

ALLEN GERLACH: *Indians, Oil, and Politics. A Recent History of Ecuador*. Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003.

New Mexico's historian Allen Gerlach has reviewed the dramatic events that took place in Ecuador in the late 20th century with the overthrow of Abdala Bucaram (1997) and Jamil Mahuad (2000). In 286 pages written in the style of a journalistic chronicle, he describes the "commotion" of the fall of these two governments in a context of economic crisis, institutionalized corruption and increasing social disparities. The book is divided into eight chapters, four of which are devoted to introducing the country and its people, the historical background since 1532, the oil era of the 1970s and 1980s, and the emergence of the Indian movement; the last four chapters deal with Ecuador's political life from 1997 to 2000.

Chapter one introduces this country of 12.4 million people on the Pacific coast of South America, whose name was chosen after the discovery of the equatorial line by the Frenchman La Condamine in 1830. Chapter two provides a general overview of Ecuador's history, from the arrival of Spanish conquerors in 1526 and the defeat of Atahualpa by Pizarro in 1532 to independence (1822) and the economic booms based on cacao and banana, leading to the first agrarian reform of 1964. Chapter three deals with the discovery of oil in the Amazon by Texaco (1967) and the modernization launched by the military regimes of Rodríguez Lara (1972-1976) and the Junta that overthrew him (1976-1979). It also offers a quick survey of the four governments that preceded Bucaram after the democratic transition of 1979 (Roldós-Hurtado, Febres Cordero, Borja and Durán Ballén). Chapter four describes the emergence of the Indian movement (with the Federation of Shuar Centers in 1964 and Ecuarunari in 1972) and its unification in the 1980s, through the creation of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) in 1986 and the left-wing political party Pachakutik in 1996. Finally, this chapter summarizes the demands for civil rights and the role of the Indian movement in the nationwide uprisings of 1990, 1994 and 1997.

The second part – in reality, two thirds of the book — recounts the 1997 uprising that overthrew populist president Abdala Bucaram, and the coup in the year 2000 against Jamil Mahuad. Chapter five shows how the austerity package announced by Bucaram in December 1996 (including a convertible currency plan, cuts in public expenditure and privatization of the telecommunication industry), together with generalized corruption (especially within the customs administration), led to the general strike of February 1997 and the removal of the president by Congress, on grounds of mental incapacitation. Then the author devotes numerous pages to the negotiations over Bucaram's successor between

vice president Rosalía Arteaga, the head of the Armed Forces, Paco Moncayo, and the president of the Congress, Fabián Alarcón.

Both chapters six and seven are dedicated to the fall of Jamil Mahuad. Gerlach relates in great detail the growing discontent with the monetary policy, the collapse of the banking system and the corruption of the government. He informs us in what way the concessions made by Mahuad to the former president of the Banco del Progreso, Fernando Aspiazu (who claimed he had financed up to 3.1 million dollars of Mahuad's campaign in 1998), were partly responsible for the December 1999 riots and the coup of 21 January 2000. Then he recounts how the 24-hour "Junta of National Liberation" was dismissed even before vice president Gustavo Noboa had assumed the interim presidency. Finally, the author describes the divisions between colonels and generals within the armed forces, following the participation of hundreds of soldiers in the coup, including Colonel Lucio Gutiérrez, who would be elected president of Ecuador in 2002.

The book ends with the government of Gustavo Noboa, a moderate right-winger who adopted the same policy as his predecessors. Chapter eight recalls how Noboa soon reached an agreement with Congress to pass the reform law that would enable him to achieve the full dollarization announced by Mahuad on January 9, 2000. But it does not explain how the Indigenous movement failed to oppose such radical economic reform, nor does it explain the difficulties of the social movement to stay united after the "national dialogue" opened by Noboa.

In fact, the book remains divided into two distinctive sections, and the relationship between oil, Indians and politics is not at all clear. Moreover, one can regret several misunderstandings about the Indian movement and the oil related socio-ecological conflicts in the Amazon, such as overestimating the role of the Huaorani people and oil spills in the nationwide uprising of 1990, or the confusion between the role of Texaco and Arco in Ecuador (the first being actually responsible for major contamination in the northern Amazon, while the second faced Quichua indigenous resistance in the central Amazon province of Pastaza from 1988 to 2000).

Furthermore, the meticulous chronology of the overthrow of Bucaram and Mahuad (based mainly on press reviews) is of little help for understanding the complexity of the events and, despite the author's attempt to place them in a perspective of 30 years of history, his analysis remains incomplete. In particular, the book fails to explain how these events form part of a governance and institutional crisis that allowed Congress to take control of the executive in 1997, naming Alarcón as interim president, when it should have been Arteaga, according to the Constitution. In addition, although Gerlach considers that the generals manipulated the Indian movement in order to displace Mahuad, who had reached peaks of unpopularity by the end of 1999, he does not offer a

convincing explanation for the squabbling between the head of the Armed Forces and the Defence Minister, General Carlos Mendoza. It remains unclear whether Mendoza's conduct, who replaced Gutiérrez in the "Junta of National Salvation" soon before announcing his retrial and condemning the coup, was part of a strategy of the higher command to neutralize the insurgency or a personal act of treason.

Still, Gerlach's book offers an interesting overview of the political events in Ecuador at the turn of millennium. One can learn a great deal from its remarkably detailed summary of the last three years of the 20th century about a country that has turned into a real laboratory for the analysis of political reforms.

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CHARLES BERGQUIST, RICARDO PEÑARANDA, AND GONZALO SÁNCHEZ, (eds.): *Violence in Colombia 1990-2000: Waging War and Negotiating Peace*. Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2001.

Charles Bergquist, Ricardo Peñaranda and Gonzalo Sánchez have edited another book dealing with violence in Colombia. Their previous effort, *Violence in Colombia: The Contemporary Crisis in Historical Perspective*, was published in 1992 and offered a broad, sweeping, fourteen-chapter historical narrative of Colombia's violence. Their most recent work, published as *Violence in Colombia 1990-2000: Waging War and Negotiating Peace* (2001), focuses on Colombian violence in the final decade of the twentieth century. Readers will notice that many of the questions, themes and problems presented in the 1992 volume remain relatively unchanged and unanswered nine years later. The most recent volume places far greater emphasis on Constitutional questions (not surprising, given that Colombians, with great fanfare, re-wrote their Constitution in 1991) and paramilitary organization/mayhem, which has played a compelling role in the more recent violence, especially concerning questions of human rights, land consolidation and forced internal migration.

Violence in Colombia 1990-2000 is organized in ten chapters, five of which have been previously published in Spanish between 1992 and 1998. Five of the essays are original contributions. The translation work, from Spanish to English, is careful and admirable. But the volume is somewhat uneven, and the book is at its best when providing specific, clear examples and prose, which is the case in Donny Meertens' outstanding work, "Victims and Survivors of War in Colombia: Three Views of Gender Relations." Professor Meertens' essay explores gender issues and gendered coping mechanisms within a violent social fabric.