

Dictatorship and Sports in Colombia: Rojas Pinilla's Military Regime and the Vuelta a Colombia, 1953-1957

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Abstract: Between 1954 and 1957, Gustavo Rojas Pinilla established the only military dictatorship to occur in twentieth-century Colombia. Although historians have analyzed the regime from a variety of viewpoints, surprisingly none of them have considered the impact of Rojas's policy toward sport, a remarkable omission since Latin American dictators who came to power after World War II tended to promote sports as a means to legitimize their rule. After brief reviews of literature concerning twentieth-century dictators and sports, and the fragmented nature of the Colombian state in the 1950s, this essay examines Rojas's career before 1953, and shows how, after achieving power, he used the annual bicycle race known as the Vuelta a Colombia and participation in the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games to enhance his regime's acceptance. By contrast, his attempt to crush opposition during the 1956 bullfighting season exposed smoldering popular discontent to his continued heavy-handed rule and contributed to his ousting on May 10, 1957.

Keywords: Colombia, Rojas Pinilla dictatorship, Cycling, Dictators, Sports

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On June 13, 1953, Colombian army commander Lt. General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla staged a bloodless coup that toppled the presidency of Laureano Gómez. Proceeding to form the only military dictatorship to take place in Colombia in the twentieth century, Rojas' opportunity occurred in the context of a fragmented Colombian nation, the systemic breakdown of rule by two traditional parties, the Conservative and Liberals, and the outbreak of La Violencia: a virtual civil war that exploded after the assassination of the populist Liberal leader, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán on April 9, 1948. Calling for "Peace, Justice and Liberty," Rojas' pledge to end inter-party violence and rural banditry received immediate support from all sectors of society, save the Laureano Gómez branch of the Conservative Party, but his regime was short-lived. By 1956, renewed violence, an economic downturn, and bipartisan opposition to his political ambitions weakened his position and, on May 10, 1957, he was forced out by the military.

A review of the extensive literature that examines the Rojas regime suggests that its impact was controversial. On the one hand, during the first six months he was able to staunch the Violencia, relax press censorship, and release political prisoners. Underwritten by high prices for coffee on the international markets, his government began an extensive series of public works projects and improved the system of credits for small farmers. On the other hand, as time passed, Rojas seemed to be taking steps toward the establishment of a personal dictatorship with populist features. The creation of the National Secretariat of Social Assistance (SENDAS) was headed by his daughter, María Eugenia, and appeared to be patterned after the policies of Argentine strongman Juan Perón, as did the general's talk of creating a "third force" and his call for a national convention to draft a new constitution. By early 1956, press censorship had returned, and the regime had alienated most organized groups, including the Catholic Church, labor unions, and two political parties.

Historians, who have assessed the regime, accept this general trajectory of Rojas' rule, but they disagree on whether the dictatorship was a positive or negative period in Colombian political history.¹ Surprisingly, neither side has considered Rojas' policies concerning sport, a remarkable omission since Latin American dictators who came to power after World War II tended to promote sports as a means to enhance their country's image, both at home and abroad, to legitimize their rule, attract foreign aid investment, and encourage tourism.

Like his contemporaries, Rojas attempted to use sports to increase his popularity, but he limited his efforts to championing bicycle racing, i.e. the Vuelta a Colombia, and promoting Colombia's attendance at the Melbourne Olympics in 1956. After brief reviews of the literature concerning twentieth-century dictators and sports, of the fragmented nature of the Colombian state, and of Rojas' career before 1953, this essay shows how the dictator attempted to use the Vuelta a Colombia and Colombian Olympic participation to enhance his popularity. The conclusion speculates on whether or not Rojas' involvement in Colombian sports may have contributed to the collapse of his dictatorship.

Twentieth-Century Dictators and Sports

In 1936, John R. Tunis published in the journal *Foreign Affairs*, "The Dictators Discover Sport": an article that outlined in detail how the three key European despots, Stalin, Hitler, and Mussolini, efficiently combined sport with militarism to incorporate the loyalty of youth, to promote the superiority of their nation, and to make "men capable of defense of the Fatherland."² Likewise, in Latin America, twentieth-century political leaders regardless of the nature of their rule—populist, revolutionary, constitutional, military or civilian dictatorship, democratic, or neo-liberal—regarded sport as "a tool for legitimatizing the regime, mobilizing or incorporating popular support, and measuring the regime's achievements against those of regimes in other countries."³ Joseph Arbena points out that the numerous Latin American dictators who seized power during the last century regarded identification with sports as an essential means of not only gaining popular support, but also of enhancing their image, both at home and abroad.⁴

Certainly, none of the Latin American "caudillos" sought or achieved the extremes embraced by Stalin, Hitler, and Mussolini, but several did take an energetic role in reshaping sport in their countries. For example, by the 1940s, Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic claimed to be the "Maximum Protector of National Sport," while in the 1950s Juan Perón in Argentina styled himself as "El Primer Deportista." Both leaders adopted policies that gave them control over professional and amateur sports. Meanwhile, in Brazil, historian Mauricio Drummond argues that during the Estado Novo (1937 to 1945), Getulio Vargas endorsed propaganda that conveyed

messages of optimism, nationalism, racial democracy and physical enhancement of the Brazilian people.

The new image of the Brazilian man had in sport (mainly football) one of its strongest icons. In short, Estado Novo policies had such a profound effect that they molded the sporting practice in Brazil for generations after the collapse of his [Vargas] government in 1945.⁵

Given this tendency by Latin American autocratic rulers, it is not surprising that General Rojas Pinilla would attempt to enhance his power and popularity by embracing Colombian sports; however, as we will see, the abrupt ousting of his Government of the Armed Forces during his rule in May 1957 cut short any efforts to take control of Colombian athletic activities.⁶

Colombia in 1954



Colombia: A Nation of Regions

As the above map suggests, Colombia is a country of regions. With 1,138,400 square kilometers of territory, bordering on two oceans, split by three branches of the Andes mountains, and including parts of the Amazon Basin and Orinoco Plains, it could hardly be otherwise. Yet it is also clear that not all regions are considered equal. From colonial times onward, the Andean highland, connected by the Magdalena River to the Caribbean ports of Cartagena and Barranquilla (or what is often called the Costa Atlántica), have dominated the country’s development, accounting for less than half of the national domain but encompassing 98% of the population.⁷

Even by the 1950s, due to the lack of viable roads, the centralized state in the Andes was out of touch with other regions of the country. The introduction of radio provided an early means of breaching the mountain barriers, but this media was still in its infancy. The outbreak of the Violencia, the brutal, undeclared civil war that lasted from 1948 until the 1960s that pitted Conservatives against Liberals and peasants against peasants, further tore through the fabric of the country, eventually costing the lives of 200,000 Colombians. Although the conflict barely touched the Atlantic coast, it was severe in the Andean and Orinoco plains, and the inability of President Gómez to bring it under control set the stage for Rojas Pinilla’s military coup.

Gustavo Rojas Pinilla: The Formative Years

Born in Tunja, Boyacá on March 12, 1900, Rojas received a conventional education in that city. He obtained a teaching diploma at the Escuela Normal de Varones at the age of 15 and a *bachillerato* in sciences at the Colegio de Boyacá a year later.⁸ With plans to become an engineer, Gustavo travelled to Bogotá in 1918 to attend the Facultad de Ingeniería at the Universidad Nacional, but he was only able to finish the first year. The death of his father at the end of 1918 devastated his family's economic resources, and Gustavo could no longer afford to attend the university. Instead, in 1919, he entered the Escuela Militar de Cadets and graduated in 1920 with a rank of Second Lieutenant. As a member of the army's artillery branch, Rojas was stationed in Manizales, Caldas, where he won promotion to lieutenant in 1923.

Although he found military life congenial, Rojas could not abandon his desire to become an engineer. In 1924, he received permission to retire from active service, in order to study civil engineering at Tri-State Normal College, a small university located in Angola, Indiana in the United States.⁹ Through frugal living and diligent study, he graduated with the title of civil engineer in 1927. On his return to Colombia, Rojas resumed active military service, during which he supervised much needed highway construction between Socha-Támara, Vélez-Chipatá, and especially the Carare road that allowed access to the northeastern interior of the country. In 1930, Rojas married Carola Correa, who he had met eight years earlier at a social function in Medellín. Although their personalities were very different, their marriage was a happy one. It produced three children: two sons, Gustavo and Carlos, and a daughter, María Eugenia, who was physically and spiritually most like her father.¹⁰

In 1932, facing war with Peru, the Colombian army assigned Rojas to aid in the nation's defense. Four years later, he became an engineer in the technical department of the Colombian ammunition factory. In this capacity, he was sent on special missions to Germany and to the United States to acquire weapons and other machinery for the Colombian military. In 1944, as a Lieutenant Colonel, he became sub-director of the Escuela Superior de Guerra. In 1946, now as Director of Civil Aeronautics, he travelled once again to Europe to acquire construction materials visiting Germany, England, France and Spain. His project to build several airports in Colombia was a plan he would subsequently implement during his presidency.

In 1948, Rojas was commander of the Third Brigade in Cali where he was able to control the rebellion that broke out because of the assassination of Gaitán. President Mariano Ospina Pérez promoted him to the position of general a year later. During the presidency of Laureano Gómez, Rojas was sent to the United Nations to inspect the Colombia Battalion which was attached to the American 21st Infantry Regiment in Korea in 1952. Additionally, in that year, he was promoted to general and appointed Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces by acting President Roberto Urdaneta Arbeláez. In short, by June 1953, at the age of fifty-three, in addition to becoming a trained civil engineer, Rojas had achieved an exemplary military record during his rise through the ranks to become head of the Colombian army.

Rojas in Power

Notwithstanding his unprecedented military coup on June 15, 1953, Rojas Pinilla proved an appealing political alternative to "Colombians sickened by the fratricidal turn that traditional politics had taken."¹¹ Raised in a deeply Conservative family, Rojas was a practicing Catholic throughout his life. He sincerely believed that close collaboration between Church and State was essential for Colombia's moral regeneration, but he made certain to include Liberals in his so-called government of the "Armed Forces." "His genial nature and quickly-responsive good humor made him attractive to people" and popular with his military subordinates.¹² As a youth his "robust health and splendid physical condition developed within him an emphatic fondness for nearly all sports within access."¹³ Only later did it become evident that his affability was tempered with an explosiveness that came with quick anger and a streak of vindictiveness.¹⁴

In a round of speeches delivered during the months following June 13th, Rojas promised that his "Government of the Armed Forces" would unite Colombians through the application of Christian and "Bolivarian" principals, and he founded a new government agency, the Directorate of Information and State Propaganda, to help publicize his ideas. One of the agency's first efforts was a lavishly illustrated volume entitled *Seis meses de gobierno (Six Months of Government)* that contained speeches delivered by Rojas subsequent to his takeover, as well as "messages of support from home and abroad, and reports on successful government initiatives, most notably its Office for Aid and Rehabilitation, which provided money to victims of the Violencia."¹⁵ *Seis meses* included portraits of Rojas that would become standard throughout his regime. In his official photographs, the general wore the presidential sash over his full military uniform, complete with all his service awards. The intention was to present an image of Rojas reminiscent of Simón Bolívar: a heroic leader, redeemer, pacifier, and protector.¹⁶

Sociologist Carlos Uribe Celis notes that populism and a cult of personality characterized the Rojas years. The portrait of the general in parade uniform, with peaked cap, epaulettes, and military awards, was fixed in all public offices by decree. Small planes and cars carried pennants, leaflets, key rings and other items that promoted the regime with the words: "Lieutenant General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, Jefe Supremo de las Fuerzas Armadas, Presidente de la República de Colombia," followed by the slogan, "Peace Justice and Liberty. Trucks from the Instituto Nacional de Abastecimientos (National Supply Institute) crisscrossed the country, selling goods that were scarce and had to be imported.¹⁷

Figure 1 Gustavo Rojas Pinilla

Rojas' daughter, María Eugenia, now nicknamed "La Capitana," made public appearances wearing a military uniform and a kepi. Rojas appointed her as director of SENDAS (Secretariado Nacional de Asistencia Social), a social assistance agency founded in 1954 that was intended to secure political support through public aid to peasants and small farmers, a policy that brought to mind the government of Juan Perón and the Fundación Eva Perón. Although María Eugenia was only nineteen-years-old, she was an increasingly effective advocate for her father's policies.¹⁸ The government also undertook several ambitious public works projects, including highway expansion, work on the Atlantic Railroad linking Bogotá to Santa Marta on the Caribbean coast, erecting tourist hotels, and constructing regional and municipal airports including Bogotá's El Dorado airport, activities that the high price of coffee exports funded during the first two years of the regime.

Sport Policy during the Rojas Regime

Rojas Pinilla did not elaborate a formal policy regarding sports, but he recognized that the identification of the Armed Forces government with Colombian sports was one of the best ways to engage popular support.¹⁹ Although his regime prioritized expanding literacy and improving primary education, plans of study presented in 1953 and 1955 did not encompass physical education. Of Colombian spectator sports in the 1950s—boxing, futbol, cycling, and bull fighting—the dictatorship had the greatest involvement with cycling, and it also sent a team of athletes to participate in the Melbourne Olympics of 1953.

Ciclismo

At the time the General seized control in June 1953, competitive cycling was already challenging fútbol as the most popular sport spectacle in the Andean area, even as baseball and boxing remained supreme in the Costa Atlántica region.²⁰ Between January 6th to 18th in 1951, following examples set by the Tour de France, the Giro de Italia, and the Vuelta a España, the Colombian periodical *El Tiempo* sponsored the first Vuelta a Colombia, an event in which thirty-one cyclists participated in a road race divided into ten stages that covered 1,254 formidable kilometers along paths of sand, mud, and stone through the departments of Cundinamarca, Tolima, Viejo Caldas and Valle del Cauca. For fifteen days, the country was paralyzed listening to the details of the competition, as narrated with great emotion by Carlos Arturo Rueda C., who, following the racers in his *transmóvil*, reported the action as it was happening over the Nueva Granada radio network.²¹ When the winner, Efraín Forero Treviño, whom Rueda C. had dubbed the "Indomable Zipa," crossed the finish line in Bogotá with a time of 45 hours 23 minutes and 8 seconds, he was greeted by a huge, excited crowd.²²

By 1952, enthusiasm for the second Vuelta was enormous. Many patrons stepped forward, and the organizers invited European cyclists to participate alongside the Colombians to bring more prestige to the event. Among the guests was José Beyaert, a Frenchman who soon demonstrated the experience and ability he had gained from competing in the European tours. The race, designed to cover 1,678 kilometers divided into thirteen stages, took place between January 12th and January 27th. Beyaert won by a comfortable margin, but a Colombian, Ramón Hoyos Vallejo, was the victor in the ninth stage that traversed the nineteen kilometers between Cali and Sevilla. Hoyos went on to win the third Vuelta a Colombia. Taking place between February 19th and March 8th in 1953, this race covered 1,923 kilometers and was divided into thirteen stages. Hoyos' victory won him the nickname "el Escarabajo de la montaña" or the "beetle of the mountain" from sportscaster Carlos Rueda and established him as the dominant Colombian cyclist of the 1950s.²³

Three months later, General Rojas Pinilla seized control of a country now partly ruled by terror and on the brink of social and political crisis. By declaring the nation above political party interests and brandishing the slogan, "Peace, Justice and Freedom," the dictator's benevolence caught the public mood. Preaching reconciliation, he associated himself with what had become Colombia's most persuasive symbol of unity: the Vuelta. There were three Vueltas during Rojas' rule, but changes in the nature and character of the races between 1954 and 1956 reflected recrudescence of the Violencia in 1955, as well as the dictator's gradual loss of popularity.

The Fourth Vuelta, held January from 12th to 31st in 1954, was a propaganda vehicle for the new regime in four ways. First, the Rojas Pinilla Armed Forces government replaced the *El Tiempo* as the principal sponsor of the race. Second, Colonel Marcos Arámbula Durán, the new Cycling Association president, stated that he was working with the organizers to adopt a military style to guarantee success. He maintained that both the army and Rojas Pinilla were determined to elevate

the level of Colombian cycling, and that the "Armed forces were convinced that sports were pivotal for the social improvement of the people."²⁴

Third, in 1954, the new regime required antioqueñan Ramón Hoyos Vallejo, the Vuelta's most successful cyclist, to perform his military service. Hoyos later recalled that the army recruited him in the Medellín airport and stationed him after basic training in Cúcuta. At that point he had lost all hope of cycling but, later, when he was transferred to Bogotá, it was announced that he would participate in the IV Vuelta, representing the Armed Forces. Although he was eager to take part in the race, Hoyos confessed to his biographer, Gabriel García Márquez, that he regretted not competing as a member of the Antioqueño team, and that his regret intensified as he began to win stages.²⁵

Fourth, with the inclusion of Ecuador and the departments of Boyacá, Santander, and Norte de Santander, the 1,842-kilometer race was more diverse than the previous three. As an article in *El Tiempo* explained on January 14th, 1954, by expanding into the eastern departments, the Vuelta would be visiting a region "sick with a political hate that only sport could cure." Above all, the race was a "healthy" initiative and a "resource" to combat political passion. The cyclists would be the vanguard of peace and the scouting party of a national movement willing to give "all its children" a better future.²⁶

On January 12, after they attended an 8:00 A.M. mass at the San Agustín Church, forty-six cyclists assembled in front of the Palacio del Gobierno, where "La Capitana" María Eugenia gave the starting signal. They began the first three stages by pedaling northward to Duitama, Boyacá. Continuing on January 13th, they crossed the 4,950-meter Guantiva pass to reach Málaga, Santander, and the following day they cycled on to Cucutá. During stage four, they ascended the 3,960-meter Almorzadero pass between Pamplona and Bucaramanga, where they were greeted by a crowd of more than 50,000 people. Hoyos won the three formidable mountain stages, proving his dominance once again.²⁷

Since the Vuelta was conducted between departmental capitals, most of the riders slept in El Socorro before facing a 24-hour odyssey on January 19th through deep forest terrain to reach the village of Santiago in Antioquia. Most travelled by cars or train but, thanks to support from wealthy Antioqueñan textile manufacturers, the teams representing Antioquia, the Armed Forces, and Valle were flown in planes directly from El Socorro to Medellín, where they enjoyed two rest days training on excellent roads. This obvious favoritism caused eleven of the other riders to protest. President Rojas, through Colonel Arámbula, averted a rebellion by sending a direct message to the race's organizers and the protesting participants, urging them to resolve the conflict, and the disagreement was eventually defused. When the race finally ended in Bogotá, Hoyos had won six stages and established himself as the "Titan of the Mountains."²⁸

In the view of Manuel Morales-Fontanilla, whose dissertation, "Impossible Roads: Cycling Landscapes and Cultural Representation in Colombia, 1930-1958" is the most complete study of the Vueltas held during the Rojas years, there is no doubt

that the 1954 race was substantially different from the earlier three. First, it was more professional, in terms of equipment and staging, while doping and self-medication were two of its most significant problems. Morales Fontanilla cites the testimony of Satoria de Sánchez, one of the few women who had traveled with the race since its first edition, who claimed that "1954 was the year of the pills because all the cyclists consumed them routinely."²⁹ Second, the competition was used to portray an image of civility that contradicted the violent reality that Colombians were experiencing in their daily life. Third, surrounded by members of the Colombian army, Hoyos's victory was publicized as a triumph for the Armed Forces. When interviewed at the finish line, he said, "I dedicate this victory to the president of the Republic, the commander of the armed forces, and the governor of Antioquia." Continuing to praise the military, he stated that while he had been enrolled in the army, he had developed extraordinary physical aptitudes and that all cyclists should train in the army because the formation men received in that institution was incredible."³⁰ Morales-Fontanilla concludes that the central role of the military during the 1954 Vuelta was clear:

Supported by the figure and populism of General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, the race was a space in which the institution conveyed its ideas about the future of Colombia. Certainly, the government was attempting to "pacify the country," and the Vuelta was a place to promote that idea.³⁰

Many representations of the 1954 Vuelta were connected to the militaristic and hypermasculine environment surrounding Rojas Pinilla's first years as president. Ramón Hoyos Vallejo became the symbol of the regime and, by his outpacing of Efraín Forero, he intensified a debate between Antioqueños and Cundinamarcans on just which department had produced the best cyclist. On February 2nd, Rojas offered a reception to honor all the riders, but Hoyos was the center of attention. Also present were members of the Armed Forces, the Cycling Association, cabinet ministers, journalists, and radio broadcasters. According to *El Espectador*, this reception was the "official entrance of Colombian sports" to the country's high politics. Rojas Pinilla declared: "Colombian people love the things that unite them. Sports in general and La Vuelta a Colombia in particular are binding factors." In a clear response to the Violencia, he added that sports were helping the military in their campaign for "coexistence of Colombia." When one of the journalists present at the reception mentioned that "in the places where violence is most intense, the caravan was welcomed with fervor," the President replied that the "new environment of understanding among Colombians" was more visible, thanks to La Vuelta.³¹

The Fifth Vuelta

In January 1955, the National Cycling Association decided to delay the start of that year's Vuelta a Colombia until May to allow the cyclists to participate in the Pan-American Games being held in Mexico in March. On March 27th, by defeating Marcus Dupin from the Union Cycliste Internationale, Ramón Hoyos Vallejo became the first Colombian to win a cycling event in a Pan-American championship. According to Hoyos, "All Colombian cyclists were happy with the result because "his victory was not personal but collective and represented the whole country."³² *El Tiempo* described Hoyos' feat as a victory for Colombian

masculinity, and that the cyclists were "rude men who could easily adapt and dominate nature."³³ In addition, Dante Panzeri wrote in the Argentine magazine *El Gráfico* that the Colombians were admirable because they had shown "an acute sense of opportunity and mental agility."³⁴

Fifteen teams participated in the fifth Vuelta in May 1955. Hoyos, no longer in the army, was now riding with one of the two Antioqueñan teams, but the Armed Forces team continued to compete along with teams representing Cauca, Nariño, Santander, Tolima and Valle. There were two independent teams, and, for the first time, cyclists from Argentina, Mexico, and Venezuela also took part. With a distance of 2,246 km divided into eighteen stages, the race was the longest yet undertaken. Participants would pass through eight departments and finish the eleventh stage in Tulcán, Ecuador.

Despite this expansion, Rojas Pinilla's presence in the race was less pronounced than the previous year. With the rekindling of the Violencia, the Armed Forces Government was fighting a vicious battle with insurgents in Sumapaz, an agricultural colony located in southwestern Cundinamarca, and the historical leaders of the political parties, as well as important sectors of civil society, were starting to resist Rojas's initiatives. Nevertheless, the penultimate, seventeenth stage ended at the General's vacation home in Melgar, Tolima, a city 100 kilometers away from the terminus in Bogotá, where Rojas welcomed the cyclists with flowers, and Hoyos Vallejo dedicated the stage to the President.

The difficulties confronting cyclists during the Fifth Vuelta were of such a magnitude that reporters described the race as "suicide on a bike," and medical authorities attested that the efforts during the competition were inhumane.³⁵ *El Tiempo* quoted Argentine Miguel Sevillano as declaring that "critics abroad can't imagine how difficult this race is [given] the weather, the terrain, the roads, the cliffs."³⁶ Both Venezuelan and Argentine teams eventually retired from the race. For the Antioqueños in general, and Hoyos in particular, however, the Vuelta was a great triumph. In the words of Matt Rendell:

Day after day, orchestrated and conducted by Julio Arrastía, the Antioqueñans called the race's tune, dictating when to attack and when to mark tempo. When they coordinated their work rate, any rider who defied their dominance was simply destroyed.³⁷

One after another, the Antioqueñans whipped away from the peloton to wear down the Cundinamarcan champion, Efraín Forero. In describing their relentless onslaught, radio announcer Carlos Arturo Rueda immortalized their performance as "the Antioqueñan liquidizer." By the end, Hoyos, having won twelve of the eighteen stages, was the overall victor with a time of 80 hours, 12 minutes and 4 seconds, and Antioqueñan riders occupied the first seven places in the General Classification. Only José Beyaert, with three stage wins, and Mexico's finest rider, Rafael Vaca, had broken the Antioqueñan monopoly.³⁸

When the cyclists arrived in Bogotá on June 12th at the completion of this most demanding Vuelta, the celebration of their efforts surprisingly became an opportunity for public expressions of disenchantment with the Rojas regime. Thousands

crowded the city's streets, excited about the caravan's arrival, but problems emerged once the riders reached the velodrome. As Morales-Montanilla writes:

Half of the spectators were drunk, and there were fights galore. People threw rocks at the pedalers, and the police had to intervene to calm the situation. Later, when Hoyos arrived in his hotel, a multitude of people stormed the lobby demanding his presence. Violence erupted again, and the fanatics ended up destroying the hotel's entrance.³⁹

The authorities called for the police, who arrested more than fifty people. Part of the rage was due to Hoyos' defeat of the Cundinamarcan hero, Forero, but some of the anger was born of frustrations against the Rojas Pinilla government. The General himself did not intervene, and it was left for bogotanos to condemn the violence and state in letters to *El Espectador* and *El Tiempo* that the country should not judge the spirit of the city by the actions of a few.⁴⁰ *El Espectador* soon provided a counterweight to the opprobrium inflicted on Hoyos by publishing his biography, written by future Nobel Prize winner Gabriel García Márquez and published in fourteen installments between June 27th and July 17th. It was obvious that the life of the three-time champion of La Vuelta was interesting enough to become the main attraction of the newspaper for almost two weeks and, in every chapter, Hoyos narrated a moment of his life that he considered relevant in order to explain his success as a cyclist.⁴¹

Olympic Games

In 1956, Ramón Hoyos, along with other Colombian athletes, looked forward to competing in the Olympic Games in Melbourne, Australia, an activity Rojas Pinilla fully endorsed. The country's participation in the Olympics had begun unofficially in 1932 when a lone Colombian, Jorge Perry Villate, arrived in Los Angeles to compete in the marathon. By 1936, a Colombian Olympic Committee (COC) had been established, and the country was able to send a small delegation to Munich. In 1948, the International Olympic Committee officially accepted Colombia as a participant, and the country sent five athletes to the games held that year in London.

In 1952, Enrique Gómez Hurtado, son of President Laureano Gómez, chaired the COC; however, due to the persistence of violence in much of the country, it proved impossible to send a team of athletes to the 1952 Olympic Games in Helsinki, Finland.⁴² Rojas Pinilla, on taking charge of the government in 1953, appointed General Guillermo Padilla Manrique as maximum head of Colombian sport. In 1954, the General approved the staging of the Séptimos Juegos Atléticos Nacionales (Seventh National Athletic Games) to be held in Cali from July 17 to August 3. Taking part in the event were 2,935 athletes, a number that reflected the growth of sports in the country despite the ongoing violence. The hurdler, Jaime Aparicio from Cali, emerged as the overall winner having achieved gold medals in six events. In the meantime, a group of

journalists led by Mike Forero Nougés and Humberto Jaimes Cañarte were urging the COC to send a team of athletes to the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne, Australia.⁴³

By that year Rojas Pinilla, facing increasing opposition from the leaders of the traditional parties, permitted *El Espectador* and *El Tiempo*, two dailies he had earlier shut down, to begin publication once again under the names of *El Independiente* and *Intermedio*, respectively. Forero and Jaimes Cañarte rejoined their newspapers and began working, with Rojas' complete support, to assemble a delegation to travel to Melbourne. To raise the funds necessary to send athletes to Australia, the journalists elicited funding from local companies such as Colgate Palmolive, Andina, and Bavaria, as well as the Club Militar and the government of Valle. Additionally, for three days in October patrons of theaters in Bogotá and at fútbol games paid a ticket surcharge of 20 centavos to help finance the initiative. A beauty contest held on October 19 crowned Yolanda Pulecio as Queen of Sportsmen. Among her duties was to accompany the Olympic delegation of 28 athletes, who represented six sports: athleticism, cycling, fencing, weightlifting, shooting, and swimming. The Government of the Armed Forces equipped the athletes with two sets of uniforms, one for competing and the other for parades, and it ordered an Avianca HK-136 jet modified to allow space for the athletes to sleep during the sixty-one-hour trip between Bogotá and Melbourne with stops in San Francisco, Honolulu, Canton, Fiji for refueling.⁴⁴

The group set off with high hopes, but after their arrival in Melbourne in mid- November, none of the participants, regardless of their sport, were able to reach the medal stage due to inexperience and some lamentable errors. The strongest contender, Ramón Hoyos, placed thirteenth in the second cycling time trial, but lost the last race for lack of experience. As a team, the Colombians placed eighth, and their participation seems best remembered by the elegant presence of their Queen of Sportsmen, Yolanda Pulecio. Perhaps the most important result to come from this disappointing performance was to alert directors of the COC, that if Colombia were to improve in Olympic competition, it was essential to promote physical education, to reorganize sport preparation, and to hire foreign trainers to help the athletes prepare.⁴⁵

Colombians would compete in succeeding Olympics, but they did not win any medals until the 1972 Games in Munich where Helmut Bellingodt earned a silver in shooting (50 meter running target competition), and Clemente Rojas and Alfonso Pérez each received a bronze medal in the featherweight and lightweight boxing divisions.⁴⁶

Ramón Hoyos continued to be the outstanding Colombian athlete of the 1950s. Between 1953 and 1958 he won five editions of the Vuelta a Colombia and participated with other Colombians in the Summer Olympics of 1956 and 1960. His glory was such that in 1959, renowned Colombian artist Fernando Botero painted the work reprinted below entitled *Apotheosis of Ramón Hoyos*. In his painting, Botero depicted Hoyos as a massive brute with his face dark with the mud of competition, disfigured shoulders, and huge, shapeless fingers. He towers over a heap of ten serene-faced corpses. Four

sunflowers dot the pile of bodies, recalling the winner's bouquet. Hoyos' grotesque figure rests its right hand on the handlebars of a rudimentary bicycle. Behind him hangs a garish, unidentifiable flag; on the lower edge of the composition a tiny Colombia flag disappears from the canvas. The portrait has been interpreted as an x-ray of Colombia that highlights its misery and the profound vitality that prevents it from sinking entirely, even when relentless forces seem to propel it into the depths.⁴⁷



The Apotheosis of Ramón Hoyos

Public adulation for Hoyos survived, even after his retirement from cycling in 1964, but General Gustavo Pinilla would not be so fortunate.⁴⁸ Ironically, opposition to his regime was openly expressed through another popular Colombia sport: bullfighting.

Bullfighting

In August 1954 Rojas won reelection as president for the period from 1954 to 58. Soon after, however, his military government faced a second wave of violence that profoundly affected the country with its acts of vengeance, banditry and sadism. University students rioted in June 1954, and a mid-decade decline in the price of coffee heightened the climate of dissatisfaction. These developments tended to mitigate opposition between Rojas' civilian antagonists, Liberal Alfonso López and Conservative Laureano Gómez. Most organized groups, including the Catholic Church, were now opposed to him.⁴⁹ Rojas censored the major newspapers, *El Tiempo*, *El Espectador*, and *El Siglo*, but popular opposition could still be voiced in the context of another sport, bullfighting. To be more specific, during the 1956 season, two ugly incidents in Bogotá's Plaza de Toros de Santamaría revealed cracks in the triumphant façade of the Armed Forces' government.

Among Colombia's traditional sports, such as cock fighting and coleo, bullfighting has been a major element in maintaining a connection to its colonial past and rural roots.⁵⁰ For three centuries, small towns throughout Colombia celebrated

anniversaries and events with makeshift bullfights, but it was not until 1890 that the contests took on their more modern appearance with the arrival of the first squads of Spanish toreros.⁵¹ In that year, major cities built more substantial bull rings, and Colombians began to train as toreros. Despite the lack of true fighting bulls, enthusiasm for the sport grew. By 1910, there were eighteen bull rings in Bogotá alone, located in different barrios of the city.

In 1928, Ignacio Sanz de Santamaría, a bogotano and cattle owner, began work on what was to become Colombia's principal bullring, the Plaza de Toros de Santamaría. The arena was finished in 1931. Constructed from brick in a style known as "*mudéjar*" (Moorish) at a cost of 70,000 pesos oro (700 million pesos at today's prices) according to plans brought from Spain, it could accommodate 14,500 spectators. In 1938, the city of Bogotá bought the plaza for 90,000 pesos. It added an attractive façade in 1943-44 and, since the 1950s, the plaza has been regarded as one of the most beautiful bullrings in South America.⁵²

The annual fight season, which ran from January to March, was a spectacle attended by elites and members of the popular class. Consequently, the unusual events that occurred during the Sunday fight on January 26, 1956 reflected discontentment across the board with the Armed Forces government in general and Rojas Pinilla in particular. Before the fight began, Alberto Lleras Camargo, the most prominent Liberal leader of anti-Rojas sentiment, arrived at the Santamaría bullring where he was greeted by a full ten minutes of cheering. A few minutes later, María Eugenia, the head of SENDAS, appeared in the company of several officers and her husband, Samuel Moreno Díaz. On entering the presidential box, the group was met by resentful whistling, the Colombian version of booing:

After the first bull was dedicated to María Eugenia, to which the crowd loudly objected, she and her party angrily strode from the amphitheater. Periodic outbursts of spontaneous applause...for Lleras Camargo forced him to stand up repeatedly to acknowledge acclaim. The bullfighter who had tried to dedicate his first bull to Señora de Moreno finally quit, to be replaced by the Venezuelan fighter Girón and a visiting Spaniard, Chicuelo. Long before the afternoon was over, Lleras Camargo wisely left rather than risk provoking a serious disturbance.⁵³

However angry this rude insult to his daughter may have made Rojas, it clearly reflected the growing gap between those who supported his regime and those who wanted a return to civilian rule. On Saturday, February 4 in Barranquilla, the General delivered two important addresses in which he enumerated his socio-economic programs and defended the actions and goals of his government. Again, he asked for the support of the masses and denounced his enemies. More ominously, he affirmed that he would not call for elections during the next two years, and that his "government of the People-Armed Forces would use all its power against those who opposed the redemption of the lower classes, including force, if necessary, to secure public tranquility and fraternal viability." He also noted that "fitting measures" would be taken against the "political

manifestation: of the previous Sunday."⁵⁴ Those measures turned out to be novel, as well as frightening. The regime bought \$15,000 worth of tickets and distributed them to thousands of policemen, plainclothesmen, and government employees. At the bullfight on February 5, official ticketholders were waved through the gates while other fans were carefully frisked for weapons. Once inside, Rojistas began cheering the president, while his opponents gave themselves away through their glowering silences or muttered retorts. As reported in *Time Magazine*, the bully boys opened up after they had fully identified oppositionists:

Whipping out blackjacks, knives and guns, they attacked in milling fury. Victims were tossed screaming over the guardrails high above exit passageways; hundreds of others were toppled into the arena. Pistols banged away. The toll: at least eight dead, 50 hurt.⁵⁵

Although the regime stifled reports of the events, the news was carried out by United Press dispatches and foreign visitors. On February 9, the Chief of Intelligence issued an official statement blaming pro-government elements for attempting reprisals against the anti-government "thugs" for the previous week's demonstration. Colombia's Cardinal Archbishop Cristiano Luque condemned the bullring "massacre" in pastoral letters and in the official organs of the church.

There was no proof that Rojas Pinilla ordered the slaughter and, in a speech delivered in Vélez, Santander on February 24, he characterized the episode as "collective insanity that springs from the low social strata of the large cities." "In the future," he declared, "necessary means to ensure that similar happenings will not occur will be strictly enforced."⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the incident reflected growing Colombian unhappiness with Rojas' policies, and an undercurrent of support for return to civilian rule.

The Sixth Vuelta a Colombia 1956

It was amidst this increasingly unsettled political climate that the Colombian Cycling Association (CCA) began preparations for the Sixth Vuelta a Colombia in May 1956. Already tensions between Rojas Pinilla and most of Colombia's civil society were tainting the race. For example, in June the CCA and the Association of Sports Chroniclers agreed to produce "official information" about the race, a plan that newspapers, such as *El Colombiano*, branded as "typical" of Rojas Pinilla's attack on freedom of speech and information.⁵⁷

The sixth Vuelta a Colombia took place during June 7-24, 1956 and covered 2,129 kilometers. It was divided into seventeen stages and for the first time began in Bucaramanga. After passing through the departments of Santander, Boyacá, Cundinamarca, Caldas, Cauca, and Tolima, the penultimate stage stopped in Melgar before finishing in Bogotá. Taking part were sixty cyclists divided into seventeen teams: Antioquia (2), Cundinamarca (2), Boyacá, Caldas, Norte de Santander, Santander, Tolima, Fuerzas Armadas, and Guatemala. The most prominent aspect of this Vuelta was its dominance by the Antioqueñan cycling team led by Ramón Hoyos, who won eight stages and completed the race in 69 hours one minute and seven seconds.

Efraín Forero managed to finish third in the general classification, but it was clear that Hoyos was now the first “megastar of Colombia sports.” In fact, his fame was of such magnitude that journalists called him the “second most popular Colombian” after General Rojas Pinilla.⁵⁸

By the late 1950s, the Vuelta a Colombia was evolving. The race marshals were sometimes ignorant of the regulations, the timekeepers still used the race as an annual holiday, and intermediate sprints and mountain prizes often depended on local knowledge; but as Matt Rendell points out, the peloton was becoming more structured and hierarchical. Time gaps between riders were now measured in minutes and seconds, and every team brought coaches and auxiliaries in registered vehicles.⁵⁹

Additionally, the success of the 1956 Vuelta in the Andean departments reaffirmed that during the event, Colombians, at least in the Andean departments, experienced a “spiritual cycling fever” that for three weeks altered everyday life, making the race the only relevant conversation topic in the country. Lucas Caballero Calderón (“Klim”) wrote in *El Tiempo* that even academics were discussing “the insane, idiotic passion for cycling” and, on a more positive note, *El Tiempo* conceded that the Vuelta was breaking down regional animosities that were now a thing of the past.⁶⁰

The End of the Rojas Pinilla Dictatorship

Plans were underway to stage the Seventh Vuelta a Colombia in June 1957, but a month before the race began, a junta of top military officers seized the government on May 10, 1957. Rojas Pinilla transferred power to the junta and left Colombia with his family to take up residence in Spain. Despite the General’s initial popularity, historian David Bushnell suggests that four basic weaknesses doomed his presidency. First was the increasingly heavy-hand nature of his regime, expressed in the decline of press freedom and the use of strong-armed tactics against the opposition, such as in the bullring incident of February 5, 1956. Second was the hardening of opposition to continued military rule by the traditional political parties whose leaders, Alberto Lleras Camargo and Laureano Gómez, had, by 1957, achieved reconciliation and signed onto an agreement to rule jointly once Rojas had been deposed. Third was the unease of both parties aroused by Rojas’s socioeconomic policies, and his “frank attempt to build up organized labor as one of the two main props of his regime, alongside the armed forces.” The knockout blow to the regime, however, was the resurgence of the Violencia, which, after an initial hiatus, broke out again with renewed fighting in some parts of the country along the same lines as before.⁶¹

Conclusion

In summary, when compared with other Spanish-American dictatorships of the 1950s and 1960s, the Rojas regime was short and relatively benign. Unlike Juan Perón in Argentina, Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua, or Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, all of whom proved to be extremely shrewd, canny politicians, Rojas was essentially an unimaginative militarist thrust into power without a true reform program beyond a call for moral regeneration and a strict adherence to

the ideas of Jesus Christ and Simón Bolívar.⁶² Moreover, unlike his contemporaries, he had less than five years to leave an imprint on Colombian sports. The facts assembled above suggest that, in order to place the nation above sectarian interest and implement his call for "Peace, Justice and Freedom," Rojas Pinilla embraced the Vuelta a Colombia, which was the country's most persuasive symbol of unity in the 1950s. The Armed Forces fielded teams in the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Vueltas. In 1954, it called on Ramón Hoyos, the star cyclist of the decade, to perform his national service and to ride as a member of the Armed Forces team in the Vuelta of that year. Rojas extended the route of the race to embrace more Andean sections of the country and, thanks to the emotional broadcasts of peloton action by radio commentators, the popularity of ciclismo expanded to regions of the country besides those in the Andes. Sending Colombian athletes to the Melbourne Olympic Games in 1956 had less impact, but it was likewise a popular decision on the part of the Armed Forces Regime.

In contrast, Rojas' heavy-handed attempt to crush his opposition during the 1956 bullfighting season was a gambit involving sports that clearly backfired. The so-called "massacre" revealed a streak of vindictiveness in Rojas' personality that belied the genial nature and quickly-responsive good humor that had made him attractive when he first seized power. Much like his predecessor Laureano Gómez, he had lost touch with the church by 1957. The banking and industrial leaders resented his attempts to manipulate the media, and his efforts to further prop up his regime by creating the National Workers Confederation smacked of socialism.⁶³ The final blow was his inability to end the *Violencia*, for its resurgence in 1955 prompted Rojas to unleash a campaign of all-out military repression: a campaign that hurt innocent bystanders, as well as the guerrilla fighters, and inevitably eroded the support that he had received when he first took power.⁶⁴

In conclusion, then, it would seem that Rojas' policies toward sport, while not a major component of his dictatorship, nevertheless reflected its general trajectory. His embrace of the Vuelta a Colombia in the early months of his government certainly contributed to his popularity, while public outrage, ignited by his reprisal against bullfight spectators in February 1956, exposed the growing discontent that smoldered under his regime and foretold his ousting the following May.

Endnotes

1 For a more extensive review of the Rojas regime, see David Bushnell, *Colombia: A Country in Spite of Itself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Vernon Fluharty, *Dance of the Millions: Military Rule and the Social Revolution in Colombia: 1930-1950* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1957) and María Eugenia Rojas, *Rojas Pinilla mi padre* (Bogotá; Panamericana, 2000) emphasize the positive aspects of the government, while Silvia Galvis and Alberto Donadio, *El jefe supremo: Rojas Pinilla en la violencia y el poder* (Bogotá: Planeta, 1988), John Martz, *Colombia: A Contemporary Political Survey* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), and Tad Szulc, *Twilight of the Tyrants* (New York: Holt, 1959) offer more critical interpretations.

2 John R. Tunis, "The Dictators Discover Sport," *Foreign Affairs* (July 1936), 606-607.

3 April Yoder, "Sport policy and political regimes in Latin America," in Gonzalo Bravo, et.al, ed: *Sport in Latin America: Policy, organization, management* (New York: Routledge, 2017): 65.

4 Arbena and La France, *Sport in Latin America*, xxvii.

5 Maurício Drumond, "Sport and Politics in the Brazilian Estado Novo (1937-1945)," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31:10 (2014), 1252-1253.

6 Not all Latin American dictators were as involved with sports as those mentioned above. For example, Rojas Pinilla's contemporary, General Marco Pérez Jiménez, who ruled Venezuela from 1952-1958, seems to have focused on reshaping Caracas through huge public works projects rather than in elevating the standard of Venezuelan baseball, the nation's most popular sport. Due to lack of research on this topic, however, this conclusion must remain somewhat speculative. See Tad Szulc, *Twilight of the Tyrants*, 240-304.

7 Jane M. Rausch, *Colombia: Territorial Rule and the Llanos Frontier* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999), 5.

8 Carlos J. Villar Borda, "Rojas Pinilla: el Presidente Libertador: Biografía (Bogotá: Editorial Iqueima, 1953), 1-29. The bulk of this material outlining Rojas's life is based on Villar Borda's biography, which offers the most complete study of his early career.

9 Tri-State Normal college became Triune University in 2008.

10 *Ibid.* 68-74.

11 James Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia: The Laureano Gómez Years, 1889-1968* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 364.

12 Martz, *Colombia: A Contemporary Political Survey*, 173.

13 Villar Borda, *Rojas Pinilla*, 42.

14 Martz, *Colombia: A Contemporary Political Survey*, 173.

15 Henderson, *Modernization*, 364; *Seis meses de gobierno* (Colombia: Dirección de Información y Propaganda, 1958).

16 Ana Lucía García-Villamarín, "La Imagen de Gustavo Rojas Pinilla en la Propaganda Política durante la Dictadura Militar, Colombia 1953-1957," *Revista Colombiana de Ciencia Sociales*, 8:2 (2017), 311-333.

17 Carlos Uribe Celis, *La mentalidad del Colombiano: cultura y sociedad en el siglo XX* (Bogotá: Ediciones Alborada, 1992), 90.

18 Bushnell, *Colombia*, 219.

19 A review of the two major publications of the work of the various ministers of Rojas' government: *Seis meses de gobierno* (Bogotá: Dirección de Información y Propaganda, 1954) and *Teoría y práctica de una política Colombiana* (Bogotá D.E.: Empresa Nacional de Publicaciones, 1956) found no statements regarding sports at any level. Even the Minister of Education's reports made no mention of requiring physical education in schools.

- 20 For an informative overview of the development of twentieth-century sports in Colombia, see Hector Fernández L'Hoeste, "Race, Sports and Regionalism in the Construction of Colombian Nationalism," in Hector Fernández L'Hoeste, Robert McKee Irvin, and Juan Poblete, eds. *Sports and Nationalism in Latin/o America* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 85-105.
- 21 The transmóvil, a unique Colombian invention probably designed by Rueda, was a kind of truck that had no specific geographic location and was equipped with a broadcasting station, a radio receiver, and a relay station.
- 22 Mike Forero, "El deporte en Colombia," 372. Born in Zipaquirá, Cundinamarca in 1931, Efraín Forero was already Colombia's foremost ciclista since, in 1950, he had led the Colombian team to victory in the 4,000 kilometer bicycle contest during the Juegos Centroamericanos y del Caribe de Guatemala. Rueda C. nicknamed him "Zipa," identifying him with the Zipa or the ruler of the southern half of the Muisca Andean territory before the Spanish conquest.
- 23 Matt Rendell, *Kings of the Mountains* (London: Aurum, 2002), 40-41. An "escarabajo" is a black, volatile insect with a sharp, penetrating stinger that does much damage to trees.
- 24 *El Tiempo*, 11 January 1954, 15.
- 25 Gabriel García Márquez, "El triple campeón revela sus secretos," Chapter 13, *El Espectador*, 11 July 1955. Reprinted in *El Espectador*, 23 June 2011. The newspaper *El Espectador* originally published García Márquez's ghosted autobiography of Hoyos in twelve parts between 27 June and 12 July 1955.
- 26 *El Tiempo*, 14 January 1954, 5.
- 27 *El Espectador*, 16 January 1954; Rendell, *Kings of the Mountains*, 45.
- 28 *El Tiempo*, 22 January 1954, 6.
- 29 *El Tiempo*, 27 January 1954, 16 cited by Manuel Morales-Fontanilla, "Impossible Roads: Cycling Landscapes and Cultural Representation in Colombia, 1930-1958," (Ph.D. diss., University of California San Diego, 2018), 320.
- 30 *Ibid.* 321.
- 31 *Ibid.* 323. It is important to note that these pronouncements by Rojas primarily resonated with inhabitants of the Andean departments, for cycling was not yet a passion among people living in the lowland areas. As Fernández L'Hoeste comments: Colombia was "A land of cyclists, though just the Andes." See his "Race and Sports," 90.
- 32 *El Colombiano*, 29 March 1955, 6.
- 33 *El Tiempo*, 5 May 1955.
- 34 *Ibid.*
- 35 Morales-Fontanilla, "Impossible Roads," 328.
- 36 *El Tiempo*, 26 May 1955, 5.
- 37 Rendell, *Kings of the Mountains*, 47. Julio Arrastía, an Argentine, was the coach of the Antioqueños.
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 Morales-Fontanilla, *Impossible Roads*, 331.
- 40 *Ibid.*
- 41 *Ibid.* 332-336.
- 42 Mike Forero, "El deporte en Colombia," in *Nueva Historia de Colombia VI: 350-390*. (Bogotá: Planeta, 1989): 376.
- 43 Comité Olímpico Colombiano, *Colombia olímpica: 75 años de presencia deportiva en el mundo* (Bogotá, 2001), 71-78.
- 44 José Eduardo Rueda Enciso, "Colombia Olímpica: hazañas y desengaños en la historia deportiva del país," *Credencial Historia* no. 127 (July 2000), n.p.
- 45 *Ibid.*
- 46 "Colombia at the Olympics." Wikipedia. Accessed 22 January 2018.
- 47 Rendell, *Kings of the Mountains*, 71.
- 48 After retiring from active competition, Hoyos opened a bicycle shop. He died at the age of 82, on

19 November 2014. See *El Tiempo*, 19 November 2014.

49 Bushnell, Colombia, 215-221; Martz, Colombia, 219-225.

50 Coleo, a sport practiced in cattle country of Colombia's llanos or eastern plains, involves two riders that chase a bull down a narrow tract of sand. The main rider must take the beast down by pulling its tail, and he or she must do it in such a way that the animal rolls over on the grounds once or twice.

51 Alberto Lopera, Colombia, Tierra de Toros, 305-306.

52 Ibid. 42.

53 Martz, Colombia, 218.

54 Tad Szulc, *Twilight of the Tyrants* (New York: Henry Holt, 1959), 296

55 *Time Magazine*, 20 February, 1956, 34. Lopera suggests that the events of February 5 were not orchestrated by Rojas, but by Bogotá municipal officials including the secretary of government, Dr. Buenaventura Guzmán. See Lopera, Colombia: Tierra de toros, p.36.

56 Martz, Colombia, 219.

57 *El Colombiano*, 12 June 1956, 5. Unlike *El Tiempo* or *El Espectador*, *El Colombiano* is a daily newspaper published in Medellín. Its criticism of Rojas shows increasing opposition to his regime in the provinces.

58 Morales-Fontanilla, "Impossible Roads," 338.

59 Rendell, *Kings of the Mountains*, 49.

60 "De Klim," *El Tiempo*, 13 June, 1956, 1. *El Tiempo*, 26 June, 1956, 5 as cited by Morales-Fontanilla, "Impossible Roads," 339. *El Tiempo*'s comment was perhaps just wishful thinking as the *Violencia* was actually increasing in intensity, and Liberals and Conservatives were still fighting each other.

61 Bushnell, Colombia, 219,

62 Martz, Colombia, 209.

63 Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence*, 152-153.

64 Bushnell, Colombia, 222.

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Appendix: Vueltas a Colombia during the Regime of Rojas Pinilla

Fourth Vuelta a Colombia 1954

Date: January 12-31, 1954

Route: Began and ended in Bogotá, passing through departments of Cundinamarca, Boyacá, Santander, Norte de Santander, Antioquia, Viejo Caldas, Tolima and Valle del Cauca.

Distance: 1,866 km Stages: 15

Winner: Ramón Hoyos Vallejo with a time of 64 hours, 41 minutes and 12 seconds

Participants: 6 department teams (Antioquia, Caldas, Cundinamarca, Santander, Tolima; 1 representing the Fuerzas Armadas, and 1 representing independent riders from Atlántico, Boyacá, Cauca, Cundinamarca and Ecuador.

Cyclists: 46 cyclists began the race; 31 completed it.

The Fifth Vuelta a Colombia 1955

Date: May 21- June 12, 1955 (The date change was made to allow Colombian cyclists to participate in the Pan-American Games held in Mexico City, March 1955.)

Route: Began in Bogotá and ended in Melgar (Tolima) passing through departments of Cundinamarca, Tolima, Caldas Antioquia, Valle de Cauca, Cauca, Nariño, Huila, and Ecuador.

Distance: 2,246 km Stages: 18

Winner: Ramón Hoyos Vallejo with a time of 80 hours, 12 minutes and 4 seconds.

Participants: 8 department teams (Antioquia (2), Cauca, Cundinamarca, Nariño, Santander, Tolima, Valle); Independents (2), Fuerzas Armadas, Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela

Cyclists: 54 entries, 36 completed the race.

The Sixth Vuelta a Colombia 1956

Date: June 7-24, 1956.

Route: Began in Bucaramanga ended in Bogotá. Passed through departments of Norte de Santander, Santander, Boyacá, Tolima, Caldas, Antioquia, Cauca, Chocó.

Distance: 2,129 km Stages: 17

Winner: Ramón Hoyos Vallejo with a time of 69 hours, 1 minute and 7 seconds.

Participants: 13 teams: 11 departments: (Antioquia (2), Boyacá, Caldas, Cundinamarca (2), Norte de Santander, Santander, Tolima, Valle); Independents, Guatemala, Fuerzas Armadas

Cyclists: 60 began and 57 finished it.