Ethnicity from Various Angles and Through Varied Lenses

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Indigenous Movements from Oppressed Nationalities to an Ethno-Nationalist Discourse

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In the 2008 constitutional revisions the Ecuadorian government recognized for the first time the country's plurinational character. This was the realization of a long-standing demand of the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE, Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador), Ecuador's most visible Indigenous organization. Since the 1980s, they had embraced the construction of Indigenous peoples as nationalities, and increasingly demanded the revision of the first article of the constitution to recognize Ecuador's diverse Indigenous nationalities as part of a plurinational state. In the minds of most scholars and activists, CONAIE was the one to create and popularize this discourse.[1]

The construction of Indigenous peoples as nationalities, however, has much deeper roots. In 1933, Ricardo Paredes, the leader of the Partido Comunista Ecuatoriano (PCE, Ecuadorian Communist Party), ran for the presidency of the country at the head of a Worker-Peasant Bloc. He campaigned as the "candidate of workers, peasants, Indians, and soldiers" and promised bread, work, land, and liberty for the people. Paredes presented a broad list of demands that included a call to defend "Indians and Blacks, not only as exploited and oppressed classes, but also as oppressed nationalities" (Manifiesto del Bloque Obrero-Campesino, 1932: 247). Fifty years before CONAIE began to organize on the basis of Indigenous nationalities, communists were already exploiting the political uses of this construction.

Paredes was not the first to refer to Indigenous nationalities. Salesian priest Juan Bottasso notes that "during the colonial period, it was very common to call indigenous groups 'nations,' but this term was simply

used to refer to homogeneous human entities that had a territory, a tradition, and a common language. The term never suggested the most remote possibility of self-determination" (1986: 151). Rather, Bottasso continues, "during the colonial period, non-evangelized autochthonous ethnic groups were called nations in the sense that the bible used the term" (2006: 31). Others would sometimes use the term, but in a negative sense. For example, in 1916 *hacendado* Nicolás Martínez (1993: 218) argued that "independent nations" needed to disappear in order for Indians to be civilized and become full citizens. What was notable about the communist use of the term in the 1930s is that they were the first ones to use the language of nationalities to advance a political agenda in favor of Indigenous peoples.

This long history of the construction of "Indigenous nationalities" has been almost completely forgotten in Ecuador, with few scholars tracing its roots back beyond the 1970s. Hernán Ibarra (1999: 83) argues that the term first emerged in Gladys Villavicencio Rivadeneira's 1973 book *Relaciones interétnicas en Otavalo-Ecuador. ¿Una nacionalidad india en formación?* Furthermore, many scholars who understand the leftist roots of the term cast this history in a negative light. For example, Fredy Rivera condemns the marxist left for having "displaced ethno-national problems to a second theoretical level since they would be solved in the new socialist society" (2003: 387). Such arguments either ignore or are ignorant of the critical role of the Moscow-based Third or Communist International (Comintern) in advancing the construction of the concept of Indigenous nationalities in South America.

In the 1920s, the Comintern advocated the establishment of "independent native republics" for Blacks in South Africa and the United States. At the Comintern's Sixth Congress in 1928, the organization recognized the revolutionary potential of anti-colonial struggles. Building on Vladimir Lenin's (1970) interpretations of national and colonial questions, the Comintern (1929: 58) defended the rights of self-determination for national minorities, including the right to secede from oppressive state structures.[2] Although such discussions began in South Africa and the United States, they were soon extended to Latin America with the Comintern's proposal to carve an Indigenous Republic out of the Quechua and Aymara peoples in the Andes. This controversial position triggered intense debates among communist activists as to whether marginalized and impoverished ethnic populations located within nation-states comprised national or racial minorities, and what the relationship of their identities to the larger class struggle should be. In Peru, José Carlos Mariátegui (1929; Becker, 2006) drafted a lengthy treatise, "El problema de las razas en la América Latina," for a conference of Latin American communist parties in Buenos Aires in June of 1929. Mariátegui adamantly maintained that the "Indian Question" was fundamentally one of class relations in which the bourgeois oppressed a rural proletariat, and that

this situation could only be addressed through fundamental alterations to the land tenure system. He challenged the Comintern's position that maintained that Indians, like Blacks in South Africa and the United States, formed a subjugated nationality and that their liberation would come through the formation of an independent nation-state. He made the materialist claim that at its core Indian oppression was a socio-economic issue rooted in the unequal distribution of land and the failure to overcome the legacy of feudalism in the Peruvian countryside. The solution lay in altering Peru's class structure, not in retreating into separate states.

In contrast to Mariátegui's resistance to Comintern dictates, his counterparts in neighboring Ecuador more closely followed Moscow's lead (Becker, 2008b). Although the first reference to Indigenous nationalities was not published until 1933, for at least five years communists had been organizing in rural communities. In large part, this activism was due to the work of Indigenous activist Jesús Gualavisí. In 1926, Gualavisí attended the founding congress of the Partido Socialista Ecuatoriano (PSE, Ecuadorian Socialist Party) where he urged the new party to work actively on behalf of rural communities (PSE, 1926: 33; Becker, 2008a). The Comintern's 1928 Sixth Congress similarly urged local parties to work in rural areas, organizing worker-peasant coalitions. In Ecuador, the Comintern instructed the party to "endeavour to get into close contact with the mass of the Indians who constitute a very valuable revolutionary element and to link up their action with that of the workers and peasants of Ecuador" (1928: 175). In part, Paredes (1928: 1177) can be seen as responsible for the Comintern's direction as he brought his experiences working with Gualavisí in rural communities to the congress:

> The revolutionary problem is linked up with that of the oppressed masses such as the Indians of Latin America. In some countries, Indians constitute the biggest section of the rural population; they suffer much more than white and half-caste workers from the exploitation of the landed proprietors. Indians who are considered an inferior race are treated more brutally. All these factors have created among the Indian workers and peasants a spirit of solidarity and a class spirit of the exploited. Therefore, Indians are very revolutionary elements. I think this problem of oppressed races must be dealt with in the programme. (1928: 1177)

Even before the Comintern dictated that local parties should work with oppressed populations, communists (with Mexico taking the lead) had developed strong connections with peasant movements (Carr, 1992: 32).

In Ecuador, even though communists had incorporated Indigenous peoples and issues into the founding of the party, the Sixth Congress triggered an intensification of rural activism. More significantly, what the Congress did was to change how communist militants talked about these issues. Instructions to the party in the late 1920s included a requirement to:

> Expound with intensity the work of the Party among poor peasants and, particularly, among the Indians and large agrarian communities and haciendas in the sierra. The Communist Party should link itself completely with the Indian masses, uphold and lead their struggles for land and for national independence, unmasking the roles of priests and the Church. The Party should not consider the Indian problem as the problem only as one of land, but also one that includes the national question. (quoted in Gallegos, 1931: 130–31)

The Comintern was key in pushing the terminology of Indigenous nationalities, in Ecuador and throughout Latin America. For example, a subsequent Comintern (1933: 33) document repeatedly referred to African and Indigenous as "oppressed nationalities," and advocated increased organization among "Indian and Negro peasant masses" in order to bring about a revolutionary movement.

Meeting in Moscow in September 1930, the communist-affiliated Conferencia Sindical Latino Americana (CSLA, Confederation of Latin American Labor Unions) instructed that class unions should not only be engaged in "an incessant struggle for complete equality of work conditions irrespective of race and nationality, but also for the complete suppression of national and racial oppression in all its forms." They called for the "complete and without reservation rights of all oppressed ethnic minorities to national self-determination, even to the point of separation" (CSLA, 1931: 36). In 1934, the Comintern drafted a set of instructions for the PCE calling on militants to:

> Put forward the slogan of the national self-determination of the Indian tribes and the nationalities to the point of separation, and while struggling to make the future Indian states have the character of workers' and peasants' (soviet) government, it is necessary at the same time to support all the actions of the Indian toiling masses, directed against the white creole landlords and bourgeoisie, even when the masses are still struggling for their national liberation under the leadership of the Indian tribal chiefs, caciques, etc. (1934a: 59–60)

The final instructions to the party dropped the demand for self-determination to the point of separation, but still repeatedly referred to "Indian and Negro nationalities." The Comintern called on the party to work with peasant organizations, "paying special attention to the defence of the nationally oppressed Indian peasants." The PCE was to draft "a list of economic and political demands and linking these demands up with the general tasks of the struggle for the national liberation of the Indians." In this way, the party "will thus create the conditions for winning the hegemony of the proletariat in the Indian national revolutionary movement" (Comintern, 1934b: 42–43). Indigenous nationalities were key to how the Comintern conceptualized its struggle in the Andes.

Slowly activists in Ecuador picked up on this terminology and began to use it in their own statements. In November 1935, Indigenous leaders gathered at the Casa del Obrero in Quito to found a Conference of Indigenous Leaders (Conferencia de Cabecillas Indígenas). A flyer announcing the closing session noted that the meeting corresponded with the eighteenth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution that gave "liberty and support to all nationalities that previously had been oppressed (such as are the Indigenous nationalities in our country)" (Presídium de la Conferencia de Cabecillas Indígenas, 1935: 298). Several months later, the conference organizers published a list of instructions in the Indigenous newspaper *Ñucanchic Allpa* to "unify and organize Indians for the defense of their class interests and as oppressed nationalities." The organization noted that:

> the Indian workers have something else that differentiates them from the other white, *mestizo*, black and mulatto workers and peasants: the Indians have languages that only they speak (Kichwa, Cayapa, Cofan, etc.), they have their own clothes and customs, they belong to their own races and nationalities or peoples that have lived free for more than four hundred years without being subjected as today to whites and *mestizos*. It is for this reason that Indians have been for more than four centuries subjected to a great oppression of their people or nationality, rejected as if they were an inferior race. (Conferencia de Cabecillas Indios, 1936: 2)

Communist organizers influenced how Indigenous peoples viewed themselves. A 1937 party document observes that backwardness, underdevelopment, and isolation prevented the emergence of a unified national identity in Ecuador, with an Indigenous "oppressed nationality" existing alongside that of the dominant white and *mestizo* classes (Comité Central del Partido Comunista, 1937: 9). Indigenous nationalities had become a common part of communist discourse.

Paredes brought these ideas to the 1944–1945 Constituent Assembly in which he served as a functional representative for the "Indigenous Race." In a lengthy speech on concepts of state formation during the first days of the constitutional debates, Paredes noted that different Indigenous groups would have different concerns, and hence a singular, unified solution could not be applied to the so-called "Indigenous problem." Paredes maintained that it was a mistake to see Indians as racial or ethnic groups because their own history, language, territory, and cultural institutions in reality made them nationalities. He urged his fellow leftists not to see Indigenous poverty as a simple concern of class oppression, but rather as a complicated issue that took into account their varying cultures and national characteristics (Asamblea Constituyente, 1944a: t. 1, 720.. "There are class problems and there are nationality problems," Paredes later argued (Asamblea Constituyente, 1944c: t. 6, 435–38). *Ñucanchic*

Allpa echoed in its pages that Indigenous oppression was a national problem and its solution would only be found in changes to the agrarian system. "Indigenous peoples are oppressed nationalities," the newspaper editorialized. "The true solution rests in the right of self-determination" (1944: 2).

In 1957, the Communist Party's Central Committee distributed a draft of the platform for the party's sixth congress that minimized Indigenous concerns (PCE, 1956a and PCE, 1956b). A month before the congress, Indigenous leaders met at party headquarters and proposed various changes that appeared in the final draft (PCE, 1957b: 6). Some of the editing was rather cosmetic, such as adding references to Indians in a discussion of the feudal exploitation of the peasantry. What is noteworthy, though, was the addition of a new section on social classes with a special mention of "Ecuadorian Indians who occupy a special place within the peasant masses." The statement that Indigenous activists insisted be inserted asserted that "this Indian mass unquestionably has a series of national elements, a language, Kichwa and other autochthonous tongues, a tradition, their own cultural manifestations." They were denied education in their own language and, through literacy restrictions, the right to vote. These small changes added up to altering a document from one that minimalized the importance of Indigenous struggles to making it central to the communist struggle (PCE, 1957a: 14). If previously communists had shaped Indigenous discourse, now the reverse was true with Indigenous activists shaping a leftist agenda. A statement at the eighth party congress in 1968 repeated these statements that Indigenous peoples possessed "national elements" including their own language, traditions, and cultures (PCE, 1968: 12). In a 1977 interview, long-time communist militant César Endara observed the double character of Indigenous exploitation in that "in addition to economic exploitation they were also exploited nationally" (quoted in Yánez del Pozo: 1988: 27). Similarly, the newly founded communist-affiliated coalition Frente Amplio de Izquierda (FADI, Broad Front of the Left) called for the defense of "the specific rights of Indigenous communities and national groups in the country (Kichwa, Shuar, Cofan, etc.)" (FADI, 1978). Unlike the assumption of many academics, Indigenous leaders did not reclaim this identity on their own but it was a contribution from marxist intellectuals who kept these ideas alive throughout the twentieth century (Guerrero Cazar and Ospina Peralta, 2003: 26).

Working from Max Weber's interpretations of cultural homogeneity combined with a coherent political and economic system that extended beyond a local environment, Gladys Villavicencio Rivadeneira (1973: 6, 283) asked almost in passing in her 1973 book *Relaciones interétnicas en Otavalo-Ecuador, "Una nacionalidad india en formación?"* She questioned whether commercial success in Otavalo was leading to the formation of an Indigenous nationality.

More significant is anthropologist Iliana Almeida who interrogated the concept of "Indigenous nationalities" as an explicit category of political analysis. Almeida argues that sympathetic leftists brought this concept of nationalities back from the Soviet Union in the 1970s and introduced it to the fledgling organizations in Ecuador (Selverston-Scher, 2001: 23). In particular, the Russian anthropologist Yuri Zubritski (1984: 215) was responsible for Kichwa-language programs on Radio Moscow that talked about the formation of an Indigenous proletariat. Zubritski (1986) discussed how capitalist development in Latin America led to national oppression. He also organized meetings with young Indigenous leaders, and arranged for scholarships to study in the Soviet Union (Albó 2008). Through these various mediums and contacts, Zubritski helped to reintroduce the concept of Indigenous nationalities into Ecuador. Apparently many of these young activists were unaware they were returning to themes that the Comintern had already introduced into Ecuador half a century earlier.

In 1979 after returning from studying in the Soviet Union, Almeida (1979: 15–16) published an essay in which she conceptualized Indigenous peoples in the Andes as a Kichwa nationality. Drawing on a marxist tradition and analysis, she argued that a common history, territory, economy, culture, and language all meant that Indigenous peoples formed a true nationality. Furthermore, nations did not necessarily coincide with states, for several nations were included within the Ecuadorian state. Later she expanded on this concept to note two contrasting constructions of nationalism, one being a homogenizing influence that emanated from the dominant classes and another representing an anti-colonial movement for national liberation that emerged out of Indigenous and other popular struggles that respected and embraced cultural diversity (Almeida, 1984: 26).

As the language of Indigenous nationalities began to make a comeback in the 1970s and 1980s, it was more commonly utilized by those on the non-Indigenous left than in the broader Indigenous movements. After Almeida's 1979 essay, leftists increasingly wrote of "the existence of oppressed Indigenous nationalities within the State" (Movimiento, 1980: 8. Also see Fiallo and Ramón, 1980: 10). At a 1982 congress, the labor federation Centro Ecuatoriana de Organizaciones Clasistas (CEDOC, Ecuadorian Center of Classist Organizations) voted to send "revolutionary greetings to Ecuador's Indigenous nationalities" who "for many years have been fighting for their inalienable rights" (CEDIS/CEDOC, 1982: 47). The following year, Rafael Quintero, who served as vicepresident for FADI, embraced the demands of Indigenous movements that were now being expressed "not only as peasants, but also as peoples and nationalities" (1983: 120). In 1985, the PSE proposed a Law of Indigenous Nationalities to the national congress, even though it took years before such a law was promulgated (Santana, 1995: 46–47, 264).

In the 1986 commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the communist party, leaders compiled a volume providing an overview of the party's history, including Paredes' 1944 statements to the Constituent Assembly in which he identified Indigenous peoples as nationalities (Paredes, 1987). In the preface to the volume, Xavier Garaycoa made a point of mentioning a long history of communist support for "the rights of people and oppressed nationalities" (1987: 4). At the Fourth Encounter of South American Communist Parties meeting in Quito in February 1990, the Communist Party Secretary General René Maugé Mosquera ended his presentation with a strong denunciation of the upcoming quincentennial celebrations:

> We are in favor of the communists taking a position on the quincentennial of the arrival of the Spanish to Latin America . . . in countries such as Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia where we have a strong Indigenous contingent – here in Ecuador there are 4 million Indigenous peoples and 9 nationalities with their own languages – colonialism and colonial dominance meant a great defeat for our people. (1990: 94)

Ecuador, the communists noted at their twelfth national congress in 1993, had a plurinational society comprised of a diversity of cultures, languages and peoples with different historical origins, and called for the "constitutional establishment of the rights of Indigenous nationalities and ethnic groups" (PCE, 1993: 14; Staar, 1991: 80). The party continued, "the true realization of a plurinational and multiethnic state can only be achieved with the unified struggle of all popular sectors" (PCE, 1990: 8). Far from latecomers, the communists had consistently embraced this discourse.

During the 1980s, the "peasant" rather than "ethnic" wing of Indigenous movements was more likely to employ the language of Indigenous nationalities. For example, in 1982 the First Peasant and Indigenous National Encounter in Quito presented a right to land as "fundamental for the development of a nationality, of our culture, our language," and key to a political struggle "against imperialism and for an authentic democracy" (Lucha Campesina, 1982: 6–9). In 1987, the Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas (FENOC, National Federation of Peasant Organizations), the more "peasant" of the Indigenous organizations, called for a defense of "our rights as peoples and nationalities" (FENOC, 1987: 49). Naturally, the communist-affiliated Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios (FEI, Ecuadorian Federation of Indians) called for recognition of Ecuador as "a multinational and multicultural country" at their seventh congress in 1989. They affirmed the need to fight for the "recognition of a multinational state," and noted that the 1917 Bolshevik revolution was the first to "resolve the problem of the nationalities" (FEI, 1989: 10–11, 5). The FEI's eighth congress in 1995 linked neo-colonial dependency to racial discrimination and the need "to

create a new power that represents the interests of the people and embraces the plurinational and pluricultural character of the Ecuadorian nation" (1995: 1–3). The country embodied a civil society with a rich "diversity of cultures, languages, and peoples with distinct historical origins." Spanish colonization and subsequent elitist governments had excluded this diversity in their attempts to construct a unitary "Ecuadorian nationality" under a centralized state structure. The FEI called for the full participation of Indigenous nationalities in government so that they would have a voice in policies that affected them.

The first non-communist Indigenous organizations to embrace the language of nationalities were located in the Amazon. In August 1980, Indigenous organizations in the Ecuadorian Amazon formed the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana (CONFENIAE, Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon). CONFENIAE's statutes declared its intent to "defend and value the cultures of the Indigenous nationalities in the Ecuadorian Amazon" (CONAIE, 1989b: 116). "We have claimed the term nationalities," Indigenous intellectual Alfredo Viteri (1983: 46) observes, "as a category that includes all of the different Indigenous groups." The First Regional Conference of CONFENIAE in August 1980 was originally to be called the First Regional Conference of Indigenous *Organizations* of the Ecuadorian Amazon, with the decision to change the name reflecting an increased concern with petitioning for territorial and political rights as nationalities. Shuar intellectual Ampam Karakras was the first Amazonian to articulate coherently that Indigenous peoples were "Indian nationalities" (1984: 106) as expressed in economic, political, cultural, and linguistic aspects. "We want to use our own names, maintain our own identity and personalities," Karakras wrote in 1984.[3] Local federations also began to shift their discourse, with the Federación de Organizaciones Indígenas del Napo (FOIN, Federation of Indigenous Organizations of Napo) moving from employing language of "Indigenous classes" in the 1970s to "Indigenous federations" in the 1980s and to "ethnic nationalities" in the 1990s" (Perreault, 2000: 225; Perreault, 2001: 394). Even in the highlands, grassroots organizations increasingly moved seamlessly between class, ethnic, and nationalist ideologies and identities. The provincial Federación Indígena y Campesina de Imbabura (FICI, Indigenous and Peasant Federation of Imbabura) chose a name bridging ethnicity and class to signify its "political alliance with exploited classes as well as leftist political forces." It engaged an "anticapitalist and antiimperialist" struggle for national liberation "as Indian nationalities" (CONAIE, 1989b: 136, 143). As political scientist José Antonio Lucero ascertains, "indigenous activists in Ecuador have taken a term from the lexicon of Marxist and European thought and 'Indianized' it" (2002: 200).

Subsequently, the discourse of Indigenous nationalities came largely

under the purview of organizers utilizing the language to build their movements. Two months after the formation of CONFENIAE, Amazonian activists met with their highland counterparts to form the Consejo Nacional de Coordinación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONACNIE). CONACNIE sought to build "only one national organization for the various Indigenous nationalities in the country" (Ecuarunari-CONAIE, 1989: 42). In order to realize success, it was "indispensable to unite the double dimension of our struggle" through a recognition of "the double character of our problems: as members of a class and as part of different Indigenous nationalities" (CONAIE, 1989b: 261). The theme was reiterated in CONACNIE's second meeting in April 1984, which emphasized a "consciousness of their class position" while at the same time reaffirming an identity as peoples and nationalities (Punto de Vista, 1984: 4). CONACNIE was the forerunner to the better known CONAIE that was formed in 1986, and subsequently became the primary champion for a language of Indigenous nationalities.

In 1988, CONAIE presented its conceptualization of Ecuador as a plurinational state to the National Congress' Indigenous Affairs Commission. In the proposed Law of Indigenous Nationalities, CONAIE (1991) declared that the republic of Ecuador was a plurinational state, and argued that the government must recognize Indigenous territoriality, organization, education, culture, medicine, and judicial systems.[4] CONAIE (1989a: 117) argued that their proposed plurinational state would not establish separate states for the various ethnic groups, as certain elements in Ecuadorian society feared, but rather it would "reflect the reality of the country and the continent in respect to different national cultures and to the reestablishment of social, political, and economic equality." Both academics and politicians increasingly relied on the language of Indigenous nationalities. Anthropologist José Sánchez Parga (1986: 59; 1992; 82; 1990) proposed that Indigenous movements had a "triple dimension." In addition to class and ethnicity, they also included a nationalist orientation, including citizenship demands, with each aspect informing the other two. Rather than being opposed to each other, class, ethnicity and nationalism formed a trinity that cannot be divided. In the late 1980s, even centrist president Rodrigo Borja employed favorable rhetoric in speeches, proclaiming that "Ecuador is a plurinational and multicultural country." Indigenous nationalities, he noted, had been here "many years before we invented our states" (Black, 1999: 31; Macas, 1991: 12). Historian and socialist activist Enrique Ayala Mora (1991) also contributed an essay on the topic of Indigenous nationalities.

Leaders used the discourse of Indigenous nationalities to mobilize their bases in street protests. "We peasants and Indigenous nationalities are the most affected by the economic crisis and the government's social policies," activists declared on the eve of a 1990 national uprising (Coordinadora Popular, 1990: 9). The bishop of Riobamba issued a statement supporting

the uprising, condemning the oppression and exploitation that Indigenous peoples faced, and celebrating the "human values and rights of the Indigenous nationalities and ethnicities of our country" (Punto de Vista, 1990: 5). An April 1992 march or *caminata* of two thousand Kichwa, Shuar, and Achuar peoples from the Amazon to Quito demanded "the legalization of the territories they inhabit, and that the national constitution be reformed to reflect the plurinational and multicultural reality of Ecuador" (SAIIC, 1992: 4–7). Anthropologist Suzana Sawyer (1997b: 77, 65) calls the *caminata* "a crucial juncture in the process of indigenous nation building." The caminata provided an opportunity to weave "indigenous rights together with local understandings of identity and place," leading to "a unique moment of indigenous agency." In June 1994, peasant and Indigenous groups unified in "La Movilización Por la Vida" against proposed changes to the agrarian reform law. CONAIE criticized failed agricultural reforms because they "have not resolved the problem of Indigenous People and Nationalities" (1994: 31). Through repeated usage, this terminology gained an increasing amount of traction among Indigenous activists.

After years of agitation, activists scored a partial victory in 1998 when politicians revised the first article of the constitution to recognize its "pluricultural and multiethnic" nature (something that their Bolivian counterparts had already gained in 1994), but stopped short of using the contentious term "plurinational." A subsequent section on collective rights implicitly recognized this ideological construction with the statement that "Indigenous peoples, who self-define as nationalities of ancestral races, and Negro or Afro-Ecuadorian peoples, form part of a united and indivisible Ecuadorian state." Indigenous and peasant organizations had fought hard to be included in a truly participatory constituent assembly; however, as elsewhere in Latin America, the desire to have Ecuador formally declared a plurinational state remained an elusive goal until the approval of the 2008 constitution (Ecuador, 1998; Sawyer, 1997a: 2, 45). As Sawyer notes, "'nation *is* a politically charged and volatile category," and Indigenous success in subverting this imagery enabled them "to challenge exclusionary state rule and dominant notions of the nation" (1997b: 78).

Long-time CONAIE leader Nina Pacari points to what she sees as a critical difference between earlier communist-led organizations such as the FEI and later ones such as CONAIE. The early organizations tended to focus on issues of wages, land, and even cultural issues such as bilingual education, but "without a broader political perspective" (1996: 25). Pacari contended, "while these concrete demands remain central concerns of the indigenous movement, they are now accompanied by demands of a more political stripe: the right to self-determination, the right to our cultural identity and our languages, and the right to develop economically according to our own values and beliefs." Specifically, CONAIE added to

the Indigenous movement a new political demand of "the construction of a plurinational state that tolerates and encourages diversity among different groups in society." Despite Pacari's statement, this political language was neither as new nor as innovative as she would have us think. Most people either willfully ignore or are ignorant of the roots of the construction of Indigenous peoples as nationalities.

Lucero (2003: 36, 34; 2002: 172) notes that nationalities "are not naturally existing units but rather the products of politics." Indigenous movements can embrace a variety of mechanisms for advancing their agenda, including organizing themselves as ethnic communities (*pueblos*), federations, cooperatives, or *comunas*. In this context, "nationality became the discursive vehicle for CONAIE's alternative democratic political project." Rather than moving back toward a "tradition" or even reflecting an existing reality, nationality formed part of a strategy to construct political subjects designed to realize their agenda. CONAIE was successful in this project not so much because "nationalities" reflected reality but because they were able to mobilize around this discourse. Lucero contends that a discourse of nationalities was successful in Ecuador because it was rooted in a trajectory of civil society rather than around "the clientelistic dynamics of party politics" as developed in Bolivia, and probably to a lesser extent in Peru. In employing the discourse of nationalities as an organizing tool, CONAIE, consciously or not, built on a long and rich tradition that can be traced back to Comintern proposals of the 1920s that subsequently contributed to a strong Indigenous movement in Ecuador.

Notes

1 The use of a capital "I" in reference to Indigenous peoples is intentional and based on (and in respect for) the stated preference of the board of directors of the South and Meso American Indian Rights Center (SAIIC) as a strong affirmation of their ethnic identities. Several of the documents used in the writing of this essay are available on the e-archivo ecuatoriano, http://www.yachana.org/earchivo/.

2 For a critique on Lenin's views on nationalism, see Löwy (1998), particularly chapter three, "The Marxist Debate on Self-Determination."

3 Paredes returned to this point numerous times during the assembly's debates. See Asamblea Constituyente, 1944b: t. 3, 326; Asamblea Constituyente, 1944c: t. 6, 436–37. Also see Becker, 2007.

4 CONAIE subsequently republished this essay after the June 1990 uprising as the first in a series of twenty pamphlets to advance their movement. See Karakras, 1990.

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