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ReVista

HARVARD REVIEW OF LATIN AMERICA

BOLIVIA REVOLUTIONS AND BEYOND



Remembering Bolivia

I'd almost forgotten about Che. Well, not the triumphant Che of Havana, but the Che who fought unsuccessfully in Bolivia—even though I'd been moved by Steven Soderbergh's *Che: Part II* a while back. But in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, my host Nigel Asquith from Natura Bolivia mentioned that some elderly folk in the area still remember Che. Nigel, who often travels to tiny villages in remote rural areas, commented that many talk about Che with fondness. I looked at him quizzically. I thought the Bolivian peasants disagreed with Che ideologically. "They remembered him kindly because he fixed their teeth," he said. "Not as a guerrilla, as a dentist."

I'd almost forgotten about Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, whose story I had first learned about in the 1969 film starring Robert Redford and Paul Newman. Nigel reminded me of that too. Bolivia was a land so isolated and far away that outlaws could hide safely, even though the two bandits eventually died in a shootout with Bolivian soldiers.

But I never forgot my first trip to Bolivia in 1977. I was expecting a desperately poor country, something like Nicaragua or Haiti. Instead, I was impressed by the stout market women with elaborate skirts and bowler hats, seemingly well-off. I was startled by the lush country club, where a Dutch oilman had invited me to lunch. Perhaps it was a question of expectations. By my recent second trip, of course, I knew about the Gini coefficient that measures the gap between the rich and poor. Bolivia is a very poor and unequal country, but as many of the writers in this issue point out, it has enormous natural resources.

I kept trying to understand the 1977 trip—when I had traveled to Bolivia as an Inter American Press Association scholar—but something was missing. But while reading about the 1952 Revolution and the sweeping movements for indigenous education, I realized I had been experiencing a country with deeply embedded dignity that had somewhat masked its poverty.

When I started to put this issue together, I had thought in terms of balancing opposing political opinions by inviting a certain number of authors on "either side of the fence." I should have known better; "balance" isn't just a matter of who supports President Evo Morales and who doesn't and to what degree. All along the road from La Paz to Cochabamba to Santa Cruz, my wonderful Bolivian hosts and guides were advising, "take into account all of the regions, gender balance, indigenous and non-indigenous, and the many varieties of indigenous people. Don't forget Afro-Bolivians, and then there's the rural and the urban."

I arrived in Bolivia in January 2011, less than a month after the *gasolinazo*—a huge hike in fuel prices that the president quickly rescinded following protests. I assumed that with the rollback, the issue was over. Instead, I found protests were sweeping La Paz, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz, the three cities I visited. Food prices and transportation costs had soared. Opposition came from the left, as well as the right. One union worker on a march in Cochabamba told me, "We're marching because Brother Evo needs to listen to us!" Many of Evo's supporters felt he had let them down. And again, I realized I had forgotten. The volatility of the social movements and the huge unmet needs of an unequal society were still very much a part of the equation; there was no certainty at all.

One late moonlit night at the home of my gracious La Paz hosts Raúl Peñaranda and Fátima Molina (Nieman '08), I looked out over outcrops of red, cragged rock, a veritable moonscape. I thought of how that rock had been there years and years and years and yet how so very much had changed socially and politically in the country in the five years of Evo Morales. With its society in transition, Bolivia is at a crossroads and the future is yet to be decided.



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ON THE COVER

The Wiphala flag representing indigenous peoples was given equal status with the traditional Bolivian flag by the country's new Constitution.

Photograph by Antonio Suárez, tsuarezbolivia@yahoo.com/
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Five Years of Evo

BY PABLO STEFANONI

LESS THAN A DECADE AGO, FEW PEOPLE OUTSIDE of Bolivia could name its president. Today, Evo Morales is not only a global figure; he is an icon for critics of globalization. During the peak of neoliberalism at the end of the 20th century, the Zapatistas in Mexico advocated “changing the world without seizing power.” Now, in the first decade of the 21st century, Evo Morales, Bolivia’s first indigenous president, embodies the desire to change the world while in power—borrowing Subcomandante Marcos’ concept, “to rule by obeying the people” (*mandar obedeciendo*), a phrase prominently displayed on billboards with the president’s image throughout Bolivia.

Evo Morales took office on December 18, 2005, with an astounding 54% of the vote. He immediately set into motion a nationalist project with two main agendas: the nationalization of oil and gas and a Constitutional Convention. With the first measure Morales proposed to do away with the “plunder of natural resources,” in the words of his party, the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS); the second sought to do away with “internal colonialism.” Bolivian indigenous movements often use this term to characterize the domestic persistence of the exclusion of the native peoples—the majority of Bolivians—and the covert violence that continued to smolder under the liberal-democratic principles of citizens’ equality. Morales thus appears like the David who confronts the “imperialistic” Goliath, an image that greatly explains his popularity both within Bolivia and abroad.

These developments have transformed Bolivia into a beacon for those who are searching for alternative models to capitalistic modernity and to the present economic crisis. The presence of na-

tive peoples as the principal actors in the actual process of change activates a series of imaginaries about an “other” who is capable of providing fresh perspectives, cosmovisions and alternative political, economic and social practices in the face of “Western decadence.” But when one looks at the situation more closely, it becomes much more complicated. Although it is certain that the majority of Bolivians are indigenous (62%, according to the 2001 census), it is just as true that a fierce desire for inclusive modernization emerges forcefully from deep within the Bolivian population. Evo Morales reactivates developmental imaginaries in which “living well” in terms of material welfare is more powerful than any spiritual or non-materialist guidelines allegedly inscribed in indigenous cosmovisions.

For many *ReVista* readers, Evo Morales is seen as one of a group of emerging “populist” leaders in South America, including Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, his Ecuadoran colleague Rafael Correa, the late Néstor Kirchner and his widow, current Argentine president Cristina Fernández, and the Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega. But this “meat-eating” left—as Peruvian writer Alvaro Vargas Llosa called it to distinguish it from the “vegetarian” (and good) left—is not homogenous. Morales’ leadership contains a heavy dose of popular self-representation rather than messianic direction (in the countryside, peasants often comment, “he is one of us”). The International Monetary Fund itself has praised his macroeconomic policy for its prudence, and his social policies can be compared without any difficulty to those of the “moderate” Lula da Silva or his successor Dilma Rousseff in Brazil.

In the last five-plus years, Morales has



Bolivia's transformation under Evo Morales has been marked by social movements and the change in elites.

consolidated his power in the midst of a violent dispute with the agro-industrial elite in the country's eastern region, encouraging the mobilization of peasants and the popular urban sectors. The support he found on the streets also translated into votes: in August 2008, he was ratified in a “recall referendum” with 67% of the votes, and in December 2009, he was reelected with an unprecedented 64%.

Nevertheless, the celebrations of the government's fifth-year anniversary in January 2011 were tainted. The aborted “*gasolinazo*,” a fuel hike of up to 83%, had been announced on December 26, 2010, by Vice President Álvaro García Linera while Evo Morales was in Caracas offering help for the floods. The surprise timing and tone of the announcement that gas and diesel subsidies would be eliminated—stirring memories of the neoliberal economic corrections of the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s—sparked popular discontent against the government unprecedented in the era of Evo. Until that moment, protest had come from the conservative right; this time, it emanated from the strongholds of “Evo-



ism”—Evo supporters themselves. As a result, a week later, before the discontent grew any stronger, Morales hastened to strike down his own decree. The Bolivian president repeated that the government was “obeying the people” and that although the measure was a necessary one, the social movements had made him realize that the moment was not right for its implementation. Nevertheless, price increases and the uncertainty created by the measure spawned a series of protests about the high cost of food.

Moreover, the mini-crisis made apparent the disconnect between the often

eloquent grandstanding that referenced such concepts as communitarian socialism, and changes that had actually taken place—many of them modest—in the daily lives of Bolivians. Moderate successes in the fight against poverty, the implementation of social subsidy bonds and the construction of rural electrification and highways are undeniable accomplishments, but far from being an “anti-capitalist policy.” At the same time, the Bolivian state remains chronically weak, especially because it lacks qualified technocrats and institutional density. This deficit creates many obstacles to the

government’s statist projects such as setting up state-owned factories. Official negotiations with small and large producers this year to seek production increases to bring down food prices and do away with scarcity of products such as sugar, along with the announcement of subsidies to oil companies, demonstrate that overcoming market mechanisms is a lot more complicated than what the government and the so-called “social movements” ever imagined.

Evo Morales is suffering from the effects of a “crisis of narrative.” Creativity appears to be declining in terms of thinking about measures with the same—or similar—political-symbolic impact as those taken in the first moments of the Morales administration. The last educational reform law passed with little public debate except among those directly affected (primarily teachers); the same holds for a universal health insurance bill that is being drawn up, and other necessary reforms to guarantee free health care to the majority of Bolivians who today must pay for care in low-quality hospitals—let alone what happens when a Bolivian needs specialized health care. Though these efforts are real, they have not produced a compelling narrative about the social effects of the Morales government.

The transformation is most profoundly noted in the change of elites, the massive inclusion of indigenous, peasant and common citizens in the state apparatus, in the changing self-perception of Bolivians and in the realm of international politics in which Bolivia has allied itself with countries such as Venezuela, Cuba and Iran after decades of uncritical submission to Washington’s dictates.

The purchase of a satellite from China, the bet on megaprojects such as petrochemicals, hydroelectric projects, mining and highways (including in the Amazon region) or the president’s close links with the Armed Forces attest to the different imaginaries in play that—because of the lack of debate among them—at times appear like an ideological mess that muddles together indigenism and hardcore development



Artisanal workers from the eastern region around Santa Cruz.

policies. Among these we may trace two general and schematic lines that could produce several possible combinations. One vision—the hegemonic one, in which Vice-President García Linera participates—proposes a strong state accompanied by “prudent” macroeco-

summits, domestic policies regarding environmental defense or the struggle against climate change are inconsistent; the environmental costs of becoming a mining power once again—given the boom with its high prices—are not subject to public debate or even of funda-

From the eastern regions to the highlands, Bolivians expect a revolution in their pocketbooks. Bolivians want action instead of sweeping discourse.

nomic policies. Another tendency, more philosophical than practical in terms of public policy, is expressed in venues such as climate change summits and anti-summits, social movement forums and courses on political formation. This tendency projects a communitarian perspective, based on political, economic, and even judicial pluralism sanctioned by the new Constitution. The main advocate of this trend is Foreign Minister David Choquehuanca, who is highly regarded by the Aymaras of the Altiplano. The tensions between these two tendencies are particularly noticeable in the realm of the environment. While Bolivia has sought to play an international leadership and moral role in the climate

mental concern to the government.

In this context, for the first time since arriving in office, Morales not only faces opposition from the knee-jerk right, but from the center-left Movement Without Fear, led by former La Paz Mayor Juan del Granado, a Morales ally until the beginning of 2010. With support from the urban middle class, especially in La Paz, members “without fear” have sought to cast themselves as a more democratic and institutional variation of the present process of change, “criticizing its errors and supporting its achievements.” To garner support, the movement seeks to capitalize on del Granado’s accomplishments as mayor, one of the best administrations in the country in the past decades.

The government reacted to the movement by pressing charges against del Granado and current La Paz mayor Luis Revilla, a mechanism that in the past had allowed it to get rid of its principal conservative rivals. This year, the governor of Tarija (in the south of the country and the principal reservoir of Bolivian gas) was deposed and obtained political asylum in Paraguay; Leopoldo Fernández, the former governor of Pando, is still in jail waiting to be sentenced for the so-called Porvenir massacre in 2008, when pro-Evo peasants were allegedly ambushed by Fernández’ thugs in the isolated Bolivian Amazon region. And several former strong opposition leaders fled to the United States, among them Branko Marinkovic, the former pro-autonomy leader of Santa Cruz region, and former presidential candidate Manfred Reyes Villa. It is not clear, however, whether the government can get the same results with members of the moderate left, even if their movement is weak.

Morales faces a certain ideological stagnation. His second term has been marked with all the wear and tear that a second term implies. From this perspective, Morales’ future—he is planning to run again in 2014—will depend on his capacity to take charge of the process of change and to recover some of the mystique of his first term. Without a doubt, “change” has entered into its most prosaic moment, without great enemies in sight—which is an advantage and a disadvantage at the same time. The struggle against the “separatists” had managed to solidify the Morales ranks until 2008. Now Bolivians are expecting Morales’ sweeping discourse to be translated into better concrete conditions in their daily lives. They are expecting a revolution in their pocketbooks.

Pablo Stefanoni, *journalist and economist, is the editor of Nueva Sociedad. Until February 2011, he was editor-in-chief of Le Monde Diplomatique Bolivia. He is the author of “Qué hacer con los indios...” Y otros traumas de la colonialidad.*



REFLECTIONS

For foreigners, Bolivia can be a difficult place to understand. Merilee Grindle and Mary Hilderbrand reflect on their experiences with Bolivia at several historical moments. Yet, even for Bolivians, the country can be a puzzle. Gonzalo Chávez A. examines the contrast between Bolivia's excellent macroeconomic statistics and the fact that most Bolivians just eke out a living.

- Through a Glass Darkly
- The Bolivian Economy

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Through A Glass Darkly

Reflecting on Bolivia

BY MARY E. HILDERBRAND AND MERILEE S. GRINDLE

AS THE AMERICAN AIRLINES FLIGHT FROM MIAMI neared La Paz, we peered down through the thin light of early morning, trying to make sense of the arid land below us. Were the neat pyramids of stones at the corner of each field the result of clearing the land for planting? If so, it must be rocky, inhospitable soil for growing crops. Were those really herds of llamas and alpacas that dotted the landscape? And how spectacular the snow-covered Andes appeared in comparison with the altiplano. We continued to watch as the walled compounds at the edges of El Alto appeared, gaining clarity and detail as we descended to the runway. Before us, Bolivia's high plains and mountains seemed an exotic moonscape.

Moments later, entering a rustic immigration hall, we took note of the oxygen tanks available for passengers with difficulty breathing at 4,000 meters. Soon, our taxi wove through the early morning throngs of El Alto's commerce and we descended the sculpted bowl into La Paz. Foot trails bit into the hillsides; shacks clung precariously on dry cliffs along with modern mansions; women in bowler hats and wide, floating skirts trekked downhill, and a river spilled muddy water down a steep sluice. As we entered the city, crowds of indigenous people waited for buses and set up street markets in the shadow of crumbling colonial churches and 19th century buildings recalling the exuberance of periodic economic booms.

Despite the passage of time, our memories of this 1993 arrival are still crystal clear. For both of us, it was a first trip to Bolivia. For one, it was the fulfillment of a lifetime dream to see the Andes and the start of a demanding and unfamiliar assignment. For the other—already well traveled in Latin America—it was the

chance to take in the sights and sounds of a new country, to learn firsthand about political, social and economic realities.

This was the first of many visits to a country dramatic in its landscape and its history. Initially, we were pursuing research for a report for the United Nations Development Programme on public sector reform. Within months, however, we were actively engaged in a much larger project involving the Harvard Institute for International Development (HIID) and the Universidad Católica Boliviana (UCB). In this USAID-sponsored initiative, HIID and the university would collaborate to establish a Master's program in public policy at UCB. We hoped that many of the characteristics of the Harvard Kennedy School, where both of us were teaching, could be adapted to the Bolivian context, contributing to pedagogy and public policy research in this interesting environment.

That program evolved into the *Maestrías para el Desarrollo* (MpD), the first Master's program of any kind at a Bolivian university. The MpD has made an important contribution to human capital development for Bolivia's public, non-profit and private sectors, training hundreds of students in analytic methods, organizational management and leadership, reaching thousands more through its executive courses and research and consulting work. Setting a standard for postgraduate education in the country, it has consistently demonstrated that scarcity of resources can be compensated through innovation and deep dedication.

Equally important for us, this relationship with the MpD and with a cadre of graduates from the Harvard Kennedy School has been a foundation for enduring friendships with many of the most



A humble home with red bricks and zinc roofing hovers over the sprawling La Paz skyline.

engaged and articulate citizens of Bolivia. Several of them have written for this important issue of *ReVista*. Although the original USAID-HIID project is long over, the MpD and the Harvard Kennedy School have continued working together and our history of professional and personal engagement in the country has now spanned almost 18 years. We have vivid memories of that first touchdown in El Alto, for it opened a window on the dramatic history of Bolivia over those years.

Yet we have seen through this window only darkly. The year 1993 was a time of great hope for the country; we saw many problems but we also saw a political and economic landscape that was becoming more stable and secure. Following many years marked by coups and military dictatorships, drug trafficking and corruption and deep economic crisis, Bolivia by then had had a functioning electoral democracy in place for a decade; the military seemed marginalized from political engagement; hyperinflation had been defeated. Successive administrations had introduced policy reforms that aimed to supplant the state-led economy of the preceding



decades with a more market-led model of development. Widely touted popular participation reforms gave local communities more resources and decision-making power. The international community eagerly promoted Bolivia's experience as a model of reform initiatives, and hotel coffee shops in La Paz were bustling with international experts consulting over breakfast and meeting with Bolivian colleagues over generous lunch buffets. It seemed a good time to be introduced to the country's potential.

What we perceived in 1993 turned out to be untrustworthy, however. Economic growth proved elusive over the following years, especially on the altiplano. Austerity and structural reforms were painful; they required a payoff at some point to be sustainable, and that payoff did not come soon enough for the large population of poor and indigenous people. Many had lost their jobs through economic turmoil and reform; many had been affected by drug enforcement initiatives that threatened their livelihoods and even their customs and values. Many felt betrayed and they denounced neoliberal policies for the hardships they faced. Meanwhile, regional tensions revived when some parts of the country began to grow economically. Neither the political nor the

economic reforms had directly addressed the fundamental inequality and injustice in the country's institutions.

We were not alone in our failure to understand the unresolved issues that Bolivia faced in the mid-1990s. Indeed, the country's experience turned into a challenge for how economic development was understood and practiced in the 1990s and early 2000s. Some claimed that the reforms had not been deep enough nor fully enough implemented and argued for staying the course; others questioned whether the reforms had been appropriate from the beginning. If stabilization and structural adjustment reforms did not lead to economic growth within a reasonable time period, was a different approach to development needed? If democratic elections and decentralization left so many marginalized from the political process and with little prospect of addressing deep inequalities in the society, how were such issues to be addressed? If drug eradication programs were capable of mobilizing protests from large numbers of poor people, were they the right programs? If regional inequalities increased in the wake of such changes, what needed to be done to ameliorate them? The experience of Bolivia posed these tough questions; it did not, alas,

suggest the answers.

A decade after our first visit to Bolivia, we had another opportunity to reflect on the uncertainties involved in understanding current events in a country. The setting, in September 2003, was a dinner party, lively with conversation and excellent Andean food. We were surrounded by friends from the Harvard Kennedy School and the MpD. Many were now professors, while others were serving in government, providing policy analysis and advice to political leaders; two former government ministers were part of the group; others worked in foundations looking for solutions to problems of poverty, poor education, and national identity.

The following day was to be marked by a massive demonstration of indigenous organizations; La Paz would be largely shut down. Thus, much of the discussion at the table concerned serious issues. How should we understand what was happening in the country? How would policy and development issues be decided in the future? How were conflicts about identity and representation to be resolved? The themes were often general: the extent to which neoliberal reforms had opened up space for changing the rules of political engagement or had simply incited anger and protest; the ability of the democratic institutions re-introduced in 1982 to survive tomorrow's demands for change; the capacity of the government to contain the potential violence of the crowd; the leadership and organization of indigenous protest. But these issues spilled over into more personal questions that underlined the gravity of the immediate situation. Are you going to go to the office tomorrow? Will it be safe to send the kids to school in the morning? Should we stockpile food in case it becomes unsafe to leave the house?

The next day, the two of us stood on the steps of a downtown hotel—thinking that if violence erupted we could easily duck inside—and watched the protest. From this vantage point, it seemed a peaceful demonstration. Rank upon rank of civil and political organizations marched by, each with a banner, the women in indigenous dress and the men in working

clothes and jackets, their knitted hats worn as emblems of their cultures. There was little chanting, and we did not feel threatened by the banners or the protesters. We watched for over an hour as thousands passed by, insistently denouncing the government for its management of the economy and the country's vast natural resources, demanding recognition of distinct cultural identities, claiming power in a new Bolivia, but doing so in well-rehearsed style. This was the first time that we had seen a major demonstration in the cellular era, and we marveled at how order was kept and communications maintained by a small army of marshals with cell phones and walkie-talkies.

In the end, the day ended peacefully, the crowd dispersed, and the government survived. We returned to Cambridge, believing we had witnessed an important event, but fairly sanguine about the capacity of the government to manage such dissent. Two weeks later, however, in the context of growing and increasingly violent opposition, government forces fired on a group of protesters, several were killed, and the president was soon forced to resign and leave the country. A new political era was at hand, one in which the country's indigenous population would become much more important participants in decisions about the political, economic and social future of the country. Perhaps ironically, or perhaps inevitably, the new democratic institutions introduced in the 1980s and 1990s, if inadequate in themselves, had provided an opening for major political demands for the inclusion of the indigenous peoples of Bolivia into its formal institutions.

These stories—our first impressions of a country and perceptions from a decade later—are unsettling in retrospect. We had probably witnessed far more than we thought we had as our taxi fought against indigenous foot traffic in El Alto in 1993 and as we stood on the steps of a hotel watching a protest in 2003. Should we have been able to “read” these situations more accurately? We were, after all, trained as political scientists, academics who study political

processes and work to explain stasis and change in institutional arrangements. At the time, however, we were unable to see clearly into the future or assess the extent to which it would be marked by change.

Indeed, since the early 2000s, the extent of change in Bolivia has been extraordinary. Political, social, and economic issues in the fall of 2011 include questions about the control and use of natural resources, the relationship between central and local governments, the recognition of ancient demands for participation, the right to secede from the nation, and how identity would define political mobilization and voting. A newly written constitution has laid the basis for reshaping political and economic institutions to address some of these fundamental issues, yet turning that document into a set of living, viable institutions will be a long process, and many basic questions remain to be worked out.

Today, we insist that political events such as those that played out in the 2000s in Bolivia reflect prior conflicts over identity, participation, legitimacy and resources. Equally, however, the big steps from 1993 to 2003 to 2011 are a reminder that history is shaped not only over the longer term but also in the shorter term in conflicts about the consolidation of power, how interests are represented and engaged, and how choices are made about the construction of new institutions. While changes may seem foregone conclusions in retrospect, they are anything but certain as energies, strategies, and political resources are put to use in conflicts about power and the direction of development.

As we consider over two decades of change in Bolivia, it now seems to us that understanding history involves adjusting short-term perspectives to longer-term interpretations and, looking backward, seeing through windows more clearly. This is not easily done, and may or may not provide greater insights into the future. As social scientists, we are accustomed to making reference to the enduring nature of institutions and the characteristics of political and social systems, attempting to

assess current events in light of continuities and expectations based on what we know of the past. But the day-to-day view from the street is often that of how much change occurs over the short term—and how abruptly it can occur—and of how contingent those changes are.

Certainly Everyman might question the academic view if the recent history of Bolivia is consulted. The 1980s and 1990s had brought many significant changes. But the more fundamental change to come in the 2000s, deeply affecting the country's political and social institutions and the dynamics of its politics and economic development, could not have been clearly foreseen in those years. There is no question that the Bolivia of 2011 is a very different country from what had existed in those prior decades. Yet the question of how to understand these changes and how to place them in historical context remains elusive.

For many Bolivians who had lived at the margins of politics and economic development for centuries, 2011 is a time of hope again. But many questions remain about the direction and long-term sustainability of economic policies, development strategies, institutional frameworks, and political representation. It is not clear yet whether the balance between hope and disappointment, so often settled on the negative side in the past, will this time sustain the positive expectations of so many Bolivians. The analysis and accounts included in this issue of *ReVista* may help us understand better some of the aspects of the current situation, the accomplishments, perhaps the failures, and certainly the work remaining to be done. At the street-level, however, we continue to see the future through a glass darkly.

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The Bolivian Economy

Snapshot or MRI? **BY GONZALO CHÁVEZ A.**

A FEW YEARS AGO I ATTENDED A MEETING OF Latin American countries in which the participants were divided up by geographic areas. I automatically went to look for my neighbors from Peru and Chile. When I entered the room marked “Southern Cone,” I was stopped by one of the organizers who told me that Bolivia had been grouped with Central America. My first reaction was indignation at my hosts’ geographic ignorance; I felt like shoving a world map into their hands. Fortunately, I restrained myself. It crossed my mind that even though from a territorial perspective Bolivia is in the heart of the Latin America’s southern cone, from the point of view of human and economic geography, it is plausible to lump it together with countries like Nicaragua and Honduras. Indeed, many of our structural indicators—percentage of

indigenous population, levels of poverty and inequality, size of the gross domestic product (GDP), productive diversification and institutional development—are more similar to those of Central America than those of our neighbors in the southern cone. These indeed were the criteria used to group countries in the international event in which I was participating.

Expectations for change in Bolivia’s economic and political model were enormous in 2006, when the first indigenous president, Evo Morales, took office. The country was booming. Many hoped the bonanza of foreign revenue would allow Bolivia to overcome low economic growth and poverty, thus ceasing to be the poorest country in South America. Looking at five years of the president’s mandate, it is apparent that an evaluation of the performance of the Bolivian

economy needs to be made on two levels. The first is macroeconomic, a snapshot of the economic situation. The second is a tomography, a sort of deeper structural look, a kind of imaginary MRI of the country’s productive apparatus.

The Bolivian economy grew at an average of 4.5% yearly between 2006 and 2010. This result is quite similar to the growth rate during the period of the height of neoliberalism between 1994 and 1998. The growth of the gross national product in Bolivia, in addition to being quite low compared to the rest of the Latin American region, is very sensitive to the booms and busts of international prices for natural resources and the volatility of foreign investment.

In these five years we are looking at, the unemployment rate in Bolivia in the formal sector was reduced to 7%. However, this statistic applies to only 20% of the employed population; the remaining 80% just eke out their living in the informal sector with low quality jobs and without any type of social protection such as health insurance.

During the first five years of President Morales’ administration, the inflation rate was very volatile. In 2006, it was 4.95%, quite similar to that of the previous three years. In the meantime, in 2007-2008, prices spiraled upwards, registering a hike of 12% yearly as a result of increases in food prices. In 2009, inflation was sharply reduced to .26%, but jumped up again to 7.18% in 2010.

During this five-year period, the Bolivian economy also registered a fiscal surplus, a positive trade balance, and a significant increase in international reserves mounting to more than ten billion dollars. These figures show that Bolivia’s macroeconomy performed splendidly, to a large extent because of favorable exchange rates and higher income obtained through the nationalization of the petroleum industry. Indeed, the prices of the raw materials exported by Bolivia tripled between 2006 and 2010.

These macroeconomic results also reflect the high level of continuity in the management of economic policy, in

spite of all the talk about change. In effect, President Morales' macroeconomic policy reflects a strong influence of the goals and instruments of the neoliberal period, and this policy was not integrated enough towards promoting economic growth and better quality jobs. Monetary and exchange policies of the Morales administration were focused on controlling inflation, maintaining an anti-productive bias, just as they had in the past. Only after the 2008-2009 world financial crisis did monetary policy become more flexible and promote the reduction of interest rates. However, even these lower rates did not provide incentives for the private sector to take on debt, because of institutional and preexisting structural restrictions in the Bolivian market such as the size of the businesses and guarantees.

Fiscal policy was much more proactive in the social area. The Morales administration maintained a voucher for senior citizens known as Renta Dignidad and created conditional transfers of money for women and children known as the Juana Azurduy de Padilla program.

Although partial improvement can be seen in the macroeconomic "photography," no significant changes were registered in the "tomography"—its MRI, if you will—of the Bolivian economy. The country's economic structure conceals old and new ailments that keep the country from an integral economic and social development.

A deeper look—our symbolic tomography—shows, for example, that the Bolivian economy has gone back to being just as highly dependent on natural resources as it was in the 1930s. Public investment continues to concentrate resources in traditional sectors such as hydrocarbons and mining. In 2010, the exports of minerals, natural gas and soy represented 80% of sales on the world market, while industrial products represented only 20% of the exports. Bolivia has returned to a primarily export and rentist economy that makes it vulnerable both in the external sector and in the national exchequer, with more than 50% of its income coming from natural gas alone.

The Bolivian economy suffers from the so-called Dutch disease—the overdependence on natural resources—and the clearest indicator of this is the increasing exchange rate. Dutch disease is producing growth without wealth, deindustrialization of the little industry Bolivia has and curbs on the growth of development of a productive infrastructure. This theme is complicated even more by governmental insistence on maintaining a fixed exchange rate, which is damaging to exports with a value-added component and also foments both legal and illegal imports.

The informal economy, stimulated by these imports, has spiraled in terms of both goods and services and in an indirect manner is linked to contraband and drug trafficking. In the year 2000, imports barely reached \$19 billion dollars, while in 2010, they surged to \$70 billion. Legal and illegal trade grew in a substantial way with financing from the trade surplus and the explosion of international remittances.

The hypertrophy of the informal sector in goods and services also contributes to the strangulation of the already weak industrial sector, which is less competitive because of the increasing exchange rates, and which has also lost external markets for ideological reasons. For example, textile exports to the U.S. market have been shut down because of the diplomatic distancing caused by the expulsion of the U.S. ambassador to Bolivia.

Another ailment that is clearly seen in the Bolivian economy is the drop in productivity, particularly in the public sector. Serious problems of administration, inefficiency, corruption, institutional weakness and difficulties in implementation of public investment are some of the symptoms of this economic illness.

The oil industry in particular is suffering from anemia and atrophy. In particular, the public oil company Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos, which ought to be the banner for change, has not taken off because of management problems and lack of financial resources. The level of investment in the oil sec-

tor is quite low, and this inactivity has translated into stagnation of the proved reserves of natural gas. Moreover, natural gas exports have declined, a nationalization damaged Bolivia's relations with neighboring markets, particularly that of Brazil. And because of the lack of investment in the petroleum sector, Bolivia has actually tuned into an importer of diesel and gasoline.

To sum up, this tomography demonstrates that Bolivia's productive structure is returning to primary goods, lack of human capital, institutional weakness, enormous growth in the informal economy, low levels of technological innovation, precarious employment, little diversification and industrialization, and low levels of productivity both in the public and private sectors. The macroeconomic figures make us look like a middle income country, according to the World Bank, which brings us closer to the economic tendencies of the neighboring countries. However, the tomography indicates structural bottlenecks which make us more like the Central American economies. As we observed in the 80s, the macroeconomy is getting on fine, but the people are getting on poorly.

As the neoliberal administration had done earlier, President Morales' government continues to bet on macroeconomic results in spite of his promise of productive changes evident in the new constitution. The tomography of the Bolivian economy also shows that the country holds great productive potential in areas like tourism, textiles, organic products and the forest industry. However, to deliver on this potential requires a productive revolution that abandons the economic and political logic tied strictly to natural resources.

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PORTRAITS OF CHANGE

This section features two portraits of Bolivians who have worked for change. Raúl Peñaranda U., the editor of *Página Siete*, creates a portrait of the country's president, Evo Morales, through an exclusive interview. Human rights specialist Tom Pegram paints a picture of the late Bolivian Human Rights Ombudswoman Ana María Romero de Campero and her legacy.

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President Evo Morales talks to Raúl Peñaranda (first to his left) and the *Página Siete* team in an English-language *ReVista* exclusive (flower vase digitally altered).

Evo Morales

Portrait of Change **BY RAÚL PEÑARANDA U.**

IT WAS 4:45 A.M. IN LA PAZ. FIVE MEN GATHERED at dawn at a lonely bus stop in a residential zone. They were wearing thick jackets to ward off the intense cold of the morning. They seemed nervous. Indeed, they were, because they were going to the presidential house. Four journalists (myself included) and one photographer, all from the Bolivian newspaper *Página Siete*, were preparing to interview President Evo Morales (with an English exclusive for *ReVista*).

The presidential residence was built in the mid-1970s under the unlikely supervision of Turkish architect Osman Birced; after just a few years in the country, he had carved out a niche in Bolivian architecture, polishing his Spanish and achieving great prestige. General Hugo Banzer's government accepted the architect's proposal to construct the residence in a modern style with straight lines, large areas for socializing and not a few triangular rooms. Birced's wife, Füsüm, an intelligent and intuitive woman with an ability to read fortunes from coffee dregs, suggested to her husband that the

reception area be kept small so that visitors would not be intimidated. Whether or not this story is true, the fact is that the lobby is less than 240 square feet and serves as a gateway to rooms and salons with floors made of exquisite mahogany-mara, a type of semi-precious nearly extinct wood from the Amazon region. An elegant staircase leads to the second floor, more sunlit than the first.

Obviously, Birced had no way of knowing that three decades after the construction, its current resident—who, some believe, wishes to stay on for a longer term than was established in the original rental lease—would be an indigent Bolivian man born into poverty. The architect could not have imagined that the present day resident—an adolescent at the time—was living in a remote corner of the Bolivian altiplano at an altitude of 13,000 feet in an adobe house no bigger than the modest lobby Birced had designed for the presidential residence.

Evo Morales was born to an Aymara household in October 1959 in Isallavi in the canton of Orinoca, in the middle of

nowhere. Only sad and lonely vistas surround this wilderness in the Bolivian altiplano; off in the distance, the peaks of the Andean mountains are visible. Adobe houses with small windows fend off the cold in a zone where temperatures often fall to freezing. Residents survive on subsistence agriculture and husbandry, producing potatoes and alfalfa, and raising sheep and llamas. A few months back, some journalists had visited the Morales birthplace 220 miles from La Paz, traveling on dirt roads for much of the trip. The one-room house with a thatched roof and dirt floors had no electricity or running water, and Morales' mother cooked using llama dung as fuel. Four of Morales' seven siblings died because of lack of medical attention.

"The Karachullpa community, next to Isallavi, where I lived as a child, had almost nothing to eat in 1971 because there was a tremendous drought. I was 13 years old and I saw how they could only boil *ankañoco*, a root tuber from the t'ola bush of the altiplano. It hurt me to see this. 'How are they going to get by just on this?' I asked myself. When my

father butchered a llama or a lamb, especially llama, families would just show up out of nowhere; my father gave them the feet, heads, tripe, something nutritious,” recounts the president, sprawled out on a stretcher while a Cuban doctor performs physical therapy to strengthen the muscles around his recently operated knee.

Evo continues: “It wasn’t going so good for us either. That year, we only had a sack of white corn, which was our breakfast, lunch and dinner. My mother toasted the corn, crushed it and boiled it with something like jerked beef or a bone; for lunch, we had the corn toasted or stewed and in the evening once again she toasted corn and served it with a bit of meat. The corn was running out. So my father took me out of school to accompany him as a muleteer going to Independencia in Ayopaya province, taking fifty male llamas to exchange for salt and meat.”

Some of the events that he has most recounted without a doubt marked his

tions, that is Evo Morales. As Morales is hyperactive, he did not obey the surgeon’s mandate to keep off his feet and within a short period he was back to business as usual—including playing soccer and *frontón* (a game similar to Basque pelota). Morales already had a serious relapse at the beginning of the year because he didn’t heed his doctors and most likely will have more in the future.

“In 1965, the economic situation was very bad. At that time it was the custom to travel to the sugar harvest in Jujuy, in the north of Argentina. One took the train to the border and then to La Quiaca, and then go further south.” Morales traveled there with his father, his brother Hugo and his sister Esther, the oldest one, “who took care of us and cooked for us.” Evo was six. “I was a closed-off Aymara; I didn’t know any Spanish,” he says. He arrived at a camp of sugar harvesters near Jujuy, where the workers were required to send

Like everyone, Evo is more than one person at the same time. He is the charismatic leader ready to recognize some of his errors; and he is also the stubborn leader with fixed ideas who does not allow his adversaries to get in his way—sometimes taking advantage of his full power to do so. He genuinely represents the aspirations of indigenous Bolivians—a symbol of indigenous leadership both in the country and abroad. Yet he is also capable of bashing people with the strongest verbal abuse. He accused his former ally and possible opposition presidential candidate Juan Del Granado of being corrupt and declared that his political party was “garbage,” not that long after he had praised Del Granado, saying that he would “like to clone him.” Evo is the person who has most democratized—*de facto*—Bolivian society, spurring an important change in elites. Yet he is the person who often pays no heed to the constitution and bends the rules to get rid of opponents. Finally, he is the president who for five years was careful to talk cautiously about Chile, Bolivia’s permanent regional rival, but doesn’t pause for a minute to scorn and insult the representatives of the U.S. government and embassy.

One of Evo’s targets is, in fact, the U.S. government, which exercised tremendous power in Bolivia for the last half century before he took power. The U.S. embassy exercised veto power over cabinet appointments, administered landing strips where Bolivian authorities could not arrive without prior permission, met with senators at the embassy to coordinate approval of laws, convoked authorities to scold them, decided military operations and anti-drug laws; some ambassadors even chewed out presidents in public. Ambassador Robert Gelbard, for example, criticized then-President Jaime Paz Zamora for his “coca leaf is not cocaine” campaign. Ambassador Donna Hrinak said that Bolivians, under Hugo Banzer’s second government, “didn’t have the balls” to confront corrupt drug judges.

“Bolivia is going to have bilateral relations with everyone,” asserts Evo, when

Evo genuinely represents the aspirations of indigenous Bolivians—a symbol of indigenous leadership both in the country and abroad. But contradictions exist.

life: that he slept on the road, that it rained, that he had little food, that he chewed orange peels thrown out the window by bus passengers. In this way he traveled an entire month at his father’s side, perhaps feeling he was an adult already, perhaps imagining that it would be better to have an adolescence that did not require him to travel on foot thirty days without shelter.

Even for experienced journalists, it’s unusual to interview a president. And even less likely to begin a dialogue at five in the morning while the leader is undergoing physical therapy, still wearing the Bolivian football team shorts he used the previous evening in a friendly soccer match. If there is one person who does not conform to any molds or preconcep-

their children to school. “The professor didn’t understand anything I said, and I couldn’t understand her,” he recalls. “She called me Evito, Evito, and then she sat by my side.” It was his first contact with Spanish, the language he would speak for the rest of his life. He lost his fluency in Aymara over the years because when the family arrived in Chapare in 1980, Aymara speakers and Quechua speakers were fighting over which language to use; everyone ended up speaking Spanish.

Asked whether he now considers himself a socialist, Morales replies, “I understand by socialism that there is equality in the society and to achieve this, one needs to have state participation in production. And there is another important point—education and health care must be universal—even if some sectors oppose that.”

we moved to a bigger room to continue the interview after his therapy. “Fortunately, we have broken with the dominance of the United States. In the first visits by the ambassador or some U.S. congressmen, they told me, ‘No, no, you can’t have relations with Cuba; that’s risky, and not with Venezuela or Iran either.’ They all told me that.”

“But I told them, ‘No, we are a culture of dialogue, and we are going to have relations with everyone—including you.’”

Yet Evo has argued with the U.S. government in what might be called an extreme fashion. If previous presidents were submissive, he is hostile. He has insulted U.S. ambassadors and USAID in a persistent and often unfair way, even expelling Ambassador Philip Goldberg. One of the main points of contention is Bolivian drug policy, which emphasizes voluntary eradication, social control and action against drug trafficking rather than coca crops. The U.S. government considers it insufficient, though the United Nations and the European Union are less critical. At the time of this interview, Bolivia was hammering out an anti-drug agreement.

“Nothing happens; nothing advances,” Evo frets. “The foreign minister is very disillusioned. Obama’s discourse is that we are all partners; he talks about mutual respect, but in reality, he doesn’t want that.”

Since there wasn’t a secondary school in his locality, Evo’s father sent him to Oruro, capital of the department by the same name, to finish his high school studies. He worked as a bricklayer and a baker. He also played trumpet in one of Oruro’s legendary musical bands. And finally, he returned, once again, to the altiplano.

Little later, escaping from a new drought at home, he arrived in Chapare in 1980 at 21. He adapted quickly to the tropical climate and geography, bought a small plot of land and planted coca and some citrus. His situation was modest but not miserable, and he was even able to hire some workers. He was a well-known soccer player. “First they named



President Evo Morales in the interview.

me secretary of sports for the union, my first position in the San Francisco Union in 1980. My nickname was ‘soccer kid,’ until later it became ‘Compañero Evo.’”

Morales adopted a vague leftist and populist ideology criticizing “North American imperialism.” In his day-to-day life, he had to deal with U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) agents directing anti-coca police and Army operations. The experience clarified for him whom he saw as the principal enemy: the U.S. government and the political parties that represented the Bolivian elite. On at least two occasions he was brutally beaten, and he was arrested dozens of times. Those years led him to develop a stance advocating the need to nationalize the country’s primary natural resources in order to distribute their profits to the most needy sectors of society. Later, when he achieved the presidency, he also adopted an “indigenist” discourse that placed a high value on Bolivian indigenous roots and on indigenous culture in general. Many people accuse him of embracing this stance out of pure demagoguery.

“I believe that you journalists have given me the title of ‘Indigenous President.’ I never thought of myself as an indigenous leader, but I understood that I was the first president that came out of the labor movement; this term ‘first indigenous

president’ comes from commentators.... Later, thinking that I come from *ayllu* in Orinoca, where there are communitarian lands, where to this date there is no private property; then, I do come from that movement. In Orinoca, there is no union; there is an *ayllu*. In the time of the Democratic Popular Union (UDP, 1982-1985), they wanted to have *ayllus* instead of unions. I come from the *ayllus*.”

Since 1988, Morales has been the most important social leader in Bolivia. After he was elected to parliament in 1997, his international image began to grow and he became the darling of the anti-globalization groups and leftist non-governmental organizations. This past January, he completed five years in office with countless challenges still facing him. His popularity has declined; the social movements that were loyal to him have distanced themselves from his administration and he has lost the aura of a “different” type of leader. An important factor was the *gasolinazo*, an aborted gasoline price increase in January.

“It wasn’t the technocrats or the Vice President that were responsible,” he declares. “I am the responsible one. I don’t like anyone else to take the blame.”

“I’m not interested in a positive or negative image,” he adds. “I am only interested in the truth. And the truth is that the economy of fuel subsidies needs to be fixed.”

But his approval has been dropping at the polls. Until very recently, it seemed likely that he would push through a constitutional change so he could run for a third term in 2015. Today that seems a remote possibility.

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Human Rights as a Vocation

A Portrait of Ana María Romero de Campero **BY TOM PEGRAM**

“With Ana María Romero dies a piece of the history of Bolivia. This woman is who built our democracy.”

THESE WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE BY THE Bolivian Vice President Álvaro García Linera marked the death of Ana María Romero de Campero on October 25, 2010, at the age of 69, the first woman President of the Senate of the newly formed Bolivian Plurinational Assembly. In the days that followed, his sentiments were echoed not only by many of the urban elite and professionals of La Paz but also, more unusually, by civil society activists and ordinary Bolivians throughout the country.

Largely unknown outside Bolivia, Ana María Romero dedicated her life to promoting democracy and human rights with particular regard for those most disadvantaged in Bolivian society. Her work reached its apogee with her appointment as the first *Defensora del Pueblo* in 1998, an office broadly translating its intent into English as “Human Rights Ombudswoman.” The high public standing of the *Defensor del Pueblo* in Bolivian society today is largely attributable to her forceful leadership as *Defensora* until 2003. In turn, Ana María used her considerable public popularity as the former *Defensora del Pueblo* to continue to play a constructive role amidst the turbulent and divisive events that followed Morales’ rise to power in 2005. The recounting of Ana María’s story serves also to reflect, albeit partially, upon the past, the present and the future of Bolivia’s struggle towards viable democracy.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Ana María at her office in July 2008 as part of my research into the human rights impact of *Defensorías del Pueblo* in Latin America. Intriguingly, little attention had been paid to these new state



Ana María Romero was sworn in as President of the Bolivian Senate in January 2010.

human rights institutions although they seemed to be held in high public esteem, in contrast to their much-maligned political systems. Bolivia was no exception. Over the course of a three-hour discussion, Ana María provided valuable insight into the grand schemes and operational minutiae that informed her term as *Defensora*, as well as the philosophical basis for her actions. A growing body of anecdotal evidence suggested that the Bolivian *Defensoría*— alongside its Colombian, Guatemalan and Peruvian counterparts—was, and remains, widely regarded as a credible, impactful institution in a sea of dysfunctionality. In the course of my five-year investigation, a recurring predictor of success came into focus: the exceptional leadership qualities of individual *Defensores*, including Jaime Córdoba Triviño (Colombia), Ramiro de León Carpio (Guatemala), Jorge Santistevan de Noriega (Peru) and Ana María herself.

Ana María Romero Campero was born into a deeply political household in La Paz on June 29, 1941. Her father,

Gonzalo Romero, was a leading figure on the left of the Bolivian Socialist Falange (FSB) party, and at the center of the turbulent revolutionary politics of the era. His nationalist revolutionary ideology was likely to have fostered Ana María’s outlook on Bolivian society, as she pursued her own political formation, honing her abilities as a journalist to convey a complex Bolivian reality to the world. A noted irreverence towards the powerful, as well as a gift for mediating conflict, provided early indications of her future vocation.

During decades of political strife, Ana María became a figurehead for independent journalism and a rare authoritative woman’s voice on the national stage. The first woman to preside over the Journalists Association, she also founded and led the Circle of Women Journalists and became President of the National Press Association. In a Bolivian world of male hierarchy, such a trajectory was a significant achievement and perhaps inevitably marked her out for political office. Initially, however, her experience with official politics would be fleeting. In 1979, Ana María was appointed Minister for Information during the short-lived democratic administration of Wálter Guevara Arce that was toppled by one of the many military coups that plagued Bolivia throughout the twentieth century, led on this occasion by General Alberto Natush Busch. Ana María was instrumental in tipping off the international community about the coup with the aid of her personal telex machine.

In the late 1990s, Ana María Romero truly found her voice on the national stage. According to the Bolivian journalist and historian Rolando Carvajal, her influence on some of the most important social and political events of recent years is perhaps exceeded only by Evo Morales.

Crucial to this narrative is the almost unanimous congressional endorsement of Ana María as the first Bolivian *Defensora* in 1998, during the government of erstwhile dictator, later democratically elected, President Hugo Banzer. A novel office, autonomous yet part of the state, and with an explicit human rights promotion and protection mandate, the *Defensor del Pueblo* appointment provided Ana María with a powerful bullhorn with which to advocate for change. She proved an adept political operator, capable of navigating in an increasingly polarized social reality and a faltering political system. Above all, she had the virtue of understanding that her role as *Defensor* was to represent a “*Magistratura de la Persuasión* [Magistrate of Persuasion].” The message that all Bolivians had rights—irrespective of political affiliation or ethnicity—and that the state had a responsibility towards those most vulnerable and marginalized within society had a powerful resonance. Ana María rapidly positioned herself and the institution as a voice for the voiceless.

The *Defensor del Pueblo* set about reframing human rights as an objective standard apart from the political fray of competing ideologies. Campaigns to redress widely perceived injustices (such as the denial of kidney transplants, reform of the social security code and compulsory military conscription) contributed to her popular appeal as a determined human rights defender in the face of formidable opposition. Against vocal objections by the Bolivian government and U.S. embassy, Ana María intervened in a violent conflict between cocaleros and security forces in 1998 in El Chapare. Her efforts—alongside those of local civil society and church—to generate a space for dialogue are widely credited as having achieved an ultimately peaceful resolution to the impasse.

Ana María was a familiar mediating presence in many other social and political conflicts in the late 1990s and 2000s. During the 2000 Cochabamba Water War, the *Defensora* actively sought to hold the water utility company and regu-

lators to account. She also successfully petitioned the Constitutional Tribunal to strike down the Banzer government’s state of emergency decree, much to the chagrin of government ministers.

Ana María’s term as *Defensora* expired in September 2003, and in the midst of a highly contested reelection bid, the Gas War saw countrywide protests against the selling of Bolivia’s natural gas reserves to the United States through Chilean territory. On October 11, 2003, on the order of Defense Minister Carlos Sánchez Berzaín, military forces shot to death an estimated 67 people in El Alto and left hundreds more wounded. In response, Ana María began a hunger strike in protest against the actions of the Sánchez de Lozada government, quickly joined by hundreds of human rights activists. This controversial action was regarded even by some of her family as a step too far. Nevertheless, Ana María felt compelled by a “moral duty” to do something. In our interview, she commented simply, “I suppose this action was coherent with my life and, in particular, my work as *Defensora*.” It proved effective. Then-sitting Vice President Carlos Mesa remarks in his 2008 memoir, *Presidencia Sitiada: Memorias de mi Gobierno*, that the action by the *Defensora* “resulted in the destruction of the government’s support base within the middle classes,” almost certainly contributing to the fall of the government days later.

These events would eventually redefine Bolivian politics, precipitating a seismic shift in the political landscape with the election of Evo Morales in 2005. In the wake of Black October, Ana María did not seek reelection as *Defensora*. Nevertheless, her legacy as a human rights advocate, as well as the prestige she brought to the office, has contributed to the appointment of credible individuals as successors. Both Waldo Albarracín (2003–2008) and the current *Defensor* Rolando Villena are highly respected within the human rights community. The election of Morales and ascendance of the traditionally excluded marks a decisive break from the old political model.

This inverting of the old order ushered in a period that has seen high levels of polarization and bitter social conflict along political, regional and ethnic lines. Such a challenging new context has also demanded adaptation and reinvention on the part of democratic and rights-oriented stakeholders.

The former *Defensora* turned her energy towards conflict resolution, negotiation and dialogue, resulting in the 2005 creation of the NGO Fundación UNIR.

While generally supportive of the reforms undertaken by the Morales government, Ana María remained an independent-minded and constructive critic of the administration. Notwithstanding intermittent disagreements, her relationship with Evo Morales remained one of mutual respect and even admiration. An invitation in October 2009 for her to stand as the first MAS Senator for La Paz in the newly formed Plurinational Assembly was widely viewed as Morales’ attempt to broaden the appeal of the MAS to the urban middle classes and intellectual elites. After some deliberation, Ana María accepted the invitation and publicly endorsed the general direction of Morales’ political project. Elected Senator for La Paz in December 2009, she was unanimously appointed President of the Senate shortly thereafter. Illness denied Ana María the chance of fully realizing the role of “mediator-in-chief” within the Senate. Nevertheless, her election to one of the highest offices in the land was a fitting tribute to a life lived in defense of ordinary Bolivians’ human and democratic rights.

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IDENTITY AND SOCIETY

Being Bolivian is belonging to a small landlocked nation. But it's also being Aymara, Quechua, Guarani, Afro-Bolivian, mestizo, male or female; it's being from the highlands or the lowlands. It's how one defines oneself and how society defines individuals. Here, several writers reflect on different aspects of Bolivian identity.

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El Alto in Flux

Crossroads Between La Paz and the Altiplano BY XAVIER ALBÓ

WHEN I PASSED THROUGH EL ALTO DE LA PAZ for the first time in 1954, I didn't even notice. The city—just a few minutes outside of La Paz—consisted of just a few little houses and market stalls at the end of the immense altiplano. La Ceja (the “eyebrow”), reaching some 13,500 feet into the air, suddenly tumbles down toward the river and the city of La Paz, about a thousand feet lower, as if it were another Grand Canyon filled with buildings at the bottom, and on either side, little houses of unprocessed red brick virtually hanging off both sides.

Towards the end of the colony (1780–81), this Ceja—the border of present-day El Alto—was already conspicuous for having sheltered thousands of Aymara rebels led by Julián Apaza (Túpaj Katari) and his wife Bartolina Sisa. From the vantage of the higher point, they laid siege to La Paz for six long months. Residents in La Paz endured famine and death until the rebels were routed by Spanish troops arriving from Lima and Buenos Aires. That encircling of La Paz has remained deeply engraved in the collective unconscious, with guilt and fear buried within in the descendants of the besieged population, and as a model and battle flag for the Aymara people, despite the fact they were defeated.

In 1985, El Alto was declared an independent municipality. Since 2007, it actually numbers more inhabitants than the capital city (although El Alto is part of Greater La Paz). In 2011, it is likely that the population will reach a million, 300 times greater than its population in 1950. Although El Alto is already Bolivia's second most populous city (after Santa Cruz) and although its human development index has improved from 0.59 in 1992 to 0.66 in 2005, it ranks in 47th place among the country's municipalities, considerably lower than all the depart-

ment (state) capitals and other smaller cities. But the city is changing. In the 1980s, most of the housing was only one story high. Now, there are more and more highrises, some in an *art nouveau* style particular to El Alto, in which the lower floors house stores, residences, extravagant event salons and, sometimes, luxurious chalet residences on the higher floors.

In the last census in 2001, 74% of El Alto's residents defined themselves as Aymara, although only 48% spoke the language. Younger generations born or raised in the city have few incentives to use Aymara. Most *alteños* own their own lots and are constructing houses; the census also found much self-employment and many family-style businesses there.

El Alto has been strengthening an identity distinct from that of La Paz, which residents refer to as “La Hoyada”—the hollows. But together they make up the same metropolis, the largest in the country, so their interdependence is very strong. About 200,000 workers from El Alto travel down to La Paz every day in the thousands of minibuses that ply between the two cities. And another huge quantity of people travel on Sundays in the other direction to the 70-block 16 de Julio open air market that sells everything from needles to Volvos. If La Paz is the political heart of Bolivia, El Alto is still its lungs. The bureaucracy of La Paz is getting old; El Alto is an adolescent in the prime years. At important moments, La Paz and El Alto have united to function as a single body working together on the political future of the country.

But all this only represents half of the key role of El Alto. The other half is the city's enduring ties to the Aymara altiplano. There's been no census to determine how many El Alto residents also maintain a place in the countryside, but it is evident that, on the level of indi-

vidual families, the bonds between city and countryside are very strong. With the exception of a few very inhospitable places, the altiplano has not emptied out, though it has somewhat stagnated, distributing members of its families between the country and the city, as if the city were another socially complementary productive niche (and one that is certainly privileged). This fluidity between city and country taps into the ancestral Andean strategy of combining access to different microclimates in order to guarantee survival.

The concept of “resident” has emerged as a new and very important social category in the countryside; this is the name locals have developed for those who live in the city. Many of these citydwellers organize associations based on place of origin and keep strong ties with their home communities. Family celebrations help seal these ties through rituals that cement exchanges, rights and mutual obligations. These residents know that if they fulfil their sundry communal obligations—including holding communal offices and sponsoring patronal fiestas—they will maintain their rights to the land. With the 1994 Popular Participation Law, rural municipalities have obtained many more resources, and some El Alto residents also run for mayors and councilmen in their home communities. Quite a few rural municipalities even have a second informal seat in the city—which could be the urban home of the mayor—to attend to the needs of residents from the community *paisanos*.

The rural origins of many of El Alto's citizens help us to understand the weight of the neighborhood boards known as “*juntas vecinales*,” from the street leaders and the board of each zone, neighborhood and area to the powerful Federation of Neighborhood Boards of El Alto known



Residents of La Ceja in El Alto go about their daily activities.

by its Spanish acronym as FEJUVE, which brings together more than 500 of these boards; they are the urban version of a rural community. Some neighborhoods were even originally formed by people from the same place or occupation (such as neighborhoods made up of miners). Over the years, even though people from other places came in, the neighborhood was usually controlled by a board whose membership reflected its origins. There is not a sector of El Alto that does not have some neighborhood association. Because of this community structure, even in the midst of the chaos of new neighborhoods that with only basic services are constantly springing up, El Alto does not seem to suffer the anomie that often afflicts other great urban concentrations in the continent.

In spite of many conflicts, sinecures and scams, these neighborhood boards are recognized by everyone as the local authority. Public works, services and even complaints to the municipal authorities or other public agencies about unfulfilled promises are all channeled through these boards. Many times, the *juntas vecinales* resolve neighborly disputes and organize to put an end to the bad deeds of thieves and gang members. Effigies are hung from lampposts to

warn off anyone thinking about stealing. When someone new comes into the neighborhood, they are expected to win their right to living space by visiting the board with a few cases of beer as a gift.

Just like in the countryside, there are fiestas and celebrations going on all the time in El Alto. It is always surprising to see the number of both traditional and new salons for receptions, parties, dinners, dances or worship services. And in spite of the great number of meeting places, the streets are not only for walking. They are also a blatantly public place for celebrating, dancing, selling, blocking vehicles and protesting.

But a city is not quite a collective entity. Unlike in rural communities, there are many people who live in the same zone or even on the same street and do not know each other or participate in the neighborhood assemblies. As in any city, relationships are not always based on physical proximity, but on other factors such as jobs, religion, youth groups and studies. Cellphones also facilitate these relations over distance. In this sense, we can talk about traces of anomie here as well.

Taking into account both perspectives—the city of anomie and that of solidarity—and in both directions—towards La Paz and away from it—the city

of El Alto operates as an intercultural and catalyzing hinge between La Paz and the altiplano.

The characteristic of being a hinge, a bellows, a fork in the road, in Spanish, *bisagra*, has strengthened the political importance of El Alto, with back-and-forth fluctuations. Since the return of democracy in the 1980s, the electorate has vacillated between rightist and leftist candidates, generally favoring the most populist tendency because of offers of public works and services.

The emergence of Evo Morales and the MAS party has led to an even stronger internal polarization between neighborhoods because of their distinct histories and options. On the one hand, El Alto is characterized as a great revolutionary city, with very ethnic overtones, particularly since October 2003. After the first road blockades came under Army fire in the countryside, El Alto became the great protagonist of the mobilizations. Its residents suffered the most losses of the 60 killed and 400 wounded by the Army's violent repression; most of the unarmed victims had mobilized around October 12, El Día de la Hispanidad (the date on

which Columbus Day is celebrated in the United States.)

After the bloody events, I accompanied a street funeral wake for a girl who had come from the countryside a few months earlier. The crowd helped me up to the terrace roof of her house, where she had stacked up two bricks to be able to see what was happening out there on the avenue. When she peered out, a war bullet pierced her head, leaving a large lock of hair on the other side of the terrace as a witness to its trajectory. A few blocks down the street, another wake was being held in a church for an unidentified youth and an old man whose bodies had been brought there in a wheelbarrow.

Such vicious repression did not make cowards out of the residents of El Alto. They were infuriated. Neighborhood boards organized thousands from El Alto who converged together like a great flood from different points in El Alto to the center of La Paz. It was like a sped-up reiteration of the 1781 anti-colonial action. This time, many of the residents of La Paz were themselves quite sympathetic to the movement, and others—such as the mining cooperatives—lent direct support. The march was successful. Finally, the Army gave in. President Sánchez de Lozada resigned and fled the country. Since then, the cry of the people from El Alto, “El Alto on its feet, never on its knees” (*El Alto de pie, nunca de rodillas*) has become consecrated as a popular slogan.

However, other neighborhoods of El Alto simply did not participate. One of the main representatives of this group, the son of El Alto’s first mayor and now an important leader of the domestic opposition group known as Unidad Nacional (UN) considers that these activists described above reflect only “a minority of leaders” who “impose their intolerant decisions” and who “commit excesses in the name of healthy neighborhood corporatism.” After the events of October 2003, USAID—and other organizations—devoted much more money to the mayor’s office for streets and other basic infrastructure. Since 1999, the mayor’s office has been in the hands of populist Pepe



This Art Nouveau building has a chalet built onto its roof.

Lucho Paredes, a former member of the MIR party (then in the government) who severed his ties with that party after the 2003 events. Paredes marched with the rebels from El Alto and later founded his own party, “Plan Progreso” (PP). In 2004, he was reelected with 53% of the vote, compared to 17% for the MAS candidate; a year later, in December 2005, while 77% of El Alto voted for Evo as president, Pepe Lucho narrowly won public office, as prefect, this time in an alliance with the rightist party PODEMOS, (although this time with a narrow difference with the MAS candidate, 39% vs 38%).

Evo Morales and MAS have continued to dominate the political stage in El Alto: in December 2009, they gained control of more than two-thirds of the new Plurinational Legislative Assembly, with El Alto reelecting the president and his congressional representatives by an astounding 87%, since the four previous years had been filled with bonanzas, subsidies and comparative tranquility.

But cracks began to appear, and by April 2010 the MAS won the mayoralty with a mere 39% of the vote. In the streets, people were talking about having to choose between a “ratero” (thief), referring to the MAS candidate who finally won, accused of corruption and a “cholero” (a man who goes after “cholititas”), referring to the MSM candidate

who years before had been implicated in a scandalous affair. But in the election the biggest surprise was the unknown 30-year-old Soledad “Sole” Chopetón (UN), whose polls were showing at two percent in February but on April 4, garnered 30 percent of the vote—a very respectable second place. A significant number of El Alto residents opted for Sole, because she emphasized that she was a *warmi* (woman), young and on the fringes of traditional electoral politics.

At the end of 2010, the Evo government surprised everyone with a decree that immediately raised gasoline prices by a whopping 83% without enacting significant compensatory measures for the majority of the population. The president invoked the problem of contraband as a justification for the measure, but even if his reason was probably valid, the gas price hike set off huge increases in transportation and food prices. Huge mass protests erupted, even in those sectors that had been very loyal to Evo’s political process, including El Alto. Only a few of the leaders of the popular movements (mostly in rural areas) accepted his reasoning. But the disenchantment, protests and loss of credibility were so generalized that Evo, one hour before the celebrations of the New Year, revoked the decree in person, declaring the necessity of “governing by obeying

the people.” His new stance was that the measures continued to be necessary, but that neither the moment nor the way of putting them into practice were opportune. In the short run, everything calmed down and New Year’s fireworks also celebrated the reversal of the measure. Yet prices of most goods could not be rolled back, nor did it appear possible to return to a state of unconditional love for Evo and his government. Now not only the opposition was marching—much of the popular sector rediscovered that the old style of protests such as marches and road blockages still got them what they wanted.

In April 2011, the previously weakened Bolivian Workers’ Union (COB) called for an indefinite general strike. Its main demand was higher salaries, especially in the areas of health and education. On the hidden agenda of certain leaders was a desire to strengthen their organization internally in the wake of union elections. The workers ended up with some pay increases, but not as much as they had asked for. In this sense, the government was strengthened more than the COB.

Significantly, all the street demonstrations with their noisy miners’ explosives and inevitable confrontations with the police affected only the city of La Paz, although a few of the marches originated in El Alto and included teachers from that city. This time, El Alto was quiet and most schools kept their doors open, unlike the situation in La Paz. “Why?” I asked a group of youth. They answered, “Here, only a few people earn a salary.”

Thus, in spite of government efforts to reverse the unfavorable new situation of higher prices and prevalent protests, Pandora’s box appears to have been opened. It may be impossible to close it.

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Coca

An Indigenous Commodity and Its Paradoxes

BY SILVIA RIVERA CUSICANQUI

IN OCTOBER 2003, A TUMULTUOUS INDIGENOUS and popular uprising brought down the government of President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, following a massacre that cut short the lives of 67 people in El Alto and the provinces of La Paz. The so-called “gas war” was one of the climaxes of popular protests that had begun in 2000 with the “water war” of February–April in Cochabamba and the indigenous and coca growers’ September–October agenda in that same year in the altiplano, the Yungas and El Chapare.

The broad insurgent, indigenous and popular movement fermenting over these

years of intense activity eventually led to the election in 2005 of coca grower Evo Morales, an Aymara native, as the first indigenous president in the Americas.

THE LIFE HISTORY OF COCA LEAF Despite the expressions of public approval and unusual levels of coverage in the international mass media, that election introduced a thorn of mistrust and fear among the conservative national and international circles; after all, it was a coca growers’ leader who had taken the reins of the nation, someone who for almost two decades had headed forceful actions,



blockades and protest marches.

One of the main bases of the new government's support lies with the coca producers. Since the 1980s, these growers and sellers have been calling for a free market for coca leaf as a more effective way of handling the problem of this illegal activity, instead of repression.

In colonial times—that is, during the first globalization—this large internal market in coca, wines and spirits, in addition to minerals (gold, silver and, later, tin), was a feature of indigenous modernity. Luis Miguel Glave (1989) has revived 16th-century Andean terms to denote this space: the *trajín* (loosely translated as hubbub), a vast circuit of trade routes, businessmen and capital that boosted the regional economy of what is now Bolivia, Peru and Argentina. Against this backdrop, the indigenous population found a space for long-term economic participation while offering cultural resistance. This helps us understand the historical forces at play behind the modern coca growers' behavior; the work involved in the production, distribution and consumption of coca leaf has also resulted in a long-standing coordination between mining-trading-coca growing that has demonstrated a noteworthy continuity to this very day.

The course of the "life history" of coca leaf as an indigenous commodity reveals the conspiracies of power and the corporate interests that seek to block the potential of this market within the context of the anti-drug war. Since the early 20th century, large pharmaceutical companies have assembled an apparatus of violent repression of coca under the abstract argument of defending public health in consumer countries. In opposition, coca producers are resisting the many forms of this unequal and unsuccessful war. The coca growers, along with the distributors and consumers, are the protagonists of Bolivian indigenous modernity that functions on the internal market and is the result of empowerment processes, agency and decolonization.

In Bolivia, the existence of a large number of lawful consumers and coca's

high value as a symbol of national identity and pride contribute to an opening for unprecedented sovereign policies and practices. In turn, because these practices involve the consumption of coca, this political phenomenon boosts the rural coca growing economies, consolidating an expansive and stratified internal market.

ECONOMIC DYNAMIC AND PROHIBITION POLICY

The history of inclusion of coca leaf onto Schedule 1 of Prohibited Substances of the 1961 UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs dates back to the 19th-century boom in European medical science and analytical chemistry. Forerunners to the current biopiracy initiatives of the large seed, food and medicinal plant transnationals, European and U.S. medical companies entered into fierce commercial competition for control of the market for coca-derived products.

From 1860 on, companies such as the U.S.-based Parke-Davis and Merck in Germany rushed to the Andes to identify cheap sources of supply and to gather seeds to export them to their overseas colonies. The only Andean country that could compete on the world market with its own pharmaceutical industry—albeit rudimentary—was Peru, which sold the "free base" made in its factories directly to overseas laboratories. These, in turn, refined the product to sell it in crystal form as cocaine hydrochloride in the world pharmaceutical market.

Meanwhile, Bolivian coca, with its characteristic high price and aromatic quality, continued to supply the regional extended market for *akhulliku* or *coqueo*, which was linked to the silver, salt-peter, tin and copper markets and to the dynamic world of labor and urban and rural ritual. In his doctoral thesis presented in Berlin in 1917, Theodor Walger observed, "Although exports [of Bolivian coca] are small, local consumption is enormous. The internal coca market amounts to 3 million *bolivianos* ... and is therefore of great economic significance. In taxes alone, coca generates a quarter of a million *bolivianos* a year."

The pharmaceuticals industry, which specialized in extracting crystallized cocaine from the leaf, was based on the colonial and oligarchic economies of Asia and Peru. Competing with this pharmaceutical cocaine was the medicinal plant industry—what you might call the "light industry" for coca—which still enjoyed considerable prestige at this time of medical pluralism and plant experimentation. In contrast to this international market, Bolivian coca—despite being partly in the hands of large estates—was more closely linked to the organic growth of regional and interregional markets, largely coordinated by an itinerant *cholo* population.

The United States was an enthusiastic consumer of coca products. At first, the manufacturers of these coca leaf tonics,



energy drinks, syrups, tinctures and elixirs emphasized the difference between the natural byproducts of the whole leaf and other preparations that contained pure cocaine from the laboratory.

Soon, however, competition became fiercer and some companies began to rely on addiction as a market principle (just as tobacco companies do today).

Preparations appeared with a high content of pure cocaine (the famous cures for catarrh and nasal congestion), giving rise to abuse and notorious medical scandals. Likewise, the drinks and soft drinks companies were carving out an ever larger market, free from restrictions and controls, which soon had to adapt to the ebbs and flows of the Prohibition era (first alcohol, then cocaine).

One classic case was that of Mariani

wine, based on a syrup of natural coca leaf soaked in grape wine. It enjoyed great popularity in the United States until eclipsed by Coca-Cola, which offered a “temperance drink” during Prohibition and wiped Mariani off the map. The battle against coca was only won by Coca-Cola in 1961, when it managed to get one single use for coca leaf included in Article 27 of the UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs: “flavoring.” The company held the monopoly of legal use of coca leaf in “Merchandise No. 5,” a vegetable extract that continues to form part of its “secret formula” with coca from Trujillo, Peru.

In 1949, the Coca Leaf Study Commission paid an official visit to Peru and Bolivia. Its 1950 report links the use of coca with malnutrition and poverty,

states that coca substitutes for food products, poisons the body and leads to a lack of concentration at work. The report was ratified in 1952 as a report of the World Health Organization Committee of Experts and then again in 1982, 1992 and afterwards, despite an independent 1995 WHO study that sought to amend this erroneous and prejudiced position. The 1950 UN document was later used to discredit President Evo Morales’ coca policy.

FROM LAW 1008 TO THE “PLAN DIGNIDAD”

The 1961 Convention was neither replaced nor complemented by the UN Convention on the Illicit Traffic of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, approved in Vienna in 1988. The resulting document reflects the new sensibilities of that decade with its important processes of ethnic self-affirmation. In this context, the Bolivian delegation managed to get the notion of tolerated “traditional uses” of *akhulliku* included as a residual right of indigenous peoples who continued the habit “where there was historic evidence of such use.” Law 1008, promulgated that same year in Bolivia, establishes an area of 12,000 hectares (about 30,000 acres) as “legal” in some provinces of La Paz and in the region of Vandíola in Cochabamba.

All coca farms outside of this demarcated area were considered surplus—meaning that sooner or later they would be illegal. It was precisely in El Chapare and other provinces of the Cochabamba tropics that the anti-drug war later reached its most violent stage with the goal of “zero” coca. In order to forcibly eradicate coca farms, the government militarized the Cochabamba region with ensuing mass arrests, raids and murders. Coca growers responded by replanting coca in ever more remote and inaccessible areas.

The rise of Hugo Bánzer to power in 1997 led to an unprecedented escalation of militarization and violence in Bolivia, which had a follow-up effect at the international level. In 1998, the United Nations approved a Plan of Action that, for



the first time, validated the use of force to eradicate crops defined as “illegal.”

THE COCA GROWER INSURGENCY AS BASIS FOR THE NEW STATE

Against this backdrop of international prohibition and anti-drug militarization, the coca growers’ organization—Six Federations of the Cochabamba Tropics (Seis Federaciones del Trópico de Cochabamba)—gained political momentum under the leadership of Evo Morales.

The coca growers’ organization burst into electoral politics following a sweeping trajectory from local to national level. Evo Morales’ leadership began with blockades, clashes and protest actions revolving around promulgation of Law 1008 and the Villa Tunari massacre in 1988. In negotiations later that year, the mobilized grassroots coca growers obtained recognition of the traditional uses of the leaf and the possibility of its industrialization. They also managed to get an explicit ban on the use of herbicides and other chemical agents included in the law, along with the manual eradication of surplus crops. Eradication was defined as a voluntary process subject to financial compensation.

The “zero” coca plan, launched during the first government of Sánchez de Lozada, was also openly resisted. The 22-day March for Life, Coca and National Sovereignty, which arrived in La Paz on September 20, 1994, re-established the indigenous technique of the 1990 March for Territory and Dignity and adopted a rich symbolic language that emphasized the notion of coca as a sacred plant and symbol for indigenous peoples and part of the traditional pharmacopoeia. The Six Federations and their leader built on these events at the political level, achieving a number of mayoral posts and councillorships and eventually posts in parliament.

Eradication was just one focus of the coca growers’ protests. The participation of the Six Federations was decisive in the Cochabamba water war, with coca growers becoming part of the Water Coordination Body, along with the town’s irri-

gators, manufacturers and professional associations. Once more, the wider platform of “defense of natural resources” drew support from the vast urban world of the excluded, as well as the middle class and intelligentsia.

FROM INSURGENCY TO POWER

The events of 9/11 produced a feverish change in drug war rhetoric. Evo Morales and the coca growers were no longer political adversaries in the democratic arena: they were drug terrorists, defenders of armed struggle with links to guerrillas in Colombia or Peru.

The subsequent Sacaba uprising revealed the impatience and desperation of the coca growers in the face of moral fundamentalists who were trying to destroy the legal market for coca in Cochabamba. Of the six deaths caused by the conflict, four were soldiers from the Armed Forces, two of whom had been cruelly lynched in revenge for the murders of two coca growers. All this ended in the embarrassing withdrawal of parliamentary privileges from Evo Morales, announced openly by U.S. Ambassador Manuel Rocha, which merely added to the coca grower leader’s popularity in the polls, with his vote rising from 3.6% in 1997 to 23% in the elections of June 2002. This turned the MAS into the second largest party in the country, expand-

ing the spectrum of the coca growers’ representativeness considerably.

Evo Morales—who had been traveling abroad during the October uprising known as the gas war—managed to capitalize on it. The October agenda became the basis for his electoral manifesto: oil and gas nationalization, the holding of a Constituent Assembly, land redistribution, defense of coca and the war on corruption. The December 2005 electoral triumph of MAS was based on this solid path of “planned accumulation” and coordination of agendas, in which coca became just one issue in a wider program of “defense of natural resources.”

EPILOGUE: PROMISES AND DANGERS OF EVO MORALES’ COCA POLICY

The increasingly explicit pressures and demands for the destruction of legal markets are pushing the government into an ever more irate position of civil disobedience in relation to the United Nations and United States—to the point of expelling all U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency members. Morales’ government has defined a Strategy for Struggle against Drugs Trafficking and Revaluation of Coca Leaf (Republic of Bolivia, 2006), which summarizes a sovereign and well-informed policy on the implications of eradicating coca and the concomitant need to extend the market for its legal use in order to offer an outlet for existing production. This document also redefines the area of “legal coca,” expanding it to 20,000 hectares (about 50,000 acres).

But there is also a degree of ambiguity and conflict between the initiatives of civil society and those of the government. These conflicts are expressed, on the local level, in pressures by the anti-drug apparatus, in active and daily resistance by the producers and in the position—not always consistent—of the government.

The government has demanded the withdrawal of coca leaf from UN Schedule 1 (1961) and the opening up of legal markets abroad. Despite the explicit refusal of the United States to even discuss such an alternative, proposals for



An indigenous woman sells coca leaf in a downtown plaza as bystanders look on.

small-scale industrialization and export to Latin America and Europe are now slowly being developed; the state's desire to open up markets and industrialize coca doesn't go beyond mere rhetoric. This opposition of interests explains the conflictive tone of the declarations on both sides, such as the ever more aggressive stand of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) and the United Nations against coca, which in turn resulted in an ultimatum and the U.S. embassy's threat to delegitimize Evo Morales' government, using language harking back to the 1961 agreement rather than the more progressive 1988 one.

One hopeful sign has been the emergence of new markets and diversification of the legal uses and benefits of coca, which has experienced an intense boom in recent years. In June 2003, the first Festival of Coca, Sovereignty and Human Rights was held in Asunta (South Yungas de La Paz). Since then, annual coca fairs, seminars, concerts and public debates have increased the public legitimacy of coca; discussion and defense have been fully integrated into the academic and political debates of civil society.

The growing coordination between civil society and government initiatives may develop a clear political proposal with which to resist the transnationals' conspiracy and develop the actions necessary for the domestic and international decriminalization of our sacred plant.

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Bolivian Women

Making The Revolution **BY GRATZIA VILLARROEL**

WHEN EVO MORALES WAS FIRST ELECTED TO office, he was asked if he would make a ministry for gender. He responded that he would not and that instead he would make women themselves ministers. Various women's organizations criticized his decision at the time yet his play on words proved to be true: in 2011, half of the twenty ministers in his cabinet are women, an unprecedented development for Bolivia.

Evo Morales has acknowledged the significance of gender parity, calling it "a tribute to my mother, my sister, and my daughter." There are a lot of "firsts" for women in the Morales government: Carmen Trujillo is the first Minister of Labor, Maria Cecilia Chacón recently became Bolivia's first Defense Minister, Ana Maria Romero was elected the first female President of the Senate, Silvia Lazarte was the first woman to preside over a Constitutional Assembly, Leonilda Zurita became the first female leader of the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) party in Cochabamba, and the list goes on. Furthermore, thanks to the new Bolivian constitution, the work of the Bolivian Women's Coordinating Committee, and Evo Morales' commitment to gender parity various campaign strategies

emerged—like *Las Mujeres Listas para las Listas*—that had a positive impact on women in the 2010 elections. Today the Plurinational Legislative Assembly has a total of 30% female representation, including 33 female deputies (28%) and 17 senators (47%). In addition, 43% of all Bolivian council members are women.

While greater female political representation in formal politics is a trend in Latin America—the region currently boasts three female presidents, quite a few female defense ministers, and a significant increase of female representation in legislatures—the Morales government ranks among the most progressive in Latin America in female political representation. Perhaps the biggest achievement, one that is unparalleled in any other part of Latin America, is the political visibility of indigenous women. Although the Morales government has been criticized for forcing indigenous women to address ethnic discrimination over gender concerns, early indicators demonstrate that women in the Morales government are exerting their influence in both areas.

Indigenous women were at Morales' side since he was a union leader in the Chapare region. They organized dem-



onstrations, marches, road blockades, sit-ins, and mobilized entire communities in support of his candidacy. Once Evo took office, the *Bartolinas* became his most ardent defenders as he began the transformation of the Bolivian political landscape. To his credit, Evo Morales had the vision to reward women's contributions with political power, perhaps guided by the Andean principle of *Chacha-Warmi*—gender complementarity. Indeed, unlike other opposition movements in Latin America that relegated woman to the background once they came into power, Morales made sure that women occupied high ranking political roles from the very beginning, although they did not immediately enjoy as high a level of decision-making as they do today.

Leonilda Zurita, one of Morales' closest advisors, was once believed to be one of the most powerful women in Bolivia. Acknowledging the important strides that women have made in the last five years, she said, "We still have men who don't want women to participate in Bolivia, but we have fought against that and here we are with more power than ever." (Robert Clarkson, "Bolivian Constitution Reinvented to Champion Gender Equality," *The Solicitor*. February 11, 2010).

Zurita and Silvia Lazarte, supporting Morales since his Chapare days, are highly respected among Bolivia's indigenous women. In January 2010, the powerful indigenous women's organization, Bartolina Sisa National Federation of Bolivian Peasant Women (FNMCB-BS or *Bartolinas*) proposed them (along with that of former Senator Isabel Ortega) as their top choices for Morales' new cabi-

they would "organically" support the government of Evo Morales Ayma. Today the *Bartolinas* have grown into a very powerful organization that has over 100,000 female members and a union presence in every region of Bolivia and in remote rural communities. One of the most impressive developments in the Bolivian political landscape is the transformation of the *Bartolinas* from a fringe radical

President Evo Morales has had the vision to reward women's contributions with political power, perhaps guided by the Andean principle known as "Chacha-Warmi," gender complementarity.

net. Morales ended up tapping *Bartolina* leader Nilda Copa as Minister of Justice, and Isabel Ortega as her deputy minister.

The president also elevated the role of indigenous women by including the FNMCB-BS as a powerful branch of Bolivia's social movements, a step that proved to be beneficial for his political ambitions. Coming out of a long history of opposition, the *Bartolinas* embraced their new formal status proclaiming that

women's group to an organization that can wield power at the highest levels of government and have still have an impact in every corner of Bolivia. In the last five years, the federation has expanded its membership to include women from all sectors of society; it has also increasingly displaced traditional NGOs by working directly with women at the grassroots.

The administration has also implemented various policies designed to



Left: Afro-Bolivians are among many cultures in the plurinational society; right: artisans reviewing handmade products from other cultures during training in Tajzara region in southern Bolivia sponsored by the Jalsuri Foundation <<http://work.www.jalsuri.org>>.

improve women's lives: between 2006 and 2008, the government distributed 10,300 property titles to rural women, a measure that is likely to have a positive long-term impact on their families and on their communities; the current government has addressed women's reproductive health by providing subsidies designed to reduce maternal and infant mortality; poor pregnant women are able to receive a stipend for attending pre-natal and post-natal checkups; infants are able to get free vaccinations.

However, women who are or were part of the Morales government still face many challenges, including family constraints, political violence and harsh punishment for political dissent. Nemecia Achacollo, the current Minister of Rural Development, has acknowledged that her political involvement has taken a toll on her family. Her younger daughters wondered why she was never home to wash their clothes and cook their meals. Her husband once got so mad at her for being absent that he burned her official documents (Ramón Rocha Monroy, *Biografía de Nemecia Achacollo Tola*, BOLPRESS). COBOL, the Association of Women Counselors of Bolivia has documented and denounced the continuing existence of political violence despite high rates of political repre-

sentation. Elected women are sometimes violently forced to resign their positions if the elected alternate is a man. In addition, political dissent can be alienating for women who take a different stand or who publicly express their dissatisfaction with the government. Former MAS member Sabina Cuellar has been brought to trial for her failure to stop the attacks on indigenous peoples in Chuquisaca on May 24, 2008. Many believe this move by the government is politically motivated. *Bartolina* Leonilda Zurita, one of the most experienced women in the Morales government, has yet to be tapped for a high level position; she has publicly expressed her disenchantment with the lack of decision-making power for women in the government (Franz Chavez, "Q&A: Bolivian Women a Force Behind Power But Still Powerless." *IPS News*, Dec. 10. 2009.)

While Bolivian women are making impressive strides into the political process, they still represent a very small elite group. High teen pregnancy rates have reached alarming rates in Bolivia, labor discrimination against pregnant women continues to exist, laws that guarantee equal pay for equal work have yet to be enacted, and sexual harassment in the workplace is still rampant. Nonetheless, there are early indicators

that a critical mass of women in political positions can positively impact the lives of all women. The number of elected women in Evo Morales' second presidential term still offers hope for an improved quality of life.

As quoted in Andres Schipani in "Bolivian Women Spearhead the Morales Revolution," Minister of Justice Nilda Copa sums it up:

"For a long time, we the women have been excluded in Bolivia.

"I remember my mother didn't know how to read and write, neither did my grandmother.

"There used to be a lot of racism and machismo. There is still some, but now that is changing thanks to brother Evo Morales."

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Medical Practices in Bolivia

Indigenous, Western, or Natural? **BY KATE MCGURN CENTELLAS**

ON THE SIXTH FLOOR OF AN OLDER BUILDING IN La Paz is a small office with a modest sign printed on standard computer paper. The dim light in the narrow hallway makes it difficult for me to read the sign. I notice a poster on the door advertising the “Primer Encuentro Nacional de Plantas Medicinales de Bolivia,” the First National Meeting on Bolivian Medicinal Plants, held in December 2010 under the sponsorship of this office. I’ve stumbled on the Vice Ministry of Traditional Medicine and Interculturality (Viceministerio de Medicina Tradicional e Interculturalidad), created by Evo Morales as part of the Ministry of Health and Sports shortly after his inauguration in 2006.

A middle-aged woman in Western clothing, drinking a cup of coca tea made from whole coca leaves, opens the door. Two men and another woman are there, one working at a computer propped on a small stand. Posters and informational materials cover the walls; bookshelves squeeze into a corner filled with binders, photocopied and spiral-bound *informes*, and locally-published books on indigenous medicine, medicinal plants and medical pluralism. It looks like a crowded, collegial office of a small but productive department at a university, or the location of an overworked but dedicated small NGO.

Everyone smiles at me and waits for me to say something. I nervously begin talking, rushing through the Spanish-language formalities for greeting a group and trying to explain my presence in their office. “I, uh, am an anthropologist interested in pluralist forms of medicine and science in Bolivia. I’m doing research on the Bolivian system of science, technology and medicine. I’m, um, wondering if, uh, maybe your office has put out any kind of materials about what you do, or how you interact with Western forms of medicine

or scientific research, or any kind of information, or um, if you know of anyone I can talk to....” I stumble through, still somewhat nervous and uncomfortable that I’ve interrupted teatime.

The woman who opened the door gives me a big smile and tells me that of course, it is our job to help you learn about what we do. You need to come back and talk to the Vice-Minister, but he’s out in the *campo* in Potosí in running a workshop (*taller*). Then one of the men joins in, telling me that the Vice-Minister is really busy but he’d like to talk to me. I ask what the office’s position is on working with biomedical institutions and practitioners. The same man makes a tent with his hands, interlacing his fingers. He tells me that they aim for “articulation” with Western medical traditions, and that they are engaged in a long process of dialog and integration with biomedical practitioners and institutions to achieve this.

What can we make of an official Vice-Ministry of Traditional Medicine (albeit one in cramped quarters, located some distance away from the Ministry of Health)? Does this hint at a new model—one that goes beyond medical pluralism, often institutionally understood as individual picking-and-choosing of health and medical philosophies. What would an “articulated” practice of intercultural health care look like? One of the Vice-Ministry’s aims is to ensure that traditional medicine in Bolivia is not an afterthought or a mere supplement to Western modes of healthcare. Under Evo Morales, institutional legitimacy has increasingly been given to traditional, indigenous and natural forms of medical practice. These terms are not identical in Bolivia. “Indigenous medicine” is the most specific; generally referring to healing practices that incorporate

specific deities or cosmologies within healing rituals performed by specialized practitioners (such as *yatiris*). “Natural” medicine can mean anything from pills derived from natural products (for instance, lollipops made of honey and bee pollen to soothe coughs and sold in a jar on the counter of a pharmacy) to prescriptions from medical doctors to drink herbal teas and take probiotics for common stomach and respiratory ailments. Both emphasize herbalism. “Traditional” medicine is a term that encompasses both of these. Many middle-class, mestizo, urban Bolivians consult *yatiris*, integrate natural medicines into their medical practices and emphasize the healing power of Bolivian pharmacopeia.

Yet Western medicine is the dominant paradigm in major cities, though many poor and indigenous Bolivians view urban hospitals and clinics with suspicion. This is due to fear of the treatments provided, legacies of discrimination within the public hospital system, cost, and conflicting models of health and healing. Furthermore, supplies and equipment, especially in the public hospital and clinic system, are in short supply. Patients often need to provide their own bandages, syringes and other crucial items before receiving treatment.

Such structural factors have historically impeded access to healthcare for much of the urban population, and access is much worse for rural populations. Bolivia’s health indicators are still among the poorest in the Western hemisphere, according to the WHO.

Integrating the diverse knowledge traditions and reducing structural impediments to health care in Bolivia is the work of articulation. Articulation is a buzzword used, in conjunction with “interculturalidad,” to help define the vision of the Vice-Ministry, as explained on its



website: to preserve and strengthen natural medicine and to formulate policy for a more equitable and intercultural health system (additional details available at <http://www.sns.gob.bo/index.php?ID=ViceMedicinaTradicional>).

This endeavor is not hierarchical, so that “traditional” practices, broadly defined, are viewed as equal to Western medicine in this interaction. Of course, there are knowledge and power hierarchies that predate the articulation model and will influence how smoothly and equally their application happens in practice. However, what is key here is that the *model* is supposedly non-hierarchical and takes knowledge claims of indigenous traditions as seriously as those of Western ones. For instance, when I inquired how articulation happens in Western-dominant spaces, I was

told that a Kallawayá herbalist could be called in to consult for a patient hospitalized in a Western public hospital and would share his findings in a conference with the patient’s medical doctor. He would also perform specific rituals within the hospital.

Articulation seems to be *required* under an intercultural model: “interculturality” (an odd, awkward word in English) means that diverse and clearly defined cultures come together and interact. Articulation, the model for how this happens, is very different than, for instance, the “melting pot” ideology in the United States. Articulation does not imply the blurring of boundaries or the homogenization and blending of different groups into one national culture. Instead, there are separate spheres for different cultures, with interaction only occurring in

Natural remedies, including many coca products, are sold at a street stand.

these intercultural spaces (I’m picturing a Venn diagram with the overlap as intercultural space and the cultures or practices cleanly defined and separable).

This fits within the definition of Bolivia as a “pluralist” state. Pluralism in Bolivia as part of a (perhaps hegemonic) state project is evident across multiple domains of social life, at least rhetorically and officially: education, health, science policy, law, and so forth. Part of this project included the reorganization of government ministries and vice-ministries immediately following Morales’s inauguration to reflect indigenous traditions and practices. The emphasis on articulation makes sense considering the state is now being defined as comprised of many na-

tions. Articulation in this model tries to level the playing field and allow for the public emergence and recognition of indigenous scientific and medical experts. It is linked to what I have discussed elsewhere as the emergence of a specific form of science in Bolivia I call “plural science” and to how different forms of expertise (what I call the construction of equivalency) are authorized and recognized in specific contexts. Yet it emphasizes separate and perhaps oppositional cultures within Bolivia, with little common ground beyond this intercultural space.

How effective this model will be in terms of breaking down barriers to effective health care, to providing space for indigenous medical traditions, and to improving Bolivia’s health indicators remains murky. It has the potential to move beyond individual choice models of medical pluralism and to provide a more holistic approach to medicine in Bolivia. It is also ideologically consistent with the pluralist project of Evo Morales and the “refounding” of the Bolivian state (with all of its concerns and inconsistencies). Yet it is still unclear how fully integrated this model will be by Western institutions. After all, the Vice-Ministry is located in a small office some distance from the Ministry of Health and Sports, which is perhaps symbolic of its relative distance from its more mainstream activities. The most recent *informe* of health indicators in Bolivia mentions traditional medicine only once in 162 pages: when it gave the name and title of the Vice Minister in an introductory page listing ministry officials.

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Regional Identities

Focus on Santa Cruz **BY PAULA PEÑA HASBÚN**

EVERYONE THINKS OF BOLIVIA AS AN ANDEAN country, even though two thirds of it lies in the lowlands. This area, also known as the Bolivian Orient, is inhabited by more than thirty indigenous nations of diverse languages, though the majority of its population is mestizo—a mix of indigenous and Spanish-descent.

The Bolivian Orient belongs to the ancient colonial territory of the Santa Cruz Provincial Government, which became part of the Republic of Bolivia in 1825, after the Independence War. Yet the newly formed Bolivian state and government sites were located quite a distance away, in the Andean mining area, where most of the Bolivian population—of Quechua and Aymara origins—lived.

The department of Santa Cruz was divided up into three parts after the forma-

tion of Bolivia: Santa Cruz and two new departments, Beni (1842) and Pando (1938). These three territories share similar cultural characteristics, as well as an economy based on agricultural production, cattle farming and forestry. A strong regional identity has developed based on history and on these three areas’ ethnic diversity and mestizo heritage.

The regional identity—now quite a politically active one—has on several occasions come into conflict with the Andean-based central government’s power. In 2003 the region backed the Department Autonomy political proposal, which has garnered votes in favor of this form of government in several referendums over the years. This region also is known for its electoral opposition to President Evo Morales.



The Bolivian Orient has expressed opposition to the cultural project of the Evo Morales government with its strong ties in the Andean indigenous world, given the region's strong sense of different identity. Between 2003 and 2008 political confrontations intensified, even after the approval of the new constitution, when the Morales government managed to weaken the opposition in the lowlands. Regional identities exist and have continued to strengthen despite of the political confrontation.

The cultural identity of Santa Cruz has developed since the Spanish domination. The Santa Cruz Provincial Government was formed as a frontier territory to stop the Portuguese invasion on the eastern border. It also sought to keep out hostile native nations that were attacking

the area, particularly since such warfare was detrimental to the economical development of the mining regions such as Potosi. In Santa Cruz, a third frontier was established—seeking El Dorado in the region of Paititi. During the colonial centuries, the Santa Cruz de la Sierra provincial government enjoyed a degree of autonomy from the power centers of the Spanish Empire, because of the great distances and communication difficulties. This provincial government also was host to the Jesuit Missions of Moxos and Chiquitos, where a different kind of evangelization developed because of this region's ethnic characteristics. Because of these historical circumstances, the ethnic tensions in the Orient are different than those in the rest of Bolivia.

Once the Republic of Bolivia was

A view of the Santa Cruz valleys.

formed, Santa Cruz continued to be a marginal region, far from the dominant political and economic networks. Throughout its history, the region fought against the unitary and centralist government, demanding decentralization, whether in the Federalist form during the 19th century or political decentralization in the 20th century.

Until 1950, the central government based its economy on mineral exports. Agricultural production was not sufficient for internal consumption. In 1942, U.S. economist Mervin Bohan proposed economic diversification, emphasizing the need to include the Orient's products in the Bolivian economy to ensure an ad-



The colonial-style downtown plaza in Santa Cruz is ringed by public and cultural institutions, and is filled with pedestrian life from sunup to late evening. Older buildings blend in with modern ones.

equate food supply.

Political participation was limited to men who knew how to read and write. Thus, most of the population was unable to choose its political representatives. In 1952, a nationalist revolution took place with U.S. support. This event transformed the country, allowing universal suffrage, and among other measures, promoting the development of Santa Cruz. From the second half of the 20th century onwards, Bolivia changed, widening its territory with the inclusion of the lowlands, and allowing citizenship for all people, including the participation of indigenous population.

In the second half of the 20th century, two different types of identities began to emerge in Bolivia. The first one, an ethnic identity, was based on the indigenous population, concentrated in the Andean area. The second, a regional identity, was located in the departments that form the lowlands, with their predominantly mestizo population and economic and political modernization projects. These two identities manifested themselves at the

beginning of the 21st century through distinct political projects. The first seeks a social transformation towards a communitarian economy, while the second seeks departmental autonomies for improved regional economic development. The tension between these two projects has become evident in a political and economic struggle since Morales came into power in January 2006.

Not only has the second half of the 20th century been marked by confrontations between Santa Cruz and the central government. A succession of Bolivian governments viewed *cruceño* demands as “separatist,” accusing the region of wanting independence. Santa Cruz, an oil producing region, had to confront the central government during the late 1950s to obtain royalty payments for oil exports. Once these payments were granted, the region managed to transform and grow. In fifty years, it has become Bolivia’s leading economy, contributing to 40% of the national GNP and concentrating 25% of the national population in its territory. It is an exporter of agro-industrial,

agricultural and forest products.

In the 1980s, after Bolivia’s return to democracy, a movement developed in Santa Cruz to establish local governments and hold municipal mayoral elections. This demand was once again categorized as “separatist” by the central government. Nevertheless, municipal authorities were indeed elected. Nowadays, 350 autonomous municipalities exist in Bolivia.

During the 1990s, Santa Cruz called for decentralization of power and the creation of departmental governments. But this demand was not heeded by the central government. As a consequence, at the beginning of the 21st century, calls for department autonomy continue in Santa Cruz. Its strong regional cohesion, based on its cultural identity, has turned into a political movement seeking a change in the centralist and unitary government form of Bolivia.

The two identities, the ethnic Andean and the regional Oriental, confront each other. Researchers have centered their studies on indigenous demands, leaving aside regional demands. Indeed, many consider regional demands to be anti-indigenous, linking them to the oligarchies, without considering that both sets of demands question the Bolivian state that has historically excluded them. The current government, responsive to ethnic demands, has not answered the regional ones. Within its political project, it categorizes these demands as oppositional, because they seek to end the centralized power in the Andes and distribute it among the nine departments that constitute Bolivia.

Bolivia’s problems will be resolved once both agendas are satisfied: that of the indigenous population and that of the departments. This is how a country can be built, by including all the people that live in it, with no ethnic or regional differences.

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ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT

Bolivia, one of Latin America's poorest and most unequal countries, has experimented with several forms of economy from neoliberal to populist. Yet, it is among the world's leaders in microfinance, according to Harvard Business School Professor Michael Chu. Here are glimpses of some visions of economy and development.

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Post-Neoliberal Policies...

And the Populist Tradition **BY JUAN ANTONIO MORALES**

PRESIDENT EVO MORALES' TWO INAUGURATIONS in 2006 and 2009 at the archaeological site of Tiwanacu captured the imagination of people in Bolivia and throughout the world. They were not simple acts of inauguration of the first indigenous president of Bolivia, but seemed almost to be a coronation of himself as the spiritual leader of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, with festive celebrations to delight tourists. Rituals, costumes and *amautas* (priests) recreated what pre-Columbian and even pre-Incan rituals would have looked like, as documented by Bolivian anthropologists. Some critics commented sarcastically that the spectacles were worthy of "Tintín in the Temple of the Sun," a reference to a popular Belgian-French cartoon book series popular in Latin America.

Without a doubt, the crowning of Evo Morales is a watershed in Bolivian history, closing the parenthesis of twenty years of representative democracy and of a market economy open to foreign trade and to foreign capital, but it does not represent a break with that history. Morales and the coalition of social movements that make up the Movement toward Socialism (MAS) harked back to the tradition of nationalism and revolutionary labor movements dating from the 1952 Bolivian Revolution, while at the same time incorporating new currents of thought. This revolution has been studied widely both within Bolivia and internationally, and the comparison has frequently been made with the 1910 Mexican Revolution. Many observers have also found similarities with the great populist movements

of the last century. Populism here needs to be understood in the Latin American sense, with its recurring invocations of the masses, its ultranationalism, its state-centric focus, its Manichaeism—seeing things in terms of good and evil—and its reliance on *caudillos* (strongmen). Politics conducted by taking to the streets and expressing general contempt for traditional channels of representative democracy such as parliaments are also part of the legacy of national revolution and of populism.

Morales personally comes out of the labor movement, although one that is *sui generis*—representing coca-leaf producing peasants. Peasant labor unions are

Ubiquitous protests have their roots in Bolivia's populist tradition.



as politicized as those of factory workers were in their time, but their forms of struggle are different. Instead of striking, the peasants block roads to present their demands and make their strength felt. Morales, an opposition leader before assuming power, had led numerous demonstrations, sometimes violent ones, against the governments that he characterized as “neoliberal.”

Electoral results at the end of 2005, when MAS won by an ample majority, surprised some observers because of its strong showing, but such strength should not have been altogether unexpected. At the polls, MAS took advantage of the population’s great discontent, especially among the poorest, with an economic situation marked by the prolonged regional crisis that had begun with the Brazilian devaluation at the end of the last century. The gap between the poor and rich had been worsening since the ‘90s, even if poverty—measured by indicators such as the satisfaction of basic needs—had actually decreased in Bolivia. That gap was the greatest cause of the general discontent. Moreover, traditional political parties were suffering loss of prestige because of their pacts and coalitions, based more on opportunism than on any social policies. There were also many allegations of corruption, although most of these charges have not been proved.

In the 2009 elections, Morales got almost two-thirds of the vote. This election crowned a series of previous electoral triumphs. There is no doubt that the official discourse had found resonance with the voters. Moreover, the economy had gathered steam and inflation, in spite of some short-term outbreaks, had been brought under control. It is also noteworthy that Bolivia had weathered the 2007-2009 international financial crisis well. MAS social policies of giving out small conditional grants were also immensely popular.

TWO REVOLUTIONS

Just as leaders had done in the 1952 Revolution, Evo Morales has stirred the flames of extreme nationalism, at least in

speech. He has strongly opposed transnational businesses that, in his words, loot the nation’s national resources, and he has engaged in a struggle against Bolivian oligarchies allied with foreign capital. Likewise, he proposed an increased involvement of the state in the economy and an economic policy with emphasis on distribution of income and of wealth. As in 1952, the use of symbols also has an important role. Frequently, words and the aggressive discourse go far beyond actual deeds.

A primary goal of the 1952 Revolution was to destroy the established order. MAS also has as its objective the dismantling of the so-called neoliberal state and to lock out neoliberal parties and policies forever. Another leitmotif in the two revolutions is the theme of decolonization, although no one is sure exactly what that means. A principal objective of the MAS government is the repeal of the most important structural reforms of the neoliberal era. Thus, privatizations have reverted to nationalizations; pension and education reforms have been counter-reformed, and the legal independence of the Central Bank has been significantly curtailed.

The MAS power strategy is also all-embracing, as was the case in the 1952 Revolution. Not only does the MAS control the legislative branch with ample majorities in both houses, but it also controls almost all the state and municipal governments, as well as the judicial branch. The opposition now has a very reduced participation, mostly symbolic, in Congress. In terms of actual deeds, it is a one-party government. The new constitution’s ambiguity on the possibility of multiple reelections calls into question any changes in power.

SIMILARITIES—BUT ALSO DIFFERENCES

Great similarities abound, but there are also great differences between the recent experience and that of the mid-century national revolution. In the first place, the actors are different. While the leaders of the national revolution came from the

petty bourgeoisie and from established political parties, the MAS leadership includes more of the indigenous peasant class, and has formed a strange alliance with non-governmental agencies (NGOs), many of them with foreign funding. The NGOs have provided MAS with a platform in the modern international left, as fighters against savage capitalism and consumerism who are in favor of environmental conservation and a more just society, less based on profit and more on solidarity. In addition, one-time leaders of the Communist party and ultra-left parties such as former guerillas from the 60s and 70s have found a home in MAS.

The 1952 Revolution insisted on the assimilation of the indigenous population, a majority of the country, into the national project, while the government of Evo Morales puts the emphasis on the affirmation of ethnic identities. The new constitution, proposed and approved during the MAS government, reflects this definition of Bolivia as a plurinational state, made up of 36 different nations. In keeping with this vision but also stemming from other factors, the new Political Constitution outlines a more decentralized country, with more power for the provincial and municipal governments than under the hypercentralist model inherited from the national revolution.

The MAS discourse, just as that of other populist movements in Latin America, proclaims its strong commitment to the struggle against corruption. This was never part of the discourse of the older revolution. In the black-and-white vision of the world that is also typical of Latin American populism, the people are opposed to the corrupt oligarchy, which is furthermore at the service of foreign interests. MAS calls all governments of the neoliberal era corrupt. The accusation of corruption, sometimes on insignificant or invented grounds, is also a convenient way to get rid of political opposition.

In spite of the anti-neoliberal discourse, the government has maintained low customs tariffs and eliminated import and export quotas, prohibitions and other quantitative restrictions, with

just a few exceptions. Its fiscal policy is more cautious than that usually associated with this type of regime; the MAS government has exercised a certain fiscal prudence and has not suffered the fiscal disasters that have been so characteristic of other Latin American populist regimes. The government has also paid attention to controlling inflation; its monetary policy has been quite conventional, even if it has severely restricted the independence of the Central Bank.

RELENTLESS HOSTILITY TO PRIVATE INVESTMENT

What might be characterized as the imprudence of MAS has been felt above all in its nationalizations and other measures that seriously weaken property rights. Even though the new constitution recognizes the right to private property, it nevertheless imposes many restrictions and obligations. The constitution grants priority to state property and to the communitarian forms of production, although the parameters of communitarian property are not very well defined. In passing, it's worth noting that the constitution is full of this type of imprecision. It is a voluminous text that contemplates a broad array of rights—more precisely, of aspirations—the fulfillment of which is very difficult to verify.

The national revolution ended in economic catastrophe, and that situation had to be contained in 1957 by a program of orthodox stabilization. In contrast, in the five years of MAS government, the country has benefited from an extraordinary economic context, characterized by continued high prices for its hydrocarbon and metal exports. The favorable external circumstances have had direct fiscal implications, which have allowed the government to enjoy fiscal superavits from 2006 to 2010. Even the 2007-2009 international financial crisis did not nick Bolivia's fiscal accounts.

In spite of the very favorable general context, which among other things has represented additional income of US\$17 billion for the government in the last five years, the growth of the economy has been modest, compared with neighboring countries or even with some years of the neoliberal era. The rate of investment has been low, very much below the average rate for Latin America—especially private investment. Without a doubt, the aggressive anti-business discourse, the nationalizations and the ambiguities of the new Political Constitution have created an adverse climate for investment. It is typical of countries with populist policies that the first area to feel a strain in the economy is investment.

The social policy of this administration has consisted primarily of conditional grants to families with school-age children, to the elderly and to pregnant women or mothers with very small children. These grants, generally helpful, are also often characteristic of neoliberal economies. At the same time, there has been no improvement in the quality of the schools or in state health service.

SUSTAINABILITY OF THE EXPERIMENT

Looking ahead, one asks whether the experiment of the Evo Morales government is sustainable over time. The low rate of investment and the virtual standstill of the growth of productivity seem to forecast a return to low growth rates. The country has not changed very much either, in spite of the extraordinary favorable international circumstances. The quality of public policies, and in particular the economic policy, suffers with a government that—even though it is democratically elected—does not govern with the conventional procedures of a democracy.

Many Bolivian observers have the impression that the Bolivian economy may have missed a great opportunity to gain momentum. Morales not only had a very favorable international context, but also enjoyed broad domestic and international support. As happened with other experiences in the region and our own in 1952, things seem to go well at the beginning and for a time, but after a longer period, the fault lines appear that lead to the failure of populist experiments. As the saying goes, history repeats itself.

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Protesters march in Santa Cruz after the *gasolinazo*, which increased the price of food.

“Thieves will be lynched” reads the warning sign on the effigy.

turing plants all over the country. One of them is *Papelbol*, the paper factory mentioned above. Its home is in the middle of a fragile environment that has been almost destroyed during the last three decades of peasant settlements and coca cultivation: the Chapare region on the edge of the Amazon areas that has some of the heaviest rainfall in the world. As originally planned, the paper plant would engulf the remaining forest and contaminate the surrounding rivers.

Fortunately for the environment, as my friend said, *Papelbol* is not operating properly, and, chances are, will never do so.

It would not be the first time that something like that has happened in Bolivia. From the city of Potosí, in the Andean altiplano, you can see not only the magnificent Cerro Rico, which still gives its silver to the world, but also the Karachipampa mill. This is a huge melting plant for lead and zinc that never actually functioned, despite the US\$250 million dollars invested in it 35 years ago.

These two examples—and there are many more—not only illustrate the questionable ability of the state to run productive companies, but also help us to understand the rentier trap and how it functions.

There is a growing literature on the so called natural resources curse. Most of it explores and describes the correlation between abundance of natural resources, and economic stagnation, expressed either as sluggish economic growth or as widespread development maladies, such as poverty, corruption and social conflict.

The problem, however, is not the abundance itself. There are many experiences of economic success and social wellbeing in countries endowed with a wealth of natural resources, and some cases of recent success based on that wealth. The problem seems to arise from the concentration of such abundance and its revenues, on the one hand, and specific social and institutional condi-

Falling in the Rentier Trap

Or how Evo Morales is missing an opportunity

BY ROBERTO LASERNA

“WHY ARE YOU SO QUIET ABOUT THE PAPER factory the government’s building in the middle of the rain forest, in Chapare?” I asked an environmental activist who has been making noise about water pollution, forest preservation, garbage treatment and every single environmental issue in Bolivia.

“Don’t worry,” he replied, “That plant will never work. It is a state company, remember?”

Although his comment was ironic, he certainly had a point. Eager to use the rents from natural resources to industrialize the economy, the Bolivian government has decided to invest in manufac-



tions, on the other. In fact, I call the rentier trap the convergence of three factors: rent concentration, weak institutions and social inequality. The rentier trap, in my view, impedes development because, once in motion, it re-creates weak institutional systems and reproduces poverty and inequality.

History shows that, if you pour money from natural resources exports into a country with high levels of poverty and inequality and with a weak democracy, it is very likely that the money will stir social conflicts. The political system will tend to grow even weaker because of escalating opportunities for corruption. Those who are poor and vulnerable have little power to organize and intervene successfully in the struggle over the control of those resources, and will remain as poor and excluded as before the export boom.

Such are the cases, for example, of Nigeria and Chad. The description also jibes with most of Venezuelan history and, currently, it is also applicable in Bolivia. The places that were not damaged by the sudden flow of abundant resources are those that already had strong institutions and more equitable societies such as Alaska and Norway.

Bolivian exports remained below \$US one billion a year for decades until foreign investments expanded natural gas reserves and developed a dynamic export industry at the beginning of the century. After a difficult process of stabilization and institutional reforms, spanning from 1985 to 2000, the discovery of gas reserves and the prospect of increasing exports stirred expectations and people became impatient with the steady but slow process of economic growth and poverty reduction.

Anxious to control the incoming fiscal boom, social and political organizations appealed to the poor. They mobilized and were able to expel the traditional parties from government. In 2005, Evo Morales, the candidate of the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS), campaigned on taking control of natural resources and recovering them from the hands of private companies. He promised to cre-

ate an industrialized economy in which the poor would get the benefits through better jobs and salaries, social security and improved public services.

The export boom was bigger than expected because of skyrocketing oil and mineral prices, fueled by the economic growth in China, India, Brazil and other emerging countries.

In fact, Bolivia is currently exporting six times more than during the 1990s; its fiscal revenues grew six times since 2005. But poverty is not declining at the same rate; public services are deteriorating in many areas, and social conflicts are on the rise. In spite of being reelected by more than 60% of the votes, which gave his party control over parliament, judiciary, electoral courts and most of the local governments, Morales' rule is plagued by governance problems.

Even the hydrocarbons industry is in trouble. Declining investments have reduced the production for the internal market and Bolivia is using a large part of its revenues to import gas oil, gasoline and even liquefied gas for domestic use, as well as to pay for subsidies that increase with rising international oil prices.

The same social organizations that toppled the previous democratic governments and supported Evo Morales are getting disenchanted. So far, the Morales revolution has only been able to reform the constitution, expanding rights and making promises that are more difficult to fulfill than ever.

Bolivia has again fallen into the rentier trap. Its democratic institutions were weak to begin with, as shown by the fact that they were unable to channel the uprisings that toppled Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada in 2003 and Carlos Mesa in 2005, and that pushed Eduardo Rodríguez Veltzé to speed up presidential elections in 2005. But institutions are even weaker now after a forced constitutional reform that questioned all rules and authorities. Contraband has been growing along landlocked Bolivia's extended border lines. Drug trafficking has expanded despite efforts to control coca cultivation; delinquency and insecurity are tak-

ing more lives and properties. Indeed, people are so fearful that lynchings are becoming a frequent practice, both in rural and in urban areas.

The government is making desperate efforts to control corruption after the third man in command, Santos Ramírez, was caught in a mafia-type scheme (2009), and a police general was trapped smuggling cocaine through Chile (2011). At the time of their arrests, Ramírez was managing the state oil company and General Sanabria was in charge of narcotics intelligence.

At the same time, public investments such as the paper factory are just not working. More than a billion dollars have already been invested in industrial plants with the same frustrating results. Most of them were located without regards to economic or environmental conditions, only to satisfy local pressures, just as infrastructure investments were often made to appease social unrest. Soccer fields, paved roads, subsidies, and union buildings have absorbed a big part of the resources brought by the bonanza, satisfying local interest groups but leaving intact the main causes of poverty and inequality.

All these problems are taking a toll on Morales' popularity. Opinion polls show a sharp decline in favorable opinion on his government, and although most of his supporters are reluctant to make the President responsible for the bad governance, blaming instead his ministers and advisors, the majority is already stating that they will not vote again for Morales, according to reputable opinion polls.

The Bolivian authorities seem totally unaware of the problems I describe as the rentier trap. Their plans still focus on retaining and expanding their power, as if controlling weak institutions would give them the capacity to avoid social pressures and soothe the social unrest. They are still aiming to increase their control over fiscal revenues, forgetting past failures and ignoring current ones, and trying to renew their industrialization plans.

Luckily, not all is failure in Bolivia. Part of the natural gas revenues goes di-



rectly to the elderly, children and pregnant women through cash transfers. In 2009, for instance, cash transfers amounted close to US\$286 million dollars, which represents around 1.3% of the Gross Domestic Product. Most of that goes to people older than 60 as a non-contributive pension, giving continuity to the Bonosol program, created during the first Sánchez de Lozada administration (1993-1997). This program is now called Renta Dignidad, and reaches more than 750,000 men and women. They only need to show their IDs to collect the money in monthly or yearly payments, as they choose.

Based on the success of this program, which proved its positive impact in lowering poverty, the Morales government created two additional cash transfer programs: “Juancito Pinto” and “Juana Azurduy.” The first is given to children who attend public schools and the second favors pregnant women who get medical attention at public facilities.

I think that these experiences seem to show an exit from the rentier trap. It is necessary to circumvent the state and to pulverize the concentrated flow of money, scattering it into little bits. Thus, it will literally rain money, spreading all natural rents all over the economy, giving consumer power to the people.

In fact, in November 2007 a group of Bolivian scholars, policy makers and opinion leaders suggested exactly that. This group, including former President Eduardo Rodríguez, Vice President Victor Hugo Cárdenas and Central Bank President Juan Antonio Morales, signed a manifesto saying:

We all are Bolivia, so we propose that all natural rents be distributed to all citizens, without intermediaries or [political] promises, directly and transparently, so that each person will decide how to use those resources for the benefit of their families and to contribute to the common progress.

Fundación Milenio, a La Paz-based think tank, has discussed the rationale behind this in a number of publications. Those reports show thoughtfulness in the use of cash transfers, evaluate the likely low inflationary impact of the distribution, estimate the resulting higher economic growth of expanding the domestic market, and look into the possible reduction in inequality and poverty that could be attained if natural rents would go directly to the people.

However, none of these arguments seem to persuade the Morales government to leave behind the illusionary path

of state-led industrialization, nationalistic policies and political control of institutions.

As the rentier trap tightens, the opportunities for a good use of natural resources decline.

An engineer involved in the paper plant in the Chapare told me the plant will soon be put into operation by bringing cellulose pulp from Brazil. It is easy to imagine President Morales playing soccer during the plant inauguration and the Central Bank authorizing a new “credit” to subsidize its operations. But I am sure that such a success will last only as long as those subsidies, so that the paper plant will soon become another example of a sad period when Bolivia missed the chance to start a new path for development.

Roberto Laserna got his doctoral degree from UC Berkeley in 1995. He has done extensive research on social and economic problems and worked as an international consultant and university professor in Bolivia (San Simón), Peru (El Pacífico) and United States (Princeton). His books include *La democracia en el Chenko* and *La trampa del rentismo*. He is an active blogger (laserna.wordpress.com) and twitter @roblaser.

Development with a Woman's Touch

Human Development: Microfinance, Health and Women's Empowerment

BY GONZALO ALAIZA

TODAY, LIKE EVERY DAY, ADELA REYES, 56, GETS up at five in the morning. She serves her family breakfast, prepares lunch, organizes the household, sends the kids off to school, and takes care of her 11-month-old motherless grandson, her daughter having died in childbirth in home birth in an isolated rural community. Adela leaves the house at 8:30, carrying the baby on her back as she makes her way to the small business she runs: selling school utensils in a local market. As she walks, she does mental arithmetic: today, she is due to pay back a third of the loan she owes for her business.

For many, Adela is just one more of the thousands of poor women who live in Bolivia. Although the country has made some progress in poverty reduction, it is still the poorest country in South America, and recently surpassed Brazil as the continent's most unequal country (as measured by the widely used Gini coefficient).

For others, Adela is an indigenous woman who received a fourth-grade education with a lot of difficulty. Of all countries in Latin America, Bolivia has the largest indigenous population (about 60%), a group of people with various mixed identities who rely on a private enterprise-based western economy, combined with indigenous spiritual values, bilingualism, and traditional customs including the use of traditional clothing.

For those who understand the world of microfinance, Adela is one out of the approximately 918,000 clients served by the microfinance system in Bolivia (as of December 2010), of which women participants constitute 58.57%. For many years now, Bolivia has been a world leader in microfinance.

In the health arena, on the other

hand, Bolivia has consistently underperformed, coming in second worst only to Haiti on the American continent. Adela and her family are represented in these statistics, since for every 1,000 live births, fifty Bolivian children die before their first birthday (2008, ENDSA); for every 100,000 births, 310 women die in childbirth or shortly thereafter (2008, ENDSA); and average life expectancy for Bolivians is 65.4 years (2007, UNDP). The statistics have shown a tendency to improve, but Bolivia still lags far behind other Latin American countries.

Bolivia's health system is fragmented, split between public health, with state-run hospitals and health centers; private medicine; and the social security system. The latter only covers one out of every four Bolivians, which means the rest need to use money out of pocket to pay

Adela also attends medical checkups with her children and grandson at the Pro Mujer agency, and she receives training in health, personal care and basic business skills. She is very proud of being the head of her household and counting on a business that has grown considerably in the past few years because of her effort.

Pro Mujer began its health services in 1998, with full coverage in all its offices. In the last two years, it is starting to bring these services to rural communities, where health care is precarious or nonexistent, and where cultural practices often rely heavily on herbal or animal-based remedies, as well as the use of rituals.

Women like Adela—whose struggles may be the same, a little bit better, or a little bit worse—are members (or clients) of Pro Mujer. Pro Mujer aggregates approximately 93,000 women in Bolivia

Bolivia is a world leader in microfinance, small loans to support business ventures. Pro Mujer is unusual because it provides answers to two needs of the poor: health care and low-cost financing.

for health care. Unfortunately, Adela is part of the group with no coverage.

In a sense, Adela represents each of these statistics. But to Pro Mujer, a social development organization, she is a strong, respected woman and president of her Communal Bank, a group of 20 to 30 women who have organized as an association to access credit. Adela began her business six years ago with a US\$100 microcredit granted by Pro Mujer; in addition to Pro Mujer's financial services,

and close to 212,000 women in the five countries where Pro Mujer operates—Argentina, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Mexico, and Peru. These women all share a common denominator: they are entrepreneurial women who live or have previously lived in precarious conditions; who suffer from social exclusion, limited access to health services, and limited sources of financing, because while they need capital to launch a business, very few financial institutions take the risk to lend under

these circumstances. They are all brave women who fight for better days, who take care of their health, and who have started their own businesses to support their families.

For the last five years, Bolivia has had a populist government under the indigenous leadership of President Evo Morales, who has made considerable strides in public health, especially by giving economic incentives to make sure women use prenatal and postnatal services and take their children for regular checkups. But it is precisely because of this policy of incentives that the public health clinics are overloaded. The consequent long waits at public health clinics represent a costly loss of productive work time for women like Adela and other Pro Mujer clients, so they prefer not to use the public system. Since they are not wage workers, they do not have access to the social security system. Thus, they often become victims of an unregulated private health system that charges too much in relationship to their unstable income. The health services provided by Pro Mujer fill a niche with easy access to free, high-quality primary care.

It is far from easy to combine financial services with human development services, such as health care and business training. But this is the formula that Pro Mujer has applied successfully for more than 20 years, working to empower women and in the process, benefit their families and communities.

Gonzalo Alaiza is the director of Pro Mujer in Bolivia. He received his BA in business administration from the Universidad Católica Boliviana and a Master's in Business Finance, a degree obtained through the joint program between the Universidad Católica Boliviana and the Harvard Institute For International Development. Alaiza has more than 14 years of experience with the Bolivian finance system. For more information on Pro Mujer, see www.promujer.org.

Justina R. and her daughter are both Pro Mujer clients (above); women at a Communal Bank Association meeting





Microfinance

A World-Class Performance **BY ELISABETH RHYNE**

WHEN I FIRST SAW THE PHOTOS OF THE SACKING of BancoSol, I cried. The slide show began with chaotic pictures of the mob hauling desks, computers and files into the street and setting them on fire. Next were two captured looters lying face down and handcuffed amid the wreckage of what hours before had been a functioning bank branch. Finally, next-day photographs documented the ravaged premises of BancoSol's branches all over La Paz and El Alto.

Thinking back to 2003 when these events occurred, I ask three questions. Why did protestors ransack a socially-

motivated bank that lends to the poor? Why did that make me cry? And what has become of BancoSol and the rest of the microfinance sector since then?

Development economist Claudio González-Vega once said of microfinance in Bolivia, "One could not write the recent economic history of Bolivia without highlighting microfinance, and one could not write the world history of microfinance without highlighting Bolivia." (Boulder Finance Institute presentation, July 2007). Microfinance is one of Bolivia's best claims to a world-class performance. It started in the late 1980s when

idealistic Bolivian social activists created a series of microfinance institutions (MFIs). They found a ready market for small loans among Bolivia's enormous informal sector, dominated by Aymara-speaking microentrepreneurs. The need, the services and the culture somehow clicked, and these MFIs quickly grew into leaders in the emerging global microfinance sector.

Among the Bolivian MFIs, BancoSol was the flagship. It started as Prodem, an NGO promoted by U.S. non-profit ACCION International, with grants from USAID and the Inter-American Devel-



Left: El Alto Branch of BancoSol; above, Hortencia Rojas, client of BancoSol, and loan officer, Raul Zusaño, in her market business.

opment Bank. In 1992, after five years of unexpectedly rapid growth, Prodem sought a bank license from the Bolivian authorities and created BancoSol, Latin America's first private commercial bank exclusively devoted to microenterprises. BancoSol's example spawned a half dozen similar transformations in Bolivia, creating a commercial microfinance sector. More importantly, the Bolivian model led to the transformation of dozens of MFIs around the world, launching the expansion of microfinance from a few tiny, donor-driven programs to a global industry that today brings access to fi-

nancial services to 150 million people.

For me, BancoSol symbolized the best achievements of microfinance. As one of the first wave of people to stake my professional life on the microfinance movement, I connected with BancoSol from the first. I knew the protagonists, from the radical anti-banker Pancho Otero who created Prodem and became BancoSol's first CEO, to the current CEO, Kurt Koenigsfest. I had even written a book about microfinance in Bolivia.

And so I cried at the insult to all BancoSol represented. I cried to think that the protesters, presumably from

the same part of Bolivia's population as BancoSol's clients, could turn against it and the other MFIs with such anger and destructive force. I believed that creating institutions to serve microentrepreneurs who had never had loans before was an unequivocal social good, contributing to a society based on economic justice. The protesters called that into doubt.

The protests were partly about microfinance, but they were also about bigger political issues. For one thing, the microfinance industry had recently participated in a rush to lend (provoked by the entry of consumer lenders into their

market) that resulted in widespread over-indebtedness among clients. This fueled a protest movement centered on debt and directed against microlenders. By 2003 another motive had emerged: BancoSol was sometimes called “Goni’s Bank” because President Sánchez de Lozada, known as Goni, was among the original founders of Prodem and owned a small share of BancoSol. BancoSol was a surrogate for Goni. The looting reflected the broader social disorder across economic sectors that led to Goni’s fall and

This involved revising lending methods and upgrading the credit bureau to cover all microfinance clients and to ensure up-to-the-minute information. Next, they sought to better satisfy client needs by adding new financial products like savings, money transfers, insurance and housing loans. Finally, they determined to speak with a common voice to policy makers in the new government, and so strengthened their associations: ASOFIN for regulated MFIs and FINRURAL for NGOs.

Microfinance represents 20 percent of all Bolivia’s banking assets, a significantly higher percentage than in any other country. It’s also growing at 25% per year.

ultimately to the ascent of Evo Morales as Bolivia’s first Aymara president.

But those days are long past. Today, BancoSol is a profitable bank with nearly 150,000 borrowers and 440,000 savers. It leads a thriving microfinance sector in Bolivia that serves more clients than banks and other financial institutions combined. Microfinance represents 20 percent of all Bolivia’s banking assets, a significantly higher percentage than in any other country, and is growing at 25 percent per year, far faster than the mainstream banking sector. Moreover, microfinance clients in Bolivia today receive a wider range of higher quality services than they did in 2003, at a much lower cost.

The path from 2003 to 2011 required significant adjustment, both from the microfinance providers and from the one-time protesters who then joined the Morales administration looking to change Bolivia’s social and economic order.

The leaders of the microfinance sector recognized the need to rebuild on a firmer foundation, and did so in three main ways. First, they improved their ability to judge repayment capacity to avoid sending borrowers into unsustainable debt.

Those who joined the Morales government, for their part, also adjusted. The standard populist view that all banks are part of the power and economic elite and therefore not to be trusted appears to have been tempered in this administration by its recognition that MFIs are important to the very people the government represents. The Morales government has evolved a critical but tolerant approach to microfinance. In contrast to governments in Venezuela, Ecuador and Nicaragua, it has refrained from the moves that are politically popular in the short term but undermine the ability of the microfinance sector to do its work. Initial proposals to create a government bank for the poor were eventually abandoned, possibly in recognition that it would be too costly for a government bank to try to compete with the MFIs.

In the wary relationship that now exists between the government and the MFIs, interest rates are the biggest issue. The government pushes microfinance institutions to pay savers more and charge borrowers less. It hints at but does not act on the threat of an interest rate cap on loans. Recognizing that this could change, the MFIs strive to reduce interest rates. Rates in Bolivia, now below

18 percent, are lower than in any other Latin American country. But the Morales government pushes for single digits.

The incentives for cost-cutting prompt MFIs to introduce technologically-enhanced delivery systems. Koenigsfest reports that moving a transaction from teller to cell phone reduces BancoSol’s cost from \$2.50 to \$0.80. A less benign effect of pressure on interest rates renders the smallest loans unviable. BancoSol’s average loan in 2010 was US\$3,500, well above the average in other countries where interest rates are higher.

The rapport that existed between bank regulators and MFIs during the infancy of the sector has been replaced by a harsher tone. But given their importance as a source of financial services for so many vulnerable people, the administration is willing to live with them. At least, from their perspective, the MFIs are better than the mainstream banks.

And that is why BancoSol CEO Kurt Koenigsfest was recently elected president of the Bolivian bankers’ association, ASOBAN, making him the chief interlocutor with the government for the entire financial sector. Koenigsfest observes that his election shows that the bankers recognize the success of microfinance in producing good social and business results and in demonstrating its bona fides to the Morales government. “Ten years ago this would have been impossible,” he notes.

As for me, I romanticize microfinance less than I used to. The protests taught me that good social motivations are only effective when well-grounded in their particular culture and political economy, and then, only if they deliver something of real value to the people they serve.

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Communal Economy

An Alternative to Socialism and Capitalism **BY FÉLIX PATZI PACO**

OVER THE COURSE OF HISTORY, MODERN WESTERN civilization has evolved mainly under two widespread economic systems: the capitalist and the socialist. The first involves private means of production or work, with the revenue derived from the worker's labor appropriated by the capitalist owner, the oft-called exploitation by the capitalist of the wage earner. In the second type of economy, the state owns the means of production and all the businesses, with a social class of bureaucrats that serve as managers. The worker is still a wage earner in this type of economy, but the revenue produced by the worker is kept by the state, rather than by the worker. These are in a nutshell the two types of economies that people hold up as theoretical models.

A version of an alternative economic model operates in Bolivia, if only on a

small scale. The 36 cultural and linguistic groups of indigenous civilizations that make up the majority of Bolivia's population already practice a form of economy that is not based on either private or state property, and even less on the exploitation of work. It is a *communitarian economy*, currently limited to rural areas and primarily to agricultural activities. In our proposal for a communitarian model, we are attempting to reclaim this rural experience as a model for an alternative means of production—an outline of a more contemporary form of economy in the Bolivian context that is a viable alternative to capitalism and socialism. Hence I propose the creation of *empresas comunales* in the city, in the countryside, and throughout various industries. These collectives would belong to the group of workers directly and freely asso-

ciated as owners—whether the products of the enterprises are material or cultural goods or services.

A few workers or thousands of workers could make up this association; the model is not rigid. The association would produce goods or services, with technology and other production materials acquired by the directly associated group of workers.

In such a communitarian enterprise, workers do not earn wages as in a capitalist private enterprise or in a state socialist economy; as producers, they do not sell their labor. A worker owns the product he or she manufactures. This means that the worker keeps the profits once a certain amount has been paid to

Miniature dollar bills mingle with bolivianos in the traditional Bolivian *alasitas* festival.

the state in the form of a tax and to the communal enterprise as an investment in its growth.

Producers thus would not work for a third party as they do in both capitalist and socialist economies, but rather for themselves. The incentive of being able to keep his/her own revenue should motivate everyone to produce according to his/her ability and needs. Some will earn more than others and prosper—but always through one's own work and not

portunity to associate in a communal enterprise and become direct workers themselves. Thus, the separation between manual and intellectual work will be eliminated.

The communal economy would take into account many of the technological and scientific advances of our time, in full realization that science and technology are not necessarily bound to the dominant state or capitalist means of production.

The communitarian model would allow the unemployed and informal sector workers to join the official economy by forming a communal enterprise.

through the work of others, given the *prohibition of the purchase of the labor force*.

The model of the communal economy brings workers together in associations in order to buy technology that a worker could not afford alone. This technology could be used by the worker in her own workshop, or in a designated location where all the associates together are engaged in production. Thus, we are talking about two types of communal enterprises. The first is a producers' association with members who produce in their individual workplaces and share technology and perhaps distribution and other forms of economic support they consider necessary and useful. The second type of communal enterprise consists of people who work together in the same space, often with the technical division of work as an important factor. The latter type of communal enterprise would be more appropriate for assembly work and for large-scale production. Both types of enterprises need specialized professionals, who must follow the orders of the workers who form the association with equality in rights and obligations.

Specialized professionals will provide innovative technology for use in the communal enterprises. But even more importantly, they will have the great op-

Peasants and indigenous people in Bolivia and in many places throughout the world hold property in collective form, which, in legal terms, Bolivia has called communitarian lands of origin. Much land, however, has already been divided into parcels with individual land titles, but the common practice is that individuals or families work the land together.

In these cases, associations don't need to be formed because the workers are already organized into communities. In this agricultural sector, technologies need to be introduced to obtain comparative advantages for the processes of production and industrialization, making sure at the same time that the peasants and indigenous peoples actually manage the enterprise. Once these comparative advantages have been obtained, this sector can pass from subsistence to a large-scale economy that will permit peasants and indigenous people to raise their present subsistence economic levels.

These communal enterprises will require seed money, and in addition to loans, the state will need to provide the technology necessary for the communal associations to start up as direct producers. Other domestic and foreign private enterprises can be partners with these potential communal enterprises.

The role of the state in Bolivia in this process will be to stimulate the creation of communal enterprises, to guarantee markets for the goods produced by them, and to develop energy sources and infrastructure to foster these enterprises.

Because communal enterprises do not have the capacity to administer the nation's strategic resources, in these cases and in these cases only will state enterprises be created. Revenues from these enterprises will contribute to the society's welfare.

It is necessary to clarify that, in the initial phase, communal enterprises may secure the investments of private firms, but only with the requirement that the profits be reinvested to increase the amount of capital in the country. This period would mark the great moment of historic transition toward a society without exploited citizens.

In the communal society, the state is by no means extinguished. On the contrary, it takes charge of planning the equitable empowerment of communitarian enterprises through tax policies. The state will continue to guarantee the nation's security, its monetary policy and, basically, will be in charge of consolidating all productive forces oriented toward national integration.

In Bolivia, 80% of the population is unemployed or works in what is now called the informal sector. The communitarian model would allow these people to incorporate into the official economy by forming a communal enterprise. It would also be a solution for the 30% of the indigenous population that already participates in a rural communal economy based on small parcels of land. Thus, creating an economy of modern communal enterprises in Bolivia is a productive beginning in the direction of a more inclusive, less exploitative economy.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Bolivia is a country rich in resources from gas to silver to lithium. The question still remains as to whom these resources—including the highly valuable commodity of water—belong and how they should be distributed and conserved.

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The Water is Ours Damn It!

New Regional and Local Frictions Over Scarce Water

BY NICOLE FABRICANT AND KATHRYN HICKS

IN JULY 2010, WE ASKED THE PRESIDENT OF THE Federation of Neighborhood Organizations (FEJUVE) in El Alto, Bolivia, how his organization planned to address seasonal water scarcity there. Our concern was aroused when, in 2007, local and international papers began to warn about the possible effects of rapidly retreating glaciers, changing weather patterns, and continued rural-to-urban migration on the reservoirs supplying the two cities of La Paz and El Alto.

As the potential for seasonal water scarcity in both cities has increased over time, so too has the conflict over how to best to manage, protect and distribute these resources. Rubén Mendoza told us, “We have found a new water source, it’s a huge *laguna* (lake) and that is where we will be able to obtain water for ourselves, for El Alto.” He further suggested that rather than developing a governing board with representatives from each city to manage water, *Alteños* would actively search for new sources and sell this water to La Paz to help finance new and more efficient water-related infrastructure. While he was conscious of the need for a meaningful solution to address the historic imbalance in levels of poverty and access to basic services in both cities, he was far less concerned with the fact that the reservoir in question was built and maintained by a rural community, and used for agricultural purposes. His response illustrated the tension between city and country as seen in the recently politicized “indigenous-based” discourse of *usos y costumbres* (indigenous uses and customs) or communitarian values, often framed in opposition to uneven power relations and as an alternative to development that relies upon large-scale, extractive industries.

While El Alto and Cochabamba have gained international attention for the success of their social movements, our work on water scarcity in El Alto suggests that it would be a mistake either to romanticize these movements or to underestimate the barriers and challenges they face. Here, we will explore some of the local and regional tensions surrounding the issue of new water struggles in El Alto, illustrating the stakes involved in the international debate on global warming.

For two years (2009–2011), we have been conducting collaborative anthropological research on the biological, social, political/economic and environmental effects of water scarcity in El Alto, which relies to a substantial degree on glacial melt during the dry season. Water scarcity is a rather complex issue in this highland region of Bolivia; it is unclear to what degree such water scarcity is a result of global warming and melting glaciers or faulty infrastructure and newly expanded population pressures on fragile water systems.

Adding to this complexity are neoliberal policies introduced in the 1990s, which privatized Bolivia’s municipal water supply and made it into a commodity. The administration of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada sold a 30-year water concession for El Alto and La Paz to the sole bidder, Aguas de Illimani consortium, led by the French Company Lyonnaise des Eaux. The policy was designed as a pro-poor strategy to balance public and private interests for the benefit of all, and was perceived as a successful model for other nations in the Global South (see Nina Laurie and Carlos Crespo, “Deconstructing the Best Case Scenario: Lessons from Water Politics in El Alto, La Paz,” *Geoforum*, vol. 38, no. 5, September 2007, 842). However, this

concession resulted in dramatic increases in cost and left substantial portions of the city without water service. Simultaneously, neoliberal agricultural policies further uprooted rural communities in the highlands leading to ever greater flows of migrants from rural to urban peripheral areas like El Alto, where many new “illegal” squatter communities had to build their own infrastructure, pipelines, and petition the municipal agents (disguised as private entities) to legalize their rights to water. Many communities in this city still lack access to the municipal network. Neighborhoods cobble together their own infrastructure, precluding central planning for preservation of dwindling resources.

In order to understand the new regional and local conflicts resulting from water scarcity, we must first turn briefly toward the historic inequality of these two highland cities, which comprise part of the same metropolis, but can be thought of as radically opposite urban environments. La Paz, founded in 1548, is the seat of legislative and executive power in Bolivia, which historically served as





the supply center for the silver producing colonial city of Potosí and the Pacific Ocean harbors. El Alto, on the other hand, was part of the rural periphery that extended alongside this important commercial center, but was comprised mainly of indigenous peasant communities (see Carlos Revilla, “Understanding the Mobilizations of October 2003.” In *Remapping Bolivia: Resources, Territory and Indigeneity in a Plurinational State*, edited by Nicole Fabricant and Bret Gustafson, Santa Fe, NM: SAR Press, 2011).

However, in the 20th century, due to both environmental and economic factors, El Alto began to urbanize at a very rapid rate, becoming an urban metropolis in its own right. Alteños initially created their own neighborhood organizations (called neighborhood boards)—which were essentially community organizations petitioning for and legalizing land tenure, accessing critical services, and building infrastructure—at a local level. These neighborhood boards still remain critical to accessing basic infrastructure and come together into a regional federation called FEJUVE, the Federation of

Neighborhood Boards of El Alto (*Federación de Juntas Vecinales*) which represent the collective interests of disparate neighborhoods comprising this municipality. The FEJUVE, more recently, has also become the engine of radical protest and change, as its people took to the streets in the 2000s to reclaim resources, both water and gas, from transnational corporations.

On top of uneven access and distribution of water due to neoliberal and post-neoliberal policies, radical shifts in temperature have led to melting glaciers, important buffers of water supply during the dry season. Dirk Hoffman, a German glaciologist living in Bolivia and studying glacier melt, commented, “It is easier to measure climate change in rural areas because of the physical effects of drought, increases in pests, and difficulties of production, however, it is nearly impossible to measure climate change in urban El Alto because of so many other factors that interact with climate change” (interview, August 2, 2010). Residents perceive climate change in the form of a stronger sun, hotter days, erratic weather

El Alto residents envision that this hidden lake might resolve water scarcity.

patterns, and a measurable lack of water in their wells. As one resident in El Alto remarked, “We know that climate change is happening because it’s getting hotter and hotter. In the past, we would put a shirt out to dry and it would take days ... now it only takes hours” (interview, July 19, 2010).

While community residents in some of these peripheral neighborhoods seemed at a loss for how to organize around issues of climate change and water scarcity, the regional leaders of the FEJUVE had a plan for the city of El Alto. The FEJUVE initially supported the creation of EPSAS (the new state-based water company that was created as a temporary solution post-privatization); now, however, they are promoting the development of an independent and autonomous water company built upon Aymara principles of social justice, reciprocity and equality. While FEJUVE-El Alto calls for a water company independent from La Paz, municipal agents in La Paz are pushing for a

more centralized plan called “Agua Para Todos,” which would involve a single water company based in El Alto with representatives from national, regional, and municipal governments, and neighborhood organizations, making decisions about larger-scale infrastructure. Funding would come from a combination of user fees, foreign aid, investment and federal funds. FEJUVE-El Alto remains suspicious of La Paz’s proposal for a centralized water company: many of these suspicions were couched in the language and discourse of historic inequality, deep racism, and failure of La Paz officials to deliver on promised services/infrastructure. One representative noted, “We are talking about [an extension of the neoliberal project], a business of and for water...we should continue to observe this problem. To us, [their plan], appears laughable” (El Alteño, February 27, 2010). While both La Paz and El Alto might rely upon the same water resources of glaciers located high above the cities, they have radically different and conflicting visions for how to address the problem. Further, neither plan pays more than lip service to global warming and the potential for increased regional conflict with worsening water scarcity.

Returning to our initial discussion with the FEJUVE leader, in an effort to see for ourselves this “hidden *fuerza de agua*,” we traveled with a team of local activists to a glacier-fed reservoir, hidden deep in the mountains. In an experience eerily reminiscent of the James Bond movie, *Quantum of Solace*, where Bond’s mission is to save what the viewer thinks is oil, we traveled for several hours up a narrow and windy dirt road path from the main highway into the mountain range. We passed brown and green mountain ranges and pastures, rolling hills filled with moss and patches of hay, small-scale farming communities herding animals and tending to crops. When we finally reached our destination, we were shocked by the expanse of water stretching in length as far as the eye could see; this crystal clear blue water appeared endless. People immediately started taking pictures and videos of the

water supply. One FEJUVE member joked, “Everyone is so worried about climate change and water scarcity [...] but this will provide enough for La Paz and El Alto for the next 100 years.” Another remarked, “this water source belongs to local *comuneros* and they do not want to give up their rights to this *laguna*. But the truth is that now it will belong to El Alto.” They continued to joke in the van about what the water company would be named and how they will build sufficient pipelines from here down to the city of El Alto, and about financing this project through international donors like European Union or private capital from Japan.

This daily practice of organizing in a moment of scarcity can reproduce broad-based inequalities at a regional or local level: between regions, urban and rural residents, indigenous/mestizo, and those who hold governmental power versus local agricultural laborers or *comuneros*. Despite organizers’ public discourse about the use of Aymara values to promote a more redistributive and equitable water system, they rely upon similar processes of accumulation by dispossession—like rerouting natural flows to city centers, disrupting and displacing whole communities.

These local contradictions mirror the national and international political scene. President Evo Morales, might declare to a large and enthusiastic crowd of global environmental activists, “We have two paths: either Pachamama or death. We have two paths: either capitalism dies or Mother Earth dies.” (Evo Morales, *Democracy Now*, April 20, 2010) However, his rhetoric and public proclamations of revamping the entire system according to an indigenous-based form of sustainable development, as Pablo Regalsky (Andean Center for Communication and Development or CENDA) notes, has not necessarily held up in practice as “foreign capital still plays a decisive role in Bolivia’s development policies.” (See Bill Weinberg, “New Water Wars in Bolivia: Climate Change and Indigenous Struggle,” *NACLA* vol. 43, no. 5, Sept./Oct. 2010, 23.) While Morales might have the best of

intentions, he has been unable to halt the influence and power of transnational corporations. This economic dependency on large-scale extraction of mining resources and hydrocarbons will only continue to speed up climate change, destroy the environment, reroute water supplies and eventually displace native communities, all in the interest of private capital. The disjunction between Alteños’ discourses of reciprocity and redistribution and their actions of usurpation, then, represents a “world in a grain of sand,” as Mendoza and his team might enact the same kinds of destructive practices and reproduce unequal power relations. In this context, the rhetoric (whether at a global or local level) of “preserving Pachamama” according to *usos y costumbres* might hold merely cultural and symbolic value in a moment of expansive capitalism and resource-based extraction.

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The title of this article is taken from a popular protest slogan, *¡El agua es nuestra, carajo!* (the water is ours, damn it!) from the Cochabamba Water Wars where thousands of people filled the main plaza in April 2000 in resistance to the privatization of their municipal water supply.

The Economy of the Extractive Industries

Poverty and Social Equality **BY FERNANDA WANDERLEY**

IT'S WORTH A POTOSÍ—AN IDIOM THAT USES THE name of Bolivia's famous colonial silver-mining town as a way of saying "it's worth a fortune"—is closely identified with the country's past and its economic history. We Bolivians have always depended on some natural resource or other. The first was silver from the highlands of Potosí, then tin and now natural gas. Throughout its history as a republic, Bolivia has constantly faced the difficulty of overcoming the model of revenue based on the extraction of non-renewable natural resources. This type of resource-dependent economy known as an "enclave economy" produces few jobs and is isolated from job-intensive industries that produce goods and services for the domestic market.

To illustrate this strong dependence on natural resources, it's worth mentioning that 80% of 2010 exports were natural resources; half of all public income comes from taxes on natural resources. Bolivia is a classic example of the limits of a primarily export-dependent economic model that has produced a mediocre average growth rate in the last six decades. Between 1950 and 2010, the Bolivian economy grew an average of 2.8% yearly, which translated to an annual per capita average of 0.5% growth, an extremely low number through which to overcome poverty and social inequality.

Thus at the end of 2009, more than half (58%) of the Bolivian population was experiencing moderate poverty and an additional 32% lived in extreme poverty. The inequality between urban and rural areas continued to be significant, with 74% of the rural population in poverty, compared to only half of the urban population. To overcome these levels of poverty and inequality, the growth rate of the Bolivian economy would have to be at least 6%. That means Bolivia's current



Miners: a resource-dependent economy produces few jobs.

model of economic growth is making the country poorer in the long run.

The heavy dependence on the extraction of just a few natural resources with low aggregate value creates a socioeconomic structure of precarious employment. Moreover, poverty alleviation strategies have been insufficient and

unsustainable because they depend on funding from the export sector, which suffers from the price volatility of the price of raw export materials.

Most Bolivians survive by generating their own income in sectors of low productivity and are thus excluded from any social and laboral protection. Even

within the employed population, only 20% has access to health insurance; the pension system covers only 27% of the employed population. This means that almost two-thirds of the Bolivian population is highly vulnerable, eking out its existence in the informal sector.

Studies like Jean Imbs and Romain Wacziarg's "Stages of Diversification as Self-Discovery" in *American Economic Review*, March 2003, show that countries that export a diversity of products have

tion in public enterprises and by channeling external aid to subsidize the private sector. However, this objective was not reached in Bolivia. Growth continued to be propelled by the export of three products—tin, oil and natural gas, all of them controlled by the public sector and strongly dependent on world market conditions and the availability of international loans.

Loans granted during this period were destined to finance public sector spending and export diversification

port in uncompetitive and inefficient circumstances (Juan Antonio Morales, "Bolivian Trade and Development 1952-1987," working paper, 1988).

During this period, social welfare policies sought to cover the entire population, but in practice only reached a reduced number of formally employed workers. The majority of workers and their families, surviving in the informal sector, were protected only through their family networks and their own capacity to generate income. State social benefits were extended only to a select group of workers, particularly public employees.

In 1985, the pendulum of the economy swung back toward a liberal model. Policy makers bet on the market and minimizing the importance of industrial policies to promote national production and diversification. The hope was that liberalization of the markets and privatization of public enterprises would foster conditions to make the economy more dynamic and generate employment, thus overcoming poverty and social inequality.

Although some macroeconomic and financial reforms did take place, the state prioritized reforms in capital-intensive sectors such as hydrocarbons, telecom-

None of Bolivia's development models—past or present—have paved the road to economic transformation and diversification.

higher rates of per capita growth. Similarly, other works illustrate that countries grow the most quickly when they export products that are part of the export basket of the countries with the highest per capita incomes. (Dani Rodrik, "Industrial Policy for the Twenty-First Century," Kennedy School of Government working paper, 2004, and Ricardo Hausman, J. Hwang and Danu Rodrik, "What You Export Matters" in *Journal of Economic Growth*, no. 12, 2007).

This begs the question of why Bolivia has not been able to transform its production to stimulate an economic takeoff and sustainable increase in social welfare, while similar countries have managed to advance toward this goal. We will explore the principal limitations of the institutional and political architecture behind the development models implemented in the past sixty years in Bolivia: state capitalism (1952-1985), neoliberalism (1985-2005) and post-neoliberalism (2006-2011). Until now, none of these models have managed to sustain a transformation of Bolivia's productive model and accompanying improvement in social welfare.

State capitalism focuses on producing a diversity of goods and services while consolidating a national industrial base in two ways: through direct state participa-

tion in public enterprises and by channeling external aid to subsidize the private sector. However, this objective was not reached in Bolivia. Growth continued to be propelled by the export of three products—tin, oil and natural gas, all of them controlled by the public sector and strongly dependent on world market conditions and the availability of international loans.



A worker processes natural resources, an important part of Bolivia's economy.

munications, and electricity, with aggressive policies designed to attract foreign investment. No consistent industrial policies were articulated for other labor-intensive sectors such as the agriculture and livestock industry, food processing and the nascent Bolivian textile industry.

These structural reforms inaugurated Bolivia's "gas era," a period characterized by greater economic dependence on this natural resource and insufficient policies for the development of private sector production that generates employment. The result was that more people worked in the informal sector in activities such as contraband, coca leaf production, commerce and retail activities with low productivity.

At the same time and without coordination with economic policies, the state promoted social policies to give the population access to public services in education, health, and other programs aimed at the poorest sectors through social investment funds. Although poverty measured by the satisfaction of basic needs decreased, poverty measured by income actually increased and social inequality remained the same.

The third period, post-neoliberalism, began in 2006 with President Evo Morales' government when soaring prices of raw materials had created a promising international context for exporters. There was much expectation at the beginning of his term that he would use the increased revenue to promote production in non-traditional sectors that employ most Bolivian workers, and thus overcome the export model of exclusive dependence on hydrocarbon income.

The model was based on concepts opposed to neoliberalism. Among these were the return to a more active state role in the economy and the recognition of juridical, political, and economic plurality. Although these ideas constituted a new and promising conceptional frame of reference, in practice rigid and opposing visions about the role of the state and the market prevailed. The excess of ideology-driven thinking—now from the left—about alternatives to the capitalist system

did not contribute to the development of a strategic vision of productive transformation and diversification of exports.

One of the main fallacies of the principled bases for President Morales' new model is the conviction that state planning should and can act unilaterally as a guiding force in economic development. There was no attempt to forge a public-private coordination; no integration of policies of technological development and innovation; no strengthening of the management of economic units; no information dissemination and training; and lack of support for forming associations to overcome the weakness of private coordination in the Bolivian economic structure.

Moreover, the macroeconomic policies of the post-neoliberal period maintained the fiscal orientation of the neoliberal period, to the detriment of a productive vision. The concept of stability restricted to inflation control and the compartmentalized view of the microeconomy and the macroeconomy still persist. Actions to promote the relationship between both dimensions of the economy never got off the ground, nor was there promotion of a macroeconomic environment favorable to private investment.

During this period, the Morales government concentrated its efforts on reforming the management of hydrocarbons under the model of nationalization. Although the levels of tax collection have been unprecedented in the past few years, the ambiguities and inconsistencies of this model have led to a slowdown in private investment, as well as a significant decrease in the proven reserves of natural gas and, consequently, of production. Thus, the sustainability of hydrocarbon production is not secure and might not ensure an adequate supply of energy for the country and an important flow of income for the state in the long run.

At the same time, in spite of its goals of overcoming an assistance-oriented vision of social policies, the government has continued with programs and projects focused on populations with the greatest degree of social exclusion and has broadened policies of direct money transfers

through different types of vouchers and temporary employment programs.

The exaggerated emphasis on natural resources has deepened the social struggle over income distribution, once more turning attention away from the policies that would lead to transform Bolivia's productive model and economy—the same policies that would establish a financial mechanism for domestic income distribution, thus softening the dependence on an inherently volatile surplus and the risks of relying on a rentier and corporatist culture, historically marked by clientelistic and corporatist relations between the state and society.

We can only conclude that none of the development models implemented in Bolivia have managed to integrate a vision of a complementary relationship between market and state that would pave the road to economic transformation and diversification. The result is the absence of intrinsic and sustained policies for improved continuation of production chains, and an increase in productivity and technological development. If we Bolivians do not widen our economic base and stimulate coordination between economic and social policies, we will never reach our goal of overcoming poverty and social inequality. We will remain subject to our dependence on natural resources. The label of "It's worth a Potosí," will stay with us.

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Bolivia's Lithium Potential

The Opportunity Deeper Beneath the Surface **BY DAVID DAEPP**

THE SOUTHWEST HIGHLANDS OF BOLIVIA HAVE offered residents one primary livelihood: salt mining. In recent years, however, a lesser known yet highly abundant element there has become the core of national economic, political and even cultural debates: lithium. Bolivia's leadership is well aware of the growing importance and desirability of this light silver-white metal. It is also aware that estimates have shown Bolivia to hold between 40 and 50 percent of the world's volume of lithium. Equipped with this information, the Evo Morales government is playing a strong hand at the negotiating table. But the real question is not how much lithium is extractable nor the timeline for extracting and refining it. The real question is "which path will lead to the greatest ben-

efit for Bolivians?"

Whether or not you understand the science behind the uses of lithium, you would probably recognize its application as the main element in the batteries that power your cell phone, GPS, scanner, laptop, iPad, iPod and many other devices. But another expanding application is fueling the growing demand for lithium: electric and hybrid vehicles. From the Toyota Prius to the Ford Fusion to the Chevrolet Volt, the Nissan Leaf and many other present and future models, hybrid and all-electric cars are stirring great interest among major players and consumers alike. China has publicly stated its aim to put one million new hybrid/electric cars on its roads in the next few years. Now picture that each of the lithium-

supplying countries represents a player at a poker table whose hand is defined by his country's abundance, viability and quality of lithium reserves. Winning a hand at this table can mean the signing of an exploration contract, the signing of a trade deal or simply the continued business from a consumer country. At this betting table, Bolivia has shown a notably aggressive and confident stance for which there are both clear arguments and counterarguments.

Almost a year ago, the Bolivian government committed \$900 million for a state-run lithium industry, according to the Strategic Plan for Lithium Industri-

Salar de Uyuni, traditionally dependent on salt mining.

alization. Bolivia plans to go it alone in the process, financing the entire chain of production, including a battery plant on Bolivian soil by 2014.

In search of a “strategic partner,” the government has rejected proposals from at least six state and private companies—including those from Japan, South Korea, and France—countries with substantial expertise in lithium battery and electric car technology.

Between 2000 and 2008, worldwide demand for lithium grew at approximately six percent annually. By the end of 2008, Bolivia had been labeled by many as the “Saudi Arabia of lithium.” This hardly earned nickname reinforced an extreme posturing of Bolivian leadership best characterized by demanding non-negotiable terms with majority ownership and guarantees for the bulk of rents from extraction to conversion. Fellow players in the lithium market, more specifically the major consuming nations, called Bolivia’s bluff—walking away from the negotiating table and leaving a significant potential untapped.

In keeping with his mantra of equitable distribution, Morales succeeded in reducing extreme poverty and making improvements in literacy rates during his first term. But many of these achievements were short-term gains from heightening central control and giving handouts to his constituency.

To apply a broader measure of national well-being, it is useful to look at the United Nations Development Programme’s Human Development Index (HDI) from 2010. HDI represents a push for a broader definition of well-being and provides a composite measure of three basic dimensions of human development: health, education and income. Bolivia’s HDI is 0.643, which gives the country a rank of 95 out of 169 countries with comparable data. Between 2005 and 2010, the HDI of the Latin America and Caribbean region increased from 0.683 to 0.706 whereas Bolivia’s HDI increased from 0.631 to 0.643—placing it below the regional average.

An unorthodox leader who once en-

joyed unheralded, steady popularity, Morales must recall that his political capital was built on the backing of Bolivians most in need. Now in times of sharp economic difficulty, the potential gains from lithium exploration could offer much needed relief if extraction, refining and distribution processes are managed effectively and in a timely fashion.

By the end of 2008, Bolivia had been labeled by many as the “Saudi Arabia of lithium.” Turning hefty claims into reality is a difficult challenge.

Compounding pre-existing challenges, recent and continued revision of global lithium reserve estimates could force Bolivia’s hand at the bargaining table. A study by the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy highlights that new estimates for Chile, Argentina, China, Afghanistan and the United States (among other countries) effectively raise global supply figures and diminish Bolivia’s importance in the lithium market, moving its world percentage down to 36%. Add to this discouraging reality that between 2005 and 2008 the United States imported 63% of its lithium from Chile and 35% from Argentina. And beyond the fact that Bolivia’s competitors have already proven their abilities by delivering to big consumer countries is the fact that Bolivia has yet to begin commercial lithium production.

To help you picture what it would take to jumpstart Bolivia’s lithium production and conversion to usable material, imagine a nearly desolate plateau 12,000 feet above sea level near the crest of the Andes in southwest Bolivia serviced only by secondary roads. This is a rough sketch of Salar de Uyuni, the (currently) undisputed single largest deposit of lithium in the world. To make the Uyuni a viable production site, all infrastructure will need to be built from scratch and both technology and skilled labor brought in from outside the area.

With this in mind, let’s look at the financing side of lithium viability in Bolivia. The Bolivian government is already committed to a \$1 billion investment plan in hydrocarbons to offset the poor results of its nationalist policies in the natural gas industry. Withdrawal from the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act program in September

2008 (which gives preference of access to the U.S. market) produced a loss of 9,000 jobs through 2009 and has forced a doubling of government subsidies to manufacturing exports (from \$8 million to \$16 million). Bolivia’s strained financial situation worsened by government decisions to impose price controls has forced the country to approach foreign investors and to test the national aversion to non-national interests.

Exploring lithium and turning the Uyuni into an effective, responsible extraction site brings with it significant, overlapping risks for the tourism industry, as well as the environment and local livelihoods. If the government-built pipelines delivering water to the pilot projects at Uyuni falter, allowing pollution into the groundwater, local farmers will suffer considerably. Turning hefty claims into reality will require an approach based on environmental, technological, infrastructure, cultural and economic analyses and a program built on the capability of firms and individuals with extensive experience and knowledge. To curb environmental risks, Morales may want to more closely involve the Bolivian Environmental Defense League (FOBOMADE) in strengthening assessments and subsequent implementation plans.

In this difficult and yet potentially opportune time, Bolivian leadership could

take a historical lesson from China and the Asian tigers to inform its approach to the lithium boon. Foreign firms should be allowed to contribute to the development of a universally agreed upon extraction, conversion and distribution strategy. Agreements must mandate and prioritize the training of locals by foreign firms, ensuring knowledge and skills transfer coupled with minimum reinvestment levels in local industries yet revisiting the current demand of 60% earnings share for the state. Bolivia should learn from the example of China, where spillover effects from foreign firms hiring and training locals have greatly strengthened local and national capacities.

Better yet, take a page from the history of DeBeers and Botswana and specifically how the insightful leadership of Seretse Khama built a mutually beneficial relationship with the commercial giant that would drive national prosperity for generations. Morales should reassess his stance and consider the far-reaching implications of continuing to overplay a weakening hand rather than taking the bold step of overcoming xenophobia with an inclusive, environmentally and economically progressive lithium strategy that could set the stage for a more prosperous, competitive Bolivia.

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Bolivian Resource Politics

Gas and Beyond **BY BRET GUSTAFSON**

ACROSS THE HILL COUNTRY BETWEEN THE ANDES and the Chaco of southeastern Bolivia, the past two decades have seen the rapid expansion of natural gas exploration, pipelines, and well sites. Here in the ancestral territory of the indigenous Guarani, gas giants like Brazil's Petrobras, France's Total, and Spain's Repsol are leading Bolivia's natural gas boom. As with other natural resources—lithium, steel, gold, zinc, tin, timber and land—gas exports offer revenue for a country of deep inequality and high poverty. In the case of gas, revenue comes largely from Brazil, the industrial giant next door that consumes around 70% of Bolivia's production. The rest is divided roughly evenly between exports to Argentina and Bolivia's domestic market—cars, electricity generation and household use. Gas royalties flowing into the treasury have generated a fiscal surplus and a huge dollar reserve. Yet the resource boom also threatens environmental degradation, political volatility and renewed export dependence. Furthermore, with many resources lying under their territories, indigenous organizations confront new challenges in their pursuit of self-determination.

Gas is at the center of these national resource struggles. The demand for the

nationalization of gas was central in the "Gas War" that led to the ouster of the free-market regime of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada in 2003. Embracing this popular demand, Evo Morales and the MAS surged to the fore in 2005 and began to roll back free-market neoliberalism and move toward state-led development. Yet despite the shrill cries of conservatives, Bolivia's was a modest nationalization. The government did not expropriate foreign firms, but pushed for a renegotiation of contracts. This brought royalty rates into line with global norms. After recouping their expenses, multinational companies now transfer higher percentages of gas rents to the state. Bolivia is attempting to rebuild its state oil and gas company, YPFB, yet dependence on foreign capital and technology means that multinational firms remain as central actors. Contrary to arguments that nationalization would lead to divestment, multinational firms continue to flock eagerly to Bolivia to dig holes in pursuit of resource wealth.

On the social side, the era of gas has led to new anti-poverty efforts. Cash transfer programs—modest measures

Sign warns about explosive gas.

embraced by entities like the World Bank—now use gas revenues to make periodic payments to the elderly and schoolchildren and to encourage neo- and post-natal care for expectant mothers. Regional governments in gas-rich regions that receive higher royalty percentages have launched their own social programs. For instance, in Tarija, the governor instituted regional health insurance, plans for urgent employment that pay rural communities to work on local infrastructure or agricultural projects, and food supplements for the elderly. Urban households have seen increased installation of domestic gas lines. This is a much desired shift in a country where trucks historically cruised through neighborhoods to deliver *garrafas* (LPG tanks), and insecurity of supply was a constant concern. Automobiles are being refitted to burn natural gas and taxi drivers now reflect on the comparative benefits of natural gas (cheaper and good for daytime use) to gasoline (better for evening driving and cleaning out the carburetor). While significant, these policies to promote domestic consumption do not radically transform the underlying structure of a narrow-based export economy.

Gas also brings risks that the practice of politics is overwhelmed by fights over gas rents. This rentier logic pervades political discourse, as different groups (regional and municipal governments, indigenous peoples, the military, the state oil company) argue about their rights to “percentages” (*porcentajes*) of gas royalties. This has paralleled the intensification of regionalism in the east—tinged with anti-indigenous racism—in opposition to national citizenship and the indigenous resurgence. Indigenous peoples clamor for rights to consultation, compensation and a voice in deciding whether and how extractive economies proceed in their territories. The public debate also raises the question of whether Bolivia might add value to its gas through industrialization, but the political immediacy of gas struggles and the national priority to capitalize

the state through gas revenues tends to overwhelm long term planning.

In places like Guarani country, the apparent wealth generated by gas is juxtaposed against the ongoing poverty of rural peoples in a state and economy that are still heavily “colonial” in structure. Gas concentrates wealth in urban centers, without radically transforming rural lives. The government has embraced talk of a plurinational state and decolonization, but for peoples like the Guarani, rural poverty persists alongside the fenced off enclaves of Petrobras and Repsol. The establishment of an Indigenous Development Fund that receives its own percentage has not yet made a substantive difference. As Guarani say, “We live on top of the gas, but we still cook with firewood, our schools are a disaster, and our territories are still occupied by others.”

On a national level, Bolivia is experiencing contradictions shared by other exporters of energy resources, which often subsidize importation and internal consumption of fuels like gasoline, diesel fuel and liquified petroleum gas (LPG), products for which Bolivia lacks sufficient refining and separation capacity (for condensing liquid fuels from gas). Subsidized LPG is smuggled to Peru and sold for profit, leading to gas shortages in a gas-rich country. In addition, last December the government tried to encourage foreign companies to extract and refine more oil by reducing subsidies on gasoline. This *gasolinazo* would have raised fuel prices by 80%. It was met with mass protest that almost toppled Evo, and the government beat a rapid retreat, especially since many of the protesters came from his support base.

Many indigenous movements are avid MAS supporters, but tensions are increasing between those who seek wholesale extraction and those who prioritize indigenous rights. Pressures to allow access to foreign companies have created new challenges for indigenous organizations. Mining generates conflicts between local communities and the state in the high Andes. Steel production in the east has mobilized conflicts between

indigenous organizations and regional elites. Hydroelectric projects promoted by Brazil on Bolivia’s northeast frontier are opposed by environmentalists and local peoples. Oil development in the Amazon creates friction as well. Brazil has also promoted new highway projects in Bolivia that transect indigenous territories and are seen as grave threats by indigenous peoples. This is all paradoxical, given the expectations that Evo Morales’ election would lead to more robust indigenous rights. For indigenous movements, the struggle continues.

From the birds’-eye view, other processes may overwhelm the aspirations of Bolivians to pursue a new economic model. Powerful consumer countries see Bolivia as a provider country and a transit corridor. Historically the United States has been the imperialist *du jour*, but Brazil is now invoked as the new empire. Brazil suggests that its growth helps Bolivia, but current trends primarily favor capital accumulation in Brazil. The rise of the global south and the turn away from free-market piracy toward state-led redistributive economies is certainly promising. Yet the new “extractivism” has yet to come to terms with its own colonial roots, and the effects fall heavily on peoples cursed by the geological history under their lands. Rural peoples and environments have long been sacrificed in the name of national progress. Whether the new era will mark a change remains to be seen.

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Reciprocal Agreements for Water

An environmental management revolution in the Santa Cruz valleys

BY NIGEL ASQUITH

SEPTEMBER 21, 1967. A HOT WIND SWEEPS TUMBLEWEED through the village of Alto Seco. Women peer from behind drawn shutters, to catch a glimpse of the visitors who arrived earlier in the day. They had walked slowly into the village, carrying immense backpacks. The men made camp in an abandoned house next to a waterhole, and during the evening talked to a group of 15 amazed and silent peasants: “The government has abandoned Alto Seco: you have no healthcare, no paved road, and no clean water.” “But don’t worry” said Comandante Che Guevara. “We’re here to help. We’re communists.”

September 21, 2010. The same hot wind still sweeps tumbleweed through Alto Seco. Little has changed: villagers greet visitors with the same guarded suspicion, and Alto Seco still has no healthcare, no paved road, and no clean water. “But don’t worry” said Maria Teresa Vargas, the leader of the latest group of visitors. “We’re here to help. We’re conservationists.”

Claudio Gutiérrez could do with the help. With each passing year, he sees fewer rain clouds above his farm. Rainfall has halved in the 50 years since Che and his guerrillas passed through the Santa Cruz valleys, and with current rates of deforestation, Claudio expects that in five years

the Masicuri River and his spinach fields will be dry all winter. Claudio’s ten cows, his only other income source, struggle to find water. They spend most of their time close to the temporary streams: compacting soil, eroding the stream banks, polluting the water and grazing on the few remaining forest tree seedlings.

The upland forests of the Santa Cruz valleys are also increasingly threatened by illegal land incursions. Encouraged by farmers’ unions and local leaders, landless migrants from the altiplano are entering the region to clear water-producing cloud forests for agriculture. Deforestation and forest degradation in the Mosqueras and Vilcas watersheds of Cruceño Valleys increased by almost 500% between 1986 and 2004, while downstream flooding over the same period caused \$250 million in damages. In 2006, floods in the lower Rio Grande destroyed more than 250,000 acres of soy and other crops.

Except where they suffer intense grazing pressure, the eastern slopes of the Andes support some of the world’s most biodiverse forests. Bordering the northern edge of the Santa Cruz valleys is Amboró National Park, home to 10% of all the bird species on planet earth. The 100 square mile Los Negros Valley supports 235 resident bird species, almost a quarter of

the number found in the whole of North America. These forests have other uses too: the region provides drinking water to the 1.5 million residents of Santa Cruz, and supplies irrigation water and flood protection to the fertile lowlands where soy producers drive Bolivia’s agricultural export economy.

Deforestation and cattle-grazing—a tragedy of commons exacerbated by climate change—are fundamentally changing the Santa Cruz valleys. The valleys are fast losing their ability to provide food, water and other environmental services to their residents, while the farmers are as poor as they were when Che failed to persuade them to rise up and revolt. Water scarcity has led to reduced agricultural yields, and of the 3,000 children in the region, almost a sixth spend significant time out of school, suffering from diarrhea caused by drinking water contaminated by their families’ own cows.

In early 2003 in the municipality of Pampagrande, in the small village of Santa Rosa de Lima, a quiet revolution began. At a meeting facilitated by a non-governmental organization, Fundación Natura Bolivia, five downstream irrigators negotiated a groundbreaking deal with their upstream counterparts. “For every 25 acres of forest you conserve for a year,” Andrés Rojas told



Serafin Carrasco, “we will give you one beehive and training on how to produce and sell honey.” And so the first reciprocal agreement for water was struck.

By 2010, the initial five Santa Rosa farmers protecting 1,235 acres had mushroomed to 63 families conserving 10,000 acres. The scheme had spread to neighboring Comarapa and Mairana municipalities, which protected another 12,000 acres through conservation contracts. The crucial innovation, though, is not just that upstream farmers have signed contracts to conserve their forests. What really is noteworthy is that the downstream water users are paying for the schemes. In 2007, residents of Los Negros, Comarapa and Mairana voted to increase their water tariffs by 9%, 15% and 7% respectively.

In Comarapa, for example, every \$20 invested by Fundación Natura Bolivia and its donors is matched by \$30 of local funds, which together purchase a beehive to compensate for conservation of 5 acres of water-producing forest for five years. Honey revenue per acre of forest conserved is \$10 per year, so *within five years the landowner has not only used the \$20 of donor funds to conserve five acres of forest, but has also sold \$50 worth of honey.* Forest conservation and watershed management have thus been transformed from unenforceable top-down impositions by central government, to negotiated agreements among participating equals.

While the details of each municipal scheme differ, the basic concept is the same everywhere. Three parties sign a ten-year agreement: the water co-operative opens a separate bank account, into which revenues from the new “environ-

mental services” tariff are channeled, the municipal government agrees to annual purchase of beehives, fruit tree seedlings, irrigation pipes or other development tools, to be given in compensation for forest conservation activities, and Fundación Natura invests cash from its donors, and provides technical support to get the scheme up and running.

Maria Teresa Vargas of Natura explains: “the model is cheap, efficient and transparent. Each party pays its own costs, including technician salaries, fuel and other expenses, so that every single dollar that enters the water fund is invested in upstream conservation. The accounts of the water co-operatives are open for all members to see, so there is simply no space for mismanagement or misappropriation of funds”.

In 2007 the concept was scaled up a level when Rubén Costas, the Governor of the Department of Santa Cruz, created a new 1.8 million-acre protected area to conserve the forested headwaters of the Santa Cruz valleys. The Rio Grande-Valles Cruceños Protected Area filled a hole in Bolivia’s conservation map, creating a biodiversity corridor between Amboró and Iñaño National Parks, and, like a virus, the water fund concept replicated into Moro Moro, Vallegrande, Postrervalle, Samaipata and Pucara municipalities.

In Pucara, close to Alto Seco, Claudio Gutiérrez took some convincing. “Visitors have been coming and going from Pucara since before the time of Che,” he asserted. “They come with so many promises, and always end up providing nothing.” But once the Pucara hydroelectric cooperative and municipal govern-

Left to right: Small streams from inside Amboro National Park feed the Los Negros River and provide important irrigation water; cloud forests; the Los Negros River affected by upstream deforestation exacerbated by climate change; agriculture in the middle of the Los Negros watershed.

ment offered Claudio six beehives and training and equipment for honey production—a value of more than \$600—in exchange for the conservation of 75 acres of his water-producing cloud forests, he was converted. Claudio is slowly convincing the rest of his family, starting with his brothers Jesús, Carlos and José, that the scheme can also work for them.

A more important question for Natura Bolivia is whether the local water funds achieve their stated goal. “While it all sounds great on paper,” notes Maria Teresa Vargas, “we haven’t yet proven that these funds really are catalyzing new conservation in areas which otherwise would be degraded or deforested, and if local people really have received benefits that would not have occurred without the funds.”

This lack of knowledge about the impact of conservation activities is not unique to the Santa Cruz water funds. Across the globe, conservation initiatives large and small have rarely been subject to scientific analysis of their effectiveness. Instead, conservationists have depended on intuition and anecdote to guide the design of investments. This makes little sense: as Paul Ferraro and Subhrendu Pattanyak suggested in 2006 (in *PLOS Biology*): “If we want to ensure that donors’ limited resources make a difference, we must accept that testing hypotheses

about what policies and interventions protect environmental services requires the same scientific rigor and state-of-the-art methods that we invest in testing ecological hypotheses.”

Understanding of the ecological aspects of conservation rests, in part, on well-designed empirical studies. In contrast, our understanding of the way in which policies can help protect biodiversity rests primarily on anecdotal monitoring of projects that were not even

assessed the diversity of beetles and amphibians in each community’s forests. Fundación Natura technicians then returned to all 120 communities to report back on results of the data collection process; to explain to the farmers how current land practices such as extensive cattle grazing are destroying the environment and their own water supplies; and to demonstrate the economic viability of alternative productive activities such as honey and fruit production, and ratio-

Harvard’s Sustainability Science Program helped develop an evaluation to show if direct incentives for land and water conservation were effective.

designed to answer the question, “Does this intervention work better than no intervention at all?” Sadly, we thus have no idea if the billions of dollars invested in conservation in the last decades have actually achieved anything.

In 2009, Fundación Natura Bolivia approached Kelsey Jack at Harvard’s Sustainability Science Program to try to develop a program evaluation: a study that could show, once and for all, whether giving farmers like Claudio Gutiérrez direct incentives to conserve their land could achieve cost-effective conservation and development. Jack and Harvard colleagues then spent a year and half with Natura figuring out how such an experiment could best be implemented. Following the logic of the natural sciences, the analysis is straightforward in its design. However, it is costly, complex, and slow in its implementation.

To establish a baseline, every single family in the Rio Grande-Valles Cruceños Protected Area initially completed a 15-page questionnaire about their socioeconomic situation, their perceptions about the environment and the role of various institutions in their lives. At the same time, researchers measured water quality in, above, and below each community, mapped vegetation cover, and

nalization of cattle ranching.

In August 2011, the experiment itself finally began. Through a simple lottery conducted in front of local officials, 60 communities—half of the communities in the area—were selected to receive funding for reciprocal agreements. All farmers in the selected communities who own land within 300 feet of streams and rivers are eligible to receive in-kind payments—i.e. fruit trees or bee boxes—at the equivalent rate of \$2 per acre of water-producing forest conserved for a year.

Farmers in the other 60 communities will receive nothing other than information about the state of the environment, and follow up data collection will indicate whether there is more effective conservation in the sites where compensation is paid, and if these payments have had an effect on local livelihoods and perceptions about the environment and local institutions. Once the experimental results are in, farmers in the 60 “non-treated” communities will then become eligible for the scheme.

Critics of such program evaluations assert that they are unfair (“How can you deny project benefits to some communities and not others?”) and unethical (“How can researchers justify ‘playing god’ with people’s lives?”). Harvard’s

Kelsey Jack explains:

“All conservation and development project face financial constraints, yet we actually don’t know if many popular interventions work or not. There is no better way of assessing whether an intervention actually works than through a randomized experiment, and, given that project resources are finite, there is no fairer way to allocate funds to communities than in a random draw. Our methodology randomly assigns which communities receive the project first, and we use this ‘experiment’ to then scientifically assess if the project actually works or not. What is increasingly clear is that effective conservation and development requires evidence about what works, including the sometimes surprising ways that potential beneficiaries respond to the proposed interventions.”

Just ask Che. His communist revolution in the Santa Cruz valleys ground to an abrupt halt—mainly because he didn’t understand his audience’s needs, and they weren’t convinced that he could help them. Perhaps Natura Bolivia’s conservation effort, led by people from the region, addressing a recognized local problem, will have more success. “We will keep fighting to protect the people’s water supplies,” asserts Maria Teresa Vargas of Natura: “*Hasta la victoria siempre.*” Unlike the events of 1967, a rigorous experimental methodology will determine whether Natura’s revolution really is victorious or not.

Nigel Asquith was a 2009-2010 Giorgio Ruffolo Fellow in Sustainability Science at Harvard Kennedy School. While at Harvard, he helped develop a research program to assess the efficiency of the Natura Bolivia’s work in the Santa Cruz valleys. His research was supported by the Sustainability Science Program at Harvard, the European Commission, the MacArthur Foundation, and the UK’s Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation Program funded by DFID, ESRC and NERC. Contact: nigelasquith@yahoo.com.



FOCUS ON EDUCATION

Indigenous education has been a right in Bolivia since the 1952 Revolution. Warisata, the first indigenous school, dates back to 1931. Yet, with Bolivia's new education law, that education is being widely extended, and for the first time, all Bolivians are learning indigenous languages and cultures.

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We Want Public Education!

Education on the Agenda of Bolivian Indigenous Peoples Movement

BY LUZ JIMÉNEZ QUISPE

“WE WANT PUBLIC EDUCATION” HAS BEEN A decades-long call among the Bolivian indigenous peoples’ public demands. It represents thousands of voices, thousands of women and men looking for the right to have access to school. We had to organize our communities to request schools and teachers from the national governments. For endless years the indigenous leaders traveled to the cities asking for one teacher or a new school, over and over again. We had to bring gifts to the authorities in order to gain one teacher for our communities. Sometimes our needs for education became good business for bad authorities. But today, our past requests are legal rights. This article tells about the indigenous movement that achieved intercultural bilingual education for everybody in the country.

WE WANT PUBLIC EDUCATION!

The following story illustrates the challenges that confronted our quest for education. Alberta Quispe (my mother) was an indigenous woman, Aymara and Bolivian, who was born before 1952. At that time indigenous people did not have any right to an education or to citizenship. Indigenous men and women were predestined to be workers, employees, and servants. They were considered incapable of abstract thought, or understanding civilization and modernity. Alberta dreamed of going to school all her life to learn to read and write. But she was excluded from receiving an education by an institutionalized and racist national political system. However, the girl had a thirst for knowledge that went beyond the limitations of history, and she learned from the knowledge of Andean Aymara

women. In the cities, Alberta saw the causes of the indigenous women’s situation and subjugation as they remained poor and illiterate. This led Alberta to become involved in social movements and in the struggles for education.

In the 1980s, Bolivia’s government issued Decree 21060, which threatened to privatize education, and this in turn stimulated social movement to defend public education. At that time, Alberta was living in El Alto city, a municipality that connects La Paz with the altiplano. She had been diagnosed with cancer, but all her thoughts were concentrated on finding a good education for her children and grandchildren; she understood the importance of education for all indigenous

An indigenous child exhibits a prized piece of candy.

people, for indigenous women, and for the entire Bolivian society. The following is an excerpt from the narrative of Alberta's last experience organizing for education:

Yesterday we had a meeting at the neighborhood council. We were informed by the federation (FEJUVE) about the Decree. We were told we should defend public education by marching. Nobody wanted to move, then I decided to speak and I said: I am an old woman. I am sick and tired but I will take to the streets with the leaders to defend the education of our *wawas* (children). Where are the men? Will you go with us or not? Then, one by one they began to join the march until finally everybody decided to go. After finishing the meeting we all went to the streets. On the way we met people from other areas and neighborhoods. I did not have time to change into my city clothes and I thought: What will my friends think if they see me looking like a country bumpkin? But we had to keep walking. Reaching the city, our social movement caused chaos, the cars could not move and people began to be angry and upset. Then I heard two *chotas* (city women) say: these ignorant Indians bother us! I turned my head to the crowd and shouted aloud: Yes, we are ignorant Indians! So, what do we want?! And they all shouted: Public Education! (La Paz, Alberta Quispe, 1986)

Yes, education had been on the agenda of indigenous peoples for hundreds of years. Education was seen as a right and an opportunity to become citizens. Indigenous women felt the effects most. According to National Statistical Institute (INE, 2001), in Bolivia the female illiteracy rate is 19.35 percent while the male is 6.94 percent. In the rural areas female illiteracy is 37.91 percent, male is 14.42 percent. In the last five years literacy campaigns have lowered female illiteracy rates.

PUBLIC POLICIES FOR INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

Since the National Revolution (1952) indigenous peoples in Bolivia have had the right to education. Education was consid-

ered the main instrument for consolidating the country. However, it was also used to assimilate the population. Local languages were to be used only for the purpose of teaching the dominant language, Spanish. This educational goal was reinforced in the Educational Code of 1955.

Article 115 - The literacy action will predominate in areas where indigenous languages, using the native language as a vehicle for learning immediately from Castilian, as a necessary factor of national linguistic integration. To this effect will be adopted phonetic alphabets that save the greatest possible similarity with the Castilian language alphabet (emphasis added).

Article 120 - The fundamental objectives of rural education are:

1. Develop good habits in the farmers' life, with regard to their eating habits, hygiene and health, shelter, clothing and personal and social behavior.
2. Promote functional literacy training through the use and mastery of the basic tools of learning: reading, writing and arithmetic.
3. Teach farmers to be good agricultural workers, trained in the use of renewable systems of crops and animal farming.
4. Encourage and develop their technical vocational skills by teaching the basics of rural industries and handicrafts in their region, enabling the earning of a living through productive manual labour.
5. Cultivate love of the traditions, folklore and national popular applied art by developing their aesthetic sense. Prevent and eradicate the practices of alcoholism, the use of coca, superstitions and prejudices prevailing in agriculture, through science education.
6. Develop the farmers' civic awareness so they can participate actively in the process of economic and cultural development of the nation. (National Educational Code 1955)

The National Educational Code of 1955 was designed to assimilate indig-

enous people into the Bolivian mainstream to benefit the dominant class.

The indigenous people in Bolivia developed diverse strategies to resist and persist. After 1955 many indigenous started to go to school, some to the Superior Normal Institutes (teachers) and a few to the public universities. Even though the indigenous professionals were taught from the assimilation perspective, they used their knowledge to help the indigenous movement. The first Aymara students were present at the emblematic indigenous meeting in the Andes and help to write a most important document during the military dictatorship in the 1970's, as follows:

Tiwanaku Manifesto (1973)

We, Quechua and Aymara farmers, just as members of other native cultures of the country, feel economically exploited and culturally and politically oppressed. In Bolivia there has not been an integration of cultures but rather only a layering and domination, maintaining us in the lowest and most exploited stratum in the social pyramid.

The education [we receive] only seeks to convert the Indian into a species of mixed person without definition or personality, but it also pursues his assimilation into the western and capitalist culture.

Neither our virtues nor our own vision of the world have been respected [...] our culture and our mentality have not been respected.

The document also declared that despite the lack of respect, indigenous knowledge was alive.

In order to construct a model of education rooted in indigenous knowledge and wisdom the indigenous professionals looked to the past and studied the Ayllu Warisata School that was active from 1931 to 1940. The school emerged from the spirit and philosophy of clandestine schools that began in 1905 in order to promote the freedom and autonomy of indigenous communities. Aymara caci-que Avelino Siñani and teacher Elizardo Pérez spearheaded the *Warisata* School,

which promoted certain values and visions about education and the Bolivian state. Students at the school divided their days between productive work, community service, and classes. A council of *Amawt'as* (Aymara wise people) assumed responsibility for decisions about

included 21 members from social, educational, and indigenous peoples' organizations. I was a member of this historical process and I can testify to how hard it was to achieve final agreements. Every sector presented its educational political agenda. The committee collected the

cana, Tapiete, Toromona, Uru-Chipaya, Weenhayek, Yaminawa, Yuki, Yurakare and Zamuco.

II. The plurinational and departmental governments should use at least two official languages. One of them should be Spanish, and the other will be decided taking into account the use, convenience, circumstances, needs and preferences of the population as a whole or the territory in question. Other autonomies should use the languages of their territories, and one of them must be Spanish.

The new education law represents a veritable cultural revolution and a huge challenge for people in the government and people in the community.

school life. This experience was quickly replicated in other indigenous communities in the Andes and in the Amazon. In 1940 the Warisata School was closed by the national government because it was seen as a threat to the status quo.

THE EDUCATIONAL PROPOSAL WOVEN BY AMAZONIAN AND ANDEAN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

"We want education" is still the indigenous women's demand in Bolivia. However, the question is: what kind of education? The answer is not simple or easy. The experiences of indigenous peoples have opened a complex and diverse scenery that demands a new educational model, new curricula, and new vision about Bolivia.

All of Bolivia's indigenous people came together in a huge organization (2006) called the Indigenous Block with representatives from the Amazon and the Andes. Led by Indigenous Educational Councils (CEPOs), the Indigenous Block drew up an education proposal after a wide consultation with all indigenous communities in the country. The result was the book entitled *A Native Indigenous Education Aiming towards Ideological, Political, Territorial and Cultural Self-determination*. This book was the most important input for designing the new law on education in Bolivia in 2006, under the presidency of Evo Morales.

The Ministry of Education organized a committee to write the new education law in March of 2006. The committee

proposals and gathered educational experiences from different institutions. The final version of the new education law was named "Avelino Sinani and Elizardo Pérez" document in tribute to the pioneers of the Ayllu Warisata School.

In 2006, the National Congress on Education reviewed and approved the draft of the Law of the New Bolivian Education. The bill was presented to the president and then to the national parliament. Finally, it was approved in December of 2010.

The educational law was written during a time of structural changes in Bolivia, drawn up before the new constitution. However, since a few participants in the design of the educational law were members of the Constituent Assembly, some articles from the New Constitution overlap with the new educational law.

The following are some articles from the each of the documents that shows how much the indigenous people achieved in the area of language policies and education.

National Constitution

Article 5. I. State Official languages are Spanish and all indigenous languages which are Aymara, Araona, Baure, Bé-siro, Canichana, Cavineño, Cayubaba, Chacobo, Chiman, Esse Ejja, Guarani, Guarasua'we, Guayayu, Itonama, Leco, Machajuyai-Kallawaya, Machineri, Maropa, Mojeño-Trinitario, Mojeño-Ignaciano, Mosestén, Movima, Moré, Pacawara, Puquina, Quechua, Sirionó, Ta-

NEW EDUCATION LAW

These changes in Bolivian law will be controlled by the social organization and Indigenous Educational Councils (CEPOs.) This control covers the entire national educational system, including universities. CEPOs have specific functions such as participating in formulating educational policies, and ensuring the implementation and enforcement of intracultural, intercultural and multilingual education from planning to evaluation.

Indigenous adults are organized and connected with the educational process in their communities or schools in the cities. Various elders were also called to contribute their knowledge, so that knowledge from many indigenous communities will now become part of the mandatory national curriculum. Therefore, Bolivia will have a national curriculum that will provide intercultural education to all the citizens. Also, every indigenous nation will have the opportunity to write its own curriculum, using its specific knowledge, time, space, didactical process, and criteria for evaluation, etc. This is a veritable cultural revolution and a huge challenge for people in the government and people in the communities. It is a historic opportunity to assemble much knowledge together, including the indigenous knowledge.

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Warisata

A Historical Footnote **BY BROOKE LARSON**

THIS YEAR, ON AUGUST 2, BOLIVIA WILL COM-memorate the 80th anniversary of the founding of the *escuela-ayllu* of Warisata, an extraordinary intercultural experiment in indigenous schooling that flourished between 1931 and 1940 on the high plateau (*altiplano*) in the shadows of the volcanic peak of Illampu. On that day, the usual civic rituals and official remembrances—school pageants, TV documentaries, and editorial page reflections—will mark the school’s founding and burnish its iconic status in the public memory. For some older Bolivians, this commemoration will also signal the passing of the last members of the founding generation of Aymara peasants and white teachers, who carved out an emancipatory Indian school in a hostile social environment, and whose testimonials of

struggle and repression serve as the last living link to this past.

Memory and myth aside for the moment, the documentary record accords Warisata a pioneering place—not only in Bolivia, but in Latin America’s history of popular and indigenous school projects. That larger pan-American history of school reform burst into public consciousness in the 1960s, when Brazilian educator Paulo Freire began to popularize his educational philosophy, known as “the pedagogy of the oppressed.” But long before Freire began preaching his program of adult education, a humble rural school, located in an Indian village named Warisata, had been crafted out of intercultural dialogue and hands-on collaboration between a few white educators, who had ventured into the region,

and Aymara peasants who put their faith, labor and trust in the school project.

The school, which eventually drew hundreds of students and families from surrounding villages, was planted squarely within the matrix of the traditional kin-based, landed community (or, *ayllu*). Working along side the school’s teachers and director, Aymara communal work parties (*minkas*) baked adobe bricks and raised the school building, donated lands in exchange for the education of their children, built an aqueduct to channel Illampu’s glacial lake water to the school complex, and tended the school’s fields, flocks, and orchards that provisioned the school children (including its large boarding population). The school’s intercultural egalitarian ethos (based on traditional norms of reciprocal exchange, or *ayni*)

also governed the school's administrative and judicial workings. An Aymara parliament of *amawt'as* (wise elders and counselors) participated in policy making, governance, arbitration, and discipline, and the rustic parliament was also turned into a forum of Aymara oratory, debate, and discussion about broader social issues and grievances that burdened indigenous people.

The prosaic workings of this school surprised many white visitors to the school, because it breached society's prevailing racial-caste norms that proscribed hard manual labor to white men (particularly men of letters and educators) and, at the same time, presumed Indians incapable of oratory and rational thought—much less of participatory democracy and self-governance. It was not uncommon in the late 1930s for a visiting journalist or politician to recall in utter amazement the dignity and eloquence of Aymara *amawt'as* speaking before an assembled group of Indians about the issues of the day, or to remark on the extraordinary “enthusiasm” that Indians demonstrated in their concern and participation in matters of education. Equally impressive to foreign educators was the school's innovative curriculum (blending practical agro-industrial skills with academic work, and often using bilingual methods of instruction). The curriculum, driven by an ideal of practical knowledge tailored to the material needs and cultural values of the Aymara community, was also responsive to the fierce desire of Aymara communities to acquire new forms of instrumental knowledge or cultural capital (access to the dominant Spanish language, alphabetic literacy, bureaucratic, historical, and legal knowledge, etc.) to press their claims against hostile landlords in Bolivian courts of law or government ministries.

The fact that this community-based school was turning into a wellspring of Aymara civic knowledge and activism was, by itself, sufficient to turn it into a target of landlord reprisal and persecution by local political authorities. But it was the scope and intensity

of Warisata's influence—the fact that it eventually irradiated political and institutional influence across a wide swath of territory and attracted multitudes of indigenous “pilgrims” to its festivals and assemblies—that put it on the landlords' psychic map as a major irritant. Just as the school's fame was spreading beyond Bolivia to Peru, Mexico, and the United States (which sent streams of visitors to observe this innovative school), Warisata became a source of bitter debate among educators, intellectuals, and politicians at home. Bolivia's conservative aristocracy accused Warisata's teachers and *amawt'as* of preaching racial hatred, walling off the Indian school from national society, and stirring up the restive peasantry across the altiplano. But the school also came under attack from a faction of progressive educators, who denigrated the school's underlying philosophy of cultural pluralism and instead pushed forward an assimilationist agenda, aimed at converting Aymara (and Quechua) Indians into generic (culturally “mestizo”) *campesinos*. When the oligarchy suddenly returned to power in 1940, the assimilationists seized this moment to strike. In a matter of months, Bolivian public education was revamped (at least in theoretical terms) as the state's arm of Indian assimilation. Warisata was invaded and transformed. Bo-



Some indigenous members of the Amauta Parliament (1931).

livia's unique, decade-long experiment in communal schooling was crushed and publically reviled.

Given its dramatic history, it is hardly surprising that Warisata's afterlife has been a history of conflictive memories and antagonistic narratives. At worst, the political struggle for memory has devolved into caricatures of the school in its heyday: its critics represented Warisata as a mortal threat to the nation (which was then rescued by the oligarchic elites from imminent race war or revolution by abolishing the *escuela-ayllu*); while its defenders fashioned Warisata into an Andean socialist utopia, which was just beginning to liberate the Indian from the long nightmare of internal colonialism (before Bolivia's reactionary elites took the school down and snuffed out the peaceful process of Indian emancipation). The bitter lesson in 1940 was not lost on Warisata's champions: there could be no emancipation of the Indian without revolutionary change.

After the 1952 National Revolution, Warisata's currency began to rise in official memory, but the school was unmoored from its indigenous origins and turned into a nationalist symbol, consonant with the project of the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR) to remake Indians into *campesinos* within a unifying mestizo nation. On this new public stage, the school's past acquired a new significance. It became an emblem of the government's heralded Agrarian Reform policy, which was proclaimed to the nation and the world in the peasant town of Ucareña (Cochabamba) on August 2, 1953. From then on, the official history and memory of Warisata were eclipsed by (and conflated with) the post-revolutionary state's tactical decision to turn that date into a state holiday commemorating the MNR-led revolution and its 1953 land reform. The event was part of the state's new nationalist narrative that fashioned the ideal *campesino* into the embodiment of rural progress and national unity. All things Indian, including the deep ethnic politics and conflictive history of Warisata, were to be banished (or else, sanitized as na-

tional folklore) from political discourse in the post-revolutionary era of cultural nationalism. Meanwhile the state's 1955 Educational Reform code mapped out a curriculum that would spread schools, but suppress indigenous languages, histories, and identities. Silence and forgetting wove the subtext of the MNR's newly revamped national holiday heralding the end of the Bolivian latifundio, while projecting a modernizing agrarian narrative devoid of Indians.

Over the next two decades, there were occasional excursions into the past, and Warisata would crop up again in the news or in public commemoration, especially with the passing of another decade. A few stalwarts, men like Elizardo Pérez (co-founder and director) and Carlos Salazar Mostajo (teacher in the late 1930s and later a writer, artist, and journalist), did their best to bring to life, though their own memoirs and stories, the history of sacrifices and hardships, as well as the triumphs and achievements, that went into the making of the *escuela-ayllu*. On the negative side, Warisata continued to be the target of pedagogical criticism of its alleged failings.

Warisata's resurgence as a meaningful landmark in Bolivian public history came only in the 1970s and 1980s, when a new generation of Aymara and Quechua activists, scholars and intellectuals began to reengage the past and, through their own scholarly writing and teaching, began to unearth the hidden narratives of indigenous-centered history that had been so long buried under official memory. As indigenous cultural values became the driving force of rural and urban mobilizations across the altiplano, and as trade union leaders and university youth began to attack the structural racism and inequality that had marginalized most native people, a few Aymara students began to rediscover and rescue an alternative collective past. Warisata's activation as a powerful indigenous symbol, and its growing mystique in the public memory, were part of this larger political and cultural shift going on in Bolivia at the time, as its indigenous majority (including,

by the 1990s, tropical lowland peoples) staged protest actions and began pushing cultural and economic agendas that included a fundamental challenge to Bolivia's system of public education. In the search for cultural revitalization and empowerment within a reimagined multicultural nation, Aymara-Quechua leaders looked to the past for inspiration and guidance. They found it, at least in part, in the buried history of Aymara communities' struggles for the right to communal lands and village primary schools that took place in the early part of the 20th century, when most *peones* were still forbidden to learn how to read and write. In the late 1980s and early 1990s local scholars (including Roberto Choque Canqui, Carlos Mamani, and a collective of young historians [popularly known as THOA]) fanned out across the countryside to collect oral testimonies and dig into provincial archives. They harvested rich material showing that, in many regions, rural Indian communities had a deep, semi-clandestine history of organizing and subsidizing rural literacy schools in the void of absent state support and in the context of local colonial-styled violence. These scholars also pieced together narratives that re-situated the origins of Warisata in this larger history of Aymara communities and their emancipatory struggles for lands, schools, and justice under successive oligarchic regimes. This new research revealed, for example, the foundational role that Avelino Siñani, an Aymara literacy teacher, had played in the mobilization of communal peasant support for Warisata in 1931, and in the public defense of the school's integrity before hostile state authorities in 1941, just hours before he died.

Within this shifting political and intellectual climate, then, Warisata became a wellspring of collective memory and inspiration for many indigenous scholars, teachers, and activists in search of decolonizing agendas for Bolivian school reform and other areas of social life. Long forgotten or discredited as a failed "utopian" experiment in Indian schooling, in the mid-1990s Warisata finally found

a place of honor in the nation's evolving collective memory, at the very moment Bolivia began reinventing itself as a plurilingual multiethnic nation. But, in September 2003, Warisata became the scene of military violence against striking students and peasants. That shocking turn of events—the unprecedented bloody clash on the school's sacred ground—set off a series of political events that eventually forced President Gonzalo Sánchez de Losada into exile the following month.

In Bolivia's current political climate, there is an understandable sense of urgency to plumb the past for knowledge and inspiration in the ongoing search for a genuinely pluralist national culture and educational curriculum—one capable of nourishing Bolivia's rich heritage of ethnic and ecological diversity. Indeed, Luz Jimenez Quispe's article in *ReVista* charts the contours of a "cultural revolution" unfolding in Bolivia today, which is centered on the education reforms (aptly named after the co-founders of the Warisata *escuela-ayllu*), which were ratified by the congress in December, 2010. This new education reform law is driven by the principles of cultural and epistemological pluralism and by a decentralized and participatory mode of organization. Given the state's chronic institutional weakness and historic tendency to hype educational reform as the panacea of all things ill, only time will tell how this effort plays out. There is no denying, however, that the 2010 Education Reform represents the symbolic relocation of indigenous peoples at the very core of Bolivian cultural politics and nationality. Collective memories of Warisata, on its 80th anniversary, surely will have deep resonance for many of today's indigenous activists and educators, in search of a usable past.

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Bolivia's Indigenous Universities

Building Community **BY MARCIA MANDEPORA**

ALONG WITH DEMANDS FOR TERRITORY AND self-determination to redress their historic marginality, the indigenous peoples' push for higher education has found traction with the election of Evo Morales. In 2008 the government launched the Indigenous University of Bolivia (UNIBOL) with sites in three ethnolinguistic regions. The Aymara UNIBOL is in Warisata, near La Paz, where the country's first indigenous school was founded in 1931. A Quechua branch is in the Chapare region north of Cochabamba. Though not a traditional Quechua area, the Chapare has long been a destination for Quechua migrants and is a bastion of support for the MAS by coca farmers. The third is in the predominantly Guarani south-eastern Chaco. The Guarani UNIBOL also serves peoples of the Amazonia and eastern Bolivia (Guarayu, Chiquitano, and Moxeño) and the Tapiete and Weenhayek, also from the Chaco. Here the university is named after *Apiaguaiki Tüpa*, a Guarani who led an uprising in

defense of Guarani territory and was executed by the Bolivian army in 1892.

The UNIBOL is a leveling institution meant to compensate for the fact that indigenous youth are underrepresented in Bolivia's traditional universities. Indigenous students receive government assistance and the backing of their organizations. UNIBOL offers training that responds to the government focus on communitarian productive development. In the Guarani case, students study forestry (for forest management in the Amazon); veterinary medicine and animal sciences (for engaging the cattle economy in eastern Bolivia), fisheries science (for fish farming) and gas and petroleum engineering.

The paradox is that oil and gas—as well as ranching, logging and industrialized fishing—have all affected indigenous communities in negative ways. Nonetheless, as well sites and pipelines dot and crisscross the region, indigenous organizations have taken a stance of en-

gagement rather than opposition. Based on my experiences as a Guarani leader and educator and the first rector of the Guarani UNIBOL, the question is how to transform how these activities take place in indigenous territories. As indigenous organizations, we now have the power to prevent oil companies from acting as they please. Training in these fields could help our peoples monitor, mitigate, and participate in productive and redistributive aspects of extraction and commercialization, and to do so with more concern for environmental and social impacts. This would be, at least, the ideal outcome.

Yet the UNIBOL also has a deeper mission that overlaps with efforts to rethink the university elsewhere in Latin America. Along with the Bolivian government, the university embraces the discourse of "decolonization." Decolonization seeks to dismantle legacies of colonial rule and rethink indigenous and national futures. This means at the ground level unraveling institutional and ideological racism,



addressing racialized class inequalities and dismantling the patriarchal logic of colonial rule. It also means rethinking western knowledge and exploring indigenous linguistic and cultural perspectives. For indigenous peoples, this also means rethinking the territorial and ideological order of the state itself, which was created to control indigenous peoples and lands for resource extraction or labor. Against development that fuels accumulation elsewhere, decolonization imagines new economies that pursue *buen vivir*, or “the good life.”

Training youth and pursuing deeper transformations is a tall order for fledgling universities. Nonetheless, we must move beyond the old way of thinking that universities should assimilate our young people to western ways of thinking. Now the university teaches indigenous histories and knowledge alongside technical expertise. For example, a Guarani oil technician would aspire to compete with any other such expert, but would also know how to engage and understand indigenous social realities. Students would approach indigenous organizations and territories through mutual respect and concern for rethinking living well. We see students and communities learning from each other, through a reciprocal ex-

change of knowledge. As I often say, if we are just training youth to be like the rest, we are doing nothing for our people. We are simply creating technocrats.

Decolonization operates practically as a demand for affirmative action and intercultural respect. Yet thinking deeply about knowledge, nature, and “living well” requires a deeper engagement with socially, historically and spiritually embedded realities of people’s relationships to nature in indigenous regions. As such, decolonial thinking is likely beyond the ken or comfort of conventional academics. While northern universities retrench themselves in disciplines, techno-science and positivist inquiry, decolonial thinking questions the bases and purposes of knowledge production. In the case of extractive activities, the challenge is the search for new economic models that lead to “living well” or “the good life” in specific places, rather than the endless commodification of people and nature.

The UNIBOL thus marks a break from the past, but is itself dependent on the acceleration of extractive activities. A special tax on natural gas funds these and other universities. The UNIBOL is thus caught in the contradiction confronting the entire country: how to transform extractive economies that have led to rural

These colorful murals by indigenous artists adorned the walls of Warisata. As Marcia Mandepora explains, UNIBOL—Bolivia’s first indigenous university—has its roots in Warisata, the country’s first indigenous school.

poverty and environmental degradation, while relying upon these activities to generate revenues for state transformation. As the vanguard in the transformation of the colonial character of the state and higher education, our work to construct the UNIBOL may offer some possibilities.

Marcia Mandepora is the rector of the UNIBOL-Guarani “Apiaguaiki Tüpa” in Machareti, Bolivia. She received a Licenciatura in Sociology from the University of San Simón in Cochabamba in 1997, and a Master’s in Bilingual Intercultural Education from PROEIB-Andes and that university in 2000. As one of the first and few Guarani to attain postgraduate education, Mandepora is a leading intellectual and women’s leader of the Assembly of Guarani People and a nationally recognized figure in indigenous education.

This article was translated by Bret Gustafson, author of New Languages of the State: Indigenous Resurgence and the Politics of Knowledge in Bolivia (Duke, 2009).

The New Bolivian Education Law

Among the Guarayo **BY HELEN STROM**

THEY MARCHED DETERMINEDLY DOWN BOLIVIA'S Santa Cruz-Trinidad highway under the hot sun. It was July of 2010, and Bolivia's most prominent lowland indigenous organization, CIDOB (Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of the Bolivian Oriente) was marching to demand modifications to the new Law of Autonomies (or Self-Determination) and Decentralization, created by Evo Morales's largely Andean party MAS (Movement Towards Socialism).

I was among the marchers. Ten days earlier, the protesters had reached the busy town of Ascensión de Guarayos, home of the Guarayo Indians since the 1500s. I was in Ascensión to study education, and local education activists had urged me to join them in the march. "Just hide if the reporters come, so they don't write that we're being funded by the Americans," they warned with a smile, referencing President Morales's unsubstantiated claims that the U.S. development agency USAID was behind the protest. My study of Bolivian education had forced me to look at broader issues of social and political change in this country where 70% of the population identifies as indigenous.

For two and a half months that winter, I carried out ethnographic research on yet another widely publicized and controversial MAS policy designed largely to benefit the indigenous population, the new Bolivian Education Law. After interviewing national education leaders in La Paz, where the policy was being revised and debated, I went to study the law's reception in the Guarayo community of Ascensión in the department of Santa Cruz for two months.

The new policy resonated in the town on many levels, yet I found significant disagreement over various aspects of the law's content and implementation.

While these tensions didn't indicate deep political breaks between MAS and local indigenous activists, they raised several questions. Why, for example, did some Indians not embrace a policy designed for all Indians? And what were they demanding instead?

A "DECOLONIZING" EDUCATION

The new Avelino Siñani-Elizardo Pérez Bolivian Education Law is a cornerstone of the MAS agenda to radically change the historically racist, hierarchical order of Bolivian society. Named after the founders of the Warisata school (see pp. 65-67), the law proposes a revolutionary, "decolonizing" education with a new emphasis on productive skills, community involvement, and indigenous language, culture, and knowledge. After a stormy reception (the proposal presented by indigenous organizations in 2006 was opposed by the urban teachers' union, the Church and many universities), a modified version was signed into law in December 2010; the Ministry of Education is now gradually phasing in the new law in Bolivian schools.

Activists and officials in La Paz described the old Bolivian education system as one of mental colonization in which the white elite imported and imposed their allegedly "superior" Western models of schooling and knowledge. Aymara official Victor Pinaya, the Director of the Office of Curricular Development in the Ministry of Education, told me about his own experience in a rural school: "I remember my book that I used when I was little...it said, 'Mother eats cake.' First of all, I didn't know what cake was. Second, there was [a picture of] a mother, but she was blond, with white complexion, with a dress, shoes. But when I looked at my mother, she was brown-skinned with braids, short with sandals, with her worn,

swollen feet...That type of education, where did it lead us? To the point where we admired that type of mother and we looked down on our mothers...the school had made us value other cultures, another model of mother, another way of life."

As Aymara activist Pedro Apala put it, decolonization therefore requires Bolivians "to stop valuing the foreign and begin to value what is ours." While previous policy created indigenous education programs solely for the Indians, the new law presents indigenousness as something that *all* Bolivians need, indigenous or not. For example, the law requires every child to learn an indigenous language and some indigenous content in addition to Spanish and traditional Western subject matter. In the activists' terminology, the new education is both *intracultural* and *intercultural*. It seeks to strengthen culture *within* Indian communities and also promote dialogue *between* cultures that puts Western and indigenous ideas on an equal playing field. From the standpoint of indigenous rights, the lingo all sounded good to leaders in La Paz. But what would "decolonization" look like in practice?

HIGHLAND-LOWLAND TENSIONS

In June 2010, the eight Indigenous Education Councils (*Consejos Educativos de los Pueblos Originarios, CEPOs*) and the Ministry of Education met to discuss the new regional curricula. Seven of Bolivia's most numerous indigenous peoples have their own Councils, while remaining groups make up the Multiethnic Amazonian Council. These groups are currently designing regional curricula that correspond to the language, culture, territory, and context of their peoples. Under the new law, these curricula will be applied alongside a new national curriculum.

The lone *gringa* in the room, I seated myself next to the Guarayo representa-



The new education law brings education about indigenous communities to all.

for several centuries prior to colonization, relying on subsistence agriculture, hunting, and gathering from the surrounding forests. Spanish colonial efforts focused on the more accessible highlands and their dense, well-organized populations, largely ignoring the isolated lowland frontier. Indeed, exploitation of the Guarayo did not begin until the arrival of Franciscan missionaries in the early 1800s. The priests founded several mission towns, including Ascensión, as part of their project to congregate, convert and “civilize” the natives.

In 1938, the Bolivian state stripped the missions of their control over the Guarayo, clearing the way for the local white elite. With state backing, these elites seized local land and compelled the Guarayo to work as peons on their farms. When the 1952 National Revolution ended the *hacienda* system in the highlands and gave indigenous highlanders new forms of political representation, these reforms failed to reach the lowlands. Change would have to be driven from below. In the 1980s, the Guarayo and other lowland groups began to organize.

Today, the Guarayo enjoy increased political power in their communities and significant (if still partial) control over their territory, a term now used by international law to describe land of traditional use and occupancy. However, logging and other commercial deforestation have severely depleted the rich expanse of forests, chasing the dense groves to distant slopes and inaccessible hilltops. Furthermore, the Guarayo are still marginalized in many senses, in their region and within Bolivia as a whole. It's a position that they continue to work to reverse.

Nevertheless, the Guarayo do not want to call this change “decolonization.” Inside the offices of the Guarayan Educational Council (CEPIG), an official told me that the concept of fully “decolonizing” from Western influences is too radical and impractical given the current reality of many of these groups. A relatively

tive. As Ministry officials introduced themselves, he turned toward me. “All of the officials are Quechua or Aymara, none of them is from the lowlands,” he informed me softly. With a current population of 20,000, the Guarayo are one of Bolivia's 34 so-called lowland groups represented by CIDOB, the indigenous organization leading the aforementioned march. Lowland peoples have demonstrated increasing political clout since the 1990s. They are still, however, a distinct minority compared to the dominant highland groups (Quechua and Aymara) that comprise roughly 85% of the country's indigenous population. Indeed, while lowland groups generally supported Morales and MAS, they were quick to tell me that they were underrepresented at the national level. The CEPO representatives showed an hour-long Powerpoint on their progress, followed by an open opportunity for comments. High-ranking Ministry officials offered abundant praise but also criticized the curricula as too ‘Western.’ One Vice Minister questioned a sample lowland lesson about the plantain, arguing that it was

“more contextualizing something from other peoples...than recognizing native knowledge.”

I furrowed my brow. Didn't the Vice Minister consider plantains to be indigenous or “native”? Perhaps he had issues with the plant's history, as the crop recalls the infamous banana plantations and banana republics of the Caribbean and Central America. Or maybe it was because bananas were part of imposed alternative development projects by USAID in some parts of Bolivia. None of these connections seemed to hit home in Ascensión, however, where native residents cultivate the crop and use it for traditional Guarayo dishes such as *masaco*.

I wasn't able to ask the Vice Minister to elaborate but the comment was revealing in itself. While highland intellectuals envisioned a process of radical “decolonization” from the West, the ideas and sense of history only partially resonated with lowland groups such as the Guarayo.

NATIONAL LAWS IN ASCENSIÓN

The Guarayo enjoyed a semi-nomadic existence in the tropical eastern lowlands

small Guarayan town through the 1970s, Ascensión has been transformed into a multi-ethnic hub through increased migration and commerce. One glance at Ascensión's main commercial area confirms this; the twenty-block stretch is saturated with cell phone vendors, microfinance banks and a couple of new Internet cafés. Indeed, today, many Guarayo look to move ahead through equal access to advanced education and new technologies, not through a romantic return to some pre-colonial past. Policymakers in La Paz do not deny this reality; they also highlight the potential value of many Western advances, including technology. The disagreement over the term, however, reflects highland officials' call for a more far-reaching and thorough shift towards "authentic" indigenism. For example, while some national activists advocate a full return to indigenous spirituality, many Guarayo in Ascensión identify strongly with the Catholic Church.

Despite Ascensión's diverse population, teachers, parents and leaders generally supported CEPIG proposals to emphasize Guarayan language and culture in schools. About half of the town's 20,000 residents are still Guarayo; the other half comes from other parts of Bolivia, including many indigenous highlanders. The Guarayo see education as an important means of strengthening indigenous identity following intense racism at the hands of the white elite. Despite these steps to revalue Guarayo identity, the language and culture are still threatened. For example, as one Guarayo teacher explained, the town now celebrates the Day of Tradition and many residents wear traditional clothing for the occasion. "But we take that off and throw it away; we are other people," he added. "It's different to learn to practice, live with, and value [the culture] one has."

TOWARD A 'PLURINATIONAL' STATE
Language and culture, however, are not most residents' top priorities in education. Access and equality are. Guarayan teachers, parents, and leaders unfailingly called for more resources, including

materials, infrastructure, and teacher salaries. Indeed, schools in Ascensión face issues of severe underfunding that disproportionately affect the town's poorest Guarayo residents; some schools even lack running water. There is no university in the area; most Guarayo youth cannot continue their education after high school. Locals demanded that municipal, regional, and national governments fulfill their responsibility to address these citizenship needs.

Many residents also insisted that the government consult and involve them more in the construction of educational policy. One weekday evening, I chatted over coffee and pastries with María, a Guarayan teacher and mother in Ascensión. She estimated that the majority of teachers knew very little about the new law; teachers had only received pamphlets about the policy. She also criticized the lack of Guarayo representation at several events, including a 2009 conference to write the national curriculum. Expressing her frustration with what she saw as a disconnect between the Ministry of Education and the communities, María commented, "A reform like this should come from below...they have never consulted us...it's an imposition." Although she supported much of the law's content, she was unhappy with the manner in which it was created.

At the 2010 indigenous march, I discovered that these desires were not limited to education, but—throughout the country—included concerns over a lack of resources and local participation. The specific list of grievances was long but the themes remained constant—marchers wanted more control over their own land, greater financial guarantees from the state, and more representation in and consultation from the national government. While largely absent in discourse, the trendy new term "plurinationalism" loomed in the background. First used as a mobilizing phrase for indigenous movements in Bolivia and Ecuador in the 1980s, plurinationalism envisions indigenous groups, and all others in any such multiethnic country, as separate *nations*,

each with substantive rights to consultation, autonomy and self-determination. Additionally, as one of many distinct nations that constitute the state, each indigenous group demands equality and inclusion in a state that is imagined as having broad redistributive responsibilities.

In Bolivia, plurinationalism is now central to debates over the relationship between the state and indigenous rights. While the concept is often attributed to Morales, plurinationalism arose as a proposal of grassroots indigenous organizations and was later incorporated into the MAS agenda despite objections within the party. In 2009, the Republic of Bolivia became the Plurinational State of Bolivia. Implementation of the term, however, is still being defined and negotiated, with indigenous groups pushing for more autonomy, consultation and resources from Morales' government.

Positioned near the front of the march, I glanced behind me at the colorful spectacle. Hundreds of activists snaked down the unevenly paved road, bearing Bolivian flags alongside banners with the names of different indigenous groups. On either side, rolling green hills and plains speckled with *cusisal* palms and the occasional herd of grazing cattle stretched out under an open sky. While MAS has brought some changes for these lowland groups, the impact on indigenous communities will rely heavily on policymakers' willingness to expand local participation, autonomy, and resources. For the Guarayo and other indigenous groups, the struggle for dignity and equality marches on.

Helen Strom graduated from Harvard College cum laude in Social Studies in 2011. Her honors thesis, entitled "I Am Free and Not an Indio; I am Guarayo: Plurinationalism, Ethnicity, and Decolonization in Evo Morales' Bolivia," was based on eight months of travel and research in Bolivia and earned high departmental marks. Special thanks to her thesis advisor and mentor Theodore Macdonald for his invaluable collaboration and guidance.



POLITICAL PROCESSES

In the last five years, Evo Morales has governed with new concepts such as “plurinationalism” and “decolonialization.” But what does it all mean in practice? Eminent Bolivian and Latin American thinkers give us their viewpoints.

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Justice to President

Justice to Change **BY EDUARDO RODRÍGUEZ VELTZE**

A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO, AFTER VISITING Egypt and Tunisia in a mission to promote a greater freedom of speech and better democracy, and then attending the presidential succession in Honduras, I realized that in Bolivia, some years earlier, in 2005, an acute political crisis had been successfully overcome in peace, without violence, and under the Constitution. Not too long ago, change of this kind was typically undertaken by the military and with foreign meddling. By contrast, the current fragile democracy has been preserved intact for the last 25 years, which is the longest democratic period of the republican history. During this time, a whole generation has been committed to a system that still needs to undergo significant changes.

Yet, democratic efforts are slowly bearing fruit in Bolivia. Bolivia has now elected a legitimate government that incorporates large population sectors that were traditionally excluded in the past. In January 2009, the current government held a Constituent Assembly and approved a new Constitution that begins a process of intense structural changes aimed at producing better stability, a sustainable balance with pluralism, and the ability to meet both old and new expectations. This new Constitution goes beyond the old republican molds and keeps the relation of an active constituent power with the power holders in a lively manner in order to make government transparent, understand it, and solve any deficiencies that might have existed during its conception.

One of the most troubling (and encouraging at the same time) aspects of this process relates to the rule of law and justice, to the thoughtful consideration of how legitimate are the authorities responsible for their development and fulfillment, and to the relation between

power and legality, as those who hold power to develop and enforce the laws tend to do so either in a “custom-made” manner, or apply them in a discretionary manner for their own benefit, as part of a centralist and dominant juridical culture.

The new Constitution defines a new complex concept for Bolivia: “Unitarian Social State of Plurinational Communitarian Rule of Law, free, independent, sovereign, democratic, intercultural, decentralized and with autonomies,” based on political, economic, juridical, cultural and linguistic pluralism within the country’s process of integration. It also pays exceptionally strong attention to the existence of the indigenous originary peasant nations and peoples and their ancestral dominion over their territories, granting their free determination.

The introduction of legal pluralism as a principle on which the new State of “Social Unitarian Rule of Communitarian Plurinational Law” is based, provides a new conception of the law and of legal instruments that interact with the Constitution and other regulatory instruments. Legal pluralism means the possibility of intersecting, combining and interrelating legal orders in order to produce a new way of understanding a plural and complex society that intends to restore the rights of the peasant, native and indigenous peoples in the framework of a constitutional policy. This initiative inaugurates a new transition period of Bolivian institutions and its legal system, including the legal instruments thereof (such as the Constitution and the laws). This may take many years of complex reforms, and the main obstacle to be solved might be the cultural one.

I myself have had to grapple with many of the issues that the new Constitution takes on.

In 2005, I had been working at the Supreme Court for more than six years and then as Chief Justice for about a year. This was a time of extraordinary achievements, hearing and solving law cases, and at the same time, promoting structural changes in order to open new spaces for justice, so that people could feel well served and the meaning of “justice” could be better understood in a country with prevailing poverty and inequality. A conservative juridical culture and the political instability were notorious obstacles to these aims.

Suddenly on Sunday June 9, 2005, the uncertain presidential succession in the midst of increasing social and political unrest led to a crisis. A couple of years earlier, the popular discontent over the administration of Sánchez de Lozada had produced his resignation and eventual departure from the country. Vice President Carlos Mesa became President, but resigned before completing a second year in office in the midst of increasingly ungovernable scenarios. The presidential succession was then opened to the leaders of the Congress, but, as their representative capacity had been severely compromised, both leaders resigned the succession and turned to the last possible successor: the President of the Supreme Court of Justice.

On the evening of June 9, I became the 64th President of Bolivia. The President of the Senate called me to say that I had to appear in the House of Liberty, the old colonial chapel where the Declaration of Independence of Bolivia had been signed in 1825, as the Congress had decided to accept the resignations of both congressional leaders, calling on me to assume the presidential office until the next elections. I soon found myself taking the oath and delivering a message to the nation. I did it recalling that I was

assuming these new responsibilities as a Judge of the Republic and invoked the common purpose of strengthening democracy with the participation of all Bolivians. From that moment on, my daily routine changed severely. In the wee hours of the next day, when I got back home, my children were getting ready to go to school, and they were surprised to see around them the security personnel, many journalists, and neighbors who woke up with a new president.

It turned out that to form and lead a government as a Judge/President was not an easy job, as I did not have a party or political allies, so the transition was not pleasant. I soon learned that the

some critical commitments: thus, elections would take place for president, vice president and congressional representatives; parliament members agreed to resign two years before the end of their terms; a Constituent Assembly would be held; a referendum on departmental autonomies would also take place; and governors would be elected by popular vote. All of these agreements demanded a great deal of effort to frame the appropriate legal amendments and interpretation of the Constitution.

General elections took place in December 2005, when an unprecedented number of voters, of more than 80% those registered, cast their ballots..

Legal pluralism is a new way of understanding a complex society that intends to restore the rights of the peasant, native and indigenous peoples in the framework of a constitutional policy.

“loneliness of power” was going to be a close companion from then on. My first actions in government were of an emergency nature and aimed at demobilizing the armed forces and dialoguing with the social and political movements, which gradually accepted that an independent administration was best fitted to ensure the next elections. However, the presidential responsibilities were not just limited to organizing the presidential elections, but also to exercise all the powers of the executive branch. Some of them were quite complex, including passage of a new hydrocarbon act, which included tax hikes; its resulting income distribution produced both domestic benefits and legal claims from the multinationals.

At the same time, a difficult equation of political and social agendas had to be negotiated within the legal framework. The traditional political parties were in crisis and tried to reverse a process of changes that seemed inevitable. Eventually, after arduous efforts, we reached

The people elected Evo Morales as the president and Alvaro García as the Vice President by an absolute majority of votes and, for the first time, the governors of the nine departments of the country were elected as well. A day after President Morales took office in January 2006, I returned to the Supreme Court with many lessons learned and much satisfaction. The judicial branch had gained a prominent role in the effective application of the principle of checks and balances to solve the constitutional crisis, and I also had been able to drive some of the measures intended to improve the justice system.

On the other hand, I also experienced the effects of the real *politik*, as my term in the judiciary was shortened due to my resignation in March 2006. A group of judges from the Supreme Court objected to the legality of my return claiming that, by accepting the presidency, I had waived my position as a judge. Criminal charges were filed against me for

treason, espionage and other charges that had been filed during the electoral campaign as a result of an obscure operation conducted in September 2005, while I was attending a summit in Brasilia, by Bolivian army officers to remove 28 Chinese missiles (manpads) to the United States, so that they could be deactivated, with the assistance of the American military mission in Bolivia. This clandestine operation produced a diplomatic protest against the U.S. mission. In those days, the search for security bordered on paranoia and the fight against terrorism could defy the respect for the law, the conventions and the people's rights. After five years, I am still waiting to be heard by the Attorney General. The actions taken, information from Wikileaks and other testimonies still are not valued, and neither Bolivian nor the U.S. governments are willing to clarify the situation. (A Wikileak cable revealed that the Bolivian government requested that the United States withdraw the clause about missiles from the bilateral agenda.) The lawsuit filed against me is like my shadow; it follows me everywhere. Yet, apart from my personal story, I feel that democratic efforts are bearing fruit.

Yes, there are challenges. The political tensions caused by ideological differences, exclusion, inequality and poverty are still putting the democratic coexistence to test. However, it is possible to think that the democratic system will continue to be the essential factor to guarantee the completion of the desired changes in peace and with a higher tolerance and freedom, and, ideally, with greater justice too.

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Political Effects of an Economic Measure

After the *Gasolinazo* **BY FERNANDO MAYORGA**

ON THE USUALLY SLEEPY DAY AFTER CHRISTMAS, on December 26, 2010, Bolivia was awakened with a jolt: the Bolivian government had just decreed a huge increase in the price of combustible fuels. The country exploded in a series of popular protests. A week later, the government revoked the measure. Nevertheless, the price of food and transportation continue to spiral upwards. Social discontent grew; three months later, workers carried out a general strike to demand higher salaries. For the first time in five years, the government faced repudiation by the social sectors loyal to Evo Morales' party, the Movement towards Socialism (MAS).

The *gasolinazo*—as the nation dubbed the aborted 73 percent gasoline hike and subsequent mass protests—

dramatically altered Bolivia's political landscape, with widespread implications for the government agenda. The official party still maintained its resources of power—indeed, the president's second term had begun with a positive outlook for the fulfillment of its political project. Evo Morales was reelected in December 2009 with 64 percent of the votes, while MAS captured a congressional majority. The party also obtained favorable results in departmental (state) and municipal elections in April 2010, winning six out of nine governors' seats and more than three-fourths of the municipal governments. The undeniable supremacy of the MAS meant that its discursive hegemony permeated diverse spheres of the nation's political process.

The *gasolinazo* didn't change the array of forces in the political arena, but it did negatively affect the strength of the government and the image of the president. It weakened the government's ability to mobilize politically by fraying the link between MAS and the social movements that constitute MAS' electoral and political mobilization base. It also decreased the popularity of Evo Morales, whose leadership and reelection are crucial to the ruling party strategy for the 2014 presidential race and to guaranteeing the continuity of MAS.

The MAS party and Bolivia's social movements are linked in an unstable

After the *gasolinazo*, a miners' union protests in Santa Cruz.



and fluctuating coalition. The cohesion and breadth of this coalition depend on the dominant issues in the political realm and on the success of the government agenda. With high profile issues, including the nationalization of natural resources, approval of a new constitution and the reelection of Evo Morales, the usual coalition counts on a variety of social organizations—peasants, women's groups, indigenous organizations, urban settlers, miners, neighborhood boards and retired citizens groups, among others—that respond in a body to the leadership of the government party. Once these are generally satisfied, other types of demands emerge, typically, interest groups or corporatist interests that distance themselves from the coalition and therefore do not act in a united fashion. The *gasolinazo* was precisely the event that provoked the predominance of corporatist interests among the workers' unions. Several social movements firmly rejected the price hike measure which they considered anti-popular and neoliberal, thus weakening the pro-government coalition and isolating peasant organizations closest to MAS.

Protests swept the very cities in which the MAS had garnered the majority of the vote the year before. Harsh and unprecedented diatribes against Evo Morales accused him of being a traitor and submitting to neoliberalism. Several polls taken after the *gasolinazo* showed that Evo Morales' popularity had dropped to the lowest point in his sixty months of government—with a 56 percent rejection rate on the national level, compared to an approval rate of 70 percent the year before.

Moreover, the political forces leading the protests were quite different from the traditional opposition from the right. One example of this new opposition is the left-leaning Movement Without Fear (Movimiento Sin Miedo—MSM) that holds the mayoralty in La Paz, the seat of the government, and could challenge the MAS in 2014.

The *gasolinazo* had a twofold political effect: public support for the party gov-

ernment declined and the leadership of Evo Morales was put into question. General rejection of the government's decision revealed the weakness of the hegemonic capacity of the MAS. The party had managed to dominate the political arena in the last few years through its emphasis on nationalism and the rights and identities of indigenous peoples—discursive linchpins

The MAS faces a double challenge: reshaping the alliance of the government and social movements and recovering Evo Morales' popularity.

that characterized “the process of change” spearheaded by the MAS and that defined the programmatic orientation of the new political constitution.

The return of the state as a protagonist in Bolivia's economy—particularly in the nationalization of the hydrocarbon industry—modified the relationship between the state and multinational companies. Demands for stability and economic growth were met through state control of natural resources and the production chain for hydrocarbons. Thus, the *gasolinazo* was seen as a negation of the nationalization; this shift in economic policy has weakened MAS discourse because its nationalist and state-centric stance lost credibility. Criticism and questioning has emerged from those on the left—both from political parties and union movements. The indigenist axis remains firmly in place, however, because the MAS has no discursive rivals in this area, even though indigenous peoples are questioning the state-promoted industrialization program, noting the internal contradictions of this development model.

After the *gasolinazo*, the MAS faces a double challenge. It needs to both reshape the alliance of the government and the social movements and to recover the president's popularity. Successfully addressing the first challenge will depend on the government's adoption of economic measures that will restore the confidence

of wage workers and social movements that criticize the neoliberal stance.

With regards to the second challenge, the government has also adopted a new strategy by counting on the coalescing force of nationalism and focusing on the issue of Bolivia's access to the sea. In March, speaking on the “Day of the Sea,” which commemorates Bolivia's defeat by

Chile in the 19th-century War of the Pacific, Evo Morales said his country will take Chile to international courts to try to regain access to the Pacific Ocean, which it lost in that war 132 years ago. He noted that Chile had failed to respond to a deadline he had set for progress in negotiations. Bolivia's loss of the sea was an “open wound” that must be healed, he said. He also said that Bolivia would continue dialogue with Chile while seeking a legal solution to its landlocked status.

This invocation of traditional nationalism seeks to restore the popularity of Evo Morales, even though the course of this initiative is highly uncertain because his popularity also largely depends on how the government performs on the economy. Uncertainty returns to Bolivian politics after five years of government under MAS, which had led the transition to a new state model; the state still confronts the historic legacies of inequality and poverty that have characterized the Bolivian society despite the undeniable advances in the strengthening of democracy and citizenship. The *gasolinazo* was a watershed that reminded Bolivian citizens of that reality.

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Evo Morales Through the Prism of Wikileaks

“Democracy In Danger” **BY MARTÍN SIVAK**

A CENTURY AGO, THE U.S. AMBASSADOR TO Bolivia suggested that coca-leaf consumption, a millenarian tradition among indigenous peoples, was the source of Bolivia's problems. He proposed instead “plain American chewing gum for everyone.” The gum would be donated by U.S. companies and distributed by the embassy.

At the beginning of this century, another U.S. ambassador interpreted the 2002 elections in terms of the Wars on Terror and Drugs, calling for a massive vote against the coca-growers' union leader, Evo Morales. This U.S. stance increased Morales' share of the votes substantially, leading him unexpectedly to finish second. In the wake of the 2002 election, according to State Department documents, the U.S. embassy proposed strengthening opposition parties to offset the growing power in Bolivia of MAS, Morales' party, calling him an “illegal coca agitator.” Neither the chewing gum strategy nor that of supporting political parties in decline managed to reduce coca consumption or dampen the popularity of Morales, who won the 2005 and 2009 presidential elections by a wide margin.

U.S. State Department documents, made public by Wikileaks and available on the website of Bolivia's vice president (<http://wikileaks.vicepresidencia.gob.bo>), demonstrate that during Morales' first presidency, the United States did not explicitly propose anything it could not achieve. The documents reveal what the United States was most worried about: the president's anti-imperialist rhetoric: Cuban and Venezuelan presence and aid, the war on drugs, protection of U.S. investments in Bolivia—particularly in the mining sector and the erosion of democracy.

In August 2007, a cable from the U.S. embassy in La Paz declared that democracy was “in danger,” adding that the support of democracy in Bolivia was the foremost priority. The embassy raised “serious questions” about Morales' commitment to democracy—understood as separation of powers, checks and balances, an active political opposition and free press—“given his demonstrated impatience with compromise.” The cable defined him as a “leader with strong anti-democratic tendencies,” adding, “over the years he has been known to bribe, threaten and even physically intimidate anyone who stood in his way, including government officials, politicians and *cocalero* colleagues.” To the embassy, Morales' project of change and renovation of the justice system exemplified his authoritarianism.

Thus, throughout the Wikileaks documents, the United States appears as one of the last defenders of the *ancien regime*—that of pacted democracy and neoliberal reforms—which had been severely challenged in Evo Morales' 2005 landslide election victory. Even groups that are moderately critical of Morales concede that the government has begun a process of putting into practice a plurinational state granting social inclusion and increased rights for indigenous and peasant sectors. In other words, democracy has been expanded.

This article attempts to point out the U.S. government's difficulties in adjusting to new times and, above all, to what I call the “Bolivianization” of bilateral relations (I first used this term in “The Bolivianisation of Washington-La Paz Relations: Evo Morales' Foreign Policy Agenda in Historical Context, in *Evo Morales and the Movimiento al Socialismo*



in Bolivia, London: Institute for Study of the Americas, 2011).

BOLIVIANIZATION

Starting with the 1952 National Revolution (nationalization of mines, universal suffrage and agrarian reform) to Morales' inauguration, the United States' grand narrative framed Washington-La Paz relations as part of the U.S. agenda—particularly the War against Communism, War on Drugs and War on Terror. After the turn of the century, the crisis of the regional neoliberal consensus marked the emergence in Bolivia of a radical political cycle with an ethno-cultural accent. This radical movement began with the 2000 Cochabamba Water War (the successful upheaval that prevented water price hikes by a multinational company, replacing it with a cooperative) and reached a peak with the Gas War in October 2003 (the rebellion against gas exports to the United States via Chile that forced President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada to resign). These radical protests introduced a new tone to the notion of national sovereignty



In front of the U.S. Embassy, an indigenous man waves the Bolivian Wiphala flag.

and control of natural resources, which proved to be crucial in redefining the relationship with the United States.

The Morales administration has established a new domestic agenda strongly driven by these two wars, especially the Gas War, and by the cocaleros' active rejection of U.S. intervention with coca crop eradication through the War on Drugs. The government has significantly reduced U.S. participation in the fashioning of public policy—especially in the areas of economics, defense and security, and in the war on drugs. It has rejected free trade agreements proposed by the United States and has proposed to Washington a bilateral relationship based on the communal concept of reciprocity.

The first symbolic step in this reciprocity was to require U.S. tourists to purchase a visa (Brazil does the same). At the same time, the government has established regional alliances with Cuba and Venezuela in the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA), and with the rest of South American countries through the trade agreements known as UNASUR

and MERCOSUR. It has also signed trade agreements with China and Iran, among others.

The president's anti-U.S. discourse—yet another novelty in bilateral relations—is the most frequent complaint of State Department officials, according to Wikileaks. “We also have to urge the Morales government to temper its rhetoric if it is indeed interested in improved bilateral ties,” says one of the documents. In another, Ambassador David Greenlee warns Vice President Alvaro García Linera that “anti-American remarks may damage Bolivia’s chances for an APTDEA extension.” (APTDEA grants trade preferences to Bolivia in exchange for its commitment to the War on Drugs; formally, it does not include the issue of “rhetoric.”) The cables maintain that Morales’ anti-U.S. stance is being used to cover up domestic problems, leaving out any question about historic reasons for such attitudes in Bolivia.

ECHOES OF TERRORISM, COLD WAR AND WAR ON DRUGS

Foreign policy has also been “Bolivianized” by how the Morales administration interprets the new U.S. intervention in Bolivia in terms of domestic dynamics, particularly the conflict between the elites in the Santa Cruz area and the national government. The Bolivian government asserts that the United States belonged to a broad coalition led by these elites that are bent not on saving Bolivia from Communism or terrorism, but from the MAS government agenda. The Morales government expelled U.S. Ambassador Philip Goldberg in September 2008, accusing him of being the leader of the opposition headquartered in Santa Cruz that seeks to overturn the government. Although no definitive proof supports this accusation, the government was able to create a narrative that enjoys a broad social consensus in Bolivia, in which the United States is seen as intervening at the heart of national politics.

In the days following the expulsion of the ambassador, relates one cable, then-U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and the Spanish ambassador to the United States concurred that Morales was “out of his league.” Months later, in a confusing operation in Santa Cruz, Bolivian security forces killed a group of hitmen allegedly contracted by members of the regional elite to defend Santa Cruz or to obtain its secession from the country. The U.S. embassy’s version of the events, as revealed by Wikileaks, is that the Bolivian government itself hired some of these hitmen and tortured the two survivors of the operation. The source, whose name was blacked out on the document, earned the confidence of the officials, who titled their cable “Gob [government of Bolivia] involved in Terror.” In this fashion, the Morales administration received the label of “terrorist.”

The role Venezuela and Cuba play in the Bolivian government also has a dominant place in the Wikileaks cables. A February 2, 2007 embassy cable is subtitled “One Place Where We Are Not Big Brother.” The cable charges that “Cuban

and Venezuelan advice, interference, and assistance continue to be of serious concern. Cuban doctors and newly inaugurated hospitals bring medical care to isolated communities. Venezuela has agreed to purchase Bolivian soy, has provided microcredit financing to small businesses, has donated tractors to Bolivian farmers, and has funded community radio stations to broadcast the Gob's messages...The Venezuelan programs receive frequent public acclaim from Bolivia's poor."

The presence of the supposed big brother who controls everything brings echoes of the Cold War. The "twins"—Cuba and Venezuela—have replaced the former Soviet Union as rivals to the United States for big brother status. Venezuela is seen as a guide and inspiration for Bolivian policy; a cable of August 2007 states, "Evo seems to be following in Chávez's footsteps." As an example, it cites a draft of the Bolivian constitution ("financed by Venezuelan and Spanish advisors") that contains a clause for indefinite reelection. In the document entitled "Venezuela-Bolivia: how much fire behind the smoke," Morales is described as acting like a "smitten school girl" when he appears in public with the Venezuelan leader.

Even though Chávez is Bolivia's ally and offers the country economic assistance, his influence in political terms is much less than what people in Washington and even Caracas think. The notion of the mentor relationship, in any case, underestimates Morales more than it overestimates Chávez's powers. This mentorship tries to explain the trajectory of the Morales government through the lens of Venezuelan and Cuban influence, completely overlooking the domestic reasons for the radical cycle that began in 2000.

The so-called War on Drugs is a central theme in Washington-La Paz relations since the 1980s. The United States sees the eradication of coca leaf as indispensable and for several decades managed to convince Bolivian governments to share this point of view. The Morales government has implemented a different policy: voluntary eradication of crops and social control (through the cocalero

union) of the considerable legal production of coca leaf (a 40x40 plot of land per family and 49 acres in total). It has allowed less participation by the United States (in fact, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency was expelled on charges of conspiring against the Bolivian government). The government strategy has not impeded the growth of coca leaf production (about 75 acres—25 above the legal limit), but it has obtained good results in the area of interdiction, a fact recognized in the U.S. documents themselves.

The United States subtly questions the program of voluntary eradication, particularly noting that Morales talks of counternarcotics as a "shared responsibility," and expresses its concern for the increased production of coca leaf and cocaine exports. At least in the cables revealed by Wikileaks, the United States does not blame Morales for the drug trafficking in Bolivia, as it alleged in the 1990s. It merely criticizes the government strategy.

The Morales government has looked for some continuity in the Washington-La Paz relationship despite significant ruptures. One example is an attempt to reclaim Bolivian certification (tariff preferences for Bolivian exports in exchange for progress in the so-called War on Drugs). But Bolivia was decertified a few days before the U.S. ambassador was expelled.

The second continuity is that Bolivia keeps receiving U.S. aid. The documents show that some \$90 million were funneled to Bolivia through USAID to "further social and economic inclusion of Bolivia's historically marginalized indigenous groups and to support democratic institutions and process, including decentralized governance..." The details of how this money was distributed are unavailable to both the Bolivian government and U.S. taxpayers.

The Morales government has insisted that the money should be channeled only through the Bolivian state, rejecting the possibility that local governments and non-government agencies receive these funds. In meetings with U.S. officials, as noted in the cables, Morales seems to be

demanding that aid be unconditional, accusing the officials of conspiracy, while at the same time thanking them for their help during recent floods and alternately telling them that he has received thousands of letters from all over the country asking that USAID be expelled. It is a style that tends to disconcert officials from the United States and many other countries.

In a meeting with Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Thomas Shannon in August 2008, Morales asked for the extradition of former president Gonzalo "Goni" Sánchez de Lozada, who has been charged with responsibility for seventy deaths in the Gas War. "Send us back Goni and you will become the mayor of El Alto," he told Shannon in perhaps the only joke contained in the documents. In November 2009, Shannon became U.S. ambassador to Brazil: everything indicates that the United States will not extradite Goni and Shannon will not govern El Alto.

Martín Sivak is the author of four books about Bolivia, including a biography of Hugo Banzer (El dictador elegido) and a portrait of Evo Morales (Jefazo, published in English as Evo Morales: The Extraordinary Rise of the First Indigenous President of Bolivia [Palgrave, 2010]. Sivak is completing a doctorate in Latin American History at New York University (NYU).

ON SIVAK'S EVO MORALES



"The best known Bolivian since Bolívar, Evo Morales is a political leader with a difference.... Evo's presidency is the product of mass struggle, but as Martín Sivak's vivid study shows, the president is also a remarkable man. Sivak

has plainly gained unusual access through winning Evo's trust, and this is an understandably sympathetic study. But it is also independently-minded, insightful and attentive to the details that do not flatter. This true insider-account is indispensable for understanding 21st-century Bolivia, and it will unsettle a good many easy convictions on both sides of the fence."

—JAMES DUNKERLEY, AUTHOR OF *BOLIVIA: REVOLUTION AND THE POWER OF HISTORY IN THE PRESENT*

Beyond Caudillos

The Need to Create a Strong Multiparty System **BY MIGUEL CENTELLAS**

DRIVING THROUGH LA PAZ, BOLIVIA'S CAPITAL city, one sees signs of the remarkable political transformation since the 2005 election of Evo Morales, Bolivia's first indigenous president. Eighteen months after the December 2009 reelection—which Morales won by a broad margin (64.2%)—and more than a year after the April 2010 municipal and regional elections, campaign murals still line the thoroughfares that bustle with packed minibuses ferrying *paceños* up and down the length of city. Besides scattered slogans for opposition candidates, most posters support Morales and MAS. The name “Evo” is prominent, including on a massive mural found between the middle-class neighborhoods of San Jorge and Obrajes, with the slogan: “One single leader, one single nation, one single project” (*Un solo líder, un solo proyecto, un solo país*). In La Paz, at least, Evo Morales dominates the city's physical landscape.

Morales rose to prominence following a massive wave of protests that forced then-president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada to resign and flee the country in October 2003. As leader of the largest “anti-systemic” legislative party, Morales

was well positioned to become the political leader of a broad coalition of social movements. His victory in the December 2005 presidential election (with 53.7% of the vote, Morales was the first candidate to win a majority in the democratic era) made him the undisputed leader of the left-popular forces with a broad popular mandate. Between 2005 and 2010, Morales and MAS won a string of electoral victories, demonstrating sustained popular support for the new regime's “democratic and cultural revolution.”

The October 2003 political crisis not only delegitimized Bolivia's neoliberal model, but shattered its political party system—which was already described as weak or “inchoate.” In 2005, only the historic National Revolutionary Movement (*Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario*, MNR) contested the general elections, managed only a distant fourth-place finish with 6.4% of the vote; it did not contest the 2009 elections.

New electoral vehicles lacking significant institutional organization dominate the post-2003 political period. This includes MAS, which only emerged as a political party in 2002, becoming a

catchall alliance of anti-establishment political actors and social movements. In fact, MAS does not consider itself a party, and Morales often relies not on the party structure (such as it is) but on CONALCAM (*Coordinadora del Cambio*), a loose coalition of social movements. Where the situation is particularly troubling is within the political opposition.

By 2002, the party system was under stress. Alongside MAS, two other new parties challenged the neoliberal establishment: a radical indigenous party led by Felipe Quispe (*Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti*, MIP) and a conservative-populist party led by Manfred Reyes Villa (*Nueva Fuerza Republicana*, NFR). MIP became the country's most successful ethnic indigenous party to date, placing fifth in 2002 with 6.1% of the national vote and six legislative seats. However, MIP collapsed in 2005 and has since disappeared. Reyes Villa, despite virtually tying with Morales in 2002, sat out the 2005 presidential contest, distancing himself from his own party and forming a new

A street mural reflects Bolivia's remarkable political transformation.



electoral vehicle (*Alianza de Unidad Cochabambina*, AUN) to campaign for the Cochabamba prefecture.

A pattern of disposable electoral vehicles is pronounced at the national level. In 2005, anti-Morales figures from “traditional” or “systemic” parties created new electoral vehicles. Most flocked to Democratic and Social Power (*Poder Democrático y Social*—PODEMOS), behind Jorge “Tuto” Quiroga, a former president of the center-right Democratic Nationalist Action (*Acción Democrática Nacionalista*, ADN). Others joined former economic minister and Bolivian tycoon Samuel Doria Medina’s National Unity Front (*Frente de Unión Nacional*, UN). Of the two, only UN is on the path to becoming a consolidated, institutionalized political party, having consistently contested every national or local election, beginning with the December 2004 municipal elections. However, UN remains a minor party, never achieving 10% of the national vote in any contest.

By the 2009 election, PODEMOS—which comprised the largest opposition bloc in the legislature and even controlled the Senate—ceased to exist. In its place, another new vehicle, National Convergence (*Convergencia Nacional*, CN), emerged as the largest opposition party. This pattern repeats at regional and municipal levels. Only a handful of regionally based minor parties show signs of consolidation, most notably Movement without Fear (*Movimiento Sin Miedo*, MSM) in La Paz and Social Alliance (*Alianza Social*, AS) in Potosí. But in many important regions, such as Santa Cruz and Cochabamba, each election presents a new constellation of parties (even if the faces remain the same). Moreover, these do not coordinate across the country, municipal, regional, and national levels.

While Morales’ opponents point to his authoritarian tendencies, the inability of the opposition to forge coherent, consistent and consolidated political parties facilitates the hegemonic position enjoyed by Morales and MAS. In a highly fractured and fluid political environment, MAS is a tempting alternative to voters

who support many (if not all) aspects of the new regime’s “process of change” and seek a sense of political stability. Morales astutely uses government resources to secure support from leaders of local and regional social movements, undercutting the ability of new parties to consolidate their position. In short, MAS is hegemonic largely because it is the only political party with a truly “national” scope.

However, this poses two significant problems for the long-term viability of the new regime. First, the opposition’s weakness facilitates personalist tendencies within MAS. Morales’ status as the party’s dominant, charismatic figure is evident. Not only had the constitution been modified to allow for his reelection in 2009, but recent statements by Vice-President Álvaro García Linera indicate the president may seek reelection in 2014 to “guarantee the [process of] change.” But if only Evo Morales can guarantee the continuation of his regime, one has to wonder how widely Morales’ agenda is shared—even within his own party.

Recent analyses suggest MAS is weakly institutionalized, hierarchical, and dominated by Morales, thus resembling previous “systemic” parties, dominated by powerful *caudillos* who made decisions with little input beyond a select inner circle. If so, MAS risks losing grassroots legitimacy (evidenced by recent social movement mobilization *against* Morales’ government). Unless MAS transforms into an institutionalized party that does not depend on the personality of Evo Morales, it risks the same fate as the personalist “systemic” parties. The concept of a “plurinational state” is difficult to sustain within the framework of a single- or dominant-party system—particularly one dominated by a single individual. Without a vibrant, institutionalized, legitimate, competitive multiparty system, its long-term viability remains uncertain.

The second—and perhaps most important—problem facing Morales’ regime is the absence of a “loyal opposition.” Morales has shown limited ability to cultivate *independent* allies. One key example was the recent bitter split be-

tween MAS and MSM shortly after the December 2009 election. A small center-left party with a strong presence in the city of La Paz (where it has controlled the mayorship since 1999), MSM loyally supported Morales beginning in 2005, playing a key role in expanding his appeal to the middle class. After the party decided it would continue its tradition of campaigning independently in municipal elections, Morales vindictively attacked the party’s leader, Juan Del Granado, a noted human rights champion who had regularly appeared alongside Morales at public events, as merely another “neoliberal” and “anti-popular” conservative opponent. Other political figures—including a growing number of MAS dissidents—have faced similar fates.

The irony, of course, is that the long-term fate of the new regime—including its many important social and economic reforms—depends on the ability of opposition parties to “buy into” the basic sociopolitical model. In an atmosphere in which the type of party pacts (*partidocracia*) of the neoliberal era are in disrepute, acceptance of the need for multiparty alliances, coalitions, and negotiations—rather than winner-take-all, scorched earth politics—is unlikely. Yet the future of Bolivia’s new “plurinational state” depends on a broadly shared consensus across the political spectrum. In the end, the fact that Morales and his inner circle do not trust *any* opposition party or figure to continue his trajectory (despite programmatic differences) says more about the tenuousness of Morales’ own regime and its democratic character than it does about the aims of his various opponents.

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ART AND CULTURE

When one thinks of culture in Bolivia, the image is often limited to its exuberant folklore, native dances and music. But art and culture in Bolivia also encompasses prominent classical music and theater festivals, as well as world-class film—not to mention thriving culture activism emerging from the country's political transformations.

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Art and Politics

Identity and the Art of Unbecoming a Colony BY MARISTELLA SVAMPA

THROUGHOUT LATIN AMERICA, THEATRE, ART and music are springing up as forms of cultural activism linked closely with new social movements. Bolivia is no exception. Nevertheless, the strong presence of large social organizations, many of them ethnic in nature, makes the social and political role of cultural collectives and organizations somewhat invisible. Yet, these groups play an important role in the creation of new political understandings and in the reproduction and expansion of social struggles.

The cities of El Alto and La Paz are host to a variety of artistic expressions, cultural collectives and artistic organizations that are permeated by a strong narrative about decolonization. Some of these groups are already quite firmly established thanks to funds from non-profit organizations and international cooperation. Teatro Trono, founded in 1989 in El Alto, is an example of one such long-term and innovative project that stimulates collective work through experiences in the daily lives of youth, probing social themes such as gender equity, poverty and globalization. Most of Teatro Trono's founders were street children.

Likewise, the Casa de las Culturas

Wayna Tambo (Wayna Tambo Youth Cultures House), which in Aymara means "meeting of youth," was received positively when it emerged in 1995 as an alternative cultural space combining a focus on the Andean Aymara with a strengthening of cultural diversity. Another example of this type of cultural activism is Mujeres Creando (Women Creating), a very creative and provocative anarchist and feminist collective that uses graffiti to make the streets its principal stage. These women, considered "street agitators," openly defend sexual diversity ("indias, putas y lesbianas, juntas, revueltas y hermanadas"—"Indian women, whores and lesbians, together, entangled and in eternal sisterhood"). Two of its founders, María Galindo and Julieta Paredes, have been widely recognized internationally.

The relationship between art and politics developed significant nuances after the so-called Black October massacre in 2003, which took more than 80 lives in the city of El Alto. The massacre led to the resignation of then President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada and enshrined the city of El Alto as a symbol of resistance. These events demonstrated the need to rethink history in the context of the

intensification of social struggles, particularly in regards to the city's Aymara ethnic identity. The arts took on the role of evoking the victims of the massacre and demanding justice and reparations. Examples abound of the emergence of new cultural and political activism, with theatre works such as "Pacto Telúrico" ("Telluric Pact") in which various groups of artists and musicians got together, or records like "Canto Encuentro" that pay homage to the victims of El Alto, produced by Radio Wayna Tambo and Radio Pachamama (which operates from the Gregoria Apaza Cultural Center), or the cultural actions of the Federation of Neighborhood Boards of El Alto, known by its Spanish acronym as FEJUVE. (Federación de Juntas Vecinales de El Alto). In all these cases, the protagonists sought to build bridges between the long memory of indigenous struggles and the memory of more recent events (the water and gas wars), establishing El Alto as the great symbolic city of resistance.

Different forms of cultural activism have highlighted the fact that El Alto is a city that hides several worlds; perhaps most importantly, it hosts a new urban youth culture which, because of its hy-



brid and plebeian nature, may find it difficult to assimilate the concept of an Aymara-centric culture. Radio Wayna Tambo reflects this diversity of interests clearly—since its creation in 2002, it has provided a space of encounter for several youth groups—with their cultural and expressive styles—and to feminist collectives, which often are relegated to the back burner because of ideas about collective rights or “complementary” relations, a view fomented by the traditional, government-promoted indigenous cosmivision. The first expressions of Aymara rap, hip hop, which in its Bolivian form manages to mix the sound of *pututus* (bull’s horns) with flutes and Andean drums and to rhyme Spanish with Aymara, were originally heard there. One of the great representatives of this genre, Abraham Bojórquez, and his *Ukamau y ké* (Así es y qué/That’s the Deal and So What?), died tragically in 2009. His songs reflected the search for a remake of Aymara identity in the context of the new social and political process.

But in the last few years, as the researcher Johana Kunin reminds us, the rap of the altiplano in its different variations has tended to become institutional-

ized through the involvement of international financing and non-governmental agencies (NGOs), as well as official support. For example, the Wayna Tambo rappers have participated in many government activities such as the celebration of the nationalization of the hydrocarbon industry, while other groups in La Paz have made video clips to educate citizens about traffic rules and noise pollution, with financing from the city and some NGOs.

It is not only for the rappers of El Alto that music is a starting point for the reconstruction of identity. Another example is that of the Afro-Bolivian associations, which are recuperating the traditional *Saya* from their African heritage to reconstruct an ethnic identity that had been rendered invisible. *Saya*, which incorporates elements of music and dance, became the letter of introduction of the Afro-Bolivians (some 30,000 Bolivians) to the rest of Bolivian society, and their presence was affirmed in 2008 with recognition in the New Political Constitution for a Plurinational State.

To conclude, in spite of all this activity, a paradoxical situation has developed under the government of Evo Morales. Political art is taking off in two parallel

Theater, art and music are blooming in El Alto and La Paz as a form of cultural activism. Above, top: a musical group performs *Saya*; all other images are of Teatro Trono.

lines. Art in support of the open constitutional reform process in 2006 was indeed visible. But there has been a lack of public policies in the area of culture, as well as a lack of will on the part of the government to promote a more anti-hegemonic historical-political narrative. And several cultural groups and organizations consider that the discourse of decolonization espoused by the government is supported by a folkloric version of ethnicity and with a merely instrumental concept of culture.

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The Flowering of Culture in Santa Cruz

Diverse And Mestizo **BY ALCIDES PAREJAS MORENO**

STRAINS OF BAROQUE MUSIC WAFT FROM SAN Javier, one of the many colonial-era Jesuit Missions in the Santa Cruz de la Sierra region. Musicians are practicing for the International Festival of Early Music, which attracts music lovers and tourists from around the world. What might surprise you is that much of this music was composed by Bolivians themselves. When the Catholic Church began restoring Jesuit churches attached to the old missions of the Chiquitos region in the 1970s, more than 5,000 sheets of sacred music scores were discovered, composed during the 17th and 18th centuries by both Europeans and residents of the zone. Until the mid-19th century, musicians in the towns routinely performed these pieces. Now, with the festival and the creation of music schools throughout the region, this tradition—drawing on the historic blending of Spanish and indigenous cultures—is being kept alive.

Bolivia is well known for its rich Andean cultures—the Quechua and Aymara, among others. Less known is that we have been capable of creating a mestizo culture that we can all identify with. The eruption of Chiquitos onto the stage of national history shows us that this culture, in spite of poverty and neglect, still thrives, and demonstrates that Bolivian culture is much more than Andean culture.

Against all predictions, Santa Cruz de la Sierra has not only become the economic capital of the country, but also its cultural capital. In addition to the Early Music Festival, the city hosts an international theater festival, a Latin American film festival and several other Bolivian cultural festivals.

This blossoming of culture goes against popular perceptions of Bolivia.

Santa Cruz hosts an Early Music Festival in the colonial-era Jesuit Missions.

When you think about Bolivia, you probably think about an Andean country with lots of indigenous people and an economy based on mining. However, many of those ideas are based on misconceptions.

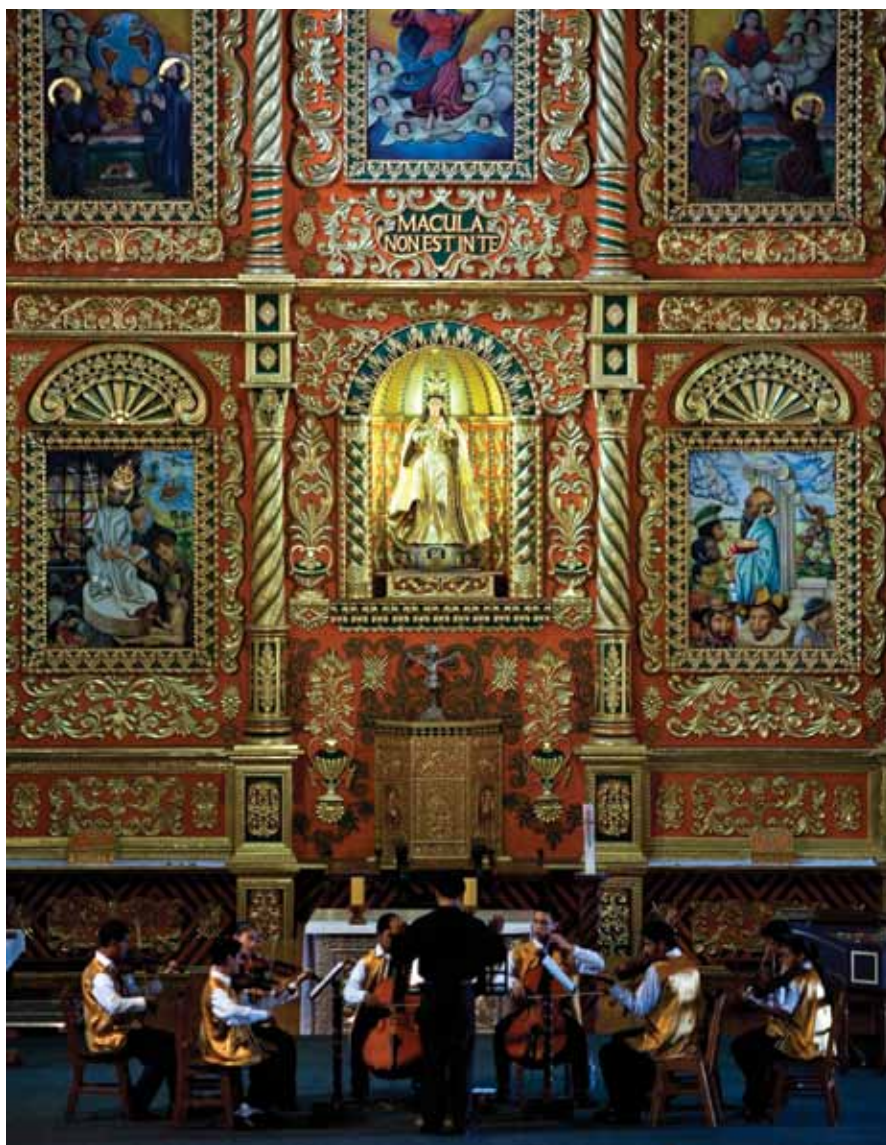
Bolivia is much more than an Andean country. Some 70% of its territory is made up of flatlands that encompass the Amazon basin and the Chaco region with its forests and jungles.

With the violence and death of the Spanish Conquest, America as a whole and the present Bolivian territory in particular ceased to be indigenous and be-

came mixed race, *mestizo*. All Bolivians can be viewed as cultural *mestizos* and most are also biological *mestizos*. However, in the past few years, some have sought to characterize Bolivia as “an Indian country, ruled by an Indian,” erasing in one fell swoop 500 years of history.

And in the mid-20th century, Bolivia stopped being an exclusively mining country and became an agricultural country, producing its own food.

Bolivia is a centralized country, which is by no means a novelty in our America. Since the creation of the republic in 1825,



it has put into practice an Andean-centric policy that does not look beyond the mountains. That was true when the capital was in Sucre, and is just as true now that the government rules from La Paz.

This obliterating centralism has led to a dichotomy between the Andean and lowland regions, creating two visions of our country, which have in the last few years appeared to be irreconcilable.

As a result of this centralism, the history of the lowlands is a history of forgetting. Thus, Bolivia, which became a republic in 1825 with its base in the territory of the Royal Court of Charcas, was presented to the world in terms of stereotypes that are very hard to undo—both at home and abroad.

In the middle of the last century, thanks to studies by art historians, Bolivia began to take a hard look at itself in the mirror, learning through plastic arts and other art forms to discover another identity, that of the *mestizo*. Art historians here, for example, coined the term *baroque mestizo* to describe the Bolivian architectural style that had been incorporating elements of both indigenous art and Baroque architecture since the 17th century. Although at first we did not like what we saw in the mirror (the Europeanizers because there was too much Indian in the mix; the indigenists because there was too little), bit by bit we began getting used to this concept and admitting our cultural and biological mixed race heritage. We began to assume that identity and to be proud of it. However, as is the custom in this country, the focus was only on the Andean region; the lowlands continued to be ignored.

Also in the middle of the last century—in the 1940s—the mining industry fell into a crisis. The government contracted a North American consulting firm that determined, in a report known as the Bohan Plan, that mining had run its course and that if Bolivia wished to be economically viable, it had to shift its economy towards the lowlands. Thus began a new and important stage of national history. The great protagonist of this new stage, the city of Santa Cruz de

la Sierra—which had about 60,000 inhabitants at the time and today has more than a million and a half—became the rival of Andean politics, confronting deep-rooted centralism to achieve the status of it had been deprived for 400 years. In this process of making itself visible, Santa Cruz has not only fought to right regional grievances, but also has contributed to the national democratic process by spearheading the democratic election of mayors and prefects (governors) and seeking departmental (state) autonomy, a struggle that is still ongoing.

Santa Cruz de la Sierra has become prominent in national life, politically, economically and culturally. The city has created its own style that is completely different from Andean centralism. It tries to do things in a grassroots fashion, sharpening its wit and creativity. In the 1970s the cultural institution known as the House of Culture was set up as part of a local initiative. It operated in an autonomous fashion with local economic support, as well as some international help obtained through its board of directors. In just a little while, the House of Culture became one of the most important and active cultural institutions in the country. And that became the launching pad for the cultural development of the region.

At the end of that decade, the Catholic Church began the process of restoring the churches of the old Jesuit missions of Chiquitos in the department of Santa Cruz, until then completely off the radar of both Bolivians and foreigners. In this process, as mentioned above, it was discovered that the inhabitants of these old missions—known as *chiquitanos*—had preserved an enormous quantity of musical scores from the 17th to 19th centuries. Two academics from the community (full disclosure: I was one of them) prepared documentation for UNESCO to declare the mission towns of Chiquitos Cultural Patrimony of Humanity (up until then the only Bolivian site with this status was Potosí, which had achieved the title through the action of the central government). The dossier made the argument that the Jesuit missions were liv-

ing towns—*pueblos vivos*—and that the people of the lowlands had a patrimony worthy of this status. In 1990, UNESCO included six of the Jesuit mission towns in the Patrimony of Humanity list.

But this was not enough for those of us who worked in cultural development. There had to be a way for the local community—and then the regional and national communities—to make this patrimony their own. A small group of people (in a grassroots effort knocking on every door for funding) launched on an adventure to create an International Festival of Early Music. The response was very positive and in just a short time the festival has become one of the most important of its kind in the world, with the special characteristic that it takes place simultaneously in many different sites; and music groups from five continents participate. The festival has situated the music of the Chiquitos region in the panorama of universal music; it has become an important cultural reference point that has managed to elevate the self-esteem of the region's inhabitants; it has stimulated tourism and—through the music schools that have been created in the small towns—become an alternative source of employment for the region's youth.

There is no need here for grotesque costumes or for violence. The lowlands of Bolivia have learned to adopt their mixed race heritage and to bask in their identity through a socio-cultural process in which European and indigenous people learn to see eye to eye without excluding the other. And the creation and recovery of culture has been a vital part of that process.

Alcides Parejas Moreno is a Bolivian historian who has written more than thirty books, including works about the history of Santa Cruz, several textbooks and four novels. He has taught extensively at universities and schools in both La Paz and Santa Cruz de la Sierra. He is one of the founders of the International Music Festival "Misiones de Chiquitos," the International Theatre Festival and the Association for the Promotion of Art and Culture (APAC).

International Theater Festival

Culture in Action **BY MARITZA WILDE**

THE CHALLENGE BEGAN AT A CAFÉ IN MADRID on a cold morning, when two Spanish colleagues dared me to organize an international theater festival in Bolivia. We were talking about Latin American theater and how little promotion theater was receiving in some Latin American countries. My colleague and friend Luis Molina, director of the CELCIT (Latin American Center of Theater Creation and Research), observed, “You are the perfect person to organize an international theater festival in Bolivia; you have the contacts and the experience.” I evaded his comment with something along the lines of “It’s complicated.”

Back in Bolivia a few days later, I started to think about the idea. I figured the most adequate place to hold the event was the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, capital of the department of Santa Cruz, which shares a border with Brazil. Although it is Bolivia’s most important city, I discarded La Paz from the beginning because of its altitude: some 12,000 feet above sea level. Santa Cruz with its increasingly prosperous society was experiencing a demand for cultural growth. The reality exceeded my expectations. Four months after my arrival from Madrid, I presented the project to three institutions in Santa Cruz de la Sierra.

It was 11:30 a.m. on another morning, a hot and humid one, and I was leaving the offices of a cultural institution in Santa Cruz. It had been my third appointment of the day, and the third institution to offer financial support for my project. It was not yet noon, and I already had the financial resources and institutional support to go ahead with the first international theater festival in Bolivia. This was nothing short of amazing. From my previous experience as an independent theater director and actress, the knowledge that theater can find its rightful place in



the culture of our peoples filled me with a deep satisfaction.

Six months after the challenge in Madrid, the first International Theater Festival of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, the first of its kind in Bolivia, was inaugurated. The public’s response was incredible; performance after performance, the people seemed amazed at the event and very emotionally receptive. It was a heterogeneous public, made up of young people filled with an expectant curiosity and older people who seemed to be emotionally moved, especially by the international performances they saw. Every one of the international performances received standing ovations. The tickets were sold out for every single performance.

The success of this first experience in 1997 encouraged me to undertake a second project, this time in La Paz. At this point, I figured if people could play soccer here, they should very well be able to perform theater. Most importantly, La

La Odissea Teatro de los Andes performs in the International Theater Festival.

Paz was the city I lived in, so it would be easier to give continuity to the project. So, taking advantage of the fact that La Paz had been named “Capital Iberoamericana de la Cultura,” we held the first International Theater Festival of La Paz, or FITAZ, in 1999.

This second experience was very different from the first, and the altitude proved to be the least of our troubles. Although we had the support of important municipal institutions, we faced multiple financial problems that threatened the success of the event. Yet the good quality of the plays drew highly positive reactions from the public and the media. Headlines like “The FITAZ dazzles La Paz” were common during those ten days. Some people approached me on the street to congratulate me and express their gratitude with words like “Thank

you for this festival that filled us with joy and optimism”.

Although the festival had been programmed to be held every two years, the Mexican ambassador to Bolivia advised me to hold another the following year. She said, “Maritza, don’t let the audience cool off; don’t let them wait two years.” After the financial difficulties we faced, I was ready to give up on the project altogether. But I thought of the enthusiastic congratulations on the street and the supportive advice of the ambassador, I and decided to forge on for the year 2000—the beginning of the new century.

The festival has now been held seven times. For my colleagues, especially the young ones who are starting out in playwriting, directing and acting, this festival has become a very important platform for their own inspirations and creation and an international arena in which to present them. It is very gratifying to see that I was not wrong to take the advice of the Mexican ambassador at the time.

Just as there have been difficulties, there are many names and faces which, as a woman of theater, inspire me and elevate me to what I believe is one of the highest qualities of the human spirit: gratitude.

Fifteen years after that morning in Madrid, we see 2012 as a year full of new accomplishments for the theater community of Bolivia; the FITAZ will be held for the eighth time in March 2012. I want to finish with the thought that has guided me throughout my work as an actress and director, which is the belief that theater is peace, even in war, and freedom even in slavery.

Maritza Wilde is an actress and theater director who has studied in Spain and France. Currently she is the director of the International Theater Festival of La Paz and of the FITAZ “Theater for Peace in the World” Foundation.

Crash Course on Bolivian Cinema

“Going beyond Sanjinés” **BY MAURICIO SOUZA CRESPO**

THE MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION about Bolivian cinema outside the country is probably this: “Bolivian cinema? Huhh?” And, usually, the quick and somewhat angry response to this perplexity is simple: yes, there is such a thing as a ‘Bolivian cinema.’ No, we have never had—and certainly not now—a ‘film industry’ (this is the case with most Latin American countries save the big ones: Mexico, Brazil, maybe Argentina). And yes, our cinema is small, only capable of producing a few movies a year, made in almost impossible conditions. Filming a movie in Bolivia, the critic Pedro Susz wrote some years ago, is equivalent to try to build the Concorde airplane in a car garage. But despite all these difficulties, we have produced several classics of Latin American cinema. Against all odds, Bolivian cinema exists, and it is alive and well. It even has a history.

A HISTORY OF BOLIVIAN CINEMA IN A NUTSHELL

If we were to offer a historical outline of Bolivian cinema, we would need to mention three names: José Velasco Maidana, Jorge Ruiz and Jorge Sanjinés.

Velasco Maidana (1900-1989), who was also an important musician, directed some of the classics of Bolivian cinema silent era: among them, *Wara Wara* (1930). Until recently, our knowledge of this movie was vague, as it is the case with most Latin America silent films. (If, as it is often claimed, more than 70% of all silent films have been lost to the world, in Latin America that percentage is probably higher.) In 1989, the nitrate negatives of *Wara Wara* were discovered in an old trunk. After a long process of restoration and reconstruction, in 2010, seventy years later, we were able to see

—almost for the first time—this central piece of our film history.

Jorge Ruiz (1924) is, above all, a documentary film director. In his time, John Grierson called him “one of the six most significant documentary filmmakers in the world.” With a work life spanning four decades, Ruiz completed more than 20 films and received many awards, but a critical consensus considers *Vuelve Sebastiana* (1953) his major achievement.

By some distance, the dominant figure in Bolivian cinema is Jorge Sanjinés (1937). His overpowering influence (through both his films and numerous essays and articles) is indirectly felt even today. For some time, every new Bolivian film was read as an attempt to “go beyond Sanjinés.” Political in nature, his oeuvre includes at least four classics of Latin American cinema: *Ukamau* (*And So It Is*, 1966), *Yawar Mallku* (*Blood of the Condor*, 1969), *El coraje del pueblo* (*The Courage of the People*, 1971) and *La nación clandestina* (*The Clandestine Nation*, 1989). (Sanjinés is still active: he is now shooting a long-awaited new movie, *Bolivia insurgente*).

ORIGINS OF BOLIVIAN CONTEMPORARY CINEMA

In the second part of the 70s, when the country was still painfully exiting the military dictatorship of General Hugo Banzer (1971-1978), filmmakers were said to confront a somewhat false choice. On the one hand, there were those who wanted to continue making films—such as those by Sanjinés—not only openly political in terms of content, but also in search of finding a new film language, different forms of production, and alternative channels of distribution. On the other hand, a group of filmmakers—

many of them formerly part of Sanjinés' group—proposed a more lighthearted social realism, descriptive in nature, that reproduced—with some degree of originality—the forms of a classic narrative (commercial) style. This second option, called at the time “Possible Cinema,” produced movies that, beyond their merits (which are not few), would prove themselves fatefully influential in the next two decades. We should mention two films: *Chuquiago* (1977) by Antonio Eguino and *Mi socio* (*My Friend*, 1982) by Paolo Agazzi. Eguino's film constructs a social portrait of the city of La Paz (‘Chuquiago’ is the name of the city in Aymara, the indigenous language spoken by a considerable percentage of its population) with an urban focus that already signals its distance from Sanjinés' work, which has been concentrated in rural indigenous populations. Agazzi, in his bittersweet road movie *Mi socio*, tries to do the same: he describes not a city this time but the different regions of the national territory (Bolivia, the sociologist René Zavaleta Mercado used to say, is a nation where “every valley is a separate country.”) In both the case of *Chuquiago* and *Mi socio*, we could talk of a risky flirting with various stereotypes (of classes, of regions of the country), but they are, at the end, movies that generally avoid this pitfall and provide a useful model for future generations.

“GOING BEYOND SANJINÉS”

If our contemporary cinema could be described as an attempt to go beyond Sanjinés' films, in 1989 we saw a first step in that direction: with his *La nación clandestina*, Sanjinés himself seemed to be going “beyond Sanjinés.” Arguably the contemporary classic of Bolivian cinema, *La nación clandestina* transforms the well-known “politicization of culture” of movies such as *Yawar Mallku* into a more nuanced “culturalization of politics.” Its deliberate, morosely self-conscious use of certain film language tools is also characteristic of Sanjinés' work: in this case, a series of beautifully planned sequence-shots create a sense of tempo-



A poster collage at the Cinemateca.

ral and spatial complexity.

Meanwhile and in the following years, many Bolivian films returned, with some luck, to the paths opened by Eguino and Agazzi: their exploration of social realism, allegorical in spirit, along with an experimentation with genres, proved irresistible (for example, in 1995 Marcos Loayza would try his hand with an endearing road movie, *Cuestión de fe*, and, in 2005, his *El corazón de Jesús* could be deemed a variation of *Chuquiago*).

THE LAST TWO DECADES

In the last two decades, Bolivian cinema has been marked by transformations

by outside factors. First, a considerable number of young Bolivian filmmakers received formal training in Cuba, the United States and elsewhere. This group is responsible for a modest but significant professionalization of our “industry.” The second outside influence was the arrival of digital formats and computer-based editing. These changes explain, among other things, a sudden increase in our production numbers: in 2010, for example, we exceeded a dozen feature-length movies (our historical average had been one or two movies a year).

Very recent Bolivian films could be grouped in three main categories. First, in variations of a classic social realism mode, films that try a direct denunciation or description of social problems



(immigration to the First World, drug trafficking, corruption, class violence). Second, films that demonstrate a desire to explore genres and commercial formulas: comedies, more road movies, action movies, even—last year—a “gore movie.” And, finally, there is an emergence of films strongly marked by the voice and style of the director, what in the 60s was called “auteur cinema” or author’s cinema. Maybe all these tendencies, thematically speaking, have forced that long-awaited move “beyond Sanjines.” Not in one crucial point, however: Bolivian cinema continues to be, right now, highly political, although not in the same manner as its predecessors.

Political in a different way, more numerous and varied, this recent cinema

is also quite uneven in quality. Genre cinema has produced mostly misses and few hits; social realism has been alarmingly bland and commonplace in its ‘social readings’ (and particularly blind to our current “revolutionary process of change”). “Auteur cinema” has only a few, though significant, achievements. In general, we could say that recent bad Bolivian movies have the same problem that bad Hollywood movies have: no matter the amount of money you spend, a lousy script is a lousy script.

BOLIVIAN CINEMA RIGHT NOW

A detailed overview of the last decade of Bolivian cinema would be impossible here (or irresponsible). We can, however, attempt a quick snapshot of the last two years, commenting on three movies that are not only well-worth seeing in their own right, but also representative and, to a degree, emblematic. To wit: *Zona Sur* (Southern District) by Juan Carlos Valdivia, *Rojo Amarillo Verde* (Red Yellow Green), by Boulouc, Bastani and Bellot and *Inalmama* by Eduardo López.

Zona Sur (2009) is, to date, Valdivia’s best movie. Less concerned with narrative construction than in his previous movies such as *Jonás y la ballena rosada* (Jonah and the Pink Whale) and *American Visa*, Valdivia constructs *Zona Sur* from a series of observations or self-sufficient scenes that patiently complete a family and class portrait. The title of the movie already suggests that this portrait is organized by an old claustrophobic metaphor: rich people are depicted as trapped in a “zone of the city,” or, more precisely, in a house. As the film is allegorical in principle (and heavy-handed at that), it is no surprise that the movie ends up proposing a space (a house) as its main character: a high-class slum, cluttered with consumer fetishes, as if memory were a collection of souvenirs inventoried by a camera that slowly circles them.

Rojo Amarillo Verde (2009), directed by three up-and-coming young directors (Boulouc, Bastani and Bellot), is a trilogy of medium-length films gathered under the pretext of the colors of the Bo-

livian flag. Although varied in styles and themes, it displays a common aesthetic: an inclination for narrative ellipsis and indirection, the frequent use of excruciating very long long-takes, an expressive use of photography. It is also true that at least one common theme crosses the three stories: lonely women, somewhat pushed aside by the world, experience interrupted or arrested relations with their (departed) children. Is there an “author’s style” in this collective project, one that would give us permission to talk of a generational sensibility? Maybe. It is a film that, contrary to a long tradition in Bolivian cinema, prefers a deliberate opacity, a reticent approach to storytelling that is, at the same time, quite eloquent.

López continues and enriches a tradition that has been inexplicably neglected in recent Bolivian cinema: the documentary. Like many contemporary world documentary films, his *Inalmama* (2010) aspires to a certain free style: López himself defines his movie as “a political, visual and musical essay about the coca leaf and cocaine in Bolivia.” This description aptly characterizes how his film works: diverse threads and tones weave, in a non-linear logic, a complex understanding of the place that coca leaves have in Bolivian culture (a place vaguely sacred and crudely profane).

SOME FINAL MAYBES

Making a movie in Bolivia may no longer be the impossible adventure it was considered to be some years ago. Maybe to make a movie in Bolivia is not equivalent anymore to building an airplane in a car garage. But as the recent unevenness of Bolivian cinema suggests, maybe its future depends on some more modest measures. Let’s name one: go back to the desk, sit down, and start writing and re-writing stories that are worthwhile to tell.

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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Historic Archives of Santa Cruz de la Sierra

BY PAULA PEÑA HASBÚN

RESEARCHERS INTERESTED IN investigating the history and anthropology of Bolivia's eastern region will find two documentation centers in Santa Cruz de la Sierra: the Museo de Historia y Archivo Histórico of Universidad Autónoma Gabriel René Moreno (the History Museum and Archives of the Gabriel René Moreno University and the Archivo Histórico del Arzobispado (Historic Archives of the Archbishopric). Both centers contain historic, civil and ecclesiastical documents dating from the 17th century.

The city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, the oldest city in this region of Bolivia, dates back to 1561. The city—considered the capital of the eastern region—was twice moved from its original location, but has been in its current place since 1622. During the colonial era, the Governorship of Santa Cruz de la Sierra included the current departments of Santa Cruz, Beni and Pando; this area, in turn, was the territory of its Bishopric. After Bolivia's creation in 1825, the Department of Santa Cruz was divided: the Department of Beni was created in 1842 and the Department of Pando in 1938.

The documents in both historic archives of the city are from the Colonial and Re-

publican eras. The Archives of the Archbishopric are mainly ecclesiastical, containing all the information produced by the Bishopric. These archives contain a wealth of information about the region's diverse ethnic groups because the Church was dedicated to the evangelization of the natives of the lowlands.

The Museum of History and Historic Archives contain an abundance of civil documents. The Historic Archives concentrate on two old archives: the university's historic archive with a small collection known as Fondo Melgar i Montaña, that brings together colonial documents and information from the independence era and Fondo Prefectural, which focuses on documents from the Department of Santa Cruz in the first Republican century. Since 2009, another archive known as the Archivo Histórico Departamental Hermanos Vasquez Machicado (Departmental Historic Archive of the Vásquez Machicado Brothers) is now at the Museum of History. The documentary collections of this archive belong to the Municipal Government and the Department Courts.

These documentary collections are being catalogued; there were only indexes for



some of them. The Prefectural Collection was catalogued thanks to the support of the Program for Latin American Libraries and Archives (PLALA) through the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies of Harvard University. In 2006, the Museum of History and the Historic Archive requested support to hire a senior researcher and two young sociologists to prepare the catalogue of the documentary collection that at the time was organized by year in folders. Since November 2006 and for a period of one year, the researcher trained the young sociologists in cataloguing, as the career of library science is not available in Santa Cruz. Together they catalogued

72,080 pages grouped in 4,598 documents related to the period from 1825 to 1910.

The effort was very fruitful: they organized the information in 11 sections and 88 series, in 145 boxes of documents. Two new professionals were also trained in archiving. Likewise, progress has been made with other collections. The catalogues are available printed and online to researchers who are dedicated to the history and anthropology of the lowlands of Bolivia during the 19th century.

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Revolution in Venezuela?

A REVIEW BY PETER DESHAZO

The Revolution in Venezuela: Social and Political Change under Chávez, edited by Thomas Ponniah and Jonathan Eastwood. *The David Rockefeller Center Series on Latin American Studies*, Harvard University, Harvard University Press, 2011, 338 pages

Much of what is written about Venezuela since the election of Hugo Chávez in 1998 tends to be highly polarized, often based on “Manichaeism” perceptions of developments in that country, according to one of the editors of this volume. At the extremes, Chávez is viewed as a social revolutionary dedicated to the service of the downtrodden in Latin America or as dictator who threatens regional democracy and security. Most academic observers tend to occupy space in between these ideological bookends, but nonetheless view Chávez and *chavismo* in a decidedly negative or positive light.

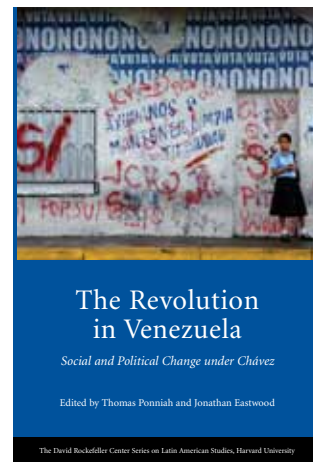
The Revolution in Venezuela accepts that impartiality regarding Venezuela is a scarce commodity and instead seeks to “construct a narrative out of contrasting views.” The book consists of an introduction and conclusion written by the editors, Eastwood and Ponniah, respectively, and eight articles by separate contributors evaluating a variety of issues related

to Chávez’s record in office. They deal with the president’s brief removal from power by the military in April 2002, political polarization and relations between Chávez and the opposition, the concept of participatory democracy in the context of *chavismo*, an analysis of the 2006 presidential elections, an examination of women’s rights under Chávez, and chapters analyzing the Venezuelan economy, health care (specifically the *Barrio Adentro* program in poor urban neighborhoods) and foreign policy.

Several articles analyze the politics of the Chávez years. Two stand in stark contrast: Javier Corrales’ description of the polarizing tactics used by Chávez to create a regime of “competitive authoritarianism,” and a far more benign vision of *chavismo* by Gregory Wilpert asserting that participatory democracy has been institutionalized in Venezuela, replacing the flawed representative democracy of the so-called “Fourth Republic” (1958–1998). Ironically, both authors agree on at least one central point, that Chávez and his supporters—in the words of Wilpert—“dominate all branches of government” and that Chávez’s governing style is authoritarian. Corrales goes into detail on the steps taken by Chávez to concentrate power in his hands.

He asserts that the evolution of the regime towards more radical positions occurred as Chávez came to understand the political value of linking polarizing rhetoric with large-scale state spending aimed at uncommitted voters (mostly urban poor) through the *Misiones* programs. For his part, Wilpert claims that Chávez’s electoral support and popularity stem as much from satisfaction with the inclusiveness of direct democracy as from the benefits of increased social spending. Wilpert also rejects a common interpretation that considers the concept of participatory democracy in Venezuela to be a smokescreen for the dismantling of checks and balances on executive authority, and the transfer of resources by Chávez to the newly created mechanisms of local government (communal councils, citizen assemblies) as a maneuver to undermine elected governors and mayors who oppose him.

Contributions by Mark Weisbrot on the Venezuelan economy and by Carles Muntaner, Haejoo Chung, Qamar Mahmood and Francisco Armada on health care highlight what they consider to be the successes of the Chávez years. Weisbrot asserts that the Venezuelan economy under Chávez has performed strongly and rejects “conven-



tional wisdom” that predicts that it will sink under the weight of lower oil prices or mismanagement. He stresses the positive effects of social spending in reducing poverty and improving health care, hails the reduction of public debt (up to 2008) and claims that the effect of high rates of inflation have been overstated. Venezuela’s fine economic performance, according to Weisbrot, should be contrasted with “the unprecedented economic failure” of the rest of Latin America in recent years owed to the application of macro-economic policies imposed on the region by the IMF and the United States. The chapter on health care echoes this interpretation; the authors contend that large-scale spending by the Chávez administration on health—specifically the *Barrio Adentro* program staffed in part by Cuban doctors and dentists—has greatly improved health standards in Venezuela, in stark contrast to former neoliberal approaches to medical care in the region (promoted by the U.S., the IMF, foreign corporations, etc) that have

had “ill effects on health and equity.” *Barrio Adentro*, the authors argue, should be a model approach to health care reform for other low-moderate income countries.

In their zeal to condemn “neoliberalism,” the authors of both chapters ignore or reject the reality of the important gains in health (infant mortality, nutrition, life expectancy), economic growth, poverty reduction, access to education, literacy, and many other social and development-related categories that have taken place in Latin America since

(Brazilian leaders would certainly disagree with Williams’ assessment that their country is in the “regionalist” camp—along with Ecuador, Bolivia, and Nicaragua, of governments that are inspired by Venezuela.) The Soviet Union, Cuba and the Cold War notwithstanding, Williams considers *chavismo* to be “the most significant ideological challenge to U.S. hemispheric interests that Washington has faced in perhaps the last 50 years.”

Many of the interpretations presented in *The Revolu-*

remains a petro-state, utterly dependent on revenue from exportation of oil to fuel public spending and the economy. Income from oil also provides the underpinning for the social spending—the *Misiones* above all, that allowed Chávez to consolidate core political support. Venezuela’s foreign policy is also powered by oil, the raw material for “petro-diplomacy,” above all the 100,000 barrels per day provided to Cuba in exchange for doctors and teachers for the *Misiones* but also the economic aid extended to friendly regimes—especially Bolivia and Nicaragua. It is by no means an exaggeration to say that future prospects for the Chávez administration remain closely linked to the oil industry—and above all oil prices. The spike in prices from 2003 to 2008 provided the underpinning for the *Misiones*, which in turn helped ensure Chavez’s victory in the recall referendum of August 2004 and opened the door to subsequent political gains. Higher oil prices allowed him to increase the size of the public workforce by 67% between 2002 and 2008, strengthening his political base but with a big price tag. With Venezuelan oil production currently at levels well below the peak reached in the mid-1990s, however, and unlikely to increase significantly anytime soon, Chávez’s future is indeed wedded to oil prices—and to continued access to the U.S. market, where a large share of Venezuela’s crude is refined and distributed.

Another key issue little discussed in the book but appropriately raised by Thomas

Ponniah in his conclusion is the sustainability of *chavismo*. Many of the chapters point to the central role of Chávez in every aspect of Venezuelan national life. There is, however, almost no mention of other *chavista* leaders, little analysis of the parties or groups that support Chávez, and no discussion of institutions that exercise influence over policy-making. Williams asserts that Venezuelan foreign policy is not a mere instrument of Chavez’s will, but offers no other explanation as to how decisions are taken. One might argue that this is not an oversight but a reflection of the indispensability of Chávez to the entire system. What then, is the future of Venezuela without Chávez and how sustainable are any of the “reforms” he has undertaken? Ponniah points to “destabilizing contradictions” within *chavismo* that make for an uncertain future, but no one else offers predictions. The uncertainties involving Chavez’s recent surgery in Cuba and his announcement that he has cancer have brought the sustainability of his rule into sharp focus.

A final consideration, raised by both Eastwood and Ponniah, is whether the Chávez regime constitutes a revolution. Eastwood claims that in terms of redefining class structure it is not revolutionary but could be when examining perceptions of status and class. For his part, Ponniah signals a “conceptual” revolution in the thinking of Chávez and his supporters toward the goal of development and the linking of “new forms of democracy”

This book provides balanced, thoughtful and provocative analysis of the situation in Venezuela under Hugo Chávez.

the 1990s. Grave problems remain—including the region’s glaring inequalities in distribution of wealth, but it should be possible to highlight gains in health, poverty reduction and access to education in Venezuela without the need to claim they are unique to *chavismo*.

A chapter on Venezuela’s foreign policy by Mark Eric Williams asserts that the Chávez administration has successfully used a “soft-balancing” approach to counter U.S. influence in the hemisphere through initiatives such as the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), oil diplomacy, and other measures to produce a region bifurcated into two camps, one sympathetic to Chávez’s vision of a multipolar world, and another with closer ties to the United States.

tion in Venezuela cry out for counterargument. Jonathan Eastwood’s comprehensive introductory essay in part assumes this task, providing a vision of Chávez’s rise to power and record in office that stands in contrast to that presented by several of the authors. In echoing the description of the Chávez regime (by a leading opponent) as being a “quasi-dictatorship,” he strongly questions Wilpert’s assessment of participatory democracy and points out that Weisbrot’s arguments on the economy are controversial.

While Eastwood’s analysis provides a useful, integrating framework to the book, several essential variables are not given enough attention. One is the all-important oil sector. Venezuela since the late 1920s has been and

with a radical redistribution approach. In the end, however, he judges that *chavismo* falls short of being revolutionary in the traditional sense. One might also argue that rather than being revolutionary, *chavismo* is an amalgam of variables from Latin America's past: hyper-populism, *caudillismo*, appeals to nationalism and ethnic and class division, predilection for a larger state role in the economy, the cult of the personality, and, of course, *anti-imperialismo*.

Before 1998, Venezuela received considerably less attention from the academic community than other important countries in the region. While the coming of Chávez has given rise to a cottage industry of newly minted experts and bloggers who fawn over or excoriate *chavismo*, serious scholarship on Venezuela remains in limited supply. *The Revolution in Venezuela* helps correct this imbalance with some provocative and thoughtful analysis, making a useful contribution to a topic with broad ramifications for the Americas and beyond.

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The Panama Canal

A REVIEW BY FERNANDO BERGUIDO

The Big Ditch: How America Took, Built, Ran and Ultimately Gave Away the Panama Canal, by Noel Maurer and Carlos Yu (Princeton University Press, 2011, 420 pages.)

"The creation of the Panama Canal was far more than a vast, unprecedented feat of engineering. It was a profoundly important historic event and a sweeping human drama not unlike that of a war. Apart from wars, it represented the largest, most costly single effort ever before mounted anywhere on earth."

—David McCullough,

The Path Between the Seas: The Creation of the Panama Canal 1870-1914. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977.

It was a question lingering for a century among most Panamanians and many Americans: was the Panama Canal good business for the Americans? There was a military-strategic gain but economically, did the money invested yield a good return as a commercial enterprise and if so, how profitable was it?

Harvard Business School professor Noel Maurer and historian Carlos Yu reflect on the economics of a very singular case of American imperialism: from Theodore Roosevelt's involvement with Panama's Revolution at the turn of the 20th century

to the establishment of a singular colonial enclave in the Panama Canal Zone and the handover of the Panama Canal itself to independent Panama in 1999.

The authors' quest is unequivocal: whether a democratic nation like the United States "operating inside the strictures of Westphalian sovereignty, was able to leverage its ability to impose military and economic sanctions into sustainable economic gains." Furthermore, why did the United States withdraw from its "imperial commitment" almost a century later?

Panama's destiny has always been linked to its privileged geographic location. Centuries before Roosevelt's endeavor, the Spanish Empire was very much aware of the strategic importance of this possession.

After Vasco Núñez de Balboa discovered the Pacific (originally named "The Sea of the South") by crossing the thinnest stretch of land—only 50 miles one ocean from the other—in 1503, the city of Panama was established as the first European settlement on the Pacific coast. Ever since, Europeans first, and Americans later expropriated most of the rents generated by Panama's geography by different means.

The book presents deep research and analysis on the



social rate of return, as well as military and economic impacts of the American "imperial" adventure on the Isthmus of Panama, not without paying proper attention to colonial times, to previous U.S. private investment in the first intercontinental railroad built in order to capture traffic from the East Coast to California during the Gold Rush, and to the French failed project of building a sea-level ditch in the 19th century.

For Maurer and Yu the cost of America's venture on Panamanian soil was small compared to the benefits obtained. It took ten years to build at a final cost of \$326 million (with an overrun of more than double of the original estimate of \$144 million). The project was not only a great investment but the United States became the main beneficiary of the "path between the seas" (as David McCullough called it).

It is well known that the Americans invoiced the new republic dearly for their backing of Panama's revolution against Colombia. "Not only did the United States reduce its payments for the

use of Panama's geographic assets, it succeeded in getting Panamanian taxpayers to subsidize some of the overhead costs of canal construction and operation. In other words, contrary to a large literature on the wages of the empire, Theodore Roosevelt managed to make imperialism pay."

The authors found out, for example, that the net present value of the Canal Treaty signed between the United States and Panama (the Hay-Bunau Varilla Treaty) was less than a half the value of the agreement previously signed between the United States and Colombia (while Panama was still part of that nation), a treaty to which the United States had already agreed two years before.

The use of military muscle by the United States in favor of the new republic yielded a significant additional return: in 2009 dollars, the authors estimate the United States profited between 10 to 32 billion dollars from the initial arrangement, an amount that would have been astronomically higher if the Canal would have raised tolls as a commercial operation (the United States did not rise canal tolls until 1974 as a result of strategic policy of keeping a revenue-neutral operation).

"Digging the Ditch" is a chapter devoted to remind readers once more of the odyssey and marvels that American engineers achieved over highly demanding technological challenges in the disease-infested tropical isthmus between 1904 and 1914.

"The American military epidemiologist William Gorgas ran the single largest tropical public health effort in history until that date so that the labor force building the Panama Canal would not be decimated by disease, as it had during the private French attempt".

The dark side of the construction story was the importation of the Jim Crow system of racial discrimination, a legacy that reigned in the former Panama Canal Zone for most of the 20th century.

Chief Engineer George Goethals, the Panama Canal Zone's first governor, "was blunt about his motives" for keeping the Caribbean black population—brought from the West Indies precisely to build the Canal outside of the territory of the Canal Zone. "I did not care to see a population of Panamanians or West Indian negroes occupying the land"—he wrote in 1915—"for these are non-productive, thriftless and indolent. They would congregate in small settlements, and the cost of sanitation and government would be increased materially."

As for tangible economic impact, according to Maurer and Yu, U.S. producers, consumers and transporters were the main beneficiaries of the cost savings produced by shortening the distance between ports.

They also found that California and the Pacific Northwest benefited at the expense of the South.

Outside the United States, the other two countries profiting significantly from

the Panama Canal happened to be Chile (minerals exports) and Japan (shipping industry and commerce).

After World War II the Canal started to show signs of stagnation and decline. The authors even found enough evidence to conclude that the American "managed the canal particularly poorly during the postwar period."

In the late 1970s, when President Jimmy Carter finally accepted to renegotiate the treaties—at significant political cost to himself—the Panama Canal was already a relatively inefficient enterprise. "The canal's American managers lacked incentives to increase its efficiency, market its services, or adopt new technologies."

Upper management consisted of military bureaucrats "at the end of their careers, given a plum job as reward before retirement." By 1979, the Panama Canal was barely making money.

With a remarkable accumulation of research and economic history it is a pity that some basic historical facts were not accurate. The inaccuracy will not, in my opinion, change the main theme or any of the supporting arguments presented by the authors. Any Panamanian, however, will be taken aback by any text asserting that "on November 6, 1903, Panama declared its Independence." Panama's Independence Day is November 3. Other minor historical typos run along Panama's turbulent political history, all the way to General Manuel Noriega regime, a figure nicknamed by his country-

men "Cara de Piña" (Pineapple Face), and not "La Piña" (The Pineapple) as the book indicates repeatedly.

The transfer of the Panama Canal administration from the United States to Panama has a happy ending. For the United States, the Panama Canal "in Panamanian hands became more valuable to the United States than the Panama Canal in American hands" concluded the authors.

For Panamanians, the peaceful transition from the original "Imperialistic Power of the North" to the small nation in Central America has been a source of economic and psychological accomplishment.

"Once Panama took back ownership of the canal, the waterway became phenomenally profitable despite the growth of alternative transport routes and fuelled a prolonged economic boom after decades of stagnation and relative decline."

Maurer and Yu are not shy about their optimistic outlook on the future of the Big Ditch. "The Panama Canal entered the twenty-first century better managed than ever before in its history." No weak endorsement from two well versed scholars.

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Exploring The Jungle Cradle

A REVIEW BY DEBORAH T. LEVENSON

Maya Roads, One Woman's Journey Among the People of the Rainforest by Mary Jo McConahay (*Chicago Review*, 2011, 288 pages)

The tropical forest within the southern Mexican state of Chiapas and the Guatemalan northern state of Petén, what Mary Jo McConahay calls the “jungle cradle” of ancient civilization in her remarkable page-turning book, *Maya Roads, One Woman's Journey Among the People of the Rainforest*, is today threatened with destruction by what can be called the modern barbarism of drug trafficking and deforestation. This is especially the case in the Petén, which covers one third of Guatemalan territory. Rich in human history and in natural resources that include the gorgeous fauna and flora of carbon dioxide-trapping forests, it has become a key route for narcotics passing from South America to the United States. Currently, the Petén is under a state of siege as a consequence of the massacre of 27 ranch workers this past May by *narcotraficantes* who are at war with the ranch's owner. No book about this region could be as timely as this one.

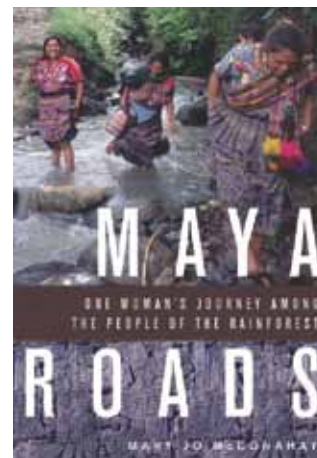
McConahay recounts the history of this Mexican/Guatemalan rainforest through the prism of her own travels, which were set into motion before the Central American wars that she subsequently

covered as part of a cohort of courageous journalists. Her journey, as well as her book, starts decades back in Mexico City's National Museum of Anthropology, where dioramas of Lacandón men and women set her off to meet the real Lacandón. She goes south to Chiapas with the great esprit of those times: here is a young woman traveling alone, improvising as she moves along, hitchhiking, finding an odd traveling companion for a brief interlude, and hauling around packs of black Sobranies as gifts for the Lacandón who will host her. Full of curiosity, optimism and anticipation of wonders, she soon finds them, be these the flight of flamingos, the density of lush green forest or the clutch of dead birds Lacandón women wear in their hair. McCarthy soon thereafter leaves the rainforest to spend years reporting on the 1970s conflicts in the Middle East and those of the 1980s in Central America. But in the 1990s, tired of wars and dead bodies, she picks up the Maya roads again to “breathe jungle air” and to satisfy her curiosity about the ancient Maya. If only it were that simple.

Ruins and digs are central to *Maya Roads*. The first journey of her 1990s return is to the site of the Maya city of Dos Pilas, founded in 629 AD. McConahay portrays the colorful characters working to reassemble this long-gone

city, to imagine its past and to decipher what they find, with a crew from National Geographic trailing behind on occasion. Accompanying the renowned U.S. archaeologist Arthur Demarest through slow excavations during which fragments of pots and other objects are carefully brought to the surface, she even follows him to the bottom of a long shaft where he, playing Jim Morrison on a portable stereo, gently picks out and puts together the bones of ruler Itzam K'awil. The unforgettable scene is made more so because all the while Demarest is deeply troubled about ancient Dos Pilas' relationship to the delicate natural environment surrounding it and what the digging will reveal about the wars this city-state waged.

McConahay cannot help have that dig and those ruins at Dos Pilas in mind when she reaches the digs and ruins of Dos Erres. In one of the book's most moving chapters, a young Argentine forensic anthropologist named Patricia Bernardi pulls up buckets from a deep dry well into which a villager has descended to dig up the dirt at the bottom and fill buckets with it. The year is 1993. Bernardi and others shift through the soil for remains of the 376 women, men and children massacred in December 1982 by the Guatemalan Army in the



once vibrant village of Dos Erres. Deep in the Petén, Dos Erres was settled in the 1970s by pioneers, poor peasants from elsewhere who built their community with hope and worked the land they desperately needed. Bernardi is watchful that the bucket not tip and something fall out. A bit of fabric, a rubber boot, after days of digging the bones start coming up to the surface where they are lovingly placed on the ground. Perhaps at least part of a skeleton can be put together. A priest bends over tiny bones, trying to preserve what is left of children in a small piece of cloth. Village survivors guard, help and observe. Time is short; there is little funding and no doubt army spies in the woods. Bernardi feels under pressure to get more and more out of the earth because witnesses to the massacre have come forward to testify and the bones and other fragments

of life now gone must be analyzed and processed to enter into a proceeding of a possible trial. Do the bones tell if the as yet unknown person died crushed by a rifle butt, or thrown against a wall? McConahay takes hours of testimony to help create what follows. In addition to village witnesses, two *kaibiles*, members of the military's elite corps, whom McConahay and human rights workers must personally protect, decide to step forward to testify in a case that will eventually lead to arrests and trials.

In a different part of the Petén, near T'ikal and tourism, McConahay comes across another kind of ruins. On her way to ruins of Uaxatun, a city-state that warred with T'ikal in 378 AD, she finds the town of Uaxatun, founded in the 1930s by the Wrigley Chewing Gum Company. Wrigley put in a railroad, built housing along it and hired a workforce to tap sapodilla trees for the sap that was then boiled down to reappear as Juicy Fruits et al. When vinyl resins, McConahay explains, replaced this sap, grass invaded the tracks and this Uaxatun became almost abandoned except for a few residents. One of these is a remarkable local woman named Neria Herrera, who protects hundreds of pre-Conquest Maya pieces—vessels, plates, jewelry—from tomb robbers in a locked room of her home that she has converted into a museum, one she has registered with the Ministry of Culture.

Whether exhumations, excavations, the murals of Bonampak, the special look of the Lacandón *milpas*, or the extraordinary ordinary people of the a region, such as “the man who died”—a survivor of another massacre—McConahay depicts all with eloquence and empathy, including the trees. She writes beautifully. Her book ends with her return to Chiapas, decades after her early 1970s adventure, to find the same Lacandón. She still hitchhikes, quickly makes friends, asks questions thoughtfully and observes people and places with care and in detail, but this time she is anxious. The Mexican army is attacking Zapatista communities in Chiapas while the drug lords are building runways and roads distinct from the Maya ones. Yet she ends her book with concern, not disenchantment. Knowledgeable and politically savvy, she is uncertain about the future, but she is sure that the Maya paths of the past and present offer spiritual wisdom and the refuge of beauty that her book gives us again and again.

Deborah T. Levenson is an Associate Professor of History at Boston College and she works with the *Asociación para el Avance de las Ciencias Sociales in Guatemala City*. Her books include *Trade Unionists Against Terror*, *Guatemala City 1954-1985*, *Hacer La Juventud* and the forthcoming *‘Adios Niño,’ Death, Political Violence and the Maras of Guatemala City*.

Copan's Stone Puzzles Come Indoors

A REVIEW BY EULOGIO GUZMÁN

The Copan Sculpture Museum: Ancient Maya Artistry in Stucco and Stone by Barbara W. Fash (Peabody Museum Press, 2011, 216 pages)

Barbara Fash's recent publication, *The Copan Sculpture Museum*, provides a personal account of ongoing efforts to document, examine, consolidate, study, and exhibit the large corpus of sculptures from the ruins of Copan. This ancient city, set in the lavish subtropical region of western Honduras, was constructed by a society of Maya peoples who were adept builders and who thrived there from AD 426 until their demise in the ninth century. Copan's inhabitants filled the lush contours of the land both in their dynastic center, known today as the Principal Group, and in diverse settlements that sprawled over the valley in a network of carefully planned buildings and exterior spaces.

The Maya are renowned for their refined visual culture that appeals to the west because of its realistic approach in representing natural forms. This graceful imagery dressed Copan's architecture and numerous free-standing monuments and was generally made of blocks of sculptured mosaic made of the local volcanic tufa stone coated in a thin layer of plaster. The variety of symbols, hieroglyphic blocks, human forms



and supernatural composites regaling these architectural structures presented important narratives that scholars have used to understand the Maya worldview.

Copan's abandonment by the Maya in the ninth century enabled the jungle to reclaim the site with the surrounding luxurious subtropical forest, while sections that brushed against the banks of the Copan River actually disappeared. Natural disasters also caused buildings to collapse, toppling façades and burying sculptures; this gave Copan's ruined condition a quixotic ambiance that brought many to visit and study its exquisite corpse. Early explorers and archaeologists drawn to Copan documented what they saw in writing, illustrations, and photographs. Some, unable to resist its allure, carted sculptural keepsakes home, leaving gaps for scholars to

reconstruct. Curiously, outside the reconstruction of the famed hieroglyphic stairway, few other major consolidation and restoration efforts took place before William and Barbara Fash created the Copan Mosaics Project in 1985 to analyze and conserve the numerous façade sculptures that remain.

Barbara Fash first came to Copan in 1977, when William Fash invited her to illustrate the monuments uncovered during extended excavations at the site. Except for a couple of short interludes, she has never left. Her artistic and academic efforts have complemented much of William

façade. She is a puzzle-master who has performed an intricate analysis of the collapsed piles of stone—plotting all the fragments to document, separate, and, when possible, reconstruct this lost material culture. Her years of experience and intimate familiarity with Copan's sculptural corpus have enabled her to rematch fragmented sculpture (through the use of casts)—removed some time ago and now in foreign museum collections—with recently reconstructed Copan building façades. Under the Fashes' supervision, Copan's ancient artistic program is visible once again in exhibitions at

sculptures and façades, some on exhibit for the first time.

Each chapter includes self-contained sections that sometimes read like museum labels. This stylistic decision, combined with the author's comment on forty-seven museum exhibits on display, help achieve one of the book's clear aims as an essential companion to Copan's Museum. The author's economic prose covers topics popular to Maya studies as well as new scholarship. She correctly allows the range of sculpted imagery to dictate the direction of her text, discussing familiar topics such as ancestor worship, underworld symbolism, the ball game, ritual sacrifice, warfare, and cosmology. More nuanced concepts are also discussed allowing her to explore the varied artistic programs and socio-political interests of communities outside of Copan's center.

Abundant historical, archaeological, and exhibition photographs handsomely illustrate this book and are essential to the text. Though there are surprisingly few of the author's own illustrations, and no plans of the acropolis or of the individual residential zones, the architectural drawings and illustrations complement the photographs, clarifying content and highlighting compositional details. Nearly all of the chapters include the author's pithy, sidebar sections that highlight specific exhibits, monuments, or concepts. The author mentions key researchers and some specific works in lieu of internal citations and footnotes, while the book's concise bibliography

cites the most salient sources related to the subject at hand. The book provides a requisite starting point for anyone interested in gaining familiarity with Copan's vast imagery and an essential foundation for any further, serious academic study on the topic.

The Copan Sculpture Museum showcases the extraordinary reconstruction of the colorful Rosalila structure discovered by archaeologists in 1989 that contains an impressive array of supernatural motifs including several green-feathered avian deities Karl Taube has identified as references to *K'inich Yax K'uk Mo*, Copan's original dynast. These avian solar deities, Barbara Fash tells us, honor the apotheosized rise of this ruler. The real Rosalila is inaccessible and remains hidden within the bowels of one of Copan's most important temples, 10L-16 1st. The dramatic piercing of the museum's open roof by Rosalila's reconstructed temple celebrates its facsimile presentation to all within the museum and symbolically underscores its visually important vertical axis. Choosing Rosalila as the physical center of this museum resonates with the story of the fifteen subsequent kings at Copan and one of many theses presented in this book: the iconographic themes on structures made visible references to the founding dynast. However, neither the book nor the museum focuses solely on a single theme. For years, Maya studies concentrated on the ruling elite who arguably commissioned the bulk of palace constructions and their accompanying Maya imagery,

This tome leads the reader through a tour of the two-story Copan Sculpture Museum in Honduras.

Fash's distinguished career at Copan (he is Harvard's Bowditch Professor of Central American and Mexican Archaeology and Ethnology). Over the years their combined efforts have centered on reconstructing Copan's many three-dimensional conundrums, but in this publication, Barbara Fash, now Director of the Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, takes the lead in presenting the impressive sculpture rebuilt by the Copan Mosaics Project on view at the museum. Her contributions to Copan studies and the museum are considerable in every reassembled

the Copan Sculpture Museum, which feature sculpture from eighteen structures and seven complete façades.

Comprised of twelve succinct chapters, this tome leads the reader through a tour of the two-story Copan Sculptural Museum. Chapters one and twelve focus on the creation and role of the museum as an educational tool that has helped reacquaint the local community with its fragmented past; Chapter two presents the history of archaeological explorations at Copan, while the remaining nine chapters (three through eleven) center on the fifty-eight exhibits in the Copan Sculpture Museum which showcase many reconstructed

but Copan has always been an exception to this rule.

From the early investigations by Sylvanus Morley in the 1900s to those later pursued by Gordon Willey and several of his graduate students (including Richard Leventhal and William Fash), activities outside Copan's "site core" have always garnered attention. Accordingly, both the museum and this book capitalize on this tradition by presenting much imagery from outside the core. In fact, the Museum houses only three of the many famed stelae found at Copan, and fittingly the author devoted only one chapter to discussing these examples and their hypnotically ornate imagery.

The useful color site plan provided in the monograph's front endpaper locates the many late settled areas outside the dynastic center where sculptural façades have been found. The variety of themes and the wide distribution of sculpture especially on later structures have informed much of Fash's insightful suggestions. For instance, the recurrent motifs and the sculptural messages consistently presented on the molding of many structures led her to argue, as some have for other Mesoamerican cultures, that architectural décor emulated headbands worn by governing elites. The presence of motifs in structures outside the dynastic center, the author points out, are also visible on structures found in Copan's Acropolis, specially the "Council House" or

popolna. Therefore she suggests that this imagery may have identified a councilor's or group representative's abode. A number of specific water motifs on the architectural molding of outlying structures enabled Fash to propose that these may have been the residences of important local water resource administrators.

As critical as the decision to make Rosalila the centerpiece of the Copan Sculpture Museum (and its vibrant image the cover for this book) was the determination to give due importance to the impressively executed sculpture from outside the core. The wide creation of structures with complicated iconography and deftly executed imagery in the periphery, Fash contends, brought distinction to these places, ultimately empowering them. The presentation and examination of sculpture from areas outside the dynastic center reflect her many studies that explore, among many other topics, a wider distribution of power at Copan. Ironically, it may well be that the very distribution of power that Fash emphasizes in this work most likely contributed to Copan's twilight, leaving us today with ruins to decipher.

Eulogio Guzmán teaches at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts/Tufts University. He is currently completing a book manuscript on the socio-political significance of portable sculptures discovered at the Mexico Templo Mayor.

READER FORUM

JOURNALISM OF THE AMERICAS

Just to set the record straight, in reference to an article by Bob Giles in *ReVista* (Spring/Summer 2011): in 1980 the Nieman Foundation received its first Latin American Nieman. We were two: my dear friend Bob Cox, a British journalist who did a precious job in Argentina as editor of the *Buenos Aires Herald*, and myself, Colombian-born, who worked in *El Tiempo* (Bogotá). We promoted several Nieman activities related to Latin America and gave a few talks to our fellow fellows related to that part of the continent forgotten, until then, by the Nieman program. Furthermore, I encouraged some Nieman to visit Colombia, which they did.

Bob Giles only mentioned Bob Cox as the first Latin American Nieman, and, frankly, I don't want to disappear from the One Francis Avenue records.

BEST REGARDS,
DANIEL SAMPER
(NF 1980-1981... "The best class ever": Jim Thomson Jr.)

Bob Giles replies: My confusion about Daniel Samper's Nieman Fellowship grows from the fact that after returning to Colombia and working there until 1987, he was forced by the narco-mafia to seek exile in Spain. Our alumni records showed him in Spain but didn't indicate that he was a Nieman from Colombia in 1981. I appreciate having Daniel's note enabling us to set the record straight.



To the Editor,
Monica Gonzalez is an outstanding journalist and a leader in investigative journalism in Latin America, but she misstates the facts about the creation of CIPER.

While I was in Chile as a Fulbright professor in 2006, I developed the idea of an independent investigative journalism center backed by funding from private, university and foundation sources. I drafted the project proposal and enjoyed many fruitful conversations about it with Monica, whose newspaper *Diario Siete* had recently closed. In April 2007, with Monica as my partner and co-signatory, I submitted the proposal to the Open Society Institute Media Program, which resulted in a grant of \$90,000 to support the creation of CIPER and of a US based nonprofit CIINFO (Center for Investigation and Information), whose purpose was to raise money for CIPER and other investigative projects in Latin America. Indeed, CIINFO obtained additional grants in 2008 totaling \$235,000, the immense majority of which was intended for CIPER.

At the same time, Monica

Gonzalez obtained the financial backing of COPESA, a corporation that owns a number of media properties in Chile, including the newspaper *La Tercera*. With majority funding from COPESA plus the OSI grant, CIPER had ample financing and excellent prospects. The original paid staff was five journalists, not four (as stated in the article). For the first year and a half, Gonzalez and I were co-directors. I was listed as co-founder and co-director on all CIPER publications until I resigned in December 2008.

CIPER is doing wonderful work. CIINFO (<http://www.ciinfo.net>) continues to promote the model of independent centers with a broad base of financial support to do investigative journalism. The two organizations parted ways over issues involving COPESA's exclusive ownership and Gonzalez's exclusive control of CIPER. The refusal of COPESA's flagship newspaper *La Tercera* to publish CIPER's investigations, as originally promised, was an early problem.

Such disputes over control are not uncommon in young organizations. I continue to proclaim CIPER as a model to be emulated and to admire the investigative leadership of Monica Gonzalez. Indeed, I had been instrumental in her nomination for two major awards, one of which resulted in a cash prize exceeding \$100,000.

Nevertheless, I feel it is appropriate to set the record straight about my role in conceiving the idea for CIPER

and in helping create and lead it during its formative period.

JOHN DINGES
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
CIINFO
GODFREY LOWELL CABOT
PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL
JOURNALISM
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Dear June:
I have just finished reading *ReVista's* last issue dedicated to "Journalism of the Americas." Congratulations! As always, you have done an excellent job in analyzing and reporting on a highly critical subject matter. I have found Volume X, N°2 on the Press in the Americas particularly enlightening, instructive and helpful to understand our region's multiple problems and the risks and intimidations that our journalists have to go through every day in order to inform their readers on the perils of living and working in Latin America.

Once again, congratulations, dear June, for tackling the subject and for selecting such a group of distinguished contributors who have given us multiple perspectives on these sensitive and relevant issues.

GLORIA GUARDIA
PEN INTERNATIONAL

June,
Your spring/summer issue is a tour de force on contemporary Latin American journalism. Anyone wanting to see up close what journalists are facing today needs to read it. I usually skip some of the stories in an issue, but I had

to read all of this one closely. Congratulations.

EDWARD SEATON
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Manhattan Mercury
FORMER PRESIDENT, IAPA

I received the latest issue of *ReVista* a day after Mexico's nationwide peace marches calling for an end to criminal impunity and a day before the local PEN Club recognized the *Diario de Juarez* for valiant reporting in a city long plagued with violence. *ReVista*—with a special section on journalism in Mexico—was indeed timely and important.

Violence associated with drug traffickers has escalated in Mexico in recent years, changing the way people in many parts of the country live. Some of my friends in provincial areas don't leave their homes at night and avoid doing things that might in any way call attention to themselves even in daylight hours. I followed their lead during a recent visit. However, I continue to behave the same way as always in Mexico City. Many of my friends brag that the capital—which once had the bad reputation—is now the safest place in the

country.

But more than ever before, violence is the topic of conversation in Mexico. For the past several months, Facebook profile photos have been replaced with "No más sangre!" (No More Blood) logos. Protests spread through 30 Mexican cities.

Your magazine—produced before the Cuernavaca homicides and protests that followed—puts current events into perspective with thoughtful reporting on journalism in Mexico and the rest of Latin America. Thank you!

LINDAJOY FENLEY
FORMER MEXICO CITY
CORRESPONDENT

Dear June,
Congratulations on a really interesting current issue of *ReVista*!

I wholeheartedly agree with you that journalism is likely the best job in the world. It would be wonderful to have the opportunity to discover and uncover the truth for a living one day. For now, it's a pleasure to write as a hobby.

DAVID DAEPP
UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR
PROJECT SERVICES

FE ERRATA

The editor of *ReVista* apologizes for two small errors in Theodore Macdonald's review of *Mexico's Indigenous Communities: Their Lands and Histories, 1500-2010* by Ethelia Ruiz Medrano. :

1. The book review says "Aztecs under Inca rule," but should read "Aztecs under Spanish rule."
2. The book review says "Guerrero and Chiapas," but should say "Guerrero and Oaxaca."

The mistakes are those of the editor and not Theodore Macdonald and were caused by a rather absurd technical glitch. With apologies to both the author of the review and the author of the book!