

Indigenous Communists and Urban Intellectuals in Cayambe, Ecuador (1926–1944)*

MARC BECKER

SUMMARY: This case study provides an example of how people from two fundamentally different cultures (one rural, indigenous, Kichua-speaking and peasant, and the other urban, white, Spanish-speaking and professional) overcame their differences to struggle together to fight social injustices. Rather than relating to each other on a seemingly unequal basis, the activists recognized their common interests in fighting against the imposition of an international capitalist system on Ecuador's agrarian economy. Emerging out of that context, activists framed collective interests, identities, ideas, and demands as they worked together to realize common goals. Their actions challenge commonly held assumptions that leftist activists did not understand indigenous struggles, or that indigenous peoples remained distant from the goals of leftist political parties. Rather, it points to how the two struggles became intimately intertwined. In the process, it complicates traditional understandings of the role of "popular intellectuals", and how they interact with other activists, the dominant culture, and the state.

In May 1926, Jesús Gualavisí, an indigenous leader representing the Sindicato de Trabajadores Campesinos de Cayambe (Peasant Workers' Syndicate of Cayambe), traveled to the Ecuadorian highland capital city of Quito to participate as a delegate in the founding of the Partido Socialista Ecuatoriano (PSE, Ecuadorian Socialist Party). At the first session of the congress, Gualavisí proposed "that the assembly salute all peasants in the Republic, indicating to them that the Party would work intensely on their behalf".¹ When the assembly drafted its final resolutions, Ricardo Paredes, the General Secretary of the new party, proposed that they should include

* This essay is based primarily on research in the Fondo Junta Central de Asistencia Pública (JCAP) of the Archivo Nacional de Medicina del Museo Nacional de Medicina "Dr Eduardo Estrella", in Quito, Ecuador. Special thanks go to Antonio Crespo for facilitating access to that collection of government documents. Sandra Fernández Muñoz and Jorge Canizares lent access to the private collection of Leonardo J. Muñoz, an early leftist leader, which provides a counterpart to the JCAP documents. Additional primary-source documentation of this history is from Quito's main daily newspaper, *El Comercio*, and the Biblioteca Ecuatoriana Aurelio Espinosa Pólit [hereafter BEAEP] in Cotacollao, Ecuador.

1. Partido Socialista Ecuatoriano (PSE), *Labores de la Asamblea Nacional Socialista y Manifiesto del Consejo Central del Partido (16–23 May), Quito, 1926* (Guayaquil, 1926), p. 33.



Figure 1. Ecuador.

a statement of support for Gualvisi's struggle in Cayambe against landlord abuses. Paredes, a white medical doctor from Quito, justified this resolution, stating that a fundamental demand of the new party was to work for "the redemption of the Indian".²

These two resolutions, both of which the delegates accepted, represented the beginning of a decades-long collaboration between Gualvisi and Paredes that reached a climax in 1944 when together they helped

2. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

found Ecuador's first indigenous-rights organization, the Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios (FEI, Ecuadorian Federation of Indians). Notably, the PSE was the first party in Ecuador to organize indigenous peoples as a political force. This was a radical departure from the actions of other parties which, as Marxist historian, Oswaldo Albornoz, noted, "never took Indians into account for anything, much less made them leaders, because they were considered to be inferior beings".³ It was not until after illiterate people in Ecuador gained the right to vote in 1979, enfranchising most indigenous peoples for the first time, that bourgeois parties began to court rural communities in their electoral strategies. Gualavisí's role as the first indigenous person to participate in a political party's congress in Ecuador helped set the stage for subsequent relations between rural communities and urban leftist activists. He helped merge indigenous social movements into a broader struggle for liberation, articulating dissent and building collaborative efforts with leftist urban intellectuals.

Gualavisí was what Steven Feierman justifiably would term a peasant intellectual. Feierman argues that such intellectuals gained the prestige and legitimacy necessary to shape discourse, define political language, and construct a peasant class-consciousness.⁴ He was careful to note that in his definition a "peasant intellectual" is a social construct, referring to a person who gains legitimacy and a leadership role within a specific culture rather than through the importation of ideologies and initiatives from the outside. Feierman rejected the notion that peasants need to rely on a revolutionary vanguard to break out of a dominant culture's hegemonic influence. He challenged the interpretations of Marxists, including Gramsci, who viewed peasants as inert and requiring leadership from other classes to be effective actors. Speaking about the Italian peasantry in the first half of the twentieth century, Antonio Gramsci believed the peasantry was incapable of producing its own leaders and would remain dependent upon the urban working class organized into a communist party to articulate its dissent. As Kate Crehan notes, however, one must be careful in applying those views to other areas and situations "with possibly very different configurations of power".⁵ Feierman observed that the peasantry in colonial Tanzania "did not need the leadership of the working class or of a Communist Party to create a dissenting discourse. It was the energy of the peasantry, which emerged locally but then merged with a nationalist party, which made

3. Oswaldo Albornoz Peralta, "Jesús Gualavisí y las luchas indígenas en el Ecuador", in Domingo Paredes (ed.), *Los comunistas en la historia nacional* (Guayaquil, 1987), pp. 155–188, 185.

4. Steven Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania* (Madison, WI, 1990), p. 4.

5. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, tr. and ed. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York, 1971), p. 6; Kate A.F. Crehan, *Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology* (Berkeley, CA, 2002), pp. 124 and 143–145.

possible the end of colonial rule.” He found peasant intellectuals who “were capable of creating their own counter-discourse”. He called for a shift in the analytic approach in order to place “peasant intellectuals at the nexus between domination and public discourse”.⁶

Ecuador provides a contrasting case study of how popular intellectuals can interact with outside forces. Active in organizing local community organizations, while at the same time participating in the formation of a national political party, Gualavisí provided a bridge between two dramatically different worlds. Dating back to the colonial period in Latin America, a profound cultural and racial divide excluded Indians from positions of power in their own lands. Urban areas, such as Ecuador’s capital city of Quito, became poles of economic and political power for a white upper class that grew wealthy off the labor of indigenous peons on landed estates (called haciendas) in rural areas. To be Indian was to be rural and engaged in agricultural labor. This rural/urban, Indian/white divide replicated itself through language (Kichua/Spanish), education (only for white children), dress, food, religion, and other factors that traditional ethnographies have used to mark Indians as the “other”.

Notably, however, influences did not flow across this bridge in only one direction. Rather than merely importing outside ideologies or merging a local organization with a national movement, Gualavisí facilitated cross-pollination, as the local and national emerged simultaneously in a struggle for liberation. The seemingly insurmountable class, ethnic, and geographic barriers make any collaboration between these two very different worlds truly remarkable. It is a reflection of the political concerns of popular intellectuals that they were able to frame their protests in such a manner that it would unify their social movements around common interests and concerns.

Although indigenous peoples had long utilized the legal mechanisms of state structures to present their demands to the government, their petitions lacked a direct voice. Mostly illiterate, they depended on local white or *mestizo* scribes (usually called *tinterillos*) who offered their Spanish-language skills and educational training to draft legal petitions and provide related services. Michiel Baud described *tinterillos* as “a group which was frequently vilified both by politicians and landowners, because they were supposed to stir up the credulous Indian peasants”.⁷ *Tinterillos* had a long history of negotiating relationships between indigenous peoples and the government, leading the Minister of Social Welfare to complain about the

6. Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*, pp. 19–20, 5.

7. Beate R. Salz, “The Human Element in Industrialization: A Hypothetical Case Study of Ecuadorean Indians”, *American Anthropologist*, 57:6, pt 2, Memoir no. 85 (December 1955), p. 133; Michiel Baud, “Liberal Ideology, Indigenismo and Social Mobilization in Late Nineteenth-Century Ecuador”, in A. Kim Clark and Marc Becker (eds), *Highland Indians and the State in Modern Ecuador* (forthcoming).

“tendency to litigation so characteristic of our rural folk”.⁸ Indigenous peoples contracted their services to record their demands in the proper format and on the legal paper which the government required, but these scribes were rarely involved in the political project of the petitioners. Rather, subalterns relied, as Andrés Guerrero noted, on others to construct “a ‘ventriloquist’s’ political representation which became a channel for Indian resistance”.⁹

The *tinterillos*’ petitions probably do not represent a verbatim transcription of an illiterate worker’s words. In highland Ecuador, the Indians’ first language was Kichua; the *tinterillos* undoubtedly saw it as part of their mandate to polish the “uneducated” peasant’s wording so it would be more presentable to an educated, urban audience. In the process, it would be hard for the *tinterillos*’ own stereotypes and assumptions not to emerge in these petitions. In the Andean world, where identity is overwhelmingly local, and in a political situation where the Indians were not citizens, it is questionable whether hacienda workers would use language such as *infelices ecuatorianos* (miserable Ecuadorians) that commonly emerged in the petitions. Surrounded with family and rooted in a proud cultural tradition, would they see themselves as miserable, or as Ecuadorians for that matter, or was this just a ploy to gain the sympathy of governmental officials who articulated a theoretically inclusive liberal ideology? The resulting documents lacked a penetrating critique of indigenous exclusion and exploitation.

The absence of a direct voice encouraged Indians to search out new allies who could help them articulate a shared vision of the world. Popular intellectuals subsequently assumed a key role in formulating alliances that would place indigenous peoples and their interests at the center of debates on the shaping of Ecuador’s future.

FRAMING RURAL SOCIALISMS

Jesús Gualavisí, born in 1867 on the Chungalá hacienda in Cayambe in northern Ecuador, organized the Sindicato de Trabajadores Campesinos de Juan Montalvo (Peasant Workers’ Syndicate of Juan Montalvo) in January 1926, as one of Ecuador’s first rural syndicates. Unfortunately, very little biographical information remains on his family history. He was one of few literate Indians and was able to bridge the rural and urban worlds, which would seem to indicate that his family enjoyed a certain

8. Carlos Andrade Marín, *Informe que el Ministro de Previsión Social y Trabajo presenta a la nación, 1941* (Quito, 1941).

9. Andrés Guerrero, “The Construction of a Ventriloquist’s Image: Liberal Discourse and the ‘Miserable Indian Race’ in Late 19th-Century Ecuador”, *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 29 (1997), pp. 555–590, 555.



Figure 2. Jesús Gualavisí (1867–1962). Gualavisí was born on the Changalá hacienda in the parish of Juan Montalvo, where in 1926 he organized the first peasant syndicate in Cayambe. He was the only Indian representative at the founding of the Ecuadorian Socialist Party in 1926, and later was actively involved in communist politics. He helped found the FEI and served as its first president. In 1992, the municipal council of Cayambe commissioned statues of twelve “illustrious personalities” from the canton. Gualavisí was one of those twelve, and his statue stands at the entrance to the city from his home parish of Juan Montalvo.

Photograph by the author, 8 July 2003

amount of prestige and perhaps had traditionally provided leadership to the community. During the nineteenth century, Kichua Indians (now known locally as Kayambis) from surrounding haciendas “who managed to acquire land and a measure of independence” had founded the community of Juan Montalvo on the southern edge of the cantonal capital city of Cayambe. Juan Montalvo (1832–1889) was a famous liberal writer who repeatedly attacked conservative governments, and reportedly claimed to have killed the dictator, Gabriel García Moreno, with his pen.¹⁰ Naming the community after such a personality would foreshadow

10. Elsie Clews Parsons, *Peguche, Canton of Otavalo, Province of Imbabura, Ecuador: A Study of Andean Indians*, University of Chicago Publications in Anthropology, Ethnological Series (Chicago, IL, 1945), p. 183; Frank MacDonald Spindler, *Nineteenth-Century Ecuador: A Historical Introduction* (Fairfax, VA, 1987), p. 89. Organized largely by an illiterate peasantry and in a context of severe repression by surrounding economic and political elites, no organizational archives and little historical documentation of the Juan Montalvo and other rural syndicates from the 1920s and 1930s have survived, if such material ever existed in the first place. Most of what we know about these early indigenous organizations is from governmental or media reports, or statements of sympathetic leftist activists.

the type of political activity in which its inhabitants would subsequently engage.

The immediate context of the formation of the peasant syndicate at Juan Montalvo was a petition from the Kayambis who claimed that the Changalá hacienda had taken over their lands. This hacienda, as with most of the landed estates in the heavily agrarian canton of Cayambe, was in the hands of absentee white landholders and produced a variety of crops (especially barley, wheat, and potatoes) for a local market. These estates often expanded until they covered vast geographic areas. They supplanted many of the ritual and civil functions of the church and state, including providing a space for weddings and baptisms and punishment of crimes. Exploiting poverty and misfortune in surrounding free communities, the haciendas slowly began to bind the Kayambis to the estate through a system of debt peonage known in Ecuador as the *huasipungo* system. In exchange for working on the hacienda, *huasipungueros* received a small wage, access to resources such as water, firewood, and pasture land on the hacienda, and the use of a small garden plot on which they could practice subsistence agriculture. The *huasipungo* system coincided with an erosion of a traditional land base as indigenous peoples were forced out of a peasant and into a wage economy.

When Changalá's owner (Gabriel García Alcázar, son of the nineteenth-century conservative leader, Gabriel García Moreno, who Juan Montalvo had claimed to have killed with his pen) ignored their demands, the Kayambis occupied the disputed land. García Alcázar called on the government to protect what he claimed as his property from "communist and bolshevik attacks". The struggle exploded into a violent conflict in February 1926, when the Pichincha and Carchi battalions from Quito and Ibarra arrived to suppress these land demands. The repression did not end the Kayambis' willingness to fight, and the following November the newspaper reported that a group attacked the police at Changalá shouting "Long Live Socialism".¹¹

This call for socialism reflects the emergence of leaders with a knowledge of, and identification with, socialist ideologies. These new ideologies translated into demands that soon extended beyond a defense of traditional land claims and into the economic realm of agitating for better salaries, easier workloads, an end to nonpaid work, and gentler treatment from hacienda owners and their overlords.¹² These demands also reflect the growth of an agrarian capitalism, as modernizing land owners broke with traditional feudal-style reciprocal relations on the haciendas to focus

11. "El dueño de Changalá acude a la junta de gobierno", *El Comercio*, 25 February 1926, p. 1; "La razón y la fuerza", *El Comercio*, 8 March 1926, p. 1; "Se atacó a la policía de Cayambe", *El Comercio*, 6 November 1926, p. 1.

12. Lucía Salamea, "Transformación de la hacienda y los cambios en la condición campesina" (PUCE/CLACSO, Master en Sociología Rural, 1978), p. 52.

on maximizing their profits through the increased exploitation of the labor force. Broader political events, including a 1922 general strike in Guayaquil, a progressive military government that took power in July 1925, and a nascent socialist party, all influenced the development of new ideologies to counter the imposition of an agrarian capitalism.

Looking to expand and solidify support for their new political party, Ricardo Paredes, Luis F. Chávez, and other socialists from Quito came to the defense of the Kayambi struggle against the Changalá hacienda and helped present their demands to the national government. In an open letter to the government, Paredes, as secretary of the Núcleo Central Socialista (Central Socialist Nucleus), a forerunner of the PSE in Quito, called for the nationalization of the lands in question so that they could be returned to their rightful owners. Socialists pointed to the 1926 uprising at Juan Montalvo as the type of struggle against large landlords that peasants and workers should support.¹³ “The movement in Cayambe”, Paredes wrote in a report to the Communist International on the status of the worker movement in Ecuador, “demonstrated the important revolutionary role of the Indians in Ecuador against the capitalist yoke”. For his vocal opposition to governmental policies, the military junta warned him to stay off the Changalá hacienda.¹⁴ Although Gualavisí had participated in local protests before, this was the first time that Kayambis at Juan Montalvo received support from urban leftists or even had any contact with potential allies outside of their home community.

Although Paredes placed himself in a leadership position of rural struggles, these protest movements did not emerge as a paternalistic creation of urban leftist organizing efforts. Rather, both rural and urban activists found themselves confronting a similar economic situation, which led them to exchange ideological perspectives and organizational strategies. In fact, there is a certain amount of evidence that Indian uprisings in Cayambe may have strengthened the resolve of urban leftists to push forward with the creation of the PSE.¹⁵ If this is the case, it reverses the standard stereotype of urban activists awakening a revolutionary consciousness in a pre-political peasant population, with instead subalterns gaining their own political consciousness and then helping to awaken that of their urban allies.

13. “Abusos de Gamonalismo”, *La Vanguardia* 1:9–10 (1 March 1928), p. 13.

14. Ricardo A. Paredes, “El pueblo de Cayambe”, *Germinal* (Quito), 26 February 1926, p. 1; *idem*, “El movimiento obrero en el Ecuador”, *La Internacional Sindical Roja*, 1 (August 1928), pp. 76–81, 80; “El asunto de Changalá”, *El Comercio*, 6 March 1926, p. 6; César Endara, “La fundación del partido: una experiencia testimonial”, in Paredes, *Los comunistas en la historia nacional*, p. 55.

15. “El partido comunista organizador y defensor de los indios”, *El Pueblo*, 2 June 1951, p. 6; René Maugé, “Las tareas actuales de nuestro movimiento”, in Paredes, *Los comunistas en la historia nacional*, pp. 219–255, 223.

Unlike Gramsci, who believed that a historic subjugation of the Italian peasantry rendered them incapable of interpreting their reality in order to develop a counter-hegemonic discourse, the Kayambis' increasing encounters with capitalism forged a type of class-consciousness that led them to construct a broader view of the world. Gualavisí, and other Kayambi leaders, understood that in order to end the oppression and discrimination that they faced, they needed to demand radical changes in society. Local intellectuals molded these ideologies into the formulation of congenial relationships with urban leftists. Socialists and their rural indigenous allies together envisioned a different world and engaged in mutually beneficial relationships. When an administrator evicted Gualavisí from the neighboring Pisambilla hacienda, Gualavisí solicited assistance from Paredes to defend his right to organize on the hacienda under the stipulations of Ecuador's labor code. Together, they confronted government attempts to use repression and intimidation to end rural organizing efforts.¹⁶

Intergroup alliances are by no means unique to Cayambe in the 1930s, nor to the actions of leftist activists. In his study of peasant movements in Latin America, Henry Landsberger observes "the not infrequent situation in which non-peasants support peasants partly because the peasant movement is congruent with their own aims". He identifies the presence of these middle-class and intellectual allies as key to a movement's success.¹⁷ In Ecuador, elites persisted in portraying Indians as ignorant of broader political and social issues, and accused urban communists of manipulating local complaints into opportunities to spread revolutionary propaganda. Reflecting the profound gap that divided rural and urban worlds, conservative white elites claimed they could not understand what good might come out of communist agitation, or even how it might benefit the communist movement. Engaging Indians who were not citizens (due to literacy restrictions) in political actions threatened to trigger dangerously uncontrollable mob action. Paredes, Chávez, and other activists, however, dismissed racist assumptions that Indians were incapable of understanding the nature of their oppression or participating in the political process. They called on the "indigenous race" (*raza indígena*) to claim their rightful place in Ecuador and to demand social justice.¹⁸ Through these contacts between rural and urban worlds, Cayambe gained

16. Letter from J.A. Jalevalel, Personero Auxiliar to Director, Junta Central de Asistencia Pública, in Archivo Nacional de Medicina del Museo Nacional de Medicina "Dr Eduardo Estrella", Fondo Junta Central de Asistencia Pública in Quito, Ecuador [hereafter JCAP], Correspondencia Recibida [hereafter CR], segundo semestre, segundo parte (1946), p. 1554. On Gramsci, see Crehan, *Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology*, p. 104.

17. Henry A. Landsberger, "The Role of Peasant Movements and Revolts in Development", in *idem* (ed.), *Latin American Peasant Movements*, (Ithaca, NY, 1969), pp. 1–61, 46.

18. Pilo de la Peña, "Los indios aspiran socialimente", *La Antorcha* (Quito), 1:3 (29 November 1924), p. 3.

a reputation as an area where communism had “taken a strong hold on the Indian”.¹⁹

Gualavisí served as the secretary-general of the Juan Montalvo agricultural syndicate from its founding until his death in 1962. He dedicated his entire life to the struggle for indigenous rights, becoming known as a *caudillo* (leader) of the Kayambis. In response, the government denounced him “for his activities of being a social agitator among the Indian class”, and feared his ability to convoke local leaders who would follow his orders.²⁰ The weight and authority that Gualavisí’s words carried in his own community meshes with one of Gramsci’s criteria for being an “organic intellectual”.²¹ In addition to being one of the earliest and most important indigenous leaders in Ecuador, Gualavisí was also an important communist leader and organizer, beginning by representing the Kayambis at the Ecuadorian Socialist Party’s founding congress in 1926. His participation in this congress symbolically represents the beginnings of a structural analysis of Ecuadorian society from an indigenous perspective. Perhaps as importantly, he was largely responsible for drawing indigenous communities into the orbit of Communist Party organizing efforts. While demonstrating that indigenous peoples did not need working-class leadership to develop a counter-hegemonic discourse, as Gramsci perceived as necessary for the Italian peasantry, Gualavisí still believed that communists could give organizational expression on a national level to the indigenous peoples’ demands. Linking to social movements that extended beyond the local level would help develop strategies for overcoming their subaltern status. Oswaldo Albornoz argued that Gualavisí understood the exploitation of indigenous masses because of his communist orientation, which he saw as a way to combat those injustices. “This new form of organization, until then unknown by the Indians”, Albornoz claimed, “gave strength and cohesion to their struggles”.²² Although not acknowledged by Albornoz, at the same time indigenous discontent provided urban activists with a base on which to build a movement toward socialism. The leaders of the two groups found the relative advantages brought by both parties to be mutually reinforcing.

Ricardo Paredes, an urban Marxist intellectual, was no stranger to radical politics, nor to agrarian struggles in Ecuador. He was born in 1898 in the Central Highland provincial town of Riobamba in the midst of the

19. Charles A. Page, “Memorandum with Regard to Communism in Ecuador”, attached to letter from William Dawson to Secretary of State, Washington, no. 150, 29 January 1931, National Archives Records Administration [hereafter NARA] Record Group [hereafter RG] 59, 822.00B/24, pp. 16–17.

20. Letter from Juan Francisco Sumárraga to Director, JCAP, 21 March 1946, in JCAP, CR, segundo semestre, segundo parte (1946), p. 1555.

21. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 8.

22. Albornoz, “Jesús Gualavisí”, pp. 155–188, 166, 167, 182.

social transformations resulting from Eloy Alfaro's 1895 Liberal Revolution. Paredes received training as a doctor of medicine, and subsequently taught at the School of Medicine in Quito's Universidad Central. Known as the "Apostle of Ecuadoran Communism", friends indicated that he "was led to communism by seeing so much misery among the poor" which he observed from his medical work.²³ He converted the Ecuadorian Socialist Party into a communist party, became deeply involved in the Communist International, and was "known in Quito as one of the most fervent socialists of Ecuador with Bolchevistic tendencies".²⁴ Neptalí Ulcuango, a pioneer Kayambi educator who led the formation of rural schools in the 1950s, later remembered that it was Paredes who "began to mobilize people in the city to help organize in the countryside"; that he "was a good person"; and that he "was the first and best comrade" who defended Indian interests.²⁵ His activism brought him to the attention of the US State Department which appeared to fear Paredes, labeling him as a "fanatic".²⁶ The police monitored his movements, and arrested him numerous times, including an arrest in 1927 (along with ten associates) for criticizing the government at a meeting of the Socialist Party in Guayaquil.²⁷ Despite coming out of two separate movements for social justice and liberation, Gualavisí and Paredes merged their efforts to create the basis for an indigenous movement that by the end of the twentieth century would become one of the strongest social movements in Latin America.

In addition to Paredes, other urban socialist leaders played significant roles in framing protests in Cayambe. Luis F. Chávez was the son of a socialist lawyer (also named Luis F. Chávez) who supported Indian struggles, and provided the Kayambis with housing when they traveled to

23. Letter from William Dawson to Secretary of State, Washington, no. 921, 10 March 1933, NARA RG 59, 822.00B/43, p. 5; Letter from Gerhard Gade, Chargé d'Affairs *ad interim*, to Secretary of State, Washington, no. 1064, 10 March 1938, NARA RG 59, 822.00B/54, p. 3. Little biographical data has been recorded on Paredes, with authors preferring to focus on his political activity rather than his family background. See Clodoveo Astudillo, "Síntesis biográfica de Ricardo Paredes", *Revista Ecuatoriana de Pensamiento Marxista*, 14 (III Epoca) (1989), pp. 9–15; and Elías Muñoz Vicuña, *Temas obreros*, Biblioteca de autores ecuatorianos, 62 (Guayaquil, 1986), pp. 257–259.

24. W. Allen Rhode, American vice-consul in Guayaquil, to Secretary of State, no. 286, 10 January 1929, NARA RG 59, 822.00/B9.

25. Neptalí Ulcuango, interviewed by Mercedes Prieto, 7–8 July 1977, private collection of Mercedes Prieto, Quito; Manuel Catucumbamba in José Yáñez del Pozo, *Yo declaro con franqueza (Cashnami causashcanchic): memoria oral de Pesillo, Cayambe*, 2nd rev. edn (Quito, 1988), p. 183; Miguel Lechón in *ibid.*, p. 185.

26. Charles A. Page, "Memorandum with Regard to Communism in Ecuador", attached to letter from William Dawson to Secretary of State, Washington, no. 150, 29 January 1931, NARA RG 59, 822.00B/24, p. 5.

27. G.A. Bading, "General Conditions Prevailing in Ecuador, January 1–15, 1927", Quito, 15 January 1927, NARA RG 59, 822.00/695, p. 9.

Quito to press demands directly with governmental officials. The younger Chávez became particularly active in rural communities, giving up his studies in Quito to organize full-time in Cayambe. Paredes and Chávez collaborated with local white activists, such as Rubén Rodríguez, a teacher and a communist whom the government repeatedly imprisoned for his political activism. Rodríguez's willingness to use his position to attract attention to indigenous demands and to suffer for the struggle gained him renown in rural communities. His activities also irritated local landlords, since his participation lent legitimacy to the Kayambis' actions, drew in other urban activists such as Chávez and Paredes from Quito, and caused peons to press their wrong-headed demands. Pedro Núñez, Functional Senator for the Indian Race, noted that the urban leftist activities on the haciendas contributed to the emergence of a class-consciousness that tended "to substitute collective protest for individual complaints".²⁸ Recognizing that "racial oppression (prejudice for being an 'inferior race') and economic oppression" led to a growing "consciousness of their [Indian] distinct class interests", socialist leaders intensified their organizational efforts.²⁹ Together they created, similarly to Feierman's findings in Tanzania, a counter-hegemonic discourse grounded in the needs and concerns of both rural and urban masses.

A STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE ON THE MOYURCO HACIENDA

In order to understand how popular intellectuals framed protest in rural Ecuador, it is worth considering a specific case study on the Moyurco hacienda in northern Cayambe. In 1904, as part of its anticlerical reforms, a liberal government had expropriated the hacienda from the Catholic Church. Kayambi workers on the hacienda expected to gain rights to the land, but instead the government rented it out to wealthy landowners to generate revenue for social welfare projects. Rather than accept a loss of control over the land, the Kayambis fought for their rights. As popular intellectuals engaged in disputes with elites over the role that subalterns should play in Ecuadorian society, they acquired new skills and cultivated alliances with sympathetic allies. These interactions led to new ideas about the type of political economy that they wished to see developed in Ecuador, and influenced their struggle for a more just and equitable society.³⁰

28. J.R. Sáenz to Director General de la Junta Central de Asistencia Pública, Quito, 25 April 1932, JCAP, CR, Enero–Junio 1932, p. 741; letter from William Dawson to Secretary of State, Washington, no. 193, 26 March 1931, NARA RG 59, 822.00B/29, p. 2.

29. Paredes, "El movimiento obrero en el Ecuador", p. 77.

30. As the *zapatista* rebels in Chiapas, Mexico, claimed some sixty years later, "our struggle is not against the future, but about who shapes that future and who benefits from it". Quoted in "In

On 31 March 1932, Julio Miguel Páez, the wealthy white landowner who rented the Moyurco hacienda, informed the Ministry of Government in Quito that four days earlier Antonio Lechón, an indigenous worker who had left the hacienda more than a year before, had returned and attempted to claim a piece of land as his personal *huasipungo*.³¹ Páez's employees on the hacienda refused to let Lechón work, and as a result "the rest of the peons have abandoned their work and are in insurrection". Without acknowledging that they might have any legitimate complaints, Páez asked the government to send in a military squadron to put down the uprising and re-establish order on the hacienda.³² The government agreed to this request, and quickly dispatched troops to suppress the strike. The government accused four peons (Marcelo Tarabata, Carlos Churuchumbi, Antonio Lechón, and José Quishpe) of leading the revolt and decided to expel them from the hacienda. The employees on the hacienda, along with soldiers, rounded up the four workers' animals and placed them in a corral, and confiscated everything from their houses (grain, clothes, and the few utensils that they owned) and dumped it into a pile on the patio of the hacienda. The soldiers padlocked their houses and took the four protestors to jail in Quito.

This uprising at Moyurco was part of a larger movement in the turbulent decade of the 1930s, as agricultural workers fought against an agrarian capitalism that undermined both their traditional land base as well as their standard of living. Following the lead of Gualavisí in Juan Montalvo, activists on the Moyurco hacienda had formed the rural syndicate "Tierra Libre" (Free Land) in 1930. This political mobilization occurred in the context of a global economic downturn that left many *hacendados* complaining that they could not meet their financial obligations. Whereas peasants in Juan Montalvo fought off the encroachment of a hacienda, the Moyurco syndicate primarily grouped agricultural workers who were going through a process of proletarianization through wage labor on the hacienda. Nevertheless, both shared similar objectives of gaining land rights, winning access to water and pasture, improving wages, constructing schools, and ending abuses from hacienda overlords. Furthermore, elites feared a repeat of a more prolonged strike that had spread throughout

Pursuit of Profit: A Primer on the New Transnational Investment", *NACLA: Report on the Americas*, 29, no.4 (1996), p. 10.

31. Their *huasipungos* were critical to indigenous survival strategies, but were also part of the service-tenancy relations that bound workers to the hacienda, which is why peons did not want to let go of these small garden plots.

32. Letter from Augusto Egas, Director, Junta Central de Asistencia Pública, to Sr Ministro de Gobierno y Asistencia Pública, Quito, 31 March 1932, Oficio no. 269, JCAP, Libro de Comunicaciones Dirigidas [hereafter CD] por la Junta Central de Asistencia Pública durante el año de 1932, p. 107.

haciendas in northern Cayambe the previous year.³³ As a result the *hacendados*, in alliance with the government and military, put this strike down much more quickly.

With the assistance of sympathetic outsiders, members of Tierra Libre drafted a petition to the Minister of Interior and Government in which they presented a counter-discourse, challenging elite statements. Lechón had been sick for the past year, they noted, and was therefore unable to work on the hacienda. When his brother died, he was forced to return to work and took the *huasipungo* plot of his recently departed brother. Lechón yoked up a pair of oxen to plow his brother's plot, but a *majordomo* (overseer) stopped him and cut the halter straps on the oxen. Other peons, who observed this, intervened and demanded that the *majordomo* allow Lechón to carry on with his work. If the *majordomo* would not permit Lechón to proceed, the peons threatened to stop working because the landlord had not paid them for three months. Páez had evicted Lechón because “el daba la gana” (he just wanted to), the Kayambis stated, and he declared he would also evict anyone who protested this action. Framing their protest around an existing legal tradition, they implored the minister to help defend the laws. “Our current plea of you”, the syndicate declared, “is that you ensure that the renter leaves us alone in our *huasipungos*, with the houses we constructed, and of which Mr Páez should not rob us by whim or by his arbitrary will”. They appealed to the Minister's humanitarian sentiments, and ended with a plea that the official should attend to the needs of a “few miserable and defenseless Ecuadorian Indians”. Finally, they placed their faith in his favorable response to their petition.³⁴

J. Rafael Sáenz, the hacienda's trustee, quickly responded to these charges against Páez, maintaining that accusations of confiscated goods and killed animals were lies.³⁵ Furthermore, Augusto Egas, the director of the *Asistencia Pública* (Public Assistance) program that administered the haciendas, resented the implication that the government only served the interests of the wealthy landowners. He minimized the significance of the complaints as merely a result of economic difficulties due to the global economic depression, leaving scarce resources for landlords to pay salaries to the peons. These Indians were continual thorns in the government's

33. On the 1931 strike, see Marc Becker, “Una Revolución Comunista Indígena: Rural Protest Movements in Cayambe, Ecuador”, *Rethinking Marxism*, 10:4 (1998), pp. 34–51; and Mercedes Prieto, “Haciendas estatales: un caso de ofensiva campesina: 1926–1948”, in Miguel Murmis *et al.* (eds), *Ecuador: cambios en el agro serrano* (Quito, 1980), pp. 101–130.

34. Petition quoted in letter from V.M. Cruz Caamaño, Subsecretario, Ministerio de Gobierno y Previsión Social to Director General de la Junta Central de Asistencia Pública, Quito, 5 May 1932, Oficio no. 290, JCAP, CR Enero–Junio 1932, p. 639.

35. J.R. Sáenz to Director General de la Junta Central de Asistencia Pública, Quito, 14 June 1932, JCAP, CR, Enero–Junio 1932, p. 742.

flesh, he noted, and accused them of not working on the hacienda and being engaged in no activity other than leading indigenous uprisings.³⁶

This exchange of letters and petitions indicates the nature of the difficulties that indigenous workers on the haciendas faced in their struggle for social justice. Given the racist situation in Ecuador in the 1930s, who was the government more likely to believe: illiterate Indians long held in a subjugated position, who under Ecuadorian law did not enjoy the privileges and protections of citizenship, or educated white elites who came from the same social class and ethnic group as the government officials? Under these conditions, it became increasingly critical for the Indians to search out allies who could lend them legitimacy and help present their demands to the government.

URBAN MARXIST INTELLECTUALS

Militant rural movements in Ecuador emerged in the 1920s in the context of growing urban labor movements and the establishment of the Ecuadorian Socialist Party. These leftists gave critical strength and cohesion to the nascent indigenous organizations and brought rural syndicates that were spread throughout Ecuador into contact with one other. For example, urban leftists helped distribute a call for agricultural workers, peasants, and Indians to gather in Cayambe in February of 1931 to form a federation to “defend the interests of rural laborers”.³⁷ They made the public aware of indigenous realities on the haciendas and helped the Indians present their demands to the government. When strikers from Cayambe arrived on foot in Quito in March of 1931 to present their demands directly to the government, these same leftists provided them with logistical support.

Somewhat paternalistically, Oswaldo Albornoz claimed that Marxists helped introduce a new form of organization to the Indians, including use of the strike which proved to be “a powerful battle arm which will never be abandoned and from the beginning demonstrated its great effectiveness”.³⁸ As a popular intellectual, Gualavisí played an important role in shaping the application of these new strategies to the local context in Cayambe, both through his authority as a local leader as well as his position as a militant in the Communist Party. He secured provisions and economic assistance for the strikers, mobilized support for the strike among other Indians, and conveyed information to solidarity activists in Quito.³⁹ Urban leftists

36. Letter from Augusto Egas, Director, Junta Central de Asistencia Pública, to Sr Ministro de Gobierno y Asistencia Pública, Quito, 15 June 1932, Oficio no. 501, JCAP, CD, 1932, p. 193.

37. Letter from William Dawson to Secretary of State, Washington, no. 170, 27 February 1931. Indian congress, following up on despatch no. 158 of 7 February 1931, NARA RG 59, 822.00B/27.

38. Albornoz, “Jesús Gualavisí”, p. 166.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 172.

provided significant assistance in sustaining these acts of resistance and the consolidation of indigenous movements in Ecuador.

Literacy, knowledge of governmental apparatuses, and access to public officials seemingly would give urban leftists an upper-hand in this relationship, which scholars have stereotypically derided as unequal, paternalistic, and manipulative.⁴⁰ Occasionally urban Marxists, including Albornoz, could fall back on the condescending language common of their environs with statements claiming that they led “the task of organizing our Indians”, and “showed them the path that leads to victory”.⁴¹ For example, Paredes noted that in 1926 the nascent socialist party sent him to Cayambe to lead the movement at Chagalá, seemingly exaggerating his role in organizing “the first peasant union among the Indians”.⁴²

Rather than framing protest on the haciendas for their rural allies, however, urban activists engaged in exchanges that facilitated the flourishing of new ideologies. Indigenous communities in the South American Andes were structured around patterns of reciprocity in which exchanges of resources provided a key component of survival strategies. For indigenous intellectuals, incorporating urban socialists into these patterns of reciprocity was a logical move that proved to strengthen both the urban and rural wings of the movement. Urban intellectuals had access to skills and tools that indigenous peoples typically did not enjoy, but these resources proved to benefit indigenous struggles. In turn, rural subalterns created, on the basis of their lived experiences, a penetrating analysis of exploitation that urban intellectuals often lacked. They did not need formal educational training to observe how the hacienda system’s insertion into a global economy resulted in the erosion of working conditions and living standards.

In a presentation on the “indigenous question” to a 1929 gathering of South American communist parties in Buenos Aires, the Peruvian Marxist thinker, José Carlos Mariátegui, argued that “Indian peasants will only truly understand people from their midst, who speak their own language”. He proposed training indigenous leaders who would then return to work for “the emancipation of their race”, thereby giving an organizational cohesion to their demands. Pointing to a long history of insurrections, Mariátegui rejected the notion that Indians were incapable of a revolutionary struggle. The Indians already had “demonstrated a quite astounding level of resistance and persistence” in pursuit of their demands. Once indigenous peoples were introduced to a revolutionary consciousness,

40. Melina H. Selverston, “The Politics of Culture: Indigenous Peoples and the State in Ecuador”, in Donna Lee Van Cott (ed.), *Indigenous Peoples and Democracy in Latin America* (New York, 1994), pp. 131–152; Amalia Pallares, *From Peasant Struggles to Indian Resistance: The Ecuadorian Andes in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK, 2002), p. 15.

41. Albornoz, “Jesús Gualavisi”, p. 167.

42. Paredes, “El movimiento obrero en el Ecuador”, p. 80.

they would be unequaled in their struggle for socialism.⁴³ Similarly, urban activists in Ecuador claimed that “it is no coincidence that today the Communist Party of Ecuador finds in its ranks numerous indigenous leaders, and that the party enjoys massive support from Indians who find that it is the only one that can carry them through to their liberation”.⁴⁴ Socialists held out great expectations for rural indigenous activists swelling their ranks, which they hoped would give them the necessary momentum to carry their party to victory.

While urban leftists celebrated any indigenous support for their cause, conservative forces feared the spread of communist propaganda in rural areas. A confidential US State Department report noted that “communist agitators are devoting a great deal of attention to the Indians”, making it the chief focus of their efforts. Currently, Paredes and Chávez were “practically the only agitators who have been willing to go out among them to stir up trouble”, but if the communists were able to establish a permanent presence it would lead to a dangerous ideological shift in rural areas.⁴⁵ “The great mass of the population in the interior consists of illiterate indians, who probably have communistic traditions from the time of the Incas.” The US Consul Harold Clum continued:

As few of them can read, this mimeographed and printed propaganda can not reach them directly, but they can be reached in other ways, and their uprisings which occur from time to time at different places in the interior, and their seizure of lands belonging to neighboring estate owners, indicate that they are being reached by communistic agitators. If they ever become thoroughly imbued with communism and realize their power, the comparatively small number of white people of Spanish descent who, with those of mixed race, form the land owning and ruling element will not be able to withstand them.⁴⁶

The US Consul urged Quito to take control of the situation to prevent such an alliance from shifting the balance of power in the country, even if it would mean violating constitutional guarantees.

The Ecuadorian Minister of the Interior concurred with this analysis, reporting “that propaganda is being translated into Indian dialects and read to the Indians at nocturnal gatherings”, which contributed to growing

43. José Carlos Mariátegui, “The Indigenous Question in Latin America”, in Michael Löwy (ed.), *Marxism in Latin America from 1909 to the Present: An Anthology* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1992), pp. 33–37, 37, 34.

44. Milton Jijón, “La ideología de J.C. Mariátegui y su influencia en el Ecuador”, in *Seminario internacional sobre la vida y obra de José Carlos Mariátegui* (Guayaquil, 1971), pp. 53–73, 65.

45. Charles A. Page, “Memorandum with Regard to Communism in Ecuador”, attached to letter from William Dawson to Secretary of State, Washington, no. 150, 29 January 1931, NARA RG 59, 822.00B/24, pp. 15–17.

46. Letter from Harold D. Clum, American Consul, Guayaquil, to Secretary of State, Washington, no. 463, 12 February 1930, NARA RG 59, 822.00B/11, p. 2.

leftist strength in the country.⁴⁷ These simple peasants were easily and “shamefully deceived and exploited by false defenders of the destitute”. Communists, the minister complained, were inflaming rebellion “in all forms and all the time” through the distribution of newspapers and fly sheets with “imprudent and exaggerated language” that were being distributed broadly in rural communities. Nevertheless, the minister claimed that:

[...] the government has been able to maintain the public order despite the serious difficulties that communist agitations have caused and are still causing by some individuals and erroneously misty groupings in transplanting to the bosom of our healthy, peaceful, and moral people, certain violent procedures that lead to disruptive and dangerous doctrines.⁴⁸

Privately, the minister declared that he had assumed control of the Interior Ministry in order “to combat communism in Ecuador”.⁴⁹ By extension, this would also mean combating the growing strength and authority of popular intellectuals in rural communities.

The government feared the willingness of leftist activists to organize in rural areas, and believed that it was precisely these rural–urban alliances that represented the greatest threat to the elites’ hegemonic control over the country. J. Rafael Sáenz, the trustee of the Moyurco hacienda, maintained that the 1932 uprising at Moyurco was a result of the support and instigation that Indians received from urban socialist leaders such as Ricardo Paredes, Luis F. Chávez, and Rubén Rodríguez. All of these activists had gained prestige and legitimacy in indigenous communities because of their willingness to leave the city and mingle with common people on the haciendas. The actions of the socialists, Sáenz maintained, resulted in slanderous accusations against Páez and “a misplaced compassion for the revolvers”.⁵⁰ Major Ernesto Robalino, who led military troops from Ibarra to put down these recurrent uprisings, also complained about the role of outsiders in supporting the organization of agrarian syndicates in Pesillo and Juan Montalvo. Socialist agitation, Robalino reported, has “resulted in an awakening of the consciousness of the Indians”.⁵¹

47. Letter from William Dawson to Secretary of State, Washington, no. 96, 30 December 1930, NARA RG 59, 822.00B/17, p. 4.

48. M.A. Alborno, Ministerio de Gobierno y Previsión Social, *Informe del Ministerio de Gobierno y Previsión Social a la nación, 1930–1931* (Quito, 1931), pp. 3–7.

49. Page, “Memorandum with Regard to Communism in Ecuador”, p. 20.

50. J.R. Sáenz to Director General de la Junta Central de Asistencia Pública, Quito, 25 April 1932, JCAP, CR, Enero–Junio 1932, p. 741.

51. Letter from William Dawson to Secretary of State, Washington, no. 176, 9 March 1931, NARA RG 59, 822.00B/28. The United States was interested in uncovering foreign, particularly Soviet, support for these movements, but was never able to do so.

RURAL INDIGENOUS COMMUNISTS

The role of urban political allies was unquestionably important to the success of rural movements. John Uggen notes in his study of peasant mobilizations on the Ecuadorian coast in the 1920s that “the impulse for the formation of rural–urban coalitions usually arises in the cities, where an aspiring urban political group is challenging traditional elites for power”. In these political power struggles, Uggen argues, peasants are paternalistically recruited as a junior ally “to broaden their base of support”.⁵² Such a conceptualization, however, is a bit too simplistic to explain the merging of urban and rural movements in northern Ecuador. Whereas the Indians previously had been forced to rely on outsiders to present their complaints to the government, increasingly they were able to turn to themselves for these resources. Utilizing tools and skills which they had learned from urban Marxists, the rural Indians gained confidence in their ability to present their own defenses and to create an alternative discourse that advocated the creation of an Ecuador that responded to their interests and concerns.

In a June 1932 petition, José M. Amaguaña, one of the few literate Kayambis, wrote to the Minister of Government and Social Welfare, asking him to provide more background and explanation for the events on the Moyurco hacienda. Framing the petition around legal issues, he proclaimed that “the constitution of the Republic guarantees the right of workers to organize unions”. On that basis, the Kayambis had launched a peaceful strike for better pay and working conditions “which, in our humble understanding, could be attended to perfectly”. Amaguaña maintained that their demands were not the result of outside agitators and a small handful of discontented people. Rather, officials only presented this as a convenient excuse to remove rural activists from the hacienda.⁵³ In the petition, Amaguaña does not assume the voice of the expelled workers, but attempts to explain the situation from the point of view of an indigenous worker on the hacienda.

Having a Kayambi hacienda worker author a petition led to a notable change in language. Gone are the references to the workers as the most miserable Ecuadorians. In its place, Amaguaña uses the ethnic marker, *indígena*, and furthermore uses it as a term of identification and pride rather than something that should be hidden or suppressed. Amaguaña’s letter also served another function. Unlike a 1931 strike on the neighboring

52. John Uggen, “Peasant Mobilization in Ecuador: A Case Study in Guayas Province” (unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of Miami, 1975), pp. 14–15.

53. Petition quoted in letter from V.M. Cruz Caamaño, Subsecretario, Ministerio de Gobierno y Previsión Social to Director General de la Junta Central de Asistencia Pública, Quito, 10 June 1932, Oficio no. 395, JCAP, CR, Enero–Junio 1932, p. 657; Letter from Larrea Jijón, Ministerio de Gobierno y Asistencia Pública to Director General de la Junta Central de Asistencia Pública, Quito, 7 October 1932, JCAP, CR, Julio–Diciembre 1932, p. 422.

Pesillo hacienda that had been splashed across the front pages of the newspapers, up to this point the events at Moyurco had been largely hidden from the public eye. Now *El Comercio*, the main daily newspaper in Quito, noted that representatives of Tarabata, Churuchumbi, Lechón, and Quishpe had petitioned their case to the Ministry of Social Welfare. The brief story simply noted that the hacienda had fired the four for leading a strike on the hacienda.⁵⁴ Although the newspaper story presents no details, analysis, or explanation for these events, it did make it more difficult for the government to discount these events as isolated, insignificant occurrences. Their strikes and petitions drew ever increasing outside attention to the plight of the Kayambis, and in doing so threatened elite interests. Indigenous peoples, using skills they acquired from their urban allies, were inserting themselves into public debates.

Although Kayambis increasingly claimed the initiative in pressing demands with the government (as Amaguaña's letter illustrates), they still appreciated the assistance of their urban *compañeros* who made it more difficult for the government to ignore their demands. For example, in June 1935, landlords in Cayambe reported that "five known instigators who have made a profession out of these matters" were planning a massive strike for 1 July. "They should be confined or isolated in any place of the Republic", a landlord advocated, "and the problem would be solved".⁵⁵ Among these communist leaders who "corrupt the workers' spirit" were the noted local white activist, Rubén Rodríguez, and the Kayambi leader, Jesús Gualavisí. Indigenous leaders continued to value the solidarity of outsiders as they confronted this repression. Together, they pledged to wage a class struggle across Ecuador.

Expanding from a focus on local issues, activists soon began to organize strategically on a national level. In November 1935, Jesús Gualavisí and Ricardo Paredes organized a Conferencia de Cabecillas Indígenas (Conference of Indigenous Leaders) at the Casa del Obrero in Quito with the goal of creating a regional or national organization to defend indigenous interests. A flyer announcing the closing session of the conference stated that the indigenous leaders had discussed their common problems and had assembled a list of demands that they would present to the government. Indicating that the nascent Indian movement was not isolated from broader protests, they identified the conference as a "key moment in the movement for the emancipation of the working, peasant, and indigenous masses of the country". Indians, the statement declared, "have demonstrated yet again that organized they are perfectly conscious of their rights

54. "Queja presentada por indígenas de una hacienda", *El Comercio*, 12 June 1932, p. 8.

55. Letter from Augusto Egas, Director, Junta Central de Asistencia Pública, to Heriberto Maldonado, Quito, 25 June 1935, Oficio no. 555, JCAP, CD 1934–1935, p. 355; letter from Heriberto Maldonado to Augusto Egas, Director, Junta Central de Asistencia Pública, Quito, 27 June 1935, JCAP, CR Enero–Junio 1935, p. 862.

and are not criminals as they are sometimes described”. Defending the legitimacy of subalterns organizing a national movement for social justice, the flyer noted that “all of their petitions are just, because the Indians only want bread, land, work, and freedom”. In summary, participants at the Conference declared that indigenous peoples desired access to the rights and responsibilities that would allow them to become fully functioning and engaged members of society.⁵⁶

Out of this meeting, Gualavisí emerged as the secretary-general of an organization called the Consejo General de Cabecillas Indios (General Council of Indigenous Leaders). He requested that syndicates, *comunas*, and indigenous leaders contact him to receive information about and help from the new organization.⁵⁷ Although this organization engaged in a minimal amount of activities, it created the groundwork for future national indigenous organizations. This led Oswaldo Albornoz to declare the conference to be a “success”, providing the bases for realizing the objectives of the indigenous movement and building future organizations.⁵⁸ While not as tightly or centrally organized as later organizations, the group which emerged out of the 1935 meeting supported local organizing efforts, attempted to organize several strikes on haciendas (efforts which largely met with failure), and published an occasional bilingual (Spanish-Kichua) newspaper called *Ñucanchic Allpa* (Kichua for “Our Land”) dedicated to the defense of indigenous concerns. In 1936, a local correspondent for the Quiteño conservative daily newspaper, *El Comercio*, lamented that known agitators were broadly distributing *Ñucanchic Allpa* in Cayambe, and that it was creating openings for leftist organizing efforts in the region.⁵⁹

As a popular intellectual, Gualavisí continued to shape the discourse that drove local protest actions even as he engaged issues beyond the confines of rural estates. In 1942 Mexican labor leader, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, founder and president of the communist-dominated Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina (CTAL, Confederation of Latin American Workers), met with the Kayambis and was duly impressed with their organizational capabilities.⁶⁰ In 1943, in the midst of the fight

56. Presídium de la Conferencia de Cabecillas Indígenas, “Hoy se Clasura la Conferencia de Cabecillas Indígenas” (Quito: Editorial de *El Correo*, 7 November 1935), BEAEP, Hojas Volantes, 1933–1938, p. 298.

57. “Organización y Peticiones de Indios”, *Ñucanchic Allpa*, 1:8 (17 March 1936), p. 1.

58. Albornoz, “Jesús Gualavisí”, p. 175; “El partido comunista organizador y defensor de los indios”, *El Pueblo*, 2 June 1951, p. 6.

59. “De Cayambe”, *El Comercio*, 6 April 1936, p. 7.

60. “Ecuador Runacunapa Lombardo Toledano campañaerota saludai”, *Antinazi* (Quito) 1:11 (9 October 1942), p. 2, facsimile edition in Raymond Mériguet Cousségal, *Antinazismo en Ecuador, años 1941–1944: autobiografía del Movimiento Antinazi de Ecuador (MPAE–MAE)* (Quito, 1988), p. 130; “En Cayambe el Párroco Dr Caicedo, encabeza la manifestación a Vicente Lombardo Toledano”, *Antinazi* (Quito) 1:12 (7 November 1942), p. 6, facsimile edn in Mériguet Cousségal, *Antinazismo en Ecuador*, p. 142; Muñoz Vicuña, *Masas, luchas, solidaridad*, p. 65.

against Nazism in Germany, Gualavisí organized a rural antifascist committee in his home community of Juan Montalvo. He was inspired to make this move because of the work of his urban allies who, in the context of the German invasion of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the Hitler–Stalin pact, had formed an antifascist committee in November 1941 to condemn Nazi attacks and to build solidarity with the people of the United States and the Soviet Union. Gualavisí observed that indigenous peoples should not be indifferent to the Nazi and fascist struggle against democracy; it was an issue which affected all of them. Author Nela Martínez later observed that in Kichua the Kayambis “condemned the fascism which they already had experienced”.⁶¹ Gualavisí utilized his position as a popular intellectual to borrow discourse from the antifascist movement, both to mobilize local followers as well as to gain more attention from urban allies for local concerns.

Collaborative efforts culminated in August 1944, when indigenous leaders, together with labor leaders and members of the socialist and communist parties, gathered in Quito to form the Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios (FEI, Ecuadorian Federation of Indians). Emerging out of the political party organizing efforts of rural peasants and urban leftists, the FEI was the first successful attempt in Ecuador to establish a national organization for and by indigenous peoples. Most of the activists at the founding of the FEI and those who subsequently provided leadership in the organization were from the Communist Party. This has led to a perception that “urban *mestizo* intellectuals and a few indigenous activists” led the federation.⁶² This grows out of a mistaken assumption that the Communist Party, like other political parties of that era, was uniquely a phenomenon of urban elites. Indians, however, had a small but growing presence in the party, including on its Central Committee. These militants provided key leadership to the FEI, including Gualavisí who served as the indigenous organization’s first President, and Dolores Cacuango, another

61. “Manifiesto del Movimiento Popular Antitotalitario del Ecuador” (11 December 1941), in in Mériguet Cousségal, *Antinazismo en Ecuador*, pp. 16–17; “Indígenas de Cayambe forman el primer Comité Antifascista del campo en Yanahuaico”, *Antinazi* (Quito) 2:24 (17 August 1943), p. 2, facsimile edn in Mériguet Cousségal, *Antinazismo en Ecuador*, p. 253; “Comité indígena antifascista se organizó en Juan Montalvo”, *Antinazi* (Quito) 2:25 (5 September 1943), p. 2, facsimile edn in Mériguet Cousségal, *Antinazismo en Ecuador*, p. 261; Movimiento Antifascista del Ecuador (M.A.E.), “Informes y resoluciones: Conferencia Provincial Antifascista de Pichincha, Septiembre 20–27 de 1943”, pp. 28, 32, facsimile edn in Mériguet Cousségal, *Antinazismo en Ecuador*, pp. 283, 284; letter from Jesús Gualavisí to Raymond Mériguet, 24 December 1943, in Mériguet Cousségal, *Antinazismo en Ecuador*, p. 309; letter from Jesús Gualavisí, Comité Antifascista de Juan Montalvo, to Señor Ministro de Gobierno, 5 December 1943, published in *Antinazi* (Quito) 2:28 (20 January 1944): pp. 4–5, in Mériguet Cousségal, *Antinazismo en Ecuador*, pp. 324–325; letter from Luis Cacuango to Raymond Mériguet, 26 January 1944, in Mériguet Cousségal, *Antinazismo en Ecuador*, p. 328; and Nela Martínez, “Prologo”, in *ibid.*

62. Pallares, *From Peasant Struggles to Indian Resistance*, p. 13.

Kayambi leader, as the secretary-general. The FEI also designated Paredes as the functional representative for indigenous organizations to the 1944–1945 National Constituent Assembly. In this position, Paredes worked for constitutional reforms and other laws to benefit the Indians.⁶³ Reflecting a close alliance between rural and urban activists as together they framed a political agenda, the FEI denounced attacks against Paredes, referring to him as “our dignified functional representative”.⁶⁴ Surveying the participation of activists in the founding of the FEI reveals that, far from white domination and the exclusion of indigenous activists, it suggests a shared space where indigenous and white activists worked together to struggle for social, political, and economic rights. Both rural and urban activists helped shape discourse and frame protest strategies for Ecuador’s indigenous popular movements.

CONCLUSION

On an ideological level and in terms of logistical support, encounters between rural and urban popular intellectuals first emerged in the formation of peasant syndicates in the 1920s, solidified with organizing around common concerns in the 1930s, and flourished with the formation of the Ecuadorian Federation of Indians (FEI) in the 1940s. These events underscore the importance of popular intellectuals in shaping a counter-hegemonic discourse that has come to characterize indigenous movements in Ecuador. Kayambi leaders sought out interethnic alliances in order to realize their movements’ objectives, embracing issues that extended far beyond immediate local community concerns. Despite entrenched racism and elite fears that communists were stirring up race hatred among the Indians to the point of urging the massacre of whites, indigenous struggles never took that direction. Rather, popular intellectuals borrowed anti-fascist ideologies from leftist discourse that rejected race hatreds, and instead focused on building coalitions across ethnic and cultural divides.⁶⁵

Kayambi activists successfully framed their protest as part of a communist movement that linked their struggles with national and even

63. Ricardo Paredes, Archivo Palacio Legislativo, Quito, Ecuador, “Actas de la Asamblea Constituyente de 1944”, t. 3, pp. 325–330 (21 September 1944).

64. “La Federación Indígena del Ecuador”, 31 August 1944, Muñoz Collection, Hoja Volante.

65. Charles A. Page, “Memorandum with Regard to Communism in Ecuador”, attached to letter from William Dawson to Secretary of State, Washington, no. 150, 29 January 1931, NARA RG 59, 822.00B/24, p. 16. Sixty years later, Subcomandante Marcos described why the *zapatista* struggle in Mexico had not converted itself into a race war of Indians against *ladinos*: “When community members meet with other white, red, black or yellow people and realize that they could be companions or siblings, and not enemies [...] but rather recognize another person with which one could speak and who could help, then that has an effect”. See “Diálogo con el gobierno, si asume a plenitud la vía pacífica: Marcos”, *La Jornada*, 18 November 1998; <http://serpiente.dgsca.unam.mx/jornada/1998/nov98/981118/dialogo.html>.

international networks. Together, rural and urban activists engaged in a popular struggle against exploitation and capitalism that concentrated the wealth of the country in the hands of a small elite. Urban leftists provided the rural Kayambis with inspiration, encouragement, and advice on how to pursue their struggles with the government, influencing how they articulated their demands and concerns. This fostered the emergence of a local variation on Feierman's peasant intellectuals, with activists such as Gualavisí providing a bridge that energized both the rural and urban wings of a popular movement. A legacy of this history for Ecuador's popular struggles for social justice is the emergence of indigenous movements that were neither the creation of paternalistic urban *indigenistas* nor racially directed against white and *mestizo* sectors of the population. Rather, indigenous communists and urban intellectuals were able to imagine together a more just social order, and this lent direction and meaning to a common struggle for social justice.