Society, whose membership includes many former military and police officers; other right-wing parties; social movement organizations, including the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE); ultra-leftist parties, like the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of Ecuador (PCMLE) and its electoral front, the Democratic Popular Movement; sectors of the indigenous party Pachakutik; the U.S. right; petty bourgeois intellectuals; and the privately owned media.6

These sinister forces, according to the Correa government, manipulated the police, whom the president has described as “a horde of savages who wanted to kill me.” He has furthermore portrayed them as ignorant, saying they did not read or understand the content of the law that they were protesting.7 As for the leaders of social movements who supported the policemen’s demands but opposed the coup, such as CONAIE, Correa said: “Their attitudes and voices are incomprehensible, against nature.”8 (For CONAIE’s position on the police uprising, see below.)

The official narrative is partially correct. Correa is right in claiming that there was a coup attempt, in the sense that the police detained the president, perhaps thinking that their actions would inspire others to rebel. Yet it was not an ordinary coup, since the military remained loyal to the democratically elected government; the only military support they received came from elements of the air force who shut down the Quito airport. The police detained the president under conditions where he was afraid of losing his life, thereby conspiring against electoral democracy. They abused their prerogatives, did not follow lines of command, and forgot that they are not just any ordinary group—they are armed and in charge of security. But the problem with the government’s narrative of a coup attempt is that its list of plotters keeps growing,
lumping the local and U.S. right wing together with leftist parties and social movement organizations.

The account of a conspiracy of evil forces against a revolutionary government transforms Correa’s democratic adversaries—including the leadership of social movement organizations—into irreconcilable enemies of the administration, the people, and the nation. Indeed, the official account of the events of September 30 is a Manichaean narrative in which the right and its allies plot behind the scenes against an altruistic, revolutionary president; it is a description that threatens to transform all of the Correa government’s rivals into imperialist coup plotters. The Venezuela-based blogger Eva Golinger, for instance, used the Correa government’s story to condemn CONAIE as a tool of Yankee imperialism without delving into the reasons that CONAIE and other social movements are in a conflict with Correa.9

If we want to move beyond conspiracy theory and Manichaean thinking, we need to understand the police rebellion not just from the point of view of the government but also from those who were protesting. Why did the police choose to protest as other groups normally do—by burning tires and disrupting traffic? Were they an irrational mob? Or had they been naively manipulated by sinister conspirators, as the government argues? As we will see, a crucial element in the police officers’ rebellion was the legacy of corporatism in Ecuador, and the Correa government’s attempts to do away with corporatist privileges.

The striking police argued that the draft Public Service Organic Law would cut important benefits, including Christmas bonuses, merit-based wage increases in the form of medals, and automatic

which has become evident with the speed with which the public forces acted.

2. The social crisis unleashed today was also provoked by the authoritarian character of the lawmaking process and its non-opening to dialogue. We have seen how laws to which a consensus was reached were vetoed by the president, closing off any possibility of agreement.

3. Faced with the criticism and mobilization of communities against transnational mining, oil, and agro-industrial companies, the government, instead of creating a dialogue, responds with violence and repression, as occurred in Zamora-Chinchepe.

4. This situation nurtures the conservative sectors. Soon enough, various groups and individuals from the old right will demand the overthrow of the government and the installation of a civil or military dictatorship. But the new right, both from within and outside the government, will use this context to justify their complete alliance with the most reactionary sectors and with emerging business interests.

The Ecuadoran indigenous movement, CONAIE, with its regional confederations and its grassroots organizations, declares before Ecuadoran society and the international community their rejection to the government’s economic and social policies, and with the same energy we also reject the actions of the right, which surreptitiously form part of the attempted coup d’état, and against this we will continue to fight for the construction of a plurinational state with true democracy.

Consistent with the mandate of the communities, peoples, and nationalities, and faithful to our history of struggle and resistance against colonialism, discrimination, and the exploitation of the oppressed [los de abajo], of the impoverished, we will defend democracy and the rights of the people: no concession to the right.

In these critical moments, our position is:

1. We call on our bases to remain alert and ready to mobilize in defense of true plurinational democracy and against the actions of the right.

2. We deepen our mobilization against the extractive model and the establishment of large-scale mining, the privatization and concentration of water, and the expansion of the oil frontier.

3. We convene and join together with diverse organized sectors to defend the rights of workers affected by the arbitrariness that has driven the legislative process, recognizing that they are making legitimate demands.

4. We demand that the national government firmly give up every possible concession to the right. We demand that the government abandon its authoritarian attitude toward the popular sectors, that it does not criminalize social protest and persecute leaders: The only thing this kind of politics accomplishes is to open spaces for the right and for destabilization.

The best way to defend democracy is to begin a true revolution that resolves the most urgent and structural questions for the benefit of the majority. On this path is the effective construction of the plurinational state, the immediate initiation of an agrarian revolution, and the de-privatization of water.

This is our position at this conjuncture and in this historical period.

Marlon Santi, President, CONAIE
Delfín Tenesaca, President, ECUARUNARI
Tito Puanchir, President, CONFINIAE
Olindo Nastacuaz, President, CONAICE