The

South American Handbook

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Chapter Six

Ecuador

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The political scientist John Martz once observed that Ecuador "serves as a microcosm for a wide variety of problems, questions, and issues relevant to various of the other Latin American countries" (Martz p. vii). Named after the Equator, which it straddles, Ecuador is one of the smaller countries in South America but is also one of the most fascinating. It has a strong popular movement, but repeatedly elects populist leaders who implement economic policies that hurt the poor. This situation has led to the growth of a powerful indigenous movement, which threatens the white elite and has begun to reshape the country's social and economic landscape.

Geography and Resources

Ecuador's physical and human geography has had a significant impact on its economic, political, and social development. The country can be divided into three geographic zones: the western pacific coastal lowlands, the sierra highlands, and the eastern upper Amazon basin, often called the Oriente (East). Regionalism is particularly apparent in the economic and political divisions between the liberal commercial coastal port city of Guayaquil and the conservative administrative city of Quito in the highlands. Ecuadorians have long recognized the presence of this tension, and, as the political scientist George Blanksten noted in the 1950s, "the story of Ecuador is a tale of two cities" (Blanksten p. 161). Regional divisions are so pronounced that even the country's declaration of independence from Spain did not result from any unified and coherent action: Quito declared independence in 1809 but Guayaquil did so in 1820. When Antonio José de Sucre defeated Spanish forces outside Quito in May 1822, its citizens, the Quiteños, passively watched while foreigners and Guayaquileños fought.

However, the focus on Quito and Guayaquil effectively marginalizes the southern urban center of Cuenca; the eastern Amazon, which is stereotypically viewed as a "savage" area, but now provides the oil revenues that fund much of the rest of the country; and the rural indigenous population, which made up a large part of the independence army but subsequently gained little from the struggle. Deep regional and social divisions continue to divide the country, which make it is a mistake to speak of Ecuador as a unified nation.

The three regions have very different ecological and economic bases. The coastal plain is wider than that further South in Peru and, because the cold Antarctic , Humboldt Current turns out to sea just before it reaches Ecuador, it is much wetter and hotter than in Peru. The coast, along with the surrounding lowlying hills, has an export-oriented agricultural economy, which includes the production of bananas, cattle, rice, sugar, coffee, and maritime products, such as shrimp and tuna. Currently, half of the country's population resides on this coastal plain, which includes the port of Guayaquil, now the country's largest city, with a population of over 2 million.

Counterpoised against the liberal commercial coast are the conservative, Catholic sierra

highlands, with around 45% of the population. Two parallel mountain chains, with over 30 volcanoes, eight of them active, dominate this region. One of these mountains, Cotopaxi, is the world's highest active volcano. The Equator reaches its highest point in the world on the snowcapped southern slopes of Mount Cayambe, and, because of the equatorial bulge, the peak of Mount Chimborazo is the furthest point from the center of the Earth (and was once thought to be the world's highest mountain). Nestled between the two mountain chains is a series of 15 fertile intermontane basins. Whereas export-oriented agriculture has dominated the coast, domestic agricultural production such as cattle, potatoes, corn, barley, and wheat destined for local markets was traditionally more important in these highland basins. Increasingly, however, nontraditional exports, such as flowers, have replaced production of food. With an Amazonian oil boom in the 1970s, Quito, the country's capital, changed from an isolated quaint colonial city into a vibrant administrative and economic center with an important banking industry.

Ecuador's third region, the upper Amazon rainforest or Oriente, comprises nearly half of the country's territory, but, according to the census of 1990, it contained only 4% of its population, most of it rural. Since the conclusion of the wars of independence in the 1820s, Ecuador has been locked in territorial disputes with the neighboring countries of Colombia and Peru over the delineation of international borders in the Amazonian region. Occasionally these disputes have led to open warfare between Ecuador and Peru, most notably in 1941 and again in 1995, and in 1942, the United States forced Ecuador to sign the Rio Protocol, which effectively ceded over half of its territory to Peru (Corkill and Cubitt p. 98). Yet Ecuador's identity is integrally tied to the Amazon. The Spanish conquistador Francisco de Orrellana left from Quito in 1540 to become the first European to float down the Amazon, and it is this feat that leads to Ecuador's territorial claims. The country embraces as a national slogan " Ecuador was, is, and will be an Amazonian country" Although important as a rhetorical device for politicians who use the denounce their opponents, until relatively recently the Amazon remained marginal to Ecuador's state formation and economic development. The discovery of rich oil deposits in the Amazon in the 1970s resulted in an economic boom for the elite, ecological disaster for the Amazon, and increased impoverishment for its inhabitants. Nevertheless, many Ecuadorians believe that the Amazon is key to their national salvation, both because of issues of territoriality and because of the potential economic wealth from exploitation of petroleum and other minerals.

Until the 20th century, Ecuador remained an overwhelmingly rural country, with the vast majority of people living in the highlands. Migratory patterns have affected this human geography of Ecuador in three different ways. First is a population shift away from the highlands, a trend that emerged after the liberal revolution of 1895, based on the coast, attempted to break conservative landowners' stranglehold on indigenous labor on the large highland estates called *haciendas.* The construction of the Guayaquil and Quito Railway further facilitated the migration of highland laborers to the coast, where they took higher-paying jobs on banana and other plantations, contributing to the monoculture agricultural export economy. In 1974, for the first time, the census indicated that the coastal population surpassed that of the sierra highlands. A similar migration has more recently taken people to the Amazon in search of land or jobs with oil companies. Second is a migration from rural to urban areas in search of higher-paying jobs and more economic opportunities: in 1990 the census reported that the urban population had surpassed the rural population. Third, economic crises in Ecuador during the 1990s drove one of the largest per-capita outmigrations, primarily to the United States, of any country in South America. These migrations continue to have an irreversible impact on Ecuador, and are visible in the nature of ethnic identities, social movements, and political structures.

Ethnicity

In Ecuador, as in the rest of South America, the myth of *mestizaje* holds that a new culture

was forged from the blending of three separate traditions, European, indigenous, and African. Although this held partly true for the *mestizo* segment of the Ecuadorian population, it threatened to subvert the unique history and surviving cultural traditions of the indigenous and African groups. Rather than embracing ethnic diversity, *mestizaje* contended that these ethnic identities must be suppressed in order for the country to move forward. Modernization was often associated with the " whitening" of society. This ideological framework created a situation of racial discrimination that placed indigenous and African groups at a disadvantage in society. In addition, ideologies of *mestizaje* implied the presence of a coherent national identity in Ecuador, which has in fact never existed. Local and regional forms of identity have always been the primary factors in people's sense of self. The formation and structure of these identities underlie movements for social change, and have influenced economic and political development in turn.

Since the Spanish invasion of Ecuador in the 1530s, the white population has always been a small but dominant force in society. A lack of good demographic studies and the blending across ethnic boundaries prevents a precise enumeration, but about 7% of Ecuador's 13 million people could be considered "white," most of them living in urban areas. They are the ones who have always controlled the land and the labor force, and benefited from the wealth of the country. Ecuador's first Constitution, promulgated in 1830, limited citizenship rights to literate males who were married or older than 22, and who owned property worth at least 300 pesos or were engaged in an independent "useful" profession or industry. It therefore recognized citizenship only for white males, since other groups did not receive schooling, and indeed for a minority among white males themselves, domestic servants and laborers being explicitly excluded. Although over time these restrictions were relaxed, the proportion of Ecuador's residents with citizenship rights rose only slowly, from 0.3% of the population at independence to 3% in 1940. It was not until 1978 restrictions, effectively granting citizenship rights to the majority of Ecuadorians for the first time.

Ecuador's population of African descent is concentrated in the province of Esmeraldas in the Northwest, in addition to pockets in Guayaquil, Quito, and the northern provinces of Imbabura and Carchi. A popular legend has it that the Afro-Ecuadorians are descendants of escapees from a slave ship that was bound for Peru but shipwrecked off the Esmeraldas coast in 1553. Under the leadership of Alonso de Illescas, they forged inland and intermixed with indigenous peoples, sometimes fighting with them over limited land and resources. After 150 years of independence, they eventually allied with Quito and the Spanish crown. Today, Afro-Ecuadorians amount to around 3% of the population (see Whitten).

Mestizos comprise perhaps 60% or more of Ecuador's population, and work as both rural *campesinos* (peasants) and poor workers in urban areas, although with increased educational opportunities more *mestizos* have been entering professions. On the coast, for example, lower-class *mestizo* peasants working as a rural proletariat on export-oriented agricultural plantations are known as *montuvios. Montuvio,* a social and cultural category rather than a "racial" one, indicates a person who "speaks Spanish, dresses like a poor white peasant, and overtly partakes of Ecuadorean [sic] (as opposed to Indian) culture" (Murra p. 786). They are descendants of coastal Indians, Africans, and Europeans, but have not retained an ethnic identity from any of these groups. *Montuvios* tend to be mobile, migrating among plantations during harvests and to urban areas in search of employment.

Far more diverse than either the white, African or *mestizo* populations are the indigenous groups, which are spread across the country but live mostly in rural areas. Before the Inca and Spanish conquests, many more indigenous groups existed in Ecuador than survive today: the number of indigenous groups appears to have fallen from 24 before the Inca conquest to ten in the 1980s, including a drop from

indigenous peoples, they still retain their own vibrant cultures, languages, dress, music, and traditions, and have been growing in strength and political presence. Estimates of their numbers vary greatly, from around 10% of the population to as high as 40% (CONAIE p. 283), although the official figure, based on census returns, is 25%. These variances in estimates are largely due to the vagueness of the boundaries between the indigenous and mestizo worlds, particularly due to a phenomenon known as "situational ethnicity" For example, a person can work as a day laborer in an urban area during the week and identify as a mestizo, speaking Spanish, wearing western clothes, eating European food, and attending Catholic mass. On the weekend, this same person may return to a native village and engage in traditional customs, including speaking an indigenous language and visiting a traditional healer, and fully embrace an indigenous identity. Further, as Jorge León and Joanne Rappaport have noted, "it is important to remember that it is not always in one's interest to identify as indigenous to a census-taker: hence many of the discrepancies in census figures" (León and Rappaport p. 32). Although the absolute number of indigenous Ecuadorians has increased during the 20th century, migration and assimilation have caused a decline in the proportion of people who would identify themselves primarily as "indigenous" based on language, religion, dress, culture, and geographic locale, and a corresponding rise in the "mestizo" and "white" segments of the population.

Four indigenous groups, the Awa, the Chachi, the Epera, and the Tsáchila, live in the coastal region and speak similar languages. Each of these groups is small and has struggled to preserve its ethnic identity. Traditionally their economy was based on hunting, gathering, and fishing, but now they engage in agriculture for household consumption, as well as growing coffee and cacao for export. The Awa (meaning " people"), who are often called Coaiquer after a nearby small town in Colombia, live on both sides of the Ecuadorian–Colombian border. The Chachi, traditionally called "Cayapas," often clash over limited resources with the Afro-who occupy the same region. The Epera are a little-known group numbering about 150 people. Better known are the Tsáchila (meaning the "true people" or the "true word"), who are often called Colorados because of their red body paint. This body paint led to their exploitation as a tourist curiosity in the 1950s, when the government built a road through their territory and whites began to colonize the zone.

However, most indigenous peoples in Ecuador live in the sierra highlands, and although they comprise many different ethnic groups they are often grouped under the single category of "Quichua." They are members of the larger Quechua ethnolinguistic group, which stretches across the Andean highlands from Colombia to Chile. As a result of the spread of the Inca empire in the Ecuadorian highlands in the 15th and 16th centuries, and the subsequent Spanish missionary impulse, many of the Quichua-speaking peoples in this region lost much of their linguistic, religious, and cultural distinctiveness. There remains, however, a strong sense of place and tradition, and it would be a mistake to label the entire region with just one category.

Land and agricultural production are important to all the highland indigenous groups, but increasingly they have undertaken other economic activities. For example, the Cañar people in southern Ecuador began manufacturing "Panama" hats in the 1950s, as a way to cope with increasing poverty as they slowly lost much of their land to the white population. The Salasacas in the central province of Tungurahua and the Otavalos in the northern province of Imbabura have gained economic independence and respect through their weavings. In the 1950s, a tourist trade began to flourish in Otavalo, and weavers modified textile designs and types of fabrics in order to cater to this market. They provide a counterexample to the popular but inaccurate stereotype of static, backward, and doomed indigenous societies.

With increased interest in the world's remaining rainforests, more attention has been paid to Ecuador's upper Amazon basin, particularly after the discovery of oil in the 1970s

survive in the region, the largest being various groups of Quichua speakers. In the ethnographic literature, the forest Quichua are often divided into the Quijos Quichua of Napo province and the Canelos Quichua of Pastaza province. In 1992, the Canelos Quichua gained national attention when, under the guidance of the Organización de Pueblos Indígenas de Pastaza (Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Pastaza, or OPIP), they marched to Quito to demand land titles and the declaration of Ecuador's character as a plurinational and pluricultural state (see Sawyer). The Shuar, the second largest group, have long had a reputation as headhunters and savages for their ability to survive in the face of external onslaughts. The word "Shuar" simply means "people," and until relatively recently, outsiders, including ethnographers, used the term `Jívaro" to refer to them. `Jívaro" has no meaning in the Shuar language, but instead comes from Puerto Rico, where it refers to a wild or untamed beast. Not surprisingly, the Shuar have rejected it. Related to the Shuar are the Achuar, who share the same area and many of the same customs and traditions, and speak a similar language.

Smaller groups in the Amazon include the Sionas, the Secoyas, the Cofán, and the Huaorani. All these groups have faced the devastating impact of evangelical missionaries and intensive petroleum exploration in their territory, due to the roads, pipelines, diseases, and economic and cultural changes. In November 1993, these groups fought back by forming the Frente de Defensa de la Amazonia (Front for the Defense of Amazon Life) and suing Texaco in New York for more than US$1 billion for a variety of environmental abuses, including dumping more than 3,000 gallons of oil a day into their lagoons. After being bounced through the US judicial system for eight years, this legal suit is still pending and the indigenous peoples of the Amazon are still awaiting justice (see Frente). The eighth and smallest indigenous group in the Ecuadorian Amazon is the Zápara (meaning "person of the forest"). Their history demonstrates the devastating impact of western civilization, as their numbers collapsed from about 200,000 before contact with Europeans to 200 now

Political Structures

Ecuador gained its political independence from Spain on May 24, 1822, and for eight years joined with Colombia and Venezuela in the Confederation of Gran Colombia. Since becoming an independent country in 1830, Ecuador has experienced a high degree of political instability, including a series of dictatorships and military governments. It has had 19 different constitutions and more than 100 executive leaders, including 34 between 1830 and 1895, and 21 between 1931 and 1948.

The political history of the country can be divided into three periods. From 1830 to 1895, conservatives and strongly pro-Catholic leaders, such as Gabriel García Moreno, held a dominant position in society. Eloy Alfaro's liberal revolution of 1895 (already mentioned above) brought in a period of liberal hegemony over political structures, with the introduction of new modernizing ideas and economic policies. The "Glorious May Revolution" of 1944 terminated liberal and conservative domination over the political system, and opened up space for broader political participation, initiating processes that continue until today. This political history reveals three interrelated themes. First, the 20th century has witnessed only three periods of political stability, as defined by civilian control of government with peaceful and constitutional changes of power, and each of these resulted from growth in the export economy. Second, populism has characterized political leadership styles, and this has had a strong influence on economic and social development. Finally, although the military has played a large role in society, it has not always been as abusive or violent as in Central America or the Southern Cone.

Ecuador's history has demonstrated that growth in the export economy leads to a reduction of tensions among the elite, which in turn translates into political openings and less contestation for political power. Conversely, economic downturns have led to political and constitutional crises. An expansion of the cacao export economy led to a period of political stability, lasting from 1912 to 1925, but the Great Depression led to a series of coups and failed governments. Another period of growth

in the export economy, this time in bananas, led to the "democratic parenthesis" of 1948-60 (Corkill and Cubitt p. 17). During this time, Ecuador became the world's largest exporter of bananas, supplying up to 25% of the global market, but the vast majority of workers, peasants, and indigenous people enjoyed few benefits from economic growth. Dependence on a few export products eventually led to an economic collapse, and a military dictatorship from 1960. The longest period of uninterrupted constitutional rule and peaceful changes of power lasted from 1979 to 1997, and came to an end when economic crises triggered popular protests that forced President Abdalá Bucaram from power. Indigenous and labor movements (see below) took advantage of the relaxed political atmosphere in each of these three periods to press their economic and social agendas, which eventually led the elite to reimpose strict and contentious control over society. During the last five years of the 20th century, seven different people held the office of chief executive, and Ecuador had seemingly returned to the *status quo* of frequent extraconstitutional changes of power.

The populist José María Velasco Ibarra was the most famous, or notorious, political leader in Ecuador during the 20th century and contributed his fair share of political instability to the country. He assumed the presidency for the first time in 1934, on behalf of the long-dominant Partido Liberal, but did not manage to complete a full year in office. In fact, he finished only one full term, his third (1952-56), of his five terms in office, the last three as leader of his own Partido Nacional Velasquista. Velasco Ibarra was a charismatic campaigner who declared "give me a balcony and the people are mine" (Martz p. 1), but had less luck holding on to power once elected. Although he promised popular reforms that appealed to the masses, he fundamentally remained a member of the privileged elite and, once in office, repeatedly implemented conservative policies that favored the interests of his own class. Logically enough, this resulted in an erosion of popular support, and his two final times in office (1960-61 and 1968-72) led to two of only three breaks in constitutional rule since periods of military rule in Ecuador in the second half of the 20th century

The third break in constitutional rule occurred after the presidential election of 1996, which was won by Abdalá Bucaram, a populist cut from the same cloth as Velasco Ibarra. Bucaram, one of the richest people in Ecuador, campaigned on promises of aiding the poor, but once in office implemented neoliberal reforms, including raising transportation and cooking gas prices, hurting the poor but benefiting the wealthy elite. Within six months his economic policies had alienated his power base and a mass uprising evicted him from power (see Torre). South America's last coup of the 20th century occurred in Ecuador on January 21, 2000, when an alliance of lower-ranking military officials and indigenous leaders evicted Jamil Mahuad from power. Antonio Vargas, President of the indigenous movement CONAIE (see below), Carlos Solórzano, a former President of the Supreme Court, and Colonel Lucio Gutiérrez formed a Government of National Salvation that held power for several hours before Vice President Gustavo Noboa took control (see Walsh).

Rather than playing a repressive role, violating people's human rights, and defending the economic interests of the elite, as has been common in other countries in Latin America, the military thus demonstrated support for indigenous peoples and popular demands, catching many people by surprise. A more critical evaluation, however, reveals that sectors of the military have played constructive roles before. In July 1925, young military officers led a coup, known as the Revolución Juliana, which launched a period of economic modernization and social reform, including progressive labor legislation. Similarly, it took military governments in the 1960s and 1970s to promulgate agrarian reform laws, and the junta in the 1970s implemented nationalistic policies, including developing Amazonian petroleum reserves to fund economic developments in the rest of the country. In Ecuador, the army is sometimes seen as progressive because of its development work in rural

Ecuador's experiences suggest that there is a need for a more careful interpretation of the complex roles played by military institutions in society.

Popular Movements

Popular movements in Ecuador have historically emerged from two distinct but interrelated bases: urban labor unions and rural indigenous organizations. Although pursuing seemingly conflictive strategies of organizing around either economic or ethnic issues, at numerous times in their histories the two groups have worked closely together. Historians date the origins of popular movements in Ecuador to a massive general strike in Guayaquil on November 15, 1922, which the military brutally suppressed, resulting in a bloody massacre that left hundreds of workers dead. Building on this foundation, leftists founded the Ecuadorian Socialist Party in 1926 and used this as a base to defend the interests of urban workers as well as rural peasants and indigenous people. Subsequently, as Enrique Ayala Mora has put it, "socialism has constituted one of the most dynamic ideological influences in Ecuador" (Ayala Mora p. 94). In May 1944, workers, students, peasants, Indians, women, and others rose up against President Carlos Arroyo del Río and caused the downfall of his government. Arroyo del Río's repressive regime had become increasingly unpopular, particularly after he conceded half of the country's territory to Peru (see above). Labor and indigenous leaders capitalized on this political opening to establish new organizations.

The successful effort to form a national leftist labor confederation came in July 1944 when workers, artisans, peasants, intellectuals, and political leaders founded the Confederación de Trabajadores del Ecuador (Workers Confederation of Ecuador, or CTE). Communist and Socialist leaders, as well as people of an anarchosyndicalist persuasion, played leading roles in forming the organization and defining its ideology. The CTE sought to improve the living conditions of the masses through industrializing the country, raising salaries, shortening the working week, protecting the right to strike, eliminating feudal trappings in agriculture, defending democracy, and embracing other elements that favored the proletariat within the framework of an international working-class struggle. The CTE established close relations with Vicente Lombardo Toledano's Communist-dominated Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina (Workers Confederation of Latin America, or CTAL), which had been established in Mexico in 1938 as the regional bureau of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU).

In addition to the CTE, two other working-class organizations emerged in Ecuador. In 1938, the Catholic Church, together with the Conservative Party, had organized the Confederación Ecuatoriana de Obreros Católicos (Ecuadorian Confederation of Catholic Workers, or CEDOC) to champion religious causes and counter the growing influence of leftists in labor movements. Over the course of its history, CEDOC has undergone dramatic transformations, including three changes of name: it adopted its current name, Central Ecuatoriana de Organizaciones Clasistas (Ecuadorian Central of Classist Organizations) in 1972. These name changes were part of a gradual drift to the left and represented the influence of liberation theology on the ideology of the organization. A third organization, the Confederación Ecuatoriana de Organizaciones Sindicales Libres (Ecuadorian Confederation of Free Union Organizations, or CEOSL) grew out of the pro-US Organización Regional Interamericana del Trabajo (Regional Interamerican Organization of Work, or ORIT) as part of the effort to counter both the CTE and the potential for a Cuban-style revolution in Ecuador. The US Central Intelligence Agency played a significant role in its founding in 1962 and attempted to control it in order to counter the influence of leftists (Agee pp. 213-14). CEOSL began to flourish during the period of military rule (1963-66), when the CTE was forced underground, but it subsequently moved leftward, and in the 1970s it adopted a socialist orientation.

In the 1960s, fierce competition for workers' loyalty raged between these three national labor organizations, but in the 1970s they joined forces in the Frente Unitario de

Trabajadores (Workers United Front, or FUT). During the 1980s and 1990s, the FUT took a leading role in organizing strikes that repeatedly paralyzed the country.

In August 1944, indigenous leaders gathered together with labor leaders, and members of the Socialist and Communist parties, in Quito to form the Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios (Ecuadorian Federation of Indians, or FEI). The FEI was conceived as a peasant wing of the CTE in order to agitate for peasant and indigenous concerns from a class-based perspective. Although it emerged out of leftist organizing efforts, the FEI was the first successful attempt in Ecuador to establish a national organization for and by indigenous peoples. Although subsequently surpassed by other peasant and indigenous organizations, the FEI stands out as a milestone in the history of Ecuador's popular movements. From the 1940s through the 1960s, it flourished as the main national organizational expression of highland indigenous and peasant groups, particularly in their struggle for land. The promulgation of an agrarian reform law in 1964 represented an achievement of this goal, and marked the beginning of the FEI's decline.

In the 1960s, new issues began to replace agrarian reform as concerns of primary importance to indigenous communities, including the defense of native cultures and languages, which led to the formation of bilingual schools; the fate of traditional lands; and the promotion of human rights. To confront these issues, indigenous peoples began to form new organizations to take the place of the FEI. Whereas leftists supported the FEI, reforms in the Catholic Church led progressive religious personnel to play this role in these new organizations. The earliest and best example of this new trend was the Federación de Centros Shuar (Shuar Federation), which Salesian missionaries helped organize in the southeastern Amazonian provinces of Morona Santiago and Zamora Chinchipe in 1964. This Federation advocated Shuar self-determination, economic self-sufficiency, defense of lands, bilingual education, health care, and civil rights. In 1980, the Shuar joined with other Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonia Ecuatoriana (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon, or CONFENIAE) to defend their common interests, including land and environmental concerns. Subsequently, the Shuar have provided strong leadership in Ecuador's indigenous movements.

In the highlands, indigenous groups formed two competing organizations, in which the Catholic Church played an important initiating role. CEDOC organized the Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas (National Federation of Peasant Organizations, or FENOC) in 1968, in an attempt to divide the peasant movement and suppress any revolutionary tendencies. Along with CEDOC's subsequent shift to the left, the peasant movement took over FENOC and converted it into a force for revolutionary changes in Ecuadorian society. In the 1980s, with a rising ethnic consciousness among the rural masses, the organization changed its name to the Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas–Indígenas (National Federation of Peasant–Indigenous Organizations, or FENOC–I), but in the 1990s it changed its name once again, to the Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas Indígenas y Negras (National Federation of Peasant, Indigenous, and Black Organizations, or FENOCIN), to reflect a broader mandate that included indigenous peoples and Afro-Ecuadorians.

In 1972, Ecuador Runacunapac Riccharimui (Ecuarunari) grew out of progressive sectors of the Catholic Church, taking its name from a Quichua phrase meaning "to awaken the Ecuadorian Indians." Closely associated with the ethnic organizing efforts of Quichua-speaking Indians, Ecuarunari sought to open people's eyes to "oppression and exploitation in order to struggle for our rights, which we have been denied throughout history since the period of the Spanish conquest" (Pichincha Riccharimui Ecuarunari p. 3). Its basic goals were to defend rights to education, health care, and basic services, as well as to struggle against oppression, exploitation, and discrimination. Ecuarunari promoted the formation of cooperatives and associations at the grassroots, and functioned as a development organization

seeking to modernize agriculture, develop bilingual education, and work on other similar projects.

The three main peasant and Indigenous organizations – FEI, FENOC, and Ecuarunari – occasionally worked together around common issues of agrarian reform, bilingual education, and economic reforms, although more often these groups competed for the allegiance of the same indigenous peasantry. It was a new organization, the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, or CONAIE), that emerged at the head of the most powerful and well-organized social movement in Ecuador's history, eclipsing in significance the contributions of previous labor, peasant, and indigenous organizations. Founded in 1986, with the intention of organizing an indigenous movement dedicated to agitating for social, political, and educational reforms, it emerged as the representative of Ecuador's indigenous peoples (CONAIE pp. 268-72). Rather than relying on the political left or the Catholic Church for support, CONAIE stressed the indigenous nature of its organizational structure. In a culture where identities and political struggles are overwhelmingly local, CONAIE struggled to create a new, comprehensive "Indian" or "indigenous" identity that crossed geographic borders and included all indigenous peoples in Ecuador.

In June 1990, indigenous peoples splashed into the national consciousness with a powerful *levantamiento* or uprising that swept across the country, paralyzing it for a week. Responding to official plans for celebrations of the quincentenary of Christopher Columbus's trans-Atlantic voyage, in 1992, the uprising reflected a growing ethnic consciousness and pressing demands for land. CONAIE presented the uprising's demands in a 16-point document that summarized its agenda for redefining indigenous people's cultural, economic, and political role in society. The most significant and contentious demand to emerge out of CONAIE and the *levantamiento* was the call to declare Ecuador a "multinational state" (see Field). Rather than organizing around issues of economic exploitation or ethnic identity, indigenous groups now embraced identities as nationalities with their own languages, customs, religion, history, and territory. These demands had revolutionary implications that threatened Ecuador's white elite, challenging their construct of an imaginary community and shaking their exclusionary hold on power. Subsequently, CONAIE and its leaders have played a major role in political developments in the country.

In 1995, indigenous leaders in the Amazon founded the Movimiento Unidad Plurinacional Pachakutik–Nuevo País (Pachakutik Movement for Plurinational Unity–New Country, or MUPP–NP, also known as Pachakutik) to campaign for political office. "Pachakutik," a Quichua word signifying change, rebirth, transformation, and the coming of a new era, was adopted to express opposition to the government's neoliberal economic policies and support for a more inclusive and participatory political system. The party experienced moderate success on both local and national levels, including the election of Luis Macas, then President of CONAIE, as a national deputy in the National Assembly in 1996. In the late 1990s, several attempts to implement neoliberal reforms that were designed to halt hyperinflation and bank failures but hit poor and indigenous peoples particularly hard brought CONAIE and Pachakutik to the forefront of political protest in Ecuador.

Conclusion

Ecuador faces the irony of having both a very strong and well-organized popular movement and a corrupt political system that repeatedly compromises the interests of the people. In 2000, Ecuador replaced the sucre with the US dollar as legal tender, becoming the third country other than the United States to do so (the others being Liberia and Panama). The government implemented this desperate policy in a frantic attempt to curb inflation and stop a free-falling economy. Critics, including indigenous peasants and poor urban workers, denounced this sacrifice of national sovereignty, which could only undermine their standard of living. The issues that underlay this startling policy, including debates over economic

policies, and divisions between the indigenous peoples, on the one hand, and whites and *mestizos,* on the other, developed throughout the 20th century. All indications are that the 21st century will not bring any easy solutions to Ecuador's problems.

Further Reading

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