly in terms of this government which they believed received its legitimacy from the alliance with the Spanish working class. Correspondingly, the Colombian Left felt that their adherence to Republican Spain also proved their democratic leanings, at least in the short term.

Fervent right-wing support for the Spanish Nationalists, in contrast, suggested that these groups may be planning something similar in Colombia. We saw in the previous chapter how intense Conservative opposition in August 1936 led to claims that party members were plotting a coup, but the Left continued to level such accusations after that incident. In October, the PCC secretary Augusto Durán proclaimed that the Conservative reaction was organising itself to take power by violent means. He described how the party capitalised on events from Spain to craft an 'anti-democratic campaign' aimed at convincing their Colombian followers that the battle on the peninsula was against communism and, in turn, win support for their own cause. The true threat to democracy in Colombia, Durán asserted, was the 'native rightists' who sought to imitate the Spanish generals and rise against the government. Whilst Conservative attacks did not surprise the PCC, they were concerned about the number of Liberal leaders seduced by the campaign. It thus fell to the communists – 'the legitimate defenders of liberty and people's rights' – to confront the opposition.[32]

Indeed, the PCC was one of the most outspoken critics of supposed Conservative action against the Colombian government. In December 1936, party secretary Ignacio Torres Giraldo wrote to the then-president of the National Liberal Directorate, Eduardo Santos, giving his opinion on the current threat posed by conservatism in the country, and how it could be combatted. He described how the opposition was trying to establish a political order in Colombia 'undoubtedly very similar to the order proclaimed by Franco, Mola and Gil Robles just seven months ago' in Spain. Torres proposed a united front between Liberals, communists and socialists after detailing how the latter two groups had been working to protect the López administration. The secretary also denounced 'rightist' Liberals who were supposedly colluding with Conservatives to overthrow López.[33] Santos rejected Torres's proposition, but

[30] 'Actualidades', *Frente Liberal*, 02-08-1936

[31] Lambe, *No Barrier Can Contain It: Cuban Antifascism and the Spanish Civil War*; Lewis Mates, *The Spanish Civil War and the British Left* (Tauris, 2007); Robert Rosenstone, *Crusade of the Left: The Lincoln Battalion in the Spanish Civil War* (Routledge, 2009).

[32] *Frente Liberal*, 18-10-1936, p.6

[33] *El Tiempo*, 12-12-1936, p.1

it exemplified how, more than just seeing Spain as a crucial battle in the larger war against fascism, the PCC interpreted its political mission in Colombia through the prism of what was happening on the peninsula. The Spanish Civil War offered communists both a reason and an inspiration to further their domestic position, and chapter six will show how the PCC sought to capitalise on this opportunity.

As a result of both groups' clear identification between the Colombian and Spanish Right, the Colombian Left staged various anti-fascist protests, often organised as counterdemonstrations to right-wing political events even if the latter had nothing to do with the Spanish conflict. On 25 July 1937, for instance, Conservatives in the capital held a parade to open their yearly conference. Local leftists, who in the four preceding days had placed posters up around the city calling for an anti-fascist protest, apprehended some of the delegates making their way to the event. The former began attacking and insulting the group, forcing them to retreat into the Conservative headquarters. The anti-fascist protesters then threw stones at the building whilst shouting 'down with Francisco Franco'.[34]

The Colombian Left also organised their own demonstrations in support of Republican Spain, such as the abovementioned rally to promote Echandía's candidacy. As well as furthering national political goals, these events also served as a platform to condemn local proponents of Spanish Nationalists. The first recorded instance took place less than a week after fighting broke out when leftist Liberals organised a pro-Spain demonstration outside Congress. The event aimed to demonstrate the 'shared ideals' between Colombian liberalism and the Spanish Republic,[35] but Chamber representative and member of *Vanguardia Socialista* Diego Luis Córdoba gave a speech in which he compared right-wing insurgency in Spain to Conservative belligerency in Colombia.[36]

Leftists' articulation of their domestic opposition in internationalist terms convinced Conservatives and moderate Liberals that the protests and protesters were communist. In particular, women's involvement in anti-fascist activity seemed to confirm these fears. *El Siglo* reported in November 1936 that 'all the city's communists' had turned up for a trade union event in Bogotá. The journalist focussed specifically on the presence of 'militiawomen' wearing the cap of Spanish women soldiers who got drunk and railed against fascism, Catholicism and the Pope whilst applauding Spanish leaders and Popular Front politics. In this account, the women had abandoned their traditional gender roles by engaging in corrupting behaviour such as drinking alcohol and discussing politics. They were therefore comparable – figuratively and literally – to their counterparts in Republican Spain who were fighting on behalf of communism. At the same time, their attendance was seen as evidence that the event was actually 'a communist party' where the money raised would 'go directly to Russia'.[37]

In fact, many of those who mobilised against fascism in Colombia actually considered themselves to be Liberal. For example, Ovinalio Allores wrote to local daily *El Relator* in

[34] *El Heraldo*, 26-07-1937, p.5
[35] *El Siglo*, 24-07-1936, p.1
[36] *El Siglo*, 26-07-1936, p.1
[37] *El Siglo*, 'Delegados rusos en una fiesta roja', 15-11-1936

February 1938 to protest against the fact that the publication had labelled him 'communist' in an article about a confrontation between leftists and 'fascists' in Cali. According to Allores, the latter held a demonstration in which they insulted López and shouted: 'Down with the Liberal party'. He and others responded with shouts of 'Long live liberalism!' and so could not possibly be communist. Allores clearly saw support for the Spanish Republic as part of his anti-fascist activity in Colombia because he claimed that 'the *Godos* and fascists are using the Trojan Horse of communism to impose [*intronizar*] fascism in Colombia, but that will not happen. We will die as Spain dies: standing, not on our knees.'[38]

Blind to these nuances, local moderates' anti-communist sentiments grew in response to the perceived association between anti-fascism, pro-Republican activity and communism. Some even expressed open support for Franco. One individual from Cereté, Córdoba complained in a letter sent to Alfonso López Pumarejo at the end of 1937 that 'rightist liberals' had made such a political volte-face 'that the people are convinced that they have unmasked themselves as true *godos* that celebrate with the Conservatives the triumphs of Franco, the Spanish traitor.'[39] The letter-writer would be proved correct: an elected member of Boyacá's Liberal Directorate joined the local Spanish Falange after its creation in late 1938 and, following Franco's victory in March 1939, prominent Liberal Alfonso Silva Silva hung a Francoist flag from his building in Bucaramanga.[40]

Equally, many of the reports of pro-Nationalism amongst local moderates stemmed from accusations by the Colombian Left. We have already seen how leftist Liberals increasingly compared their moderate rivals to the Spanish Nationalists following Santos's victory in the April 1937 elections. Yet the allegations became so commonplace that, in October 1938, Armando Solano devoted one edition of his regular column in *El Liberal* to discuss whether there were Liberals who supported General Franco.[41] Whilst he did not rule out the possibility that some may have turned against the Republican government, he considered such a phenomenon to be impossible because the essential and fundamental premise of liberalism made them favourable towards the Spanish Republic. The implication being that those who were pro-Nationalist could not be Liberal, even if we have seen that the opposite was also true.

The Spanish Civil War therefore roused virulent anti-communism amongst local groups who thought 'communist' activity in Colombia would provoke an uprising just as they believed it had in Spain. Simultaneously, the conflict also influenced who was grouped under the banner of communism: anyone who engaged in 'anti-fascist' activity as a reaction to the perceived dangers of a Franco-supporting Colombian Right, which did include but was not limited to communists, was automatically labelled as such by local moderates. This made communism seem far more active and widespread than it actually was, further provoking fears of the communist threat and fuelling a turn to the right. For the Colombian Left, Spain

[38] 'Una aclaración', *El Relator*, 11-02-1938
[39] Letter to López, 23-12-1937. AGN.DAPFRE.DP, Caja 69, Carpeta 30
[40] *El Liberal*, 01-12-1938, p.5; *El Liberal*, 04-04-1939, p.5
[41] *El Liberal*, 16-10-1938, p.4

also became a platform to combat accusations from 'rightist' Liberals that they were a threat to Colombian liberalism. But by casting moderates as the enemy, this internationalist discourse made left-wing groups more vulnerable to attacks from the Right who also interpreted leftist political manoeuvrings through the lens of Spanish events. Just as the supposed Communist Uprising of 1935 laid the foundations for Brazil's anti-communist movement, local Colombians' engagement with Spanish events convinced many that more needed to be done to tackle communism in the country.[42] Significantly, the majority of these debates occurred outside of the national sphere and evoked Spain much more forcefully than Liberal leaders in Bogotá.

Divisions within the opposition camp

Though the Conservative party had been experiencing ongoing tensions since the mid-1920s, members' opposition to López's reforms had brought them together in 1935. By early 1937, however, cracks were also starting to appear in the united Conservative front. The start of this debate actually occurred in late 1936 and was largely concerned with the party's seeming stagnation in the face of growing Liberal victories. Whilst almost all members had supported abstention in 1935, their reasons for doing so differed and certain factions were growing increasingly impatient with the fact that the policy was not accompanied by direct action. However, an incident in December that shone a spotlight on these intraparty divisions related specifically to certain Conservatives' avid admiration for the European extreme right, including the Spanish Nationalists.

In December, Aquilino Villegas, a Conservative from Manizales, Caldas and collaborator in the city's daily *La Patria*, swapped a series of letters with Silvio Villegas, director of the newspaper and an important figure in the Colombian extreme right. The spark for the exchange was *La Patria*'s sharp turn to the right under Silvio's direction, evidenced by a slew of articles praising totalitarian systems in Italy, Germany and Nationalist Spain, and discussing their application in a Colombian context as a way to overcome the Conservative party's deficiencies. In the letters, which were subsequently published by the press, Aquilino attacked the fascistic trend amongst the new Conservative generations. He considered that fascism was completely antithetical to the party's democratic ideals and that replacing one leftist dictatorship (as he saw López's government) with a rightist version was not the answer.[43] Aquilino thus argued that Conservatives were inherently democratic and rejected any extremist tendencies amongst the Colombian Right. Further, the Spanish conflict was very much in his thoughts as he attempted to disavow extremism in his party. In another letter to a fellow Conservative in which he explained his tirade against Silvio, he compared the takeover of *La Patria* to the seizure of Spanish daily *El Debate* by 'the reds in Madrid'.[44]

[42] Sá Motta, *On Guard Against the Red Menace*.
[43] *El Espectador*, 12-12-1936, p.9
[44] *La Defensa*, 14-12-1936, p.3

Silvio's response made no attempt to deny his newspaper's new ideological orientation, instead explaining that 'the intense communist propaganda in recent years' had triggered 'a rightist tendency amongst Colombian youth'. Refuting Aquilino's view that fascism had nothing to offer Conservatives, he claimed that 'two democratic ideologies could successfully combat each other, but communism […] can only be effectively opposed through the systems adopted by Mussolini in Italy and Franco in Spain.' However, Silvio also had commercial reasons in mind: he wrote that 'if [*La Patria*] wants to increase its circulation then it should throw open its doors and capture sympathy from all sectors'.[45] Although he did not specifically say so, Silvio could have been referring to the vocal support for right-wing extremism amongst wider society which will be discussed below.

The two men were arguing about the future of the Conservative party in the face of the communist threat. Whilst they both agreed on the nature of the problem, they differed in their understandings of an appropriate response. Aquilino believed the Conservative party could not impose their will by force whereas Silvio maintained that the rise of communism could not be countered by democratic means. Moreover, Silvio seemingly recognised the importance of non-elite groups for national politics, in contrast to the snobbish insularity of Conservative elites like Aquilino. They both cited Spain as an example of what ideology the party should or should not pursue.

Silvio's view was not new but rather reflective of a more extreme trend that he had pioneered in the Conservative party over a decade ago. Along with four other university students, Silvio had established the right-wing intellectual group *Legión Organizada para la Restauración del Orden Social* (Leopardos) in the early 1920s. The Leopardos formed part of a broader youth movement known as *Los Nuevos* who opposed the politics and ideologies of the turn-of-the-century political elites, although the former stood out for their dissident, right-wing views.[46] In their 1924 manifesto, the Leopardos promoted a Colombian nationalism based on property, family and fatherland as the cornerstone of political action and posited an authoritarian political system as a means for progress.[47] According to Silvio, from its very conception the group was inspired by 'the spiritual legacy of Athens, Rome and Paris, brought over to the New World by Spanish Catholicism.'[48] By 1936, the Leopardos no longer operated as a formal aggrupation but many of its members were still active amongst the Colombian Right. It was therefore natural that, when the Spanish Civil War broke out, they expressed support for and drew inspiration from the Spanish Nationalists who promoted similar values and symbolised the true inheritors of Spain's imperial past. As we will see, Spain became a rallying cry for the rightists who were horrified by the Conservative party's apathetic response to the threat of communism.

By contrast, Aquilino's stance was largely reflective of older Conservatives many of whom were veterans of the Thousand Days' War. Although Laureano Gómez did not fit neatly into

[45] *El Espectador*, 12-12-1936, p.9
[46] Ricardo Arias Trujillo, *Los Leopardos: una historia intelectual de los años 1920* (Ediciones Uniandes, 2007).
[47] Silvio Villegas, *No hay enemigos a la derecha* (Arturo Zapata, 1937).
[48] Villegas, *No hay enemigos a la derecha*. p.79

this category, both the Liberal and Conservative press presented Aquilino as the interpreter of the Conservative leader's democratic sentiments.[49] Gómez's tour around Colombia in late 1938 revealed a much more ambiguous approach to democracy. During a stop in Santa Marta, he told his audience that there were three types of democracy: as a social tendency towards providing the working classes with reasonable and humane living conditions; as a type of government; and 'democratism' as a quasi-religious myth aimed to substitute belief in God. Gómez believed that the first two definitions aligned to Conservative principles, but that the third was far removed from his party's political and spiritual doctrines. Citing the Spanish poet José María Pemán, the Conservative leader explained that democratism was the result of a conspiracy between the Marxist 'beast' and the Liberal 'lamb' to appropriate the words 'democracy' and 'republic' and, through this deceit, subdue entire populations.[50] Although Pemán's metaphor aimed to rationalise the insurgency in Spain, Gómez's insinuation about Colombia's own Liberal regime was apparent. Gómez thus espoused an exclusionary discourse that posited conservatism as the only way to do democracy in Colombia and justified undemocratic action as a means to return the party to power. Moreover, this interpretation of Colombian democracy was inspired by the Conservative leader's understanding of the Spanish Civil War.

Colombian nationalism

The tensions within Colombian conservatism reveal the importance of regional politics. One movement in particular gained particular notoriety in the late 1930s: Colombian nationalism. The heterogenous nationalist group – which had important bases in Manizales and Medellín – developed out of the diverse experiences of various Conservative youth who opposed the traditional and centralising tendencies of party leaders in Bogotá. Initially, they attempted to overcome the inertia of late 1930s conservatism by imbuing it with ideologies and practices from the extreme right but, when that failed, they formed the splinter group *Acción Nacionalista Popular* (ANP) which temporarily threatened the unity of the Conservative party.[51] As we will see, the Spanish Civil War helped foment the rise of this nationalist movement that had never quite taken off over a decade earlier and that, from the regions, offered an alternative to the Conservative doctrine followed by party leaders in the capital.

Silvio Villegas's aforementioned response to Aquilino suggested that he had grown more extreme in his right-wing views since 1924. From promoting authoritarian systems from within the Conservative party, he now seemingly championed totalitarian practices being implemented in Europe. Spanish events played an important role in facilitating this transition. In August 1936, Silvio had declared that 'in Spain, just as here, a sector of conservatism has become... an inoffensive party of vigorous, moral ideology but defenceless against the

[49] For example: 'El idilio conservador', *El Relator*, 16-12-1936; *El Colombiano*, 03-07-1937, p.3
[50] *La Defensa*, 06-12-1938, p.6
[51] César Augusto Ayala Diago, *El porvenir del pasado: Gilberto Alzate Avendaño, sensibilidad leoparda y democracia. La derecha colombiana de los años treinta.* (Fundación Gilberto Alzate Avendaño, 2007).

reactions of barbarity'.[52] For him, the conflict confirmed the defunct nature of a republican and democratic conservatism that reacted to liberal excesses in Spain by participating in a corrupt Republic, and in Colombia by removing itself from electoral politics but shying away from armed opposition.

Although Silvio did not go further in suggesting that Colombian rightists should follow the Spanish Nationalists' lead, it was not too far of a conceptual leap to reach that conclusion. Later that month, Marco Alzate Avendaño – brother of ANP leader Gilberto – did just that. He wrote that 'the triumph of the right in Spain is a lesson to our government that we will no longer support the degenerative state in which Colombia finds itself and that our party is willing to ensure guarantees [of safety] through violence.' Alzate and his followers were fed up with liberal rhetoric and 'only want to hear the sweet prayer of the bayonet'.[53] In other words, the extreme right was threatening violence – inspired by the Spanish conflagration – as the only way to solve the domestic problems they perceived within Colombia. This was in stark contrast to the position of Conservative leaders who, as per the previous chapters, opted for rhetorical and non-violent forms of opposition.

It was common for right-wing movements in Latin America to look to European dictatorial regimes during the 1920s and 1930s.[54] This was true of Colombia, too, and many authors have referred to so-called Colombian fascists in the 1920s and 1930s. However, extreme right-wing groups there were much more likely to call on 'national' examples of authoritarianism to win support for their cause.[55] Indeed, like leading Liberals and Conservatives, certain nationalists were critical of those who attempted to implant foreign systems in Colombia. In September 1936, José Mejía Mejía, a Medellín-based Conservative and member of ANP, described Colombian nationalism as 'a bastion of rightist ideas and the acute antiliberal emotion of the conservative masses.' According to him, the movement was 'undertaking the commendable task of emotional irrigation' to revolutionise the 'trusting and almost mechanical' attitude of conservatism. Still, he recognised that 'there are some rhetorical excesses that have nothing to do with rightist arguments', particularly those relating to Hitler and Mussolini. Whilst Mejía believed that the nationalist movement was right to 'adopt certain ideology schemas... that serve as an impenetrable wall against the Marxist offensive', he also warned its proponents should not simply transplant 'all the doctrinaire architecture' onto the Colombian context.[56]

Mejía thus promoted a right-wing extremism that he argued was based on national realities rather than foreign models. Yet, crucially, as Conservatives believed Spanish Nationalists were fighting for Hispanic culture of which they were a part, Franco's style of authoritarianism was not considered alien in Colombia. Mario Vélez Escobar, committee member of the *Unión Nacional de Estudiantes Conservadores* (UNEC), summarised this logic. He argued that the Colombian government concealed Marxist practices in a markedly

[52] 'La contra-revolución', *El Mundo*, 01-08-1936
[53] *Diario del Pacífico*, 19-08-1936, p.3
[54] Antonio Costa Pinto, *Latin American Dictatorships in the Era of Fascism* (Routledge, 2019).
[55] Rubén Sierra Mejía, "Política y cultura durante la República Liberal," in Sierra Mejía, ed., *República Liberal*.
[56] 'Rubrica', *El Colombiano*, 03-09-1936, p.5

communist fashion, just like its counterpart in Spain. This necessitated the formation of a unified nationalist front which could 'consult the racial, political, historical and sentimental conditions' of the Colombian (and Spanish) people. Such a front was inspired by 'successful [Spanish] nationalism' in that it evoked 'natural sources of religious sentiment to detain the materialist invasion', protested 'against educational disintegration' and formed citizens that were 'an integral part of a social, familial, religious and individual whole.'[57] Vélez posited a united right-wing front based on Conservative principles but joined under the flag of nationalism given the latter's victories in Spain. In 1936, the Conservative party leadership had promoted UNEC as a way to counter the influence of the nationalist movement. That one of its main organisers was espousing the virtues of nationalism a year later demonstrates how the extreme right was able to attract many Conservatives to their cause by highlighting the cultural and ideological similarities between Colombian and Spanish nationalists. In this way, Spain's example helped the extreme right mount a regional challenge to centralised Colombian conservatism.

It was not just members of the Conservative youth who were seduced by such tactics. Primitivo Crespo, a Conservative elite from Cali and owner of *Diario del Pacífico*, had previously sworn loyalty to Gómez. However, in response to Aquilino's Villegas's tirade against fascism in December 1936 and echoing the rhetoric of Colombian nationalists, he condemned 'conservatism drained in the old, strict moulds of sterility, democracy and republicanism'. Turning to the Spanish right, and explicitly linking the two in the process, he asserted that 'the principal cause of leftist victories in Spain has been above all the lack of true political vision amongst the electoral counterrevolutionary leaders'. Crespo therefore viewed 'the rightist youth as the right hand of our party' because it 'gives our party vitality and robustness'. As he saw it, Colombian nationalism could not be simplistically compared with Italian fascism because it was engaged in 'adaptation efforts' to obtain purely 'creole characteristics'. Instead, Crespo signalled the Spanish Falange which followed 'unobjectionable' principles 'that do not resemble the fearful descriptions of brutal tyranny and strangulation of freedom'.[58] His support for Colombian nationalism was thus influenced by developments in Spain. Crespo's own brother was fighting with Franco's forces which meant he would have been paying close attention to the progress of the Spanish Nationalists. Yet, as he made clear, such ideologies in Colombia should be allowed to flourish within the Conservative party.

Illustrative of the advance of nationalism within Colombian conservatism was the establishment of the *Haz Godo* [Conservative Fasces] in Medellín in late 1936. The name was a clear reference to the Italian 'fasci' which was the name given to the revolutionary and nationalist political organisations who would initiate the fascist movement in the 1920s. The group – one of the founders of which was Mejía – had a totalitarian view of conservatism but were self-declaredly not fascist: they were inspired by the authoritarian ideology of Simón Bolívar; promoted Christianity in the home and at school; and followed an ideology of

[57] *Diario del Pacífico*, 23-07-1937, p.3
[58] 'El retiro de Aquilino Villegas', *El Colombiano*, 19-12-1936

economic and territorial nationalism.[59] Significantly, the majority of these postulates mirrored what Colombian Conservatives believed the Spanish Nationalists were fighting for and the *Haz* confirmed its close ideological connection to Spain by dedicating its first public conferences to the civil war. However, the exaltation of Bolívar showed that domestic nationalism was not a mere replica of its Spanish counterpart. The initiative was a practical response to the calls for a reinvigoration of the Conservative party and therefore it had distinctly domestic aims. Further, it was conceived as an organisation for the extreme right in Antioquia and so aimed to combat the stagnation of central conservatism from the regions.

The nationalists' use of the Spanish Civil War as a rallying call even brought regional women into their folds. At least three hundred women joined the *Sección Femenina* which burst onto the public scene in November 1936 when it ordered all members to wear the organisation's blue badge for eight days from the day in which Franco's army entered Madrid.[60] By mobilising women, the *Haz* also offered a distinct reality to that of Conservative leaders who still excluded women from politics and the move also reflected the right-wing youth's calls for women to be granted the vote.[61] However, this did not mean that nationalist men or women challenged traditional gender roles. Less than two weeks later, Juan Roca Lemus of the *Haz* Supreme Council gave a speech to the *Sección Femenina* in which he clarified their function in the nationalist movement. According to Roca, they had 'great cultural and social missions' which included spreading Catholic sentiment and teaching morality and admiration for national heroes.[62] These women's support for the Spanish Nationalists seemingly fulfilled this goal at the same time as their organisation under the banner of Colombian nationalism lent legitimacy to the nationalists' domestic programme. By mobilising their supposedly inherent feminine traits to cultivate nationalist sentiment at home and through education, paralleling trends seen in other Latin American nations at this time, right-wing women played a fundamental role in disseminating extreme ideologies in Colombia.[63]

The development of the Colombian nationalist movement in the 1930s thus demonstrates how Conservatives outside of the national sphere were seduced by the extreme right as a result of the Spanish conflict. By drawing on Spain's example, the nationalists were able to appeal to those who rejected the application of foreign doctrines such as Italian fascism or German Nazism in Colombia. In doing so, they established a distinctly regional movement that challenged the centralising tendencies of the Conservative leadership in Bogotá. Spain's influence was felt here too: the extreme right's suggestion that the methods and systems employed by the Spanish Nationalists could be applied in Colombia also contrasted sharply with Conservative elites' insistence that they were not inspired by events on the peninsula. At the same time as nationalists in the regions claimed that national politics mirrored events in Spain, they used the Spanish example to set themselves apart from Conservative leaders in

[59] *El Fascista,* 19-12-1936, p.1
[60] 'Actividades Del Haz Godo', *El Colombiano*, 11-11-1936
[61] Ayala Diago, *El porvenir del pasado*. p.151
[62] *El Colombiano*, 23-11-1936, p.5
[63] Sandra McGee Deutsch, *Las Derechas: The Extreme Right in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, 1890-1939* (Stanford University Press, 1999). pp.143-314

Bogotá. Whereas in other places (most notably Europe) it was the spectre of Bolshevism in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution that convinced conservatives to ally with the revolutionary right, in Colombia it was the Spanish Civil War that sparked this change. Although Bolshevism was clearly still an important thread in Colombian interpretations of the conflict, it was the apparent spread of Bolshevik ideas and practices to a Hispanic country that made it appear a more immediate cause for concern.

The draw of Colombian nationalism was a threat to the unity of the Conservative party, not least because some members of ANP called for a separation of the two. This perhaps explains Gómez's more ambiguous approach to democracy. Seeing as the Colombian Right was unified in supporting the Spanish Nationalists, the Conservative leader recognised that Spain could be a rallying cry for disillusioned party members and so, to appeal to those who were inspired by the violence of the civil war, Gómez needed to be careful not to fully renounce the virtues of authoritarianism. This nuances the idea, suggested by Javier Guerrero-Barón, that the Spanish Civil War pushed Gómez towards abandoning democratic values.[64] Instead, it appears that the influence was less direct; Colombian nationalists' promotion of Spanish totalitarianism and its application in Colombia drove the Conservative leader to exalt authoritarianism as a way to wrestle support from the extreme right.

Some regional Conservatives were aware of the consequences of these divisions particularly in the face of the supposed communist threat about which their party agreed. In July 1937, Francisco José Ocampo, a Conservative from Manizales, sent a cable to party leaders requesting that they cease the dispute that only benefits liberalism. He stated that their duty as Conservatives was to 'strongly unite the forces of order' and used the hypothetical example of the Spanish Nationalist forces turning against each other during the siege of Madrid to highlight the ludicrousness of the Conservative split.[65] Other members of moderate conservatism, equally concerned by party factionalism but seeing the extreme right as the main adversary, took their rulers' attempts to divide liberalism at face value and called for a coalition between the moderate elements of both parties.[66] In this sense, moderate Conservatives also invoked Spain's example to criticise their leaders' stance, but for them it was an expansion of the concept of democracy, rather than its complete rejection, that would save Colombian conservatism. In the regions, then, Colombian rightists used the Spanish Civil War as a rhetorical device to both promote and contest different visions for the Conservative party.

Conclusion

Although many Liberals ostensibly supported the Spanish Republic, and all Conservatives sympathised with the Nationalists, understandings of what these movements represented

[64] Guerrero Barón, *El proceso político de las derechas en Colombia y los imaginarios sobre las guerras internacionales*.
[65] *El Siglo*, 26-07-1937, p.1
[66] For example: 'El enemigo', *Diario de la Costa*, 18-10-1936

shifted between different groups and throughout the war. Similarly, ideas of what support for either of the Spanish belligerents meant in a Colombian context did not remain constant throughout. The way that different sectors of political society interpreted events from Spain and applied them to Colombian realities adapted both in response to the development of these events and, more significantly, as a reaction to national particularities which also changed over time. Tracing diverse Colombian reactions to events in Spain thereby sheds light on the contradictions of domestic politics in the mid-1930s. By exposing the divisions within liberalism and conservatism, we can appreciate how the bipartisan system allowed for autonomous movements to appear and exert significant impact on national politics, even if they were never elected to power. The success of the Colombian nationalist movement, in particular, suggests that democratic politics were more vulnerable than the exceptionalist narrative would suggest.

One aspect of Colombian discussions of the Spanish Civil War that reveals the clear divisions inside as well as between parties is the different ways in which national and regional political society understood the conflict and its impact on domestic society. Groups in the different regions consistently emphasised Spain's incursion into local politics as a way to further their own position. Moderate Liberals and the Left constantly discussed how Spanish events were being replicated in Colombia, whereas moderate Conservatives and the extreme right used the civil war to revive movements from earlier periods in the twentieth century. These peripheral expressions of political opinion were much more forceful than their central counterparts and, whilst the latter were denying the relevance of Spanish events in Colombia, the former ensured their direct impact in Colombia by entering into rhetorical confrontations with local opposition groups over the conflict's meaning.

In many cases, regional Colombians articulated Spain's relevance as part of anti-communist and anti-fascist discourses meaning it became refracted through public debates in a way that modified pre-existing tensions. Accordingly, the Spanish conflict became a trope through which different groups could assert their place in political society largely through the 'Othering' of perceived adversaries. This chapter supports works that have suggested regional politics was much more violent and combative than policymaking at the national level.[67] By showing how this regional assertiveness also impacted national politics, it revises narratives about the relative insignificance of extremist groups in 1930s Colombia. To further interrogate these multiple, overlapping levels of engagement with Spain, the next chapter will look more closely at some of the groups and individuals who interacted with the larger ideas and debates of the Spanish Civil War in distinctly local settings

[67] Catherine LeGrand, *Frontier Expansion and Peasant Protest in Colombia, 1850-1936* (University of New Mexico Press, 1986); Mary Roldán, *Blood and Fire: La Violencia in Antioquia, Colombia, 1946-1953* (Duke University Press, 2002); Williford, *Armando los espíritus*.

Chapter 4 – Between the global and the local: popular engagement with the Spanish Civil War

In January 1937, joking about the '*rebeldes*' (Nationalists) in the Spanish Civil War, *El Espectador* published a quip under the title 'The other side of Spain'. Two 'idles' were discussing the conflict when one said to the other: 'Did you know that in Madrid they've just shot various asthmatics?' When the other man did not respond, he continued, 'Yes, they were accused of having *tos rebelde* [a chronic cough].'[1] This eight-line segment in one of Colombia's largest newspapers provides insight into how the conflict was received by Colombian society. On the one hand, the fact that a national daily used the civil war as material for its light-hearted jokes reveals how ingrained the events from Spain had become in popular vernacular. On the other, having two commoners as subjects of the joke, whilst presumably adding to its comic value, also illustrates how many sectors of society took an interest in Spanish events.

This thesis has so far been concerned with national newspapers printed in Bogotá and circulated across the country, as well as the major regional presses with which they engaged in reciprocal conversation. One would therefore be forgiven for believing that only national and regional politicians and intellectuals were aware of and took an interest in the conflict. As we have seen, these largely male and *mestizo* groups – several of whom had visited Spain – did continually comment on the conflict. They also tended to dominate the press and nascent broadcasting industries and exploited this media advantage to perpetuate their own views whilst limiting the spaces for dissenting voices.[2] Even so, technological advances and lax censorship laws in early twentieth-century Colombia facilitated a wealth of smaller newspapers that shed light on how news was circulated and discussed in non-elite spheres.[3] Local papers provided a voice to literate Colombians by publishing their letters and adverts or canvassing their opinions via surveys. Smaller publications such as bulletins, posters and flyers were often distributed amongst local populations or displayed on city walls. The spoken word and public performance offered ways for illiterate or semi-literate members of society to participate in public debate.

In order to further interrogate the centre-periphery relationship discussed in the previous chapter, this chapter will explore how popular discussion of the Spanish Civil War reveals the complexity of public debate in Colombia. The apathetic stance of Liberal leaders made them vulnerable to rumours of intervention in Spain at the same time as it opened up space for

[1] *El Espectador*, 18-01-1937, p.4

[2] Fabio López de la Roche, "Medios de comunicación y movimientos sociales: Incomprensiones y desencuentros," in *Movimientos sociales, estado y democracia en Colombia*, ed. Mauricio Archila and Mauricio Pardo, Medios de comunicación y movimientos sociales (Centro de Estudios Sociales, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2001); Mario Alfonso Murillo, "Community Radio in Colombia: Civil Conflict, Popular Media and the Construction of a Public Sphere," *Journal of Radio Studies* 10, 1 (2003).

[3] Luz Núñez-Espinel, *El obrero ilustrado: prensa obrera y popular en Colombia, 1909-1929* (Uniandes - CESO, 2006).

local groups and individuals to undertake spontaneous action in support of Republican Spain. Conservative and religious elites, on the other hand, actively encouraged wider participation in the Spanish debate by using a more engaging approach for their pro-Nationalist and anti-liberal message. Yet neither party could fully control the public response as the rhetorical battles over Spain that played out in the national press became the physical struggles of local Colombians who associated themselves so closely with either the Republican or Nationalist cause that they felt it was theirs to defend at home. By illuminating these multiple and overlapping public spheres, these findings contribute to a growing body of research uncovering the diverse spaces of sociability where different societal groups exchanged political information in ways that greatly impacted how politics and government functioned in Latin America.[4] This chapter considers that process within a global framework, contending that political information could also relate to events occurring outside of Colombia.

By performing their support for either of the Spanish warring factions, local groups believed that they were contributing to universal causes that they defined as anti-communism and anti-fascism. However, this action was mostly targeted against opposition forces at home, although there were significant instances of Colombians and Spaniards who travelled between the two countries and became the embodiment of Colombia's transnational engagement with the civil war. Sectors of society explicitly excluded from public debate also viewed their activism in support of the Spanish Republic as an extension of their strive for recognition in Colombia. Collectively, these Colombians' visceral association with the war drove them to participate in various solidarity initiatives which they conceived of in local, national and global terms. Exploring the interplay and interactions between different groups – political, ideological and social – this chapter will use the Spanish conflict as a lens through which to explore engagement with transnational events and Colombian politics at a grassroots level. In doing so, it positions Colombia firmly within global histories of the Spanish Civil War.

Public spheres

Although Colombian political elites espoused democracy, social and racial hierarchies ensured the exclusion of many from so-called public forums. Historians of Latin America's late colonial and early Republican era have nevertheless demonstrated that the existence of political censorship and widespread illiteracy did not preclude the existence of other areas of sociability where public issues were discussed.[5] These 'incipient' public spheres provide a window into non-elite groups who produced and circulated their own forms of communication to discuss, critique and even challenge the narrative coming from the state. Although the López administration purported to be building a more inclusive Colombian

[4] Rebecca Earle, ed., *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600-1945* (Routledge, 1999); Cristina Soriano, *Tides of Revolution: information, insurgencies, and the crisis of colonial rule in Venezuela* (University of New Mexico Press, 2018); Galán-Guerrero, "Circulating Political Information in Colombia."

[5] Elias José Palti, "Recent Studies on the Emergence of a Public Sphere in Latin America," *Latin American Research Review* 36, 2 (2001); Victor Uribe-Uran, "The Birth of a Public Sphere in Latin America during the Age of Revolution," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, 2 (2000).

society, various scholars have shown how this was a largely patriarchal initiative aimed at subsuming excluded members of society into a homogenous vision of Colombian national identity which the Liberal government would be the sole spokesperson for, rather than giving all sectors of society their own voice.[6] With regards to the Spanish Civil War, we have already seen how elites attempted to shut down claims of the conflict's importance for their own politics.

Cristina Soriano's work on late colonial Venezuela pays particular attention to the importance of rumours as a means of information circulation that can lead to political destabilisation.[7] In this way, incipient public spheres can pose a challenge to the political order created and maintained by exclusionary governments. Although Soriano's research centres on a territory without a printing press – a very different context to 1930s Colombia where press material abounded – leading Liberals' consistent denials about the relevance of Spanish events may have forced other groups to find different means to voice their dissent. Certainly, reading against the grain of press coverage on Spain reveals that rumours about the impact of Spanish events on Colombian politics were rife. These ranged from suggestions that Colombia would break diplomatic relations with the Spanish government following the murder of various Colombians in Barcelona,[8] to Bogota's National Library increasing its yearly salary so it could hire Spanish president Manuel Azaña.[9]

One rumour was particularly salient because of its potential consequences for the national government. In September 1936, the López administration renegotiated a deal with the Czech armaments factory Skoda for the production of weapons. Conservatives had already attacked the deal because of a major corruption scandal in the company's Romanian factory during March 1933 in which several prominent Liberals, including the president's brother, were implicated. However, murmurings amongst wider society alleged that the new agreement also included provisions for a proportion of the arms to be sold to the Spanish Republic. One of *El Siglo*'s columnists discussed the implications of this 'serious rumour' which suggested that López's government was going to 'crush a just and nationalist cause'. He claimed that a recent fire at a warehouse where the Colombian government stored armaments in Castillogrande, which caused many explosives to detonate, was proof of the secret deal because Cartagena was a port city with direct connection to Spain. Indicating how important he believed this supposed arrangement to be for international relations, the commentator demanded to know the type of boat being used to transport the weapons and its licence plate number in order to pass the details on to the newly formed Non-Intervention Committee (established to monitor the support offered by European powers to the Spanish warring factions) who would 'undoubtedly' want to investigate this case and 'establish the facts'.[10]

[6] Muñoz Rojas, *A Fervent Crusade for the National Soul*; Pécaut, *Política y sindicalismo en Colombia*.
[7] Soriano, *Tides of Revolution*.
[8] 'La suspensión de relaciones colombo-españolas', *El Heraldo*, 18-08-1936
[9] *El Heraldo de Antioquia*, 08-11-1936, p.1
[10] *El Siglo*, 13-09-1936, p.5

Though the specifics of the claim do not appear to have been true, three semi-recent and tangentially related incidents lent credence to the rumours, further demonstrating how news from Spain became entangled in a wider web of Colombian domestic and international affairs. The first was the corruption scandal but the other two related to previous arms sales negotiations. During the 1932 Leticia War, a short-lived conflict between Colombia and Peru over disputed territory in the Amazon region, Enrique Olaya Herrera's government had discussed the possibility of purchasing a warship from Spain. Then, in August 1936, the López regime had reportedly purchased five thousand rifles from Mexico in case of a Conservative uprising. Given the Mexico-Spain-Colombia triumvirate discussed in chapter two, in addition to Czechoslovakia's alliance with the Soviet Union, these facts seemingly combined to produce an alternate reality in which the Latin American and European nations were once again colluding. This time it was not for personal financial gain but to support the ailing Spanish Republic alongside other 'communist' nations like USSR and Mexico. Liberal commentators tried to downplay the rumour's significance, but the outrage provoked in Conservative circles forced War Minister Mendoza to publicly deny the charges.

At the same time as the Liberal government was denying speculation that it was intervening in the Spanish Civil War, Conservative and religious groups were actively encouraging popular groups to discuss the conflict by using a more interactive reporting approach. Although original conceptualisations of the public sphere posited an arena separate from formal politics, in early twentieth-century Colombia political elites were also prominent intellectuals, businessmen and journalists so, whilst they guided public debate, they were also intricately involved in government affairs. Accordingly, theorists like Pablo Piccato have argued that historians of Latin America need to bring ideas about public opinion into dialogue with the Gramscian concept of hegemony.[11] In this interpretation, the general public is active in the public sphere but vulnerable to influence by the governing elites who try to sway public opinion for their benefit. Although Piccato is more interested in the newly independent Latin American republics, elites in early twentieth-century Colombian society also engaged in paternalist attempts to co-opt public opinion for their own ideological endeavours.

It was a section of the Colombian Church that most explicitly expressed these objectives during the 1930s. As part of the broader ACC organisation mentioned in the previous chapter, the Jesuit community spearheaded an initiative to reform Catholic publications in the country. In June 1937, alongside the Archbishop of Bogotá Juan Manuel González Arbeláez, they created a secretariat to 'promote a coordinated movement across Colombia of investigation, propaganda and practical achievements to... defend our workers and *campesinos* from communism's fatal influence.'[12] The group's first act was to overhaul the Jesuit press, establishing a clear purpose for each separate publication. Previously, missionaries circulated the magazines *FAS* and *Destellos* amongst their parishes without any particular consideration for the audience and format of each. Following this new initiative, however, *FAS* was now

[11] Pablo Piccato, "Public sphere in Latin America: a map of the historiography," *Social History* 35, 2 (2010).
[12] *Acción Popular Católica* to Rafael Afanador, 04-06-1937. AHANP, Cofradías, Grupos Apostólicos y Delegaciones, Caja 4, Carpeta 1

destined solely for the local clergy and religious leaders whereas *Destellos* would be turned into a leaflet distributed to congregations during Sunday mass. This clear distinction was to be reflected in the different presentation of the two publications. *FAS* published lengthy editorials and shared information produced across Europe and America concerning religion, anti-communism and the Spanish Civil War. It thereby made Colombian clerics feel part of a transnational community combatting the global communist advance from their local parishes. *Destellos*, in contrast, replaced its text- and analysis-heavy issues with editions displaying large caricatures on the cover accompanied by anti-communist messages. The remaining text, much less dense, was now punctuated by short, emotive subheadings or questions written in larger, bold font. As a result, the leaflet's format matched its desire to disseminate the Church's social doctrine amongst the broader Colombian public.

2364

Registrado para curso *librede porte* en el servicio postal interior. Licencia No. 8 de 16 de abril de 1935.

D E S T E L L O S

Director, Luis R. David

SERIE A-142 — N.° 198 — Bogotá-Colombia, Agosto 2 de 1936 — Año 4.° — APARTADO 270

M15-VI-36-Imp. del C. de Jesús-Bogotá — Con las debidas licencias

Espejo en qué mirarnos

Ya apenas suena. ¡Son tantos años ya! pero el drama no acaba aún; continúa con la misma intensidad, siempre hacia el fin, sin descanso en el camino, en jornadas de dolor y sacrificio, de heroísmo y traiciones, entre lágrimas y sangre, esperanzas infinitas y desengaños crueles, con cerco de enemigos y deslealtades de hermanos, ¡el mayor dolor!, el peor enemigo, el que esteriliza todos los esfuerzos, el que infunde desalientos, el que enerva voluntades y siembra confusión, el que da el triunfo a los enemigos, siempre en acecho, siempre traidores.

Fe admirable la del pueblo mejicano, sostenida milagrosamente; pueblo heroico, mártir de Cristo Rey. ¡Cristeros! Pero la táctica aquella.....

* * *

No examinemos ahora, tiempo vendrá para juzgar.

Situación—Dos millones de kilómetros cuadrados de territorio (cuatro veces España) y catorce millones de habitantes, ¡para trescientos sacerdotes!

Oaxaca, antigua Antequera, noventa y cinco mil kilómetros cuadrados de extensión; seiscientos municipios; un millón ochenta y dos mil habitantes, ¡un sacerdote! Desterrado el arzobispo.

La mitad del territorio y mitad de población no tienen sacerdotes. Campeche, Colina, Chihuahua, Chiapas, Guerrero, Baja California, Sinaloa, Sonora, Tabasco, Tamaulipas, Tlaxcala, Veracruz, Yucatán y Zacatecas, ni obispos ni sacerdotes.

El resto de los Estados, «trescientos sacerdotes para todos», a razón de catorce mil habitantes San Luis Potosí, el mejor librado, por cada «sacerdote»; cincuenta mil en el distrito federal; ciento dieciséis mil en Querétaro; ciento treinta y trés mil en Hidalgo; doscientos cuarenta y seis mil en Durango; ¡por cada sacerdote!

Y esto con distancias enormes (hay parroquia de trescientas leguas cuadradas), climas durísimos, sin vías ni medios de comunicación, montañas inaccesibles, barrancos, torrentes, fieras, insectos..; y sobre todo esto el ejercicio del ministerio sacerdotal es el más grave delito; exige espíritu de apóstol, vida de catacumbas, vocación de martirio. Persecución, delaciones, multas, prisión, destierro, muerte....

Los seminarios cerrados. Desolación de vocaciones, pero....

2421

Registrado para *tarifa reducida* en el servicio interior. Licencia número 36, enero 18 de 1937.

D E S T E L L O S

A. P. C.

Nro 257 — BOGOTA - COLOMBIA — APARTADO 270 — Año 5.°

M25-XI-28-37-Imp. del C. de J.-Bogotá — Con las debidas licencias

Las garantías en Rusia

Obreros! Campesinos!

Aquí, como en Rusia, como en México, como en España, en todas partes son los mismos los ***comunistas tiranos del pueblo!***

Al público

Alló.... alló.... desde Rusia.
Aquí les habla Stalin
para decir que es mi pueblo
de todos el más feliz.

Hay garantías sin cuento
y reina la libertad....
....

Al carcelero (por lo bajo)

El grito acalla del pueblo....
Me está haciendo quedar mal!

Two front pages of *Destellos*. The first, from 15-06-1936, shows an editorial entitled 'Mirror in which we see ourselves.' The second, from 25-11-1937, displays a caricature addressed to 'Workers! Farmers!' under the title 'Russian guarantees'.

As their constant evocation of Spain implies, the ACC's belief that they needed to use the press more effectively to counter the 'communist threat' was informed partly by the civil war. During parish visits in 1937 and 1939, the Bishop of Nueva Pamplona Rafael Afanador paid particular attention to the presence of ACC organisation and Jesuit publications because 'as the danger to the people's faith is increasingly great, the faithful also need to defend themselves against the evil spirit's propaganda'. He therefore labelled the movement as 'the only effective remedy to the current threat of communism which has [...] introduced itself in Colombia and whose toll is visible in nations like Spain and Mexico who have been victims to the fatal error.'[13] Whilst the ACC predated the Spanish conflagration, events on the peninsula convinced many Catholics of the impending need to effectively organise against the communist threat.

The evolution of *Destellos* illustrates how visual representations of the conflict were an important factor for widespread interest in the conflict. As we have seen in previous chapters, these were not limited to religious publications but included the many photos sent by international news agencies as well as satirical caricatures produced by Colombian artists. In a country where not everyone could read or purchase newspapers, images provided an effective means to reach a greater audience. Yet the influence flowed both ways; as public attention increasingly focussed on Spain, certain newspapers attempted to capitalise on this captive audience by producing content that would allow readers to engage further with the civil war. The historiography on 'yellow journalism' during the Spanish-American war has demonstrated how the New York press's sensationalist reporting drove circulation for particular newspapers whose editors in turn made increasingly daring choices to compete for this growing audience.[14] Similarly, in 1930s Colombian reporting on the Spanish Civil War, editorial decisions were as much a product of public opinion as they were an attempt to shape it.

The dual tactic of engaging readers more actively in the conflict and responding to a pre-existing interest amongst the general public can be seen most obviously in the lengths that newspapers went to obtain, create and share maps of Spain during the conflict. Many published a variety of different charts covering the entire country as well as the different regions and cities engaged in conflict. This trend was particularly prevalent amongst regional Conservative newspapers which supports the assertion that the Colombian Right actively encouraged public discussion of the Spanish conflict. It also suggests that publications outside of the national press who may have not had the resources to pay international news agencies for photos or to employ their own caricaturists sought different ways to exploit widespread interest in Spain. Oftentimes the maps were taken from international sources and accompanied by text in Spanish so readers could relate the image to the current course of the conflict. However, Barranquilla's Conservative daily *La Prensa* spared no expense or effort to develop its own, highly detailed map of Spain.

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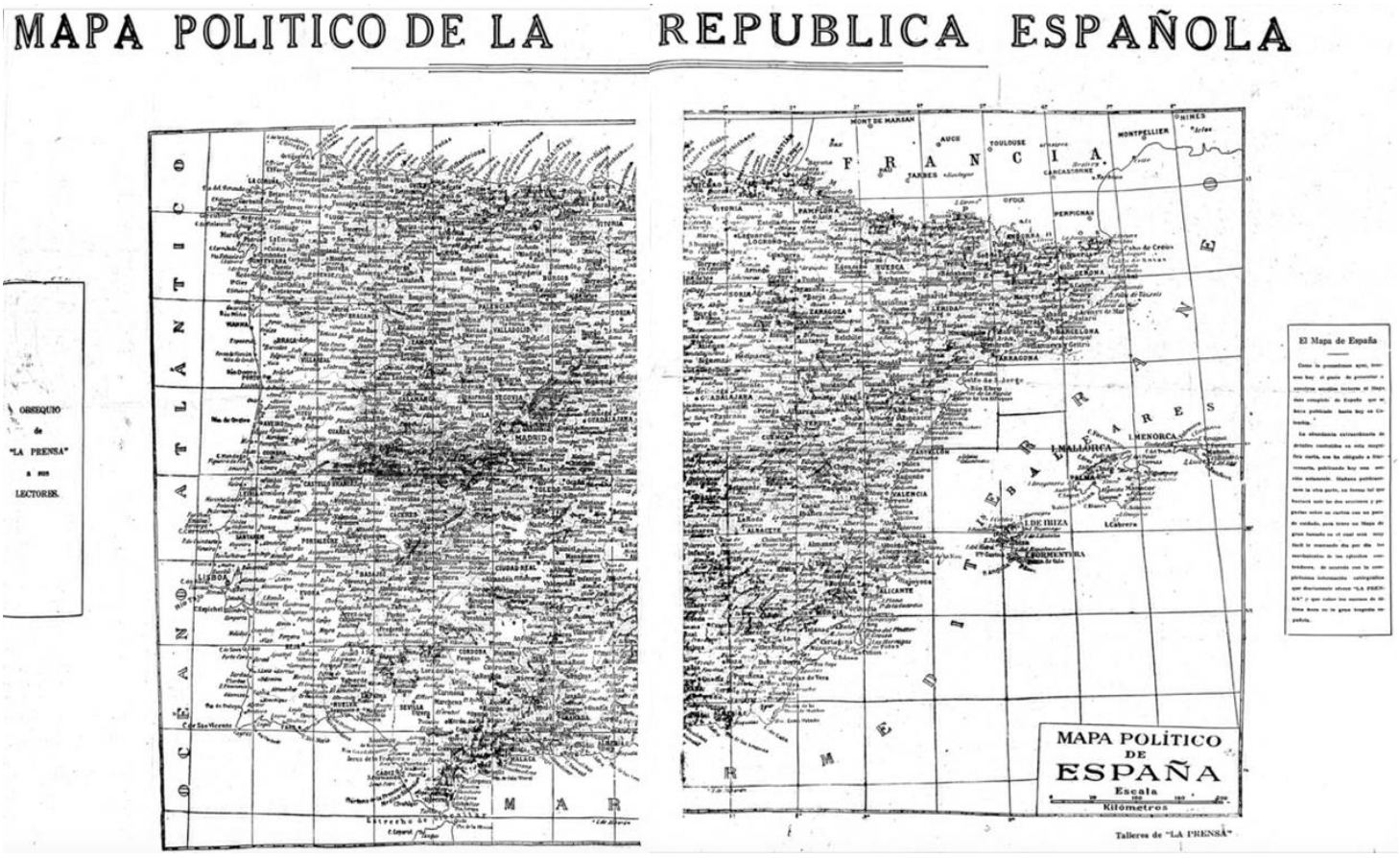
[13] AHANP, Visitas e Informes, Caja 2, Libro 4 (Visitas), pp.266-77

[14] David R Spencer, *The Yellow Journalism: The Press and America's Emergence as a World Power* (Northwestern University Press, 2007).

This bold move, which involved contracting designers and photographers to work in their own printing shop, stemmed from the editors' recognition that the updates and simplistic maps they had been printing up to that point were largely unsatisfying to an audience who were not familiar with the regions and cities of Spain.[15] Just as the development of telegraph technology facilitated 'yellow journalism' in New York during the 1890s,[16] *La Prensa* exploited advances in the printing press to create a sense of greater immediacy amongst Colombian audiences. The move was also an attempt to surpass other Colombian newspapers publishing information from Spain; when *La Prensa* announced its plans on 22 September 1936 it informed readers that the feat was something that 'no other Colombian daily' could do.[17] Although this was a slight exaggeration, that *La Prensa* was the fifth largest publication in Colombia no doubt meant it was better equipped to set up and pay for the necessary technology to produce an intricate Spanish map than other regional newspapers.



La Prensa, 25-09-1936, p.7. *La Prensa*, 24-09-1936, p.7.

[15] *La Prensa*, 22-09-1936, p.1

[16] Craig Carey, "Breaking the News: Telegraphy and Yellow Journalism in the Spanish-American War," *American Periodicals* 26, 2 (2016).

[17] *La Prensa*, 22-09-1936, p.1

The following day, *La Prensa* published another notice which claimed that the chart would be 'the most complete published in Colombia to date' and so would allow readers 'to follow the day-to-day operations of the unrelenting struggle'. The newspaper also revealed that the map, whose first instalment would be released on 24 September, comprised two halves published on consecutive days with the recommendation that individuals 'carefully' join them and hang the completed version on their wall so that they could mark out the daily movements of the warring armies published in *La Prensa*'s foreign news section.[18] In doing so, *La Prensa* encouraged the public to physically manipulate Spanish events in ways that paralleled political groups' ideological appropriation of the conflict. Moreover, the newspaper's emphasis on the innovative and unique nature of its action suggests that the Colombian press competed not only over the meaning of the Spanish conflict but also about who reported its events best. As part of this competition, publications were prepared to expend significant amounts of money in order to attract a Colombian public anxious to find out more about Spain. Yet they were motivated by more than just an altruistic desire to satisfy their readerships and the pride of outdoing their rivals. *La Prensa*'s decision to publish the map in two separate editions and advise readers to use it alongside future updates printed in the newspaper represented a deliberate tactic to sell more copies. Colombian newspapers thus capitalised on the general public's obsession with Spanish events for their own commercial gain.

Confrontations

As newspaper owners had presumably intended, extensive and increasingly personalised coverage of the Spanish Civil War served to further attract broader society into the public debate. These discussions became so intense that, for certain Colombians, the rhetorical battles over the significance of the Spanish conflict became a tangible part of their everyday struggles. The most extreme example of this was when Horacio Cruz Lozano, a communist from Tulúa, Valle del Cauca, allegedly died of suicide in November 1936 after hearing false reports that the rebels had taken Madrid. Commenting on the news, *El Espectador*'s daily news commentator recognised the press's role in the incident by referring to Cruz as 'the first victim of publishing agencies' in the country.[19] Further clashes between local individuals or groups demonstrated how the Spanish war manifested itself physically in the lives of everyday Colombians.

One of the more shocking examples because of the individuals involved concerned two women who were discussing the recently reported death of Falangist leader José Primo de Rivera in November 1936. Maruja Pinzón expressed her satisfaction at the news, but Josefina de Báez countered that she hoped the rebels would avenge his death when they entered Madrid and Barcelona. Enraged by her companion's response, Pinzón smashed a bottle into Báez's face. The case was taken to court and both women received criminal convictions. This incident exemplifies how women were not ignorant about the war, and in fact took an active

[18] *La Prensa*, 23-09-1936, p.1
[19] *El Espectador*, 10-11-1936, p.4

and personal interest in its development, despite being largely excluded from public commentary and deemed unsuitable when it came to participating in the fight. The journalist who covered the story even admitted that 'Spain is still a topic of great debate, not only between men but also between passionate and fiery women.'[20] His choice of adjectives, so far from the 'grace, tenderness, frailty and mercy' that we saw Armando Solano ascribe to the 'Latin woman' in chapter two, indicates his view on women who discussed current affairs.

The many screenings of newsreels from and films about the Spanish Civil War provided ample opportunity for similar clashes to occur. Both belligerents invested significant amounts in producing films that reproduced their version of the conflict whilst disparaging their enemy.[21] Further, the recent birth of cinema newsreels meant that international film agencies produced various short- and long-form documentaries about Spain.[22] Given the intense public interest in the war, private companies and individuals rushed to bring some of these films to Colombian audiences. In late 1936, for instance, *Teatro Colombia* brought the French film 'La tragedia española' to theatres across the country. The production, which ran for over an hour, showed reels from the conflict narrated in Spanish. A journalist at *La Prensa*, who had been invited to a special screening in Barranquilla, wrote that Colombian audiences had previously only seen documentary films that depicted short scenes, suggesting that newsreels from Spain revolutionised cinemagoing in Colombia. However, attesting to the potential for these screenings to themselves become sites for conflict, he also confirmed that police had to attend the Barranquilla event to 'prevent riots'.[23] This move no doubt responded to the fact that, when the same film was shown at Popayán's municipal theatre a few days before, local supporters of the Spanish Republic had attacked other viewers who cheered and applauded Franco when he appeared on the screen. The police had to intervene before it got out of control.[24]

As the previous chapter showed, local celebrations and demonstrations further paved the way for altercations amongst the Colombian public. However, one incident in particular stands out for highlighting the transnational dimension of these local conflicts. We have seen how two women from Republican Spain became centres of controversy in Colombia, but they were not the only individuals who travelled from Spain during the civil war. In September 1937, Spanish poet Ginés de Albareda arrived in Barranquilla. Unlike Xirgú and Séculi, who had refused to discuss the conflict, Albareda came as an unofficial Francoist envoy to spread pro-Nationalist propaganda. He therefore became a significant figure for many right-wing sectors of society who viewed him as an embodiment of the close links between Colombian conservativism and traditional Spain. In turn, the envoy's presence provoked physical confrontations amongst the general public that in many ways mirrored the Spanish struggle whilst relating largely to domestic concerns.

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[20] 'Dos mujeres riñeron anoche, por asuntos de la Madre España', *El Tiempo*, 20-11-1936

[21] Magí Crusells, *La Guerra Civil Espanola: Cine Y Propaganda* (Ariel, 2000).

[22] Alejandro Pizarro Quintero, *Historia de la propaganda: Notas para un estudio de la propaganda política y de guerra* (Eudema, 1990). pp.378-82

[23] 'La tragedia española', *La Prensa*, 06-11-1936

[24] 'Por la revolución de España hubo choque en el Teatro Municipal', *El Tiempo*, 06-11-1936

Albareda was from Zaragoza and had, according to his own testimony, spent time in both Republican and Nationalist Spain prior to his journey. He came to Colombia reportedly as a special delegate of Franco's press and propaganda board during a wider tour of central American countries.[25] Before he had even set foot in the country the Chamber of Representatives passed a motion to declare the envoy 'persona non grata' since he was representing a regime not recognised by the national government.[26] Indeed, in the days preceding Albareda's arrival, the López administration was considering the Uruguayan government's request that it accord belligerent rights to the Spanish Nationalists. In his response, sent on 10 September, Foreign Minister Gabriel Turbay declared that Colombia could not 'exonerate itself from its obligations and responsibilities towards the legitimate Government with which it has relations' by recognising 'a movement' that had still not established itself in power.[27]

Amidst this atmosphere of excitement and apprehension, Albareda disembarked in Puerto Colombia on 9 September. Men and women from right-wing sectors of the Spanish colony and wider Barranquilla society were waiting for him at the port and accompanied him to the centre.[28] Local workers, in contrast, organised a demonstration in Plaza Bolívar to protest against the presence of a Francoist representative in their city. To them, it seemed like leftist fears that right-wing support for the Spanish Nationalists would pave the way for a fascist invasion of Colombia were being realised. The strength of their objections made it difficult for Albareda's hosts to find a venue for the series of conferences he would hold to promote the Nationalist cause for fear that the premises would be subjected to violent attacks.[29] Further, after hearing news that the envoy was planning to travel to Bogotá, a group of students organised a demonstration for 19 September that would march across the city centre to La Sabana station with the aim of blocking Albareda's entry to the capital.[30]

These protests seemingly discouraged the envoy from travelling as Barranquilla's Conservative press announced that he would be holding his first conference at the city's *Jardin Aguila* building on 24 September. Days before the event, and confirming earlier fears, individuals allegedly sent threats to the venue sparking *La Prensa*'s daily news columnist to declare 'if foreigners who do not share Mr Albareda's ideas are allowed to speak and write... there is no justification for any restriction on the Spanish gentleman'. He added that 'it would not square with [the government's] democratism if they were to obstruct freedom of speech'. Tensions around the presence of a Francoist representative in the country thereby became a way to debate the meaning and application of Colombian democracy. To combat criticisms that Albareda was interfering in domestic politics, the journalist stressed that the envoy would limit his discussion to the current situation in Spain. However, he did explain that the ongoing

[25] 'De Cartagena', *El Siglo*, 02-09-1937
[26] *El Diario*, 13-09-1937, p.5
[27] República de Colombia, *Memoria del Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores al Congreso* (Imprenta Nacional, 1938). pp.325-6
[28] *El Figaro*, 11-09-1937, p.1
[29] Vice-Consul in Barraquilla to Climent, 11-09-1937. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3115
[30] *El Siglo*, 16-09-1937, p.1

polemic meant Albareda had to obtain permission for the event from the local authorities and these in turn offered security guarantees to the envoy and his followers.[31] The Liberal government regularly offered similar 'guarantees' to Conservative voters during election periods, illustrating how Albareda's conference became entangled in Colombian politics even as his promoters claimed otherwise.

On the evening of the event, Conservative commentators reported that several thousand attendees came to hear Albareda speak. They all highlighted the presence of numerous 'ladies' further exemplifying how rightist Colombians saw women's involvement as a way to legitimise their cause. However, in this case it also served to make what happened next seem even more shocking. During the opening speech to introduce Albareda, a small group of protesters broke into the venue and interrupted the speaker with shouts of 'down with General Franco' and 'long live President Azaña'. They were promptly ejected but regrouped with a reported two hundred other demonstrators who were protesting outside the building. The sizeable group began to throw stones at the *Jardin Aguila* before breaking back into the hall and attacking the audience. During the ensuing struggle, four individuals were injured: three audience members who were hit by stones as well as 25-year-old worker Jesús Morales who had been amongst the protestors. The latter had to be taken to hospital after receiving a punch to the chest. As a result of the commotion, police arrested five demonstrators, including Ascensión Oquendo who *La Prensa* described as a 'female comrade' and whose presence seemingly confirmed to Conservative observers that 'communists' were behind the protest.[32]

In addition to provoking an altercation between members of Barranquilla's general public, Albareda's conference became an issue of national importance after Morales died from his injuries. The incident sparked a prolonged debate in the Chamber, with several representatives calling for the envoy's expulsion and the interior minister being summoned to clarify the government's response. On 30 September, Lleras explained that he could only force Albareda to leave Colombia if he was proven to have violated Colombian law. However, the government currently viewed him as a common foreigner given that Colombia did not recognise Nationalist Spain, and so no precipitatory action could be taken.[33] In this way, the same context that drove representatives to declare Albareda unwelcome also enabled him to freely promote Spanish Nationalism in the country. The laws in question were those that regulated the activities of foreigners in Colombia and prohibited them from intervening in national politics. This included article 5 of the 1936 Constitutional Reform Act which guaranteed foreigners the same civil rights and guarantees as Colombians except for reasons of public order.[34]

In response, various leftist representatives presented a motion to protest the murder of Jesús Morales by 'the fascist fist' (the individual who had delivered the fatal blow was reportedly from Italy) and requested that the government impede Albareda from continuing

[31] *La Prensa*, 24-09-1937, p.4
[32] *La Prensa*, 25-09-1937, p.1
[33] *El Tiempo*, 01-10-1937, p.7
[34] *Diario Oficial*. Año LXXII. 22-08-1936, p.5.

to defend an unwelcome cause. The association of Francoism with fascism and the assertion that such ideologies were alien in Colombia clearly demonstrated left-wing views on the anti-democratic nature of the Nationalist cause. The motion was passed by 49 votes to 8, but several moderate representatives requested its revocation. One of these, José Miguel Arango, expressed his belief that Albareda was only adhering to the sacred liberal principle of freedom of speech. He also declared that, whilst the envoy's conferences were not inherently antidemocratic, any attempts to curtail his right to hold them were.[35] The following day, the Chamber passed motion 271 which conveyed its sorrow at Morales's violent death but no longer attributed any blame, instead leaving this up to the Executive who it hoped would 'apply the corresponding sanctions' if it discovered any 'violation of legal and constitutional laws'.[36] The congressional debate surrounding Albareda's conference once again revealed the divide between leftists and moderate Liberals over the meaning of democracy and liberalism, as well as how the example of Spain contributed to these debates.

As a result of the Barranquilla incident, the Colombian government was forced to open an investigation and defend its stance on dangerous foreigners, but Albareda never faced any political repercussions although the popular protest against his presence seemingly forced him to abandon the country in October. The next chapter will show how his return in January 1938 helped coordinate initiatives to raise funds for the Spanish Nationalists and establish the Colombian arm of the *Falange Española* (the political party that Franco established in April 1937). For now, though, Albareda's September 1937 conference illustrates how tensions caused by the Spanish Civil War led to conflicts amongst the Colombian public and even the death of some of those involved. It illuminates the tangible and serious way in which Colombians internalised and personalised Spanish events; how they took ownership of them and, at least in some cases, paid the costs of doing so. Finally, it reveals the transnational dimension of this process: as well as news reports and ideas, individuals who came from Spain became embroiled in conflicts that connected local, national and international developments.

"De Colombia también ha habido héroes"

Although Spaniards who came to Colombia during the late 1930s were far more likely to cause local conflicts, the actions of various Colombians who participated in events on the peninsula also found echo at home. The involvement of foreigners in the Spanish Civil War is undoubtedly one of the more globally renowned aspects of the conflict, most notably the International Brigades which were volunteer military units coordinated by the Comintern to assist the Republican government. From the Hispanophone Atlantic, Cuba sent by far the largest contingent of volunteers, largely because of the revolutionary continuity from the country's own domestic struggle against presidents Machado and Batista.[37] Argentinians,

[35] Colombia, *Anales de la Cámara. 4a Trimestre*. p.742-4
[36] Colombia, *Anales de la Cámara. 4a Trimestre*. p.775
[37] Lambe, *No Barrier Can Contain It: Cuban Antifascism and the Spanish Civil War*.

Mexicans, Costa Ricans, Chileans, Puerto Ricans and Bolivians also took up arms for the Spanish Republic.

Far less attention has been paid to the various volunteers who joined the Spanish Nationalists, largely given the significant official military support that Hitler and Mussolini offered to Franco. However, Judith Keene found that approximately 1,000 international volunteers from Britain, Ireland, France, Russia and Romania went to fight for the Nationalist cause.[38] Although Colombia has largely been left out of these accounts of foreign volunteers, there were Colombians who both fought for and offered their services to both of the Spanish belligerents. These individuals brought the reality of Spain's war to a Colombian audience. Their decision to join one or other of the warring factions reflected their own ideological positions and their experiences across the Atlantic confirmed to Colombian observers the legitimacy of either cause.

There are well-documented accounts of at least seven Colombians who lent their support to the Nationalist troops in Spain. The most famous of these was Luis Crespo Guzmán. He was from a prestigious Cali family and was the brother of local Conservative leader Primitivo. Crespo, who had left Colombia after completing his studies at the University of Popayán, enlisted in the Spanish Foreign Legion in 1921.[39] He fought in the Moroccan wars during which he was awarded three military crosses and rose to the rank of captain, the highest promotion available for non-Spaniards.[40] In July 1936 he formed part of the Madrid column, tasked with marching from Andalucía to the capital, before being sent to assist Mola's advance on Irún. During an attack on a Republican position at San Marcial, he received a gunshot wound to the thigh and was rushed to hospital in Pamplona. The wound became gangrenous, and Crespo died on 1 December 1936.[41]

Crespo became a symbol for Conservatives who heralded him as an example of Colombian valour. All the stories of his military exploits emphasised his bravery and the esteem that Spanish officers, including Mola and Franco, apparently held him in. Even the report of his death was shrouded in jingoistic exaggeration. Almost every right-wing Colombian newspaper claimed that Crespo died after refusing an operation, implying that he would rather die than not be able to continue his military career. Yet a letter from Crespo's Spanish wife to his relatives in Colombia revealed how she managed to convince him to have his leg amputated but that the operation could not prevent his ultimate death.[42]

More significantly, however, Crespo became an embodiment of the affinity between the Spanish and Colombian Right. In a eulogy to the soldier after the news that he had been injured, Conservative journalist José Domingo Rojas described him as an 'illustrious Colombian, son of Popayán and Spanish nobleman'. This duality was expressed physically in terms of the 'Spanish blood' running through his veins (presumably referring to his Spanish

[38] Judith Keene, *Fighting For Franco: International Volunteers in Nationalist Spain during the Spanish Civil War* (Continuum International, 2007).
[39] *Diario del Pacífico*, 12-11-1936, p.5
[40] *El Siglo*, 18-01-1937, p.5
[41] *El Siglo*, 18-01-1937, p.5
[42] 'Un mensaje de la esposa del Capitán Luis Crespo', *El Hogar,* January 1937

lineage), as well as spiritually in the way that Crespo 'loves and serves Spain' whilst simultaneously 'conserving and cultivating his love for Colombia.'[43]

The numerous funeral services held for the soldier throughout Colombia reflected this shared heritage. During the service at Buga's Santa Barbara church, the coffin meant to symbolise the fallen hero (Crespo's actual body had been buried in Spain) was adorned with both Colombian and Spanish flags.[44] By depicting Crespo as the physical link between Colombia and Spain, Conservatives explicitly connected the Nationalist cause for which he was fighting in Spain with what they saw as their own struggle against anti-Catholic forces at home. Two months after Crespo's death, delegates at the National Conservative Convention unanimously passed a motion paying homage to the 'Colombian hero' who 'fell gloriously in defence of the cause of Christian civilisation whose postulates constitute the fundamental base of the community that in Colombia fights and will fight against the impulse of barbarity.'[45]

Unlike Crespo who was a trained soldier, and in ways that were reflective of international trends, Colombians who fought alongside Republican troops in Spain were mostly volunteers with little to no previous military experience. In December 1938, the new Spanish Minister Rafael de Ureña reported to the Colombian government that less than ten Colombian volunteers were enrolled in the Republican army.[46] One of these, Mario Sorzano Jiménez, was already in Spain studying medicine in Madrid when the war broke out. He turned down the opportunity to return to Colombia, instead enlisting with the Republican army where he served six months as a private in the assault guard before being promoted to lieutenant.[47]

Back home, more Colombians expressed a desire to fight for the Spanish Republic in defence of a cause that they also felt was their own but ultimately could not travel to Spain due to a lack of means. In late July 1936, for example, Bertulfo Arenas and Bernardo Velasquez wrote to then Spanish Minister, Manuel del Moral Aloe, asking him to send them to Spain to join the Republican army and 'defend the Nation'. Moral thanked them for their offer but explained that the Spanish government did not have the resources to organise transport for foreign volunteers.[48] The minister reported later that month that he had received 'numerous requests' from Colombians 'who come to ask me to pay for their journey to Spain so that they can fight for our country'. This, he stated, was their 'distinct way of manifesting their devotion to Spain'.[49]

Certainly, the archives of the Spanish Legation in Bogotá show that, between July 1936 and May 1938, at least sixteen individuals from across Colombia offered their services as soldiers, pilots, sailors, engineers, signallers and dentists. Many of these had previous military experience, several during the Leticia conflict, but some were regular civilians drawn by their sense of connection to Spanish events. Horacio Carajol from Medellín wrote in May 1938 that

[43] *Diario del Pacífico*, 12-11-1936, p.5
[44] 'De Buga', *El Siglo*, 04-02-1937
[45] 'La Convención Rindió Honor a Luis Crespo G', *El Siglo*, 01-02-1937
[46] Letter to Roberto García Peña, 29-12-1938. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3202
[47] *Estampa*, 20-05-1939, p.10
[48] Moral to Arenas and Velasquez, 27-07-1936. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3108/0002
[49] Letter to MEE, 08-08-1936. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3108

he believed 'events over there have transcendental importance for us Latin Americans' and that his 'growing interest in the fate of the Spanish Republic has led me to conclude that it is my duty to help defend the Spanish democracy by offering my forces to the Republican government'. Although he was not a member of Colombia's armed forces, he felt that his PCC affiliation was 'proof of my activism in support of the revolutionary and democratic cause.' Further, Carajol even offered to pay for his own trip to Spain, refuting the idea that volunteers were merely looking for a paid transfer across the Atlantic. The number and sentiment of these offers suggests that the reduced number of Colombians in the International Brigades came down to logistical factors. As well as the Spanish government's unwillingness to assist in the transport of foreign volunteers, the marginalised nature of the PCC on the domestic and international scale perhaps meant they could not take charge of organising volunteers as they did in other nations.

Transnational solidarity

Colombian individuals who offered or actually took up arms in Spain were engaging in their own acts of transnational solidarity. Many others who did not or could not make such grand gestures still found ways to pledge their allegiance to either of the Spanish belligerents. The philosopher Carol Gould defines transnational solidarity as 'overlapping networks of relations between individuals or groups and distantly situated others... in which the former aim to support the latter through actions to eliminate oppression or reduce suffering.'[50] Whilst we have certainly seen how pro-Republican Colombians justified their support for the Spanish government in part because it was victim to fascist oppression, Gould's is a rather restrictive view of solidarity that reflects the intense scholarly attention on the transnational Left during the twentieth century.[51]

To address this bias, historians of the Cold War are increasingly examining the ways in which right-wing groups across the world collaborated in what Kyle Burke has called 'a global anticommunist brotherhood'.[52] This 'anticommunist international' mobilised non-state individuals in a transnational campaign to liberate all people from potential totalitarian rule.[53] Similarly, in 1930s Colombia, rightists offered their physical and rhetorical support to the Spanish Nationalists who were, in their view, combatting the repressive and violent nature of

[50] Carol Gould, "Solidarity Between the National and the Transnational," in: Helle Krunke, Hanne Petersen, and Ian Manners, eds., *Transnational Solidarity: Concept, Challenges and Opportunities* (Cambridge University Press, 2020). p.23

[51] For broad overviews: Anna Grimaldi and Samira Marty, eds., "Special Issue on Solidarity Politics: the reactivation of European-Latin American solidarities", *Alternautas* 11, 1 (2024); Jessica Stites Mor, ed., *Human Rights and Transnational Solidarity in Cold War Latin America* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2013).

[52] Kyle Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right: Anticommunist Internationalism and Paramilitary Warfare in the Cold War* (University of North Carolina Press, 2018). p.3

[53] Other Latin American examples include: Aaron Coy Moulton, "Counterrevolutionary Friends: Caribbean Basin Dictators and Guatemalan Exiles against the Guatemalan Revolution, 1945–50," *The Americas* 76, no. 1 (2019); Aaron T. Bell, "A Matter of Western Civilisation: Transnational Support for the Salvadoran Counterrevolution, 1979–1982," *Cold War History* 15, no. 4 (2015).

the Popular Front government. Both sides therefore engaged in acts of transnational solidarity with Spain that, whilst couched in internationalist language, took place in local settings and were often aimed at national developments. This situates Colombia within a larger history of similar activism across Latin America but illustrates how such actions pre-dated and offered foundations for Cold War developments later in the century.

Stemming from the belief that Spain's internal strife was inextricable from national and local concerns, various Colombians undertook to propagandise on behalf of the two Spanish belligerents. In one such instance, the *Antena* Bookshop in Bogotá printed tens of thousands of leaflets containing the 'marvellous speech' given by Azaña on 21 January 1937 at the Valencian Town Hall. This was aimed at 'belying the biased [*intencionada*] news that the foreign agencies write daily',[54] demonstrating that the non-elite channels for circulating news about the Spanish war were often set up in direct opposition to the national press which reprinted stories from international press agencies.

Conservatives, too, relied on non-press sources to spread their views on the Spanish Civil War. In particular, they used radio broadcasts to reach a wider audience and escape the confines of newspaper reporting. By mid-1938, multiple local radio stations had a weekly 'Spanish Hour' in which they gave voice to local representatives of the *Falange Española* (tied to the Franco regime) and their Colombian supporters. These included Cartagena Radio and Fuentes Radio on the coast, and Claridad Radio in Medellín.[55] The broadcasts would invariably include some combination of Spanish, Falangist and Colombian content and, much like the images and maps discussed in the previous section, their nonwritten format made them more accessible to a larger audience thus spreading the message of Colombian-Spanish kinship across the country.

Several local organisations also sent messages of solidarity to Spain. The first recorded greeting came from the Trade Union Congress in Medellín, held only two weeks after civil war erupted in Spain, whose delegates expressed 'the unanimous protest of the Colombian people' against the military 'uprising [that] constitutes an imminent danger for workers' victories'.[56] More messages poured in for the duration of the conflict from official bodies, workers groups, ideological committees, Masonic lodges and educational centres who expressed their support, or more often fraternity, with Republican Spain in its battle against (international) fascism.

As the message from delegates in Medellín indicated, these were often tied implicitly or explicitly to national concerns. For example, during a workers' assembly in Socorro, Santander to commemorate the 1928 banana workers massacre, attendees passed a resolution to 'On this date of mourning for the Colombian proletariat, put on record their solidarity with their Spanish brothers who are desperately fighting against the fascist and monarchist forces who want to impose their dominance by way of destruction and force against democracy and

[54] G Restrepo to Climent, 19-04-1937. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3114

[55] 'Los nacionalistas celebraran con solemnidad el 2o aniversario de la guerra civil española', *El Figaro*, 16-07-1938; *El Colombiano*, 16-07-1938, p.5

[56] Moral to Álvarez del Vayo, 12-08-1936. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3108/0002

liberty'.[57] In this way, the workers paralleled their own tragic history with that of the Spanish people thereby evoking the sense of a shared struggle against oppression.

Given that there was no official Francoist representative in Colombia during the civil war, there is much less documentary evidence for similar messages of support sent to the Spanish Nationalists. However, a few scattered press references suggest that right-wing members of the public did attempt to forward proof of their spiritual solidarity to Spain. In September 1936, fifty-three male students in Bogotá sent a letter to Franco expressing their enthusiasm for his victory because his cause 'corresponds to Spain's glorious traditions... [and] represents the permanent interest of humanity.'[58] In doing so, they espoused the right-wing notion that, by tackling communism in Spain, Franco was also acting on behalf of anti-communist forces across the globe including Colombia. Two months later, the Liberal press delighted in informing readers that a letter sent by a group of Catholics in Medellín congratulating Franco for his campaign against Azaña was returned with the message 'unknown recipient'.[59]

Perhaps the most intriguing way in which Colombians manifested their adherence to either of the Spanish causes was through poetry. Though not great works of literature, these poems both further and contest political narratives about the value of the two warring factions, showing how propagandists reproduced domestic discourses when attempting to drum up support for Spain. Baltasar Uribe Isaza from Medellín penned one such tribute to Nationalist Spain under the title 'Arriba España'. The poem opens with the image of farmers telling their cattle 'amidst/flourishing fields' that they are going to war before making the sign of the cross 'with weathered and white hands'. One of the men tells his horses that his 'daughters who are staying will see to your work' and that the steed 'will know of my return when the old flags/flutter like a wing'. The following eight stanzas evoke visions of rural life across the whole of Spain – from 'The coasts of Galicia' to 'the orangeries of Granada' – where similar men are going to fight for the Nationalists before concluding:

Mientras suenen roncos cantos de victoria	Amidst raucous songs of victory
por todos los muertos del épico asalto	for all the fallen in the epic assault
recemos… Y aquellos que vuelven en gloria	we pray… And those who return in glory
pasen entre un bosque de brazos en alto.	pass through a forest of raised arms. [60]

Through his use of rural imagery, the poet suggests that the Spanish Nationalists are the authentic representation of Spain, and these explicitly light-skinned men are depicted as at one with the country's diverse agricultural landscape. That these rural soldiers are all male – the women, we are told, will stay at home – reflects the traditional family roles promoted by the Spanish right whilst the poet's repeated reference to religious practice reinforces the Nationalists' Catholicism. The final image of victorious soldiers passing through a mass of

[57] Letter to Climent, 06-12-1936. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3194
[58] 'Los Estudiantes Colombianos Y La Rebelión Hispana', *El Siglo*, 05-09-1936
[59] *El Heraldo de Antioquia*, 10-11-1936, p.1
[60] *El Colombiano*, 22-03-1937, p.3

raised arms alludes to the fascistic aspirations of Spain's rightist forces. Uribe thus expressed his support for the Spanish right in terms of the latter's ethnic, religious, traditional and ideological characteristics; the same characteristics that the Conservative party purported to uphold in Colombia.

Some poets took it upon themselves to contest the opposition's narratives about the civil war, illustrating how pro-Spain propaganda was as much about attacking rival political groups as it was about promoting a particular cause. One of the editorial staff at *Heraldo de Antioquia*, Carlos Ramírez Arguelles, offered one such example in his anti-Nationalist poem 'Romances a Fuego Sangre y Cenizas'. It, too, provides a panorama of the Spanish territory 'From the southern coast/to the Cantabrian coast' but instead of lush, fertile fields Ramírez paints a scene of 'pain and agony/blaze and massacre'. Like Uribe, he refers to the women who have been left behind but now they are crying mothers and wailing sisters. The reason for this Dantesque panorama, the poet informs us, is that 'there are moors [sic.] everywhere... so many and so ferocious/that wherever they go they leave/the ground stained red'. Then, in the second stanza, Ramírez transports us back to the battlefields of the Spanish Reconquest where we encounter:

grandes hombres de Castilla,	great men of Castilla,
comendadores y duques,	commanders and dukes,
señores de sangre limpia	men of pure blood
que no trataron con moros	who never dealt with moors
sino en el campo de lidia.	except on the battlefield.

The poem ends with an image of two men – one a knight and the other his page – passing through the Vizcayan coast and contemplating the scenes of destruction before them, 'one crying in sorrow/and the other crying to see him.'[61] This reference to Don Quijote and Sancho can be seen as a nod to Spain's knightly tradition that the Spanish Nationalists claimed to be defending. Ramírez thereby uses the poem to destroy one-by-one the rhetorical bases of the Nationalist cause. The women that rightist troops are supposedly fighting for are imagined as forlorn and devastated figures and the apparently authentic Spanish soldiers are nothing more than Moroccan legionaries. Nationalists' use of colonial troops belies the contention that they are the true inheritors of Spain's Catholic past because the *reconquistadores* fought against Moroccan forces, not with them. Equally, they cannot be the representatives of Spain's cultural greatness because Don Quijote himself cries to see the destruction they have wrought. As these claims about the Nationalist troops were those articulated and disseminated by Colombian rightists – albeit in conversation with other international advocates for Nationalist Spain – Ramírez's poem can be read as an attempt to discredit these domestic supporters rather than a direct attack on Spain.

[61] 'Romances a Fuego Sangre y Cenizas', *El Heraldo de Antioquia*, 05-11-1936

These poets – along with the other Colombian instigators of transnational solidarity efforts discussed so far – were all male and mostly white or *mestizo*. This was partly a result of the exclusionary nature of 1930s Colombian society discussed in chapter two. Yet even those sectors of society that were typically marginalised in public debate showed their solidarity with Spain. In 1938, Cauca's Indigenous Federation approved a motion to send 'a fervent greeting and its support to the great cause of the heroic Spanish people that for the last two years has been undertaking an armed struggle in defence of democracy and for the freedom and independence of their fatherland against the bloody and savage invasion of German and Italian fascism'.[62] The Buenavista and Campoalegre Indigenous League raised 5.76 pesos collected by Indigenous communities which 'should serve as a lesson for all the workers who, being able to effectively help, do not do so, whilst the Indigenous peoples who are oppressed and subdued by a feudal regime help as much as they can their brothers who are fighting for the liberation of all the workers of the world.'[63] The PCC was a key proponent of Indigenous organisation in the early twentieth century and often imported books from Republican Spain to use in their study centres.[64] This perhaps explains why Indigenous groups in Colombia felt able to parallel their own struggle to that of Republican soldiers. The league's statement also shows them using their tangible support for the Spanish Republic as proof of their moral superiority over their perceived domestic rivals, in this case Colombian workers. In the context of the Liberal's government exaltation of the urban proletariat, this may have been a veiled attempted to stake their own place in 1930s Colombian society.

Women also participated in public performances of solidarity in ways that both challenged and conformed to discourses around Colombian femininity. As in other Latin American countries, left-wing Colombian women's solidarity with the Spanish Republic was also a means for them to advance their own rights which indicated they were not the meek and passive subjects that political leaders wanted them to be.[65] During September 1937, for example, women strikers from *La Garantia* textile factory in Cali used Republican slogans on their picket lines.[66] The action, during which two thousand workers occupied the factory in protest against low wages and poor working conditions, led to other (male) workers joining the action and threatening the city with a general strike.

Although the reporting did not explain why the women used Republican slogans on their picket lines, three separate pieces in the PCC newspaper *Tierra* by self-proclaimed working women provide some insight. Fanny Garzón del Río, Elvira Medina and Marta Sorel all praised Dolores Ibárruri for her heroism in Spain and heralded her as example for working women

[62] José Gonzalo Sánchez to Ureña, 08-08-1938, AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3110
[63] *Boletín Pro-Defensa República Española*, 31-05-1937, p.3
[64] Roberto Pineda Camacho, "Cuando los indios se vuelven comunistas (1910-1950)," in Sierra Mejía, ed., *República Liberal*. Roberto Pineda Camacho, "Antonio García y el indigenismo en Colombia," *Noticias Antropológicas* 73 (1982). p.1
[65] Sandra McGee Deutsch, "The New School Lecture "An Army of Women": Communist-Linked Solidarity Movements, Maternalism, and Political Consciousness in 1930s and 1940s Argentina," *The Americas* 75, 1 (2018).
[66] *El Relator*, 16-09-1937, p.1

across the world and in Colombia.[67] Using the Spanish Civil War as a platform and inspiration, women engaged in political action even whilst they were excluded from formal politics. As a result of the strike, local newspaper *La Voz Católica* repeatedly claimed that Colombia was becoming more and more like Spain.[68] Spain thus became the lens through which women factory workers in Cali viewed their own struggle for better conditions, whilst for other observers it presented an ominous preview of what could happen in Colombia if such action were allowed to continue.

Photo of female strikes outside the main doors of *La Garantia* factory in Cali. *El Relator*, 16-09-1937, front page.

[67] 'Pasionaria', 19-12-1936; 'Miliciana roja', 07-11-1936; 'Homenaje a Dolores Ibárruri', 19-12-1936, all in *Tierra*
[68] For example: 19-09-1937, p.1; 03-10-1937, p.1, all in *La Voz Católica*

A year later, the city of Bucaramanga celebrated the second anniversary of the civil war at the José Antonio Galán Centre. The room was decorated with antifascist posters as well as portraits of la Pasionaria and other notable leftists. Three Colombian women read out Spanish poems before the 'militiawoman of the party' was chosen. More than twenty women were nominated and the top four won 1,402, 983, 706 and 590 votes respectively, illustrating the popularity of the event. [69] The competition seems to have been a modified version of the Colombian '*reina*' tradition where one woman would be chosen as the 'queen' of a particular festival in celebration of her beauty, grace and other conventionally feminine characteristics. The 'militiawoman of the party' revealed how the Colombian public celebrated the same women soldiers who had been vilified in the national press, albeit in a way that furthered the gendered nature of Colombian society. It also exemplifies how Colombians transposed events from Spain onto domestic realities.

Right-wing women were not immune to performative acts of solidarity but ensured that their pro-Nationalist initiatives adhered to the traditional gender roles laid out by Church doctrine and Conservative ideology. In September 1936, hundreds of women in Bogotá signed an open letter to protest against the 'current evils that affect our *Madre Patria*… committed by Godless and lawless men'. The women recognised that their voice was 'weak' and quoted the words of the Pope to substantiate their complaint. In doing so, they conformed their protest to Conservative and Catholic notions of meek and religious women. They invoked their gender to condemn 'the horrendous crimes', implying that their status as women made them more sensitive to criminality.[70] However, their supposed passivity belied the political nature of such an act. By attributing the horrors in Spain to 'Godless men', the women upheld right-wing narratives of the civil war which made clear that their protest was directed against the Republican government. As rightist discourse also drew parallels between that government and the López regime which itself was refusing to condemn the actions of the Spanish Popular Front, the women's protest can also be seen as a direct attack on their own Liberal administration. In this sense, right-wing women used Spanish events to attack Colombian liberalism even as they purported to defend traditional gender norms that limited them to the domestic sphere.

Conclusion

The Spanish Civil War provides insight into the variety of public spheres in early twentieth-century Colombia as well as how these operated. Both Liberals and Conservatives maintained exclusionary public spheres but, whilst the former's apathetic stance opened up space for dissenting voices to challenge their official narrative on Spain, Conservative and religious leaders' belligerency purposefully targeted the Colombian public so as to encourage broader participation in their ideological campaigns. All these groups were nevertheless unable to

[69] *Tierra*, 06-08-1938, p.4
[70] 'Protestas de las damas colombianas', *El Siglo*, 09-10-1936

maintain effective control over public debate and thus could not account for the widespread interest that they had either unwittingly facilitated or actively encouraged.

Members of wider Colombian society fought, often physically, for their respective cause in what they saw as the Colombian rear-guard and expressed and performed their solidarity in Colombian towns and cities. Local groups and individuals therefore converted political debate over Spain at the national and global level into instances of physical confrontation in local contexts, often in a way that was explicitly linked to domestic politics or parochial disputes. Many of these individuals belonged to sectors of society that were explicitly excluded from the public sphere but, at the local level, participated actively in public discussion of events from Spain. In this way, the globalising discourses from Spain proved a more effective resource for marginalised groups to assert their position in Colombia than the restrictive definitions of citizenship coming from their own government. Accordingly, it is only by integrating the local, national and global contexts that we are able to fully appreciate the multiple ways in which Colombians understood their relationship to the state and place in wider society.

The exchanges between Colombia and Spain were not unidirectional; both left- and right-wing Colombians maintained correspondence with their Spanish counterparts and exploited the opportunity that the war presented to invite these individuals or their ideas across the Atlantic to further their own domestic programmes. In an environment of heightened interest in and association with Spain, whether intentional or not, these characters became the focal point for many of the debates discussed in previous chapters. As their mere presence in the country was interpreted through the lens of the Spanish Civil War, they provoked multiple polemics in Colombia which heightened the country's connection to Spain and furthered the sense that its population was engaged in global movements of universal significance.

It is clear from this examination of public responses to the Spanish Civil War that we need to apply multiple, overlapping scales of analysis to the study of 1930s Colombian history. Though in many instances local expressions of support for Republican or Nationalist Spain took place in national settings and responded to domestic issues, the groups and individuals responsible believed that they were furthering universal causes of workers' rights, anti-fascism and anti-communism or democracy and dictatorship. As part of this effort, they appropriated discourses, responded to ideas and interacted with individuals from Spain and other countries. The wider Colombian public was therefore shaped by transnational events at the same time as they adapted these events to their local contexts. The next chapter will explore the ways in which these expressions of transnational solidarity transformed into tangible initiatives in support of the two warring factions in Spain.

Chapter 5 – Colombia's aid Spain movement and the arrival of President Santos

As the Spanish Civil War entered its second year, the Nationalists were making increasing incursions into government-held territory whilst small Republican victories proved short-lived. The approaching winter provoked concerns amongst international civil society about how the besieged Spanish population would weather the harsh conditions. Like elsewhere in Latin America, the Colombian aid campaign began as Spanish-led initiatives to support their friends and family, real or imagined, in Spain. The complex interplay of global interest in the Spanish conflict and the practical implications of Colombian legislation meant that these were increasingly framed as humanitarian initiatives that had no impact on national politics. By 1938, however, when no end to the civil war was in sight and interest in Spanish events had spread amongst diverse sectors of Colombian society, local individuals and groups began to establish their own aid campaigns which were intrinsically linked to domestic affairs.

In total, grassroots humanitarian activity within Colombia collected at least 30,400 Colombian pesos (approximately USD$375,000 today) between May 1937 and February 1939. Of this, 52 per cent was destined for Republican Spain and the remaining 48 per cent went to the Spanish Nationalists. Given that the average Colombian wage in 1936 was 1.50 pesos per day in the public sector and $1.30 in the private sector,[1] and that many of the donations came from the middle and working classes, this is not an insignificant amount even if it pales in comparison to the £1,000,000 raised by the British public or the USA' contribution of $2,356,000.[2] Perhaps a more representative comparison is Cuba's *Asociación de Auxilio al Niño del Pueblo Español*, a charitable organization raising monetary and material aid for Spanish children impacted by the war, which raised more than 18,800 Cuban pesos during nineteen months of operation.[3] As these examples suggest, Colombian fundraising initiatives need to be understood in the context of a global aid Spain campaign. Amidst supposed international neutrality in the Spanish Civil War, partisan groups across the world mobilised in support of the warring factions. Those engaging with aid campaigns in Colombia understood and framed their actions as part of this international drive, and this chapter takes their claims seriously in its attempt to resituate the country in the historiography of the aid Spain movement.

However, fundraising also served purely national purposes. On the one hand, it became a way for many Colombians to formalise their adherence to either of the warring Spanish factions especially, for the liberal public, in light of the government's perceived apathy. On the

[1] Miguel Urrutia and Mauricio Ruiz, "Ciento Setenta Años de Salarios Reales en Colombia," *Ensayos sobre Política Económica* 28, 63 (2010). p.164

[2] Michael Alpert, "Humanitarianism and Politics in the British Response to the Spanish Civil War, 1936-9," *European History Quarterly* 14 (1984). p.437; Eric R. Smith, *American Relief Aid and the Spanish Civil War* (University of Missouri Press, 2013). p.131

[3] Lambe, *No Barrier Can Contain It: Cuban Antifascism and the Spanish Civil War*. p.118

other, humanitarianism also provided means for political groups within Colombia to capitalise on public support for their own domestic purposes. The liberal public concretised the largely verbal support offered by the Colombian governments to Republican Spain by organising their own aid campaigns. Conservative and religious elites, in contrast, facilitated and occasionally became the instigators of the numerous humanitarian initiatives undertaken by the conservative public. The actions of fundraising groups – which were made up of Spaniards as well as Colombians – thus led to both accusations and actual instances of intervention in domestic politics. By offering two perspectives on political organisation that encompassed political parties and formal politics as well as public expressions of activism and mobilisation, this chapter reveals how politics and humanitarianism operated in different spheres and for different purposes. In that sense, it contributes to wider research on the political dimensions of humanitarian action in Spain.[4]

Change was also afoot within Colombia following the inauguration of a new Liberal president in August 1938. Eduardo Santos had been chosen as the party's presidential candidate in mid-1937 and won the May 1938 presidential elections after he ran unopposed. We have seen how Santos led a much more moderate faction of Colombian liberalism, and himself championed a return to the early twentieth-century idea of power-sharing in direct contrast to Alfonso López's Pumarejo's explicit emphasis on partisan politics. Santos's efforts to bring Colombian politics back to the centre and the fact that he, unlike his predecessor, did not actively seek the support of the working class or accept that of the PCC, enabled him to take a more pragmatic approach to the Spanish Civil War. This meant balancing his Republican sympathies with a desire to mollify domestic opposition, and the course of the conflict in Spain also facilitated the new president in this regard. Although Santos did not campaign explicitly on foreign policy, we have seen in previous chapters how he regularly cited events in Spain to criticise political developments within Colombia.

Santos was not completely free of domestic constraints on his Spanish policy, however, as under his rule transnational right-wing groups became emboldened to push for a closer relationship with Nationalist Spain. Indeed, the changing national and international tides enabled the president to pledge 10,000 Colombian pesos to war-torn Spain at the same time as he oversaw his country's recognition of the Franco regime. These twin initiatives also provided opportunities for Santos to pursue a different continental policy than López and so, as we shall see, his position on Spain reflected a broader trend during his administration of carving out a distinctive international position for Colombia. By drawing clear distinctions between the foreign policies of the two Liberal regimes, the research presented here therefore expands upon those texts that have highlighted the difference between the domestic policies of the Liberal administrations of the period.[5]

[4] Dolores Martín-Moruno and et. al., "Feeling humanitarianism during the Spanish Civil War and Republican exile," *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 21, no. 4 (2020).

[5] Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín, *La destrucción de una República* (Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2017); Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia 1875-2002* (Duke University Press, 2006); Pécaut, *Orden y violencia*.

Humanitarian aid

The initial proposals to send assistance to Republican Spain were put in place by Spaniards who established *Comités Pro-Defensa de la República Española*. The first of these appeared in Santa Marta in November 1936 with the aim of 'helping Republican Spain as much as economic capacity allows and counteract[ing] the smear campaign from international fascism'.[6] It initially comprised eight Spaniards who met every Thursday in a room that they had rented in the city. These individuals agreed to contact friends in other Colombian cities and so committees soon appeared in Barranquilla and Cali during December 1936 and January 1937 respectively. Other Spaniards formed similar groups in Cartagena and Ciénaga during late 1937 and early 1938.[7]

Collectively, they organised pro-Republican propaganda in their separate communities and opened up subscriptions to raise funds for supplies that they would send to Spain. Although aid was not officially centralised through the Spanish Legation in Bogotá until late 1938, these groups collaborated to streamline their efforts. The Cali committee, for example, was located far from the main transatlantic port at Puerto Colombia and so quickly gave up on the idea of shipping supplies themselves. Instead, the members engaged in fundraising activities – such as selling their weekly *Boletín Pro-Defensa República Española* – and sending all proceeds to the Barranquilla and Santa Marta groups who dedicated themselves to collecting and despatching produce.[8] Reports to the Spanish minister suggest that, through this coordinated action, the committees were able to transport at least 115 sacks of coffee, 410 kilos of sugar cane molasses, 1,490 kilos of banana flour, 12,250 kilos of beans, 132,000 packs of cigarettes and 850,000 bags of dried bananas from March 1937 to July 1938 at an approximate cost of 7,300 pesos.[9] In October 1937, members in Santa Marta bought their own banana drying machine which they claimed could produce 10,000 pieces of the fruit each week.[10]

These organisations explicitly focussed their efforts on sending Colombian products. The Spanish *chargé d'affaires* in Bogotá, Juan Climent Nolla, had originally advised aid committees to send him any funds raised so that he could convert it into francs and send via cheque to the MEE alongside a list of all the donators.[11] By mid-February 1937, however, the Barranquilla group 'decided that for our government it is preferable to send them products instead of money.' They reasoned that exotic produce, such as that grown in Colombia, would be very expensive in Spain and this in addition to the poor exchange rate meant that the Spanish government 'would only be able to buy half of the coffee that, with the same amount of money, we could send them.'[12] The committees believed that Colombian products such as

[6] Enrique Torres to Ureña, 22-10-1938. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3114
[7] Francisco Noguer to Climent, 18-11-1938. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3114
[8] Pedro Sellares to Climent, 16-06-1937. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3110
[9] These amounts are collated from various reports sent to Climent in AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3110
[10] Letter to Climent, 20-10-1937. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3110
[11] Climent to Comité Pro-Defensa Barranquilla, 03-02-1937. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3110
[12] Comité Pro-Defensa Barranquilla to Climent, 18-02-1937. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3110

coffee and tobacco would be highly desirable in war-torn Spain, and particular emphasis was placed on the nutritional value of dried bananas for Republican troops.[13]

From the very start, then, Spanish-led relief efforts for Republican Spain imbued their work with a distinct Colombianness in a manner that was apparently unique amongst other Spanish-led campaigns across South America (although Cuba did also take care to send its 'agricultural crown jewels' tobacco and sugar).[14] This perhaps attests to Colombia's rich agricultural offering but may also have been a way to encourage local participation. Certainly, the committees had to work with various Colombians to ensure the success of their initiatives. The Barranquilla, Santa Marta and Cali organisations sent requests to local export control boards and even the *Ministerio de Hacienda y Crédito Público* that their despatches be exempt from export duties.[15] Further, the Cali committee worked with the Valle Employees Society to organise an exhibition of pro-Republican propaganda in July 1938 to raise funds for their aid Spain campaign.[16]

Relief and propaganda efforts were therefore intricately linked, and the fact that members of the Cali committee in particular disseminated pro-Republican material made them subject to criticism by local rightists. Even before the committee's establishment, Cali's Conservative newspaper *Diario del Pacífico* had attacked its future members for their political leanings. During the *Fiesta de la Raza* in 1936, the newspaper criticised Café Hamburgo and the El Barato store for flying the 'flag of communist Spain' when all other members of the Spanish colony hung the 'glorious scarlet and gold' Nationalist banner.[17] Similar abuse continued throughout 1936, culminating in a physical attack against the café owner and his son in December.[18] These premises would become the centre of committee activity from 1937.

Given that their supporters were so critical of those who sent aid to Republican troops, it is no surprise that Spanish rightists emphasised the supposedly apolitical subjects of their humanitarianism. In April 1937, Antonio Goicoechea, ex-leader of the Spanish monarchist party *Renovación Española*, sent a telegram to Conservative journalist Guillermo Camacho Montoya asking him to organise a collection amongst the Spanish community in Colombia to raise 15,000 pesetas (approximately 8,000 Colombian pesos) for an orphanage in Madrid, to be built 'as soon as Franco's army enters'.[19] *El Siglo* published the telegram, prefacing it with the declaration that 'Peninsula children... invoke the humanitarian sentiment of those who are linked to the fate of those heroic people by blood'. By making children – 'victims of this horrific tragedy' – the subject of its fundraising drive, the newspaper hoped to appeal to 'all Spaniards resident in Colombia and [...] those compatriots who feel connected to [Spain] by

[13] Flyer from Cartagena Comité Pro-Defensa to residents of Cartagena, no.67. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3110
[14] Ariel Mae Lambe, "Cuban Antifascism and the Spanish Civil War: Transnational Activism, Networks, and Solidarity in the 1930s" (Columbia University, 2014). p.23
[15] Letters from Climent, 06-03-37 and 11-03-37. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3110
[16] Letter to Climent, 16-06-37. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3110
[17] *Diario del Pacífico*, 13-10-1936, p.1
[18] *El Crisol*, 17-12-1936, p.1
[19] The figure comes from letters sent by Climent to Julio Álvarez del Vayo in March 1938 in which he detailed exchange rates of £6.10 to 100 pesetas and 9.07 pesos to the £1. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3136; Goicoechea's letter was quoted in *El Siglo*, 25-04-1937, p.1

affection and sympathy.'[20] However, the evocation of shared Hispanic heritage indicated the tension between the desire to appear nonpartisan and the clear pro-Nationalist leanings of the campaign. After all, the request had come from a Spanish rightist and the orphanage would only be established once Franco's forces had taken control of the Spanish capital. But the appeal seemingly worked: four days later members of Bogotá's Spanish Circle, supposedly representing all Spaniards in the city, held a meeting to discuss how they would help the Spanish orphans.[21] On 3 May, they established a provisional committee to organise a national subscription which they described as 'exclusively humanitarian and completely free of political passions'.[22]

Outside of the capital, the partisan bias was much more apparent. At the same time as the Spanish colony convened in Bogotá, right-wing Spaniards in Cartagena founded the *Comité Pro-Huérfanos de la Guerra Española*. They met in the house of committee president Juan Trallero and named fundraising commissions.[23] Members elected a Spanish woman, Asunción de Amadó, as honorary president and placed her in charge of collecting funds from women and families. In ways that were reflective of trends across Latin America, rightist women in Colombia used the concept of maternalism to justify their participation in political initiatives whilst their involvement seemingly confirmed the apolitical nature of such action.[24] The committee also wrote to Camacho asking him to put them in touch with similar groups in Bogotá 'to exchange ideas and achieve greater efficacy in our mutual relations.'[25]

Over the next fortnight, several Spaniards in Colombia approached the provisional committees offering their assistance. Unlike pro-Republican initiatives, these gifts tended to draw on Spanish identity. In Bogotá, Rafael Cuesto provided an authentic Manila shawl to be raffled and the Spanish actor González Marín arranged a special performance to raise money for the orphanage.[26] The Cartagena committee even began preparations for 'a great bullfight which will be the biggest ever seen in this city, Colombia and probably in all America.' It would include at least four bullfighters who would perform for free.[27]

The conscious efforts to emphasise the Spanish character of their work probably responded to the right-wing view that they owed much of their identity to Spain. Certainly, *El Figaro*'s reporter believed that the Cartagena committee's work 'befits this city... with a doubt the most Spanish [city] on our continent'.[28] Even where the Bogotá group attempted to portray itself as nonpartisan, the very nature of its activity exposed its Nationalist sympathies. By appealing to the Hispanic sentiment of local societies, the committees cemented the link between their fundraising efforts and the Colombian Right. This did little to stem their success,

[20] *El Siglo*, 25-04-1937, p.1
[21] *El Siglo*, 27-04-1937, p.1
[22] The committee was announced in *El Siglo*, 04-05-1937, p.1; its purpose was described in *El Siglo*, 13-05-1937, p.4
[23] *El Siglo*, 02-05-1937, p.1
[24] In particular see the work of Sandra McGee Deutsch and Margaret Power.
[25] *El Siglo*, 02-05-1937, p.1
[26] *El Siglo*, 13-05-1937, p.4
[27] 'Actividades del comité pro-huérfanos de la guerra española', *El Figaro*, 18-05-1937
[28] *El Figaro*, 05-05-1937, p.1

however; on 13 September, Camacho wrote to Goiroechea that the committees – now expanded to include Cali and Barranquilla contingents – had managed to raise the necessary funds for the Spanish orphanage.[29]

The *Comité Pro-Huérfanos*' supposed apoliticism and focus on the 'innocent victims' of the Spanish Civil War responded to the shifting national and international scenarios. First, the rapid development of camera technologies in the early twentieth century made the Spanish Civil War one of the first conflicts to be covered extensively by photojournalists. Photographers such as Robert Capa travelled around Spain capturing images from the front lines and occupied zones which were then disseminated by international news agencies to appear on the front pages of newspapers all over the world. As the war went on, many of these images depicted the multitude of women and children who were impacted by the fighting. Unlike the photos of militiawomen, these images garnered sympathetic responses. Showing women as victims rather than soldiers was presumably more palatable to Colombian audiences. International humanitarian drives therefore increasingly focussed their efforts on these groups, especially children, who were seen as blameless in the larger political and ideological struggle.

Colombians across the political spectrum were also horrified by the fact that *adult* brutality was affecting *innocent* youth. A photo published in *El Tiempo* in September 1936 was indicative of this anxiety: it showed a 3-year-old child with a pistol in one hand and the other raised above their head in a clenched fist and was accompanied by the caption 'the most horrible of all the horrible pictures of the Spanish Civil War'. That the child was a girl clearly added to the horror, and the caption referred to the woman holding her up as 'not a mother but a beast' thus reinforcing Conservative notions about the inhumanity of Republican women.[30] The image provoked poet Gregorio Castañeda Aragon to question 'the reasons for troubling infant minds with adult concerns.'[31] In Colombia, as elsewhere, children became a trope for discussing the horrors of the Spanish Civil War and those undertaking fundraising initiatives sought to capitalise on these concerns in seeking support for their campaigns.

[29] *El Siglo*, 25-11-1937, p.9
[30] *El Tiempo*, 09-09-1936, p.1
[31] *El Tiempo*, 05-10-1936, p.5

Quizá más trágico, más horripilante, que el espectáculo de las víctimas de la barbarie desencadenada sobre España, más sacrílego que el de las momias arrancadas de sus tumbas, es el de esta niña de tres años, con el puño en alto y la pistola en sus manecitas, llevada en brazos por una madre, que no es madre sino fiera. Esta foto fue tomada en el patio del cuartel de la montaña, a la vista de los cadáveres de los oficiales asesinados que se ven en la foto publicada en otro lugar. Si adultos educados en otro ambiente, se han trocado en estos salvajes, que afrentan a la humanidad, cómo serán los hombres y las mujeres de mañana, salidos de este infierno?

El Tiempo, 09-09-1936, front page.

The other reason for the committee's attempts to portray itself as non-partisan was because Colombian law prohibited the involvement of foreign nationals in domestic politics. As we have seen, the *Pro-Huérfanos* groups were made up primarily of Spanish residents in Colombia. However, due to the intertwining of domestic politics and support for Spain explored in previous chapters, and the fact that many Spanish-led initiatives relied on local networks to publicise and carry out their humanitarian activity, the committees clearly felt it was necessary to pre-empt potential accusations of intervention in Colombian affairs. This was particularly important when their own local supporters were levelling similar charges against pro-Republican Spaniards.

Seemingly learning from the success of these right-wing campaigns, by the end of 1937 the *Pro-Defensa* organisations had also centred fundraising drives around Spanish children rather than Republican troops. Given the increasingly vicious attacks on members of the Cali committee throughout 1937, it is also reasonable to assert that the move was a response to accusations of political intervention. In Barranquilla, ten Spanish men met on 5 December 1937 to establish the *Junta de Ayuda a los Niños Huérfanos Españoles* in recognition of the desire amongst locals to raise funds to help Spanish orphaned children. In keeping with their

goal of avoiding any potential interference in Colombian affairs, the attendees decided that the committee should be formed solely of Spaniards.[32]

In Santa Marta, however, some Spaniards founded the *Comité Pro-Auxilio a los Huérfanos de la Guerra Española* precisely because they wanted to actively involve local populations in fundraising efforts. The group appeared following a split in the *Comité Pro-Defensa* over how closely to work with the city's Colombian-led antifascist committee. The majority of members believed that initiatives bound for Spain should not be used for Colombian propaganda, but a handful of individuals disagreed. They broke away to form the *Comité Pro-Auxilio* which would collaborate more explicitly with local groups. Aid committees for Spanish orphans could therefore be pro-Nationalist or pro-Republican and exclusively Spanish or joint initiatives. This paradox highlights some of the tensions that existed amongst Spanish populations in Colombia over how best to support their country in a context of intense politicisation of the civil war and growing suspicion about 'foreign' ideologies and individuals.

Despite disagreements over the means for fundraising, all groups agreed on the new ends and, in mid-1938, they reached an agreement with the Barcelona child welfare group *Assistencia Infantil* to fund a colony for seventy war orphans in Catalonia. From that point on the various committees channelled all their efforts into this initiative. It is possible that Catalan pedagogue Miguel Fornaguera i Ramón facilitated the arrangement as he was working for the *Assistencia Infantil* during the civil war but had previously lived in Colombia and knew several members of the Santa Marta *Comité Pro-Defensa*. Indeed, correspondence between Fornaguera and the committee indicates that shipments were sent and received directly between the two.[33] Regardless of who instigated the arrangements, the *Hogar Colombia* opened on 19 July and the inaugural ceremony at the Café Inglés was reportedly so oversubscribed that the majority of attendees had to stay outside in the street. The café's upstairs room was adorned with anti-fascist quotes by famous individuals such as Albert Einstein and Buenaventura Durruti and the ceremony opened with the national anthems of Colombia, Republican Spain and Mexico.[34] Clearly, though the pro-Republican organisations had changed the subjects of their aid, they had not abandoned their partisan stance.

In another attempt to reframe the purpose of their fundraising, again responding to the success of pro-Nationalist initiatives, the previously male-led pro-Republican groups began to rely on newly formed women's committees to spread their new humanitarian message. In December 1938, the wives of three *Comité Pro-Auxilio* members in Santa Marta established a Women's Aid Committee to raise money for Spanish women and children. Ana Maria de Barrial, Joaquina de Roig Marqués and Maria Gloria Gaztañondo circulated a leaflet which addressed the city's mothers directly: 'Whatever concept... you have of the fight, be mothers above all else and [...] hear this call that comes from the broken heart of the Spanish mothers

[32] Copy of the first act of the *Junta de Ayuda a los Niños Huérfanos Españoles de Barranquilla*. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3110

[33] Fornaguera to Comité Pro-Defensa, 11-10-1938. Archivo Histórico Javeriano, Fondo Miguel Fornaguera i Ramón (hereafter AHJ.MFR), Caja 9, Legajo 218

[34] *El Estado*, 22-07-1938, p.3

who see their children suffer and die... do not let our children perish from hunger and cold...'[35] The organisation had raised 250.70 Colombian pesos by the end of the year which they requested be sent to the Women's Aid Commission in Barcelona.[36]

Like the Nationalist efforts before them, humanitarian efforts led by pro-Republican Spanish women attempted to transcend political lines in order to gain more support for their cause. Yet the tensions between apolitical humanitarianism and a clear partisan stance appeared here, too, particularly in the Colombian public's response to the initiatives. In December 1938, for instance, the new Spanish Minister to Colombia, Rafael de Ureña, received a donation from the Bavaria Brewery Employees' and Workers' Union which was destined for Spanish women and children in the 'loyal zone'. The unionists signed the accompanying letter 'reiterating our votes for the triumph of the cause of justice'.[37] Similarly, the Santa Marta's Dockworkers Union who raised 11.60 Colombian pesos from a collection for Spanish children explicitly stated that this support would go to help children who are 'innocent victims of fascist barbarity' and whose 'fathers [have] died defending the sacred right to be free men'.[38]

Casting women and children as apolitical subjects allowed fundraising efforts to reach wider audiences. However, presenting them as 'innocent victims' also removed their agency and allowed for their image to be appropriated by those who had clearly political aims. Indeed, any Spanish woman or child who did not conform to such notions of passivity were condemned as 'savages' in order to perpetuate the notion that communism or fascism was destroying Spain. Even as Spanish-led relief initiatives attempted to overcome partisan biases, their humanitarianism could not escape the politicised environment within which Spanish news and events were received, interpreted and understood in Colombia.

Political intervention

Whilst the Spanish-led campaigns endeavoured to varying degrees and at different points to construct discourses of neutrality, the wider Colombian public who both supported them and were compelled to undertake their own fundraising projects viewed such activity through the lens of domestic politics. The first organised action that appears in the documentary record is the *Comité de Amigos de la Republica Española* established in Bogotá during April 1937. In their manifesto, the group expressed its 'solidarity and unconditional adhesion to the legitimately constituted Government' in whose suffering they shared because those who attacked it were 'the same murderers and inquisitors of America'. Members therefore employed the same rhetoric used by Liberals to justify their support for the Spanish Republic when the civil war first erupted. This is unsurprising as several of the members including César Uribe Piedrahita and Luis de Greiff Bravo played important roles in the Liberal governments'

[35] *El Estado*, 21-12-1938, p.1
[36] Letter to Ureña, 16-01-1939. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3098
[37] Letter to Ureña, 19-01-1939. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3098
[38] *El Estado*, 27-12-1938, p.1

educational programmes. Unlike political leaders, however, the *Comité de Amigos* implored the Colombian public to join the transnational struggle for Republican Spain. They ended their manifesto with the call: 'People of Colombia! Fight for the cause of the legitimate government of Spain. Follow the enduring example of the brave Mexican and Yankee workers! Convert your sympathy – until now passive – into a powerful material and intellectual solidarity!'[39] In doing so, committee members situated their own activity within the global aid Spain campaign.

As part of this campaign, members published a bulletin based on propaganda material received from the Spanish Legation and organised various events to support the Spanish Republic that brought together leftist Liberals and Colombian workers.[40] A similar organisation in Giradot, Tolima held a rally in autumn 1937. Before the event, they hung up posters across the city and disseminated pamphlets to local residents. Their promotion paid off: more than 1,500 attendees turned up and Gilberto Vieira, founder of the PCC and congressional representative, gave a speech.[41] The participation of national politicians in these events illustrates how Colombian pro-Republican activity could not be separated from domestic affairs. Many other groups saw their support for Spain as part of their local struggles. In Santa Marta, for example, the *Comité Antifascista Amigos de la República Española* held weekly meetings to coordinate their propaganda and fundraising activities on Monday evenings in the Union Society premises, an organisation normally dedicated to defending the interests of workers in Magdalena.[42]

These local initiatives led to the opening of the Ateneo Español Republicano in Bogotá on 29 December 1937.[43] A space where pro-Republican Colombians could meet with their Spanish counterparts, it was conceived in both global and local terms. On the one hand, members of the Ateneo would promote the ideals 'that our Spanish brothers are so heroically defending' by carrying out 'an extensive and profound cultural project' as part of the international struggle against fascism. Flowing from this internationalist sentiment, founding members invited the Mexican minister in Colombia and Venezuelan and Chilean anti-fascist leaders to the inaugural assembly. On the other, their work to promote the Republican cause in Colombia would counter the 'corrosive and illiterate campaign' against the López government that local supporters of Franco were undertaking at home.[44] Indeed, a portrait of the Liberal leader hung in the building alongside that of the Spanish president.[45] The Ateneo was thus born out of the inherently partisan nature of grassroots support for the Spanish Republic at the same time as it attempted to channel this partisanship and direct it against rival political groups.

[39] Included in a letter from José María García to Climent, 31-05-1937. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3110
[40] Climent to MEE, 17-10-1937. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3115
[41] Letter to Climent, 11-09-1937. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3110
[42] 'Organizado un Comité Antifascista', *Por La Unión*, 13-11-1937
[43] Armando de Placencia to Climent, 30-12-1937. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3110
[44] Climent to José Giral, 27-12-1937. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3083
[45] *Tierra*, 14-01-1938, p.1

The local groups that members of the Ateneo hoped to counteract were those that made up the Círculo Nacionalista Española, founded on 10 September 1937 in Bogotá. Although various networks of pro-Francoist support existed within Colombia, the Círculo was by far the most well-known and impactful. Spanish residents in Bogotá, including Jesús Gorrincho who also sat on the *Comité Pro-Huérfanos*, founded the group but several Colombians were heavily involved in its activities. The Círculo's main objectives were to strengthen cultural, social and economic relations between Colombia and Nationalist Spain and to spread pro-Nationalist propaganda. In order to carry out this mission, attendees to the inaugural meeting elected an executive committee. They also created a press and propaganda committee headed by Camacho whose first action was to send a letter to Franco promising 'to work our hardest from this land to assist your triumph.'[46]

Almost immediately, members set to work extolling the virtues of the Nationalist cause. To commemorate the *Día de la Raza*, and following rightist Colombians' proclivity towards using diverse media for its pro-Nationalist message, the Círculo organised a radio programme on *La Voz de Colombia* in homage to Spain. During one of the sections, Camacho declared that 'Colón and Franco are guides for the universal cosmos' because 'one navigated the world and the other will complete a spiritual and political reconfiguration'. Fellow Conservative Francisco Fandiño Silva dedicated the 'special day' to 'Spain, the discover, the conqueror and the civiliser' who was an 'outstanding example' for Latin American nations because 'here, like there, [we need to] muster up our remaining energy to repel communism.'[47] Right-wing Colombians connected their mission to spread domestic support for the Spanish Nationalists with their own national political goals that, in turn, furthered the universal anti-communist cause. The Círculo's actions reflected this internationalist orientation: it maintained 'an intense correspondence' with Nationalist leaders and the right-wing Chilean radio journalist Julio Argaín held the position of honorary president.[48]

One figure in particular symbolised the transnational activities of the Colombian Right. When we last saw Ginés de Albareda, he had left Barranquilla in late 1937 amidst a national polemic over his presence in Colombia. He returned to the country in January 1938 to channel Nationalist support in Bogotá and, on his instigation, the Círculo opened a Spanish Nationalist Centre on 28 January. *La Voz de Colombia* installed microphones so that it could broadcast the event, and the organisers wrote to Salamanca informing them of the act so that they could listen to the ceremony on 'the only national radio station whose waves can reach Europe'.[49] The Archbishop of Bogotá, Juan Manuel González Arbeláez, attended the opening ceremony and publicly blessed the venue and the Francoist cause. Laureano Gómez also made an appearance and, at the request of the Spanish community, pronounced the opening speech. The address, during which the Conservative leader praised the Spanish Nationalists and their links to the right-wing Colombia, drove one Liberal commentator to conclude that 'the

[46] *El Siglo*, 11-09-1937, p.1
[47] 'Homenaje a España', *El Siglo*, 13-10-1937
[48] *El Colombiano*, 17-01-1938, p.1
[49] *El Siglo*, 23-01-1938, p.1

conservative party has died' in favour of a party that supported totalitarianism.[50] Even the Centre's décor reflected the coalescence of right-wing Colombia and Nationalist Spain. The flags of the two countries hung in each of the rooms whose walls were adorned with portraits of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Franco.[51]

Albareda also kicked off a distinctly Colombian fundraising campaign which, unlike that of the Spanish-led initiatives, explicitly aimed to assist Nationalist troops. Given their strong support for the Spanish right, Albareda focussed particularly on Colombia's Catholic communities. In February 1938, *El Cruzado* sent out a circular to other religious publications affirming that it had been 'authorised' by the Spanish Nationalist Committee to found 'sympathetic Centres of Spanish action' to raise funds for 'our brothers in faith and blood'. The plan was to send 'thousands of kilos of our coffee to the soldiers, and some packages of ornaments to the priests'. Following the Colombian Church's broader approach to spreading its anti-communist message, *El Cruzado* then called on priests and 'people with social status' to disseminate the message from the pulpit and in the press.[52] Just as joining together in prayer made Colombian Catholics feel part of the Nationalist spiritual rearguard, participating in fundraising campaigns created a sense that they were actively contributing to the war effort. Together, such collective acts in support of Spain help explain the reach of the anti-communist campaign in Colombia.

Though there are no fundraising figures for *El Cruzado*'s campaign, a similar initiative in *Veritas* provides insight into the level of support received. The Catholic weekly opened its subscription on 19 January 1938 which it framed as a way for its readers 'to become soldiers of Christian civilisation'.[53] Two months later, the subscription had raised 250 pesos which Ariza sent to the Círculo to be forwarded to Spain. By April, the newspaper had changed its message slightly, asking readers 'Are you catholic? Prove it by sending us your contributions to aid the Liberating Army in the *Madre Patria*.'[54] This was perhaps a result of the relatively unenthusiastic response it received to the campaign; a similar subscription to finish the atrium of Chiquinquirá's Mariana Basilica had already raised 401.59 pesos in just three weeks.[55] In total, *Veritas* sent 475 pesos in the first eight months of 1938.

On 3 August, Ariza received a signed letter from Franco thanking him for 'the campaign... inspired in the truth and the just cause of western and Christian civilisation... against the Soviet hoards who want to destroy [Spain] and attempted in a wishful folly to turn our dear Spain into a Soviet colony, ignoring her history and not understanding that the mother of nations can never be a Bolshevik colony.'[56] Unsurprisingly, giving their shared influences, the reference to Bolshevism mirrored Catholic conspiracy theories about Colombian Liberals and the Spanish Civil War. Whilst it is unclear how aware Franco was of right-wing commentary on

[50] *El Espectador*, 31-01-1938, p.4
[51] *El Siglo*, 30-01-1938, p.1
[52] Quoted in 'Segundo año triunfal', *El Adalid*, 27-02-1938
[53] *Veritas*, 19-01-1938, p.1
[54] *Veritas*, 06-04-1938, p.1
[55] *Veritas*, 13-04-1938, p.1
[56] *Veritas*, 14-09-1938, p.1

Spain in Colombia, his letter clearly demonstrates how actors on both sides of the Atlantic contributed to the process of Nationalist mythmaking.

Colombian Catholics were not alone in organising fundraising initiatives for Nationalist Spain. Sparked by Albareda's request that *El Siglo* help him source the money for his onward journey in March 1938, the newspaper decided to open its own subscription to support Spanish soldiers.[57] *El Siglo* kicked off the campaign on 1 February, which was also the second anniversary of its first edition, indicating how the Conservative party tied Spanish humanitarian activity to its own political propaganda.[58] This is particularly significant given the increasing tensions amongst the Colombian Right discussed in chapter three. Although it was unlikely that Gómez personally led the initiative – probably it was the work of Camacho who was employed by the newspaper and, as we have seen, active in pro-Nationalist aid initiatives – he directed *El Siglo* and presumably saw the campaign as a way to win back support from those who were increasingly drawn to the extreme right. Certainly, the initiative proved popular amongst men and women from across the social spectrum who contributed amounts from 20 cents to 15 pesos.

The newspaper decided that the money raised would buy Colombian coffee and cigarettes, and the campaign slogan declared 'Colombian coffee in Franco's Spain is propaganda for Colombian industry and an anti-communist affirmation.'[59] Colombian-led relief efforts for Spanish Nationalists therefore served practical, economic and ideological purposes. Firstly, the campaign would provide sustenance to the forces fighting against communism on the peninsula. However, it also aimed to strengthen commercial ties with Nationalist Spain which *El Siglo* hoped would form the basis of a strong economic relationship once the Spanish right had emerged victorious in the civil war and established their own ruling regime. Finally, the initiative reflected Conservatives' rejection of their own 'communist' government that was rhetorically, if not yet materially, supportive of the Spanish Republic. The subscription raised 5,870.78 pesos which provided 3,540 kilos of coffee and 325 cases of *Pielroja* cigarettes for Franco's troops.[60]

Conservatives were not the only political party involved in Spanish aid initiatives. The PCC played a significant role in coordinating pro-Republican activity through its newspaper *Tierra*. In a campaign that paralleled *El Siglo*'s endeavour, the party opened up a regular subscription and ran several drives to collect as many cigarettes, coffee and cane sugar as possible for Republican Spain. Proceeds from these initiatives were sent to the various *Comités*, further evidencing the fragility of their discourse of apoliticism. The party also used the paper to promote upcoming humanitarian initiatives and spotlight groups and individuals who were raising money or support for Republican Spain. In July 1938, *Tierra* announced a week-long campaign in which various activities would take place, culminating with a 32-page special

[57] *El Siglo*, 05-10-1938, p.1
[58] *El Siglo*, 31-01-1938, p.1
[59] *El Siglo*, 03-02-1938, p.1
[60] *El Siglo*, 05-10-1938, p.1

edition dedicated to the Spanish government.[61] The events were largely propaganda and recruitment initiatives with the aim of increasing the newspaper's regular circulation to 6,000 copies, showing how the PCC explicitly tied their own expansion to their action in support of the Spanish government.

By coordinating and advertising pro-Republican activity across the country, the party also posited itself as the link between the Colombian masses and Republican Spain. Active PCC support for the Spanish Republic was therefore a means to strengthen and legitimise the party's position as leader of Colombian workers. Indeed, in late 1938, PCC member Filiberto Barrero embarked on a tour of Colombia to visit different workers' organisations and encourage them to donate money for the Republican government and people.[62] As a result, from November 1938 to February 1939, Ureña received various donations from workers' groups and unions that articulated communist understandings of the Spanish Civil War and Colombian politics. For instance, thirty-eight men and one woman from the National Railway Workers Union sent 9.10 pesos with a letter explaining that by 'HELPING THE SPANISH PEOPLE WE DEFEND OUR OWN COLOMBIAN DEMOCRACY'.[63] Another donation from a group of workers in La Dorada, Caldas was explicitly destined for the Spanish communist la Pasionaria.[64]

The Colombian experience of the aid Spain campaign showcased some particularly innovative ways of capitalising on domestic advantages, particularly in the claim that sending export goods like coffee and bananas could serve as sustenance to troops and populations on both sides. A letter from Fornaguera to the Santa Marta committee in which he congratulated them on their 'magnificent idea' of constructing a machine to dry bananas suggest that the produce was well received.[65] However, his recommendation that members wrap the bananas in specific food packaging rather than newspapers (presumably because some of the fruit had spoiled) also hints at the limitations of Colombian humanitarian efforts.

Ultimately, the grassroots nature of such initiatives combined with the vagaries of the foreign exchange market, meant that donations were made up of things that it was easy for everyday groups and individuals to obtain. In Colombia, a crop-producing country, this meant sending produce that by its very nature was perishable across long distances and without proper storage. What Spaniards needed, particularly the Republican government, were sufficient funds and arms to definitively crush the other side. As we have seen, the Liberal government was unwilling to send such support and the lower-to-middle class Colombians who supported the various aid initiatives, no matter how many in number, were unable to do so. The support offered by Colombia's Catholics to the Spanish Nationalists may have helped further legitimise their cause on the international stage but materially paled in comparison to the considerable support lent to Franco by Hitler and Mussolini. Colombian aid to Spain was clearly not a decisive factor in the Spanish Civil War but, whilst its international impact was

[61] *Tierra*, 10-06-1938, p.4
[62] Marco Castaño to Ureña, 22-10-1938. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3098
[63] Letter to Ureña, 20-11-1938. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3098. Emphasis in original
[64] José Herrera Silva to Ureña, 03-11-1938. AGA Caja 54/3098
[65] Fornaguera to 'Compatriotas', 11-10-1938. AHJ.MFR, Caja 9, Legajo 218

reduced, it did precipitate a shift in national policy that was also facilitated by the rise of a new Liberal administration.

The Santos administration

The fact that the Spanish-led efforts increasingly used discourses of neutrality opened a window of opportunity for the new president who was sympathetic towards Republicans but whose main concern was placating the Conservative opposition. Santos wanted to avoid inciting further partisan rivalries so toned down the anti-clerical and revolutionary rhetoric of his predecessor's government and moved to control popular agitation by limiting the right to strike.[66] He also embarked on a policy of political *convivencia* which was a continuation of the overtures he had made to the Conservative party during his stint as president of the National Liberal Directorate in late 1936.

The rise of Santos, which in reality had begun in spring 1937 when he had overcome the left-wing Dario Echandía to become the Liberal party's presidential candidate, therefore meant the formal end of López's *Revolución* and the idea of Popular Front politics in Colombia. This ensured that the new president faced fewer domestic constraints on his Spanish policy than his predecessor because fewer parallels could be drawn between his and the Republican governments. However, Santos was politically attuned to moderate Spanish Republicans and had met and/or worked with several of them in Geneva during the 1930s. Indicative of the uncertainty that preceded the new president's assumption of power, Climent warned the MEE that it was 'impossible to predict what position Colombia will take towards the Spanish Republic under Santos. His attitude in the League of Nations as Head of the Colombian Delegation is well known… However, it is worth remembering that this country's political leaders and almost all the members of its Chambers are people with extremely moderate ideas, almost conservative, and they are profoundly religious.'[67]

Santos's presidency also coincided with a significant moment in the Spanish Civil War. The Republican government was becoming more moderate in an attempt to overcome its international isolation, as evidenced by its 'Thirteen Points' peace programme in May 1938 that included an amnesty for all Spaniards and the disbandment of the International Brigades four months later. A combination of these shifting domestic and international contexts meant that Santos did not officially withdraw support for the Spanish Republic until it was clear they were going to lose the war.

As part of this continued support, the new government moved almost immediately to send its own gesture to war-torn Spain but under the international principle of neutrality. The initiative actually originated from the other side of the Atlantic where, as part of its policy of international rapprochement, the Republican government encouraged American leaders to send aid to the Spanish non-combatants during winter. On 20 July 1938, two weeks before

[66] Ricardo Arias Trujillo, *Historia de Colombia contemporánea (1920-2010)* (Universidad de Los Andes, 2011). pp.77-85

[67] Climent to MEE, 10-05-1938. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3115

Santos assumed the presidency, the newly arrived Spanish Minister Rafael de Ureña met with the president-elect to discuss the proposal. He told Santos that the US and Mexican presidents were supportive of the move, but that it would provoke less suspicion if Colombia took the lead. This statement was perhaps in recognition of the new administration's more moderate position vis-à-vis Spain. Certainly, Ureña also reassured the incoming president that his government would consider the action purely humanitarian and ensure that aid was evenly distributed across the Nationalist and Republican zones.[68] Throughout August, the two continued to discuss the proposal but Santos became much more hesitant, worrying that other governments in Latin America would see it as direct support for Republican Spain. He also questioned the best way to realise the gesture, discarding the idea of a national subscription presumably because it was too similar to the political initiatives undertaken by Conservatives and the PCC. Santos did agree, however, to contact his representative in Washington to sound out the US government's views on the best way to proceed.[69]

The president must have received a positive response because, on 8 September and at Santos's request, the Chamber passed motion 205 naming a committee of three members to elaborate a draft bill about 'effective aid' to Spain. The project was framed as 'interpreting the democratic and humanitarian sentiments of the Colombian people' thus linking it to the discourse of the aid Spain campaign.[70] A month later, the committee recommended that Colombian assistance should be delivered via the Red Cross to a value of no less than 10,000 pesos, but they left the ultimate means up to the president whose 'intense democratic desires' made him the best candidate to do so.[71] Despite the best efforts of the right-wing press to paint the move as 'a project to assist the Spanish reds',[72] the decision to use the Red Cross – inspired by the US despatch of 70,000 barrels of wheat via its branch of the international charity – highlighted the neutrality of the act. Liberal newspapers were keen to stress this impartiality, reporting that the money would contribute to the provision of 'basic necessities' to purely 'non-combatant zones'.[73]

This was not the first time that the question of official Colombian aid to Spain had arisen in the Chamber of Representatives. In October 1937, Vieira proposed that the Colombian government bring over Spanish children to Colombia as part of the international effort to evacuate young Spaniards from northern Spain.[74] Although the idea was rejected because of its impracticability, that it came from a PCC representative may have influenced the lack of further discussion on Colombian relief efforts at that time. Furthermore, Vieira's proposal came during a period in which the López regime, continually accused of communist leanings, was trying to distance itself from Republican Spain. Any initiatives which could have been interpreted as supportive of that government would have therefore provided the president's

[68] 'Pro Memoria', 26-10-1938. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3098
[69] Ureña to MEE, 01-09-1938. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3098
[70] República de Colombia, *Anales de la Cámara. Ago-Sep* (1938). Acta 08-08-1938.
[71] *El Liberal*, 11-10-1938, p.4
[72] 'Dineros Tintos En Sangre', *La Defensa*, 11-10-1938
[73] *El Tiempo*, 11-10-1938, p.2
[74] *El Tiempo*, 02-10-1937, p.7

detractors with more ammunition. Santos, on the other hand, led a faction which had been extremely critical of leftist tendencies in both Spain and Colombia and so was better placed to lead any project for Spanish aid.

That Santos framed the move in terms of international principles and seemingly followed the US example was also reflective of his broader foreign policy. The new president was less concerned with joint Latin American action than López had been. The US ambassador to Brazil suggested as much when he reported a conversation with Santos to the State Department in August 1938 in which the president stated that at the 1938 Pan-American Conference in Lima, his delegation would 'go through the motions of supporting the plan for a league of American nations but… will not insist on its adoption.' The league had been López's pet project but Santos, according to the US ambassador, realised that the plan was 'not practicable at this time.'[75] This understanding was possibly a reaction to the opposition of several states – including the US, Argentina, Brazil and Chile – which Santos had been told about on a visit to Washington before he became president. The ambassador further commented that Santos was 'opposed to the institution of a Pan-American Court of Justice', indicating that his scepticism of inter-American organisation was not limited to López's proposal.[76]

In fact, the new administration was seemingly more focussed on fomenting Colombia's bilateral relations with various states, partly because fears of another European war sparked real concern about the impact this would have on the Colombian economy and culture, thus compelling the government to concentrate its energy on ensuring the protection of these.[77] The practicalities of such an approach were set out in a circular from the new Secretariat of the MRREE to all Colombian consulates. In it, the ministry requested regular updates on what Colombian produce could be sold in their respective countries and which goods from those nations could be imported to Colombia 'for mutual benefit', as well as summaries of scientific achievements and outstanding works of art and literature that could 'stimulate our students and intellectuals.'[78]

Santos's ability to align support for Spain with his broader international goals was the result of his government's attempts to pursue a more coherent foreign policy. As suggested in chapter one, the MRREE was a disjointed institution prior to August 1938, and this was reflected in some of the correspondence sent to and from the peninsula during the Spanish Civil War. In May 1938, for instance, the Diplomatic Department sent a letter to the General Consulate in Barcelona asking about the wellbeing of a Colombian citizen despite his death having been reported to the Consular Department in January.[79] Such failings were deemed unacceptable given that Colombia was 'opening' itself up to the world and so the López

[75] Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) Diplomatic Papers, 1938, The American Republics, Vol. V, 711.21/930: Telegram from Jefferson Caffery to Cordell Hull, 09-08-1938
[76] FRUS Diplomatic Papers, 1938, The American Republics, Vol. V, 710.H Agenda/81**:** Memorandum of Conversation by the Under Secretary of State (Welles), 25-07-1938
[77] David Bushnell, *Eduardo Santos and the Good Neighbor* (University of Florida Press, 1967). p.103
[78] MRREE to General Consul in Barcelona, 23-08-1938. AGN.MRE.CD, Transferencia 8, Caja 301, Carpeta 175
[79] Referred to in letter from Muñoz to Antonio Rocha, 01-06-1938. AGN.MRE.CD, Transferencia 8, Caja 301, Carpeta 175

government had proposed to reform the ministry. On 25 February 1938, it issued decrees 319, 320 and 231 ordering the reorganisation of the MRREE, the creation of a diplomatic and consular qualification and the codification of the functions of the different ministerial departments.[80]

Under the Santos administration, these measures were strengthened and fed down to the Colombian legations and consulates across the world. In early September 1938, circulars about the new plans and objectives were sent out including a promise to send a complete summary of correspondence between the MRREE and the various diplomatic missions and the proposal to implement special codes so that legations could communicate amongst themselves as well as with Colombia.[81] The first was particularly pertinent in the case of Spain given that representatives there regularly complained that they didn't receive all communications from Bogotá. Furthermore, perhaps learning from the mistakes of the López regime, the MRREE under Santos was much more focussed on keeping its consular agents in line. This ranged from ironing out small procedural issues such as insisting that consuls send signed balance sheets each month even if there had been no transactions, to issuing orders with deeper policy implications like those that will be discussed in the next chapter.[82] Though all institutional problems were clearly not solved in the first year of the Santos administration, there was a concerted effort to professionalise the ministry. This facilitated the fulfilment of specific objectives in Spain, particularly that of limiting Republican emigration to Colombia, whilst simultaneously reducing the risk of diplomatic tensions with the Spanish government. In turn, the actions of Santos's representatives in Spain furthered his concern for economic and cultural protection illustrating the overall coherence of the president's foreign and domestic policies as well as his aptitude for statecraft.

Colombia's previous diplomatic activity in Spain – most notably, the actions of Melguizo – were also brought into check. Though the situation on the peninsula was such that there were fewer diplomatic problems between the two countries which the Colombian diplomat could assume charge of, there was a definite change of tone in the communications between Madrid and Bogotá. The implication for Melguizo was that he no longer enjoyed the same free agency and support as he had under the previous administration. From September 1938, the majority of letters sent by the *chargé* were in response to an order received from Bogotá, generally for updates on issues of asylum and repatriation, which ensured that the MRREE was duly informed of all regular diplomatic activity in Spain. The one outstanding problem was that of a prisoner exchange for the son of the consul in Vigo, Fernando Martínez de la Escalera, who had been arrested by the Spanish authorities in autumn 1937 on charges of espionage.[83]

The following August, Melguizo wrote to the new minister that *he* had done everything he could to secure the exchange but, given that the accused had not yet stood trial, it was 'not

[80] *Diario Oficial*, Año LXXIV. N.23.746, 05-04-1938

[81] Referred to in letter from Melguizo to Roberto Garcia Peña on 30-09-1938. AGN.MRE.CD, Transferencia 8, Caja 283, Carpeta 30

[82] Note on letter sent by Muñoz to López de Mesa, 10-10-1938. AGN.MRE.CD, Transferencia 8, Caja 301, Carpeta 175

[83] Melguizo to Turbay, 17-10-1937. AGN.MRE.CD, Transferencia 8, Caja 283, Carpeta 29

possible to resolve anything for the moment' and was therefore 'necessary to wait for the case to be heard.'[84] Here, the diplomat positioned himself as the authority on the issue, insinuating that, after the trial, it would be he who oversaw its resolution. It was the ministry, however, that radioed Melguizo on 28 December to inform him that proceedings on the matter had resumed, indicating that Bogotá had taken charge and Melguizo's role was limited to serving his government.[85] This was reinforced by the diplomat's response in which he expressed his desire to 'support' negotiations as well as his conviction that '*We* will be more successful on this occasion.'[86]

It therefore appears that Santos had a clear, overarching Spanish policy and that, notwithstanding their previously stated positions on the civil war, the diplomatic officials and consular agents in Spain were working in a way that was conducive to these objectives. Though this was perhaps a consequence of the broader push to reorganise the MRREE rather than a specific effort to bring Colombian representatives in Spain to heel, the difficulties encountered in Spain were reflective of wider problems in Colombia's foreign policy and thus echoed the concerns driving the reorganisation process. It also had very specific benefits for the new president's approach to Spain: by ensuring officials responded to orders from Bogotá and making them accountable for their actions, his administration pursued a much more cohesive and less reactive strategy as regards the Spanish conflict.

"Una Nueva Colombia"

However, Santos was not completely free of domestic constraints on his Spanish policy. As the president attempted to appease Conservatives and Catholics, they and their pro-Nationalist Spanish allies became more audacious. This can be seen most clearly in the actions of the local *Falange Española*. The organisation first appeared in Spain during 1933 when various rightists created their own fascist-inspired party, and it merged the following year with the national-socialist movement *Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista*. Unlike its Italian and German counterparts, the Falange had a strong Catholic element which reflected its deep embedment in Spanish traditions. In this way, the movement was not dissimilar to the Colombian nationalist movement examined in chapter three, which was itself inspired by the Falange. However, as we will see, the Falange propagated neo-colonialist discourses in contrast to nationalists' exaltation of independence heroes.

In April 1937, General Franco merged the party with other right-wing groups in Spain to create the *Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las JONS* (FET-JONS) as the sole party of his regime.[87] The original party had established a *Falange Exterior* in 1936 with the aim of fomenting Hispanic cultural imperialism abroad, and Franco continued the initiative once he

[84] Melguizo to López de Mesa, 17-08-1938, AGN.MRE.CD. Transferencia 8, Caja 283, Carpeta 30
[85] Referred to in letter from Melguizo, 29-12-1938. AGN.MRE.CD, Transferencia 8, Caja 284, Carpeta 32
[86] Referred to in letter from Melguizo to López de Mesa, 29-12-1938. AGN.MRE.CD, Transferencia 8, Caja 284, Carpeta 32. My emphasis.
[87] For a comprehensive history of the Spanish Falange: Stanley Payne, *Fascism in Spain, 1923–1977* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1999).

assumed control. In particular, given the historic links between Spain and its former American colonies, the Nationalist leader focussed on this continent.[88] Accordingly, Spanish rightists across the Hispanophone Atlantic began to establish local branches of the Falange which, like the main party in Spain, were organised into strict hierarchies. Some of these – like in Argentina and Cuba – appeared before the eruption of hostilities in Spain but grew stronger following Franco's unification decree.[89]

In Colombia, the creation of a single Spanish right-wing party seemed to be the impetus for the establishment of a local branch as it was from mid-1937 that Falangist centres sprang up in various cities across the country. Many of the individuals who joined the party were also members of the various pro-Nationalist aid committees. Indeed, the Spanish Nationalist Centre in Bogotá was one such locale although they presumably chose a name that would be more palatable to the Colombian government. Shortly after the centre's inauguration in January 1938, Albareda named its president, the Spaniard Antonio Valverde Gil, as provincial delegate of the FET-JONS.[90]

The organisation held its first General Assembly at the centre on 13 February with more than sixty members in attendance. To kick off the proceedings, Albareda formalised Valverde's new position and gave him the responsibility of naming local heads all over Colombia so that 'New Spain' could have effective contact with the Spanish colony there. In a similar vein to Colombian-led fundraising efforts, illuminating the connection between the two, Albareda confirmed that Valverde would also be responsible for facilitating closer economic and commercial relations between Spain and Colombia. Finally, he read out telegrams from centres across the country, including thirty-six Falangists in Medellín, who swore their allegiance to Valverde.[91] Over the next few months, other branches appeared in Barranquilla, Cali, Manizales, Popayán and Bucaramanga.

El Siglo, which reported on the assembly, claimed that the FET-JONS limited 'itself to ensuring Spaniards have a better understanding of Nationalist Spain'.[92] However, as suggested above, the organisation was intricately linked to right-wing Colombians. Following the example of the Bogotá centre, other Falangist locales that opened across the country hung Spanish and Colombian flags and acted as a meeting point for pro-Nationalist Spaniards, Colombian Conservatives and religious figures. These centres set up their own newspapers in late 1938 such as Medellín's *Arriba España*, printed by the Catholic San Antonio publishers, and *Jerarquía* in Bogotá. The latter publication, under Valverde's direction, aimed to 'even more closely intertwine the hearts of Colombia and the *Madre Patria* until they beat in

[88] Lorenzo Delgado Gómez-Escalonilla, *Diplomacia Franquista y Política Cultural Hacia Iberoamérica, 1939-1953* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1988).
[89] Binns, *Argentina y la guerra civil española*; Jesús Cano Reyes and Ana Casado Fernández, *Cuba y la guerra civil española: la voz de los intelectuales* (Calambur, 2015). p.49
[90] *El Siglo*, 03-02-1938, p.1
[91] *El Siglo*, 21-01-1938, pp.1-4
[92] *El Siglo*, 21-01-1938, p.4

unison... towards the summit of true progress, freeing themselves from the Marxist plague and seeking shelter in the One Truth of Christ.'[93]

As this quote indicates, the FET-JONS in Colombia grew more daring under Santos's rule. No longer confining its activity to Spaniards, the organisation was now seeking a deeper relationship with its host nation even though the Colombian government still did not recognise Franco. Perhaps the act mostly exemplary of the group's increasingly bold domestic objectives came during Bogotá's quatercentenary celebrations when Valverde offered the city's Mayor a gold plaque engraved with the Falangist emblem in the name of General Franco. The letter that accompanied the gift confirmed that it came from 'New Spain which, in normal times, could have been at the front [of the celebrations]' but because of the international situation had 'been forced to watch this Centenary with the sad gaze of a mother whose extraordinary energy and efforts are totally consumed'.[94] Using imperial language that matched Spanish right-wing aspirations, Valverde thus suggested that the Nationalists were the true representatives of Spain who should be joining Colombia in celebrating the foundation of its capital city. The mayor evidently understood the inference because he initially rejected the plaque on the grounds that he could not officially accept a tribute from a government not recognised by his own, instead inviting Valverde to present the gift as 'a donation from the Spanish colony' in Bogotá.[95]

The activity of the local FET-JONS therefore aimed to establish unofficial relations with important Colombian figures even before Franco had won the civil war. Such actions inevitably caught the attention of liberal society, particularly given the ongoing debates about the intervention of foreigners in domestic politics explored in previous chapters. On the day that Valverde led a delegation to deliver the plaque to the mayor, protestors gathered around the city hall and threw rotten eggs at the group.[96] Two months later, and following increasing Falangist activity across Colombia, *El Liberal* and *El Heraldo* called for Valverde to be expelled from Colombia and his magazine to be banned in the country on the basis that he had violated Colombian laws on foreigners' non-intervention in national politics.[97]

In response, local rightists came out in defence of Valverde. *Veritas*'s director declared that the Spaniard could not be accused of interfering in domestic matters because he was the 'leader of the Spanish falangists resident in Colombia and the Spanish Falange is not an international party.' The logic for this hinged on the argument that 'Spain is not a foreign country amongst us'. Communism, on the other hand, was an international party founded in 'a barbaric country' and therefore, in the author's view, the government should be looking to ban *Tierra,* not *Jerarquía*.[98] In arguing against the FET-JONS's political intervention, Ariza confirmed that the party was tightly intertwined with the Colombian Right.

[93] 'Jerarquía', *Veritas*, 02-11-1938
[94] *El Siglo*, 27-08-1938
[95] *El Liberal*, 04-09-1938, p.1; *El Siglo*, 11-09-1938, p.1
[96] *El Siglo*, 11-09-1938, p.2
[97] Cited in 'Un atentado imposible', *Patria Nueva*, 26-11-1938
[98] *Veritas*, 23-11-1938, p.1

Although the existence of local branches of the FET-JONS was not unusual in the Hispanophone Atlantic, perhaps where Colombia did differ from its regional neighbours was in the Santos government's relationship with the group. Some governments, particularly in Argentina, welcomed the Falange and incorporated it into a larger network of fascist movements that came to the fore under Juan Perón in the early 1940s.[99] Others attempted to reign in Falangist activity, such as Cárdenas who virtually terminated the local FET-JONS in Mexico and Batista who ordered the Cuban branch to close in December 1937.[100] Santos, as part of his wider policy of *convivencia* and his commitment to party principles of liberty, allowed the FET-JONS to continue its activity despite its close relationship with the Conservative party and brazen attempts to interfere in national politics. This exposed the president to criticism from left-wing sectors of society who, as we saw in chapter three, increasingly likened him and his supporters to the Spanish Nationalists.

Certainly, it was under Santos's rule that a group of local Conservatives and Catholics proposed fascist political systems in Colombia. Inspired by the Spanish Right, they posited corporatism as a middle road between capitalism and communism. One of the key proponents of this idea was the Jesuit priest Félix Restrepo. Between 1906 and 1926, he had travelled regularly between Colombia, Spain, Germany and the Netherlands to continue his religious studies. These European trips coincided with several key events in European history. Restrepo was studying for a doctorate in Educational Sciences at a university in Munich when Adolf Hitler launched his failed putsch in November 1923, and he witnessed the early years of the Miguel Primo de Rivera dictatorship in Spain.[101] These experiences clearly had a profound impact on the young Jesuit and helped inform his view of Spanish (and world) events a decade later.

When the Spanish Civil War broke out, Restrepo was back in Colombia and Provincial Secretary of the *Universidad Javeriana* that he had helped re-establish in 1930. Since his return, he had also founded and directed various publications in Colombia, including the *Revista Javeriana* which, like many other Catholic publications at the time, engaged in extensive coverage of Spanish events that offered a biased and purposefully impassioned accounts. In particular, Restrepo became increasingly enamoured by European authoritarian systems as the conflict raged on, especially the FET-JONS. From January to June 1939, around ten per cent of the articles published in *Revista Javeriana* related to the Spanish party, its history, ideology and organisation. This fascination led to Restrepo proposing in late 1938 a distinctly Colombian version of the corporatist doctrine promoted by European rightists, including the Franco regime.

According to Restrepo's own understanding of corporatism, laid out in his book on the topic published in 1939, society was constituted by individuals who collaborated in a series of

[99] Federico Finchelstein, *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War: Fascism, Populism, and Dictatorship in Twentieth Century Argentina* (Oxford University Press, 2014). Particularly chapters 1-3
[100] On Mexico: Ricardo Pérez Montfort, "The Spanish Falange in Mexico, 1937-1942," in *Atlantic Crossroads: Webs of Migration, Culture and Politics Between Europe, Africa and the Americas, 1800–2020*, ed. José Moya (2021). On Cuba: Lambe, *No Barrier Can Contain It: Cuban Antifascism and the Spanish Civil War*. p.199
[101] Antonio Cacua Prada, *Félix Restrepo, S.J.* (Instituto Caro y Cuervo, 1997).

associations that could be social, regional, religious or professional. These so-called corporations were bodies of public law that had normative, executive and judicial power to resolve their own issues. The state thus recognised private ownership of means of production but still controlled society via a series of contracts to ensure that economic activity was turned to state ends.[102] This was not dissimilar to the corporatist systems enacted in fascist states, most notably Benito Mussolini's Italy and Antonio de Oliveira Salazar's Portugal, which Liberal observers highlighted when they accused the Jesuit of harbouring 'clear sympathies for the ideas of totalitarian states' and attempting to establish fascism in Colombia.[103]

Restrepo, however, was careful to distance himself from European dictatorial regimes. In a speech on 'Corporativism and Democracy' which he gave at the Colombian Academy of Jurisprudence in November 1938, he told the audience that corporatism and democracy were not mutually exclusive. He cited a series of examples from the democratic nations of Switzerland, Holland and Belgium before suggesting that the Liberal hero Rafael Uribe Uribe's call in 1904 for a Chamber of Workers which would be elected by workers' organisations was proof of corporatist tendencies within a Colombian (Liberal) tradition.[104] In the following month's edition of *Revista Javeriana*, the Jesuit elucidated his own vision of Colombian corporatism inspired by Spanish events. Commenting on *Corporativism gremial – La organización social en la España nueva* printed in Burgos, the Jesuit celebrated its conclusion that 'the only system suitable for Spain [is] the guild system with a traditional and Christian spirit.' This finding, he believed, proved that 'the Javeriana University is not alone in its task to guide the [Colombian] youth and people towards corporatism'.[105] Though Restrepo's own idea for a confessional corporative state stemmed from Pio XI's proposal of such a system in his 1931 *Quadragesimo Anno* encyclical, it was Nationalist Spain, not fascist Italy, where he saw his vision for Colombia's future coming to life.[106]

Indeed, the Spanish Civil War was partly responsible for Restrepo's conviction about the need for a corporatist state in Colombia. In a speech on the topic, which became the basis for his 1939 book, Restrepo cited the elimination of class struggle as one of the main motivations behind corporatism. Spain, as a country which, like Colombia, found itself 'on the edge of the abyss' as a result of communist influence, had been able to 'free itself [...] from the venom that the new apostles of materialism had injected into its veins' by returning to Catholicism and 'organising the new State along markedly corporatist lines.'[107] Restrepo's vision, which was shared by other right-wing figures including Gómez, set in motion a chain of events which would culminate in 1952 when the Conservative leader, now president, proposed a denominational corporate state to the National Constituent Assembly. This case resituates Colombia within a continental history of fascism. Whilst much has been written about Getúlio Vargas and Juan Perón's flirtation with corporatist systems, it is clear that important

[102] Félix Restrepo, *Corporativismo* (Ediciones de la Revista Javeriana, 1939).
[103] For example: *El Liberal*, 23-08-1938, p.5
[104] *La Defensa*, 03-12-1938, pp.9-10
[105] *Revista Javeriana*, December 1938
[106] Figueroa Salamanca, *Tradicionalismo, hispanismo y corporativismo*. pp.157-67
[107] Restrepo, *Corporativismo*. pp.26-36

Colombian figures also had similar designs for their country even if they were not in a position to implement them until a decade later.[108]

Certain sectors of liberalism grew increasingly vocal about the dangers of this growing Spanish-Colombian right-wing movement, especially Bogotá daily *El Liberal*. The newspaper, originally founded by General Rafael Uribe Uribe in 1911, was revived in August 1938 to be a mouthpiece for leftist Liberals after Santos's inauguration as president. The following November, *El Espectador* reported that a member of the Conference for American Democracy had uncovered a plot to re-establish a Spanish empire in America.[109] This is perhaps unsurprising in the context of increased Falangist activity and *El Liberal*'s daily news columnist surmised that such an endeavour was ultimately a fascist one. Positing Spain as the link between fascist powers and Colombia because of the support for Franco amongst Colombian rightists, he argued that 'the shortest and safest route' for a fascist invasion of the country was via the Spanish general. The level and intensity of this support led the commentator to conclude that 'America, imperial colony of a Germanised and fascist Spain, is not a strange fantasy'.[110]

Whilst the supposed parallels between López's government and the Spanish Republic led to accusations that the president was allowing communism to flourish in Colombia, Santos's policy of rapprochement with Conservatives drove fears that these were working with Nationalist Spain to impose authoritarian systems in the country. To a certain extent, these fears were founded. The growth of the Falangist movement and attempts to promote corporatism in Colombia suggest that the country experienced its own 'glocal fascism' although in this case the mutual interaction was with Spain, and it occurred later than fascism's first global moment.[111] Facilitated in part by local interpretations of and interactions with the Spanish Civil War, the political centre of gravity shifted to the right in Colombia.

Franco recognised

The Colombian Left's worst fears were seemingly realised when Santos recognised the Franco regime in April 1939. There exists a common view amongst US and Colombian historians that, in doing so, Colombia simply followed the USA's lead.[112] However, a closer look at the documents suggests a more complex picture that reflected Santos's international strategy of building strong, bilateral relations with specific nations including Spain. On 11 February 1939, after the fall of Barcelona, the Argentine government contacted their Latin American counterparts suggesting joint recognition of Franco once the British and French governments

[108] For example: Antonio Costa Pinto and Federico Finchelstein, *Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Europe and Latin America* (Routledge, 2018). The volume opens with reference to Gómez's 1952 project, but chapters focus on corporatism in Brazil, Argentina and Chile.
[109] Mentioned in *El Liberal*, 22-11-1938, p.5
[110] *El Liberal*, 22-11-1938, p.5
[111] Daniel Hedinger, "Fascism," in Andrew Denning and Heidi Tworek, eds., *The Interwar World* (Routledge, 2023).
[112] Bushnell, "Colombia." p.175; Medina, *Historia del partido comunista colombiano*. p.341

had taken similar action.[113] The Colombian response was tentatively positive but, when the new Foreign Minister Luis López de Mesa contacted Miguel López Pumarejo, Colombian Ambassador in Washington, for the US government's view, it was clear that their northern neighbour was unwilling to partake in any collective measure.[114] From this moment on, the Santos regime proceeded to make unilateral decisions regarding its relations with Spain, even if the president was made aware of potential US responses to his country's action.

Santos considered recognition of Franco 'inevitable' from at least 1 March when he offered José Umaña Bernal the post of Colombian minister to the Franco regime. In the invitation letter, the president stated that he was only waiting until the 'last stages of the Spanish tragedy' to recognise the new government. However, revealing the impact of leftist Liberal claims that Franco was planning a fascist invasion of Colombia, Santos warned Umaña that he considered 'this mission to be very delicate, it will have to be one of permanent observation and constant information. The new Spanish situation could pose dangers for our regime, as could the aim of certain powers to convert Spain into a weapon for penetration into Latin America'.[115] Two days later, the president brought the issue of recognition up in a Cabinet meeting stating his belief that the essential dissolution of the Republican government meant it was opportune, convenient and necessary to recognise the Nationalist regime. His ministers agreed and at no point was the US position mentioned.[116]

A week later Cabinet returned to the topic, discussing the best way to recognise the Nationalist government of Spain 'taking into account the dealings with governments of the old Gran Colombia as well as those of Panama and Chile.'[117] Though the USA was clearly not included in this cohort, the Santos government appears to have considered the Argentinian suggestion of joint action at least as it applied to Latin American nations. The theme of continental solidarity was certainly emphasised by both MRREE statements and Liberal reporting on the recognition of Franco,[118] and López de Mesa was in regular contact with regional neighbours – particularly Chile which had just elected its own Popular Front government in October 1938 – about their attitude towards the matter. The president himself kept track of other Latin American nations' relationship with Franco, as indicated by a scribbled note on a telegram from Paris informing him about which countries had recognised the Franco regime.[119] Yet, when it came to public action, the official documentation suggests that Colombia was far more independent.

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[113] 'Argentine Enquiry about the Recognition of Franco.' AGN.MRE.CD, Transferencia 8, Caja 314, Carpeta 294

[114] Argentine *chargé d'affaires* to Argentine Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 11-02-1939. AGN.MRE.CD, Transferencia 8, Caja 314, Carpeta 294; López de Mesa to López Pumarejo, 13-02-1939; response 15-02-1939. AGN.MRE.CD, Transferencia 8, Caja 314, Carpeta 294

[115] Santos to Umaña, 01-03-1939. BLAA.ES.MRE, Caja 2, Carpeta 3

[116] Minutes from ordinary session, 03-03-1939. Consejo de Ministros, *Actas del Gobierno de Eduardo Santos Montejo 1939-1940*, vol. 1.

[117] Minutes from ordinary session, 10-03-1939. *Actas del Gobierno*.

[118] For example: 'Franco fue reconocido', *El Diario*, 01-04-1939; 'Una política internacional', *El Tiempo*, 02-04-1939

[119] Colombian Legation in Paris to Santos, 11-03-1939. BLAA.ES.MRE, Caja 8, Carpeta 6

The day after the Cabinet meeting, presumably responding to Santos's update on the session, López Pumarejo told the president that he saw no 'urgency to recognise Franco' because such action would only 'interest and directly benefit the imperialist powers whilst undermining the principles that today constitute the greatest defence for weak countries.' He also reminded Santos that Roosevelt's 'Good Neighbor' policy meant that if Colombia deviated from the principles of respecting other nations' sovereignty it 'would undoubtedly produce a disturbing impression in the USA.'[120] Despite the ambassador's warning, Santos broke relations with the Republican government in Spain, taking control of the Spanish Legation on 9 March and ordering Melguizo to cease his own activities in Madrid the following day.[121] He did not, however, completely disregard his ambassador's advice regarding the recognition of Franco. On 14 March, the president told his minister in Quito that he 'would not be annoyed if Ecuador recognises Franco as soon as possible' but that Colombia would 'wait a few days.'[122]

The moment finally came two weeks later when, after Madrid fell to the Nationalists, López de Mesa informed López Pumarejo of the Colombian government's decision to recognise Franco citing 'the need to normalise our relations with Spain'. He proposed 1 April as the appropriate date.[123] On the same day, Santos cabled Umaña informing him that he 'was waiting for the fall of Madrid to recognise Franco' and that for 'one thousand reasons' he 'wanted this move to coincide with the end of the war to avoid making it seem like we were supporting one particular side.'[124] Making no reference to any other American nation, the president made clear that the move was his decision alone.

Indicative of the fact that Colombia was not following anyone else's lead, the MRREE sent telegrams to the governments of Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Panama, Haiti, Honduras, Dominican Republic and Mexico informing them of Santos's decision and highlighting how pleased his government would be if their nations took 'similar or parallel action.'[125] Most of the responses came back negative or uncommitted, although some praised the initiative. The Chilean government reacted positively to the idea but, because it was involved in a dispute with the Nationalists over Republican refugees in the Chilean Embassy in Madrid, it had to delay its recognition of Franco.[126] Chile requested that Colombia wait so that a joint declaration could still be made, but Santos was not going to be steered off course. His administration proceeded to independently recognise the Spanish general on 1 April, doing little more than updating the other Latin American governments of its action.

This highlights the hollowness of Santos's rhetoric of a joint declaration; the Colombian government stuck to the date it had originally proposed in full knowledge that it would be

[120] López Pumarejo to Santos, 08-03-1939. BLAA.ES.MRE, Caja 8, Carpeta 6
[121] Santos to Melguizo, 10-03-1939. BLAA.ES.MRE, Caja 8, Carpeta 6
[122] Santos to Gómez Picón, 14-03-1939. BLAA.ES.MRE, Caja 8, Carpeta 6
[123] López de Mesa to López Pumarejo, 28-03-1939. AGN.MRE.CD, Transferencia 8, Caja 314, Carpeta 294
[124] Santos to Umaña, 28-03-1939. BLAA.ES.MRE, Caja 2, Carpeta 3
[125] Letters to first five were sent on 28 March and to final four on 29 March. BLAA.ES.MRE, Caja 8, Carpeta 6
[126] Colombian Minister in Santiago to López de Mesa, 31-03-1939. AGN.MRE.CD, Transferencia 8, Caja 314, Carpeta 294

acting alone. Significantly, the telegrams also show how, with the exception of Ecuador, the Santos administration made its decision to recognise Franco without any information on when the other governments were planning to take such action. The decision was also based on purely *Colombian*, not American, concerns. Although Santos stated that the timing of the move was consistent with his government's desire to maintain an aura of impartiality vis-à-vis Spain, it is plausible that the president saw the process of recognition as an opportunity to further his objective of making Colombia an independent international actor. Certainly, the contrast with López's expressed desire to secure regional consensus before making any decisions on the Spanish conflict could not be starker. As per the letter to Washington, the decision was also made according to a pragmatic understanding of Colombia's relationship with Spain, as opposed to the ideological interpretation of the Spanish Civil War pursued by the López government. Ironically, whilst the latter's incoherent foreign policy meant that the conflict ultimately became an impediment to his attempts to institutionalise inter-American cooperation, the former was successfully able to align his Spanish and international policies so that they were mutually reinforcing.

Further, it is reasonable to assert that by recognising Franco as soon as practicably possible, the new president was also appeasing Conservatives and Catholics in Colombia. Indeed, when recounting to Congress in 1939 the events of the previous year, López de Mesa reiterated the notion that 'The situation in Spain with respect to America cannot be considered extracontinental' – i.e. the historic ties between the two regions meant that the Spanish conflict was America's conflict – but, instead of discourses of democracy and legitimacy, what linked Colombia to its old colonial power was now 'Blood, language, civilisation and culture.'[127] Such lexis, traditionally the domain of Colombian Conservatives, harked back to ideas of *Hispanismo* and the exaltation of the colonial legacy which were more in line with the Nationalists' conceptualisation of the relationship between Spain and its ex-colonies. By articulating contemporary Colombian-Spanish ties in neocolonial terms, the Santos government indicated its intention to maintain good relationship with the new Franco regime.

Despite these public demonstrations of harmony, the president clearly recognised the potential implications of the growing links between the Spanish and Colombian Right. When he wrote to inform Umaña that he had officially been named Colombian representative in Madrid, Santos reminded him of 'the main objective of your mission: permanent observation of new Spanish politics, of plans for ideological penetration of Latin America and respective measures adopted, of connections that may exist between reactionary parties there and here.'[128] Even as his foreign minister appeared to publicly endorse Francoist's imperialist designs, the president took private action to ensure these would never be realised.

[127] República de Colombia, *Memoria del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores al Congreso* (Imprenta Nacional, 1939). p.XCVI

[128] Santos to Umaña, 21-04-1939. BLAA.ES.MRE, Caja 8, Carpeta 6

Conclusion

The Colombian experience of the global aid Spain movement sheds light on the intersection of the transnational, national and local in humanitarian relief efforts. Spanish-led aid initiatives attempted at different points and to varying degrees to highlight their apoliticism as a way to navigate national laws on the non-intervention of foreigners in domestic politics as well as in response to criticisms from local groups. At the same time, however, they needed to work with other local and national organisations to realise their relief efforts. Colombian-led campaigns also viewed their activity as part of global movements to advance transnational ideologies but always through local lenses as a way to oppose rival domestic groups and sometimes as a way to advance national political and economic agendas. The humanitarian campaign for Spain, in addition to being a moral imperative, became for groups and individuals in Colombia another tool for them to assert their own competing visions for the country's future.

The new Santos administration also engaged in pro-Spain humanitarianism but in ways that reflected its new domestic programme. Santos did not tie himself to any specific faction within Colombian politics meaning his Spanish policy could be guided by his government's desire to establish strong bilateral links with several key nations over any continental arrangements. This was facilitated by the fact that, when he took office, the Spanish government was presenting itself as more moderate and the outcome of the war was becoming more obvious. Santos therefore had a much more consistent and pragmatic approach to the Spanish Civil War than his predecessor. He succeeded in his main objective of maintaining good relations with whichever Spanish government was in power. These goals were facilitated by the impetus given to reorganising the MRREE and institutionalisation of the diplomatic and consular profession. His administration was able to exert more control over its representatives in Spain to ensure they were acting per Colombia's position on the conflict, and always on the orders of the government. Similarly, Santos's Spanish policy reflected his broader international diplomacy and attempts to establish a more individualistic position for his country on the world stage. The next chapter will delve into one particular aspect of Santos's policy towards Spain: the tightening of immigration restrictions to avoid 'undesirables' entering the country.

Chapter 6 – Republican refugees in the development of Colombian immigration policy (1936-42)

As the Spanish Civil War entered its final months, hundreds of thousands of Republicans fled Spain. The increasingly vengeful rhetoric of the Franco regime convinced many who had participated in the Spanish Republic – or merely supported it – that their lives would be at risk if they stayed. A smaller, but still significant, number of Republicans who were abroad for all or part of their country's conflict suddenly found that they could not return. All these individuals faced a stark decision: wait in neighbouring countries, especially France, until the 'New Spain' collapsed and it was safe enough for them to return, or seek a new life far from the impending crisis of another European conflict.

A sizable portion of the new exile community who opted to leave Europe turned their gaze towards the Hispanophone Atlantic. Aside from the supposed social and cultural links between these so-called 'Hispanic' countries and Spain – an idea that both Nationalists and Republicans had propagated during the civil war as they vied for international support – the American continent appeared as a beacon of peace and democracy in contrast to beleaguered Europe. On top of this, certain Latin American political parties and populations had openly supported the Spanish Republic during the conflict and therefore seemed like a hospitable environment for Republican exiles. Most notably, the Mexican government had sent military aid to its Spanish counterpart during the civil war, and it received around 20,000 Republicans fleeing Francoist reprisals after the fighting ceased.[1]

This thesis has established that the two Liberal governments in Colombia were also rhetorically supportive of Republican Spain even if they were either unable or unwilling to turn words into tangible action. However, the country received far fewer refugees from Spain than other nations in the region whose stance on the conflict had been more ambiguous or even hostile towards the Spanish Republic such as Argentina, Chile and the Dominican Republic. This was in part due to demand: officially only an estimated 1,894 Spaniards applied for Colombian visas between July 1936 and May 1942, the point at which visa requests decreased dramatically.[2] However, the number who enquired was likely much higher because

[1] Julio Aróstegui, 'La emigración de los años treinta,' in: Carmen Martínez Gimeno, ed., *Historia general de la emigración española a iberoamérica*, vol. 1 (Historia 16, 1996). p.459

[2] I derived this figure from visa requests and port arrivals pertaining to the period 1936-1942 in the following archives: AGN.MRE.DC Transferencia 10, Secciones Primera y Segunda; AGN.MRE.DC Transferencia 1, Departamentos Consular, Diplomático, y Inmigración; AGN.MRE.DC Transferencia 6, Grupo Interno de Nacionalidad y Visas; AGN.MRE.DC Transferencia 8, Consulados y Legaciones en Bélgica, España, y Francia; BLAA.ES.MRE; and BLAA.ES.CV. I inputted each visa request or port arrival in a database with information on date and location of request, name of applicant, name of invitee (where relevant), any supporting information, date and result of decision, consulate where the visa was issued, issue date, arrival date, arrival port. Where one request covers multiple individuals, I inputted each individual into the database. Where applications referred to '*y familia*' or '*y hijos*' I inputted one or two unnamed entries respectively. Sometimes, information for one entry came from a variety of different sources. This database is called Spanish Visa Applications Database and from hereon will be cited as SVAD.

many consular officials simply turned potential immigrants away without formalising their request. Demand alone does not, therefore, explain why Colombia had such a small exile community: the Colombian government's stance on immigration also played a crucial role. As we will see, this stance was greatly informed by the developing notions of race discussed in chapter two and the policy shift that occurred after Santos took office.

Given the relatively insignificant number of arrivals from Spain (no more than 850 of those who applied actually came to Colombia) historians have tended to ignore how the Spanish Civil War impacted Colombian immigration in the early twentieth century. Compounding this oversight is the widespread notion that Colombia has never been a country of (European) immigrants.[3] However, this chapter will show how the conflict in Spain and subsequent refugee crisis occurred at a key time for Colombian immigration policy. The new Liberal regimes, concerned with 'modernising' the nation, grappled with questions of what place, if any, immigrants had in building this new society. At the same time, heightened fear of 'international' movements such as communism and fascism drove many to fear what large contingents of new arrivals, particularly from Europe, might do to their own domestic politics. Given this context, the Spanish war represented both an opportunity and a threat, and it loomed heavy in Colombian debates around immigration.

Even so, the Republican refugee crisis was not the only such event in 1930s Europe: Nazi occupation of eastern and central Europe coupled with its growing antisemitic legislation sparked a mass exodus of Jews many of whom also looked to Latin America. Antisemitism was not limited to the German Reich and the increase in visa applications from European Jews, combined with the notion that these immigrants were racially and culturally distinct from Latin American populations, pushed Latin American governments to implement new regulations to block or limit the arrival of Jewish refugees. Colombia was no different and the tightening of restrictions in the late 1930s was largely targeted at this 'undesirable' immigration. Although Colombian officials had traditionally seen Spaniards as welcome additions given their shared heritage and purported disposition towards farming, the politicisation of the Spanish conflict explored in previous chapters spilt over into discussions about Republican refugees. Concerns about a 'red wave' from Spain intersected with anxieties over a Jewish 'invasion' and, as this chapter reveals, Republicans that may have previously been considered 'useful' were unofficially grouped into the category of 'undesirable' and blocked from coming to the country.

Throughout the late 1930s, Colombian policy towards Spanish immigration responded to both domestic concerns and international developments. However, the Republicans themselves were not mere recipients of these policies. Through continual contact with Colombian officials and other expatriates and exiles from Spain, they were aware of both the

[3] Many histories of transatlantic migration during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries focus on North America and the Southern Cone. Benjamin Bryce, "Entangling Labor Migration in the Americas, 1840–1940," in *The Cambridge History of Global Migrations. Volume 2: Migrations, 1800–Present*, ed. Marcelo Borges and Madeline Hsu (2023). During this same period, Colombian officials themselves believed felt they did not have the infrastructure to attract European immigration. Appelbaum, *Muddied Waters*. Particularly pp.52-7

possibilities for and restrictions against their emigration to Colombia. Certain individuals then exploited this knowledge and existing networks to navigate Colombian immigration law and facilitate their arrival in the country. Where they were unable to obtain satisfactory results through lawful means, some refugees resorted to illegal measures to enter Colombia. National and local authorities, in turn, responded to such action by implementing new policies and procedures. Following Lauren Banko, Katarzyna Nowak and Peter Gatrell's call to 'make the displaced more visible as purposeful agents' in histories of refugeedom, the final part of this chapter will illustrate how Republican refugees themselves helped shape Colombian immigration policy in the early twentieth century.[4]

Immigration before July 1936

Although a recurrent topic of political discussion, immigration never really became a key issue before the mid-1930s. As the nation transformed from Gran Colombia into the United States of Colombia and finally the Republic of Colombia, each successive regime attempted to encourage immigration as a means of colonising territory. In the process, elites pondered the question of the ideal immigrant and introduced sporadic pieces of legislation on which foreigners could and could not settle in the country. However, in contrast to other Latin American nations, Colombia did not receive a significant number of immigrants in the nineteenth century due to a lack of tangible state support in the context of ongoing internal conflict.[5] Those groups who did arrive were not necessarily from the parts of the world that leaders had intended.[6]

Faced with the failure of their European immigration project, and amidst global interest in theories of scientific racism, Colombian governments turned their full attention towards immigration policy in the early 1900s. Decree 496 of 1909 formally defined the term 'immigrant' and established the first immigration department in the *Ministerio de Obras Públicas* (MOOPP).[7] Eleven years later, Law 48 'on immigration and foreigners' enshrined the principle of free immigration for the first time into legislation. This was sixty-seven years after the Argentinian constitution declared this same principle and fourteen years after an equivalent law came into effect in Bolivia. The new Colombian ruling included some restrictions, however, based in part on the experiences of their regional neighbours. In Argentina, for example, elites started blaming unrestricted immigration – and the immigrants themselves – for their country's social, political and economic problems from the 1890s

[4] Lauren Banko, Katarzyna Nowak, and Peter Gatrell, "What is refugee history, now?," *Journal of Global History* 7, no. 1 (2022).
[5] Frédéric Martínez, "Apogeo y decadencia del ideal de la inmigración europea en Colombia, siglo XIX," *Boleten Cultural y Bibliográfico* 34, 44 (1997).
[6] Ana Milena Rhenals Doria and Francisco Javier Flórez Bolívar, "Escogiendo entre los extranjeros "indeseables": afro-antillanos, sirio-libaneses, raza e inmigración en Colombia, 1880-1937," *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura* 40, 1 (2013).
[7] *Diario Oficial*, Año XLV, N.13.847. 26-11-1909

onwards.[8] Article 7 of the Colombian law therefore prohibited beggars, the homeless, the unemployed and those without 'honourable' jobs, sex traffickers, political agitators and convicted criminals from entering the country.[9]

Over the next decade, subsequent Conservative governments introduced a series of new immigration laws which sought to better define the ideal immigrant and control their arrival into and activity within Colombia. This was representative of a wider trend of exclusionary immigration policies across the Americas, although the Colombian case is noteworthy for its lateness. Law 114 of 1922 aimed to 'strengthen the immigration of individuals and families who because of their personal and racial conditions cannot and should not be subject to precautions'. This comprised workers (manual or professional) over sixty who were able to confirm their 'identity, morality and ability'. At the same time, the new law prohibited the arrival of 'individuals whose ethnic, organic or social condition made them inconvenient for the nation and the development of the Colombian race' in addition to the groups already covered in Law 48.[10] Five years later, Law 103 established that all immigrants should possess a passport with a visa issued by a Colombian consular agent and also set out various conditions on which foreigners could be expelled from the country.[11]

The focus on social as well as ethnic characteristics reflected the ongoing debates about the Colombian 'race', but legislation was still vague as to what 'conditions' made a potential immigrant 'inconvenient' [*inconveniente*] for Colombia. This ambiguity opened up a space for some public debate on the issue which was broadly divided into two camps. The group that opposed immigration believed that Colombia should turn its gaze inward to ensure its future development. During the conferences on 'Colombia's race issue' in 1920, organised to discuss the supposed 'degeneration' of the national population, the medic Jorge Bejarano argued that the way to overcome the country's perceived backwardness was not by encouraging European immigration but by refining the habits and behaviours of Colombians themselves.[12] He emphasised that high birth rates proved the country would be able to effectively populate its territory, so the government should instead concentrate on creating better defences against poverty and unsanitary conditions.[13] For this task, Bejarano placed the onus on Colombian women to whom he addressed his speech: 'in order to improve the physical condition of your children condemned to premature degeneration and decrepitude… seek in physical education the harmony and beauty of your body and mind.' He implored: 'Mothers! Remember that there is no better immigration than that of your own children!'[14] In doing so, he upheld a gendered view of society advanced by many eugenicists across the world that posited control of women's bodies as key to ensuring the nation's future.

[8] Carl Solberg, *Immigration and Nationalism: Argentina and Chile, 1890–1914* (University of Texas Press, 1970).
[9] *Diario Oficial*, Año LVI, No.17.392, 03-11-1920
[10] *Diario Oficial*, Año LIX, Nos.18.693-4, 08-01-1923
[11] *Diario Oficial*, No.20.656, 29-11-1927
[12] Jorge Bejarano, 'Quinta conferencia', in: Muñoz, ed., *Los problemas de la raza en Colombia*. pp.237-300
[13] Muñoz, ed., *Los problemas de la raza en Colombia*. pp.250-3
[14] Jorge Bejarano, 'Sexta conferencia', in: Muñoz, ed., *Los problemas de la raza en Colombia*. p.266

Those who supported immigration emphasised the vast swathes of 'unsettled' national territory in Colombia and the apparent 'backwardness' of the 'Colombian race' to support their view. Repeating an idea common across Latin America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, they advocated for settler colonialism to propel the country forward. Exemplary of this trend, the Colombian Consul in Boston, Enrique Naranjo Martínez, published a series of essays on race and immigration in 1927. These were no doubt influenced by the Municipal Theatre conferences earlier that decade but were also shaped by his experience of living in a racially segregated US city. Indeed, he claimed that the USA would have been a 'mediocre' nation were it not for 'the great masses of European settlers'. To follow the US example and 'make a great and prosperous Nation', Colombia needed 'to populate the country' and 'attract great masses of well-selected immigration'. According to Naranjo, the benefits of this would be two-fold. On the one hand, the arrival of 'Europe's healthy population' to 'our uninhabited mountains and plains' would bring economic development and, on the other, the 'deformed' Colombian population 'would learn very quickly if they come into contact with civilised immigrants'. The consul clearly equated whiteness with progress and the timeline he gave for the policy to produce the desired results – twenty-five to fifty years – suggested the 'learning' he had in mind was more biological than socio-cultural.[15]

Taken together, Bejarano and Naranjo's views illuminated the contentions over racialised conceptualisations of 'backwardness' and 'modernity' in early twentieth-century Colombia, as well as the global context within which such contestation occurred. Whilst the former employed neo-Lamarckian ideas to propose 'uplifting' the national 'race' through health and educational measures, the latter based his argument that European immigration was the only viable solution on Mendelian notions of heredity. In turn, these debates around how to tackle Colombia's 'race issue' reflected wider discussions about the application of eugenics in Latin America.[16]

It was against this backdrop of increasing regulation and discussion of immigration that the Liberal regime came into power in August 1930. Building upon concerns that 'free' immigration was threatening Colombian national identity, Enrique Olaya Herrera's government introduced Decree 2232 of 1931 which set up a quota system for immigrants from various eastern European, Asian and Middle Eastern nations. Ten individuals from each of the nationalities covered in the decree were permitted to enter Colombia each year.[17] By implicitly allowing for unrestricted arrivals from all other parts of Europe, the move also satisfied those who felt that European immigration would help modernise the country. Decrees 2247 of 1932, 25 of 1934 and 148 of 1935 added Armenia, Egypt, Estonia, Latvia, Morocco, Palestine and Persia to the list of restricted nationalities and reduced the quotas for Bulgaria, China, Greece,

[15] 'Necesidad de la Inmigración a Colombia', enclosed in letter to Santos, 08-03-1938. BLAA.ES.CV, Caja 8, Carpeta 1

[16] Leys Stepan, *"The Hour of Eugenics"*.

[17] *Diario Oficial*, Año LXVII, No.21.873, 23-12-1931

India, Lithuania, Russia, Turkey and Yugoslavia to five immigrants per year (it is not clear whether this figure included family members).[18]

Alfonso López Pumarejo had assumed the presidency by the time the final decree was issued. However, the new government found that the quota system was causing a bureaucratic nightmare because requests exceeded places by ten to one.[19] López therefore modified immigration policy by removing all quotas and dividing potential immigrants into two categories: foreigners in general and those belonging to certain nationalities. Decree 1194 dealt with the latter, requiring successful applicants to pay a deposit of between 100 and 1,000 pesos depending on their age and sex.[20] All other foreigners fell under Decree 1697 which established a reduced deposit of 250 pesos only applicable to men over seventeen and married women who came to live in Colombia without a prearranged work contract.[21] Although he adapted the means, López continued his predecessor's overarching approach to immigration. Indeed, a letter by Foreign Minister Jorge Soto del Corral written just before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War expressed the government's desire to 'select immigrants and encourage those foreigners who because of their racial and cultural characteristics [...] will fit in with Colombia' but 'close the doors to undesirable foreigners'.[22]

The two Liberal governments' stance on immigration highlighted how their vision for Colombia's future was built on racist understandings of who could best contribute to this 'modern' nation. Though not an imitation of nineteenth-century ideas of white migration at a source of development – the governments' emphasis on immigrants 'fitting in' suggested that members did not necessarily share others' pessimistic views about the Colombian 'race' – immigration policy contrasted sharply with the contemporary move towards promoting *mestizaje* in countries such as Brazil and Mexico and within Colombia itself. It once again highlighted the hollowness of Liberal rhetoric about greater inclusion. Whilst politicians and intellectuals espoused discourses of national identity that celebrated Colombia's mixed population, at least as far as Euro-descendant and Indigenous groups were concerned, they implemented legislation that would prevent the arrival of non-white and non-Christian immigrants into the country lest they taint the national 'race'. The inclusion of eastern European nations, historically Christian and ethnically white, on the list of 'undesirable' nationalities also reflected the politicised notions of race discussed in chapter two because these countries were associated with communism or Judaism. As we will see, this precedent had significant consequences for Colombia's approach towards Republican immigration in the late 1930s.

[18] *Diario Oficial*, Año LXVIII, No.22.181, 07-01-1932; *Diario Oficial*, Año LXX, No.22.496, 26-01-1934; *Diario Oficial*, Año LXXI. No.22.814, 18-02-1935

[19] Instructions that the MRREE imparts to Jorge Soto del Corral, Minister in France, 09-02-1938. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 6, Caja 468, Carpeta 70

[20] *Diario Oficial*, Año LXXII, No.23.203, 09-06-1936

[21] *Diario Oficial*, Año LXXII, No.23.247, 01-08-1936

[22] Quoted in 'El problema de la inmigración', *El Tiempo*, 27-07-1936

"El peligro rojo"

Notwithstanding officials' and certain interested parties' increasing focus on immigration, the issue did not receive consistent and widespread national attention until the mid-1930s. Then, in November 1936, *La Prensa* announced that '29 COMMUNISTS ARRIVED AT PUERTO COLOMBIA FROM SPAIN'.[23] The story – which was later revealed to be false – was a reaction to the actions of Southern Cone governments who were drafting bills to impede the entry of 'undesirable elements' (in this case, communists) from Spain. It also responded to a longer Colombian tradition of associating immigrants with the spread of left-wing ideologies in the aftermath of the Russian and Mexican revolutions.[24] The journalist who wrote the story complained how the reported arrivals saw the country as an 'ideal' refuge given that 'here they do not face obstacles such as simple measures of social hygiene that other governments of Central and South America have erected.'[25] By referring to restrictive immigration laws as 'measures of social hygiene', he implied that the Spaniards' presence would be harmful to Latin American society. This pathologisation of migrants was not unusual for the time (indeed it is a phenomenon that has persisted into twenty-first-century debates around asylum seekers) but it is noteworthy that in this particular case the supposed immigrants did not represent a particularly large contingent and, more importantly, their presence was not even confirmed.

Despite the report's dubious veracity, the news sent shockwaves across the country. National newspapers from both sides of the political divide began to catastrophise about what the arrival of Spanish communists might mean for their country. *El Tiempo*'s daily news columnist referred to them as 'dangerous travellers' and 'professional agitators' who saw Latin America as fertile land for their corrupting ideologies.[26] Armando Carbonell from *El Siglo* declared that Colombia was 'being invaded by Spanish communists... without port authorities putting up any resistance against such undesirable elements.'[27] Significantly, these two newspapers were the mouthpiece for moderate Liberals and the Conservative party respectively and so their fears of a 'communist invasion' reflected their views of Republican Spain.

As Conservatives blamed lax government policy for the appearance of the unwanted Spanish guests, local authorities and civil society groups began to petition the government for tighter immigration restrictions. The day after the alleged incident, members of Barranquilla's municipal council called for a national law to prohibit the entry of 'an international sect that has engraved into its banners hatred against the concepts of nation, property, home and order'.[28] In Bogotá, a group of industry owners planned to submit their urgent request for

[23] *La Prensa*, 20-11-1936, p.1
[24] Maryluz Vallejo, *Xenofobia al rojo vivo en Colombia: Extranjeros perseguidos y expulsados en el siglo XX* (Planeta, 2022).
[25] *La Prensa*, 20-11-1936
[26] *El Tiempo*, 21-11-1936, p.5
[27] 'Invasión de comunistas a Colombia', *El Siglo*, 22-11-1936
[28] *El Tiempo*, 22-11-1936, p.5

'new measures that restrict the immigration of dangerous foreigners whose disruptive aims are not in doubt' to top government officials.[29] Even after a correspondent disproved the particular case of the twenty-nine Spanish extremists three days after the original report surfaced,[30] newspapers continued to discuss the 'flood of communists into Colombia' for the rest of the year.[31]

The reality of the situation could not have been more different. Official visa records suggest that very few people from Spain were travelling to Colombia during the first few months of the civil war. Only two per cent (40) of the 1,894 requests came from the period July to August 1936, and 38 per cent of these (15) may never have arrived.[32] Those who did reach Colombia left for different reasons than Republican refugees from mid-1937 onwards. For example, Ascensión Villalón y Mateo was the Spanish wife of Colombian citizen José Ignacio Sanclemente who was repatriated from Madrid in September 1936.[33] Sanclemente gave interviews to journalists on his return which implied that he and his wife were not particularly sympathetic towards the Republican cause.[34] Other arrivals were Republicans but not necessarily escaping the war. Luis de Zulueta, a politician and university professor, had been Spanish Ambassador to the Vatican when the conflict erupted. Following a Nationalist campaign to have him expelled, he travelled to Paris from where he wrote to Eduardo Santos enquiring about the possibility of emigrating to Colombia.[35] Indicative of opportunism that will be discussed further down, the future president offered Zulueta a contract and even covered his travel expenses, meaning that the Republican came to Colombia without ever having personally witnessed the fighting in Spain.[36]

This raises the issue of who can be considered a refugee and how migration is historicised. Lara Putnam has argued that human mobility in the Greater Caribbean challenges the assumption that all migrants are oppressed and othered.[37] It is clear from the above that not all who arrived in Colombia as a result of the Spanish Civil War shared the same experience. Further, though applicants increasingly appealed to their refugee status after March 1939, visa records are an imperfect source for ascertaining someone's political ideology, especially at a time when immigration restrictions centred around nationality. Even where it is possible to identify political leanings, the changing course of the conflict also affected who might fall into the category of refugee. Especially during the first months of fighting, rightist Spaniards were subject to popular violence, and as battle arenas moved from one location to the next

[29] *El Colombiano*, 23-11-1936, p.1
[30] 'Se rectifica la noticia', *El Tiempo*, 23-11-1936
[31] For example: 'Avalancha comunista hacia Colombia', *El Pueblo*, 19-12-1936
[32] SVAD
[33] Jorge Castaño Castillo to Turbay, 22-01-1937, AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 8, Caja 498, Carpeta 326
[34] *Diario del Pacífico*, 12-10-1936, p.2
[35] Zulueta to Santos, 28-10-1936. BLAA.ES Correspondencia Personajes (hereafter BLAA.ES.CP), Caja 20, Carpeta 5
[36] Zulueta to Manuel Marulanda, 26-12-1936. BLAA.ES.CP, Caja 20, Carpeta 5; Zulueta to Santos, 11-12-1936. BLAA.ES.CP, Caja 20, Carpeta 5
[37] Lara Putnam, "Borderlands and Border Crossers: Migrants and Boundaries in the Greater Caribbean, 1840–1940," *Small Axe* 43 (2014).

individuals who were not necessarily vulnerable to direct attacks may have decided to leave their home. For this chapter, any individual from Spain who from July 1936 to May 1942 requested a visa for reasons that were not explicitly commercial, transitory or returning home is classed as a refugee. This also reflects the way Colombians perceived Spanish immigration at the time. Though refugees came from a variety of backgrounds and left for a variety of reasons, concerns around the number of Republicans looking to emigrate to America after the Spanish Civil War combined with various groups' tendency to conflate the Spanish Republic with communism meant that any visa request from Spain during the late 1930s and 1940s was viewed with suspicion either by the government or by wider society.

In fact, the López government responded to the public outcry against the potential arrival of Spanish extremists by instructing consular officials specifically on Spanish immigration. On 28 December, the MRREE sent a confidential letter to the Colombian consul general in Paris informing him of its decision to 'restrict the ease with which Spaniards can come to the country' and requesting that he send a circular to all diplomats and consuls in Europe instructing them not to issue visas to Spaniards without first consulting with the Madrid Legation or Paris General Consulate. The measure, Turbay declared, was 'in anticipation of future evils' given that 'many of these naturally profess doctrines contrary to our institutions and there is a danger that they will come to propagate these inconvenient doctrines, or that they will simply be made up of many undesirable elements.'[38] The foreign minister's justification revealed the influence of anti-Spanish immigration campaigns.

However, López did not issue any decrees or legislation against Spanish immigration and his government was seemingly sympathetic towards the plight of the refugees. Hernando Téllez was the Colombian consul in the French port city of Marseille from September 1937 to October 1938. According to his son, Germán, who lived with Téllez in France: 'Alfonso López Pumarejo named him consul in Marseille with a specific mission: provide a Colombian passport or visa for all European refugees... in particular giving priority to Spanish refugees.'[39] Certainly, Téllez's appointment occurred during López's presidency and he replaced Jorge Castaño Castillo who had written a series of letters to the MRREE in early 1937 expressing his opposition to Spanish immigration.[40] Whether or not López specifically authorised Téllez to accept Republican refugees is harder to determine. Records from the Marseille Consulate are absent from the period June 1937 to March 1938, although all of the twenty-seven visa applications from Spaniards between April and October 1938 were approved. More broadly, 94 per cent of all Spaniards who applied for visas between July 1936 and August 1938 when López stepped down (106/113) had their requests granted.[41] This suggests that the López

[38] Instructions that the MRREEE imparts to Jorge Soto del Corral, Minister in France, 09-02-1938. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 6, Caja 468, Carpeta 70

[39] Author's interview with Germán Téllez, 14-09-2022, Bogotá. Translation for this and future interviews are my own.

[40] Castaño to MRREE, 15-10-1936, 12-01-1937, 22-01-1937, 12-03-1937. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 8, Caja 498, Carpeta 326

[41] SVAD

administration did look favourably on immigration from Spain despite concerns about 'inconvenient doctrines'.

"Inmigrantes indeseadables"

When Eduardo Santos took office, he inherited an immigration policy that was still open to Spanish immigration even if it recognised public anxieties around arrivals from Spain. As mentioned in the previous chapter, his presidency coincided with a significant moment in the civil war. But whilst the Republican government's attempts to negotiate peace with General Franco's forces made it easier for the new Colombian president to maintain his country's support for the Spanish Republic, it had the opposite effect on the issue of immigration. The Franco regime, which had just won the Aragón offensive and was looking increasingly likely to win the war, responded to their opponent's overtures with scorn and doubled down on repressing their enemies.[42] By February 1939, Franco published the Law of Political Responsibilities which declared as military rebels all Popular Front supporters and those who had opposed the July 1936 coup.[43] The repression, coupled with increasing Nationalist victories, forced an increasing number of Republicans across the French border and into exile.

Colombian visa records reflect this surge in the number of Republican refugees. From August 1938, the MRREE received around ten visa applications per month, up from an average of five per month in the preceding period. From January 1939, these figures grew even higher and requests from that year accounted for 29 percent of all applications studied here. A report from Gregorio Obregón, Colombian Minister in Paris, describes how the final two months of war were 'an intense period' in which 'practically all working hours were absorbed' by visa applications from Republican refugees. Even in June, as he penned the letter to the MRREE, he described how 'the demand continues'.[44] What was a practical problem for Obregón became a public issue for Colombia as the increased demand gave way to greater numbers of arrivals from Spain. Newspapers, particularly in port cities, began to complain about these 'red refugees' and businesses started to worry about the impact of these new immigrants on the economy.[45]

These reports once again brought the issue of immigration into the public sphere. Writing in his regular column for *El Liberal*, Armando Solano complained that 'every businessman and peddler feels empowered to demand that a group of foreigners not be received in the country'. He continued, 'no one wants to talk about the economic growth, population

[42] For a discussion of Francoist repression during the Spanish Civil War see 'Chapter 12' in Paul Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain* (HarperPress, 2013). Particularly pp.459-68 for violence after mid-1938.
[43] Preston, *The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution and Revenge*. p.296
[44] Obregón to MRREE, 16-06-1939. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 8, Caja 468, Carpeta 72
[45] For example in Cali which is where arrivals to the port of Buenaventura would go to secure onward travel for the interior: *Diario del Pacífico,* 01-03-1939, p.1; López de Mesa refers to complaints by local businesses in a letter to Ramón Emiliani and Pedro Juan Navarro, 29-04-1939. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 1, Departamento de Inmigración.

betterment and cultural uplifting that would result from the arrival of a certain class of immigrant.' As a result, Colombia 'stays the same, without increased consumption, without crop development, without exporting products. Meanwhile, only Argentina and other countries with strong immigration are making solid progress in America.' Solano thus continued the tradition of linking immigration to development and comparing Colombia's record unfavourably with that of its regional neighbours. Turning to the matter of Republican refugees, and reiterating views expressed during the conflict, Solano declared that 'the bulk of Spanish immigration is made up of labourers, artisans and the middle classes... Those who claim that all these people are communists... are wrong. They are simply dignified and loyal men who succumbed in the fight for Spain's independence and freedom.'[46]

Responding to these comments, *El Siglo*'s daily news columnist argued that, whilst it was 'logical that a leftist like Solano requests... accommodation of all these types of people in our nation', the dangers of such an approach were clear. He considered the 'two sides of the problem... ideological and material.' The latter related to the inconvenience of 'hand[ing] over to foreigners our land that the rural Colombian masses desperately need' and therefore harked back to previous arguments against immigration in general. The former referred to Republican refugees in particular because 'they will in one way or another promote leftist ideas' which would 'subject the spiritual values of [our] nation to attack.'[47] In this way, departing from previous assertions about the desirability of Spanish immigration because of cultural similarities, certain sectors of society considered Republicans to be alien in the same way as the nationalities covered by Decree 1194 of 1936. This indicates that Colombia was not immune from the pre-Cold War anti-communist sentiment that swept the globe in the interwar period, even if in the Colombian case these ideologies intersected with deeper-rooted understandings of the country's relationship with Spain.

Yet Republican refugees were not the only group arriving in Colombia in the late-1930s. Between Santos assuming the presidency and March 1939, when the aforementioned articles were written, the country had also received many visa requests from central European Jews who were fleeing Nazi persecution. The 1938 census found that of the 56,487 foreign residents in Colombia, approximately 2,300 were Spanish whilst Jewish individuals totalled 3,500.[48] In this context, starting in mid-1938, various Colombians began to consider the issue of 'desirable' and 'undesirable' immigration more carefully with a particular emphasis on where Jewish populations fit in Latin American society. This was expressed via the concept of 'assimilation' and often drew on international experiences. For instance, Conservative daily *Diario del Pacífico* expressed its support for immigration but stated that 'assimilation is fundamental' because 'it is not just about populating but populating with assimilable elements'. The author of the piece on 'Immigration and racial conflict' pointed to the US example and asked: 'if a country with the USA's imposing greatness cannot unite the diverse

[46] 'Glosario Sencillo', *El Liberal*, 07-03-1939
[47] 'Más sobre inmigración', *El Siglo*, 09-03-1939
[48] Luis Esguerra Camargo, *Introducción al estudio del problema inmigratorio en Colombia* (Imprenta Nacional, 1940). pp.51-3

racial elements... what can the less progressive nations of America expect?'. As we have already seen, the US stance on immigration informed public debate on whether Colombia should encourage foreign settlers. Interestingly, given Conservatives' aforementioned views about Spanish immigration, the *Diario del Pacífico* article concluded that Colombia should 'resoundingly reject' all unassimilable races and only accept those who were racially similar such as Spaniards and Italians.[49]

The idea that certain 'races' were undesirable in Colombia was not limited to Conservative groups. The Liberal newspaper *El Heraldo* published an editorial 'About Immigration' in June 1938. Though the editorialist reassured readers that he was not calling for 'a banner of persecution against immigrants from a particular nationality or race', he did declare the need for 'each country to encourage immigration that most suits their international, commercial and even racial interests'.[50] He did not refer specifically to Jewish immigrants in the editorial, but given that the newspaper had published a front-page story two days prior about '200 Jews illegally entering the country each month', it was clear who the author considered unsuitable.[51]

Both articles, along with a slew of other antisemitic ones published in response to news stories about Jewish immigration, called for the government to implement tighter restrictions. Santos was clearly aware of these demands because he made immigration policy one of his top priorities after assuming the presidency in August 1938. On 10 September, the MRREE sent a circular to all diplomatic and consular officials informing them of new dispositions on immigration that would come into place on 1 November. These included fines for consuls who issue visas to 'dangerous foreigners' and new authority for port captains to block any immigration whose visa did not detail the precise date of MRREE authorisation.[52] Within Colombia, López de Mesa made the Immigration Office its own administrative department in the ministry (previously it had been part of the Consular Section). He also set up an immigration board that oversaw all visa requests and automatically rejected those from individuals who had no ties to Colombia.

The government tightened restrictions again on 23 September when it issued Decree 1723 which ruled that only consuls with Colombian nationality could issue visas and they had to inform their diplomatic representative about every application they approved. Further, where the applicant belonged to one of the nationalities covered by Decree 1194 or had lost their nationality, only the MRREE had the authority to authorise a visa. The new disposition also doubled the deposit for restricted groups so that amounts now ranged from 200 to 2,000 pesos and it also set harsher conditions for the return of these deposits.[53] The addition of those who had lost their nationality to the list of restricted groups was significant because, since 1935, the Nazi party in government had stripped Jews of their German citizenship. The

[49] *Diario del Pacífico*, 16-06-1938, p.4
[50] *El Heraldo*, 30-06-1938, p.3
[51] *El Heraldo*, 28-06-1938, p.1
[52] José Latuf to MRREE, 03-10-1938. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 8, Caja 468, Carpeta 70
[53] *Diario Oficial*, Año LXXIV, No.23.893, 05-10-1938

move was undoubtedly facilitated by the fact that, two months earlier, the Évian Conference to discuss Jews fleeing Germany and Austria, in which Colombia had participated, failed to implement any international agreement on accepting these refugees. Chillingly, the decree also came into effect on the same day that the Nazi regime invalidated all German passports held by Jews. Then, at the end of October 1938, Liberal Senator Max Grillo submitted a draft bill on immigration which sought to turn Decree 1723 into law.[54] Jewish refugees had officially been defined as 'undesirable immigrants' in Colombia, underscoring the prevalent antisemitism within the Liberal party and the country more generally. This antisemitism, in turn, exposed more contradictions in the regime's discourse of *mestizaje*. Whilst Liberal officials celebrated Colombia's mixed population (at least rhetorically), that population was also defined in relation to 'Others' who were then categorised as being outside of the nation and therefore subject to discrimination.

Concerns about the assimilability of Republican refugees therefore need to be understood in this broader context of Colombian constructions of the 'undesirable immigrant'. Given the politicisation of the Spanish conflict in Colombia, Republicans were increasingly lumped into this category. From the initial fears about the 'Spanish communists' discussed above, previous chapters have explored how different sectors of Colombian society developed wider anxieties about Republican Spain whose proponents on the peninsula and in Colombia were seen to have abandoned traditional Spanish values. Though the sense of what these values were varied – moderate Liberals equated the Spanish Republic to democracy and liberty whilst Conservatives believed order and religion were intrinsically Spanish – all agreed that they formed part of a shared Spanish-Colombian heritage. By departing from this sense of Spanish identity through their purported association with communism, Republicans were no longer suited to Colombia's racial and international interests. Given that the legal framework was already in place to exclude 'undesirables', officials began to use these dispositions to block mass Spanish immigration even as Spaniards were never officially defined as a restricted nationality.

In February 1939, López de Mesa received a telegram from the consul in Paris asking for instructions on the reach of Article 1 of Decree 1723 in light of the growing number of visa requests from Republican refugees.[55] The article in question prohibited consuls from issuing visas to anyone who had lost their nationality or was suffering limitations to their political and civil rights. Although no disposition at the time included restrictions against Spanish citizens, the foreign minister must have liked the idea because four months later, as Obregón reported on the situation of Republican refugees in Paris, he noted a recent requirement to submit visa requests from Spaniards to the same legal requirements as those from persecuted groups. Obregón, reaffirming his desire to 'harmonise humanitarian concerns with our national interest', declared that he had not issued a single visa to any Republican refugee since receiving the new decree.[56]

[54] Debate 28-10-1938. República de Colombia, *Anales del Senado*, vol. 2 (1938). pp.848-51
[55] CONSULBIA to López de Mesa, 14-02-1939. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 8, Caja 485, Carpeta 217
[56] Obregón to MRREE, 16-06-1939. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 8, Caja 485, Carpeta 72

The visa records bear witness to this shift in policy: from May 1939, the MRREE started rejecting visa applications *en masse* on the basis that 'there are already hundreds of Spanish refugees [in Colombia] who do not have a job thus creating a serious problem for the government.'[57] In June 1939, the MRREE officially suspended immigration of those referred to in Decree 1723 whilst they reformed the existing dispositions. Although Spanish citizens were still not formally covered by this decree, many visa requests from Republican refugees in the latter half of 1939 were rejected on these grounds. Over the year, the authorisation rate for visa requests from Spain fell to 71 per cent.

The potential for mass immigration from Spain following the civil war was thus a significant moment in the development of Colombian immigration policy. Unlike in Mexico, where the relative openness to Republican refugees marked a change in the country's restrictive approach to immigration, in Colombia their arrival encouraged the government to implement further controls.[58] Interestingly, despite the rhetorical emphasis on 'assimilation', the fact that Republican refugees could speak Spanish did nothing in this particular instance to convince officials that they should be welcomed into the country, at least not as a mass group. The next section will examine those groups from Spain who were considered suitable for assimilation.

"Elementos insospechables"

The government's approval of the majority of visa requests shows that some Republican refugees were still welcome in Colombia. The high acceptance rate reflected the practice of many consuls who, like Obregón, turned potential immigrants away without ever submitting their requests to the MRREE. It also responded in part to a loophole in existing laws which meant that even individuals from 'undesirable' nationalities could come to Colombia if they had an economic or close family connection in the country. There is evidence that Republicans were both aware of and tried to exploit these opportunities. An MRREE circular from 13 October 1938 drew consuls' attention to the fact that certain foreigners already in Colombia were drawing up fake work contracts to facilitate the entry of family members and friends into the country.[59]

In some instances, the individuals were Colombian and those whom they invited were not even friends. In November 1938, for example, the Colombian citizen Carlos de Mier y Restrepo invited Jesús Ezpeleta Basterrica whom he had contracted to work as an agricultural machinery driver for a monthly salary of 35 pesos plus free food and accommodation.[60] However, de Mier and Ezpeleta had never actually met. According to Maite Ezpeleta, de Mier invited her grandfather at the request of Andrés Perea Gallaga with whom de Mier had

[57] This sentiment was conveyed in various visa rejections sent out in May and June 1939. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 1, Departamento Inmigración

[58] Breanna David, "Ins and Outs: Immigration Policies in Early 20th Century Mexico and the Arrival of Spanish Immigrants and Exiles," *The Latin Americanist* 68, 1 (2024).

[59] Consul in Brussels to López de Mesa, 30-10-1938. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 8, Caja 78, Carpeta 140

[60] 'Expediente 1'. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 6, Caja 21, Carpeta 129

travelled to Colombia in mid-1938 after meeting in Belgium.[61] The two reportedly told the Colombian *chargé d'affaires* in Belgium that they were neighbours, so the MRREE granted Perea's visa on a special recommendation from the Brussels Legation.[62] Over the course of the next year, Perea and de Mier would work together to invite at least thirty-six Republican refugees from France, twenty of them with work contracts. By March 1939, Perea was acting as de Mier's 'legal representative' for all visa applications.[63] This chapter's final part will examine in more detail how Spanish exiles were able to navigate the restrictions against them.

The continued arrival of Republican refugees despite increasing restrictions against Spanish immigration was also a result of a dual policy of preventing the Republican masses from entering Colombia, whilst allowing for the cherry-picking of a select few individuals (primarily intellectuals and artists) who would be able to contribute towards the government's cultural, educational and agricultural programmes. We have already seen how Luis de Zulueta came to Colombia in autumn 1936 at Santos's invitation. This practice became more widespread once Santos assumed the presidency and was central to the formulation of immigration policy in the late 1930s. As López de Mesa told Congress in 1939, the government 'Had to take special measures to impede the arrival of [thousands of Spanish citizens] to Colombia… limiting favourable resolutions to individual cases'.[64]

This dual policy required a conceptual divide between the 'undesirable' masses and the 'cultured' few, and both the president and foreign minister helped construct this division. The latter had long been concerned with the issue of immigration as an extension of his preoccupation with 'uplifting' the Colombian 'race' discussed in chapter 2. Indeed, López de Mesa had been one of the proponents of immigration during the Municipal Theatre conferences in 1920. However, he reiterated and further refined these ideas in his *Disertación sociológica*, published in 1939. Now as foreign minister, López de Mesa explored how other Latin American countries, particularly Chile, Argentina and Brazil, had been able to temper the presence of Indigenous and Afro-descendant populations by encouraging European immigration. Drawing upon these experiences, he concluded that Colombia 'would benefit from injections of select immigration in certain regions' to counteract the high levels of 'immigrants of dubious racial and cultural benefit.'[65] The key term here was 'select' and, in his response to the Republican refugee crisis, the foreign minister made clear what type of immigration he felt the government should be selecting. As head of the Immigration and Colonisation Committee, established on 14 March 1939, he led a detailed investigation into existing immigration legislation and potential areas for foreign settlement. He wrote to the *Contraloría General* requesting census data on existing arts, trades and professions so that he could study 'the possibility of using the technical services of workers qualified in trades,

[61] Author's interview with Maite Ezpeleta, 28-02-2022, Bogotá.
[62] Soto to López de Mesa, 13-10-1938. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 8, Caja 485, Carpeta 216
[63] For example in the case of Mariano Perea Gallaga, 29-05-1939. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 6, Caja 33, Carpeta 208, Expediente 58
[64] Colombia, *Memoria de 1939*. pp.181-2
[65] Luis López de Mesa, *Disertación sociológica* (Editorial "El Gráfico", 1939). pp.344-8

professions or industries that do not exist in Colombia but whose development could be beneficial for the country's economy'.[66]

The fact that López de Mesa established the committee as the Spanish Civil War was drawing to a close and more and more Republicans were fleeing abroad suggests that the government saw the European refugee crisis as an opportunity for Colombia. A letter from the Immigration Department to the consul general in Paris in May 1939 confirmed that his practice of issuing visas to Spanish citizens following a thorough examination of these individuals to ensure that they were fit to contribute to Colombia's scientific, artistic and industrial development was 'in line with the government's wishes'.[67] López de Mesa made the link even more explicit in his correspondence with the education minister in July: 'As you well know, in France there is a great number of Spanish refugees, amongst whom are many professors and teachers qualified to improve the education systems in this country, and who would happily come to undertake this mission. Professors of natural and exact sciences, languages, etc. which our provincial schools lack and who could be contracted on favourable terms'.[68] Various historians have examined the consequences of this policy for mid-twentieth-century Colombian cultural and educational programmes, but the point here is that this was only one side of Colombian policy towards Spanish immigration.[69] Whilst his department considered the vast majority of refugees from Spain as undesirable and blocked them from entering Colombia, the foreign minister actively sought Republican intellectuals that he believed could contribute towards his country's cultural development.

Given López de Mesa's position during this key period for immigration policy, he has often been considered the sole mastermind behind the restrictive immigration laws. The fact that he was openly antisemitic and often referred to Republican refugees as communists and anarchists does nothing to invalidate this view.[70] Santos, on the other hand, is seen as a proponent of immigration from Spain because he was in contact with various refugees from his time in Paris and so in many cases was the person who facilitated their arrival. He also participated in many of their activities in Colombia after the end of the civil war, particularly once he had stepped down as president. According to the traditional narrative, then, the foreign minister did everything possible to impede the arrival of Republican refugees whilst the president tried his utmost to help them. We have already seen how the former was also invested in a policy of bringing over 'select' Spaniards, but the documentary evidence suggests that López de Mesa and Santos actually shared very similar views on mass Republican

[66] López de Mesa to Gonzalo Restrepo, 26-04-1939. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 1, Comité de Inmigración y Colonización

[67] Letter to Colombian General Consul in Paris, 16-05-1939. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 1, Comité de Inmigración y Colonización

[68] López de Mesa to Minister for National Education, 18-07-1939. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 1, Comité de Inmigración y Colonización

[69] Silva, "Política cultural e inmigración docente."; Silva, "La inmigración docente como posibilidad histórica: el caso de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1930-1950." Martínez Gorroño, "La educación en la Colombia liberal de los años 30 y 40."

[70] For example in *Disertación sociológica* he discusses the 'inconvenience' of Jewish immigration employing several antisemitic tropes.

immigration as well. Moreover, their stance was shaped by the much longer trend of successive Colombian governments limiting immigration which stretched back to the late nineteenth century.

In September 1938, after the new government began to tighten immigration restrictions, *El Liberal* reported that the new decrees responded to Santos's 'express determination' to limit the amount of 'undesirable immigration'. The newspaper also claimed that the president himself ordered the confidential circular that prohibited consuls from issuing visas to individuals from specific nationalities.[71] Certainly, Santos seems to have taken a personal interest in ensuring new immigration laws were effectively communicated. On 24 September, for instance, he telegrammed Obregón informing him that he had issued Decree 1723 the previous day and explaining its provisions.[72] A month later, the president once again contacted Paris asking the minister to 'urgently and quickly' order all consuls to ascertain how many tickets had already been sold to immigrants whose visas were issued before Decree 1723 and invalidate all those whose revocation would not open the government up to claims or complaints. He also requested that consuls send statistical, detailed reports with names and concrete information about all visas issued in the previous twenty months.[73]

As the end of fighting in Spain appeared imminent, Santos increasingly turned his attention to the issue of Republican refugees. In February 1939, he once again cabled Obregón:

> With respect to the requests from intellectuals to come to Colombia, we would need to study the cases individually. Some of them – like [José] Cuatrecasas, [Claudio] Sánchez-Albornoz or Victorio Macho [Republicans who Santos invited to Colombia] – have my respectful sympathy and could carry out great work in Colombia. I fear that Spain is entering into a period in which intellectuals will be persecuted [...] and we could benefit from the services of Spanish professors who, as Republicans, could not be fairly labelled as communists. Especially amongst the Basque and Catalan communities there are many spotless individuals, even from the religious point of view, who are persecuted only because of their liberalism and love for their respective regions. In any case, we will not issue a general resolution but will study special cases with care, rejecting any possibility of immigration for militant revolutionaries who could cause bitter problems here.[74]

Santos, whilst sensitive to some of the differences in the Republican camp, nonetheless implicitly categorised the majority of refugees as 'militant revolutionaries' by reducing the instances of 'spotless individuals' to specific cases. Further, the telegram indicates that the president was not only aware of restrictions against Spanish immigration but actively identified with them, suggesting he played a central role in their formulation.

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[71] *El Liberal*, 10-09-1938, p.1
[72] Santos to Obregón, 24-09-1938. BLAA.ES.MRE, Caja 14, Carpeta 4-5
[73] Santos to Colombian Legation in Paris, 20-10-1938. BLAA.ES.MRE, Caja 14, Carpeta 4-5
[74] Santos to Obregón, 08-02-1939. BLAA.ES.MRE, Caja 14, Carpeta 4-5

Later that month, he sent another cable to Paris emphasising that 'We are deeply concerned about requests from Spaniards but my sincere sympathies for Republicans cannot prevent me from seeing the problems we would have if we allowed uncontrolled Spanish immigration... A penniless Spaniard relocating here would only cause resentment and I do not see where we could put him.'[75] This statement reveals how Santos's concern for domestic *convivencia* which had heavily influenced his Spanish policy, also overrode any sympathies he may have for Republican refugees. Ultimately, he did not want to allow individuals to enter the country who could then be used by Conservatives and Catholic groups to claim that the Liberal government was exposing the country to communism. The president therefore played a key role in constructing a divide between the 'undesirable' Republican masses and 'desirable' individuals, even if his reasons for doing so were more practical than ideological.

Basque immigration

There was one mass group that both Santos and López de Mesa were nevertheless willing to grant entry: farmers. They therefore dedicated a significant amount of time to studying the possibility of bringing over settler colonies from Spain to inhabit parts of Colombia's vast 'uninhabited' territories. The rationale for these projects had its basis in the arguments put forward by proponents of European immigration in the 1920s. There were also legal precedents: as part of its attempt to strengthen 'healthy' immigration, Law 114 of 1922 established that the Colombian government would arrange for free transport of settler immigrants from their port of arrival to the colony and exempted these individuals from paying import duties.[76] These dispositions, in turn, had their roots in a decades-long tradition of national and local administrations encouraging internal immigration from certain 'civilised' parts of Colombia to Indigenous *resguardos* in order to make them 'productive'.[77]

After the Liberals came to power in 1930, they placed renewed emphasis on the 'colonisation' of Colombian land to enhance the country's agricultural production and help drive the process to create a 'modern' nation. In 1931, the government allocated 100,000 pesos to establish settler colonies and allowed for a further 2,000,000 to be handed out in loans. As a result, by 1935, two settler colonies existed in Colombia in Sumapaz to the south of Bogotá and Bahía Solano on the northwest coast.[78] Both of these, plus the other three that the López administration established between 1937 and 1938, housed Colombian settlers not foreign immigrants as envisioned by the 1922 law. At two international congresses in 1938 – an International Labour Organisation conference on settler immigration in March and the Évian Conference on Jewish refugees – López had begun to articulate a stance on foreign settlers. Colombian delegate Jesús Yepes told attendees at both events that his government

[75] Santos to Obregón, 18-02-1939. BLAA.ES.MRE, Caja 14, Carpeta 4-5
[76] *Diario Oficial*, Nos.18.693-4, 08-01-1923
[77] Appelbaum, *Muddied Waters*.
[78] Esguerra Camargo, *Introducción al estudio del problema inmigratorio en Colombia*. pp.101-10

would welcome 'agricultural workers of honourable character who are prepared to come and work the land'.[79] He therefore indicated López's readiness to put Law 114 into practice.

However, it was under Santos that the Colombian government moved to convert this principle into reality. Its attention immediately focussed on Basque groups who, as we have seen, the president held in high esteem. The deep religiosity of the Basque people made them attractive even to Conservatives who otherwise disparaged Republican refugees. An article in *Diario de la Costa* sang the praises of Basques who it said were well known 'for their traditional austerity, their formidable capacity for work'. The author further asserted that they had 'characters so similar to the American people' and that the Colombian department of Antioquia was considered of Basque origin.[80] Such assertions were based on historic experiences of Basque immigration to Latin America. During the colonial period, Basque migrants had established many important enterprises in the region which undoubtedly contributed to their reputation for working hard.[81] In the nineteenth century, Basques dominated the newly established cattle ranching and sheep herding industries in the Southern Cone.[82] This explains why Colombians in the 1930s felt that they would make good agricultural workers even though by then the Basque region was most famous for industrial production. These international and historic models garnered cross-party sympathy for Basques in Colombia which, in turn, shaped the president's opinion that they were ideal candidates for the country's first immigrant settler colony.

In November 1938, the government selected the town of Simití in Bolívar as the location for the new settlement. They committed the *Ministerio de Correos y Telégrafos* and the MOOPP to establish communication and travel networks in the area.[83] At the end of the month, Leoncio Bastidas, a representative from the town, travelled to Bogotá to discuss the finer details and, on 27 November, Santos authorised the project for Basque immigration. The plan was for two hundred families to cultivate 55 kilometres of land aimed at growing plants to produce fibre and raising cattle for dairy produce.[84] Francisco de Abrisketa, exiled in Colombia as a result of the Spanish Civil War, helped orchestrate these negotiations and his involvement illustrates how Republican exiles attempted to influence Colombian immigration policy in the late 1930s. In this case, such agency intersected with official desires to expand Colombia's productive capacity, and it produced promising results.

On 17 March 1939, Basque citizen Gabino Seijo Zarrandikoechea arrived in Cartagena aboard the steamer *Cuba*. He had come to Colombia as the technical head of Basque immigration.[85] The following day, he travelled to Simití to inspect the site of the proposed

[79] Speech by Jesús María Yepes Herrera at the Évian Conference, 09-07-1938, p.11. Available at: https://evian1938.de/en/colombia/ (accessed 30-11-2023)
[80] *Diario de la Costa*, 18-02-1939, p.3
[81] José Manuel Azcona Pastor, *Possible Paradises: Basque Emigration to Latin America*, trans. Roland Vazquez (University of Nevada Press, 2004).
[82] Gloria Totoricagüena, *Basque Diaspora: Migration and Transnational Identity*, Basque Textbooks Series, (University of Nevada Press, 2005).
[83] 'Se gestiona otra inmigración vasca', *El Liberal*, 25-11-1938
[84] *El Liberal*, 27-11-1938, p.1
[85] *El Siglo*, 18-03-1939, p.1

settlement.[86] Reports of his arrival sparked groups from other areas of the country to request the establishment of settler colonies there. One hundred residents from the town of Tamalameque, 100 kilometres to the north of Simití, wrote to the *Ministerio de Economía Nacional* requesting that the government comply with Law 29 of 1936 about establishing an agricultural settlement in the region. They also asked the ministry to make the Basque mission aware that 'the fertile lands of Tamalameque are no different than those in Simití', adding that 'Basque settlement would mean the region's economic redemption' and therefore was 'a work of great social importance.'[87] The demands stemmed from residents' awareness that the establishment of settler colonies would bring important investment and infrastructure to their region thus demonstrating, as Nancy Appelbaum has argued for Antioquia, how colonisation was a 'multilateral process' that involved negotiations between the colonised and the colonisers.[88] In turn, the inhabitants of Valledupar department as it was then, staked their place as part of the wider nation by petitioning the government to fulfil its promise of integrating their region into a modern Colombia.

In the meantime, the Santos administration and Seijo continued to negotiate the proposed Basque immigration. On 17 July, the Interior Minister Carlos Lleras Restrepo wrote to the prefecture of Ayapel province in the Córdoba department, informing him that the 'vast extension of the land that makes up the territory of your Province makes me think that it might be necessary to have a Basque immigration to undertake one of the best goals which is that of colonising a large part of the territory because, effectively, almost all of it is unpopulated.' He praised the region's 'virgin forests and extremely fertile lands' but claimed that to ensure 'the prosperity of the region... the strong arm of a man, dogged and brave, is necessary to tear out of the cement the seasoned fruit which according to the rules of art grants it exuberance.' Lleras closed the letter with a request that the prefecture allow the technical head of Basque immigration to undertake a thorough study of the land to see whether it would be convenient for up to two hundred Basque families to inhabit the region.[89]

The minister's description of the region and the type of person required to cultivate the land highlights the problematic nature of the project for Basque immigration and broader plans to 'colonise' parts of Colombia. The 1938 census showed that, although Ayapel only had 19,225 inhabitants, 73 per cent of these lived in rural areas.[90] These figures reveal how the area was not uninhabited but that the Colombian government did not consider the rural residents of Ayapel fit to farm the land. The inhabitants and authorities of Simití and Tamalameque had seemingly encouraged settler immigration because it would mean more resources for their region, but in the case of Ayapel the government took it upon itself to designate the province as an ideal site for foreign settlement. So, whilst proposed Basque immigration represented an opportunity for many refugees who were suffering in Europe, it

[86] *El Siglo*, 19-03-1939, p.3
[87] *El Siglo*, 22-03-1939, p.2
[88] Appelbaum, *Muddied Waters*. p.13
[89] AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 1, Comité de Inmigración y Colonización
[90] Controlaría General de la República, *Censo general de población: Resumen general del país*, vol. 16 (Imprenta Nacional, 1942). p.43

posed a problem for some of Colombia's rural citizens who risked having their agency, their lands and their very identities removed. This was not the first time local groups had been made invisible in the face of international development initiatives. At the turn of the century, 40,000 residents in the supposedly 'empty' Panama Canal zone had their histories, culture and traditions erased as part of the US construction project.[91]

Perhaps because the Basque immigration project signalled the 'whitening' of rural areas of Colombia, it was well received on both sides of the political divide. However, for reasons that evade documentary evidence, none of the Basque settler colonies were ever actually established. Even so, the initiative does provide an interesting case study of how, despite concerns about the danger posed by mass immigration from Spain, the Santos government also saw an opportunity in the Republican refugee crisis to further its own domestic plans. This shines a spotlight on an inherent paradox within the 1930s Liberal project in Colombia: at the same time as leaders espoused nationalist rhetoric that denied any external influence on government policy, they still believed that foreign expertise was necessary to carry out their 'modernisation' project. In turn, the refugees exploited these brief openings to show that they were not 'undesirable' immigrants.

Republican agency

Oftentimes, those best placed to navigate immigration restrictions were exiles who had already arrived in Colombia and could petition the government on behalf of their friends and relatives. 21 per cent of visa requests in the period covered by this chapter fell into this category.[92] Some exiles used their privileged position to recommend individuals. Fernando Martínez Dorrien, for instance, landed in Colombia in April 1938. Shortly after his arrival, Martínez opened *Editorial Bolívar* and, by November 1938, he and his Colombian collaborators had published the first edition of *Estampa* magazine which would run until 1966.[93] His position gave him access to high-level Colombian officials, many of whom were also involved in the press industry. In February 1939, Martínez wrote to Santos recommending Ricardo Baeza who, at the time, was in France with his wife and two children. He emphasised how Baeza's knowledge of the arts would make him a valuable asset for Colombian universities and suggested that the president 'contract Baeza as a general teacher, with a monthly salary of 200 pesos.' His work as a journalist 'would allow him to better these conditions and make it much easier for the government to support him'.[94] The appeal to Baeza's value played into the government policy of only selecting immigrants who could contribute to Colombian society. It clearly worked: five days later, Santos personally sent a

[91] Lasso, *Erased: The Untold Story of the Panama Canal*.
[92] SVAD
[93] For more information about *Estampa* see: Jimena Montaña Cuéllar, "Semanario Gráfico Ilustrado Estampa: El inicio de la modernidad en una publicación periódica," *Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico* 37, no. 55 (2000). Antonio Cajero Vásquez, "Gilberto Owen en la revista Estampa (Bogotá, 1938-1942): textos desconocidos," *Literatura Mexicana* 22, no. 2 (2011).
[94] Martínez to Santos, 17-02-1939. BLAA.ES.CV, Caja 12, Carpeta 5

telegram to the Colombian Legation in Paris authorising Obregón to issue visas for the family.[95] Baeza did not end up coming to Colombia – instead he and his family opted to travel to Buenos Aires – but his example shows how certain Republican refugees were able to leverage contacts within Colombia to obtain visas for their compatriots.

Most exiles in Colombia did not share Martínez's privileged position, however. They therefore needed to prove their solvency to the Colombian government before inviting others to the country. The case of the Larrauri y Landaluce brothers is exemplary. Antonio and Felix arrived in Colombia in early 1938 having been themselves invited by Spanish citizen Eugenio de Gamboa.[96] Over a year later, after establishing a farm in El Espinal, Tolima, they wrote to the MRREE requesting authorisation for their mother and three sisters to come to the country. Their father had died the previous year and 'not existing any other men in the family who can protect and look out for them... we find ourselves with the pressing need to bring our elderly mother and single sisters so that they can live with us thus fulfilling our most sacred duties.'[97] The emphasis on their mother's age and sisters' marital status highlights the brothers' awareness of the gendered nature of Colombian immigration law which, since late 1938 and as part of the attempt to further restrict immigration from Europe, only authorised requests from the elderly parents of individuals already in the country or their female and child dependents.[98] Yet this also meant that they had to prove that they were well established, honourable, law-abiding, beneficial to their local community and with sufficient resources to sustain themselves and their family. To that end, Felix and Antonio had to submit two references from Colombian citizens as well as a certificate from the local mayor. Only after the MRREE had received all this documentation did it approve the visas on 5 May 1939.[99]

As more refugees arrived in the country and requested visas for friends and family members abroad, the MRREE introduced even more stringent requirements. For example, on 7 April 1941 Julián Barbero López applied for visas for his wife and young daughter who were in Mexico. The MRREE initially rejected Barbero's application on the basis that he 'only entered the country last October and neither his actions nor solvency can be sufficiently accredited.' He therefore reapplied a month later with references from José María España and Marino López Lucas – two other Republican exiles who had established in Colombia a Biochemistry Institute and a Spanish college respectively – and his request was finally granted on 27 May.[100]

That Barbero's family were in Mexico reflected the changing patterns of Spanish immigration after the Spanish Civil War. The outbreak of the Second World War provoked new situations that made it more difficult for refugees to leave Europe (such as the Nazi occupation of France in May 1940) or find direct routes to Colombia (particularly during the Battle of the Caribbean). Visa requests from France thus fell to 54 per cent of total applications in 1940 and

[95] Santos to LECOLOMBIA, 22-02-1939. BLAA.ES.MRE, Caja 14, Carpeta 4-5
[96] 'Expediente 34'. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 6, Caja 17, Carpeta 103, Gamboa is sometimes referred to as 'Ganboa' in the records.
[97] 'Expediente 82'. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 6, Caja 17, Carpeta 103
[98] Letter from MRE to port authorities, 16-03-1939. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 1, Departamento Inmigración
[99] 'Expediente 82'. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 6, Caja 17, Carpeta 103
[100] 'Expediente 4'. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 6, Caja 43, Carpeta 227

again to 26 per cent the following year. Even those who had managed to flee the continent before these events began to reconsider their options as the focus switched from escaping persecution to building a future in exile. Consequently, after 1940, requests from the Americas and the Caribbean gradually outnumbered those from France.[101]

The involvement of España and López in Barbero's request also illuminates the networks that Spanish exiles established within Colombia to facilitate the arrival of more refugees. The next chapter will examine the figure of Francisco Carreras Reura who was instrumental in this regard. But Barbero's case also shows how these networks – whether within or outside of the country – also shaped Colombian immigration policy. As Spaniards found loopholes in existing legislation, the government moved to fill those gaps with additional rules and requirements aimed at maintaining or strengthening immigration restrictions.

Not all Republican refugees had access to such networks and so some resorted to more drastic measures for entering Colombia. In July 1937, the customs officer in Barranquilla, Enrique Gómez Latorre, complained to the MRREE about the 'many cases of foreigners who enter the country without paying the necessary deposit by pretending to be "in transit" or "travelling agents" when in reality they are coming as immigrants.'[102] At least thirteen Republicans arrived in Colombia as tourists and later requested leave to remain in the country. One of these, Santiago Sentís Melendo, who entered Colombia in May 1939, explained in his application for a residence visa that the Colombian consul in Le Havre recommended he apply for a tourist visa given that he did not have sufficient funds to pay the immigration deposit.[103] Despite the restrictions against Spanish immigration, particularly those without resources, some consular authorities were clearly still sympathetic towards the plight of Republican refugees and helped them travel to Colombia. Generally, the MRREE took a lenient approach to individuals from Spain who entered the country under these conditions, eventually granting all of them leave to remain. However, on 22 January 1940, the government issued Decree 55 which made it harder for foreigners to obtain tourist visas.[104]

Others who attempted to evade immigration restrictions were less lucky. On 29 April 1940, the Dutch steamer *Cottica* carrying various Spaniards who were being returned from Panamá to the Dominican Republic made a stop in Colombia. As it docked in Barranquilla, some of the refugees attempted to negotiate with the port authorities so that they could disembark. The government of Rafael Trujillo had accepted many Republicans after the end of the Spanish Civil War on the understanding that they would work in the Dominican Republic as farmers, but then abandoned them to their fate once they arrived in the country. The Spaniards aboard *Cottica* were likely aware of the hunger and hardship that awaited them and were therefore desperate to find another option. However, their request was refused and so, as the ship left the port to carry on its voyage, four of these individuals jumped overboard and attempted to swim ashore. Two days later, the bodies of two of them washed up on a Colombian beach.

[101] SVAD
[102] Latorre to MRREE, 03-06-1937. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 10, Sección Segunda, Caja 25, Carpeta 190
[103] 'Expediente 12'. AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 6, Caja 34, Carpeta 214
[104] *Diario Oficial*, Año LXXV, No.24.276, 26-01-1940

The documents that they were carrying identified them as Luis Hornes Sabando and Antonio Corominas Giral, and they were taken inland for burial. On 2 May, another body – that of Carlos Zumalacarregui – was also found drowned, naked and so heavily decomposed that the local authorities had to bury him right there on the shore. The fourth individual, Francisco Perez Arecho, reportedly survived and was under the protection of unknown persons who were sheltering him from the police.[105]

Conclusion

Renán Silva has argued that, whilst Republican exiles' contribution to Colombian society was significant relative to their number, the government's restrictive policy on Republican refugees limited the possibility of greater impact.[106] This chapter has shown how the co-constitution of 'red Republicans' and 'undesirable immigrants' encouraged both Liberal administrations, but the Santos regime in particular, to stem the flow of Spanish immigration as a result of the Spanish Civil War. Whether it was for ideological or pragmatic reasons, the Liberal governments imposed increasingly strict restrictions on immigration in general and Spanish immigration in particular. However, at the same time as it sought to exclude the majority of Republican refugees from entering Colombia, Santos's administration saw the European refugee crisis of the late 1930s as an opportunity to bring over certain groups and individuals that they considered beneficial for Colombia's cultural and economic development. In that sense, the contribution of Republican exiles to Colombia in the 1930s and 1940s was conditioned by widespread anxieties about the types of immigrants that could be assimilated into Colombian society as well as officials' understandings that their modernising project depended in part on select immigration.

As the former closed windows of opportunity for Republicans seeking refuge in Colombia, the latter provided openings for certain individuals who were aware of and could navigate these loopholes in the country's immigration policy. Whilst Colombian immigration policy in the late 1930s and early 1940s responded to domestic concerns and international developments, it was also a reaction to the actions of exiles who mobilised networks in Colombia and abroad to facilitate the arrival of their compatriots. Interactions with Colombians were important, whether in getting someone to issue a work contract for someone they'd never met or coming across a consul who was sympathetic towards Republican refugees. But ultimately it was the refugees themselves who were responsible for traversing the restrictions against them, and some paid with their lives. Consequently, though discussions around the place of Republican refugees in Colombian society tended to paint them as either 'red communists' or 'useful elements', the true situation of these individuals was far more complex. To examine their stories, the next chapter will highlight the lives and experiences of some of the individuals from Spain who arrived in Colombia after the civil war.

[105] Juan Sarasua to Luis Áviles, 04-05-1940. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3088

[106] Silva, "La inmigración docente como posibilidad histórica: el caso de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1930-1950."

Chapter 7 – Lived experiences of Republican exile and belonging in Bogotá (1938-45)

The development of Colombian immigration policy over the 1930s did not just affect who could come to the country. Given the stringent requirements for refugees from Spain, immigration law also shaped the experience of exile for those who made it to Colombia. The duality of Colombian policy ensured that a significant proportion of those who arrived were political, intellectual and professional elites. A lot of the literature on Republican exiles in Colombia has focussed on their contributions to Colombia's Liberal programme, emphasising their disproportionate impact relative to the number of refugees received in the country.[1] However, the Colombian stance on immigration also impacted exiles in negative ways as the polemic surrounding 'red refugees' made it increasingly difficult even for those who were granted visas to turn rhetorical support into tangible action.

Both in spite and because of these difficulties, Republican exiles developed meaningful links with local actors in Colombia who were sympathetic to their individual or collective causes. These individuals tended to be the Liberal intellectual and political elites explored in previous chapters of this thesis and their wives. Whereas previous works' emphasis on 'contribution' has tended to obscure the agency of Colombians themselves, here the focus will be on how exiles worked *with* locals on projects that proved beneficial for Colombians and Republicans alike. Exiles in Colombia were not unique in this regard – Republicans in Mexico helped ensure that country's continued non-recognition of the Franco regime and in Chile they were welcomed into cultural and literary circles – but they have often been overlooked in transnational studies of Republican exile.[2] The fact that Colombia received far fewer refugees from Spain than other Latin American nations translated into assumptions about the relative insignificance of the exile community there. However, this chapter will show that they were important, sometimes central, actors in helping establish a sense of what the Spanish Republic meant and should do following its defeat in Spain both within Colombia and throughout the Americas more generally.

The internal divisions that had precipitated the end of the Spanish Civil War nevertheless became more pronounced in exile and Republicans' experiences within Colombia shed new light on the fissures within the broader community. With the conflict's end, many of the political disputes that created tensions within the Republican government became more

[1] For general overviews: Martínez Gorroño, "La educación en la Colombia liberal de los años 30 y 40."; Hernández García, *La Guerra Civil Espanola y Colombia*; María Eugenia Martínez Gorroño, *Españolas en Colombia: la huella cultural de mujeres exiliadas tras la guerra civil*, vol. 19, Cuadernos de la Fundación Españoles en el Mundo, (Fundación Españoles en el Mundo, 1999); Silva, "La inmigración docente como posibilidad histórica: el caso de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1930-1950."

[2] On Mexico: Abdón Mateos, "Los republicanos españoles en el México cardenista," *Ayer* 47 (2002). On Chile: Weld, "The Spanish Civil War and the Construction of a Reactionary Historical Consciousness in Augusto Pinochet's Chile." pp.96-103

embittered. This was particularly true for the socialists who split into two factions, one led by the ex-prime minister Juan Negrín from London, and the other by his old Defence Minister Indalecio Prieto.[3] As the Prieto-led faction of *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE) was based in Mexico along with its centrist allies, most studies of Republican politics within Latin America after the Spanish Civil War have concentrated on this group.[4] In no way isolated from these currents, party members in Colombia maintained correspondence with and adhered to their representatives in Mexico. However, due to the strong presence of Basque and Catalan groups amongst the exile community – both of whom were vehemently opposed to the centralising tendencies of Prieto-led Republicanism – there also existed a separate political coalition within the country which increasingly promoted plurality as the key to Spain's future. The Colombian lens thus reveals how cultural as well as ideological factors contributed to the political tensions that existed amongst Republican exiles in the mid-twentieth century. It also shows the way in which left-wing divisions were transplanted and often exaggerated in exile. These individual and collective experiences, in turn, provide further insight into Colombian politics in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

The relatively high proportion of Basque and Catalan exiles meant that they played a salient role within the Republican community in Colombia even if their total number was less than in other Latin American nations such as Argentina, Chile and Mexico. This, in addition to Colombians' positive perceptions of Basque and Catalan groups, enabled them to engage in instances of important cultural exchange with their hosts in ways that were quite unusual for other autonomous groups exiled in Latin America. These experiences created new understandings of what it meant to be Basque or Catalan, particularly amongst those who were children when they came to Colombia or who were born into exile. Other exiles sought to transpose their previous collective identity onto the new geographic context by establishing and participating in transnational networks that brought members of Spain's different autonomous groups in exile across the Americas into contact. Whilst the majority of studies on Republican exile in Latin America have tended to focus on the men who drove these diasporic networks, this chapter will also highlight the central role of Republican mothers, often the wives or relatives of exiles who accompanied them to Colombia but who, through their domestic and social lives, maintained the traditions that facilitated the endurance of their cultural identity in exile.

Though several hundreds of Republicans came to Colombia during and after the Spanish Civil War, this chapter will focus on the story of seven in particular: Miguel Fornaguera i Ramón, a Catalan pedagogue; Ramón Trías, a medical student who attempted to continue his studies in Bogotá; Francisco Carreras Reura, a Republican politician; Ana María and María Antonieta Busquets, daughters of Catalan exiles; Francisco de Abrisketa, a bank worker from Bilbao; and Judith Gómez Basterra, daughter of Basque exiles. These individuals appear not

[3] Jorge de Hoyos Puente, "Los difíciles años cuarenta para el exilio republicano de 1939," *Historia y Memoria de la Educación* 9 (2019). pp.27-35

[4] Two notable exceptions: Abdón Mateos, *La batalla de México, final de la guerra civil y ayuda a los refugiados 1939-1945* (Alianza, 2009).

because their experience was representative of all exiles' in Colombia – indeed, the relatively extensive documentary record they left attests to their exceptional character – but because collectively their histories illuminate the prominent themes outlined above that make the experience of exile within Colombia noteworthy. They share several important features: they all lived in Bogotá; they were all engaged in either political or cultural exile communities within Colombia; and they enjoyed close relationships with Colombian elites.

Crucially, the variety of experiences even across this relatively homogenous group suggests that there was not one typical 'exile experience', nor was there a standard figure of the 'Republican exile'. Building on a growing body of scholarship that recognises the pluralities of exile experience and identities within Latin America, this chapter uses a biographical lens to explore the broader context of Republican exile in both Colombia and Latin America.[5] It endeavours to take advantage of the nuanced details such individual stories provide whilst simultaneously recentring Colombia in a continental history of exile. Of course, such an approach is not without its limitations. Although Bogotá offered the most opportunities for Republican exiles, many lived outside of the capital in other urban centres and even worked as farmers in rural areas which meant they did not have the same opportunities to interact with Colombian elites. Accordingly, the stories presented here cannot speak for the many other Republican exiles who did not occupy such privileged geographical and social positions in the country. However, they do allow for a narrative in which the exiles can take centre stage in their own histories and therefore complicate top-down narratives of refugeedom and exile.[6]

From refugee to resident

Although the MRREE approved the majority of visa requests it received from Republican refugees, many of the applicants still found it difficult to translate this tacit approval into practical outcomes. The Santos government, making good on its promise to only allow the entry of migrants from Spain who could support themselves financially, offered no economic or logistical assistance to the overwhelming bulk of successful applicants. In fact, sometimes it seemed to actively obstruct their arrival as the case of Miguel Fornaguera i Ramon and his Colombian wife Evangelina Pineda shows. According to Colombian law, Pineda and the couple's two daughters were eligible for support from the government, but Fornaguera and their two adult sons would need to apply for visas. As he was married to a native Colombian and had lived in Colombia for several years in the 1910s and 1920s – working first in the Gimnasio Moderno in Bogotá and then at the Universidad del Cauca in Popayán – Fornaguera had no trouble obtaining permission to return to the country when he applied in April 1939, and he was even granted an exemption from the 250 pesos deposit.[7] However, when the family began planning for their journey they received news that the Colombian government

[5] Luis Roniger, James Green, and Pablo Yankelevich, eds., *Exile and the Politics of Exclusion in the Americas* (Sussex Academic Press, 2012); Lastra, ed., *Exilios: un campo de estudios en expansión*.
[6] Banko, Nowak, and Gatrell, "What is refugee history, now?."
[7] Enrique Chaux to Fornaguera, 01-05-1939. AHJ.MFR, Caja 5, Legajo 122

would not cover the costs of repatriating Pineda and their daughters and that Fornaguera would need to secure a job before travelling to Colombia.[8] Given that the journey from France to Colombia cost 3,000 francs (approximately €1,650 today), this was a considerable expense for a family of five and Fornaguera was incensed by the government's lack of support.[9]

In a move typical of many Republican refugees, on 1 August 1939, the Catalan wrote to a compatriot in Barranquilla expressing his hope that 'you can draw up a work contract, putting whatever salary and conditions you see fit' and advising him to 'try to make the conditions look logical and reasonable so that it looks real.'[10] The same day, Pineda wrote to the Colombian consulate in Paris as 'a Colombian mother with four children' begging them to intervene on the family's behalf.[11] Pineda did not receive a response to her request, but by the end of the month, the Colombian government had confirmed that it would be repatriating its citizens in France as a result of the Second World War.[12] On 1 September, the MRREE decreed Resolution 78 which authorised the repatriation of Pineda and her two daughters although the family did not receive this news until four weeks later.[13] They finally arrived in Colombia on 26 January 1940, almost ten months after their initial request, demonstrating how even after the Colombian government had authorised visas, its immigration restrictions continued to hinder refugees' entry into the country.[14]

The harsh realities of hollow Colombian support for Republican refugees reflected continental trends but were also the result of national peculiarities that impacted exiles' experience in the country after arrival. In June 1940, the Francoist minister in Bogotá wrote to his minister for foreign affairs describing how many newcomers from Spain were finding it difficult to exercise their profession even though the 1936 Spanish-Colombian treaty on recognising professional titles meant that they could not legally be denied this right. He explained how the Colombian government 'willingly grants provisional exercise of their profession, making refugees believe that official recognition of this profession will also be easy. However, after the preliminary period, they find it extremely difficult to formally practice their profession.'[15] This was particularly apparent in the case of medics who faced intense xenophobia from their Colombian colleagues. In August 1939, for example, the Faculty of Medicine at the Universidad Nacional in Bogotá ruled not to employ any Spaniards.[16] The situation worsened significantly in 1941 when Ramón Trías, a Catalan student who had

[8] Fornaguera to Luis Eduardo Nieto Caballero, 22-07-1939. AHJ.MFR, Caja 4, Legajo 75; Fornaguera to Mallol, 01-08-1939. AHJ.MFR, Caja 6, Legajo 155

[9] Fornaguera to Servicio de Evacuación de Republicanos Españoles, 27-10-1939. AHJ.MFR, Caja 4, Legajo 76. Figure calculated using https://fxtop.com/en/inflation-calculator.php (27-09-1930).

[10] Fornaguera to Mallol. AHJ.MFR, Caja 6, Legajo 155

[11] Letter to J Gonzalez Salgar. AHJ.MFR, Caja 4, Legajo 75

[12] Chaux to Pineda, 31-08-1939. AHJ.MFR, Caja 4, Legajo 122

[13] Chaux to Pineda, 26-09-1939. AHJ.MFR, Caja 4, Legajo 122

[14] Fornaguera to Chaux, 09-02-1940. AHJ.MFR, Caja 4, Legajo 122

[15] Áviles to MEE, 19-06-1940. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3132

[16] José Cuatrecasas to José Giral, 19-08-1939. Archivo Histórico Nacional, Sección Diversos, José Giral (hereafter AHN.SD.JG), Caja 16

enrolled in the medical school, became the subject of a localised incident that became a national polemic.

In August, Trías was caught taking a jar of reactive agent from the Chemistry laboratory without permission. The board of the Faculty of Medicine therefore decided to suspend him for a year but, given the university's organisational structure, the matter went to the governing board for final approval. The latter was split on what action to take, with some members believing that the faculty board's decision should be upheld and others believing that the penalty was not proportionate to the crime. To illustrate the second stance, members compared Trías's case with that of a Colombian student who had been caught stealing from the Hospital de San Juan de Dios and been pardoned because their 'shame' was 'punishment enough.'[17] The governing board came to no firm conclusion after this first debate and discussion continued across several sessions for the next month, with the education minister being called to preside over the meetings.

The main point of contention was whether the action could be considered criminal given that professors in the medical school often allowed students to take reactives home with them and so Trías's only fault was not asking permission. On 15 July, board members agreed to ask the faculty board to reconsider their decision to suspend Trías for a year on the basis that his infraction was a disciplinary matter, not a crime.[18] However, the faculty board refused to modify their stance, claiming that letting an instance of theft go unpunished would set a dangerous precedent. Eventually, the governing board, on the minister's recommendation, passed Resolution 33 which overruled the faculty board's decision and instead suspended Trías for a week.[19] The obvious split between the two boards, in addition to the undermining of the medical faculty's disciplinary procedures, led to all members of the latter resigning their posts, as well as protests by medical students followed by a joint teacher and student strike.[20] Ultimately, the incident provoked the resignation of Rector Agustín Nieto Caballero and the dean of the Faculty of Medicine.[21]

Although the minister and both boards claimed that the issue had nothing to do with Trías's status as a foreigner, coverage of the story in the press and the Chamber of Representatives claimed that the student had received lighter punishment because he was Spanish [sic.] whilst a Colombian student who had committed a similar crime had been expelled.[22] Though this was not true, in fact quite the opposite, the relocation of the matter into the public sphere provoked widespread protests against Republican exiles.[23] That a relatively minor incident could have such far-reaching consequences shows how the Colombian government's lack of tangible support to many refugees from Spain, combined

[17] Act 47, 18-06-1941. Archivo Central e Histórico de la Universidad Nacional, Actas Consejo Directivo (hereafter ACHUN.ACD), Caja 438
[18] Act 55. 15-07-1941.
[19] Act 69, 25-09-1941.
[20] Act 72, 06-10-1941; Act 74, 08-10-1941; Act 75, 10-10-1941.
[21] Act 78, 13-10-1941.
[22] Act 74, 08-10-1941.
[23] de Zulueta to Giral, 28-10-1941. AHN.SD.JG, Caja 14

with the politicised atmosphere within which Spanish immigration was discussed, created significant challenges that extended well beyond getting approval to come to the country. This chapter will now turn to the experience of five different individuals whose stories highlight the variety of ways in which exiles navigated and overcame these challenges, establishing meaningful connections with local actors and helping shape new diasporic communities in the process.

Francisco Carreras Reura

Francisco Carreras Reura was a Spanish pharmacist who had also served as the governor of Madrid during the Spanish Civil War. He left Spain for France in January 1939 alongside many other members of the Spanish government, leaving behind his parents and siblings. He later wrote that he had seen 'many things in France that filled me with horror. Friends… who had been decent people, degrading themselves for a pittance; and, finally, I watched how they attempted to live off subsidies instead of remaking what they had lost'.[24] It was perhaps this sense of despair and misery that drove Carreras to embark with his wife Carmela and their young daughter for Colombia in March 1939.

Whilst it is unclear what specifically motivated the family to choose Colombia, it may have been at the suggestion of his friend Cipriano Rivas Cherif who had met Eduardo Santos in Geneva during the civil war and witnessed his actions in support of the Republican cause. Certainly, Rivas wrote to Santos on 17 March requesting that he take care of Carreras on his arrival in Colombia.[25] Santos presumably heeded his ex-colleague's advice because, by May 1939, Carreras had been contracted as an expert adviser to the *Ministerio del Trabajo, Higiene y Previsión Social*. The position, which was initially for nineteen months with a monthly salary of 300 pesos, was to assist in the regulating, monitoring and controlling of the heroin trade and to organise an anti-addiction campaign.[26] It was a continuation of the work Carreras had been carrying out in Spain prior to his departure: as the General Director of Pharmacy for the Republic, he had represented Spain in the 1938 Advisory Committee on Traffic in Opium at the League of Nations.[27]

As part of his new job, Carreras travelled around Colombia to ensure that the country was adhering to League of Nations' conventions on illegal drugs, demonstrating how Republican exiles facilitated transnational knowledge exchange in the early twentieth century. In August, for example, he was sent to inspect a marijuana plantation that had just been discovered on the Atlantic coast. Recounting his experiences to José Giral in Mexico, he boasted that both

[24] Letter to Carlos Esplá, 06-11-1941. Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica (hereafter CDMH), Incorporados 58
[25] Rivas to Santos, 17-03-1939. BLAA.ES.CV, Caja 12, Carpeta 2
[26] 13-05-1939. BLAA.ES.CV, Caja 12, Carpeta 2
[27] 'Report to the Council on the Work of the Twenty-Third Session,' League of Nations Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs (Geneva 7-24 June 1938) 24-06-1938. Available at: https://archives.ungeneva.org/commission-consultative-du-trafic-de-lopium-et-autres-drogues-nuisibles-rapport-sur-les-travaux-de-la-23eme-session-juin-1938 (Accessed 08-04-2024)

his bosses and the national press were happy with his findings which pleased him because he aimed to be a 'Spanish republican who knows how to honour his country in exile and help to dispel the false legend of Spanish Republicans.'[28] Though he recognised the ongoing polemic surrounding exiles from Spain, Carreras seemingly felt he was establishing meaningful connections between himself and local actors that had significant benefits both for Colombian policy and for his compatriots' reputations in the country. In January 1940, he revealed that he had drafted the regulations that accompanied Decree 1959 of 1939 which prohibited the import and production of heroin in Colombia.[29] Once again acting as the point of knowledge transfer between Colombia and abroad, Carreras used the Spanish monopoly law as a basis for these regulations.

Establishing international networks around counternarcotics policy became an important part of Carreras's role in the ministry. In one notable instance, he was instrumental in getting Colombia to study an international convention on coca chewing. This idea was picked up by Bertil Renborg, head of drug-related issues at the League of Nations Secretariat. In November 1942, Renborg wrote to Carreras informing him that the Secretariat in London had decided to study the issue of coca leaves in South America as part of their post-war planning. He included with the letter a bibliography that he had drafted relating to coca leaf and cocaine, requesting the Spaniard's input 'on publications that might have escaped our attention or that have been published after we drew up the bibliography'.[30]

Whilst the initiative was evidently facilitated by the fact that Carreras found himself in a country where coca leaf and the practice of chewing it was far more prevalent than in his home country, he still saw it as something 'which enhanced both his and Spain's prestige'.[31] This highlights the problematic nature of focussing solely on exiles' 'contributions' to their host nations. In this instance, Carreras viewed his achievements as reflective of his status as a pharmacist and a Spaniard, not as a functionary in Colombia. Moreover, in proposing the regulation of an activity that was largely practised by Colombia's Indigenous populations, he failed to recognise the complex cultural and social functions of the plant in Latin America. His drive to get Colombia to adhere to regulations produced in Europe to control a plant that was native to South America had significant colonial overtones. Clearly, then, the transnational exchanges that Republican exiles enabled were not always beneficial for, or well received by, the host countries. The case of Carreras illustrates how they sometimes reproduced colonial mentalities and helped encourage neocolonial practices.

Despite his self-proclaimed successes, Carreras's contract was not renewed after 31 December 1942 'for financial reasons' and this impacted him emotionally and economically.[32] After finishing at the ministry, he was forced to take whatever position came up, which happened to be a post in medical advertising for the Swiss company Casa Om. The new job

[28] Carreras to Giral, 26-08-1939. AHN.SD.JG, Caja 16
[29] Carreras to Giral, 16-01-1940. AHN.SD.JG, Caja 16
[30] Renborg to Carreras, 18-11-1942. CDMH, Incorporados 58
[31] Carreras to Esplá, 28-11-1942. CDMH, Incorporados 58
[32] Carreras to Esplá, 28-11-1942. CDMH, Incorporados 58

paid less than his previous salary which would not have been a problem if he did not have to send money back to support his family members in Spain.[33] Further, the perceived insult of losing his privileged position made Carreras less optimistic about the opportunities Colombia had to offer Republican exiles. In January 1943, he wrote to Carlos Esplá in Mexico complaining that 'Those of you who live in Mexico have the advantage of a population over one million, something that this South American Athens (!) cannot claim with its barely 400,000 inhabitants. And, more importantly, you do live as we cannot here because it […] is more boring than Soria [a city in northeastern Spain].'[34]

Eighteen months later, presumably seeking what he saw as a better life, Carreras left Bogotá for Mexico City. His story thus reveals how the uneven and unequal distribution of job opportunities continued to impact exiles in Colombia years after their arrival and this, in turn, drove certain individuals to try their luck elsewhere. This perhaps explains why Colombia has not been seen as an important site of Republican exile: various exiles who had planned to settle there ended up leaving as opportunities dried up. That part of Carreras's concern about his uncertain future in Colombia was that he needed to support his family in Spain also reveals a new aspect of the challenges exiles faced. Whilst they sought a new life in an unfamiliar country, they remained tied – emotionally and financially – to their friends, families and communities back home.

Refugee support and exile resistance

Certainly, throughout his time in Colombia, Carreras worked hard to help other exiles who wanted to come to Latin America. He did this initially through his contacts with the Republican government in exile, particularly Giral who was working to get refugees from Spain out of France. In September 1940, Carreras told Giral to provide him with the names of five to ten compatriots whose authorisation he would seek to obtain from the government. He also assured his old friend that he would help these individuals find work once they were in Colombia.[35]

Increasingly, however, Carreras worked with the *Junta de Auxilio a los Republicanos Españoles* (JARE) which had been established to administer funds to Republican refugees and which, from September 1939, was based in Mexico. By 1941, JARE's activity centred mainly around individuals who were stranded in the Dominican Republic and Carreras, who was himself attempting to help out several compatriots in that country, became an unofficial representative for the organisation in Colombia. In January, he had expressed his concern about several friends on the island 'suffering hunger and calamity' whom he wanted to bring to Colombia where 'they will live better or worse but respectably'.[36] He thus corresponded regularly with Carlos Esplá, JARE Secretary in Mexico, providing him with the names of

[33] Carreras to Giral, 30-11-1943. AHN.SD.JG, Caja 14
[34] Carreras to Esplá, 16-01-1943. CDMH, Incorporados 58
[35] Carreras to Giral, 24-09-1940. CDMH, Incorporados 58
[36] Carreras to Giral, 07-01-1941. CDMH, Incorporados 58

individuals who needed help to travel to Latin America, and attempting to secure visas for those who wanted to come to Colombia. Esplá recognised his colleague's diligence and influence when he wrote, in September 1941, that Carreras was 'becoming the main bigwig in JARE. You get everything you ask for, which does not happen to me.'[37]

Carreras often carried out his duties at significant personal expense. He covered the USD$110.50 for his friend Francesc de Sales Aguiló's journey from Ciudad Trujillo to Bogotá. It was only because he could not afford to similarly assist his remaining two colleagues Victor Barber and Juan Medina Tur that he wrote to 'beg' JARE to see if they could 'do anything for dignified republicans who have already gone through enough.'[38] Four months later, he received a request for assistance from two more friends, Vicente Gaspar and Miguel Mascaró, who were stuck in the Dominican Republic with no money. Carreras sent a few dollars but lamented that he could not afford to pay for their journey or support them in Colombia.[39] In all cases, JARE eventually reimbursed him for the incurred expenses and obtained onward passage for his compatriots but Carreras grew increasingly incensed at helping others secure support from JARE when he had been forced to borrow 14,000 francs to cover his family's journey and a further USD$200 to live off whilst he found a job, an amount that he was still paying off in September 1941.[40] In November, recognising his hard work in support of Republican refugees, JARE thus sent Carreras an extraordinary donation of USD$260.[41] The Spaniard continued working with JARE until 1942 when the organisation came under the auspices of the Mexican government.

Carreras's connections with important members of the Republican government exiled in Mexico meant that he also became the centre of Republican political organisation within Colombia. In early 1940, the *Izquierda Republicana* in Mexico drafted a manifesto which called for the reinstatement of the 1931 constitution and the unity of all Spanish Republican parties in exile. They sent the draft to Carreras, asking him to share it with other affiliates in Bogotá and request their support.[42] The response to the manifesto foreshadowed future tensions amongst the exile community in Bogotá because it revealed divided interpretations over the meaning and purpose of a Republican party in exile. For example, Josep María Ots Capdequi, a law historian who was working as a university professor in Bogotá, was reluctant to sign the manifesto because, in his words, some of the individuals who had drafted the manifesto 'do not inspire any political sympathy in me. Others even provoke in me true loathing. And if during the war all these feelings had to be curbed as a result of the situation, I am not sure whether the same obligation applies today.'[43] Despite the hesitations of some, however, Colombia provided the second largest number of signatories after Mexico for the resultant manifesto which was officially issued on 14 April 1940 to coincide with the ninth anniversary

[37] Esplá to Carreras, 17-09-1941. CDMH, Incorporados 58
[38] Carreras to Giral, 07-01-1941. AHN.SD.JG, Caja 14
[39] Carreras to Giral, 03-04-1941. AHN.SD.JG, Caja 14
[40] Carreras to Esplá, 25-09-1941. CDMH, Incorporados 58
[41] Act 134, 13-11-1941. JARE Libro de Actas, Libro IV.
[42] José Royo y Gómez to Giral, 19-02-1940. AHN.SD.JG, Caja 9
[43] Ots to Giral, 30-02-1940. AHN.SD.JG, Caja 9

of the Second Republic. Twenty-one exiles in Colombia signed in comparison to eight from Argentina, four from Chile and nineteen from Cuba.[44] This demonstrates how Colombia was a significant centre of Republican political organisation within the Americas in the early 1940s despite the smaller number of exiles there.

The manifesto created the new *Acción Republicana Española* (ARE) which aimed to help Spain recuperate its political sovereignty and bring together all Spaniards belonging to Republican parties in one common cause.[45] It was also a way to combat the *Unión Democrática Española*, led by the *Partido Comunista de España* (PCE) and supported by the pro-Negrín socialists. At the group's first meeting on 12 May, the president Diego Martínez Barrio proposed Francisco Carreras Reura as the delegate in Colombia. Three weeks later, Carreras accepted his assignation and organised a meeting of relevant individuals in Bogotá to formalise the Colombian group.[46] The twenty-five members that would make up the Colombian ARE met on 7 June in the Ateneo Español Republicano and decided that they should coordinate with other groups sympathetic to the Republican cause – such as *Esquerra* (Catalan Republican party) and PSOE – but not with communists or anarchists.

Four days later, the group met again to elect a directorate which, along with Carreras, included Rafael de Ureña, Adolfo Álvarez Buylla (ex-Spanish footballer and consul in Marseille), Francisco Noguer Vila (resident in Colombia since 1925) and Leopoldo Menéndez (Spanish military officer). They also voted to approve the 14 April manifesto.[47] The minutes from ARE sessions in Mexico show that Carreras took an active role in encouraging the organisation's expansion across Colombia and the Americas. In August 1940, he drew the main committees' attention to the fact that there were Republican exiles in the Philippines who were interested in establishing an ARE group,[48] and later that year he proposed the formation of another group in Cali.[49] Carreras continued to be active in Republican political organisation in Colombia until he left the country for Mexico in 1944.

Part of the ARE's role was to drum up support for the Spanish Republic amongst Colombians and continue its resistance against the Franco regime and its supporters. The group managed to get *El Espectador* to publish the ARE manifesto and the Republican community in Bogotá celebrated the anniversary of the Second Spanish Republic with a conference by José Prat, a Socialist representative from Albacete, about the Spanish poet Antonio Machado who had died in exile in France in 1939.[50] They also petitioned the Colombian government to intervene on behalf of Republican refugees who were still in France. Carreras was particularly instrumental in this regard through his ministerial connections. Such action won the support of Colombians who had mobilised in favour of

[44] 'Relación de adheridos al manifiesto de 14 de abril de 1940'. CDMH, Incorporados 51
[45] Circular no.1. CDMH, Incorporados 51
[46] Carreras to Martínez Barrios, 03-06-1940. AHN.SD.JG, Caja 14
[47] Carreras to Martínez Barrios, 12-06-1940. AHN.SD.JG, Caja 14
[48] Act 18, 14-08-1940. CDMH, Incorporados 51
[49] Act 28, 24-10-1940. CDMH, Incorporados 51
[50] Carreras to Giral, 06-05-1940. AHN.SD.JG, Caja 16

Republican Spain during the Spanish Civil War and continued their activities into the post-war period.

The most significant of these groups was the *Comité Colombiano de Ayuda a la Lucha del Pueblo Español* which included members of the Colombian ARE group like Ureña and José Royo y Gómez as well as Colombians like Baldomero Sanín Cano, Edgardo Salazar Satacoloma and Diego Montaña Cuellar. The committee supporters were also a diverse group of Colombians, Spaniards, Free Italians and Jews.[51] The addition of the latter two groups shows how the Colombian and Republican activists saw their struggle as part of a global fight against fascism and Nazism, and also mirrors experiences of pro-Republican solidarity elsewhere in the Hispanophone Atlantic.[52] The committee's manifesto, published in their monthly magazine *España Combatiente*, situated their activism within this continental campaign in which 'all youth and popular forces' are forming 'a solidarity movement to support the Spanish people's struggle'. The reason for this, the manifesto claimed, was that the 'language and cultural community are links so powerful that of course Spain's destiny will influence the future of our countries.' Its authors therefore used the same logic of historical connection between Spain and its former American colonies that had shaped Liberals' support for the Spanish Republic during the civil war. However, the manifesto also declared that Colombia was the best place to lead the campaign, citing its supposed democratic exceptionalism: 'as a country with a deep democratic tradition... it has, more than any other nation, a duty to start the campaign to help defeat the fascist regime that rules Spain.' The committee therefore aimed to inform Colombians about Spain's domestic situation in order to 'channel the solidarity and sympathy towards democratic Spain' into 'moral and material support'.[53]

España Combatiente effectively encapsulated the committee's national, international and transnational aspirations. Contributors came from Colombia, Spain and the Americas; the magazine included articles written in Catalan; and it published information about resistance and solidarity activity in other American countries. Aside from the magazine, the committee organised fundraising activities for Republican resistance, held events to commemorate key moments in Spanish Republican history and called on Colombians to support their campaign to restore democracy to Spain. All these initiatives were advertised in *España Combatiente* which, by September 1945, had been converted into a fortnightly bulletin distributed free of charge thanks to donations from Colombians and Spaniards.[54] This exemplifies how Colombian solidarity groups merged with Republican organisations in exile in ways that transformed both movements and allowed them to renew their resistance to Francoism and global fascism. Like exiles from the Southern Cone between the 1960s and 1980s, Republicans connected their plight to wider discourses of anti-fascism to forge networks that for a time

[51] *España Combatiente*, No.1, October 1944, p.2
[52] Raanan Rein, "A Trans-National Struggle with National and Ethnic Goals: Jewish-Argentines and Solidarity with the Republicans during the Spanish Civil War," *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research* 20, no. 2 (2014).
[53] *España Combatiente*, No.1, p.3
[54] *España Combatiente*, No.8, 04-08-1945, p.1

created an image of an influential community of exiles.[55] However, the international scenario was less forgiving in the early twentieth century and the arrival of the Cold War curtailed anti-fascist discourses, resulting in the ultimate futility of exiles' resistance.

Ana María and María Antonieta Busquets

Amongst the Aid Committee's supporters were various Catalan political and cultural groups. This is unsurprising given that the Catalan community was one of the largest and most active in Colombia, and many of them opposed Franco who refused to recognise Spain's different autonomous regions. The experiences of Ana María and María Antonieta Busquets help shed light on some of the particularities of this Catalan exile. They are the daughters of Juan Busquets Baró, a businessman from Barcelona, and Ana Nel-lo Bentosa, a housewife from Tarragona. The couple received their visas from the Colombian consul in Barcelona on 10 April 1940 and left the Catalan capital two weeks later. Ana María was four when they embarked for Colombia, but María Antonieta would not be born until after the family arrived in Bogotá at the end of May.[56]

Ana María claims that her family did not leave as refugees; instead, her father, who had fought on the Republican side, could simply not bear the defeat. The idea that this family were somehow different from the many others who left Spain in the aftermath of the civil war is perhaps a reflection of the fact that they never crossed the border into France. It also reveals how the methodological difficulties in classifying refugees discussed in the previous chapter were also part of certain individuals' lived experience of exile and their own way of making sense of the categories of displacement and migration. The term 'refugee' has connotations of helplessness and victimhood that, although exploited by many Republicans who sought visas for Colombia and elsewhere, may not have fit with other individuals' understanding of their decision to leave Spain. In any case, Franco's law of political responsibility made it difficult for Republican supporters to leave Spain in the 1940s and the Busquets Nel-lo family were only granted such permission because Juan Busquets' brother had fought with the Nationalists and been killed. They chose Colombia because his sister Antonia and her husband Francisco Campdesunyer had already been in the country for a year and could provide the necessary assurances that they would assist the family financially. Campdesunyer also provided a work contract for his brother-in-law as per Colombian immigration law but, as was the case with many refugees, when Busquets arrived in the country the job did not actually exist.[57]

In our interview, María Antonieta reflected on how hard it must have been for her parents to leave Catalonia. Nel-lo had a very close relationship with her siblings because they were orphaned as young children as a result of the Spanish flu. The couple's decision to come to

[55] Luis Roniger and Mario Sznajder, *The Politics of Exile in Latin America* (Cambridge University Press, 2009). Particularly chapter 6

[56] AGN.MRE.DC, Transferencia 6, Grupo Interno de la Nacionalidad, Caja 172, Carpeta 2501

[57] Author's interview with Ana María Busquets, 11-07-2022, Bogotá.

Colombia was therefore painful, but it was made with the expectation that their children would have a more peaceful life outside of Spain and the couple remained strong in their determination to settle in Colombia. Even as a child, María Antonieta noticed her parents' nostalgia for home and, as an adult, acknowledged that this enabled them to impart a great sense of love for Catalonia even though she had never known the region.[58]

Indeed, both women remembered the strong links between the Catalan exiles in Bogotá. Although most of the new arrivals had never met before their exile in Colombia, they soon formed a tight-knit group. They would gather regularly, either in each other's houses or in the Ateneo Catalan, to sing songs, commiserate their losses, share new experiences and support one another. Ana María explained how, through these activities, 'everyone tried their hardest to form a family even though they weren't really, amongst the Catalans.'[59] The exiles formed cultural groups such as the *Joventut Catalana de Colòmbia*; educational organisations like the *Associació Protectora de L'Ensenyanca Catalana* (established in Barranquilla in 1942); and economic support groups like the *Mútua Catalana de Colòmbia* (founded in Bogotá in 1942 with Joan Busquets as secretary).

As Busquets' involvement in these organisations suggests, many of the prominent figures were men. However, María Antonieta recounted how Catalan mothers used to meet during the school holidays in the *Parque Santander* which helped the sisters get to know the children of other Catalans. Their shared experience of exile brought them together, and they maintained this union by conserving Catalan traditions, 'something as endearing as a *pan con tomate*' (a typical Catalan dish). Food became an important part of how these traditions were passed from one generation to the next and, in the Busquets sisters' case at least, it was their mother who did the cooking. Similarly, Julie Shayne has shown how the gendered labour of Chilean women exiled in the 1970s, which included cooking *empanadas*, forged ties that generated and sustained transnational solidarity.[60] In this case, it is not clear whether the Catalan women felt that they were contributing to the anti-Franco resistance. However, for María Antonieta in particular, the care her mother took to maintain a sense of their cultural heritage ensured a lasting relationship with Catalonia even though she had been born in Colombia: 'a love for something that you don't know personally but is very special.'[61] This underscores the centrality of women – so often obscured in histories of migration and exile – in maintaining diasporic cultural identities and communities.

The two sisters' extended trajectories also illuminate how age and gender were important mediating factors in the experience of exile. In the 1950s, they married the Cano Isaza brothers – Guillermo and Alfonso – heirs to the *El Espectador* empire to whom they were introduced by their father who had met Guillermo through their shared interest in Santa Fé football club and bullfighting. Although María Antonieta was Colombian by birth, Ana María became Colombian after she lost her Spanish nationality following her marriage to Cano. In

[58] Author's interview with María Antonieta Busquets, 12-07-2022, Bogotá.
[59] Interview with Ana María Busquets, 11-07-2022.
[60] Julie Shayne, *They Used to Call Us Witches: Chilean Exiles, Culture, and Feminism* (Lexington Books, 2009).
[61] Interview with María Antonieta Busquets, 12-07-2022.

1933, the Pan-American Union adopted the Equality Nationality Treaty which permitted women to retain their nationality upon marriage to a foreign citizen. Colombia ratified the treaty but, despite South American feminists' pressure on the League of Nations to take similar action, only in 1957 did its predecessor pass the Convention on the Nationality of Women.[62] Spain did not sign the treaty and its civil code maintained that women who married foreigners acquired their husbands nationality until May 1975, six months before Franco's death.[63] Consequently, Spanish legal dispositions helped cast exiled women and children as individuals without agency. This was not to be the sisters' experience. Through their husbands' connection to *El Espectador*, they ended up working as journalists for the national newspaper with Ana María writing several editorials and María Antonieta authoring the weekly family page. Later, the MEN awarded the sisters honorary degrees in journalism as a result of their work and, in 1995, *Semana* magazine named Ana María as one of the fifty most influential women in Colombia.[64]

Jessica Frazier and Johanna Leinonen have argued that whilst gender affected women's reasons for and experiences of migration, gender identity did not influence all women across different times and places in equal ways.[65] Certainly, for the Busquets sisters, the fact of being Colombian through marriage enabled them to establish links and achieve accomplishments that may have been reserved for their male counterparts if their husbands were Spanish. In Ana María's case, she was even able to engage in discussion of Colombian politics particularly after her husband was assassinated by drug cartel gunmen outside the *El Espectador* building in Bogotá in December 1986. This was an activity that was explicitly prohibited for immigrants and one that many Republican men in Colombia explicitly avoided given the politicisation of their arrival. At the same time, however, the loss of her Spanish nationality was clearly significant given that later she fought to recuperate it. Even María Antonieta, who considers herself to be Colombian, alluded to the sense of difference that came from straddling two different identities. Their stories therefore provide insight into how gender shaped the long-term experience of exile in the twentieth century. Women who were children when their parents' exile began had very different experiences from their mothers; indeed, they may not have even considered themselves exiles at all. Young women had more opportunities for integration into local society which gave them a broader range of possibilities for their adult lives. Yet, as these windows opened, others closed and some women who lost their

[62] Marino, *Feminism for the Americas*. pp.97-119

[63] Ley 14/1975, de 2 de mayo sobre reforma de determinados artículos del Código Civil y del Código de Comercio sobre la situación jurídica de la mujer casada y los derechos y deberes de los cónyuges. Available at: https://www.global-regulation.com/translation/spain/1499529/law-14-1975%252c-of-may-2%252c-on-reform-of-certain-articles-of-the-civil-code-and-the-commercial-code-on-the-legal-status-of-married-women-and-the-rights.html (accessed 08-08-2024)

[64] https://www.semana.com/especiales/articulo/las-50-mujeres-mas-importantes-de-colombia/26739-3/ (accessed 28-03-2024)

[65] Jessica Frazier and Johanna Leinonen, "Women's Migration and Transnational Solidarity in the Twentieth Century," in *The Cambridge History of Global Migrations. Volume 2: Migrations, 1800–Present*, ed. Marcelo Borges and Madeline Hsu (Cambridge University Press, 2023).

nationality, or never had it, experienced the emotional and practical struggles of having an identity thrust upon them that did not adequately cover the breadth of their experiences.

"Trasplantar el alma entera de Cataluña a esta noble ciudad de Bogotá"

The Busquets sisters' stories exemplify the tensions between embodying one nationality whilst preserving the cultural heritage of another. A significant aspect of Catalan identity that exiles sought to maintain was a strong literary tradition exemplified by the *Jocs Florals*, a poetry contest with origins in the fourteenth century during which numerous prizes in the forms of flowers were awarded to works of literature published in Catalan. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the *Jocs* had been held in Barcelona, but Franco prohibited the event after the Spanish Civil War so Catalans in exile organised the *Jocs Florals de la Llengua Catalana* from 1941 onwards. The idea for holding the *Jocs* abroad came from the Catalan community in Argentina which had created its own council after 1939; Buenos Aires hosted the first event, followed by Mexico City, Santiago de Chile and Havana. In 1944, Catalans in Colombia agreed to organise the *Jocs* for the following year in Bogotá. The events had both local and international aims: they intended to provide Catalans in exile with a sense of return through a celebration of Catalan language and literature, but they also served as a concrete place of socialisation for Catalans spread across the Americas (and later Europe) and a symbolic affirmation of Catalan and democratic identity abroad.[66]

Ana María, whose father was on the organising committee for the 1945 *Jocs* and whose mother participated in the event, clarified that, in the Colombian case, the idea was also to raise awareness of Catalan traditions amongst their host society.[67] Certainly, the event in Bogotá stood out for the active participation of Colombians in both the organisation and proceedings of the event. The magazine *Ressorgiment*, published by Catalans in Argentina, reported that the Colombian organising committee had managed to overcome the barriers imposed by the relatively small Catalan community in the country by securing support from Colombian politicians and intellectuals. It also described these *Jocs* as 'possibly the last to be held in foreign lands', alluding to the optimism amongst exiles from Spain following the Allied victory in the Second World War.[68] The Bogotá event also stood out for three more reasons: it coincided with the centenary celebrations of Jacint Verdaguer i Santaló who had won all of the main prizes at the 1880 *Jocs Florals de Barcelona*; it celebrated more prizes which meant it had a larger prize pot (over USD$2,000) than any of the previous events; and it included prizes for works written in Galician and Basque.[69] The latter point perhaps points to the *Jocs*

[66] Josep Faulí, *Els Jocs Florals de la Llengua Catalana a l'Exili (1941-1977)* (l'Abadia de Montserrat, 2002). pp.8-9.
[67] Interview with Ana María Busquets, 11-07-2022.
[68] *Ressorgiment*, No.338, September 1944, p.5496
[69] *Ressorgiment*, No.341, December 1944, p.5551

serving as a means to bridge some of the divisions amongst the exile community in Bogotá which will be discussed later in this chapter.

However, it was the dual involvement of Catalan and Colombian groups that was the most distinguishing feature of the 1945 *Jocs*. This shared commitment to promoting Catalan culture was evident in all aspects of the event. The administrative body, presided by Josep María Capdevila, included the Colombians Antonio Gómez Restrepo and Eduardo Guzman Esponda 'to recognise the generous hospitality of the country in which we live'.[70] The *Reina* of the event – an honour bestowed by the winner of the main prize (the '*Flor Natural*') on a woman of his choosing – was a Catalan woman, Joana Abadias, but her *Cort D'Amor* (a group of women who accompanied the *Reina*) included four Colombians as well as six more Catalans (including Anito Nel-lo). To mark the celebrations, Colombia's National Broadcasting Company included four programmes of Catalan music, songs and dances as well as an adaptation of *Terra Baixa* by Angel Guimerà. The government also handed over the Teatro Colón to the *Jocs* organising committee and both the room and the staircase were adorned with flowers and orchids as well as the Colombian and Catalan flags. Alongside members from the exile committee, the education and finance ministers attended the event. Ex-president Eduardo Santos was also present as well as the attorney general, supreme justice, governor of Cundinamarca and Bogotá mayor. Antonio Trias i Pujol, president of the organising committee, opened the ceremony with a speech in both Spanish and Catalan in a nod to the diverse attendees.[71]

[70] *Ressorgiment*, No.341, December 1944, p.5551
[71] *Jocs Florals de la Llengua Catalana*, (Bogotá: 1945).

The *Reina* and her *Cort d'Amor* at the *Jocs Florals* in Bogotá, 1945. Photo published in the accompanying pamphlet *Jocs Florals de la Llengua Catalana.* Bogotá, 1945.

That Catalans and Colombians joined together in 1945 to host an event that fomented diasporic cultural exchange illustrates how refugees from Spain and their Latin American hosts alike saw exile as an opportunity to develop new transnational identities. Sebastiaan Faber has referred to this as a 'left-wing *hispanismo*' or a resurgence of nineteenth-century ideas of spiritual unity between Spain and its former American colonies.[72] Indeed, exiles in Colombia did attempt to draw parallels between their present-day experiences and the history of the Hispanophone Atlantic. Joan Solé i Pla, who had arrived in Colombia in June 1939 and was working as a medic in Barranquilla, published an article in *Ressorgiment* in February 1942 that declared: 'How lucky are the American republics, yesterday colonies of Castile, today free, independent, thanks to their courage and their culture... that with each new wave of oppression of the Iberian peoples [...] men arrive in these lands who do not want to be slaves, who enjoy working and thinking with freedom for progress, art and science without the eternal burden of the civil guard.'[73] For the Catalan, Republican exiles and their American hosts

[72] Sebastiaan Faber, "Contradictions of left-wing hispanismo: The case of Spanish Republicans in exile," *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 3, 2 (2002).
[73] 'Ramon Subirats a Colombia', *Ressorgiment*, no.307, p.4998

were united by their shared experience of overcoming oppression at the hands of Spanish tyrants as well as their love for culture. Interestingly, this mirrored the arguments put forward by Colombian supporters of Republican Spain during the civil war but, in Solé's account, this reimagined relationship between Spain and its former American colonies was still hierarchical. According to the author, it was still the American republics that were 'lucky' to receive these agents of 'progress, art and science'.

What an analysis of exiles' discourse and cultural production can miss, however, is the Latin Americans who enthusiastically promoted a new Ibero-American identity and into whose folds the refugees from Spain were warmly welcomed. This was part of a continental push to establish a sense of Latin American cultural unity built from within in direct opposition to externally-imposed interpretations of the region articulated by scholars in the USA and Europe. In August 1938, for example, scholars of Latin American literature across the Americas met in Mexico City for the First International Congress of Ibero-American Literature. Representatives agreed to establish the International Institute of Ibero-American Literature as a forum for knowledge exchange across the continent.[74] The *Revista Iberoamericana*, the official organ of the institute, explained that the main objective was to bring together individuals with 'a vision, a great love for American Arts, a shared aspiration for intellectual independence' to 'coordinate and reveal a sense of American literary work'.[75] Intellectuals in Latin America were therefore articulating a distinct Spanish- and Portuguese-language cultural tradition prior to the mass influx of refugees from Spain.

Colombia positioned itself as an important centre of this new continental drive, but one that also included the new arrivals from Spain. Less than a week before the Mexico congress, a group of authors from Latin America and Spain – including Colombians Germán Arciniegas, Eduardo Carranza, Daniel Samper Ortega and Joaquín Tamayo as well as future exiles Cuatrecasas, Ots and Zulueta – met in Bogotá during the celebrations for the city's quatercentenary. They decided to establish an association of American and Spanish writers with its own journal that would serve to link intellectuals from both sides of the Atlantic. The group's manifesto, signed by notable figures from Bolivia, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Uruguay and the USA, asserted their 'desire to exchange ideas on how to bring together writers and artists who, all over America, live completely isolated from one another thus hindering a continental cultural project.'[76] They opted to make Bogotá the home of this new association – later justified based on its geographical position in the 'centre' of the Americas, the 'purity' of the Spanish spoken there and Colombia's peaceful and democratic nature – and towards this end the Colombian government offered to concede to the group direction of the *Revista de las Indias*, a publication of the MEN that had appeared in 1936 as a key part of Liberals' cultural programme.[77]

[74] Ernest R. Moore, "International Institute of Ibero-American Literature," *Hispania* 21, 4 (1938).
[75] *Revista Iberoamericana*, No.1, May 1939, p.8
[76] Published in *Revista de las Indias*, No.1, December 1938, pp.161-5
[77] *Revista de las Indias*, No.5, April 1939, p.156

Although *Revista de las Indias* never reached the prominence of *Revista Iberoamericana*, over the next twenty-two years it did serve as a forum for authors from across the Americas to publish works on a variety of cultural, literary and political topics relating to Latin America and Spain. The particularities of its management in the late 1930s – namely, the inclusion of Republican intellectuals – also highlights how the discourse of left-wing *hispanismo* was articulated in conjunction with, and indeed on the instigation of, Latin Americans who were looking to promote a regional cultural identity. In this sense, exiles' desire to justify their newfound positions in the Americas combined with Latin Americans' own continental aspirations to create a new Ibero-American sentiment that transcended both nineteenth-century Hispanism and twentieth-century Panamericanism. Ultimately, this shared heritage would not prevail outside of a small, literary community within Latin America, but the fact of its existence, and that Colombians attempted to situate themselves at its heart, demonstrates that multiple opportunities for Latin America's future relationship with the world existed in the early 1940s. In at least one of these imagined futures, Colombia was a central actor.

Francisco de Abrisketa

Catalans were not the only significant autonomous group within Colombia. We saw in the previous chapter how the Liberal government attempted to establish Basque settler colonies in the country. Although ultimately unsuccessful, Colombians' relative openness towards this group of immigrants meant that many Basques did end up coming to the country. One of the most notable individuals amongst the Basque community was Francisco de Abrisketa. During the civil war, the Basque government commissioned Abrisketa first to reassign unemployed industrial workers in northern Spain to Barcelona and Valencia and then, during the war in the north, to evacuate the remaining workers east.[78] After the fall of Bilbao in June 1937, he crossed the French border and, in November, he left for Barranquilla from Bordeaux.[79] He had been invited by Alberto Ricaurte Montoya, a Colombian who he had met at the University de Deusto, and he travelled immediately to Bogotá to take up a post that Ricaurte had secured him at the *Contraloría General*.[80] From that role, he became a member of the National Statistics Council and director of the Centre for Economic Research.

Despite his prestigious position, correspondence with his close friend Fructuoso de Arrospide in Argentina suggests that it took him a while to settle into Colombia. In 1939, seemingly responding to Abrisketa's suggestion that he might move to Buenos Aires, Arrospide wrote that in the city 'finding a job that pays extremely poorly is not hard, the difficult thing is finding a job where they pay you enough to live' and described Argentines'

[78] Sabino Arana Fundazioa, Archivo del Nacionalismo Vasco, Fondo Francisco Abrisketa (hereafter SAF.ANV.FA), Caja 77, Carpeta 2
[79] Patrick de la Sota Mac Mahon, 'Abrisketa si se le podía pedir algo más.' SAF.ANV.FA, Caja 64, Carpeta 7
[80] Sonia Bonifacio Pérez interview with Patxuco Abrisketa, 22-10-2015. Available at: https://dkh.deusto.es/en/community/ondarebizia/resource/patxuko-abrisketa-kolonbia/8f3de3dc-c928-4924-929c-16ee7e24b960 (accessed 17-01-2024)

attitudes towards Republican refugees as a 'façade: kind words but nothing practical'.[81] He therefore warned his friend in another letter: 'I think that it is very difficult, if not impossible, for you to be in the same conditions here as you are there'.[82] Arrospide's impressions of the Argentine capital therefore modifies the assumption – common at the time and since – that Colombia was a less desirable destination for exiles from Spain than other Latin American nations.

By mid-1941, Arrospide made references to his friend's 'satisfaction' and 'progress', suggesting that Abrisketa had now settled in Bogotá.[83] Certainly, he found significant leeway for the pursuit of different and varied occupations. Abrisketa taught statistics at various universities across Bogotá and contributed articles on economics and statistics to the *Revista del Banco de la República* and the *Anales de Economía y Estadistica*. In 1947, the Colombian government awarded him and Andrés Perea the *Cruz de Boyacá* for their work on the country's first industrial census.

Aside from these significant contributions to the Liberal project in Colombia, Abrisketa also worked hard to establish national and transnational Basque networks. We have already seen how he was actively involved in the proposals to bring two hundred Basque families to Colombia, but he also sought connections with Basques who were already in the country. From 1938 to 1943, he maintained contact with a Basque Jesuit in Pasto, Adoni Egaña. Egaña was a staunch Basque nationalist as well as a Catholic and so wrote several letters criticising Franco to the Basque magazine in Paris, *Euzko Deya*, using the pseudonym Alejandro Eraso to avoid recognition. It was this shared commitment to the Basque cause that drove the correspondence between the two men, with Abrisketa updating Egaña on the activity of Basque exiles in Bogotá and Egaña sending articles defending all things Basque so that Abrisketa could publish them in the national press.[84]

Abrisketa also endeavoured to establish cross-border networks with other Basques in exile across the Americas. In one instance during late 1940, he helped his friend Ramón Sota Mac-Mahon in New York to get authorisation to enter Colombia so that he and Marino Gamboa could start shipping produce from the Caribbean and USA.[85] It was perhaps because of this vast web of contacts that the president of the *Euzko Alderdi Jeltzalea* (Basque Nationalist Party) in exile, José Antonio Aguirre, chose Abrisketa as his secretary during his visit to the Colombian capital in 1942. The *Lehendakari* (president) subsequently named him delegate of the Basque government in Colombia.[86] Indeed, news of Aguirre's favourable impression of Abrisketa spread south as the Basque president continued his tour of the continent. In Chile, he told another Basque exile Nicasio Abásolo 'about the great role [Abrisketa] played during

[81] Arrospide to Abrisketa, 01-11-1939. SAF.ANV.FA, Caja 63, Carpeta 3
[82] Arrospide to Abrisketa, 19-11-1939. SAF.ANV.FA, Caja 63, Carpeta 3
[83] Arrospide to Abrisketa, 31-07-1939. SAF.ANV.FA, Caja 63, Carpeta 3
[84] SAF.ANV.FA, Caja 63, Carpeta 6
[85] Mac-Mahon to Abrisketa, 07-10-1940. SAF.ANV.FA, Caja 64, Carpeta 7
[86] Arrospide to Abrisketa, 02-10-1942. SAF.ANV.FA, Caja 63, Carpeta 3

his visit to Colombia' and implied that he could be a key player in 'divulging our problem' because of 'the intellectual milieu' which he inhabited.[87]

Part of the 'problem' that Aguirre referred to was conjuring up international support for Basque independence. Towards these ends, he used his position as an exile in New York to secure financial and governmental assistance to aid Basque separatist efforts. An important part of this plan was the reorientation of a Basque Intelligence Service (BIS), initially established during the civil war, to work with Allied nations undertaking espionage activity across Latin America and Europe throughout the Second World War and early Cold War period.[88] Aguirre's aforementioned trip around Latin America, disguised as a tour of different universities in the region, was the first step in putting that network into action.

According to FBI records, in mid-1942 before his departure to Mexico, Aguirre and Mac-Mahon had approached the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs and the Vice President about using Basque networks across Latin America to aid the Allied cause. Henry Wallace received the duo in the Rockefeller Center and promised significant financial assistance.[89] An FBI update in February 1943 referred for the first time to the BIS and revealed that Basque representatives in Latin America worked with both Special Intelligence Service (SIS) and Office of Strategic Services (OSS) agents in their respective nations.[90] One of these representatives, Antonio Irala y Irala, reported a year later how the Basques were using their social networks from 'both the upper and lower social levels' to monitor any activities 'in connection with Fascism' throughout the region.[91] The agreement was one part of the nascent US intelligence-gathering system in Latin America which depended on various local networks that also included Free Italy movements.[92]

In naming Abrisketa as his representative in Colombia, then, the *Lehendakari* recruited him into a web of secret intelligence operatives across the continent. Although Abrisketa's name is redacted in the documentary record, a 1944 report on Basque espionage activities in Latin America confirmed that 'Our representative in Colombia' was also the 'Delegate of President Aguirre' in that country.[93] Most of the FBI files also removed any references to the specific activities undertaken by operatives but a report from a meeting between Abrisketa and the US legal attaché in Bogotá on 24 June 1944 detailed the sorts of information the former could provide. This included updates on Spaniards in Colombia (both Francoist and Republican); the political and economic situation in Colombia, particularly as it related to relations with the US and Pan-American affairs; Nazi groups and sympathisers; affiliations and

[87] Abásolo to Abrisketa, 29-06-1943. SAF.ANV.FA, Caja 63, Carpeta 3
[88] Juan Carlos Jiménez de Aberásturi and Rafael Moreno Izquierdo, *Al servicio del extranjero: Historia del servicio vasco de información (1936-43)* (Antonio Machado Libros, 2009).
[89] 'Report on Basque Delegation of New York City', 19-11-1942. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Basque Intelligence Service (hereafter FBI.BIS), available at: https://vault.fbi.gov/Basque%20Intelligence%20Service, part 2.
[90] C.H. Carson to Mr Ladd, 12-02-1943. FBI.BIS, part 10
[91] Letter to J. Edgar Hoover, 21-01-1944. FBI.BIS, part 10
[92] Pedro Cameselle-Pesce, "Italian-Uruguayans for Free Italy: Serafino Romualdi's Quest for Transnational Anti-Fascist Networks during World War II," *The Americas* 77, no. 2 (2020).
[93] 'Latin America'. FBI.BIS, section 2

activity of Colombian and foreign clergy; vigilance of the northern coast of Colombia and Venezuela as well as the pacific coast, the Gulf of Darien and the land and sea borders with Panama; vigilance of Asturias restaurant in Bogotá 'where all Colombian Falangists gather.' To gather this information, Abrisketa mobilised his contacts across the country (two formally and several more informally) and received a monthly salary of USD$150 paid via the Basque delegation in New York.[94]

In late 1943, however, the BIS ceased its relationship with the OSS because of unsatisfactory supervision arrangements. In February and March of the following year, the New York Basque delegation approached the FBI to suggest that their organisation cooperate exclusively with Bureau representatives in Latin America. Presumably as a reflection of changing US interests given that they had never previously mentioned the topic, delegates highlighted their 'special interest' in combatting communism and outlined the various methods that Basque representatives could use to infiltrate communist organisations throughout Latin America. Significantly, they emphasised Colombia as a significant centre for communism in the region, along with Mexico, thereby unwittingly repeating Conservative rhetoric that circulated within Colombia during the Spanish Civil War.[95]

Less than two weeks after the second meeting, G. H. Cannon recommended that the FBI accept the proposal because 'Our experience with the Basques in Latin America has indicated that they are extremely valuable informants... In view of their interest in combating Communism and their efforts already begun to infiltrate Communist organisations, they could be of extreme value in the future, inasmuch as Communism is presently one of the principal problems in Latin America and will become increasingly serious.'[96] Although is not clear what motivated the BIS to turn their attention towards anti-communist activity, the final section of this chapter will explore how certain Basques turned against the PCE and its allies during their exile, blaming them for the Republic's defeat. Abrisketa certainly expressed no personal opposition to the re-orientation of BIS activity once he learned of it in June 1944. He agreed to instruct his network in their new mission – although he did express misgivings about some of his informants' willingness to engage in anti-communist espionage – and arranged to meet with the legal attaché on Monday and Thursday evenings. In those meetings, the two would discuss work being done by the local BIS group and Abrisketa would provide written updates in Spanish that would subsequently be translated into English for inclusion in reports or memorandums sent to the FBI. The attaché described Abrisketa as 'an extremely intelligent man' who 'demonstrated an intense interest in our work', and he therefore believed 'that we will be able to use him and his group to great advantage in obtaining much better informant coverage in Colombia.'[97]

By March 1945, Abrisketa had instructed his network to furnish monthly reports on communist activities in their respective regions and, two months later, he recruited three

[94] Letter to Hoover, 08-07-1944. FBI.BIS, section 2
[95] E.E. Conroy to Hoover, 04-03-1944. FBI.BIS, section 2
[96] Memorandum to Ladd, 14-03-1944. FBI.BIS, section 2
[97] Legal Attaché to Hoover, 08-07-1944. FBI.BIS, section 2

more operatives in Barranquilla, Cali and Medellín who could attend communist meetings and conventions there and send regular updates.[98] The Basque continued his work with the BIS until he left Colombia for the USA in 1945. When informing bosses in Washington of his departure, the attaché noted that Abrisketa had been 'a superb informant… faithful and loyal to this Office.' The FBI thus gave him a bonus 'equivalent to one month's salary' in recognition of 'his outstanding work'.[99] The BIS in Colombia continued under Abrisketa's successor and was one of the last groups to continue working with the FBI until it closed its SIS programme in February 1947.[100]

The case illuminates several important aspects of Republican exile and the early Cold War in Latin America. Firstly, exiles acted across the intersection of national, international and global developments in the 1940s. By mobilising contacts across Colombia to report on pro-Axis activity in support of the Allied cause in the Second World War, Abrisketa also furthered exiles' continued resistance to the Franco regime albeit now subsumed under the broader and more immediate banner of anti-fascism. As his own account reveals, Nazi operations within the country were largely indistinguishable from the Falangist sentiment that had been growing amongst right-wing Colombians since 1938. Secondly, that the BIS approached US officials to suggest shifting the focus of espionage activity in Latin America from Nazism to communism supports Patrick Iber's assertion that US Cold War diplomacy in Latin America was in many ways a continuation of political and intellectual currents that developed in the region before the period of superpower conflict. The 'Cultural Cold War' was therefore as much a bottom-up development as it was a top-down imposition, and it involved intra-left conflict as well as the traditional right-left divide.[101] In this case, Basque exiles in New York merged their own ideological struggles with the changing winds of US interests and, because of their extensive and entrenched networks throughout the continent, positioned themselves as a key group involved in anti-communist espionage in Latin America during the mid-1940s. That this initiative was picked up and carried out seemingly to the satisfaction of US authorities demonstrates the fungibility of Republicans' politics in exile – a topic that will be explored further in the final section.

Judith Gómez Basterra

In his position as Basque delegate in Colombia, Abrisketa acted as a centralising figure for the Basque community in Bogotá. The Gómez Basterra family – Paulino Gómez Sáiz, Judit Basterra Nanclares and their three children Judith, Paulino and Eduardo – were also members of this group. The story of the family's journey to Colombia encapsulates some of the struggles Republicans faced when going into exile. The diary that Paulino junior kept on the instruction

[98] Letter from Legal Attaché in Bogotá, 05-03-1945; Letter from Legal Attaché in Bogotá, 18-04-1945. FBI.BIS, section 8

[99] Letter from Legal Attaché in Bogotá, 29-10-1945. FBI.BIS, section 8

[100] Letter from Legal Attaché in Bogotá, 03-03-1947. FBI.BIS, section 8

[101] Patrick Iber, *Neither Peace nor Freedom: The Cultural Cold War in Latin America* (Harvard University Press, 2015). Particularly chapter 1

of their mother described how the three children were first sent to Britain as part of the mass evacuations of northern Spain in spring 1937. They spent a year moving around different camps in England before their mother called them back to France where they stayed in a Basque refuge in Enghien-les-Bains, just outside Paris. In May 1939, after the Nationalist victory in Spain, the family travelled to Poitiers where they were reunited with their father who had crossed the French border with Negrín. Following the German invasion of France, they made their way to Marseille – a port city in the free zone – where they were joined by other exiles including Paulino senior's brother Eduardo who left for the Dominican Republic shortly after.[102]

In an interview with Judith Gómez in July 2022, she recalled how the family's decision to embark for Colombia in early 1941 was based on the fact that Eduardo had ended up there in August the previous year, but that they had no idea about the country and did not know what to expect.[103] On 24 March, they embarked from Marseille with Visitación Blanco, wife of the ex-Republican Minister for Education Segundo Blanco, and her three children.[104] Paulino senior and Segundo Blanco had been refused boarding because all men between seventeen and forty-eight were expected to stay and fight for France. The ship was a merchant vessel and it was carrying five hundred passengers – half Republican and half Jewish – so the two families slept in the hold during the long journey to Martinique via north Africa.[105] Once they arrived on the Caribbean island – now only eight of thirty-seven refugees from Spain heading for Latin America – they were interned in the lazaretto at Fort-de-France with no money and awful food.[106] Finally, they were authorised to leave Martinique and set sail once again, this time for Ciudad Trujillo where they arrived on 23 May 1941.[107]

Paulino's diary suggests that the family had a relaxed time in the Dominican capital – the children playing and going to the cinema whilst Judit visited other refugees who were in the city – but a letter from Prieto to Judit in June 1941 expressed his sorrow for the inconvenience of their prolonged stay, due to many shipping companies ceasing operations in the Caribbean as a result of the Second World War.[108] The letter suggests that Judit had been struggling to get her family out of Ciudad Trujillo, thus exposing the differential experiences of exiles and their children. On 11 July, after nearly two months, Judit was able to get visas and tickets for Cuba where they disembarked three days later. After two more months, following stops of various durations in Havana, Mexico City, Acapulco and Balboa, the family arrived in Buenaventura from where they travelled to Bogotá via Cali and Ibagué, reaching their final destination on 13 September 1941.[109]

[102] Diario de Paulino Gómez, 22-09-1941. FPI.PG, Escritos Paulino Gómez Basterra
[103] Author interview with Judith Gómez, 06-07-2022, Bogotá.
[104] 'Relación de familias españolas,' 02-05-1941. CDMH, Incorporados 44
[105] Diario de Paulino Gómez, pp.13-14
[106] 'Relación de familias españolas,' 02-05-1941
[107] Diario de Paulino Gómez, p.15
[108] Prieto to Basterra, 10-06-1941. FPI.PG, Correspondencia familiar
[109] Diario de Paulino Gómez, pp.23-38

Once in the Colombian capital, the family quickly integrated into the exile community, staying in a *pensión* run by Marina Nalda who had arrived with her husband Ismael Dieguez and their two children in August 1939 on the invitation of Andrés Perea and Carlos de Mier. Judit enrolled the children in the Eujes Institute which another exile, Marino López Lucas, had established in 1940. Paulino senior was finally able to leave France on 10 November and arrived in Bogotá in March 1942, having spent two months in Mexico City awaiting his renewed Colombian visa.[110] Paulino's presence facilitated the family's immersion into wider Colombian society, with Eduardo Santos reportedly inviting them to the presidential palace and Tomás Rueda Vargas admitting Paulino junior and Eduardo into the *Colegio San Bartolomé*.[111]

Eighty years on, Judith still expressed a certain bitterness about not being allowed to go to school herself, supposedly due to her family's lack of money. This experience, not unique amongst refugees from Spain, again shows how gender mediated the exile experience. Fornaguera had attempted a year earlier to obtain scholarships for his daughter Nuria and son Miguel to attend universities in Colombia. When Rueda Vargas disclosed the challenges that awarding two scholarships to the family posed, Fornaguera responded that he and his wife 'would prefer that Miguel be awarded a scholarship over Nuria.'[112] For exiled families from Spain, when faced with financial difficulty in a new environment which offered little more than rhetorical support, it was clearly more important to secure opportunities for their sons. The daughters of these individuals, at least when it came to education, were therefore disproportionately disadvantaged by exile.

Judith channelled her frustration into reading; the *pensión* where the family were staying had a huge library and she would spend all her spare time devouring all the books there. This determination helped Judith, at the age of fifteen, find employment in the *Federación Nacional de Trigueros* for 88 pesos a month which was, according to Judith, 'a good salary'. Further, as a result of their prolonged stay in France, she had learned French and so was contracted by the Swiss commercial attaché in Bogotá before moving into a secretarial job at the National Insurance agency. From these experiences, Judith established her own relationships with important Colombian figures. The director of the *Federación* was the son of Liberal war hero General Uribe Uribe, and, at the insurance agency, she worked with Jaime Michelson Uribe who would later establish Colombia's most important economic conglomerate *Grupo Grancolombiano*. Judith persevered against the obstacles imposed on her by her family's exile and her own gendered experience, becoming a significant member of Colombian society in her own right.[113] Her story therefore further challenges assumptions about exiled women and children as victims without agency.

[110] Letter to Basterra, 18-12-1941. FPI.PG, Correspodencia familia; Jorge Zawadsky to Prieto, 15-01-1942. FPI.PG, Correspodencia

[111] Interview with Judith Gómez, 06-07-2022.

[112] Fornaguera to Rueda, 02-12-1940. AHJ.MFR, Caja 63, Carpeta 3

[113] Interview with Judith Gómez, 06-07-2022.

As well as their Colombian connections, Judith and her family would meet regularly with fellow Basque exiles. Abrisketa's memoir describes how the men would meet at Café Vizcaya in the central banking district, a venue owned by Basque who had lived in Colombia for many years, and leaf through newspapers they received from compatriots in Europe and Latin America discussing the stories over their morning *tinto* (Colombian style coffee).[114] However, Judith's own memories again emphasise the importance of women in maintaining cultural identities whilst in exile. She recounted how her mother taught her how to cook the Basque dishes that were a central element of community gatherings through which the Basque group in Bogotá also established meaningful connections with locals. Judith described how members would bring their Colombian friends along, share their regional dishes and teach them how to sing Basque songs.[115]

The close relationship that the Basque colony in Bogotá established with their Colombian hosts was immortalised in 1945 when the former donated a bronze plaque honouring Gernika crafted by the sculptor Jorge Oteiza, who spent time in Colombia during the mid-1940s, to the city.[116] In response, Bogotá council named a park in the capital after the Basque town. The accompanying act declared that Gernika existed centuries before Athens and Sparta; that it was a symbol of the destruction of democratic ideals and political freedom; and that Colombians should therefore remember Gernika as an emblem of liberty and social democracy. The council also cited more intimate reasons for their decision: many Colombian people owe their surnames to the Basque people, including Simón Bolívar whose forebearers originated from very near to Gernika. Three councillors – including Julio Ricaurte Montoya, brother of the Colombian who invited Abrisketa in 1937 – thus renamed the park in Palermo neighbourhood as Parque Gernika.[117] The plaque was initially displayed in the park but, because of fears that it would be stolen, the Basque community removed it and installed it instead at one of their meeting points. But the park still exists to this day, and, in 2000, Judith planted a tree there in homage to the famous tree of Gernika.[118]

Political tensions amongst exiles

Despite these Basque connections, the Gómez Basterra family were not Basque nationalists like many of their compatriots. Instead, they were linked to PSOE. Paulino senior was a party member who had been named interior minister under the Negrín government that came to power in May 1937. In exile, Gómez continued his affiliation and joined the Colombian branch of PSOE that José Prat García had established in 1940. They were a small group – in December

[114] 'Voces de los vascos en el exilio.' SAF.ANV.FA, Caja 64, Carpeta 7
[115] Interview with Judith Gómez, 06-07-2022.
[116] Francisco de Abrisketa, *Presencia vasca en Colombia* (Eusko Jaurlaritzaren Argitalpen-Zerbitzu Nagusia, 1983). p.52
[117] Included in Abrisketa, *Presencia vasca en Colombia*, p.53
[118] Interview with Judith Gómez, 06-07-2022.

1946 Prat reported that there were fifteen members[119] – but they met every Sunday afternoon and maintained correspondence with their counterparts in Mexico.[120]

Stemming from his political membership, Gómez became staunchly anti-communist in the post-war era as he made clear in his review of Julián Zugazagoitia's *Historia de la guerra en España* in January 1943. He took issue with his old friend's account of the war which, in his view, reduced the division between socialists and communists to 'a personal quarrel' between Prieto and Negrín. Instead, Gómez declared that 'the underhand treachery... of Lamoneda, Vayo, Negrín... traitors and so-called socialists, united with profiteering and foreign communistoides… was the most dramatic element of the Spanish war.' The Republican government's official protection of communist manoeuvrings was, he believed, the main reason for the Republic's defeat: the socialists who were preoccupied with the war had to defend themselves 'not only from fascism but also FROM THE CRIMES THAT COMMUNISTS COMMITTED'.[121]

In the early 1940s, this was not an uncommon position amongst Republican exiles as reflected in the Colombian ARE group's decision not to collaborate with communists. By the end of 1943, however, and following the creation of the *Junta de Liberación Española* (JEL) in Mexico, divides amongst the exile community became more complex and pronounced. The JEL was an organisation that formally united the ARE, Prieto-led socialism and Catalan republicanism to defend the continuation of Republican institutions in exile. In Bogotá, both the ARE and PSOE welcomed the news because they saw 'in the move a step towards re-establishing the unity that brought in the Second Spanish Republic.'[122] However, in December the JEL named the Catalan José María España as its delegate in Colombia which caused uproar amongst the local PSOE and anti-Negrín Republicans because España did not mix with non-Catalans and had applied for Colombian nationality in 1942 thus forsaking his Spanish citizenship. Alfredo Rodríguez Orgaz, an architect from Madrid who had arrived in Colombia in 1939 and initially supported the JEL, bemoaned that 'those who have defended the Junta are shocked by what has happened and we look ridiculous to the communist-Negrín group for whom this appointment has been a great triumph.'[123]

Discouraged by the backlash, España did not accept the position but the opposition to his designation infuriated the Catalan community in Bogotá who saw it as proof of anti-Catalan sentiment. In February 1944, Jaume Cantarell wrote a scathing letter to *Ressorgiment* condemning what he called the 'lamentable incident.' He blamed the socialists, particularly Prat who was appointed in España's stead, for blocking España's candidacy and informed his compatriots across the Americas that 'Unfortunately, it means that Catalans in Bogotá are now adverse from joining the JEL' even though their counterparts in Mexico were actively

[119] Prat to Rodolfo Llopis, 01-12-1946. FPI, AE 786-7 PSOE-CE/Correspondencia
[120] José Prat, 'Exilio en Colombia.' Fundación Francisco Largo Caballero, Fondo José Prat (hereafter FFLC.JP), Caja 758, Carpeta 3
[121] 'Mas nociva que una mentira es una verdad a medias', January 1943. FPI.PG, Escritos Paulino Gómez Sáiz. Emphasis in original.
[122] Orgaz to Álvaro de Albornoz, 28-11-1943. CDMH, Incorporados 1936.
[123] Orgaz to Albornoz, 19-12-1943. CDMH, Incorporados 1936.

participating in the new organisation. The magazine's editors, for their part, held up the case as a warning to 'those Catalans who still believe that they can serve Catalonia by going hand in hand with the Spanish, whether they are from the right or the left.' [124]

Yet the matter did not end there. On 15 January, the General Assembly of the Ateneo in Bogotá met to elect a new board. In the preceding days, members had agreed to secure representation from all parties including the PCE. The socialists, led by Prat, refused to collaborate with communist representatives and so decided to field their own candidates who were soundly defeated in the elections. The resultant board was thus made up of members from all pro-union groups, including several Catalans and one communist. Incensed by their loss, the Colombian PSOE group left the Ateneo – branding all its members as 'communist' or 'nationalist-separatist' – and established their own centre, the Casa de España.[125]

These divisions were not limited to Bogotá. In early 1945, the Ateneo Republicano in Cali closed because of infighting amongst its members.[126] Accordingly, Republican politics in Colombia was both similar and different to that experienced by exile communities elsewhere. Like in other Latin American nations, exiles from Spain maintained and became more entrenched in the political positions they had held at the end of the Spanish Civil War. In the early 1940s, this meant most groups displayed varying degrees of anti-communist sentiment and practice. Yet in Bogotá, unlike in Mexico City, the relatively high proportion of autonomous groups meant that, over time, loose unionist coalitions often succeeded over the exclusionist stance of anti-communist socialism. Catalans in particular grew increasingly suspicious of what they perceived as the anti-separatist stance of the Colombian PSOE group and opted instead to collaborate in representative bodies where they could maintain their distinct political and cultural identity. Although Judith was too young to participate in any of these debates at the time and does not recall any major divisions amongst the exile community, it is clear that her father's involvement greatly impacted her. Even in 2022, when asked whether she ever attended the Ateneo, she recalled that the centre was 'a meeting point for communists'.[127]

Conclusion

Colombia received relatively few refugees from Spain when compared to other Latin American nations. Yet we lose an opportunity to reflect on the cultural significance of exiles in the country if we do not consider the several hundred who chose – and were among a selected group to be admitted to – Colombia as their place of refuge for all or some of the post-war period. Clearly, Republican exile was not a uniform experience. Even in Colombia, where official policy meant that only 'useful elements' were welcomed, there were a variety of different 'Republican exiles'. As we have seen, the government's determination not to encourage immigration from Spain helped shape refugees' experiences of arriving at and

[124] *Ressorgiment*, No.333, p.5424
[125] Prat to Llopis, 06-10-1946. FPI, AE 786-7 PSOE-CE/Correspondencia
[126] Manuel Jordá Capdevila to Gonzalo de Ojeda, 16-04-1945. AGA 10(0015) Caja 54/3125
[127] Interview with Judith Gómez, 06-07-2022.

settling into the country. However, official apathy garnered meaningful interactions as the new arrivals sought to establish themselves amongst their local hosts, Spanish cultural and political groups or both. Aside from these structural factors, the various stories in this chapter support the increasingly established notion that categories such as age, gender, political affiliation and cultural identity helped shape the lived experience of exile. The Colombian case, precisely because refugees from Spain were forced to seek out their own communities, permits an exploration of these differential experiences.

Tracing these seven individuals' trajectories within the country also helps re-centre Colombia in a continental history of Republican exile. From engaging with diasporic societies to facilitating continued political organisation, and even participating in transnational espionage networks, exiles in Colombia actively contributed to the imagining and crafting of a new Spanish Republic and a regional Latin American identity. These visions were not always complementary and were sometimes in open conflict, but we risk obscuring the different articulations of Spain's future by focussing solely on Prieto-led socialism in Mexico or renewed Catalan nationalism in Argentina. Indeed, the development of a more pluralist Republican sentiment in Colombia during the early 1940s suggests yet another possibility for Republican Spain. This chapter therefore contributes to histories of political exile that show how the transnationalisation of political practices generated tensions between geographically distant co-partisans but also created the possibility for new collective groupings and political meaning.

Of course, Colombia was not just a passive host for exiles from Spain to regroup and reconfigure their political and cultural identities. Certain Colombians from the political and intellectual elites also saw in their recent guests opportunities to further their own domestic and international aspirations. In particular, this chapter has foregrounded the projection of a new Ibero-American identity that had Bogotá as its geo-cultural centre. This reimagining of Spain's historic relationship with its former American colonies stood in stark contrast to the Panamericanism promoted by the USA and a new *Hispanidad* stemming from Francoist Spain. Instead, it highlights the uniqueness of a historical moment that brought the mid-twentieth-century Latin American liberal project together with progressive intellectuals from Spain. In this way, an exploration of Republican exile in Colombia also allows for an appreciation of the distinct regional hopes for their future position within global society.

It could be argued that with the arrival and activity of Republican refugees in the late 1930s and early 1940s, the Liberal regime's internationalist aspirations came full circle. At the outbreak of war, Alfonso López Pumarejo had to grapple with the impact his reactive policy towards Spain had on his aspirations for greater continental unity. Ultimately, the two stances proved incompatible and the president's perceived sympathies for Republican Spain also hastened the collapse of his reformist programme. When Eduardo Santos came to power, he seemingly grasped the Spanish Civil War's bearing on his country's foreign and domestic policies and worked to minimise the influence of news, ideas and people from Spain. As part of this, he sought an international position based on strong, bilateral relations rather than regional organisations. Despite the differences between the two presidents' stances, they

both saw Colombia as an important actor in the international arena. Whilst political and diplomatic histories might question the extent to which they were able to do this, cultural histories of Republican exile in the country suggest otherwise. Ironically, the very people whom the two Liberal administrations' denied had any impact on their own national aspirations were ultimately those who helped Colombian elites forge a unique global position.

That distinct moment for Colombia's future has been lost amidst the well-worn narrative of Colombian exceptionalism that has shaped both national and continental histories of the 1930s and early 1940s. It has been argued here that this narrative was an elite construction that responded, in part, to the immense interest in the Spanish Civil War and its immediate aftermath. This interest demonstrates how it was not just elites who had internationalist ambitions and not just foreigners who helped realise them. Of course, we have seen how various individuals travelled across the Atlantic during and after the war, becoming for local individuals the embodiment of their connection to Spain. Much more often, however, individuals from all sectors of Colombian society connected with Spanish events because they saw in the globalising discourses surrounding the conflict – whether it was fascism vs communism, democracy vs dictatorship, empire vs sovereignty – a way to further their own position at home. So, political parties and organisations that could not gain representation at the national level employed the rhetoric and imagery of the Spanish Civil War to win support in their localities. Members and supporters, in turn, appealed to these discourses to advance their own agendas, as did marginalised groups for whom national frameworks proved insufficient to assert their rights. They used internationalist language – taken largely from Spain – for national purposes but, in doing so, these diverse Colombians asserted themselves as part of a global society even as their political and intellectual leaders cast them as subjects of a nation immune to foreign influence.

Studying early twentieth-century Colombian history through the lens of the Spanish Civil War therefore illuminates the variety of hopes that different Colombians had for their country's future. These hopes, in turn, challenge the very notion of Colombian insularity during this period as they reveal the experiences that the country shared with its regional neighbours. Sometimes these occurred much later than in other parts of Latin America, as with debates around immigration, and often they never reached the same intensity, like the Colombian Right's flirtation with corporatism, but this does not make them any less worthy of study. Colombia was not exempt from the twentieth-century (post)colonial imaginaries that have been the subject of research elsewhere in the Hispanophone Atlantic; in fact, it shows how those imaginaries functioned in a chronological period that is often ignored in international histories of the region.

Conclusion

In 2018, whilst considering applying for a PhD programme, I was in Colombia visiting friends. At that time, the country was approaching the second round of the presidential elections which saw conservative Iván Duque face former member of the M-19 guerrilla movement Gustavo Petro. Although most press commentary focussed on the potential implications of a Petro victory in terms of Colombia becoming another Venezuela, I was intrigued to hear sporadic references to the Spanish Civil War. These generally argued that the lesson of Spain was an ominous warning about what could happen should Petro become president. In the end, Duque emerged victorious and references to Spanish history seemed to fade once again into the background.

Four years later, as I was undertaking my doctoral research in Bogotá, I unexpectedly came across a protest outside a hotel near the *Universidad Pedágogica* where the extreme right-wing Spanish party *Vox* was reportedly holding a meeting with Colombian counterparts. Several demonstrators were brandishing protest signs, including one that caught my eye: a long banner displaying the famous Republican slogan *No pasarán*. I had just come from a meeting discussing potential sources to study the reception of the Spanish Civil War in Colombia and took this as striking evidence of the continued significance of the topic.

In the 2022 presidential elections, Petro achieved the victory that had previously eluded him. The continued references to Spain by both the president himself and his opponents, suggest that these two defining features of my PhD journey were not just happy coincidences.[1] Instead, as Kirsten Weld has argued, such allusions offer the opportunity to map historical continuities.[2] This thesis has not attempted to draw a straight line from 1936 to the present day, rather it has interrogated exactly why the Spanish Civil War resonated with so many Colombians during the early twentieth century in ways that might help explain why Spain's example has proved so enduring in Colombia.

In 1945, Alfonso López Pumarejo resigned early from his second presidential term following ongoing political conflict, financial scandals and a failed coup attempt. He was replaced by Alberto Lleras Camargo, but this could not prevent the return of the Conservatives to power in 1946 following a split in the Liberal party. The new president – Mariano Ospina Pérez – had actually been put forward as the Conservative candidate by Colombian nationalists in the late 1930s, but he presided over a relatively moderate government which

[1] Gustavo Petro, Discurso en el evento 'Transformando vidas – Seguridad Humana y Paz Total en Colombia', 14-06-2024 https://fba.se/contentassets/bcc5dc90ebad42ab9afdb4ace30e1bd6/transcripcion-del-discurso-del-presidente-de-colombia-gustavo-petro.pdf (accessed 20-08-2024); Mauricio García Villegas, 'Sobre la inexistencia del centro', *El Espectador*, 21-11-2020. https://www.elespectador.com/opinion/columnistas/mauricio-garcia-villegas/sobre-la-inexistencia-del-centro-column/ (accessed 20-08-2024)

[2] Kirsten Weld, 'Holy War: Latin America's Far Right', *Dissent*, Spring 2020. https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/holy-war-latin-americas-far-right/ (accessed 20-05-2024)

sought Liberal cooperation at every level of political administration. However, Conservatives in some regions wrested back control through violent means in a similar fashion to Liberals in 1930 although this time, with the help of the Spanish Civil War, the traditional political adversary had been converted into a communist 'Other'.

Liberals, in turn, were influenced by the growing clamour of popular groups who saw in Spain a way to exert their own influence on Colombian politics. The party closed ranks around Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, a leftist Liberal from a modest background who garnered the support of Colombia's working classes. Gaitán's assassination on 9 April 1948 sparked widespread riots in the capital city – known as *el bogotazo* – followed by a nationwide outburst that converged with the ongoing instances of regional violence to create an unofficial civil war that lasted for at least a decade and became known as *la Violencia*. Though multiple types of conflict with both historic and immediate causes intersected to create this now infamous period in Colombian history, the extent and type of violence seen can only be explained by a drastic 'Othering' of the opposition. As this thesis has argued, such a process was facilitated at all levels by local interpretations of the Spanish Civil War and its significance for Colombia.

In the midst of growing unrest, Laureano Gómez assumed the presidency after he ran unopposed in the 1950 elections. His rule marked a new phase in *la Violencia*, one which was characterised by official clampdown on 'communist' subversion. However, Gómez's view of what communism represented in Colombia had been heavily shaped by his experience of the late 1930s and so the repression was largely targeted against Liberals. Indeed, several Republican exiles who arrived in the country following the civil war either felt compelled to leave or were expelled from Colombia during this period because their association with the old Spanish regime led the Gómez administration to label them as communist.[3] Parallel to this process of marginalising the opposition, the new president also attempted to institute a confessional corporatist state in the country along the lines of Francoist Spain. This failed attempt to modify the Colombian constitution contributed to Gómez's downfall at the hands of General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla who launched a successful coup against the Conservative president. Rojas's four-year dictatorship was the last presidency before the *Frente Nacional* which paved the way for the political system that characterises Colombia today.

All this is not to say that any of these events were inevitable, or to claim that the Spanish Civil War was the only contributing factor. Instead, I suggest that viewing 1930s and early 1940s Colombian history solely through national lenses obscures some of the global framework within which diverse Colombians understood themselves, their surroundings and their place in the world. The strong sense of connection – both historic and contemporary – to Spain as well as the globalising messages of the Spanish Civil War ensured that these became important reference points for early twentieth-century Colombian identity formation. At the same time, I have argued that the idea of exceptionality that has characterised this period in the country's history was a construct that evolved in part as a response to widespread local interest in Spanish events and as a way for elites to retain control of

[3] Such was the case of Mercedes Rodrigo who was a pioneer of psychotechnology in Colombia. Martínez Gorroño, *Españolas en Colombia*. pp.14-27

Colombia's nation-building project. Understanding how and why visions of Spain became embedded in these processes helps contextualise the continued invocation of Spanish history in modern-day Colombia.

The Spanish Civil War was pivotal in the evolution of Colombian politics in the 1930s and, for that reason, has remained a crucial reference point up to the present. Its antecedents – the establishment of the Second Spanish Republic and the election of a Popular Front government – helped provide inspiration for leading Liberals and the wider left in their plans to expand citizenship and enhance political participation. In turn, the conflict became the prism through which Conservative and Catholic groups interpreted the Liberal's modernisation project. They then weaponised Spanish events, particularly the popular violence it unleashed during the first months, to use against the López government and claim that the president was inciting a similar situation in Colombia. Individuals on both sides of the political spectrum thus imported ideas, rhetoric and even people from Spain to articulate their own domestic programmes and contest those coming from opposition groups.

The impact of these transnational exchanges was not limited to inter-party rivalry. Local perceptions of the Spanish Civil War also contributed to growing factionalism amongst Conservatives and Liberals. The split amongst moderates and radicals in both parties widened as they drew different lessons from Spain. Moderate Liberals interpreted López's *Revolución en marcha* through the lens of events across the Atlantic and, especially once Colombia's own interests had been directly threatened, hastily withdrew their support. For their part, the extreme right viewed the Nationalists' insurrectionary tactics with admiration and began to question more forcefully whether the Conservatives' policy of abstention was really the best way to face the perceived communist threat. The Spanish conflict therefore contributed to two key developments in 1930s Colombian politics: the pause in López's reforms and the Conservative party's slide-to-the-right.

Intra-party debates over the conflict's significance for Colombian politics and society also foregrounds the limits of the central government's power during the 'Liberal Republic'. Spain became a means for regional groups to challenge the narratives coming from Bogotá and drum up support for alternate visions of their country's future. Colombian nationalists based in major regional cities fused narratives of colonialism and independence based on a local understanding of Franco's exaltation of *Hispanidad* to push for a more assertive Conservative party. Liberals and leftists outside of the national sphere countered the notion of Colombian insularity by organising anti-fascist or anti-imperialist campaigns inspired by the Spanish Civil War and directing them against these local opponents. In turn, interpreting Colombian realities through the globalising discourses emanating from Spain permitted marginalised groups who were not considered fit to debate domestic issues to assert their place in national society. In this way, Colombians' interactions with events in 1930s Spain sheds light on how international events can become a space for the global to meet the local, particularly in a society where strict hierarchies and regional difference mean that not everyone felt invested in or represented by the national government.

Spain, because of its strong resonance in early twentieth-century Colombia, offers a useful lens with which to interrogate the Liberal project. The governments' insistence that the Spanish Civil War bore no relevance for their plans to construct a 'modern' nation was an attempt to shut down the popular response to the conflict within the country. By negating its impact in Colombia, they also diminished the impact of bottom-up contributions to their nation-building project even as they sought to enact policies that would instil a greater sense of national belonging. Liberal leaders' paternalism was thus not limited to their domestic social or cultural policies but also extended to their country's international relations.

In turn, these Liberals' discussion of certain aspects of the Spanish Civil War revealed how their reformist programme did not seek to overcome racial and gender hierarchies in Colombia. They contrasted images of the Republican *miliciana* with their depiction of Latin American women to justify their governments' refusal to pass universal suffrage, and they articulated a new discourse of race that associated moderate political ideologies with 'civilisation' to block the arrival of many Republican refugees. In doing so, Liberals upheld long-standing gendered and racialised notions of modernity that equated whiteness and masculinity with progress. Even as they were promoting a more inclusive vision of national identity, they retained a limited view of who exactly could contribute to a 'modern' Colombia. By situating Colombians' response to the Spanish conflict against these debates, I have uncovered this broader history of inclusion and exclusion that invite us to reflect on the limitations of early twentieth-century liberalism.

Understanding Colombia's multifaceted relationship with Spain in the 1930s and 1940s sheds light on how different sectors of society conceived of their country's position on the world stage. This thesis therefore underscores the complex interplay between the local, national and international in Colombia's early twentieth-century nation-building project. The change in the two Liberal administrations' Spanish policies – confused and reactive under López; much more pragmatic and focussed during Santos's rule – had implications for their broader foreign policy objectives, particularly as they pertained to regional cooperation. López's diplomatic priority was encouraging greater American unity but his administration's actions in Spain were often in contrast to the rest of the continent. Santos, on the other hand, wanted to carve out a more individualistic global position for Colombia and the clarity of his Spanish policy both reflected and facilitated this. This demonstrates how, although both presidents downplayed foreign influence, their ideas about what it meant to be Colombian were in part related to what was going on outside the country's borders.

Other groups, by linking their own struggles to events on the peninsula, also viewed their local aspirations in global terms. To oppose Liberals' perceived and actual links to Republican Spain, right-wing groups across Colombia articulated a transnational identity that bound them to the Spanish Nationalists through their entangled history and shared values. They were a Hispanic and Catholic brotherhood that sought to preserve these fundamental bases of their national societies against the internationalist tendencies of socialism and communism. In response, left-wing groups saw in the plight of the so-called Spanish people their own fight to be free from Colombia's exclusive political and social systems. They, too, linked the Colombian

and Spanish right but in a negative discourse of renewed imperialism whereby Republican Spain was attempting to cast off the same colonial forces that had conquered the Hispanophone Atlantic centuries before. All sectors saw these struggles as part of the global anti-fascist and anti-communist movements that currently had their epicentre in the Spanish Civil War.

The transnational movement of people between Spain and Colombia facilitated this sense of connection between the two nations. Important Republican figures came to assist national and regional governments in the cultural and educational initiatives that formed part of their modernisation project. Nationalist envoys helped disseminate and foment the new notion of *Hispanidad* amongst Conservatives and Catholics. In turn, Colombians fighting for either of the Spanish warring factions became physical embodiments of the various solidarity initiatives that cropped up across the country. As the war drew to a close, and Republicans began to cross the Atlantic, exiles from Spain joined with Colombians who had been sympathetic to their cause to establish an important place for Colombia within a new vision of an Ibero-American community. All these individuals saw their country not as a nation isolated from international developments and free from external influence but as an important player within a larger international, transnational or global context.

The experience of Republican exile in Colombia also situates the country firmly within regional histories of cultural and political exchange. On the one hand, the work of individuals like Francisco de Abrisketa who engaged in anti-communist espionage on behalf of the US government shed light on the early development of the transnational networks that would play such an important role in Latin America's Cold War. Patrick Iber has examined the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), established in 1950 and taken to Latin America by Spanish Republicans who had become staunchly anti-communist in exile, which aimed to foment pro-Western sentiment abroad.[4] But precursors to this cultural diplomacy existed before the superpower conflict had officially begun, and were established on the initiative of Republican exiles seeking to advance their own cause of Basque nationalism. On the other hand, Colombian-Spanish engagement during the civil war and its aftermath envisioned a particular transnational cultural community that would shape the way US propaganda was received in Latin America during the Cold War. Though the CCF was intended as an instrument of US-led anti-communism, for its local participants it was a way of promoting a broader Latin American understanding of democracy that was opposed to dictatorships in general. This mobilisation of cultural networks to advance a distinct transcontinental identity was not new either. Colombian intellectuals, including some of those who would be involved in the CCF, had established such a movement in the late-1930s, also with the help of key Republican figures.

In the end, Colombia did not become a centre of Republican exile like Mexico; nor was it an important focus for Franco's *Hispanidad* movement as was the case with Argentina. Unlike in Guatemala and Cuba, it did not have revolutions that drew on the Republican experience

[4] Iber, *Neither Peace nor Freedom*.

in the Spanish Civil War. Similarly, it did not see the counterrevolutionary movements inspired by Nationalist Spain that shook Guatemala and Chile. But that does not mean individuals who imagined those futures for Colombia did not exist in the 1930s and 1940s. We risk eliding the very real impact that Spanish events had in Colombia if we only focus solely on how they shaped the 'big events' of twentieth-century Latin America. Instead, I have argued for shifting focus to longer-term widespread processes that set the scene for and continued long after those events. Ignoring Colombia in these new global histories of the Spanish Civil War also serves to perpetuate the notion of that country's early twentieth century exceptionalism which, as this thesis has shown, evolved in response to those who did propose distinct possibilities for their nation. I have therefore sought to provide an expanded view of the conflict's impact in the Hispanophone Atlantic at the same time as I have used its example to argue for the benefits of globalising Colombia's 'Liberal Republic'.

By applying a (post)colonial lens to Colombia's early twentieth century, this thesis brings the nation's history into conversation with broader regional accounts from which it is usually sidelined. Viewing the continent's twentieth-century trajectory through more than just its relationship with the USA allows for an appreciation of how Colombia too felt the ebbs and flows of regional turmoil even if these often did not draw the attention of their northern neighbour. Rightist Colombians interpreted Liberals' attempts to modernise the country as an attack on the country's 'traditional' (colonial) structures. Viewed through the prism of the Spanish Civil War, the reforms took on heightened significance and elicited an increasingly hostile reaction from these groups. Faced with such a fierce and threatening backlash, Liberals and the Left also read the situation through the lens of what was happening in Spain and claimed that their political opponents were trying to restore Colombia to imperial rule through violent means. By reinterpreting Latin America's decades-long cycle of reform and reaction as more than just a response to US actions in the region, we can also appreciate how Cold War mentalities developed in Latin America during a period that has traditionally been seen as a lull in the region's tumultuous twentieth century.

In particular, the findings presented here draw our attention to the role of the Catholic Church in fuelling anti-communism in early twentieth-century Latin America. The unique relationship between church and state, especially between Catholicism and the Conservative party, in Colombia meant that the religious question remained a key point of contention between parties in the 1930s. Moreover, the social and cultural reach of the Catholic Church during this period ensured that, for many Colombians, priests contributed much more to their worldview than newspapers or the national government. Catholics in Colombia, shaped by papal encyclicals on 'the social question' as well as their transnational links to Spain, took a strong stance on the Spanish Civil War and its potential consequences across the Atlantic. At the national level, the Catholic hierarchy joined Conservatives in using the conflict as a tool with which to attack Liberal policies that threatened their position in the country. At the local level, however, priests promoted and even mobilised parishioners in an anti-communist campaign that was couched in internationalist language inspired by events in Spain. The

targets for this campaign were local opposition groups who supported the Spanish Republic but did not identify as communist.

This thesis also illuminates the international environment within which ideas of gender and race developed and became increasingly politicised in the country during the 1930s and 1940s. Though often referred to in studies of Cold War violence, the early twentieth century was also a significant moment in the evolution of gendered and racialised images of the 'communist Other'. Postcolonial notions of authority and civilisation converged with global features of the interwar period – such as the emergence of the 'modern girl' – to produce new anxieties about older concerns. I have already demonstrated how Liberals' discussion of the Spanish Civil War revealed the limitations of their modernising project, but Conservative commentary also reproduced and reformulated notions of gender and race in Colombia in ways that had significant political consequences. For them, the Spanish *miliciana* had abandoned all femininity and therefore could no longer be considered fully human. They then adopted the term to refer to Colombian women who supported the Liberal reforms or engaged in pro-Republican activism, thus casting them as both unnatural and anti-national. At the same time, Conservatives constructed a racialised discourse that linked together Colombian Liberals, Soviet Russia and Black and Indigenous populations to claim that the former were implementing an internationalist programme that would drag Colombia away from civilisation by erasing the nation's Hispanic heritage, traditions and values. Accordingly, they emphasised the ethnicity of important Liberal ministers and supporters of the Spanish Republic to highlight their supposed foreignness.

The study of Colombian interactions with the Spanish Civil War and its legacies opens up several avenues for further research relating both to the relationship between the two countries and Colombia's place in the world. Firstly, although this thesis has alluded to local perceptions of Spanish political developments before 1936, there is more room to interrogate how Colombian political elites responded to the establishment of the Second Republic. It is still not clear exactly how Liberals went from constructing a black legend of their old colonial ruler to celebrating and even seeking closer ties with Republican Spain, for example. Such works would help contextualise the widespread interest in the Spanish Civil War that has been the subject of this thesis. Secondly, following the pattern of other research into the conflict's long shadow in the Hispanophone Atlantic, there is still important work to be done on its legacies in Colombia. Understanding Spain's continued relevance in later decades may provide further insights into Laureano Gómez's political evolution and how left-wing interpretations of the conflict helped shape the revolutionary movements that appeared from the 1960s. Finally, Colombia has of late played an important role in mediation efforts across the continent, most recently in the aftermath of the contested Venezuelan elections. Whilst this may be an innovation of the Petro presidency, it would be interesting to see whether there are any historical precedents. In particular, interrogating how the country responded to the revolutions, coups, civil wars and peace processes that characterised Latin America's Cold War. Research in this vein would continue the trend towards inserting Colombia into wider regional and global histories.

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