

Ecuador is a Time Bomb: How long will the crisis last?

written by Marco Teruggi
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October 11 — The Lenin Moreno Administration informed they would not retract its economic adjustment measures. The indigenous movement said they will continue mobilizing. What will be the ending of this arm wrestle? In Quito, Sputnik interviewed Ecuadorean sociologist Irene Leon.

The agreement between the Government of Ecuador and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is part of a plan devised since Lenin Moreno took office in 2017, explained Irene Leon, member of the Network of Intellectuals in Defense of Humanity.

“They’ve tried to fulfill the necessary conditions for the IMF to accept us, they sought indebtedness when the country was able to solve its economy in a different way,” Leon said at the end of another day marked by a confusion of events in Quito and several areas of the country, with roadblocks and mobilizations since October 3rd against adjustment measures announced by Moreno to observe the demands of the international organization.

If an agreement with the Fund was part of the “neoliberal reconquest” initially proposed, implementing it in October was a result of Fund’s own demands. In fact, the letter of intention included a series of steps to be achieved by December 2019, so the Government was running out of time.

Leon, also member of the Foundation of Studies, Action and Social Participation, explained that Ecuador’s Constitution envisages a limit of indebtedness and a series of requirements to engage with foreign organizations.

The state of emergency announced on October 3rd “is issued to obviate those provisions and to create a situation in which things can be done through different means,” she commented.

The different steps had been probably devised even envisaging the little approval

they would receive. The unexpected aspect was the size of the contempt against the measures: protests since last Thursday 3rd brought back memories of those which forced several presidents to resign, the last of them was Lucio Gutierrez in 2005.

Overestimating and underestimating

“These are very arrogant elites. They are anchored in financial capital, exporting companies, people who live tied to capital,” more related to “the dynamics of global capital rather than to Latin American dynamics,” analyzed Irene Leon.

Besides overestimating itself, the Moreno Administration committed another mistake which was underestimating people’s response: “They thought there was not such a capacity for mobilization as the one occurring today and they did not think that rural sectors and indigenous communities would raise their voices too.”

This combination paved the way for a scenario of huge instability and the country advanced to a dynamic of nationwide protests, in Quito, Guayaquil, and the country’s most important highways. This is a response headed by different social and political sectors which, altogether, made up a process that overwhelmed the conviction of plans devised by the IMF, Moreno, and their economic allies.

There are several actors mobilizing, Leon said. First, what she calls the “people identified with the process of Citizen’s Revolution,” the political process headed by ex-president Rafael Correa. This leadership has some major features, such as “a mindset opposed to neoliberalism” and to not having a space for their own organization.

Second, she identified sectors reemerging into this scenario, such as labor unions, particularly a major movement was it is the workers’ union. This was the first one going out to reject the package of adjustment measures, especially the elimination of fuel subsidies. This was the kick-starter given its impact on the price of combustible

and therefore on transportation and the price of commodities.

These sectors had been approaching Moreno's rhetoric during the last two years and this new scenario allowed them to organize themselves again, the same as the indigenous movement mainly gathered under the Confederation of Indigenous Organizations of Ecuador (CONAIE), with a leading role in the agenda and in radicalizing the protests this last week.

Irene Leon noted as well the participation of two other important sectors: women and youth. In the case of women, the sociologist highlighted their role not only this last week but in the two years of resistance against the Moreno Administration and vindicating the achievements of the Citizen's Revolution.

Arm wrestle

President Moreno is still supported by sectors of power, "elites and the Army," the Ecuadorean sociologist noted. But he has a very low rate of approval and it is decreasing day to day, "less than 10 percent according to surveys," she stated. How long can this situation stand?

The strength of mobilizations face difficulties too. One of them is regarding time. The indigenous movement, for instance, "these communities coming from a faraway Ecuador endure a huge human collective cost in order to be in Quito. Many of them came by foot from their places of origin, leaving their lands, crops, animals, and ways of living behind."

Besides that, they are facing a very strong repression on behalf of the Government. CONAIE in fact has denounced that five of their members have been murdered and hundreds are injured or arrested. "It's very difficult to think that Quito is going to continue like this," explained Irene Leon.

CONAIE affirmed they would not hold talks until Moreno retracts the package of

measures requested by the IMF. The President, in turn, said he won't. How long will this arm wrestle last? "This situation cannot last too long. There has to be an ending," Leon concluded.

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