

**THE ECUADORIAN LEFT DURING GLOBAL CRISIS:
REPUBLICAN DEMOCRACY, CLASS STRUGGLE
AND STATE FORMATION (1919-1946)**

Valeria Coronel
(FLACSO Ecuador)

For historian Alexei Páez, the origins of the Ecuadorian left can be traced back to a diverse range of currents formed in the first two decades of the twentieth century, including anarchism and utopian socialism, that, international in nature, began to filter into Ecuador through the port of Guayaquil where they then connected with popular ideologies described as “mythical, millennialist, and archaic”.¹ For Páez, the Ecuadorian Socialist Party (the SPE, founded in 1926) maintained this heterogeneity until 1929 when one of its members, Ricardo Paredes, came into contact with the Communist International (CI) and committed the SPE to undertaking particular doctrinal adjustments which culminated in the formation of the PCE in 1931. Páez suggests that the PCE, subordinate to the CI, became largely irrelevant due to its fixation on the notion of the proletariat which lacked any real historical precedent in the country. According to Páez, the party’s neglect of popular culture and its attempts to force the existence of a class that could not arise in a society such as Ecuador with low levels of industrialization culminated in its relative marginalization as a historic political force in the country.

The work of Páez (1989), itself influenced by EP Thompson’s critique of mechanistic Marxism, questioned a teleological narrative of history that presupposed that the industrial development of each country would come to produce a revolutionary proletariat. In effect the routes of capitalism and the history of popular classes are far more complex.

¹ Alexei Páez, *Los orígenes de la izquierda ecuatoriana* (Quito: Abya-Yala, 2001), 97.

It would also be erroneous, however, to equate the historic identity of the Ecuadorian popular classes merely with traditional customs or archaic perceptions of reality. On the contrary, Ecuadorian history shows that the uses of modern political language among the popular classes was not driven solely by external forces.

In analyzing the Ecuadorian left between the end of the 1910's and the beginning of the Cold War, we find, contrary to Páez, that the emergence of the left in Ecuador is inherently connected to previous national political cycles and the various ways political language was harnessed at the time. In this essay we analyze various sources from the press, legal proposals and public discourse to examine how conceptions and expressions of the left, in both their political and discursive forms, developed both in reference to international leftist currents (including Russian, Peruvian and Mexican Revolutions), but importantly also in a relatively autonomous fashion. The left combined the use of national political language – the discourse of the liberal democratic party – with the previously mentioned international sources in light of the demands of political practice and the need to advance strategic analysis in certain spheres of conflict.

The use of Marxist language in the 1920s, including references to international guidelines that the PCE partially adopted, inevitably took shape in dialogue with a broad spectrum of political language: formed within the field of political antagonism, which the left had also influenced through analytic interventions, social mobilization and contributions to State formation. The socialist tendency – that which placed class conflict and the emancipatory horizon of the proletariat at the center of its agenda – emerged in the midst of a reformulation of democratic republican discourses and based around such notions as popular sovereignty, freedom and common good.

The historiography of the northern Andes as well as the Atlantic Caribbean confirms the existence of a nineteenth century and early twentieth century democratic-popular republicanism or plebeian revolutionary republicanism that provided the language for the dispute and/or negotiation of racial borders during a revolutionary moment constitutive of the nation across the region.² This discourse included the ideas that the republic should guarantee the existence of the people and combat all forms of domination that prevented their freedom, including that of property when it endangers the first social law guaranteeing (the people's) existence. The popular classes, some of them with strong ties to the peasant world, have historically resisted economic dispossession. The concept of popular sovereignty and the vision of a republic that empowers populations to emancipate themselves from tyranny pointed to the idea that the State should con-

² For a genealogy of marxism based in classic and modern revolutionary republicanism see Anthoni Domenech, *La democracia republicana fraternal y el socialismo con gorro frigio* (La Habana; Barcelona: Editorial de ciencias sociales, 2017).

trol any social power which subordinates the people and impedes their participation in the deliberations around the common good or public interest. Patriarchal domination, servitude related to land concentration and imperialism were all deemed part of this potential tyranny.

In Ecuador and southern Colombia, this trend lasted throughout the cycle of nineteenth century independence revolutions in the framework of the inter-party wars,³ and in Ecuador specifically continued during the first decades of the twentieth century when it constituted a central discourse of public power,⁴ and remained popular for more than a century of political-military mobilization by different social classes confronting the predominance of the landed elite of the sierra on behalf of both the racialized population and the State. The discourse was adopted between 1883 and 1906 by the people's army and between 1895 and 1925 by the ruling liberal party, the latter of which reproduced it through a civil society formation program harnessing educational institutions and a vigorous print industry. Democratic republicanism became *the* language of the popular and middle classes under the leadership of Eloy Alfaro (1895-1912, "America's Garibaldi"), and the civic rhetoric constituted a central language of contention against the conservative party until approximately 1920 when the global crisis created a class tension within the "liberal nation" that the newly born Left could lucidly build upon. Since as far back as 1917, capitalist monopolies were also identified as containing the potential for tyranny. More than just a millennial or archaic mythical discourse therefore, the popular classes, especially those from the historical party of Alfarismo, can be seen to appropriate the language of republican democracy.

Neither anarchism, utopian socialism, nor the Marxist current, arrived in Ecuador in the nineteen twenties to meet a void of popular politics, but rather intertwined with a long-established republican trajectory from which their terms were to be translated and their forms of political dispute were to be renewed. In fact, the founders of the SP argued that the organization brought together Marxism from the Russian Revolution with the Popular Republicanism of Alfaro in a historical moment of the 1920s marked by global economic crisis which, in turn, produced an internal crisis within the Liberal Party,

³ James E. Sanders, *Contentious Republicans: Popular Politics, Race, and Class in Nineteenth Century Colombia* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2004). Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). James E. Sanders, *The Vanguard of the Atlantic World. Creating Modernity, Nation, and Democracy in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014). Carmen Dueñas de Anhalzer, *Sobneranía e Insurrección en Manabí* (Quito: Abya-Yala, 1991).

⁴ Valeria Coronel y Mercedes Prieto, *Celebraciones centenarias y negociaciones por la nación ecuatoriana* (Quito: FLACSO, Sede Ecuador/Ministerio de Cultura, 2010). Valeria Coronel, "El liberalismo y el pueblo. Alianzas, postergaciones y aspiraciones en torno a la Revolución Liberal. (1895-1922)", *El tiempo de Alfaro*, ed. by Rafael Barriga (Quito: Odysea Producciones, 2009), 39-70.

both of which were characterized by an increase of the banking sector's control over State institutions. A powerful antecedent of popular and democratic struggle already existed in the liberal party which by the 1920s was increasingly recognized as under threat, thereby triggering a renewal of revolutionary discourse which this time placed class struggle closer to its core. The confrontation between 'the people' and landowners, a central discourse of radical liberalism, was reconstructed with marxist concepts using a historical analysis that incorporated the idea of the working classes (and racialized peasants) confronting a banking oligarchy, commercial monopoly and large States.

Historical records point to the need for an interpretation based around the convergence of two interconnected processes identified by militants on the left in the 1920s: on the one hand was the development of a capitalist system of accumulation that, by the 1920s, was increasingly characterized by the emergence of 'new forms of imperialism' or monopoly capital. This created an environment in which both bourgeois economic alliances and foreign capital were increasingly regarded with skepticism. On the other hand, there was a powerful antecedent of popular and democratic struggle in the liberal party that had largely been shut down by the 1920s. Having long since played a central role in the formation of popular political identities (incorporating a discourse of proletarian redemption, for example), even defining the State's own legacies, the spectacle of the corruption of liberal discourse and the decline of the liberal party created a vacuum into which could arrive marxist analyses of exploitation and the economic dimensions of political rights.

Having suggested that the historic trajectory of the left in Ecuador cannot be understood in isolation from the historical trajectory of the liberal party, we can now go on to state that the founding of the socialist party cannot be understood in isolation from the Juliana Revolution of 1925. The left was a force in dialogue with others and, far from marginal, was influential in the State reforms that were introduced in Ecuador and other Latin American countries as a result of the political transitions constructed in the context of the interwar crisis.⁵ The Juliana Revolution was a civil-military coup in response to the increasingly plutocratic nature of the State under the LP that kickstarted a reformist process geared toward greater State intervention in the economy, in labor relations, and in forms of land ownership.

⁵ Laura Gotkowitz, *A Revolution for our Rights: Indigenous Struggles for Land and Justice in Bolivia, 1880-1952* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007). Alan Knight, *La revolución cósmica. Utopías, regiones y resultados. México 1910-1940* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2015). Valeria Coronel, "Justicia laboral y formación del Estado como contraparte ante el capital transnacional en Ecuador 1927-1938", *ILLES I IMPERIS (Monográfico)*, *Justicia, violencia y construcción estatal. Revista de La Universidad Pompeu Fabra*, 15 (2013): 171-196. Valeria Coronel, "Izquierdas, Sindicatos y Militares en la disputa por la tendencia democrática del Ecuador de entreguerras (1925-1945)", *El movimiento obrero y las izquierdas en américa latina. Experiencias de lucha, inserción y organización*, ed. by Martín Mangiantini and Hernán Camareno (USA: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 195-220.

The discourses of the partisan left before the Cold War repeatedly refer back to a conjuncture between two revolutionary cycles; Alfaro's 1895 democratic revolution that for more than two decades referenced 'obrerismo' or 'workerism', and the aforementioned civilian-military revolution of 1925, which was the product of the agency of subaltern classes alongside the radicalized middle classes against the enthronement of monopoly capital, and is widely considered a movement that aimed to deepen the economic dimensions of democratization.

At the beginning of the 1920s, the concepts of class and the proletariat were crucial in diagnosing the crisis of republican hegemony. The class concept was so conjugated with both intellectual reflections and organizational political language that it nourished popular, middle and even bourgeois identities in Ecuador during the crisis of the liberal party. Radicalism, the discourse of the liberal revolution (1883-1906); Modernism, the aesthetic discourse of liberal civil society (1900-1925), and the Marxist political and cultural avant-garde (1920-1946), all maintained a critical discourse against the myth of a paternalist culture. Liberals and the left associated traditional customs with clericalism "feudalism" or "colonial aristocratism".⁶

Through literature as well as through the writing of legal demands and public speeches, radical and socialist intellectuals tried to make visible the violence that hid behind the paternalistic discourse they described as colonial. Witnessing rural conflicts in the sierra, the communists noted the long-term disputes between communities and the large estates, and particularly how the rural community defended notions of the common good and collective ownership that had been recognized during previous moments of democratic opening within the State. The hacienda, meanwhile, was seen to defend the exclusive character of private property and exercise forms of racial violence against the communities.

A key development amongst the communists was the bringing together of terms such as 'modernity' and 'the nation', with terms such as proletariat, race and 'revolutionary Indianness', this together with their treatment of traditional paternalistic customs as part of a wider culture of domination. In this sense ethnicity was understood within the framework of political antagonism to racialization. The communist left identified Indians and rural communities struggling against dispossession as part of a broader struggle against all antisocial forms of ownership. The idea of 'revolutionary indians' proved central to both communism and socialism in Ecuador, and suggests that the

⁶ See for instance the novel "A La Costa-Costumbres Ecuatorianas" by Luis A. Martínez, published by the Quito National Press, 1904. This novel was publicized by the cultural weekly *Guayaquil Artístico* (1900-1906) within a broad project of the critique of *Hispanicism* and the Catholic tradition in Ecuador. See also *Los Guandos* by Joaquín Gallegos Lara (1936) and *Huasipungo* by Jorge Icaza (1934), as well as newspapers such as *La Tierra* and *Nucanchic Allpa*.

country was little adjusted to the notion of an industrial proletariat as *the* privileged revolutionary subject.

The various socialists, vanguards and communists on the left, though marked by differences, did nevertheless at certain times manage to build convergence strategies in the interests of challenging antagonistic blocs and constructing hegemony, as well as to further State reform and broaden the horizon of social rights, particularly those relating to labour laws, the right to organize, and access to land and justice for rural communities and campesinos. Indeed the influence of the Ecuadorian left over State reformation in the 1930's is comparable to the historic cases of Mexico and Bolivia. Throughout the 1930s, the communist current worked to complement the strategies of the SPE in the processes of State reform and popular organization. They were key to the formation of a national-popular cultural program by means of organizational newspapers, interventions in the public sphere, and a visible leadership in the public education system.

The communists integrated the language of class conflict and above all the vision of a revolutionary working class subject from the Russian revolution, while the Mexican revolution together with the popular demands in Ecuador, taught them more about the central issues of land and race, and the possibility of the left holding onto power and driving State reform.

Between the thirties and forties, the left had to confront the reconfiguration of rights, reflecting on the problem of fascism and incorporating socialist notions of democracy and particularly the crisis of democracy under the existing power of monopoly capital. Their reflections on democracy went beyond the electoral sphere and entailed State intervention in the economic sphere in the name of upholding social rights and guarantees, and in this sense reclaimed the leftist notion of the social function of property basing the democracy of the majority on material conditions.

In the following pages we will undertake a concrete examination of documentary sources which indicate the existence of what we have previously suggested is a constitutive relationship between the political languages of Radicalism (another word for Popular Republicanism) and Marxism. The newspapers studied and the memories collected in the bibliography show how the discourse of class conflict and the proletariat emerge in the associative and participative spaces of the liberal party, as well as in the liberal press, which together nourished the critical elements of intellectual production of both Democratic Republicanism in politics and Modernism in aesthetics. In both spaces, the emergent left confronted the crisis through an analysis of (the contradictions of) social class and the conditions for political struggle, and in doing so radicalized and transformed its legacy.

I. *Juan Cholo*: Class and Race in the Radical Press during the Crisis of the Liberal Party

One of the most powerful factors at the origin of class politics was the articulation of two organized spheres of civil society, *liberal workerism* and *the press*. The liberal press had been constituted between 1900 and 1920 as a powerful cultural industry. Publishing circles committed to the formation of a democratic public sphere themselves fostered circles of popular education. The most famous journalists and modernist artists promoted intellectual circles for workers, and it was there that Modesto Chavez Franco and Emilio Gallegos del Campo joined together with the WCG in creating literary education programs for the people, where reflections of a ‘worker sociology’ and the ‘social question’ were rehearsed; this process was part of a broader reflection then present in the liberal press regarding the character of revolutionary culture. Despite the assassination of Alfaro and other leading radicalist figures in 1912, these circles of political and cultural formation continued to grow.

All strata of *Guayaquileña* civil society, including the civil associations, experimented with editorial projects. Some press and publication associations specialized in the liberal arts, associations geared towards civic training and the progress of worker and worker-craftsmen classes of the city, as well as spaces to increase the civic participation of women.⁷ There existed a great diversity of printed and editorial projects, and a public and counterpublic sphere was formed that were attentive to the news and to interpretative analysis, as well as to cultural innovations and publicity.⁸ Journalists, intellectuals, political organizers and civil society organizations regularly intervened in editorial experiments as an instrument of economic and cultural formulation. Alongside mainstream media output, a broad range of political analysis newspapers, magazines of modern art and civilization, workers’ newspapers, treaties of practical sociology and so on, were published between 1900 and 1920.⁹

⁷ Sonia Fernández, *La escuela que redime: Maestros, infancia escolarizada y pedagogía en Ecuador, 1925-1948* (Quito: Corporación Editora Nacional, 2018). Ana M. Goetschel, *Educación de las mujeres, maestras y esferas públicas: Quito En La Primera Mitad Del Siglo XX* (Quito: Abya-Yala, 2007).

⁸ See, among others, *Guayaquil Artístico*, 1900-1906; *Revista de la Sociedad Jurídico-Literaria*, 1902-1906; *Altos Relieves*, 1906; *Letras*, 1912; *El Telégrafo Literario*, Guayaquil, 1913; *Renacimiento*, Guayaquil, 1916; *La Ilustración*, Guayaquil, 1917; *Frivolidades*, Quito, 1919.

⁹ Alfredo Sanz, editor of the radical weekly *Telegrafo Literario*, referred to the Workers’ Literary Centers and their printing presses as vehicles for supporting democracy among the working classes. Alfredo Sanz, “Centros de Alfabetización”, *Guayaquil Artístico*, 3 (1904): 185-186. Among the works published by the printing press of the Workers’ Confederation of Guayas were the newspaper *Confederación obrera*, the liberal feminist magazine *La Aurora*, brochures, statistics, as well as more ambitious works such as *The Treaty of Practical Sociology* by Juan Elias Naula, lost from the national libraries, and referred to frequently

Between radical journalism, which published critical editorial projects, and popular journalism that had access to the printing press linked to organizations such as the WCG, public opinion about the crisis was (in)formed, and the place of class in national politics became a topic of discussion.

In 1919 began to take shape in Guayaquil a multifaceted crisis that included an economic dimension stemming from the impact of the World War I on the cocoa economy, as well as a quasi-embargo that resulted from loans that had to be assumed by both the agro-export sector and the State. The perceived wearing away of the liberal party's cultural hegemony caused by the deterioration of its instruments of social integration, the withdrawal of its mechanisms of political negotiation and its attempted control of the press, also clearly suggest an interrelated political dimension. To compound matters further, the financial elite had by this point taken greater control with apparently little interest in nurturing the political instruments of the party, and the army, the press, organized labor in the *Workers Confederation of Guayas* (WCG), as well as various party operators in civil society, were all impacted by the deterioration of political representation and lack of influence in the party policy.

With some degree of sensationalism, newspapers *El Día*, *El Comercio* and *El Guante* (1919) began to report on the first seedlings of rebellion amongst the artisans of the port, the workers of public service companies and numerous *campesinos* and rural workers. Lawsuits demanding democratic inclusion where it was not conventional to do so began to appear, such as in the rural periphery of Guayaquil.

Among the reading circles of liberal workerism, a group of youths close to the Tomas Briones Cosmopolitan Society of Cocoa Workers (known as *Cacahueros*) introduced anarchist and socialist concepts into labor policy debates. Their testimonies speak of printed materials being brought by sailors including *Alba Roja* (*The Red Dawn*), *El Proletario* (*The Proletarian*) and *Solidaridad de la IWW* (*The Solidarity of the IWW*). Alejo Capelo (a young typographer) visited Andrés Mora and Narciso Velis, members of the *Cacahueros* society, to conduct discussions, as they had had many times before, about Juan Montalvo, anarchism, and the social question in democracy. People of different generations and trades converged in what would become a radically heterogenous political and anti-imperialist organization. Among these were Luis Maldonado Estrada (accountant), Floresmilo Romero (hairdresser), Tomas Briones (cocoa worker) and Manuel Donoso Armas (teacher); names that by

in *Confederation* as a reference of collective life; José María Chávez Mata, *Estado actual de las instituciones obreras de Guayaquil* (Guayaquil: Sociedad de tipografos, 1914) and José Buenaventura Navas, *Evolución social del obrero en Guayaquil, Obra historica. 1849-1920* (Guayaquil: Imprenta Guayaquil, 1920).

the 1920s would be widely recognized as founders of socialism in the province of Guayas.¹⁰

They leased a room to the Hijos del Trabajo (Sons of Work) association, from where they would offer a formalization service to new organizations. As a means of strengthening popular representation the circle proposed the expansion in both number and content of the workers' organization that already existed in the port, and for each of the petitions that arrived in their corner, they began to form a general secretariat, a program, and commissions, in addition to writing documents demanding better salaries and labor conditions. They advanced political work with shipyard workers and approached industrial food workers, grain and rice huskers, metalworkers, urban public transport workers, and those in the electricity services and at the railroad in an effort to further extent participation.

The workers who came to the *Cacahueros* society were classified as students. There were the central barracks. We became organizers. Everything was secretarial: as the presidential form was typical of mutualism, we appointed a *secretary-general*, and a procedural culture. In those days the organization was done with the purpose of making lists of petitions, for salary increases, work condition improvements, etc. [...] Mass assemblies were held in the large hall of the *cacahueros* society, which was often insufficient to contain so many people [...] since they did not fit, they put a lot of tables, their secretaries and the crowd in the park.¹¹

These were spaces of reading and training on issues of radical republicanism, where conceptual and strategic discussions were conducted that concerned the suitability of anarchist syndicalist concepts and Marxist notions of class as instruments suited to the diagnosis of the crisis and the future of these organizations. These liberal political training circles would later give rise to both the Regional Workers' Federation (RWF) and the concept of 'revolutionary workers school'.

In this context would enter the notion of class struggle in political language. The *Bandera Roja* (*Red Flag*) newspaper, founded by the Revolutionary Workers' School installed within the old Sons of Labor Society (founded in 1896) was the first socialist weekly in Guayaquil. For journalists at the *Bandera Roja*, the sermon on the values of civilization – secularity, progress, freedom of the press, and even social justice – had become a kind of 'second providence'; this is a new religion. It was time to note that

¹⁰ Manuel Donoso, *El quince de noviembre de 1922 y la fundación del socialismo relatados por sus protagonistas* (Quito: Corporación Editora Nacional: 1982).

¹¹ Donoso, *El quince de noviembre de 1922*.

such values would not lead to the ‘progress’ of all, for the bourgeoisie was no longer a progressive class but had become an agent of monopoly capital.

[T]his progress does not benefit anyone but those who have money [...] those (the commercial and agrarian bourgeoisie), who have become vain on it, have refined their tastes until the unspeakable, have become more heartless, more corrupt, arriving at what has come to be known as monopolizing capitalism.¹²

Bandera Roja discredited the alliance between the popular, middle and bourgeois classes of the party and directed its criticism to the conservative role of the popular leadership of the WCG for promoting the idea of class harmony: “Granted in Ecuador there exists no proletarian politics, the ex-workers who until now have led the working masses have become accomplices to all the filth of bourgeois politics”.¹³ It also reflected on the nation’s enduring popular affinity with a liberal party that was “impervious even to the global commotion of the workers’ world” and presented it as akin to the divorce that took place in Colombia between the people and the liberal party, though there the elites of the bipartisan system had attacked their popular bases resulting in a more classically socialist organization. The existence of a Workers’ Confederation linked to the political work of what was increasingly recognised as a crumbling Liberal Party was the predominant factor in such a scenario: the Workers’ Confederation had integrated and thereby halted workers’ demands for decades in Guayaquil.¹⁴ The *Bandera Roja* questioned how its leadership had become a broker for the elite of a Party which they exclaimed, had even taken down the portrait of Alfaro from the wall of the COG.

The socialist weekly induced a significant transformation in how *workerism* was presented at the time. Instead of the image of the dignified worker taken at face value, the socialist circle introduced the fictional character of *Juan Cholo*, a proletarian and racialized subject who spoke in the first person and singlehandedly intervened in the *workerism* discourse by inserting a critical perspective right in the heart of the mainstream press industry.¹⁵ “I, Juan Cholo, haughty and dignified, honest and poor with my brain free of adoration toward the great big-bellied men, white and rich; if they came to ask for my vote for a bourgeois candidate, I would demand an agenda”.¹⁶

¹² Bandera Roja, *Socialist Weekly*, 3 (1920).

¹³ Bandera Roja, *Socialist Weekly*.

¹⁴ Bandera Roja, *Socialist Weekly*.

¹⁵ A decade later they would position themselves as the central characters of a popular national literature series.

¹⁶ Bandera Roja, *Socialist Weekly*.

The rise of proletarianism occurred alongside conflict between the bourgeoisie, deemed increasingly close to monopolistic forces, and the racialized and impoverished popular classes that had reconsidered their political inclusion in the party of the liberal revolution. It was not long before the weekly would begin to associate Juan Cholo with rural conflicts in the periphery; a ‘champion of the people’ commenting on news regarding the repression of peasant initiatives, speaking of monopolistic imposition, and responding to all the letters received by the weekly, largely sent from readers in the rural peripheries of Duran, Daule and Milagro. The articulation of news from rural conflicts with that of the public sphere of the city was an innovative turn that the socialists associated with the image of the proletariat, and which they used against the progressive bourgeoisie’s strategy of only selectively incorporating popular classes within its program. As can be seen in the letters from the representatives of various parish associations offering to conduct a collection among workers to help finance it, the interest generated among popular organizations and the communities involved in rural conflicts was significant. In its issue on 5 June 1920, marking 25 years since Alfaro’s revolution, the weekly was expressive in establishing a genealogy between two red flags: the triumph of the revolution of 1895 and socialist struggle. Having undertaken the struggles and conquests associated with Alfarismo, the people would surely continue the fight against the diverse reactionary forces located both inside and outside of the historical party.

The day that the workers and liberal bourgeois came together against the troops that defended clerical terrorism, and with that act of citizen’s independence solidified the throne of Freedom that, threatened by reactionaries, betrayed by those who call themselves liberals, nevertheless still holds. Our mistake has been great. Each new conquest of the people has been rough and tenaciously attacked by the coalition of all the reactionary elements of society. But it is sustained in its pristine purity [...] like the rest of the conquests that, with blood, secured liberalism after long years of rough battle.¹⁷

The *Bandera Roja* debated the possibility of creating a Liberal Workers Party, but ultimately chose to found a socialist party to honor the legacies of Alfarismo. Four years later the first socialist weekly in Quito, *La Antorcha*, would take up the issue of the relationship between the radical legacy of the Alfaristas and the proletarian movement in Ecuador. Leonardo Visconti’s article “The advent of red socialism in Ecuador” (1 May 1925) stated that, in order for the Ecuadorian people to identify class struggle within the framework of their own language, it was essential to focus on establishing a connection with its main cultural language, referring to the language of the struggle

¹⁷ *Bandera Roja*, *Socialist Weekly*, 5 (1920).

between political parties. For Visconti, it was clear that the ‘essentially political’ people were motivated by democratic republican language, for “nothing impassions them as the struggle between parties [...] only tyranny has aroused the rebellion of the masses”. The deprivation of public liberty in the last period of liberal party dominance had “marked the antagonistic separation of government and people” so crucial to the demarcation of the proletariat as a political subject, confounded by advances in capitalism that were seen as an absurd protection of the plutocracy by the State. While Visconti identifies a generation that was aware and allied to the language of Marxism, ready to advocate for socialism, he simultaneously advised that it was essential to speak the political language of the people if they were to understand that their employer was also their exploiter and not be further alienated.

In order to flourish in this deeply political country, of moral spirit, with that external religiosity of worship common to Latin countries, Socialism must enter for us in the form of a political party. Socialism should not be introduced in Ecuador in a cold or dogmatic way, but in a sentimental way; in the midst of a large dose of politics will the doctrine will be adopted [...]. The extent of the bankocracy’s extortion of the proletarian classes means that the public spirit will react unconsciously in the form of a socialist movement if we but speak of exploitative governments.¹⁸

The discursive interventions around the country’s early engagements with socialism were, in summary, to install the image of the class contradiction of an oligarchic economy; to connect the proletarian vocabulary with perceptions of racial difference and the dangerous articulations between the poverty of the city and the violence of the countryside; to provide a voice to this formative subject through an innovative use of the printed public sphere; and to try to appropriate the revolutionary legacy of Alfarism by questioning its abandonment by a crisis-ridden liberal party and the complicity of the workers’ leadership linked to it.

When *Bandera Roja* confronted the worker with the commercial mafias of the port and the banks, the extent of the banking elite’s control over the organs of State power had not yet been fully revealed. On 14 November 1922, when the management of the tramway company in Guayaquil refused to negotiate an agenda of workers’ demands, the leadership appealed to a republican rhetoric that was made visible to the sovereign on the city’s public roads. The young leadership of the RWF quickly called upon its allied organizations, both old and new, to strike in solidarity with the tram workers and on 15 November forces combined in a stark display of the popular leadership’s control over the city’s urban services.

¹⁸ Bandera Roja, *Socialist Weekly* (1925).

Newspapers records confirm vast crowds in the streets. The founders of the FTRE warned of the threat of violence. Maldonado Estrada was among those who tipped off the leaders of the COG. The collective action was met with genocidal violence that claimed the lives of hundreds of workers, an event remembered as the Workers' Massacre of 15 November 1922. Two months later, Alejo Capelo commented that "[T]hey expected a human response, encouraging, perhaps even paternalistic; while, we say, a breath of death spread menacingly".¹⁹

The traumatic scene of hundreds of corpses lying along the city's boulevards caused a profound impact on the people's collective memory, leading to political breakdown and further persecutions. Parts of the popular leadership and the intelligentsia had to take refuge in the peripheral areas and radical strongholds of provinces such as Esmeraldas. Accusations during the 1922 Workers' Massacre memorial organized by survivors, some of whom came from radicalized sectors of the FTRE such as Maldonado Estrada and Alejo Capelo, maintained that the "plutocracy" had directed the hand of the liberal party to massacre the workers.²⁰ This version of events was later repeated in Quito during the Liberal Assembly meeting of 1923²¹ further cementing the notion of national and anti-national classes into the peoples' collective memory. One of the key mobilizing concepts of the Left between 1923-1925 was the fight against the banking elite. This event and its memory created the discursive space for the Left to antagonize the banking elite and to present alternative economic models associated with ideas of social integration and national political economy.

II. State Reform, Popular Mobilization and Political Dispute Between 1925 and 1945

While the socialist circuit in Quito centered around the publication of *La Antorcha* made an impact in the press from its very beginning, much like the *Bandera Roja* in Guayaquil, its founders became close to the liberal printing press through a very different route. The socialist associations from Quito and their peers in Loja and Riobamba had risen up through public education establishments in which schools, colleges and public universities – considered a matrix for citizenship formation.²² The liberal State

¹⁹ José A. Capelo, *El crimen del quince de noviembre de 1922* (Guayaquil: Imprenta El Ideal, 1923).

²⁰ Capelo, *El crimen del quince de noviembre de 1922*.

²¹ Pio Jaramillo Alvarado, *La asamblea liberal y sus aspectos políticos* (Quito: Imprenta Editorial, 1924).

²² Sonia Fernández, *La escuela que redime: Maestros, infancia escolarizada y pedagogía en Ecuador, 1925-1948* (Quito: Corporación Editora Nacional, 2018). Ana M. Goetschel, *Educación de las mujeres*,

had required technicians and professionals to work in public policy but also to serve various functions within civil society. Publication of cultural magazines, and scientific journals were well embedded in Latin American networks as far back as 1900.²³

The axes of the discussion driven by *La Antorcha* demonstrates the conjugation of different political languages. Demands were regularly made to ensure the freedom of public opinion and the press's persecution by president Gonzálo Córdova (1924-1925) was denounced as 'tyrannical'. Class enemies were portrayed with anti-imperialist rhetoric, as those who manipulate the State for the sake of committing public fraud for private interests. A scam by a circle of elite Guayaquileñas in which resources destined for the construction of a railroad to Esmeraldas were siphoned off, halting the construction of a maritime port in Manabí, was chosen as an emblematic case. In light of this preexisting image in the anti-imperialist texts and nineteenth century republican nationalism of thinkers such as Juan Montalvo and José Martí, the socialist weekly proposed that, considering the oligarchy's tendencies towards using regionalist-imperialism as a weapon for its own betterment (which was subsequently deemed an obstacle to national progress and integration), the proletariat was the only truly universalist class.

This notion of *the people* (in Spanish, *el pueblo*) was often used interchangeably with *the proletariat* and, coming from a society characterised by structural heterogeneity, included a variety of social factions.

And the people who constitute the power of socialism are numerous in Ecuador, and include the subaltern public official and employee, laborers of the land (the Indian), the apprentice worker, the common soldier, the school teacher, etc. All those whose work is stolen by the exploiter, whether this might be the government, the banker, the merchant or the hacienda owner.²⁴

Alongside this use of republican language, notions of class conflict was inserted:

What is necessary for there to be a socialist party? Exploitation. And in Ecuador, in proportion to its wealth, we are exploited with as much audacity as in any other industrial country.²⁵

maestras y esferas públicas (Quito: Abya-Yala, 2007).

²³ Gladys Valencia, *El círculo modernista: La autonomía del arte según el modernismo ecuatoriano* (Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, Magister, 2004).

²⁴ *La Antorcha*, 12 (1925).

²⁵ *La Antorcha*, 12 (31 January 1925).

Inspired by the Russian revolution, class critique was articulated through a discourse inspired by the *unfinished* trajectory of the liberal revolution and the powerful experience of the Mexican revolution. In May 1925 the Mexican communist leader Rafael Ramos Pedrueza was received with high praise by the weekly when he arrived as Mexico's *chargés d'affaires* in Ecuador. The presence of this deputy of the Mexican congress (1921), a professor of history and commissioned by the PCM (the Mexican Communist Party) to contribute to the formation of a communist group in Ecuador had a significant impact on the language of the left in the following years.²⁶ The Ecuadorian Socialist Party developed a Mexican-inspired agenda that combined the politics of class struggle with the construction of a "Restorative State", with a proletariat and peasant focus that was willing to intervene in the economy and territory in the name of social rights. In this vein in the pages of Quito's socialist weekly a program of centralized State reforms was clearly defined. There was talk of the need of a transformation of the State towards social rights, and economic intervention to guarantee the political rights of the majority. There were proposals based around the organization of ministries focused on the regulation of labor relations, as well as a department in charge of interventions designed to resolve the problem of indigenous servitude and their demands for land.

This project of popular empowerment and State reform inspired the formation of various socialist nuclei around the country geared toward the "recovery of the people's sovereignty", as recorded in a speech by the civic-military coup of June 1925. In that year young officers questioned civil war veteran officers, accusing them of having ceased to preserve sovereignty and having become a mercenary of 'mafia capital'. For liberals the national army founded on the basis of revolutionary militias was the nucleus of public power and responsible for the expansion of democracy: "The guarantors of the people's rights in a society under conservative and imperialistic threat".²⁷ The contact between Luis Napoleon Dillon (president of the National Assembly of the LP in 1923) and the Antorcha group facilitated the use of the concept of the proletariat under the new regime of 1925.²⁸ The government of the Julian Revolution put the bankers on trial, calling them fraudsters of the nation, and instigated the formal recognition of the socialist party in 1926, the same year it created the Ministry of Social Welfare, Labor and Land (SWLLM), many of whose officials were committed to socialism. The gov-

²⁶ Víctor Jelifets and Lazar Jelifets, *Internacional Comunista y América Latina, 1919-1943: Diccionario Biográfico* (Ginebra: Ariadna Ediciones, 2015), 277

²⁷ Ángel F. Rojas, *La novela ecuatoriana* (Guayaquil: Graficas Ariel, 1948).

²⁸ As a way of sponsoring the socialist cycle, DILLON commercial advertizing from the cotton fabric's "la Internacional" for *La Antorcha* and promoted socialist industrialism. Alejandro Lopez, *Dominación y Consenso en Ecuador, 1922-1938. Un estudio de la construcción de la hegemonía estatal en el ámbito del trabajo* (FLACSO Ecuador, Ph.D., 2018).

ernment effectively constituted an internal government body responsible for resolving conflicts on the basis of the social function of property.²⁹ The Ministry of Social Welfare, Labour archives draw attention to the numerous demands coming from different places around the country based on the revolutionary aspirations that Alfariismo had failed to fulfil, covering subjects concerning everything from violence in rural labor relations, to precariousness, dispossession and a lack of recognition of property titles and collective possessions among peasants. They address in the spheres of traditional haciendas and foreign capital investment alike. The socialists served as public authorities, community lawyers and visitors, and the ministry effectively became an investigative body and court of justice for the popular classes.

This perspective on the rural and Indian nation had a number of different sources. The inspiration of the Mexican Revolution and the translation of the concept of the proletariat to the analysis of historically existing classes added to the body of written work concerning the question of the nation. The Ecuadorian left participated in the Latin American debate on the problem of national formation by questioning how to build a national culture in societies characterised by racial segregation. In this area, the intellectual exchanges with the founders of the socialist vanguard in Peru were both long-winded and of particular importance. *La revista obrera de Lima (The Workers' Magazine of Lima)*, a socialist literary magazine, *Cuba Contemporánea*, Ateneo of Honduras directed by Froilán Turcios, *Renacimiento de La Habana*, and others, maintained exchanges with the *Letras* journal in Quito, where intellectuals related to both socialism and modernism participated. In 1916 they enthusiastically announced the launch of the *Cólonida* magazine in which Abraham Valdelomar and Jose Carlos Mariategui collaborated in a renewal of the concept of the colonial. They were fascinated by Valdelomar's creole tale which announced the arrival of distinct voices and scenarios to modern literature in a movement proposed that "on the basis of Inca civilization could be build an original and beautiful art".³⁰ This program was central to Mariategui's work in *Amauta* magazine, and of great interest to Ecuadorians. *Colonida* spoke critically of the colonial condition, about building an *Indigenismo* that was not a cult to tradition but instead a vision of Indians as transforming subjects that would build a radical anticolonial modernity. From Valdelomar's publications in Ecuadorian modernist magazines, to the recognition given by the Communist leader and narrator Joaquin Gallegos Lara in the 1930s, to

²⁹ Valeria Coronel, *A Revolution in Stages: Subaltern Politics, Nation-State Formation, and the Origins of Social Rights in Ecuador, 1834-1950* (New York University, Ph.D., 2011). Valeria Coronel, "Orígenes de una Democracia Corporativa: estrategias para la ciudadanía del campesinado indígena, partidos políticos y reforma territorial en Ecuador (1925-1944)", *Historia social urbana: espacios y flujos*, ed. by Eduardo Kingman (Quito: FLACSO/Ministerio de Cultura, 2009), 323-364.

³⁰ Isaac J. Barrera, "La revista, libros hispano-americanos", *Letras* (1915), 159.

Mariategui as the most influential revolutionary intellectual in the Americas. This source of inspiration spurred the creation of remarkable avant-garde productions in Ecuador between the mid-twenties and the mid-forties. The communists intellectuals Joaquin Gallegos Lara, Adalberto Ortiz, Demetrio Aguilera, Enrique Gil, Alfredo Pareja and José de la Cuadra, were, with the socialists Pablo Palacios and Angel Felicísimo Rojas, fundamental figures in the political and cultural dispute of the time.³¹ These productions aided the work of State reform and demonstrated the longstanding relationship between the vanguard and *communist indigenismo* in Ecuador, as opposed to the conditions of harassment and “agony” that Mariategui’s Andean socialism must have experienced both under the pressure of communist orthodoxy and due to the oligarchic pact of the Peruvian government.³²

For Ricardo Paredes and Joaquin Gallegos Lara, the role of the vanguard was to accompany the Andean proletarian class, the *Indians*, in their potential transformation into an organized people (*political unit*) and provide a protean language for that struggle. What would be the subject that could emancipate and revolutionize language as had been done by the anti-Hispanic bourgeoisie during modernism? Questions began to be asked about the relationship between crisis and national culture, and the concept of revolution that was alive in the Ecuadorian intellectual and political lexicon was subsequently reinvigorated.

When Ricardo Paredes presented the Ecuadorian left to the Communist International in 1928, he advanced a historical analysis of the ruling classes in which “the grand bourgeoisie [...] pursues with great energy the concentration of capital by ruining the petty bourgeoisie and exploiting the workers”; commerce consists largely of foreign capital; and the large “feudal domains or estates [...] constitute the chronic evil of Ecuador” for their unproductive hoarding and the condition of servitude that they impose on the Indian peasants. Characteristically, Indians are identified as one of the key actors of class conflict in which “the dispute between classes is the one that occurs between the offensive strategies of land owners in order to expand their private property, be it for a commercial orientation or that of estates, and the rural communes that continue to exist in numerous regions of Ecuador”.³³ Paredes maintains that combating a complete

³¹ Humberto E. Robles, *La noción de vanguardia en el Ecuador: recepción, trayectoria y documentos (1918-1934)* (Quito: Corporación Editora Nacional: 2006). Valeria Coronel y Gabriela Aleman, *Vienen ganas de cambiar el tiempo: Epistolario entre Nela Martínez Espinosa y Joaquín Gallegos Lara-1930 a 1938* (Quito: Instituto Metropolitano de Patrimonio, 2012). José de la Cuadra, *El Montuvio Ecuatoriano: Ensayo de Presentación* (Quito: Libresa, 1996).

³² Alberto Flores, *La agonía de Mariategui: La polémica con La Komintern* (Lima: Centro de Estudios y Promoción del Desarrollo, 1980).

³³ Ricardo Paredes, “El Movimiento Obrero en el Ecuador”, *El pensamiento de la izquierda comunista*

expropriation and vigorously defending the “communal regime” has a revolutionary influence on the Indians, setting forth the notion of a *double condition of exploitation*, based on both race and class, and focusing on the constitutive dispossession of private property and racial oppression as key elements of capitalist accumulation.

Paredes argued that in order to understand class conflict and its potential one had to understand the political landscape of the country, by which he meant the localized forms of class struggle in the partisan conflict of the democratic revolution. According to his reading, bourgeois and even petit bourgeois democratic revolutions with a successful social orientation had already existed in Ecuador, as they had in Mexico, and for this reason it was better to use the concept of *dependent* countries than *semi-colonial* countries. The emergence of the Marxist discourse allowed the popular classes to combine the republican democratic with the socialist, and Paredes described Ecuador’s government between 1926-1928 as a labor government “similar to that of Calles in Mexico but in many cases more radical”.³⁴ Yet the reformist civil-military government required popular support in order to be better positioned to resist the elite’s attacks. Evaluating the confluence of interests between the middle classes in control of the State apparatus in that period and their organizational allies on the left, Paredes noted how popular power did not consist mostly of salaried workers and Ecuador would therefore have to follow the cases of Mexico, Peru and Bolivia in relying on the revolutionary movement of “Indian communities”, adopting their concept combining a mixture of primitive communist traditions, the historical struggle against landowners, participation in national political processes and the most recent socialist organization. He wrote “the spirit of class is very widespread among the Indians”.³⁵

In 1929 the civil-military government convoked a Constituent Assembly seen as a precondition for calling an election. The left used the constitution to introduce motions to ban bonded labor relations, coercion, the imprisonment for debts arising from purely civil obligations, and the establishment of contracts that entailed a loss of individual freedom; all of which were regarded as an unacceptable breach of inalienable rights.³⁶ Presenting it as a danger for the State and a wound on the nation, the PLR and the left agreed to reject “feudal domination”, arguing that indenture labor was merely another

(1928-1961), ed. by Hernán Ibarra (Quito: Ministerio de Coordinación de la Política y Gobiernos Autónomos Descentralizados, 2013), 67-78, 69.

³⁴ *El pensamiento de la izquierda comunista (1928-1961)*. For a critique of the close relation between the Mexican Communist Party and Lázaro Cárdena’s reformist regime see Elvira Concheiro, Massimo Modonesi, and Horacio Gutiérrez Crespo, *El comunismo: otras miradas desde América Latina* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2007).

³⁵ Paredes, “El Movimiento Obrero en el Ecuador”, 77.

³⁶ National Congress, Ecuador. *Constitución de la República de Ecuador de 1929* (26 de marzo de 1929) section 151, subsections 1, 2 and 3.

name for slavery. It was agreed the State should ensure access to justice for all and land-owners were prevented from impeding access to Indians through *gamonalismo*; a local structure of domination in which *hacendados* held a patron-client relationship with local authorities, privatizing the ultimate power to judge and imprison, and preventing the passage of lawsuits and conflicts from reaching the national courts.

For some authors the critical discourse of the Liberal Party and the Left concerning the highland haciendas and conservative politics was an expression of regional elites antagonism, and had no relation to popular politics. Beyond any redemptive rhetoric, however, in contemplating the right to organization and introducing the notion of the social function of property, the constitution of 1929 provided resources which would later be harnessed for popular struggle and guided State intervention in local power. It would determine the obligations, limitations and rights in support of the general interests of the State, national economic development, and of public health and wellbeing. It was also dedicated to permitting State intervention, by means of a judicial ruling, in expropriation cases when faced with demands from towns or communities that lacked land or water, and guaranteed a right “to be provided with them, taking them from the immediate properties, and harmonizing the mutual interests of the population and the owners”.³⁷ State dominion over all territorial mineral resources was established as a means to manage foreign companies and subject them to the laws of the republic. In addition to strengthening the power of parliament vis a vis the executive, the constitution also widened the representation of Parliament including the corporate vote of new subjects of political recognition and social welfare. Fifteen institutional spaces for ‘functional senators’ were established which would include public teachers and journalists; workers, peasants and Indians; one representative from the military, and three from the various business branches of the bourgeoisie.

The intellectual notion that Andean Indians had constituted a “great communist empire, the first State founded on agrarian socialism” became increasingly powerful after 1926, gathering even more strength after 1929 when huge numbers of peasants began to demands State intervention in land conflicts. Joaquin Gallegos and Ricardo Paredes separated from socialism and, alongside others, founded a communist group saying that they saw the PSE as preserving its position as an intermediary, unwilling to let a popularly rooted leftist leadership speak for itself. The CPE decided to strengthen agrarian unionization, focusing on the provinces of Pichincha and Cotopaxi in the highlands, and Guayas, Los Rios, Guayas and Esmeraldas on the coast. It was unique at that time for its inclusion of Indian and peasant leaders within the main body of the party.

³⁷ National Congress, *Constitución de la República de Ecuador de 1929*, section 151, subsections 1, 2 and 3.

Gallegos contributed by positioning the exploitation of Indians and the resultant violent repression of the indigenous leadership squarely in the public sphere, following-up on the multiple harassments and eventual imprisonment of indigenous leader Ambrosio Lasso and reporting it in local and international newspapers creating an international solidarity campaign.

He proposed naming Ambrosio Lasso an Indian colonel of the Liberal Revolution, a figure who would serve as a bridge within the communist party. In his historical essay *Biography of the Indian People* (1936), and novel “Los que se van” (1930) Gallegos also helped instigate an Ecuadorian communist avant garde literature, while communist militants Nela Martinez and Luisa Gomez founded schools teaching in Quichua in rural areas and created a newspaper called the “*Ñucanchic Allpa*” (*Our Land*) which contained news and testimonies of the popular struggle for Spanish Quichua bilingualism and was designed to encourage the articulation of struggles and facilitate the construction of both a proletarian and Indo-American identity. As a result, Indians became more visible in the political bureau of the Communist Party between the 1930s and the end of the Second World War, helping to advance prominent leaders such as Dolores Cacuango who, like Gualavisi, came from a trajectory of community territorial defense.³⁸ These efforts would come together over the next two decades with the formation of the Ecuadorian Federation of Indians (FEI) within the Communist Party and the Indian communist leaders participation in the Workers of Latin America Confederation (CTAL) before the Cold War.

In the thirties, the PCE on the coast supported the peasant and small business struggle against the formation of monopolies including the United Fruit Company.³⁹ They created unions and peasant confederations, activated the press, and demanded State compliance with social legislation in several well-known conflicts between peasants who had settled on the land of old cacao haciendas and entrepreneurs seeking to rebuild the large property for the cultivation of rice, sugar or banana. In 1938 the National Constituent Assembly convoked by Enriquez Gallo received input from the left regarding how to contain the monopolies and impositions of transnational capital, culminating in the declarations of the inalienable state ownership over mining resources, and the banning of bank agents and foreign corporations from running as candidates for the executive. The State was committed to dissolving the latifundia, to guaranteeing land and water to the peasant economy, and to including small rural landowners as

³⁸ Marc Becker, *Indians and Leftists in the Making of Ecuador's Modern Indigenous Movements*. (London: Duke University Press, 2008). Raquel Rodas Morales, *Dolores Cacuango. Gran líder del pueblo indio* (Quito: Banco Central del Ecuador, 2005).

³⁹ Steve Striffler, *In the Shadows of State and Capital : The United Fruit Company, Popular Struggle, and Agrarian Restructuring in Ecuador, 1900-1995* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

‘functional senators’ before the Senate. At the same time the PCE promoted a United Antitrust Front, Committees for the Defense of Labor Code, the Ecuadorian Labor Confederation and National Teachers Union.⁴⁰

Business corporations considered it urgent to regain control of the State through the coming presidential election. Lombardo Toledano and Guillermo Rodríguez, the president and vice-president of the CTAL (The Workers Confederation of Latin America), commented with surprise on the violent response of the Ecuadorian Government against the National Workers Congress in 1943. In other countries it meant working class progress, yet the communist leader Primitivo Barreto described the Ecuadorian communist platform as a “powerful citizen bloc” with a “class political line” likely to regain State control.

To understand the Ecuadorian left and the strands of socialism and communism within it, we must understand how the ruptures and legacies that came out of the “bourgeois and petty bourgeois democratic revolution” of 1895-1920 and 1925-1930 took place; a historical process mediated by the press in which organizational experiences and legal language combined with the language of the Russian revolution, the Alfarist revolution and the Mexican Revolution. Concepts such as worker and Indian redemption, the nation, class and the people, proletariat and race, democracy and revolution, all found themselves combining Marxist analysis together with languages from the Ecuadorian party system.⁴¹ Class conflict, the State, and the public sphere were all battlefields.

The middle classes on the left waged their struggles around the issue of land and labor relations alongside workers and ethnic communities. The communist party played a key role in strengthening different levels of the struggle. The construction of an indigenous political directorate in the sierra and a peasant directorate at the coast are important examples of national platforms that were developed between the 1930s and 40s. This political training interacted with the institutional development of the guarantor State and social policy. Forms of collective action were combined with forms of legal litigation. The program on the left included notions such as the redemption of indigenous servitude, labor rights, the formation of a popular leadership, the expansion of popular national culture, the social function of property, and a revamped antiimperialist predicament when legislating on natural resources.

Though the PCEs and the PSEs participation in the construction of the State and legislative power were successful, representative democracy proved very difficult.

⁴⁰ Miguel Á. Zambrano, *Breve historia del Código del Trabajo Ecuatoriano: Su génesis, elaboración y expedición* (Quito: Corporación Editora Nacional, 1962).

⁴¹ Guillermo Bustos, “La politización del ‘problema obrero’. Los trabajadores quiteños entre la identidad ‘pueblo’ y la identidad ‘clase’ (1931-34)”, *Antología ciudadanía e identidad*, ed. by Simón Pachano (Quito: FLACSO, 2003), 189-230.

While the left managed to prevail alongside the first faction in the Julian Revolution, the internal struggle of the PL between multiple attempts to form a modern right by both liberal and conservative factions were to prove powerful rivals in the thirties and forties. Polarization turned the executive into a volatile place and constitutional efforts in Ecuador were, as Angel Felicísimo Rojas suggested, “geological traces to locate the past. They represent, in a more or less profound way, the footprint of a revolution or a counterrevolution”.⁴²

In the face of the loss of the PL to the hands of its oligarchic faction, the left is driven into an alliance with the forces of conservative populism in an attempt to reject the dictatorship of the financial elite and rebuild democracy in light of the influence of the international anti-fascist struggle, but this alliance turns out to be onerous.⁴³ When the concept of democracy became restrictive and divorced from the history of the democratic revolutions in the postwar global system there was a strengthening of the re-accommodation of reactionary forces within the country. In 1946 during Velasco Ibarra’s dictatorship the conservative elite of the highlands and the oligarchy of the coast finally made a pact under the auspices of the FBI. Ecuador was one of the fields of struggle between socialist democracy and liberal democracy – somehow a struggle between between plebeian democracies and oligarquich democracies – at the beginning of the Cold War.

It is intriguing that the Ecuadorian communist party, with its experience in political disputes, with peasant and indigenous bases that staged multiple cycles of mobilization and public litigation, with its significant participation in State formation, and with its record of influential cultural production, has almost disappeared in comparative research on Latin America Communist Parties. The silencing of this history is likely to be partly the result of the Cold War. According to research by historian Marc Becker the FBI described the Ecuadorian left as a ‘continental danger’.⁴⁴ In contrast to the Colombian or Chilean cases, the communist party in Ecuador was nonorthodox.⁴⁵ The prevalence of the left in the party system and in popular organizations contrasted with populist movements in the Southern Cone.⁴⁶ To this we must add that the left of the sixties and seventies stopped thinking historically about revolution in terms of connect-

⁴² Rojas, *La novela ecuatoriana*, 19.

⁴³ Alianza Democrática Ecuatoriana, *Los postulados de la Revolución de Mayo: Programa* (Quito: Talleres Gráficos Nacionales, 1981).

⁴⁴ Marc Becker, *The FBI in Latin America: The Ecuador Files* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

⁴⁵ Klaus Meschkat and José M. Rojas, *Liquidando el pasado. La izquierda colombiana en los archivos de la Unión Soviética* (Bogotá: FESCOL-Taurus, 2009).

⁴⁶ Daniel James, *Resistance and Integration: Peronism and the Argentine Working Class, 1946-1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1988).

ed cycles. Rather new branches of revolutionary Marxism in the 1960s-1970s tended to reject the historical Communist Party and populist movements for their collaboration with bourgeois democracy. For this new generation “feudalism” was not opposed to modernization and underdevelopment was structural, thus the old communist struggle would never lead to democratization, national integration nor revolution.⁴⁷ For the contemporary left, one that has experienced rapid changes in the twenty first century, from severe crisis to progressive State reforms and back again to an authoritarian neoliberalism, the effort to reconnect with Andean Marxist reflections on revolution and democracy, on social conflict and State formation, on the relevance of class struggle amidst global crisis, is clearly of the utmost importance. In this vein, a new Political History in Latin America studies political language and recuperates historical notions in which the dialectics between social struggle and institutional building can be illuminated.

⁴⁷ *Memorias del seminario internacional: El legado intelectual y político de Fernando Velasco Abad*, ed. by Santiago Ortiz Crespo and Soledad Álvarez Velasco (Quito: Flacso Ecuador, 2014), 207-225. Cristóbal Kay, *Latin American Theories of Development and Underdevelopment* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), chapter 1. Ruy M. Marini, *El Maestro en rojo y negro. Textos recuperados* (Quito: Instituto de Altos Estudios Nacionales, 2012). Agustín Cueva, “El estado latinoamericano y las raíces estructurales del autoritarismo”, *Ensayos sociológicos y políticos*, ed. by Fernando Tinajero (Quito: Ministerio de Coordinación de la Política y Gobiernos Autónomos Descentralizados, 2012), 143-156. Agustín Cueva, “El populismo como problema teórico político”, *Ensayos sociológicos y políticos*, ed. by Fernando Tinajero (Quito: Ministerio de Coordinación de la Política y Gobiernos Autónomos Descentralizados, 2012), 221-234. Hernán Ibarra, “Los idearios de la izquierda comunista ecuatoriana (1928-1961)”, *Los idearios de la izquierda comunista ecuatoriana (1928-1961)*, 11-64.