

**La Violencia Revisited: The Clientelist Bases of Political Violence in Colombia**



Steffen W. Schmidt

*Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (May, 1974), 97-111.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0022-216X%28197405%296%3A1%3C97%3ALVRTCB%3E2.0.CO%3B2-D>

*Journal of Latin American Studies* is currently published by Cambridge University Press.

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/cup.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

---

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## *La Violencia* Revisited: the Clientelist Bases of Political Violence in Colombia\*

by STEFFEN W. SCHMIDT

Lying at the heart of the problem in analyzing Colombian violence is the relative poverty of conceptual frameworks not only for dealing with violence but with the institutions and processes and traditions which form the social environment of the society.<sup>1</sup> In the following pages I shall argue that a dialectic between violence and patron-client relations offers a useful analytical framework. The first part will deal with the historical dynamics of Colombian politics. In part two, patron-client politics will be looked at in a small town setting.

### *The Historical Dynamics of Violence*

The nineteenth century in Colombia saw the reinforcement of agrarian patrimonialism accompanied by intense competition of the national elites for control over the political system. The Liberal and Conservative parties became differentiated in the 1850s during a time of radicalization.<sup>2</sup> They continued to

\* An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the 1972 meeting of the Midwest Association of Latin American Studies, 20 Oct. 1972, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois.

<sup>1</sup> The literature on *La Violencia* is abundant, but very uneven in both approaches and analytical clarity. The most obtuse study is the 761-page dissertation by A. S. Frances entitled *Structural and Anticipatory Dimensions of Violent Social Conflict* (University of Pittsburgh, 1967), which despite its pretentious length and theoretical title is primarily a history of Colombia, a review of conflict theory and finally a jargon-filled conclusion which ends with the sentence: 'But the motivation of the elites to led (*sic*) the peasantry into internal war belongs to the anticipatory domain, in the present (*sic*) of an all pervading cultural background, which we have called the Hispanic Catholic Ethic' (p. 761).

A useful source book is the two-volume study *La Violencia en Colombia* by Germán Guzmán Campos, Orlando Fals Borda and Eduardo Umaña Luna (Bogotá, Tercer Mundo, vol. 1, 1962, vol. II, 1964). See also Robert G. Williamson, 'Toward a Theory of Political Violence: The Case of Rural Colombia', *Western Political Quarterly*, 18 (March 1965) and Richard Weinert, 'Violence in Pre-Modern Societies; Rural Colombia', *American Political Science Review* Vol. LX, No. 2 (June 1966).

<sup>2</sup> An excellent description of one of the leaders of Liberal radicalism is the recently published Gustavo Rodríguez, *Santos Acosta: Caudillo del Radicalismo* (Bogotá, Biblioteca Colombiana de Cultura, 1972).

reinforce their legitimacy in struggles for power which consistently and violently pitted the growing sectors of partisans in both parties against each other.

These political wars, penetrated deeply into the society, drawing peasants as well as the urban sectors into the struggle.<sup>3</sup> Colombia became politicized and the politicization went beyond the personalistic splinter groups led by notables, a pattern which characterized most of Latin America in that period. Two vaguely distinct national parties came into being and maintained themselves, by a combination of violence, elasticity and to a large extent because they were able to meet the demands of ruling the country – in other words they were functional and viable institutions in the eyes of most of the polity.<sup>4</sup> The extent of partisan cohesion at the national level was weak despite the high violence (see Table I); the parties have been endemically plagued by factionalism and by the temporary defection of splinter groups in the elite to short-lived coalitions. This factionalism prevented total war and a breakdown of the system, and was possible without mass popular disaffection because of another characteristic of the Colombian system, namely a reliance on patron-client interpersonal relations as the dominant ruler-ruled nexus.<sup>5</sup>

TABLE I

*Colombian Domestic Violence 1830–1965*

<i>Years</i>	<i>Casualties</i>
1830–1854	10,600
1860–1895	20,000
1899–1902	150,000
1948–1965	300,000
Total	480,600

Compiled from: Eduardo Riascos Grueso, *Geografía Guerrera de Colombia* (Cali, Imprenta Bolívariana, 1949) and Germán Guzmán Campos *et al.*, *La Violencia en Colombia* (Bogotá, Tercer Mundo, 1964).

- <sup>3</sup> J. Leon Helguera has brought together some very useful primary material on the period: 'The Problem of Liberalism Versus Conservatism in Colombia: 1849–1885', in Fredrick B. Pike (ed.), *Latin American History: Select Problems* (New York, Harcourt Brace & World, 1969). The descriptions of bands roaming through countryside and cities, intimidating their political opponents, and the class-based tensions separating the *cachacos* and *los de ruana*, leave little doubt about the intensity of the conflict.
- <sup>4</sup> It is important to point out that despite several efforts to form third parties, notably Gaitán's in the 1940s, López Michelsen's in the 1960s and Rojas Pinilla's in the 1970s, these have been short-lived and both their leaders and their following moved into one of the two dominant groups.
- <sup>5</sup> Patron-client relations are '... an exchange relationship between roles – may be defined as a special case of dyadic (two-person) ties, involving largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socio-economic status (*patron*) uses his own influence and resources

Patron-client relations as a sociological process have become the subject of considerable attention in political analysis. The Colombian case suggests that the bonds between unequals and the reciprocal exchange of resources gave the two-party system continuity and strength.<sup>6</sup> This process is likely to take on more than simply social and economic characteristics in a society where national parties penetrate into the local level very early, that is to say in the agrarian period.<sup>7</sup> This is true because the resources of the client tend to be of more value than they are later, in the stages of urban growth and industrial development. It can be argued that the value is recognized by rural elites because in the early periods of national consolidation the role of centralized government in such things as guaranteeing the property of landowners is extremely weak, and the notables are, therefore, compelled to construct their own network of loyal subjects who will be available to defend the landlord's territory and life.<sup>8</sup>

In Colombia it was not only the particularistic security of the elites which needed to be serviced by the *clients*, but indeed it was the legitimacy of national rule which had to be fought out. I use the words 'fought out' deliberately because control over central or regional government and their respective budgets, bureaucracies, etc., before the extension of suffrage was accomplished by mobilizing large armies fighting under the leadership of local

---

to provide protection and/or benefits for a person of lower status (*client*) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron'. James C. Scott, 'Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in South-east Asia', *American Political Science Review* Vol. LXVI, No. 1 (March 1972).

<sup>6</sup> The exchange resources may be cash credit, protection, work, gifts and education from the *patron*, usually a landlord, and loyalty, work, the vote and armed protection from the *client*, usually a peasant villager or farm laborer. It should be noted that the bureaucracy has been looked upon by the two parties as a source of patronage and pay-off for loyal followers. Clientelist networks, therefore, have looked with eagerness to their party coming to power. It inevitably meant both jobs for some of them and preferential treatment in the distribution of public goods and services. For some useful comments on this, see James L. Payne, *Patterns of Conflict in Colombia* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1968) especially Part One, chs. 3 and 4. I have also argued this point in 'Bureaucrats as Modernising Brokers? Clientelism in Colombia', *Comparative Politics* (forthcoming).

<sup>7</sup> Clientelism is, of course, not an explicitly political phenomenon; rather it is a form of exchange and obligation. F. G. Bailey says, for instance, speaking about patrons in India: 'In so far as a man is chief he is expected to protect the interests *not* of the community at large, but the interests of his own followers against rival chiefs and their followers.' 'The Peasant View of the Bad Life', in Teodor Shanin (ed.), *Peasants and Peasant Societies* (Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books, 1971), p. 306. I would argue that the introduction of national political parties into village clientelism adds greater resources (external to the limited ones found in peasant communities) and makes the outcome of struggles immeasurably more important because national control is now at stake.

<sup>8</sup> In the Colombian case, the role of the central government did not extend forcefully into the countryside. Even such a rudimentary presence as the law enforcement instruments, army and police, has not existed in large areas during most of Colombian history.

patrons usually confederated into clusters comprising *the* Liberal or Conservative armies.<sup>9</sup>

Internal violence raged endemically across the country, always identified with political parties and always leaving the dead, the devastated landscape and the legacy of vendettas. This social history might be dismissed as pre-modern violence of little consequence because it was not distinctly based on class, race, ethnicity or regional loyalty. It was not classic civil war between distinct regions. It seems to have become, nevertheless, deeply internalized into the value system of Colombians. Most peoples' cognitive maps were influenced by the symbolic 'good guys' and 'bad guys'. Most families' lives were directly affected by politics. Most people joined a group, and became part of a political network.<sup>10</sup>

Since the basis of these networks was not regionalism, there tended to be a diffusion of adversaries through much of the society; often the division of villages into hostile party-identified factions. Thus the enemy was everywhere and the temptation for violence (often violence as revenge for brutalities suffered by family members) omnipresent.<sup>11</sup>

For the national elites the job of consolidating power was not so much one of 'the best man winning', but one of preventing the opposition from terrorizing one's following while at the same time mobilizing one's following and if necessary terrorizing the opponent. This uneasy situation understandably led to endless uprisings and short 'political wars'. The last of these wars at the end of the nineteenth century took on extraordinary dimensions, finally

<sup>9</sup> The passion and commitment of the actors in these conflicts comes across vividly in General Aurelio Acosta, *Memorias: Un Sobreviviente del Glorioso Liberalismo Colombiano* (Bogotá, Editorial Cromos, 1940). Also, see Gonzalo Paris Lozano, *Guerrilleros del Tolima* (Manizales, Ed. Arturo Zapata, 1937) for an excellent feeling for the manner in which local *patriones* and, indeed, local farmers or party leaders mobilized their friends and followers, and joined in strategic military manoeuvres with other partisan armies to fight against the equally partisan government troops.

<sup>10</sup> Fals Borda's description is the classic one for this political differentiation. 'When the two modern political parties, the Conservative and the Liberal, started to take full form during the 1860s, the Liberal bond became one of the social characteristics of Saucio. Then the peasants followed the dictates of *gamonales* (brokers or bosses) who appeared to be *mayordomos*, or supervisors, for local landowners such as the Neiras, the Maldonados, the Corteses, and others.

'Open warfare caused each locality group to strengthen its internal political bond as a means of survival in civil conflict. In this manner politics became for the Saucite as important as life itself — it was identified with his struggle for existence,' Orlando Fals Borda, *Peasant Society in the Colombian Andes* (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 1962), p. 242.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43, points out that 'Most *veredas* (rural neighborhoods) in Colombia can be classified according to a political dichotomy. Neighborhoods with a balanced number of Conservatives and Liberals are hard to find. When rural families migrate, they tend to move to *veredas* of the same political affiliation, where they will not be harassed, and where they can count on the solidarity of the whole group in case of emergencies.'

devastating and exhausting both parties.<sup>12</sup> The Liberals lost the war and came under an inevitable Conservative dominance which they were unwilling to challenge between 1903 and 1930.

In 1930 the Conservatives lost the presidential election because they ran two candidates which gave the Liberals the presidency by default. However, it is at this crucial juncture that the story of *La Violencia* in Colombia begins, the devastating conflict which is usually dated 1948–60, but which I would argue should be defined as functionally running from 1930–64.

It was in 1930 that the Liberals saw and seized the opportunity of becoming the majority. The evidence is incontrovertible that having seized the government the Liberals proceeded ruthlessly to purge the opposition from offices. To be sure, the initial cabinet was politically mixed and gestures were made suggesting that a semi-coalition between the two parties would rule. However, in the hinterlands, especially in the most heavily Conservative-dominated areas, violence erupted. Conservatives were run out of town, the bureaucracy was purged and Liberal party officers sent instructions to village partisans to 'Liberalize' the areas.<sup>13</sup>

Violence and coercion in elections became endemic. In 1934, 1938 and 1942 the Conservatives refused to run a presidential candidate, declaring that the persecution of their following was so great that the elections were a foregone conclusion. The Liberals, on the other hand, unabashed, won elections. The presidential vote doubled between 1930 and 1934, causing Alfonso López, the new president, to say that his Liberal partisans were much too generous with their delivery of votes.

The Liberals, completely dominant by 1945, split badly, ran two candidates in 1946 and lost to the Conservatives just as they had won the 1930 presidential election. However, growing out of inter-party conflict and a rising demand for greater opportunities for the masses, a Liberal populist, Jorge Eliecer

<sup>12</sup> The best description of this war, called *La Guerra de Los Mil Días* is Jorge Martínez Landínez, *Historia Militar de Colombia*, Tomo 1 (Bogotá, Iqueima, 1956).

<sup>13</sup> The evidence is that the Liberal party, after it captured the presidency, rapidly moved to replace Conservative officials and bureaucrats at the local level. Abel Carbonell, in *La Quincena Política* (Bogotá, Editorial Cosmos, 1952), documents and describes a large number of incidents throughout the country.

After the assassination of Liberal leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitán in 1948, Liberal partisans turned once more and violently against Conservatives. In the town of Puerto Tejada, 'Public officials and Conservative leaders were imprisoned, savagely tortured until they died, then their bodies [were] mutilated, heads separated from bodies and thrown to the ferocity of the mob which organized, with those macabre trophies, a barbarian sport in the main square, where between hysterical yells, the bloodied heads flew back and forth, propelled by kicks, like bloody meteors from a barbarian sky.' Rafael Azula Barrera, *De La Revolución al Orden Nuevo* (Bogotá, Editorial Kelly, 1956), p. 416.

Gaitán, rose to the surface. He swept across the nation in 1946, 1947 and the first months of 1948 with his powerful oratory and charismatic appeal. In 1948 he was assassinated and the Conservative regime was unquestioningly blamed for it by the Liberals. The capital of Colombia was almost burned to the ground in the *Bogotazo*. The Conservatives terrorized and the Liberals took to the hills and barricades. Armed self-defense was declared and the violence moved to defensive insurgency.

I would argue that structurally the central government in 1950 still exercised almost no authoritative control over most of the country. Local notables and peasant village leaders continued to mobilize themselves either on the offensive or the defensive. Guerrilla leaders were patrons (often literally speaking in the sense that they were local landlords or their sons).<sup>14</sup> They offered leadership, protection, arms and food in exchange for the loyalty of peasant followers.

It seems clear that by 1948 the objective conditions reinforcing traditional patron-client relations were starting to break down. Gaitán<sup>15</sup> had politicized the society and raised questions of class relations, equality, the oligarchic domination of the masses and imperialist exploitation by the United States. He was prepared to shatter the old patterns of patrimonial reciprocity. Yet the incidence of massive violence blurred the class-based national coalition, which Gaitán was building. It re-established a traditional status of insecurity; it isolated people into small bands and it drove a wedge in the form of party labels between people living under similar objective conditions. It reconfirmed the relevance of a more traditional patron-client bond.

If one looks carefully at the post-1948 rural situation in Colombia, one finds a certain amount of rural consciousness among peasant guerrilla bands. There were, for example, innumerable socialist experiments in these defensive enclaves:<sup>16</sup> the communal holding of property, *ad-hoc* governments and instruments for rule. New ideas in social policy (the abolition of the distinction between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' children, provisions for the care of old and orphaned members of the community, equitable access to food and shelter) are also found in the organization of remote communities. These

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Eduardo Franco Isaza, *Las Guerrillas del Llano* (Bogotá, Librería Mundial, 1959). The book is written by the son of a landowner in the eastern part of Colombia who became the leader of a large guerrilla army which took control when the army of the national government came under Conservative party control and retreated from the area.

<sup>15</sup> The best material on this extraordinary populist leader can be found in *Gaitán: Antología de su Pensamiento Social y Económico* (Bogotá, Ediciones Suramerica, 1968).

<sup>16</sup> The documents pertaining to this can be found in Guzman Campos *et al.*, cited earlier. They are extraordinary documents, as complex and intelligent as any national constitution and its civil code.

ideas, one must suggest, reflect the impact of the dialogues initiated in the 1930s and 1940s, and underscored by Gaitán's militancy.

However, I would argue that the social process binding leader and follower remained a rather classic pattern of clientelist relationship. These dyadic or two-person ties between leader and follower served to preserve some minimum semblance of normalcy for the communities, averting revolutionary violence which might have gradually developed. It also assured the conservation of very scarce resources by invoking unwritten rules of mutual support between the patron and clients; it conserved the concept of reciprocity as the primary instrument of social interaction. Thus the violence remained traditional, maintaining the *status quo* rather than being subversive and very much benefiting the ruling groups of both parties.

Very important in this respect is the fact that the centralization of power and the slow but measurable extension of national authority did not serve one single elite. In other words, centralization did not replace the functionality of clientelism by providing police and military protection for the landlord and his property, or by making available increasing public services for the general population such as public schools, health, welfare and so on. Rather, given the explicitly political identity of most of the clientelist networks, the availability of *outside* resources tended to be lopsided.<sup>17</sup> With the Liberals in power, protection to the patron and marginal services to the general population tended to be regarded as a *political* service flowing only to Liberals, while the same seems to have been true during Conservative rule. Guillen Martínez, Dix, Payne and others have convincingly demonstrated the use of bureaucratic positions and so-called public services as pay-offs to party loyalists and party followers.<sup>18</sup> Thus, it stands to reason that even with the growth of central national power the relevance of patron-client relationships in periods when one's party was out of power continued to be very high. With the rapid precipitation of violence in the 1940s, resistance in the form of defensive patronalism also escalated. Violence of a more intense proportion took place with the introduction of automatic weapons, explosives and, on the part of

<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the 'outs' when they become 'ins' seem to take revenge for whatever abuse they suffered. '... once there is a change of government, those going in will settle accounts with those going out. This is a law of action and reaction. The more antagonistic and bloody the means used to remain in power, the stronger in antagonism and bloodshed the reaction of the persecuted...' Fals Borda, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

<sup>18</sup> This is argued by James Payne, *op. cit.*, Fernando Guillen Martínez, *Raíz y Futuro de la Revolución* (Bogotá, Ediciones Tercer Mundo, 1963), and Robert H. Dix, *Colombia: The Political Dimensions of Change* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1967). Guillen Martínez suggests that the history of the two parties has been like the confrontation between a mass of armed public employees defending their jobs against a mass of armed aspirants to those jobs. *Loc. cit.*, p. 148.



the government (in the early 1950s), the use of air power, including the bombing of villages.<sup>19</sup>

Still, during an important period of *La Violencia*, the dominant loyalty patterns were probably not affected in the same way that they seem to have been in parts of Southeast Asia, where the elites allowed traditional patron-client relations to break down when the outside resources of the central government (the colonial regime) began to offer an alternative resource for elite control and expansion.<sup>20</sup>

For example, Liberals did not become alienated from the Liberal party in the period of pressures for social change because their party continued to perform clientelist functions while at the same time it displayed a considerable amount of elasticity on social issues. Thus, the demands for modernization, wherever and whenever they were present, really did not delegitimize the more traditional identities of party membership.<sup>21</sup> Neither did it very visibly delegitimize patrons. The patrons themselves had to move cautiously, not alienate their clients and thereby potentially destroy the most viable and valuable resource available to them during periods of opposition rule. The patrons continued to need a loyal constituency to defend them in the absence of what might be called neutral outside forces (i.e. governmental forces or bureaucratic resources). Moreover they needed to maintain strong links in order to assure themselves of voting strength if and when elections could be held again.

#### *Violence and Clientelism in Salado*

When we look at violence in a small town context, its psychological impact and political implication come into sharper focus. The town of Salado, which was studied in 1971,<sup>22</sup> had passed through the painful episodes of *La Violencia*. People recalled that the Conservatives were purged from office in the 1930s when the Liberal party began to consolidate itself as the majority in power. Some sporadic violence occurred as local notables tried to recapture the bureaucracy and fight for elected positions which had been taken from them and their following. There was counter-terrorism by the Liberals.

When the Conservatives returned to power a counter-purge took place. In

<sup>19</sup> A very interesting description from the guerrilla's perspective is found in Arturo Alape, *Diario de un Guerrillero* (Bogotá, Ediciones Abejon Mono, 1970).

<sup>20</sup> This thesis is argued in a paper 'The Erosion of Patron-Client Bonds and Social Change in Rural Southeast Asia', by James Scott, delivered at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., 5-9 Sept. 1972.

<sup>21</sup> It was pointed out earlier that third parties have never been successful in Colombia.

<sup>22</sup> The interviews were carried out by the author and two key informants who participated as interviewers. The town is located in the coffee-growing central region of Colombia, the area hit hardest by violence.

the process, violence was directed, often indiscriminately, toward members of the opposition. This, in a community of some 5,000 urban and 7,000 rural inhabitants, was surprisingly easy. Everyone's political identity was common knowledge. Even in 1971, despite a coalition between the parties from the local to national level (the National Front), people in Salado knew most families' political identity.

The intensity with which the dialectic of violence and politics surged through Salado's life is underlined by the political memories and historical legends which remain part of the contemporary culture.

Two 18-year-olds who were young children during the worst of *La Violencia* had explicit knowledge of that period. *El Ciego* ('the blind man' because he wore glasses) remembered the killings well. Walking through Salado late one afternoon we talked. As we came to a steep dirt path connecting the main road to a side street he motioned: 'Over there', pointing to the dirt path, 'Eliseo Paves was killed in August 1954. He was the leader of the Liberals. The guy who killed him jumped out from there' – a hidden stairway leading into a house on the side of the alley. 'He chopped at him with his machete; cut his throat on the side and almost cut off his right arm. Then he walked away around the corner there', pointing to the side street. We walked over to the street. 'This is the house where he lived. His name was Pedro Tadeo. He fled from town but came back about four years ago and killed two *campesinos* near Salto Bonito.'

I was impressed with the richness of detail. Later the story was confirmed as accurate. *El Ciego* had only been two years old at the time of the slaying, so one must assume that his knowledge of the incident comes from the story being told; that it is one of the histories talked about in his very strongly Liberal home. After this episode I began to collect a large number of anecdotes on *La Violencia*: eyewitness stories and personal accounts of political persecution.

All the accounts concluded that political motives lay at the bottom of the violent acts. Community perceptions, in other words, were that the violence was carried out for political motives either by one's political friends and co-partisans, in which case it was pointed out that the violence was in self-defense, or by one's political enemies, in which case the use of violence was condemned. Violence is remembered with great self-righteousness.

One man told of watching from between the bars of the iron gate of his store which faced, and still faces, the main plaza, as two Liberals were hacked to death by four public employees. As he turned to look up, he noticed the Conservative mayor standing on the balcony of city hall approvingly, slowly nodding his head at the act he was witnessing.

Another man, who had been secretary of the Liberal party, was tipped off that his turn had come. He fled from his house outside town, hid for two days with his family in his coffee trees, and then returned to find the house had been fire-bombed. A 20-year-old man walking past a steep trail that climbs out of town, up a lush hill and vanishes over the rise into the countryside, said sadly:

In the late 1950s every morning on my way to school right here at the crossing of these two roads I would run into *la caravana de los muertos* (the dead men's caravan). It was usually six or seven mules tied head to tail, each one piled with the bodies of that night's victims who were picked up in the countryside and brought to town. They were strapped two or three at a time across the top of the animals and covered with coffee sacks; sometimes bloody parts would stick out from underneath. One time as the caravan passed and the last mule was almost past me an arm fell out from under the bundle, rolled a few meters down the road and lay there in the gutter. I vomited.

These generalized personal experiences are sad in their moral implications. They are in addition significant when we look at them together with two other realities of this community.

First, I ascertained that by and large people relate politically to individuals of their own party and seek out patrons among individuals with whom they share proximate residential location and party affiliation. In other words patron-client relations tie together networks of people in Salado. (See Table 2 for the responses to the question, 'If you have a problem which can be solved by someone with political influence here, whom would you go see?')

TABLE 2  
*People Named by Salado Residents as Important*

<i>Individual Named</i>	<i>Party Affiliation</i>	<i>Liberal</i>	<i>Conservative</i>	<i>ANAPO</i>
Don Nacho	ANAPO	(N) 1	(N) 3	(N) 18
Don Eliseo	Liberal	12	2	1
Don Arturo	Liberal	7	1	
Don Toraso	Conservative	4	6	2
Don Gibardo	Conservative	1	16	
Don Eustébio	Conservative		7	
Don Aristeto	Conservative	1	4	1

The individuals named not only are usually members of the same political party as the respondent; they are also in most cases owners of small grocery stores or engaged in economic activities which allow them to extend credit to 'clients'. Moreover, the individuals who were identified in the study as important to people were also often presidents of community development committees (*juntas de Acción Comunal*) from which they could communicate

with the bureaucracy, sometimes get jobs for people or write letters of recommendation for scholarships and in general help their constituents with the kinds of things patrons (or brokers) are classically thought of as doing.

Second, violence is uppermost in the minds of Saladeños even today. Over 44 per cent named violence when the question 'What is the most important political problem in Salado?' was asked. (See Table 3).

TABLE 3

<i>Most Important Political Problem</i>	
<i>% Responding</i>	<i>Problem Named</i>
30.6 (N53)	ANAPO
44.6 (N78)	Violence
14.5 (N26)	Corruption
4.6 (N8)	Fate of rural areas
5.7 (N10)	Revolution
<hr/>	
100 (N175)	

The basis for the response is anticipatory, that is to say it seems to be largely based on expectations about what the future will bring rather than the present occurrence of violence. Moreover, this violence is put into explicitly political terms. Liberals are afraid of the new political party ANAPO<sup>23</sup> (which many Liberals consider to be a party of malcontent Conservatives) and to some extent afraid of the Conservatives; Conservatives are afraid of Liberals but also of ANAPO (because they think of it as a radical party) while ANAPO members are afraid of the two traditional parties ganging up on them.

This fear and continued hostility between the traditional groups is vividly expressed in the comment one merchant made: 'The only good Conservative', he said, 'is the one who dies young.' It is also reinforced by comments such as the one of a 19-year-old who said:

I have hatreds no one knows about. I have a thirst for revenge against those who killed so many people. Often it's barely containable. I see my family's friends with limbs missing, with terrible scars, speech defects caused by their brains being damaged with a machete or a bullet. I know who killed who and when and where. They are mostly *godos* (Conservatives).

The same attitude prevails among a sizeable number of Conservatives in their view of the Liberals. There is a family clan consisting of three families

<sup>23</sup> ANAPO is a loose alliance between followers of former dictator Gustavo Rojas Pinilla (1953-7), small personalist factions of the Liberals and Conservatives, as well as some leftist groups. ANAPO has tried to mobilize a following by projecting itself as a populist party. It did well in several elections during the 1960s and the 1970 presidential election. However, ANAPO suffered a serious set-back in the 1972 state and local elections.

which has totally controlled one *vereda* (a rural neighborhood defined by a name and by clustered residences but having no legal or administrative status). This clan will not even allow Liberal party campaign workers to enter their area. One young man who tried in the 1970 presidential election was shot at and driven off. The story is told of one member of the clan Moises Bolaño who was on his way into the village for mass one Sunday. Suddenly from the bushes beside the path a Liberal jumped with his machete in hand. The Liberal said: 'I'm going to kill you, you *godo* bastard.' Moises said in the slow drawl which the inbred clan has come to develop: '*Apurate pues que voy pa misa*' ('hurry up then, I'm going to mass'). After which he pulled out his own machete, concealed in a leather sheath under his poncho (*ruana*) which Colombian highland people wear, and deftly cut down the assailant. He wiped his blade clean, put it back in his sheath and got into town in time for mass. Some Conservatives liked to tell this story, looking around to see who is listening, and almost visibly swelling with pride at their cool and skilful co-partisan.

The ever-present effect of past violence is most pathetically evident in the remarks of a middle-aged man:

It's so horribly difficult when someone comes into the store and you have to say, 'Don Miguelito how are you, the family: why haven't you been by to visit for so long?', when that son of a bitch in 1951 gave orders to his *pájaros* (political assassins) to kill me if they ran into me at night. I know because for four years I spent most nights hiding in the coffee bins under my store so I wouldn't get killed. The *Casa Conservadora* (Conservative Party headquarters) was next door and I could hear them plan their murders and watch through the cracks in the floor boards. You can't imagine what it does to your insides to see your would-be executioner and the murderer of your friends and family on the street every day, and have to greet them as though nothing had ever happened.

Protection during the periods of violence was achieved either by being a member of the party in power or by banding together in groups large enough to discourage attacks. In some parts of Colombia entire sectors of communities fled to the hills and formed nomadic self-defense groups. In other cases people left for the relative tranquility of cities. In Salado often several families moved into one house, let it be known they were well-armed and posted guards day and night. Saladeños relied on their patron for protection of their very lives. People tell of arms, food and money being sent through politically well-connected people to their beleaguered following. Arms and money were also procured for the political offensive when one's party was in power. The patron-client bonds thus often literally withstood the test of fire.

Since the authorities, if it was during the rule of one's opposition, were not neutral, were not an impersonal outside force, but rather were a political

resource of the party in power, friendship and family groups were an indispensable resource for every Saladeño. I would argue that the party-based patron-client networks were strengthened, preserved and brought into play during the worst of *La Violencia*.<sup>24</sup>

By 1970 violence in Colombia had passed into a stage of Marxist revolutionary insurgency and simple banditry. However, I would point out that, in Salado, people still perceive of violence in terms of political parties; still conserve a large amount of partisan consciousness, continue to hate the opposition for what they believe it did and to a great degree still trust and rely upon their own party as a source of security.

### Conclusion

In part the National Front coalition has survived because of people's fear of renewed violence. For instance, women in a survey done in the city of Cali in July 1972, who said they supported the National Front or thought it had done a good job, overwhelmingly gave as the reason for their position the fact that the National Front 'brought peace'.<sup>25</sup> Given the evidence in the literature and based on the arguments presented here, I would suggest that patron-client networks are alive and functioning in Colombia partly as a consequence of political violence in the last forty years. I would also argue that in this dialectic, Colombia's political violence in turn is in great part due to the existence of widespread, competitive, aggressive, patron-client based politics.

As the National Front is phased out in the mid-1970s by constitutional provision, competitive politics for elected offices will very likely become the style of Colombian politics again. This suggests renewed competition for the bureaucratic positions and a greater attraction to the clientelist connexions

<sup>24</sup> The traditional security of clientelism in societies of scarcity may have been greatly enhanced in the Colombian case by the incidence of protracted violence. In a recent study of the psychological effects of violence, a team of Colombian researchers analyzed a clinical sample of people. In comparing responses of the group which had experienced violence in the rural areas with a control group which had not, the investigators found that the 'violence' group '... displays a profound feeling of abandonment, helplessness, isolation and loneliness as well as uncertainty which pushes the individual in this group toward the search for greater security', Alfredo Ardila *et al.*, *Psicología y Problemas Sociales En Colombia* (Tunja, Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia, 1971), p. 82. It is possible that patron-client ties afforded the most accessible form of security available. In another study comparing victims of violence with others, the authors conclude 'the *Violencia* victim doesn't look forward to the future; instead he desires to retreat to the past...' Aaron Lipma and A. Eugene Havens, 'The Colombian *Violencia*: An Ex Post Facto Experiment', *Social Forces*, XLIV, no. 2 (Dec. 1965), p. 244.

<sup>25</sup> The sample was of 200 women in *barrios* of the city. The proportion is representative of the distribution of the city and national population by class. Four classes were distinguished: *Clase Alta, Media, Obrera* and *Baja*. The full data obtained on 52 items of a questionnaire is in the process of being computed.

which are so necessary for election victory in Colombia. It has already been shown that 44.5 per cent of respondents in the municipality of Salado named violence as the most important problem of the community.

Another interesting piece of evidence comes from a 1970 survey done in the Valle del Cauca. Responses to the question, 'When the National Front is over will violence return?' are shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4

Q: 'When the National Front is over will Violence Return?'<sup>26</sup>

	Yes	No	Don't know
Per cent of total	26.3	37.8	34.7
Number responding	549	789	724

As the table shows, only 37.8 per cent of the respondents do not think violence will return, while 26.3 per cent indicate that they think violence will reappear and 34.7 per cent are not certain whether or not it will reappear.

While these figures cannot be interpreted as evidence that political violence will grow if and when the National Front expires, they do suggest that Colombians are contemplating the possibility that it might. Given the experience of Colombia's competitive clientelist, two-party system, the re-emergence of violence appears possible. What is impossible to anticipate is whether the violence will be perceived as being 'traditional' – pitting Liberals and Conservatives against each other – or 'revolutionary' – pitting the working class against the landowners and industrialists. If the radical Marxists manage to reshape the profile of Colombia's violence, revolutionary insurgency may become a reality. If the traditional images of party competition (perhaps with the Liberals casting themselves in the role of 'Socialists' and the Conservatives playing the role of a 'developmentally'-oriented party)<sup>27</sup> can be revived, violence could be blamed by most people on the hatreds, so much

<sup>26</sup> I am grateful to Judith T. de Campos, Universidad del Valle, Cali, Colombia for making available the data cards from the study. Parts of the survey have been published as 'Colombia Política, 1971', Judith de Campos and John F. McCamont, *Colombia Política* (Bogotá, DANE, 1972).

<sup>27</sup> Two books published in Colombia punctuate this differentiation. One published by the Conservative Centro de Estudios Colombianos and containing articles by 15 prominent politicians is entitled *Por La Derecha Hacia el Desarrollo* (Cali, Centro de Estudios Colombianos, 1968). Hernando Agudelo Villa, Minister of Finance from 1958–61, member of the Liberal Party's National Directorate and leading promoter of a series of 'encounter groups' intended to unify the Liberal Party around a series of new goals, wrote a book which had the title *La Alternativa: Un Liberalismo de Izquierda* (Bogotá, Tercer Mundo, 1969). The book is a hard-hitting combination of philosophical and practical innovations which the Liberal party should, in Agudelo Villas' view, undertake.

a part of each party's mythology.<sup>28</sup> If the evidence from Salado reported above is correct, these hatreds are still very much alive, even in the younger population.

What path Colombian political development finally takes will depend on whether the ruling groups are elastic, competitive and willing to take political risks, or whether a 'ruling class' with very strong horizontal ties has, indeed, come into being during the National Front; a ruling class which in its efforts to maintain the status quo will finally precipitate class-consciousness and revolutionary insurgency.

<sup>28</sup> Since violence has always been part of Colombian political life it is possible that Marxist guerrilla attacks on towns may be perceived as simple banditry which in the past inevitably accompanied the political violence. A woman asked by newsmen what she thought of a raid on the town she lives in by a group of the National Liberation Army said, 'Well these bandits killed fewer people than they usually do'. This was despite an assembly in the main square of the town in which the guerrillas lectured to the townspeople on the need for social justice, revolution and a new order. Most other people were probably similarly convinced that this was 'violence as usual'. See *Vea*, 26 Jan. 1972, p. 30.