

# Ecuador: Masses back President

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In Ecuador President Rafael Correa has survived an attempted coup on 30 September by police and sections of the armed forces.

Apparently in protest against reforms to their pay, police were joined by soldiers and paramilitaries and took over the National Assembly, whilst air force troops occupied the international airport outside the capital, Quito.

Correa went to a barracks to confront the police, who were chanting, 'Long live civil war.' He was doused in scalding water and tear-gassed but managed to escape to a hospital, where the police again besieged him.

Eventually loyal soldiers rescued Correa from hospital and addressed thousands of supporters in the main square.

## Promises

Correa was elected in January 2007 on a left populist programme, promising to spend more of the country's petroleum revenues on the poor and the indigenous peoples of the country. Following the model of Hugo Chavez, he summoned a Constituent Assembly that in 2008 enacted a new constitution giving greater rights to the poor and indigenous communities. When he was re-elected last year he pledged;

'We are going to continue the fight to eliminate all forms of workplace exploitation within our socialist conviction: the supremacy of human work over capital. Nobody is in any doubt that our preferential option is for the poorest people, we are here because of them.'

He has suspended payment of the external debt, implemented a hydrocarbons law to take a greater percentage of the profits from the foreign oil multinationals and, on this basis, increased the minimum wage and social benefits, as well as making improvements in education, health and welfare for the masses.

Correa joined Venezuela in forming ALBA - an economic and political bloc of Latin American states under the banner of 'Bolivarianism'.

## Anger grows against Correa

But public sector workers and the powerful indigenist organisation CONAIE have criticised the half-hearted nature of the reforms. CONAIE is actively resisting the handing over of their community lands to the state and oil companies for increased exploitation.

Correa has repeatedly used the police and army to attack protestors. For example, in November 2007 in the Amazonian town of Dayuma, police attacked people demonstrating for more social investment paid for from the wealth of the local oilfield.

In addition, he has just launched an austerity programme that even his own party has rejected. In response, he threatened to abolish the National Assembly and rule by decree.

The radicalised trade unions and organisation of the poor need to break their reliance on Correa - whatever the personal courage he displayed during the coup.

The answer is an ever greater independent mobilisation of the workers, the poor, the indigenous people to demand, and indeed carry out, a break with the capitalist and landowning class, the winning over of the rank and file of the army, with the goal installing a revolutionary workers and peasants government. In the end this is the only barrier to right wing coups.

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