

The June Shutdown in Ecuador: 18 Days of Struggle to Win a Victory

By Guido Proaño A.



After 18 days of massive and combative struggles, the indigenous and popular shutdown that began on June 13, 2022, won a great victory. It is the most important political-social event of recent years in our country, due to its many-sided impact on the development of Ecuadorian society, the characteristics of the struggle, the effects of the consciousness of the masses, the lessons that the movement left for future combats, among other aspects.

Three years ago, in October 2019, a similar mass movement also culminated in victory and left its mark on the life of the country. The attempt by the government of Lenin Moreno to raise the price of fuels was stopped by an indigenous and popular uprising that lasted 12 days; it also prevented the enactment of labor reforms aimed at making work more precarious. That victory was later derailed by President Guillermo Lasso, when he established a mechanism for the monthly increase in price of extra, super and diesel fuel, based on the variation in the price of a barrel of oil in the international market. This had a strong negative impact on the economy of popular households.

However, this is just one of the many policies adopted by the government that are intended to benefit large local and international capital and caused an increase in poverty among the masses of the

countryside and the city. To get an idea of what is happening in Ecuador today, we will state that, according to INEC [National Institute of Statistics and Censuses], 32.2% of Ecuadorians live on less than \$2.80 a day; about six million people live in poverty, of whom more than 2,600,000 live in extreme poverty, equivalent to 14.7% of the total population; 5.2% of the Economically Active Population (EAP) are unemployed and, among those who have a job (whether "adequate" or "inadequate"), they had an average income of US \$290 per month, far from the basic salary of US \$425 per month; poverty and extreme poverty strike the rural population the hardest, where it grew from 38% to 49.2% from 2016 to June 2021.

A situation of this nature cannot fail to provoke discontent among the people and anger towards those responsible for this happening: the government and its policies that favor the powerful economic groups and international monopoly capital, and the rich in the country who are increasing their fortunes while the majority are impoverished.

The protest took place in a country plunged into a deep crisis that is enveloping all the bourgeois institutions, expressed in the confrontation between the executive and legislative branch and in the sharp contradictions within the National Assembly; in the little credibility of the population in the different institutions of the State: the Executive, the Legislative, the Judicial Function, the Police and the Armed Forces, the mass media, the political parties of the bourgeoisie; in the evident political weakness of the central government and the discrediting of most of the administrations of the regional governments.

In April of this year, when analyzing the unfolding of the political crisis, our Party pointed out that "the struggles between legislative and executive do not occur because some defend the workers and the people and others do not, but rather by their eagerness to capture positions in order to exert pressure and to buy votes. They are typical contradictions among bourgeois factions; they subside when they think that their class interests in general are in danger. Therefore, one moment they vote in favor of one group and at another moment they support a different sector.... There is a decomposition of the bourgeois institutions; the crisis that the country is experiencing is an expression of the crisis of capitalism, it is a manifestation of the structure of its State and of the policy applied by the bourgeoisie that holds power; it is an expression of the decadence of bourgeois society.... Regardless of class and their own political project, the workers and



people must give a clear and forceful response to this situation. They must confront the crisis and those responsible, seeking a political solution that puts their own interests first."¹

Popular response to the crisis

It was not difficult to foresee that the year 2022 would be characterized by the sharpening of the class struggle and that the popular mobilization would have a special prominence, since, in addition to the harsh living conditions of the workers and the people, the government planned to carry through the main economic-political projects of its neoliberal program. It announced its interest in privatizing several profitable state-owned enterprises, such as the CNT [National Telecommunications Corporation]; expanding the oil exploitation area – including the impact on Yasuní Park; expand large-scale mining, handing over concessions to international monopolies; adopt labor reforms that would lead to the precariousness of work; and approved a state budget with cuts to the education and health sectors.

In January, the Popular Front and the United Workers' Front called for the first mobilizations to reject the government's policy. From then on the protest actions were constant and diverse in terms

¹ *En Marcha* [newspaper of the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of Ecuador], issue #1997, April 20 to 26, 2022.
<https://www.pcmle.org/EM/spip.php?article11760>

of the social sectors that chose to take to the streets: small and medium producers of corn, rice, dairy farmers, health workers and professionals, the women's movement, university and secondary school students, defenders of the environment, residents of poor neighborhoods, social security pensioners, patients in IESS [Ecuadorian Institute of Social Security] hospitals, among others. They led mobilizations, sit-ins and cut off roads. Of particular importance were the mobilization of May 1 and the teachers struggle grouped in the National Union of Educators, UNE.

The marches on the occasion of the celebration of May 1 warned of a new spirit among the masses and the resurgence of the popular movement as a critical actor in the situation of the country. They were numerous mobilizations; they expressed the repudiation of the government's anti-popular and sell-out policy; they condemned the announcement of the privatization of state enterprises and the anti-worker labor policy. They rejected poverty, unemployment and the government's inability to solve the pressing problems of the workers and the people. Popular dissatisfaction was evidenced in the shouts: "Only the people can save the people!" and "Let them all go!", which resonated throughout the country and were also expressed in future protest actions.

The constant mobilization of the teachers throughout the country forced the National Assembly to ratify the reforms to the LOEI [Organic Law of Intercultural Education] approved by the previous legislature. This reiterated the right of teachers to equalization of salaries; however, the government's intention to ignore this resolution led to the deepening of the struggle and the declaration, on May 3, of a new hunger strike, which lasted 18 days and culminated in victory with the resolution of the Constitutional Court supporting the demand of the UNE. For several months, the Ecuadorian teachers carried out mobilizations, sit-ins, hunger strikes, seizures of the premises of public institutions, presented proposals, etc. It was the first social sector in the country that confronted the government and taught a great lesson: it is possible to win rights, but to do so one must fight and have a correct political leadership.

The continuous deterioration of the living conditions of the people, and the government's decision to "stand firm" in the implementation of its neoliberal economic program, raised the need to organize new protest actions. The Popular Front called for making June a month of struggle of the workers and peoples of Ecuador, which



would be expressed in local and general actions of the various social sectors for their particular demands and against the anti-popular policy of the government. Together with this, the FUT (United Federation of Workers) called for a new National Day of Protest for mid-June.

The indigenous and popular movement takes to the streets

On Monday, June 13, the shutdown called by CONAIE [Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador], FENOCIN [National Confederation of Indigenous and Black Organizations] and FEINE [Council of Indigenous Evangelical Peoples and Organizations] began. From the first day, the movement showed strength and garnered sympathy from other sectors of the population who saw the 10 demands presented to the government as their own. Likewise, from the beginning one could judge the discourse of the government and the right-wing used to confront the protest. Guillermo Lasso called for unity against organized crime; the Minister of the Interior, Patricio Carrillo, went further in warning that looting and kidnappings would take place and threatened to unleash harsh repression. The right-wing said that the purpose of the mobilization was to overthrow the government and the "people of means" in Quito repeated the discourse

that the indigenous people "are coming to destroy the capital"² and that they should stay in their provinces. It was learned that the police had a plan to infiltrate civilian agents into the protests, for operations of repression and to commit acts of provocation. Although in their initial statements, Lasso and other high government officials underestimated the strength of the movement and strove to deny the reasons for the struggle, they could not hide their concern and therefore they always appealed for repression. It could be seen that in the upper echelons a double discourse was being played: while the Minister of Government [responsible for political relations, and negotiations of the president with the National Assembly (parliament) and with local government and social organizations – *translator's note*], Francisco Jiménez, spoke of the willingness of the government to dialogue, others strove to discredit the protest and threatened to implement the "progressive use of force"³.

An important element was the rapid adherence of the popular sectors of the cities; from the first day secondary and university students, residents of the popular neighborhoods, teachers, artists were mobilized. They were gradually joined by unions, health professionals, retail merchants, drivers and other contingents, either as combatants in the street or carrying out actions of solidarity and logistics.

The result of the first day of struggle included the blocking of highways in several provinces, mainly in the provinces of the Amazon and in the central and north Sierra, and demonstrations in several cities. However, the Minister of Government said that "the number of demonstrators was substantially lower than we expected."

² The mayor of Quito, Santiago Guarderas, was among those who spread these views and encouraged holding marches against the presence of the indigenous people in the city. He also presented precautionary measures so that the National Assembly would not debate a possible revocation of the emergency decree issued by the Government.

³ This confirmed the denunciation maintained by popular and left-wing organizations that the true purpose of the law known as the progressive use of force was mainly oriented to repress social protest. That law was approved a few months earlier in the National Assembly, with votes of Correa's Party (UNES [Union for Hope]), Social Christians, ID [Democratic Left], CREO [Creating Opportunities], the so-called independents and those assembly members of PK [Pachakutik] identified with the government.



Gasoline to put out the fire

In the early morning of June 14, the president of CONAIE, Leonidas Iza, was illegally detained in Pastocalle, Latacunga. If the intention of the government was to remove the leadership and thus weaken the movement, the effect was totally the opposite. It led to the greater unity of the indigenous movement and of other popular sectors; the protest grew stronger, new provinces joined the struggle and in others it swelled in size; the clashes between the demonstrators and the repressive forces occurred in several places.

The government committed a serious political error, one of many in the course of the shutdown, because it showed that the call for dialogue was nothing more than a ruse and that the main line of action was repression, not to attend to the demands raised. In Quito, the place where Iza was detained for several hours in the morning remained militarized; it became a point of concentration for people demanding his freedom; it fueled the shutdown and called for attention to their demands. The area around the Prosecutor's Office in Cotopaxi was taken over by thousands of people as soon as it was known that the habeas corpus hearing would be held there. This culminated in the formulation of charges against the president of CONAIE for the alleged crime of paralysis of public services and imposed alternative measures allowing him to remain free.

The arrest of the indigenous leader caused a split in the institutions; the Attorney General's Office issued a statement saying that Iza

had not been arrested by order of that institution and that it had not received the relevant police report; it also stated that it had taken measures to "avoid illegal and arbitrary detentions." The National Assembly debated and censured that detention.

That same day, the Guayaquil oligarchy repeated the authoritarian and racist behavior that it showed during the indigenous and political uprising of October 2019. The mayor of Guayaquil, Cynthia Viteri, mobilized city dump trucks to block the five access bridges to the city to prevent the entry of indigenous people from other provinces.

Day by day the shutdown grew stronger; new sectors joined in and the level of struggle rose in tone. The political crisis of the country, which until then was seen mainly in the sharpening of contradictions among the bourgeoisie, in the spheres of power, took on a qualitatively different characteristic, the leading role of the masses who fought in the street, questioned the institutions for their direct responsibility in the critical situation of the country. In this way, the shutdown placed at the center of the political-social scenario the contradictions between the people and the neoliberal government, between the people and the ruling class, the peoples and imperialist domination because it confronted the policy of the IMF.

The contradictions within the bourgeoisie also became heated; Lasso was unable to get the total support of the bourgeoisie. In the course of the shutdown, the crisis that had engulfed the Assembly continued to develop and the positions of both sides, of some or the other members of the Assembly, were more clearly separated. The behavior of supporters of Correa was at first quite ambiguous, they weighed their commitments to Social Christianity and other rightists for the consolidation of the new parliamentary majority and the agreements maintained with the government; in turn they tried to present themselves as defenders of the interests of the people. The Social Christians, who expressed their opposition to a good part of the government's policy but sometimes voted together with it, took care of their class interests, and this was confirmed when the Assembly debated the application of Article 130 of the Constitution, which establishes the so-called "muerte cruzada" ["cross death" – here the power of the National Assembly to remove the president, but also of the president to dissolve the National Assembly – *translator's note*].

The political weakness of the government was evident, with a minority in the legislature, but above all with low levels of credibility



and support in the population. We must not forget how the Lasso government was formed; an appreciable number of people voted for him to block the road to the candidate of Correa's party. He himself came to the second round due to electoral fraud and the percentage of null votes in the runoff was very high; all that did not allow him to count on a sustainable social base. The expectation that he created in some sectors of the population with his campaign promises and that grew with the initial success in the first phase of the vaccination campaign against Covid 19, was weakened and transformed into disillusionment in the popular sectors and in the so-called middle sectors due to the effect of his policies.

Thus, the indigenous and popular shutdown confronted a president with a bad image in the country, politically isolated from the Assembly, in the midst of discredited institutions; the shutdown, on the other hand, had the support of the majority population dissatisfied with the government, which explains their rapid joining the struggle.

The nationwide protest and the epicenter of the struggle

Starting on the third day, caravans from several provinces began arriving in Quito, which after a few days would become the epicenter of the struggle. Road closures increased, massive forays into cities and in some cases provincial governorates and state institutions were taken, transport operations between provinces were affected throughout the country and in several provinces suspended completely.

The struggle in urban areas gradually grew, in which the member organizations of the Popular Front played an important role; in the provinces of the Coast, where the indigenous movement was weak, the Popular Front had the initiative and maintained the drive until the last day of the shutdown, both in the cities and in rural areas.

The Day of Protest called for June 16 by the UNE and the Popular Front gave a particular impetus to the struggle in the cities. It took place in 23 provinces; it was the first time that the shutdown took place simultaneously throughout the territory.

The development of the struggle showed the leading role of the two parts of the popular movement: the indigenous movement – led by CONAIE – and the organizations of the Popular Front. Undoubtedly, the vigorousness of the indigenous movement is greater. Hundreds of popular organizations of different types, political movements and parties of the left are also present, such as Popular Unity, the PSE [Ecuadorian Socialist Party], the PCMLE [Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of Ecuador], the Guevarist Movement, among others.

The indigenous movement concentrated its forces in the capital; about 15 thousand people came from several provinces, as they arrived they were housed in communal houses in the popular neighborhoods, but these were insufficient. They launched the demand: Open the universities, to turn them into centers of peace and humanitarian safety zones! The Central University of Ecuador, the National Polytechnic School and the Salesian University opened their doors for that purpose.

The capital was taken by the demonstrators, not only by those who came from other provinces; the student youth, women's organizations, artists, teachers and professionals joined the struggle, traffic was scarce, private and city public transport was paralyzed, in the afternoons and evenings there were sectors of the city totally controlled by the protests, especially in the center and south, in the popular neighborhoods the drive began at night.

The development of that day allowed one to see the political experience gained by the indigenous and popular movement. Now, unlike similar days before, they concentrated forces in Quito without abandoning or weakening the struggle in the territories. This was made possible by the uniting of several factors, such as the joint action of CONAIE, FENOCIN, FEINE, the participation of other organizations such as the Popular Front, which sustained the struggle



in the cities and provinces of the coast, the discontent of the popular sectors with the government, the identification of these sectors with the platform of the proposed struggle.

Concentrating forces in the capital was a certain and a political necessity; it allowed the movement to project a message of its strength to the whole country, of its capacity for struggle. The political decisions that it took in each circumstance and allowed it to act quickly and directly on the Executive and the Legislative Authority with the strength of the masses.

The carrot and the stick

Five days after the shutdown began, President Lasso announced a state of emergency in the provinces of Pichincha, Cotopaxi and Imbabura, which authorized the Police and the Armed Forces to use lethal force, restricted the right to information, prohibited public meetings and demonstrations and, in Quito, declared a curfew. The restriction on the right to freedom of information established that the Government "may require providers who operate public telecommunications networks to suspend, degrade the quality or temporary limit services." So far, no government has proposed such measures. In his television message, Lasso echoed the discourse promoted by the most reactionary right-wing media, assuring that he is "committed to defending the capital."

The widespread repudiation provoked by that declaration, and particularly the restriction of the right to information, forced the government to retract the question of freedom of information the next day. Despite having banned public gatherings and demonstrations, he supported and joined the call for the so-called "march for peace" called for in Quito by the right-wing and the "well-off children" against the shutdown.

In the National Assembly, voices were raised calling for the revocation of the decree; two days later the president of the Assembly, Virgilio Saquicela, summoned the plenary of the Assembly to deal with the issue; a political-legal maneuver of the government prevented that decree from being discussed in the legislature.⁴

Despite the fact that Lasso and other high officials pointed out that there was no reason for protest, that the government was attending to the needs of the people, at the same time that decreed the state of emergency he announced that the bonus for human development would rise from US \$50 to US \$55, that overdue loans of up to US \$3,000 in BanEcuador would be forgiven, that there would be a subsidy for small and medium farmers and that these measures would have an immediate effect. He said that he intended to open credit lines of up to US \$5,000 for farmers with a term of 30 years; he also declared that the public health system was in emergency and announced that he would double the current budget for the Bilingual Intercultural Education System.

It is not difficult to see that the measures adopted on Friday, June 17, implied the recognition that the movement had strength and that he was trying to deactivate it or at least to decrease its intensity. He said nothing about one of the main demands of the shutdown, the reduction of fuel prices; the response of the indigenous and popular movement was that what Lasso announced was fine, but it was not enough, that there was a 10-point platform that must be addressed; therefore, the struggle continued.

⁴ On June 20, while the National Assembly was debating a motion to repeal the state of emergency established on June 17, the government repealed that decree and submitted a new one, which prohibited freedom of assembly or association in public spaces, but accepted "peaceful demonstrations" and extended the state of emergency to the provinces of Tungurahua, Chimborazo and Pastaza. That way the Assembly could not deal with something that did not exist.



With the state of emergency in their hands, the repressive plan of the government increased a notch. The national headquarters of the Ecuadorian House of Culture (CCE) was raided by the National Police on Saturday, June 18; an "anonymous complaint" stated that "war material such as home-made explosives and weapons" were kept there, which, of course, were never found. The order issued by the Prosecutor's Office contemplated "searching, unlocking, breaking of doors or locks, apprehension of people and seizure of evidence that could be found in the facilities." The rejection by artists, promoters of culture, intellectuals and many others was immediate: dozens of people gathered in the surrounding area to condemn the ignominious action. Appealing to the act of "requisition," during the following days they converted the CCE building into a police barracks.

It is known that the plaza around the House of Culture and El Arbolito Park had become a symbol of the struggle and resistance of the indigenous movement; it has been a place of housing people and of assemblies and meetings. The government sought to deprive the indigenous movement of that reference point and to create difficulties for it to remain in the city. The measure did not have its effect; five days later the plaza was again occupied by protesters.

Discourse of the right-wing and the government

Using the same discourse, the government, the right-wing and the mass media unleashed an intense and systematic offensive that aimed to discredit the struggle and the reason for it, neutralize the support of the population, provoke a social reaction against the demonstrators and justify the repression.

Initially, the campaign claimed that there were no reasons for the protest and that the government was willing to talk and listen to the

proposals; as the shutdown grew stronger, the government's narrative rose in tone. It spoke of a confrontation between coup plotters and defenders of democracy, of a violent and destabilizing movement, financed by drug traffickers and organized crime, and that terrorist groups were operating. The most visible leaders of this campaign in the government were the Minister of the Interior, Patricio Carrillo; the Minister of Defense, Luis Lara; the director of the Strategic Intelligence Center, Fausto Cobo; presidential adviser Diego Ordóñez and, of course, President Lasso himself. The CIA agent and former army intelligence director, Colonel Mario Pazmiño, was and remains one of the most active promoters of this campaign.

The colonial vision of the most reactionary elites showed itself in the racist attacks against the indigenous movement. Behind the phrase "go back to your territories," used in a derogatory way, was a discriminatory and segregationist attitude. Racism not only has this type of conceptions; it includes means of categorization and exclusion to exercise power over subordinate sectors. It relies on authoritarian practices to guarantee the *status quo*, normalizes forms of oppression and justifies everything that serves to maintain inequality. The colonial prejudices about indigenous people, such as that they are "lazy" and poor because they "don't like to work," are in line with legitimizing the privileges of the ruling class.

The stirring up of racist discourse is, in itself, a complex and dangerous issue; it brings with it the risk of pro-fascist political structures. It is a warning that must be considered.

The right-wing also worked to create a social movement against the shutdown; in several provinces the business owners put themselves at the head of the call for the so-called "white marches" – in which hatred and racism abounded – which took as their slogan the "search for peace." They did not have the size that the organizers expected, but they had a presence in several provinces; in Quito they went from smaller to larger. In the capital there were two or three incidents that should warn us; young people from well-to-do families from their cars fired weapons at those who protested in the street. About this, the bourgeois press maintained total silence; the facts were made known through social media.

The confrontation in the field of communication played its own role and was fundamental. On an important level, the alternative media managed to counter the official discourse and expose the real de-



velopment of the struggle. Through these and social media, the population saw the brutality of the police repression, the courage and bravery of the front-line fighters, the development of the struggle both in the capital and in the most remote areas and the actions of solidarity; they got information and reported the development of events. The popular communication derailed the lies and false accusations of government officials and police chiefs, as in the case of Byron Guatatuca, a Kichwa youth murdered in Puyo. The police chiefs claimed that he died from the misuse of explosive materials, but videos circulating on social media showed the impact of a tear gas cannister dropped by the Police that lodged in his skull and killed him instantly.

The contrast of information, narratives and analysis regarding what was happening in the country was a form of acute ideological confrontation.

Let the guns speak first

The government's supposed willingness to dialogue was never accompanied by concrete actions to make it happen except in the last days. The discourse about the dialogue was used to mask its decision to confront the shutdown with repression, calculating that, with the passing of days, fatigue and uncertainty would spread among the demonstrators.

None of the measures and actions taken by the government and the repressive apparatuses to quell the shutdown worked. The popular struggle overcame the declarations of the states of emergency, the forces of the Army and the Police were confronted and, in several places and occasions the demonstrators prevailed over the repressive forces. The people resisted and won.

The repressive apparatus was enormous: military, special police forces, riot tanks, cavalry, dogs, motorized equipment, helicopters, plainclothes agents, tear gas bombs, pellet cartridges and lead bullets.

In Quito, the Central University (UCE), the Salesian University, the National Polytechnic School, intended as safety zones and places for humanitarian aid, were attacked by the police forces, as was the Catholic University. This caused the Ombudsman's Office to issue a resolution in which it requested the police and military not to enter the country's universities. However, the attacks continued; hours after the Ombudsman's Office made that request, the Police threw tear gas bombs inside the UCE.

The police acted viciously against the demonstrators. In the Preliminary Report presented by the "Mission of International Solidarity and Human Rights," which was in the country during the shutdown, there were heartbreaking testimonies denouncing the repressive violence. "Especially members of the elite UMO (Unit for the Maintenance of Order) corps shot people directly in the face, at close range, with the clear objective of killing.... the cruel treatment of detainees, including torture, ill-treatment, inhuman or degrading treatment, constituted special violations aimed at undermining the human condition itself."⁵

The repressive forces acted with impunity, with *carte blanche* granted by President Lasso. June 24 was one of the days in which police repression acted with greatest brutality in Quito; more than a hundred were reported injured in the area of El Ejido park, dozens were detained, children were missing and women were choked by tear gas. At night on the same day, in one of the halls of Carondelet [the Presidential Palace – *translator's note*], Lasso and the military and police chiefs congratulated each other on the achievements of the day, and in a tweet he praised the repressive violence: "...I thank you for your courage and drive with which you defend every man, woman and child in Ecuador. My full support for the work they do to return the country to tranquility."

It is not possible to specify exactly the toll of the repression, because the forces operated everywhere, not only in the cities where there were the largest concentrations and mass mobilizations; they

⁵ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1K96tbkLhVWcGvAEkxB9IM-wBl_bGN90IM/view

also repressed small groups in rural areas, they bombed with tear gas houses where children were inside, schools, beating those who demonstrated on the highways, passengers on public transport, people who applauded the struggle from sidewalks. It is acknowledged that at least six people were killed by the repressive forces and more than 500 injured. As had happened in the indigenous and popular uprising of October 2019, also now, General Patricio Carrillo bears the main responsibility for these events, for the crimes committed in October 2019; on him lies an accusation of crimes against humanity.

The high point of the struggle

After ten days, the struggle grew in extent and intensity, provinces such as Imbabura, Cotopaxi, Pastaza and Chimborazo remained totally paralyzed; throughout the country there were protest demonstrations in urban and rural areas, dozens of oil wells stopped producing, food and fuel were scarce in the market, truck, bus, van and taxi drivers joined the protest in several provinces. The businessmen complained about the losses caused by the paralysis and demanded that it be put to an end. The movement was reaching its highest peak and the government was isolated.

In the mobilizations, the slogan “Lasso out, a people’s government!” spread; the degree of discontent of the population and the discredit of the government were high; according to opinion polls – in those days – disapproval of his administration was about 80%. The struggle achieved a political significance, the confrontation between the people and the government, the people and the ruling class became clear; the country was polarized around the shutdown.

This circumstance was taken advantage of by Correa’s party (UNES), which proposed that the Assembly debate a demand for early elections (“muerte cruzada”), in correspondence with article 130.2 of the Constitution: a “serious crisis and internal commotion.” It was known that the motion would not achieve the minimum 92 votes required for its approval, but Correa’s party saw this as an opportunity to identify with the anti-government sentiment among the population and to clean up its image affected by its agreements with the government. Its abstention, along with the ruling party in the Assembly, when a motion was voted to shelve the tax reform bill, allowed the proposal sent by the government to enter into force without any change; on the other hand, the government would have had the

commitment to work to review the judicial processes for corruption against Rafael Correa, Jorge Glas and others in their ranks.

The CONAIE convened a Popular Assembly for Friday, June 24, to which unions and other organizations of workers, teachers, peasants, students, small and medium banana producers, rice farmers, corn growers, etc., communities, neighborhoods, transportation workers, youth and women's groups, etc. were invited. The call recognized the popular composition of the shutdown, because all these sectors were part of the struggle; without their incorporation the movement would not have had the significance and size that it had. The Popular Front supported the call, and proposed that it also be organized in the provinces with the participation of all sectors that are fighting against the neoliberal policies, including democratic, progressive and left-wing political organizations, that it be a space in which everyone has the right to their opinion and where its resolutions are the result of collective debate, that all organizations and participants act on equal terms.

Pachakutik legislators were invited to the Assembly, nine of the 27 that make up the parliamentary bloc attended, and they received the mandate to join in the demand that the National Assembly discuss the dismissal of President Guillermo Lasso.

The magnitude of the social protest, the deepening of the political crisis, the pressures that arose from some sectors of the oligarchy, the failure of coercive and repressive measures to stop the struggle forced Lasso to build bridges by starting talks with the leaders of the indigenous movement. The withdrawal of the Police from the building of the House of Culture, which occurred on Thursday, June 23, was a message of the "political will" of the government to talk. A day before, the CONAIE, FENOCIN and FEINE issued a public statement in which they expressed their willingness to dialogue, provided that "there were conditions of good faith and guarantees for their realization." They set six conditions: immediate cessation of the actions of repression and criminalization, repeal of the state of emergency and guarantees not to impose new decrees in the framework of the national shutdown, cessation of the attack and respect for the areas of humanitarian protection, that the entire agenda be put on the table and that there be no points that the government refuses to discuss, that it must make efforts to listen to the citizens' outcry. The communiqué ended by pointing out: "the dialogue that we, the indigenous, social and people organizations want, is a face-to-face and direct dialogue



between the actors involved, for which we do not need mediators or intermediaries; instead we do request oversight of the process, so we ask collectives, social organizations, national and international human rights organizations, to be guarantors of this dialogue process..."⁶

It seemed that the negotiations and an agreement between CONAIE, FENOCIN, FEINE and the government were close, which would put an end to the protest. However, the savage repression that broke out on the afternoon of the 23rd, which caused the death of young Henry Quezada, the injured, beaten, suffocated, missing children, intensified the levels of confrontation and a different situation was created, the possibilities of sitting down to negotiate were postponed. Not only in the vicinity of the National Assembly and El Ejido Park, the clashes with the Police and the Army were violent, there was a fight in the center and south of the city; in the north, near the Middle of the World [site marking the line of the equator – *translator's note*], army trucks carrying equipment to repress the protest were attacked by the demonstrators; near the Central University there were provocations by the Police, who fired shots. Up to that day four popular fighters had been killed.

⁶ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OWq0-CG1WAedTqT50QU9nLOA-rmtMYmP/view>

The government's campaign to delegitimize the protest intensified; it was said that the leaders of the CONAIE did not want to dialogue; they tried to overestimate the problems of shortages of products in the markets and medical supplies, they spoke more insistently of an alleged financing of the struggle with drug money. It was evident that the most reactionary sector had imposed itself on the government, the one that bet on ending the protest with bullets, tear gas and prison. At the same time, the right-wing took measures to move from condemnation to the struggle to public actions of rejection with the so-called "white marches"; racist and hate speech increased. In this context there were attacks by armed civilians against the demonstrators. The class confrontation was absolutely clear.

On Friday June 24, in the afternoon, Guillermo Lasso addressed the country; he blamed the indigenous movement for the violence created by the Police the day before in Quito and maintained that "the real intention" of Iza was to overthrow of government and "usurp a legally constituted government." Faced with that, he announced that "the National Government would use all the resources that the law empowers it to confront **vandals and criminals**. The National Police and the Armed Forces will act... through the progressive use of force, [to ensure] public order and democracy." He did not miss the opportunity to thank the Democratic Left, the Christian Social Party, the National Accord Caucus and the assembly members who "have publicly demonstrated in favor of the constituted order."

The conclusion of the President's message meant the order for the Police to savagely attack those who were in the plaza around the House of Culture – where in the morning the People's Assembly was established – and in the vicinity of El Ejido park. "We are no longer going to push back but to repress with the progressive use of force. We are no longer facing protesters with a social demand but a group of criminals," said Minister Patricio Carrillo.

In that afternoon alone, more than a hundred people were injured; doctors, medical students and volunteers who were carrying out relief actions in the protest organized a humanitarian cordon to protect hundreds of women, children and men who were ambushed by the Police and the Army, thus preventing them from continuing to beat, harass and detain people. On social networks, the urgent call to "Stop the massacre!" became universal!

The government celebrated the operation as a political victory and announced the withdrawal of the protesters to their provinces.



What happened that afternoon emotionally affected the people who, in addition, felt tired after almost two weeks of struggle. The following Saturday and Sunday the level of protest decreased in the capital, but it did not disappear; they were dedicated to regaining strength and holding assemblies by communities, to analyze the situation and agree on new actions. That Saturday a mobilization of women was held to reject the criminal violence of the State; they made it clear that the struggle would continue until the government sat down to dialogue and discuss the 10 points of the platform of struggle.

The final confrontations

On Sunday evening, June 26, Lasso made a new announcement from a position of strength that can be summarized in three aspects: he maintained his decision to impose a strong hand, to prosecute protesters, in particular the leaders; he would intensify the repression through the application of the progressive use of force; and, he decided to reduce the price of gasoline and diesel fuel by 10 cents. Government spokespersons said that, with this announcement, there was no longer any reason to continue the shutdown, that the "effort" of the State would cost \$260 million dollars which, added to what it had announced a week earlier, would be an expenditure of \$600 million.

The response of the various popular and political organizations was immediate. The Revolutionary Youth of Ecuador, Popular Unity and the Popular Front agreed that the struggle of the people was for

more, that the government had to respond to the entire platform presented. The CONAIE delayed in making its opinion public, it described the reduction as insufficient and insensitive, that the government was blind to the situation of poverty that the people are living in and it also insisted that the entire platform be addressed.

Although, as we said, the announcement was made from a position of strength, it was not difficult to understand that the government knew that it had to give up something on an issue that it had considered taboo and that was the one that provoked the most interest in the population. At that point, including the announcements on June 17, there were already five points on which it was forced to give a response. These were achievements of the struggle, but the decision of the rank-and-file was to continue the shutdown until attention was paid to the entire platform and that the decrease in the price of fuels had to be greater.

Meanwhile, the debate on the so-called “muerte cruzada” began on Saturday afternoon, June 25. In some sectors, there were great expectations raised as to their result. Lasso sent a representative and made a new maneuver: to remove support from the request for a trial, he announced the repeal of the state of emergency "due to serious internal commotion." Three days later the Assembly made a decision: 80 legislators voted in favor, 48 against with 9 abstentions. A sector of the Democratic Left, the Christian Social Party, the National Accord caucus voted to save Lasso; some Pachakutik and Democratic Left legislators abstained, expressing support for the government. "Nothing else could be expected from an Assembly which, with the exception of a few assembly members, does not represent the interests of the workers and the people. They have not thrown Lasso out, but the majority of the people all over the country have shouted: Lasso out! The president of the Republic cannot feel victorious after this result, because only 48 assemblymen voted in his favor, but beyond that, millions of Ecuadorians have repudiated him and have shown it during this indigenous and popular uprising," said the editorial of *En Marcha*, issue 2007.⁷

The people continued to arrive in Quito, the weekend provided relief forces. The news of the brutal repression of the previous days inflamed their spirits and new contingents were enlisted to go to the capital. On Monday June 27, the protests had a new impetus across

⁷ <https://www.pcmle.org/EM/spip.php?article11913>



the country. Azuay was added to the provinces that were paralyzed previously. Over the weekend the bourgeois government and press worked to create the idea that the people had given up the fight and that, therefore, the movement was defeated, but the facts showed a different situation; the movement took the initiative again.

With the people fighting in the streets and highways, talks begin between the government and the leaders of CONAIE, FENOCIN and FEINE. This first meeting ended with positive results for the movement. The Minister of Government, Francisco Jiménez, said that Decree 95, which refers to the expansion of the extractive or mining area, would be repealed; he also announced the commitment to introduce changes in Decree 151, which includes the government's mining policy. Specifically, the reform would move towards eliminating the powers of the President to request extraction of natural resources in protected areas and in areas declared as untouchable "under exceptional conditions." In addition, new projects of extraction of natural resources in such areas would not be allowed. Regarding the price of fuels, there was the offer to focus on a new price.

The events that took place in the early hours of Tuesday June 28, in Shushufindi, served as a pretext for the government to break off the dialogue. The population confronted members of the army and police guarding a convoy of 17 tankers carrying fuel, which was heading towards the ITT [Ishpingo-Tambococha-Tiputini] oil block; in the clash one soldier died and several were injured. Throughout the shutdown, the population kept control of this road without any acts of violence. There is no doubt that this was a provocation by the security forces.

With an authoritarian and threatening tone, Lasso said that they will not sit down to dialogue with Leonidas Iza again, because "you

cannot dialogue with those who try to hijack the peace of Ecuadorians." The Prosecutor's Office joined the government's game and opened more than 260 investigations for rebellion, terrorism, paralysis of public services and extortion.

Again the government bet that the fatigue of the popular fighters and the population and the repression would force the end of the shut-down; however the protest continued. Therefore, on June 29 a new state of emergency was decreed, this time in Imbabura, Azuay, Sucumbios and Orellana; in the last three provinces a curfew was also applied. The governor of Morona Santiago, Freddy Villamagua, resigned from his position; in exchange the provincial manager of BanEcuador was released, who had been held by the demonstrators.

The Minister of Government made it known that the government would accept the intervention of the Episcopal Conference in the dialogues; later, Iza confirmed that the leaders of the indigenous movement would also participate. After 18 days of struggle throughout the country, on June 30, a "Peace Accord" was signed and the indigenous and popular movement won a great victory. The Executive accepted the:

- *Decrease in 15 cents of the price of a gallon of gasoline and diesel, and discuss a process of creating a subsidy for peasant, transportation workers, fisherfolk and others sectors.*
- *Repeal of Decree 95. The oil area would not be extended in order to protect the territories and collective rights of indigenous peoples.*
- *Reform of Decree 151, to prohibit mining in protected areas and ancestral territories; areas declared untouchable; archaeological sites; water protection areas; prior, free and informed consultation in indigenous communes, communities, peoples and nationalities will be guaranteed.*
- *Strengthening of operations and mechanisms of price control in order to prevent speculation in the market of basic necessities (Decree 452).*
- *The public health system was declared to be in emergency (Decree 454).*
- *The so-called Human Development Bonus will rise from US \$50 to US \$55*



- *A subsidy of 50% in the price of fertilizer for small and medium producers.*
- *Reduction of the interest rates from 10% to 5% in loans of up to US \$3,000 granted by BanEcuador.*
- *Overdue loans of up to \$3,000 with the same institution will be forgiven.*
- *US \$100 million more for productive loans, which will be US \$20,000 for a 10-year term and 5% annual interest.*
- *A draft law will be drawn up to amend Article 66 of the Organic Law of the Special Amazon Territorial District.*

As part of the agreement, round tables for technical discussion were established, with the responsibility of setting the mechanisms for the implementation of the agreements within 90 days.

Bases for victory

Different factors and circumstances allowed this struggle to achieve victory. Among these we cite the massiveness, combativeness, unity in action of the different popular sectors, its extension throughout the country, the content of the platform of struggle, a correct political leadership, the concentration of forces in the capital, the existence of a politically weakened government, the impact the struggle had on the country's economy and on the profits of powerful economic groups, its duration, the active solidarity and sympathy of broad sectors of the population.

The struggles of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement have been characterized by their massiveness. In this, the communal social organization plays a transcendent role, everything having to do with the life of the community is resolved collectively, everything agreed to is executed collectively. The first indigenous uprising, in 1990, already showed the massive participation of young people, women, mothers with their children, adults. From then until now, the indigenous movement has been strengthening and showing itself as a social actor that cannot be ignored when defining state policies, nor in the daily development of Ecuadorian society, which has also developed as a strong political actor.

The resistance struggle of the indigenous movement is not limited to protecting its cultural elements, which in itself is a hard and enormous historical task; it is a battle to achieve their recognition as indigenous peoples and nationalities with the same rights and options of the mestizo nation; within the framework of a plurinational State, it is a struggle to overcome the condition of oppressed peoples. This idea has developed at the level of social consciousness and is one of the elements that motivates its action. Of course, they fight for water for irrigation, for fair prices for their products, for credits to produce, in defense of their lands and territories, for education for their children, and by fighting for this they are protecting their own existence as peoples.

Principal actors of the struggle

The joint participation of CONAIE (and its subsidiaries), FENOCIN and FEINE made it possible for the front of struggle to expand, a situation that was not present in previous uprisings, in which CONAIE always took care to maintain its leading role within the indigenous movement. From the first day, these convening forces were joined by other social sectors, in particular the organizations making up the Popular Front, the activists of Popular Unity, our activists, various organizations of women, neighborhoods, unions and peasants.

The national extension was made possible by the combination of these forces in action. In most provinces, the organizations of the Popular Front sustained the struggle in the cities and in Quito, where the indigenous movement concentrated its forces; the university and high school students, teachers, members of women's and feminist organizations, artists and unemployed youth mingled with the fighters in the streets.



Particularly on the coast, the weak presence of the indigenous movement was made up for by the Popular Front. The major actions that were carried out at several places in the province of Guayas, and of course in Guayaquil, were carried out by the members of the UNE, FEUNASSC [United Federation of Affiliates of Peasants' Social Security], CUBE [United Coordination of Neighborhoods of Ecuador], UP [Popular Unity], JRE [Revolutionary Youth of Ecuador], FESE [Federation of Secondary Students of Ecuador], FEUE [Federation of University Students of Ecuador] and Women for Change. a similar thing happened in Esmeraldas, Sto. Domingo, Manabí, Los Ríos, Sta. Elena, El Oro, in which banana producers also took part.

The teachers, called out by the UNE, gave particular support to the development of the struggle throughout the country, since their particular demand for wage equality became part of the indigenous and popular shutdown. The sit-ins, rallies and marches that they carried out during those days for that aim contributed to highlighting the protest in the cities. This could be seen from June 16 to 22, the latter convened by the FUT [United Federation of Workers] and the Popular Front.

It was clear that the most robust contingents of the popular movement in our country are the indigenous movement and the forces of the Popular Front; clearly, the leading and fundamental force is the indigenous movement.

Combativity to confront the violence of the State

The massiveness of the struggle was accompanied by combative-ness. The movement of the masses has learned from its own struggles and this was seen in the struggle in the streets, in the building of barricades, the use of tools and means of protection and self-defense, the action of the masses in the cities, the seizure of governorates and institutions, the closure of main roads to affect the productive apparatus, the blockade of cities taking over key points, the organization of relief, the logistics to sustain the fighters in the capital.

This struggle was a new time of learning for everyone, for those who were on the front lines, in the first aid teams, for those who worked in communications and propaganda, for those who took part in the massive marches and cutting off of roads, for those who worked in the reception centers, for the people who gave their solidarity contribution by providing lodging, food and medical care. Thousands of people took part in these street actions for the first time; thousands also for the first time confronted a repressive force like the one that acted; now they are in a position to transmit their experience for new struggles.

The government, the police and military chiefs, the bourgeois media were frightened and wanted to frighten the country by the presence of the "Front Line" and "Indigenous Guard"; they said that they were military formations in the struggle, that they were guerrilla comandos and even that there were insurgent organizations from other countries. The truth is that the struggle teaches, and our people have learned to fight and confront repression; they are not willing to face unarmed a repressive apparatus that wants to punish the protesters. The indigenous guard is a natural organization in the communities for their protection from crime; now they fulfilled the role of taking care of their brothers and sisters. For most of those on the front lines, this was their baptism as combatants.

These are very important elements of organization for the fight, not only for the combatants, but for the mass struggle. The way in which this struggle unfolded, what happened during those days show elements of what is the Marxist conception of the people's war.

The strength of the youth and women

Those who provided combativity to the struggle gave an example of courage and even heroism; they were young men and women who



came with their indigenous communities, others who lived in the cities but who did not cut themselves off from their national situation and contributed to their people, high school and university students, the unemployed, artists. Among those thousands of young people from the city and the countryside were our militants, the comrades of the Revolutionary Youth of Ecuador, of the FESE and FEUE, of Popular Unity.

The Ecuadorian youth have always been characterized by their social sensitivity, by their willingness to join the struggle against the anti-popular policies of the various governments, to defend their rights and those of the people. These young people have always been victims of the oppression and exploitation of this system, which provides them with nothing but uncertainty, hopelessness, it denies them education and work and forces them to flee the country to look for options in other areas, where it does not find them either. The Ecuadorian youth are always front-line fighters.

The leading role that women had shown in previous days was repeated; it is not possible to conceive of a popular uprising without their presence. Lasso said that they were being used when they led the marches and that the children were also being used; he did not only say it because of his ignorance of indigenous culture, but because he tried to discredit the leaders of the movement from a patriarchal and male chauvinist position.

In the midst of the obstacles that they face, such as having almost no opportunity to have access to the labor market, the economic and

geographical difficulties in getting access to services such as education and health, their marginalization and other problems, the indigenous women are playing a decisive role in the struggle for resistance and self-determination of their peoples; they are guarantors of their culture and are playing a fundamental role in their families and in the community.

The prominence of indigenous women in the shutdown was not determined by their massive participation, but by the way they acted. They debated in the assemblies and took part in their resolutions; they confronted the repressive forces, assumed responsibilities of leadership of the movement, in the work of communication, in logistics.

In the organized popular movement, women have played a greater role; they have opened up and gained spaces for their own abilities and qualities. They are the main leaders in various trade union, student, teacher, peasant, indigenous, neighborhood and retail organizations, at the national and local levels; their presence in the actions and struggles of various social sectors showed an evident growth and the women's movement, due to its particular demands, experienced a remarkable development in recent years.

Reasons to fight

The rapid support that the various sectors gave to the shutdown and their joining in the struggle was due to the enormous discontent that the population had with the government, because their living conditions have deteriorated even more in recent years. The application of neoliberal policies and the effects of the capitalist crisis in the country have led to an accelerated impoverishment of the population. The call for the shutdown was the opportunity to show their dissatisfaction and rebelliousness.

The ten points of the platform of struggle included specific demands for the indigenous movement and the peasants, demands of general interest (such as the issue of mining and oil), but the population saw the decrease in fuel prices as the central and most important point. The results of a survey, published a month after the shutdown, showed that 54.88% of the population thought that the reason for calling the shutdown was the price of fuel, and 39.78% said that it was due to the high cost of living and the bad economy; only 4.41% considered that it was for political or personal interest. This showed that, in this respect, the government's discourse had no hold on people. Even more specifically, when asked what were the main demands of



the shutdown, 72.37% answered lower fuel prices, and 19.08% said the high cost of living. Millions of Ecuadorians identified their feelings and moods with the demands of the shutdown.

The platform of struggle questioned the policy of the government and the neoliberal bourgeois factions, the shutdown was a response to the worsening of the crisis, the results achieved meant a political defeat for the government, a blow to the policy of the IMF.

The money came from the people

This struggle was sustained by the masses in all respects. The government and reactionaries of all stripes make calculations and insist again and again that drug money financed the shutdown, but they have not shown it and cannot prove it.

Among the many lessons that the shutdown left behind, the sense of solidarity occupies a special place. It does not fit in the minds of the bourgeoisie, specialized in seeing how to make a profit in everything, that a poor people give a part of the little they have to sustain the struggle. Peasant communities, neighborhood organizations, market merchants, student organizations, women's groups, families and individuals contributed with food, medicines, mattresses, blankets, clothing and everything that the permanence of the people in Quito demanded.

The care of the children, food, provisions, medical care, relief and first aid in the mobilizations were covered all the time by professionals, students and young volunteers, who understood that these actions helped to sustain the combat, that this was their trench of struggle.

The people fashioned their victory

The indigenous and popular shutdown ended in an important victory; the efforts of the government and its repressive apparatus, of the owners of big capital, of the bourgeois media could not isolate the mass movement and defeat it, as was their objective. The strength, unity, organization and struggle of thousands of men and women, young and old, isolated the government and defeated it.

The government calculated that to meet the demands of the shutdown would mean about one billion dollars; this is not a small amount, but it is not enough to meet all the unmet demands and needs. They will not do so because they want to, but they were forced to. From their political conception, these resources should have been channeled into the payment of the foreign debt or for projects in which big international capital is benefited. We must remain vigilant so that the government fulfills what it has promised and so that the benefits of the proposed programs and actions reach those who need it most.

The shutdown reaped victories in other fundamental areas of strategic importance for the Ecuadorian revolution. The indigenous and popular movement emerged strengthened in organization, in political experience, in its capacities and skills for struggle. During these 18 days, the class struggle was visibly at the center of the political life of the country; our ordinary people saw and recognized who are part of their struggle, who are at their side and fight together with them for their common needs and demands, they also saw on the other side those who had all the support of the bourgeois institutions to quell the struggle and treated them with hatred and contempt.

The workers, the youth, the peoples of Ecuador made great progress in the development of their political consciousness, in the recognition that society is divided between poor and rich, exploited and exploiters who, in order to maintain their class domination, have the government, the apparatuses of repression, the big media, the laws and the organs of justice at their service.

In the consciousness of the people, the idea has been reaffirmed that rights are won by fighting, that the struggle bears fruit when it has strength; with that conviction they are prepared to raise new struggles, because the needs of the masses are many.

In the country there has been a change in the balance of social and political forces; the organized popular movement has reached a new level; the indigenous movement has gained prestige and confidence among the population. There has been a promotion of leadership from the indigenous and popular movement; the left organizations have gained prestige; all the bourgeois institutions have been struck, the government has been further discredited, as the National Assembly, the organs of justice, the mass media and the political parties of the bourgeoisie have been.

The revolutionary forces have fertile ground to work with these tens of thousands of fighters, to bring our politics to them, to spread more widely and insistently the ideas of revolution and socialism among the masses.

The crisis of the country has not been resolved; the crisis of capitalism remains; new struggles await us.

August 2022

Annexes

The Politics of the Carrot and the Stick

It seems that the government is trying to implement the policy of "the carrot and the stick." Faced with the announcement of protest actions called by several trade union and popular organizations, which will be carried out in the next few days, the Minister of Government, Francisco Jiménez, "reiterated his willingness to dialogue." At the same time the Minister of the Interior, Patricio Carrillo, warned of harsh repression of what he described as "kidnappings of police and military, looting," which would occur during the protests. The repressive apparatus is ready and, as is known, it has new equipment. There is enough money for riot tanks and tear gas bombs, but not for health and education.

To talk of the government's willingness to dialogue is a joke, to say the least. Lasso and his group believe that to dialogue is to invite leaders of the popular movement — and not always true representatives of it — to tell them what the government plans to do and to refuse to listen to the opinions of the popular leaders. Months ago commissions were formed to debate the labor issue and then to analyze the problem of social security, but nothing positive for the workers and the people came from these, to the point that, for example, the Workers' United Front decided to withdraw from these "round tables."

Between the views of the government and those of the organized popular movement, on the various issues of an economic, social and political order, there is a huge and marked difference. Lasso represents the interests of the big bourgeoisie and international monopoly capital, which are in total contradiction with the needs and aspirations of the workers and the people. So far apart are those interests that Minister Carrillo had no qualms about warning that the voices of protest would be silenced with a club and bullet.

This is why there is so much interest and urgency in the approval of the law on the progressive use of force. It was justified by the wave of criminal violence that the country is experiencing, but everyone understands that its fundamental purpose is to legalize the brutal repression against the popular protests.

With or without the law, Minister Carrillo is an expert in bringing out the troops to shoot at close range. We must not forget that an

accusation of crimes against humanity hangs over him, because he was directly responsible for the repression unleashed against the indigenous-popular uprising of October 2019.

Editorial of the weekly En Marcha

Issue #2005, from June 15 to 21

Lasso Out, People's Government!

A new indigenous and popular uprising is occurring in Ecuador. Tens of thousands of indigenous people, workers, peasants, youth, students, women, residents of popular neighborhoods, the unemployed, traders in the markets and streets, are protesting throughout the country, because it is not possible to continue enduring the cost of living and poverty, the hunger that stalks their homes, the lack of employment, low wages, the impossibility of gaining access to health and education.

The crisis that the country has been experiencing for months in all areas, today has a qualitatively new element, the leading role of the masses in the streets, which has become the main element in the current political scenario. The contradiction between the people and government has been strained to the point that, together with the initial demands that motivated the struggle of the masses; today the departure of the president has been called for: "Lasso out, people's government!" resounded throughout the country.

The rise of the struggle of the masses has in fact broken the state of emergency decreed by the government in order to stop the protest. The mobilization of numerous Army and Police troops has not been able to stop the fighting actions throughout all the provinces and the advance of contingents of men and women arriving in Quito. The threat had no effect when conscience and courage come together; the experience of other combats allows people to confront the repressive forces in better conditions and to avoid their attacks and encirclements.

The struggle is pushing back the government. From an initial position that "nothing is happening here and there is no reason to protest," it has been forced has adopted some measures – such as the declaration of a health emergency or the increase in the budget for bilingual intercultural education – and announce others that remain as promises, nothing more. It thought that that would be enough to

paralyze the protest movement, but once again it was wrong: the struggle grew, convinced that it is possible to win a greater victory.

The people are isolating the government; they are confronting the effects of the application of neoliberal policies – and neoliberalism itself – which is the economic-political creed of the most powerful bourgeois factions in the country. It is also confronting the effects of the exploitation and oppression exercised by capitalism.

In our country there is a people who are rising up, who are writing history with their struggle, who are forging the unity of the exploited and oppressed by fighting the government that represents the interests of the owners of big capital. The people are fashioning a new victory.

Editorial of the weekly En Marcha
Issue #2006, from June 22 to 28

The platform of struggle must be listened to

Yesterday, Thursday, the indigenous movement took over the plaza of the House of Culture in Quito, which, in the course of years of struggles, has become a symbol of resistance and combat of the peoples. In recent days, the government, by controlling it militarily, tried to prevent the movement from having a place of welcome and peace and, in turn, to show the country that it was willing to prevent the protest from continuing. The police had to leave the whole area; the indigenous and popular struggle has won a victory.

The withdrawal of the repressive forces, they say, is a sign of the government's willingness to dialogue. These days Lasso has played around a lot with the talk of sitting down to dialogue, while at the same time, the Police and the Army have filled the streets and roads with tear gas and have even claimed the lives of four popular fighters together with hundreds injured and beaten. The government never had a serious disposition to discuss with the popular organizations and listen to their proposals; as the rulers who preceded him, Lasso believes that dialogue means to summon the leaders of popular organizations so that they listen to him give a monologue and agree to what he plans to do.



On several occasions, the leaders of the trade union federations, the indigenous movement and other popular organizations have shown that they are not running to a dialogue with the government, nor are they willing to be used for its propaganda. If we sit down to talk, they say, it is to put together the proposals that the popular organizations have on the economic and political administration of the country, and not to talk to the walls. Dialogue can only be valid if and when positive results emerge from it, that is, if popular demands are met.

In the current circumstances, if the government says it is willing to dialogue, it must give positive signals: this implies lifting the state of emergency and announcing its agreement with at least part of the proposed platform and discuss how to implement the rest of it. The indigenous and popular movement that is protesting must maintain its action in the streets in Quito and in the provinces; this is the only means that forces the government to meet its demands. In addition, the investigation of those responsible for the deaths of the four popular fighters and their punishment must be incorporated into this process.

The leaders of the indigenous movement have said that they will not withdraw if the government does not accept the ten points of the platform of struggle, that will – which is the decision of the rank-and-file – must be maintained if the talks begin.

*Editorial of the weekly En Marcha
Special supplement, June 24*

Confrontation between the People and the Oligarchy

Guillermo Lasso is mocking the people. One moment he says he wants to talk, but he immediately throws groups of police and soldiers who beat and shoot at those who are protesting in the street; history is repeating itself once again. It is not that he has lost patience or anything like that, the combination of demagoguery and the stick is the formula that every bourgeois government uses to guarantee the domination of the class it represents.

It is clear that the most reactionary sectors of the government and the bourgeoisie does not want to "give an inch" to the indigenous and popular movement that has risen up. That is why they have appealed to the most varied means to combat it, such as racist and hate speech, blatant lies to remove legitimacy from the struggle and, of course, state violence that has claimed the lives of six popular fighters, about two hundred injured and many more arrested. Despite all this, at one point the struggle of the masses had isolated the government, which was even forced to recognize some points of the platform proposed by the CONAIE. For the most reactionary sectors even this must have been too much and that is why Lasso abandoned the dialogue.

The responsibility for what is happening in the country lies directly with the government, not only for abandoning the dialogue, but because it has constantly remained deaf to the popular demands and

because it tried to quell the protest with bullets and tear gas. This behavior led to the slogan “Out, Lasso, out!” gaining ground in the midst of the shutdown, raising the level of protest to a political struggle; this constituted a very important step taken by the people.

In the National Assembly this aspect was debated, but the demand for the dismissal of Lasso did not have the necessary 92 votes; it reached 84. It was known in advance that this would happen; those who proposed the impeachment knew it very well, but they did it to take advantage of the political moment and to appear as if they were on the side of the people. Nothing else could be expected of an Assembly which, with the exception of a few assembly members, does not represent the interests of the workers and the people. They have not thrown Lasso out, but most of the people have shouted all over the country: “Lasso out!” With this result, the president of the Republic cannot feel victorious, because only 42 assembly members voted in his favor, but beyond that, millions of Ecuadorians have repudiated him and have shown it during this indigenous and popular uprising.

*Editorial of the weekly En Marcha
Issue #2007, from June 29 to July 5*

The Struggle of the People Has Won

The indigenous and popular shutdown has ended in an important victory. It took eighteen days of massive and combative mobilizations across the country to force the government to accept the points contained in the platform of struggle. The government of Guillermo Lasso and the big bourgeoisie were defeated; the neoliberal IMF policy proclaimed by the ruling classes was struck; arrogance and authoritarianism were also defeated. This struggle created an important precedent: the peoples united and in struggle they overcame enemies who present themselves as powerful.

The popular movement has emerged strengthened, in high spirits, because, once again, it has been shown that the struggle is the weapon that forces governments to recognize and grant the rights and demands that, in other circumstances, it denies them. The combat had to overcome the government’s offensive that was shown through violent repression, provocations and a discourse full of threats, attacks, defamations, lies, overestimating some events, concealing the action of the repressive forces. Attuned to this, the most reactionary sectors

appealed to racist and hateful discourse; the mass media aligned themselves with that script to amplify it as much as possible and, to that effect, they did their part.

The indigenous movement has given a demonstration of its capacity for action, its determination and courage to fight and was the main contingent of the masses in this uprising; beside it were the forces of the Popular Front, several other popular organizations, the militancy of Popular Unity and other left-wing political organizations, showing that the main inspirations of the Ecuadorian popular movement are the indigenous movement and the forces of the Popular Front. All of them had the solidarity of other sectors of the people.

An important battle has been won, but the struggle of the workers and the people continues. There are many demands and grievances from different sectors that are pending and we must join with them: the repeal of Executive Decree 457, which opens the door for the dismissal of thousands of employees and workers in the public sector; the struggle to ensure that the salary equality in the teaching profession is being implemented; the defense of social security and the payment of debts that the State has with the IESS; the fight against the anti-worker labor policy; the struggle for the budget for education at all levels, among other aspects. In addition, we must remain vigilant so that the points of the platform of the shutdown that will be analyzed in several technical round tables during the next 90 days are carried out.

Editorial of the weekly En Marcha
Issue #2008, from July 6 to 12