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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

FIRST YEAR OF EVO MORALES' PRESIDENCY



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The Bolivia of an Indigenous President

The Bolivian elections of 18 December 2005 resulted in the victory of the Movement to Socialism (MAS), led by the indigenous leader Evo Morales and the intellectual Álvaro García Linera, with 53.7% of the vote. Since then, the election of the continent's first indigenous president has attracted considerable interest from around the world.

In this edition of *Indigenous Affairs*, on Bolivia today, the anthropologist and Jesuit priest, Xavier Albó, takes a look back at Bolivian democracy since 1982 and then considers the versatility of Evo Morales as a fundamental feature of his personality and political charisma. Albó emphasises the persistent ethnicity in the vicissitudes of a country that is always ready to revolt, to rise up and call anyone working against the national interest to account.

From the articles in this issue, it can be seen that Evo Morales' electoral agenda has now become a government programme. He has begun implementing this on the basis of three priorities: a new oil and gas policy in the context of the defence and use of natural resources to the benefit of society, a reform of agrarian policy that involves the indigenous and rural worker majorities, and the organising of a Constituent Assembly that will provide Bolivia with a new Law of Laws, in line with the changes proposed by the MAS.

The highly publicised oil and gas nationalisation meant the re-negotiation of contracts with 12 multinational oil companies operating in Bolivia, resulting in a substantial increase in state royalties. While average receipts totalled US\$282 million per year over the 1998-2002 period, in 2007 the state will receive a total of US\$1,300 million. Over the next 25 years, it is estimated that the Bolivian state will receive income of US\$82,000 million, including the Brazilian, Argentine and, in the medium term, probably Chilean, markets.

This considerable increase in state income must be seen in the context of a consolidation of gas exports in the form of a raw material that has not yet undergone any industrial processing. This will be the next stage of oil and gas optimisation, aimed at providing it with the value-added it currently lacks. Along the same line of thought, the aim is to exploit the iron deposits in the Mutún area together with the Indian company, Jindall, which will convert the mineral into steel by means of investments agreed with the Bolivian government.

The article by the Minister for Rural Development, Farming and the Environment, Susana Rivero, looks at the historical background to the country's predominantly extractive natural resource policies and proposes, on the basis of a tipping point represented by the negotiation of the sale of gas, an approach that will enable this pattern to be substituted by one of recovery of the national wealth, with greater equity in the distribution of the profits created.

Another structural problem in the country is the conflict created by land ownership. Indigenous demands led to the amendment of the 1953 Agrarian Reform, with the approval in 1996 of Law 1715 (Law on the National Agrarian Reform Institute - INRA). The expected recovery of indigenous ancestral territories was partly thwarted by the meagre results of the land redistribution process. Once the law was approved, the government set a 10-year period for land regularisation, and lands that were not being used productively or that had been fraudulently obtained were to be returned to the state. In almost two decades of this new agrarian process, of the 30,000,000 hectares claimed by the indigenous peoples, only 7,400,000 were titled to them. In actual fact, the regularisation served primarily to legalise land speculation by means of dubious titles.

In November 2006, and following the "Sixth Indigenous March" – more than one thousand kilometres on foot along the road that links the east of the country with the west – the Law on Community Renewal was approved, amending the INRA Law, and by which it is now intended to return unproductive lands to state ownership in the context of the so-called Agrarian Revolution defined by Evo Morales.

On this issue, the expert on land and territory, Leonardo Tamburini, reviews the land regularisation process and analyses the scope of the Law on Community Renewal. This law has created discontent among business sectors who, along with previous governments, were used to manipulating the agrarian agenda according to their own interests. He emphasises that, although the new law is an important step forward, it does not take into account aspects relating to the land problem as a whole, which will need to be considered and, as far as possible, resolved by the Constituent Assembly.

In July 2006, elections were held for the Constituent Assembly, and the MAS won 137 of the 255 seats. The initial enthusiasm for the Assembly which, in Evo Morales' words, aims to "re-establish the country", is making slow progress. The main problem that paralysed the work of the Assembly for the first six months was a disagreement over the voting system. In the end, the MAS ended up giving in to the opposition's demands and honouring the Law on Organisation of the Assembly such that all decisions will be approved by a two-thirds majority.

Carlos Romero, MAS Constituent Member for the Department of Santa Cruz, writes about the prospects for the Assembly, which the majority governing party calls a “democratic and cultural revolution”, and hopes that the new Constitution will establish a plurinational and multicultural state model, offer a new natural resource management model and provide a new agrarian structure that includes indigenous territories as a priority.

Following submission of the new constitutional text in August of this year, the Bolivian people will need to ratify or reject it in a referendum. The government feels that the new Constitution will bring about changes of such enormity to the country’s political, social and economic structure that it will require new national elections to be held.

Another issue that has been key to Bolivian politics in recent decades is the eradication/legalisation of coca leaf, a subject that sociologist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui considers and analyses in this issue.

The “zero option” or “zero coca” plans of the governments of Gonzalo Sánchez de Losada and Hugo Bánzer/Tuto Quiroga were based around a militarisation of the Cochabamba tropics, and this led to many clashes with - and deaths among - the area’s coca growers, without achieving the eradication of large areas of coca. The other side of the coin was that the crackdown against coca growers organised into the so-called Six Federations of the Cochabamba tropics propelled their main leader, Evo Morales, onto the national political scene.

The government is now defining a policy that will crack down on drugs trafficking while encouraging increased appreciation of coca leaf. Although the area of legal coca plantations will be increased from 12 to 20,000 hectares, an eradication plan will simultaneously be promoted by means of agreements with the coca growers’ unions.

The government is also promoting actions in different international arenas to enable coca to be removed from List 1 of prohibited substances, approved in 1961 by the United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. At the same time, it is working on coca leaf processing and the opening up of new legal markets abroad, with the aim of eliminating the coca surplus for the illegal economy.

The indigenous leader, José Bailaba, analyses the quantitative and qualitative imbalance between the majority indigenous peoples of the west of the country -- Aymara and Quechua – and the 32 peoples of the eastern lowlands, and states that the most significant conquests in terms of the rights of native peoples have been achieved with the active participation of these latter. This is an aspect on which the journalist, Julio Peñaloza, agrees. He also analyses the institutional, business and political agents that are persisting in their racist behaviour, resisting the profound changes that have begun to

occur in a country where the social movements have now recovered their validity, their prominence and their active participation in the country’s democratic process.

In relation to this Andino-centrism, challenged by the inhabitants of the Bolivian Amazon - which forms two thirds of the national territory, and includes the lowland indigenous peoples - the Minister for External Relations, David Choquehuanca, trustworthy founder of the MAS alongside Evo Morales, provides us with what he calls the “Aymara world vision” which points to a future based essentially on recovery of their ancestral origins.

In its first year of administration, the government has undoubtedly achieved extremely notable successes, as observed in this issue by the former prefect of Santa Cruz and former Minister of State, Carlos Hugo Molina, who considers that the country has regained its sovereignty, dignity and prominence. But he also notes that it has encountered significant difficulties that it has been unable to face up to with sufficient skill such as, for example, the system of voting in the Constituent Assembly and the issue of the departmental autonomies.

The government has clear difficulties in counteracting the opposition’s campaigns, headed primarily by the Santa Cruz oligarchy. This oligarchy controls the main media and has a strong power of mobilisation. In the name of autonomy, it has been able to capitalise on the radical rhetoric of Evo Morales and some of his ministers, entrenching the country’s fragmentation.

The clashes with the opposition do not seem to be easing, despite a change in the government’s discourse, with a more moderate rhetoric now being adopted. The tendency to resort to violence in order to resolve issues such as land is notable. Young people from the Right in Santa Cruz have been increasing their action in the style of paramilitary groups within the so-called Santa Cruz Youth Union (*Unión Juvenil Cruceñista*).

Despite these worrying prospects, a survey conducted in February 2007 indicates that support for the presidential administration is running at 65%. But geographical differences must be noted. For example, in the town of El Alto, where the overthrow of President Sánchez de Lozada began in 2003 with the so-called “Gas War” that resulted in 80 deaths, government support is at 86%, while in Santa Cruz it is only 41%.

2007 will undoubtedly be a decisive year for Bolivia. Evo Morales’ government is counting on the design and launch of a country with new paradigms in the Constituent Assembly, which should result in a new constitution that will form an effective instrument through which to channel the many demands of the country’s different sectors. □

Xavier Albó

The history of a Bolivia in search of change



Indigenous March in El Alto
Photo: Maximiliano Failla, 2006



The change that has taken place in Bolivia since the elections of 18 December 2005 may be the start of the most significant process of transformation the country has seen since the National Revolution of 1952, given the power that has been gained by the country's social sectors and organisations. This has taken place via the conventional democratic path and with the unprecedented feature of a high degree of indigenous involvement, in alliance with other left-wing sectors, now remodelled in the atmosphere of the "other possible world" extolled by the World Social Forum.

Here I will look at the most significant actors and landmarks that have resulted in this new situation.

The old system vanquished

Democracy returned to Bolivia in 1982, bringing fifteen years of military dictatorship to an end. After the unrest of the first few years of Hernán Siles' *Unidad Democrática y Popular* (Democratic and Popular Unity/UDP) government, hit by severe economic crisis, rampant inflation and political instability, 1985 saw a system established which the population, tired of the previous years of insecurity, viewed initially with some hope. A "negotiated democracy" prevailed in politics, headed by traditional parties of the Right (along with other smaller parties, including those of a much reduced Left), and these competed and alternated in government in the following order:

- *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (Revolutionary Nationalist Movement/MNR) with Víctor Paz Estenssoro (1985-89)
- *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario* (Movement of the Revolutionary Left/MIR) - *Acción Democrática Nacionalista* (Nationalist Democratic Action/ADN) with Jaime Paz Zamora (1989-93)
- MNR with Gonzalo 'Goni' Sánchez de Lozada (1993-97)
- ADN-MIR with ex-military dictator Hugo Bánzer (1997-2001), succeeded due to ill-health by his vice-president Jorge 'Tuto' Quiroga (2001-2)
- MNR again with Sánchez de Lozada: 2002 until October 2003 when he had to resign and leave the country.

In economic terms, they all shared the same neo-liberal concept that was then so common on the continent, and this was forcefully imposed from 1985 on.

One of the main architects of this strategy was the mining entrepreneur 'Goni' Sánchez de Lozada, from the MNR, who was prime minister under Víctor Paz Estenssoro (1985-89) and later twice elected president (1993-97 and 2002-3). At the suggestion of the US advisor, Jeffrey Sachs, he rapidly implemented a "shock ther-

apy”, taking advantage of frustration at the UDP. On the basis of a simple Supreme Decree - number 21060, soon to become famous – the State capitalism that Victor Paz himself had imposed years earlier during the 1952 National Revolution was dismantled, and regulations regarding employment and retrenchment were liberalized joint venture agreements were signed with foreign companies in order to capitalize the dilapidated State companies, strategic or not. In practice, this meant that they fell into the hands of foreign partners.¹

The change was most noticeable first in the State mining sector, bankrupted by low international mineral prices. Most of its workers, once members of the Mine Workers’ Federation (*Federación de Trabajadores Mineros/FTM*), a dominant force within the Bolivian Workers’ Federation (*Central Obrera Boliviana/COB*), were “relocated” (fired) and so gradually either crossed over into the informal economy, particularly around the poorer outskirts of the towns, or splintered off into independent mining cooperatives.² The most valuable and coveted of these State companies was *Yacimientos Petroleros Fiscales Bolivianos* (YPFB – the Bolivian State Oil Company). This was split up between various multinationals which, through extremely favourable contracts, immediately made heavy investments in Bolivia. Their prospecting efforts demonstrated the extent of the country’s great national wealth in natural gas – the clean energy of the future –, surpassed only by Venezuela in the whole of Latin America.

The MNR’s second period in office (1993-97) gave rise to new hopes that corrective social policies would be introduced following the initial shock. Goni chose the former Katarista³ Aymara indigenous leader Víctor Hugo Cárdenas as his vice-president and, while they capitalised/privatized State companies, an Educational Reform was passed that opened the door to a bilingual intercultural approach and to innovative new teaching methods. This was challenged by the teaching profession, however, who perceived a risk to their previous job security. In addition, the Law on the National Agrarian Reform Institute (INRA) was introduced which, on the one hand, encouraged the large agricultural firms in the lowlands (for example, soya and timber firms) and, on the other, recognised the indigenous territories (TCOs). Finally, and particularly, the Law on Popular Participation was passed, which breathed new life into hitherto virtually defunct rural municipalities. This Bolivian experience, an initial shock followed by a combination of a neo-liberal economy open to globalisation yet with a certain social feel to it, was frequently presented to the world as a successful model to be followed in other countries.

And yet these innovations did not go as far as was hoped. The change in government in 1997 (when Bánzer came to power) did not help and then, when Goni took office once more in 2002, he no longer extolled them with the same enthusiasm as before, and so it would seem that

they were never truly fundamental to his approach. To this must be added other contributory factors such as the inefficiency of the State apparatus in many areas, in part caused by the constant rotation of staff, irrespective of their qualifications (due, above all, to changes in government) and, in part, to the scourge of general corruption, Bolivia being one of the worst affected on the continent.

The crux of the model established in 1985 continued to be an economy wide open to external market forces which, at least in Bolivia, left the poor with even less protection than before, due to their declining relationship with the market, the lack of State support and their lack of security in their new occupations, with the informal sector increasing in weight and causing growing migration to the cities and abroad. For all these reasons, from 2000 on this model began to fall into crisis, with a new era of social upheaval. And this leads us on to the players that were beginning to emerge.

The new emerging players

The above innovations also led to changes in the social players. Following the miners’ impressive marches in protest at their mass dismissals, euphemistically called ‘relocations’, they and other salaried workers eventually lost their influential role and, in parallel, the historic Workers’ Federation, the COB, began to go the same way. In contrast, the peasant farmer movement was in the ascendance, increasingly aware, too, of its indigenism, something that the first MNR government of the 1950s had diluted. Within this, the Aymara and coca growers’ sectors are worthy of particular note.

The Aymara

The Aymara make up 25 percent of the country’s population and are concentrated on the Andean high plateau (*altiplano*) around La Paz and Oruro. Already the spearhead of the Katarista movement in the 1970s, they were the first to reclaim their ethnic roots and also the ones who were to regain the independence of the *Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* (Unique Confederation of Rural Labourers of Bolivia/CSUTCB), rejecting the Peasant Military Pact back in 1978, when the Bánzer dictatorship was overthrown.

In that same year, they also established their own political parties, particularly the *Movimiento Revolucionario Tupaj Katari* (Tupaj Katari Revolutionary Movement/MRTK), closely allied to the CSUTCB, and the *Movimiento Indio Tupaj Katari* (Tupaj Katari Indian Movement/MITKA), more ideological and urban. In this way, they participated in the three elections which, alternating with military coups, marked the transition to democracy. Without a solid party apparatus, and riven with internal con-

flicts, they managed to obtain only a few Aymara deputies although it was these deputies who put the new ethnic issue onto the public agenda.

The Katarista Aymara, mostly those linked to the MRTK, continued to control the CSUTCB until the early 1990s when its leadership then passed to the Quechua, primarily from Cochabamba, where the coca growers' movement was gaining strength. But internal conflicts among them meant that, in 1998, another Aymara took control: Felipe Quispe, who liked to call himself *El Mal-lku* (the condor, in English), an Aymara title of authority. He first joined the MITKA and then became involved in a group which, along with urban left-wing sectors led by Álvaro García Linera (a university graduate who had been involved in the guerrilla forces in Nicaragua), encouraged small armed groups or '*focos*' in the Guevara style of guerrilla warfare used in Cuba. Under the name *Ayllus Rojos*, they had already been involved in the CSUTCB's congresses since 1978 and, later organised as the Tupaj Katari Guerrilla Army (*Ejército Guerrillero Tupaj Katari*/EGTK), they conducted minor attacks blowing up electricity pylons and so on but were rapidly deactivated and imprisoned. Shining Path was active in neighbouring Peru over the same period, although they had no links with this latter, apart perhaps from occasional contact with the MRTA. For Felipe Quispe, those years in prison and a number of statements he made in the press formed the springboard that turned him into a kind of saviour when the above noted crisis occurred between the two Cochabamba factions.

Now extremely proud of their cultural roots, the Aymara live in both poor and difficult conditions on the icy *altiplano* and many have migrated or have a foothold in the cities, above all in El Alto, which is essentially the poor, immigrant worker face of metropolitan La Paz, the country's main urban concentration. In El Alto, 74% of inhabitants consider themselves Aymara while, in La Paz itself, this figure is around 50%. This combination of ethnic pride and poverty, of town and country, gives them great power of mobilisation. Their historic conscience always reminds them (them and the rest of La Paz) that in 1781 their forefathers, led by Tupaj Katari, laid siege to the city for six months. The neighbourhood committees in El Alto in many ways replicate the strong organisational structure that is present among Aymara communities, and a number of their leaders are men "relocated" from the mines.

The coca growers

The vast majority of these small coca leaf producers are migrants from different rural impoverished Andean regions, largely Quechua, who moved to El Chapare in the Cochabamba tropics in search of alternative means of survival. Depending on circumstances, their numbers

hover around the 200,000 mark, all family members included.

Once there, they find themselves trapped in the ambiguous "war on drugs" promoted by the United States, which maintains a military base there. Although in principle they devote themselves only to growing coca, an activity in itself not criminal, they find they are the "main enemy" of this war, given that they are the weakest link. Back in the 1980s, Víctor Paz, under pressure from the US Embassy, passed Law 1008, confusing coca with cocaine, introducing a presumption of guilt without proof and encouraging the eradication of coca leaf in El Chapare. During the 1990s, Bánzer went one step further with his goal of "zero coca [leaf]". This resulted in a situation of permanent conflict between these small producers and the eradicators, with marches, protests and skirmishes that caused more than one hundred deaths, mostly among the coca growers. Since 1988, their main leader has been Evo Morales, an Aymara born in a small rural community in Oruro and who, at twenty years of age, migrated to El Chapare with his father, fleeing a fierce drought that spread hunger throughout the *altiplano*.

This coca growers' movement, organised into six federations, has had a knock-on effect among the peasant organisations from the rest of Cochabamba department and, more indirectly, among many other peasant farmers from the Andean region, such that gradually a large part of the CSUTCB and its departmental federations have gained new strength, with the exception of the northern part of the Aymara *altiplano*, which is closer to Felipe Quispe's sector. This whole movement has also had an impact on the *Federación de Colonizadores* (Federation of Settlers), spread throughout different parts of the lowlands (Eastern Bolivia).

Other popular players

The emergence of these two groups has been the most outstanding innovation in relation to the way things used to be, when the great popular player was the *Central Obrera Boliviana* (COB) led by miners dependent on the State company. Over the course of these fifteen years, however, both these latter had been reduced to a minor role.

Increasingly predominant now was a dispersion of sectoral demands, with or without the involvement of what remained of the COB. These might come from the health workers, the truck or taxi drivers, from the so-called "sandwich generation" that had been left without benefits following a change in the social security system, or from any one of the different trades and professions. One way or another, blockades and marches were peppering the whole national map through a thousand and one localised demands.

But it would be wrong to assume that everything had crumbled to dust. The number of salaried mineworkers

fell notably but mining cooperatives grew, including many who in reality depended on them, as little organised and badly paid workers. The teaching profession continues to be particularly strong and militant, its leaders representing one of the few surviving bastions of Trotskyism, particularly in the urban sector. Through their tenacity, they have managed to improve their incomes albeit at the ambiguous cost of disrupting the continuity of the school year over and over again. There were still industrial unions of salaried workers, although now it was more the different trade or professional groups that prevailed, with many home and self-employed workers.

The rise in strength of the Neighbourhood Committees should finally be noted, above all in the poorer areas of the main cities. In the past, it had been argued that this type of grouping lacked the mobilisation power of the workers' unions. But experience has shown its great potential, at least in the Andean region,⁴ and particularly at moments of crisis and heightened need in relation to basic services such as water or bottled gas for cooking.

1992: Five hundred years of resistance, carried forward

Around 1992, the entire peasant-indigenous movement in the country gained greater importance and cohesion under the continental slogan "500 years of resistance".

Photo: Maximiliano Failla, 2006

And, on the basis of the 1994 Law on Popular Participation, the coca growers were the first to organise as a political party, initially called the *Asamblea Soberana del Pueblo* (People's Sovereign Assembly) – in clear reference to the Yankee presence – although later, in order to obtain the recognition that the Electoral Court was denying them, they borrowed the acronym of other parties, previously recognised but now defunct: first the IU (*Izquierda Unida/United Left*) and, finally, the MAS (*Movimiento al Socialismo/Movement to Socialism*). With this ability to adapt to new circumstances, by the time of the municipal elections of 1995, it had become the number one force in rural Cochabamba, both inside and outside El Chapare. In the 1997 general elections, it gained six deputies, one of them Evo Morales, and in the 2002 elections came second with 35 congresspeople (indigenous and not) and 20.9% of the vote, only 1.5% behind the winner, Goni Sánchez de Lozada, who had to join forces with his old opponents, the *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria* (MIR) to be able to govern.

This vertiginous rise can be explained in two ways. Firstly, there was the fierce social unrest that had begun to shake the country since April 2000, based around the "water war" and the Bechtel multinational's attempts to hike up the price of water without improving the service. Cochabamba was paralysed by neighbourhood committees, industrial workers, irrigation users and other groups all united around the *Coordinadora del Agua* (Wa-



ter Forum); and, via a domino effect, waves of demands and blockades from other sectors continued for more than two years, particularly in El Chapare (under Evo's leadership), in the *altiplano* (under Felipe Quispe) and in La Paz. It became clear that a growing number of popular sectors had now lost all confidence in the current State system and in the economic model that had been prevalent since 1985.

The second factor coincided with the "zero coca" policy of Bánzer-Quiroga's presidency (1997-2002). It was triggered, at the start of 2002, by a decree of the president at the time, Tuto Quiroga, prohibiting even the (hitherto legal) marketing of coca leaves from El Chapare. Those affected marched in their masses to Cochabamba, some 200 kms away and, alongside a legal coca leaf warehouse, clashed with the police, causing several deaths, including two police officers who were dragged violently from a vehicle and later found dead, one of them mutilated. Along with the MNR and other right-wing parties, the ADN-MIR government sought to exploit these unfortunate events by throwing Evo out of Parliament and so, in a matter of hours, they had stripped him of his parliamentary immunity, accusing him (with no evidence) of being the intellectual author behind

these deaths. He walked out, stating that they could throw him out but that he would soon return with forty, fifty and many more. Resonant were the words attributed to Tupaj Katari before his execution: "I will return and we will be millions". A large part of public opinion condemned this expulsion, such that Evo and the MAS became a catalyst for much of the discontent aimed at the traditional parties. The US Ambassador dealt the final blow by threatening that if Evo (whom they had, since 11 September 2001, called a "drugs terrorist") were elected president, the US government would withdraw its aid to Bolivia. This is why Evo later humorously called the Ambassador his "campaign manager".

The parliamentary representatives that the MAS had at this time (including 16 non-indigenous people from the old urban and mining left-wing) plus the six from the other indigenous party, the MIP,⁵ were silenced time and again by the so-called "parliamentary road roller" that the new MNR-MIR majority governing coalition imposed on them. This frustration led once more to popular demonstrations: the blockade imposed on them in Congress contrasted with their blockades on the streets and roads.



October 2003 crisis and the Mesa government

From September 2003 on, these demonstrations - coming from the MAS and a number of other rather loosely linked groups - escalated, boosted by protests caused by the serious suspicion that the government's multinational partners were prioritising the sale and processing of gas - the new national wealth - abroad rather than giving it use and value added within the country. More serious still for national sensitivities was the fact that they were considering establishing the processing plant on the coastline that Chile had taken from Bolivia following the Pacific War (1879-1883). In September and early October, the issue exploded when the government decided to use force. This came to a head on 12 October - *Fiesta de la Raza* (Day of the Race) - when the town was without gasoline and the army forced a convoy through, firing at the people - protesting but unarmed - and resulting in 60 deaths and numerous injuries.

Instead of crushing the uprising, this violence increased the people's irritation and brought the middle classes, previously undecided, onto their side. Even the vice-president, Carlos Mesa, distanced himself from the government, stating that such use of violence was unacceptable. By this time, the organisational capacity of various groups was becoming clear, particularly the neighbourhood committees in El Alto and poor neighbourhoods of La Paz. Time and again, the main squares and avenues of La Paz filled with demonstrators and, in the final stages, miners, primarily from cooperatives many miles away, joined them in their numbers. Finally, on Friday 17th, Goni handed in his resignation and fled the country. Parliament, in an emergency meeting and in line with the Constitution, handed power over to the vice-president, Carlos Mesa, for the remaining period to 2007.

Mesa and the October agenda

In the first few months Mesa enjoyed great popularity and made the "October agenda" his own. This included a referendum on gas policy, a new Hydrocarbons Law more favourable for the country and the holding of a Constituent Assembly. He appointed a non-partisan cabinet and, taking advantage of the fact that the previous majority of the traditional parties in Parliament had lost all credibility and had been overwhelmed by events, he managed to get a constitutional amendment rapidly approved that would facilitate implementation of this agenda. Informally, a truce was called between the Mesa government and the MAS (which had become the main emerging political force) given that, being so different, both perceived that they needed each other.

Evo needed Mesa to continue in office so that he could better prepare himself for the presidency in his own time

and via the ballot box. Mesa needed Evo's support in order to put an end to the social unrest of the last few years. In July 2004, the promised referendum on gas was held, and Mesa obtained the people's support for his five proposals. Nevertheless, this support was much greater for the first three proposals, agreed with Evo, than for the last two, for which Evo had suggested voting "no". This is, in fact, what a large part of the countryside did. In October, Mesa granted the coca growers their constant demand to be able to continue growing a *cato* (1,600 m²) of coca in El Chapare, at least while a detailed study was conducted into the traditional demand for this leaf outside of drugs trafficking, and he thus also obtained a period of calm in that region. But, given the ever more complicated political environment, given the growing doubts of Mesa and his trusted team and given their somewhat conservative social background, no progress was made on other issues of the stated "agenda", such as holding a Constituent Assembly.

Difficulties soon cropped up for his administration. Gradually, people came to see that Mesa's acknowledged qualities and honesty as a journalist and historian were insufficient to handle this difficult situation, given his lack of previous political experience. His openness to dialogue and his clear and public opposition to the use of violence undoubtedly reassured those sectors that had previously been badly affected, such as those in El Chapare, but at the same time it increased the audacity of others to use pressure tactics, and even irritated those who were demanding a firm hand from him, for example the Santa Cruz landowners, who called on Mesa to "govern", i.e., evict by force the small farmers settled on their unproductive lands. Mesa began to make concessions right, left and centre, depending on where most pressure was coming from, in order to be able to remain on his tightrope. He followed no firm line of action however.

The weakest aspect of Carlos Mesa's administration was probably his bad relationship with the traditional parties in Parliament, who were not as defunct as had first appeared and who were becoming ever bolder, in permanent conflict with the government. The following are just two examples: (1) for three months they refused to approve the President's call for a referendum on gas; (2) for almost a year they drew out the slow process of the Law on Hydrocarbons, scarcely considering the presidential proposal, and the final law was approved and promulgated by Parliament alone, as the President would not accept it. It is clear that, deep down, the parties defeated in October wanted their revenge against Mesa and would do whatever possible to make sure his administration failed and did not complete its term. The suspicion that these parties were supporting some of the destabilising protests of the most radical groups is also not as ridiculous as it might seem. In his chronic conflict with Parliament, Mesa paid dearly for three errors: his

own lack of party structure, which only too late did he try to remedy; the fact that he overestimated his own popularity in the opinion polls; and the fact that, instead, he underestimated the traditional parties' capacity for manoeuvre once their initial uncertainties had faded.

The other front: the Crescent

Beyond Parliament, Carlos Mesa's style, condescending to all and wavering in his decisions, led to an upsurge in the regionalist and autonomist movement in Santa Cruz. This movement had been around for some time and was now reflected in the classic opposition between *collas* (Andeans from the west) and *cambas* (from the lowlands and tropics, in the east). It was precisely the Revolution of the first MNR in the 1950s that had breathed life into the region due to the resources created by mining in the western part of the country. A new elite thus emerged who, with the Bánzer dictatorship of the 1970s, even managed to gain national power. But the *Comité pro Santa Cruz* (Pro Santa Cruz Committee) always continued to demand greater autonomy for its department, so rich in its own resources, from the centralist seat of government in La Paz. Implementation of the Law on Popular Participation, promulgated in 1994 by the second MNR with advice and support from Carlos Hugo Molina – a Santa Cruzan with a more social and national vision – overshadowed this demand for a time, as it was the municipalities (a local and more rural level) that were strengthened, leapfrogging the departmental (middle level) demands for autonomy that this regional elite was advocating. But this latter soon restructured around the Civic Committee itself and what the most radical began to call the "*Movimiento Nación Camba de Liberación*" (Camba Nation Liberation Movement).

The first clash occurred back in January 2004, when the local elite, together with the other most affected sectors, opposed one of Mesa's initiatives for a capital gains tax. He soon backed down in the face of their pressure and so, gradually, their demands became greater. On a number of issues related to excessive centralism, Mesa – like many others – was very much in agreement with them. For example, he himself had promoted greater decentralisation of the prefectures and supported the direct election of the prefects. But, on other aspects, the Santa Cruzans rejected him harshly, among other reasons because they had now lost the influence over central government that they had enjoyed when Bánzer was in power. They even demanded, successfully, that he remove prefect Carlos Hugo Molina from office, despite being from Santa Cruz and a "luxury prefect", given his greater proximity to the rural popular sectors of Santa Cruz.

The "statist and anti-liberal" focus of the "October agenda" also worried them, with consequences, for example, for the way in which issues such as lands and estates – oft ill-gotten gains from the past – were handled or for the exploitation of oil and gas, business areas in which influential sectors of the Santa Cruz elite were involved alongside the multinationals. They were even less in favour of the Constituent Assembly, because the *collas* would be in a majority and would end up imposing their interests. And Evo, who they had always considered *persona non grata*, both because of his support of small peasant and indigenous farmers, who were demanding land, and because of the El Chapare blockades, which had had an impact on transport to and from Santa Cruz.

For all these reasons, in June 2004, the *Comité pro Santa Cruz* called a grand council, attracting some 50,000 people around the monument of the Redeeming Christ, the city's emblem, and there they decided what became known as the "June agenda" (in contrast to the westerners' "October" agenda), with demands linked to autonomy and local management of their own resources. In January 2005, because of other problems with the government, another grand council was held, much more well-attended.⁶ The agenda was taking shape around demands such as a referendum on departmental autonomy, supported by some 300,000 signatures, and the direct election of the prefects, accepted by the President and other state bodies and for which dates had even been set. Behind this agenda was a clear desire to get in ahead of the Constituent Assembly, the holding of which might then be postponed indefinitely.

All these ideas quickly aroused a great deal of interest among the elite of Tarija, where the main gas wells and reserves are located and – given the influence of Santa Cruz as far as the northern plains – it also stretched to encompass the two departments of Beni and Pando, for which reason people began to talk of a Crescent, referring to the shape these four eastern departments make around the Andean region.

The "catastrophic balance" and the fall of Mesa

In this way, between east and west, between Santa Cruz and El Alto, between the most powerful groups, the strong ones based particularly in the east, and the poor concentrated in the west, there occurred what Álvaro García Linera (who had become a political analyst and university lecturer since his release from prison) characterised as a Gramscian "catastrophic balance", given that no solution could be found. At the same time, the weakness of the President and his team in the face of the growing prominence of different fronts – popular movements in the west, movements for autonomy in the east, end-

less⁷ blockades and marches for local and sectoral demands, in addition to the chronic conflict between Parliament and government - gave many the impression that government and State were no longer present.

By 2005, Evo and the MAS had given up hope that Carlos Mesa would make much progress on the "October agenda" and so they distanced themselves from him once and for all. It may be that the apparently low result the MAS party gained in the eagerly awaited municipal elections of December 2004 may also initially have played a role, when it in the end came first and gained more councillors and mayors than any other participant but with only 18.4% of the vote, that is, 2.5 points less than that of the general elections two years previously. Worse still, the MAS did not manage to win any of the main cities. The media and politicians speculated that the party had already reached its electoral peak. Even so, it must be remembered that this was the first time when - thanks to the 2004 constitutional change - "civic groups" and "indigenous peoples", many of whom were very similar to the MAS, particularly in rural areas, were also able to participate alongside political parties. Because of this, the MAS was undoubtedly initially opposed to a constitutional change that would end the party monopoly over candidates. Popular demand, however, swamped his first equally partisan calculation.

The fact is that, since early 2005, the party was again participating far more actively in demonstrations and protests favouring a more radical position on oil and gas and even against the government. These activities ensured it greater credibility among the popular sectors, albeit at the cost of losing followers among sectors of the middle, even popular, classes who could no longer put up with so many blockades, marches and other public order disturbances.

Faced with this situation, Mesa made a bold move in March 2005, presenting his resignation to Parliament along with a direct attack against the blockades in particular. He directly accused Evo Morales and the president of El Alto's neighbourhood committees, Abel Mamani, thus provoking -perhaps more than he intended- a positive reaction in his favour from other urban groups, albeit not without racist overtones such as "Hit that Indian Evo hard!" Parliament did not accept his resignation and instead received Mesa, now veering to the Right, warmly. In the popular camp, this attack encouraged a momentary "pact of unity" between previously distanced moderate and radical groups. A week later, Mesa instead turned on Parliament, which was continuing to block his proposals for the Law on Hydrocarbons, finally approved and promulgated by Parliament alone because the President did not consider it suitable. And so the Mesa government continued to lurch along without any direction, in the midst of demonstrations, block-

ades and protests, the main theme of which was oil and gas nationalization, an issue that had already been discussed widely during the debate on the Law. All the while, Evo publicly maintained an intermediate position between Mesa, more conservative, and the more radical street groups. Soon those calling for Mesa's resignation joined forces, despite the fact that he continued to enjoy good levels of popularity in the polls. Although not as strong or as convinced as those of October 2003 against Goni, they were equally efficient and, in the end, on 6 June, Mesa presented his resignation once and for all.

This resignation was not without its problems given that, according to the Constitution, the person who was to replace him until the end of his term in office in 2007 had to be one of two distinguished members of the two main parties defeated in October and, in addition, who both came from the Crescent: either, first, Santa Cruzan Hormando Vaca Díez from the MIR, in his position as President of the Senate; or, failing him, the President of the House of Deputies, Mario Cosío, an MNR member from Tarija. Only if both were unable or refused to take the position would the presidency pass to the President of the Supreme Court, and only then with the express mandate of holding new elections as soon as possible. This latter was exactly whom the popular sectors wanted. Vaca Díez, in particular, openly aspired to the presidency, but - given his background - he was strongly opposed by the majority. Evo had already stated that he would not last one week in office if he were to be appointed. Mesa also publicly urged both to give up their right in order to ease the transition. Vaca Díez tried to avoid this popular pressure by moving the Congress session that was to accept Mesa's resignation and appoint his successor to the town of Sucre and, on 9 July, there they all were, including the wife and daughter of Don Hormando, all dressed up for the occasion. But "the cake got spoilt as it came out of the oven", as one newspaper put it. A great mobilisation of different popular sectors took place in Sucre, including numerous miners who had come from the mining cooperatives in Potosí, and who deafened everyone with their noisy dynamite explosions.⁸ For this reason, the two candidates and some other congress people decided to take refuge in the local military base. A "state of maximum alert" had been declared within the Army "to defend the constitutional succession" and troops were somewhat unexpectedly deployed in Sucre, La Paz and Santa Cruz in a manner that remains unclear to this day. The death of a miners' leader, shot by the army as he arrived with his followers at the outskirts of Sucre, was the last straw. Both the President of the Senate and the President of the House of Deputies resigned their right to the presidency and Eduardo Rodríguez Veltzé, President of the Supreme Court, was appointed president with a mandate to call elections within a 150-day period.

As at other times when the country has been on the edge of the abyss, it was finally possible to overcome the crisis by constitutional means.

Elections and the new government

The new president performed his duty quietly and well. The first thing was to agree a political pact, known as the "June agreements", which can be summarised, once more, as a two-way "balance" - no longer catastrophic but agreed - between the western agenda of October [2003] and the eastern of June [2004] by means of a complex electoral timetable. It was agreed first to hold, on the same day in December 2005, both the general and prefectural elections and, secondly, to postpone the election of the constituent assembly members and the referendum on autonomy until six months later, also on one day, in June 2006. With various legal difficulties overcome, the elections were finally announced for Sunday 18 December.

The prefectural campaign was much calmer, and well-known local figures prevailed, without the MAS seemingly devoting much effort to choosing and promoting its best candidates at this regional level, where experience and efficiency in implementing public works is more important than ideological position.

In contrast, the campaign for president and congresspeople was one of the most aggressive and polarized of recent years, this time around the two main candidates: Evo and Tuto [Quiroga], the former vice-president and successor to Bánzer in 2001 representing, on the one hand, change and, on the other, continuity. The former stood on behalf of his party the MAS but the latter no longer stood under the banner of his discredited party, the AND, but under that of a new "civic group" *Poder Democrático y Social (PODEMOS)* (Social and Democratic Power), which attracted both members from the old party and from other traditional parties.

Only two other candidates played any kind of role: Samuel Doria Medina and Michiaki Nagatani. The first is a wealthy businessman who controls the country's cement industry. Years previously, he came to prominence when he was kidnapped by the Peruvian Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) and it is believed that they used his ransom to fund their spectacular attack on the Japanese Embassy in Lima. Distanced from the MIR for some time now, in December 2003, Doria Medina founded the *Frente de Unidad Nacional* (National Unity Front/UN), presenting it as an essential midway point between the two most polarized contenders. A number of sectors joined him, such as those who at the last minute had tried to give some political structure to the Mesa government. But the polarization of forces and votes took over. Nagatani was an un-

known Japanese immigrant from Santa Cruz whom the MNR, at Sánchez de Lozada's suggestion, promoted in order to win sufficient votes to at least avoid losing their legal status.⁹

The choice of Alvaro García Linera as vice-presidential candidate was key for the MAS. We have already noted that he had previously formed part of the EGTK alongside Felipe Quispe and, after his release from prison, became a highly valued university lecturer and political analyst on TV. As a candidate, he managed to gain a good mutual understanding with Evo and complement him very well, and he captured key votes among the more concerned urban middle classes. His profile was far more successful than that of the PO-DEMOS vice-presidential candidate, María René Duchén, a famous TV presenter, or that of the UN's candidate, a well-known member of the Santa Cruz oligarchy, Carlos Dabdoud, who had already been tipped as future autonomous prefect but whose agreement to stand as UN vice-presidential candidate distanced him more from that oligarchy and led to the party's "midway" position losing credibility.

The polls were already showing some preference for Evo but with margins of scarcely 2 to 7%. Within the party, they felt that if they could gain 40% of the overall vote it would be a very good result, but no poll was forecasting this. And yet in his campaign, Evo was asking the electorate to help him win 50% plus 1 more, so that no "shady" deals would have to be done afterwards in Parliament and he repeated that he did not believe the poll predictions because he had always done far better than they suggested. Once the elections were over, it soon became clear that Evo had achieved his goal and more, with a total of 53.7% of the vote, as opposed to only 28.6% for his main opponent, Tuto Quiroga.¹⁰

In the prefectural elections, too, the prediction that the MAS would not win one seat was wrong, as they even won three which, not long before, many had given up for lost. This was perhaps more due to the overall appeal of the MAS than the personalities of its concrete candidates, an approach that was used more successfully by other parties and civic groups.

It should be noted in passing that, unlike the municipal elections of the previous year, there were no candidates presented by the "indigenous peoples" in these new national and departmental level elections, not even in the uninominal constituencies whose candidates came from bodies recognised at departmental level. They lacked the necessary logistics for elections at these higher levels.

Reflection on the results of the elections themselves

Once more, Evo's intuition had outwitted the polls. In truth, this happens in all elections but, for one reason or another, those responsible for designing the polls seem to have forgotten it by the time the next elections come round. The suspense created in 2005 was dramatic, for example, as the results came in from rural isolated areas, increasing Evo's percentage until the results from Lipez, in the south of the country - delayed one week due to a huge snowfall that cut off all communication - ended up giving him a 700-vote advantage over Manfred Reyes Villa who, in the first polls, had appeared to be the clear winner by a wide margin and now had to resign himself to third place. In Bolivia, pre-election polls tend to suffer from technical deficiencies, particularly because of their bad coverage of rural areas (33% of the population) but also, in some cases, because of the clear lack of impartiality on the part of those financing them.

The efficiency, not to mention the ethics, of extravagant media campaigns is also questionable in a situation such as that of Bolivia. Even without giving the exact figures, it is clear that the cash value of every vote, in terms of the investment made in the communications media, transport and other equally costly areas, tends to be far greater among the main parties of the Right, without this necessarily always winning them the election. Furthermore, possible immediate successes achieved through sophisticated media manipulations may, in the long run, end up very volatile and even create a boomerang effect. This is what happened with the campaign recommended, if not imposed, by the Greenberg Carville Shrum company, hired by Sánchez de Lozada for the 2002 campaign, as clearly depicted in the recent documentary "Our brand is crisis" by Rachel Boynton.

Evo's direct knowledge of the people and their culture, his use of local organisational mechanisms and his political and popular "nose" gave better results at far less cost. In 2002, the direct attack that the company hired by Goni recommended against Manfred undoubtedly had results but could not have anticipated or prevented the concomitant effect of Evo's greater growth. And when, in 2005, Tuto tried something similar against Evo, the result was instead counterproductive, as it had been four years earlier when he was removed from Parliament. Evo and his team chose, instead, to highlight the personality of their candidate, from his childhood on a remote Aymara farm and his younger days, little known, up to his present leadership and proposal for radical change. It was a clever move on his part to refuse a public debate - which three years previously had been denied him - unless his opponent first apologised for having called him a murderer and a drugs trafficker.

Since the restoration of democracy in 1982, nobody had managed to win anywhere near 50% of the vote.¹¹ But, with an eye to the future, it will be useful if the new governors and different political analysts are able to distinguish, within the 54% finally achieved, between a clear vote for the MAS, a more general vote for change, a vote simply rejecting the other candidates or even a pragmatic vote on the part of some just "to put an end to the blockades".

This overall result gave the MAS the following achievements, which were significant but insufficient for absolute control of Parliament: 72 deputies (55.4% of the total), of which 41 can be considered indigenous, including only five women) but only 12 senators (44.4% of the total, there being three per department, regardless of size), of which 4 are indigenous, including the only female senator in post. Even before inaugurating the new President, however, the only two indigenous senators from other parties guaranteed the MAS the presidency of this chamber besides that of the House of Deputies, which was already secured. Both senators are Quechua, from Potosí and Cochabamba respectively. But negotiations with the opposition and other minority forces will continue to be necessary, particularly in the Upper House, where PODEMOS has 13 senators and where, for issues of great importance, a two-thirds vote is required from those present.

The symbolic breakthrough

This overwhelming result undoubtedly broke the chronic "catastrophic balance", at least in the electoral sphere. This triumph was also of great immediate symbolic impact, both inside and outside the country.

One of the first and most impressive demonstrations of the president elect was to embark on a world tour, visiting four continents and ten countries in two weeks, while others organised and took forward the whole transition process at home. No Bolivian president elect had ever done anything like this before nor would their visit have had such support from the host governments who, in this case, virtually covered the costs. The fact that this was the first indigenous president to be elected on the continent gave far more global significance to this first tour, which attracted a great deal of media publicity.

The journey began - very deliberately - in Fidel's Cuba, which provided a plane for Evo and a large delegation of union and peasant leaders. He then went on to Chávez' Venezuela, which provided the president elect and his entourage with transport and personal security for the other stages of his trip. He continued on to Europe, including visits to the king and prime minister of Spain, the presidents of France, Holland, Belgium and the highest authorities of the European Community. He



The indigenous peoples have mobilised en masse in favour of the Constituent Assembly. Photo: Tony Suárez, 2005

Photo: Tony Suárez, 2005



then went to China and South Africa, where he was able to see first-hand how the slow and difficult breakdown of *apartheid* had taken place and what it meant, and he finally visited Lula's Brazil. In a plane provided by this latter, Evo returned to Bolivia to again leave only a few days later in a lightning visit to Kirschner in Argentina.

Apart from a good financial harvest – around 800 million dollars were promised – this tour changed Bolivia's international image overnight. No longer was it a country only used to appearing in the press when there was a violent coup or a natural disaster. The country had felt proud when it qualified for the World Cup in the USA in 1994 and they were drawn to play their first game against the reigning champions, Germany. Although they lost and were eliminated soon after, Bolivia had finally made the world news on another level. But now Evo – a former shepherd from the Aymara *altiplano* – was a far greater reason for national pride in the concert of nations.

Highly publicised were his *chamarra* (jacket), shirt and particularly his red, blue and white-striped *chompa* (alpaca wool sweater) in which, disregarding expectation and protocol, he met kings and presidents, causing articles to be written against him but also many for, such as that of the Nobel laureate José Saramago who savaged "the stupid arrogance of civilized peoples". It must be noted that this was no piece of sophisticated paraphernalia relating to indigenous authority but merely the day-to-day clothing typical of peasant farmers, miners or informal workers in the countryside or town, which the world's authorities were able to respect on the president elect, whilst the rest of his entourage had to dress as protocol demanded. That *chompa* even led (without this having been the intention) to a new line of marketing and "Evomania". But it was pure chance, as Evo himself confessed later because, in fact, he had been looking for another *chompa* that he liked more but apparently had not put it in his suitcase. The symbolic debate about the new president's clothing persisted in Bolivia. One editorialist said that it was one thing to "vest" in clothes and quite another to be "invested" by society. Others highlighted the fact that the very act of dressing informally without a tie was already a new symbol, as the alpaca clothing designer Beatriz Canedo said. It was she who, finally, designed the suit for his investiture, simple and with a touch of Andean awayo (cloth), starting a new trend in high fashion.

The main exception was the ceremony in the ruins of Tiwanaku, moving and solemn, attended by tens of thousands of people in a spontaneous caravan of vehicles of all kinds, which stretched tens of kilometres. Near the end of his campaign, Evo went there with a poncho and blue *lluch'u*¹² (the MAS colour) to solicit help from the forefathers and tutelary protectors of his people. Now, on 21 January, the eve of his official investiture, he

returned, dressed in clothing inspired by that of Tiwanaku and walking barefoot on that sacred land, to give thanks to them and to continue to ask for their protection. In 1993, the first Aymara vice-president, Victor Hugo Cárdenas, held a similar, albeit more low key, ceremony.

Without going into great detail here, it should be noted that everything in Tiwanaku was full of Andean symbolism, both generally and in terms of the clothing, the religious and civic ceremonies, the general public. It was also replete with "ethnogenesis", that is, new signs reinforcing the native identity. Some of the participants carried signs in Spanish or Aymara which, with small variations, repeated a central message: "We have come and we are millions". This was an allusion to the last words of Tupaj Katari before being executed by the Spanish, words recalled by Evo in 2002 when he was thrown out of Parliament. Everywhere rippled thousands of *wiphallas*, the flag recently recreated on the basis of previous evidence, consisting of a seven-by-seven square chessboard design chequered with the seven colours of the rainbow spread across it diagonally. This design, so clearly suggesting unity in diversity, was first taken up by the Katarista movement and the Aymara people, then by all the Andean peoples and, very soon, by all the indigenous peoples too. And now - why not? – it also represents the new country that people hope to build, unified and in harmony with the cosmos, with equality for all and respect for differences. Alongside those presiding over the ceremony, on two great flagpoles, flew another large *wiphala* and a large Bolivian flag, both as immense as if we had been in Mexico.

The following day, the investiture took place by means of three different ceremonies: the formal inauguration, in Congress; the popular inauguration, in the San Francisco square before the monument of heroes, the place of the city's main political and popular mass meetings; then, after dark, a reception in the Government Building, "bedecked with colours" as never before, with an initial *ch'alla* (Aymara ceremony giving offering to Pachamama, the Mother Earth) of two calabashes of *chicha* (fermented drink) and, later, a crush of people bringing together ambassadors and grassroots leaders, dolled-up women and no less elegant women peasant farmers, miners in their helmets and indigenous with their *lluch'us*, and so many others all mixing, hot and cramped, come to greet the new president. The Government Building had become a "house for everyone".

There was a minute's silence before Evo, now inaugurated, made his speech, in order "to remember our ancestors", beginning with Manco Inka, Tupaj Katari and Tupaj Amaru, from colonial times, and ending with Che, Marcelo Quiroga and Luis Espinal, along with the many coca growers, El Alto inhabitants, miners, the thousands and millions of fallen throughout America;



each and every one, within and beyond our current borders. The sound of a *pututu* (instrument made from a seashell) played by a community member from Orinoca, Evo's place of origin, gave an electrifying tone to this first minute of the "profound and long overdue memorial of grievances" which, according to the Mexican special envoy, Adolfo Gilly, was the first part of this first speech. No-one could fail to recall that, only four years previously, on that same date of 22 January and in that same hall, Evo had been unjustifiably accused and thrown out of Parliament.

There then followed a number of proposals in the equally warm, easy, jovial and direct language of someone who speaks with authority and knowledge of the cause. These included an announcement that he was reducing his presidential salary by more than half, to 15,000 bolivianos (less than 2,000 dollars). This automatically meant reducing other high salaries, given that the Law on Public Administration states that no-one may earn more than the President. He also announced the immediate calling of a Constituent Assembly; that the Bolivian people would regain control over their natural resources, via nationalization - without however specifying the scope of this term - and that national companies such as YPF for oil and gas and COMIBOL for minerals would be relaunched; there would be territories for the indigenous people, and so on. Foreign partners on an equal footing, yes; a begging and dependent State, no. He predicted good relations with neighbouring countries and other nations, highlighting the presence of his allies from Cuba, Venezuela, Argentina and - more revealingly - Chile, whose President Ricardo Lagos was attending a ceremony of this significance for the first time since Bolivia had lost its coast in the Pacific War, 115 years earlier. He proposed a goal of zero drugs trafficking and cocaine but stated that this would not be an excuse for the US government to dominate our peoples.

His rejection of the previous policy of "zero coca" was made all the more dramatic by the presence of coca leaves on all seats to chew¹³ throughout the inauguration ceremony. Then, later, during the reception given for the attending presidents, they were presented with beautiful paintings by the artist, Gastón Ugalde, all made with coca leaves of different shades.

The following two days sealed the symbolic breakthrough. On Monday 23rd, in the morning, the 16 new ministers were appointed and inaugurated. The cabinet was atypical in its diversity. The Foreign Secretary (and head of cabinet) and another four ministers are indigenous, including two women. One of them - Casimira Rodríguez, now Minister of Justice - is a Quechua woman born into a Mizque community in Cochabamba and who, since the age thirteen, had been employed as a domestic worker and, as such, had fought effectively to obtain a law on domestic workers. With no formal legal

education, she is an expert on the injustices of the legal system and how to fight for change. The cabinet also includes the more usual "besuited" gentlemen, including economists, sociologists and lawyers plus a millionaire businessman from Santa Cruz, appointed as government spokesperson, who coordinates the whole area of politics and is also Minister of Planning, a portfolio re-established to reorganise the whole productive and economic sector. There may always be errors of calculation but to design this kind of cabinet is still a prophetic sign.

On Tuesday 24th, the first difficult decision was taken, appointing relatively young officers to the High Command and overlooking some who thought that "it was now their turn", but who might have been too involved in a shady deal regarding deactivated missiles, in collusion with the US government. There were protests from the sidelined generals and their irate wives but it was made quite clear who the Commanding Officer of the Armed Forces was. The following day, Commander-in-Chief Evo appeared early in the morning at a barracks to share food with the soldiers, thus highlighting his first military credential as one of the country's few civilian presidents to have completed their compulsory military service, unlike many of the middle and upper classes who simply "paid" to avoid it.

At midday on the same day, Evo and the mayor of La Paz - Juan del Granado, whose MSM party had been allied with the MAS - opened the traditional *Feria de Alasitas*, a massive urban Aymara celebration in which the whole city prays, dreams and plays at exchanging and *ch'allar* (blessing with water) miniature goods in the hope that they will later receive whatever the item represents. It was like a popular culmination of the whole series of symbolic celebrations. While Evo handed out miniature bank notes (dollars and euros included), others were giving him little houses, little cars, little tools, tiny busts of his own image, a girlfriend and even a mini-certificate of his marriage to a 180-year-old woman called Bolivia, or a mini-briefcase holding a tiny Political State Constitution and a micro-Law on the Nationalisation of Natural Resources. In the tiny "*alasitas*" newspapers for that day, Evo was of course the central figure. One, for example, included a sheet on which Evo appeared in his underclothes, surrounded by different outfits: indigenous, doctor's, military etc. The idea was to cut them out and dress him as you saw fit. In another, his wedding to Condoleezza Rice was described, with Fidel Castro and George Bush there to give the bride away. The central figure of the whole festival was that of Ekeko - a little god, chubby and smiling, loaded down with all kinds of gifts - and the mayor did not hesitate to call Evo, "the great Ekeko of Bolivia, because he comes bearing hope for the whole country..." □

Notes

- 1 There was much criticism for example, about the National Railways being taken over by the Chilean national pension scheme, Cruz Blanca.
- 2 86% in 2000, as opposed to 13% in small and medium-sized companies and scarcely 1% in what remained of the State company.
- 3 Name derived from Tupaj Katari, the anti-colonial Aymara hero of 1781.
- 4 In Santa Cruz a patron/client relationship still prevails between the municipal authorities and the poor neighbourhoods.
- 5 The *Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti* (Pachakuti Indigenous Movement), created at the end of 2000 by Felipe Quispe. In Parliament, internal divisions soon began to appear between its members and, in 2005, it lost its legal status.
- 6 Figures quoted ranged from 120,000 (Mesa) to 500,000 participants (Civic Committee). It must be recalled that, unlike El Alto, in Santa Cruz the power groups have managed to impose a far more privileged and clientelist relationship with quite a few of the area's popular sectors.
- 7 In his resignation speech, Carlos Mesa noted 820 conflicts with 2,000 points in 15 months.
- 8 Typical expressive form of all miners' marches, without any real connotation of violence.
- 9 Those that do not win at least 3% lose this.
- 10 The UN gained 7.8 % and the MNR climbed back up to 6.5%, achieving their objective of keeping the party alive. The other

four parties and groups participating lost their legal status as they did not win the necessary 3%. These included Felipe Quispe's MIP and even Manfred Reyes Villa's NFR. He was, however, elected prefect of Cochabamba under the umbrella of a new "civic group".

- 11 Previously, the MNR had managed to obtain this from the first universal elections in 1956 until those of General Barrientos, in 1966, which consolidated the power he had already established via a military coup some time earlier. But in those days they did not yet use the single ballot paper, only established for the second democratic elections of 1979. Previously, each party was responsible for printing and distributing its own ballot papers throughout the whole country and pre-electoral conflicts due to destruction of opposition ballot papers or post-electoral conflicts over changing of deposited ballot papers were frequent, as could be seen in the 1978 elections, the last under this system.
- 12 Cap of Andean wool.
- 13 Chewing coca leaf is a common Andean practice at joint social or ritual gatherings.

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Official inauguration of Evo Morales in the ruins of Tiwanaku. Photo: Maximiliano Faila



Julio Peñaloza Bretel

INTERVIEW WITH XAVIER ALBO

- *Do those who insist on seeing Evo Morales as only indigenous or only “mestizo” fail to see some kind of multiplicity of identities in him?*

Most certainly. Evo Morales was born in Orinoca (Oruro department) and until the age of five spoke only Aymara; he knew no Spanish. His first real-life experiences began when he went with his father to work on the Argentine sugar harvest and then later when he went to live in the coca growing area of Chapare (Cochabamba subtropics) in the 1980s. This life training was already moulding Evo into a complex and multi-faceted leader. Let me explain: in his youth, Evo played the trumpet in a band that was hugely successful at the Oruro carnival, a festival known throughout the continent for its folkloric diversity. Then he began his union career as a coca grower, but his initial success and popularity was achieved through football. Incidentally, this was also the case for the historic leader of the Bolivian Workers' Federation (*Central Obrera Boliviana* - COB), Juan Lechín Oquendo, in the 1960s. Once he had become a focal point for the six union federations of coca growers, this popularity enabled him to become a parliamentary candidate, first under the banner of the United Left (*Izquierda Unida* - IU) and then with his own party the Movement to Socialism (*Movimiento al Socialismo* - MAS). This latter is an unconventional party in the style of Lula's Workers' Party in Brazil because, over and above individual activists, it represents over 40 social movements.

The son of a miner, a musician, footballer, coca grower, union leader, “media savvy” politician, these are all features that have enabled Evo to position himself in different arenas with great resilience, arenas between which he alternates with notable flexibility.

- *Is Evo an indigenous indigenist?*

Not simply that. He considers himself indigenous and this is where those who attempt to present him as a *mestizo* go wrong. They are trying to politically “whiten” the indigenous peoples along the lines of the class alliance attempted by the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (*Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* - MNR) during the 1952 Revolution. The last time Bolivians considered themselves *mestizos*, as the MNR wanted, was in 1900 and, what's more, Evo is consolidating this self-identification because people are realising that this is his most attractive asset on the international scene, an indigenous president in the 21st century.

- *Change is the key word of Evo's government. Are there any precedents in terms of how possible the change he wants for Bolivia will be, apart from his political and union struggles?*

There are two key precedents: first, the World Social Forum, whose slogan was “Another World is Possible”, and second, his experience and knowledge of social struggles, which tells him he has to nurture a hegemonic vocation to be able to handle the reins of power and the state, as the Bolivian and Latin American Left realised in the 1960s and 70s. In Evo, then, there are two politico-cultural sources: on the one hand, a deep understanding of a national indigenous majority that is subjected, discriminated against and scorned by the racism prevalent among the urban middle and upper classes and, on the other, his left-wing reference points, beginning with Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution.

- *‘Indigeness’ in Bolivia comes in many shapes and forms. Evo Morales largely represents the Ay-*

Indigenous authorities in Tiwanaku, during the inauguration of Evo Morales.
Photo: Maximiliano Failla



mara majority, which makes up more than 50% of the Bolivian population and, in this context, he is considered “Andino-centric”. In other words, the indigenous people of the east (the tropical lowlands), who make up no more than 5% or 6% of the country’s total population, are people of “lesser importance” in the political project.

This is very likely and is also related to the fact that the Bolivian lowlands are inhabited not only by peoples of indigenous origin (Ayoreo, Chiquitano, etc.) but also by rural migrants from the west of the country, so-called settlers and also people from the Landless Movement. In terms of power seeking, the Aymara have a practical preponderance over the lowland indigenous which does, in fact, make many think that some are of greater political importance than others.

- *On the other hand, those who insist on seeing an indigenous fundamentalism in Evo Morales have to acknowledge that this is not the case, if they recall that it was he, with no outside influence, who decided to make a middle-class intellectual, a mathematician trained in Mexico, his vice president.*

This adds yet another element to Evo’s multi-faceted qualities. He recognises that he needs an intellectual complement and he has found this in Alvaro García Linera, with whom he has established a very good working relationship. Unlike previous vice presidents in democratic Bolivia, García Linera works alongside the President, genuinely performing his role as number two. Not only does he hold the post of President of Congress, as indicated by the Constitution, but he also intervenes decisively in the running of the government. Of course, García Linera would not be averse to taking up the post for which he, like any other politician with a minimum

sense of power, is prepared but, at the same time, and this is what is interesting, nobody doubts his loyalty to Evo because if anyone is militantly indigenist in this process then it is Vice President García Linera.

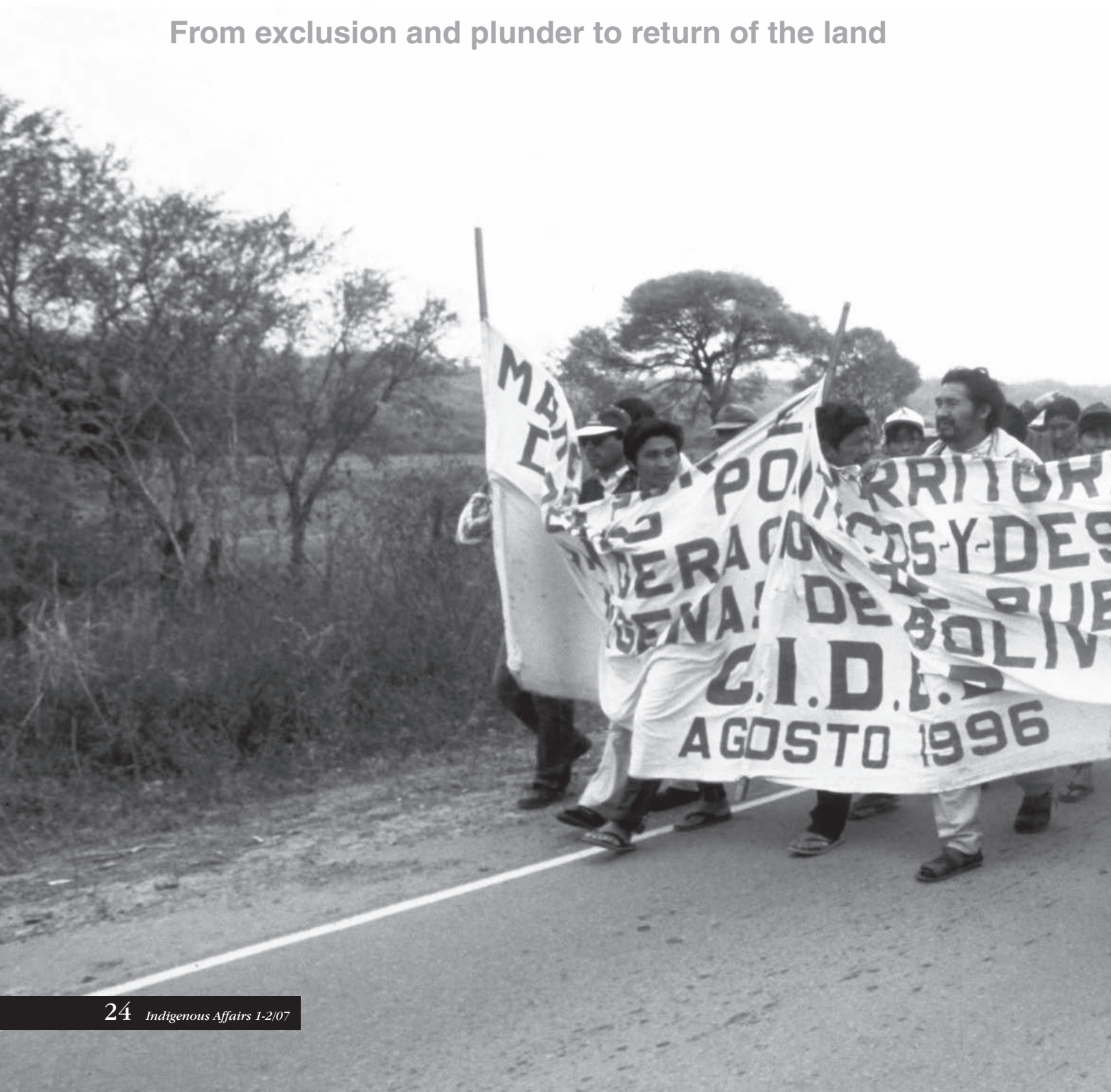
- *The great dilemma is whether the change that Evo’s government wants will end up going down an unmistakably reformist path in which dissent, and thus the political opposition (with all its inherent inconveniences) will be admitted or whether it will finally take a path of confrontation, making this a truly revolutionary process in the Marxist sense of the word*

There are people in Bolivia who misunderstand the politics of it because they fail to take sufficient account of the time in which this is being implemented. Evo Morales has scarcely been in office a year and people are maliciously stating that they would have liked to have seen more changes. From this angle, it is rather premature to venture a prediction with regard to the path that will eventually be adopted by a government whose legitimacy has been ratified in a Constituent Assembly in which the MAS has more than 50% of seats and yet which has a basic error in its make-up, because Evo Morales called for a Yes vote on the issue of departmental autonomies as demanded by the “Crescent” of departments of Santa Cruz, Beni, Pando and Tarija but, before going to the polls, changed his mind and asked his supporters to vote No. This has given rise to a polarisation between left and right-wing which has enabled an opposition that was very weak in March/April 2006 to grow in strength, take shape and gain in power. The past year has been very favourable in the sense that Evo has demonstrated that he is able to govern coherently but political errors such as the above presage a highly confrontational year for Bolivia in 2007. □

Susana Rivero Guzmán

The struggle for natural resources and for the rights of indigenous peoples

From exclusion and plunder to return of the land



Situated in the heart of South America, Bolivia suffered losses of its original republican territory (which dates from 1825) in wars against Chile, Paraguay and Brazil. But, in addition to this, since colonial times and to this very day, the country has suffered the indiscriminate pillaging of its various natural resources. This was the case for centuries and it has only begun to change now with the oil and gas nationalizations and with the new contracts signed between Evo Morales' government and the oil companies that establish a new and more favourable relationship for the Bolivian state.

This article sets out the history, economics and politics that explain the path trodden by a country that has been the victim of its own internal instability, of its dominant classes and of external agents who were able to exploit the diversity of Bolivian lands at the expense of the native indigenous peoples and the Bolivian population as a whole. The final section offers criteria for change within the context of

the Constituent Assembly, the work of which will be concluded in 2007.

In its Political Constitution (articles 1 and 171), Bolivia recognises and respects its multiethnic and pluricultural nature, in addition to the social, economic and cultural rights of the indigenous peoples who inhabit the national territory. This refers particularly to those rights relating to their native community lands, guaranteeing the use and sustainable exploitation of natural resources, their identity, values, languages, customs and institutions – thus ratifying the existence and rights of indigenous and native communities and peoples. The constant struggle of the country's indigenous peoples for natural resources can therefore only be explained on the basis of the country's ethnocultural reality¹ and its historic tradition of exclusion and dispossession.

Second Indigenous March - Photo: Alejandro Parellada, 1996



Conflicts over land, water, forests, mining and oil/gas have been the cause of constant clashes between social sectors and regions, but have also established a permanent struggle on the part of the country for control and management of these resources in the face of large foreign powers and transnational companies.

Description of the country

Bolivia – an underdeveloped capitalist country - is characteristic for having maintained precapitalist modes of production whereby the development strategy is to encourage the coexistence of small monoproducing enclaves aimed at increasing exports. As part of this strategy, public policies focused on favouring small minorities rather than the native indigenous peoples and small farmers, who were only heeded at times of social protest.

On this basis, three natural resource management models can be distinguished over the course of our history:

- a) Colonial extractivist model
- b) Statist national model
- c) Neoliberal privatised model

It should be noted that the common denominator in all these models is their privatist, extractivist, elitist, exclusionary and discriminatory aspects, involving no vision of either sustainable development or social participation.

Colonial extractivist model (1825 – 1936)

From Bolivia's independence until 1936, the natural resource management model was essentially an extractivist and feudal one. It continued in much the same vein as under the colonial system, with a few powerful families extracting raw resources such as minerals, and later rubber, and then selling them on with no industrial processing whatsoever. Feudal lords ran and operated the mines; they controlled the large estates (*latifundios*) and government; they retained all the profit from natural resource exploitation. In this way, they dispossessed the native highland peoples of their lands and territories.²

The discovery of silver deposits in the Cerro Rico de Potosí in 1545, and its subsequent indiscriminate mining for the purposes of sustaining the colonial system, set the scene for Bolivia's history as a pre-

dominantly mining country, with isolated links to other economic sectors.

During colonial times, the natural resource management model was purely extractivist, based on a logic of plundering the colonies' natural resources as a source of mercantile accumulation. The Spanish Crown monopolized the production and sale of silver in Europe, retaining all the profits from exploitation of its colonies' natural resources. This pillaging was based not only on the extraction of natural resources but also on the exploitation of the native indigenous peoples, whom they robbed of part of their territories, forcing them into servitude to form a pool of unpaid labour.

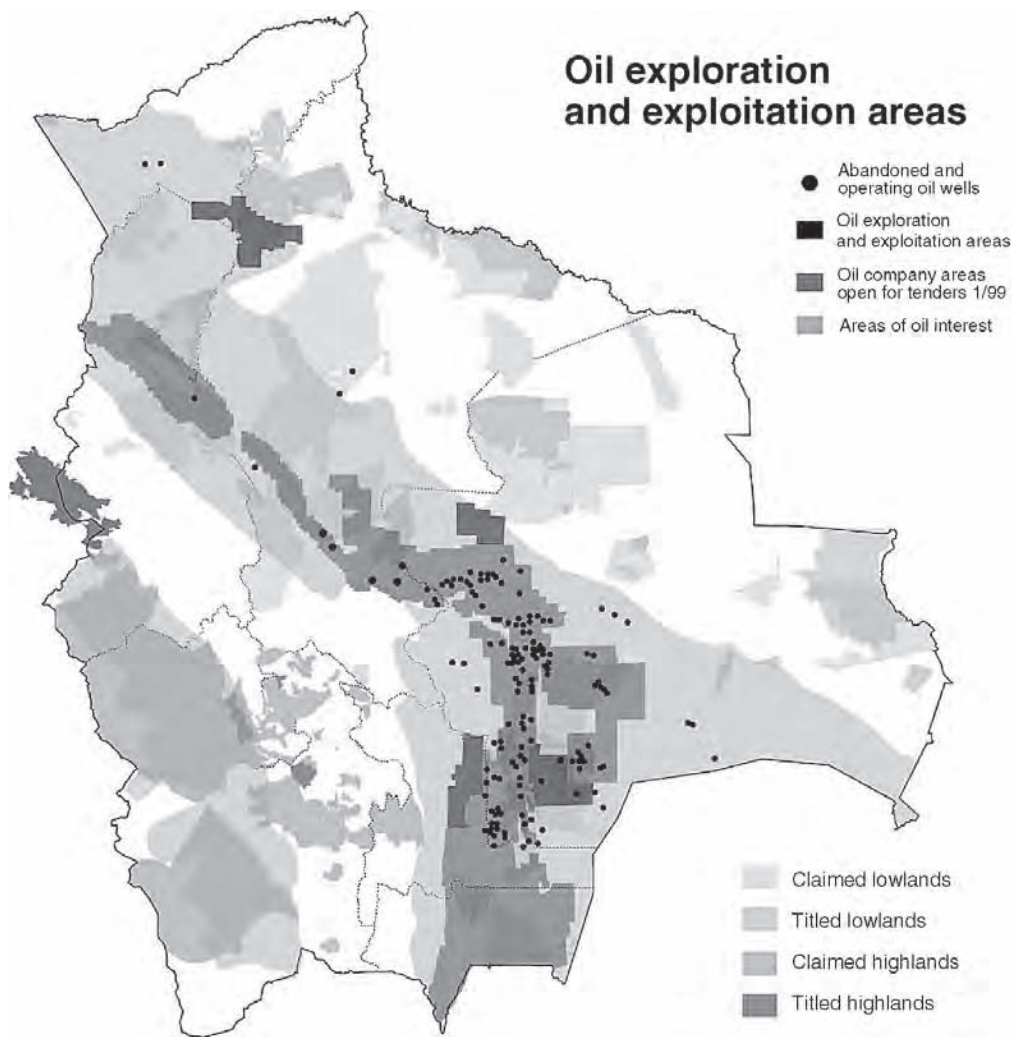
The history of the colonial era was repeated following independence. Decrees such as the 'De-Linking Decree' of President Mariano Melgarejo (1864-1871) are examples of how, after gaining independence from the Spanish Crown, Bolivia maintained colonial patterns of production and social organisation in order to sustain the state via the exploitation of native indigenous peoples and through the taxes imposed on indigenous communities. The lands continued under a feudal system, although they now began to pass into the hands of *mestizos* and *criollos*.

The "Silver Patriarchs" were local mining companies supported by Chilean or British capital who set up transnational economic empires by extracting Bolivian silver, a commodity that accounted for 70 percent of the country's exports. This emphasis on silver later changed to gold and tin, without changing the essence of the repugnant feudal system that continued to predominate and which was expressed through *pongueaje*, that is, the use of free labour by ranch and land owners. The Bolivian state was controlled by the mining oligarchy, who benefited from the surplus generated by the land.

Expeditions undertaken during colonial and republican times found no significant mineral wealth in the Bolivian lowlands and so this vast region remained relatively isolated from the rest of the country. It was long coveted for its wealth of non-timber forest resources, however, such as rubber and Brazil nuts. In the 1920s, the boom in rubber turned this into Bolivia's second largest export, extracted indiscriminately through the subjugation of the indigenous peoples.

National statist model (1936 – 1985)

During this period, the state extracted and managed the natural resources on behalf of all Bolivians. The first oil and gas nationalisation took place in 1936, following the Chaco War in which the Guaraní people and the Quechua and Aymara nations lost significant



More than half the Bolivian territory has oil and gas potential. The map shows where areas of intervention and oil potential are superimposed on the Native Community Lands (TCOs).⁸

numbers of men fighting the Paraguayan army, an event that marked the start of the indigenous peoples' struggle for natural resources.

This natural resource management model increased under the nationalist trend and, in 1952, tired of this systematic looting, the national majority (composed of mineworkers and native indigenous peoples from the highlands) headed a national revolution that brought about significant transformations, including agrarian reform, the nationalization of the mines, universal suffrage and the first educational reform.

From this point on, the highland indigenous peoples were forced to call themselves peasant farmers and organise within the logic of unions if they wished to obtain state recognition of their ownership, and thus access land rights.

State companies were established to manage renewable and non-renewable resources. Oil, gas and

minerals began to be extracted and managed by Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos (YPFB) and the Corporación Minera de Bolivia (COMIBOL). The forests, which were logged by private companies but under state authorisation, and the lands taken from the feudal lords during the Agrarian Reform were redistributed by state institutions: the National Agrarian Reform Council (Consejo Nacional de Reforma Agraria) and the Settlement Institute (Instituto de Colonización). This related only to the highlands since lands in the lowlands³ were distributed to private individuals under the pretext of populating these areas. These plots were superimposed on the territories of indigenous peoples, to whom no rights were recognised and who were generally under the tutelage of the Catholic Church.

The mine nationalization, the agrarian reform and universal suffrage were the great achievements of the

National Revolution which, for the first time in Bolivian history, endeavoured to include Bolivia's indigenous peoples and rural populations into not only the economy but also the politics of the country.

With the 1952 Revolution, political and economic power was snatched from the hands of a fistful of landowners who controlled the best cultivable lands and thousands of agricultural labourers. The Agrarian Reform was based on the following principles: that land should be for those who worked it; that servitude should be eliminated, incorporating the indigenous and rural work force into the labour market; that production and productivity levels should be increased, that land should be redistributed and that a "March Eastwards" should be initiated.

Land was handed over to small farmers and indigenous peoples from the valleys and altiplano and, in the lowlands, in accordance with the guidelines of the so-called "Bohan Plan" (international prescriptions), an import substitution model was adopted with active and aggressive state intervention in terms of east/west road infrastructure, a distribution of lands to ensure occupation of hitherto insufficiently inhabited geographical areas (i.e. indigenous lands, in many cases), the establishment of state agroindustrial complexes until private agents were in a position to take them over, and the direct production of raw materials for agricultural and livestock activity, controlled by the state itself.

Through COMIBOL, the state controlled more than 70% of national exports. The surplus generated was used to finance the objectives of the Bohan Plan, namely, the establishment of a state presence in the Bolivian lowlands, with the channelling of development loans, the provision of road infrastructure, technological assistance and the implementation of settlement programmes.

The agrarian reform's aim was to redistribute the large estates (latifundios) in the west and to transform the traditional ranches (haciendas) in the east into modern companies. According to information from the National Agrarian Reform Institute (Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria - INRA) and other sources, 66,000 of the Agrarian Reform beneficiaries were from Santa Cruz. They represented 10% of all beneficiaries and yet they obtained 30 percent of all land distributed.

A total of six million hectares were distributed in Beni department, four of which benefited 2,500 people with properties of between 100 and 2,000 hectares, while one million hectares were distributed to 450 people via properties of between 3,000 and 10,000 hectares. Another million hectares benefited 45 people with properties of between 10,000 and 40,000 hectares.⁴

In the Amazonian north, land provision was minimal because of the legal regulations passed during the rubber boom that allocated land free of charge to

national companies/residents working the rubber forests who, in addition, could take large areas given that no legal limits were in existence. The Bohan Plan thus ended up establishing the bases for a new latifundia system, one that survives to this day, and against which the 34 indigenous peoples of the lowlands have to fight.

These products of the national revolution were modified by successive governments, beginning with the same Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario - MNR) government that had introduced them. Due to the economic crisis and the high inflation levels recorded at that time, these governments drew politically close to the United States, a rapprochement that led to measures such as the Davenport Code (oil and gas law), approved in 1956, which allowed foreign oil companies to begin operating in the country once more.

In terms of oil and gas, it was the North American company, Gulf Oil, that benefited most from the Davenport Code, eventually gaining control over the sale of gas from Bolivia to Argentina, without the knowledge of the Bolivian state.

Pillaging in the 1970s

The 1967 Constituent Assembly passed article 139 – still in force - establishing that oil and gas were to come under the direct control of the state, inalienable and imprescriptible, and a second oil and gas nationalization took place in 1969, abolishing the Davenport Code. This nationalization, however, lasted scarcely three years, for in 1972 Hugo Banzer's dictatorship established what were known as 'operation contracts' by means of which resources were once more handed over to the transnationals.

Up until 1985, when the neoliberal model was introduced, all upstream and downstream⁵ stages of the oil and gas production chain were owned and managed by the national state administration, thus safeguarding national interests. For 60 years, YPF controlled oil and gas production on behalf of the state, and the oil industry - run by the state company - formed the principle source of income for the nation's Treasury, averaging 339 million dollars a year.

Forest resource management was also the responsibility of the state which, through the Forestry Development Centre (Centro de Desarrollo Forestal) granted short, medium and long-term Timber Extraction Con-

tracts stating the annual volumes of timber that could be extracted from a particular area of land (cutting area), over which no rights were conceded. The timber extraction contracts had to be granted in areas classified as Forestry Reserves, where the land was owned by the state. However, these contracts covered large areas previously allocated by the Agrarian Reform Council or Settlement Institute for farming purposes.⁶

This model of natural resource management fell into crisis because of Bolivia's turbulent political history, which was marked by bloody military coups such as that instigated by Hugo Banzer in 1971. They not only violated the rights of Bolivians but also disposed of natural resources in a discretionary manner (and generally to the detriment of the nation's assets) in order to obtain recognition from foreign powers, offer political favours to maintain themselves in power and ensure loyalty towards their illegitimate governments, using the surpluses from the extractivist model to their own benefit.

Towards the end of the 1970s, Bolivia's external debt reached 3,500 million dollars which, added to the rise in interest rates and the fall in price of raw materials on the international market, set the backdrop for a deep economic crisis that could not be overcome by the Democratic and Popular Unity (Unidad Democrática y Popular - UDP) government that came to power following eighteen years of rural, student and worker resistance to the military dictatorships.

Neoliberal privatist model (1985- 2005)

In 1985, and following the recommendation of international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), against the backdrop of a neoliberalism that was sweeping the continent, the Bolivian state began to privatise and capitalise strategic state companies, with the argument of attracting investment, importing capital and technology, and modernising. In order to make this neoliberal model viable, a number of laws were approved that gradually consolidated the greatest historical error of the Bolivian economy and subjected national dignity and sovereignty to foreign powers. This affected the natural resource management model and the lives of the native indigenous peoples and small farmers, as various laws and decrees were approved by which the state relinquished responsibility for extracting, managing and controlling the natural resources, handing it over to private companies. The superintendencies were supposedly created to monitor these private companies.

The alienation of our natural resources reached its peak during implementation of the neoliberal model. A Structural Adjustment Programme began in 1985 with the implementation of a New Economic Policy in the country, and this favoured the private over the collective. The history of exclusion and dispossession of the native indigenous peoples was thus repeated but, this time, there was fierce resistance because, from 1990 on, the indigenous peoples of the lowlands emerged from obscurity to form themselves into collective subjects capable of challenging both state and society.

The country's economy paid a high price for having relied on just one export product when, in 1986, the world price of tin fell. More than 23,000 miners were laid off in what was euphemistically called a "relocation" (labour redeployment). This relocation, however, never actually took place. Nationalized mining was dying a death in Bolivia and the mining resources were handed over to transnational capital.

During the 1990s, the extractivist management of natural resources extended to other spheres and the structure of national exports changed from traditional products – oil/gas and minerals - to non-traditional ones such as soya and, to a lesser extent, timber. And yet the management model did not change, instead actually consolidating the primary export economy on which Bolivia relied. Liberal visions were favoured and collective indigenous rights were ignored, despite their formal recognition in national legislation. Under the deceptive label of "capitalisation", extractive industries hitherto considered strategic were thus handed over to transnational companies. From being a leading player in the production process the state now adopted a regulatory role, as the superintendencies took on the job of market regulation and facilitation, based on a legal framework approved to send the economic surplus created by natural resources abroad and favour international interests, to the detriment of the rights of native indigenous peoples.

In line with the conditions imposed by the IFIs, Law on Hydrocarbons No. 1194 was approved during Jaime Paz Zamora's government (1989-1993). This legislation recognised and enabled the signing of operating or joint venture contracts for up to 30 years between the Bolivian state and foreign companies for exploration and extraction work, but without the state handing over ownership of the reserves and with the YPFB maintaining its monopoly of marketing, transport, refining and storage. This regulation opened the door to the arrival of large foreign companies into the country.

The first government of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (1993-1997) promulgated a number of laws and supreme decrees aimed at benefiting, guaranteeing and protecting foreign investment, and signed con-

tracts with the World Bank's Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) of the US government.

In addition, Sánchez de Lozada promulgated Law on Capitalization No. 1554 dated 21 March 1994, by means of which the YPFB was privatised and the oil and gas fields and pipes that until then had belonged to the Bolivian state were sold to transnational companies. Law on Hydrocarbons No. 1689 dated 30 April 1996, also promulgated by Sánchez de Lozada, put an end to state control of the upstream stage of oil and gas production, and ignored the Political Constitution by establishing that the state would own the oil and gas reserves but not be responsible for production or marketing, leaving YPFB as a residual department charged with signing and administering shared risk contracts with transnational companies on behalf of the state.⁷

Later, the Hugo Bánzer Suárez-Jorge Quiroga Ramirez government (1997-2002) privatised downstream activities, thus completing the break up of state control of the whole oil and gas sector.

Under the protection of Law 1689, 76 shared risk contracts were signed by means of which 12 transnational companies were handed the reserves existing within the country, totalling 48.7 trillion cubic feet of natural gas distributed over 29 fields and 856.6 mil-

lion barrels of oil and condensate distributed over 44 fields (See table below).

In the case of mining, also subject to the neoliberal model, all COMIBOL's mining rights were put out to tender following the tin crisis, the resources being distributed in a system of concessions which, in many cases, were in perpetuity for private beneficiaries.

According to the Mining Code approved in 1997, mining concessions form real estate that can be sold, mortgaged, leased and inherited. The condition for holding onto them is payment of a mining tax, at scandalously reduced amounts of no more than two dollars per hectare of mining concession.

The concession holders are authorized to carry out all production chain activities on their concessions, from exploration to smelting and marketing of minerals. In spite of all these advantages, the sector's contribution to the National Treasury is minimal.

Despite being one of the most environmentally and socially harmful activities for the native indigenous communities and peoples, the mining sector's contribution to Bolivia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is no more than 7 percent and the large mining consortia make no contribution to national development because they create no sources of employment, leaving this task to the mining cooperatives and what remains of state mining.

No.	COMPANY	NATURAL GAS (Mn cubic feet)				OIL AND CONDENSATE (barrels)			
		ESTABLISHED	PROBABLE	ESTABLISHED + PROBABLE	%	ESTABLISHED	PROBABLE	ESTABLISHED + PROBABLE	%
1	PETROBRAS BOLIVIA	12.924.566	9.488.067	22.412.633	43%	191.445.693	147.100.569	338.546.262	37%
2	REPSOL YPF	6.013.111	4.668.883	10.681.994	20%	162.904.057	125.825.124	288.729.181	32%
3	TOTAL E&P BOLIVIE	3.273.845	4.483.300	7.757.145	15%	49.218.582	65.531.062	114.749.644	13%
4	ANDINA S.A.	1.824.117	507.978	2.332.095	4%	21.519.509	10.442.889	31.962.398	4%
5	CHACO S.A.	1.489.494	900.621	2.390.115	5%	24.930.347	26.926.642	51.856.989	6%
6	VINTAGE PETROLEUM	597.666	433.256	1.030.922	2%	7.519.660	4.962.627	12.482.287	1%
7	BG BOLIVIA	290.249	204.945	495.194	1%	4.662.282	3.124.353	7.786.635	1%
8	PETROBRAS ENERGIA	169.010	529.360	698.370	1%	930.917	2.402.855	3.333.772	0,37%
9	PLUSPETROL	150.191	765.831	916.022	2%	1.299.951	3.748.146	5.048.097	0,56%
10	DONG WON	12.924	39.384	52.308	0,10%	505.493	766.436	1.271.929	0,14%
11	CANADIAN ENERGY	2.936	7.543	10.479	0,02%	42.093	74.436	116.529	0,01%
12	MATPETROL	0	0	0	0,00%	220.084	409.551	629.635	0,07%
13	AREAS LIBRES	0	0	0	0,00%	26.878	65.000	91.878	0,01%
	NACIONAL TOTAL	26.748.109	22.029.168	48.777.277	93,17%	465.225.546	391.379.690	856.605.236	94%

Source: Calculation by the author on basis of report on Certified Reserves January 2005 Y.P.F.B.

In relation to the much debated issue of land, Law No. 1715 dated 18 October 1996 – better known as the INRA Law – was approved. The fundamental pillars of this were a clarification of ownership rights (in order to redress the irregularities committed during the previous model), the distribution and redistribution of land and a new agrarian institutionality. This legislation was conceived from within the two trends that even today still fight for prevalence of their positions and aspirations: the liberal trend and the social trend.

The first, that is the liberal trend, promoted by international institutions such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), proposed the allocation of land at market value, the opening up of the land market for purchase and sale, the creation of an Agrarian Superintendency as regulatory body for this land market, the re-establishment of the rural land registry and a tax system based on a self-evaluation of property. All these proposals were supported by the agricultural and livestock sector and the government.

The second, that is the social trend, expounded by the indigenous/rural organisations, proposed the redistribution of land to those who had insufficient or none; the titling of lands for women; the reversion of large estates (*latifundios*) that did not meet the requirements of ‘socio-economic function’ – on the principle that the land should be for those who work it –; the regularisation of ownership, with the cancellation of titles obtained fraudulently, and recognition of indigenous and peasant farmer rights, understood as being those stated in ILO Convention 169 and ratified by Bolivia in Law 1257 dated 11 July 1991.

The substantial presence of indigenous peoples, particularly from the lowlands, in the discussion process for this law managed to achieve the following:

- a) The Native Community Lands (*Tierras Comunitarias de Origen* - TCOs) and communal properties are of a collective, indivisible, imprescriptible and inalienable nature.
- b) An exemption from payment of taxes is granted to small subsistence plots, small properties, communal properties and TCOs.
- c) Free provision to indigenous and rural communities takes precedence over allocation via public tender to the highest bidder.
- d) Agrarian rights take precedence over forestry rights, and salaried rural workers are incorporated into the sphere of application of the General Labour Law.
- e) The rights of women are recognised and there is a mandate to apply criteria of equality in the dis-

tribution, administration, possession and use of land, in favour of women.

Official data up to October 2006 indicated that, despite having cost the Bolivian state and international cooperation more than 80 million dollars, the process to regularise land rights and redistribute land had reorganised scarcely 10% of the land. This was due to distortions in the agrarian process, with the approval of agrarian counter-reform laws and decrees, and a failure on the part of public officials linked to land-owning sectors and the politicians in power to implement the regulations correctly.

Forest resource exploitation during application of this model was limited to the intensive extraction of high market value species. With the approval of the Forestry Law in 1997 and subsequent provisions, the logging companies paid an annual tax of one dollar per hectare, and this only for the area being worked, despite the fact that large areas were being stockpiled, the long-term concessions system having been established for forty years. Despite recognising some forest rights to the indigenous peoples, this regulation was designed to favour private concession holders.

The whole legal structure described here can be summarised as a system whereby the state gave rights to private companies without being in a position to be able to control or defend the rights of native indigenous communities and peoples. This is because, through concessions and a system for regulating eminently private rights, the state ran into a logic of privatisation and liberalisation in the lucrative administration of natural resource management, as opposed to the holistic vision of the native indigenous peoples and small farmers.

According to the National Budget for 2006, more than 65 million dollars was pumped into the superintendencies, and yet these bodies were unable to resolve conflicts or defend national interests from abuses committed by private and transnational companies.

The indigenous marches

Implementation of the above measures was interspersed with significant indigenous mobilisations around two issues: attainment of full recognition of their rights, and defence of their land, territory and natural resources.

In 1990, the first great march of lowlands indigenous peoples for land and territory took place, a march along the highways connecting the country's east and west, from Beni to the seat of government in

La Paz, that is, a journey of more than one thousand kilometres walked by men, women, children and the elderly. This gave rise, in 1992, to ratification of ILO Convention 169, and the incorporation of some rights into the 1994 constitutional reform.

The second native indigenous march took place in 1996 around the Law on the National Agrarian Reform Institute (INRA), the Land Law.

A third march was organised in 2000, this time to prevent the distorting regulations of the Law on the National Agrarian Reform Institute (INRA).

In 2002, a fourth march had the aim of calling for a Constituent Assembly in the face of a new attempt at neoliberal constitutional reform promoted by a team of “dignitaries” headed by former President Carlos Mesa (successor to Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada) and appointed by the President of the time, Jorge Quiroga Ramírez. To this team he entrusted formulation of a draft constitutional reform bill on the basis of popular demands, without actually including any of the native indigenous peoples’ or popular sectors’ proposals.

The fifth march in 2003 was inspired by efforts to get indigenous rights recognised in the Law on Hydrocarbons and to reconcile views on the general interest with the development vision of indigenous peoples.

And the last march, which took place in November 2006, had the aim of approving an amending law for the community-based relaunch of the law on the National Agrarian Reform Institute (INRA).

The native indigenous peoples and small farmers fought for recognition of their rights in the oil and gas regulations. The current law requires the state to implement rights of consultation and compensation and to protect, in particular, the lands and territories of the native indigenous peoples as well as ensure their participation in the economic benefits by means of a percentage of the income from oil.

Natural resources, indigenous peoples and the constituent process

All the considerations stated thus far explain why the native indigenous peoples and small farmers of Bolivia are demanding discussions around, and the establishment of, a new model of natural resource management.

Bolivia is in the process of recovering its national sovereignty and the role of the state, with the further possibility of reforming itself through the Constituent Assembly, where one of the central issues is the establishment of a new natural resource management model.

The devastation of Bolivian mining

Over the last ten years, mining companies working in the country have exported (taken out of Bolivia) more than 4 thousand million dollars, but paid only 90 million dollars in royalties and taxes to the Bolivian state. In other words, for every one hundred dollars taken out, only two dollars have returned to the country. The native indigenous communities and peoples living where the mineral deposits are to be found suffer social and environmental impacts and yet receive none of the profits, which could contribute to compensating for this damage.

Oil and gas exploitation: from neoliberal “sell out” to a balanced relationship between state and oil transnationals

Bolivia benefited by less than 230 million dollars a year from the law approved by Sánchez de Lozada in 1996; the rest was taken by the oil companies. With Law on Hydrocarbons No. 3058, which the Bolivian people, native indigenous peoples and small farmers managed to get approved in 2005, Bolivia’s income rose to 500 million dollars per year. Following the nationalization of 1 May 2006, Bolivia will now receive 1,300 million dollars and, with the industrialization to be consolidated in the medium term, 4 thousand million dollars a year.

This will require:

- Redefining the nature of the state, forming a plurinational state that recognises the autonomy of the native indigenous peoples and the regions without losing national control of natural resources.
- Adapting the state politico-administrative organisation, including the traditional indigenous and native socio-cultural system, respecting the territoriality of the native indigenous peoples and small farmers.
- Changing the system for managing renewable and non-renewable resources and the system of concessions, guaranteeing respect for indigenous rights and social control.
- Changing the institutional framework responsible for administering natural resources, begin-

ning with the closure of the sectoral superintendencies and establishing new bodies that combine the social participation of local communities with the technical role of the state authorities in order to undertake integral and sustainable management of natural resources and effective socio-environmental monitoring.

- Incorporating into the Political Constitution the right to prior and informed consultation, profit sharing, compensation for damage resulting from extraction activities, administration, preservation and conservation of natural resources and of the territories of the native indigenous peoples, as provided in Convention 169.
- Incorporating aspects of environmental protection into the Political Constitution, thus filling one of the big gaps in current constitutional regulations.
- Adopting an integrated vision of the management and industrialisation of natural resources that includes economic, social, environmental, cultural, regionally balanced, equitable, supportive and participatory aims, because its ob-

jective must be to improve the quality of life of current and future generations.

- Recovering the strategic nature of natural resources such as oil and gas, water, biodiversity, minerals and oxygen, because they contribute to the country's social and economic development, reconciling visions of development with the native indigenous communities and peoples.
- Establishing regulations for the socio-environmental monitoring of extraction projects for all natural resources, guaranteeing their social control.

On the basis of the proposals of the indigenous, native and rural organisations, the broad outline of this new natural resource management model would need to be:

A natural resource management model that combines control on the part of the plurinational state with local management and use; that promotes state power over resource management but respects and protects the rights of native indigenous nations and peoples and rural communities.

The indigenous peoples march to defend their territories. Photo: Alejandro Parellada



For this:

The new natural resource management model will need to guarantee that exploitation of renewable and non-renewable natural resources benefits and develops the needs of the current population, without putting future generations at risk, from a concept of sustainable development.

The plurinational state will need to adopt an integral vision and management of renewable and non-renewable natural resources that incorporates the economic, social, environmental, cultural, balanced, equitable, supportive and participatory aims of natural resources; only then will the quality of life of current and future generations be improved, respecting

the rights of native indigenous nations and peoples and rural communities.

The plurinational state will need to respect indigenous territoriality and apply the collective rights recognised in ILO Convention 169: consultation, profit sharing, indemnity, compensation, intellectual property, traditional knowledge and protection of intellectual property.

The management, sustainable use and product of the industrialization of natural resources will need to benefit the whole country and, in particular, the indigenous nations and peoples and rural communities.

The plurinational state will need to guarantee and democratise social and sustainable access to natural resources through differential plans and programmes



of technological support and technical and financial assistance. The new constitution will therefore need to contain clear and precise articles that boost and promote the native indigenous nations' and peoples' and the rural communities' right to access, use and manage the natural resources in the context of special regulations.

The new constitution will need to contain aspects that protect the environment and the cultural and traditional systems of the native and indigenous communities and peoples, prohibiting the exploitation of natural resources in areas of high environmental sensitivity within protected areas.

The plurinational state will need to guarantee agricultural production, promoting food security and

sovereignty, prohibiting the use of transgenic foods and seeds and chemical products that cause damage to the physical and mental health of the population.

The plurinational state will need to guarantee access to the land, and apply redistributive measures exclusively for sectors that have insufficient or no land, in terms of its vocation and production status. The new constitution will need to contain prohibitions on and penalties for large estates (*latifundios*), for the hoarding of unproductive lands, for bad use of the land and for creating work under conditions of servitude.

The new model of natural resource management will need to guarantee the eminent domain of the plurinational state over natural resources, as the social property of all Bolivians, guaranteeing national control and local management of them, and putting an end to the system of concessions and superintendencies. □

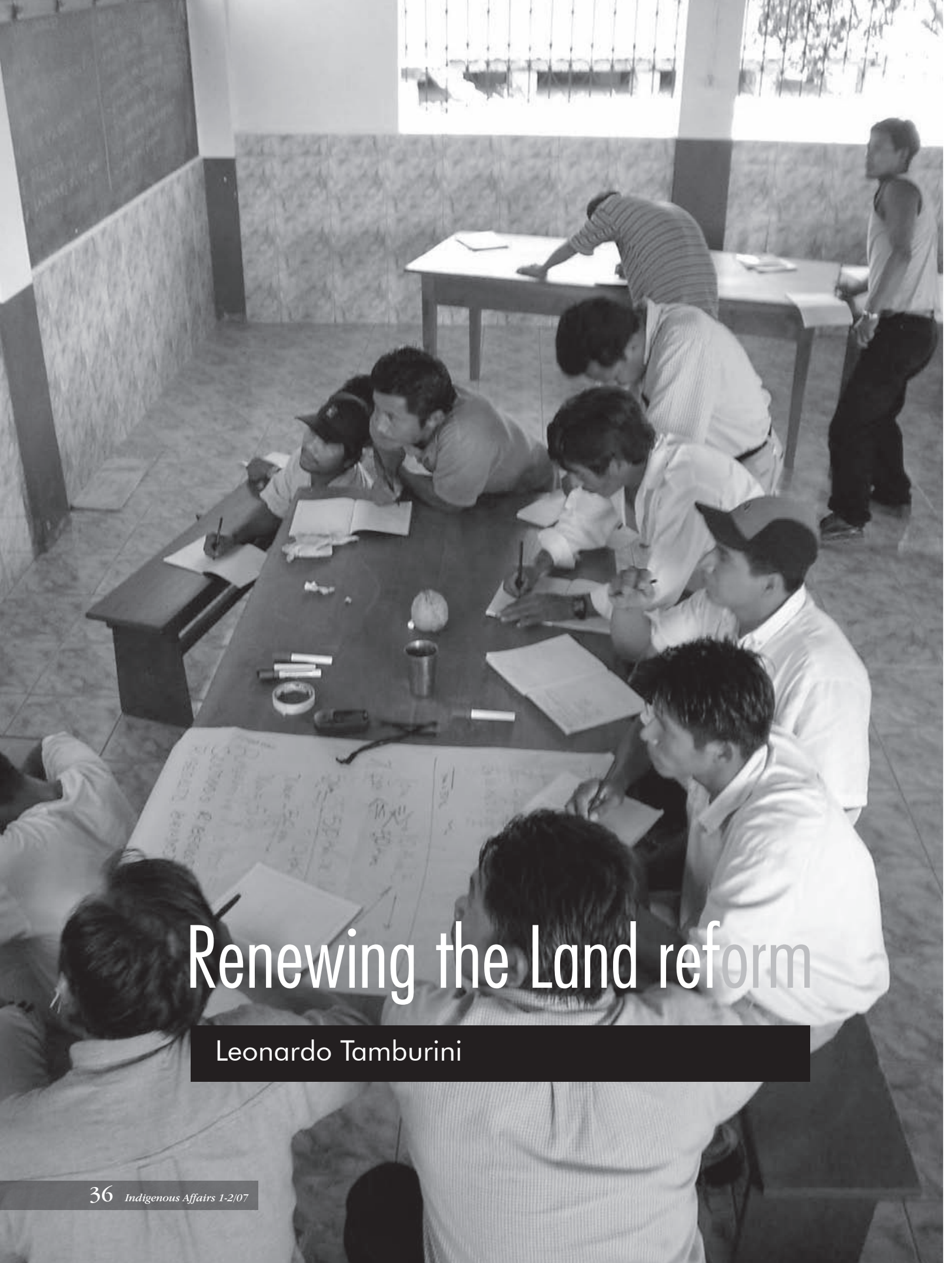
Notes

- 1 According to the latest census on population and habitat from 2001, 62% of the population identify themselves as indigenous.
- 2 Highlands: Altiplano and valleys (Departments of La Paz, Oruro, Potosí, part of Chuquisaca and Cochabamba).
- 3 Lowlands: Amazonia, eastern plains, Chaco and the tropics (Departments of Santa Cruz, Beni, Pando Tarija and part of Cochabamba)
- 4 Reforma Agraria. 50 años. Revista Artículo Primero. Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social. pp. 53-85.
- 5 Upstream: activities of exploration and extraction. Downstream: refining, production of derivatives, marketing, distribution and export.
- 6 La gestión de los recursos naturales de Bolivia. Centro de Documentación e Información Bolivia. 2005.
- 7 Source: Carlos Villegas, Artículo Primero N° 15, "El gas y el destino de Bolivia", CEJIS, March 2005.
- 8 TCOs. According to Law 1715 on the National Agrarian Reform Service, these are the same as the indigenous territories established in ILO Convention 169.

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Demonstration in favour of the Constituent Assembly. Photo: Tony Suárez, 2005





Renewing the Land reform

Leonardo Tamburini

1. Introduction

On 28 November last, Law No. 3545 on "Community Renewal of the Agrarian Reform" was approved. A large part of the rural development policy being promoted by President Evo Morales is based around this law. The law had as its final and natural consequence a great march which, as in 1996 for the INRA (Agrarian Reform) Law, was organised by the indigenous peoples of the eastern part of the country (*Oriente*) and lasted almost one month.

The 1953 Agrarian Reform had run out of steam and the process of regularising agrarian rights applied under the effects of the 1996 INRA Law had neglected the demands of the rural social sectors, and so social conflict over land had acquired a dramatic element in recent times.

The demands addressed in the new legislation are the product of proposals that had been maturing throughout the period of application of the INRA Law and its lower ranking legislation, and their main objective is to free the Bolivian agrarian process from its paralysis, resolving the central problems and speeding up the process of regularising rights so as to enable the access of historically marginalised sectors to productive lands through free distributions.

The new regulations also mark an important change in the model that was established in the 1996 INRA Law. In this law, the regularisation of rights in order to update the rural land registry, the preservation of large-scale land ownership linked directly to the payment of taxes and the market as a means of accessing land via public tender were all issues identified with a land reform in keeping with the neoliberal model that took root in the country in the 1990s.

The new land reform law establishes a model more in keeping with a process of deep socio-economic change, based on the neglected national rural sector. The reform is focused on reviving legal mechanisms that were not used in the previous law and which will enable the state to regain control over the land, as stated in the Agrarian System of the Bolivian Constitution, implementing policies that promote a more equitable socio-economic development in rural areas.

2. The 1953 Agrarian Reform. Historic transformations and distortions

The failure to resolve the land problem and the consequent neglect of a much yearned for democratization of land tenure and use was the result of the great chaos that was created by the distorted application of the

1953 Agrarian Reform in the country. With the developmentalist visions that prevailed in the mid-20th century, the National Revolution formed a basis for substantial changes in the ownership and distribution of land, affecting the large landed estates (*latifundios*) and bringing in the principle that "the land belongs to those who work it", with a view to doing away with the motley rural reality of that time. The system of servitude was thus eradicated, with the aim of incorporating the work force into the labour market, thus increasing both production and productivity levels.

But only the *latifundios* in the country's Andean region were confiscated and, moreover, as the reallocated lands passed down from father to son they became sub-divided, diminishing the size of plots and, over time, they ended up as smallholdings (*minifundios*).

In the Bolivian Oriente, the transformation of the traditional plantations (*haciendas*) into modern companies was proposed, declaring them protected in terms of their size and system of labour. This enabled a 'neo-*latifundio*' system to be established that concentrated economic, political and social power yet further in the hands of a small regional elite. This situation worsened with the granting of tens of millions of hectares to a new supposed agro-industrial sector, backed up by credit which, in many cases, was not honoured and had to be absorbed by the state.

In this region of the country, the land reform subjugated the rural and indigenous peoples, denying them formal recognition and thus respect for their right to land and the exercise of their cultural rights. It meant that in the lowlands their ancestral territories were subject to speculation by large-scale cattle ranchers and agro-industrial entrepreneurs, and to redistribution under the capitalist developmentalist paradigm of intensive land use.¹

This situation is clearly illustrated by the case of the Guaraní people of the Chaco region. There, over the 50 years that the reform lasted, more than 10 million of the 13 million hectares that make up the Bolivian Chaco eco-region were stockpiled by cattle farmers, primarily from Sucre and Santa Cruz, by means of free land allocations or *de facto* possession. In some areas, the Guaraní people were squeezed into communities with very little land resources, forcing many of them to migrate to the cities or neighbouring countries. Other families still live today in a state of 'captivity' caused by the various forms of *enganche* or debt bondage that keep them bound to the cattle ranches.²

Table 1 shows how land was distributed in the country over the period 1953-1992. Inequality indices between those who gained access to land, and in what quantities, speak volumes. More than 16,000 medium

Table 1 - Lands distributed in Bolivia from 1953 to 1992

DEPARTMENT	SIZE OF PROPERTY IN HECTARES											
	0 to 50		51 to 500		501 to 2.000		2.001 to 2.500		2.501 to 50.000		de 50.001 or more	
	PLOTS	AREA	PLOTS	AREA	PLOTS	AREA	PLOTS	AREA	PLOTS	AREA	PLOTS	AREA
Beni	2.633	58.756	1.598	315.537	1.721	2.091.633	727	1.662.552	1.512	7.522.193	1	73.691
Chuquisaca	5.377	12.265	601	108.636	259	273.596	60	135.952	121	957.568	2	137.668
Cochabamba	5.151	41.493	1.777	334.069	754	753.712	59	132.965	234	1.719.027	1	139.804
La Paz	7.074	53.309	2.060	408.409	1.212	1.302.716	263	606.128	746	6.719.856	11	1.007.116
Oruro	556	8.897	557	94.154	195	215.196	36	79.279	318	3.725.627	8	484.531
Pando	485	5.707	283	52.748	76	77.577	21	47.388	91	817.071	2	198.112
Potosí	3.383	26.864	799	141.991	395	422.696	58	129.332	265	3.218.096	10	913.150
Santa Cruz	3.791	49.575	3.043	678.090	2.988	3.572.971	1.088	2.544.975	2.195	15.843.836	5	1.001.021
Tarija	2.463	20.764	773	164.861	501	527.041	93	217.323	203	1.336.533	2	114.234
SUB TOTAL	30.913	277.630	11.491	2.298.495	8.101	9.237.138	2.405	5.555.894	5.685	41.859.807	42	4.069.327
PERCENTAGE	52,7	0,4	19,6	3,6	13,8	14,6	4,1	8,8	9,7	66,1	0,1	6,4
TOTAL PLOTS	58.637	100,0										
TOTAL HECTARES	63.298.291	100,0										

Author's own calculations on the basis of SNRA-INRA data

and large landowners (500 to 50,000 hectares) shared more than 56 million hectares while, at the other end of the scale, more than 42,000 small landowners were granted 2.5 million hectares.

The phenomenon was even clearer in the eastern departments. In Beni, 7.5 million hectares were provided to around 1,500 large landowners, being an average of almost 5,000 hectares per family. In Santa Cruz, 3,000 small landowners benefited from almost 50,000 hectares, being an average of 16 hectares per family, while 3,000 medium and large landowners were provided with more than 18 million hectares, being an average of 6,000 hectares per unit.

This largely explains the relationship of domination and subjugation that could be seen in the control of large areas of unproductive lands on the part of local and regional power sectors who placed often critical conditions on progress in - and a permanent solution to - the land problem.

3. Law No. 1715 or the "INRA Law"

On 18 October 1996, Law No. 1715 on the National Agrarian Reform Service - hereinafter the "INRA Law" - was approved, under pressure from more than 20,000 rural workers and settlers³ who marched on the government offices calling for a halt in the approval of a text around which a consensus had not been reached, despite the fact that it included some of the demands of the indigenous peoples in the Oriente, neglected in the 1953 Agrarian Reform.

The INRA Law formed part of the administrative legislation on natural resources that was promulgated

during the first government of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (1993-97), as part of the so-called Third Generation of Structural Reforms, in which the privatisation of strategic sectors of the national economy took place. Nevertheless, for the indigenous peoples of the Bolivian Oriente, it offered the possibility of obtaining collective property rights over their ancestral territories, recognised in very general terms in the 1994 reform of the Bolivian Constitution.

Approved in an international context of reforms advising the introduction of the land market as a mechanism for accessing and redistributing lands, the INRA Law was made it possible to protect private property from such dangerous tools as reversion or expropriation, which were rendered legally useless. The use of these would have enabled a large part of the land demands of the indigenous peoples and rural workforce to be resolved, avoiding a conflict that is now one of the most sensitive in the country. The revival of these legal concepts forms the backbone of Law No. 3545.

The INRA Law established a new institutional framework within which to take the official project forward. It established the National Agrarian Reform Institute, which assumed the powers of the National Agrarian Reform Council (CNRA) and the National Institute for Settlement (INC),⁴ and had technical/administrative powers to proceed with the most important task of the Bolivian agrarian process: implementation of the whole procedure of clarifying and regularising the legality of rural properties, known as *saneamiento* (art. 65 L. No. 1715). The participation of those involved in land issues was anticipated by means of the National Agrarian Commission and the Departmental Agrarian Commission. The Agrarian Superintendence

COMMUNITY LANDS OF ORIGIN (TCOS) REQUESTED AND TITLED IN THE BOLIVIAN LOWLANDS



was also created, heavily criticised by the social sectors because it reflected the most visible face of the market model. Despite its powers, related to the setting and payment of land prices, genetic resource concessions and approval of land use plans, it never became a clear part of the land process, given that the exercise of these powers depended on the prior regularisation of rights granted within the Agrarian Reform.

Finally the INRA Law, which emerged as a response to the problems created by the previous process, characterised by a discretionary and privileged handling of the land issue, proposed a procedure by which all the administrative procedures issued by the Agrarian Reform since 1953 would be subject to a technical/legal review, verifying the land in order to check whether the plots were fulfilling a social and economic function (FES), that is, were actually being used. The law entrusted implementation of this process, known as *sa-*

neamiento,⁵ to the National Agrarian Reform Institute, to be completed within a ten-year period.

The aim was to recover lands presumed fraudulently obtained and not being used so that, once in the hands of the state, they could be redistributed to those who had no or insufficient land.

4. The land *saneamiento* process runs out of steam

For this great historical mission, the INRA Law offered the process of *saneamiento* of rural property. This was presented, however, as the only legal option by which to fulfil two functions: to regularise property rights and distribute public lands. In addition to establishing a direct linkage between both processes, the amalgamation of the two responsibilities, that is,

making it impossible to distribute lands unless they have previously been the object of a *saneamiento*, made this a highly complex process, under constant pressure from all those involved.⁶

Very quickly, land *saneamiento* became precisely the opposite of what was intended. While one of the main aims was to identify those lands that had been obtained fraudulently, paradoxically the process became an opportunity by which to formalize fraud and lands obtained questionably, and without the land being put to any social or economic use. This was possible, first of all, because those in charge of applying the law were the landowning sectors in which this resource was concentrated. Copious regulations were being approved as they went along in an attempt to distort the law's constitutional principles without any consultation of the social sectors, and this facilitated many fraudulent actions and violations of basic principles established in the Constitution and the laws, leading to institutional instability and legal insecurity.⁷

In July 2000, the indigenous peoples and rural workers of the Oriente led a great march that ended in Montero, 50 kms from Santa Cruz. They were demanding the annulment of various secondary regulations that were distorting the INRA Law, along with the adoption of others in order to streamline it and help it break out of its stagnation which, by this stage, was quite obvious.

Other sectors, on the other hand, believed that the solution to their demands lay beyond *saneamiento*. Between 1999 and 2000, the Landless Movement (*Movimiento Sin Tierra*) sprang up in the Tarija Chaco, in the far south of the country. For them, a process headed by those directly responsible for the frauds that were purportedly to be dealt with/ would never result in the longed for equality of land distribution. Their strategy was thus to recover the idle lands that the *saneamiento* would, sooner or later, return to its illegal holders. Their primary method of action was *de facto* occupation and the formation of urban groups to work the large estates considered unproductive.

In November 2001, 6 landless rural workers died on the "Pananti"⁸ estate, murdered by guards employed by a number of the area's landowners, who had organised to defend properties "threatened" by the landless, with the complicity of the area's local and provincial authorities. The Pananti Massacre made the *saneamiento* all the more complex and, from that point on, various land conflicts began to be resolved by violent means. The aggression and threats towards leaders and their advisors multiplied and violent evictions by security forces in the pay of the landowners began to be a common occurrence.⁹ Given the lack of response

from either the state or its competent bodies, co-opted by the professional agricultural and livestock farmers' associations in the Oriente, the contradictions began to deepen and the process began to walk a dangerous tightrope, with each step threatening a fall.

The 2003 crisis, which led to the fall of President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada and formed an apparent turning point in social and political power relations, did not change the structure of the process substantially. The "October agenda"¹⁰ did not include land demands, the process remaining under the same distorting influences.

The political parties and forces that had supported the overthrown regime re-formed around the "civic"¹¹ committees of the lowlands and, in January 2005, another variable appeared on the national political scene which, under the guise of administrative decentralisation, was an attempt to destroy the October 2003 process¹²: regional (departmental) autonomy.

In the face of a faltering government, they managed to divert the national political agenda and, in this context, President Carlos Mesa (Oct 2003 – June 2005) announced a new *agrarian counter-reform package*.¹³ This new *package* was aimed at increasing the control of the regional power sectors within the agrarian institutional structure and proposed activating the land market as a way of gaining access to this resource.¹⁴ Through the sale of lands it was, in reality, seeking to do two things: on the one hand, dilute the pressure from the social sectors, enabling them to access lands at low interest rates and, on the other, to throw a lifeline to the banks, who were holding large areas of land as a guarantee against bad debts. The state's responsibility for resolving land conflicts was contracted out to *saneamiento* companies, suspected of being behind the new frauds occurring in the *saneamiento*. It was the beginning of the "January 2005 agenda", which started the process "afresh", and in which the landowning structure remained intact.

The Mesa decrees were the last *package* until December 2005. There was an attempt between July and August to play on the good faith of President Eduardo Rodríguez Veltzé,¹⁵ but this was averted in time by reports made by the social organisations, who mobilised to prevent it.

The *saneamiento* was also an opportunity for the indigenous peoples to gain access to recovery of their historical possessions. Their decisions, when they were not able to duly consider the contextual reality and historic, social and cultural factors in which they were immersed, ended in absolute failure for those involved.

In relation to these peoples, as of December 2005 and through the *saneamiento*, the state had returned to them only "re-titled" areas already in their hands, or "empty" areas, claimed by no-one given their little

Table 2 *Saneamiento* of Community Lands of Origin (*Tierras Comunitarias de Origen*)

Nº	Department	Name of TCO	Date requested	Area requested (Ha)	Current population	Current number of families	Area Titled (Ha)
1	Beni	Sub Centre of the Movima indigenous people	08/08/2000	30.000,0000	238	42	5.969,2338
2	Beni	Chacobo Pacahuara indigenous people	09/04/1996	531.849,0000	1.020	169	371.237,0000
3	Beni	Itonama indigenous people	09/04/1996	1.345.693,0000	5.564	927	372.426,6697
4	Beni	Sub Centre of the San Joaquin indigenous people		337.226,0000	2.044	312	168.688,8612
5	Beni	More indigenous people	09/04/1996	113.400,0000	156	26	60.753,2162
6	Beni	Siriono indigenous people	09/04/1996	62.903,4365	451		52.206,1340
7	Beni	Sub Centre of the Itonama indigenous people (area 1)		305.989,0000	5.010		270701,0184
8	Pando	Yaminagua Machineri indigenous people	09/04/1996	193.533,0000	162	29	25.675,0166
9	Pando	Esse Eja - Takana Cavineño Multiétnico II	09/04/1996	441.470,5998	3.594	589	289.470,9480
10	Santa Cruz	Kaipependi Karovaicho indigenous people	04/30/2001	63.607,8547			63.607,8547
11	Santa Cruz	Rincón del Tigre – Guayé indigenous people	09/04/1996	97.871,2421	384	65	97.742,9486
12	Santa Cruz	Ayoreo Santa Teresita indigenous people	09/04/1996	49.726,2497	157	30	77.545,2245
13	Santa Cruz	Tobite II (Ayoreo) indigenous people	09/04/1996	22.373,3734	180	33	26.103,9089
14	Santa Cruz	Zapoco (Ayoreo) indigenous people	09/04/1996	26.748,6970	222	38	43.344,4312
15	Santa Cruz	Guarayos indigenous people	09/04/1996	2.194.433,0000	14.496	1.986	970.201,6763
16	Santa Cruz	Isoso indigenous people	09/17/1996	1.951.782,0629	9.273	1.330	615.403,98
17	Santa Cruz	Charagua Norte (Guarani) indigenous people	09/17/1996	235.250,0000	4.578	786	70.455,7574
18	Santa Cruz	Charagua Sur (Guarani) indigenous people	09/17/1996	132.769,0000	4.167	605	62.670,6203
19	Santa Cruz	Guarani Iupaguasu indigenous people	09/17/1996	58.100,0000	2.094	395	28.076,1330
20	Santa Cruz	Guarani Kaaguasu indigenous people	09/17/1996	126.500,0000	4.001	607	68.964,2462
21	Santa Cruz	Guarani Kaami indigenous people	09/17/1996	100.750,0000	3.456	541	30.657,8842
22	Tarija	Itika Guasu (Guarani) indigenous people	09/17/1996	216.200,0000	2.874	462	68.385,8482
23	Tarija	Tapiete indigenous people	09/17/1996	54.743,8500	148	28	24.840,0000
24	Cochabamaba	Yuracaré indigenous people	09/04/1996	213.486,0000	2.358	396	241.170,4595
25	Cochabamaba	Yuqui indigenous people	09/04/1996	115.000,0000	150		115.924,8633
26	La Paz	Tacana indigenous people	07/21/1997	549.464,8338	3.500	555	325.327,2625
27	La Paz	Moseten indigenous people	10/31/1996	28.389,7795	1.923	320	96.807,7482
28	La Paz	Araona indigenous people	09/04/1996	95.036,4000	90		77.714,6647
29	La Paz	San José de Uchupiamonas indigenous people	10/23/2001	300.000,0000			165.411,6158
30	Santa Cruz	TCO Lomerio	1996	290.788,0000	4969		259.188,7205
31	Santa Cruz	TCO Bajo Paragua	1998	366.952,0000	1400		374.151,3897
32	Santa Cruz	TCO Monte Verde	1996	1.059.964,0000	21923		947.440,8320
33	Beni	TCO Cavineño	1996	523.249,0000	1465		468.117,0000
34	Beni	TCO Tacana Cavineño	2002	288.410,0000	801		468.117,2200
Source: Author's own calculations on the basis of INRA data				12.523.659,3794	102.848	10.271	7.404.500,3896

economic, social or cultural importance or because they were exhausted. This was why, with good reason, it was considered that in actual fact the *saneamiento* was not affecting the structure of land ownership.¹⁶ The TIM II¹⁷ and Monte Verde Indigenous Territories were an exception to this rule, where large areas of land were recovered in areas claimed by private individuals with rights still pending.

5. The New Agrarian Reform N° 3545 dated 28 November 2006

The current process of change has prioritised the resolution of land conflicts as one of the problems requir-

ing immediate and urgent attention, bearing in mind that no agrarian policy will be viable in the current context unless this is addressed, as it has been one of the structural problems that has caused most social conflict over the last decade.

The process is a delicate one, bearing in mind that the wealthiest lands and forests to be redistributed are located in the Oriente, where the political opposition has taken refuge and grown in strength following the demand for regional autonomy and the defence of the lands and natural resources for their appropriation and distribution under the logic of the private market.

For this, the draft Law on Community Renewal of the Agrarian Reform was presented as a legal instrument which, by reviving many of the key elements of

the INRA Law, will contribute fundamental aspects the application of which will have an impact on the dominant structure of land ownership, particularly in the country's lowlands. To achieve this objective required the revival of the legal mechanisms of reversion and expropriation, rendered unviable by the 1996 INRA Law and which put pressure on the rural *saneamiento* to the point of its collapse.

The law also established, as a general rule that would form the backdrop to the seven decrees issued by the government on 3 June,¹⁸ that their main objective was to overturn the last *agrarian counter-reform package* noted above.

Of these, No. 28733, on the distribution of public lands is noteworthy because, to a large extent, it sets out one of the fundamental pillars of the new rural development policy being promoted by the Morales government: the massive redistribution of available public lands for free as collective titles to indigenous peoples and rural workers. According to this regulation, the state would provide 3.1 million hectares for Community Lands of Origin (*Tierras Comunitarias de Origen - TCO*) claimed by indigenous peoples in the Oriente, of which 300,000 were tied up in commercial logging concessions. In addition, it is planned to distribute another 4.5 million hectares that have been declared public lands through the *saneamiento*¹⁹ via free provision to rural workers with no or insufficient land; in all, more than 7.5 million hectares over the course of one year. It is intended to distribute 20 million over the next 5 years.

This regulation is of vital importance in terms of understanding the direction of the land reforms being proposed by the current government. The decree represents the most important tool for removing the legal

obstacles that are preventing immediate access to available lands on the part of indigenous peoples and rural workers, lands that had already been identified during the process and held, inaccessible, for several years by previous governments.

The most noteworthy element is the exclusive distribution to indigenous peoples and rural workers, free of charge and as collective titles, of all available public lands plus those to be identified in the process.²⁰ These aspects aroused an immediate reaction from the business sectors, particularly the logging industry in the lowlands, since the areas to be distributed formed those forested areas that had for many years been protected from being allocated to social organisations.²¹

Although the INRA Law stipulates two forms of distribution: provision free of charge and allocation against payment by means of public tender, it also establishes the first as the preferred mechanism, for which reason the decree was legal. This regulation meant that one of the first beneficiaries of available public lands was the Santa Cruz Landless Movement (MST-SC). Their Pueblos Unidos community had for years been refused a plot of land in the community but, in July 2006, they were awarded an area of 16,000 hectares for more than 300 families.

6. Content

The new land reform is based, firstly, on an analysis that the concentrated structure of agricultural land in Bolivia, the result of the failed Agrarian Reform, still persists, and is one of the main factors of social conflict and the cause of the exclusion and marginalisation of indigenous peoples and rural workers. For this reason, a new framework needs to be built within which to relaunch the national agrarian process.²² The other aim is to reinstate tools with which to recover public lands, for their subsequent distribution and redistribution, and to bring back mechanisms that would reduce pressure on the process for accessing lands, for which the marginalised sectors had struggled for years because of the unequal structure of landholdings.

6.1 The land for those who work it. *The reversion of unproductive lands*

The first factor to be noted in this law is that relating to Social and Economic Function (FES). This concept, which is closely linked to the constitutional principle that *the land is for those who work it*, seeks in theory to ensure that medium-sized agricultural plots²³ and agricul-

Table 3 - Public lands to be distributed

First phase		
Department	Area	Method of Distribution
La Paz	21.130,6565	Ordinary provision
	94.371,3766	Extraordinary provision
Santa Cruz	161.158,4126	Ordinary provision
	454.193,9742	Extraordinary provision
Beni	2.566,9940	Ordinary provision
	9.647,9407	Extraordinary provision
Tarija	1.120,3769	Ordinary provision
	690,7594	Extraordinary provision
Total	744.880,4909	

Second Phase

In a second phase it is planned to distribute the remaining the remaining of 1,844,938.6826 ha which, added to the first phase, makes as grand total of 2,589,819.1735 ha.

Source: Author's own calculations on the basis of INRA data

tural and livestock companies form the object of productive activities. Along with documentary evidence, this form the real basis of the law on land ownership. A clarification of land rights in Bolivia, in the context of the *saneamiento* process for rural properties, focused on verifying actual compliance with FES, given that one of the main distorting factors of the 1953 Agrarian Reform was that large areas of land were being owned and yet not put to use. On this basis, it was estimated that large areas of illegally appropriated land, primarily in the Oriente, would be returned to the state ('reversion') for subsequent distribution and redistribution.

However, ten years of agrarian *saneamiento* (1996-2006) had revealed numerous attempts to avoid real and effective verification on the ground, with repeated regulations being approved in contradiction to the provisions of the law itself, along with the corruption of the INRA officials conducting the field work. This, added to the very poor progress made,²⁴ meant that very few lands were identified by the state and, in reality, the manipulated application of the regulations became a mechanism for formalizing the speculative holding of idle lands.

In the first group of reforms,²⁵ Law No. 3545 introduced a number of factors clarifying the concept of FES in relation to rural work that had been overlooked by the previous law, which had thus granted wide powers to the authorities of the time to manipulate its meaning and application. A central factor included here is a reaffirmation that this constitutional requirement must be "...verified in the field, this being the main method of checking." This clarification ensures, above all, that work and investment undertaken in the field, and its demonstration on the ground, form the essential means of proof in this process. The provision is backed up by innumerable cases of photographs of supposed improvements, foot-and-mouth disease vaccination certificates for large numbers of cattle, area management plans etc., all accepted by INRA as valid proof of "work" on properties and serving to consolidate large areas of idle lands.

One of these was the Property Land Use Plan (*Plan de Ordenamiento Predial* - POP), a property regulation and planning tool to which INRA tried to give the category of irrefutable proof of work being undertaken in the field in order to prove Social and Economic Function in the *saneamiento*. This inexplicable interpretation was deduced from a provision introduced in a tax law no less,²⁶ with no consultation, and which INRA began to use indiscriminately in areas outside the control of the rural organisations. Various administrative processes have been initiated to verify the legality of plots consolidated via POP in recent years.

Within the concept of FES, it has also been ensured that clearances undertaken illegally, that is, without the authorization of the relevant authorities, are not valid for the purposes of establishing right of ownership. A correct application of the new regulation could revive the true spirit and meaning of the agrarian *saneamiento*, as was intended in 1996.

All these clarifications were necessary in order to make the reversion instrument effective, a legal tool that will make recovery of lands by the state a reality. Reversion is the legal mechanism in land law by which lands handed over to private individuals via an administrative process can be returned to the state if they demonstrate a failure to comply with the conditions under which the lands were originally granted, and this without payment of any indemnity or compensation. This action is based on the damage caused to the collective interest by an individual's failure to comply with requirements for preservation of the agrarian property. With the INRA Law, this mechanism was activated when failure to pay tax on the agrarian property for two consecutive governments could be demonstrated.²⁷ This having been verified, the law assumed that the land had been "abandoned". It was the most flagrant violation of the principle that inspired the 1953 Agrarian Reform and the Agrarian System provided in the Bolivian Constitution, which establishes that *work* is the condition for respecting, guaranteeing and preserving agrarian property. (arts. 166-169 CPE). Law No. 3545, brings justice to the process once more, now establishing that reversion is activated by "a full or partial failure to comply with Social and Economic Function..."²⁸ in other words, lands that are not being put to good use shall be returned to the state. To this must be added the fact that reversion can be applied *during* the *saneamiento* process.

This was one aspect that hampered discussions with the opposition party representatives in both legislative chambers, who largely represent the interests of the landowning sectors. This issue was on the point of preventing approval of this law as it stood when, in the afternoon of 28 November, prior to authorisation of the law, President Evo Morales announced that if the Senate did not approve the bill that night, he would invoke the Agrarian Revolution by decree, as had been the case in 1953.²⁹ The conflict focused around the amount of time that had to pass after a property had undergone *saneamiento* before INRA, in application of the reversion procedure, could check the existence of work on the plots. Bearing in mind a number of variables, including that of the previous Agrarian Reform Law, a period of two years was stipulated before the state could again verify fulfilment of

Social and Economic Function. This decision sparked heated protest from businessmen, particularly cattle farmers, who saw this time period as a lethal risk to their activity,³⁰ as well as from the social organisations themselves, who wanted a six-month period.

Also the object of conflict was another important amendment to the INRA Law aimed at strengthening the legal channels for *saneamiento* in order to avoid trafficking in illegally obtained lands. It has been established that all transfers of agricultural land must be registered with INRA as a precondition for their validity and registration on the Land Registry (Second Final Provision). During the time the INRA Law was in force, a black market grew up around lands based on completely illegal documents, and this served to fraudulently enrich many supposed businessmen who, in turn, under the effects of the soya boom, transferred these documents to foreign investors. These latter often acquired these documents in complicity with the vendors. Resolving these potential conflicts will no doubt be one of the greatest challenges facing the new authorities.

6.2 Expropriation in order to re-establish indigenous territoriality

In Bolivian land law, expropriation is a legal mechanism by which the state, representing the Bolivian nation and as original owner of the country's lands,³¹ reclaims their control for certain reasons by means of compulsory purchase from private individuals at the going rate. This was the other instrument that had been distorted in the INRA Law. The bill of law that was discussed during the great march of 1996, and which marked the process for approving the INRA Law, anticipated that one reason for expropriation would be to regroup properties, particularly smallholdings (*minifundios*) so that, under special programmes, these lands could be distributed via free provision to those who had no or insufficient land, thus attempting to overcome one of the main problems inherited from the 1953 process.

But the government of the time totally distorted the agreements with the protesting organisations, and expressly provided that lands expropriated for regrouping and redistribution reasons "...can only be awarded via public tender". In other words, sectors that had been historically neglected and submerged in extreme poverty had to go to public auction and compete with the highest bidder in order to gain access to a piece of land. As stated above, however, the slow

progress in this process meant that hardly any allocations actually took place.

Law No. 3545 has revived this important legal tool in order to give it new direction and a new function, creating a new window of opportunity and finally settling the country's historic outstanding debt to its indigenous peoples. According to article 34 of the new law (amendment 59 L. INRA), lands that are expropriated for reasons of regrouping and redistribution "...shall be provided pursuant to law or at the request of the interested party exclusively on behalf of the indigenous and/or native peoples who, neither as a result of the *saneamiento* process for agrarian property nor of the distribution of public lands, have been provided with land in sufficient quality, quantity and geographical location to ensure their physical survival and ethnic reproduction, ...". This represents one of the most important breakthroughs in the whole process of titling indigenous lands. Rather than recognising their historical rights over the areas claimed by indigenous peoples, the *saneamiento* of a number of indigenous territories in Bolivia had instead become a way of formalizing private third party holdings in the area.

Thousands of hectares claimed by the indigenous peoples have remained in the hands of private individuals who, legally or not, consolidated their holdings by encroaching on the longed for recovery of indigenous territory, the focus of their historical demands. In the cases given, urgent attention is required for the captive families and communities of the Guaraní people who, because of the meagre areas titled to them in the *saneamiento* (that put their existence as a people at risk), ended up formalising their status of slavery and dependency.

6.3 Legal status for indigenous and rural workers' organisations

Another area of substantial progress in this law is that which refers to the powers given to the President of the Republic to grant legal status to indigenous and rural workers' organisations.

The state recognises the legal status of indigenous and rural workers' communities and rural worker's associations and unions (art. 171 par. II) and, in line with this, the Law on Popular Participation, Law No. 1551, also more concretely and expressly recognises the different forms of indigenous and rural workers' organisations existing in the country that, as Community-based Territorial Organisations (*Organizaciones Territoriales de Base* - OTB) can gain access to this fundamental right.

These constitutional provisions have been frequently violated by local and regional state bodies,

Table 4 - Results of the saneamiento in the TCOs

Department	TCO	People	Requested	Total Measured	Lands	Titled to TCO
Beni	Joaquiniano	Joaquiniano	345.507,3670	342.201,9367	118.509,8591	168.688,8612
Beni	More	More	81.974,0822	80.919,2389	20.189,1482	60.753,2162
Beni	Cayubaba Pol.1	Cayubaba	651.839,6119	264.009,4952	94.343,6483	
	Cayubaba Pol.2			490.199,9557	311.669,8558	
Beni	Baures	Baures	505.776,0000	447.381,6000	241.041,3597	
Beni	Movima	Movimas	27.219,2264	24.357,7489	18.384,7009	5.969,2338
Beni	Multiétnico I		343.262,4479	314.570,2744	164.736,9780	
Beni	Canichana	Canichana	33.460,1580	49.958,3017	24.738,5649	
Beni	Moxeño Ignaciano	Moxeño Ignaciano	98.368,9039	89.949,4269	41.093,5451	
Santa Cruz	Charagua Norte	Guaraní	227.276,0000	303.700,8300	167.086,0000	70.456,0000
Santa Cruz	Parapitiguasu	Guaraní	109.589,0000	194.171,5200	136.283,0000	
Santa Cruz	Kaaguasu	Guaraní	131.217,5341	133.075,0000	91.635,0000	68.964,0000
Santa Cruz	KAAMI	Guaraní	95.947,1736	148.218,2081	106.629,9366	
Santa Cruz	IUPAGUASU	Guaraní	54.387,8169	59.979,7529	16.198,2025	

Source: Author's own calculations on the basis of INRA data

Photo: Pablo Lasansky



which is where the recognition process begins. Generally, these bodies introduce pretexts of a bureaucratic or formal nature or demand requirements that do not exist within the regulations, and this ends up making it unviable to attain legal status. These apparently trivial motives also conceal the concrete interests of the power sectors that control the municipalities, who are aware that recognition of the legal status of indigenous communities or rural workers' unions is usually followed by a request for a TCO, an area over which expectations are entertained.³²

In an attempt to correct this tendency to disrespect fundamental rights, article 5 of Law No. 3545 gives the President of the Republic the power to grant legal status to indigenous and rural organisations, whether they be national, departmental or regional. This provision was not to the liking of the local municipal associations, nor that of the dominant sectors, in particular, who saw in it a threat to the future model of autonomy and concentration of powers, from which they would continue to practice exclusion and violations of rights. This presidential power is qualified by the provisions of the Fifth Final Provision, which authorizes its exercise once a refusal has been confirmed or there is an unjustified delay on the part of the local authorities, who then lose the authority to rule on the request made to them by the interested parties.

6.4 Indigenous Peoples, beneficiaries of their territories and full legal subjects before the courts

With the provision of the "new" enforceable deeds under the INRA Law system, the problem of correctly establishing the holder of the right had arisen, and even the name given to the territory itself by the people. These problems were the result of inadequacies in the legislation but, particularly, of the academic training of the INRA officials, overly biased towards civil law.

In fact, through these new titles, INRA was conferring rights on the indigenous organisation whose legal status had been authorised when starting the process of *saneamiento* and titling of the TCO. To this was added the fact that the officials were "renaming" the territories after the requesting organisation(s), in violation of the right of the peoples to call their territories by their own traditional names.³³ In a most discerning way, and in line with changes in legal provisions, the new law establishes that the enforceable deeds that are granted in recognition of ownership as a Community Land of Origin (TCO) must record the indigenous or native people requesting it as beneficiary or title holder (Third Final Provision).³⁴

As stated above, the *saneamiento* of indigenous lands is proposed as a mechanism for regularising private rights within the territories so that, once this has been completed, the right of the people claiming the territory can be generated in order to consolidate the remaining plots of land.³⁵ Should the resulting area be insufficient to guarantee the ethnic and cultural reproduction of the people, according to a study undertaken by the state, then a right to compensation outside of their territory shall be granted.³⁶ This provision meant that the whole follow-up to processes before INRA was focused on the results of third-party landholdings, given that their greater or lesser degree of consolidation directly implied a greater or lesser degree of territorial recovery for the peoples in question.

In this context, the follow-up and participation of the organisations in INRA's administrative processes was being allowed, albeit it in a very cautious manner, but when third parties went to court, the National Agrarian Court (TAN) did not recognise the indigenous organisations as forming a procedural part of this. This situation meant that various cases before the Court were taken forward in violation of the requirement for indigenous participation, notwithstanding the fact that whatever decision was adopted would have a direct effect on indigenous rights to their territories.³⁷ More recently, TAN had been facilitating the indigenous peoples' intervention in cases that directly affected them under the concept of *interested third parties*, in application of a Constitutional Court ruling from 2003,³⁸ although this was incidental and did not have a major impact on the case.

The Law has prescribed that "...in legal processes or administrative appeals in which the final decision may affect the legitimate rights of native indigenous peoples and rural workers, these shall be cited or notified, considering them for all legal purposes as a necessary part of said process, with attendant rights and procedural guarantees." (First Final Provision). This legal provision represents a fundamental step towards guaranteeing the effectiveness of the organisations' right of defence in decisions affecting indigenous territorial rights, as an active party and not by way of mere "interested parties" as they had thus far been considered.

6.5 Other important provisions

Finally, important regulations have been introduced and adopted, on the one hand with the aim of reaffirming the national state's administrative supervision in land management, closing the door to autonomist ambitions to gain control over this resource at regional level (art. 14). New powers are also given to the agrarian judges

and the National Agrarian Court (TAN) with regard to forest and water conflicts (art. 21), creating for this purpose a new court within the TAN (Sixth Temporary Provision), in addition to setting some limits to its powers to hear some cases, if they are under INRA supervision, as well as establishing powers in real, personal and mixed actions resulting from agrarian property.

In terms of guaranteeing social control over public action, regulatory provisions have been laid down by which the participation and consultation rights of all sectors of agrarian activity have been widened, attempting to create more transparency in the process. The multisectoral participation of the National Agrarian Commission (CAN) has thus been extended, and consequently that of the departmental commissions also. The National Agricultural and Livestock Confederation (*Confederación Agropecuaria Nacional* - CONFEAGRO) is now joined by the Bolivian Forestry Chamber (*Cámara Forestal de Bolivia* - CFB) and the Bolivian Livestock Farmers Confederation (*Confederación de Ganaderos de Bolivia* - CONGABOL), representing the business sector.

From the social sectors, alongside CIDOB (indigenous), CSTUCB (rural workers) and CSCB (settlers), the National Bartolina Sisa Federation of Women (*Federación Nacional de Mujeres Bartolina Sisa*) and the Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qollasuyo (*Concejo de Ayllus y Markas del Qollasuyo* - CONAMAQ) now form part of the Commission. State participation has also been extended to eight commissions, totalling 16 within all sectors. In terms of its powers, the CAN will now also supervise the processes of reversion and expropriation, exercising control over FES compliance, being able to request the reversion of plots, where appropriate, as well as being the impetus behind policies for the expropriation of land for public use (art. 9 L. 3545).

7. Outstanding issues for the Constituent Assembly

Law N° 3545 represents a substantial step forward in breaking with the historical structures that have de-

Indigenous technicians measuring the boundaries of their territory, with the help of a GPS. Photo: Noel Coronado



terminated the marginalisation of wide sectors of Bolivian society. However, the new agrarian reform law is still a regulation that governs only land ownership, leaving aside aspects that affect agrarian problems as a whole.

This is why the social organisations are addressing the agrarian issue in the Constituent Assembly. An important grouping of the primarily rural sectors of the country³⁹ has been working on an integral proposal for a new Bolivian Constitution in which, under the construct of the new Plurinational State,⁴⁰ a new Land-Territory model is being proposed, focused around a number of aspects:

- a) Life Plans for the management, conservation and use of renewable and non-renewable resources;
- b) Original control and shared administration of natural resources on indigenous territories, plus participation in benefits;
- c) Prior, informed and binding consultation for the conducting of prospecting, exploration or exploitation of natural resources on territories, by means of socio-environmental impact studies and development plans;
- d) Water to be declared a social asset and its access a fundamental human right; it cannot be provided in concessions to private individuals and must rather be administered, handled, managed and controlled by indigenous and rural organisations on the basis of their habits and customs;
- e) The administration and management of Protected Areas must be undertaken by indigenous and rural organisations living in the areas; they cannot be privatized under any title and must promote the development and well-being of the local population;
- f) Registration, protection and regulation of collective intellectual property over the natural, genetic and cultural resources of the indigenous, native nations and peoples and rural population;
- g) Prohibition of the use of transgenic seeds in agricultural production.

On the Land Tenure system⁴¹, the organisations propose the following for the new Constitution:

- a) Original control over the land and territory and shared responsibility with the Plurinational State in the preservation and conservation of the environment; promotion of the different forms of collective-community control;
- b) Responsibility of the Plurinational State and the indigenous autonomies to promote the equitable

distribution of lands, the administration of which shall be undertaken on the basis of their habits and customs;

- c) Prohibition of the *latifundio* and all types of concentration of land in the hands of a few, limits being set for the size of large agricultural and livestock properties;
- d) Recognition of the forms of individual private ownership;
- e) Promotion of forms of collective ownership of land in indigenous and rural communities;
- f) Free provision in agreement with the communities in the area under integral planning and which guarantees the well-being of the beneficiary families and the sustainability of use of the natural resources;
- g) Prohibition on the sale of lands to foreigners or to national companies with foreign capital;
- h) The creation of private protected areas cannot be used as an excuse to concentrate unproductive lands and encourage *latifundios*.
- i) Reaffirmation of the principle that the land must be for those who work it and lands that do not comply with this requirement must revert to the state.

Despite the threats hanging over it due to the complicated mechanisms for the approval of the new Constitution, the Constituent Assembly has finally become a democratic stage on which to debate these and other proposals that will shape the path towards constructing a more democratic Bolivia. This process must necessarily involve a transformation of the agrarian structures, and this is now underway. □

Notes

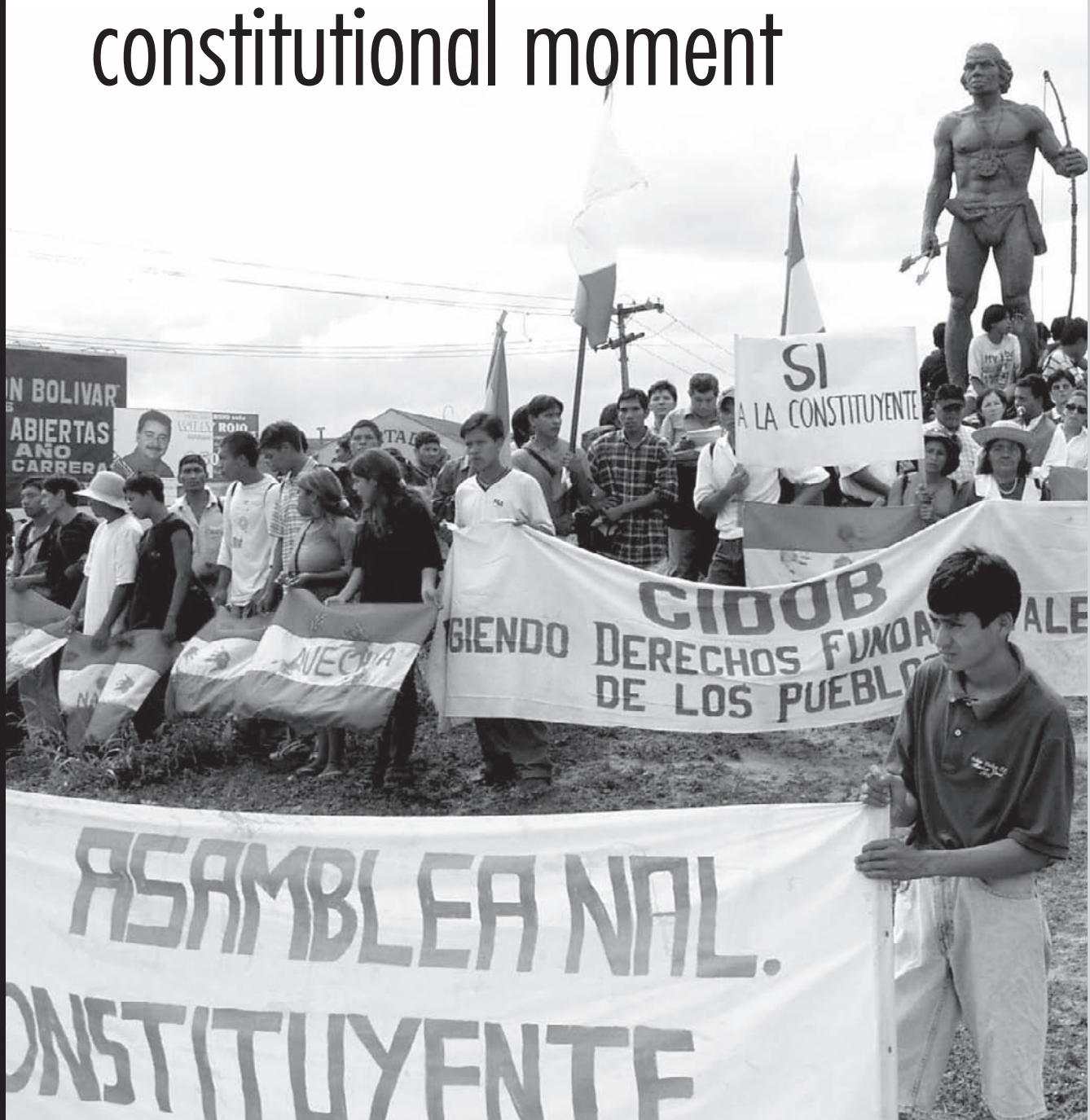
- 1 Almaraz, Alejandro (coordination and editing). 2002: *Tierras Comunitarias de Origen. Saneamiento y titulación. Guía para el patrocinio jurídico*. Santa Cruz: CEJIS – IWGIA,.
- 2 Valdez, Miguel y Juan Carlos Rojas. 2003: "A medio camino: La Reforma Agraria en el Chaco". In *Artículo Primero. Reforma Agraria 50 Años –TCO y Tierras campesinas-* October 2003. pp. 349-364. Santa Cruz: CEJIS.
- 3 The INRA Law recognised three national organisations as representative of the main Bolivian agrarian social sectors, with the authority to participate in the National Agrarian Commission: the *Union of Rural Workers (CSUTCB)*, the *Union of Settlers in Bolivia (CSCB)* and the *Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia (CIDOB)*. Law No. 3545/06 extended this participation, as we shall see further on, to other social and business sectors.
- 4 Article 18 of the INRA Law.
- 5 Article 65 of the INRA Law.
- 6 Almaraz, Alejandro (coordination and editing) *Tierras Comunitarias de Origen ...op.cit p.29*.
- 7 For instance, administrative decisions on the part of INRA on checking the Social and Economic Function (FES) of the lands, invalidities of agrarian processes, techniques on preparing meas-

- urements and land registry. On identification of lands presumed public for logging (Res. Adm. INRA 098/99). On forest registration for companies (D.S. 27024 de 2003), on rates of *saneamiento* (D.S. 27165), setting and payment of prices for medium and large land allocations (with interminable deadlines for their fulfilment), etc.
- 8 In Gran Chaco Province, Tarija Department.
 - 9 See *Artículo Primero*. Legal and social discussion journal N° 10 , 2001. Santa Cruz: CEJIS.
 - 10 This refers to demands made by those sectors that led the “gas war” and who focused their demands on amendments to the regulatory framework for hydrocarbons, a gas referendum and the organisation of a Constituent Assembly.
 - 11 These are groups that represent the interests of professional institutions and sectors, generally business groups.
 - 12 On 25 January 2005, a great “civic” demonstration took place in Santa Cruz de la Sierra demanding initiation of an institutional reform process to transform the country into a state based around autonomous departments.
 - 13 Supreme Decree Nos. 28153 (National Agricultural and Rural Development Strategy – ENDAR), 28159 (Lands for captive Guaraní families and communities in the Chaco), 28160 (Land Market), 28140 (Conversion of forest concessions into private property), 28148 (Amendment to the regulations governing the INRA Law). These were included within the 52 decrees passed on 17 May 2005 under the title of “Economic and Social Programme – Plan Bolivia for Production and Solidarity”. GACETA OFICIAL DE BOLIVIA Special Edition N° 0071, 17 May 2005.
 - 14 Supreme Decree 28148 dated 17 May 2005.
 - 15 As President of the Supreme Court of Justice, he was the constitutional successor to Carlos Mesa following this latter’s resignation in June 2005. The social sectors rejected the possibility of either the president of the Senate or of the Chamber of Deputies taking over, given their links with the traditional political system.
 - 16 Tamburini, Leonardo “Tendencias en el proceso agrario boliviano”. In *El Deber*, Santa Cruz, 14 December 2005.
 - 17 Indigenous Multiethnic Territory, situated in the Amazonian departments of Beni and Pando.
 - 18 The seven decrees are Nos. **28732** (abrogation of S.D. 28140), **28733** (on distribution of state lands), **28734** (restricting the scope of S.D. 28160 to land purchases in only three municipalities), **28735** (tolerance in establishing allocation prices), **28736** (enabling unrestricted access to women to hold title to their land as “heads of families”), **28737** (rules governing the hiring of INRA staff), **28738** (repeal of S.D. 28148 on the deconcentration of INRA and outsourcing of agrarian property).
 - 19 Vice-ministry of Lands. 2006: *7 surcos abiertos en la revolución agraria*. July 2006. p. 2.
 - 20 S.D. 28733 of 2 June 2006.
 - 21 The power structures of the Oriente had built a skilled rhetoric around the risk of devastation that the tropical and sub-tropical forests would be subjected to if they were given as collective titles to indigenous peoples and rural workers. They maintained that the way to protect and care for these forests was to allocate them as concessions to national or international companies on 40-year renewable contracts for their commercial exploitation.
 - 22 Vice-ministry of Lands. *Continúa la siembra de la “Revolución Agraria” ¿Qué busca el Proyecto de Ley de Modificaciones a la Ley INRA de Reconducción Comunitaria de la Reforma Agraria?* 14 *Respuestas a los principales problemas de la tenencia de la tierra en Bolivia*. Offprint August 2006, p 2.
 - 23 The average property may cover an area, in the eastern plains and sub-tropical zones, of 501 to 2,500 hectares in size. An agricultural/livestock company is recognised in the 2,501 to 50,000 hectare band. (Tenth Final Provision INRA Law).
 - 24 According to official data from INRA, a little over 10% of the lands were regularised with titles. More than 60% have still not been inspected.
 - 25 Article 2 L. No. 3545.
 - 26 Law 2493 of August 2003, which amended the national tax system Law No. 843.
 - 27 Article 52 L. 1715.
 - 28 Article 2 of Law No. 3545.
 - 29 Presidential speech in the Plaza de los Héroes, La Paz, on the arrival of the indigenous and rural organisations that organised the “March for the Community Renewal of the Agrarian Reform”.
 - 30 The opposition withdrew all its representatives from the Senate, leaving the law pending at its final stage of approval, in response to the demand of large landowners, particularly in the Oriente, that the period for reversion should be 5 years.
 - 31 Article 165 of the Political Constitution of Bolivia.
 - 32 Tamburini, Leonardo. 2006: “*Proceso de Saneamiento y Titulación de Tierras Comunitarias de Origen: La experiencia boliviana sobre reconocimiento y formalización de derechos territoriales indígenas*”. Speech given at the International Conference “Experiencias comparativas sobre la demarcación de tierras/territorios indígenas”, Caracas, July 2006.
 - 33 The most recent case is that of the Lomerío TCO, of the Chiquitano people, which has been titled to the *Central Indígena de Comunidades Originarias de Lomerío* (CICOL), under the name of “CICOL TCO”.
 - 34 This proposal was made by the technical team of the protesting social organisations, who were involved in the whole discussion process around the Law, and who were supported in this by Pedro García Hierro, a lawyer/anthropologist specialised in indigenous law, whom we thank for the guidance he gave us and which was of great use in writing this article.
 - 35 Article 72 par. II and Third Temporary Provision, Law No. 1715.
 - 36 As can be seen above, expropriation from third parties with legal rights within the territories has practically abolished compensation in land for indigenous peoples.
 - 37 Tamburini, Leonardo: “Monte Verde en la recta final” en *Artículo Primero* No. 18, CEJIS Santa Cruz 2007 (forthcoming).
 - 38 Constitutional Ruling N° 1350R, dated 16 September 2003.
 - 39 Known as the “Unity Pact” and made up of CIDOB, CSUTCB, CSCB, Federación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas “Bartolina Sisa”, Movimiento Sin Tierra de Bolivia (MST-B), the Asamblea del Pueblo Guaraní (APG), the Coordinadora de Pueblos Étnicos de Santa Cruz (CPESC), the Central de Pueblos Étnicos Mojeños del Beni (CPEM-B) and CONAMAQ.
 - 40 The Plurinational State, according to the Unity Pact organisations, “...is a model of political organisation for the decolonisation of our nations and peoples, reaffirming, recovering and strengthening our territorial autonomy, in order to achieve a full life, to live well, with a supportive vision, and in this way to be the engines of unity and social well-being for all Bolivians, guaranteeing full exercise of all rights.” *Propuesta para una Nueva Constitución Política del Estado*, Asamblea Nacional de Organizaciones Indígenas, Originarias, Campesinas y de Colonizadores de Bolivia. Sucre, 5 August 2006, p. 3.
 - 41 *Propuesta para una Nueva Constitución Política del Estado*, op. cit. p. 12.

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Carlos Romero Bonifaz

Constituent Assembly: Bolivia's third constitutional moment



Collective memory

In 1985, an orthodox neoliberal development model was implemented in Bolivia, accompanied by repressive measures aimed at its consolidation. Three generations of neoliberal reforms could be distinguished. The first was based on monetary adjustment, fiscal reform, closure of the state mines, the massive lay-off of workers, market and trade liberalization, plus a free market for labour. The “second generation” reforms had as their central focus the “capitalization” (privatization) of the largest public companies: the National Electricity Company (ENDE), the National Telecommunications Company (ENTEL), the National Railways (ENFE), the airline *Lloyd Aéreo Boliviano* (LAB), the oil company *Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos* (YPFB) and the metallurgy company *Empresa Metalúrgica Vinto*.

This capitalization process consisted of attracting “strategic partners” (private companies), chosen by international public tender according to their capital contribution, with the Bolivian state transferring the assets of these companies to all people of legal age as of 31 December 1995. The shares, along with worker contributions, were deposited in a pension fund to be placed on the capitals market. In turn, the Bolivian state took over the liabilities of these companies, which caused a growing fiscal deficit.

The “third generation” of reforms reorganised the structure of the state. The 1994 constitutional reform declared the state’s ethnically diverse nature, stipulated that one half of deputies were to be elected in geographical constituencies (without, however, extending the mechanisms for civic participation) and brought in reforms of the judiciary, with the creation of the Constitutional Court, the Council of the Judiciary and the Ombudsman, without – however - affecting its subordination to the political system. Popular participation, or municipal administrative decentralization, while incorporating rural and urban communities into local public management, in effect represented an attempt to institutionalize social fragmentation. The 1996 reform of agrarian legislation was aimed at clarifying agrarian rights, given the innumerable irregularities that had been denounced, and at prioritizing the titling of collective lands for indigenous peoples and small farmer communities; however, it failed to fulfil either of these tasks successfully.

The rigid application of neoliberal measures led to all-round crisis in the country. Most frustrating for Bolivians was the flight of the economic surplus created through oil and gas exploitation: of 1,500 million dollars in annual profit, the oil companies transferred

an average of only 160 million to the State Treasury. The conditions of the concessions and the fact that the oil companies’ profits were tax credited in their countries of origin explain this outflow of surplus.

At the same time, the Bolivian population were struggling under difficult living and working conditions; only 24% of the population was directly linked into the modern economy, the Gini index of inequality was 60,¹ and the country was 115th out of 177 countries on the human development index. The worst impacts of the crisis were felt in rural areas, where 9 out of every 10 people were living below the poverty line and, of these, 6 were living in extreme poverty (see Romero, “*El proceso constituyente boliviano*” Santa Cruz-Bolivia, 2005: 49-52). The state’s commitment to addressing the indigenous peoples’ and small farmers’ demands for land did not materialise in the way these sectors had hoped.

To the above picture must be added the incredible levels of corruption that characterized the political system, and against which the people finally reacted. This protest was spearheaded by the collective action of the social movements, based around a revival of their indigenous identity. The scenario was one of real indigenous rebellion, and this was the driving force behind the most significant social protests in defence of natural resources; land and territory; gas nationalization and the organising and holding of a Constituent Assembly that would enable new rules for collective coexistence to be agreed, along with an organisational restructuring of the state by democratising the distribution of public power.

The Constituent Assembly

Elections were held for the Constituent Assembly on 2 July 2006. These were preceded by a parliamentary agreement that also contemplated the holding of a binding referendum on recognition of the departmental autonomies promoted by the Santa Cruz² Civic Committee, a corporate body of local power groups against the process of change taking place in the country. Two hundred and fifty-five constituent members were elected; 45 in the 9 departmental constituencies and 210 in 70 local constituencies. The people’s vote was focused around two political forces: the Movement to Socialism (MAS) of the current president, Evo Morales, with 142 members, and the Social Democratic Power (PODEMOS) grouping of liberal Jorge Quiroga, with 60 members. The remaining 53 were divided between 14 political parties.

The indigenous organizations in the Lowlands have been one of the main promoters of the Constituent Assembly. Photo: IWGLA archive

In terms of the departmental autonomies, 5 out of 9 departments voted NO with 56.2% of the vote, and 4 departments voted YES with 43.8% of the vote.

Six months after the Constituent Assembly was established, and having undergone a period of great complexity and tension, the organisational aspects of this momentous event have at last been decided and expressed in general operating rules. Of these, three central themes can be highlighted: the declaration of the “sovereign” (*originario*) nature of the Constituent Assembly; the structure of its thematic committees; and the procedure for deliberations and the decision-making process.

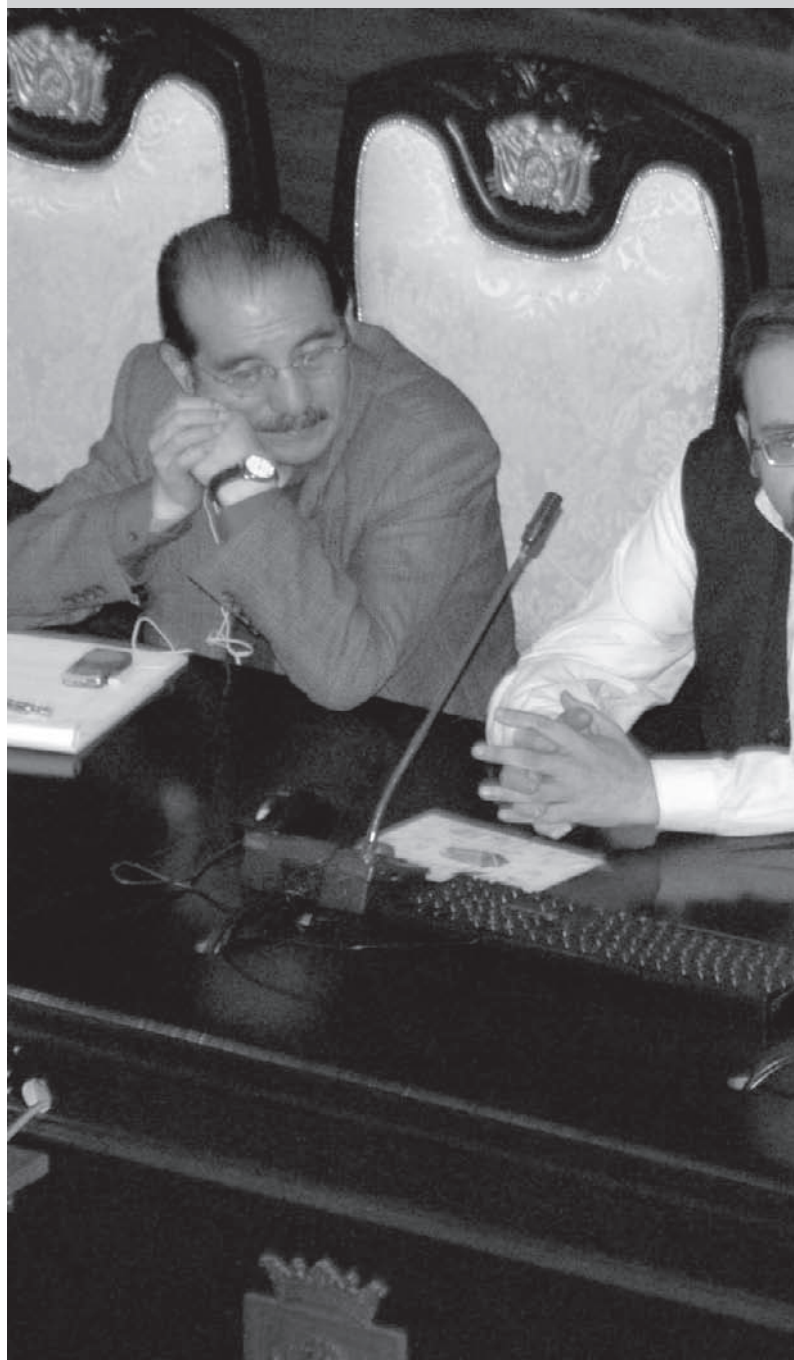
The declaration of the “sovereign” nature of the Constituent Assembly was the cause of intense debate and dispute with opposing conservative positions, which claimed that its power was derivative. Given the depth of the state crisis and the need for structural transformation to overcome it, the current historical moment that the country is going through can be described as the third constitutional moment in its republican history.³ Two reasons underscore this: the Bolivian people’s irrevocable desire to recover ownership of their natural resources and control of their economic surplus, thus meaning that the prevailing economic conditions need to be re-defined, and the re-shaping of the socio-political power block, with the indigenous peoples as the driving force behind this. Consequently, the declaration of the Assembly’s sovereign nature reaffirms the transformatory vocation of the constituent process and allocates it the task of undertaking an in-depth reorganisation of power, affecting privileges and traditional strategic interests. This is an important conquest, and one that is included in the first article of its general regulations.⁴

Another issue that underscored the debate within the Assembly during these first months was the structure of the thematic committees, given that their shape would directly influence the shape of the new Bolivian state. Four fundamental themes run through the structure of the committees: country vision, structure of public power, land-territory and natural resources, and development model. The aim of “country vision” is to define the philosophical principles that will give theoretical and ideological cohesion to the structure of the new state, a proposal resisted by conservative sectors who deny the indigenous peoples their status of collective subjects.

From the social movements’ point of view, the functional and territorial structure of public power must be organised on the basis of plurinational social power, whereas for the conservative sectors it

has to reproduce liberal patterns, complemented by a system of departmental autonomies that will enable the departments to wrest power over natural resource management from traditional local power structures .

There is a need to re-establish native territoriality and integrated natural resource management that is in line with the holistic world vision of the indigenous peoples in the face of the attempts at fragmentationist and privatist reproduction promoted by the conservative sectors. There is also a need to define a new development model that links economic, social and environmental dimensions around economic sovereignty and a redistribution of wealth, as op-



posed to the neoliberal and primary export models supported by the conservative elites.

In terms of the deliberation and voting procedure, two contradictions arose. Firstly, whether discussions should be conducted in three stages, broad, detailed and revised, as proposed by the conservative sectors as a delaying tactic, or whether the revision stage should be delegated to an Assembly committee, as recommended by the MAS. Secondly, regarding the voting system, whether all issues should be approved by a two-thirds majority, as put forward by the conservative sectors, or whether there should be a mixed system, as suggested in the MAS's proposal, whereby non-controversial issues would be approved by an absolute majority and controversial issues by a two-

thirds majority. In essence, the dispute was between those who wanted to bring about in-depth changes to the structure of the state and those who wanted to restrict the scope of the constituent process. The MAS and other progressive forces would not be able to achieve a two-thirds majority alone, and so they would be forced to make concessions to the conservative sectors, a possibility that would be of far less consequence if only controversial issues had to form the object of political agreement.

The solution to this controversy was finally proposed by the MAS itself, establishing that it would accept the two-thirds system for all issues on condition that a date of 2 July 2007 (one year after the Constituent Assembly elections) was set as a deadline

Leader Silvia Lazarte is responsible for the Assembly's presidency. Photo: Max Toranzo



for approval of the new Political Constitution, such that any issues not resolved by this date would have to be settled by the people in a referendum.

Prospects

The MAS government has described this process as a cultural-democratic revolution. Democratic because the path of transformation is a peaceful and agreed one, subject to the rules of the democratic system. Cultural because the social subjects that are promoting and leading the social change are the indigenous peoples, projecting their cultural reference points onto an integral vision of the country.

A democratic revolution occurs when the power factors are divided and fighting amongst themselves to construct a new hegemony, such that they promote the formation of constantly changing social forces. This makes the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly conditional upon contextual factors. The other feature that distinguishes the Bolivian constituent process is that the social players leading the change come from family units provided with rudimentary means of production in economic systems of simple mercantile reproduction, joined together into collective structures. This is why they do not support the radical overthrow of the current system of ownership of the means of production, unlike classic socialist revolutionaries.

From this perspective, the constitutional dynamic will be subject to the external rhythm of the power factors, and so it will constantly need to adapt its strategies to the possibilities arising in this context. Scenarios may include mobilisation, polarization or harmonization, or a cyclical combination of all three. The main struggles will be around the following issues:

- Defining a plurinational and multicultural state model as opposed to reproducing its current mono-organisational and monocultural liberal nature.
- Creating new constructs of citizenship, including those of a collective nature, and defining a democratic system of government with participatory emphasis, as opposed to support for the notion of individual citizenship and restricted popular participation in the management of public affairs.
- Creating the functional and territorial structure of public power based on plurinational social power as opposed to reproducing delegated and representative liberal institutionality.

- Defining subnational levels of government that recognise the native-indigenous cultural dimension as opposed to restricting political decentralisation to departmental units, to which other organisational expressions are subordinate.
- Resolving the regional issue through the gradual formation of new politico-administrative entities as opposed to respecting the framework of departments as linking units.
- Reconstructing native-indigenous territoriality, legally integrating the land with natural resources, as opposed to maintaining the current disaggregated structure of land and natural resources.
- Launching a new integrated natural resource management model as opposed to reproducing the privatist and fragmentationist system.
- Regulation and planning of the economy by the state in order to recover control over the surplus, diversify production, create value added, control trade and equitably redistribute wealth as opposed to reproducing the current model of primary export enclaves with weak links to the country's other economic systems.
- Recovery of the integral nature of the agrarian reform, with a redistributive criterion for agrarian property and the launch of a new agrarian structure that includes indigenous territoriality as one of its linking nuclei as opposed to the preservation of the current concentrated structure of land ownership in which the large ranches in the east of the country and the micro farms in the Andean and sub-Andean regions form the dominant units of agrarian structure. □

Notes

- 1 A Gini index of 0 represents perfect economic equality, and 100 perfect inequality. It is named after the statistician who developed it. -Ed.
- 2 Santa Cruz is the most economically important department in Bolivia, and contributes approximately 600 million dollars a year through logging, mining and oil/gas; it coordinates large-scale trade and mobilises financial capital and functional services for its main economic components. However, it is also home to the main power groups opposed to the changes being promoted by the social movements, given the strategic alliances they maintain with transnational companies. They are corporately represented by the *Comité Cívico Pro Santa Cruz*.
- 3 We identify the previous two constitutional moments as being firstly the federal war that took place at the end of the 19th century and which resulted in a change in the seat of political power from Sucre to La Paz along with the re-establishment of a primary export economy based on mining as the focus of the economic structure, with the great mining companies ("tin

barons”) allied with the landowners as the socio-political power nucleus.

The second constitutional moment was the 1951 National Revolution, the pillars of which were the nationalization of the mines and agrarian reform, a process that ended in new economic relations organised around direct state intervention in the main strategic sectors and the displacement of the large mining companies and landowners from the socio-political power block, being temporarily replaced by an alliance between the middle and working classes, until a dominant business sector was later re-established, together with bad oligarchic habits.

- 4 “The Constituent Assembly is sovereign, because it stems from a desire for change on the part of the people, who hold the Sovereignty of the Nation. The Constituent Assembly is an extraor-

dinary political event emerging from the crisis of the state, evolving from social struggle and established by popular mandate....It is legitimately placed above the constituted power. The Constituent Assembly has full powers to draft the new constitutional text and has as its mandate that of transforming and building a new Bolivian State” (General Regulations of the Constituent Assembly, Official Gazette, 2007).

Carlos Romero Bonifaz, researcher on indigenous issues and Movement to Socialism (MAS) member of the Constituent Assembly for the department of Santa Cruz.

Session of the Constituent Assembly. Photo: Max Toranzo, 2006





Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui

An indigenous commodity and its paradoxes

The coca leaf in a globalised world

In October 2003, a tumultuous indigenous and popular uprising brought down the government of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, following a massacre that cut short the lives of 67 people in El Alto and the provinces of La Paz.¹ The so-called “gas war” was one of the climaxes of a process of popular protest 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 different demands expressed during these demonstrations gelled around a few key issues: defence or recovery of the natural resources threatened or sold off in the wave of privatisations that took place during the 1990s, democratization of the exclusive and racist political structures inherited from colonial times, and state sovereignty over public policy, including with regard to coca. The magnitude of the demands that had accumulated over two decades of frustrating neoliberal reforms resulted in what was known as the “October agenda”: an in-depth restructuring or “re-establishment of the country” that culminated in the unanimous call for a Constituent Assembly. This was finally established in mid-2006.²

The broad insurgent, indigenous and popular movement that had been fermenting over these years of intense activity was led by various sectors of indigenous rural workers, organised either under the banner of the unions (CSUTCB, coca growers, “*bartolinas*”) or under revived ancestral methods of ethnic organisation (CONAMAQ, CIDOB).³ These social organisations, along with the mining cooperatives, still had to overthrow other presidents or potential presidents before managing, in June 2005, to get general elections called for December of that year. In a result that surpassed even the expectations of the winners themselves, the Aymara coca grower Evo Morales thus became the first indigenous president in the Americas, and the Movement to Socialism (MAS) the

first political group to win by an absolute majority (53.7% of the vote), bringing to an end a more than 20-year-long cycle of murky parliamentary agreements and carve-ups of the state apparatus between the *criollo* parties of neoliberal and populist persuasion. All these factors contributed to enshrouding the inaugural ceremonies (21-22 January 2006) in an unprecedented aura of expectation and cultural shock.

The life history of coca leaf

Despite the expressions of public approval and unusual levels of coverage in the international mass media, the fact that a coca growers’ leader had taken the reins of the nation, someone who for almost two decades had headed forceful actions, blockades and protest marches, introduced a thorn of mistrust and fear into the conservative circles of national and international opinion. Different press articles in the United States noted with concern that the situation in Bolivia was a triumph of “forces that run counter to the free market” and hence to Western representative democracy. The idea that the rural and urban indigenous populations, who have played a leading role in recent Bolivian protests, are “archaic” or “backward” - that is, resistant to the disciplines of the modern market, in a kind of cultural and racial atavism - is deeply rooted in the elites, both in our country and in the developed world, and forms part of a common understanding that has only recently begun to be questioned. Paradoxically, one of the main bases of the new government’s support lies in the coca producing sectors, one of whose main demands has been, since the 1980s, a free market for coca leaf, as a more effective way of facing up to the illegal economy than repression. This demand is not new, and harks back to the times of the large coca-growing estates and communities, linked to a broad inter-regional and cross-border market for

coca. (see Soux 1993, Walger [1917] 2003, Rivera 2003).

Since colonial times – the time of the first globalization -, this large internal market articulated around 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 terms used in the Andes in the 16th century to denote this space: the “*trajín*” and its protagonists, the “*trajinantes*”, 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 and cultural resistance and this helps us to understand the kinds of historical forces that are at play behind the modern coca growers’ behaviour. The continuing mercantile practices around the production, distribution and consumption of coca leaf has also resulted in a longstanding coordination between mining-trading-coca growing that has demonstrated a noteworthy continuity to this very day, focused around the urban-mining network of Potosí-Oruro-Siglo XX-Huanuni, etc. On the basis of these hubs, the market for coca leaf or *akhulliku* in the 19th century stretched as far as Tucumán in the north of Argentina and the saltpetre deposits and mines of northern Chile – although this market seems to have started much earlier, during the silver boom of the eighteenth century.

In this article, I will consider some of the implications of the “life history” of coca leaf as an indigenous commodity (cf. Appadurai [1986] 2000), the course of which reveals to us the conspiracies of power and the corporate interests that have been constructed in order to block the scope and potential of this market, within the context of the anti-drugs war. To understand this process, we have to go back to the early 20th century when a change took place from what Ruggiero Romano called the false equation of good coca = good cocaine, to the equally false equation that bad cocaine = bad coca (Romano 1982). The interests of the empire which, at the same time, involve the interests of the large pharmaceutical companies, have managed to assemble an apparatus of violent repression of coca, under the abstract and hypothetical argument of defending public health in the consumer countries.⁴ At the other end of the spectrum, the coca producers are resisting the many forms of this unequal and unsuccessful war. The coca growers, along with the distributors and consumers, are actors in and protagonists of Bolivian indigenous modernity, established on the internal market, which forms the stage of empowerment processes,

historical-cultural initiative (*agency*) and decolonisation. Given that the majority of the population form a part of this market, resistance is not limited to eradication in coca producing areas but also extends to the prohibitive controls that weigh on the market and the stigma associated with consumption.

The burden of this dispute is an issue of conflict for the current government, and it must be understood in all its historic depth. I will therefore begin by describing the history of prohibition, and its colonial logic of market destruction and blocking of domestic industrial potential for the benefit of outsiders. I will then consider the recent history of the coca growers’ struggle, which has resulted in the construction of a political project of hegemonic cultural force that has turned the sectoral and individual demands of the coca growers into the central focus of a “re-establishment of the country” and a “decolonisation of society” that has been taken up as valid for the whole Bolivian population.

In Bolivia, the existence of a large number of lawful consumers and coca’s high value as a symbol of national identity and pride are both factors that contribute to an opening up of space for unprecedented sovereign policies and practices. In turn, insofar as these practices involve the act of consuming coca, this political phenomenon becomes an economic strength by boosting the rural coca growing economies and consolidating an expansive and stratified internal market. Given that North American pressure demands constant intervention, the prohibition of legal markets and the confiscation of increasing amounts of coca leaf, the producers, traders and consumers are facing up to the rigidity of Law 1008 and the restrictions of the applicable Regulation on Marketing, and developing strategies by which to evade or resist compliance. In turn, the government is seeking to gain time and resist the pressures of the empire, without causing a total breakdown that would lead to sanctions and reprisals. Yet again, social practice and state policy are in dangerous contradiction with current agreements and laws.

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 boom in European medical science and analytical chemistry in the 19th century. Forerunners to the current biopiracy initiatives of the large seed, food and medicinal plant transnationals, the European and US

medical companies soon entered into fierce commercial competition for control of the market for different products derived from coca.

From 1860 on, with the crystallization of cocaine and with the rapid spread of its use as an anaesthetic, both this and coca became global commodities.⁵ As with cinchona, companies such as the US-based Parke-Davis and Merck in Germany very quickly rushed to the Andes to identify cheap sources of supply and to gather seeds from the different coca varieties in order to export them to their overseas colonies. Apart from the “German connection” which, in Peru, managed to create a raw material-producing economy subordinate to the industrial apparatus, the main body of world coca leaf production was focused on the colonial possessions of Holland in Indonesia,⁶ the United Kingdom in Ceylon and Nigeria, and Japan in Taiwan, Iwo Jima and Okinawa. From this perspective, the only Andean country that could compete on the world market, with its own pharmaceutical industry - albeit rudimentary - was Peru, which directly sold the paste base made in factories in Lima, Huánuco and the Monzón valley to the Merck laboratories in Germany, Parke Davis in the USA and others in Japan, UK and Switzerland (Spillane, 1999: 22-30). These, in turn, refined the product to sell it in crystal form as cocaine hydrochloride on 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, saltpetre, tin and copper markets and to the dynamic employment world and urban and rural ritual. Referring to this at the beginning of the 20th century, in his doctoral thesis presented in Berlin in 1917, Theodor Walger said: “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” (Walger, [1917] 2003: 154-155).

It can thus be said that the “heavy” pharmaceuticals industry, which specialised in extracting crystallised cocaine from the leaf, was based on the colonial and oligarchic economies of Asia and Peru, insofar as 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 co-ordinated by an itinerant Chola population who satisfied the indigenous and Chola demand for the *akhulliku* habit and other uses of the leaf in its natural state.

But on a global scale, another sector that was demanding coca leaf, in competition with 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. The science and art of using plants or parts of plants as nutritional or medicinal supplements, the so-called medicinal plant or pharmacognosy industry, had many followers in the 19th century world. And, given the Chinese presence throughout Southeast Asia, it was not strange that the inclusion of *ku-ka* in their pharmacopoeia was related to the boom in “Java coca” which, not by chance, was being exported to Europe in metal containers known as “Chinese boxes” (Reens, [1919] 2003). The natural preparations - soaking coca in alcohol or wine - enjoyed particular popularity, as demonstrated in the doctoral thesis of Emma Reens, who recorded the inclusion of herbal medicinal coca preparations in the *Codex* or pharmacopoeia of France, the United States, Great Britain, Spain, Switzerland, Holland and Italy. If we add *akhulliku* to this, along with the use of coca as a herbal remedy in the producer countries themselves, we see that between 1860 and 1940 the world market provided a considerable (although difficult to quantify) demand for other uses of coca leaf, in addition to the pharmaceutical cocaine industry.

The United States was undoubtedly the most enthusiastic market for all these innovations. In this context, the intense competition for the public’s favour led the industry as a whole to create the modern concept of the “advertising campaign”. This has been credited to the Corsican doctor, Angelo Mariani, whose “Album” records the great appreciation that celebrities from the highest echelons of politics, art and literature had for his ‘wine’, including Popes Leon XIII and Pious X (cf Andrews and Solomon 1975:243-246). At first – according to research quoted by Spillane -, the manufacturers of these coca leaf tonics, energy drinks, syrups, tinctures and elixirs emphasised the difference between the natural by-products of the whole leaf and those preparations that contained pure cocaine from the laboratory. Soon after, competition became fiercer and some companies began to rely on addiction as a market principle (just as tobacco transnationals do today). Preparations appeared with a high content of pure cocaine (the famous cures for catarrh and nasal congestion) and these increased the number of cases of abuse, giving rise to large-scale medical scandals (Spillane 1999, Kennedy 1985). Alongside this, the drinks and soft drinks companies were carving out

Various indigenous rural sectors were actively involved in the broad insurgency movement. Photo: Tony Suárez





an ever larger market, free from restrictions and controls, and 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, the star product of *Ángelo Mariani*, based on a syrup of natural coca leaf soaked in grape wine, which enjoyed great popularity in the United States until eclipsed by Coca-Cola who, on the back of US prohibition, offered a “temperance drink” and wiped Mariani off the map.⁷ 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: “flavouring”.

The medical scandals and the growing association of cocaine abuse with the coloured population led to a fundamentalist hysteria that effectively banned cocaine by means of the Harrison Narcotics Act of 1914, although its impact outside of the United States was only relative. Even in the 1930s in Peru, they were still openly discussing the need to modernise the cocaine industry and promote a state monopoly for coca, something that eventually became a reality in the 1950s with the establishment of the National Coca Company, ENACO (Gootenberg 1999: 56-72). The context of North American hegemony during the Second World War (1939-1945) and the decades of the “Cold War” that followed effectively put an end to the German and Japanese cocaine industries and established the basis for the era of synthetic cocaine, limiting the monopoly of legal use of coca leaf to Coca-Cola. “Merchandise No. 5”, a vegetable extract that continues to form part of the “secret formula” of this popular soft drink is made out of coca from Trujillo (Peru), where it still exercises a virtual monopsony.

In 1949, in the midst of the controversy between modernist defenders of industrial cocaine (Peru), traditionalist defenders of *akhulliku* (Bolivia) and detractors of both (the pro-North American elites in both countries), an official visit took place to Peru and Bolivia on the part of the Coca Leaf Study Commission, whose report was published in 1950 (see Rivera 2003: 76-83). Although, by then, the legal and illegal use of cocaine had virtually disappeared in the United States, the hygienistic and modernising

vision of the Commission and the interests created by the pharmaceutical companies represented by Howard B. Fonda, its President, explains how it was that a document so plagued by prejudices, unfounded speculation and third-hand sources managed to pass for “science”. The report links the use of coca with malnutrition and poverty, states that coca substitutes food products, poisons the body and leads to a lack of concentration at work. It ends up rejecting the fact that coca serves to combat fatigue, tiredness and weakness as an unfounded “belief”.

It is not so incredible that this report was ratified in 1952 as a report of the WHO’s Committee of Experts. After all, it was a boom era for “scientific” medicine, hygienism and notions of progress equating to adopting the *American way of life*. What is outrageous is that this report continued to remain in force until 2007 – in an era of *Ayurveda*, acupuncture, *new age* consumption – and that it had been ratified on more than one occasion by the World Health Organisation (1982, 1992), without even the WHO’s own 1995 study having served to amend this erroneous and prejudiced position. The 1950 UN document, the distortions and myths of which Philip O. Emafo, President of the International Narcotics Control Board - INCB (*La Prensa*, 3-03-07), ended up repeating to discredit Evo Morales’ coca policy, continues to be the only official UN basis for having coca leaf included on Schedule 1 of Prohibited Substances of the 1961 Single Convention. Whilst this document remains in force, not only cocaine but also coca leaf will be considered as drugs and millions of consumers in the Andean republics -- including the President of Bolivia -- will be officially described as “drug addicts”.

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 document reflects the new sensibilities of this decade, in which important processes of ethnic self-affirmation had occurred and various organisations had emerged to defend indigenous cultural rights. 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”.

That same mood of residual tolerance became clear in Law 1008, promulgated that same year to determine the long-term relationship of state control

and prohibition of coca and its markets, along with other “controlled substances”. Law 1008 establishes an area of 12,000 hectares as “legal”, located in some provinces of La Paz and in the region of Vandiola in Cochabamba. This demarcation was based on anthropological and statistical research undertaken by Carter and Mamani (1986), whose national-level survey excluded the capital cities, with the exception of the mining capitals of Oruro and Potosí. Despite this bias, all coca farms situated outside of this demarcated area were considered surplus. The exact definition of Article 10 is “surpluses in transition”, which craftily indicates that sooner or later they will be illegal farms. It was precisely in El Chapare and other provinces of the Cochabamba tropics that the “drugs war” reached its most violent stage when they tried to put an end to this transition phase and pursue the goal of “zero coca”. The first version of this project was known as the “Zero Option” and took place, in the midst of great violence, from 1994 to 1997 during the government of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada and Víctor Hugo Cárdenas. In order to forcibly eradicate coca farms, the government militarised the Cochabamba tropics, decreed a state of emergency and conducted mass arrests, raids and murders. And yet net eradication was no more than 500 hectares per year because the coca growers’ strategy was to replant coca in ever more remote and inaccessible areas.

Bánzer’s rise to power in 1997 led to an unprecedented escalation of the militarisation and violence, which had a knock-on effect at 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 document was preceded by a speech by the then Secretary-General Kofi Annan who highlighted – without recognising it – the absolute failure of the war on drugs, with its emphasis on reducing supply. Between 1988 and 1998, the volume of cocaine on the market and the number of its consumers grew in a stable, albeit moderate, form. But this did not mean the drugs “problem” was any the less because, over that same period, there were thirty million new consumers of methamphetamines, easily produced “designer” drugs whose supply was almost entirely located in the consumer countries themselves. In terms of the production of raw material for the illegal economy, the drastic reduction of coca farms in Bolivia was very soon amply compensated by an increase in crops in Colombia, which came to occupy first place in terms of size of area cultivated, beating even Peru.⁸

General Bánzer’s government, in alliance with the MIR, launched the *Plan Dignidad* at the start of

1998. This envisaged a halt to “voluntary and compensated” eradication and a move to forced eradication without compensation, its action being focused on the Cochabamba tropics (Supreme Decree 24963 of the Republic of Bolivia, undated: 496-501). According to official information published by the Department of Coca Reconversion, the combined forces of the army and the environmental police managed to eradicate 7,512 has. in 1997, 11,621 in 1998, 16,999 in 1999 and 7,953 in 2000 (DIRECO 2002: 7). At the start of 2001, General Bánzer celebrated reaching the goal of “Zero Coca” in El Chapare and official declarations were issued stating that the coca-growing area in that region had fallen to only 600 hectares in 2000. In June 2001, the Joint Task Force entered Asunta, in South Yungas, to begin forced eradication in the heart of the legal production zone (see Huanca 2001, Rivera 2003 in this respect). This was the greatest effort yet to apply the 1961 Convention to the letter.

The “withdrawal from the Yungas”, - the result of a mass uprising on the part of the population -, and evidence that in El Chapare there were not 600 but 6,000 hectares of coca, brought Bánzer’s triumphalist illusion back down to earth, and this was to go with him to his grave. When his vice president, Jorge Quiroga, took over, the offensive intensified, revealing that the North American strategy sought not only to put an end to surplus coca but also to create a focus of political and military conflict that would enable the democratic and largely rural/indigenous profile of the emerging coca grower forces to be destroyed.

The coca grower insurgency as basis for the new state

It was against this backdrop of international prohibition and the militarisation of the anti-drugs war that the coca growers’ organisation, called the Six Federations of the Cochabamba Tropics (*Seis Federaciones del Trópico de Cochabamba*), emerged and gained political momentum, under the leadership of Evo Morales. The coca growers’ organisation was catapulted into electoral politics following a sweeping trajectory from local to national level. The path of Evo Morales’ leadership began with blockades, clashes and protest actions revolving around promulgation of Law 1008 and the Villa Tunari massacre in 1988. In the negotiations that were to become established that year following pressure from mobilised grassroots coca growers, they obtained recognition of the traditional uses of the leaf and the possibility of its industrialisation. They also managed to get an explicit ban on the use of

herbicides and other chemical agents included in the law, and the manual eradication of surplus crops prescribed. Eradication was defined as a voluntary process subject to financial compensation. In this new legal framework, the first experiments of “alternative development” and eradication with compensation were launched. These did not substantially affect the area cultivated or volume of harvest for a long time, given the evasive resistance of the coca growers in terms of replanting eradicated crops (see documentation compiled by CEDIB, 1992).

The “Zero Option” plan, launched during the first government of Sánchez de Lozada, was also openly resisted. The first marches from El Chapare to La Paz (1994, 1995), in particular the March for Life, Coca and National Sovereignty, which arrived in La Paz on 20 September 1994 after 22 days, re-established the indigenous technique of the 1990 March for Territory and Dignity and adopted a rich symbolic language that emphasised the notion of coca as a sacred plant and symbol for indigenous peoples and part of the traditional pharmacopoeia (Contreras, 1994). All these achievements were built on politically by the six federations and their coca grower leader. In the municipal elections of 1995, under the borrowed banner of the United Left (*Izquierda Unida*) and along with Alejo Véliz from Valle Bajo, Evo Morales thus won 49 councillorships and 10 mayoral posts in various regions of Cochabamba. In the 1997 national elections, just before the *Plan Dignidad*, the IU won 4 uninominal deputies and 3.6% of the national vote. Evo Morales entered Parliament as the uninominal deputy with the most votes, with almost 62% of votes in his constituency (*Pulso*, 25 to 31 January, 2002). The other three deputies were rural workers from various regions of Cochabamba. This reveals a strategy of reaching out beyond the coca growers’ sector alone and achieving a wider representativeness, indigenous and departmental.

In this context, with one foot in Parliament and the other in the Six Federations of the Tropics, the most aggressive and desperate protests of the coca growers began, in a climate of militarisation and increasingly intensive open warfare. Thus, in August 1998, a massive march left El Chapare and, after 23 days of hard walking, reached the seat of government with just one demand: the legalisation of “*un cato de coca*” (1600 mts²) per family throughout the Cochabamba tropics.⁹ The government’s refusal was firm: the plan to put an end to all coca in El Chapare seemed to be one of its clearest, most rapid and most obsessive public policies. This is why the marchers’ hunger strike, on the premises of the La Paz Univer-

sity, ended in the demobilisation of a demoralised movement and the withdrawal of the most senior coca leader from Parliament.

From then on, in the Cochabamba tropics coca-growing families began to form “Self defence Committees”, and an active - even violent - resistance to the eradication began. The result was more than 30 deaths, primarily among coca growers, to be added to the long list of fallen since the Villa Tunari massacre in 1988, when eight *qhichwa* coca producers died. But this was just one area of the coca growers’ protest. In the water war fought in the town of Cochabamba (February – April 2000), the participation of the Six Federations was decisive and the coca growers thus became part of the Water Coordination Body (*Coordinadora del Agua*) along with the town’s irrigators, manufacturers and professional associations. Here, once more, the formation of a wider platform of “defence of natural resources” could be seen that was drawing its support from the vast urban world of the excluded and the middle and intel-

lectual classes around two daughters of the *pachamama*, water and coca.

In September – October 2000, roadblocks occurred almost simultaneously in the *altiplano* and in Yungas de La Paz and the Cochabamba tropics. Coca growers were desperately demanding a halt to forced eradication and respect for the “*cato de coca*”. But this time the focus of public attention moved to the blockade called by the CSUTCB, under the leadership of Felipe Quispe, the “*Mallku*”. This organisation was voicing a multitude of cultural, political and economic demands from Aymara rural workers, amongst which only defence of “traditional coca” of the Yungas featured, and not of the Cochabamba tropics. The rupture between Morales and Quispe – which in October 2000 left the El Chapare blockade isolated – was in the end to play in the favour of Morales, who presented himself as more moderate and tolerant, capable of seeking urban alliances, of calling on society as a whole and of questioning the comfortable ideology of the *mestizos*. However, the distancing of the coca growers’ agenda from the

Coca eradication in Los Yungas. Photo: Somos Sur archive



more radically indigenous wing of the movement was also to have negative effects that were to cut off Evo's rhetoric and practices from one of the key factors of his hegemony.¹⁰

From Insurgency to power

The year 2000 was also the year in which "Zero Coca" was declared in El Chapare, celebrated with government and embassy visits and inspections to the relevant places. With the tactic of symbolic struggle so common to them, women coca growers eloquently debunked the state's fictional claims, flooding the streets and public spaces where the official committee was to pass with coca. Very soon, the figure of 600 hectares of coca remaining in El Chapare had to be corrected to 6,000 ("calculation error" on the part of the North American satellite) and, when Quiroga succeeded the moribund Bánzer in August 2001, the war began again with equal if not greater ferocity. In June, shortly before resigning in favour of his vice

president, Bánzer launched an unprecedented offensive in the Yungas region, sending in 750 soldiers of the Joint Task Force and incurring the wrath of the whole region, which mobilised massively to get rid of them. The "withdrawal from the Yungas" brought town and country together, coca growers, businessmen and traders in a unique front that was soon to be expressed on an electoral level (cf. Rivera 2003).

Throughout the "Plan Dignidad", the war was also fought on a media level and in terms of figures: volumes and hectares of coca eradicated were continually calculated in varying detail. Announcements and charts depicting eradication progress formed part of a symbolic crusade that, in the end, appeared to be succeeding. But this whole construct of speculations was soon to be brought down by the very rationale of the war against drugs, which continued and ceaselessly extended the areas of conflict.¹¹ Quiroga's vice minister for social defence, Osvaldo Antezana, declared at the end of 2001: "We do not know how much [coca] exists, previously estimates were made on the basis of satellite images that are no longer sufficient, plantations are left fallow (sic), crops are spread out in small areas, it is very difficult to detect them in aerial photographs or by means of satellite." (*Pulso*, 2-8 November, 2001: 11). With this, the main foundation on which government policy was based collapsed and a stage of complete uncertainty, irrationality and politicisation of the attacks on the coca growers' organisation commenced. Undoubtedly, the events of 9/11 that year produced a feverish change in drugs war rhetoric. Evo Morales and the coca growers were no longer political adversaries in the democratic arena: they were drugs terrorists, defenders of the armed struggle with links to guerrilla organisations in Colombia or Peru.

The tragic epilogue to the *Plan Dignidad* was the so-called "coca war" of January 2002, in Sacaba. By virtue of a government decree – imposed by the US Embassy – ordering the closure of this population's market, all possibility of coca from the Cochabamba tropics reaching legal markets was extinguished, and they were condemned to supplying the illegal economy. The mechanism was very simple: the fever for figures had been replaced by a state attitude of ignoring the existence of coca in El Chapare, trying to put a band-aid on a gaping wound. In the words of Víctor Orduna:

A government frustrated by its failure to achieve the desired "zero coca" has decided to opt for fiction, denying the reality and imagining that there is no coca,



closing markets and denying their existence, strangling the producers... as the legal path has been closed to them, the producers have no other option than to sell to drugs traffickers. Ultimately, the government is relinquishing its responsibility for controlling coca circulation to the drugs traffickers, guaranteeing them a monopoly (Pulso 18-24 January, 2002: 13.)

The Sacaba uprising revealed the impatience and desperation of the coca growers in the face of a moral fundamentalism that was 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 on 16 January. This repression was due, in turn, to the attempt to take the DIGECO (General Coca Department) premises and the burning of 25 vehicles of the anti-drugs forces by a furious mob who, throughout this process, revived old tactics of indigenous anti-state violence.¹²

What is clear is that all this ended in the embarrassing withdrawal of parliamentary privileges from Evo Morales, announced openly by the US 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 electoral force in the country, expanding the spectrum of the coca growers' representativeness considerably. On the one hand, this vote was the political expression not only of the coca producers but also of indigenous rural workers and of the consumers, urban and mining, of coca leaf. It was a long-term expression, in sum, of the interregional market for coca. But, on the other hand, the vote expressed the indignation of progressive sectors of public opinion at North America's barefaced interference in their country's internal politics. The MAS thus ended up becoming spokesperson for a wide range of urban and mining popular sectors, the middle and intellectual classes and progressive business sectors, who felt stifled by structural adjustment policies and humiliated by the constant external interference in Bolivian affairs.

The new composition of forces represented by the MAS was reflected in the legislature inaugurated in 2002. Of 35 parliamentary members (27 deputies and eight senators), eight were coca growers and one an ex-miner and adviser to the Six Federations. The very structure of the MAS was that of an aggregate of leaders strongly supported by their grassroots, whom they had led during the period of confronta-

tion of the *Plan Dignidad*. Thus, for example, the leader of COFECAY in the Yungas, Dionicio Núñez, who was the most outstanding leader of the Yungas uprising in June 2001, was elected as a uninominal deputy by constituency 20 of La Paz. Coca growers from areas both "traditional" and "surplus" thus had the opportunity of discussing and even influencing state policies. Commenting on the surprising electoral victory of the MAS, the US-based Bolivian analyst, Eduardo Gamarra, stated in July 2002: "Without the *Plan Dignidad*, Evo Morales would perhaps not have achieved second place in the elections" (Pulso, 19-25 July, 2002: 12).

The 14 months of the second government of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada were extremely agitated. In January 2003, the coca growers from the Cochabamba tropics rose up once more. Their demand this time was a "pause" in the eradication, at least until a study had been conducted of the legal market, which the government had promised as part of its new coca policy. After almost one month of blockade and 11 people dead in the clashes, the coca growers and government sat down to talk in seven committees dealing with issues of coca, land and gas, while mass vigils were held in the streets by men and women from the Six Federations. The formation of the People's General Staff (*Estado Mayor del Pueblo*), with the representation of all the popular and indigenous organisations involved in the conflicts, thus brought about a level of collective leadership with a presence both in the streets and in Parliament. However, an urban revolt of unprecedented street violence interrupted the negotiation process. On 12 and 13 April, a police mutiny occurred due to the January "impuestazo" – a decree increasing income tax by more than 15%. Soldiers and police clashed in the Plaza Murillo with the consequence of more than 30 deaths. What became known as "black February" will remain engraved on the public's conscience as the most serious internal breakdown in the 1952 state apparatus, the death knell of its final crisis. The coca growers' agenda was to take second place in a context in which negotiations for the sale of gas to California through a Chilean port led to tension on the nation's agenda around this natural resource. A series of sectoral and local conflicts – the march of the elderly against the pensions law, the civic strike in El Alto against the Town Hall's *Maya* and *Paya* forms – and the violent repression of an Aymara blockade in Achacachi-Warisata, all culminated in the general uprising of October known as the "gas war".

In this new phase of protest, the MAS and the coca growers took second place, given the decentralised and communal nature of the El Alto leadership.

High participation on the part of women and youth gave the protest an incorruptible and collective ethical nature, which no political party had fully managed to represent. Although Felipe Quispe had begun a hunger strike on 11 September in El Alto, in support of the El Alto movement and making a rural/urban link, he did so more as the highest leader of the CSUTCB than as a leader of the MIP, the party that had absorbed him in a strong internal crisis in Parliament. To these players must be added the mining cooperativists, the micro-credit debtors, the landless movement and indigenous organisations such as CONAMAQ and CIDOB. The profile of this coordination of interests placed it right in the anti-globalisation movement, among the critics of structural adjustment policies, among those who were practically demonstrating the failure of neoliberalism, the fallacy of its promises of employment, well-being and market redistribution. With the exception of the coca market, virtually every other market for small farmer agricultural and livestock products had gradually declined, succumbing to competition from smuggling and food donations. This is why, in the October 2003 uprising, the coca growers' presence was almost imperceptible. Evo Morales was travelling abroad, regions such as the Yungas were mobilising around sectoral demands and the leaders of the MAS in Cochabamba were taking up the gas agenda as a priority. However, the coca growers' leader was to capitalise on the October agenda, which became the basis for his electoral manifesto: oil and gas nationalisation, the holding of a Constituent Assembly, land redistribution, defence of coca and the war on corruption.

The electoral triumph of the MAS in December 2005 was based on this solid path of "planned accumulation" and coordination of agendas, in which coca became just one more issue in a wider programme of "defence of natural resources". To a certain extent a secondary issue, given the priority of other issues and the fact that winning power would have to mean forcefully negotiating with, and tolerating certain pressure from, the Embassy.

Epilogue: promises and dangers of Evo Morales' coca policy

We can only outline here some of the challenges and paradoxes facing the coca policy of Evo Morales' government. The increasingly explicit pressures and demands for the destruction of legal markets – despite what happened in Sacaba at the start of 2003 –

are pushing the government into an ever more irate position of civil disobedience in relation to the United Nations and United States. This position is not without sympathy in a number of countries of Europe and Latin America. In this regard, Evo Morales' government has defined a Strategy for Struggle against Drugs Trafficking and Revaluation of Coca Leaf (Republic of Bolivia, 2006) which summarises 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 alternative space for existing production. This document also redefines the area of "legal coca", expanding it from 12,000 to 20,000 hectares. With this, the level of "surplus" coca was reduced to 6,000 hectares, according to data from the UN itself. With regard to this latter, a plan for its "agreed" eradication was adopted with coca growers' unions and with the involvement of the public security forces.

But there is also a dimension 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 from the colonial anti-drugs apparatus, in active and daily resistance on the part of the producers and in the position – not always consistent – of the government. The government strategy has a radically alternative tone to that which appears in the 1950 UN Report of the Commission of Enquiry on Coca Leaf and in the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. Its desire to extend the legal market for coca and revalue its use opens up a new perspective to the dilemma of surplus coca. If the government continues with its intention to demand the withdrawal of coca leaf from UN Schedule 1 (1961) and the opening up of legal markets abroad, even in "dissident" countries such as Venezuela and Cuba, in addition to those already existing in northern Argentina and Chile, there will soon be no surplus coca for the illegal economy.

Despite the explicit refusal of the United States to even discuss such an alternative proposal, their mechanisms of pressure have not yet managed to reverse this process. Albeit very slowly, proposals for small-scale industrialisation and export to Latin America and Europe are now being developed. It can thus be seen that the state's desire to open up markets and industrialise coca goes beyond mere rhetoric. All this explains the conflictive tone of the declarations on both sides. On the one hand is the position, ever more aggressive, of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) and the United Nations against coca, which in turn resulted in an ultimatum and the US embassy's threat to disaccredit

Evo Morales' government (*La Prensa*, 2 and 3 March, 2007). The tone of these declarations reveals a retrograde step from the 1988 Convention – more tolerant to the traditional uses of coca – back to the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, which gives Bolivia a 25-year period for the elimination of *akhulliku*.

It must be emphasised that, to date, the strongest mechanism of pressure/oppression exercised by the US government has been cancellation of the benefits of the Andean Trade Preferences and Drug Eradication Agreement (ATPDEA) if the country does not obey the drastic plan to eradicate surplus coca. The suspension of the ATPDEA is also a form of blackmail to force the country to sign the FTA. The continuity imposed from outside and the efforts, proposals and expectations for change that both the government and civil society are promoting and developing form a complex panorama of which we can here only give tentative outlines, more as an agenda for future research than as a finished product. Knowing the enemy will enable us to avoid frustrations and develop viable political and cultural initiatives in which the social players involved in the large domestic and international market for coca leaf can legalise and extend their activity and successfully face up to the conspiracy that the transnationals and agencies will certainly mount against Bolivia. Assessing the government's actions and evaluating our own potential will help us to create a common agenda for the decriminalisation, revaluation and promotion of legal uses of coca leaf, both internally and abroad.

One hopeful sign in this regard 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, by means of annual coca fairs, seminars, concerts and public debates, the visibility and public legitimacy of coca has increased and its discussion and defence has been fully integrated into the academic and political debates of civil society, and into the working committees of the Constituent Assembly. From a growing coordination between civil society and government initiatives may emerge a clear political proposal with which to resist the transnationals' conspiracy and develop the actions necessary for the domestic and international decriminalisation of our sacred plant. □

Chukiyagu Marka, March 2007

Notes

- 1 See Mamani Ramírez 2004 in this regard and the excellent report by Luis Gómez: *El Alto de Pie, Una Insurrección Aymara en Bolivia*.
- 2 The indigenous demand for a Constituent Assembly dates back to the 1990 Indigenous March for Territory and Dignity, and was then repeated at different protests on the part of the CSUTCB, CONAMAQ, CIDOB and other social organisations of the east and west of the country (see note 3).
- 3 CSUTCB: Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia; "Bartolinas": Confederación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas de Bolivia Bartolina Sisa; CONAMAQ: Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas Aymara-Qhichwas; CIDOB: Confederación Indígena del Oriente Boliviano. All these organisations, in addition to the "settlers" and coca growers, arose from the 1970s onwards as a result of the collapse of the rural parastatal unions that were behind the 1952 National Revolution.
- 4 The fact that equal zeal is not shown in combating public health dangers as serious as alcohol, pharmaceuticals abuse or iatrogenic illnesses caused by "good use" of the same leads us to consider that ethics must be absent from the business affairs of the world pharmaceutical transnationals, which turns them into doubtful censors of the ethical conduct of coca-growing populations.
- 5 The idea of a *global commodity chain* was proposed by Paul Gootenberg to analyse the history of the legality of cocaine prohibition in Peru (1999). In what follows, I will draw freely from the data in this work and from the works of Spillane, Friman, De Kort and Karch, which form part of a compilation by Gootenberg entitled *Cocaine. Global histories* (London 1999).
- 6 By the end of the 19th century, the island of Java was supplying 40% of world coca leaf exports, thanks to its low price and higher level of extractable cocaine (to which could be added the fact of being grown in a plantation economy; see Reens [1919] 2003: 74)
- 7 It would be interesting to find out whether the patriotic connotation of this trade war later helped Coca-Cola to become the symbolic drink of the United States, a country that was to involve the company in its colonial designs on the world and support it - with the indisputable force of arms or with the power of money - in the United Nations.
- 8 This is what analysts have called the "balloon effect".
- 9 I personally participated in this protest, accompanying the march on its last five days.
- 10 The possibility of an indigenous government in Bolivia held a fascination and a fear at international level. Given the huge corruption among the *mestizo-criollo* parties, an Indian in government offered the hope of emerging from the chronic lack of governability in the country. In addition, an indigenous ethic in the way power was conducted would perhaps be the only solution by which to remove coca from the networks of corruption and double standards that enabled this diversion into the illegal economy.
- 11 "If the anti-drugs war is characterised by anything then it is its veracity, its need to feed by expanding and encouraging new conflicts where previously there were none," notes Víctor Orduna in "La enfermedad de la coca cero" (*Pulso*, 18-24 January, 2002).
- 12 These acts of violence, which the government attributed to a guerrilla conspiracy of an international nature, closely followed the age-old indigenist tactics of symbolic violence, direct action of the masses and the emergence of apparently spontaneous leaderships, obeying a grassroots community structure. The way in which the two disappeared soldiers died also emulated the events in the *altiplano* in April 2000, with the lynching of an army officer by an angry mob in Achacachi. See Mamani Ramírez in this regard 2004, Thomson 2006, Rivera 2007.

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Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui is of Aymara descent. She is a sociologist and activist involved in the Katarista indigenous movement and the coca growers' movement. In 1983, along with other indigenous and mestizo intellectuals, she set up the Workshop for Andean Oral History, a self-managed group that works on issues of oral history, identity and indigenous and popular social movements, primarily in the Aymara region. She is the author of a number of books, including: "Oprimidos pero no vencidos". Luchas del campesinado aymara y qhichwa de Bolivia, 1900-1980, (La Paz, 1984), Los Artesanos Libertarios y la Ética del Trabajo (an oral history of the anarchist movement in La Paz, in association with Zulema Lehm), Bircholas. Trabajo de Mujeres, explotación capitalista y opresión colonial entre las migrantes de La Paz y El Alto (La Paz, 1996) and Las Fronteras de la Coca: Epistemologías Coloniales y Circuitos Alternativos de la Hoja de Coca (La Paz, 2003). She has also produced films and videos, both documentaries and fiction. She has been Professor of Sociology at the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés in La Paz for more than 20 years. She has also been a Visiting Professor at Columbia, Austin, La Rábida (Huelva) and Jujuy universities and the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar in Quito. She received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1990 and in 1993 was appointed Emeritus Professor of UMSA.

“This change has not been driven by the elite”

As a former Prefect under the Carlos Mesa government, Carlos Hugo Molina believes the people have supported the measures taken by Evo Morales thanks to very clear signs: a quite unusual intensity of work (“The President gets up at 5 in the morning and expects others to do the same. Ministers have been visiting the nine departments, seeing disaster zones (for the El Niño phenomenon) like never before”). These measures are far more radical when compared to the few cents increase in the price of diesel that led to the fall of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada’s successor, Carlos Mesa. As the former national secretary of Participación Popular and current director of CEPAD (Centre for Participation and Sustainable Human Development/Centro para la Participación y el Desarrollo Humano Sostenible), Molina is well-placed to observe the region’s demands for development. He is convinced that, the way things are at the moment, the opposition’s rhetoric will not be able to withstand the time remaining of the government’s mandate.

In terms of the people’s perceptions, not only inside the country but abroad too, we have a concept, an illustration of a government that has returned sovereignty, dignity and dynamism to the country. Bolivia is taken into account at international level like never before. This political act (the election of Morales and the changes that have been commenced) has created a Bolivian presence and an extraordinary interest that did not previously exist. We have an external message that has also been made clear with an internal response. If not, the President of the Republic would not have the backing of more than 60% of the people. And we are talking of the urban areas and departmental capitals, where the population are most informed and where the opposition’s work is strongest. We should not look on a President who has 65% of the population’s support or sympathy and give the poor response “but he’s doing it wrong”. No. The people still do not believe that he is doing it wrong.

– *What kind of government actions have strained the political climate?*

First, the government’s bad handling of discussions around the voting system for the Constituent Assembly. Obviously, there was a campaign to achieve an absolute majority for constitutional reform. But failing to respect

the two-thirds, as demanded by the opposition, has caused weakening and could cause much more still if this is not consolidated. Second, the bad handling of the issue of the autonomies. The issue of the Constituent Assembly and that of the autonomies have been the two main issues around which the political crises of recent times have been decided.¹

Another issue of inappropriate handling was the use of official violence and the way in which outbreaks of violence were handled in Bolivian civil society. This occurred in both the Huanuni mines and, primarily, in Cochabamba. Twice this issue was mismanaged – once through lethargy, leaving the problem “to sort itself out” (in Huanuni) and once by encouraging the violence (because that is effectively what happened) – and this has, in some ways, changed public opinion although not yet enough to taint the image of Evo in his *chompa* or the disobedient Evo on the international stage. The dignity and sovereignty with which he is exercising power, a result of the nationalizations and defence of natural resources, is still clearly recognised.

– *Has the government created a climate of intolerance through these actions? Autonomy, two-thirds...*

Much has been said on the issue of intolerance, official violence... but this has to be seen in a context in which more than 60% of the general public still back him because they believe that the government is doing things the right way. Either there is something we are not understanding clearly or we are not analysing what is going on appropriately. We are looking at things as if there had been no changes in the country, and radical changes have occurred here. What has happened over the last three or four years is never going to happen again: the quota system and distributions.² There is no possibility of this kind of thing happening again. There is no possibility that space will not be given to absolutely all players; there is no possibility of discrimination in this country from this point on.

– *Why?*

Because the change that is taking place is not a change of elites, it is not a change of leadership, it is a change from the base, from the grassroots. It is a process of “people power” in which there is a different way of living and do-

Carlos Hugo Molina - Photo: Javier Méndez Vedia, 2007



ing politics. If you look at the headlines and the way news is being handled, it would seem that we have not recognised that something completely new is taking place here.

– *Is there a lack of communication on the part of both the authorities and the anti-establishment media?*

One of the qualities of Evo Morales' government has been that it has shown up the weakness of the political/social structures and leaders of all parties and organisations that are not the MAS. At the moment, the government, the President of the Republic, does not have a political interlocutor within the country. And as there are no political interlocutors then nor are there any spokespersons. All the parties that are not within the MAS, the civil society representatives who were traditionally the government's interlocutors, have disappeared, virtually swept from the political reality. The government has never met with the *Confederación de Empresarios Privados* (Confederation of Private Businesses); it has never met with the *Cámara Agropecuaria del Oriente* (Agricultural and Livestock Chamber of the Oriente), as is the usual custom with presidents meeting them to discuss, agree...it hasn't happened! For the moment, the President of the Republic does not recognise anyone as his government's interlocutor.

– *Do you see this situation as a constructive one?*

It is a part of the reality that is going to have to be resolved one way or another, because in Bolivia at the moment we have a monologue, and this is not the fault of the government, because the government is doing what it must do. We have to look for answers from the other side, which is taking a traditionally critical attitude, with the same rhetoric as always, when there is a different player or scenario. It does what it always does: "list of demands", "state of emergency", "strike".

We have to understand the reality: Evo Morales is no Rodríguez Veltzé, he's no Carlos Mesa, no Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, no Hugo Banzer Suárez. He is someone else. The MAS government is not a government like any previous. The interpreters, the analysts, the interlocutors of Bolivian politics, including the media, are not helping us to understand this.

We are not considering the radical nature of the changes that are occurring and, when these changes occur, the new relationships that appear. In Santa Cruz, in our daily life, we continue to have carnivals, fiestas, 24 September, the *Magníficas*... the biggest discussion is around the carnival parade, and all the while things are happening that are much more radical than this. This is why it is so difficult to take this qualitative step, because the whole proposal, or a very large part of the content of the Santa Cruz proposal, was for Santa Cruz. At the moment, a Santa Cruz proposal that is not for Bolivia will not pass scrutiny in the other eight departments. It just will not pass. So it is difficult to understand that it is no longer the government that is against Santa Cruz, which is what we have always heard and what is said. No! The government is not against Santa Cruz; the political reality has changed and, if it is not interpreted properly, we will continue to cry pitiful tears. It is no longer possible to understand what is going on with the same rhetoric.

– *What kind of 'bridges' need to be built between both sides?*

At the moment, the president of the Chamber of Senators, who is from the opposition, has the possibility of being an important political interlocutor. He would need to be able to integrate state relations. And the attempt of the six prefects who are working in coordination and proposing a different kind of relationship with the executive power cannot be ignored. □

Notes

- 1 The need for a Constituent Assembly was first raised by the social movements almost a decade ago; these movements are largely aligned with the MAS government.
Efforts to establish autonomies within the Bolivian state have primarily been in response to the corporate and civic sectors of the east of the country. This is why, for example, a movement known as the "Camba Nation" was formed in Santa Cruz department – ed.
- 2 Quota system and distributions refers to the logic of 'democracy by agreement' in Bolivia (1985-2004), in which institutional powers and responsibilities were divided up among the political parties governing the country, particularly the MNR, ADN and MIR – ed.

“There’s a gap there, in the dark, to move forward”

The new vice-president of CIDOB (the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of the Bolivian Oriente/Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas del Oriente Boliviano) was witness to how his people, the Mojeño, led the first March for Dignity and Territory in 1990. With the Central de Cabillos Indígenales Mojeños (Coordinating Body of Mojeño Indigenous Councils) as the instrument of organisation, they rose up against the incursion of logging companies from Santa Cruz and their livestock-farming cronies. He says: “We the indigenous made the paths to our fields and along these same paths came the carayanas, that is, the White people. As they were knowledgeable in documents and papers, they began to consolidate the land, because they themselves were the authorities. ‘OK, this is mine. Here is my title. What do you have? Nothing, Eh?’ they would say. So then we went further into the bush. We established our villages. But the White people came, so again we went further in, and again and again, until there came a time when there was nowhere else to go. When a wild animal is wounded, cornered and has nowhere to escape to, the only thing left is for it to attack.”

There have always been leaders in his family. A grant enabled him to go to a Catholic school in Cochabamba and, at eleven years of age, he visited Trinidad, the capital of Beni department, for the first time. Later having returned to his village, he took up the post of Natural Resources Secretary and was elected Land and Territory Secretary. The joint desires of the Mojeño people are now expressed in three territories: one is the multi-ethnic territory, titled shortly after the historic march of 1990; the second is the Isiboro Sécure (Tupiza) indigenous territory and national park and the third is one of the new demands awaiting titling. They have had to wait a decade to obtain certificates of land regularisation (saneamiento). During this time, Nuni Caiti took over the presidency of the Central de Pueblos Étnicos Mojeños del Beni, which was to herald the start of similar organisations on the part of other ethnic groups in Beni. The process con-

tinued with the creation of the Central de Pueblos Indígenas del Beni (Coordinating Body of Indigenous Peoples of Beni/CPIB), which groups together all native peoples in the area. The CPIB led the March of 1990.

– *Has the unity of the indigenous people been maintained during this first year of Evo Morales’ government?*

Unfortunately, the glory years of the indigenous peoples lasted from 1990 to 2000. During all the government administrations after 2000, CIDOB tended to favour government policy. There was no independence. This is my view. They were pro-government. Worst of all was when some leaders began to fight against their own interests, to the point of signing agreements that were detrimental to the indigenous peoples. There were agreements with landowners from Santa Cruz and, in extreme cases, there were even agreements signed in blood... really... we heard about this. This shows the level of penetration of the Right, but let’s not talk about this. What’s most important now is that we are in a very special situation. CIDOB is not, organically, a fundamental part of the MAS. It is important to maintain this distance, because there is no cultural affinity between the lowlands and the highlands. What’s more, in the Bolivian Oriente, our organisations have long been forgotten, and still are.

– *Even with an indigenous government?*

Yes, with an indigenous government. All the policies are focused on the *altiplano*, the highlands. The policies do not favour, are not balanced, at any rate, with the



Pedro Nuni Caiti - Photo: Javier Méndez Vedia, 2007

lowlands. There will be no balance until there is representation of the lowlands. There are signs, but nothing concrete. I think the leadership of a people...of all the peoples living in this region is needed. And yet this does not mean we are against the government. We prefer to maintain this distance because, in this way at least, there is a hope of being able to run the Confederation as it was originally intended, that is, defending the cultural, economic and political rights of the indigenous peoples of the lowlands. This is how we want to work. And this would ensure we have the independence to say, "Mr. President, this is lacking, or this is good". If we are in the government's entourage, like the CSUTCB (*Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia*/Bolivian Union of Rural Workers) what would we be able to say to the President if he made a mistake? We wouldn't be able to say anything, because we would be a part of it. I repeat, we are not against this government; we are going to support it and we are going to make proposals, too, not just requests. We want the vision to be focused on the *Oriente*. We are very concerned because government rhetoric talks only of the Quechua, the Aymara, the Guarani, that's all. Yet there are 34 peoples in the *Oriente*.

- *Would you say then that you have not really participated in the government but that you prefer to keep your distance?*

We want to keep a certain distance because this gives us the independence we want. It's not that we are being indecisive.

- *You mentioned a lack of leadership among the lowland peoples. Do they lack representatives, a specific person...?*

Leadership has to be joint. This guarantees that, if we focus ourselves around a leadership, there will be the support of a team of people who can establish a vision. I think we need to reconstruct our own history. History is still passed down from generation to generation, through the knowledge held in our memories; it is an oral knowledge. We need to write down the history of our peoples. We want to do this ourselves because, if someone who is not one of us does it, they will not write it as it should be.

- *What use would this be?*

It would be of great use, because there would be no invention in it. Culture is not an invention of the past; the history of a people has been built over hundreds of years. It is not a useless history. It is a practical, real history. We have to gather together all these contributions and make just one history. For example, I am not of the belief that the Amazonian peoples and the Andean peoples of the *altiplano* are opposed to each other. There have always been intercultural experiences and these still continue.

- *Could you give us some examples?*

In my area, in the Mosevenes mountains between Cochabamba and Beni are the roads known as the "the Inca Trail". Where did the Incas get their multi-coloured feathers, if they lived in the *altiplano*, where there

are no parrots or birds? How can it be that we indigenous had stone axes, deep in the forest? There was some contact and this interculturality has always been maintained. This belies the prejudices that state that the “colla” (the people from the highlands) and the “camba” (the inhabitants of the Santa Cruz) cannot be united. We have to be united, and this is why the idea of the Constituent Assembly, incorporating lowlands and highlands, developed. The Constituent Assembly was born in the lowlands; it was an idea of the lowlands. We were unable to put the idea of autonomy into practice as it was intended. But where did the idea, the first voices for autonomy come from? From the indigenous peoples! The issue of territory and territoriality relates not only to the forest, the pampas and the lakes... in everything that is defined as territory there is land, inhabitants, a system of government and justice; so why can we not consider the possibility of autonomy? The idea of territory is also that of autonomy. But we were not capable of exploiting this idea, and the Right snatched our banner and put it to good use, albeit as departmental autonomies, which is the same centralist idea as before. Now they want to centralise everything in the departments. This is what we have to show the Nation.

– *In this overall context, has there been any progress around the land issue? Are the land distribution decrees considered progress?*

There has been some progress under this government. After all, something that has made so little progress for so such a long time cannot be reversed overnight. At least our territories are becoming viable. There is a ray of light at the end of the tunnel which we can follow. There is an INRA that at least wants to change its image. They are raising the profile of the land regularisations (*saneamientos*) but they’re not giving anything away. In this country, last year, the indigenous peoples again had to march to demand approval of the new Agrarian Reform Law. The INRA Law was in force for ten years, and then what? There was a legal vacuum and a need to continue with the *saneamientos*, given that no progress was being made and a great deal of international donor funding was wasted. This is common knowledge. Unfortunately, there was no change. This money has gone to line the pockets of many officials who did a bad job; they merely sought to favour

their own relations within the institution. This is why, through this process, the land ended up in the hands of a few. The lands were handed over to families during the times of the dictatorship, during the Bánzer and García Meza governments. And what is most shameful is that they were handed over at no cost...at least they should have paid for them but they were freely distributed! There has always been a rescheduling of accounts, and the state has always written off their debts. Well... this is all set out in books and there are testimonies from important people.

– *What is the new Agrarian Reform Law?*

Basically, given the great need there is in the country, we have to decide what we are going to do with the lands that are only in the hands of a few and which do not comply with what is known as Economic and Social Function. There are many lands that are being challenged. Why do you think that in this country sectors are being formed such as the Landless Movement (*Movimiento Sin Tierra/MST*), or the Roofless Movement (*Movimiento Sin Techo*) in urban areas? It is because of the injustice of this country, the bad distribution of its resources. This is why we believe that the agrarian reform law must reduce these lands, return them to the State for redistribution. This would be an act of historic justice not only for our indigenous brothers and rural workers but for all the people who have never had land, or have only had insufficient. This is the spirit, and the aim is also to find a way of providing support through credit so that it is not just a matter of handing over the land and then seeing some indigenous person or rural worker have to sell it off the next day or the day after.

– *The form of land you are requesting is communal, indivisible and cannot be sold. Even the Landless Movement makes its requests in this way.*

Exactly. The demands of the social organisations such as indigenous peoples and rural workers are collective, not individual. It is important to reflect, before the international community, that the MST now has land where once it didn’t, and it works it collectively. Our culture has always been that of the community, of common unity. This is what we want: to make historic justice.

The law was passed in a most chaotic way. Although this government has a parliamentary majority, it does not have the infamous two-thirds, and so it is conditional upon small and medium-sized political groups. But there were apparently good negotiations, as we have seen. Pressure from the marchers encouraged its approval. Two people from the Right backed it: they voted for the new Agrarian Reform Law to be approved by a majority, but they were penalised by their party. Approval of the law was a CIDOB initiative. Its regional bodies helped to ensure that this march was legitimately attributed to and led by CIDOB. We don't wish to ignore our rural brothers who joined in, and the other social sectors, but it was largely an indigenous initiative; the march started in Santa Cruz. We marched and we achieved our objective. This was a product of the new leadership we now have. We kept the pressure up for 33 days. Chiquitano, Yuracaré, Chimane, Ayoreo, Mojeño, Itonama... most groups participated.

– *From a lowlands point of view, do you see the beginnings of an openness in the Andinocentric view?*

It will take time. I would have liked to see an initiative from the President balancing representation, beginning with the ministries... but we still have no representation in any ministry. We do not want to establish a ministry for indigenous peoples because we would end up imprisoned in it. Given that this is an indigenist government, why should we have a ministry for indigenous peoples? If so, we should also have a ministry for white people. The idea is absurd. We want a balance of regions in the ministerial cabinet. At least there is someone from Beni who is a minister (Susana Rivero Guzmán). She has worked with the indigenous organisations. In Beni, we did not have this space with the Right, as I remember, and now the Left have put this person in place. Well, at least there's someone. Let's hope they take this opportunity to open up more spaces. Next year there will be general elections anyway. At the end of the Constituent Assembly – which we hope will conclude successfully with a constitutional text – and after the referendum, we hope that the people will support the Constitution in order to move towards general elections. □

Photo: IWGLA archive



Por el **TERRITORIO** y la **DIGNIDAD**
Central de Pueblos Indígenas del Beni

“A high level of participation is being shown”

A former parliamentary representative and Constituent Assembly member from the Chiquitano people tells us why it was thought that this government would be “vindicative” and explains the interests that are seeking to bring about the failure of the Constituent Assembly. He also reveals how USD 10 million vanished into thin air...through lack of identity cards.

– *From the point of view of the indigenous movements, how would you assess this first year of Evo Morales’ government?*

The indigenous movement is not an active part of the Movement to Socialism (MAS). We have to be clear on this. Its principles, which are the demands of the indigenous peoples, its philosophy of recognition, its mandate, are not in line with a political trend, such as the MAS; this is why the two are separate, almost as if it were another party. This is the direction in which the indigenous movement has to continue. It will be great if the MAS takes up the demands of the indigenous peoples because, as a movement, we have long been making demands of previous governments but our proposals have never been listened to.

There have been a number of important issues for the indigenous movement in this first year of government. Documentation, that is, the issuing of birth certificates or identity cards, was one of these. This is fundamental to feeling Bolivian, members of this Bolivian state. 90% of our indigenous brothers from the 36 peoples did not have such documents, despite this having been a demand of ours since 1982. Hence it is important to note the differences between this government and the previous administrations.

During the administration of Víctor Paz Estenssoro (1985-1989), we requested a meeting and proposed a package of organisational demands; we asked to be recognised as indigenous peoples and as organisations by means of legal status and the documentation

of every citizen. We also asked for recognition in relation to health and education. We began with literacy, and the issue of land.

No policies emerged from this indigenous documentation process; instead it became sidetracked. It was a failure. And since then it is something that we have pushed for with all subsequent governments but to no avail. When I was a parliamentary candidate, I said that I was going to demand such documentation, and when I was in Parliament I said the same thing. How can it be possible that our brothers have no documentation whatsoever? When I lived with the Yuqui people, they used to say that they did not feel Bolivian. To feel Bolivian, you have to have registered documents, demanding a legitimate right.

We have had a number of problems in this regard. During the 2000 March for land, territory and natural resources, Senator Walter Guiteras was responsible for the negotiations. We managed to obtain a 10-million dollar credit for indigenous development. But who benefited from these loans? No one, because they did not have the necessary documents. How do you demand a right of this kind? No one benefited from anything. We don’t know anything about the money. It wasn’t given to other rural workers because those with identity documents still had previous debts to pay off. Interest rates were at 18%, which didn’t give anyone any incentive. It was an obstacle to access.

– *So what’s happened under this government?*

This government already knew of our demands in this regard, and knew that there were proposals dating back years. This is why it was taken up as a state policy; this is why they organised the free documentation campaign. It was one of the first measures.

Another issue is literacy. We believe this has also been taken up as a policy, although it received rather a lot of criticism and was demonised, with critics



José Bailaba Parapaino - Photo: Javier Méndez Vedia, 2007

making reference to communism and other stupidities. I was in Concepción yesterday, and saw 56 indigenous people graduate. Some of them were 70 years old! The great thing was that they wrote their notes to their teachers and the local authorities in their own creative way.

Many of the previous authorities didn't want to know anything about this issue, because of the so-called "counter-campaign", saying that communism was here, communism was there, and that they could not allow or accept such outrages. I wondered yesterday if this could really be called communism: seeing indigenous people reading and writing. These are the results, and they conducted a dirty war against us. This is another way of denying a right.

It is worth noting that this process is also a new experience for the indigenous organisations, because they often criticise us and say, "Why so many meetings? Instead of working for something, they are wasting time in meetings and more meetings". My answer to them is, "Look, how long have we been talking about such things?" We do take a lot of criticism, but the results can be plainly seen.

It was the same during the health campaign, when the Cuban doctors came over. People said it was just a media hype but many people received free treatment who would not otherwise have had such an opportunity.

We know this is not a solution but, albeit a small one, it is a sign – as a policy – that improvements are needed. Many did their best to feather their nest off the back of indigenous rights or the rights of the poor. For example, you couldn't see a doctor without paying ten, fifteen or twenty pesos (between 1 and 2.5 dollars). It's one way of making a profit. The Cuban mobile brigades offered free consultations, and the people received free medication! A lot of old people were able to have operations to remove cataracts.

Another example: some of those who graduated yesterday could see well, without glasses and, what's

more, they could read. These examples show that they are at last really beginning to understand the long-standing demands of the indigenous peoples. And this is absolutely as it should be, given that President Evo Morales comes from a poor background himself; he could hardly be unaware of or fail to understand them.

It is true that the President is more knowledgeable on issues related to the *altiplano*. But it is a process; he has to learn as he goes along, now more than ever because he has a duty to understand the issues and take them up. One way or another, he is now involved in these issues. He's already given the signs to start, and not before time.

– *It's clear then: the President may not know about all the issues, but this doesn't mean he's not aware of them... But is there a prevailing 'highlands' vision?*

The problem is who to give priority to. What is important is the fact that he has not ignored the lowlands. As we have seen with their sign, which show great responsibility.

– *How would you describe these signs in relation to land?*

In truth, the land issue is rather a tricky one. First, because the regulations of the INRA Law were badly drawn up. We must not forget that, in 1996, during the 18 months of discussion with the sectors involved in this issue, we were present, knowing full well that some of the issues could be detrimental to us. The most important thing was to submit new demands for indigenous territories. It wasn't easy, because a media campaign was run claiming that you could not have one territory on top of another, and that the only

territory was the Bolivian one, hence indigenous territories could not exist. This was clearly a way of obstructing the process and refusing to accept that it was possible. It helped us because with that introduction, we said that anything was possible, that the demands could be submitted within the new laws. This was the most important thing. Up to that point we were present, up to the formulation of the INRA Law, but we were not involved in the regulatory decree. It was, in fact, a much longer process. In addition, the internal regulations for how the land regularisation (*saneamiento*) was to be carried out were also a distorting factor. How could they be put right? First, ten articles of the new law were amended; this was achieved recently, but now there are delays in the regulations.

So what's happening now? There is suddenly a great sensitivity which, in fact, I think means a great touchiness regarding the proposed regulations which, in fact, the other sectors are not going to accept. This is having a detrimental effect. How can you regulate with regard to the amount of land they have? Why should I be involved in this challenge, if I know they will take it away from me? This is what is stymieing the process, preventing regulations from being agreed.

– *Let's talk about the Constituent Assembly. Will you be able to agree a new constitutional text by 6 August?*

I want to be clear about excuses with regard to the Constituent Assembly, whether we will reach agreement or not...Since the 13 May 2002 March left the headquarters of the Coordinating Body of Ethnic Peoples of Santa Cruz (CPESC), the political parties have not been in agreement. They didn't want a Constituent Assembly. You can find all this in back copies of the newspapers. One of them reads, "Parties turn their back on the Constituent Assembly". After 37 days, the march arrived at the government offices but was not received. This was during Tuto Quiroga's government. No party came forward to talk about the issue.

And that's not all. When the March left, people from the Santa Cruz College of Lawyers said, "What do these Indians know about a Constituent Assem-

bly?" These were their words, this is what they said. I remember very clearly that during the last elections to the College of Lawyers, one candidate said he did not agree with the Constituent Assembly. This is what he said in his manifesto. Such a lawyer obviously leaves much to be desired, and yet he is being put forward as president of the College of Lawyers! What kind of message does this send? These are the absurdities that take place, and yet there is no more than a trend that is not in agreement.

In terms of article 70 (establishing the approval of articles by a majority), this was just an excuse. It tied up other sectors, such as the Civic Committee, whose strike produced no results. Then came the hunger strike, with no results; then came the million-dollar Council, and this gave no results either. This is what we called the Council because the money was wasted. These are all inconsistencies. It shows that there has been this trend right from the start and perhaps they won't be in agreement with the Assembly right up until it ends.

To find out if the two-thirds demand was true, we had to accept it...and they rejected it. On two occasions, when we revised article 70, this trend did not vote.

– *Who make up this trend?*

Podemos, MNR, UN and MIR. They have little representation but they are there as civic groups. These are the trends that are going to hold their ground.

– *In other words, they are committed to the failure of the Assembly?*

What they want is for the current Constitution to remain in place because it protects their interests. Perhaps they are not the direct owners, perhaps there are outside interests, but they are the spearhead and they have to keep on trying to make it fail.

The decision that votes would be approved by a two-thirds majority up until 2 July (which was the proposal that was finally agreed) was so that we could see if they would vote or not. And if you look back at

the records, you will see that most of the Podemos and MNR members did not vote.

– *Did you accept the two-thirds at that time?*

Although we agreed to the two-thirds, there is no consistency: they demand, they want, but at the moment of truth they don't agree, they don't vote. It would be false to say, "The ... two-thirds is the path to agreement, to a solution".

– *The media made much of the two-thirds demand. Why did acceptance of this demand not have the same impact?*

There was a great deal of confusion. We were quite heavily criticised. People understood it as: "I'll get my own back when I'm in power". According to this way of thinking, the government was going to take revenge precisely for all the bad things done to it. But it was quite the opposite: there is broad participation, a real way of agreeing issues. No other government has done this. People thought that, because they had a majority, it could be implemented without consultation. When we were in opposition there was no consultation. They didn't ask us if we agreed with any of the laws: they were simply approved, and whoever wanted to, supported it or not, without telling us what it was about. I say this from my experience as a parliamentary representative. Everyone thought that this government would do the same in revenge, and yet this has not been the case; it has been noticeable since the formation of the Assembly's *ad hoc* committee, since the election of its governing body.

Those on the Right said: "The regulations say this. They can't exclude us, if they say they are so broad". Regulations for the Chamber of Deputies set the members of its governing body at nine, no more; and yet it was extended to eleven, and this isn't in the regulations. They demand respect for the law but they don't respect it themselves. Just to give it breadth and as a reflection of broad participation, this was accepted. This is how we demonstrated our openness.

– *What will it take for the President to show more interest in the lowlands? Do the leaders need strengthening?*

The President needs people who are knowledgeable about indigenous issues. If not, he will remain very weak on this issue. There are people who are extremely capable professionally, in a technical or theoretical sense, but not in terms of their experience. Perhaps they have read a great deal on indigenous peoples, but the theory needs to tally with the reality. If not, we do not think it will be possible to make progress and continue with the signs already mentioned.

– *How are relations between CPESC and CIDOB?*

They have been re-established. They have been redirected by their leadership around the need to follow just one agenda, just one proposal, because there cannot be two indigenous demands. This is the important thing, although there is constant debate in terms of improving, refining proposals.

– *Is it appropriate that CPESC remains separate from the MAS?*

Coordination is possible, if the President is committed to it, as has been the case, for example, with documentation. In the documentation campaign, brigades were organised and leaders accompanied the committees to meet the people who needed documents. This does not mean they are activists, the organisation is merely exercising its right and achieving its demands. It was the same with health, literacy.

Sometimes a bad image can be created if someone is an active member of a political party. The organisations must not fall into this trap. How can you claim legitimate demands if you are actively involved? You may end up falling in line behind the leader of the party, as has happened in many cases. The leader acts hierarchically and you have to do as you're told, like it or not. The organisations must have the freedom to demand their rights and all governments have the duty to listen to them. □

David Choquehuanca

“Our struggle goes beyond democracy”

When I am asked about Bolivia’s foreign policy under Evo Morales’ government, my answers usually have to focus on particular issues, such as our new relationship with the United States, our close *rap-prochement* with Cuba and Venezuela, or the various growing exchanges that are taking place with our neighbours, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Peru. But apart from these more conventional issues, when I leave the country the staff in our embassies tend to organise meetings for me with people interested in understanding our philosophy, our vision of the planet. This is something that is unfortunately not broadcast in the media’s news bulletins, either for practical reasons or because many of them do not make the effort to understand us.

For the Aymara, the Earth (*Pachamama*) is our mother, it is she who shelters the great family of living beings within which harmony between nature and man must predominate - this is true sustainable development. But at the moment the planet is deeply wounded because this harmony, this balance (*Tama*), is broken.

This is why, for us, not only everything that has life but everything that exists (*Taj Pacha*) is important and we are constantly striving for a return to this balance, to *Pachakuti*, the code that our brothers are beginning to uncover.

In this search for harmony, Brother Evo Morales is the bearer of the prophetic word of our brothers in the rest of the continent and the world.

In the search for *Pachakuti*, we enter another dimension with the code of *Kinsa Pia* that contains the titles of *Mallku*, *Wilka* and *Auka*, coming from our natural universities. In this way we are reclaiming our knowledge, and this is what we wish to share with the world.

Capitalism is based on money; socialism on the needs of man. The indigenous vision, however, is based on a harmonious life between nature and man and so, for example, the process that is taking place within the Constituent Assembly must enable not only the restructuring of a new society but also of a new life.

We are rebels. In Oruro department, there is a dangerous volcano which, as young boys, we were warned not to climb. But we are rebels (*larama*) and so when we reproach ourselves, we say, “Don’t be a rebel Indian”. But this is how we are, because they always wanted to subjugate us and we always rebelled and this is why we continue to talk in our Aymara language.

It was these Aymara rebels who took to the streets in October 2003 in the town of El Alto (and caused the fall of President Sánchez de Lozada). It was they, who, on this path to reclaiming our knowledge and our own ways of organising, also reclaimed Bolivia’s oil and gas for the country.

This is why the headquarters of Tupaj Katari (historical indigenous leader) were in El Alto and why we say “the rebels will return” and how it is understood that we were the force behind the siege of La Paz (indigenous mob against the colony that encircled the current seat of government in 1781).

How can we link this whole vision and way of life with the West? At university, we learn the laws made by and for man and which have led us to destruction, and this is why we say that it is the laws of nature that must guide us and our guide can be found in the *whipala* (Aymara flag) which incorporates a whole system of codes around the Cosmos-Being.

This is why, when our President advocates “Living Well”, that is, being *Kamiri Cápac*—a person who lives well— this does not mean a logic of living better or living worse, as it is within this logic that man’s predatory attacks on nature arise. This is why we say that our struggle goes beyond a democracy in which minorities are subjected to majorities, for subjugation is not living well.

Our great difference with the Left is that we conceive of a life of complementarity that goes even beyond freedom, which is why we talk of cosmic rights. This is what the world is expecting from our President because Western values have long been in crisis.

We are Brothers of Change (*Panaka Pachakuti*). Our struggle is for Them and for Us. We aspire to the well-being of All and hence this explains why, in our language, the words Friend and Enemy do not exist.

What does exist in Aymara is *Masi*, which means ‘we are similar’ and ‘we are different’ at one and the same time, and in this concept there is not reciprocity but complementarity.

In the Pachakuti code, we embrace what is universal and what is our own and this can be seen in the Carnival festivals. During the first days of celebration we dress up as characters from the world stage and during the final days we wear our own clothes. In this type of cultural event, anthropologists help us to systematize information but we want to guide ourselves and so we are lost, given that their logics impose models of understanding of our reality that are very far from their real depths.

All this is great and complex. We never say “we are well” or “we are ill”. There are things that cannot be translated and our ancestor, Taki Onkori, explains that the Ayra code gives an explanation of Being without Being. This can be illustrated with symbols such as the Bolivian flag – there I am – and in the Whipala or in Tupac Katari – there I am not -. And I have to say that unfortunately I no longer have time for the Not Being as the Foreign Office does not permit it. I am being absorbed by the Being because I cannot practise the Ayra code, I cannot be *Yatiri* (1).

To understand this, we prepare our meals according to the seasons and with a certain type of music and instruments such as the *tarka* or the *pinkillo* (wind instruments). At the moment I can eat but cannot feed myself, I am unable to plan meetings in line with the phases of the moon.

But we do not give up hope. We are aware that even the stars participate in taking decisions by consensus and so we are convinced that the time will come when we are going to govern ourselves and, in this context, I repeat, the Constituent Assembly is a great step forward in the long process of decolonisation that we have been confronting for more than five hundred years.

In this process of community reconstruction of our knowledge, of being absolutely clear that our future lies in our past (*Nayra*, which is both Behind and Ahead), we have not come to clarify the politico-economic model but to change it by peaceful means. We

have to achieve our objectives while reaching *Taiipi* (balance).

The first step is *Tanta*, which occurs when we talk, for example, in Parliament. If they do not listen to us we move on to *Chajwa* and, at this stage, we raise our voices. If, despite this, there is no response, we move on to *Thinku* which involves physical contact and during which we use the whip, which represents the ‘viper’ (a kind of leather lasso) and it is here that we must focus on Achachila Katari because we are simple intermediaries. The fourth level is *Auka Pacha* which is the time of *intifada*, of war, and it is in this context that the Red Ponchos must be understood in Omasuyos province, who have raised a *whipala* at the observation that there is no indigenous participation.

In this concept of the world that is decided in the *Tanta*, where the concept of time does not exist, one day the Sun will come out for us. We are in no hurry in this search for a life of balance, complementarity and respect for cosmic rights.

For the moment, the symbols are not being correctly used. Such is the case of the *whipala*, which represents the rainbow and does not belong to any specific sector because it is a symbol of inclusion in which all human beings are equal.

Apart from the colours of the rainbow, this flag has white on it to signify transparency, purity, clarity. Therein lies the *Willka*, which means Man of Light who seeks to be called *Katari* (hence it is understood that Julián Apaza may have become Tupac Katari).

Behind the white is black, the *Chamaka* that is the darkness from whence comes Power and it has to be used to save the planet because we belong to a culture of life, not of death. We read our codes in our fabrics, in our ceremonial acts. We are moving from the covering to the uncovering of our knowledge. □

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Julio Peñaloza Bretel

The indigenous face of Bolivia: confronting the racist *intelligentsia*



Photo: Tony Suárez



Picture postcard images for the Yanks and Europeans: protruding noses, high cheekbones, faced burnt by the sun and the icy wind of the *altiplano*. These are the striking facial features of the “bronze race” to which the intellectual, Alcides Arguedas,¹ referred and which he classified as a fundamental constituent part of a “sick people” –the Bolivian–, insofar as its inhabitants, diverse, distinct and remote from each other, make up a disparate and unviable society, torn by prejudice and a lack of desire to overcome this in order to join the Western, civilized, world.

It is these same features, a sculptor might call them stony, that can be seen in the face of Juan Evo Morales Ayma, elected on 18 December 2005 as the first president to emerge from the indigenous bowels of the most numerous native people in Bolivia - the Aymara – and who, together with the Quechua and smaller peoples of the lowlands, comprise 62 percent of the approximately ten million inhabitants that make up this (multi)national population.

This majority face in the Andean zone was that of the “shit Indian” who arrived without warning in the cities in search of fortune, leaving behind the vast and arid uncultivated lands of the high pampas of La Paz, Oruro and Potosí. This Indian was, for decades, swallowed up by the *homo urbanus* prior to 1952, and politically orchestrated following the consolidation of the National Revolution, which occurred in that year. But he was always considered a second-class citizen, a human being without the mental and physical faculties that would enable him to access essential civic rights, even in times of modern democracy (1982 to date).

It was unthinkable, an illusion, a vision belonging to mythology or legend, that an indigenous person would one day come to govern Bolivia, precisely because of this fabricated image of someone mentally inferior, dirty, illiterate, with only the spirit of revenge in him, and so he was condemned for generations to

be a “pack horse”², controlled and subjugated by the self-defined white and/or mestizo class.

Even today, the disdainful and exclusionary stance of the middle and upper class city dwellers continues unchanged, although now as a “precaution” they tend to conceal it. Against this enormous and diverse backdrop, Evo Morales is waging a daily struggle against the prevailing neocolonialism in order to refute those conservative voices, many of them strategically cloaked, appearing as if to finally acknowledge the other after “five centuries of oppression”³.

One year of his term in office has now passed and, so far, the Indians have not tried to invade the private properties of the whites, comfortably settled in the residential suburbs and, although the influence of Hugo Chávez’ Venezuelan government can be felt in many ways, the country has no anti-Bush showman and it maintains political and trading relations with the United States (e.g. war on drugs trafficking and expansion of the Andean Trade Promotion and Drugs Eradication Act – ATPDEA - ⁴), whose ambassador makes press statements and meets regularly with government officials.

In terms of relevant management actions, a substantial change has taken place with regard to natural resources whereby control over the oil and gas production chain has been recovered by the state. This latter has managed to satisfactorily negotiate new contracts with the oil transnationals without confiscating any fields, thus quadrupling national income from this sector. In the mining sector, the iron and steel company Vinto has been nationalised and a policy is being drafted to recover what was auctioned off by private individuals when Sánchez de Lozada was in power, making the most of the advantageous conditions offered by international and domestic market prices.

With its pluricultural and multilingual nature, the country’s day-to-day life bears little resemblance to the Balkanization of which some ominous voices forewarn, and this day-to-day life includes the participation of an unevenly-matched and disjointed political opposition. This opposition has its main platform in the mass media where it denounces what it considers to be an evil plot that will lead the country to totalitarianism, and in which the extreme of interethnic war will be necessary to resolve the central national dilemma of a triumph of confrontation over the preservation of balance based on a party system of majorities and minorities and the ever-present option of an alternation of power.

Confrontation or dialogue is the dilemma that has kept the “apolitical” urban dwellers on tenterhooks in

recent times. For propagandists and critics of the government, it is a question of the former; for those that look at things in a more balanced way, and do not participate actively in party politics because they do not belong either to corporate interests or to the organised grassroots movements, a gradual change is taking place that could lead to possible turmoil in a society characterised by high levels of conflict – clashes in Cochabamba between city dwellers and rural coca growers for example -, specific to a country that René Zavaleta Mercado⁵ lucidly defined as the country of dual power.

Although the media hype devised by conservative sectors may appear to indicate the opposite, the attitude of the government of “this Indian” is strikingly more rational and prudent than the “study-it-alls”⁶ would have us believe with their “scientific” readings aimed at offering the political and cultural opposition solid arguments with which to discredit him and diminish the credibility and wide popular support he enjoys. And this support is despite an administration that lacks experience in public affairs due, largely, to a lack of specialist staff within the multifaceted conglomerate of his political tool, the Movement to Socialism (MAS).

The first conclusion in favour of this *government presided over by an indigenous person*, and not an *indigenous government*, as sectors of the right so often suggest in their depiction of an ethnic apocalypse, is that this support is set to last and, for this reason, the Constituent Assembly will form the institutional framework that, with all the strength of the law, will make the prophecy of the dismembered leader of colonial times, Tupaj Katari, come true: “I will return and I will be millions.”⁷. That is, the long exploited and subjected indigenous peoples will finally obtain legal recognition and make historic demands for land, territory and the use of renewable and non-renewable natural resources, putting an end to their continuing systematic and indiscriminate exaction and plundering. In sum, a harmony between man and the land, as proclaimed in the Aymara world view and, in differing variations, in that of the other 34 indigenous peoples of Bolivia.

Operation Fear

This is the first time since the restoration of democracy in the 1980s that a single political force has managed to win an absolute majority in the presidential elections - 53.7 percent of the vote as opposed to 28 percent for the second placed candidate, the pro-

North American Tuto Quiroga - thus achieving the possibility of making a fundamental break with the immediate past. A past characterized by agreements between parties who, never obtaining more than half the votes had to seek such alliances in order to jointly govern and build governability, obtain a parliamentary majority and consequently share the power apparatus alternately between three forces that dominated the exercise of government over the last 25 years.

Those three forces are/were: the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR), the oldest and only historical party of the "masses"⁸, which led the 1952 Revolution, was the author of the agrarian reform, mine nationalization, universal vote and first education reform, and was responsible for heralding in the neoliberal era that commenced the privatization and alienation of natural resources in 1985; the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), more ideologically aligned with European social democracy than the progressive Latin American trends of the 1970s; and the Nationalist Democratic Action (ADN) of the late ex-dictator Hugo Banzer who won presidential power through the ballot box in 1997.

Evo Morales' MAS crushed all these forces in the elections, some of them realigned under different names and, in the early days of his administration, on the basis of an analysis more mathematical than political, he calculated that he would again sweep to victory in the elections for constituent assembly members (June 2006) and thus gain unbridled control of the Assembly in order to establish a new social contract, amending the constitution as he saw fit. This was a misjudgement on his part because, although he again won, this time he gained only 50 percent of the vote, not the two-thirds of the 255 assembly members necessary to sideline an opposition largely opposed to substantial changes to the Constitution that would affect their privileged position.

It was on this basis of a mishandling of the Constituent Assembly from the beginning, along with his opposition to the autonomies proposed by the so-called departments of the Crescent⁹ (the powerful Santa Cruz, the gas-producing Tarija, the cattle farming Beni and the highly depressed Pando, on the border with Brazil) that a solid platform was established from which to savage the government for its supposed authoritarian onslaught, its absolute seizure of all organised bodies of the executive, legislative and judicial powers. In other words, by committing two tactical errors, the government facilitated a realignment of the so-called traditional parties.

This first struggle between the emerging mass force of the social movements, headed by Morales, and the opposition parties of the centre and right led to certain conditions being established by the media, above all those run by businessmen from the east (the so-called *Oriente*) of the country - autonomists from the so-called Crescent -, who embarked on a sustained campaign to make the Bolivian president look like a puppet of Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez. It was with these latter that he signed a trade agreement known as the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), in contrast to and rejection of the North American FTAA. At the end of January this was also signed by Daniel Ortega on his return to the Nicaraguan presidency.

These attempts were steeped in folklorism, in the constant use of shock tactics around supposed underground movements, and had the aim of exterminating the indigenous Aymara (particularly those from the spirited province of Omasuyos, La Paz) and the coca growers of El Chapare (Aymara and Quechua in origin) who were opposing the non-indigenous Bolivians, particularly the "autonomists" or "independentists" of the Crescent. This constant psychological media manipulation of the fearful and unorganised urban middle classes - a manipulation apparently akin to the fabled "big bad wolf" or "there's a Red under your bed" of the 1960s and 70s, found echo in the national and international TV channels and the government initially came out badly in this media battle, largely due to its inexperience. The racist voices of the Bolivian *intelligentsia* were sufficiently strategically placed and financially protected to look after themselves both inside and outside the institutional apparatus that they had run for almost three decades and in which many of their organic and inorganic officials were still embedded, due to their experience and bureaucratic competence.

The Oriente landowners and the *bien-pensant* and learned people

Five decades of struggle against military dictators and neoliberalism, on the highways, in the countryside, in the mining centres, and in the coca growing villages, have hardened the worker/farmer organisations in the face of an established order that is now in a process of transformation, with the arrival of Evo Morales to power. The playing field is beginning to change now that the organised popular movement has a leader emerged from its defences, and there is now a need to work from a logic of change, involving

Photo: Maximiliano Failla

the rural workers, indigenous people, urban intellectuals and technicians of the Left in the running of the institutional apparatus and the administration of power.

This process is necessarily slow, if we consider the conciliatory tone - ostensibly different from that of his first months in office - noted in the most recent message made by the Bolivian president to the international community, through the country's diplomatic services in the Government Palace on Monday 5 February. "The ambassadors are our advisors, our international operators," said Evo and, in the key part of his speech came an enlightening statement: "Never again will there be civil war in Bolivia".

This message, assuming it remains constant over time, stemming from the credibility and confidence that a reliable and transparent government can generate, seems to consolidate the victory of respect for democracy and to herald - although it may seem an ideological contradiction in terms from a Marxist point of view - a reformist revolution¹⁰.

But of course it is not politically expedient for the landowners in the Oriente, those *latifundistas* who own vast swathes of land often illegally obtained over the course of the last half century in exchange for favours, to acknowledge this rhetoric because this, along with the government's designed policies, will destroy the political, social and economic control exercised in the Oriente by parastatal organisations such as the *Comité Cívico Pro Santa Cruz* and, behind this, the Santa Cruz Chamber of Industry and Commerce (CAINCO), the richest in Bolivia, and the Agricultural and Livestock Farming Chamber of the Oriente (CAO)¹¹.

In this context, the government must retrace its steps and embark on a shrewd strategy that does not put it within range of the anti-autonomist camp, given the harshness of political historical reality: Bolivia is a nation of nations like no other in Latin America and one that is struggling to overcome the paradox of a fragmented unity - Cambas in the east versus Collas in the west¹² -, fragmented even in the forms of organisation and action of its indigenous peoples, which vary between the historically aggressive and violent





actions of the highlands (Aymara and Quechua) and the more submissive and easily-led lowlands peoples (Chiquitano, Ayoreo, Mojeño, some of the Guarani, etc.), influenced in their psycho-social behaviour by the Jesuit settlements and missions of colonial times.

Before gaining independence and becoming established as a Republic (1825), everything that is now Bolivia could have formed part of other nations. For example, La Paz could have ended up as part of Peru, Santa Cruz and Tarija part of Argentina, and it is because of this that this nation, considered a "favourite daughter" by Simón Bolívar, was in danger of not developing into a sovereign nation, precisely because of its native ethnic multinational diversity. In this we also have to take account of the climatic variations and notable contrast in ecosystems, with two-thirds of the country lying within the Amazon region and the other third within the Andes mountain range. This is why the common description of Bolivia as the "country of the *altiplano*" is no more than a tourist stereotype.

In this ethnic, geographical and ecosystemic complexity lies the difficulty of implementing a single development model. In a structure of dissimilar time and space visions, in a context of different interests and historical evolutions, money, the opposition's sabotage and the private media companies have taken it upon themselves to demonstrate - both inside and outside the country - and as plainly stated by the political scientist Diego Ayo, that "there is an indigenist/communal/ethnic project of a fundamentalist nature, of semi-authoritarian countenance and populist nature, capable of breaking down the rule of law, and which is promoting a statist-communal economy with possible semblances of illegality, laying the foundations for an escalation in interethnic, interregional and class-based violence"¹³.

Such statements could lead one to believe that soon, within a decade according to Ayo, Bolivia will become the Yugoslavia of South America, with Santa Cruz as its Kosovo. And yet in spite of the government, with all its imperfections, mistakes, procedural blunders and vulgar tendency to manipulate and interfere in court decisions, the country generally has not changed its *modus vivendi*, although the intellectual allies of the Santa Cruz landowners and the so-called *bien-pensant* and learned people embark on a crusade to undermine the 'dictator in the making' that is Evo Morales.

The *bien-pensant* and learned people come from traditional families with academic/intellectual credentials, above all aligned with ex-president Carlos Mesa, Vice-president and successor to Sánchez de Lozada in October 2003, who imprinted on his government - over-

thrown by popular pressure in June 2005 - the stamp of an ideological indetermination that led the country to the dangerous brink of conflict and violence.

In a context of informative journalism liberally sprinkled with opinions but almost no interpretative or investigative journalism, these *bien-pensants* who lead the middle and upper classes continually invoke respect for the rule of law, pluralist good sense, and the "authoritarianism" of Evo Morales. But, in their noble-neoliberal logic, they simultaneously applaud the 2006 fiscal surplus, the increase in small and medium-sized companies, the positive export figures, the very fluid diplomatic/trade relations with neighbouring Argentina, Brazil and Chile and, above all, the signing of new contracts with large oil transnationals such as PETROBRAS and REPSOL in the form of a partial nationalization, even though when running the country, the neoliberals took it upon themselves to state that such an undertaking would be impossible because international decisions would bankrupt oil and gas-producing Bolivia.

Some with the power of money and others with the power of speech with which to manipulate information and opinion form the main informal nuclei of the opposition, an opposition that the MAS will have to fight in the boxing ring of ideas as it commences its second year in office. This will be once the more radical trend within the governing party - responsible for stirring up conflict such as the rash attempt at the beginning of January to obtain the resignation of the opposition Prefect of Cochabamba, Manfred Reyes Villa, resulting in two deaths due to street fights - has been eradicated, at least for now.

Indigenous or left-wing populist government?

The traditional Left has found a coherent channel in Bolivia by strategically merging with a project of indigenous identity. Evo Morales has managed to unite progressive figures from across the Left, something that leaders during the 1970s and 80s, such as Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz¹⁴ or even ex-president Jaime Paz Zamora (1989-1993) himself were unable to do. This alliance of indigenous peoples with an intellectuality or even a "progressive technocracy" can be seen in the new ministerial team, which includes indigenous leaders, former union leaders, civic-minded people and specialist professionals dealing with the technical areas of decision-making in government affairs. The same can be said for the composition of parliament - Senate and Deputies - and the Constituent Assembly.

For those for whom the concept of populism is synonymous with demagoguery, swimming against the tide of this prejudice, the contemporary Argentinian thinker Ernesto Laclau indicates that, "Populism exists whenever the masses are called upon to form collective players outside of the institutional apparatus"¹⁵, a concept that serves to define the Movement to Socialism (MAS), a grouping with party political status but which is peculiar in that it does not involve the concept of individual activism but of rural, indigenous and union collectives signed up to the political project that Evo Morales began under a borrowed acronym - *Izquierda Unida* (IU) - around two decades ago.

Referring to the emergence of governments of a left-wing tendency on the continent, Laclau states that, in international terms, "It is important to show that destabilisation of the Washington consensus will not lead to chaos but to a new kind of stability". This can be seen in the unchanging nature of an economy in which the market continues to regulate itself according to a logic of supply and demand but in which can be seen a return to State involvement, in terms of supervising, preserving and managing the national interests in its search for the creation of wealth.

The enemy continues to be the same but the combinations of ideologies and social players appear to be moving towards a consolidation of the unorthodox Left, with the strong influence and decisive participation of the indigenous people: "Any system whose democratic vocation leads it to increase popular participation needs to try out new institutional forms that undermine the patterns of oligarchic liberalism"¹⁶.

The challenge for Evo

On winning the presidential elections in Bolivia, Evo Morales shook the political world with a tour - prior to his formal investiture - that enabled him to travel the world dressed in his *chompa* (sweater, pullover), breaking all the established rules of protocol and etiquette. He has travelled like no other Bolivian president and governs by constantly moving from one city, one town, to another. He begins work at five in the morning in the Government Palace and his working day ends at around one in the morning the next day. He plays football and rackets and is as media-savvy as many of his predecessors. He took the bull by the horns in deciding, as a first government measure, to reduce his salary from four to less than two thousand dollars a month.

Evo is a politician with an international vocation but he has just one major weakness, common to some-

one who learned the ropes in the union world: his long speeches (four to five hours) aimed at his supporters sometimes lead him to excess and to facile descriptions of his adversaries, regardless of the specific importance of each of them. It will be his decision as to whether to choose the path of improvement in order to achieve the status of statesman or to remain as the leader of six federations of coca growers who look on him as their unquestionable guide.

In other words, Evo faces the challenge of transforming his leadership into political leadership for all citizens of the country. If he succeeds, his project may turn into a state project that will lead Bolivia out of last place in South America in terms of the indicators now used to measure human development. If he retains his indigenous identity without indigenist temptations, and overcomes the racists without racism, the majority popular sectors could renew the overwhelming trust they placed in him through the ballot box in December 2005. □

Notes

- 1 Bolivian historian from the early 20th century. His best known work is "*Pueblo enfermo*" but he also wrote, drawing on European thought in Paris, "*Los caudillos bárbaros*", "*Los caudillos letrados*", "*La Plebe en acción*", "*La dictadura y la anarquía*", books that form part of two volumes of his "*Historia general de Bolivia*". In his collected letters, published in 1979, can be read the following introductory text: "How many years will pass before these documents are discovered? What sort of people will discover them? Will it be an illiterate indigenous person, a lazy mestizo or a cultured white?"
- 2 "*Mula de carga*" was a common nobleman's expression from the times of *pongueaje*, before the Agrarian Reform of 2 August 1953. There are still elderly indigenous people to this day who work as "*aparapitas*", carrying heavy packages at the food markets.
- 3 In 1992, the five hundredth anniversary of the "meeting of two worlds" was commemorated in America and in Spain. These closer links led to the creation of an Indigenous Fund, a multi-lateral fund aimed at addressing the needs of all the continent's indigenous peoples. Spain made a cleverly marketed act of contrition, an international PR operation, by organising the Seville Fair at which the former colonies, today's Republics, showed off their special characteristics, including their exotic indigenous peoples.
- 4 The ATPDEA is a system of preferential tariffs that the US government offers to countries belonging to the Andean Community of Nations, including Bolivia, for the exportation of their textile production.
- 5 An outstanding Bolivian intellectual who, through his work, examines the antithesis of formal democracy and the democracy of the masses. One of his fundamental essays is "*Las masas en noviembre*" on the military coup of Gen. Alberto Natusch Busch (1979). This coup led to the so-called "Todos Santos Massacre" that left two hundred dead in the central San Francisco district of the government seat, La Paz.
- 6 These multi-talented media opinion makers are called "know-it-alls": just one of them can talk with authority on issues ranging

from Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to the Social Economic Function of the Land.

- 7 Julián Apaza (Tupaj Katari) and his wife Bartolina Sisa were two indigenous leaders who led the indigenous siege of La Paz against the Spanish Colony in 1781. He was dismembered in a public place by the royalists using four horses pulling in four different directions.
- 8 The Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNR) which, through its so-called Class Alliance strategy, caused contradictory radical transformations in the Bolivian state structure, first caused the populist measures of 1952 when an economic system run by the Tin Barons was brought down and, later, in 1985, when through decree no. 21060, structural adjustment (in this case recommended by Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs) began to be applied, heralding in twenty years of neoliberalism.
- 9 This group of departments is called the Crescent due to the geographic shape they form. They are characterized as containing such important natural resources as gas, oil, iron, rubber and Brazil nuts.
- 10 Reformist revolution or revolutionary reform because, without the extreme of the violent elimination of the dominant class, the changes that are taking place in the country include the recovery of state responsibilities that were lost during the neoliberalist privatization of services and strategic companies such as *Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos* (YPFB) and the dismantling of the *Corporación Minera de Bolivia* (COMIBOL) that took place in the country during the period of so-called State Capitalism from 1960 to 1984. And, in addition, the majority are being included in the decision-making, supported by the MAS government programme.
- 11 The *Comité Cívico Pro Santa Cruz* is a powerful corporation of corporations involving businessmen, landowners, traders and which is, in addition, organised into lodges such as that of the *Caballeros del Oriente* or the *Toborochis*. It forms part of the so-called Santa Cruz oligarchy. It has a colossal capacity for organising, as was seen last December when it managed to gather, by its own reports, a million people around the Cristo Redentor, right in the heart of the department's capital, in support of its request for autonomy, and in line with the victory obtained by the four departments of the Crescent in a referendum on au-

tonomy held on the same day as the elections for Constituent Assembly members (June 2006).

- 12 The generically named "*Cambas*" live in the Oriente of the country and the "*Collas*" in the west. There is a rivalry which, without going to the extreme of the Quiteños versus the Guayaquileños in Ecuador or the Basques versus "the world", contains deep regional differences and which is also linked to ultranationalist and racist positions that led to the human rights violations of last December when different expressions of the opposition staged a hunger strike against the government, calling for fulfilment of the referendum on autonomy.
- 13 Ayo Diego; "*El primer año y la siguiente década*" in the weekly magazine *Pulso* N° 383, year 7, 2 to 8 February 2007.
- 14 Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz was leader of the Socialist Party (PS-1). As Minister for Energy in the government of Gen. Alfredo Ovando Candia (1968-1969), he supervised the nationalization of the oil company Gulf Oil. Years later, he headed the malfeasance trial of the Banzer dictatorship in his position as national deputy. He was assassinated on 17 July 1980 on the stairs of the Bolivian Workers' Federation (*Central Obrera Boliviana* - COB) at the time of Luis García Meza's military coup. His body was never found. Jaime Paz Zamora was head of the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), founded clandestinely during the Banzer dictatorship of the 1970s. In order to gain the presidency of the Republic, he allied with his former opponent to govern Bolivia (1989-1993). He returned the favour, supporting Banzer's election in 1997.
- 15 Ernesto Laclau, a contemporary Argentinian thinker, is the author of the book "*La razón populista*". The quotes in the text come from an interview he gave to the international edition of the magazine *Veintitrés* (Buenos Aires, September/October 2006).
- 16 Ernesto Laclau, idem.

Julio Peñaloza Bretel is a journalist.. He was in charge of the country's state-run television during the transitional government of President Eduardo Rodríguez Veltzé. He organised and was responsible for the televised coverage of Evo Morales' historic election day and of his inauguration.

"Death to the collas". Over the past year, slogans like this have been appearing on the walls of Santa Cruz de la Sierra.
Photo: Marco Antonio Aimaretti, 2006



IWGIA - INTERNATIONAL WORK GROUP FOR INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

IWGIA's aims and activities

The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs - IWGIA - is a non-profit making, politically independent, international membership organization.

IWGIA co-operates with indigenous peoples all over the world and supports their struggle for human rights and self-determination, their right to control land and resources, their cultural integrity, and their right to development.

The aim of IWGIA is to defend and endorse the rights of indigenous peoples in concurrence with their own efforts and desires. An important goal is to give indigenous peoples the possibility of organising themselves and to open up channels for indigenous peoples' own organizations to claim their rights.

IWGIA works at local, regional and international levels to further the understanding and knowledge of, and the involvement in, the cause of indigenous peoples.

The activities of IWGIA include: publications, international human rights work, networking, conferences, campaigns and projects.

For more information about IWGIA's activities, please check our website at: www.iwgia.org

Publications

IWGIA publishes a yearbook, *The Indigenous World/El Mundo Indígena*, and a journal *Indigenous Affairs/Asuntos Indígenas*. Furthermore, a number of books thematically focussing on indigenous issues are published each year.

IWGIA's publications can be ordered by

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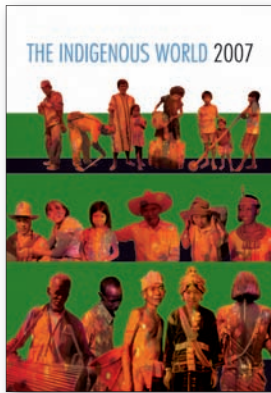
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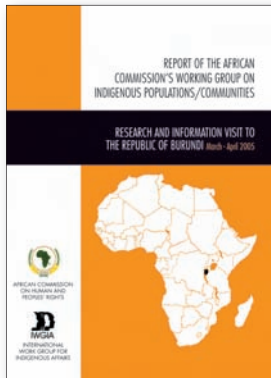


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