

Introduction

Colombia History =) connected to the agrarian question



resistance movements of the Colombian people



against the exploitation of the *latifundia* + against the capitalist agricultural model



Colombian oligarchy response (bourgeoisie and landlords): terror + violence

Since the 2000s:

a) *oil reserves have increased*

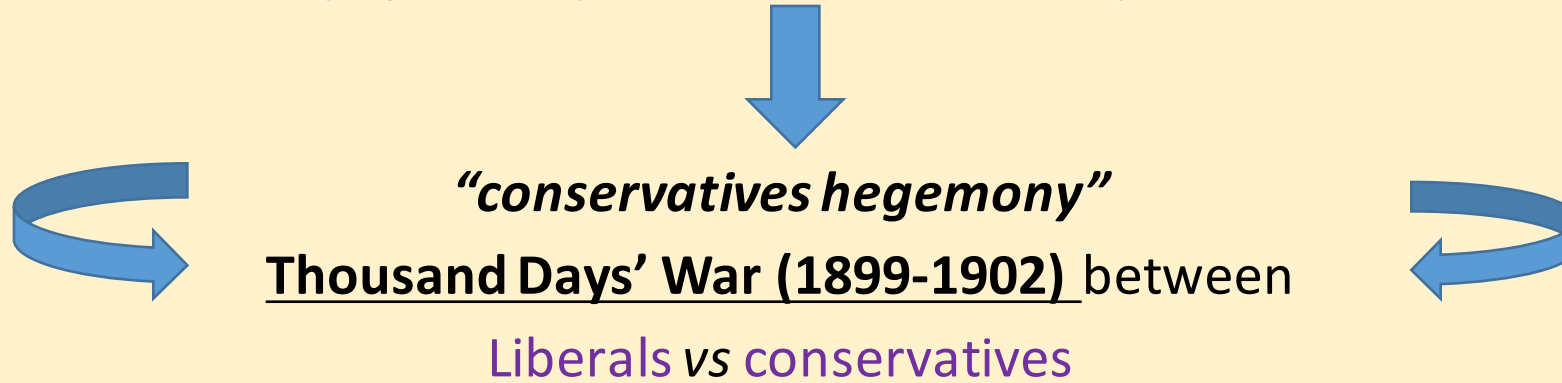
b) *extraction of natural resources constitutes the bulk of the country's exports*



41.5% of total exports = oil + coal

1. From conservative hegemony to liberal power

- From 1886 to 1930: *Presidency of the Republic* =) National Party (1888-1900) + Conservative Party (1900-1930)



- Conservative Party = **landlord ideology**, attached to the aristocratic features of the monarchy
- Liberal Party = often assimilated with a progressive attitude, defended the reforms that the development of capitalism required

apparent progressive character =) class character

Gabriel Garcia Marquez:

Colonel **Aureliano Buendia**, character of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and *The Colonel*, **No one writes to the Colonel**, they have in common:

- both are veterans of the **Thousand Days' War**

1. From conservative hegemony to liberal power

- Example of **economic submission** + **political submission** of the Colombian State



Banana industry=) the ***United Fruit Company***

- In 1870, the American **Lorenzo Dow Baker** initiates the transport and commerce of bananas between the **Caribbean islands and the USA**. In 1881, **Minor C. Keith**, a well-known railway builder in Central America, joined the company, and in 1899 **Andrew Preston** also joined it: **the United Fruit Company was born**. We are in the early twentieth century, **the one Theodore Roosevelt had proclaimed as the American century**.

1. From conservative hegemony to liberal power

AGUDELO, Leonardo Velásquez. “La industria bananera y el inicio de los conflictos sociales del siglo XX”. Credencial Historia (Bogotá), n° 258, 1 de junho de 2011:

“The *United* ensured the loyalty of the great families of the region - Dávila, Goenaga, Campo, Serrano, Díaz Granados, Salcedo, Ramón-, who had large areas of land and capital to provide the banana company, knowing that this single firm would purchase their crops. From **these families came the ruling class that controlled the region and the representatives and senators of the Magdalena Department.** These large families concentrated credit, land and capital, which stimulated the antipathy of small and medium landowners who could not expand their banana crops”

2. US investments between 1900-1930

- **US investments** between 1900-1930:

- **1913:** 4 million dollars
- **1920:** 32 million dollars
- **1929:** 280 million dollars

Exploitation of **oil, ores, railways, ports, roads and major public works** were under control

“of a few businessmen based in Pittsburgh, New York, Philadelphia and other cities of the

*empire. The **increasing inflow of capital**, together with the **first outbreaks of national***

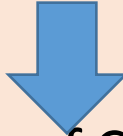
industry**, led to the **advance of the economy** and contributed to the birth of the **Colombian

***proletariat”** (ESCOBAR, Felipe. “La Concesión Barco: una oprobiosa entrega de la que no habla el llerismo”. Tribuna Roja (Colômbia), n° 42, março de*

1982).

2. US investments between 1900-1930

- 1931: Henrique Olaya signs the **Chaux-Folsom contract**



delivery of the hydrocarbons of Catatumbo in the hands of imperialism



*“The government will lend to the contracting companies the right **protection** to prevent or repel the hostility or attacks of Motilones (Barí) tribes or other savages, who live in the regions which lands are part of this contract, doing that protection through **armed police forces** or **public force** when necessary”*

(extract of Chaux-Folsom contract)

2. US investments between 1900-1930

- **US monopolies** present in Colômbia:
 - **Standard Oil of New Jersey** (today **Exxon**)
 - belonging to the **Rockefeller family**
 - acquired the shares of **Tropical Oil Company** (which had begun in **1921** the **oil exploration works** in the region of the **middle Magdalena**)
 - **Gulf Oil Corporation** (rival of **Exxon**)
 - created thanks to one of the largest US banks owned by the **Mellon brothers**
 - purchased the majority rights of **Colombia Petroleum Company** - which exploited the hydrocarbons of the **Barco Concession** until 1981:

“Since its founding, the **contract signed for 30 years** between the **Colombian government** and the *Colombian Roberto de Mares*, said that the **lands should be reverted to the nation in 1936**, but it **only happened in 1948** - 12 years later - by the North American multinational oil company Tropical Oil Company, a subsidiary of Standard New Jersey. **The same happens with the concession signed with General Barco in 1905**, which was to be reversed in 1955 and it only happened in 1961 by the Colombian Petroleum Company (colpet) and the South American Gulf Oil Company (sagog)” (HERNÁNDEZ,

2. US investments between 1900-1930

- The struggle for the land will be stronger after the accession to the Presidency of the Republic of the liberal **Alfonso Pumarejo (1936-1938)**, *Keynesian formed in the United Kingdom*
 - **Agrarian Reform** (which was intended to distribute, within ten years, unproductive land to landless peasants)
 - a Reform in Education (which sought to withdraw Education from the domain of the Church, creating the - present - Campus of the National University of Colombia)
 - a Political Reform (it was under his presidency that the *Central de Trabajadores de Colombia* -CTC) was founded
- In **1938**, liberal **Eduardo Santos** (great-uncle of the current President of the Republic), assumed the **presidency (1938-1942)**: curb the reforms of its predecessor =) especially the agrarian reform
- In the **presidential elections of 1942**, **Lopez Pumarejo** is re-elected:
 - supported by the more progressive sectors of the liberals and by broad layers of workers
 - contrary to what they expected, he did not pursue his reformist policy

2. US investments between 1900-1930

- He thus initiated a **process of deceleration of the reforms that he had promoted in 1938**, promoting, in 1944, following what Santos had already begun, a **process of counter-reform of the law of Agrarian Reform**
- In this sense, the **Law 200 of 1944** extended for ten more years the attribution of unproductive lands to small peasants, thus **postponing the first attempt to implement an Agrarian Reform**
- New violent **clashes between peasants, peasantry and landowners emerged**

2. US investments between 1900-1930

- In the elections of **1946** the **conservative Mariano Ospina Pérez** is elected:
 - It begins a period of **violence and confrontations =)** within the **ruling class** + between the **ruling class and the different classes and layers of workers**
- From then on, **great massacres were perpetrated** against peasants and native communities fighting for land
- The conflict intensifies, and the **powerful landowners increasingly used arms to subjugate the peasantry and native communities**
- During this period, **the first paramilitary armies** (notably the “Chulavitas” in Boyacá and the “birds” in the northern coffee-growing region) **emerge**, while the **conservative party tries to impose a new hegemony** on the strictly political level

3. The period known as *Great Violence* (1948-1953)

- **1948**: The period known as *Great Violence* (1948-1953) =) coincides with the **formation of guerrillas**

- **1948**:

JANUARY

- the Cauca communities (western range) are attacked
- in the north of Santander the government declares the *state of siege*

FEBRUARY

- the municipal workers of Bogota go on strike
- in the middle Magdalena, workers fight the rule of *Tropical Oil Company*

APRIL

- On April 9, the presidential candidate of the Liberal Party, *Jorge Eliecer Gaitán*, is assassinated



several armed uprisings

4. The beginning of the armed conflict

- The acceleration of **violence** =) gradually, **self-defense groups** that had formed after April 9, 1948, improved operational and organizational plans and gradually **becoming guerrillas**
- The **army** immerse itself in the **class conflicts**, in order to protect the landowners “**The performance of the landowners is a faithful expression of the economic interests that comes into play, at a certain moment, as an immediate cause of violence**” (GUZMAN CAMPOS, G, FALS BORDA, O. e UMANA LUNA, E. *La violencia en Colombia*. T. I. Bogotá: Ediciones Tercer Mundo, 2005 [1962])
- Between 1953 and 1957 (Presidency of the **General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla**) the **American and Colombian oligarchy**, in order to fight the guerrillas, **imposes a military dictatorship**:
 - Seeking to neutralize the guerrillas, **the Rojas government decrees an amnesty**, which is followed by a decrease in armed violence
 - At the end of that period, **since mid-1954, the massacre curve has, however, again ascended**, with elements of the army continually massacring peasants and native communities

4. The beginning of the armed conflict

- In 1958, in order to overcome the partisan violence that they themselves fostered, it is established a political settlement of governmental alternation between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party
 - *The agreement lasts until 1974*
- In **Marquetalia** (located in the central mountain range, in an area of very difficult access), a group of guerrillas decides to demobilize the armed body and to constitute **self-defense groups constituted by peasants**



Agrarian Movement of Marquetalia

5. From the 1961 Agrarian Reform to the creation of the FARC-EP and ELN guerrillas

- In **1961** an **Agrarian Reform (AR)** was **approved**

- as a result of **peasant convergence and mobilization**

+

Latin American political-historical context (triumph of the Cuban Revolution) and **national context** (attempt to neutralize revolutionary tendencies, reformist and developmental orientations of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC))

Despite the AR law



government pressure on the peasantry increases:

- In 1962, Conservative congressman Álvaro Gómez claims that **16 republics escaped national sovereignty** and control of the central government

=

government campaign against the **settlement of ex-guerrillas of the Agrarian Movement of Marquetalia**

5. From the 1961 Agrarian Reform to the creation of the FARC-EP and ELN guerrillas

- the 1961 Agrarian Colombian Reform sought to **generate jobs, supply the country with food and overcome violence**
- the Agrarian Reform considers (via legislation) the **democratization of land, qualified technical assistance, credit, infrastructures** and even **co-operative capacity building**, while creating the **Colombian Agrarian Reform Institute (Incora)**
- However, the **application of the Agrarian Reform legislation faced strong opposition** within the National Front itself, as well as by landowners, who prevented both the redistribution of land and the productive restructuring of the countryside, limiting its application
- The **State did not applied any Agrarian Reform legislation**
- Until 1971, **only 1% of the land subject to expropriation was distributed**, which was mostly public
- As there is no effective mechanism for redistribution of land on the one hand, and given the INCORA's failure on this point, **conflicts over land are increasing**

5. From the 1961 Agrarian Reform to the creation of the FARC-EP and ELN guerrillas

- The first combat **against** the *Agrarian Movement of Marquetalia* takes place the May 27, 1964, date that marks the creation of the FARC-EP
- Agrarian program (publically announced on July 20, 1964):

“We fight for **an Agrarian Policy** that gives the land of the latifundio to the peasants: that is why, from today, July 20, 1964, we are a guerrilla army that fights for the following Agrarian Program:

FIRST: To the Agrarian Policy of Lies of the Oligarchy, **we oppose an effective Revolutionary Agrarian Policy** that changes the **social structure of the Colombian countryside**, giving **free land to the peasants who work it or want to work it**, through the confiscation of latifundio property for the benefit of all working people. (...)

SECOND: The settlers, occupants, tenants, sharecroppers, aggregates, etc., of land belonging to the latifundistas and to the nation, will receive the property title of the land they are exploiting. All types of **backward exploitation** of the land, sharecropping systems, rent in kind or in money **will be liquidated**”

(FARC-EP AGRARIAN PROGRAM)

An armed conflict began, which would only end when the peace agreement was signed in 2016 between the FARC-EP on the one hand and the Colombian government under the presidency of José Manuel Santos

5. From the 1961 Agrarian Reform to the creation of the FARC-EP and ELN guerrillas

- The **ELN** becomes public on **October 7, 1965**, in the municipality of Simacota (Santander Department), when ELN makes **public its Manifesto**:

“The ELN fights for the full realization in our country of the following program:

2. An authentic agrarian revolution that contemplates the **elimination of *latifundio***, of *minifúndio* and of *monoculture*; an authentic agrarian revolution to make **a technical and fair distribution of the land to the peasants who work on it**; an authentic agrarian revolution that **grants credit, fertilizers, tools, seeds and work tools to farmers (...)**

The latifundios owned by the landlords **will be confiscated** and the **properties that benefit the national economy** will be respected; the creation of *production, distribution and consumption cooperatives* and *state farms* will be encouraged; the planning of agricultural production will be foreseen, seeking diversity of crops” (Simacota PROGRAM, January 7, 1965)

6. The 1960s and 1970s: industrialization and deepening of financial capitalism

- The 60s and 70s:

- **increasing** urbanization of cities
- Cities need **urgent supply of goods**
- In **urban territory**:
 - **industrialization** policies increase
- In **rural territory**:
 - increases the **importance of land ownership**
 - increases the importance of **expanding** the **agricultural frontier**
- although **some technical improvements** have taken place in recent years, **this has not meant the widespread of mechanization in agriculture**
- Begins the **cocaine production** =) the first **Cartel will be born**: The *Medellín Cartel*, of Pablo Escobar:
 - The agrarian conflict will, thereafter, meet a new element: **drug trafficking**

6. The 1960s and 1970s: industrialization and deepening of financial capitalism

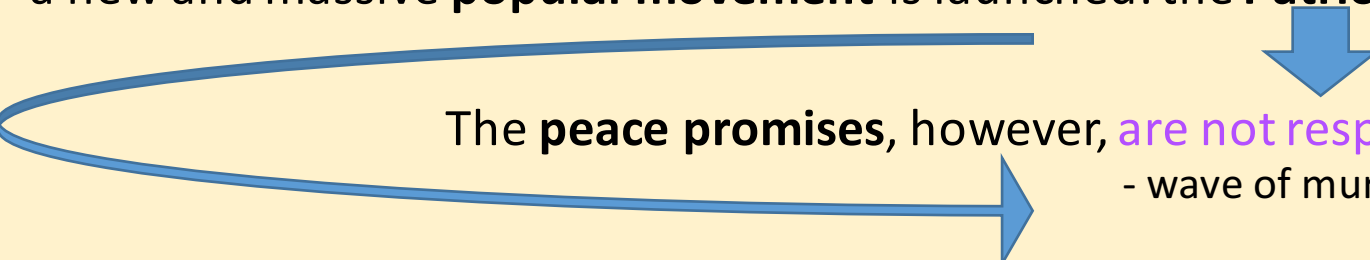
- Reprivatization of productive public sectors:

“The State began the **process of privatization of ecopetrol** in the **mid-seventies** with the implementation of **partnership contracts** that entails the repositioning of multinationals **for the exploitation of the country's natural resources**. Those contracts legitimized **taxes and royalties** and allows the **exploitation of the resources until exhaustion**. In the nineties starts the sale of refineries. The privatization process continued in the 1990s with the sale of assets such as **refineries and oil pipelines**” (HERNÁNDEZ, Luis Humberto. “América latina: petróleo y conflicto”. Ciencia

Política (Colômbia), nº 8, janeiro-junho de 2008, p. 114-142)

7. The 1980s, the UP genocide and armed resistance

- While from **1930 to 1970** the problem is essentially **agrarian**, since 1970s the **social problems are extended to other domains** (Health, Education)
- **Second Generation guerrillas** arise (Ex: Bogotá and Medellín) and **there is an unusual state violence** (torture, prisons)
- during the 1980s, the **FARC-EP increases its strength**:
 - the guerrilla theme becomes, under the **presidency of Belisario Betancur** (1982-1986), in a **problematic that the State can not ignore**
 - in 1984, **Betancur opens a dialogue between the Colombian government** and the FARC-EP guerrilla, **which culminates with the Uribe Accords**
- a new and massive **popular movement** is launched: the **Patriotic Union (UP)**



The **peace promises**, however, **are not respected** by the Colombian State:
- wave of murders

8. The struggle for agrarian reform in the late twentieth century

- In **1994**, a new **neoliberal agrarian law** was passed (Law 160), promoted by the World Bank:
 - it establishes a **National System of Agrarian Reform (AR)** and a **National System for Peasants Rural Development**, the establishment of an **allowance for the purchase of land** and a **reform of the Colombian Institute of AR**
 - Establishes the **PEASANT RESERVE ZONES (ZRC)**:
 - which the peasants will use to try to **curb the dominance of large property**, the **occupation of land by monopolies and transnationals**, and the **intensive use of monocultures**
- In **1996**, Colombia will go through an **economic crisis**:
- as a result of the sudden application of **open trade policies on agriculture affected by monopoly conditions of land suitable for production, low taxation and high tariff protection**, which resulted in a **reduction of more than one-fifth in the planted area, especially seasonal crops** (typical of peasant agriculture), causing the loss of more than 300,000 jobs

8. The struggle for agrarian reform in the late twentieth century

- During his term in office, **President Álvaro Uribe** (2002-2010) will intensify the **process of land accumulation**
- Under the presidency of Uribe, the “Agro Ingreso Seguro” (AIS) program was implemented, **which was presented as a system of agricultural subsidies that should benefit small Colombian farmers**
- In practice, the money that should have been given to peasants and small farmers **was diverted to paramilitarism**, to the **Colombian landowning oligarchy** and to **multinationals and transnationals operating in Colombia**, which fractionated their land in order to benefit from state subsidies

8. The struggle for agrarian reform in the late twentieth century

- In 1998, during the presidency of Andrés Pastrana, a new attempt is made to **reach a peace agreement** between the **FARC-EP and the State**. This attempt fails and **will lead to Plan Colombia**
- **Juan Manuel Santos**, former Minister of Defense of Uribe, **elected President of the Republic in 2010, and again in 2014**:
 - apparently impelled a **policy of redistribution of land** BUT it was a failure:
 - between 2010 and 2015 Juan Manuel Santos was being pressured by the **Havana Peace Dialogue** to apply a public **policy of land redistribution**
 - However, President Santos **failed to apply such agrarian policy** plan due to the difficulties created during the negotiations to exit the conflict
 - In fact, **Santos had promised to redistribute land to 160,000 families displaced by violence**; however, only 431 families were redeployed, i.e. 0.3% of the total [out of the 12,142 hectares distributed, out of the two million pledged].
 - Furthermore, in addition to **the government also reducing the budget allocated to the program, several of the refunds corresponded to simple land titling**. On the other hand, **the government closed its eyes to the illegal evictions of peasant and native lands and by national and foreign monopolies**

Conclusion

- The **Colombian rural structure** is characterized by a high concentration of land ownership
- **US imperialism** has imposed itself on the region since the **late nineteenth century**
 - TODAY:
 - controls and dominates the extraction of natural resources, especially oil
 - since the late 1990s, 48% of total Colombian exports are directed to the US
 - since the late 90's that 42% of imports come from the US
 - the economic relationship of dependence was reinforced with the increase of Colombian oil production in the late 1990s => **today, 80% of this production is directly sent to the US**
- Since the **agrarian question** arises from the **structural contradiction of the mode of socioeconomic organization**, which **produces concentration of wealth and the consequent expansion of poverty and misery**



the resolution of the oldest armed conflict of the American continent depends on the resolution of the conflicts of the earth:

Conclusion

Since the **Agrarian Reform of 1961** never materialized



the current **process of agrarian counter-reform** continues
through

- a) the use of arms, money, intimidation of the peasant and native movement
- b) the promotion of subsidies for agribusiness and powerful landowners



It should be noted that **Colombia imports more than eight million tons of food per year** and **delivers the most fertile lands to the production of raw materials for export at low cost**