



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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Ecuadorians general strike against President Mera, 1933

August 15,
1933

to: September 1,
1933

Country: Ecuador

Location City/State/Province: *Quito and Riobamba*

Goals:

To overthrow President Juan de Dios Martínez Mera

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
- 048. Protest meetings

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 048. Protest meetings

Methods in 3rd segment:

Methods in 4th segment:

Methods in 5th segment:

- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
- 085. Merchants' "general strike"
- 097. Protest strike
- 117. General strike
- 119. Economic shutdown › in Quito
- 121. Refusal of public support
- 145. General administrative noncooperation › Congressional recess in protest

Methods in 6th segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 038. Marches
- 085. Merchants' "general strike" › in Riobamba
- 097. Protest strike
- 116. Generalised strike › in Quito
- 117. General strike › in Riobamba

- 119. Economic shutdown › in Riobamba
- 125. Boycott of government employment and positions › Resignation of police officers
- 145. General administrative noncooperation › Congressional recess in protest

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

Democracy

Economic Justice

Group characterization:

- Ecuadorian Citizens

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Oppositional political leaders, union leaders

Partners:

Congress of Ecuador

External allies:

Two Riobamba police officers resigned in solidarity with the campaign

Involvement of social elites:

President of the Riobamba Municipality and the Ecuadorian Congress resisted the Mera's rule

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Congress of Ecuador
- Labor unions

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

- Storeowners in Quito
- Transportation workers
- Workers in Quito

Groups in 6th Segment:

- President of Riobamba Municipality

- Riobamba workers and citizens
- Workers and Storeowners in Quito (exit)

Segment Length: *Approximately 3 days*

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

President Juan de Dios Martínez Mera

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not known

Campaigner violence:

Alleged acts of violence by campaigners on August 29

Repressive Violence:

Police arrested strike supporters

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

3 points out of 6 points

Survival:

0 points out of 1 point

Growth:

2 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

President Mera was impeached by Congress one month after the strike ended, but it is not clear what role the strike played in this result.

The strike and organizations did not survive.

The campaign grew to incorporate Riobamba, but no other known regions.

In the 1930s, many South American countries experienced great upheavals. This was due mostly to the fact that there were many dictators in the majority of the countries there. These upheavals came in many forms and leaders used many different tactics, however they often resulted in the government being overthrown. One such overthrowing was attempted in Ecuador in 1933 during the regime of President Jean de Dios Martinez Mera.

Like many other strikes that occurred during that time period, Ecuador's general strike was spurred by a great amount of economic hardship under President Mera. Some commentators specifically believe that the strike occurred because of rising living costs, although there were most certainly many other factors that very likely influenced it.

The strike in Ecuador was greatly influenced by the strike that had recently occurred in Cuba. The leadership of the attempted strike in Ecuador was primarily "from traditional political parties directed by members of the local oligarchies." In addition to leadership from opposition political parties, unions in Quito, Ecuador, helped to organize the strike through a central strike committee. As was the case with many of the other strikes in Latin America at the time, marches by women and children were important actions within the campaign.

The government of Ecuador was clearly not functioning the way it was supposed to, so on August 15, 1933, Congress asked for the resignation of President Mera. When this did not happen a labor meeting in Quito was set up in order to form a committee to plan a general strike. On August 28, Congress again encouraged the resignation of President Mera by passing a resolution with this suggestion. The congress then proceeded to go on a three-day recess in protest of the fact that President Mera refused the requests. In solidarity with Congress the labor meeting declared a three-day strike. By August 29 public transportation workers went on strike and stores around Quito closed. That same day police arrested people that they suspected to be supporting the strike.

On August 30 public transportation in Quito resumed and many stores reopened. However, a suspension of food deliveries caused prices to rise. Strikers briefly cut one electric line. The strike committee called for a suspension of the strike on that day. At the same time, organizers in the city of Riobamba orchestrated the beginning of a strike there. By August 31, normal life had resumed in Quito but in Riobamba stores, workshops, factories, and offices were closed. The biggest part of the strike in Riobamba was a march led by women through the city, which culminated with a speech by the president of the municipality. Two Riobamba police officers also publicly resigned in order to show their solidarity with the strikers. The strike ended on September 1, when the government in Quito sent a new Intendant General of Police and fifty more police officers to Riobamba. From Quito, the strike committee called the strike off.

The general strike in Ecuador was not considered a success because it lacked broad support. The union leaders in Quito were not able to enlist the support of unions in other cities in Ecuador, except for Riobamba, thus preventing the strike from growing or even surviving. The strike in Ecuador was so small that they were unable to impact the resources that were necessary for the survival of the government.

In October 1933, after dismissing the President's cabinet, the Ecuadorian Congress charged that President Mera had attempted to instate a dictatorship and impeached him. It is unclear what role the strike played in these events. Lacking any popular support, President Mera was forced to accept the Congress's decision.

Research Notes

Sources:

Parkman, Patricia. *Insurrectionary Civic Strikes in Latin America 1931-1961*. Cambridge, MA: The Albert Einstein Institution, 1990.

Maier, Georg. *Presidential Succession in Ecuador, 1830-1970*. *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, 13(4), Jul-Oct 1971. pp475-509.

Additional Notes:

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