

# General Alberto Enríquez Gallo: Soldier, Populist, Leftist

MARC BECKER\*

*Abstract.* A tradition in Latin America of reliance on strong leaders becomes problematic when political parties look outside their ranks for candidates who have popular appeal but do not embody their ideologies. This contradiction emerged in Ecuador in the mid-twentieth century when the Left looked to General Alberto Enríquez Gallo as its champion. His early trajectory in the military made him a most unlikely hero for the Left, but when he promulgated progressive labour legislation he gained its strong support. It was, however, a marriage of convenience, as leftists and populists inherently follow different political logics.

*Keywords:* Ecuador, caudillos, populism, Left, communism

The scholarly literature has long acknowledged competition between populists and leftists for mobilisation of the same working-class base of support. Populists employed a similar rhetoric to the Left of railing against the oligarchy, even though they did not have a clearly articulated ideology such as a Marxist notion of class struggle.<sup>1</sup> The tension also had strategic roots, since populists deprived leftists of working-class allegiance in electoral contests. Leftists faced the temptation to ally with populists because of their ability to rally large segments of the population, despite a recognition of the danger of having their political project swallowed up in one that was not of their making. The relationship became even more complicated when the populist was a military officer. Historically, the Latin American armed forces were associated with the conservative and propertied class that was diametrically opposed to a leftist agenda, even as the communist Left had a history of attempting to organise among the military's rank and file. These military populists also made nationalist claims that appealed to the Left, even when

Marc Becker is Professor of Latin American History at Truman State University.  
Email: [marc@yachana.org](mailto:marc@yachana.org)

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<sup>1</sup> Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism* (London: NLB, 1977).

it was not always clear whether their statements were progressive or reactionary in nature.

Gil Alberto Enríquez Gallo was a career military official in mid-twentieth-century Ecuador who had a history of taking seemingly contradictory political positions of supporting the military's institutional interests but also promoting progressive policy initiatives. Mention of his name can still raise polemical debates, even in academic circles, as to whether he is more properly categorised as a leftist, a liberal, a conservative, or whether those ideological labels have little meaning when speaking of populist leaders. During the 1930s and 1940s, Enríquez played a variety of roles: military official, including as minister of defence who put down popular revolts; unelected head of state who drafted progressive legislation that gained him support from the Left; coup plotter who repeatedly attempted to remove the current president from office; presidential candidate on a liberal–socialist ticket; and finally senator for the Partido Liberal (Liberal Party). In 1938, as military dictator, he convoked a constitutional assembly and readily handed power back to civilian authorities. But that did not prevent him from intervening when he thought those politicians were acting in their own rather than the public's interest. Enríquez was a strong nationalist, but not clearly committed to liberal democratic ideals and processes. He believed in the power and value of the military as a stabilising force in society, and one that would not be as easily corrupted as civilian politicians, even as he also competed in electoral contests when provided with the opportunity.

Diverse interpretations of Enríquez's ideology came to a head when he ran as a leftist candidate for the presidency of Ecuador in the June 1948 election. The Partido Comunista del Ecuador (Communist Party of Ecuador, PCE) debated whether to support his candidacy, even while both the communists and Enríquez were concerned that a formal endorsement would be more of a liability than an asset for his campaign. As someone who both gained support from those on the Left, Centre, and Right, *and* alienated opponents from across the political spectrum, his motivations appeared to be complicated if not contradictory. As with many classic caudillos and populists, Enríquez's actions raise the perennial question of whether he was interested in improving society, or just maintaining himself in a position of power and privilege – something that could perhaps be said of most politicians. A more critical question, though, is why the Left came to view as its champion someone who was such an unreliable ally and did not identify as one of them.

Most of the literature on the Latin American Left's complicated relations with populism either assumes the perspective of the populists, or, as the historian Daniel James does for Argentina, challenges notions of working-class passivity in the face of the overwhelming presence of charismatic and

authoritarian leadership.<sup>2</sup> The literature has moved far beyond stereotypical perceptions of subalterns as inert, passive, or negative forces in society who were indifferent to battles over state structures. Even when the government treated Indigenous peoples as legal minors, they often still exhibited a political consciousness and assumed active roles in guiding policy decisions that affected their lives.<sup>3</sup> Leaders' interests have always been inextricably intertwined with those of the popular classes, whether they took the form of Indigenous communities, peasant farmers, or urban workers. As the historian Charles Walker has so probingly demonstrated, a study of leadership must be linked with that of the actions of the general population in order to gain a proper understanding of political debates over government policies and state formation.<sup>4</sup>

Instead of exploring leadership or subaltern strategies, this essay takes the perspective of the political – and specifically communist – Left that has largely been ignored in the literature in order to analyse its complicated and convoluted interactions with populist movements. Rather than examining how subalterns seek to influence government policies or how leaders negotiate cumbersome coalitions, this essay raises the question of why political activists would be willing to reach outside of their own circles to forge alliances with politicians who have a history of making opportunistic and non-ideologically grounded decisions. Enríquez provides an example of how subsumed leftists became to populist mobilisations, even when doing so did not advance their stated ideological agenda of organising a working-class challenge to capitalism. On the surface, it would appear that such alliances would inevitably compromise their political projects. Nevertheless, leftists consciously decided in favour of a tactical and opportunistic alliance in an attempt to gain a strategic advantage, even as they recognised that doing so would mean sacrificing other parts of their larger programme.

### *Leadership*

A large literature exists on authoritarian styles of leadership in Latin America. Nineteenth-century caudillos inspired intense devotion among a loyal following through their charismatic leadership. Those caudillos filled a political void left at independence after the departure of the Spanish colonial government. They gained renown through exploits in battle and relied on the military to maintain themselves in power, not only with an iron fist of control but also by strategically handing out favours and issuing policies that played well to the popular classes. Although caudillos typically came to power through

<sup>2</sup> Daniel James, *Resistance and Integration: Peronism and the Argentine Working Class, 1946–1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> James Sanders, *Contentious Republicans: Popular Politics, Race, and Class in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Charles Walker, *Smoldering Ashes: Cuzco and the Creation of Republican Peru, 1780–1840* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 6.

extra-constitutional means, they relied on legal structures including elections and plebiscites to legitimate their rule. At the same time, they tolerated no dissent, and became authorities unto themselves.<sup>5</sup> As with Álvaro Obregón in the Mexican Revolution, many of these characteristics carried over from the post-independence period to military leaders in the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup>

Historians traditionally have divided caudillos into cultured or ‘good’ ones who benefited the larger society, and barbarous or ‘bad’ ones who ruled in a harmful or selfish manner, and similar categories might be extended to twentieth-century populist leaders.<sup>7</sup> Populists appealed to an emerging sense of nationalism, and drew their support from a growing urban and literate working class that under industrialisation played a larger role in society. They emerged in response to deep socio-economic changes that left workers feeling alienated and with a loss of control over their lives. Populists thrived in weakly organised and politically disarticulated environments that resulted from a crisis of legitimacy for the traditional oligarchy. As with caudillos, populists have been associated with an authoritarian tradition. Much has been made of populists’ charisma, and their ability to inspire and mobilise large populations with their oratory skills. They resorted to antagonistic discourse to discredit their opponents, and relied on direct, personalist appeals to their followers, which led to deeply polarised societies.<sup>8</sup>

As with caudillos, ‘populist’ is a necessarily vague and imprecise label. Despite repeated critiques, populism continues to be a defining category for how to interpret twentieth-century leadership patterns in Latin America. As the historian Alan Knight observed two decades ago, ‘its staying power suggests some inherent qualities’.<sup>9</sup> Knight built his interpretation on the pioneering work of the political scientist Kenneth Roberts, who identified five core principles of populism: personalistic, though not necessarily charismatic, leadership; heterogeneous, multiclass political coalitions; top-down political mobilisations; eclectic and anti-establishment ideologies; and redistributive or clientelistic economic projects.<sup>10</sup> Knight contends that populism does not

<sup>5</sup> Hugh Hamill (ed.), *Caudillos: Dictators in Spanish America* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992); John Lynch, *Caudillos in Spanish America, 1800–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); John Charles Chasteen, *Heroes on Horseback: A Life and Times of the Last Gaucho Caudillos* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> Jürgen Buchenau, *The Last Caudillo: Alvaro Obregón and the Mexican Revolution* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> E. Bradford Burns, *The Poverty of Progress: Latin America in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980).

<sup>8</sup> Michael Conniff, ‘Introduction’, in Michael Conniff (ed.), *Populism in Latin America* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Alan Knight, ‘Populism and Neo-Populism in Latin America, Especially Mexico’, *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 30: 2 (May 1998), p. 224.

<sup>10</sup> Kenneth M. Roberts, ‘Neoliberalism and the Transformation of Populism in Latin America: The Peruvian Case’, *World Politics*, 48: 1 (Oct. 1995), p. 88.

always emerge out of a political or economic crisis, and is not necessarily exceptional or irrational. Rather, he urges us to understand populism as a dynamic and fluid category that allows for variations in how it is constructed, including being rooted in either urban or rural populations, following both civilian and military leaders, and utilising individualistic as well as institutional structures.<sup>11</sup>

The Ecuadorean José María Velasco Ibarra, who famously declared ‘Give me a balcony and the people are mine’, is often included in a pantheon of Latin America’s classic populists together with Juan Perón in Argentina, Getúlio Vargas in Brazil and Lázaro Cárdenas in Mexico. The sociologist Rafael Quintero challenges depictions of Velasco Ibarra as a populist, maintaining instead that such a categorisation results from an uncritical application of external models to Ecuador’s political system.<sup>12</sup> Quintero’s critique has led to a healthy debate in Ecuador, with the sociologist Carlos de la Torre arguing for the durability of populism as a political phenomenon.<sup>13</sup> The historian Ximena Sosa astutely notes, ‘Ecuador has had the second-most intense experience of populism after Brazil’, although ‘Ecuador does not fit the typical mold of Latin American populism nor does the country display all of its characteristics’. Ecuador, for example, industrialised later than Argentina, which under Perón often provides a normative interpretation of populism.<sup>14</sup> The debate highlights how contentious and vague a category populism is.

Enríquez never gained Velasco Ibarra’s high profile and notoriety, either in Ecuador during his lifetime or in the broader academic literature. Unlike his competitor’s five times in office, Enríquez never won a presidential election, and the one time he held executive power was as the result of a military coup. He is more akin to Peru’s Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre or Colombia’s Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, who faced frustration in their electoral aspirations. Although Enríquez’s personality has not left a large imprint on Latin America, his actions reflect broader patterns of how populists contested the political Left for working-class allegiance.

The historian W. John Green contrasts twentieth-century populists with their nineteenth-century predecessors in the sense that the former were military men whereas the later drew on mass and representative politics, including coming to power through electoral means rather than military coups.<sup>15</sup> In that sense, Enríquez might be more closely related to a caudillo tradition. Given Ecuador’s weak government structures, Enríquez helped fill a political

<sup>11</sup> Knight, ‘Populism and Neo-Populism in Latin America’, pp. 231, 240.

<sup>12</sup> Rafael Quintero, *El mito del populismo en el Ecuador* (Quito: FLACSO, 1980).

<sup>13</sup> Carlos de la Torre, *Populist Seduction in Latin America*, 2nd edn (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010).

<sup>14</sup> Ximena Sosa, ‘Populism in Ecuador: From José M. Velasco Ibarra to Rafael Correa’, in Conniff (ed.), *Populism in Latin America*, p. 159.

<sup>15</sup> W. John Green, *Gaitanismo, Left Liberalism, and Popular Mobilization in Colombia* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2003), p. 2.

vacuum. Populists, as is the case with caudillos, were not necessarily ideological, and could move either left or right. Or, rather, as with Enríquez, their ideology was eclectic and ambiguous, and instead they were more likely to use nationalistic language to advance their careers. Sosa observes that populists had little interest in building a coherent ideology, and would randomly draw ideas from conservatism, liberalism, and socialism. Populist discourse ‘did not explain, but persuaded’. Their ideological flexibility helped fill institutional and organisational voids.<sup>16</sup>

The most interesting and useful questions are not whether Enríquez was a caudillo or populist, or how those categorisations can help explain or challenge his actions, but rather why the political Left continually and repeatedly placed its hopes and aspirations in charismatic leaders who came from outside of its ranks and did not necessarily embody or forward its ideological perspectives. Caudillos and populists were quite adept politicians, and could effectively parrot leftist rhetoric that would appeal to the working class. Their policies could result in a downward and inward redistribution of income, which was a welcome break from a reliance on the extraction of natural resources that had undermined domestic economies and national sovereignty under previous governments. For leftists, populist rhetoric and actions appeared to challenge the policies of traditional conservatives and modernising liberals who reliably implemented policies of upward redistribution of wealth that worked against working-class interests. Enríquez fell into this model. He was a nationalist, but nationalism (as well as anti-imperialism) is not necessarily a leftist ideology, and at points can manifest overtly nativist, xenophobic and racist sentiments. The curiosity is why the Left would come to rely on such caudillo personalities to be the standard bearer for its political campaigns.

Unlike socialism rooted in a working-class struggle, populists tended to identify as part of a new and emerging middle class as they articulated multiclass, or even classless, strategies. While populists appealed to the socio-economic interests of the downtrodden, their concrete policies to redistribute wealth, power and prestige remained deliberately vague and quite moderate. Populists, as the historian Steve Ellner contends, did not commit themselves to long-term objectives, nor did they support deep structural changes in society. They lacked a class analysis of society, and did not advocate for a true revolution that would remove the ruling class and replace it with a working-class participatory democracy.<sup>17</sup> Populists excelled at telling audiences what they wanted to hear, and gained their authority from that strategy. They positioned themselves as above and beyond politics, and in the process preempted autonomous working-class activities and organisation. All of those

<sup>16</sup> Sosa, ‘Populism in Ecuador’, p. 166.

<sup>17</sup> Steve Ellner, ‘The Heyday of Radical Populism in Venezuela and Its Reappearance’, in Conniff (ed.), *Populism in Latin America*, p. 138.

factors were present with Enríquez, and raise questions of why the Left decided to support him. As James notes, populist strategies made it difficult for leftist appeals to gain traction among the working class.<sup>18</sup>

Green recognises ‘two opposing tendencies within the phenomenon of populism: it could be either a form of elite social domination through controlled mobilisation of the popular classes, or a mode of popular mobilisation and resistance to the existing relations of power from below’. Populism could be either a brake applied from above, or pressure exercised by the grassroots from below. It could be revolutionary or counter-revolutionary, and sometimes both at the same time.<sup>19</sup> It is precisely these contradictory responses that we see exhibited in Enríquez’s actions.

### *Military Official*

Enríquez’s early record betrays his authoritarian and conservative tendencies. He joined the military in 1909 when he was only 14 years old, and over the next several years engaged in various combats to put down insurgent forces.<sup>20</sup> The military is a common avenue for social advancement in Latin America, and it served that purpose in Enríquez’s case. It is also traditionally understood to represent a conservative institutional force that together with wealthy landholders and the Catholic Church provided a bulwark against subaltern challenges to the ruling class and its hold on power. Latin America has numerous examples of military leaders breaking from that traditional alliance and supporting working-class demands. One of the most famous was Luis Carlos Prestes, who led an insurgent campaign in Brazil in the 1920s against the oligarchy and in favour of democracy, progress and national independence. In the 1930s Prestes became more radical and joined the Communist Party and actively mobilised in support of subaltern concerns.<sup>21</sup> A more recent example of military officials allying with the Left is, of course, former Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez.

In contrast to Prestes and Chávez, Enríquez never joined or formed a leftist political party. Instead, on 15 November 1922, Enríquez was the captain of a military force that brutally suppressed a general strike in Guayaquil. In response, he received a commendation for ‘having saved Guayaquil’ from an anarchist threat. In 1941 he related to his nephew Marcos Gándara Enríquez, who had just returned from military training in Benito

<sup>18</sup> James, *Resistance and Integration*, p. 264.

<sup>19</sup> Green, *Gaitanismo*, pp. 6–7.

<sup>20</sup> Héctor Coral Patiño, *Vida y obra del Señor General Alberto Enríquez Gallo* (Quito: Banco Central del Ecuador, 1988), p. 36.

<sup>21</sup> Jessica Graham, ‘Representations of Racial Democracy: Race, National Identity, and Cultural State Policy and United States and Brazil, 1930–1945’, unpubl. PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2010.



Mussolini's fascist Italy, how his squad expected the protesters to relent in the face of a show of military force. Enríquez claimed that anarchists ambushed the soldiers who were merely attempting to maintain order, and that the protesters were responsible for the 300 deaths. For him, the result was not a massacre but the logical outcome of a combat situation.<sup>22</sup>

Later, Enríquez would tell others that observing the massacre led to a birth of his consciousness, and influenced his subsequent political positions.<sup>23</sup> He became convinced that workers needed legislation to address the problems they faced, and he found the solution to these social conflicts in the labour code that he promulgated 15 years later when he was head of state.<sup>24</sup> Based on Enríquez's later actions, the historian Valeria Coronel challenges interpretations of him as a conservative, and instead situates him within a liberal left tradition.<sup>25</sup> As the historian James Sanders demonstrates, a radical republican liberalism had been developing in neighbouring Colombia since the nineteenth century. That tendency did not emerge out of a Marxist class analysis, but did contribute to democratic and popular struggles to challenge conservative politicians whose ideologies were instrumental in the creation of exclusionary societies.<sup>26</sup> Those reformist influences are apparent in Enríquez's decision in 1925 to join a group of young progressive military officers in the Juliana Revolution that overthrew President Gonzalo Córdova and brought an end to a sequence of constitutionally elected liberal governments. As reward for his participation, the new military government promoted him to the rank of captain. Two years later he was part of a military force that put down an armed rebellion by Francisco Gómez de la Torre, one of the Juliana's leading generals. His support for the established government again led to public recognition and more promotions.<sup>27</sup> The historian Pablo Ospina Peralta claims that the Juliana Revolution converted Enríquez into a radicalised liberal who was sensitive to social problems, but in reality his political trajectory was somewhat more complicated.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Marcos Gándara Enríquez, *La semana trágica de Guayaquil, noviembre de 1922: aproximación a la verdad* (Quito: Sociedad Ecuatoriana de Investigaciones Históricas y Geográficas, 1991), pp. 2–4.

<sup>23</sup> Coral, *Vida y obra del Señor General Alberto Enríquez Gallo*, p. 82.

<sup>24</sup> Rafael Espinoza and Carlos Villacis, *Semblanzas histórico-biográficas del Sr. Gral. Alberto Enríquez Gallo* (Quito: Editorial Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, 1965), p. 48.

<sup>25</sup> Valeria Coronel, 'Justicia laboral y formación del Estado como contraparte ante el capital transnacional en el Ecuador 1927–1938', in Claudia Contente (ed.), *Justicia, violencia y construcción estatal* (Barcelona: Edicions Bellaterra, 2013), p. 183.

<sup>26</sup> Sanders, *Contentious Republicans*.

<sup>27</sup> 'Actitud del regimiento de caballería "Yaguachi" en el movimiento militar de la noche del cuatro de marzo', *El Comercio*, 10 March 1927, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> Pablo Ospina Peralta, 'La aleación inestable. Origen y consolidación de un Estado transformista: Ecuador, 1920–1960', unpubl. PhD diss., University of Amsterdam, 2016, p. 144.



Since the 1920s, communists in Ecuador had attempted to recruit among the rank-and-file of the military, but Enríquez was an officer and always remained reliably anti-communist in his outlook. Other officers, including Luis Larrea Alba, had formed the Vanguardia Revolucionaria del Socialismo Ecuatoriano (Ecuadorian Revolutionary Socialist Vanguard, VRSE), and Marxism influenced that party's ideology. The VRSE occasionally allied with socialists and communists in popular front electoral campaigns. Enríquez and Larrea Alba lived parallel lives, but never made common cause. Both rose through the military to become generals, served as defence ministers, assumed executive power through extra-constitutional means, and subsequently appeared eager to return to office through whatever means available. Both functioned as ideologically ill-defined caudillos who were willing to assume conveniently flexible political positions, though Enríquez was associated with mainstream liberals whereas Larrea Alba was a long-time VRSE leader and actively collaborated with the radical Left. Enríquez easily could have affiliated himself with a leftist tradition in the military, and he deliberately chose not to do so. He pursued reformist policies, but never embraced Marxist ideologies.

Rather than joining the Left, Enríquez remained committed to the military as an ostensibly apolitical institution, and that influenced many of his actions. As a trusted officer, the government sent him to Chile to procure horses and to obtain training from the *carabineros*, Chile's militarised police.<sup>29</sup> He also received instruction from the Italian military mission as a leader of the Yaguachi battalion that, among other things, suppressed a 1931 communist-supported Indigenous strike in Cayambe. Furthermore, Enríquez was in charge of the Remonta hacienda in Cayambe that the government gave to military officials as part of an economic development programme, even as it denied those opportunities to Indigenous labourers in the area who had made similar demands. While in Cayambe, he was charged with but acquitted of *tinterillaje*, of practising law without a licence, usually with the intent to defraud non-literate rural populations.<sup>30</sup> Further reflecting his political proclivities, Enríquez defended the conservative president-elect Neptalí Bonifaz who was prevented from taking power in the August 1932 Four Days' War.<sup>31</sup> A biographer notes that, as a soldier, Enríquez could not take political positions but rather was mandated to defend the constitution. Privately as an individual, however, he had his own political sympathies, and those were for Bonifaz.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Coral, *Vida y obra del Señor General Alberto Enríquez Gallo*, p. 103.

<sup>30</sup> 'Juicio criminal seguido contra Alberto Enríquez, por tinterillaje', 6 June 1932, Juzgado Segundo de Letras, Caja 13, Carpeta 6-VI-1932, Archivo Nacional de Ecuador (hereafter ANE).

<sup>31</sup> Coral, *Vida y obra del Señor General Alberto Enríquez Gallo*, p. 121.

<sup>32</sup> Espinoza and Villacis, *Semblanzas histórico-biográficas del Sr. Gral. Alberto Enríquez Gallo*, p. 111.

In September 1935, Enríquez as representative of the Yaguachi battalion was one of a group of military officers who negotiated the resignation of interim president Antonio Pons Campuzano and the transfer of power to Federico Páez.<sup>33</sup> As a reward for his support, Páez appointed Enríquez minister of defence and later promoted him to the rank of general.<sup>34</sup> His rapid promotion from colonel while serving as minister of defence led to questions of propriety, and the designation divided the military, with conservatives opposing the appointment.<sup>35</sup> British diplomats reported that his reorganisation of the army ‘will no doubt make him many enemies’. The military official had ‘never before taken any part in politics and, while he has a pleasant personality, there is no reason to suspect that he has any ability as a statesman’.<sup>36</sup> Enríquez gave little indication that he had political aspirations.

As head of state, Páez initially exhibited leftist sympathies, but once in office he drifted in a conservative direction. As part of his rightward turn, Páez encouraged US investment in the country, particularly in the realm of mining concessions. He rolled back provisions of an 1892 mining code that had established government control over mineral deposits, extended legal guarantees for the exploitation of natural resources, and suppressed worker protests against mining companies.<sup>37</sup> Leftists denounced Páez’s policies, and supported worker struggles against the imperial economic policies of the United States-based South American Development Company (SADC). Communist Party secretary-general Ricardo Paredes contended that socialists were ‘not opposed to foreign investment’. Indeed, Paredes believed that Ecuador needed ‘the capital and the advanced techniques of the major industrial countries to develop our own economy’. Those resources, however, must remain under domestic control.<sup>38</sup> These policy differences led the communists into opposition to Páez’s government.

On 28 November 1936, the Calderón artillery battalion rebelled against Páez’s government. Enríquez personally directed the military response against the mutiny. Minister of government Aurelio Bayas thanked

<sup>33</sup> ‘El Ing. Federico Páez asume el mando supremo’, *El Comercio*, 27 Sept. 1935, p. 8.

<sup>34</sup> Federico Páez, ‘Nómbrese ministro de defensa nacional al Sr. Coronel Dn. Alberto Enríquez’, *Registro Oficial* I: 53 (30 Nov. 1935), p. 2; Federico Páez, ‘Asciéndese a General de la República al Coronel G.A. Enríquez’, *Registro Oficial* II: 559 (7 Aug. 1937), p. 1523.

<sup>35</sup> Gonzales to Secretary of State, 26 Nov. 1935, Record Group (hereafter RG) 59, 822.00/1137, National Archives Records Administration, College Park, MD (hereafter NARA).

<sup>36</sup> London, ‘Records of Leading Personalities in Ecuador’, 1 Jan. 1936, A 2880/2880/54, in *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print* (hereafter *BDFAP*), Series D, Part II, Vol. 15 (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1991), Document 33, p. 105.

<sup>37</sup> Federico Páez, *Explico* (n.p. [Quito]: Editorial de El Comercio, 1939).

<sup>38</sup> Ricardo Paredes, *El imperialismo en el Ecuador; oro y sangre en Portovelo*, 3rd edn (Guayaquil: Edición CPPEO, 1980), p. 211.

Enríquez for his decisive action, and Enríquez in turn thanked his soldiers for their support.<sup>39</sup> Páez and all of his ministers, including Enríquez at defence, signed a statement that blamed the Calderón mutiny on communists.<sup>40</sup> The PCE strenuously denied involvement. No communists were found among the participants, it observed, and neither were they the mutiny's intellectual authors. Accused conspirators José Joaquín Silva and Gustavo Salgado were already serving a prison sentence on the Galapagos Islands and thus were far from the theatre of operations, while the Indigenous activists Ambrosio Lasso and Florencio Gashpa were at home working their fields. Floresemilo Romero was also in prison after returning from a labour congress in Colombia.<sup>41</sup> In an increasingly repressive environment, Páez charged Enríquez together with the ministers of government and welfare with executing a decree to the effect that no one could travel without police permission.<sup>42</sup> The president used the Calderón uprising as an excuse to promulgate the repressive 'Ley de Defensa Social' (Law of Social Defence) that outlawed the Communist Party.<sup>43</sup> The PCE denounced the law as 'contrary to the spirit of the constitution that guarantees political rights and liberties for all citizens without exception', and asked the Supreme Court to abolish it.<sup>44</sup> As defence minister, Enríquez was deeply implicated in Páez's repressive actions, and the positions he took were antithetical to those of the Left.

### *Supreme Leader*

Enríquez's most visible public presence came during a brief stint as the country's unelected supreme leader after he reversed course and removed Páez – whom he had previously supported – in a military coup on 23 October 1937. On taking office, Enríquez accused Páez of dishonest and unscrupulous dealings that brought misery to the country. He promised an honest administration that would punish those who benefited from corruption. Except for the conservative jurist Julio Tobar Donoso at foreign affairs, army officers initially filled all of his cabinet posts, highlighting his continued reliance on the military.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>39</sup> 'El Ministro de Defensa dirigió las operaciones', *El Comercio*, 29 Nov. 1936, p. 3; 'El Ministro de Gobierno expresa su congratulación al Ministro de Defensa', *El Día*, 5 Dec. 1936, p. 1; 'M. de Defensa felicita a los cuerpos que sofocaron rebelión de regimiento Calderón', *El Comercio*, 1 Dec. 1936, p. 7.

<sup>40</sup> Federico Páez, 'A la nación', *El Día*, 4 Dec. 1936, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Partido Comunista, *Exposición a la Corte Suprema* (Pasto, Colombia: Imp. Nariño, 1937), p. 5.

<sup>42</sup> 'No se podrá viajar dentro del país sin permiso de la policía', *El Comercio*, 30 Nov. 1936, p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> Federico Páez, 'Ley de Defensa Social', *Registro Oficial II*: 353 (1 Dec. 1936), p. 927.

<sup>44</sup> Partido Comunista, *Exposición a la Corte Suprema*, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> G.H. Bullock, 'Ecuadoran Coup', 26 Oct. 1937, A 8218/181/54, in *B DFA*, Series D, Part II, Vol. 18 (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1992), Document 17, p. 36.

While previously the military general could be counted on to defend the institutionalised interests of the dominant culture, once in office he undertook a dramatic reorganisation of the government. Enríquez freed political prisoners; restored civil rights; and turned back some of Páez's most objectionable legislation, including measures that he had supported as defence minister. Enríquez named new ministers who demonstrated leftist inclinations, including the *indigenista* Víctor Gabriel Garcés at social welfare. A later cabinet added socialists at education and finance, together with three liberals and one conservative.<sup>46</sup> Enríquez's nine months in office resulted in some of the most progressive legislation in Ecuador's history and contributed to a fundamental shift in how the Left viewed him. Alan Knight notes that leaders tend to move from populist to conservative positions; Enríquez is a rare outlier in that he appeared to move in the opposite direction.<sup>47</sup>

The Partido Socialista Ecuatoriano (Ecuadorean Socialist Party, PSE) was initially not sure how to respond to the military official now in power, and questioned whether his actions were 'simply the result of a demagogic zeal to gain friendly sympathy from the people'.<sup>48</sup> The Left, however, welcomed the new chief executive's tolerance, and supported his reversal of the previous administration's repressive policies that it now associated with Páez rather than with the former defence minister who had implemented them. A mythology grew up around Enríquez's brief time in power. The historian Jorge Núñez characterised his government as a continuation of the 1925 reformist Juliana Revolution that progressive sectors of the small bourgeoisie had influenced.<sup>49</sup> It is by no means apparent, however, that Enríquez's policies emerged out of a leftist, or even liberal, ideological orientation, and that enigma is key to understanding his relationship with broader political forces.

Enríquez's government paralleled a broader left turn in Latin America that accompanied the deepening political and economic crisis of the 1930s Great Depression. Most significantly, during his time in the presidency the Bolivian and Mexican governments nationalised foreign-owned petroleum companies and regulated extractive industries. Enríquez applauded the Bolivian government for its 'patriotic sense of justice' in expropriating the petroleum reserves, although unlike his counterparts he did not nationalise the

<sup>46</sup> G.H. Bullock, 'Ecuadoran Situation', 17 Nov. 1937, A 8588/181/54, in *B DFA*, Series D, Part II, Vol. 19 (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1992), Document 86, p. 198; G.H. Bullock, 'Enríquez Cabinet', 14 June 1938, A 5325/715/54, in *B DFA*, Series D, Part II, Vol. 18, Document 28, p. 51.

<sup>47</sup> Knight, 'Populism and Neo-Populism in Latin America', p. 234 n. 51.

<sup>48</sup> Napoleón Humberto Súa, *Informe que el compañero Napoleón Humberto Súa, Secretario General del Partido Socialista Ecuatoriano, presenta al V congreso del partido* (Quito: Editora Moderna, 1939), p. 16.

<sup>49</sup> Jorge Núñez, 'El nacionalismo revolucionario: Ecuador y Bolivia', *Nueva*, 82 (1982), p. 51.

SADC or other foreign corporations.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, as Valeria Coronel has shown, Ecuador's foreign ministry was aware of this international political context, and those external factors influenced his policies.<sup>51</sup> As a politician, he knew which way the wind was blowing, and he effectively followed those currents to his political advantage. Author Albert Franklin reported that a 'passionate nationalism' drove these policies, and quite to his surprise gained him the enduring adoration of the Left.<sup>52</sup> Alan Knight categorises populism in the 1930s as 'the political counterpart of import substitution industrialisation' that repudiated the oligarchy, mobilised new social groups, and advocated for larger state intervention in the economy, and Enríquez's policies are consistent with those broader patterns.<sup>53</sup> In retrospect, it is not clear whether Enríquez was acting in an ideological or opportunistic fashion, and whether his nationalistic policies responded to progressive or reactionary impulses.

Similarly to Enríquez, Mussolini's fascist policies led Bolivia's two self-styled military socialist leaders David Toro (1936–7) and Germán Busch (1937–9) to favour the creation of a corporatist regime and adopt functional legislative representation. They pursued policies of resource nationalism, including limiting the ability of foreign corporations to transfer profits out of the country and requiring private property to serve a social function.<sup>54</sup> Their promulgation of progressive labour and other legislation encouraged working-class mobilisations, even as they attempted to subjugate autonomous organisations to government control. When pressed to move more quickly, Busch suspended the constitution and outlawed communist and anarchist organisations. His conservative turn highlights the limits of top-down approaches to societal transformation. Despite pressure from below, the military socialists failed to implement radical reforms. The historian Laura Gotkowitz characterises Bolivia's experiments with military socialism as a double-edged sword. While progressive military policies could empower workers and farmers, government officials could also be corrupt and undermine independent organising efforts.<sup>55</sup>

Enríquez was also a contemporary of Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–40), and it is instructive to contextualise his nationalistic policies

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>51</sup> Valeria Coronel, 'Una cuestión de derecho y reivindicación: los vínculos entre la demanda de derechos sociales y la política internacional soberanista en el Ecuador de entreguerras', *Lineasur: Revista de Política Exterior*, 1: 3 (2012), p. 186.

<sup>52</sup> Albert Franklin, *Ecuador: Portrait of a People* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1943), p. 297.

<sup>53</sup> Knight, 'Populism and Neo-Populism in Latin America', p. 237.

<sup>54</sup> Kevin A. Young, 'From Open Door to Nationalization: Oil and Development Visions in Bolivia, 1952–1969', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 97: 1 (Feb. 2017), p. 100.

<sup>55</sup> Laura Gotkowitz, *A Revolution for our Rights: Indigenous Struggles for Land and Justice in Bolivia, 1880–1952* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 164.

within interpretations of his better-known counterpart. As with the Bolivians Toro and Busch, both were military leaders. Cárdenas gained renown during the Mexican Revolution, but his rise to power was equally due to his achievements as governor of Michoacán. Unlike Enríquez, who came to office through a military coup, Cárdenas won an election. Their professions as military generals were at the same time irrelevant and foundational to their actions as president. Both embraced progressive social policies that would appear to be at odds with the institutional interests of the military, although both followed vertical and authoritarian models of governance to achieve their policy objectives.

Many Mexicans celebrate Cárdenas for his 1938 expropriation of foreign petroleum companies and the formation of the government-owned *Petróleos Mexicanos* (Mexican Petroleum, Pemex). Scholars have alternately cast Cárdenas as a communist, socialist, radical, liberal, reformist, or democrat, while others have depicted him as a populist who demobilised and manipulated workers through corporatist structures that resulted in a bureaucratic, authoritarian and repressive government. For scholars such as Adolfo Gilly, Cárdenas consolidated the process of an interrupted revolution that degenerated into corrupt, clientelist structures rather than achieving the liberation and empowerment of workers and farmers.<sup>56</sup> Historian Adrian Bantjes counters that Cardenismo has a variety of meanings if interpreted from the perspective of ordinary Mexicans. Rather than framing Cárdenas as either fostering a democratic, popular, bottom-up movement, or imposing policies in an authoritarian, top-down fashion, Bantjes contends that his government did not represent ‘a monolithic ideology and movement’. Instead, he observes, it presented ‘an arena in which diverse political cultures clashed violently’. Although Cárdenas’s policies embodied radical proposals, they stopped short of what workers and farmers hoped for and had expected. In the end, his reforms ‘were limited and their significance was ambiguous’, and his government failed to ‘give rise to a new, popular, democratic political culture’.<sup>57</sup> A similar interpretation can be forwarded of the chaotic period during which his Ecuadorean counterpart held office. The multivocality and fluidity of Enríquez’s policies are what make it so difficult to characterise his policies.

Many other governments in the 1930s pursued corporatist policies designed to harmonise working-class interests with government policies, similarly leading to results that are difficult to categorise. In neighbouring Peru, the conservative Óscar Benavides (1933–9) favoured a benevolent ‘social state’ that protected private initiatives but also subordinated those to larger national interests. Benavides sought to negotiate the interests of labour and capital in pursuit of a modern and rational nation-building project that would suppress

<sup>56</sup> Adolfo Gilly, *The Mexican Revolution* (New York: New Press, 2005).

<sup>57</sup> Adrian Bantjes, *As if Jesus Walked on Earth: Cardenismo, Sonora, and the Mexican Revolution* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1998), pp. xiv, 224.



class conflict in pursuit of social justice and class harmony. As with many of his contemporaries, including Franklin D. Roosevelt and his New Deal policies in the United States, leftists were not always sure how to respond to these policy initiatives, with some denouncing them as manifesting fascist tinges.<sup>58</sup> During the Great Depression, both conservative and progressive governments turned to government structures to manage the economy and to implement a wave of new social policies. Those initiatives, whether from the Left or the Right, gained significant popular support, and ultimately challenged ruling class interests.<sup>59</sup>

In Ecuador, Enríquez reversed his predecessor Páez's economic policies that had been favourable toward foreign mining concessions. Following a policy of economic nationalism, he sought to limit the excessive profits of US mining companies that operated in Ecuador, to regulate their industrial relations, and to outlaw payment of workers in scrip. With the collaboration of a wealthy national bourgeoisie, the mining company had operated freely as a state within a state with privileges that included exemptions from customs duties and free use of land and other public resources. Notably, the new leader defended miners in their labour demands against the SADC. He increased taxes on the company, a position that paralleled what the communist leader Paredes had advocated. Enríquez was willing to use the military, if necessary, to enforce these provisions.<sup>60</sup> The British foreign ministry, in representation of the Anglo Ecuadorean Oilfields Limited, complained that Enríquez 'showed himself to be virulently opposed to British and American companies in Ecuador, and was quite unscrupulous in his attacks upon them'.<sup>61</sup> His nationalist policies gained him the praise of leftists and the animosity of imperial powers.

The *New York Times* noted that 'radical and labor elements' supported Enríquez's policies, but the newspaper also wondered whether fascist influences underlay his nationalist programmes.<sup>62</sup> Populists commonly discarded labels of 'left' and 'right' in order to appeal to broad segments of the population. Nevertheless, rooting their political strategy in a corporatist tradition and expression of a 'third way' between capitalism and communism – as Perón did in Argentina – opened populists up to charges of fascism. In Argentina, as elsewhere, communists initially characterised Peronism as a form

<sup>58</sup> Paulo Drinot, *The Allure of Labor: Workers, Race, and the Making of the Peruvian State* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 126–7.

<sup>59</sup> Sosa, 'Populism in Ecuador', p. 159; Paulo Drinot, 'Introduction', in Paulo Drinot and Alan Knight (eds.), *The Great Depression in Latin America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 6–7.

<sup>60</sup> Andrea Carrión, 'Economic Nationalism and the Public Dominion of Mineral Resources in Ecuador, 1929–1941', *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 2: 1 (2015), pp. 108–9.

<sup>61</sup> G.H. Bullock, 'Records of Leading Personalities in Ecuador', 30 Aug. 1941, A 8418/8418/54 in *B DFA*, Series D, Part III, Vol. 3 (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1998), Document 169, p. 80.

<sup>62</sup> 'Ecuador Burdens Foreign Business', *New York Times*, 3 Feb. 1938, p. 7.



of fascism, but later changed their position in the face of Perón's growing strength and ultimately weakened their own autonomous organising efforts.<sup>63</sup> Superficially, populists pursued the same nationalist policies as the political Left, and undermined the Left's ability to mobilise its working-class base.

The Colombian populist leader Gaitán also faced charges of fascism from those who could have been his allies on the Left. W. John Green notes that Gaitán's opponents branded him as a fascist because he had studied in Italy, and because of how Mussolini influenced his modern style of mass, multiclass mobilisation and public oratory. Green, nevertheless, discards these charges, and contends that Gaitán simply adapted lessons from Europe to his Colombian reality. Gaitán's popularity came at the expense of the communists, who had attempted to organise the same working-class population that now supported the populist leader, and leftists applied the label 'fascist' as a propaganda ploy to attack their rival.<sup>64</sup> Even so, as reformists, populists often became deeply anticommunist. Indeed, historically populism has more commonly formed a foundation for fascism than for socialism. It relied on emotional rather than ideological appeals, and resulted, as Ernst Bloch commented for German workers, in a situation in which 'the Nazis speak falsely but to people, the communists truthfully, but of things'.<sup>65</sup>

Charges of fascism led Enríquez to defend the justness of his actions, and retort that 'no other motive than defense of Ecuadorean interests' inspired his policy. Some companies had paid little or no taxes, and the increased taxes represented 'just compensation for the benefits enjoyed by these companies for many years'.<sup>66</sup> Enríquez's stint in office corresponded to a time when foreign direct investment had fallen across Latin America because of the Great Depression. Located between the collapse of the cacao boom in the 1920s and the rapid growth of exports in the banana industry after World War II, US direct investment in Ecuador amounted to US\$ 5 million, the lowest in the region.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, Enríquez effectively exploited the perception of foreign domination of the economy as a political issue to establish national sovereignty over the country's resources, and to increase the tax revenues flowing to the government. Even if those policies did not emerge out of a Marxist analysis of class relations, they were consistent with what the Left demanded.

At the end of his time in office, Enríquez pointed to those economic policies as some of his most significant achievements. He emphasised that he was not

<sup>63</sup> James, *Resistance and Integration*, p. 12.

<sup>64</sup> W. John Green, 'Guilt by Association: Jorge Eliécer Gaitán and the Legacy of his Studies in "Fascist" Italy', in Ingrid Elizabeth Fey and Karen Racine (eds.), *Strange Pilgrimages: Exile, Travel, and National Identity in Latin America, 1800–1990s* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2000), pp. 179–92.

<sup>65</sup> Cited in James, *Resistance and Integration*, p. 24.

<sup>66</sup> Aurelio Falcón, 'Ecuadorean Contracts', *New York Times*, 4 March 1938, p. 22.

<sup>67</sup> Robert Grosse, *Multinationals in Latin America* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 20.

opposed to international investment in Ecuador, nor foreign economic aid. Rather, he renegotiated contracts so that more of the profits of the mineral wealth would benefit Ecuador rather than transnational corporations. It simply was not fair, Enríquez stressed, ‘that foreign capital, with the threat of leaving the country, should enjoy privileges that domestic companies did not have, in addition to even more state support’. He denied that ‘foreign doctrines’ politically motivated or influenced his actions, implicitly eschewing allegiance to either communist or fascist ideologies. His policies had not intended to extort finances from mining companies, nor trample on their rights. Rather, controls over international corporations were the actions of a ‘free, sovereign, and independent state’. The best proof that these policies were fair, Enríquez declared, was that the same foreign companies that this legislation had targeted had accepted these new policies and remained in Ecuador. The new tax policies resulted in a significant increase in the country’s budget, which meant more resources to meet pressing needs for the people as well as contributing to economic growth.<sup>68</sup> Even as Enríquez held communists at a distance, his policies of economic nationalism in large part were what gained him leftist support.

Valeria Coronel identifies Enríquez’s time in office as launching a search for social justice that changed how the government interacted with popular movements.<sup>69</sup> Enríquez promulgated legislation at an unprecedented pace to guarantee social and democratic rights for marginalised and disadvantaged communities. He passed education and other social welfare reforms including a new law of civil marriage that protected the rights of children. Enríquez legally established Indigenous community structures (the *comunas*) and cooperatives, and made steps toward an agrarian reform that would grant land rights to rural workers. Those steps triggered a period of intense peasant and Indigenous mobilisations for their rights. He also encouraged unionisation almost to the point of making it obligatory, including requiring that bosses formalise contracts and recognise the rights of their workers. Enríquez supported the Congreso Obrero de Ambato (Ambato Workers’ Congress) called by leftist unions and political parties in order to form a national workers’ federation.<sup>70</sup> Communist labour leader Pedro Saad applauded the supreme leader’s support for the communists’ organising efforts.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Alberto Enríquez, *Memoria que el señor General G. Alberto Enríquez G., jefe supremo de la república presenta a la honorable asamblea nacional constituyente sobre las labores desarrolladas en su administración* (Quito: Imprenta del Ministerio de Gobierno, 1938), p. 65.

<sup>69</sup> Valeria Coronel, ‘A Revolution in Stages: Subaltern Politics, Nation-State Formation, and the Origins of Social Rights in Ecuador, 1834–1943’, unpubl. PhD diss., New York University, 2011, p. 931.

<sup>70</sup> Guillermo Bustos, ‘La identidad “clase obrera” a revisión: una lectura sobre las representaciones del Congreso Obrero de Ambato de 1938’, *Procesos: Revista Ecuatoriana de Historia*, I Semestre: 2 (1992), pp. 73–104.

<sup>71</sup> Pedro Saad, *La CTE y su papel histórico* (Guayaquil: Ed. Claridad, 1968), p. 20.

Enríquez placed socialists in control of the ministry of social welfare, which further encouraged grassroots mobilisations. As reported in the *New York Times*, he acknowledged that ‘subversive elements are charging that he is embracing communism because his interest in the social welfare of the workers has alarmed elements who for years have exploited the lower classes for personal aggrandisement’. He claimed, however, that he was not a radical but a liberal democrat, even as he warned his opponents not to think of him as weak ‘since his government is supported by the strongest groups of citizens and working classes of all political parties’.<sup>72</sup> Leftists did not seem to care much how he identified himself, because finally they had a government in power that was implementing their programme.

The general is best known for promulgating, only five days before leaving office, the 1938 labour code that was based on the forward-looking 1917 Mexican constitution. That far-reaching legislation established minimum wage commissions, and provided for government mediation and regulation of labour conflicts.<sup>73</sup> Through the labour code and other legislation, Enríquez reconstituted corporatist power from the bottom up, and undermined previous governmental plans for top-down modernisation. Both urban labour unions and rural peasant syndicates benefited from his corporatist policies. The Left embraced this labour legislation as one of the most important social reforms in the country’s history. A US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agent conducting surveillance on the labour movement, however, interpreted its intent and function in a quite different light. From the FBI’s perspective, the labour code ‘was influential in pulling the workers away from Moscow domination’. If it had not been for such legislation, socialists and communists might have realised success in organising a class struggle with much more dramatic ramifications.<sup>74</sup> As was common with populist policies, his moderate reforms undermined the growth of a much more radical social revolution. Divisions on the Left, particularly between socialists, with their backing among middle-class intellectuals, and communists, who drew their support from urban workers and rural peasants, further eroded the control that it was able to exercise over the direction of those policies.<sup>75</sup>

Enríquez claimed that he was initially reluctant to take power, and did so only with the explicit support of the armed forces, and with a promise that he would resign the following August with the democratic election of a

<sup>72</sup> ‘Bans Political Disorders’, *New York Times*, 2 March 1938, p. 10.

<sup>73</sup> Alberto Enríquez, ‘Código del Trabajo’, Decreto Supremo 210, *Registro Oficial* I: 78–81 (14–17 Nov. 1938).

<sup>74</sup> Hoover to Berle, 11 May 1943, RG 59, 822.504/54, NARA.

<sup>75</sup> David Gómez López, ‘La constitución perdida. Una aproximación al proyecto constituyente de 1938 y su derogatoria’, *Ecuador Debate*, 86 (2012), p. 153.

constituent assembly.<sup>76</sup> He asserted that his government was ‘genuinely democratic, in line with my purely republican principles’. He denied that he had acted in a dictatorial manner, and proclaimed that he respected individual liberties of speech and the press. No previous government, ‘either dictatorial or constitutional, has respected the rights of citizens as much as the current one’, Enríquez asserted. His was a government of and by the people.<sup>77</sup> Not everyone bought into his rhetoric. The *New York Times* later commented, ‘he established another in the nation’s long line of dictatorships’, a characterisation intended to denigrate his government’s accomplishments. As a populist caudillo, he drew support from the military as well as stirring up popular sentiments against conservative and foreign business interests.<sup>78</sup> In the process, Enríquez effectively neutralised the radical Left as an independent political force.

The general convoked a new constituent assembly and filled it in equal parts with conservative, liberal and socialist representation from the three legally recognised political parties. According to sociologist Agustín Cueva, Enríquez provided the three parties with equal representation because they represented three social forces (landowners, the bourgeoisie and the middle classes) that had come to an impasse in the country’s administration.<sup>79</sup> That decision provided the socialists – as well as the conservatives – with more power than they would otherwise have received in a public vote. US diplomats complained that Enríquez had taken this measure to inflate the Left’s representation in the assembly with an eye toward maintaining himself in office.<sup>80</sup> Under Enríquez’s jurisdiction, the assembly drafted a new constitution that nationalised natural resources and limited the control of transnational corporations. It also increased the number of ‘functional’ deputies in the assembly (selected to represent the corporate interests of a specific group such as farm workers rather than being elected in a popular vote), which would ensure the Left’s continued hold on power. The resulting 1938 constitution was never promulgated, but it represented the closest that the socialists came to taking power in Ecuador. Some militants responded with expressions of undying loyalty to the general. If Enríquez’s goal was to solidify a base of support, he was successful.

Even with these gestures to the Left, the communists complained that they were not specifically mentioned in the electoral law that provided for the

<sup>76</sup> Alberto Enríquez, ‘El General G. Alberto Enríquez asume el mando supremo de la República’, *Registro Oficial* I: 1 (23 Oct. 1937), p. 2135.

<sup>77</sup> Alberto Enríquez, *Mensaje que el Sr. General G. Alberto Enríquez G., presenta a la honorable asamblea constituyente* (Quito: Imprenta del Ministerio de Gobierno, 1938), p. 5.

<sup>78</sup> ‘Alberto Enríquez, Ex-Head of Ecuador’, *New York Times*, 14 July 1962, p. 14.

<sup>79</sup> Agustín Cueva, *The Process of Political Domination in Ecuador* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1982), p. 29.

<sup>80</sup> Gade to Secretary of State, 26 April 1938, RG 59, 822.00/1199, NARA.

tripartite division of the assembly.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, the PCE responded warmly to Enríquez's reforms. The party applauded him for following democratic policies, for supporting popular interests, and for defending national sovereignty in the face of imperialist threats. But, the communists emphasised, theirs was not an unconditional backing but rather one that provided critical support for the government's democratic and progressive proposals that were consistent with those that the PCE had long advocated. Furthermore, the party stressed that Enríquez's government was 'not socialist or communist, as conservatives maliciously claimed'. It stressed that in contrast to conservative propaganda that labelled the government as communist, the party did not hold any posts in the government. The PCE also urged party militants to remain ever vigilant to stop fascist influences that might derail the government's reforms and tenacious conservatives who wanted to change his policies. In particular, the PCE urged its members to watch for attempts by the agents of foreign companies to subvert national interests. Even though its ultimate goal was socialism, the party claimed that at the present historical moment 'not even the communists want a moderate socialist government'. Rather, the social and political conditions required a democratic and progressive government. Staking out a position of appealing for evolutionary rather than revolutionary change, the communists presented themselves as patriotic citizens who defended the country 'with more energy than any other political party'. The party believed that its agenda would be best achieved through maintaining and expanding Enríquez's political platform.<sup>82</sup>

One of Enríquez's first actions in office had been to abrogate Páez's repressive Law of Social Defence, a point that he emphasised when he handed power over to the constituent assembly at the end of his rule as chief executive.<sup>83</sup> That law had outlawed the Communist Party, but Enríquez did not explicitly allow the party to operate legally. With a government that neither officially recognised nor attacked the communists, the party did not know whether it was legal or illegal, but, doubtful of its legal status, continued to work underground. As a result, leftists always had a complicated relationship with the general: on the one hand they applauded him for his social legislation and for lessening the repression of leftists, and on the other hand they recognised him as an authoritarian caudillo and an opportunist politician. Although the Left benefited from his policies, those policies seemed to be guided more by a corporatist desire to retain societal control than by any ideological notions of a socialist

<sup>81</sup> Gade to Secretary of State, 28 April 1938, RG 59, 822.00/1200, NARA.

<sup>82</sup> Ricardo Paredes, 'Línea política y organizativa del Partido Comunista Ecuatoriano', 1938 (thanks to Valeria Coronel for providing a copy of this document); Partido Comunista Ecuatoriano (PCE), *El programa de reconstrucción nacional en el Ecuador* (Quito: Imp. Editorial de El Correo, 1938), pp. 8–9.

<sup>83</sup> Alberto Enríquez, 'Derógame la Ley de Defensa Social, expedido por Decreto Supremo no. 448', *Registro Oficial I*: 1 (23 Oct. 1937), p. 2136; Enríquez, *Memoria*, p. 5.

transformation of fundamentally unequal class relations. In the final analysis, Enríquez acted primarily as a nationalist who seemingly only wanted to help ordinary people. Regardless of his intent, popular movements exploited the openings he created to their own benefit.

After a nine-month period of intense legislative activity, on 10 August 1938 Enríquez resigned his position as supreme leader of Ecuador and handed power over to the constituent assembly as promised. In not attempting to hold on to power indefinitely, Enríquez appeared to be an ideal leader. Returning power to civilians, in essence, also meant handing the government over to a plutocratic wing of the Liberal Party. Liberal Party stalwart Alberto Arroyo del Río, who, following a series of short-term appointments, served as president from 1940 to 1944, had been one of the SADC's lawyers. Most notably, in power he opened the country up to the control of foreign monopolies. The oligarchy, now back in control, immediately set to work turning back the gains that the Left had made under Enríquez's government. In retrospect, given the realistic possibilities, in the current environment Enríquez appeared to be the best option for the Left.

### *Coup Plotter*

Enríquez did not disappear from the public scene when he left office in August 1938. Over the course of the next several years, he was arrested three times because of his involvement in conspiracies against the government in power. The former dictator gained supporters who criticised the government for falsely creating the image of 'communist revolutionary plots' to justify the arrest and imprisonment of 'distinguished members of our society'.<sup>84</sup> The underlying ideology behind those conspiracies has not been properly studied, and press reports and statements at the time shed little light on their motivation. While in office, Enríquez did not appear to suffer from a Machiavellian complex that pushes some leaders to maintain themselves in power at all costs. Once out of office, he appeared to be entirely motivated by a desire to return to the presidency, either for reasons of personal aggrandisement or out of a belief that the military was more capable of running the country than was corrupt and inefficient civilian leadership.

Despite Enríquez's repeated alleged attempts to overthrow the government, he was not involved in the one that was successful, and the one that emerged out of leftist inspiration. On 28 May 1944, workers, students, women, peasants and Indigenous peoples joined forces with lower-ranking military personnel against Arroyo del Río's repressive and corrupt government, and the

<sup>84</sup> Camilo Desmoulins, 'Un gobierno de vampiros', 3 July 1941, Hojas Volantes [Flyers], Biblioteca Ecuatoriana Aurelio Espinosa Pólit (hereafter BEAEP).

*carabineros*, modelled on Chile's militarised police, that maintained him in power. A month later, the new chief executive José María Velasco Ibarra reduced Enríquez's rank from general to colonel as punishment for having created the hated *carabineros* six years earlier while president.<sup>85</sup> The socialist Emilio Gangotena came to Enríquez's defence, claiming he was a good leader who had promulgated the labour code and other social legislation. Gangotena called on other leftists to join him in support of the military leader, but few did.<sup>86</sup> Velasco Ibarra was now their new champion, even though (or perhaps because) he was even more of an effective populist leader and political chameleon than the former dictator.

As Ecuadoreans went to the polls in July 1944 to elect a new constituent assembly, Velasco Ibarra arrested Enríquez on charges of threatening to overthrow his government, apparently in revenge for having reduced his military rank.<sup>87</sup> The former dictator's brother claimed he was innocent, and that he was a victim of false accusations based on personal vengeance and gratuitous hate.<sup>88</sup> The assembly freed Enríquez when it took up its labours several weeks later. On 7 March 1945, in one of its final acts, the same assembly restored his rank of general, a measure that Velasco Ibarra as president vetoed.<sup>89</sup> Both caudillos appealed to the same popular base, and the rivalry between them was intense, but that rivalry did not advance the Left's political agenda.

Velasco Ibarra subsequently deported Enríquez to Peru after a failed coup on 30 March 1946. The government alleged that Enríquez had been organising the revolt for eight months, but the documents it released in support of the charges also revealed that the movement had no political ideology and lacked political party leadership. Rather, the coup was nothing more than a terrorist attempt designed to introduce chaos into the country. Nevertheless, the government exploited the coup attempt as an excuse to keep communists under surveillance, and to arrest party activists. Velasco Ibarra also used the attempt as a justification to launch an *autogolpe*, or coup against his own government. The president dissolved the congress, and abrogated the progressive constitution it had drafted a year earlier.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>85</sup> José María Velasco Ibarra, 'Desconócese el grado de Generales y Coroneles a varios oficiales Superiores', *Registro Oficial* I: 33 (10 July 1944), p. 208.

<sup>86</sup> Emilio Gangotena, 'El Doctor Emilio Gangotena solicita se reconsiderare el decreto dado contra el Señor General Alberto Enríquez', *El Comercio*, 21 July 1944, p. 11.

<sup>87</sup> 'Militares que fueron degradados han estado en agiteos de carácter subversivo', *El Comercio*, 27 July 1944, p. 1.

<sup>88</sup> Luis Enríquez, 'La venganza en acción', *El Comercio*, 27 July 1944, p. 1.

<sup>89</sup> 'La Asamblea rehabilitó los grados de varios oficiales', *El Comercio*, 8 March 1945, p. 1.

<sup>90</sup> 'El gobierno declara que tiene en su poder documentos sobre un complot', *El Comercio*, 31 March 1946, p. 1.



The Left's complicated relationship with charismatic but ideologically undefined leaders emerged in this attempt. United States ambassador Robert Scotten had been eager to highlight evidence that the communists might support Enríquez were he to attempt a coup.<sup>91</sup> In contrast, according to an FBI agent, 'it was well known that Enríquez, if he came to power, would not tolerate the Communist Party, stating that he would declare it without legal status'. The general apparently was negotiating with the communists to gain access to arms that the party had acquired in the May 1944 revolution in order 'to neutralise the group as a factor in the revolt'. The PCE headquarters in Quito allegedly had knowledge of Enríquez's plans, but had repeatedly repudiated his overtures, believing that its fortunes would be best served with a continuance of constitutional rule under Velasco Ibarra. That support was not ideologically determined, but based on a presupposition that continuing with the limited advances under a known quantity was preferable to potential but elusive gains under another caudillo. That position was by no means unanimous, and some party activists in Guayaquil argued that Enríquez would be preferable to the growing conservative presence in Velasco Ibarra's government.<sup>92</sup>

In contrast to communist backing for Velasco Ibarra, socialists continued to support Enríquez because of the labour and economic policies he pursued during his time as president.<sup>93</sup> Ana Moreno, a member of the PCE's central committee, criticised the socialist position, and declared that communists did not want to return to a dictatorship. 'It would do us no good to remove Velasco and place another dictator in his stead', she reportedly stated. The party was not nearly strong enough to establish its own government with its own political programme. In the meantime

we are fighting for a government that respects law and the constitution of 1945 and for a government which will give us something to eat when we are dying of hunger; which gives us a better life, which gives liberty to the people and which will not take from us the rights that we fought for in the 28 May [1944] revolution.<sup>94</sup>

Communist Party leader and novelist Enrique Gil Gilbert expressed a similar attitude, cautioning against replacing Velasco Ibarra with an equally disagreeable dictator such as Enríquez.<sup>95</sup> According to an FBI informant, communist opposition to the socialist support for Enríquez led to 'hatred' between Enríquez and communist leaders, and a fear that the army would annihilate the PCE if they took over the government.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Scotten to Secretary of State, 5 March 1946, RG 59, 822.00/3-546, NARA.

<sup>92</sup> Hoover to Lyon, 17 May 1946, RG 59, 822.00B/5-1746, NARA.

<sup>93</sup> X. Trujillo M., 'Portovelo, problema nacional', *La Tierra*, 30 Dec. 1946, p. 3.

<sup>94</sup> Hoover to Lyon, 17 July 1946, RG 59, 822.00B/7-1746, NARA.

<sup>95</sup> Hoover to Lyon, 12 Sept. 1946, RG 59, 822.00B/9-1246, NARA.

<sup>96</sup> Hoover to Lyon, 17 Sept. 1946, RG 59, 822.00B/9-1746, NARA.

After successfully facing down multiple coup attempts, Velasco Ibarra finally fell from power on 23 August 1947 – not to Enríquez, but to Velasco Ibarra’s own defence minister Colonel Carlos Mancheno.<sup>97</sup> Previous rumours had mentioned possible conspiracies between Enríquez and Mancheno, but a lack of a common ideology, personal ambitions and oversized egos prevented such collaboration. With Velasco Ibarra gone, congress finally restored Enríquez to his previous rank of general. Still, Enríquez kept up his plotting and repeatedly appeared to embrace contradictory and opportunistic views. As a populist and caudillo, Enríquez seemed ready to make whatever pacts necessary to keep him in a privileged position. The United States embassy did not trust Enríquez, and constantly looked for any opportunity to link him to subversive movements. An informant told diplomatic officials that Enríquez had promised the communists support in a public demonstration against the potential affiliation of the Confederación de Trabajadores del Ecuador (Confederation of Ecuadorean Workers, CTE) with the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Ambassador John Simmons read that development as ‘a bid on his part for future Communist political backing’.<sup>98</sup> Simmons continued to attempt to connect Enríquez to subversive movements.<sup>99</sup> Regardless of whether or not Enríquez was a leftist, the United States did not trust such a maverick. It was those maverick tendencies, however, that made him such a tempting champion for the Left, and made the Communist Party so cautious about collaborating with him.

### *Presidential Candidate*

Even as Enríquez continued to engage in military conspiracies, he campaigned for the presidency with a coalition of liberals, socialists and other leftists in the June 1948 elections. Alliances between liberals and socialists required a certain amount of negotiation, and inevitably emotional appeals won out over adherence to ideological stances. The liberals placed Enríquez in the presidential slot as their candidate, while the socialists nominated Carlos Cueva Tamariz for the vice-presidency, with the understanding that if they were successful the two parties would divide up the cabinet posts.<sup>100</sup>

A month before his formal nomination, Enríquez published a thoughtful response to the mention of his name as a possible candidate. According to the military general, workers had encouraged him to run because of positive comments they had read about him in the socialist daily *La Tierra* in Quito

<sup>97</sup> ‘Dr. Velasco Ibarra renuncia y entrega el mando al Ministro de Defensa’, *El Comercio*, 24 Aug. 1947, p. 1.

<sup>98</sup> Simmons to Secretary of State, 19 Aug. 1947, RG 59, 822.00B/8-1947, NARA.

<sup>99</sup> Simmons to Secretary of State, 11 Feb. 1948, RG 59, 822.00/2-1148, NARA.

<sup>100</sup> ‘Gral. Enríquez candidato presidencial a la presidencia’, *La Tierra*, 27 Jan. 1948, p. 1.

and the progressive *El Telégrafo* in Guayaquil. Before accepting the nomination as a workers' candidate, however, he wanted to outline his views on the current political situation in the country. First, Enríquez declared, Ecuador needed to decide whether it should be guided by conservative, liberal, or socialist principles. The country had benefited from the liberal project that had been under development for the half-century since Eloy Alfaro's 1895 revolution introduced a programme of economic and social justice, but he accused the liberal elite of using electoral fraud to maintain themselves in power, and this had contributed to the political instability that plagued the country. The 1925 Juliana Revolution attempted but failed to address persistent structural problems. Conservatives, unfortunately, only wanted to weaken the judicial institutions that the liberals had implemented, and undermine the social gains that leftists had achieved for the working class. The emergence of leftist parties had also weakened the liberals. The current political reality, Enríquez claimed, was that while most Ecuadoreans favoured a liberal democracy, the Liberal Party was unable to deliver on those promises. Conservatives attempted to take advantage of this situation and re-establish themselves in power, but 'neither public opinion nor the military could resign themselves to the restoration of conservative men and methods' which would deepen socio-economic inequalities. Enríquez cautioned that the oligarchy would plot to capture power with 'a conservative disguised as a liberal'. He also pointed to leftist failures, and accused some leftist leaders of inadvertently serving conservative interests, which only led to great confusion in the country. Unfortunately, liberals were not in a good position to advance working-class interests. They were on the verge of nominating a moderate for the presidency, someone the conservatives would call 'respectable', but this would only prolong the country's ideological confusion, and that would serve a conservative cause. Liberals were divided between those ready to make accommodations to the current political climate, and others who took a more doctrinaire position, but their main concern should be how to work in favour of the poor masses. For leftists, their challenge was how to make social changes within the context of a liberal democracy. The best solution he saw was for the Liberal Party to rally the 'democratic and popular forces in the country to draft a solid and respectable electoral platform'. Enríquez imagined that such an approach would benefit the working class in the same way that his government did in 1938. He asked leftist political parties to join this campaign in defence of liberal and social advances. This was necessary to avoid the disaster that the country would otherwise face.<sup>101</sup> In order to compete electorally, Enríquez would need to build his own

<sup>101</sup> Alberto Enríquez, 'A la clase trabajadora del Ecuador', 10 Dec. 1947, Hojas Volantes, BEAEP.

popular base of support, and that would be best accomplished through appeals to the anti-oligarchical pole within the Liberal Party.

Enríquez's electoral campaign is usefully contextualised with that of his counterpart Gaitán, who was also seeking the presidency in Colombia. The two have their similarities and differences, which underscores the broad diversity included under the label 'populist'. As with many other populist leaders, Gaitán organised a top-down movement filled with working-class followers. Both gained expressions of undying adoration from their admirers, with Gaitán's supporters characterising him as a '*caudillo del pueblo*' ('people's caudillo').<sup>102</sup> Both illustrate a certain amount of overlap between left liberalism and socialism, although neither were Marxists. In fact, a complicated relationship with the Communist Party characterised both leaders.

The general's candidacy led to fierce debates within the Communist Party over whether or not to ally with liberals and other progressives in support of him. With Velasco Ibarra out of the picture, Enríquez now appeared to be the best realistic option. From the communists' perspective, an Enríquez presidency would clearly be preferable to the alternatives: the independent Galo Plaza Lasso who was the candidate of a reactionary bourgeoisie and would deliver the country to the Yankees, or the conservative Manuel Elicio Flor who threatened to return Ecuador to the oppression of its feudal past. Enríquez's decision to exclude communists from his campaign led to no small amount of consternation among party members. The PCE had raised the necessity of forming 'a broad coalition, capable of blocking the path of the conservative, pro-imperialist, and feudal forces', but the Socialist and Liberal Parties ignored its call. As it had previously hoped for with Velasco Ibarra, the party believed that Enríquez's candidacy 'could be converted into a force capable of mobilising our people in its struggle for well being and independence', but unfortunately this had not happened. Instead 'of formulating a true platform of democratic and progressive action', the coalition only presented 'vague and confused points' that failed to address 'grave national problems' of production, industrialisation, the rising cost of living and the living conditions of workers and peasants. In particular, the PCE criticised Enríquez for his anti-communist position that, in reality, represented an 'attack on all national democracy'. The coalition, as presently constructed, hindered 'the formation of a broad and powerful anti-reactionary front' and furthermore laid the ground for a potential 'reactionary electoral triumph' or, worse, a coup d'état. These limitations made it impossible for a government that would address the country's pressing problems to emerge from these elections. In response, the party urged people to cast blank

<sup>102</sup> Ricardo Arias, 'Los sucesos del 9 de abril de 1948 como legitimadores de la violencia oficial', *Historia Crítica*, 17 (July–Dec. 1998), p. 39.

ballots in the election, and ‘to fight for an authentic programme of social and national liberation’.<sup>103</sup>

The PCE’s conflicts with Enríquez parallel W. John Green’s characterisation of the interactions between Gaitán and the communists as ‘sibling rivalry on the Left’. Communist leaders opposed Gaitán because of the institutional threat he provided to their party, while many rank-and-file members supported the populist because of how he effectively championed their economic and social interests. Membership in the Liberal Party did not preclude leftist sympathies, and some workers identified with both forces. Left-liberals promoted radical causes, and some considered themselves socialists. Communist leaders, however, lost political traction when they made tactical and opportunistic allegiances to advance their party’s institutional interests in the face of Gaitán’s populist threat rather than adhering to a clear ideological line or political agenda that would benefit their working-class base. Even though on many issues the programmatic agendas of the two forces were not that different, competition for the same base of support meant that no love was lost between the rivals.<sup>104</sup>

Ambassador Simmons always remained suspicious of Communist Party motives and its alleged distancing from Enríquez’s candidacy. As he reported, the PCE ‘appears to have thrown its weight behind the Enríquez campaign, not openly, but covertly’. The communists controlled labour federations in the provinces of Guayas and Pichincha, and ‘although grievances apparently exist for strikes ... the communists counsel patience in the hope that Enríquez will solve their problems and in turn they will support Enríquez’.<sup>105</sup> For his part, in the context of growing Cold War sentiments Enríquez found it expedient to distance himself from the communists. ‘I am a candidate of a coalition formed by the Liberal and Socialist Parties, which have nothing to do with communism’, he declared. ‘I reject all forms of totalitarianism.’<sup>106</sup> During the campaign, communists became distrustful of Enríquez. His erratic swings on his political positions both in and out of power in addition to his seemingly opportunist anti-communist declarations made it quite unpalatable to support his candidacy. Finally, the coastal regional committee of the PCE announced its decision to withdraw its support for Enríquez.<sup>107</sup> On the eve of the election, the PCE’s provincial committee for Pichincha similarly confirmed that it would not support any of the candidates and reiterated its

<sup>103</sup> Partido Comunista del Ecuador, ‘El Partido Comunista frente al problema electoral’, 17 May 1948, Hojas Volantes, BEAEP.

<sup>104</sup> W. John Green, ‘Sibling Rivalry on the Left and Labor Struggles in Colombia during the 1940s’, *Latin American Research Review*, 35: 1 (2000), pp. 85–117.

<sup>105</sup> Simmons to Secretary of State, 13 April 1948, RG 59, 822.00B/4-1348, NARA.

<sup>106</sup> Untitled article, *New York Times*, 21 April 1948, p. 12.

<sup>107</sup> ‘Comunistas retiran su apoyo a candidatura del General Enríquez’, *El Comercio*, 2 May 1948, p. 1.

call to cast blank ballots. It appealed to true socialists and liberals who wanted to continue with the programme of Alfaro's 1895 liberal revolution to join the fight for agrarian reform, national sovereignty, democracy and social progress.<sup>108</sup>

Simmons did not believe that the party's 'pious declarations of neutrality in the present political struggle will deceive many people'. Despite all indications to the contrary, the ambassador feared potential disruptions that the communists could be planning.<sup>109</sup> The liberal *El Día* commented that the PCE's statements served to remove the ghost of communism that had done harm to Enríquez's candidacy, and now his chances of winning should improve.<sup>110</sup> A public break might have been mutually beneficial for both parties. Revealing, however, is a private letter in which PCE secretary-general Paredes confided his frustration with the Liberal and Socialist Parties because they did not want to collaborate with the communists. He also criticised the actions that the PCE had taken, 'despite General Enríquez's stupid statements'. Paredes admitted that the party supported the caudillo, and that it was against both the party's and country's interests to permit 'Yankee intervention' in domestic policies through Plaza's election.<sup>111</sup> Pursuing electoral paths to political change was inherently complicated and required constant compromises and trade-offs.

In comparison to Velasco Ibarra's energetic and charismatic populist campaigns, Enríquez proved to be a relatively colourless and weak candidate. His vague and seemingly contradictory ideological positions meant that he received only tepid support from the Left's working-class base. The coalition performed poorly, and Plaza handily won the June 1948 election. The socialists, nevertheless, ended their campaign on an optimistic note, claiming that they had lost only a battle and not the war.<sup>112</sup> Two weeks after the election, the PCE organised an open meeting of labour unions, students and the public in general to discuss the new political environment. Among the speakers was long-time communist militant Nela Martínez, who defined the tasks facing democratic forces in the current domestic and international context.<sup>113</sup> The struggle would go on, with or without a popular caudillo who was willing to air their grievances.

<sup>108</sup> Comité Provincial del Pichincha, '¿Por qué el Partido Comunista vota en blanco en las elecciones?', 5 June 1948, Hojas Volantes, BEAEP.

<sup>109</sup> Simmons to Secretary of State, 28 May 1948, RG 59, 822.00B/5-2848, NARA.

<sup>110</sup> 'Acerca del retiro del apoyo comunista al candidato de la coalición', *El Día*, 3 May 1948, p. 3.

<sup>111</sup> Lenín Eduardo Paredes Ruiz, *Ricardo Paredes y la antorcha revolucionaria: ensayo biográfico sobre el fundador del Partido Comunista del Ecuador* (Quito: Casa de La Cultura del Ecuador, 2014), p. 236.

<sup>112</sup> 'Después del resultado', *La Tierra*, 8 June 1948, p. 2.

<sup>113</sup> El Comité Provincial del PCE, 'Gran Asamblea', 19 June 1948, Hojas Volantes, BEAEP.

### Death

With the loss in the 1948 presidential contest, Enríquez retired from public life, first to his hacienda near Saquisilí and then back to Quito. He served a single term from 1956 to 1960 as a senator for the Liberal Party, but unlike during his brief time as chief executive two decades earlier he did not leave behind any notable legislative achievement for posterity. In fact, after charting the caudillo's rise to power for decades, in 1953 the British foreign service quietly dropped his name from its annual list of leading personalities in Ecuador. The retired general no longer played a significant public role.

It was a propitious time for someone who had been intimately involved in a quarter-century of chaotic and frequent extra-constitutional changes of power to leave the public scene. Enríquez first emerged as a public figure in the context of the 15 November 1922 massacre of striking workers in Guayaquil that highlighted the limits of liberal governance and foreshadowed the collapse of an extraordinary (for Ecuador) period of peaceful transfers of presidential power. The July 1925 revolution was the first break in constitutional power since Leónidas Plaza Gutiérrez had won election in 1912. The election of Plaza's son, Galo Plaza Lasso, in 1948 similarly introduced an unprecedented sequence of constitutional transfers that came to an end with the collapse of Velasco Ibarra's fourth presidency on 7 November 1961, the assumption of power by his vice-president Carlos Julio Arosemena Monroy, and a military coup on 11 July 1963. In the midst of the collapse of Ecuador's liberal democracy, Enríquez died from cancer in Quito on 13 July 1962 at the age of 66.

The general's death was met with an outpouring of warm sentiments toward the former leader, particularly from military and governmental officials. The Ecuadorean government declared three days of mourning for the death of the 'distinguished citizen'.<sup>114</sup> The current president Carlos Julio Arosemena Monroy, government ministers, and military authorities led his funeral procession from the national palace to the cemetery, where he was buried with full honours befitting a former head of state and military general.<sup>115</sup> The left-liberal periodical *La Calle* published an essay that celebrated his life as 'a great Ecuadorean, a distinguished member of the military, and an outstanding patriot'. The laws he promulgated for the benefit of the majority of the country remained in force. The essay celebrated Enríquez as a fair, honourable and visionary leader who offered a model for ruling for the people rather than in his own interest.<sup>116</sup> Decades later, the leftist writer and intellectual Pedro Jorge Vera remembered Enríquez's government

<sup>114</sup> 'Falleció el General Alberto Enríquez', *El Comercio*, 14 July 1962, p. 1.

<sup>115</sup> 'Realizáronse funerales del que fue General Alberto Enríquez', *El Comercio*, 15 July 1962, p. 9.

<sup>116</sup> Gonzalo Pasquel, 'El General Alberto Enríquez Gallo', *La Calle*, 4: 280 (20 July 1962), p. 23.



as representing enormous progress for the country, as one of the country's best governments, better than many civilian ones.<sup>117</sup> More than half a century after his death, that is still how the military general is remembered.

Enríquez did not have the political presence or charisma of the classic populists such as Perón, Vargas, Cárdenas, Gaitán, or Velasco Ibarra, and the intent is not to petition for his inclusion in such an elite group. Nor does an examination of Enríquez clarify what is a notoriously and frustratingly vague term. Rather, populism is a useful category of analysis to understand how leaders appealed to working-class support even as they undermined a broader leftist political project. As Alan Knight aptly observes, populists organised multiclass movements instead of advocating for a Marxist class struggle. Furthermore, populists implemented reformist policies that repudiated revolutionary actions and formed 'an antidote to real revolution'.<sup>118</sup> The opportunistic and malleable characteristics of such politicians effectively undermined more radical mobilisations. The historian Paulo Drinot does not doubt that their policies co-opted labour mobilisations and neutralised the Left, but he also cautions that 'the cooption or incorporation paradigm does not properly capture the character of the relationship between populist leaders and their clients'.<sup>119</sup> Populist actions were negotiated processes that were shaped from above and below, and to understand them it is necessary to incorporate both the rationalities of government policy and the Left's attempts to capture those initiatives for its own benefit.

Despite the caudillo's complicated and contradictory trajectory as a public figure, the Left continued to hold to him as representing its best hopes and aspirations for the country even as it sacrificed longer-term programmes in pursuit of short-term gains. Unfortunately, in life the military general had not been so clearly dedicated to a progressive political agenda. Following a populist leader could be seen as revealing the presence of the Left's ideological weakness, but instead it highlights the trade-offs and compromises that political movements are forced to make. Unable to compete with a populist leader's ability to mobilise popular support, opportunistic alliances provided the best possibility to advance at least part of its political agenda. In its actions, the Left became a political force with complicated institutional and ideological interests distinct from those that scholars have commonly recognised for populist leaders and the subaltern working class.

### *Spanish and Portuguese abstracts*

*Spanish abstract.* Una tradición en Latinoamérica basada en la dependencia en líderes fuertes se vuelve problemática cuando los partidos políticos buscan fuera de sus filas a

<sup>117</sup> Coral, *Vida y obra del Señor General Alberto Enriquez Gallo*, p. 347.

<sup>118</sup> Knight, 'Populism and Neo-Populism in Latin America', pp. 237–8.

<sup>119</sup> Drinot, *The Allure of Labor*, p. 129.

candidatos con apoyo popular pero que no representan sus ideologías. Esta contradicción se dio en Ecuador a mediados del siglo XX cuando la izquierda apostó por el General Alberto Enríquez Gallo como su carta ganadora. Su trayectoria anterior en el ejército lo convirtió en héroe poco plausible para la izquierda, pero cuando promulgó una legislación laboral progresista ganó su apoyo. Fue, sin embargo, un matrimonio de conveniencia, ya que izquierdistas y populistas inherentemente siguen diferentes lógicas políticas.

*Spanish keywords:* Ecuador, caudillos, populismo, izquierda, comunismo

*Portuguese abstract.* A tradição latinoamericana de fiabilidade em líderes fortes se torna problemática a partir do momento em que partidos decidem buscar candidatos fora de sua base que tenham apelo popular mas que não incorporam suas ideologias. Tal contradição surgiu no Equador na metade do século vinte quando a esquerda fez do General Alberto Enríquez Gallo seu campeão. Sua trajetória militar inicial o tornava um herói um tanto improvável para a esquerda, mas quando promulgou uma legislação trabalhista progressiva, ele ganhou grande apoio da mesma. Foi, no entanto, uma união de conveniência, na medida em que esquerdistas e populistas inentemente seguem lógicas políticas distintas.

*Portuguese keywords:* Equador, caudillos, populismo, esquerda, comunismo