

his hand ended in failure. Under the Ibáñez administration the nation's economic problems showed little improvement, and its already severe social tensions increased.

The 1958 elections were won by Conservative Party candidate Jorge Alessandri, largely due to a split in the majority left-of-center vote. It is too early to determine the success, or failure, of the present administration in meeting Chile's manifold problems.

COLOMBIA

Colombia, since World War II, has been a country in crisis. The problem developed in 1946, when, after 16 years of rightwing Liberal Party rule, victory in the primary elections of the Liberal Party went to the radical, labor-backed Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. Thereupon rightwing liberals, alarmed at the rising power of the lower income groups, joined the Conservatives, which enabled the latter, under Mariano Ospina Pérez, to return to power. The economic and political aspirations of Colombia's newly awakened lower and middle groups, however, were intensified by severe postwar inflationary pressures which the status quo regime of President Ospina did nothing to alleviate. These economic hardships stretched political and social tensions to the breaking point. In April 1948, while the Ninth Inter-American Conference was in session in Bogotá, the assassination of Gaitán set off a wave of mob violence, and the country drifted into civil war.

As violence spread to the provinces, the beleaguered Ospina regime increasingly harassed and intimidated the Liberals, whom it suspected of abetting the violence. In November 1949, Laureano Gómez, leader of the uncompromising rightwing of the Conservative Party, was "elected" President while the country was under a state of siege. His reactionary tactics only made the bloodletting worse. His determined attempt to set up a Falange-type state and his inability to end the civil war provoked the armed forces, led by Gen. Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, to seize control of the Government in June 1953.

The army's coup aroused great popular enthusiasm, and most of the fighting in the countryside subsided as General Rojas promised to bring order and hold elections as soon as possible. Rojas Pinilla, however, saw his role as something more than that of an interim pacifier. Instead, he began to think of himself as a sort of messiah, and Perón-like, began a program of broad social reform. He levied heavier taxes upon the upper-income groups, adopted a social welfare program, sponsored a Government labor union, and launched a "Third Force" political movement, seeking support from the long neglected lower and middle classes. The alarmed traditionalist parties thereupon went into uncompromising opposition and violence again erupted. In the spring of 1957, the armed forces, faced with the prospect of intensification of the civil war, ousted Rojas Pinilla. He was succeeded by a new military junta which remained in power until August 1958, when the newly elected President, rightwing Liberal Party leader Alberto Lleras Camargo, was inaugurated.

Over the last year the Lleras administration, which is a coalition of the traditional Liberal and Conservative Parties, has brought a modicum of political stability and economic responsibility to Colombia.