

## **Source Packet Two: History as Myth (2)**

### **Politics and Civil War**

#### **“Bolívar, Simón”**

“Bolívar, Simón.” *Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica Online Library Edition.*  
Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 2013.

Born: July 24, 1783, Caracas, New Granada [now in Venezuela]

Died: December 17, 1830, near Santa Marta, Colombia

Byname: the Liberator, Spanish *El Libertador*, South American soldier and statesman who led the revolutions against Spanish rule in the Viceroyalty of New Granada. He was president of Gran Colombia (1819–30) and dictator of Peru (1823–26).

The son of a Venezuelan aristocrat of Spanish descent, Bolívar was born to wealth and position. After his father died when the boy was three years old and his mother died six years later, his uncle administered his inheritance and provided him with tutors. At the age of 16, Bolívar was sent to Europe to complete his education. For three years he lived in Spain and in 1801 married the daughter of a Spanish nobleman, with whom he returned to Caracas. The young bride died of yellow fever less than a year after her marriage. In 1804, when Napoleon was approaching the pinnacle of his career, Bolívar returned to Europe. In Paris he encountered a former childhood tutor, Simón Rodríguez, who guided him to the writings of European rationalist thinkers such as Locke, Hobbes, Buffon, d’Alembert, and Helvetius as well as Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau. The idea of independence for Hispanic America took root in Bolívar’s imagination, and, on a trip to Rome, standing on the heights of the Monte Sacro, he made a vow to liberate his country. In 1807 he returned to Venezuela by way of the United States, visiting the eastern cities.

The Latin American independence movement was launched a year after Bolívar’s return, as Napoleon’s invasion of Spain unsettled Spanish authority. Bolívar himself participated in various conspiratorial meetings, and on April 19, 1810, the Spanish governor was officially deprived of his powers and expelled from Venezuela. A junta took over. To obtain help, Bolívar was sent on a mission to London, where he arrived in July. His assignment was to explain to England the plight of the revolutionary colony, to gain recognition for it, and to obtain arms and support. Although he failed in his official negotiations, he did foster the cause of the revolution by persuading the exiled Francisco de Miranda, who in 1806 had attempted to liberate Venezuela single-handedly, to return to Caracas and to assume command of the independence movement.

Venezuela was in ferment. In March 1811 a national congress met in Caracas to draft a constitution. After long deliberation it declared Venezuela’s independence on July 5, 1811. Bolívar now entered the army of the young republic and was placed in charge of Puerto Cabello, a port vital to Venezuela. Treasonable action by one of Bolívar’s officers opened the fortress to the Spanish forces, and Miranda, the commander in chief, entered into negotiations with the Spanish commander in chief. An armistice was signed (July 1812) that left the entire country at the mercy of Spain. Miranda was turned over to the Spaniards-- after Bolívar and others prevented his escape from Venezuela-- and spent the rest of his life in Spanish dungeons.

Determined to continue the struggle, Bolívar obtained a passport to leave the country and went to Cartagena in New Granada (present-day Colombia). There he published the first of his great political statements, *El Manifiesto de Cartagena*, in which he attributed the fall of the First Republic to the lack of strong government and called for a united revolutionary effort to destroy the power of Spain in America.

With backing from the patriots of New Granada, Bolívar led an expeditionary force to retake Venezuela. In a sweeping, hard-fought campaign, he vanquished the royalists in six pitched battles and on August 6, 1813, entered Caracas. He was given the title of Liberator and assumed political dictatorship. But the war of independence was just beginning. In 1814 Bolívar was once more defeated by the Spanish, who had converted the *llaneros* (cowboys) led by José Tomás Boves into an undisciplined but savagely effective cavalry that Bolívar was unable to repulse. Boves subjected Creole patriots to terrible atrocities, and his capture of Caracas and other principal cities ended the second Venezuelan republic. Narrowly escaping Miranda's fate, Bolívar fled to New Granada and eventually Jamaica.

In exile, Bolívar wrote the greatest document of his career: *La Carta de Jamaica* ("The Letter from Jamaica"), in which he outlined a grandiose panorama from Chile and Argentina to Mexico. "The bonds," wrote Bolívar, "that united us to Spain have been severed." He proposed constitutional republics throughout Hispanic America, and for the former Viceroyalty of New Granada he envisioned a government modeled on that of Great Britain, with a hereditary upper house, an elected lower house, and a president chosen for life. The last provision, to which Bolívar clung throughout his career, constituted the most dubious feature of his political thinking.

By 1815 Spain had sent to its seditious colonies the strongest expeditionary force that had ever crossed the Atlantic. Its commander was Pablo Morillo. Bolívar meanwhile turned to Haiti, a small republic that had freed itself from French rule, where he was given a friendly reception as well as money and weapons.

Three years of indecisive defeats and victories followed. In 1817 Bolívar decided to set up headquarters in the Orinoco region, which had not been devastated by war and from which the Spaniards could not easily oust him. He engaged the services of several thousand foreign soldiers and officers, mostly British and Irish, established his capital at Angostura (now Ciudad Bolívar), began to publish a newspaper, and established liaison with the revolutionary forces of the plains, including one group led by José Antonio Páez and another group led by Francisco de Paula Santander. In spring 1819 he conceived his master plan of attacking the Viceroyalty of New Granada.

Bolívar's attack on New Granada will always be considered one of the most daring in military history. The route of the small army (about 2,500 men, including the British legion) led through flood-swept plains and icy mountains, over routes that the Spanish considered nearly impassable. The Spaniards were taken by surprise, and in the crucial Battle of Boyacá on August 7, 1819, the bulk of the royalist army surrendered to Bolívar. Three days later he entered Bogotá. This was the turning point in the history of northern South America.

Indefatigably, Bolívar set out to complete his task. He appointed Santander vice president in charge of the administration and in December 1819 made his appearance before the congress that had assembled in Angostura. Bolívar was made president and military dictator. He urged the legislators to proclaim the creation of a new state; three days later La República de Colombia was established, comprising the three departments of Cundinamarca (New Granada), Venezuela, and Quito (Ecuador). Since most of this territory was still under royalist control, it was largely a paper achievement. Bolívar knew, however, that victory was finally within his grasp. Early in 1820 a revolution in Spain forced the Spanish king to recognize the ideals of liberalism on the home front, an action that discouraged the Spanish forces in South America. Bolívar

persuaded Morillo to open armistice negotiations, and the two warriors met in a memorable encounter at Santa Ana, signing in November 1820 a treaty that ended hostilities for a six-month period. When fighting was resumed, Bolívar found it easy, with his superior manpower, to defeat the Spanish forces in Venezuela. The Battle of Carabobo (June 1821) opened the gates of Caracas, and Bolívar's Venezuelan homeland was at last free. In the autumn of the same year a congress convened in Cúcuta to draft a constitution for Gran Colombia. Its provisions disappointed Bolívar. Although he had been elected president, he thought the constitution too liberal in character to guarantee the survival of his creation. As long as more urgent assignments claimed his attention, however, he was willing to put up with its weak structure. Leaving the administration to Santander, he asked permission to continue his military campaign.

At the end of a year, Ecuador was liberated. In this campaign Bolívar was assisted by the most brilliant of his officers, Antonio José de Sucre. While Bolívar engaged the Spaniards in the mountains that defended the northern access to Quito, capital of Ecuador, Sucre marched from the Pacific coast to the interior. At Pichincha on May 24, 1822, he won a victory that freed Ecuador from the Spanish yoke. On the following day the capital fell, and Bolívar joined forces with Sucre on June 16.

It was in Quito that the Liberator met the great passion of his life, Manuela Sáenz, an ardent revolutionary who freely admitted her love for Bolívar and accompanied him first to Peru and ultimately to the presidential palace in Bogotá.

The territory of Gran Colombia-- comprising present-day Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Panama-- had now been completely recovered from Spain, and its new government was recognized by the United States. Only Peru and Upper Peru remained in the hands of the Spaniards. It was the Peruvian problem that brought Bolívar and the Argentine revolutionary José de San Martín together. San Martín had done for the southern part of the continent what Bolívar had accomplished for the north. In addition, he had already entered Lima and proclaimed Peru's independence. But the Spanish forces had retreated into the highlands, and San Martín, unable to follow them, decided to consult with Bolívar. On July 26, 1822, the two men met in the port city of Guayaquil, Ecuador (see Guayaquil Conference). Details of their discussions are not known, but presumably they covered completion of the military struggle in Peru as well as the subsequent organization of liberated Hispanic America. San Martín must have understood that Bolívar alone combined the military, political, and psychological assets needed to gain final victory over the powerful Spanish army in the highlands. Given the situation in Lima, where he faced mounting opposition, San Martín's presence there could only hinder the performance of that task. On his return from Guayaquil, San Martín resigned his office in Lima and went into exile, allowing Bolívar to assume sole direction of the war.

The avenue that would lead to Bolívar's ultimate ambition was now open. In September 1823 he arrived in Lima. The Spanish army occupied the mountains east of the city, and its position was considered unassailable. Bolívar systematically assembled troops, horses, mules, and ammunition to form an army, and in 1824 he moved out of the temporary capital in Trujillo and ascended the high cordillera. The first major battle took place at Junín and was easily won by Bolívar, who then left the successful termination of the campaign to his able chief of staff, Sucre. On December 9, 1824, the Spanish viceroy lost the Battle of Ayacucho to Sucre and surrendered with his entire army.

Bolívar was now president of Gran Colombia and dictator of Peru. Only a small section of the continent-- Upper Peru-- was still defended by royalist forces. The liberation of this region fell to Sucre, and in April 1825 he reported that the task had been accomplished. The new nation chose to be called Bolivia after the name of the Liberator. For this child of his genius, Bolívar drafted a constitution that showed once more his authoritarian inclinations: it created a lifetime president, a legislative body consisting of three

chambers, and a highly restricted suffrage. Bolívar was devoted to his own creation, but, as the instrument of social reform that he had envisaged, the constitution was a failure.

Bolívar had now reached the high point of his career. His power extended from the Caribbean to the Argentine-Bolivian border. He had conquered severe illness, which during his sojourn in Peru had made him practically an invalid for months at a time. Another of his favourite projects, a league of Hispanic American states, came to fruition in 1826. He had long advocated treaties of alliance between the American republics, whose weakness he correctly apprehended. By 1824 such treaties had been signed and ratified by the republics of Colombia, Peru, Mexico, Central America, and the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata. In 1826 a general American congress convened in Panama under Bolívar's auspices. Compared with Bolívar's original proposals, it was a fragmentary affair, with only Colombia, Peru, Central America, and Mexico sending representatives. The four nations that attended signed a treaty of alliance and invited all other American nations to adhere to it. A common army and navy were planned, and a biannual assembly representing the federated states was projected. All controversies among the states were to be solved by arbitration. Only Colombia ratified the treaty, yet the congress in Panama provided an important example for future hemispheric solidarity and understanding in South America.

But Bolívar was aware that his plans for hemispheric organization had met with only limited acceptance. His contemporaries thought in terms of individual nation-states, Bolívar in terms of continents. In the field of domestic policy he continued to be an authoritarian republican. He thought of himself as a rallying point and anticipated civil war as soon as his words should no longer be heeded. Such a prophecy, made in 1824, was fulfilled in 1826.

Venezuela and New Granada began to chafe at the bonds of their union in Gran Colombia. The protagonists in each country, Páez in Venezuela and Santander in New Granada, opposed each other, and at last civil war broke out. Bolívar left Lima in haste, and most authorities agree that Peru was glad to see the end of his three-year reign and its liberation from Colombian influence. In Bogotá, Bolívar found Santander upholding the constitution of Cúcuta and urging that Páez be punished as a rebel. But Bolívar was determined to preserve the unity of Gran Colombia and was therefore willing to appease Páez, with whom he became reconciled early in 1827. Páez bowed to the supreme authority of the Liberator, and in turn Bolívar promised a new constitution that would remedy Venezuelan grievances. He declared himself dictator of Gran Colombia and called for a national convention that met in April 1828. Bolívar refused to influence the elections, with the result that the liberals under the leadership of Santander gained the majority. Bolívar had hoped that the constitution of Cúcuta would be revised and presidential authority strengthened, but the liberals blocked any such attempts. A stalemate developed. Arguing that the old constitution was no longer valid and that no new one had taken its place, Bolívar assumed dictatorial powers in Gran Colombia. A group of liberal conspirators invaded the presidential palace on the night of September 25, and Bolívar was saved from the daggers of the assassins only by the quick-wittedness of Manuela Sáenz. But, though this attempt on his life had failed, the storm signals increased. Bolívar's precarious health began to fail. Peru invaded Ecuador with the intention of annexing Guayaquil. Once more Sucre saved Ecuador and defeated the Peruvians at Tarqui (1829). A few months later, one of Bolívar's most-honoured generals, José María Córdoba, staged a revolt. It was crushed, but Bolívar was disheartened by the continued ingratitude of his former adherents. In the fall of 1829, Venezuela seceded from Gran Colombia.

Reluctantly, Bolívar realized that his very existence presented a danger to the internal and external peace of the nations that owed their independence to him, and on May 8, 1830, he left Bogotá, planning to take refuge in Europe. Reaching the Atlantic coast, he learned that Sucre, whom he had trained as his

successor, had been assassinated. Bolívar's grief was boundless. The projected trip to Europe was canceled, and, at the invitation of a Spanish admirer, Bolívar journeyed to his estate near Santa Marta. Ironically, his life ended in the house of a Spaniard, where, toward the end of 1830, he died of tuberculosis.

## **“Conservative Revolutions”**

Wiarda, Howard J. *The Soul of Latin America: The Cultural and Political Tradition*. Yale University Press, 2001.

Although the independence movements of 1807-25 in Latin America are often called revolutions, they were revolutions of a particular land. Frequently, they are lumped together with the English (1689), American (1776), and French (1789) revolutions under the rubric of “the age of the democratic revolutions.” But can the Latin American revolutions be included in the same category as the other three? And were they truly democratic?

First, consider the class backgrounds of those who led the Latin American revolutions. Almost to a man, these leaders were white, Hispanic (creole, not peninsular), upper-class commercial and landholding elements. They believed in a paternalistic and patrimonialist state, not a liberal, democratic, and participatory one. These were not persons who contemplated a fundamental restructuring of social, economic, and political power in the colonies. Rather, these would-be revolutions were led by the “better” elements who would continue to hold power after Spain was expelled. There was almost no consideration given to bringing peasants, Indians, and Africans in as full and equal participants in the political process. The same rigid social categories of wealth, prestige, and race were present both before and after the revolutions. There is no evidence that full democracy was ever considered as a viable possibility for the postindependence republics.

Second, one needs to consider who conducted the independence movements, their intentions, and who inherited power after independence was accomplished. It was again the white, Hispanic, creole elite that had grown up in America but that resented the monopoly on high-level colonial positions monopolized by the peninsulars-- those born in Spain. All the evidence shows that the criollos coveted the peninsulars' positions and the prestige and salaries that went with them and wished to inherit them for themselves. The last thing they wanted to do was to upset the existing social hierarchy or to usher in any real democracy. Rather, they wanted to keep the social structure intact, inherit it for themselves, and substitute themselves in the lofty positions held by

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the peninsulares. They had no intention of sharing power with others or bringing the masses in as full participants in social, economic, and political life.”

Third, recall the neoscholastic grounds on which these so-called revolutions were fought. These were not wars of national liberation; rather, they were meant to hold power until the legitimate Spanish and Portuguese kings-- temporarily unseated by the Napoleonic occupation-- could be restored to the throne. [...] These are not liberal or liberating principles; instead, they have their origin in Spanish medieval law as outlined in a previous chapter, in the *Siete Partidas*, and in the scholastic writings of Suarez and the sixteenth-century Jesuits.” [...]

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The revolutions in Latin America for independence, thus, were never full-fledged revolutions in the proper sense. They were separations from Spain, not social or genuine political revolutions. They involved no fundamental class, racial, or social upheaval. They instead involved merely the substitution or rotation of one ruling elite for another: the creoles seized power from the peninsulars but left all the fundamentals of a top-down, two-class, patrimonialist social and political structure in place. The wars for independence in Latin America were thus conservative revolutions rather than liberal or liberalizing ones, and they retained many features of their colonial past-- authoritarianism, elitism, hierarchy, theocracy, mercantilism, patrimonialism, and so on-- both before and after independence.

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### **“Marx in Macondo”**

Lawrence, Gregory. “Marx in Macondo.” *Latin American Literary Review*, vol. 2, no. 4, 1974, pp. 49-57.

The civil wars in which Colonel Aureliano Buendia participates represent the conflict between the traditional and subversive forces from which the bourgeois order emerged. The fight waged between the liberals and conservatives actually went on for most of the nineteenth century. In “Los Funerales de la Mamá Grande,” Colonel Aureliano is said to be fighting in the War of 1885. Fais Borda describes the struggle as follows: “The conflict of 1884-1885 is a case study of how not to carry out a revolution. There were errors of strategy, mistakes in organization, a scorn for technology, lack of resource, wavering leadership, and a lack of consistency. Moreover, it revealed the futility of using violence when people do not respond

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positively to it.” This is what led Colonel Aureliano to declare, “The only real difference between liberals and conservatives is that the liberals go to mass at five and the conservatives go to mass at eight.” Actually, the political and economic predominance of conservatism which developed in this period helps explain the basic intolerance, the profound resistance to change, and the tendency to maintain alienated patterns of political and social behavior in Colombia today.

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### **“Liberals versus Conservatives (Again)”**

Wiarda, Howard J. *The Soul of Latin America: The Cultural and Political Tradition*. Yale University Press, 2001.

After the initial flirtation and partial experimentation with liberalism in the 1810s and 1820s, conservatives, oligarchs, and military men-on-horseback dominated Latin America for the next thirty years. But by the 1850s, with the passing of the first wave of postindependence leaders, the conflict between

liberals and conservatives flared anew. Often, depending on the country, the fights continued intermittently well into the twentieth century. But at the same time greater stability, foreign investment, and economic growth in a number of the countries began to alter the nature of the contest.

What before had largely been a clash between individual leaders or amorphous, unorganized groups now increasingly became a struggle between organized interests. During this period Latin America's first political parties were organized. Conservative forces usually organized themselves as a conservative party while liberal elements organized as a liberal party. In such countries as Colombia and Honduras, these historic conservative and liberal parties are still functioning; in other countries new ideological movements or offshoots of the original parties eventually came to the fore.

Both conservative and liberal leaders were recruited from the elites of Latin American society. At this time the suffrage remained extremely limited, slavery was still countenanced in most countries, and neither conservatives nor liberals wanted to admit the masses as full participants in the political process. The conservative party usually consisted of one coterie of elite families while the liberal party was made up of rival groups of elites: Tweedledum and Tweedledee. The two groups jockeyed for power: control of the presidential palace, from which jobs, treasure, patronage, and economic opportunities flowed. Both groups sought to mobilize regional or national caudillos to support their power bids, and both rallied the peasants who toiled in their estates and enterprises. But over time this very competition for spoils and power inexorably led to an expansion of the suffrage and, hence, at least the potentiality for greater democracy.

Although the competition between conservatives and liberals was mainly a struggle for power and the benefits that accrued from controlling the government, it had ideological and policy components as well. Conservatives usually stood for a strong central state, the unity of church and state, and high tariff barriers so as to protect their local

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production and keep out foreign competition. Liberals, on the other hand, often wanted to freely carry out their business activities unencumbered by statism, bureaucracy, and mercantilism. They stood for the classic nineteenth-century freedoms, including free trade. And they wanted an end to corporate privilege-- at least in part, so they could grab the lands of the groups that held vast quantities of it, namely, the Church and the Indian communities. Neither group spoke of a meaningful democracy.

Conservatives continued to stand for all the familiar principles of the past: order, discipline, authority, hierarchy, a Catholic society in which all were secure in their station in life. Conservatives continued to cite Latin America's familiar problems as a justification for strong, even authoritarian government: the vast empty spaces, the lack of infrastructure, the absence of organizational and associational life, and the lack of experience in self-government. These are the familiar laments that authoritarians and dictators have continued to use to this day. "How can you talk of democracy in a country that lacks roads, bridges, or economic development?" questioned the longtime Paraguayan strongman Alfredo Stroessner." "A country that has no highways, no literacy, no agriculture, no public buildings, no electricity, and no 'civilization' cannot possibly have democracy," said the Dominican Republic dictator Rafael Trujillo.

But now conservatives also adopted a more explicit ideological stance as well. Once again the major ideas came from Europe and were derivative in nature. For in the aftermath of the French Revolution, a conservative backlash had set in in France and Spain. The chief spokesmen for the conservative cause in these years of the early to mid-nineteenth century were Joseph de Maistre in France and Donoso Cortés in Spain. Both writers were archconservatives. They wished to restore the status quo ante-- an impossible task then as now-- to go back to the traditional, Catholic, orderly, hierarchical society of prerevolutionary

rites. They rejected the Enlightenment and its concepts of rationalist inquiry, preferring the harmony and uncomplicated wisdom of revealed truth. They insisted on a restoration of order and discipline and a society based on hierarchy. They wanted the Roman Catholic Church and Catholicism restored to their earlier status as the official church and religion, with strong state support. They also urged the restoration of the society of corporate rights and mutual obligation from before the revolution, of monarchy held in check only by corporate group and

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customary rights, and an end to the rampant individualism, egoism, and anarchy that they saw in republicanism and liberalism.”

These ideas had a powerful effect on Latin American conservatives, providing intellectual and philosophical justification for what they believed and intended to do anyway. The traditional forces in Latin America adopted these ideas to strengthen their position and hang onto power. But whereas such a reactionary stance is perhaps understandable in the early nineteenth century, when society was still conservative, two-class, and nonparticipatory, it was not adequate in the latter part of the century and on into the twentieth, when new, more dynamic social forces began to appear. Then, a new, initially more progressive form of Catholic social theory began to appear: corporatism.

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## “Colombia (History)”

“Colombia.” *Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica Online Library Edition*.  
Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 2013.

Santander, the vice president under Bolívar and then leader of the opposition to Bolívar’s imperial ambitions in 1828, held the presidency from 1832 until 1837 and was the dominant political figure of that era. The 1830s brought some prosperity to the new nation, but a civil war that broke out in 1840 ended a nascent industrial development, disrupted trade, and discouraged local enterprise. The seeds of political rivalry between liberals and conservatives had already been sown, and they bore fruit in the bloody revolution and costly violence that ravaged the country in the years between 1840 and 1903.

Colombia’s modern political history began in the late 1840s with the delineation of the Liberal and Conservative parties. Gen. Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, a Conservative, during his first term as president (1845–49) replaced the government monopoly on tobacco sales with a private monopoly and expanded international trade. These changes increased the production and export of tobacco but reduced the tax income of the national government.

In 1849 Gen. José Hilario López, of the radical faction of the Liberal Party, became president. It was his task to implement the reforms passed in 1850, which galvanized political sentiment and divided the country politically and economically for half a century. The guiding principle of the radical Liberals under General López was greater liberty for the people of Colombia. His government ended slavery, ended communal ownership of Indian lands, diverted tax resources from the central to local governments, and eliminated a number of taxes and monopolies held by the central government.

Rather than eliminating the institutional barriers to self-fulfillment by the people, however, the reforms of 1850 tended to eliminate the traditional proscriptions that had stood as safeguards against the

exploitation of the poor by the rich. The reforms, despite the liberal rhetoric that accompanied them, legalized—indeed encouraged—a redistribution of landed property and tended to strengthen the position of the wealthy landowners, merchants, and professionals against the mass of poor Indians, peasants, and artisans. Since there were only 25,000 slaves (in a country of 2,000,000 in 1851), the effects of manumission were small compared with those of the breakdown of the Indian communal system, which affected a third of the population. The Indians were induced to give up their little plots of land and the small amount of independence they enjoyed. Within a few years the ownership of Indian lands was concentrated in a few hands; the Indians had become tenants, their land used for grazing cattle.

While class conflict seethed under the surface in Colombian society, the struggle between members and groups within the elite was more open. Two issues in particular divided the upper class: first, whether a centralist or federalist political system would be the best arrangement for Colombia and, second, what role was appropriate for the Roman Catholic Church and particularly for its clerics in Colombian society. Adherents of federalism were strongest in the years between 1863 and 1880, during which time the country was called the United States of Colombia. Subsequent government publications were to refer to that period as the “Epoch of Civil Wars.” In 51 of the 240 months that passed in the 1860s and ‘70s, there was some form of civil conflict taking place within the country. The Colombian army was so small that public order could not be maintained.

The power of the anticlerical faction reached a peak in the early 1860s. A revolutionary government headed by Mosquera expropriated church lands in 1861, and a constitution adopted in 1863 guaranteed freedom of religious practice, thus bringing to an end the traditional intimate relationship between church and state in Colombia.

Both actions were reversed during the period of Regeneration (1880–95) under Rafael Núñez and the Conservatives who followed him. After further civil conflict in the 1880s, Núñez was able to promulgate a new constitution in 1886, to reestablish relations with the Vatican via the Concordat of 1887, and to promote some internal improvements and industrial development. But the political struggle between Liberals and Conservatives was far from over. Armed civil conflict reached its peak in the War of a Thousand Days (1899–1903). The estimates of the number of deaths in that struggle range from 60,000 to 130,000.

### **“Neither Liberty nor Order (1875-1903)”**

Safford, Frank and Marco Palacios. *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society*. Oxford University Press, 2002.

On assuming the presidency in 1880 Núñez appointed Conservatives to significant positions and slowly began to form an unusual bipartisan alliance. To succeed him in 1882 Nunez chose Francisco J. Zaldúa, a prestigious septuagenarian jurist of moderately Liberal antecedents, in the belief that Zaldúa would continue his policies in harmony with a Congress that had Independent majorities. The Radicals, however, tried to seduce Zaldúa with the hope that, under his presidency, Radical and Independent Liberals might reunite. The death of Zaldúa aggravated the problem because his successor, Jose E. Otálora, succumbed to the temptation of a possible Radical candidacy. Thus, during the two-year term of Zaldúa and Otálora the relations between Independents and Radicals became poisoned. The denouement came with the election of Núñez to a second presidential term (1884-1886) as a candidate of the National Party .

In 1884 Núñez confronted the kind of regional conspiracy that he knew quite well and had taken part in when he was a federalist. A muddled succession to the presidency of the State of Santander at the end of 1884 led to an armed uprising by Radicals against a new bipartisan regional alliance that was imposing its candidate. This episode, which was being watched by politicians all over the country, culminated in Liberal rebellions in various states, particularly on the Caribbean coast. At the beginning of 1885, Núñez and the Conservatives agreed upon the creation of a national reserve army, which eventually would deal with these revolts. Once the Radicals had been defeated, Núñez announced that the constitution of 1863 had died and began a new constitutional process, which concluded with a new constitution in 1886.

The war of 1885 convinced the Regenerator of the need to give a new turn to constitutional government. He found a partner in Miguel Antonio Caro, one of the most combative of the doctrinaire Catholic-Conservative writers. Now Núñez could repudiate federalism: “... [I]n addition to an external boundary we created nine internal boundaries, with nine different constitutions, nine costly bureaucratic hierarchies, nine armies, nine agitations of all kinds.” The federalist Liberals had consecrated maximum liber-

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ties without considering minimum means of protecting them. The Liberals' absolute freedom of the press was a parody of liberty. The laxity of the penal system encouraged crime. The ideological disputes of the Radical oligarchy consumed the nation's energies in anachronistic conflicts like those relating to the Church.

The dramatic defeat of the Liberals in the 1885 war left the way open for a drastic change in the structure of the State. In September 1885 the government convoked a Council of Delegates to draft a new constitution. The council was composed of eighteen delegates-- each state having two, one Conservative and one Independent, appointed by the state president. In November 1885 the council approved the bases of the reform, which were then submitted to the municipalities for ratification. Finally it was issued in August 1886 and the council unanimously elected Núñez president for the period 1886-1892.

The constitution, although often reformed, had a long life. Issued “in the name of God, supreme source of all authority,” it declared the Catholic religion to be the essential element of nationality and social order, while at the same time recognizing religious toleration. The constitution sought to centralize power in the national government and to strengthen the hand of the president. The president's term was lengthened to six years, and the Congress was authorized to grant special powers to the president, in addition to the extraordinary powers permitted by the norms of states of siege. The sovereign states were converted into departments, with governors appointed by the president. The nation recovered control of mines, saltworks, and those public lands it had ceded to the states. The 1886 constitution reestablished the death penalty and prohibited commerce in or bearing firearms, while a series of laws restricted freedom of the press and public assembly. [...]

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As the Regeneration became increasingly conservative, with the centralized constitution of 1886 and the embrace of the Church in the Concordat of 1887, Independent Liberals increasingly became alienated from the regime. With Independent Liberals no longer active in the government, political problems after 1888 stemmed from divisions among Conservatives. The death of Núñez in 1894, followed a few months

later by that of the able Carlos Holguín, left the ultra-Conservative Vice President Miguel Antonio Caro in charge. Caro's rigidity, the instability of the export economy, and fiscal pressures contributed to the regime's misfortunes and its final collapse amid the civil war of 1899-1903.

Elections marked the rhythm of public life of the Regeneration, even though only supporters of the government took part in them. With the ex-

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ception of the delegation from Antioquia, Liberals had no representation in Congress. Elections ritualized disputes within the government party, disputes that were of the same types as in earlier times-- personalist, regionalist, generational; tactical skirmishes with little substance. Nonetheless, electoral activity continued to absorb the attention of political elites. The Porfirian regime in Mexico was a model for many in the Regeneration, but the Porfirian ideal of "less politics and more administration" had no place in the mentality of local political machines. As under the federation, electoral campaigns occurred continually. Every two years there were elections of municipal councillors and deputies to assemblies; every four years members of the Chamber of Representatives were chosen, and every six years the electors who would designate the president and the vice president. Departmental assemblies elected senators every two years. In the Regeneration, with its centralism and its concentration of power in the hands of the president, deliberately sought political demobilization, the electoral laws, which fostered an unending succession of campaigns, and the customs of municipal political machines had a contrary effect. Consequently, the stability so much desired by the Regenerators proved impossible to attain.

During the 1890s, disputes between Historical Conservatives and Nationalists became accentuated. The Historical Conservatives shared with many Liberals a mutual commitment to foreign trade. The Liberals also split. A peace-oriented faction, mainly the remnants of the old Radical oligarchy, looked to alliance with the Historical Conservatives. Younger, more aggressive Liberals, however, pressed for war against the Nationalist regime. However, the differences between the two Liberal factions were not clear-cut: The older group also prepared for war, while the younger one did not completely reject the idea of coalitions with dissident Conservatives.

For many government supporters the principal issue was the continuation of Caro in the presidency. With crises in the coffee market and in the government's fiscal situation in the background in 1896, the question of the presidential succession deepened divisions between the Historical Conservatives and the Nationalists. The Historical Conservatives formed tacit alliances with the peace-oriented Liberals, in the hope of showing that the liberal constitutionalist ideal of alternation of power could be fulfilled in Colombia.

The play of tactics produced a comedic finale. Caro renounced the idea of reelection and pulled out of his sleeve, as candidates for the presidency and vice presidency, two venerable lawyers, Manuel A. Sanclemente and José Manuel Marroquín, whose combined ages totaled 155 years. The country duly elected them for the period 1898-1904.

Amid an acute commercial depression, the political elite moved irreversibly down the road to war. The Liberals' war faction rebelled in October 1899. The next day, the government followed the established routine for such occasions. It gave departmental governors both civil and military authority, with the power to decree forced loans and expropriations, which

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were levied on the more affluent Liberals and in the Liberal localities where the “authors, accomplices, supporters and sympathizers” of the revolution lived. This pattern, common in Colombia’s civil wars, reinforced party identities; it divided Colombians along party lines more than along those of socioeconomic classes. All shared the costs of the war, although perhaps the powerful, whose property and income were affected by party enemies, were more intensely resentful than the poor.

The conflict lasted three years. It confirmed the saying that war is the continuation of politics by other means. In this case, factional politics continued during the war among both Liberals and Conservatives. In 1900, Vice-President Marroquín, urged on by the Historical Conservatives, carried out one of the few coups d’etat in Colombian history.

After six months of conventional warfare, the war broke up into a series of guerrilla skirmishes. In 1902, when the Liberals had been defeated in the rest of the country, their fortunes revived in Panama, whose interior they dominated. Accordingly, the unconditional surrender of the Liberals occurred in Panama somewhat later than in the rest of the country.

The war provided more anecdotal texture to the mythology of the two parties in the twentieth century. The economic elites exaggerated its disastrous effects. The most important consequence was the loss of Panama. [...]

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The men of the Regeneration called themselves Nationalists. Nationalism had at this time a peculiar meaning. The nationalists were men of order. The mentality of the Colombian elite could not subscribe to a nationalism based on the mestizo populace, or on an appreciation of its values. It could not conceive an image of a national culture compatible with modernity or the changes occurring in the broader world. Conservative nationalism tended to mean either a return to Hispanic foundations or, a little later, the affirmation of patrimonial rights. The Hispanicist nationalists stressed the importance of Roman Catholicism, the Spanish language, and the institutions implanted by the Spaniards in the colonial period. The other conservative nationalists asserted the preeminent rights of the state to subsoil mineral rights as against foreign mining and oil interests.

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