

LAS FUERZAS ARMADAS REVOLUCIONARIO DE COLOMBIA EJERCITO DEL PUEBLO

A BRIEF HISTORY

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The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia –

gained the support of the Colombian army. Despite the polarization of its politics, Colombia remained relatively peaceful during the '30s and early '40s. This changed rapidly following 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 Perez. Ospina was elected president of Colombia with only 42% of the vote.³ In September of 1947, Gaitán disclosed a secret document detailing the Ospina government's plan to import huge quantities of 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 he stated, "If I am killed, not

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”.⁹ 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 Colom

overthrew the established government of Gomez and placed General Rojas in power. Since this point, traditional government has been slowly wrenching power from the military, but frequently the two have not been operating as one force. The paramilitary groups further complicate the relationship between military and government. In the late 1960s, the Colombian army established the paramilitary groups as legitimate special operations groups. Violence was encouraged in these groups and oversight was minimal at best. The government turned a blind eye to the methods of torture and murder used by these groups, hoping they would succeed in obliterating the guerrilla organizations and establishing peace. Eventually the government saw that these groups were doing more harm than good and that the tactics used by them were not only unsuccessful, but provided the FARC wi