

gained the support of the Colombian army. Despite the polarization of its politics, Colombia remained relatively peaceful during the 1946 elections. In 1946, Gaitán ran for president without the support of the liberal party, causing a split that resulted in the victory of the conservative candidate, Mariano Ospina Pérez. Ospina was elected president of Colombia with only 42% of the vote.³ In September of 1947, Gaitán disclosed a secret document detailing the Oswal weapons into the country in order to handle the growing liberal unrest.⁴ The liberals assumed he was preparing to violently crush all opposition and reacted by arming themselves, setting the scene for a civil war.

With the messy political situation and the resulting violence, the people of Colombia were ready for a change. Gaitán was certain to win the 1950 election, assuming he could stay alive. Gaitán refused bodyguards, claiming the act of accepting bodyguards would transform his image from a man of the people into a corrupt politician. He believed he was immune – that no one would be stupid enough to assassinate him. Shortly before his assassination, one source will La Violencia was officially ushered in on April 9, 1948 with the assassination of Gaitán. The assassination shattered what little faith the people of Colombia had for their government and sparked the pigriest riot the western hemisphere has ever seen,

The Founding of the FARC

The FARC was born out of the violence during and after La Violencia and the corresponding loss of faith in government. Referring to La Violencia, Pedro Marín, founder of the FARC, wrote "The police and armed Conservatives would destroy the villages, kill inhabitants, burn their houses, take people prisoner and disappear them, steal livestock and rape the women. The goal of the Conservative groups was to inflict terror on the population". In response to the violence at the hand of the military and paramilitaries, a teenager named Pedro Marín fled the Amazon and went into hiding in the Cordillera Central. There he began to form a guerrilla army of displaced Colombians. Tensions came to a head in 1964 when the Colombian Army set its sights on Marquetalia, a small town that had declared itself an independent republic during La Violencia. The Colombian army attacked the barely armed village of approximately one-thousand farmers. This attack sent the members of the community fleeing for the mountains, where a group of about fifty of them would officially unite to form the FARC. Shortly after, founder Pedro Marín adapted the nom de guerre Manuel Marulanda. Colombian historian, Arturo

supported by the military, had an even more brutal reputation. Children and teenagers in the countryside matured in an environment where the military was to be feared for their brutality and

overthrew the established government of Gomez and placed General Rojas in power. Since this point, tr