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**Above and Below: Peasants and Miners in Oruro and
Northern Potosí, Bolivia (1899-1929)**

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Northern Potosí, Bolivia (1899-1929)**

by

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Dissertation

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Dedicated to the memory of my father:

Leland “Skipper” Smale

1940-1990

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Above and Below: Peasants and Miners in Oruro and

Northern Potosí, Bolivia (1899-1929)

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During the first three decades of the twentieth century, massive industrial mining operations developed among the wind-swept hills and steppes of the Andean highlands. From out of these isolated mining camps arose one of the most militant union movements in Latin America—a movement so powerful that in 1952 the miners imposed a socialist revolution on the country. Mining prospered in the Andes even before the Spanish conquest in the sixteenth century. As the mines developed, European entrepreneurs cemented their control over the more advanced capital-intensive operations, but they never completely abolished small mills and mines controlled by the popular classes. The rivalry between the capital-intensive pole of mining and the artisan pole continues today. Both the Spanish state and the later republican government of Bolivia supported the dominant classes in this struggle. Also during the Spanish colonial period, urban mineworkers emerged as a separate and distinct segment of Andean society. The rapid industrialization beginning in the early 1900s fortified the nation's working class; as the

mines expanded and employed new technology to boost production, the workers strengthened their own union structures and experimented with new political philosophies. The Bolivian peasantry did not make a similar advance; the rural population of the country never shed the political and ideological tutelage of Bolivia's dominant classes.

Ironically, the Indian majority of the country did successfully resist oligarchic and state encroachment during the years 1899 to 1929. This victory, coupled with their only indirect contact with industrial capitalism, retarded the development of independent ideological programs among the peasantry. The Bolivian working class, with a mixed European and Andean cultural heritage, built upon a centuries-long history as a distinct social group to craft a forward-thinking ideology very much their own. Only the working class had enough direct exposure to capitalist industry and the vagaries of Bolivia's oligarchic government to understand the true character of the country's economic and political order. More than any other segment of Bolivia's popular classes, the working class of the mining camps accumulated the necessary historical experience and ideological sophistication to formulate viable alternatives to the nation's capitalist economy.

Table of Contents

List of Maps	xi
Introduction: 1932, 1952	1
Chapter One: Silver and Tin	27
Silver in the Colonial Period.....	33
Silver in the Nineteenth Century.....	56
Conclusion.....	71
Chapter Two: The Success of <i>Ayllu</i> Resistance	75
The Hacienda and the <i>Ayllu</i> in Bolivian History.....	77
Guaracata and Sullcavi vs. the Colquechaca Mining Company.....	96
Land Tenure on the Eve of Revolution.....	113
Conclusion.....	124
Chapter Three: Capitalism in the Countryside	127
The <i>Ayllus</i> and Industrialization.....	130
Laboring on the Hacienda.....	156
Peasant Political Movements.....	166
Conclusion.....	186
Chapter Four: Organization and Ideology	189
Laboring in the Boss's Shadow, 1899-1915.....	192
The Growth of Association, 1916-1923.....	215
The Massacre of Uncía, 1923.....	239
An Ideology of their Own, 1924-1929.....	251
Conclusion.....	258

Epilogue: The Permanent Revolution Triumphant.....	261
The Thesis of Pulacayo.....	268
Bibliography.....	276
Vita.....	289

List of Maps

Map 1: Railroads, Towns, and Cities of the Bolivian Altiplano.....	275
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Introduction: 1923, 1952

The proletariat is characterized by having the sufficient strength to realize its own objectives and even those of others. Its enormous weight specifically in politics is determined by the place that it occupies in the process of production and not by its relatively small numbers. The economic axis of national life will also be the political axis of the future revolution.

The Syndicalist Federation of Bolivian Mine Workers, Tesis de Pulacayo (1946)

Winter in the Bolivian Andes begins in late May; by June, the nights are clear and cold (the coldest months of the year closely correspond with the driest). On the night of 4 June 1923, the small mining town of Uncía in the isolated northern reaches of the department of Potosí experienced what is popularly remembered as the first massacre of striking miners by the Bolivian government. That evening the military opened fire with rifles and a machine gun on a crowd of workers gathered in the Plaza Alonso de Ibañez. The workers had congregated in the plaza to protest the arrest of their union leaders; men eventually exiled from Uncía to break the momentum of organization in the region. After the night of bloodshed, the Bolivian state ensured the return of company control over the mines and mills in the region, but the conflict presaged future confrontations between state and capital on the one hand and the Bolivian working class on the other.

Three decades later, the workers and the Bolivian military again confronted each other with very different results; this time most of the fighting took place in the national capital: La Paz. In La Paz, Bolivia the vertical geography of the city reflects the social tensions of the country. The wealthy and powerful occupy the river bottom, monopolizing the most temperate sector of this precipitous Andean valley carved by the Chuquiapu River, a tributary of the expansive Amazon. The poor and politically

marginalized Bolivian masses carve their precarious homes from the ascending walls of the valley—the higher altitude means cold and biting winds. On 9 April 1952, this vertically segmented city erupted in revolution. That morning the frustrated middle-class militants of the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (*Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario*, MNR) and a group of sympathetic police officers seized several important government buildings in downtown La Paz. The insurgents sought to inspire a quick and bloodless coup to defeat a military council led by General Hugo Ballivián, the de-facto leader of the nation. The military council was itself the product of a coup carried out the year before. General Ballivián's coup scuttled the 1951 electoral victory won by the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement. Although the April 1952 rebellion began like so many other political coups in Bolivian history—the product of party factionalism and military rivalries. But its final results surprised everyone. General Antonio Seleme pledged his police officers to the cause of the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement, in exchange he sought the presidency of the Republic. The conspirators envisioned a sudden victory, yet the overwhelming majority of the Bolivian military remained loyal to General Ballivián and the military council. The popular classes of La Paz and the miners of the nation decided this contest of power.

Throughout the day on April 9 and into the night, the population of La Paz rose in rebellion against military units moving through the city to strangle the coup. Despite the popular support, General Seleme and his followers sought refuge in the Chilean Embassy. The leadership of the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement, also pessimistic about the rebellion's chances for success, sought an accord with the military council. The popular classes of La Paz continued to fight. On 10 April, military units attempted to sweep the

streets of the capital—they encountered barricades and a population in arms. In the afternoon, mine workers from Milluni attacked the rear of army units encircling La Paz. The military council also received word that miners and their allies in Oruro had already destroyed three reinforcing army regiments. The Bolivian military evaporated.¹

Why begin this dissertation with events that transpired more than two decades after the time period that is its ostensible focus? The National Revolution of 1952 is the most important single event in twentieth-century Bolivian history. It is also the only social revolution in Latin America carried out by the workers for the workers. Without the mobilization of the urban popular classes, most especially the miners, the revolution never would have occurred. Without the rebellion of the Syndicalist Federation of Bolivian Mine Workers (*Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Mineros de Bolivia*, FSTMB), historians would remember the events of 1952 as just another attempted coup. Instead, the Revolution of 1952 led to the nationalization of the nation's central industry: the tin mines of the Bolivian Andes. The National Revolution destroyed the colonial institution of the hacienda and distributed land to rural workers throughout the country. Finally, the Revolution extended the vote to all adult Bolivians (including women),

¹ Liborio Justo (Quebracho), Bolivia: la revolución derrotada, raíz, proceso y autopsia de la primera revolución proletaria de la América Latina (Buenos Aires: Juárez Editor S.A., 1971), 166-68. Of the critical participation of Bolivia's mine workers in the National Revolution, Mario Tórrez Calleja, secretary of the Syndicalist Federation of Bolivian Mine Workers, wrote only a few days after the fighting:

When the time came to fight for the triumph of the revolution, Oruro and La Paz found in the miners' strength the most solid support for their resistance and their offensive. Regiments with a proud tradition of massacres such as the Camacho, the Andino, the Ingavi, the Lanza, and the Military College were defeated thanks to the heroic and intuitive military initiative of the men from the underground. Thanks to their valor, to the fact that the miners had preserved intact their organization, to their capacity for leadership, and to their combative spirit the great victory of April was possible.

Mario Tórrez Calleja, El Diario (La Paz), 18 April 1952 quoted in Trifonio Delgado Gonzales, 100 años de lucha obrera en Bolivia (La Paz: Ediciones ISLA, 1984), 209.

something that nearly 130 years of history as an independent republic failed to accomplish.

Prior to 1952, Bolivia never developed a social class with the will and power to make real the promise of independence and democracy. The retarded economic development of the country prohibited the emergence of such a dynamic group among the dominant strata of Bolivian society; the wealthy and powerful of the nation depended upon social and economic relations semi-colonial in character and resistant to democratic innovation. Even the most modern and cosmopolitan business interests, the mining magnates, profited from semi-colonial economic arrangements. Internationally, these industrial entrepreneurs compromised Bolivian sovereignty to secure investment and markets. Only the Bolivian popular classes led by their most cohesive component, the miners, developed a zealous interest in democracy and national emancipation. By 1952, only the until-now marginalized Bolivian masses could complete the struggle for independence and democracy begun in the Andes in the early nineteenth century.²

As industrial capitalism continued its uneven advance in Bolivia during the first half of the twentieth century, the miners followed a parallel route of development. The mines expanded and employed new technology to boost production, and the workers strengthened their own union structures and experimented with new political philosophies. Historical experience and Marxist ideology eventually allowed the miners to refashion themselves as a conscious revolutionary force. The Bolivian peasantry did not make a similar radical advance during the first few decades of the twentieth century.

² Independence in both Bolivia and Peru had to be imposed from the outside by military expeditions from Colombia captained by Simón Bolívar and José Antonio Sucre. Indalecio Liévano Aguirre, Bolívar (Caracas: La Presidencia de la República y la Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1988).

With little direct experience in industry, the rural population of the country never shed the political and ideological tutelage of Bolivia's dominant classes. In 1952, the peasants benefited from the worker's revolution; they seized land in the countryside dealing a deathblow to the hacienda. Yet in the end, they allied themselves with military counterrevolution after 1964.

Some contemporary scholarship on the National Revolution obscures the central role of the miners and instead focuses on the peasantry. In a recent article Laura Gotkowitz argues, "rural mobilization was central to the origins of the revolution."³ The assertion is predicated upon the continuous mobilization and agitation of rural residents during the 1940s right up until 1952.⁴ While acknowledging the existence of such agitation, the important question has to be asked: mobilization to what end? Gotkowitz asserts that rural Bolivians demanded a variety of concessions and reforms from both the government and the rural oligarchy: "land, community, justice and education."⁵ The peasantry did not call for the complete overthrow of the state or the total destruction of the oligarchy, yet the reforms they sought could never be achieved within the bounds of Bolivian government and economy as they existed before 1952. Gotkowitz's argument is only a recent example from Bolivian historiography of a long-term trend within social history stressing the revolutionary potential of the peasantry—a potential that should not be overestimated.

³ Laura Gotkowitz, "Revisiting the Rural Roots of the Revolution," in Proclaiming Revolution: Bolivia in Comparative Perspective, eds. Merilee S. Grindle and Pilar Domingo (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies; London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 2003), 165.

⁴ For work on this mobilization see Jorge Dandler and Juan Torrico A., "From the National Indigenous Congress to the Ayopaya Rebellion: Bolivia, 1945-1947," in Resistance, Rebellion, and Consciousness in the Andean Peasant World, 18th to 20th Centuries, ed. Steve J. Stern (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1987).

⁵ Gotkowitz, "Revisiting," 179.

Studies of peasant revolution and resistance first developed in the United States in the 1960s and grew in strength during the 1970s (in some countries the trend appeared earlier than in North America). The work of Barrington Moore and Eric R. Wolf is representative.⁶ In 1966, Barrington Moore argued that studies of the countryside are essential for understanding the development of modern political systems, both democratic and authoritarian. Moore's investigation focused almost exclusively on two critical rural groups: the landed upper classes and the peasantry. Yet in his study, peasants play a pivotal role in only one kind of modernizing political change—socialist revolution, where they “provided the main destructive revolutionary force” in both the Chinese and Russian revolutions.⁷ The language is controlled and moderate; he does not suggest that the peasantry is in anyway an independent revolutionary force. Moore reminds his readers that peasants have never staged a successful revolution “by themselves,” he acknowledges that they require “leaders from other classes.”⁸ Rebellion and revolution are two very different phenomena. The first is limited in scope and objective, reflecting a circumscribed political vision; the second requires an expansive understanding of what is to be done to overturn central social, political, and economic arrangements.

⁶ Barrington Moore, Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969); Eric R. Wolf, Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century (London: Faber and Faber, 1973); and Eric R. Wolf, Europe and the People Without History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982). For other important works typical of this trend see Eric J. Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959); James C. Scott, The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976); James C. Scott, Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); Jeffrey M. Paige, Agrarian Revolution: Social Movements and Export Agriculture in the Underdeveloped World (New York: Free Press, 1975); Charles Tilly, From Mobilization to Revolution (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1978); Samuel L. Popkin, The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); and Theda Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

⁷ Moore, Social Origins, xvi.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 479

In 1969, Eric R. Wolf extended the study of “peasant revolution” beyond China and Russia to include Mexico, Vietnam, Algeria, and Cuba. He was even more explicit than Moore in exploring critical alliances between the peasantry and other insurgent social groups. According to Wolf, rural rebellion led by peasants alone “tends to be self-limiting, and, hence, anachronistic.” He acknowledged that Marxist thinkers have long argued the need for outside leadership to “make a revolution” and that his own study “would bear them out.”⁹ In the case of Russia, the Communist Party and the working class provided the necessary revolutionary leadership. In both China and Vietnam, the Communist Party molded the peasantry into an effective army. The Cuban Revolution took shape when a small rebel group captured the apparatus of the Communist Party and organized the countryside. Parochial rebellion becomes revolution when outside groups, the working class or a radical political party, channel rural discontent to destroy the larger social structures causing peasant misery.

How has this interest in the revolutionary potential of the peasantry developed in Latin American historiography? Some historians, with their studies of the countryside, have begun to blur the critical differences between rebellion and revolution. In 1987, Steve J. Stern criticized scholarship that posits the “ideological parochialism and predictability” of the peasantry. Yet in his discussion he mentions only instances of rebellion; there is no discussion of revolution as something apart. With a study of rebellion alone, one might conclude that historians should “discard notions of the

⁹ Wolf, Peasant Wars, 294.

inherent parochialism and defensiveness of peasants.”¹⁰ Who would dispute that peasants are capable of autonomous revolt, both successful and unsuccessful? Yet rebellion alone cannot overturn the basic social, economic, and political structures of a nation—that requires social revolution. In a country like Bolivia where the peasantry has little experience with wage labor and no direct contact with capitalism, how are they going to develop an ideology capable of overthrowing capitalism, an economic system alien to their historical experience? That can only happen with the leadership of another class. In Bolivia, Marxism became the dominant ideology of revolution, and Marxism is an ideology of the workers. Studies of the peasantry that focus on rebellion alone dangerously overestimate the political sophistication of rural residents as relates to social revolution.

Other scholars claim to proceed with greater care. Florencia Mallon in 1995 cautioned against social history that errs in the “uncritical celebration of popular resistance.”¹¹ In her study of Mexico and Peru during the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth, she argues for the development of a popular national-democratic ideology among the peasantry; this political ideology supposedly becomes most visible during periods of prolonged rural resistance to foreign invasion and occupation. The argument is a response to scholars influenced by Marxist historiography, a tradition that emphasizes the practical limitations of peasant political thought.¹² Nationalism is

¹⁰ Steve J. Stern, “New Approaches to the Study of Peasant Rebellion and Consciousness: Implications of the Andean Experience,” in Resistance, Rebellion, and Consciousness in the Andean Peasant World, 18th to 20th Centuries, ed. Steve J. Stern (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 13, 15.

¹¹ Florencia E. Mallon, Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 9.

¹² Florencia E. Mallon specifically mentions the work of Heraclio Bonilla as a counter-point to her own work: Heraclio Bonilla, “The War of the Pacific and the National and Colonial Problem in Peru,” Past and Present (November 1978): 92-118; and Heraclio Bonilla, “The Indian Peasantry and ‘Peru’ During the War

generally seen as an ideology of the bourgeoisie, one they employ during and after the transition to capitalism. Mallon argues that in Latin America peasants could and did develop “alternative nationalist discourses.”¹³ The evidence does not support the weight of her contention. The rural insurgents that are the focus of her book appear primarily interested in local, parochial concerns: land, political autonomy, and the defense of their families and communities. Additionally, “outsiders” appear in the history again and again; merchants, lawyers, and military men figure as important leaders and advisors to the rural insurgents. There is no autonomous development of alternative peasant nationalism in Mallon’s study.

How have these larger studies of rural people affected Bolivian historiography? In a recent collection of essays published to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the National Revolution of 1952, not a single article focuses exclusively on the Bolivian working class; two examine the peasantry on the eve of revolution.¹⁴ Laurence Whitehead, in his contribution to the book, makes the observation that “the mining sector and the labor radicalism it generated” are now an “unfashionable” approach to the understanding the National Revolution.¹⁵ The emphasis on the peasantry is not an

with Chile,” in Resistance, Rebellion, and Consciousness in the Andean Peasant World, Eighteenth to Twentieth Centuries, ed. Steve J. Stern (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987).

¹³ Mallon, Peasant and Nation, 315.

¹⁴ The collection is Merilee S. Grindle and Pilar Domingo eds., Proclaiming Revolution: Bolivia in Comparative Perspective (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies; London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 2003). The two articles that focus on the countryside during the decades before the National Revolution are Gotkowitz, “Revisiting;” and Brooke Larson, “Capturing Indian Bodies, Hearths and Minds: ‘El hogar campesino’ and Rural School Reform in Bolivia, 1920s-1940s,” in Proclaiming Revolution: Bolivia in Comparative Perspective, ed. Merilee S. Grindle and Pilar Domingo (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies; London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 2003).

¹⁵ Laurence Whitehead, “The Bolivian National Revolution: A Twenty-First Century Perspective,” in Proclaiming Revolution: Bolivia in Comparative Perspective, ed. Merilee S. Grindle and Pilar Domingo (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies; London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 2003), 27.

entirely new development in Bolivian historiography. Susan Eckstein argued in 1976 that land reform made the events of 1952 and 1953 a true revolution, and that the working class had already “gained access to power...directly or indirectly through political parties closely associated with labor.”¹⁶ Reading the National Revolution as a peasant movement is a contentious issue in Bolivian historiography. Most contemporary boosters of the peasantry view their scholarship as a reaction to earlier work on 1952 that is Marxist in orientation, with a focus on the working class. The older reading of events deserves reconsideration.

Bolivian historians, many of them not professionals, guided by a Marxist framework of analysis (often Trotskyist in orientation) have better identified and explained the central characteristics of the National Revolution of 1952 than foreign historians, mainly professionals, employing other analytical approaches. Much of the misunderstanding about the true character of the 1952 National Revolution derives from a misunderstanding of the balance of power that existed in the country after April 1952. The MNR was not a revolutionary party; both the left and the right wings of the party were instead mildly nationalist in character. If the party in office from 1952 to 1964 was not revolutionary, how then did the events of 1952 become a true social revolution? The solution to this dilemma can be found in the concept of “dual power”, first used by Lenin to describe the political situation in Russia following the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.¹⁷ In Russia the unstable situation of “dual power” resolved itself in the direction of

¹⁶ Susan Eckstein, The Impact of Revolution: A Comparative Analysis of Mexico and Bolivia, Contemporary Political Sociology Series, ed. Richard Rose, vol. 2 (London: Sage Publications, 1976), 42-43.

¹⁷ V.I. Lenin, “The Dual Power,” March 1917 to June 1918, vol. 2. of Lenin: Selected Works in Three Volumes (New York: International Publishers, 1967), 18-20. For an application of the concept to the context of Bolivia see: René Zavaleta Mercado, El poder dual (Cochabamba: Los Amigos del Libro, 1987).

socialism; in Bolivia “dual power” eventually degenerated into counterrevolution. Yet after April 1952 a situation of “dual power” existed in Bolivia very similar to that of Russia in 1917. The MNR and its president Víctor Paz Estenssoro figured as the titular heads of the new Bolivian state—this state lacked substance and power, but in 1952 and 1953 a second pole of power existed in Bolivia—the armed might of the workers and the peasantry in the form of miner and peasant militias. All of the National Revolution’s great accomplishments occurred during its first two years of “dual power:” the nationalization of the tin mines, agrarian reform, and the extension of the franchise to all adult Bolivians. The MNR and a rebuilt military did not have the power to begin reversing these social changes until 1985. Therefore, the organized workers stand as the crucial revolutionary protagonists in the 1952 National Revolution. The basic question is therefore: how did labor achieve this revolutionary role in a country like Bolivia suffering from uneven capitalist development?

This dissertation seeks the roots of the 1952 National Revolution in an earlier, seemingly more tranquil time. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, Bolivia experienced a surprising period of economic, political, and social peace. The years 1899 to 1929 marked the height of both economic liberalism and oligarchic rule in the land-locked Andean republic. During this era the urban popular classes, most specifically the miners, came to know and understand international capitalism and the liberal, oligarchic state in their most unadulterated forms. The trends of the period are a simple continuation of previous decades, but specific aspects—industrialization, state building, and the growth of the working class—develop with greater intensity and vigor during the new century.

This dissertation's study of the first three decades of the twentieth century anticipates the events of 1952; this forward-looking perspective makes the subject of this project different from much contemporary labor history. The dissertation does more than just discuss contested hegemony; it goes beyond a search for worker and peasant agency; and it does not focus on everyday resistance. Instead, the dissertation strives to reveal the history of a revolutionary working class in the making. Bolivia is an underdeveloped, dependent nation; for most of its history the peasantry has dominated the demographics of the country. Peasants are important subjects of study in the first half of the dissertation, but the countryside never spawned a social-revolutionary class. The uneven industrialization of the nation did not create a working class capable of rivaling the demographic weight of the peasantry, yet the miners occupied a strategic position in the Bolivian economy. Historical experience and ideology prepared them to exploit that position and forge a social revolution.

Labor history that limits itself to a study of resistance creates an incomplete story—resistance alone is not victory for the masses. This project describes Bolivia's popular classes during an important period of industrial development and state building, but it also explains how the workers began to organize themselves into a force capable of destroying both the state and capitalist industry. Eternal resistance is not the goal of an ideologically vigorous working class; liberation from exploitation is the final goal. In 1952, the workers of this small Andean republic temporarily achieved the ultimate goal—the emancipation of labor.

The dissertation has both a specific class perspective and a well-defined regional focus. Industrial development and state building will be explored from the perspective of

Bolivia's popular classes: the peasantry and labor. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, the population of Bolivia could be divided into two broad groupings: the dominant classes and the popular classes.¹⁸ Each of these halves might be further divided into smaller units. To begin, the dominant classes encompass the leaders of business, both foreign and national, the upper-middle class (urban professionals, state bureaucrats, and large merchants), and the rural oligarchy—large landowners. The Bolivian pejorative for this group as a whole is *la Rosca*.

In a similar manner, the popular classes might be broken into smaller groups based on economic vocation. First of all, there is the sizable Bolivian peasantry; during the first half of the twentieth century, this was the overwhelming majority of the national population. Employing a definition of urban so broad as to be absurd: "cities, towns, cantons, missions, and vice-cantons with more than 200 inhabitants," the 1900 census still counted 73.2 percent of Bolivia's population as rural.¹⁹ The country retained its rural and agricultural character during the following decades. In 1950, 72 percent of the population still labored in agriculture and related economic activities.²⁰ A demographic mass as large as the Bolivian peasantry demands further division: rural residents might be parsed into three different groupings based on their relationship to the land: hacienda residents, individual smallholders, and *ayllu* (a traditional Andean Indian community) members. Hacienda residents do not own the land they live on or work on, they must rent it. Individual smallholders own the land they work, yet they may rent part of it to

¹⁸ I make a conscious choice to avoid the word "elite" and its various permutations—elite politics, elite culture, etc. "Elite" implies some sort of superiority over other social groups.

¹⁹ For some reason the census did not record mining camps with more than 200 residents as urban areas. Oficina Nacional de Inmigración, Estadística y Propaganda Geográfica, Censo general de la población de la República de Bolivia...1900, vol. 2 (La Paz: Taller Tipo-Litográfico de José M. Gamarra, 1904), 17-18.

²⁰ Herbert S. Klein, Bolivia: The Evolution of a Multi-Ethnic Society (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 228.

someone else. Finally the *ayllus* a system of communal landholding (not necessarily egalitarian) with centuries of history in the Andes. The differences between these three groups will be discussed in greater detail in chapters two and three.

The second major constituent part of Bolivia's popular classes was the bulk of urban residents, a group perhaps more diverse than the peasantry: artisans, petty merchants, domestics, and wage laborers (the most important segment of which was the miners). In 1900, Bolivia had only six cities with more than 10,000 residents: La Paz, Cochabamba, Potosí, Sucre, Santa Cruz, and Oruro. Far and away the largest urban settlement in the country was La Paz with 60,031 inhabitants (7,334 of whom are listed as rural). In 1900, Cochabamba was the second city of the republic with 21,881 inhabitants. Oruro, the most important urban area for this dissertation, was the sixth largest city in Bolivia with 13,575 residents and an additional 2,323 in nearby mining camps.²¹ As the census of 1900 recorded any small settlement of more than 200 persons as urban, historians need to create their own more stringent requirements for calculating what percentage of Bolivia's population lived in cities or large towns at the turn of the last century.²² Using population centers with more than 5,000 inhabitants as a base for calculation, only 9.3 percent of Bolivian residents might be considered urban in 1900.²³

²¹ Oficina Nacional de Inmigración, Estadística y Propaganda Geográfica, *Censo general...1900*, vol. 2, 17.

²² Using the liberal definition of "urban" employed in the census, one arrives at a figure of 26.9 percent of the population classed as urban in 1900—a ridiculously inflated number. Ibid.

²³ This calculation deserves further explanation. Herbert Klein says this about census figures for 1900 and the 1950s: "Between 1900 and 1952 the urban population (those living in cities or towns of 5,000 or more) had risen from 14.3 percent to 22.8 percent of the national population." Klein, *Bolivia*, 227. The figure 14.3 percent in 1900 is not believable. The census records only seven settlements in Bolivia with an urban population greater than 5,000. After Oruro, which is number six, there is only the town of Punata in the region of Cochabamba in seventh position. Punata is recorded to have an urban population of 5,788 and a rural population of 10,099. Punata was most certainly a small town of just over 5,000 with some additional 10,000 individuals living in the countryside outside of the town. Klein could only get his figure of 14.3 percent by including in his calculations the rural population around a number of small towns. Taking into account only the "urban" population of these seven cities or towns, one gets a figure of 151,632

By 1952, the urban population of the country had grown to 23.3 percent of the national total.²⁴ As a group, the urban popular classes experienced significant growth (for such a poor and rural country) during the first half of the twentieth century. As this dissertation will discuss, they became a significant consideration in national politics by the 1920s.

Outside of these two great divisions in Bolivian society—the dominant classes and the popular classes—stood the Bolivian state. The apparatus of the state might primarily be described as all government functionaries from the highest to the lowest—from the President of the Republic to the local *corregidores* (the political boss of a small town and the surrounding countryside). The state employed teachers for Bolivia's urban and rural schools. It ran the postal service and commanded the police. The nation's courts formed an integral part of the structure of state power. Finally, the Bolivian military represented its most powerful arm. The state was essentially a tool in the hands of nation's dominant classes—it did not function to promote the interests of the popular classes.

Just as the dissertation focuses on Bolivia's popular classes, there is a special emphasis on one region of the country: Oruro Department and the northern segment of the neighboring Potosí Department. This project is not a comprehensive history of the mining industry in Bolivia, nor is it the complete story of the making of the Bolivian

individuals, or only 9.3 percent of Bolivia's total population in 1900. Oficina Nacional de Inmigración, Estadística y Propaganda Geográfica, *Censo general...1900*, vol. 2, 17.

²⁴ For the 1950s my own numbers are quite close to those of Klein. He calculated that 22.8 percent of the population lived in towns or cities of over 5,000 residents in 1952. Klein, *Bolivia*, 227. An explanation of my calculations from the 1950 census—working from the numbers of those actually counted in the census rather than the “adjusted” numbers, I calculated a total population of 630,647 in settlements larger than 5,000 inhabitants (there are nineteen such towns or cities in 1950). This is 23.3 percent of the national population actually covered by the census in 1950. Ministerio de Hacienda y Estadística, Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, *Censo demográfico 1950* (La Paz: Editorial “Argote,” 1955), 11-45.

working class.²⁵ It is primarily a regional study focusing on the impact of industrialization and modernization for the popular class of one part of the Bolivian Altiplano. Today, Oruro and northern Potosí bear the undeniable mark of poverty and economic decay; during the first decades of the twentieth century, the departments presented a very different panorama. Between 1899 and 1929, the region saw a massive infusion of foreign capital and the creation of truly industrial mining enterprises. For decades, Oruro and northern Potosí figured as the industrial heartland of the nation; they also became the birthplace of a militant and politically powerful working class. Why does this dissertation split the northern segment of Potosí from the rest of the department and attach it to a study of Oruro? For much of the twentieth century, northern Potosí (more specifically that portion of the department known today as the Bustillos Province) enjoyed closer economic and political ties to neighboring Oruro than to the rest of Potosí. After 1921, a railroad bound the mines and mills of Llallagua and Uncía to the town of Machacamarca in Oruro. The earthen roads between Uncía and Potosí were difficult and poorly maintained. Also, Simón Patiño's company (Patiño was Bolivia's greatest "tin baron"), which came to dominate the northern Potosí mines after 1924, maintained its

²⁵ For other histories of mining in Bolivia see: Juan Albarracín Millán, El poder minero en la administración liberal (La Paz: 1972); Juan Albarracín Millán, Bolivia: el desentrañamiento del estaño, los republicanos en la historia de Bolivia (La Paz: Ediciones "AKAPANA", 1993); Peter Bakewell, Miners of the Red Mountain: Indian Labor in Potosí, 1545-1650 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984); Antonio Mitre, Los patriarcas de la plata: estructura socioeconómica de la minería boliviana en el siglo XIX (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1981); Antonio Mitre, Bajo un cielo de estaño (La Paz: Biblioteca Minera Boliviana, 1993); Roberto Querejazu, Llallagua: historia de una montaña (La Paz: Los Amigos del Libro, 1978); Vicente Rahal, Sangre y estaño (presencia de Bolivia) (Santiago: Editorial Atacama, 1958); and Gustavo Rodríguez Ostria, El socavon y el sindicato: Ensayos históricos sobre los trabajadores mineros, siglos XIX-XX (Instituto Latinoamericano de Investigaciones Sociales). For studies of the Bolivian labor movement see: Agustín Barcelli S., Medio siglo de luchas sindicales revolucionarias en Bolivia (La Paz: Editorial del Estado, Dirección de Informaciones de la Presidencia de la República, 1957); Delgado G., 100 años; Zulema Lehm A. and Silvia Rivera C., Los artesanos libertarios y la ética del trabajo (La Paz: Ediciones del THOA, 1988); Guillermo Lora, Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano, 4 vols. (Cochabamba: Los Amigos del Libro, 1968-1980); and June Nash, We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

central Bolivian office in Oruro. The mining industry was the central preoccupation of government in the region—protecting and fomenting its growth was the primary concern of the state.

The history, strength, and character of the Bolivian state are of exceptional importance for a study of the nation's popular classes during the first three decades of the twentieth century. From 1880 until the 1930s, the state clearly functioned to promote and defend the interests of the mining industry; only, the government did not concern itself with the development of a national business class, instead it served foreign or transnational interests. The peculiar character of the nation's economy and government—underdeveloped and dependent—not only allowed for but necessitated the preservation and perpetuation of pre-capitalist and quasi-colonial institutions. The Bolivian economy during the early twentieth century was capitalist, and the state existed to serve capitalist economic interests, but Bolivia did not enjoy a central position in the world economic system—a position dominated by the United States and the nations of Western Europe. The state in the primary capitalist nations attended to the needs of their own business class; no similar class existed in Bolivia. The Bolivian state and the nation's dominant classes depended upon and served as clients of the more powerful capitalist nations and their business interests.

The Bolivian state expanded and grew in power during the first decades of the twentieth century, yet this expansion was geographically uneven. In Oruro and northern Potosí, the government was generally incapable of projecting and maintaining state power in the countryside. The state was much more effective in controlling urban areas, the mining camps, and land along the course of the railroads. A more modern and

capitalist society emerged in the cities and towns of the region than might be found in the pastoral and agricultural recesses of the Altiplano. Wage labor, public education, a professional police force, and the promise of electoral democracy became the norm in the small urban settlements of Oruro and northern Potosí during this period. In the countryside, a more traditional economic and social order persisted well into the twentieth century. Pre-capitalist labor arrangements, the delegation of state functions to the leaders of Indian communities or landowners, and a dearth of modern services prevailed in rural areas.

The Bolivian state itself underwent an important political change on the eve of the twentieth century. Between 1898 and 1899 the nation experienced a bloody civil conflict known as the Federalist War. Although the fighting inspired massive popular participation on the part of the country's Indian peasantry, the war began as a test of strength between two factions of the nation's dominant classes: the oligarchy of Sucre and the oligarchy of La Paz.²⁶ The wealthy of Sucre controlled the ruling Conservative Party, whereas the leaders of La Paz dominated the upstart Liberal Party. The Liberal Party claimed to represent the ideals of federalism in the face of centrist Conservative rule, but the espoused political differences were often exaggerated. The war was an oligarchic duel for control of the government and the right to choose the site of the national capital. What were the practical implications of the Federalist War? The Liberal Party of La Paz emerged victorious from the conflict; they immediately fixed the national capital in their own city, replacing the historic capital of Sucre. La Paz lay closer to the

²⁶ The Federalist War (1898-1899) will be discussed in more detail later in this dissertation. For an account of the conflict see: Ramiro Condarco Morales, Zárate, el "Temible" Willka: historia de la rebelión indígena (La Paz: Talleres Gráficos Bolivianos, 1966).

Pacific Ocean and the rail lines that connected the mining heart of the country to the international market. The Conservative Party in the late nineteenth century had already centered the national economy around the mining export sector; the Liberal Party further bound Bolivia to the international metals market and the dictates of foreign capitalists.

This dissertation presents three principal arguments about the peasantry of the southern Altiplano for the years 1899 to 1929. As mentioned earlier, the peasantry dominated Bolivia's demographic make-up during the first half of the twentieth century, and Oruro and northern Potosí reflected the rest of the nation in this respect. First, the *ayllus* or Indian communities of the region experienced enormous success in defending both their land and their organizational autonomy. To do so they employed defensive strategies similar to those used in the colonial period: recourse to the courts and minor rebellion. Scholars generally portray the final decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth as a time of tribulation for Bolivia's Indian communities—an important part of the nation's peasant population. The alienation of community land and the expansion of the hacienda are the most common avenues of inquiry; these topics deserve further consideration. The historian Erick Langer asserts that during these decades large rural properties aggressively expanded their lands at the expense of their neighbors: smallholders and Indian communities. He contends that only the establishment of large haciendas at the end of the seventeenth century can rival this period for the alienation of community land.²⁷ Silvia Rivera agrees with the conclusion; she sees the years 1900 to 1920 as a period of voracious, fraudulent, and violent land

²⁷ Erick D. Langer, Economic Change and Rural Resistance in Southern Bolivia, 1880-1930 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 2.

expropriation.²⁸ These characterizations of the early twentieth century may apply to some Bolivian departments, but others—especially those containing the open steppes of the Bolivian Altiplano—have a very different history. Both Oruro and northern Potosí provide a striking contrast to the history of land alienation in the department of La Paz.²⁹

The resistance of the Indian communities of Oruro and northern Potosí during the late nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth must be considered a success. This is not a debased definition of “success” as the word is often defined in much contemporary labor and social history. A simple demonstration of resistance and agency are enough for many historians to term failed social and political movements a success.³⁰ The resistance of the *ayllus* was a “success” as they might define it—they succeeded in defending their land from alienation, and they preserved much of their political and social autonomy as well. The failure of ayllu resistance in other Bolivian departments should not be generalized as applying to the whole of the nation. As we will see, two neighboring departments in similar climactic and environmental zones can have quite divergent histories when it comes to the alienation of community land and the expansion of the hacienda system (the contrast between the departments of Oruro and La Paz is striking).

²⁸ Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, “Oppressed but not Defeated”: Peasant Struggles among the Aymara and Qhechwa in Bolivia, 1900-1980 (Geneva: United Nations Research Institution for Social Development, 1987), 18.

²⁹ Erwin P. Grieshaber notes the vitality of Indian communities in La Paz, Oruro, and Potosí up to 1877. After 1877, the communities of La Paz and some parts of Potosí began to suffer the expansion of haciendas in a way that the communities of Oruro and northern Potosí never did. Erwin P. Grieshaber, “Survival of Indian Communities in Nineteenth-Century Bolivia: A Regional Comparison,” Journal of Latin American Studies 12, no.2 (Nov., 1980), 223-269.

³⁰ One egregious example of this is Doris M. Ladd, The Making of a Strike: Mexican Silver Workers’s Struggles in Real del Monte, 1766-1775 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988).

Secondly, the peasant population of the Altiplano, both those living as members of an Indian community and those with their residence on haciendas, did have a limited contact with the capitalist economy and the Bolivian state, but those connections were often pre-capitalist and quasi-colonial in character. The peasantry often served the interests of both the government and mining entrepreneurs, but that service was often clothed in older social and economic arrangements that predated industrial capitalism. The government employed Indian tribute payments and forced labor drafts to skim money and workers from the *ayllus* and funnel them into the hands of industrial capitalists. The hacienda was another stronghold of pre-capitalist and quasi-colonial social relations yoked to the interests of modern industrial capitalism. Bolivia failed to produce a true rural working class (i.e. a class of landless wage laborers); the dominant classes profited enormously from semi-feudal arrangements that required little capital investment.

Finally, because of the circuitous contact rural residents had with both the modern Bolivian state and capitalism, they failed to develop a comprehensive understanding of both. They lacked the necessary historical experience that might allow them to formulate viable political programs for improving their social and economic position—the most they might hope to do on their own (despite their demographic preponderance in the national population) was defend the status quo. This study does not deny the ideological creativity of Bolivia's rural population, yet their relationship to the means of production as hacienda tenants, members of an Indian community, or independent smallholders limited their ability to completely know the Bolivian state and economy—to identify the structural impediments to reform. As influential segments of the Bolivian oligarchy

depended upon pre-capitalist social and economic arrangements for their profits, the state (in part an expression of oligarchic power) could never permit the reforms that many Indian leaders sought. Only through the complete overthrow of the oligarchy and the destruction of the Bolivian state might the popular classes achieve the most basic of reforms.

As for the urban popular classes of Oruro and northern Potosí, this dissertation presents two principal arguments for the first decades of the century. First, more than any other segment of Bolivia's popular classes, the urban popular classes, most especially the working class of the mining camps, accumulated the necessary combination of historical experience and ideological sophistication to formulate viable alternatives to the nation's capitalist economy. Only the working class had enough direct exposure to capitalist industry and the vagaries of Bolivia's liberal, oligarchic government to understand the dependent and capitalist character of the country's economic and political order.

Secondly, the mining working class of Bolivia was more mestizo (a hybrid of Native American and European culture) and urban than previous scholars have wanted to admit. The miners of Oruro and Potosí can trace an unbroken history deep into the colonial period that marks them as a separate and distinct social group. A widespread and fundamental misunderstanding exists in Bolivian historiography as to the composition, character, and development of the mining labor force during the first half of the twentieth century. This misunderstanding might best be described as the "peasant into miner" thesis, which postulates that Bolivia's mining labor force consisted mainly of recent migrants from the countryside. What are the historiographic origins and implications of

the “peasant into miner” hypothesis? The historiography of Peru has had an enormous impact on the study of Bolivia in this respect.³¹ A focus on rural migrants to the mining camps, whether this was the objective reality in Bolivia or not, has spawned a whole constellation of related arguments. One related idea growing out of this supposition might best be described as the “barriers to proletarianization” thesis: the argument that the rural origin and connections of mine laborers impeded the development of an urban working-class consciousness. A second related academic tendency is for some scholars to look for “the Indian under the miner’s hard-hat”: to see the miners as Indian in their cultural and social practices. This line of thought has even led some scholars to formulate arguments opposed to the “barriers to proletarianization” thesis, namely that the Indian character of Bolivia’s miners makes them more revolutionary. If one discounts the “peasant into miner” thesis, then all of the related arguments are false in their initial assumption.

These critical misunderstandings are clearly on display in a recent essay by Alan Knight. In making a comparison between Mexican and Bolivian mine workers, Knight relies upon the scholarship of June Nash and Michael Taussig for his understanding of the Bolivian working class.

³¹ For scholarship on Peruvian mining that relies upon the “peasant into miner” thesis see: Josh De Wind, Peasants Become Miners: The Evolution of Industrial Mining Systems in Peru 1902-1974 (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1987); Alberto Flores Galindo, Los mineros de la Cerro de Pasco, 1900-1930: un intento de caracterización social (Lima: Pontfíca Universidad Católica del Perú, 1974); and Florencia E. Mallon, The Defense of Community in Peru’s Central Highlands: Peasant Struggle and Capitalist Transition, 1860-1940 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983). For scholarship on Bolivia that relies upon the same supposition see: June Nash, We Eat the Mines; and Michael Taussig, The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980). A variant of the thesis might be found in the following projects on Bolivia: Erick D. Langer, “The Barriers to Proletarianization,” International Review of Social History 41 (1996); and Ricardo A. Godoy, Mining and Agriculture in Highland Bolivia: Ecology, History, and Commerce Among the Jukumanis (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1990). Langer and Godoy note the participation of peasants in the mining industry without arguing a peasant origin for the industry’s labor force as a whole.

Since the days of the *mita*, Bolivia's mines had relied on Indian labor drafts, drawn from the massive Andean peasant population, while Mexico's mines had largely relied on free wage labor, chiefly migrants from the south who trekked north in search of income and livelihood. Northern colonial Mexican mining towns, like Chihuahua, tended to be fluid, mobile and mestizo.... Bolivian mining communities tended to be more homogeneous, replicating Indian/peasant practices in a harsh, isolated setting: the cult of the *tío* and Pachamama, 'pagan' practices, and anthropomorphic visions of the mine.³²

The urban popular classes of Oruro and northern Potosí, including the miners, consciously constructed a racial and cultural identity that was non-Indian. During the years 1899 to 1929 the urban popular classes constructed, or better said, continued to build, a cultural and racial identity that was very much their own. This identity might loosely be described as mestizo. What eventually emerged from the 1920s was a racial and cultural identity closely tied to class that allowed the urban popular classes to differentiate their own interests from those of other social groups in most important circumstances.

The points mentioned above generally suggest a progressive story, yet the development of the Bolivian working class was not without its pitfalls and missteps. The urban popular classes, captained eventually by the miners, experienced enormous difficulty in crafting a durable alliance with the nation's peasantry, the overwhelming majority of the national population and a necessary ally in any confrontation with the nation's dominant classes. As mentioned above, the urban popular classes constructed an identity that was primarily mestizo in character, creating a chasm of racial division between themselves and the peasantry. Here, one should not fall into the fallacy of

³² Alan Knight, "Domestic Dynamics of the Mexican and Bolivian Revolutions Compared," Proclaiming Revolution: Bolivia in Comparative Perspective, ed. Merilee S. Grindle and Pilar Domingo (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies; London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 2003), 61-62.

thinking that “peasant” and “Indian” are synonyms in early twentieth-century Bolivia, such was not the case. But a hefty percentage of rural residents did probably identify with a Quechua or Aymara cultural background, especially in the highlands of Oruro and Potosí. The failure to craft a stronger alliance between the urban popular classes and the peasantry must be blamed on working class chauvinism and base racism. A militant mestizo identity dangerously divided urban workers from the peasantry: one of the two fatal flaws of the National Revolution of 1952.

A second failing of working-class political and ideological development was the inability to completely extirpate oligarchic liberal-democratic ideology. This second fatal flaw of 1952 can be traced to the first decades of the twentieth century and further into the past. Prior to the general spread of socialist or anarchist political programs among the Bolivian working class, urban labor suffered the ideological tutelage of the country’s dominant classes. Liberal-democratic and republican ideals heavily influenced Bolivia’s union movement during its early formative years; the shock of state violence and capitalist intimidation eventually pushed the workers in a different ideological direction. The miners finally developed an advanced Marxist political program, but the background taint of oligarchic political ideology would cause the working class to make important missteps at critical political junctures before, during, and after the National Revolution of 1952.

In 1952, popular revolution brought sweeping changes to Bolivia. The political upheaval at mid-century destroyed the remnants of feudalism in the countryside and nationalized the tin mining industry. The mobilization of the urban working class made these monumental changes a reality. During the first years of the National Revolution,

the moderate middle class had to accede to the demands of labor; the peasantry trailed in the wake of the urban popular classes and gained enormously in the rural recesses of the Andes. The organizational and ideological development of a Bolivian working class did not necessarily begin in the three-decade period between 1899 and 1929, but it made enormous and surprisingly quick advances in those thirty years. More than any other social group in Bolivia, the workers began to emancipate themselves from the political and ideological dictatorship of the dominant classes and craft their own solutions to the unjust economic and social structure of the nation. If 1952 did not provide a permanent solution to injustice in Bolivia, the weakness of Bolivia's popular classes might also be found in the first thirty years of the twentieth century.

Chapter One: Silver and Tin

The past is interesting. America was discovered, and then the conquistadores arrived. They founded cities and filled them in the Spanish manner: with officials, courtiers, and nobility; and by accident, they established no workshops, as the title of artisan was considered dishonorable and for ignoble individuals. All commerce belonged to the metropolis...for a long time they lived only on that which arrived from Spain and from plunder. Only the very poor practiced a manual trade, but they still preferred the exercise of arms to labor. Those who were condemned to the depths of the mines were of course the Indians. With the Republic, the situation did not much change...the *encomienda* and the *mita* continued with different names.

Tristan Marof, La justicia del Inca (1926)

The Imperial City of Potosí is a place of legend situated thirteen thousand feet above the Pacific Ocean in the torturous Cordillera Oriental of the Bolivian Andes. Bartolomé Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela, an eighteenth-century resident of Potosí and a historian of his native city, recorded several legends surrounding the discovery of the most famous mines in colonial Spanish America.¹ The Inka king Huayna Ccápac, in the course of one of his endless military campaigns, sought respite at the hot springs of Tarapaya located in the southern quarter of his empire, the Qullasuyu. Refreshed, Huayna Ccápac continued his journey seeking to tour the royal mines of Ccolque Porco; en route, his retinue passed near the Rich Hill of Potosí. Struck by the beauty and symmetry of the mountain, the king declared, “Without doubt there must be much silver in its bowels.” The Inka lord immediately organized an expedition to prospect the flanks of the Rich Hill. Quickly recognizing the wealth of the red mountain, the king’s servants prepared to open their first mine. A thunderous explosion stopped them: a voice from the

¹ Bartolomé Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela, Historia de la Villa Imperial de Potosí, ed. Lewis Hanke and Gunnar Mendoza, 3 vols. (Providence: Brown University Press, 1965).

air declared, “Take no silver from this hill, because it is for other masters.”² Huayna Ccápac chose prudence and continued his campaigning. The tempting wealth of the mountain was forgotten.

More than eighty years later, after the bloodshed of the Spanish Conquest and the fratricide of the ensuing civil war between the followers of Pizarro and Almagro, on the eve of Gonzalo Pizarro’s rebellion against the Spanish Crown, an Indian by the name of Diego Huallpa presumably rediscovered the silver of Potosí. Chroniclers disagree as to the exact details of his story. One day in 1543, nightfall caught Diego Huallpa and a herd of livestock in his charge on the slopes of the Rich Hill of Potosí; he camped there on the mountainside where darkness found him. Some colonial chroniclers claim that he stumbled upon a rich vein of silver the following day. While chasing a deer, a misstep caused him to lose his footing; to stop himself from tumbling down the mountain, he grabbed a small bush and tore it out by the roots. As he lay supine on the hillside he noticed a rich coat of silver on the clump of roots in his hand. A second version of Diego Huallpa’s discovery records the night he spent on the mountain as being exceptionally cold; to warm himself he built a small fire of grass and twigs. The next morning when he awoke, he found rivulets of molten silver had poured out of his fire during the night. No matter how he actually made the discovery, Huallpa sought to protect the news of his find from the Spaniards. He hoped to grow wealthy mining the silver in secret, yet a fight with one of his companions, an Indian from Jauja and the only other person to know

² Ibid., 1:27.

about the hidden riches of Potosí, eventually led to the revelation of his find. In 1545 the rush to Potosí began; the settlement soon became the largest city in the Americas.³

Diego Huallpa's history illustrates perfectly the coexistence of two different mining systems in the central Andes. One was firmly under the control of the dominant classes and depended upon the investment of large amounts of capital and the continuous application of new technological advances. The second competing system of mineral production might best be characterized as artisan and did not necessarily require a large investment of capital. Segments of the dominant classes did find ways to profit from this second system of mining, yet they did not control production: the popular classes themselves often ran the artisan mining operations. Between these two poles, a whole range of mid-sized mining operations developed, blending and borrowing the characteristics and practices of both. In the colonial period, large-scale mercury amalgamation and a combination of wage and bonded labor (the infamous *mita* system being the best known type of involuntary labor) came to characterize mining operations controlled by the dominant classes. Prior to the introduction of mercury, Indian bosses and laborers dominated actual production in Potosí; after the application of amalgamation, smaller *trapiches* (artisan, small-scale mills) continued to operate in the shadow of the larger, better-capitalized businesses. The *trapiches* relied upon an irregular flow of ore from small, independent mines; ore smuggled out of the larger, more productive mines by laborers seeking to supplement their wages; and the proceeds of

³ Ibid., 1:34-36; and Luis Capoché, Relación general de la Villa Imperial de Potosí, ed. Lewis Hanke, vol. 122, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles (Madrid: Ediciones Atlas, 1959), 77-78. For other versions and discussions of Potosí's foundation see: Bakewell, Miners of the Red Mountain; and Lewis Hanke, The Imperial City of Potosí: An Unwritten Chapter in the History of Spanish America (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1956).

kajcheo: bands of men (*kajchas*) organized to invade abandoned and unguarded workings or even the active mines of the silver magnates at night and on the Sabbath.⁴ In the nineteenth century, mining entrepreneurs sought out foreign capital, introduced new technology to the mines, built railroads between the silver camps of the highlands and the Pacific Ocean, and hoped to transform unruly Bolivia miners into a disciplined class of dependent wage laborers. The *trapiches* continued their long parallel existence; the pilfering of the richest ore and *kajcheo* continued to bedevil the large mineowners. With the twentieth century transition from silver to tin, the mining magnates found themselves in a stronger position vis-à-vis their centuries-old rivals. Intensified industrialization, the need for massive amounts of foreign capital, and the greater volumes of illicit ore required to make tin *trapiches* profitable placed enormous pressure upon the artisan, plebeian pole of mineral production. Despite the odds, it survived the twentieth century.

State institutions during the colonial period and beyond always supported the development of the capital-intensive style of mining; the state favored the dominant classes in their struggle to control the production of silver and tin. The Spanish colonial state and the republican government of independent Bolivia consistently sought to strengthen mining's profitability to the neglect or even the detriment of other segments of the regional economy. In the sixteenth century, Viceroy Francisco de Toledo codified the *mita* system to deliver drafts of involuntary Indian laborers to the mineowners of Potosí; he also instituted reforms such as the construction of a royal mint that sought to place the

⁴ *Kajcheo* (and the related *kajchas*) is a word whose meaning changes over time. By the nineteenth century, the term *kajcheo* in some circumstances came to mean a type of contract labor, by which the worker and the owner of the mine split any ore recovered. In contemporary Oruro and northern Potosí, another term is employed to describe the illegal theft of ore from a mine carried out at night or on the weekend: *jukeo*, and the men who engage in this practice are termed *jukus*.

colonial mining industry on a more stable institutional base. In the eighteenth century, as Potosí's productivity declined, the Crown again turned its attention to the silver mines: tax breaks and royal intervention to ensure a regular supply of mercury sought to stimulate investment by the dominant classes in additional mines and mills. After Independence and the economic tribulations caused by prolonged civil conflict, the leaders of the new republic tried with mixed results to revitalize the mining economy. During the second half of the nineteenth century, silver again came to dominate the nation. The mining entrepreneurs even captured the national government in 1870; the state became an appendage of the mining economy. Until the 1930s, the central government worked exclusively and obsessively to promote the interests of capital and its investment in the mines; the transition from silver to tin at the beginning of the twentieth century had almost no impact on this fact. The relationship between the state and the mining industry grew more complicated and contentious after the 1930s: that is a subject that will be addressed in the dissertation's epilogue.

In addition to a structural and economic discussion of mining's history in Bolivia and an analysis of the support offered the industry by state institutions, this chapter also seeks to explore the long history of labor in Oruro and Potosí's mines and mills, specifically the social origin of the labor force and the cultural or ethnic character of the workers. Mine workers in Bolivia are both days and centuries removed from the rural, agricultural society and culture of the countryside. Even during the first years of mining, right after the Spanish conquest, an important nucleus of the Indian labor force came from an occupational background that was not necessarily agricultural—they had supported themselves under Inka rule with artisan trades. In the colonial period, a special

stratum of the popular classes devoted to mining consolidated itself even further. The mines of Potosí and Oruro attracted significant numbers of rural migrants, both voluntary and involuntary, but the nucleus of the colonial labor force was a highly mobile group of professional, skilled miners. Many of these miners might have identified themselves as Indian and been identified as such by colonial authorities, but they were not Indians of the same type who devoted themselves to agricultural occupations in the countryside.

Over time, many members of this mining stratum moved culturally in the direction of a mestizo identity; this process accelerated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As the mining industry again entered a period of boom during the 1870s, the silver magnates increasingly sought to stabilize and discipline their workforce. Seasonal migrants from the countryside continued to play a significant role in the camps, yet the cultural, economic, and social contest between the mineowners and the more permanent, dedicated laborers set the tone for what would happen in the twentieth century. During the years 1899 to 1929, the labor force of Bolivia's tin mines increasingly constituted a dependent working class; they counted upon industrial employment and had few economic options outside of the mining camps or other urban settlements. Along with this growing dependence developed new working-class political organizations and ideology. The workers began to craft themselves into a formidable presence in Bolivia politics. A historically-conscious mine worker in 1929 might look back on an unbroken chain of social history that marked him as a member of a separate and distinct segment of Bolivian society with nearly four centuries of history.

Silver in the Colonial Period

Silver mining dominated the economy of first Alto Perú and then Bolivia until the twentieth century. Although the Spanish conquerors inherited the mines of Porco to the southwest of Potosí from the Inkas, the dramatic history of silver mining in the Andes really begins with the 1545 rush to the Rich Hill. Today, Potosí is an economic backwater: cooperative miners still labor to scrape a bit of metal from a mountain disfigured by centuries of mining. The city at the base of the Rich Hill struggles to maintain its colonial monuments with a limited budget, and a trickle of international tourists flows through the region soaking up the novelty of the place. In 1545, the mountain and its immediate surroundings lacked substantial settlement. A small Indian village named Cantumarca lay a few miles to the north of the Rich Hill; with the discovery of silver, the Spaniards destroyed the place relocating the population closer to the mountain.⁵ By 1603, some chroniclers claimed the city of Potosí boasted a population of 120,000.⁶ That figure dates from the boom years of *mita* labor and mercury amalgamation (a milling technique explained in greater detail below). The initial rush to Potosí in the sixteenth century occurred under a very different technological and social system of production.

During Potosí's first boom years, Indians themselves dominated production on the mountain and employed mining techniques and technology dating to the Inka period.⁷

⁵ Arzáns, Historia, 1:38-40; and Bakewell, Miners of the Red Mountain, 9.

⁶ Ann Zulawski, "They Eat from their Labor": Work and Social Change in Colonial Bolivia (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), 48.

⁷ This is one of the principal and surprising revelations of Peter Bakewell's work. Bakewell, Miners of the Red Mountain.

The pre-conquest mining settlement of Porco lay less than 25 miles to the southwest of Potosí. Diego Huallpa, the official discoverer of Potosí's riches, had ties to the older mines; Porco provided Potosí with its first settlers and laborers. The native people of the Andes exploited surface outcroppings and employed tunnels to reach more inaccessible, buried veins. Indian prospectors preferred to mine pure metals, but they did develop rudimentary milling and smelting techniques to work ores of a lesser quality. The most striking technology of this type was a wind-powered furnace called a *guayra* or *wayra*; Spanish observers marveled at the ingenuity of the invention. Pedro de Cieza de León, a Spanish chronicler described a *guayra*:

To extract the metal they make pottery forms in the size and manner of planters in Spain, they have in a number of places holes or ventilators. In these contraptions they place charcoal with the metal on top; sited on hills and heights where the wind blows with more force, they extract the silver, which is then purified and refined with small bellows or cane tubes through which they blow.⁸

Another Spanish chronicler and mineowner, Luis Capoche, counted 6,497 *guayras* in Potosí in the late sixteenth century.⁹ De Cieza de León said of the thousands of small furnaces scattered across the countryside, "at night there are so many of them on all of the hills and heights that they resemble decorative lights."¹⁰ While Potosí's mines continued to provide ore with a high silver content, little incentive existed to introduce or adopt newer and more expensive technology.

Indians not only employed their own familiar mining techniques in Potosí, they extracted and refined much of the mountain's silver with little direct Spanish supervision. Between 1545 and 1548, the early rush to Potosí occurred during Gonzalo Pizarro's

⁸ Pedro de Cieza de León, *La crónica del Perú con tres mapas* (Madrid: Calpe, 1922), 335-336.

⁹ Bakewell, *Miners of the Red Mountain*, 17.

¹⁰ De Cieza de León, *La crónica del Perú*, 336.

rebellion against royal authority in the Andes; the Spaniards, so distracted by their own internecine conflict, could not maintain a strong and consistent presence in the isolated settlement. The first Indian laborers on the mountain had to produce two marks of silver a week for their Spanish masters; anything beyond that they kept.¹¹ After Pizarro's defeat in 1548, more Indian workers relocated both voluntarily and involuntarily to Potosí. The Spanish also began to establish a regime of greater supervision over the extraction of silver, but workers still enjoyed relative autonomy and freedom in the workplace until the introduction of mercury amalgamation and Francisco de Toledo's mining reforms in the 1570s. Pedro de Cieza de León wrote of the workers during these early years: "as the Indians have not had supervisors and nor is it possible to control their extraction of silver, as they go and take it from the hills, it is believed that many of them have grown rich and carried off to their lands a great quantity of this silver."¹² During the 1550s and 1560s, the Spaniards seemed reluctant to organize production and left mining and milling operations to what might be described as an emerging class of Indian contractors. Spanish mineowners held title to the actual claims on the mountain; they leased those claims to skilled contractors who employed other Indians as laborers. The specifics of these leases varied from mine to mine: generally the contractors shared a portion of the ore with the Spanish mineowners.¹³ Luis Capoche described these arrangements from the 1550s and 1560s:

Many entrepreneurial Indian have of their own volition entered into agreement with the mineowners so that they might work a few meters of the mine.... And the mineowner gives them metal bars, which they then set and sharpen at their own cost—they [the Indians] also supply the candles.... And the recompense and

¹¹ Bakewell, *Miners of the Red Mountain*, 36.

¹² De Cieza de León, *La crónica del Perú*, 336.

¹³ Bakewell, *Miners of the Red Mountain*, 49-51.

interest that they receive is that the mineowner sells them the rich ore that they have extracted.

Capoche summed up the arrangement by declaring, “the Indians possess all of the riches of the kingdom.”¹⁴ Where did this Indian labor force come from? What segment of society provided the bulk of workers for Potosí’s first decades of glory?

The answer to these two questions requires a better discussion of the *yanakuna*, a special economic class in Andean society. Luis Capoche identified the Jauja Indian who betrayed Diego Huallpa’s secret discovery of silver in Potosí as a *yanakuna*.¹⁵ Peter Bakewell asserts that by 1550, two distinct groups of laborers appeared in Potosí: *yanakuna* Indians and *encomienda* Indians.¹⁶ The two groups differed not just in their skill and experience with mining; they also differed in their broader relationship to the organization of social relations in the post-conquest Andean world. The fact that the *yanakuna* played such a pivotal role in the establishment of colonial mining had significant implications for the development of urban popular culture and the formation of a working class in Alto Perú.

The *yanakuna*, while considered Indian by Spanish colonizers, actually represented a different class from the Indians of rural agricultural communities. Spaniards viewed the *yanakuna* as a slave class, but this does not adequately describe their position in the economy. Agriculture provided the foundation of the Inka Empire, and the *ayllu*(community) functioned as the principal unit of rural production. *Ayllu* members enjoyed the right of direct access to the means of production: land. Community members worked fields reserved for the Inka state, they labored on land reserved for their

¹⁴ Capoche, Relación general, 108-109.

¹⁵ Ibid., 77.

¹⁶ Peter Bakewell, Miners of the Red Mountain, 46

own *ayllu* nobility—this labor tribute conferred official protection for their own access to land. In an economic system so closely tied to the *ayllu* and the community management of land, what of those individuals who did not belong to an *ayllu*? These individuals held no claim to the principal means of production. The *yanakuna* had to rely upon a different system of economic relations to sustain themselves and their families; the *yanakuna* occupied a position closer to that of wage laborer than that of bonded slave. A *yanakuna*'s patron did not own the *yanakuna*'s person; instead, he enjoyed an exclusive right to the fruit of the *yanakuna*'s labor in exchange for the maintenance of the *yanakuna*'s life and family. This is the closest one might come to wage labor in an economic system that admits no market relations.

The powerful and influential of the Inka Empire employed the *yanakuna* in a variety of occupations: craft production, agriculture, and mining. The mines of Porco contained a significant percentage of *yanakuna* laborers; with the discovery of Potosí's wealth, they simply relocated to the newer, richer mines. The skilled *yanakuna* miners of Porco became the masters of production during Potosí's first boom years, but the system could not continue indefinitely. The declining quality of ore in Potosí and the introduction of mercury amalgamation changed the balance of power in the workplace between the Andean population and Spanish mineowners.

The use of mercury amalgamation in the milling of gold and silver ore first appeared in the Americas in New Spain (Mexico) in the 1550s. The construction of an infrastructure to support the amalgamation technique required an enormous investment of capital and labor; mineowners in Potosí did not begin to employ the new technology until the 1570s. Peter Bakewell contends that Spaniards in Alto Perú only began to undertake

the expenditures necessary to establish the more modern mills with the declining quality of ore in Potosí and a subsequent drop in silver production. The new technique allowed for the extraction of silver from low-quality ore resistant to Andean technology. During the years of *huayra* milling, Andean workers simply discarded rock they judged to be of little value. Not surprisingly, these piles of “waste” became the first source of ore for the new amalgamation mills in the 1570s.¹⁷

Mercury amalgamation is a fairly sophisticated industrial process demanding an expensive infrastructure and a substantial commitment of both skilled and unskilled labor. The first step required the pulverization of silver bearing rock. Mercury was expensive, and the efficiency of amalgamation depended upon the fine milling and granulation of ore.¹⁸ Alvaro Alonso Barba, writing in Potosí in the seventeenth century, recommended the pulverization of ore until it possessed “the consistency of flour,” only then could the miner expect to “abbreviate its processing and remove the silver it contains.”¹⁹ The masters of Potosí constructed stamping mills to pulverize silver ore; they relied upon a variety of power sources: human driven, animal powered, and hydraulic operations. Hydraulic mills proved the most efficient to run and the most expensive to construct. After grinding, workers dumped the ore into vats or pools and mixed it with water, salt, and mercury. When mixed over heat, mercury drew the silver out of the ore in less than a week; with no heat, mixing might take three and a half weeks. The mills eventually separated the mercury-silver mix from aggregate material in a series

¹⁷ Ibid., 18-19.

¹⁸ Ibid., 17

¹⁹ Alvaro Alonso Barba, Arte de los metales (Potosí: Editorial “Potosí,” 1967), 69

of settling pools, yielding a substance 80 percent mercury and 20 percent silver. When smelted, the mercury vaporized leaving pure silver behind.²⁰

Amalgamation required more than just an expensive investment in milling equipment. Mills required an enormous amount of water for their various vats and pools; hydraulic mills also required running water to power their machinery. The city of Potosí sits in a relatively arid part of the Andes; rainfall averages only 25 inches annually. Additionally, precipitation is seasonal with a distinct dry season; little rain falls between May and August.²¹ Spaniards constructed most mills in Potosí along a seasonal river running through the town, the Ribera. They depended upon its flow to power their machinery. Capoche wrote of the Ribera, “its flow was not perpetual...it flowed only three or four months of the year with any speed.” To extend the annual operation of their mills, the Spaniards had to marshal considerable labor to transform the countryside around the city of Potosí. They ordered the construction of a series of reservoirs in the Kari-Kari highlands to the east of the mines to regulate the flow of the Ribera.

As need is the mother of invention and seeing the short and uncertain time the water lasted, a half-league from this city, among the hills and canyons one can fortunately find a few pastures where a certain quantity of water collects making a kind of lake, with the aid of engineers a few improvements have been made in the form of strong dams...in those areas where the canyons are at their most constricted, retaining and damming the current....There are seven of them, their gates are opened when water is needed and a volume of water flows out—they are closed on holidays. When the lakes are full and the year is wet, the milling can last six or seven months.²²

The substantial investment in infrastructure and machinery eventually allowed the new mill owners to profit from the “waste” of the earlier Indian-controlled silver boom of the

²⁰ Bakewell, *Miners of the Red Mountain*, 19-22.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

²² Capoche, *Relación general*, 117.

1550s and 1560s. This laid the foundation for an even more spectacular and prolonged boom in silver production—a boom firmly controlled by the Spaniards.

Amalgamation mill owners began in Potosí by processing the tailings discarded during the first decades of mining—ore judged inferior and unsuitable for Indian milling techniques.²³ Luis Capoché described the wasteful early decades of mining, a waste easily turned into wealth with the use of better technology in the 1570s: “The rich ore that they take from the mines they process in the *guairas*, as they have always done.... And the poorer ore which did not serve in the *guairas*...and was for the most part the majority of the vein...they discarded it as something useless.”²⁴ He added that despite an intensive reworking of the tailings beginning in 1573, the rock heaps of the preceding decades still yielded significant amounts of silver in the year he penned his chronicle, 1585. When the Viceroy Francisco de Toledo sought to marshal the resources of the Spanish colonial state to stimulate mining in Alto Perú, he concentrated on reforms promoting the development and profitability of amalgamation.

Toledo, the great organizer of sixteenth-century Perú, firmly believed in the promise of amalgamation: “the new process of amalgamation is what shall determine the restoration of this kingdom.” In justifying his new regulations for the mining industry of Charcas (Alto Perú) in 1574, Toledo argued that Potosí’s early boom had already gone bust; production organized by Indians and employing Andean technology and techniques no longer produced silver like it once had: “the greater part of the mines are dark and abandoned.” He saw in mercury the hope for a revival of mining in Potosí, and thereby a surge in royal revenue. “The invention of mercury amalgamation was truly fortuitous,”

²³ Bakewell, *Miners of the Red Mountain*, 19-20.

²⁴ Capoché, *Relación general*, 78.

Viceroy Toledo argued, “because new mills have been established with which they can process that which was discarded and from which nothing had been hoped for.” While the thrust of early amalgamation efforts focused on the substantial tailings of Potosí, Toledo expected an expansion of mining with the employment of the new technology. Even in the early 1570s, he observed that some entrepreneurs had begun to rehabilitate old diggings. “They are cleaning them, and they are exploiting what was abandoned to some good effect, and because of cost, those who continue to hope for the discovery of new metal in the depths, hoping to save themselves labor, have extended tunnels already begun,” he wrote.²⁵ Some miners even began to undertake the cost of opening new shafts.

Toledo hoped to promote the continued growth and health of the mining industry through several regulatory changes. He sought to limit the number of lawsuits and conflicts generated by competing claims, to ensure a dependable flow of mercury, to guarantee a steady supply of workers to the mines and mills, and to regulate labor conditions and wages in the mining industry. Viceroy Toledo firmly established the legal primacy of mining in the Andes, a policy unchanged in Bolivia after independence. Toledo and his successors elevated the mining industry above all other sectors of the economy. The colonial state (and later the government of republican Bolivia) even placed the legal privileges of miners above those of *encomienda* holders and hacienda owners—the landed oligarchy. An example, colonial prospectors were able to hunt for minerals on any land, no matter its legal status or ownership. Toledo deplored that “some

²⁵ Francisco de Toledo, *Ordenanzas del Virrey Toledo*, ed. Roberto Levillier, vol. 8, *Gobernantes del Perú, cartas y papeles, siglo XVI*, Colección de Publicaciones Históricas de la Biblioteca del Congreso Argentino (Madrid: Imprenta de Juan Pueyo, 1925), 143-144, 146.

persons—*encomenderos*, *caciques* and Indian notables, and others—that possess estates and lands, impede entry to their lands for the purposes of survey and discovery, and in this manner [veins] are hidden and as such the republic does not receive the benefit for which they were created.”²⁶ No other segment of the colonial economy would be allowed to restrict the development of mining.

The Spanish state also began to play a more active role in marshaling the resources and labor necessary to make mercury amalgamation work in Potosí. Mercury was both expensive and rare, but the mining industry and the financial health of Spain’s colonial empire depended upon guaranteeing the mills of Perú and Mexico a steady supply. The miners of Potosí relied upon casks of quicksilver from Huancavelica, Perú and additional imports from Europe. During the boom years of the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries, Potosí never suffered a critical shortage of mercury.²⁷ Part of the reason for this was that the Huancavelica mines came to enjoy the same kind of state attention that Potosí enjoyed. Viceroy Toledo again figured as the main architect of this royal patronage. The mines of Huancavelica drew upon a northern *mita* system that mirrored that established for Potosí.

Peter Bakewell highlights precursors to the *mita* in Potosí prior to Toledo’s arrival in 1572, yet the new viceroy gave the system royal sanction and placed the whole authority of the colonial state behind its administration and enforcement. Toledo hoped to standardize the number of laborers Indian communities had to provide annually and the conditions of their employment in the mines and mills. In its ideal form, the *mita* marshaled one-seventh of the adult male Indian population of fifteen provinces in Perú

²⁶ Ibid., 149.

²⁷ Bakewell, *Miners of the Red Mountain*, 25.

and Alto Perú each year for labor in Potosí; *mitayos* (as the Indian draft laborers were known) had to labor for one year at a set wage before returning to their rural homes. While working in Potosí or some other mining district, Spanish law established the wage, hours, and conditions of labor. Toledo began organizing his first *mita* for Potosí in 1572; by the end of that year, some 9,500 men found themselves ordered to the mines. In 1578, Toledo ordered that employers pay *mitayos* in cash for their labor; previously, some Spanish mineowners paid their workers with ore, giving Indians only low-grade rock. Mine workers earned 3.5 reales a day, freighters 3 reales, and refinery workers 2.75 reales. The influx of workers and the mercury amalgamation technique initiated a new, decades-long boom in silver production.²⁸

Potosí's silver production peaked in 1592. In that year, the Rich Hill produced more silver than it ever had or ever would again; officially the mines produced 201 metric tons of silver. The boom did not immediately end with this peak, but production did begin a long, slow decline over the course of the seventeenth century. By the first decades of the eighteenth century, production had fallen back to level of the 1570s—the era previous to the adoption of mercury amalgamation.²⁹ But Potosí's history is not the only story of silver mining to be found in Alto Perú. In the course of the seventeenth century, other districts began to challenge the Cerro Rico's dominant position in the regional mining economy. The city of Oruro stands out as an important rival.

²⁸ Ibid., 33-59, 67, 77, 79-80; and Ann Zulawski, *They Eat from Their Labor*, 48. For works on the *mita* system of Potosí see: Valentín Abecia Baldivieso, *Mitayos de Potosí: en una economía sumergida* (Barcelona: Técnicos Editoriales Asociados, S.A., 1988); and Jeffrey A. Cole, *The Potosí Mita, 1573-1700: Compulsory Indian Labor in the Andes* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985).

²⁹ Bakewell, *Miners of the Red Mountain*, 26, 28-29.

The Spanish founded the modern city of Oruro on 1 November 1606 (the official name of the new mining settlement was Villa de San Felipe de Austria).³⁰ The small town of Paria, a few miles to the northeast of Oruro, was actually the first Spanish town established in Alto Perú in 1535.³¹ In the years before the town's official foundation, three brothers Diego, Juan, and Francisco de Medrano discovered and began to exploit important silver veins in the hills that surround Oruro.³² The mining rush pulled the center of population in the region away from Paria to the protective shadow of the mineral-rich hills: Pie de Gallo, La Flamenca, La Colorada, and San Cristóbal.³³ In 1607, the president of the Audiencia of Charcas, Alonso Maldonado de Torres, sent Felipe de Godoy to inspect the new settlement; Godoy left an informative description of the town and its infant mining industry. The Audiencia ordered Godoy to carry out his assignment with "care and discretion for the least publicity possible". Men with a financial stake in the mines of Potosí already feared that the young town might steal labor, supplies, expertise, capital, and royal favor away from the older city. The wealthy and powerful of Potosí and La Plata (Sucre) especially bemoaned the perceived migration to Oruro of "Spanish mineowners with skill and experience in the workings of the Rich Hill" and of "Indian miners who have the experience and knowledge of working in the mines and labors of said hill [Potosí]."³⁴ They had good reason for concern.

In Oruro, Godoy discovered not only a migration of experienced Spaniards and skilled Indian workers, but a significant diversion of unskilled *mita* laborers detailed to

³⁰ Gilberto Pauwels, "Oruro 1607. El informe de Felipe de Godoy," *Eco andino* 7-8 (1999): 96.

³¹ Laura Escobari de Querejazu, *Caciques, yanaconas y extravagantes: La sociedad colonial en Charcas s. XVI-XVII* (La Paz: Plural Editores; Embajada de España en Bolivia, 2001), 53.

³² *Ibid.*, 52; and Zulawski, "They Eat from Their Labor", 91.

³³ Zulawski, "They Eat from Their Labor", 90.

³⁴ Philippe de Godoy, "Descripción de la Villa de Sanct Philippe de Austria, asiento y minas de Oruro," ed. Gilberto Pauwels, *Eco Andino* 7-8 (1999): 105-106.

Potosí escaping to the newer, richer mines. “Among the Indians that are in said settlement, it is certain that there are many escapees (*extravagante*) who would generally be in Potosí, selling their labor,” Godoy noted, “but they, because of the famed wealth of the mines [in Oruro], have gone to them.... these Indians always go to where the prospects are better.”³⁵ The response of Indian workers—both skilled and unskilled, those subject to the *mita* and those outside of it—to the competing promise of Oruro’s mines contradicts Viceroy Toledo’s justification for the *mita* in the 1570s. In a March 1572 letter to the Spanish King, Toledo argued for the compulsory labor draft because the Indians “are by nature and inclination lazy, and because of their lowliness, little honor, and greed...they have no inclination for accumulating wealth and leaving an inheritance to their children.”³⁶ Bakewell notes that the early decades of mining in Potosí demonstrated the material ambition of the average Andean laborer.³⁷ The rush to the rising mining district of Oruro and away from declining Potosí confirms the observation.

Historians traditionally contrast the coercive *mita* system of Potosí with the “freer” system of wage labor in Oruro, yet some colonial officials hoped to develop the mining industry of Oruro along the lines of the older city. Felipe de Godoy, as a result of his 1607 visit to the region, actually proposed a *mita* of some 2,553 Indians for Oruro. When Viceroy Toledo first codified the *mita*, he assigned workers to a number of mines in Alto Perú not as important or as productive as Potosí; Godoy proposed redirecting many of these workers to Oruro. He sought the transfer of *mitayos* from the mines of Garci Mendoza, Berenguela, Porco, Caravaya, and Chocolococha to the hills and mills of

³⁵ Ibid., 135.

³⁶ Francisco de Toledo to king, Cuzco, 1 March 1572 quoted in Bakewell, *Miners of the Red Mountain*, 65.

³⁷ Bakewell, *Miners of the Red Mountain*, 65-66.

Oruro. He also suggested redirecting *mitayos* laboring in the city of La Paz to Oruro.³⁸ The secretary also proposed the transfer of a handful of *mita* Indians assigned to the city of Potosí to the new mining settlement. He did not see the diversion as damaging to the economy of the older mines, as many Indians were effectively evading the long trip south anyway. He mentioned “a group named the Condes from the vicinity of Cuzco and Arequipa.” Although Viceroy Toledo ordered the group to contribute 539 *mitayos* to Potosí, none had ever made the trip. Closer to Oruro, Godoy mentioned the Urus, a group of hunter-gatherers from which the mining settlement received its vernacular name. Toledo ordered the Urus of Paria to contribute 434 *mitayos* to Potosí annually. Godoy observed that originally the Urus “arrived with great punctuality,” but with the departure of Toledo, “who with great care ensured their good treatment and pay,” the Uru *mitayos*, “no longer wish to go to said mines, and even though they are taken in chains and locked up, they flee and return to their land to lose themselves in the lake from which they wish not to leave.”³⁹ He stated that the Urus did not necessarily oppose laboring for Spanish miners, “they enjoy working in their own land, and of those found in the mills, the majority are Urus.” He argued that a transfer of Uru *mitayos* from Potosí to Oruro adhered to the spirit of Toledo’s original orders, “that they will only go to Potosí as long as there are no mines in their own land.” Godoy concluded by observing that special care should be taken with Uru workers, and that they should be, “marked for the mills, where they love to work, and prohibited with fines from carrying them to the mines, because

³⁸ Pauwels, “Oruro 1607,” 102-104; and Godoy, “Descripción,” 160-162.

³⁹ Godoy, “Descripción,” 161. In his October 10, 1575 plan for the *mita* Viceroy Toledo ordered that 13 to 17 percent of the Indian tributaries of the La Plata, La Paz, and Cuzco regions make the trip to Potosí or other mines. He ordered that the Uru groups scattered through out those three regions assign 30 to 40 percent of their tributaries to the *mita*. Peter Bakewell says of this exaction, “...they were generally held to be primitive and therefore less useful.” Bakewell, Miners of the Red Mountain, 69.

they are a bestial people and know nothing of that work.” Godoy also sought the transfer of 600 workers from the mines of Porco to Oruro. These 600 *mitayos* hailed from the Aymara provinces of Carangas and Pacajes. Carangas lies to the west of Oruro and Pacajes to the north. Godoy argued the sensibility of the change, “that because of proximity and ease the Indians will travel of their own free will.”⁴⁰ Despite Godoy’s recommendations and various petitions from the mine and mill owners of Oruro, the region never received the royal patronage of a *mita*; the power of Potosí’s mining lobby swayed royal officials against the idea. Throughout the colonial period, Oruro had to rely on labor arrangements slightly different from those in the older mining district.

Oruro’s “free” wage-labor arrangements have generated considerable academic debate. Spaniards legally and illegally transferred *mita* Indians to Oruro even from Potosí itself.⁴¹ But *mita* labor was never the norm in Oruro. Recently Laura Escobari de Querjazu has objected to the prevailing interpretation of Oruro’s labor market as freer than that of Potosí.⁴² She directs much of her argumentation at the work of Ann Zulawski. In her study of colonial Oruro, Zulawski argues that mine workers in Oruro enjoyed relatively high wages, opportunities for illicit enrichment, and a strong bargaining position with their employers in comparison with the workers of Potosí. Escobari de Querjazu’s objections do not convince; if anything, the traditional view of Potosí and its coercive *mita* need revision. The *mita* in Potosí did not always function as the mine and mill owners might have hoped—this subject will be addressed in a moment.

⁴⁰ Godoy, “Descripción,” 160-161.

⁴¹ Zulawski, “They Eat from Their Labor”, 94; and Escobari de Querjazu, *Caciques, yanaconas y extravagantes*, 285-286. In addition to the work of Zulawski and Escobari de Querjazu, also see the following for insights on the colonial mining economy of Oruro: Oscar Cornblit, *Power and Violence in the Colonial City: Oruro from the Mining Renaissance to the Rebellion of Tupac Amaru (1740-1782)* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

⁴² Escobari de Querjazu, *Caciques, yanaconas y extravagantes*, 271-286.

Now, Ann Zulawski's study of labor in Oruro deserves a bit more attention; her work points to the early colonial development of an independent working class devoted to mining.

Superficially, some of Zulawski's arguments for seventeenth-century Oruro seem to contradict the idea that a special social group with little connection to the agricultural occupations of the countryside and a mestizo racial identity developed in the mines of colonial Alto Perú. Zulawski's analysis focuses on two different Indian groups in Oruro: the *yanakuna* and the *forasteros*. By the late seventeenth century, the *yanakuna* of Oruro began to resemble the urban, mestizo working class mentioned above; Zulawski describes them as "highly acculturated" and "free from the mita, free from communal responsibilities." Good enough, but she then notes the concentration of urban *yanakuna* in trades other than mining: "they were primarily concentrated in crafts, working as assistants to Spaniards, or in some cases on their own." *Forasteros* supplied the bulk of Oruro's mine workers, and the *forastero* population was not as "acculturated" or as firmly rooted in urban society as the *yanakuna*:

...those who worked in the mines in most cases didn't really seem to be developing into a proletariat either. Primarily *forasteros*, well into the seventeenth century they could identify their *ayllus* and *parcialidades*, and many were close enough to their homes to go there frequently. This connection with their communities and with land seems to have put them in a position, especially in times of labor shortage, to resist the mine and mill owners' efforts to eliminate the practice of ore sharing.

The evidence Zulawski uses to make this argument comes from a 1683 census of Oruro's population; the census data does not lend itself to such a drastic differentiation between the *yanakuna* and the *forasteros*. A good part of Oruro's *forastero* population was urban: nearly half of the *forastero* men counted in the census claimed to hail from Oruro or

nearby towns; among the *forasteros* recorded as migrants to Oruro some “60 percent had lived in the city more than five years.” Now for another look at the *yanakuna* in the 1683 census as they appear in Zulawski’s book: they did not work exclusively in artisan and petty mercantile occupations. She notes that in the census, 37 percent of the *yanakuna* claimed no occupation. Zulawski speculates that most of these men “probably worked in the silver industry.”⁴³ The 1683 census suggests that the mining labor force of Oruro had a strong, “acculturated”, urban nucleus. The labor force of Potosí developed in a similar manner during the colonial period despite the presence of thousands of *mita* Indians.

The mineowners of the Rich Hill relied upon skilled wage laborers for a variety of important tasks. Also, as the *mita* developed (the mineowners might have used the word “degenerated”) over the course of the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth, the system came to subsidize the employment of wage laborers. The key to understanding this transformation of the *mita* lies in the growing propensity of Indian communities to fulfill their obligations with *indios de faltriquera* (Indians in the pocket), that is turning a fixed amount of cash over to the miners of Potosí so that they might contract wage labor replacements.⁴⁴ Supplying the mineowners of Potosí with *indios de faltriquera* was one way in which Indian communities feeling the combined pressures of a declining population and inflexible state demands for tax and labor might hope to cope with the impositions and survive.

⁴³ Zulawski, “They Eat from Their Labor”, 125, 129, 202-203.

⁴⁴ I take the term *indios de faltriquera* from Bakewell’s work; he also contends that over time the word *minga* came to mean something similar. Enrique Tandeter, in his study of Potosí uses the term *rezagos* to describe these individuals. Bakewell, *Miners of the Red Mountain*, 123-124; and Enrique Tandeter, *Coacción y mercado: La minería de la plata en el Potosí colonial, 1692-1826* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1992), 79.

Much of the *mita*'s decay over the course of the colonial period had to do with the Indian population's demographic tribulations. During the second half of the sixteenth century, Viceroy Toledo undertook the systematic reorganization of Indian settlement patterns throughout the Andes. The Spanish colonial state ordered the concentration of the rural population into new centralized, planned settlements called *reducciones*. Previously, the native people of the Andes, especially those of Alto Perú, demonstrated a preference for dispersed, decentralized settlements. Toledo, his advisors, and his successors saw the *reducciones* as an important step in the extension of royal authority over the former Inka Empire. The *reducciones* made control of the Andean population an easier affair. The centralized settlements facilitated Catholic conversion and supervision, the collection of census data, the collection of taxes, and the organization of labor drafts like the *mita*. The process of creating *reducciones* was an enormously dislocating experience for the Andean population but a general success for the Spanish state. Over time, the control of the Spanish state in rural parts of the Andes became attenuated as the Indian population learned to manipulate and evade the colonial state and its demands. Drastic demographic changes in the colonial period also affected the ability of Indian communities to meet their economic obligations to the state. Disease, violence, and exploitation all had a devastating impact on the Andean population as they did on the Indian population of the Americas in general. Indian communities also lost residents to haciendas, rural-to-urban migration, and the cultural transformation that might loosely be described as *mestizaje* (the mixing of Native American and European culture). While the Spanish state did occasionally re-evaluate the tax burden and *mita* requirements levied on the Andean population, it did not do so with a frequency that kept pace with the

demographic decline of the Indian communities. Tax and labor demands often remained constant while the population declined. The community either had to increase the pressure upon themselves, find creative ways to meet the demands of the state, or refuse to meet all of their obligations. Buying their way out of their *mita* service was one of the ways in which Indian communities dealt creatively with this confluence of economic and demographic pressures.

How did the tendency of Indian communities to supply the mineowners of Potosí with *indios de faltriquera* affect the colonial silver economy? The *mita* continued throughout the colonial period as a source of cheap labor, but it also developed into a financial subsidy, sanctioned by the Spanish state. The cash payments did not even subsidize the industry directly. The money flowed into the pockets of influential mineowners who might then invest the capital in a mining operation or simply pocket the coin. In 1692, the viceroy decreed that a mineowner might only accept the cash payment if he used it to contract a wage laborer. Spanish authorities sought to abolish the practice completely in 1697 only to officially reinstate it in 1732.⁴⁵ The practice of *indios de faltriquera*—Indian communities sometimes preferred cash payments to actual *mita* service—illustrates the importance of free labor in colonial Potosí.

Peter Bakewell notes that by 1600 more than half of the Indians laboring in the mines and mills of Potosí worked outside the *mita* system; throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many depended upon wages to support themselves and their families. The term employed in colonial Alto Perú to describe free laborers in the mining industry was *mingas*. In Potosí and other mining settlements, *mingas* labored under a

⁴⁵ Bakewell, *Miners of the Red Mountain*, 161-164; and Tandeter, *Coacción y mercado*, 79.

variety of employment arrangements that often resembled wage labor. The all-important and highly-skilled *barreteros* provide an example of the labor arrangements those working outside of the *mita* might expect. The *barreteros* drove the advance of the shafts; they slowly chipped away at the rock face and followed the hidden silver veins of the mine. Because of their importance in the workplace, *barreteros* requested and received cash advances on their wages. This frequently led to fraud; workers sought money from several employers but then only worked for one or none. *Minga* workers also demanded a portion of the ore that a mine produced in addition to their regular wages.⁴⁶ The strong bargaining position of highly-skilled wage laborers in Potosí illustrates the sometimes tenuous control that mineowners and the Spanish state had over the workplace. Two other plebian elements of the colonial mining economy also worked to undermine the complete dominance of the wealthy: *kajcheo* and *trapiches*.

Any discussion of colonial mining is incomplete without an understanding of *kajcheo* and *trapiches*. *Kajcheo* describes illicit mining carried out under the cover of darkness, on the weekends, or on holidays. Bandit miners sometimes occupied abandoned shafts, but they often raided productive, rich mines avoiding, bribing, or overpowering their guardians. Some *kajchas* (those engaged in *kajcheo*) lived exclusively from their illegal activities; others simply engaged in raids to supplement their work-week salaries. Just like the *kajchas*, *trapiches* often operated at the margins of colonial law. *Trapiche* operators processed the ore provided them by *kajchas* or by workers seeking to dispose of ore pilfered from the work site. These small-scale milling operations sometimes employed stolen mercury or purchased it on the black market.

⁴⁶ Bakewell, *Miners of the Red Mountain*, 122-123, 181; and Tandeter, *Coacción y mercado*, 110-111.

Finally, the *trapiches* did not necessarily turn their refined silver over to the Royal Mint for the requisite taxation before its shipment out of Alto Perú. That being said, the larger, legitimate mill owners often engaged in similarly evasive practices. How much did the *trapiches* contribute to overall silver production? The work of Enrique Tandeter provides some illuminating numbers for the eighteenth century. In 1759, the *kajchas* and *trapiches* of Potosí produced nearly 38 percent of the silver registered in the Royal Mint. For the years 1784 to 1788, these producers on the margins contributed nearly 12 percent of the silver registered in Potosí, and in the four-year period 1789 to 1793 some 6.5 percent. The figure for 1759 is truly exceptional; this surprising productivity can be explained by the quality of ore the *kajchas* and *trapiches* worked with. Tandeter notes that the quasi-illicit milling operations processed ore that was ten times richer than that worked by the large enterprises.⁴⁷

What was the culture and ethnic identity of the *mingas* and *kajchas* who populated the mines and cities of colonial Alto Perú? The chronicler Bartolomé Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela recorded in his Historia de la Villa Imperial de Potosí a detailed and entertaining biographical sketch of one of eighteenth-century Potosí's more flamboyant *kajchas*: Agustín Quespi. Arzáns identified Quespi as an Indian, but Quespi was no rural migrant to the imperial city of Potosí; "his home was this city." Quespi was raised in the home of a Basque of some influence in Potosí, one Miguel de Sopeña, a man generally acknowledged as "valiant and skilled with arms." Agustín Quespi was a thoroughly urban individual, a product of colonial urban society, culture, and economy. The mineowners of Potosí despised and feared Quespi. "He became so feared on the Hill that

⁴⁷ Tandeter, Coacción y mercado, 119-120.

the bravest Spaniards fled from his presence,” wrote Arzáns. Despite Agustín Quespi’s ferocious reputation, Arzáns found much to admire in the *kajcha*’s character. The working class of the Rich Hill greatly respected him as a popular leader. “Many *kajchas* (those who violently go in search of metal during holidays with the strength of their arms and danger to their lives) called him their captain.” Arzáns recorded that the mineowners wanted to destroy Quespi:

So great was his fame that the owners wanted to drink his blood: they planned ambushes, surrounding him with 30 or 50 men, and he, sometimes alone and sometimes with his companions, attacked and beat them with sheathed blades, sabres, clubs, slings, and stones, because his valor and strength fell all before him; because of this, they began to believe that he had a pact with the devil, certainly (they said) a small Indian of such ruinous appearance could not naturally raise such resistance.

But Arzáns noted that Quespi actually engaged in his independent mining operations with care and consideration: “This Indian Agustín did no damage in active mines.... True, he went to work with a pair of pistols because he did not own his own mine and entered abandoned ones or through passages and tunnels, those owned by others, but he took metal without knocking down supports or causing considerable damage.”⁴⁸ Quespi understood perfectly the Hispanic and mestizo culture of the Imperial City; he himself was a product of that multi-ethnic environment. *Kajchas* such as Agustín Quespi figured as an important part of the mining economy in the late colonial period, an economy struggling to recapture the dynamism of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

In the eighteenth century, the new Bourbon monarchs of Spain sought to shake the Andean mining economy from its recent lethargy; administrative reform figured as

⁴⁸ Arzáns, *Historia*, 3:200.

one of several factors stimulating the production of silver in Alto Perú. Between 1730 and 1790, silver production in Potosí began a continuous rise. During the eighteenth century, the European economy expanded at a surprising pace and inter-continental commerce grew accordingly.⁴⁹ In Potosí, royal officials slashed the Crown's levy on minted silver to stimulate production. Prior to the 1730s, miners in Potosí theoretically paid a tax known as the *quinto real* (royal fifth) on all the silver they produced. Colonial officials did not allow the export of silver that had not been turned into coin; in Potosí, the miners had to turn their silver over to the *Casa de la Moneda* (Royal Mint) where the Spanish state minted the silver and exacted the Crown's 20 percent levy. Mines in Mexico and in some parts of Perú saw the tax on silver cut in half during the seventeenth century; the notables of Potosí requested a similar concession. In 1736, royal official bowed to the miners' wishes and cut the tax from 20 to 10 percent. The Crown also assured the mineowners of Potosí of its continued commitment to the *mita*; in the 1730s, the viceroy sent out several surveys to pressure rural areas to deliver more *mitayos*. As for the supply of mercury to Potosí, in 1725, the Crown guaranteed the sale of mercury on credit, and over the course of the eighteenth century, increased the production of mercury in Huancavelica.⁵⁰

The economic recovery of Alto Perú in the eighteenth century began to falter in the 1780s with the Tupak Amaru and Tupak Katari Rebellions. The wars of independence and the prolonged civil conflict they engendered further debilitated the

⁴⁹ Tandeter points to the example of French commercial penetration in the Pacific during the first quarter of the eighteenth century. He also makes the interesting observation that some of the international stimulus for silver production in Alto Perú probably came from the smuggling of silver bullion. A full 40 percent of the silver introduced to France from the Americas during this period seems to have avoided Spanish customs and taxes. Tandeter, *Coacción y Mercado*, 13-14, 18-21.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 13-14, 22-25.

silver economy of the Andes. Despite the disruption in production (there was never a complete break), colonial mining cast an important shadow over the development of Bolivia's economy after independence. In the nineteenth century, *trapiches* continued to compete with better-capitalized mining operations. The Bolivia state threw its bureaucratic weight behind enterprises firmly controlled by the dominant classes, just as the Spanish colonial state had done in the preceding centuries. Finally, a special segment of the popular classes devoted to and dependent upon mining continued its unique social, economic, and cultural development in the newly independent republic.

Silver in the Nineteenth Century

Independence and the prolonged conflict that preceded it (both civil and international) severely disrupted the mining economy of Alto Perú. The chronic European warfare of the period interrupted the shipment of Spanish mercury to the American colonies. Fighting throughout South America shrunk trade and commerce across the continent. Civil war, guerrilla insurgents, and invasion took a heavy toll on the internal political and economic order of Alto Perú. The *mita* broke down completely, mines flooded or collapsed, and on three occasions the patriot army of Argentina invaded and occupied the city of Potosí (1811, 1813, and 1815) only to be evicted by the royalists each time.⁵¹

After the definitive establishment of an independent Bolivian Republic in 1825, the political leadership of the young nation sought to revitalize the mining economy. The

⁵¹ Ibid., 281.

capitalist aspirations of the new Bolivian government appeared in Simón Bolívar and Antonio José Sucre's early political and economic initiatives; they desperately sought to revive the country's once vibrant mining and agricultural economy. A decree dated 2 August 1825 issued by Bolívar in Pucará, Perú provided the basis for this dreamed of reactivation. According to the declaration, all abandoned and flooded mines were to become the property of the new, independent government. Later additions to the original decree made clear the Liberators' intentions to sell the concessions to wealthy investors. During the administration of President Sucre (1826-1828), the government sought to establish labor relations in the mining industry on a capitalist foundation; wage labor was to be its bedrock. In September 1826, Sucre promulgated a mine labor code that among other things enshrined wage labor as the industry ideal; payment to workers had to be in cash, and the law limited the value of goods and food that an employer might advance to the worker.⁵² Despite these and other aggressive measures to promote the capitalist revitalization of Bolivia's mining economy, the results disappointed government officials. The country failed to attract the sought-after infusion of foreign capital, and those mineowners operating in the country constantly complained of a dearth of laborers.⁵³

Historians traditionally view the early Republican period as a time of stagnation or even decay for the nation's mining enterprises—a continuation of the economic

⁵² William Lofstrom, *Dámaso de Uriburu, a Mining Entrepreneur in Early Nineteenth-Century Bolivia* (Buffalo: Council of International Studies, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1973), 7-8, 31-32.

⁵³ Previously, historians dismissed the mining industry of early nineteenth-century Bolivia as an economic enterprise teetering on the verge of extinction. The words of June Nash are typical of this interpretation: "exploitation of silver in the colonial period gave way during the republic as the lowering of the mineral content of the silver ores led to a withdrawal from mining and development of consumption-oriented handicrafts and agriculture." Nash, *We Eat the Mines*, 23-24. Antonio Mitre considers mining in the decades between 1810 and 1872 as depressed when compared to the years 1872 to 1895. Mitre, *Los patriarcas de la plata*.

lethargy and chaos of the independence wars. Tristan Platt's recent work on the subject of mining in early-Republican Bolivia challenges historians to reconsider this assumption; his research provides compelling evidence of a mini-boom in silver production during the 1830s and 1840s. This early boom presaged the better-understood mining boom of the late nineteenth century, a boom driven by greater foreign investment in Bolivia's mining industry and by liberal economic policies. The mini-boom during the first half of the nineteenth century was more than just the simple continuation of colonial mining practices in a newly independent Bolivia; the mine and mill owners of Potosí could no longer count on the *mita* to provide them with a relatively dependable source of cheap labor. Also, to improve the profitability of their mining operations, several entrepreneurs began to experiment with new technological innovations. Platt singles out three brothers from Argentina, the Ortiz family, but he notes that they were not the only innovators during this period.⁵⁴ Despite the changes, the Bolivian mining industry still inherited several important elements from the colonial period.

The artisan or more plebian pole of mining continued to flourish in the shadow of better-funded operations like those of the Ortiz brothers. The continued vigor of artisan enterprises also indicates an unbroken continuity within the popular classes of a special socio-economic group dedicated to mining. The *trapiches* and the *kajchas* continued to play a critical role in the mining economy of Potosí in the 1830s and 1840s. Platt notes that in 1854 the *trapiches* and the *kajchas* produced nearly 30 percent of Bolivia's registered silver output. Platt's numbers for the preceding decades indicate that during

⁵⁴ Tristan Platt, "Producción, tecnología y trabajo en la Rivera de Potosí durante la República temprana," El siglo XIX: Bolivia y América Latina (La Paz: Muela del Diablo Editores; Coordinadora de Historia, 1997), 397, 400-401.

the early Republican period, artisan or illicit mining provided an important safety net for national silver production. The labor force of the early nineteenth century continued to be the *mingas* and *kajchas* of the colonial period, and they still maintained a strong bargaining position with their employers. The mineowners viewed their workers as undisciplined and undependable; some continued to scam potential employers out of cash advances, and others sought to smuggle the richest ore out of the mines in which they worked.⁵⁵

During the first half of the nineteenth century, some *kajchas* sought an expansion of their legal employment options and official sanction for their mining activities; both the Bolivian state and the mineowners resisted their pretensions. In an appendix to his article “Producción, tecnología y trabajo en la Rivera de Potosí,” Tristan Platt transcribes a unique document from 1837 penned by a group of *kajchas* laboring in Potosí. The *kajchas* began by acknowledging that both government officials and the mineowners viewed them and their vocation with “aversion and repugnance.” They admitted their past transgressions and the valid criticism sometimes leveled at them: “certainly the men dedicated to this vocation have only sought to enrich themselves, extracting the best ore with little planning and without considering the accompanying damages to the owner.” But they argued that much of the damage caused by their mining activities resulted from the illicit character of their entry into the mines and that “ending the cause will end the effect.” What the authors of this document proposed was a “regulated *kajcheö*— an understanding with the mineowners. The *kajchas* demanded:

That they permit us to enter their works from Saturday until Monday night; that the respective watchmen turn the shafts over to us, with a precise examination of

⁵⁵ Ibid., 396, 410, 418, 420.

their condition...we will then bear the responsibility of guaranteeing to them in whatever manner they wish that we will return them [the shafts] to the same watchmen, without risk and with no damage done. In this time, with all of the formality of the Regulations, we will exploit the metal with our tools and whatever else may be necessary. The exploited metal will then be divided between the individual mineowner and ourselves—he may even buy our part at a just price established by a third party, as long as we agree.

The *kajchas* offered a variety of arguments to illustrate the utility of their proposal. As for the mineowner, “they will not have to make up-front payments; they will be spared the cost of tools.” The *kajchas* even argued that the mineowners would be left in an enviable position in comparison with themselves, as they labored with the “uncertainty that perhaps our labor will not be repaid, nor even the costs that we have incurred.” As for the city of Potosí, the *kajchas*’ proposal promised to cushion the social blow of a slowdown in the mining industry. “There is the need that exploitation continues in order to conserve the working class and amass metal,” they argued.⁵⁶ This final observation hinted at the relative dependence of the *kajchas* on mining; outside of the mines, they could not support themselves or their families.

All of the major mineowners of Potosí rejected the proposal. “Experience has proven how prejudicial the *Kajchas* are,” they responded. Mineowners did sometimes employ *kajcha* gangs in their labors as contract workers, but on their own terms. “Voluntary arrangements are not prohibited by the Law; in this way, the petitioning workers might enter into agreement with those mineowners who wish to employ them in their works,” they wrote.⁵⁷ The bosses hoped to keep the government out of the contracting process; the *kajchas* sought a greater range of legal options and to possibly

⁵⁶ “Expediente de los capchas de esta ciudad...” AHP PDE 1094 (1837) quoted in Platt, “Producción,” 412-414.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

force the opening of certain mines closed to them in the past. The national-period inheritors of Agustín Quespi's legacy also hoped for government sanction of contractual points they might demand of mineowners in the future. The Bolivia state declined to act on the *kajchas'* petition.

In the 1850s and 1860s, a new wave of investors representing Chilean, North American, and European capital began to express interest in the potential of Bolivia's mining industry.⁵⁸ The Bolivian business men, the "Silver Patriarchs" to use Antonio Mitre's words, who became the domestic representatives of this foreign investment, all came from prestigious, Creole land-owning clans: the Aramayos, Gregorio Pacheco, and Aniceto Arce. José Avelino Aramayo and Gregorio Pacheco, relying on the wealth of their families, both made trips to Europe as young men; upon their return to Bolivia, they used their contacts on both continents to establish import-export commercial firms. These same contacts eventually allowed them to funnel Chilean and North Atlantic capital into the mining industry of the Bolivian Andes. Aniceto Arce acquired his international commercial and banking contacts in Chile during a temporary political exile from Bolivia.⁵⁹ To make Bolivia productive in the late nineteenth century, mineowners

⁵⁸ Platt, "Producción," 411. Silver was not the only metal to see national and foreign commercial capital invest in its development during the nineteenth century in Bolivia. In Corocoro, La Paz a variety of entrepreneurs funneled money into the development of the district's copper mines. Over the course of the nineteenth century there was a gradual consolidation of Corocoro's mining operations. Iván Ramiro Jiménez Chávez, "Comerciantes, habilitadores e inmigrantes en la formación del capital minero de Corocoro (1830-1870)," *El siglo XIX: Bolivia y América Latina*, ed. Rossana Barragán, Dora Cajías, and Seemin Qayum (La Paz: Coordinadora de Historia, 1997), 437-450.

⁵⁹ Mitre, *Los patriarcas de la plata*, 58-61. The history of Arce's exile from Bolivia in the early 1850s is fairly adventurous. In 1850 at the age of 26, Arce won election to the Bolivian Congress where he became an outspoken opponent of President Manuel Belzu. President Belzu declared himself the enemy of oligarchic power and wealth; he anointed himself the champion of Bolivia's popular classes. Economically he sought to defend Bolivia's protectionist and mercantile Spanish heritage. The proponents of free trade and liberal economic policies despised him. Belzu also possessed a dictatorial streak and he did not always adhere to constitutional niceties. When Arce and several other congressmen called for a return to constitutional legality, the president dispatched a detachment of soldiers to arrest them. Arce eventually

contracted European engineers versed in the most modern of technologies and industrialized their operation with steam-powered machinery; all of this required greater capital investment than the wealthiest of Bolivian families might afford.⁶⁰ Foreign capital became a necessity.

Powerful segments of the Bolivian oligarchy wedded to foreign capital required an adjustment of Bolivia's laws to the dictates of liberal, free-trade ideology. The final triumph of liberal, *laissez-faire* economic thought began in Bolivia even before the debacle of the War of the Pacific. Several early Bolivian presidents favored a capitalist re-activation of the mining industry—Bolívar and Sucre included—yet the mining oligarchy could not initially impose its agenda on the nation. Some segments of the new Bolivian state, the old colonial oligarchy, and vocal elements among the popular classes refused to sacrifice national sovereignty and other aspects of the Bolivian economy to a focus on mining exports. The balance of power began to tip in favor of the mineowners and their foreign backers in the early 1850s.

The mining oligarchy achieved its greatest triumph on 8 October 1872 when the Bolivian government legalized the export of silver paste and minerals. This change in policy signaled a complete break with the colonial practice by which state authorities regulated and taxed the export of silver coins since the sixteenth century. The 1872 reform marked the culmination of a prolonged campaign on the part of the mining oligarchy to remake the national economy, a campaign that first began to win concessions

found himself confined to the jungle town of Guanay in the Amazon Basin, northeast of La Paz. Arce escaped Guanay and after a month of difficult travel through the jungle arrived in Perú. From Perú he quickly relocated to northern Chile. Klein, *Bolivia*, 128-130; and Lora, *Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano* 1:195-196.

⁶⁰ Mitre, *Los patriarcas de la plata*, 90

from the government in the 1850s during the presidency of José María Linares (1857-1861). Among Linares' several *laissez-faire* economic reforms, in 1858 he legalized the export of unrefined minerals, except for silver; he also encouraged mineowners to form an official society to lobby for their collective interests. Yet not all of Linares' policies reflected the interests of the nascent mining oligarchy; in a move to expand government revenue, he made mercury sales a government monopoly and strengthened state supervision over the minting of silver. During the presidency of Mariano Melgarejo (1864-1871), some companies, including the Huanchaca mining company of Aniceto Arce, won the right to export silver paste and bullion. Herbert Klein does an excellent job of penetrating the popular image of Melgarejo's presidency—the obvious corruption and erratic authoritarianism of the *caudillo*—to explain the influence of *laissez-faire* and liberal economic thought on this surprising champion of the Bolivian oligarchy. When passed, the 1872 law paved the way for an even greater influx of foreign capital and the consolidation of the mining industry in the hands of a few wealthy and powerful companies.⁶¹

Beginning in the 1870s, Bolivia's export of silver began a rapid and sustained expansion. The growth of silver exports in this period surprises; in the early 1870s, the international price of silver began a prolonged slide. In 1859, the United States became a substantial exporter of silver with the discovery of the rich Comstock Lode in northern Nevada. A second mining strike in the United States had an important positive impact on Bolivia's silver industry and that of other traditional silver producers: substantial mercury deposits in California made this necessary commodity substantially cheaper. Finally,

⁶¹ Ibid., 65-66, 68-69; and Klein, *Bolivia*, 131, 135-141.

Germany adopted the gold standard for its currency in 1871, abandoning silver; beginning in 1873, the Germans dumped their silver stockpiles on the international market. Despite the steady decline of silver's value on the international market, production in Bolivia rose through the final decades of the nineteenth century. In the 1860s, Bolivia exported an average of 344,000 marks of silver a year. By the 1890s Bolivia was exporting an average of 1.6 million marks annually. Production peaked in 1895 when the country's mines produced around 2.6 million marks. Between 1875 and 1890, Bolivia was the world's third largest silver exporter, supplying some 10 percent of global production.⁶²

What did an important silver company in Bolivia look like during the boom years of the late nineteenth century? Antonio Mitre's history of the Huanchaca Company of Pulacayo, Potosí provides an excellent illustration; during several years in the late nineteenth century, the Huanchaca Company contributed more than half of Bolivia's silver exports. By the 1850s, the Huanchaca Company began producing favorable returns for its investors, but the substantial production of its mines overwhelmed the mills' refining capacity. In the 1870s, Aniceto Arce began looking for foreign capital to fund the expansion of the mills and improve the transportation infrastructure of the region. Arce invited a group of potential Chilean investors to Potosí to tour the company's mines and mills in 1872. A year later, the company was reorganized with Chilean investors holding a majority stake in the now better capitalized operation; Aniceto Arce, the only Bolivian on the board of directors, controlled a 33 percent stake in the company. In 1877, the company again reorganized itself, this time with a significant infusion of

⁶² Mitre, Los patriarcas de la plata, 32, 34, 37; and Klein, Bolivia, 143.

European capital.⁶³ The growth of foreign investment in Bolivia was not without its difficulties.

The War of the Pacific in 1879 put a temporary brake on the silver oligarchy's search for capital in Chile and beyond. Ironically, the debacle of the war would eventually spur the silver magnates to rise from the dislocation of the conflict and take total control of national politics. In 1876, General Hilarión Daza seized the presidency, ending a six-year period of civilian rule. The mineowners viewed Daza's seizure of power with indifference, as he appeared a defender of free-trade economic policies. The outbreak of hostilities with Chile in 1879 put an end to the silver oligarchs' complacency. An 1878 Bolivian law taxing Chilean and British nitrate interests along the Pacific Coast sparked the conflict; the historian Herbert Klein attributes the law's passage to a growing tension in Bolivia between the military and the silver oligarchy. Since independence, Chilean settlers and Chilean capital (often fronting for British investors) slowly cemented their de-facto control over Bolivia's coastal territories. By the late 1870s, Bolivia's military chieftains had drained the national treasury; rather than attempting to tax the country's increasingly powerful silver oligarchy and sparking civil war, they sought to extract revenue from the foreign capitalists of Bolivia's Pacific coast.⁶⁴

The war with Chile, home to so many of their important business partners, horrified oligarchs like Aniceto Arce. Within two months of the February 1879 Chilean invasion, Bolivia had lost the whole of its coastal territories. In December 1879, two revolts, one in La Paz and the other among Bolivian troops stationed along the Peruvian coast, put an end to Daza's presidency. General Narciso Campero, an officer trained in

⁶³ Mitre, Los patriarcas de la plata, 18, 92-93, 98-99.

⁶⁴ Klein, Bolivia, 142-148.

Europe, occupied the presidential palace; his administration became a battleground between the pacifist mining oligarchy and those favoring a continuation of hostilities with Chile. In May 1880, President Campero organized a national assembly of elected representatives; the body counted amongst its membership important representatives of the silver oligarchy—Aniceto Arce and Gregorio Pacheco (Pacheco was President Campero's cousin). The assembly confirmed Campero as president and appointed Arce as one of his vice-presidents; the relationship between the two men quickly devolved into one of bitter hostility. Campero favored a continuation of the conflict; Arce opposed the idea with such vigor that the president ordered his exile.⁶⁵ In the letter that actually provoked his expulsion from the government and from the country, Arce wrote of the ongoing war, "Our madness brought us war, territorial loss, and still defeated...and impotent we make ridiculous provocations to attract the wrath of the enemy."⁶⁶ Despite the exile of Aniceto Arce, the oligarchic proponents of peace eventually won out; Campero himself recognized the impossibility of continued conflict with Chile. In 1883, the Bolivian Congress recalled Arce to his post as vice-president of the republic.⁶⁷

The presidential election of 1884 marked the silver oligarchs' definitive seizure of national government. In that year, the mining magnate Gregorio Pacheco won the presidency of Bolivia; four years later, in a contested and controversial election, Aniceto Arce succeeded him in office. The mineowners ruled through the Conservative Party (sometimes known as the Constitutional Party). The Conservative Party sought a quick

⁶⁵ Ibid., 146-148; and Klein, Parties and Political Change in Bolivia, 1880-1952 (Cambridge University Press, 1969), 14-15.

⁶⁶ Aniceto Arce, Una carta del Doctor Don Aniceto Arce (La Paz: Imprenta de la Unión Americana, 1881), 1.

⁶⁷ Klein, Parties, 15.

peace with Chile and reparations for Bolivia's lost coastal territories; money they planned to invest in railroad construction to serve the mining industry of the Altiplano. The Conservative Party, while in power, focused on the economic development of Bolivia, most especially its mining sector, with the systematic implementation of *laissez faire* economic policies. Gregorio Pacheco ascended to the presidency as a political independent, yet the Conservative Party cooperated closely with his administration; during his time in office Bolivia signed a formal truce with Chile. During Aniceto Arce's term as president (1888-1892), Bolivia inaugurated a railroad connecting Uyuni and Pulacayo with the Chilean port of Antofagasta; by 1892, the railroad stretched from Uyuni to Oruro. The Conservative Party continued to control Bolivian politics until the Federalist War of 1898-1899.⁶⁸

A political atmosphere in which some of the principal stockholders of Bolivia's most important silver companies occupied the presidency contributed to the growth and profitability of the mining industry. Aniceto Arce's own Huanchaca Mining Company provides a perfect example. To cope with the declining value of silver on the international market, the Huanchaca Mining Company sought to industrialize and modernize its operations. The company built a half-million peso conveyor-belt connecting the mining camps of Pacamayo and Pulacayo; contributed three million pesos toward the construction of the Antofagasta-Uyuni-Pulacayo railway; and invested even more money in the construction of a modern refining complex in Antofagasta, Chile. The growth of silver mining continued until 1895; in 1890, the price of silver began a catastrophic, five-year downward spiral. By the mid-point of the decade, the Huanchaca

⁶⁸ Ibid., 19-20, 22-23; and Klein, Bolivia, 151, 159, 162.

Mining Company had to suspend its dividend payments. Flooding in Pulacayo's principal shafts contributed to the economic difficulties of the company; for the first time in over two decades, the Huanchaca Company lost money in both 1896 and 1897.⁶⁹ By the end of the nineteenth century, silver mining fell from its position as the dependable engine of Bolivia's export-oriented economy; in the twentieth century, tin rose to take its place.

The silver boom and the mining oligarchs' accompanying political dominance had important repercussions for Bolivia's popular classes. The government imposed a plan to privatize the community land holdings of the peasant majority of the republic; the rural reaction to this will be discussed in Chapter Two. The dizzying growth of silver mining and the advance of industry also impacted Bolivia's urban working class. The silver oligarchs of the nineteenth century sought a disciplined body of laborers for their expanding mining operations—a discipline consistently resisted by the workers. José María Dalence, in his census of mid-nineteenth century Bolivia, counted some 282 mineowners employing an estimated 9,000 laborers. Between 1850 and 1872, contract rather than wage labor dominated work in the Huanchaca Mining Company's tunnels and shafts. The company renewed the contracts on the first of each month; contractors received their pay in cash and goods from the company store. The historian Gustavo Rodríguez Ostría contends that the new generation of entrepreneurs who came to dominate mining in the late nineteenth century—Arce, Aramayo, and Pacheco—employed every legal device available to rectify what they saw as an undisciplined and undependable labor force such as fines, legal charges leveled against “ore thieves,” and

⁶⁹ Mitre, Los patriarcas de la plata, 26-27, 99-102.

educational programs. In 1852, José Avelino Aramayo published a series of internal regulations for his mining company, the Anacona Society, the first such guide published by a Bolivian mining company. Internal regulations of this type made an uneven advance in many of Bolivia's mines during the final decades of the nineteenth century.⁷⁰ Mining companies also began to encourage the creation of municipal Mining Police (*Policía Mineral*) or private security squads. These organs of government and private capital sought to eliminate absenteeism and limit the consumption of alcohol. The mineowners also asked these organizations to guard against the theft of ore and to suffocate sedition on the part of its workers. Mineowners also launched a sustained campaign against religious celebrations that might keep their workers away from the mines and mills. In the nineteenth century, the discipline campaign was not always successful.⁷¹

In addition to imposing new discipline on their workers, the mineowners sought to promote the creation of a completely urban labor force. The proletarianization of Bolivia's mine workers actually involved two different processes. The first demanded that workers break their occupational ties with agriculture—the elimination of seasonal rural-to-urban migration. The second transformation was an urban phenomenon—the establishment of wage labor as the norm in Bolivia's mines and mills. Some mineowners in the nineteenth century continued to hope for the re-establishment of the *mita*. Gustavo Rodríguez Ostría notes that the mineowners of Corocoro in the department of La Paz continued to lobby for the return of a compulsory labor draft leveled on the rural

⁷⁰ What is unclear is if these company regulations simply codified, in writing, traditional labor practices that were already well understood by the mine workers, or if their content was an attempted, new imposition by the mineowners on their workforce.

⁷¹ Klein, *Bolivia*, 123; Mitre, *Los patriarcas de la plata* 148-149; and Rodríguez, *El socavón y el sindicato*, 35-36, 38-43.

communities of the highlands as late as 1859. Over time, the progressive industrialization and modernization of the mines reduced the dependence of the large mineowners on unskilled, seasonal rural migrants. Steam power and advances in the mechanization of mining eliminated many colonial occupations often filled by *mita* laborers and other unskilled workers such as *repasiris* (the workers who performed the labor intensive jobs associated with colonial mercury amalgamation), and *apiris* and *cumuris* (those charged with the manual transport of ore inside the mine and from the shaft to the mill). The mechanization of mining also required a more skilled labor force. The *maestranza* (mechanics' workshop) became an essential division of any large mining operation. New, specialized jobs like *locomotoristas* (engine operators) also appeared with the introduction of more machinery.⁷² In the twentieth century, the imposed discipline of the working class and the growing skill and sophistication of Bolivia's laborers contributed to the emergence of an influential union movement that would make the popular classes important political actors on the national stage.

After the economic dislocation of independence, Bolivia's mining industry struggled to regain the glorious heights of the colonial period. While the nineteenth century boom shared some points with silver mining in earlier eras, the economy of the new republic saw important innovations. The state continued to back well-capitalized mining operations firmly controlled by the dominant classes; by the 1880s, wealthy mineowners even occupied the highest office of government—the presidency. More artisan mining production, the *trapiches* and the *kajchas*, continued to operate in the shadow of more sophisticated enterprises. The working class of the colonial period also

⁷² Rodríguez, *El socavón y el sindicato*, 36-37, 45-46.

continued their own social and political evolution under the pressure of greater workplace discipline, proletarianization, and urbanization. Unlike the colonial period, industrialization and innovation had important repercussions in the new republic. Mineowners could no longer depend upon the influx of cheap, unskilled *mita* laborers. To pay for modern machinery and technical advice, the mining operations depended upon massive infusions of foreign capital. In the twentieth century, industrialization and the penetration of foreign capital advanced with greater intensity; the social, ideological, and organizational development of the working class also reached critical mass catapulting the popular classes to the center of the national political stage.

Conclusion

The following chapters focus on the reaction of the popular classes to industrialization and oligarchic politics of the first three decades of the twentieth century (1899-1929). While the politics and economy of this period much resembled those of the late nineteenth century—one dominant political party intolerant of opposition and an export-oriented mining economy—in one respect the new century presented a new political panorama. Unlike the silver magnates of the nineteenth century, Bolivia's tin miners demurred from direct participation in government. Instead, they employed a corps of professionals—lawyers, engineers, and administrators—to ensure a government responsive to their needs. The mining companies exerted their influence from the lowest levels of local administration to the office of the president. In December 1916, the Penny and Duncan Mining Company of Morococala recommended one Nicanor L. Gutiérrez as

corregidor of the settlement. The mining company claimed to make the recommendation employing their “impartial method of judgment.”⁷³ This sort of close cooperation between the representatives of the mining industry and the professional politicians and bureaucrats of the Bolivian state became a hallmark of both Liberal and Republican administrations during the first decades of the twentieth century, continuing a tradition begun with the Spanish administration of Viceroy Francisco Toledo centuries before. The descendants of Potosí’s discoverer Diego Huallpa and the eighteenth-century *kajcha* Agustín Quespi continued their parallel struggle and development in the new century.

During Potosí’s first years of glory, the *yanakuna* segment of Andean society controlled production in the new and promising mining settlement with little Spanish supervision; they even relied upon technology of their own indigenous technology. As the quality of the Rich Hill’s ore declined over time, a new mining regime arose in the mountains of Alto Perú—mercury amalgamation dominated by Spanish operators. The new process required a significant investment of capital and an abundant supply of cheap labor; the Spanish state supplied the second with its levy of *mita* labor on the Indian communities of the Andes. Despite the rise of mercury amalgamation, more artisan mining operations continued to flourish in the shadow of the larger mills—a semi-illicit economy best typified by the *trapiches* and the *kajchas*. Despite the impressment of thousands of involuntary rural workers annually, a special socio-economic group devoted to the subterranean quest for silver developed in the cities and mining camps of Alto Perú. While many of these laborers identified themselves as Indians, their work set them apart from the Quechua, Aymara, and Uru residents of the countryside.

⁷³ Penny & Duncan Mining Company of Morococala to the prefect of Oruro, Morococala, 22 December 1916, 228, “Recibido de Varios, 1916,” Archivo de la Prefectura de Oruro (hereafter cited as APO).

With independence, the government of the Bolivian Republic replaced the Spanish colonial state as the protector and promoter of oligarchic mining enterprises; in the 1880s, the largest mineowners even occupied the office of the presidency. As the mining industry demanded greater industrialization to remain competitive in the international silver market, foreign capital from Chile and then the North Atlantic began to flow into country. Railroads first connected the mines of the Bolivian Andes to the Pacific coast in the 1880s; the steam engine and mechanized mills quickly revolutionized well-capitalized enterprises like the Huanchaca Mining Company. In addition to industrializing the workplace, mineowners also sought to transform the workers they employed. Temporary laborers, rural migrants to the mining camps, became less important, the miners became more settled and urban. The bosses also sought to impose greater discipline in the workplace, a discipline fiercely resisted by their laborers. Ironically, the industrialization of Bolivia's mining industry sparked profound changes among the workers. As the economy transitioned from silver to tin, the miners began to organize themselves and experiment with radical ideological programs like never before.

In this chapter, we explored the long history of mining in what is today the modern nation of Bolivia from the earliest years of the Spanish conquest in the sixteenth century to the collapse of the republican silver industry in 1899. We address important continuities in the organization of production, state support for oligarchic mining operations, and the long history of a special segment of the popular classes dependent upon the silver mines for their livelihood. The next four chapters will examine in greater detail the tin mining industry of the early-twentieth century and the state structures supporting it and their impact on the popular classes of Bolivia's industrial heartland:

Oruro and northern Potosí. The peasantry and the working class reacted in different ways to the various oligarchic impositions of the period. Chapters Two and Three will focus on the peasantry; Chapters Four will zero in on the working class.

Chapter Two: The Success of *Ayllu* Resistance

Everything revolves around a ferocious and unstoppable individualism. And naturally, as the majority of the population is not prepared for an individual fight because of a lack of education, it is not unusual to see the natives subjected to humiliating conditions, exploited and dispossessed —if they have property—by the Creole bourgeoisie and by the unscrupulous Europeans...all under the guise of a liberal constitution, that does not protect its citizens, or their wealth, or their future.

Tristan Marof, La justicia del Inca (1926)

On 31 May 1926, the leadership of two northern Potosí *ayllus* (a unit of Andean indigenous community organization) brought suit against the neighboring Hacienda La Palca, property of the Colquechaca Mining Company, seeking an official boundary survey of their adjoining land holdings. The *ayllus* Sullcavi and Guaracata asked the local court in the provincial capital of Colquechaca to mediate the reconstruction of a centuries old property boundary dividing their fields and pastures from those of a land and mining company owned and operated by the wealthiest man in Bolivia, Simón I. Patiño, the “Tin King.”¹ This particular case is one of several that afford the historian an excellent opportunity to probe the legal, social, and economic position of Indian communities in northern Potosí and Oruro during a pivotal time period in Bolivian history. The first three decades of the twentieth century stand as a period of enormous political and economic stability when compared with the rest of Bolivian history, but

¹ In modern Quechua and Aymara orthography the two *ayllus* in question are spelled Sullkhawi and Waraxata (in Quechua: Waraqhata). In the course of this paper, I will use the antiquated spellings so as to match the orthography used in the primary documents. Both Sullkhawi and Waraxata are minor *ayllus* within the Alasaya (Anansaya) half of the larger *ayllu* of Macha. Tristan Platt, La persistencia de los ayllus en el norte de Potosí de la invasión europea a la República de Bolivia (La Paz: Fundación Dialogo, 1999), 30; and Tristan Platt, personal correspondence. On the subject of Simón I. Patiño see Manuel Carrasco, Simón Patiño, un procer industrial (Paris: 1960); and Charles F. Geddes, Patiño, rey de estaño (Madrid: A.G. Grupo S.A., 1984). For an English language version of Geddes’ work see: Charles F. Geddes, Patiño: The Tin King (London: Robert Hale & Company, 1972).

important and violent rural insurrections did occasionally punctuate the relative peace of the era. Scholars generally view the period (at least until 1924) as one of trial and loss for the *ayllus*: haciendas expanded insatiably at the expense of Indian communities.² Yet in 1929, the Chayanta *ayllus* of Sullcavi and Guaracata scored a seeming victory against the wealthiest man in Bolivia. The Colquechaca court agreed to a boundary settlement accepted by both the *ayllus* and the Colquechaca Mining Company—why?

This dissertation posits the relative success of the *ayllus* of Oruro and highland areas in northern Potosí in preserving their land and defending the organizational autonomy of their communities during the first three decades of the last century. Creole and mestizo landowners, both large and small, made little progress in acquiring the land of their Indian neighbors—this is a surprising contrast with the history of La Paz where Indian communities lost land at a dizzying rate during the same period. The success of the *ayllus* of the central and southern Altiplano flows from two related circumstances: the relative weakness of the Bolivian state in the countryside and the adroit employment of physical violence by Indian communities.

The dominant classes and the Bolivian state never extended their cultural and physical power over much of Oruro and northern Potosí; they never established a monopoly of violence in the most isolated recesses of the Andean steppes and highlands. In the central and southern Altiplano, the Indian communities terrified both their hacienda neighbors and the Bolivian state. Liberal economic policies and the dominant classes' brand of racial superiority and cultural hegemony might be imposed in the shadow of the nation's cities, but oligarchic designs often failed in rural areas. There

² Langer, *Economic Change*, 2; and Rivera C., "*Oppressed but not Defeated*", 18.

they confronted *ayllus* with a clear conception of their “rights,” and many communities demonstrated a willingness to use extra-legal violence to defend those “rights.” Violence or the threat of violence by Indian peasants forced landed oligarchs, in spite of their overwhelming sense of entitlement, to moderate their ambitions to expand their property.

Contemporary Andean historiography emphasizes the use Indian authorities often made of the colonial judicial system. After the initial conquest decades of the sixteenth century and the consolidation of Hapsburg rule in the Andes, community leaders found a useful tool in the courts to defend the interests of their communities against both the exactions of royal officials and the incursions of Spanish landowners.³ A number of scholars also assert the continued viability of indigenous legal challenges in nineteenth and early-twentieth century Bolivia to both the laws and designs of the new republic and the *ayllus*’ long-time rivals: expansionist haciendas.⁴ This dissertation argues that state officials and otherwise aggressive and powerful landowners in Oruro and northern Potosí accepted judicial mediation and interference because they feared the *ayllus*’ collective and effective capacity for violence.

The Hacienda and the *Ayllu* in Bolivian History

³ Two good studies on this subject for colonial Peru are: Ward Stavig, The World of Tupac Amaru: Conflict, Community, and Identity in Colonial Peru (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999); and Steve J Stern, Peru’s Indian Peoples and the Challenge of Spanish Conquest: Huamanga to 1640 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982). One work on this topic for the colonial era in northern Potosí is Platt, La persistencia.

⁴ Some of the best works on the subject are: Ricardo A. Godoy, Mining and Agriculture; Herbert S. Klein, Haciendas and Ayllus: Rural Society in the Bolivian Andes in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Langer, Economic Change; Tristan Platt, Estado boliviano y ayllu andino: Tierra y tributo en el norte de Potosí (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1982); Platt, La persistencia; and Rivera C., “Oppressed but not Defeated”.

Geographically Oruro and northern Potosí are an arid and harsh combination of mountain and steppe with an average altitude of well over 10,000 feet above sea level. To the west lies the Cordillera Occidental of the Andes—a relatively thin ribbon of peaks that separates Bolivia from the neighboring republic of Chile and the Pacific Ocean. To the east the Cordillera Oriental or Cordillera Real of the Andes presents a thicker, more convoluted mass of mountainous terrain that dominates much of northern Potosí. Some of the eastern valleys of Potosí are lower in elevation and enjoy a more temperate climate. Between the two parallel mountain chains lies the Andean Altiplano: a windswept steppe land of bare hills, shallow lakes, and salt flats. The departments of Oruro and Potosí contain the central and southern segments of the Altiplano. In the north, in the department of La Paz the Altiplano grows more hospitable and fertile around Lake Titicaca. The terrain creates singular difficulties for agricultural production.

In Oruro, the haciendas and other private landholdings cluster around the towns and cities of the department's northeast. The city of Oruro lies at an important commercial crossroads. There, Inka roadways, the commercial routes of the Spanish Andean empire, and modern Bolivian roads and railways all converge on a small cluster of mineral rich hills. To the north, the road travels through the town of Caracollo onward to La Paz and Lake Titicaca. Eastward the road snakes over the Cordillera Real down into the fertile valleys of Cochabamba. To the west alternately muddy and dusty roads cut across the Altiplano to eventually cross the Cordillera Occidental and enter Chile. To the south, the road threads the small plain that lies between the Cordillera Azanaques (a front range of the Cordillera Real) and the lakes of Uru Uru and Poopó, eventually turning east over the mountains and onward to the mining city of Potosí and the colonial capital of

Sucre. A spur of this fourth road continues southward across the Altiplano to the railroad town of Uyuni—from there routes led to Argentina and Chile. In the colonial period, wealthy Spaniards took advantage of this important commercial nexus to build their own, private landholdings close to the city of Oruro and close to routes carrying their products to other important urban centers in the Viceroyalty of Peru. This concentration of haciendas in one small section of the central and southern Altiplano continued well into the twentieth century. A 1905 report penned by the *corregidor* (a local political boss) of Caracollo explained that no Indian communities owned land in the vicinity of Caracollo—everything was privately owned.⁵ Only in the northwest corner of the department did the hacienda dominate the landscape. Traveling south from Oruro on the road to the colonial town of Challapata haciendas and private farms grow more infrequent. West of the lakes Uru Uru and Poopó, out across the expansive Altiplano—haciendas are almost unknown, all of the land belongs to the *ayllus*. In northern Potosí the Indian communities of the region enjoyed a similar dominant position.

Government officials both inside and outside of Oruro bemoaned Indian control of so much of the department's land. "Being occupied almost the totality of the land by the indigenous race," one functionary noted, "it is not possible to think of colonizing it, nor even changing the actual ownership."⁶ Some especially creative, or perhaps foolish, government functionaries and private citizens hoped to take advantage of the Altiplano's variable climate to market a bit of unused land to European colonists. Many Bolivian

⁵ Corregidor of Caracollo in the prefecture of Oruro to the Minister of Education in the Office of Justice and Education in La Paz, Oruro, 29 September 1905, 132, "Ministerios de Justicia e Industria (Instrucción) desde agosto 26/1905 hasta febrero 2 de 1909," APO.

⁶ Constantino Morales, prefect of Oruro to the Minister of State in the Office of Government and Development in La Paz, 157, "Ministerio de Gobierno. desde 12 de julio 1909 hasta 28 de agosto 1911," APO.

officials during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries dreamed of whitening the nation's population; in 1910, the Minister of Colonization and Agriculture wrote the following to the prefect of Oruro:

Having retreated Lake Poopó from its old shoreline, there is a good space of abandoned land. Various citizens requested its adjudication, but the Supreme Government declared that the only proprietors were the indigenous communities that surround the lake, thereby wasting a good opportunity to found agricultural colonies with ethnic elements distinct from the aborigines.⁷

More thoughtful administrators recognized the legitimate territorial claims of the *ayllus*, or at least their capacity to resist tinkering with the system. The dominant classes and the Bolivian government preferred a system built upon the private ownership of land; they could not always impose their vision upon the nation's Indian communities.

The peasant population of Oruro and northern Potosí lived and labored in one of two principal rural institutions of land tenancy and agricultural production: the hacienda and the *ayllu*. The first was a system of private land ownership dominated by Creole and mestizo landowners, and the second was a traditional form of communal ownership and land management dominated by the Quechua, Aymara, and Uru-Chipaya people themselves. Hacienda residents and *ayllu* members in Oruro and northern Potosí shared a similar Andean culture; the internal political organization of the hacienda mirrored that of neighboring Indian communities. Liberal land reform and the Bolivian state transformed *ayllu* residents in many regions of La Paz into dependent *colonos* (the laboring residents of the hacienda) with the alienation of their land and its sale to urban Creoles and mestizos. One 1890 sales agreement from the province of Omasuyos in the department

⁷ Minister of Colonization and Agriculture to the prefect of Oruro, La Paz, 3 August 1910, in the prefect of Oruro to the subprefect of the Poopó Province, Oruro, 11 August 1910, 154, "1908 a 1910," APO.

of La Paz illustrates this transformation for the former community of Pucuro: “In virtue of the present contract my clients renounce all right to their mentioned landholdings and are obliged to serve the buyer as *colonos*.”⁸ Despite certain cultural and organizational similarities, different structural arrangements distinguished the economy of the *ayllu* from that of the hacienda. *Ayllu* members and hacienda *colonos* related differently to both the means of production and the product of their own labor. Ideally, *ayllu* residents enjoyed direct and guaranteed access to the means of production—land. Hacienda *colonos* received no such guarantee; absentee owners might deprive *colonos* of land at any time. *Ayllu* members also expected to retain and enjoy the product of their own labor or see it reinvested in the community.⁹ *Colonos* saw the fruits of their labor alienated by a different class; the production of the hacienda became the private property of an absentee landlord. One approach to the rural history of the Bolivia is a study of the mutable balance of power between the hacienda and the *ayllu*

Any study of land tenure patterns in rural Bolivia requires a rigorous regional focus; one should proceed cautiously in making broad generalizations about historical

⁸ REGISTRO Especial para la Enajenación de Terrenos de Origen de 1890, protocolo No. 49, Fs. 223-225, quoted in Alejandro Vladimir Antezana Salvatierra, Estructura agraria en el siglo XIX: Legislación agraria y transformación de la realidad rural de Bolivia (La Paz: Centro de Información para el Desarrollo, 1992), 182.

⁹ The Bolivian state alienated a portion of the *ayllu*’s labor and capital as will be discussed in Chapter Three, yet the Indian communities might rationalize this as part of a “reciprocal pact” that served the long-term interests of the *ayllu*. The concept of a “reciprocal pact” or a “tributary pact” between Indian communities and the Bolivian state comes from the work of Tristan Platt. The concept will be discussed in greater detail further along in this chapter. Platt, Estado boliviano y ayllu andino. The leadership of the *ayllu* also demanded a portion of the community’s labor and capital, but again individual members might rationalize this as an investment in the *ayllu*’s long-term interests. Some historians might question this description of the *ayllu*’s economy as overly idealized. It is important not to forget Herbert Klein’s admonition, “Not all Indians were economically equal.” Herbert S. Klein, Haciendas and Ayllus, 163. During both the colonial period and the nineteenth century, *ayllu* residents fell into two groups: the *originarios* (full community members, considered the “original” inhabitants of the *ayllu*) and the *forasteros* (landless migrants not necessarily entitled to *ayllu* land). The relationship between these two groups is not well understood for the twentieth century.

change for the open steppes of the Altiplano. In his history of society and economy in Chuquisaca during the liberal period (1880-1930), Erick Langer breaks the department into four smaller units or provinces.¹⁰ The study illustrates the importance of a regionally focused examination of Bolivian history; Langer discovers very different patterns of land tenure and labor relations in each province. In her study of Indian communities for the period 1900 to 1920, Silvia Rivera focuses on two provinces in the La Paz Department: Pacajes and Achacachi. It is important to remember that her conclusions about the widespread alienation of community land really only apply to the department of La Paz.¹¹ The central and southern Altiplano of both Oruro and Potosí exhibited land tenure patterns quite different from those of La Paz during the first decades of the twentieth century.

In addition to Erick Langer, several other scholars have conducted their studies with a rigorous regional focus—most of them for the colonial period and the nineteenth century.¹² The early twentieth century has not received the same exacting attention. Brooke Larson writes about the valleys of Cochabamba during both the colonial period and the nineteenth century in her book Cochabamba, 1550-1900: Colonialism and Agrarian Transformation in Bolivia. Soon after the Conquest, Spanish landowners came to dominate the fertile valleys of Cochabamba, making the hacienda the dominant rural institution in the region by the early seventeenth century. The process transformed the Indian population into a landless, dependent peasantry. Yet hacienda tenants fought

¹⁰ The four provinces are Yamparaez, Cinti, Azero, and Tomina. Chuquisaca is a geographically diverse department, but it lies to the east of and outside of the Bolivian Altiplano. Langer, Economic Change.

¹¹ Rivera C., “Oppressed but not Defeated”.

¹² Aside from those studies already mentioned and the books soon to be discussed, another good, regionally-focused study is Alberto Rivera Pizarro, Los terratenientes de Cochabamba (Cochabamba: Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Económica y Social; Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Sociología, Universidad Mayor de San Simón, 1992).

landlord hegemony in a number of ways—mainly through their understanding and manipulation of market forces. By the early twentieth century, a decayed market for Cochabamba’s agricultural products so weakened the owners of haciendas that peasant smallholders (many of them now identifying themselves as mestizos) made significant inroads in the countryside, as large landowners liquidated their rural properties. Yet the ascendant class of peasant smallholders could not absorb all of the valleys’ growing population, and many found themselves forced to abandon the department of Cochabamba to seek employment as mine workers in the highlands. Larson is careful to note that the dominance of the hacienda in the history of Cochabamba is not typical of the rest of Bolivia; she makes a special point to highlight the contrast with the rural history of the highland region of Chayanta in northern Potosí.¹³

Tristan Platt focuses on the *ayllus* of Chayanta in his influential book Estado boliviano y ayllu andino. Platt’s study surveys the nineteenth century and examines the changing relationship between the *ayllus*, the Bolivian state, and Creole landowners in the region. The Indian communities of Chayanta survived the colonial period relatively intact and figured as the dominant landholding institution in northern Potosí at the time of independence. *Ayllu* members paid a semi-annual tribute to the Bolivian state and provided a number of other services to local officials with the expectation that the government would protect community land—Indian communities understood this as a “reciprocal pact” or “tributary pact” with a long, historical precedence. With the onset of liberal land reform (the attempted privatization of community land) in the 1870s and 1880s, the Chayanta *ayllus* tenaciously fought to defend their understanding of this

¹³ Brooke Larson, Cochabamba, 1550-1900: Colonialism and Agrarian Transformation in Bolivia (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

“pact” and to stymie official attempts to individualize community land. They did both with a good level of success—a contrast with the tribulations of La Paz’s Indian communities during the same period.¹⁴

Herbert Klein focuses on the *ayllus* of La Paz and their contentious relationship with the institution of the hacienda for both the late colonial period and the nineteenth century in his book Haciendas and Ayllus: Rural Society in the Bolivian Andes in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries. As with Chayanta, Potosí, the Indian communities of La Paz successfully survived the colonial period and proved remarkably responsive to market forces and economic change. Unlike Chayanta, the hacienda existed as an important rural institution, and during the nineteenth century the Creole landowners of La Paz took advantage of liberal land laws to expand their holdings at the expense of the department’s *ayllus*. The landowning class of the region exhibited a good level of market responsiveness, mirroring that of the Indian communities. This marks an important contrast with older autarchic interpretations of the hacienda in Latin American historiography. The *ayllus* of La Paz did not disappear during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but they did loose ground to the hacienda.¹⁵ The Indian communities of Oruro—one of the foci of this dissertation—resembled the *ayllus* of Chayanta in northern Potosí rather than those of neighboring La Paz; they successfully resisted the liberal onslaught well into the twentieth century, holding onto much of their land.¹⁶

¹⁴ Platt, Estado boliviano y ayllu andino.

¹⁵ Klein, Haciendas and Ayllus.

¹⁶ Generally, the *ayllus* of Oruro do not receive the same volume of scholarly attention as the Indian communities of either La Paz or Potosí. Two recent publications focusing, in part, on the history of Oruro’s *ayllus* are Margot Beyersdorff, Historia y drama ritual en los Andes bolivianos (siglos XVI-XX)

Any discussion of the rural balance of power between haciendas and Indian communities for the early twentieth century has to begin with a consideration of liberal land reform in the nineteenth century. During the early republican period, the poverty of Bolivia's central government and the backwardness of the national economy precluded any assault on the nation's Indian communities and their land. Independence in 1825 created a state with liberal-democratic dreams in a country without the social and economic development to support those aspirations. Simón Bolívar and Antonio José Sucre sought to radically transform the new nations of the Andes.¹⁷ Chapter One of this dissertation discussed the Liberators' attempted capitalist reactivation of Bolivia's mining economy. In the countryside, Bolívar and Sucre envisioned the transformation of the Indian population into a class of yeomen farmers; they sought the extirpation of colonial, communal, and feudal institutions in the Andes. They also hoped to stimulate greater capital investment in agriculture. While superficially similar to the ideology of liberal land reform during the second half of the nineteenth century, the Liberators' rural initiatives sought to protect Indian citizens from despoliation by Creoles and mestizos. In August 1825, Bolívar informed Sucre "all of the usurpations of indigenous land are reversed with the decree issued in Cuzco [4 July 1825]."¹⁸

In addition to the threat posed by outside groups such as the rural oligarchy, Bolívar also identified the leadership of the *ayllus* as a danger—a cause of rural iniquities

(La Paz: Plural Editores, 1999) and Thomas Alan Abercrombie, *Pathways of Memory and Power: Ethnography and History among an Andean People* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998). The first half of Beyersdorff's book contains a detailed history of several Indian communities close by the city of Oruro during the Spanish colonial period—especially the Aymara-Uru settlement of Challacollo. Her study also casts light upon the emergence of several important haciendas in the shadow of Oruro's mineral-rich hills. Beyersdorff, *Historia*, 13-149.

¹⁷ Antezana, *Estructura agraria*, 23-50; and William L. Lofstrom, *El Mariscal Sucre en Bolivia* (La Paz: Imprenta Alenkar Ltda., 1983).

¹⁸ Simón Bolívar, 29 August 1825, La Paz, Bolivia quoted in Antezana, *Estructura agraria*, 23.

and an impediment to reform in the countryside. In the same July 1825 decree that sought the restitution of Indian land, he also declared that, “The title and authority of the *caciques* [community leaders] is extinguished.”¹⁹ The pronouncement envisioned an equitable distribution of land within the *ayllus*—the redistribution of excess land held by community leaders—as a precursor to the legal extinction of the Indian communities and the privatization of community land. As the reins of government passed from Bolívar to Sucre, the new Bolivian government persisted in its attempt to remake rural society. On 27 December 1826 President Sucre promulgated a second agrarian law building upon the precedent of Bolívar’s declarations the year before.²⁰ Both men sought the abolition of Indian communities and the distribution of land to individual *ayllu* members. Sucre’s decree stated that, “The Indian who wishes to acquire in perpetuity the land that he today occupies or other unclaimed land can request it in writing from the governor of his province.”²¹ The government imposed only one limitation on recently individualized plots of land: Bolívar’s 1824 decree prohibited the commercialization of Indian land until 1850; Sucre shortened the prohibition to just 10 years.²² The Liberators’ felt the need to protect Indian agriculturalists from the rapid alienation of their land and its sale to Creoles and mestizos.²³ Liberal land reform laws in the 1820s failed miserably; when superficially similar laws returned in the second half of the nineteenth century they had a

¹⁹ Simón Bolívar, 4 July 1825, Cuzco, Peru quoted in Antezana, *Estructura agraria*, 25.

²⁰ Antezana, *Estructura agraria*, 25, 48.

²¹ Antonio José Sucre, 27 December 1826, Chuquisaca, Bolivia quoted in *Ibid.*, 48.

²² Antezana, *Estructura agraria*, 37, 49.

²³ The prohibition against the sale of recently individualized community land for a period of either 25 or 10 years probably resulted from Bolívar and Sucre’s doubts about the ability of Bolivia’s Indians to manage their own affairs during the period of economic and social transition that the abolition of the *ayllus* constituted.

very different objective—to consolidate and strengthen the wealth and power of Creole and mestizo landowners at the expense of the *ayllus*.

Prior to 1880, government budgets depended upon Indian tribute payments (a revived colonial institution) and rural tax receipts. Early liberals in Bolivia did not find themselves in a strong enough position to impose liberal economic policies (i.e. the privatization of land) on the whole of the country, especially on the Indian communities, during most of the nineteenth century. The result was a hybrid political system that lay somewhere between liberal ideals and old colonial traditions. No matter the political or economic inclination of early republican administrators, a practical evaluation of the nation's financial situation ensured the protection of *ayllu* landholdings —the bedrock of the budget. Not until 1866 did any Bolivian president attempt to alter the rural status quo. In that year, President Mariano Melgarejo abolished *ayllu* communal property requiring all Indians to buy their land or face losing it to the state. He founded this decree upon the legal precedence of the *Ley de Enfiteusis* of 1842, a law that declared that all Indians were to be considered *inquilinos* (renters or tenants) of the state—an early, tentative step extending republican authority over the *ayllus*. A desperate bid to remedy the bankruptcy of Melgarejo's administration, the 1866 decree raised little money and sparked a wave of Indian revolts that helped to bring the government down in 1871. Despite the repeal of Melgarejo's decree in 1871, the final thirty years of the nineteenth century brought to power a series of governments, liberal in economic orientation, that

attempted to strip away many of the *ayllus*' legal protections and alter land-tenure patterns in the countryside.²⁴

A changing national economy allowed Bolivia's dominant classes to pursue a new and more vigorous campaign against the *ayllus*. As discussed in chapter one, during the final decades of the century, the nation's silver industry experienced a strong revival; the mining resurgence allowed the central government to break with its dependency upon indigenous tribute receipts. Additionally, the dominant classes seemed willing to sacrifice the nation's internal markets and agricultural production to a mineral export economy founded upon the principle of "free trade." An example: prior to 1860, Chayanta in northern Potosí and the fertile valleys of Cochabamba acted as Bolivia's breadbaskets both supplying the needs of the internal market and providing a surplus for export to southern Peru. The northern Potosí *ayllus* of Chayanta benefited from their active participation in this regional grain market, a market eventually undercut by the importation of Chilean wheat. The steady expansion of a railway network linking Bolivian mines and cities with the Pacific quickly marginalized the internal grain trade, making imported wheat cheaper than that grown in the nation's rugged valleys. In 1889, a rail line from Antofagasta, Chile reached the Bolivian mining settlement of Huanchaca sounding the death knell of market-oriented agriculture in Chayanta. The demise of internal trade knocked the *ayllus* of northern Potosí back into a subsistence economy; Tristan Platt notes that some Andean scholars and development organizations have erroneously interpreted this economy to be an immutable characteristic of *ayllulife*.

²⁴ Langer, *Economic Change*, 7, 61; Godoy, *Mining and Agriculture*, 27, 29; Platt, *La persistencia*, 38; and Tristan Platt, "The Political Culture of technology and labor in early Bolivian mining," paper presented at the Conference on "Political Cultures in the Andes, 1750-1950," Illinois-Champaign, March 23-26 2000.

These market changes shaking Bolivia at the end of the nineteenth century weakened the economic power of the nation's Indian communities vis-à-vis the dominant classes.²⁵

The liberal economic sentiment of leading sectors of the dominant classes found expression in the 1874 *Ley de exvinculación*, directly threatening Bolivia's Indian communities. The *ayllus* spent the final decades of the nineteenth century fighting against the law's implementation. Platt argues that Bolivia's Indian communities struggled at this time to maintain what he has termed a "reciprocal pact" with the central government. A cultural, political, and economic understanding growing out of *ayllu* relations with the Spanish colonial government, Indians felt this pact guaranteed them royal recognition and protection of community land in exchange for tribute, labor, and other services to the state. After independence, the *ayllus* fought to maintain this reciprocal relationship with the republican government.²⁶ The 1874 law guaranteed to community members "the absolute proprietorship of their respective holdings, under the boundaries and markers currently known," but added, "the rest of the land that is not possessed by the Indians is declared excess and as such belongs to the State."²⁷ In effect, the law sought to expropriate land left fallow—a necessity of sustainable Andean agriculture. This decree constituted a direct assault upon the *ayllus*' "reciprocal pact" with the national government. The new law established land survey commissions to determine what land might be declared "excess" and subject to eventual sale by the state. The land survey commissions became the primary targets of Indian anger and resistance.

²⁵ Godoy, *Mining and Agriculture*, 29; Platt, *Estado boliviano y ayllu andino*, 13-14, 39; Platt, *La persistencia*, 36; Langer, *Economic Change*, 26-28; Rivera C., "Oppressed but not Defeated", 28; and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ayllus y proyectos de desarrollo en el norte de Potosí* (La Paz: Ediciones Aruwiwiri, 1992), 42.

²⁶ Platt, *Estado boliviano y ayllu andino*, 20.

²⁷ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 76.

Implementation of the law began slowly; first a coup by Hilarión Daza in 1876 and then Bolivia's tragic participation in the War of the Pacific in 1879 delayed the process. Finally, in 1880, with the military discredited, government passed into the hands of the liberal silver mining oligarchy of Sucre. General Narciso Campero, president of the republic from 1880 to 1884, was even a cousin of the great mineowner Gregorio Pacheco. The new government embraced a radically liberal interpretation of the *Ley de exvinculación*: Ladislao Cabrera, the Minister of State, declared in 1880 that the law be used. The dominant classes believed the Indian population of the country incapable of modern, market-oriented agriculture. Flush with booming silver exports, the liberal oligarchy even transferred the proceeds of Indian community taxes to the departmental governments in 1885.²⁸

Despite this nearly continuous assault on their economic and social well being, the *ayllus* managed to defend themselves ably through a number of legal and extra-legal tactics. This nineteenth century resistance mirrors some of the struggles played out in the twentieth century—Indians sometimes used violence to ensure respect for their customary rights. Land survey commissions met with an uncooperative and sometimes hostile reception in the countryside.²⁹ Intimidated by the residents of communities whose lands they sought to survey, the commissioners' work proceeded slowly. In 1898, the prefect of Oruro, Andrés Aramayo, lamented: "To this date they have not yet carried out the *ley de exvinculación* of land of 5 October 1874...the surveys have been made impractical because of the tenacious resistance presented by the Indians and the lack of

²⁸ Langer, *Economic Change*, 20-21; and Platt, *Estado boliviano y ayllu andino*, 78.

²⁹ For a more detailed description of this resistance see Platt, *Estado boliviano y ayllu andino*, 79-88.

government force in the provinces to support the action of the surveys.”³⁰ In addition to active civil disobedience, Indian leaders looked to the courts to fight the *Ley de exvinculación*. Using documents long held in the community or discovered in colonial archives, the *ayllus* sought to prove their “respective possessions” legally.³¹

Community resistance to liberal land reform culminated in the massive participation of Indian combatants in the Bolivian Federalist War of 1898-1899. Supporting the insurgent Liberal Party of La Paz led by General José Manuel Pando, the *ayllus* of the Altiplano and northern Potosí actively fought the forces of the Conservative Party of Sucre, the political embodiment of the old silver oligarchy.³² After their victory, General Pando and the triumphant Liberal Party turned on their Indian allies, embracing the economic policies of their predecessors. When the *ayllus* reacted violently to this betrayal, Pando hunted down the insurgents and executed or murdered their leadership.³³ Despite the repression, continued mobilization and agitation in northern Potosí in 1902, eventually prompted Pando’s administration to completely abandon surveys in that region associated with the *Ley de exvinculación*.³⁴

Indian communities in the department of Oruro vigorously participated in the Federalist War. One non-Indian resident of Challapata, Óscar Bravo, penned the

³⁰ Andrés Aramayo the prefect of Oruro to the Minister of State in the Office of Government and Justice in Sucre, Oruro, 20 June 1898, “1898 a 1899, Gobierno y Justicia, Abril del ’98,” APO.

³¹ Rivera C., “Oppressed but not Defeated”, 30-31.

³² So as to avoid confusion, one should not take too seriously the party labels used in the Federalist War: Conservative Party vs. Liberal Party, as both espoused and practice liberal economic policies. The war essentially pitted one regional oligarchy against another: the elite of La Paz tied to the nascent tin industry, and the elite of Sucre tied to the declining silver industry. For a similar irrelevance of party labels in neighboring Brazil see: Emilia Viotti da Costa, The Brazilian Empire (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985).

³³ Langer, Economic, 30. For a more detailed description of the conflict see: Condarco, Zárate, el “Temible” Willka.

³⁴ Platt, Estado boliviano y ayllu andino, 15, 90-94.

following description and analysis of a particularly bloody uprising in Peñas, Oruro associated with the conflict.³⁵ “The rebellion of the Indians of Peñas has left a painful impression on the soul of all of the upstanding residents of this region,” he recorded. “The hostile character that this community still presents today has obliged me to study them...They hate the proprietors of the haciendas in this area.” Bravo actually represents an aggressive element of the landed oligarchy of Oruro; his proposed final solution for the Indian community of Peñas involved deportation and the redistribution of community land—presumably to non-Indian landowners such as himself:

To tear out by the roots the constant threat of rebellion by the Peñas, the best would be to send all of the rebels to colonize our eastern lowlands, this lesson would stop in the whole of the Republic all idea of rebellion—Also the rubber plantations would benefit to a great degree, and the land that they would abandon, which is the most satisfactory of this region, would give a great benefit to the Nation. With the disappearance of the Peñas, who are the instigators of rebellion in the whole province, peace would be established for a long time.

The Bolivian government never implemented Bravo’s suggestions. One unknown reader even highlighted the aggressive oligarch’s more provocative proposals and wrote “bad” alongside.³⁶

With the suspension of the land survey commissions at the beginning of the twentieth century, the locus of conflict and the primary combatants changed in the Chayanta region of northern Potosí—the scene of the legal dispute with which this chapter began. The central government no longer actively participated in local disputes

³⁵ Óscar Bravo appears to be the subprefect of the Challapata region: “The opportune intervention of Subprefect Óscar Bravo...in command of a competent force, has returned confidence to the landowners and peace to the province, capturing the criminal leadership, authors of innumerable crimes and against whom the justice system is now preparing the corresponding charges.” Quoted in Lora, Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano, 1:263.

³⁶ Óscar Bravo to the prefect of the Oruro Department, Challapata, 22 August 1899, “1898-1899, Prefecturas y Sub Prefecturas, Abril del ’98,” APO.

over land-tenure policy.³⁷ Instead, hacienda owners and smallholders had to depend upon their power in local and departmental politics to expand the boundaries of their landholdings. Ironically, the alienation of Indian land, even in some sectors of northern Potosí, accelerated in the twentieth century. In Chayanta, those cantons sharing a border with the departments of Chuquisaca and Cochabamba experienced the greatest number of land sales. The *ayllus* lost land in the more temperate valleys but not in highland regions. Macha, the canton where the court case already mentioned took place, experienced no new land sales, only the consolidation of pre-existing private holdings. In his study of northern Potosí, Platt sees two reasons for the accelerated loss of *ayllu* land in the valleys despite the relative inactivity of the central government. One was a legacy of the *Ley de exvinculación* and its land survey commissions; landowners now had official land titles that they could use as the basis for legal action against neighboring *ayllus*. The 1874 law laid the foundation for a public land market that had little previous legal precedence. Secondly, the frustration of hacienda owners with the failure of national land reform prompted personal action; oligarchic landowners expanded their holdings in those areas where private property already had a strong foothold.³⁸

Just as Indian communities resisted official land reform in the nineteenth century, they also took active steps to resist this newer “unofficial” version. Silvia Rivera sees the twø decade period 1910 to 1930 as an important epoch of Andean rebellion, an era

³⁷ The changes discussed in this paragraph are a regional phenomenon; the work of Silvia Rivera suggests that the rate of land loss was greater on the Altiplano around La Paz, and that the central government actively colluded with aggressive *paceño* hacienda owners well into the twentieth century. Rivera C., “Oppressed but not Defeated”.

³⁸ Langer, *Economic Change*, 31; Platt, *Estado boliviano y ayllu andino*, 127-129, 114, 131; and Forrest Hylton, “Common Ground: Indians, Urban Radicals, and the Chayanta Uprising of 1927” (master’s thesis, University of Pittsburg, 1999), 35.

combining both active rebellion and other non-violent forms of struggle.³⁹ Gonzalo Flores C., in his work Una indagación sobre movimientos campesinos en Bolivia: 1913-1917, records a number of rural revolts that convulsed Bolivia from the Altiplano to Cochabamba to the Chaco during the years 1913-1917.⁴⁰ Both Tristan Platt and Silvia Rivera see mestizo and Creole townspeople and hacienda owners (those who embraced land reform through “private initiative”) as the primary targets of these revolts.⁴¹

The central government and local political officials did not always stand as disinterested observers in these simmering local battles. Intervention might take the form of swift and brutal military action against Indian insurrection, as happened in Jesús de Machaca in 1921 and Chayanta in 1927.⁴² But the central government, the courts, and local political officials did not always favor mestizo and Creole hacienda owners over Indian communities. A number of departmental governments had an acute financial interest in the preservation of *ayllu* land similar to the nineteenth century interest of the national government. Platt even sees a tentative resurrection of the traditional “reciprocal pact” at this time between the *ayllus* and local government.⁴³ In 1925 the territorial tax on Indian communities still provided 34.2 percent of the departmental budget of Oruro and 15 percent of the budget of Potosí.⁴⁴ The percentages fluctuated throughout the

³⁹ Rivera C., “Oppressed but not Defeated”, 26.

⁴⁰ Gonzalo Flores C., Una indagación sobre movimientos campesinos en Bolivia: 1913-1917 (La Paz: Ediciones C.E.R.E.S., 1979), 27-54.

⁴¹ Rivera makes her observation for the 1921 Indian rebellion in Jesús de Machaca: Rivera C., “Oppressed but not Defeated”, 29. Platt makes his for the 1927 Chayanta Rebellion: Platt, Estado boliviano y ayllu andino, 145-46.

⁴²For Jesús de Machaca see Roberto Choque Canqui and Esteban Ticona Alejo, Jesús de Machaca: La marka rebelde. 2 Sublevación y masacre de 1921 (La Paz: CIPCA and CEDOIN, 1996). For Chayanta see Erick Langer “Andean Rituals of Revolt: The Chayanta Rebellion of 1927,” Ethnohistory 37:3 (Summer 1990), 227-253.

⁴³ Platt, Estado boliviano y ayllu andino, 145.

⁴⁴ Rivera C., “Oppressed but not Defeated”, 20.

1920s, but always remained important: in Potosí, tax money on the department's *ayllus* accounted for 19 percent of the budget in 1926, 28 percent in 1928, and 23 percent in 1930.⁴⁵ Due to their local dependence upon the tax revenue generated by Indian communities, a number of officials in the department of Potosí maintained a certain sympathy for the complaints of *ayllu* members—a sympathy resented by other government administrators and aggressive hacienda owners. In 1926 the prefect of Potosí, Enrique Aparicio Loza, complained that, “the subaltern administrative authorities grant protection to those Indians that...appear soliciting [aid]...with simple papers of doubtful origin...in which it is stated that the Indian in question has possessed a determined amount of land since time immemorial.”⁴⁶ The early twentieth century even saw legislative changes intended to slow the alienation of Indian land, a sudden reversal after several decades of legal attack upon the *ayllus*. In 1916, the central government passed legislation regulating the sale of Indian land, and in 1920 they prohibited sales to cover debts and those without a judicial order.⁴⁷

National and local governments did not always agree with and support *ayllu* leaders, and military intervention to control and prevent massive Indian insurrection remained a constant possibility. But official, liberal land reform ended in northern Potosí and Oruro with the close of the nineteenth century. However, a local endemic conflict over land continued to simmer in the countryside with Creole and mestizo landowners facing-off against Indian communities both in the courts and in highland pastures.

⁴⁵ These figures represent a combination of the *contribución indígena* and the *catastro* paid by Indian communities. The *catastro* came into being in 1912 when the government collapsed the *diezmo* and the *primicia* into this one category. Platt, *Estado boliviano y ayllu andino*, 116-117.

⁴⁶ Enrique Aparicio Loza, *Informe del Prefecto de Potosí, Gestión 1925-26* quoted in *Ibid.*, 145.

⁴⁷ Langer, *Economic Change*, 66.

Violence or the threat of violence played an important role in these conflicts; the *ayllus* did not always figure as passive victims in these confrontations. Nor, as Erick Langer asserts, was violence merely a last resort for highland communities once other, non-violent forms of struggle failed.⁴⁸ The *ayllus* proved adept at and commonly employed both violent and non-violent resistance simultaneously.⁴⁹ The Bolivian court system only continued to serve and protect Indian communities in the twentieth century, because hacienda owners and the central government never established a monopoly of violence in northern Potosí or Oruro.⁵⁰ Landowners accepted judicial mediation and interference because they feared their *ayllu* neighbors. In this atmosphere of latent violence and uncertain alliances the Macha *ayllus* of Guaracata and Sullcavi pressed their land claims against the Colquechaca Mining Company and its wealthy owner Simón I. Patiño.

Guaracata and Sullcavi vs. the Colquechaca Mining Company

The property line at the heart of the legal dispute between the two northern Potosí Indian communities of Guaracata and Sullcavi and the Colquechaca Mining Company did not involve the recent alienation of community land nor even the attempted expansion of hacienda property on the part of Patiño's administrators. Instead, the dispute arose from a centuries-old boundary grown faint and permeable over time. If Simón I. Patiño

⁴⁸ Ibid., 194.

⁴⁹ Both Silvia Rivera and Forrest Hylton argue that Bolivia's Indian communities use both violent and non-violent struggle simultaneously. Yet they do not adequately explain why this is important, and why it is perhaps the only effective means of resistance. Rivera C., "Oppressed but not Defeated"; Rivera C., Ayllus; and Hylton, "Common Ground."

⁵⁰ Both Tristan Platt and Gonzalo Flores C. discuss a similar failure on the part of the country's ruling class: the failure of Bolivia's urban oligarchy to establish their cultural hegemony over the countryside. Platt, "Political Culture"; and Flores C., Movimientos campesinos.

was the most recent proprietor of the Hacienda La Palca, the hacienda itself had a long history in northern Potosí. A bastion of Creole private property, the hacienda was a centuries-old neighbor to the *ayllus* of Guaracata and Sullcavi. The highlands around the modern town of Colquechaca produced both silver and gold even before the arrival of the Spanish in the Andes. After the Conquest, European miners established the mining district of Aullagas in the region to continue the exploitation of the area's mineral wealth. The *ingenios* or mills established to process the raw ore often included expansive land holdings to provide raw materials for the mining operations and foodstuffs for the workers. The *ingenios* of Aullagas date to the earliest epoch of Spanish private property expansion in the highlands. La Palca stood alongside five other mills as one of the primary *ingenios* of eighteenth-century Aullagas.⁵¹ The *ayllus* Guaracata and Sullcavi neighbored La Palca as early as 1719, as recorded in a document conserved by the twentieth-century leadership of the Macha *ayllus*.⁵²

Economically stagnant since the late colonial period, the Aullagas district experienced a resurgence at the end of the nineteenth century. Rich in silver, the Colquechaca mines prospered again in 1871 and helped to inflate the bank accounts of the mining oligarchy in Sucre. La Palca and other Colquechaca properties typified the operations of the Sucre mineowners: land and mining companies with large haciendas that could supply the mining camp with peon labor, draft animals, and foodstuffs. The silver oligarchs practiced this revival of colonial operations not just in Colquechaca but throughout Potosí: Condado de Oploca in the south and Huanchaca in the west. Yet the

⁵¹ Platt, *Estado boliviano y ayllu andino*, 124.

⁵² "Los linderos de los ayllus de Macha (1719)," Archivo del curaca de Macha (Aransaya), in Platt, *Estado boliviano y ayllu andino*, Anexo I: 173-181.

boom did not last, falling silver prices and flooding in the mines destroyed Colquechaca's mining economy at the close of the nineteenth century. Yet the mineowners from Sucre determined not to abandon the region. Caught off guard by the rapid Bolivian economic transition from silver to tin at the beginning of the twentieth century, they hoped to reassert themselves with an expensive rehabilitation of their Colquechaca holdings, including the Hacienda La Palca. In 1918 they formed the Gallofa Consolidated of Colquechaca with a capital of 1,275,000 Bs. The flooded mines swallowed everything. Broke, the Sucre investors sold their Colquechaca holdings to Simón I. Patiño in 1922, and so began the Colquechaca Mining Company.⁵³

If the physical integrity and economic purpose of La Palca remained relatively unchanged over the centuries, the structure and struggles of highland *ayllus* in northern Potosí demonstrate a similar continuity. The modern *ayllus* of Chayanta trace their origin to the two pre-Inka Aymara kingdoms of Charka and Qaraqara. In the fifteenth century, the two kingdoms formed an alliance with Inka Pachakuti and joined the expanding Inka Empire. The Charka and Qaraqara provided *mitayo* labor (tribute labor) to the Inka lords, working royal farms in Cochabamba and Tiraque. They also provided warriors for the Inka army, sending soldiers as far north as Quito (Ecuador) and Pasto (Colombia). The Spanish conquest brought with it several important changes for the Charka and Qaraqara. In 1539-40, Francisco Pizarro awarded the lands of these two Aymara groups as *encomiendas* to his two brothers, Gonzalo and Hernando. The *encomiendas* proved short-lived; by the end of the 1550s, the Crown claimed direct control of the two former

⁵³ Geddes, Patiño, 309; and Langer, Economic Change, 23, 38, 47.

kingdoms, punishing the Pizarros for their rebelliousness and independence.⁵⁴ Despite the brevity of *encomendero* rule, these years began the process of *ayllu* fragmentation that accelerated throughout the colonial and republican periods. Larger ethnic identity broke down, giving way to a localism that stressed the village and the local *ayllu* as the primary units of identity.⁵⁵ In northern Potosí, the most obvious manifestation of this process was the breakdown of the two Aymara kingdoms of Charka and Qaraqara into a number of smaller, independent *ayllus*.⁵⁶ After the consolidation of royal rule in Chayanta, especially after the arrival of Viceroy Francisco Toledo in 1569, the *ayllus* labored for the direct financial benefit of the Spanish crown and its favored subjects: the silver miners of Potosí. The Indian communities paid tribute directly to the royal treasury and provided *mita* labor for the ravenous silver industry of the Rich Hill in the city of Potosí. In exchange, the *ayllus* expected royal officials to respect and defend their landholdings and political integrity.

Despite the centuries-long stability of the mature colonial arrangement, the *ayllus* did not always prove completely pacific subjects or neighbors. The large *ayllu* of Macha provided important leadership for one of the most important Indian uprisings of the colonial period: the Tupak Amaru/Tupak Katari Rebellion of 1780-83. The brothers Katari, leaders of the rebellion in northern Potosí, all came from the Majasaya half of the *ayllu* Macha. Tomás Katari, a *kuraka* of the Macha, fought vigorously within the colonial legal system to confirm his communal leadership position. Facing local Creole

⁵⁴ Platt, *La persistencia*, 16, 23.

⁵⁵ Ward Stavig describes this process for the Andes, yet this fragmentation of Indian political organization was not confined to just South America. Ward Stavig, *World of Tupac Amaru*. James Lockhart describes a similar process in colonial Mexico. James Lockhart, *The Nahuas After Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico: Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

⁵⁶ Platt, *Estado boliviano y ayllu andino*, 45; and Platt, *La persistencia*, 13.

opposition, he even made a trip to Buenos Aires to petition the support of the Viceroy of Río de la Plata, into whose jurisdiction Potosí passed in 1776. Despite viceregal sanction, local officials sought to deny his title, sparking rebellion. Eventually, Tomás and his brothers Nicolás and Dámaso died for their leadership roles in the revolt. The *ayllus* of northern Potosí maintained this combative disposition well into the twentieth century.⁵⁷

The Colquechaca Mining Company and Simón I. Patiño faced tenacious and determined neighbors in the 1926 case to be decided by the Colquechaca court. George McBride, a U.S. geographer, wrote in 1921 of Bolivia's highland Indian communities:

The Indians not only love their land, they cling to it generation after generation. Nothing will induce them to move. . . . Even the inducements of good wages in the cities and the mines, or upon the railroads can seldom uproot these devoted farmers. . . . Only by the use of violence and by the demolition of his humble cottage, the destruction of his sheep corral, and the appropriation of his fields can he be driven from the place. Centuries of occupation have fixed him fast to the soil.⁵⁸

Yet, Patiño's company did not use violence to move or influence their *ayllu* neighbors. Instead, the *ayllus* Guaracata and Sullcavi used the threat of violence to bully and intimidate Patiño's mining enterprise.

The case began in 1926, with the Indian communities of Guaracata and Sullcavi officially listed as the plaintiffs. Yet the land dispute and boundary questions date to at least 1913, and the *ayllus* did not always appear as the most strident supplicants for legal intervention. The Colquechaca Mining Company, in documents penned by hacienda administrators and company lawyers, oftentimes sounded more the plaintiff than the *ayllus*—paranoid and slightly intimidated. On 2 May 1927, on the eve of a planned

⁵⁷ Platt, *La persistencia*, 29.

⁵⁸ George McBride quoted in Hylton, "Common Ground," 38.

boundary survey, the company even demanded that the court provide a “detachment of armed men” at the ceremony to ensure the peace.⁵⁹ A corporation owned and operated by the wealthiest man in Bolivia intimidated by two small highland *ayllus*? After fifty years of Creole and hacienda assault upon the land and legal prerogatives of the nation’s Indian communities, an influential mining company still found itself appealing to the courts for intervention when facing their *ayllu* neighbors. The Bolivia legal system, despite decades of liberal law and legislation, still played the mediating role of colonial courts—regulating relations between Bolivia’s Indian communities and the rest of society. In spite of years of liberal “agrarian reform”, the most important institution traditionally used by highland *ayllus* to defend their interests, the courts, remained an important route of appeal. This phenomenon suggests more than just the bureaucratic inertia of a well-established colonial institution.

Neither the Colquechaca Mining Company nor the Bolivian state found itself in a strong enough position to impose their will upon the *ayllus* Guaracata and Sullcavi at the end of the 1920s (the case did not end until late 1929). The global economic crisis shaking the world at the end of the decade had a chilling impact upon Simón I. Patiño’s tin empire in Bolivia, especially its Colquechaca operations. With the collapse of the international tin market, profits and exports evaporated. The Colquechaca Mining Company continued to experience the same difficulties that plagued it before its 1922 sale to Patiño: flooding and a dearth of rich veins. With the economic crash of 1929 and the ensuing Chaco War (1932-35), the Patiño family lost 17 million bolivianos or £

⁵⁹ The Colquechaca Mining Company to the Juez de Partido, Colquechaca, 2 May 1927, Expedientes Provincia Chayanta (hereafter cited as E.P.Ch.) 33, La Casa Nacional de la Moneda—Archivo Histórico (hereafter cited as CNM-AH).

1,200,000 in the Colquechaca mines.⁶⁰ The Colquechaca Mining Company was a fragile branch of the Patiño family fortune despite Simón I. Patiño's overall personal wealth.

Patiño's administrators and lawyers appealed to the Bolivian judicial system for mediation, because they despised the fluid character of land tenure and use in the highlands. A multinational corporation, Patiño's mining enterprises relied heavily upon European engineers and administrators, men who believed in the absolute and immutable character of private property. In the *ayllus*, they faced a different conception of property. Most *ayllus*, especially the more traditional and stronger communities of northern Potosí, administered their lands as a community. Community leaders used an *ayllu* member's social position to determine the size of their allotment, allowing for a high degree of social stratification—not completely egalitarian, yet still a form of communal ownership.⁶¹ Community demand for land varied from year to year—fluctuating with population and other social and economic factors. As such, conflict between neighboring communities became an endemic part of highland agriculture. One year a village might invade the fallow lands of a neighbor, only to be beaten back the next and have their lands invaded by a neighboring community. Richard Godoy, in his study of the Jukumani *ayllu* of northern Potosí, observed that,

Village boundaries, which are easy easily disassembled piles of stone [*mojones*], resulted from and caused this ever-changing process of expansion and contraction. Peasants valued impermanent boundaries because they realized temporary interloping was a necessary and, perhaps, inevitable attribute of common field agriculture.⁶²

⁶⁰ Geddes, *Patiño*, 298.

⁶¹ Langer, *Economic Change*, 65.

⁶² Godoy, *Mining and Agriculture*, 46.

A multinational corporation such as Patiño's found the transient and shifting property lines intolerable—a chaotic irritant to their corporate faith in scientific planning and immutable private property rights.

The Colquechaca Mining Company's managers sought legal intervention and mediation because they alone could not always impose their definition of private property on their neighbors. In 1923, soon after Patiño's purchase of the Hacienda La Palca, his administrators made an early and unaided attempt to impose their vision of property relations on the Chayanta countryside. Management ordered La Palca's administrator Francisco Argüelles to evict a mestizo resident of the property. "Please inform Pablo Oros to vacate the house and land that is the property of the rural estate La Palca, granting him a prudent time period to relocate," they commanded.⁶³ Pablo Oros lived on La Palca but owned the neighboring property of San Lázaro. Oros obeyed the eviction order, but the company did not have the same luck with its *ayllu* neighbors. By 1927, in the midst of the political and judicial maneuvering surrounding the court case begun a year earlier, it became clear to the representatives of the Colquechaca Mining Company that they could no longer force their definition of property on their neighbors. On 27 January 1927, they complained to the court:

The members of the *ayllu* Guaracata and a few laborers who influence them, principally Pablo Oros...encouraged no doubt by the delay in official action and believing that they are nothing more than idle threats, taking advantage of the rainfall, are trying to sow and plow on land that belongs to La Palca using force and violence at the suggestion of Pablo Oros and others.⁶⁴

⁶³ The Colquechaca Mining Company to Francisco Argüelles, Colquechaca, 21 May 1923, E.P.Ch 33, CNM-AH.

⁶⁴ José R. Pérez to the Juez de Partido, Colquechaca, 27 January 1927, E.P.Ch 33, CNM-AH.

For his part, Pablo Oros denied any role in the land invasion; his court brief gives a good indication of how complicated, fluid, and conflictive land tenure might be in Chayanta. “They have denounced me as the promoter of attacks on the property of the Company, where I have played no part at all,” he testified, “but on the contrary, the members of Huaracata and the laborers of the rural property San Lázaro are engaged in lawsuits over land with me, and there is no way that I could have influenced them as they are my enemies.” This document also reveals that Oros was more than just an ordinary mestizo landowner. While the question of his literacy is difficult to determine—his lawyer prepared the brief, and Oros signed it with a shaky and unpracticed hand—he held an important local political position, that of *corregidor*. In his brief to the court, Oros tried to portray himself as an ally of the Colquechaca Mining Company. “Currently I perform positive services for the Company in my position as *corregidor*, offering the aid that they have requested in repairing the roadway,” he said. This was just the type of alliance between large and small landholders that Platt asserts strove to carry out its own form of autonomous land reform at the beginning of the twentieth century. Additionally, this sort of mestizo and Creole political monopoly in the countryside sparked a number of Indian uprisings in the 1910s and 1920s. The only thing that might have soured a stronger alliance between Oros and the Colquechaca Mining Company was a lingering resentment over his previous residence on La Palca’s land and his eventual eviction. Yet, in the end, he asserted that he was not a “provocateur of the indigenous race” and that, “on the contrary they are the ones who have declared open war on me because of the lands that belong to my rural property San Lázaro bordering those of the Company.”⁶⁵

⁶⁵ M. R. Fernandes a lawyer and Pablo Oros to the Juez de Partido, Colquechaca, 21 March 1927, E.P.Ch

Did the *ayllus* of Guaracata and Sullcavi invade La Palca's lands to put pressure on company officials to resolve the case quickly? The already cited company petition to the court stands as the only documentary mention of this invasion, yet the *ayllus* commonly employed maneuvers such as this. Moreover, highland Indian communities commonly fought each other over their mutual boundaries with similar tactics. The *ayllus* termed these conflicts *ch'aqwas*, a Quechua word meaning a loud or noisy confrontation equated to the barking and growling of dogs. Such a confrontations did not necessarily entail excessive violence and bloodshed. In the nineteenth century, *ayllu* officials often mediated and resolved the squabbles between neighboring communities with little difficulty. Yet there is some indication that the turn of the century brought with it an escalation of the *ch'aqwa*, as community land losses and population growth raised the specter of land hunger. *Ayllu* officials also found themselves less able to broker solutions, with communities turning to the state and the courts for mediation.⁶⁶

In the early twentieth century, the two northern Potosí *ayllus* of Puku Wata and Macha acquired particularly notorious reputations as frequent combatants for highland farmland. Local officials complained of bloody clashes between the *ayllus* and struggled to contain them. On 26 April 1922, the prefect of Potosí cabled the Minister of Government in La Paz, reporting "once again a violent Indian rebellion has erupted between the rival communities of Macha and Pocoata, having produced some acts of extreme ferocity."⁶⁷ This one particular instance of conflict proved so disastrous for the *ayllu* of Puku Wata that they turned to the state for protection: "The members of Pocoata

33, CNM-AH.

⁶⁶ Godoy, *Mining and Agriculture*, 46.

⁶⁷ Prefect of Potosí to the Minister of Government in La Paz, 26 April 1922, C.D. (e) 385, "Varios Telegramas, 28 Diciembre 1922," CNM-AH.

ask for protection and the dispatch of a police force, swearing that they have suffered various deaths and injuries at the hands of the members of Macha.”⁶⁸ Despite the prefect’s assertion on 2 May 1922 that the conflict had ceased and that a Civil Guard unit had formed in Colquechaca to keep the peace, tensions continued to upset the region.⁶⁹ In mid-May, the prefect of Potosí ordered the commander of the army regiment “Ballivian” in Challapata to send a detachment of 32 men to Macha.⁷⁰ In explaining his actions to the subprefect in Colquechaca, he counseled him to “take some advantage of their presence to pacify the spirits of the rebellious Indians.”⁷¹

The Colquechaca Mining Company had good reason to fear being drawn into a *ch’aqwa* with the *ayllus* of Guaracata and Sullcavi (two Macha communities), and thus turned their hopes to the Colquechaca court. For a detailed description of what a *ch’aqwa* might look like, and the sometimes-deadly result of these confrontations, one can look to Oruro for an example. On 9 April 1921, the two Aymara *ayllus* of Collana and Casaya fought each other over a disputed property line outside of the provincial town of Toledo. The conflict left one person dead, Angelino Saca of the *ayllu* Casaya. Saca’s death prompted three members of the *ayllu* Casaya —Hermenegildo, Antonio and Juan de Dios Aime—to travel to the departmental capital, Oruro, to denounce the *ayllu* Collana. The Casaya found themselves on the losing side of the confrontation, and the Aime family had a vested interest in seeing the land dispute resolved in favor of their *ayllu*—

⁶⁸ Prefect of Potosí to the subprefect in Colquechaca, 28 April 1922, C.D. (e) 385, “Varios Telegramas, 28 Diciembre 1922,” CNM-AH.

⁶⁹ Prefect of Potosí to the Minister of Government in La Paz, 2 May 1922, C.D. (e) 385, “Varios Telegramas, 28 Diciembre 1922,” CNM-AH.

⁷⁰ Prefect of Potosí to the Commander of the Regiment “Ballivián” in Challapata, 12 May 1922, C.D. (e) 385, “Varios Telegramas, 28 Diciembre 1922,” CNM-AH.

⁷¹ Prefect of Potosí to the subprefect in Colquechaca, 12 May 1922, C.D. (e) 385, “Varios Telegramas, 28 Diciembre 1922,” CNM-AH.

they had a special claim to the disputed land. One witness testified that the “Collana in actuality occupy the land of the Aime; they occupied it before the fight.”⁷² Although members of the *ayllus* Collana and Casaya each accused the other of being the aggressor, the general details of the conflict remain consistent from one witness to another. Every witness claimed to have only observed the conflict from a distance and not to have participated. Most likely they prudently lied, as the three Aime brothers found themselves in jail for the duration of the case because of their direct participation.

The accusations resemble those leveled by the Colquechaca Mining Company at the northern Potosí *ayllus* of Guaracata and Sullcavi. Plácido Cález of the *ayllu* Casaya testified that the conflict originated when “members of the *ayllu* Collana sowed on the land of the Casaya.”⁷³ Although the actual fight occurred on Saturday, tensions began to build early in the week as both sides prepared themselves for a confrontation. Juliana Guaita, who the court lists as “Juan de Dios Aime’s woman,” testified “on Tuesday the Collana met; every day they built bonfires. On Thursday the Casaya met; they also built bonfires.”⁷⁴ Cález also testified to the growing tension between the neighboring communities. “I saw members of the *ayllu* Collana armed with clubs since Wednesday,” he stated. “On Thursday and Friday they did not fight.... On Saturday they fought.” Although he attempted to emphasize the relative innocence of the Casaya and obscure his own role in the conflict, Cález gave a good summation of the actual confrontation. Most witnesses concurred with him that the *ayllu* Collana both outnumbered and outgunned the Casaya:

⁷² Testimony of Juliana Guaita (Interpreter: Víctor Calderón), Oruro, 31 March 1922, “JPP” A2, Archivo del Corte Superior de Oruro (hereafter cited as ACSO).

⁷³ Testimony of Plácido Cález (Interpreter: Natalio Cayoja), Oruro, 17 March 1922, “JPP” A2, ACSO.

⁷⁴ Testimony of Juliana Guaita (Interpreter: Víctor Calderón), Oruro, 31 March 1922, “JPP” A2, ACSO.

The members of the *ayllu* Collana were armed with clubs, the same with the other side. Both sides were fighting and Eulogio Sora Condori directed the fight, I saw him armed with a club as the leader of the *ayllu* Collana, from their side came two shotgun blasts.... As I was watching the fight out of curiosity, Inecito Gutierrez struck me in the forehead with a metal bar.... The Collana were more than forty persons; I saw them from far away like two leagues, and they met only to attack. The Casaya numbered around thirty persons more or less, and they gathered there only to defend themselves. In the attack more than ten were injured. The Collana are accustomed to attack.⁷⁵

The judges in Oruro expressed frustration both with the evidence and with the fact they even had to take the suit. To begin, a forensic examiner questioned the cause of Angelino Saca's death, and others questioned Saca's character. Dr. Víctor Barrientos had performed an autopsy on Saca. "There was no real cranial collapse," he declared, "as such we believe that the blow suffered by Saca was not sufficient enough to produce his death." The doctor relied upon traditional Creole stereotypes of the indigenous population to explain Saca's death. "Probably he was drunk," Barrientos postulated, "and it is well known that under such conditions a cranial blow is often sufficient to produce a cerebral hemorrhage which can produce death."⁷⁶ Other witnesses sought to cast disrepute upon Saca's character. One Bruno Flores, a friend of two of the defendants, Gutiérrez and Sora Condori, declared to the court that "I knew Saca; he was a bit of a trouble maker. When I was *corregidor* he was denounced as a deserter, and I sent him to Poopó; he had run away...he did not obey authority; he was a deserter." One might dismiss Flores' testimony as bias, yet military records confirm that Saca was in fact a deserter from the army. In the end, the *ex-corregidor* Flores was not willing to completely denounce him. "Saca was a trouble maker; he was not a criminal," he

⁷⁵ Testimony of Plácido Cáceres (Interpreter: Natalio Cayoja), Oruro, 17 March 1922, "JPP" A2, ACSO..

⁷⁶ Dr. Víctor Barrientos, "Autopsia del cadáver del Angelino Saca," Oruro, 11 May 1921, "JPP" A2, ACSO.

concluded.⁷⁷ In its verdict, the court in Oruro expressed the exasperation of the Bolivian state with its inability to control affairs in the countryside. The judges declared their hope that the contending *ayllus* might one day consent to an official survey of their lands, and they lamented the fact that “suits of the type that occupy us now are very frequent in the courts of justice.”⁷⁸ In a display of impotence, or perhaps reconciliation and mediation, the court found Pedro Sora Condori guilty of Angelino Saca’s death, but at the time of his sentencing, Sora Condori was a fugitive from justice. The court convicted the one man they could not punish.

The Oruro case demonstrates the sort of rural violence the Colquechaca Mining Company hoped to avoid in expediting an official survey of the boundary dividing their lands from those of the *ayllus* Guaracata and Sullcavi. Urban Creoles and the Bolivian state could not control the outcome of a rural *ch’aqwa*; in the courts, they still maintained a modicum of control. In addition to the threat of low-intensity violence represented by the *ch’aqwa*, other events transpiring in Chayanta provoked an even greater fear among landowners throughout the Altiplano, and most especially among those of northern Potosí. In 1927, Chayanta lay at the epicenter of the largest indigenous uprising in the Bolivia since the Federalist War of 1898 and 1899.

The Chayanta revolt first exploded in the agricultural valleys of northern Potosí that border the department of Chuquisaca, where individual *hacienda* owners had expanded their landholdings despite the failure of national, liberal land reform at the end of the nineteenth century. The violence quickly spread to the neighboring departments of

⁷⁷ Testimony of Bruno Flores (Interpreter: Natalio Cayoja), Oruro, 22 March 1922, “JPP” A2, ACSO.

⁷⁸ “Sentencia,” Oruro, 14 May 1923, “JPP” A2, ACSO.

Chuquisaca and Oruro.⁷⁹ No evidence exists to connect the small *ayllus* of Guaracata and Sullcavi to the 1927 uprising, but other members of the larger Macha *ayllu* system took a hand in the violence. The rebellion allowed a number of northern Potosí Indian communities to settle some long-standing personal vendettas. In one Chayanta community, Indians killed a local *hacienda* owner and consumed part of his heart in a form of ritual cannibalism; they then sacrificed his remains to an important local mountain deity or *apu*. In Chuquisaca, the *ayllus* also lashed out at other Indians and mestizos who had cooperated with local *hacendados* in their land expropriation schemes, again threatening ritual sacrifice and cannibalism.⁸⁰ Yet in the course of the revolt, the Indians drew upon more than traditional Andean religious beliefs in the persecution of their enemies. Many rebel leaders maintained contacts with urban Socialists, and several had served as delegates to a pro-Indian, Socialist labor conference in Oruro in 1927.⁸¹ Additionally, some *ayllus* used republican-style court proceedings to prosecute offending *hacienda* owners—an unusual affirmation of the legitimacy of the forum of the court in the chaotic swirl of rebellion. The Jaiguari *ayllu* put the landowner Andrés Garnica on trial. Using the services of a kidnapped judge and a local *corregidor*, the community members recorded trial testimony in accordance with Bolivian law. The following day, the *ayllu* expropriated Guarnica's two *haciendas*, and the hostage officials certified the transfer according to established legal procedures.⁸²

⁷⁹For a detailed description of the 1927 Chayanta Rebellion see Langer, "Andean Rituals of Revolt"; and Hylton, "Common Ground."

⁸⁰ Langer, *Economic Change*, 82-83

⁸¹ Scholars continue to debate the extent of Socialist influence on the Indian insurrection. Erick Langer and Silvia Rivera prefer to down-play its importance while Forrest Hylton asserts that the connections deserve further study. Langer, *Economic Change*, 82; Langer, "Andean Rituals of Revolt"; Rivera C., "Oppressed but not Defeated"; Rivera C., *Ayllus*; and Hylton, "Common Ground."

⁸² Hylton, "Common Ground," 9.

One indication of the fragility of state and Creole hegemony in the Chayanta countryside is the final resolution of the rebellion. In October 1927, President Siles granted an amnesty to all 184 Indians jailed for the insurrection. The government also verbally indicted the corruption and greed of a few landlords, local officials, and priests as the true causes of the rebellion. In a way, the rebellious Indian communities achieved their goals with the 1927 uprising: historians agree that the rebellion put an end to the long decades of community land loss in the valleys of northern Potosí.⁸³ The violence, legacy, and lessons of the Chayanta revolt clearly cast a powerful shadow over the court proceedings pursued by the *ayllus* Guaracata and Sullcavi against the Colquechaca Mining Company.

The violent ambience of northern Potosí in the 1920s should not obscure the fact that the *ayllus* of the region had rather moderate and reasonable demands: the defense of community lands and the continued survival of traditional forms of economic and social organization. Only the irrational greed and arrogance of certain government planners and Creole landowners forced the region's Indian communities into the sometimes-bloody defense of their perceived historical rights. Whether born of feelings of racial superiority or the superiority of class or both, this arrogance on the part of urban and rural Creoles lacked a real and effective physical expression in the Chayanta countryside of the 1920s. They felt far more comfortable in the intermediary arena of the courts.

There is no better conclusion for this section than a short synopsis of the survey that took place on the Hacienda La Palca on 28 November 1929 after numerous postponements. In addition to the legal representatives of the Colquechaca Mining

⁸³ Langer, *Economic Change*, 87; and Hylton, "Common Ground," 16-17, 29.

Company and the *kuraka* leadership of the *ayllus* Guaracata and Sullcavi, a whole entourage of political officials attended the ceremony—an indication of the regional importance of this particular case. The manager of La Palca, Joseph Henri Portugal, and the lawyer Aurelio Pacheco Carratalá represented the interests of the Colquechaca Mining Company. Two Indian mayors represented the *ayllus* Guaracata and Sullcavi: Ceverino Laka and Fernando Montano. The judge Juan N. Zegada and the district attorney Guillermo Portada officiated over the official boundary survey, while the subprefect of Chayanta Pastor Cosio and the police official Osvaldo Barrera and his secretary attended as observers. The survey had the air of a rather official and peaceful stroll through the countryside. The party walked the complete perimeter of the Hacienda La Palca. The survey document itself reveals some of the reasons for conflict in the region: many of the stone markers mentioned in the case had to be reconstructed or repaired. “PUCA-KASA, being the first marker, and as there was no sign of it, a new one was built; continuing the survey, the commission passed the second marker whose name was Vila-Pampa, where again no marker existed, and it was rebuilt on the summit of a hill with the same name,” read the official survey. The only objection to the commission’s work came from Pablo Oros, when the survey arrived at the marker Checta-Rumi. “Pablo Oros claimed to have a stake in the survey and that the marker...would impinge upon his interests, there was a lengthy discussion after which the contending parties jointly decided to locate the marker thirty meters distant from the point Checta-Rumi.” The officials representing the Colquechaca Mining Company felt uncomfortable with this spontaneous modification of the property boundary, a discomfort not shared by the representatives of the *ayllus*, and asked the judge to declare that, in the

future, “all opposition should be done in writing and accompanied by titles.” Again, company representatives felt more comfortable in the controlled arena of the court than in the open and unpredictable spaces of the Altiplano. In all, the commission visited and certified eight different markers “without there being any form of opposition from the community members of Huaracata and Sullcavi.” In conclusion the judge clasped the hand of La Palca’s administrator Joseph Portugal and declared, “I the judge of the Chayanta Province, in the name of the law...do give unto you official possession, civic and physical, of all of the lands again surveyed of the rural property La Palca.”⁸⁴

Company officials might have viewed this final declaration as a victory, yet the *ayllus* Guaracata and Sullcavi, and to a lesser extent the court itself, stand as the true victors. After decades of Creole and government assault on their lands and on their legal prerogatives, these two Indian communities challenged a land and mining company owned by the wealthiest man in Bolivia and saw that the court protected their interests. In the late 1920s, the institution of the court still functioned as a respected forum to which the Indians of northern Potosí might take their grievances. Yet one should not forget the main reason the Bolivian judicial system still functioned as a mediating institution. Urban, Creole Bolivians failed to establish a monopoly of violence in the countryside. They too still needed a mediating court system to protect themselves from their Indian neighbors; neighbors willing and able to employ violence effectively when they felt their interests threatened.

Land Tenure on the Eve of Revolution

⁸⁴ “Acta de Deslinde y Posesión,” 28 November 1929, E.P.Ch. 33, CNM-AH.

Historians present confused and misleading interpretations of land tenure patterns for Bolivia on the eve of the National Revolution of 1952. Much of this confusion derives from the facile manipulation of data from the first national agricultural census of 1950.⁸⁵ Despite its limitations, this survey stands as the first national attempt to construct a complete picture of Bolivia's agricultural production.⁸⁶ For Bolivian historiography, the census occurred during a propitious year; just two years after the census, Bolivia experienced its National Revolution leading to the peasants' seizure of hacienda land and the Agrarian Reform Law of 3 August 1953. The revolution remade land tenure patterns in Bolivia and completely extirpated the traditional landed oligarchy from the countryside. The agricultural census of 1950 deserves a detailed reexamination; the figures contained within illustrate the success of the *ayllus* of Oruro and northern Potosí in defending their land from hacienda encroachment during the first half of the twentieth century. The data provides a striking contrast to the situation of Indian communities in La Paz during the same time period.

Herbert Klein, in his otherwise excellent history Bolivia: The Evolution of a Multi-Ethnic Society, presents the following misleading statistic for 1950: "...6 percent of the landowners who owned 1,000 hectares or more of land controlled fully 92 percent of all cultivated land in the republic."⁸⁷ Silvia Rivera comes up with similar numbers

⁸⁵ Instituto Nacional de Estadística (hereafter INE), I Censo agropecuario 1950 (La Paz: 1985).

⁸⁶ Juan Demeure V., "Agricultura: de la subsistencia a la competencia internacional," Bolivia en el siglo XX: la formación de la Bolivia Contemporánea, ed. Fernando Campero Prudencio, (La Paz: Harvard Club de Bolivia, 1999), 275.

⁸⁷ Klein, Bolivia, 228. The same numbers appear in Herbert S. Klein, "Social Change in Bolivia since 1952," Proclaiming Revolution: Bolivia in Comparative Perspective, ed. Merilee Grindle and Pilar Domingo (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies; London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 2003), 232.

based on her own reading of the 1950 agricultural census, comes up with similar numbers.⁸⁸ Both scholars commit errors in interpreting data from the land survey. To begin, Klein makes an error that Rivera does not—he mixes up statistics for two different categories of terrain covered by the census: land suitable for cultivation and land actually under cultivation. In the quote presented above the words “all cultivated land” should be replaced with the phrase “all land suitable for cultivation.”⁸⁹ The whole quote should actually read, “...6 percent of the landowners who owned 1,000 hectares or more of land controlled fully 92 percent of all land suitable for cultivation in the republic,” yet even this more correct presentation of the data is misleading. If one examines the 1950 census and calculates the percentage of land actually under cultivation, census units larger than 1,000 hectares (the six percent mentioned above) actually contained only 47 percent of Bolivia’s active cropland.⁹⁰ The large census units that Klein focuses on control less than one half of the land producing commodities for consumption or for the market. The next paragraph will make clear why this dissertation employs the phrase “census units” rather than the term “landowners.”

In a continued discussion of the data from the 1950 survey, Klein presents additional information that seems to complicate or casts doubt upon the straightforward statistic about large landowners and their control of so much land. He notes that in 1950

⁸⁸ Rivera bases her numbers on productive units larger than 500 hectares; her specific figures are 8 percent of productive units controlled 95 percent of Bolivia’s cultivated land. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *“Oprimidos pero no vencidos”: luchas del campesinado aymara y qhechwa de Bolivia, 1900-1980* (Geneva: Instituto de Investigaciones de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo Social, 1986), 67. One should note that Rivera and Klein are not the only scholars to present these misleading numbers without adequate explanation: even the statistically oriented James W. Wilkie makes the same mistake. James W. Wilkie, *Measuring Land Reform: Supplement to the Statistical Abstract of Latin America* (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center, 1974). 15.

⁸⁹ In the article Klein, “Social Change”, 232-3, he actually has the misleading line face to face with a chart that divides lands covered by the census into their proper categories.

⁹⁰ INE, *I Censo agropecuario 1950*, 25.

traditional Indian communities controlled 22 percent of Bolivian land suitable for cultivation and 26 percent of the nation's cultivated fields.⁹¹ How does one reconcile this new fact with that discussed in the previous paragraph—that a relatively small percentage of landowners controlled so much? The introduction to the census explains:

The Census Unit might be known under any one of the following terms: Estate, Property, Hacienda, Orchard, *Piquero*, Ranch, Establishment, Parcel of Land, *Sayaña*, Community.... As for community land, Census Units will be considered every Section of the Community into which the communal nucleus is divided.⁹²

When Klein says “6 percent of the landowners”, what he should be saying is 6 percent of census units. Individual landowners and Indian communities with thousands of members appear in the census as undifferentiated census units.⁹³

Armed with this important fact, how does our understanding of the 1950 agricultural census change? As mentioned above, census units larger than 1,000 hectares controlled 47 percent of the land in Bolivia actually under cultivation; this represents a total of 308,221.21 hectares of active farmland. Indian communities or *ayllus* controlled 29.3 percent of that land; the rest belonged to haciendas or other private landowners. Now for a reexamination of the figures that led Klein to conclude erroneously that six percent of the landowners in Bolivia controlled 92 percent of its agricultural land. Census units larger than 1,000 hectares represent six percent of the units that figure in the 1950 survey, but these are not necessarily individual, private landholdings as Klein's presentation of the data might suggest. Large census units might be one hacienda or a collection of landholdings owned by one man or an Indian community with thousands of

⁹¹ Klein, “Social Change,” 233.

⁹² INE, *I Censo agropecuario 1950*, 11.

⁹³ I am not the first scholar to take note of this important point: Demeure, “Agricultura,” 276.

members. These large census units controlled 30,105,065.11 hectares of land judged suitable for cultivation by the Bolivian government (this in itself is misleading as will be discussed in a moment); Indian communities controlled 22.6 percent of this land.⁹⁴ The figure that Klein uses to illustrate the concentration of landownership in the hands of a few Bolivian oligarchs (a figure often quoted by others) has little meaning as around a quarter of that land actually belonged to Indian communities.

Smaller census units did exhibit a greater intensity of cultivation; Klein correctly calculates that census units larger than 1,000 hectares only farmed 1.5 percent of their land. In explaining this, he states, “these large estates themselves were underutilized.” But as noted above, Indian communities not private estates accounted for almost one fourth of the land in the survey controlled by large census units.⁹⁵ Silvia Rivera, using similar numbers from the 1950 agricultural census, decries “the unproductive large estate.”⁹⁶ Juan Demeure V., in his own study of the 1950 survey, remarks that statistically the hacienda did not appear any less “efficient” than the Indian community. Haciendas cultivated 2.3 percent of their land; Indian communities cultivated 2.4 percent of theirs.⁹⁷ Guided by these numbers, Demeure concludes, “despite policies favorable to the haciendas at the end of the last century and the beginning of the present, the communities maintained considerable extensions of land and on them the proportions of land under cultivation was not significantly greater than on the haciendas.”⁹⁸ The author of this dissertation hesitates to draw the same conclusion as Demeure based upon this

⁹⁴ INE, *I Censo Agropecuario 1950*, 25-26.

⁹⁵ Klein, “Social Change,” 232.

⁹⁶ Rivera, “*Oprimidos pero no vencidos*”, 67.

⁹⁷ Demeure, “Agricultura,” 276. Indian communities in Chuquisaca cultivated 4.1 percent of their land, communities in La Paz 2.6 percent, in Cochabamba 7.5 percent, in Oruro (a dry, inhospitable department) 0.4 percent, in Potosí 6.4 percent, and in Tarija 0.4 percent. INE, *I Censo agropecuario 1950*, 91-92.

⁹⁸ INE, *I Censo agropecuario 1950*, 91-92.

specific statistic alone. The small percentage of land cultivated by both the *haciendas* and Indian communities could reflect the difficulties of agriculture in the Andes and the Amazon Basin or the idiosyncrasies of classification employed in the census rather than any intensity of use (or even potential intensity of use). Of the 32,749,849.50 hectares of land judged suitable for agriculture by the Bolivian government, only 2 percent (654,258.09 hectares) enjoyed active cultivation in 1950: pasture land accounted for 34.57 percent, forest or jungle for 33.5 percent, and quality agricultural land left resting or fallow accounted for 7.44 percent. The remaining 22.49 percent of the land in the census carried the meaningless tag “Other Class of Land”.⁹⁹ To get at numbers reflecting a meaningful intensity of use or utilization requires a much more detailed manipulation of census data.

How might a detailed reexamination of the 1950 agricultural census change our understanding of land-tenure patterns in pre-revolutionary Bolivia? How might it reshape our understanding of the confrontation between hacienda and *ayllu* in the twentieth century? Demeure begins to hint at some of the answers, but the numbers are preliminary. His study suggests that “the continued existence of the communities was especially important in the region of the Altiplano that, according to the census, corresponds with the departments of La Paz, Oruro, and Potosí.” These three departments contained 95 percent of all of the land in the 1950 census that purportedly belonged to traditional Indian communities or *ayllus*; it is there that one must seek out the reality of the confrontation between the hacienda and the *ayllu*.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Ibid., 19.

¹⁰⁰ Demeure, “Agricultura,” 276.

The important presence of Indian communities in the countryside of La Paz, Oruro, and Potosí on the eve of the National Revolution surprises when compared to the eastern valleys and lowlands of Bolivia. In 1950, Indian communities controlled 42.2 percent of the actively cultivated land in the department of La Paz, 47.3 percent in Oruro, and 48 percent in Potosí. Of all of the lands considered in the census (those judged suitable for some sort of agricultural use), Indian communities in La Paz controlled 40.6 percent of the department's total, and the *ayllus* of Potosí controlled 46.7 percent of the land in their department. Oruro is the most surprising highland department of all and a stronghold of community land ownership on the eve of revolution. The *ayllus* controlled 85.7 percent of the department's land covered by the 1950 census. The Bolivian departments of the eastern Andean valleys: Cochabamba, Chuquisaca, and Tarija demonstrate drastically different patterns of land tenure in the countryside—the predominance of private property. In Chuquisaca Indian communities controlled only 7.4 percent of the department's actively cultivated agricultural land, 4.9 percent in Cochabamba, and a measly one percent in Tarija. As for total agricultural land, both used and unused, in the valley departments: Indian communities controlled only 2.8 percent of Chuquisaca's potential agricultural land, 2.3 percent of Cochabamba's, and 4.2 percent of Tarija's. Since the early colonial period, private property dominated the valleys of the eastern Andes, driving the Indian communities to the brink of extinction in more temperate climates.¹⁰¹

Let us look in more detail at a department that seems to stand as the most striking example of community strength in land ownership at the midway point of the twentieth

¹⁰¹ INE, *I Censo agropecuario 1950*, 91-92.

century: Oruro. The 1950 agricultural census records that the *ayllus* of Oruro controlled 85.7 percent of the department's land judged suitable for some type of agricultural exploitation and 47.3 percent of the land experiencing active cultivation. While this final percentage for Oruro appears similar to that of neighboring La Paz where Indian communities controlled 42.2 percent of the department's cultivated land, the way in which private property spread across all of the provinces of La Paz provides a striking contrast with Oruro. In La Paz, no highland region seems to have escaped the presence of private property and the hacienda; in three important Altiplano provinces, private estates were ubiquitous and a threat to neighboring *ayllus*. In the province of Pacajes, Indian communities controlled 46.4 percent of the region's active agricultural land; communities in Omasuyos owned 45.4 percent of the province's fields; and in Murillo the *ayllus* controlled only 26.9 percent of the area's productive terrain.¹⁰² In Oruro, the haciendas were concentrated in just one province—the Cercado—in the shadow of the city of Oruro and its mines; Indian communities dominated the rest of the department even in 1950.¹⁰³ The *ayllus* controlled just 9.5 percent of the active agricultural land in the Cercado Province; census units listed as private landholdings employing *colonos* and *jornaleros* (i.e. haciendas) controlled 80.5 percent of the Cercado's active fields. As for total agricultural land in the Cercado, both active and inactive, the Indian communities controlled just 19.4 percent, and the haciendas controlled 71.6 percent. Outside of the Cercado, the *ayllus* dominated the Altiplano of Oruro. The communities controlled 95.7

¹⁰² Ibid., 203-4

¹⁰³ Margot Beyersdorff's study of several of Oruro's Indian communities casts light upon the emergence of important haciendas in what will eventually become the Cercado Province of the Oruro Department. Many began as estates belonging to or supervised by various religious orders of the Catholic Church during the Spanish colonial period. Beyersdorff, *Historia*, 13-149.

percent of the active agricultural land in Abaroa, 100 percent in Carangas, 98.2 percent in Sajama, 100 percent in Sabaya, 80.9 percent in Poopó, and 100 percent in L. Cabrera. (P. Dalence has been left off the list; this province was essentially the mining town of Huanuni and contained little agricultural land). As for total agricultural land, both potential and active, the *ayllus* controlled 97 percent in Abaroa, 100 percent in Carangas, 100 percent in Sajama, 100 percent in Sabaya, 50.7 percent in Poopó, and 100 percent in L. Cabrera.¹⁰⁴ Private property came to dominate the Cercado Province of Oruro during the colonial period, but the institution of the hacienda never really expanded beyond that province into the rest of the department.

In terms of population, the overwhelming majority of rural people in the department of Oruro lived in Indian communities rather than as hacienda tenants in 1950. The census records a total agricultural population of 94,686 individuals in Oruro on the eve of revolution. The Cercado, the heartland of hacienda power in the department, contained only 19 percent of Oruro's agricultural population. Abaroa contained 26.3 percent of the department's rural agricultural workers, 19.5 percent lived in Carangas, 5.9 percent in Sabaya, 9.2 percent in Sajama, 14.5 percent in Poopó, 2.7 percent in P. Dalence, and 2.9 percent in L. Cabrera.¹⁰⁵ Combining these statistics with what we know about land tenure patterns in Oruro's eight provinces, 63.8 percent of the department's agricultural population lived in regions marked by a complete control of land by Indian communities (Abaroa, Carangas, Sabaya, Sajama, and L. Cabrera).

Provinces controlled by Indian communities also made a significant contribution to agricultural production in Oruro and even dominated some sectors of the rural

¹⁰⁴ INE, I Censo agropecuario 1950, 203-4

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 205.

economy, most especially the pastoral production of the department. Of Oruro's 365,516 llamas, the Indian provinces of Abaroa, Carangas, Sabaya, Sajama, and L. Cabrera accounted for 85.2 percent of that total. The five provinces dominated by the *ayllus* contained 99.7 percent of the department's 43,130 alpacas. Of the department's 1,117,008 sheep the aforementioned provinces represent 53.3 percent of the total. The *ayllu*-controlled provinces of Oruro also accounted for 49.2 percent of the department's 29,040 head of cattle, 54.7 percent of its 16,099 pigs, and 67.2 percent of the department's 61,877 burros. As for the production of important highland foodstuffs, the provinces Abaroa, Carangas, Sabaya, Sajama, and L. Cabrera produced 28.5 percent of Oruro's dried lima beans in 1950, 51.3 percent of its green lima beans, and 40.7 percent of the department's 14,795,099 kilogram potato harvest.¹⁰⁶

Evidence exists suggesting that Indian communities in Oruro did make more effective use of their land than did haciendas. One can get a general idea of the relative productivity of different institutions of land tenure by comparing agricultural output in the Cercado with that in Abaroa. Haciendas controlled 80.5 percent of the Cercado's active farmland; Indian communities controlled 95.7 percent of Abaroa's. The Cercado produced more potatoes than any other region in Oruro. The province accounted for 41 percent of the department's total potato harvest, but the haciendas of the region succeeded in producing only 1,532 kilograms of potato per hectare. The province of Abaroa produced 17.3 percent of Oruro's potato harvest in 1950, yet the *ayllus* of the region produced 3,662 kilograms of potato per hectare—more than double to productivity of the Cercado per hectare.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 206-207, 210-211.

The numbers from the Agricultural Census of 1950 for Oruro are especially surprising when compared to partial figures on land tenure from one hundred years earlier. José María Dalence was a native of Oruro who eventually rose to the presidency of Bolivia's Supreme Court of Justice in 1840. In 1848, he penned a statistical study of Bolivia (the book was first published in 1851); the work provides historians with some preliminary numbers that hint at land tenure patterns in Bolivia in the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁰⁷ Dalence was not able to provide firm numbers for the percentage of Bolivia's national territory cut up into haciendas and Indian communities. What he does provide are numbers suggesting the value of rural properties and more anecdotal information about some departments; Oruro is one of them. Dalence counted 79 haciendas in Oruro valued at some 301,400 pesos and 302 Indian communities valued at around 240,740 pesos. The *ayllus* of Oruro controlled 44.4 percent of the estimated landed wealth in Oruro in 1848; this number is very close to the 47.3 percent of actively cultivated land in Oruro controlled by the communities in 1950. Anecdotally, Dalence said of Oruro "only a tenth of its territory belongs to the haciendas," and later he noted that, "the Cercado Province of Oruro contains all of the private haciendas."¹⁰⁸ The situation described by Dalence for the department of Oruro in 1848 is almost identical to the land tenure patterns described in the Agricultural Census of 1950. A one-hundred-year period during which liberal economic policies sought to strip the *ayllus* of their land made almost no dent on the land tenure patterns of Oruro.

¹⁰⁷ Salvador Romero P., "Prólogo," in José María Dalence, Bosquejo Estadístico de Bolivia (La Paz: Edit. Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, 1975 (1851)), 7-8. The statistics used in the publication actually come from Bolivia's first census in 1864. Herbert Klein discusses the findings of this census in some depth. Klein, Bolivia, 122-125.

¹⁰⁸ Dalence, Bosquejo Estadístico de Bolivia, 241-242.

On the eve of revolution in 1950, when most scholars insist on viewing the rural areas of Bolivia as ripe for revolution, the Indian communities of Oruro maintained a strong and—in many provinces—unrivaled presence in the countryside. Only in the shadow of the city of Oruro and its mines—in one province in the northeast of the department—did the hacienda dominate rural land tenure. The haciendas of the Cercado Province of Oruro acquired most of their land from the *ayllus* in the early colonial period. During the era of liberal land reform at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, as Indian communities in La Paz and in some of the eastern valleys of northern Potosí again suffered the aggressive expansion of private property, the *ayllus* of the Altiplano in Oruro went unchallenged in most provinces. Oruro never became a hotbed of rural revolutionary agitation. Instead, agricultural regions dominated by private property relations like Cochabamba led the way in rural mobilization and organization in the years following the National Revolution of 1952.

Conclusion

The rural history of Oruro and northern Potosí forces scholars to reconsider generalizations that have long reigned in Bolivian historiography. Scholarship concerned with the competition between the hacienda and the *ayllun* the countryside often focuses on the impact of liberal “agrarian reform” on land tenure patterns at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. Laws seeking to transfer agricultural land from the Indian communities to Creole and mestizo landowners had a regionally varied impact in Bolivia. In the highland departments of La Paz, Oruro, and

Potosí, the *ayllus* of La Paz suffered enormously at the hands of liberal politicians and neighboring haciendas. In northern Potosí the Indian communities of the region maintained their control of land in the highlands, but lost territory in the more temperate valleys on the eastern edge of the department. In Oruro the *ayllus* completely sabotaged liberal agrarian reform, and the haciendas of the department failed to expand beyond their colonial boundaries.

The legal dispute between the *ayllus* Guaracata and Sullcavi and the Colquechaca Mining Company illustrates the strong position in the countryside maintained by many Indian communities in Oruro and northern Potosí well into the twentieth century. The *ayllus* still successfully employed traditional practices of resistance, tactics used in the colonial period, to fight the aggression of neighboring haciendas and the intrusions of the Bolivian state. The court remained an important forum of mediation even in the third decade of the twentieth century—while true, the statement merits further discussion and clarification. The Bolivian state and Creole landlords never established an effective monopoly of violence in Oruro and northern Potosí; Indian communities effectively employed violence or the threat of violence to blunt the land pressure of neighboring haciendas. Wealthy hacienda owners still needed the institution of the court to defend themselves from their *ayllu* neighbors.

On the eve of revolution in 1950, the Indian communities of Oruro and northern Potosí still maintained an impressive presence in the countryside; the strength of the *ayllu* in these two departments provides a striking contrast with the history of community land loss in the department of La Paz during the first half of the twentieth century. The

agricultural census of 1950 provides data suggesting a strong and vibrant community economy in the central and southern Altiplano.

Chapter Three: Capitalism in the Countryside

The popular classes of Bolivia, especially the Indian element, are eminently hard-working. The Indian rises at dawn and sows his fields or pastures his livestock, while his woman tirelessly weaves and cooks in the company of their children. The Indian does not need Western Civilization in the least and can survive ignoring it for a few centuries more.

Tristan Marof, La justicia del Inca (1926)

In 1896, Severo Fernández Alonso, the favored candidate of the ruling Conservative Party (sometimes known as the Constitutional Party), won election as president of the Republic of Bolivia. Fernández Alonso inherited a legacy of corrupt and unpopular one-party rule. Because he was a proponent of reconciliation between the nation's quarreling Conservative and Liberal Parties, the Bolivians termed his policy of rapprochement *fusionismo*. The new president, denounced by both his allies and his enemies as "timid" and "effeminate," only inflamed the combative tendencies and intransigence of hard-liners in both parties. By 1898, a political debate about federalism and a squabble over fixing the seat of government in either La Paz or Sucre began to mix explosively with pre-existing party antagonisms. On 12 December 1898, the wealthy and powerful of La Paz, primarily but not exclusively affiliated with the Liberal Party, declared themselves in rebellion against the government of President Fernández Alonso. The Federalist War of 1898-1899 began as an internecine dispute among the dominant classes of Bolivia; in the countryside, the conflict quickly developed into a vicious peasant rebellion beyond the control of urban political leaders.¹

¹ Condarco, Zárate, el "Temible" Willka, 83-84, 107-142.

The peasantry of the Altiplano (the high plains of the Andes) rebelled in conjunction with the Liberals of La Paz and their leader Colonel José Manuel Pando, yet the insurrection in the countryside developed with chaotic autonomy. The rural rebels even followed their own chief, Pablo Zárate Willka, an Aymara Indian from the village of Imilla-Imilla on the border between the departments of La Paz and Oruro. Willka claimed the title of General and Commander in Chief of the Indian Army. In theory, he answered to Colonel Pando and claimed the Liberal leader awarded him his military titles; in practice, the Aymara chief enjoyed significant liberty of action. Yet even Zárate Willka could not hope to completely control the widespread rural rebellion. On a number of occasions during the conflict, peasants vented their ire on Conservatives and Liberals alike, perpetrating several spectacularly bloody massacres. Civil war among the oligarchy in 1898 and 1899 allowed for the eruption of peasant rage over the loss of community land to neighboring haciendas, mainly in the department of La Paz, and of the long festering resentment over the cultural, social, and economic subjugation of Bolivia's Indian population. Zárate Willka and his followers believed Colonel Pando would address their grievances after a Liberal victory; they misplaced their faith. Following a definitive victory on 10 April 1899 at the Battle of *Segundo Crucero* (the Second Crossroads), Pando and the Creole Liberals of La Paz quickly turned on their erstwhile Indian allies. The provisional government circulated a series of orders in 1899 seeking to demobilize the countryside.

The indigenous race, always removed from the political events of the country due to their special condition of ignorance, has been forced in the present fight to participate in the horrors of civil war.

With the recent triumph, the bellicose services of the indigenous race are no

longer necessary, because of that, please order all of the priests and cantonal *corregidores* subject to your subprefecture to encourage them [the Indians] to return to their labors and the peaceful lives they have always enjoyed.²

When Indian rebellion did not abate in the Bolivian countryside, Pando ordered a general repression; in late April 1899, the victorious Liberals ordered the arrest of Pablo Zárate Willka himself. Two years later in 1901, the guards charged with escorting Zárate Willka from prison in Oruro to a similar cell in La Paz gunned down their prisoner down during a supposed escape attempt.³

The Aymara and Quechua participation in the Federalist War represented the largest Indian rebellion in the Andes since the Tupak Amaru/Tupak Katari revolts of the late eighteenth century. Did the insurgency directly address the dominant economic trend of the modern era: industrial capitalism? The answer is ambiguous. A consideration of the rural history of Oruro and northern Potosí during the thirty-year period falling between 1899 and 1929 can provide clarification. During the early twentieth century, the Bolivian state ensured that industrial capital profited from the exploitation of rural people. Did *ayllu* members and other rural residents develop a sharpened perception of capitalism and its exactions because of this exploitation? The countryside witnessed a considerable level of ideological ferment during the first decades of the twentieth century, yet structural factors limited the spread and acceptance of the most radical of political programs: socialist, anarcho-syndicalist, and Marxist ideologies. The mechanisms employed by the Bolivian state to funnel the wealth and labor of rural communities into the coffers of influential industrialists had long-standing, pre-capitalist

² Quoted in Nicanor Téllez Fernández, Rasgos biográficos del Dr. Dn. Macario Pinilla, obra escrita sobre documentos inéditos y datos suministradas por el mismo Señor Pinilla (La Paz: Escuela Tipográfica Salesiana, 1924), 83-84. The quote is also discussed in Condarco, Zárate, el "Temible" Willka, 358.

³ Condarco, Zárate, el "Temible" Willka, 91-93, 178-184, 379, 391-392.

precedents—some even pre-dated the Spanish colonial period. By the early twentieth century, foreign and domestic industrialists became the ultimate beneficiaries of this state patronage.

Between 1899 and 1929, rural residents displayed a variety of responses to this systematic exploitation: from quiet consent to open rebellion. The pre-capitalist, semi-feudal, and colonial ties that bound rural residents to industrial capitalism masked their exploitation and ultimate dependence on the new system of economic relations.

Proletarian ideological programs appealed to the working class, most especially the mining proletariat, because these programs corresponded with the lived experience of the urban popular classes. Working-class ideological programs failed to appeal to the overwhelming majority of rural residents, because they did not depend upon wage labor for their own support and that of their families; no real rural working class existed in the Bolivian Andes during the first decades of the twentieth century. Socialist, anarcho-syndicalist, and Marxist ideas as formulated in Bolivia during the first three decades of the twentieth century failed to correspond with the lived experience of rural laborers. Modified forms of liberal-democratic ideology and nationalism made greater headway in the countryside, and rural residents displayed enormous creativity in adapting these alien ideologies to their economic and social needs.⁴

The *Ayllus* and Industrialization

⁴ What is the difference between bourgeois ideology and proletarian ideology? Bourgeois ideology is any political or economic program that envisions a society within the bounds of capitalism—a society where the dominant class is the bourgeoisie. Proletarian ideology seeks to overthrow capitalism and destroy the political and social dominance of the bourgeoisie.

The enclave character of industrial development in Bolivia can produce an assumption of disconnect between city and countryside—the erroneous impression that agrarian society had little intercourse with industry.⁵ The metaphor the Bolivia historian Antonio Mitre employs is that of an industrial “island” in a country where the majority of the population continued to live in the rural, agrarian world.⁶ When historians do address the relationship between agricultural communities and mining (between 1899 and 1929 industry and mining are practically synonyms in Bolivia), they focus almost exclusively on two subjects: land and labor. The loss of land by Indian communities during the early twentieth century is a popular avenue of inquiry, yet the alienation of *ayllu* (a unit of Andean social organization) territory only relates indirectly to industrialization. The designs of wealthy *hacendados* (large landholders) and liberal land reform in the late nineteenth century more directly threatened Indian land. A reinvigorated mining economy stimulated hacienda expansion, but the two economic endeavors did not always follow a parallel course. The interests of mining capital and those of the landed oligarchy did not always correspond. Also, the rural impact of liberal land reform varied considerably from one region of Bolivia to another, as illustrated in the previous chapter. On the relationship between rural laborers and industry, the scholarship emphasizes rural to urban migration and the direct participation of peasants in the mining industry. Is this the most fruitful and complete approach? For early twentieth century Oruro and northern Potosí, the answer has to be “no.” Indian communities and other rural residents made

⁵ For a good study that seeks to integrate the history of city and countryside see William Cronon, Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991). Cronon's study is primarily an environmental history of Chicago and the Upper Midwest of the United States emphasizing commodity and capital networks; this dissertation is more a history of labor.

⁶ Antonio Mitre, Bajo un cielo de estaño, 220.

significant contributions to the mining economy that go well beyond their simple employment in towns like Huanuni, Llallagua, Uncía, and Oruro

The Quechua, Aymara, and Uru-Chipaya communities of Oruro and northern Potosí made a significant, coerced contribution to the industrialization and modernization of the Bolivian Andes. As the tin industry solidified its central place in the national economy between 1899 and 1929, supplanting the silver industry of the late nineteenth century, the Bolivian government ensured that rural communities subsidized the profits of private capital, both foreign and domestic. Officials in Oruro and northern Potosí did this by mobilizing community labor for the construction and maintenance of a modern communication and transportation infrastructure. The system of railways, roads, telegraph lines, and public buildings that emerged from this period sought to promote and stimulate the development of the mining economy; these same industrial improvements marginalized or bypassed the Altiplano's Indian communities. The colonial character of the relationship between the Bolivian state and the rural population of the country appears not only in the economic arrangements of the period but in the sometimes delegation of political and administrative tasks to Indian communities by the government. The defense of Bolivia's national borders and law enforcement in the countryside sometimes fell to the *ayllus* of Oruro and northern Potosí; in a more modern and economically independent nation, the central government would not need to farm out such important activities.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, Indian communities faced more threats and exactions than the expropriation of land. The Bolivian state and the economic interests controlling it demanded that the *ayllus* provide an involuntary subsidy for the

industrialization and modernization of the country in both cash and labor. The subsidy took various forms but invariably benefited a handful of capitalists and drained resources from the Indian communities. During the early twentieth century, the Bolivian government continued to impose a “territorial contribution” on Indian agriculturalists. The tax, a legacy of the colonial period, still supplied a sizable percentage of Oruro and Potosí’s departmental budgets. The state also demanded that the *ayllus* provide a variety of labor-intensive services; almost all of this labor went toward the construction and maintenance of the nation’s communication and transportation infrastructure—an infrastructure that benefited the mining industry and marginalized the participation of Indian communities in the economy. Finally, haciendas existed as only one of a variety of threats to *aylluland* —mining companies, with the aid of Bolivian mining legislation, often seized Indian land without paying any compensation. All of these exactions formed a substantial rural subsidy for the process of industrialization in Bolivia.

The pressure of nascent industrial capitalism on traditional agriculture is a phenomenon well studied in the European context. The phrase “primitive accumulation” describes the systematic investment of agricultural profits and capital in infant industry.⁷ But “primitive accumulation” does not accurately describe the exactions imposed upon the Indian communities of Oruro and northern Potosí by the Bolivian government during the first decades of the twentieth century. The *ayllus*, impoverished by the economic and political changes of the late nineteenth century, could not produce even a fraction of the

⁷ Irfan Habib, a Marxist historian of Indian history, notes that “primary or primitive accumulation” might extend well beyond the borders of an industrializing nation touching that country’s colonial possessions. “Marx in his contributions to the *New York Tribune*, and in *Capital* and other writings, gave special attentions to the relationship between the colonies and the emergence of capitalism in England. He framed the theory of primary or primitive accumulation of capital to explain how the Industrial Revolution in England was generated by colonial plunder.” Irfan Habib, “Problems of Marxist Historiography,” Essays in Indian History: Towards a Marxist Perception (New Delhi: Tulika, 1995), 8.

capital necessary to construct the massive industrial operations that came to dominate tin mining—only foreign investment could meet those needs. Despite this fact, the Bolivian government and private industrialists still demanded money and labor from Indian communities for the construction and maintenance of a modern, industrial infrastructure to promote the growth and profitability of the mining companies. These heavy demands on already impoverished communities only served to sink them further into misery, benefiting a small group of foreign and domestic capitalists. A more appropriate phrase than “primitive accumulation” to describe this process in Bolivia might be “primitive exploitation.”⁸

During the first decades of the republican period, the impoverished Bolivian government depended upon the “territorial contribution” and other rural taxes paid by all Indian communities to fund the national budget.⁹ This relationship changed when Bolivia’s silver industry experienced a strong revival during the final decades of the nineteenth century; the mining boom allowed the central government to break with its dependence on the “territorial contribution.” Levies on the export of silver became the mainstay of the national budget, but a couple of departmental treasuries only slowly shed their reliance on rural tax receipts. Oruro and Potosí’s prefectures continued to rely upon

⁸ Marx applied the term “primitive accumulation” to Western Europe (mainly England) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But an example of the effective application of “primitive accumulation” for the development of a modern industrial state closer in time to early twentieth century Bolivia is Meiji Japan of the late nineteenth century. The Japanese state employed the harsh 1873 Land Tax to wring funds from the countryside and embark upon a crash industrial program. How does Japan’s history compare to that of the Bolivian state and its various demands of the peasantry of the Andes? First of all, the Bolivian state was a relatively weak institution compared to the Japanese state. Also, there seems to be no indication that the Bolivian government ratcheted up their pressure on the countryside during the early twentieth century; the taxes and labor the Bolivian government demanded of the peasantry were a simple continuation of colonial period exactions. My information on the Meiji government in the countryside comes from “The Meiji Restoration: A Bourgeois Non-Democratic Revolution,” *Spartacist* 58 (Spring 2004), 26-27

⁹ Langer, *Economic Change*, 61; Godoy, *Mining and Agriculture*, 27; and Platt, “Political Culture.”

the “territorial contribution” well into the twentieth century.¹⁰ In 1925, the “territorial contribution” still underwrote 34.2 percent of Oruro’s departmental budget and 15 percent of Potosí’s budget.¹¹ The percentages fluctuated during the 1920s, but the “territorial contribution” continued as an important source of revenue throughout the period. In Potosí in 1926, taxes on the *ayllus* underwrote 19 percent of the department’s budget; the figures jumped to 28 percent in 1928 and 23 percent in 1930.¹² As noted in chapter two, the local government’s dependence on rural tax receipts might influence departmental officials to defend the integrity of Indian landholdings (the *ayllus* clearly hoped for this result), but a second point also deserves further exploration: what did the government do with this money? Departmental governments employed their rural tax revenue to pay the wages of local political and administrative authorities, to maintain infrastructure like office buildings and courts, and to construct and maintain roadways—all allowing for the better projection of state power in the countryside and in the mining camps of the Andes.

The Indian communities saw little return on all of the capital they supplied to departmental treasuries. The departmental budget of Oruro from 1927 provides a concrete example of local government expenditures; little tax money actually found its way back to rural communities. In July 1927, the prefect of Oruro, Claudio Calderón Mendoza, estimated annual departmental revenue at 268,785.89 Bolivianos (Bs.). The “territorial contribution” provided 33.5 percent of this operating budget. Calderón wrote

¹⁰ Because of Bolivia’s extreme political centralization, a departmental budget or a departmental treasury funded only a limited number of local government offices and services. The national treasury funded major services like education and the police.

¹¹ Rivera C., “Oppressed but not Defeated”, 20.

¹² These numbers represent the combination of the territorial contribution and the *catastro* paid by all Indian communities. The *catastro* appeared in 1912 when the government collapsed the *diezmo* and the *primicia* into this one category. Platt, Estado boliviano y ayllu andino, 116-117.

of the tax, “This line...is one of the most reliable upon which the Treasury depends.”

The Bolivian government continuously tinkered with the regulations governing the collection of the “territorial contribution,” but traditional, quasi-colonial methods of collection often proved most reliable. In 1926, the government established a new decree allowing private citizens “who occupy no particular position in the public administration” to operate as tax farmers; the decree allowed them a ten percent cut of the revenue. The department of Oruro experimented with the new program for only a year; Calderón noted that the policy failed to produce a “satisfactory result.” Because of the previous year’s failures, the prefect and his advisors resolved to return to a more proven and reliable method of collection in 1927. “The territorial contribution of Abaroa and Poopó will be collected directly by the Treasury, where the community *caciques* and the *hilacatas* of Indian *ayllus* go to pay this tax, charging only a fee of 1 percent,” Calderón wrote. A good part of the failure to modify the collection of the “territorial contribution” lies with tenacious resistance of the Indian communities of Oruro to the changes. The prefect writes, “the Indians of the communities of this department, resist paying the territorial contribution to private collectors because of the abuses they commit.” No matter the method of collection, the *ayllus* saw little of the “territorial contribution’s” revenue returned to their communities. In 1927, the department of Oruro divided its own budget among six different branches of local government: the Government; the Treasury; Public Works; Sanitation or Health; Religion; and Charity and Education.¹³ The prefect divided the department’s 268,845.89 Bs. in the following manner: 21 percent for Government; 33.5 percent for the Treasury; 28.4 percent for Public Works; 4.3 percent for Sanitation

¹³ The titles of the six branches of local government in Spanish: *Gobierno, Hacienda, Obras Públicas, Sanidad, Culto, and Beneficencia e Instrucción*.

or Health; 2.8 percent for Religion; and 10 percent for Charity and Education.¹⁴ The important offices of local administration gobbled up most of the departmental budget; money that did find its way back to the citizenry of Oruro in the form of public services remained concentrated in urban areas.

The *ayllus* subsidized the industrialization and modernization of the highlands with more than just the “territorial contribution”; labor demanded by the Bolivian state provided a less apparent but equally important subsidy. The government channeled this mostly involuntary labor toward the construction and maintenance of the nation’s transportation and communication infrastructure: roads, railways, telegraphs, and the postal service. But the Bolivian government marshaled Indian labor for a variety of projects not easily predicted. In 1906, the prefect of Oruro wrote the *corregidor* of Challacollo requesting laborers for the construction of a building to house university studies in Oruro:

Having started work on the Mining School in this city and noting the lack of laborers for the continuation of said project, this Prefecture felt it wise to communicate with you so that you might, as quickly as possible, provide as many unskilled workers as you can, assuring them that they will be offered a good wage for their labor.¹⁵

Most levies of Indian labor occurred with more predictable frequency; the important *prestación vial* (a labor tax for the maintenance and construction of important roadways) occurred every winter when dry weather allowed for roadwork.

The road tax figured as a central component of the government’s plans for industrial and commercial development. The prefect of Oruro in 1914, Eduardo Diez de

¹⁴ Claudio Calderón Mendoza, Informe Politico-Administrativo del Prefecto del Departamento de Oruro, Dr. Claudio Calderón Mendoza, Gestión 1926-1927 (Oruro: 1927), 48, 50-51, 54-55.

¹⁵ Eloy del Castillo to the *corregidor* of the Challacollo Canton, Oruro, 28 August 1906, 127, “Corregidores, 1904-1909,” APO.

Medina, succinctly described the policy: “The necessity of maintaining the public roadways is of national interest, as it is related to the commercial and industrial development of the country and the obligation to provide easy access to centers of production and consumption.” In theory, the whole adult male population of Bolivia paid the tax with either a cash contribution or two days of “voluntary” labor. Yet the Bolivian government used race to decide who might pay the tax in cash and who had to labor on the nation’s roadways. A 1913 law declared that “it is prohibited to demand of the indigenous race the payment of said taxes in cash, instead the [Indian] taxpayers must offer their labor either personally or by a substitute.”¹⁶ As local officials generally implemented the tax, most of the actual work in the highlands fell to Indians living in the countryside. Indians living and working in the mining camps of La Paz, Oruro, and Potosí might escape the tax; through a bit of racial magic, the Bolivian government declared that no Indians labored in the nation’s mining industry. In 1914, the Minister of Government and Development, Claudio Pinilla, wrote the prefect of Oruro:

The mining companies of Corocoro...in order to avoid the inconveniences that their workers’ completion of the road tax might cause them, have offered to pay the mentioned tax in cash for the corresponding amount. This proposition... which in no way contradicts the law of 29 November 1913, that prohibits the collection of cash from the indigenous race, has been favorably accepted, because of the obvious inconveniences to the mining operations caused by their workers leaving to fulfill the road tax.¹⁷

Often, the Bolivian government viewed Indian and rural as virtual synonyms; an urban place of residence and industrial labor implied mestizo or European ancestry.

¹⁶ “Prestación Vial,” Diez de Medina, Prefect and Commander General of the Department to the subprefect of the Cercado Province, Oruro, 21 March 1914, “Bloque No 2 documentos y otros gestion 1911-1949,” Archivo de la Prefectura de Oruro, Subprefectura del Cercado (hereafter cited as APO SC).

¹⁷ Claudio Pinilla the Minister of Government and Development to the prefect of the Oruro Department, La Paz, 2 April 1914, 207, “Archivo de Oficios, 1914, Ministerios, 1,” APO.

The implementation of the road tax in the departments of Oruro and Potosí completely favored the economic interests of the mining industry. In 1917, the subprefect of the mining province of Poopó informed the prefect of Oruro that, “Taking advantage of the fact that the Indians pay this tax with their personal labor, I have repaired and cleaned the roadways from here [Poopó] to Antequera, Pazña, Avicaya, Totoral, and Machacamarca, giving preference to those that connect mining centers.”¹⁸ The subprefect not only gave “preference” to roads connecting Poopó with other mining towns, he repaired only those roads that served this function. All of the towns he named in his report contained either mines or important mills. The subordination of the road tax to the interests of the mining industry in Oruro became so extreme that the departmental government actually left the execution of some projects associated with the tax to the supervision of the mining companies themselves. In his 1910 “Departmental Report,” the prefect of Oruro, Constantino Morales, wrote, “By virtue of a Supreme concession, dated the 14 of May of the current year, a society of property owners in the mining settlement of Antequera, led by Moisés Blacut, has been charged with collecting the road tax in that town and repairing the roadway to the train station in Pazña.”¹⁹ Only when threatened with rural, peasant unrest did local government responded negatively to mining industry demands. In March 1921, a mining concern, the Bolivian Colquechaca Company, wrote the departmental authorities of Oruro requesting that they advance the work of the road tax earlier in the season so as to facilitate the transfer of mining equipment the company

¹⁸ Miguel Brun the subprefect of the Poopó Province to the Prefect and Commander General of the Department of Oruro, Poopó, 23 de junio de 1917, 243 “Subprefecturas, 1917, Prefectura-Oruro,” APO.

¹⁹ Constantino Morales to the Minister of State in the Office of Government and Development in La Paz, Oruro, 6 July 1910, 157, “Ministerio de Gobierno. desde 12 de julio 1909 hasta 28 de agosto 1911,” APO.

“urgently” needed.²⁰ Pastor Dulón, the subprefect of the Avaroa Province, denied the petition explaining “the Indians might find a pretext in the premature work of the road tax for an Indian uprising.”²¹ Only the threat of violent retribution sometimes stayed the hand of overzealous government officials.

In theory, the demands of the *prestación vial* fell to every male resident of Bolivia; the vagaries of its implementation twisted the tax into something especially onerous for the *ayllus* of the highlands. The Bolivian government formulated other labor drafts that targeted only Indian communities. The construction of the Oruro-Viacha railroad provides a transparent example of involuntary labor employed to advance the industrialization of the country. (This construction project was part of a larger program to lay track between Oruro and the capital, La Paz). Railroad construction required thousands of workers and cost enormous sums of money; the Bolivia government subsidized the project by supplying contractors with poorly-paid Indian peons. From the beginning, the national government pressured departmental authorities in Oruro to enlist laborers for the project. Under “instructions from the Supreme Government to make every possible effort to send workers,” the prefecture of Oruro did all that it could to carry out the government’s orders.²² In 1905, engineers charged with surveying and marking the route of the new rail line wrote the prefect of Oruro: “We now find ourselves ready to begin the final study of the line from Viacha to Oruro, and as it is very difficult

²⁰ Máximo Nava of the Bolivian Colquechaca Company to the subprefect of the Abaroa Province, Oruro, 17 March 1921 contained in P. Dulón the subprefect of the Abaroa Province in Challapata to the Prefect and Commander General of the Departamento in Oruro, 18 March 1921, 279, “Tesoros, Subprefecturas, 1921, Prefectura, Oruro,” APO.

²¹ P. Dulón, subprefect of the Abaroa Province in Challapata to the Prefect and Commander General of the Department in Oruro, 21 March 1921, 279, “Tesoros, Subprefecturas, 1921, Prefectura, Oruro,” APO.

²² Ascarrunz to the subprefect of the Carangas Province in Corque, 22 May 1908, 139, “Prefectos y Subprefectos, 1906-1908,” APO.

preserving the stakes in the ground, I wish to make arrangements so that the line is definitively marked with adobe posts.”²³ The engineers hoped to construct 540 adobe markers to mark the route, and the prefect Andrés Muñoz suggested to the subprefect of Carangas that he order “the *corregidores* to facilitate the workers necessary for the preparation of the ground and the erection of the markers.”²⁴ When actual construction began, the demand for Indian labor became voracious. In 1908, the prefect of Oruro Víctor E. Sanjinés wrote a letter of congratulation and encouragement to the subprefect of Carangas: “...during the month of December...you have sent from your province 1,002 Indians destined for work on the Viacha-Oruro railroad...please continue sending similar groups for the same end.”²⁵ The prefecture often stipulated a standard wage for Indian laborers, but labor was not necessarily free or well paid—just like during the colonial period when the Spanish Crown established standard wages for *mita* laborers working in the mines of Potosí.

Was this sometimes-involuntary stint of wage labor a capitalist labor arrangement? Might this wage work have led to the development of a working-class consciousness among the peasantry? In both theory and practice, Indian laborers recruited for railroad construction projects had a true capitalist, wage labor relationship with the companies that hired them. Despite coercive recruitment practices and attempts by some construction companies to avoid paying their Indian workers, labor on projects like the Oruro-Viacha railroad brought peasants into direct contact with industrial

²³ The primary difficulty with wooden stakes was their rapid disappearance or theft. The Altiplano is a treeless environment lacking in firewood and wooden building materials. Peasants in the region quickly stole any wood they came across.

²⁴ Andrés Muñoz to the subprefect of the Cercado Province, Oruro, 6 November 1905, 130, “Prefectos y Subprefectos, 1905-1906,” APO.

²⁵ Víctor E. Sanjinés to the subprefect of the Carangas Province in Corque, Oruro, 11 January 1908, 139, “Prefectos y Subprefectos, 1906-1908,” APO.

capitalism and the capitalist practice of wage labor. The second question asked at the beginning of this paragraph cannot be answered with similar ease. While Indian laborers might hold working-class jobs for a short period of time, the occasional work was probably not enough to make a substantial impact on their consciousness and understanding of capitalism. This short-term wage labor made only a passing and unpredictable contribution to their overall economic identity; petty mercantile activities and subsistence agriculture formed the overwhelming bulk of their productive economic endeavors. Also, the pre-capitalist coercive practices often tacked onto wage labor recruitment in the Andean countryside conspired to obscure the capitalist character of their work on the railroad. Peasants who occasionally labored for wages in the growing industrial economy of Bolivia failed to develop a consciousness of capitalist exploitation and a concurrent horizontal sympathy with other working-class groups.

The Indian laborers recruited for the construction of the Oruro-Viacha railway did not necessarily volunteer for the work, nor did they enjoy generous pay. In March 1908, some workers appealed to the Minister of State complaining “principally of the low salaries they are paid, considering the wage of 1.20 Bs. a day insufficient.” But Indian workers suffered more abuse than just low pay in railroad work camps. The Minister of Government wrote the prefect of Oruro that many of the workers receive their wages in kind, “as it appears some contractors abusively pay.”²⁶ The departmental government even discovered that many Indian workers labored for no pay at all. “Various [Indian] Mayors have just arrived denouncing the failure to pay wages to workers on the rail line,” the prefect reported. “The list that I have counts one hundred and thirty one victims of

²⁶ The prefect of Oruro to the Minister of State in the Office of Government and Development in La Paz, 28 March 1908, 142, “Ministerios de Gobierno, Desde 13 marzo 1906 hasta 11 de julio de 1909,” APO.

abuse, and I know that various groups have returned to their communities without pay.”²⁷

The involuntary character of the work became clear when some decided to resist government orders and object to the “hostility exercised by supervisors in the construction of the Viacha-Oruro line with Indian laborers.”²⁸ On 19 November 1907, the prefect of Oruro Víctor E. Sanjinés responded to the threat of Indian insubordination with force:

The Indians of the Toledo Canton have resisted the authority’s orders seeking to send them to Quelcata, where one can find the construction of the Viacha-Oruro rail line...the prefecture under my command has decided to deploy a Security Police squad of 10 men...with the object of giving aid to the local *corregidor*, making effective the Orders...that you have given.²⁹

The Bolivian government would not permit Indian communities to obstruct work so important for the industrialization of the nation.

And what of the argument that commerce generated by new railroads benefited all Bolivians?³⁰ The construction of railroads in Bolivia demonstrates that “development” and industrialization (especially uneven industrialization) does not benefit all. To promote industrialization and modernization, the Bolivian oligarchy willingly sacrificed the health of domestic markets and agricultural production for an export-oriented mining economy built around the principles of “free trade.” Before 1860, the Chayanta Province in northern Potosí and the fertile valley of Cochabamba provided a surplus of grain for Bolivia’s domestic needs; farmers even exported excess grain to southern Peru. The northern Potosí *ayllus* of Chayanta actively participated in the production of grain for the

²⁷ The prefect of Oruro to the Minister of Government in La Paz, 135, “Telegramas, 1905-1908,” APO.

²⁸ Víctor E. Sanjinés to Jorge E. Zalles the Sub Director of the Casa R.R. Grace & Co., Oruro, 3 July 1907, 140 “Varios, 1906-1908,” APO.

²⁹ Víctor E. Sanjinés to the subprefect of the Poopó Province in Poopó, Oruro, 19 November 1907, 139 “Prefectos y Subprefectos, 1906-1908,” APO.

³⁰ These early twentieth century arguments about the benefits of capitalist expansion and free trade are similar to ideas that neoliberal thinkers apply to Latin America today.

domestic market, a market eventually devastated by the importation, via railway, of Chilean grain. The construction of the railroad, linking the mines and cities of Bolivia with the Pacific, marginalized the domestic production of grain, making imports cheaper than foodstuffs produced in Bolivia. In 1889, the railroad line from Antofagasta, Chile arrived at the Bolivian mining camp of Huanchaca in the department of Potosí sounding the death knell of market-oriented agriculture in Chayanta. The disappearance of this domestic trade in foodstuffs pushed the *ayllus* of northern Potosí back into a subsistence economy; Tristan Platt notes that some students of the Andes and many international aid agencies have made the error of interpreting this subsistence economy as an immutable characteristic of *ayllu* life.³¹ The economic changes shaking Bolivia at the end of the nineteenth century tended to debilitate the economic power of the Indian communities.³² During the first decades of the twentieth century, the economic deterioration of the *ayllus* continued with the construction of more rail lines and greater industrialization.

The Bolivian government not only used community labor to construct a modern transportation infrastructure, they also employed Indian workers to construct and maintain the nation's communication network: the telegraph and postal service. In the department of Oruro, the construction of telegraph lines proceeded similarly to the construction of railroads: the prefect often ordered the subprefects and local *corregidores* to recruit poorly paid Indian laborers to do the work. The central government in La Paz usually initiated the process. As one functionary wrote, "you [the Minister of State] recommend that the prefecture in my charge order the subprefects across whose

³¹ Platt, *Estado boliviano y ayllu andino*, 13-14.

³² *Ibid.*, 39; Godoy, *Mining and Agriculture*, 29; Langer, *Economic Change*, 26-28; Rivera C., *Ayllus*, 42; Rivera C., "Oppressed but not Defeated", 28; and Platt, *La persistencia*, 36.

jurisdiction the telegraph line from this city to Challapata passes to recruit a sufficient number of unskilled laborers to avoid the interruption of work on said line.”³³ The construction of telegraph lines occurred only intermittently, creating a sporadic demand for Indian workers. Bolivian mail service on the other hand spawned an almost constant demand for labor, often in violation of national law.

The courier or postal service (*servicio de postillonaje*) that the government demanded of Indian communities continued as a legacy of the colonial period. By turn, Indian mayors (*alcaldes*) had to supply *ayllu* members as well as burros and llamas to carry mail and other packages between different postal stations. Republican-era laws consecrated this colonial-style labor draft in the nineteenth century; a government decree dated 2 July 1829 allowed governors two Indian couriers and local *corregidores* one to aid in official correspondence.³⁴ Later, article 25 of a law dated 5 October 1878 ordered “the postal and mail service be attended by Indian community members.”³⁵ At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Bolivian government modified the postal service laws with a decree dated 20 November 1904. The modification stipulated that there be “an exemption of service for those Indians who pay the rural land tax; that is, those whose lands have been surveyed, but not those who pay the territorial contribution, who will continue [to labor] under the authority of the law dated 24 November 1874.”³⁶ The government intended that this change serve as an incentive for the dissolution of the

³³ Víctor E. Sanjinés to the Minister of State in the Office of Government in La Paz, Oruro, 19 December 1906, 142 “Ministerios de Gobierno, Desde 13 marzo 1906 hasta 11 de julio de 1909,” APO.

³⁴ Condarco, *Zárate, el “Temible” Willka*, 32.

³⁵ Claudio Pinilla the Minister of Government and Development to the prefect of the department of ..., La Paz, 1 April 1914, contained in “Postas y Correos,” Diez de Medina the Prefect and Commander General of the Department to the subprefect of the Cercado Province, Oruro, 4 April 1914, “Bloque No 2 documentos y otros gestion 1911-1949,” APO-SC.

³⁶ “Servicio de Postillonaje,” M. Lemaitre to the corregidor of the Todos Santos Canton, 16 April 1917, 244 “1917,” APO.

ayllus and the privatization of community land, something that Oruro's Indian communities resisted fiercely. The central government in La Paz actually abolished Indian postal service with an executive decree dated 8 July 1905; the abolition became a national law 30 November 1911.³⁷ Despite the law, Indian communities throughout Oruro and northern Potosí continued to serve as involuntary couriers and postal attendants. In 1914, the Minister of Government Claudio Pinilla wrote the prefect of Oruro, Eduardo Diez de Medina: "In spite of the cited legal proscriptions, the overwhelming needs of public service have determined the demand that the landowning Indians of surveyed communities continue their postal service according to the dispositions contained in the General Mail Regulations."³⁸ When laws conflicted with the practical needs of government and industry, Bolivian officials preferred to ignore them and focus instead on the industrialization and modernization of the country.

Industry and the state extracted one final subsidy from Indian communities, an expropriation that deprived the *ayllus* of a resource essential for the reproduction of their social and economic life—the land. In northern Potosí, Indian land disappeared without compensation beneath the mining installations and waste rock of Llallagua, Catavi, Siglo XX and Uncía. The same occurred in every mining region in Bolivia, including the department of Oruro. On 11 March 1903, Juan Gramier solicited "possession of thirty hectares atop tin veins on Churicollo hill, seven kilometers to the east of Huanuni, on

³⁷ Condarco, *Zárate, el "Temible" Willka*, 32.

³⁸ Claudio Pinilla the Minister of Government and Development to the prefect of the department of ..., La Paz, 1 April 1914, contained in "Postas y Correos," Diez de Medina the Prefect and Commander General of the Department to the subprefect of the Cercado Province, Oruro, 4 April 1914, "Bloque No. 2 documentos y otros gestion 1911-1949," APO-SC.

land belonging to the community of Venta y Media,” an Indian community.³⁹ This claim typifies hundreds made in the department of Oruro during the first decades of the twentieth century. The mining laws of the country endorsed this usurpation without compensation: Article 9 of the “Compilation of Mining Laws” authorized the “investigative or survey works even without the authorization of the land’s proprietor, as long as it is not enclosed.”⁴⁰ The Bolivian government valued and elevated the mining industry above all competing economic pursuits.

Traditionally, scholars do not focus on the subsidies the Bolivian government demanded of Indian communities for modernization and industrialization; instead they emphasize the alienation of *ayllu* land. But, the communities involuntarily supplied capital and labor for the development of industry. The Bolivian state employed the “territorial contribution” to fund local government in the mining departments of Oruro and Potosí. The road tax and other labor duties levied on the *ayllus* allowed the Bolivian government to erect and maintain a transportation and communication infrastructure essential for the development of industry. The nation’s mining legislation even sanctioned the expropriation of Indian land for industry. In all, this formed a significant subsidy for the industrialization of Oruro, Potosí, and Bolivia as a whole. This official and systematic plunder impoverished Indian communities, sinking them further into misery; the Bolivian government expropriated money, labor, and land to fund industrial works that only marginalized the *ayllus* from the modern capitalist market.

³⁹ 11 March 1903, 113 “Posesiones y otros, Minas, 1902-1904,” APO.

⁴⁰ Marcial Vergara Rivas to the subprefect of the Cercado, Oruro, 28 September 1920, “Bloque No 2 documentos y otros gestion 1911-1949,” APO-SC.

Roads, railways, and telegraph lines not only provided industrialists with the indispensable, modern infrastructure they needed to operate profitably in highland Bolivia, the improvements also helped the Bolivian state to project police and military power throughout the nation. The government most effectively exercised its influence and power in the mining camps and towns of Oruro and northern Potosí; rural Bolivia presented a more difficult problem. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, the Bolivian government confronted several major peasant uprisings with two being especially important for the departments of Oruro and Potosí: the rebellion resulting from the Federalist War of 1898-1899 and the Chayanta rebellion of 1927. The Bolivian state and its military eventually suffocated both, but state power in the countryside of Oruro and northern Potosí should not be overestimated. Community members provided essential services to government administrators in the countryside; without the assistance of the *ayllus*, day-to-day governance in the provinces broke down completely.

Rural government and its employment of Indian auxiliaries created innumerable opportunities for corruption. In 1922, a group of *ayllu* authorities submitted a protest to the Minister of Government, complaining of abuses by local authorities and the Catholic clergy. The community leaders of Pampa Aullagas and San Pedro de Challacollo charged both secular and religious officials with monetary exactions, the abuse of personal services, and the illegal demand for community goods. The headmen wrote that the revelation that many of these services had been “completely abolished by the

congress for several years” surprised them.⁴¹ Competition between secular officials, ecclesiastic representatives, and mestizo townspeople for Indian laborer often created significant tension in the provinces of Oruro. In these local disputes, the subprefects, the *corregidores*, the priests, and the more privileged residents of provincial towns variously represented themselves as the true defenders of the impoverished peasant population. In 1916, a mestizo resident of Turco (a town in the Carangas Province) complained to the prefect of Oruro of abuses committed by the priest José María Boso. “He has in his power...eleven Indians from this community,” the townsman reported, “who are the true victims of every type of involuntary labor.”⁴² Complaints such as this one from Turco appealed to a latent anti-clericalism among Bolivian government officials steeped in liberal political thought. In his 1914 “Departmental Report” to the central government in La Paz, the prefect of Oruro, Eduardo Diez de Medina, complained of abusive Catholic practices associated with religious festivals. “Various priests force the Indians to celebrate religious festivals,” and had ordered departmental functionaries to “deter...the odious practices of the Catholic religion, leaving the inhabitants [of Indian communities] with complete liberty to celebrate or not to celebrate such festivals.”⁴³ Despite the accusations of clerical abuse frequently penned by secular officials, government authorities profited from their own use of Indian labor. As late as 1947, a host of government officials continued to make ridiculous demands of Oruro’s peasant

⁴¹ Leandro Callapa to the Minister of Government in La Paz, 1 December 1922, “Bloque N° 2 documentos y otros gestion 1911-1949,” APO-SC.

⁴² Daniel Durán to the prefect, Turco, 10 January 1916, 228, “Recibido de Varios, 1916,” APO.

⁴³ Eduardo Diez de Medina, “Informe Departamental, 1914,” 191, “Ministerio de Instrucción y Agricultura, Comensado en 14 de Octubre de 1913, Termina en...,” APO.

population; in July of that year, the municipal intendant of the city of Oruro submitted the following request of the subprefect of the Cercado Province:

With the object of giving greater luster to events associated with the August celebration [the day of Bolivian independence] soon to be carried out, the Intendancy in my charge has prepared a number of games that require a few animals like (viscachas, rabbits, pheasants, and others); I ask for the collaboration of the local *corregidores* and other subalternates, in acquiring said animals.⁴⁴

Oruro's Indian communities did much more for the Bolivian government than simply capturing small animals for urban celebrations; the state sometimes relied upon the *ayllus* to defend national sovereignty when the police and military proved incapable of doing so. Closely related to the already mentioned weakness of the Bolivian government in the countryside, state power often faltered in the more isolated corners of the nation. Both the central government and departmental authorities in Oruro exhibited an extreme paranoia when it came to the defense of Bolivia's national territory against perceived Chilean incursions.

A series of altercations along the sparsely populated Chilean border in 1914, episodes that taken together might be termed the "Chinchilla Incident," illustrate the occasional police role of Indian communities. One particularly valuable Andean rodent, the chinchilla, sparked this minor international confrontation. The subprefect of the Carangas Province explained the appeal of the chinchilla to the prefect of Oruro in a letter dated 12 May 1914: "Also, there exists on several hills in this province, like on 'Tata Sabaya' and others, the chinchilla, whose skin is of great value. The hunting of this animal is prohibited by Supreme Resolutions, so that their survival is preserved in said

⁴⁴ César Arzabe Reque the municipal intendant to the subprefect of the Cercado Province, Oruro, 28 July 1947, "Bloque No 2 documentos y otros gestion 1911-1949," APO-SC.

regions.”⁴⁵ Chilean poachers angered local officials, but the Bolivian government had no military or police presence along the border. The Bolivian government employed only three officials in this isolated stretch of the expansive Carangas Province: the subprefect of Carangas, and the *corregidores* of Sabaya and Huachacalla.⁴⁶ These three officials relied upon the Indian leadership of the *ayllus* to administer the territory. When confronting Chilean poachers, Bolivian officials depended upon the communities to defend Bolivia’s national sovereignty. The Bolivian government only irregularly enforced its environmental regulations at the beginning of the twentieth century, but the Chilean nationality of these poachers made their incursions particularly distressing for the officials involved.

The Bolivian state sought to conserve and protect several species of Altiplano fauna in the early decades of the last century. At various times, laws and orders circulated among the highest offices of government regulating or abolishing the hunting of vicuñas, suri (an Andean ostrich), the Altiplano’s various species of flamingo, and the game fish of Lake Uru Uru and Lake Poopó. But of all these animals, officials consistently exhibited the greatest concern for the chinchilla and the vicuña. As with the chinchilla, officials sought to protect the vicuña from the depredations of foreign poachers, but they mainly hoped to protect this wild cameloid from Bolivia’s own rural population. “The Law passed about the hunting of this animal has made much progress,” one official observed, “forever prohibiting that the residents of the province exterminate

⁴⁵ A. Illanes M. the subprefect of the Carangas Province to the Prefect and Commander General of the Oruro Department, Corque, 12 May 1914, 206, “Archivo de Oficios, 1914, Autoridades Departamentales, 3,” APO.

⁴⁶ A. Illanes M. the subprefect of the Carangas Province to the Prefect and Commander General of the Oruro Department, Corque, 28 March 1914, 206, “Archivo de Oficios, 1914, Autoridades Departamentales, 3,” APO.

an animal useful to Bolivian industry.”⁴⁷ The vague hope that at some point in the future both the chinchilla and the vicuña would produce substantial commercial profits sustained much of this legislation. In the case of the “Chinchilla Incident,” Chilean poachers threatened both potentially valuable natural resources and Bolivian national sovereignty.

In May 1914, the *corregidor* of the Sabaya Canton informed the subprefect of Carangas that “two Chileans have appeared in this canton with no business.” The official, distrustful of the Chilean’s assertion that they hoped only to prospect for sulfur, suddenly suspected that they might attempt to hunt the protected chinchilla when *ayllu* residents informed him that the two appeared to be traveling to the mountain Tata Sabaya, the chinchillas’ most important home range in the department of Oruro. At this point, the *corregidor* dispatched members of the local *ayllu* leadership to investigate. “I took action by sending two [Indian] Mayors, to watch them and see what they do,” he reported.⁴⁸ On 16 June 1914, the subprefect of Carangas informed Oruro’s prefect that “the two Chileans have been captured,” and that “effectively they were chinchilla hunters.”⁴⁹ In a later report, the two Chilean poachers were identified as Bernardino Madariaga and Juan de la Cruz Morales.⁵⁰ When captured, Bolivian official confiscated

⁴⁷ A. Illanes M. the subprefect of the Carangas Province to the Prefect and Commander General of the Oruro Department, Corque, 12 May 1914, 206, “Archivo de Oficios, 1914, Autoridades Departamentales, 3,” APO.

⁴⁸ A. Illanes M. the subprefect of the Carangas Province to the Prefect and Commander General of the Oruro Department, Corque, 10 May 1914, 206, “Archivo de Oficios, 1914, Autoridades Departamentales, 3,” APO.

⁴⁹ A. Illanes M. the subprefect of the Carangas Province to the Prefect and Commander General of the Oruro Department, Isluga, 16 June 1914, 206, “Archivo de Oficios, 1914, Autoridades Departamentales, 3,” APO.

⁵⁰ M. Santivañez the Inspector General of the Police to the Ministry of Government and Development, 16 November 1914 in the Ministry of Government and Development to the prefect of Oruro, La Paz, 20 November 1914, 207 “Archivo de Oficios, 1914, Ministerios, 1,” APO

40 chinchilla pelts and “various traps.”⁵¹ The Carangas subprefect, Illanes Monje, congratulated himself that these two citizens of Chile who “have always violated our borders” would soon face Bolivian justice.⁵² The chinchilla pelts themselves which “by right belong to the captors” instead began to move through the channels of Bolivian government, “destined for the President of the Republic.”⁵³

Whatever their punishment for the poaching infraction, Bernardino Madariega and Juan de la Cruz Morales returned to Bolivia three months later in September 1914, again seeking to hunt chinchilla. This time, the threat of violence grew more palpable. Seeking to arrest “these trouble-makers who were on the hill,” subprefect Illanes Monje “organized a group of Indians to evict them; they forced the two to retreat, but from a distance the Chileans fired two Rifle shots at them; the [Indian] delegation continues to guard the hill.” At this point, the subprefect began to solicit additional assistance to police the border and defend the chinchillas’ habitat. Illanes Monje requested that departmental authorities dispatch a mounted police detachment to reinforce his subordinates on the border.⁵⁴

In November, officials again sought aid to blunt what they saw as the violent threat posed by Madariega and Morales. “The previously mentioned hunters have

⁵¹ A. Illanes M. the subprefect of the Carangas Province to the Prefect and Commander General of the Oruro Department, Isluga, 16 June 1914, 206, “Archivo de Oficios, 1914, Autoridades Departamentales, 3,” APO.

⁵² A. Illanes M. the subprefect of the Carangas Province to the Prefect and Commander General of the Oruro Department, Corque, 24 June 1914, 206, “Archivo de Oficios, 1914, Autoridades Departamentales, 3,” APO.

⁵³ M. Santivañez the inspector general of the police to the Ministry of Government and Development, 16 November 1914 in the Ministry of Government and Development to the prefect of Oruro, La Paz, 20 November 1914, 207 “Archivo de Oficios, 1914, Ministerios, 1,” APO

⁵⁴ A. Illanes M. the subprefect of the Carangas Province to the Prefect and Commander General of the Oruro Department, Corque, 30 September 1914, 206, “Archivo de Oficios, 1914, Autoridades Departamentales, 3,” APO.

returned captaining a gang and threatening the inhabitants of Sabaya to exact vengeance for having been captured,” they reported. Now, the central government in La Paz planned to establish a ten-man police force to “defend against the foreign advances that are often made against the pastures of the Indians of Isluge; and to make effective the law prohibiting the hunting of vicuñas, chinchillas, and ostriches; and to guarantee the tranquility of the region’s inhabitants.”⁵⁵ Prior to the establishment of this small armed patrol, Indian communities did much of the police work on the Chilean border. Once organized, the minimal police presence in the region did not always remain focused on blunting foreign incursions.

Less than a decade after the “Chinchilla Incident” in Sabaya and the ensuing establishment of a mounted police squad to patrol the sparsely populated border between Chile and Bolivia, some Bolivian officials began to question the utility of the detachments in Sabaya and Sajama. A. Barrientos, Carangas’ subprefect in 1923, could not understand the logic behind the creation of this squadron of mounted officers in western Oruro. Instead of expressing concern for the security of the border, not to even mention the chinchilla, he focused on expanding his own power and authority (perhaps even his own safety). Barrientos worried most about internal security; he sought to enhance the defenses of the provincial capital Corque against political subversion and possible peasant unrest:

The eight well-mounted police officers in the cantons of Sabaya and Sajama should be permanently based in the provincial capital, alongside the primary political authority, so that at opportune moments, during political commotions and Indian subversion, he might make quick use of the mounted police officers with

⁵⁵ M. Santivañez the Inspector General of the Police to the Ministry of Government and Development, 16 November 1914 in the Ministry of Government and Development to the prefect of Oruro, La Paz, 20 November 1914, 207 “Archivo de Oficios, 1914, Ministerios, 1,” APO

assignments tending to preserve public order and guaranteeing the life and property of the province's subjects.⁵⁶

The preoccupation with internal security derived from important political events of the early 1920s. First, the heated political competition between the Republican Party and its various opponents often exploded in violence, and secondly, the Jesús de Machaca peasant rebellion of 1921 in the neighboring department of La Paz stimulated official concern about the security of Bolivia's countryside. The state quickly forgot the "Chinchilla Incident" and filed it away in its archives.

The role of the *ayllus* in this small confrontation with a pair of persistent Chilean poachers deserves remembrance. In the absence of police or military detachments in the abandoned steppes of western Oruro, the government depended upon *ayllu* authorities to defend the nation's territorial integrity and enforce Bolivia's laws. The relationship between the state and the Indian communities in Oruro and northern Potosí at the beginning of the twentieth century might be described as quasi-colonial—the government often ruled indirectly in the countryside through the semi-autonomous leadership of the *ayllus*. Important community officials even played a decisive mediating role in the state's expropriation of peasant labor and capital for the advance of industrialization in highland Bolivia. How did the relationship between *ayllu* residents and industrial capitalism differ from that of hacienda residents? Did landless peasants have a more direct contact with the ideology and workings of capitalism, a contact that might allow them to better understand the socio-economic structure of twentieth century Bolivia?

These questions led this author to hunt for a rural working class.

⁵⁶ A. Barrientos the subprefect of the Carangas Province to the prefect of the Oruro Department, Corque, 1 August 1923 in A. Arce to the Minister in the Office of Government and Justice in La Paz, 11 August 1923, 302 "Copiador de Ministerios de 24 de Marzo de 1923," APO.

Laboring on the Hacienda

No true rural working class existed in the countryside of Oruro and northern Potosí during the early twentieth century. The *ayllus* most certainly did not contain a large, landless class of rural workers forced to sell their labor power for wages. The institution of the hacienda provided more fertile terrain for the growth of wage labor, yet even there, wage labor appeared only as an infrequent anomaly. Hacienda residents in Oruro and northern Potosí found themselves subject to semi-feudal, Andean rental practices; invariably, tenants paid their rent with labor, only rarely did hacienda residents pay a cash rent. Contracts stipulated that tenants perform a variety of labor services for the owner of a hacienda, some of it of a very personal nature in the home of the landowner—services known as *pongueaje*.

Several Bolivian intellectuals active during the first three decades of the twentieth century correctly diagnosed the semi-feudal character of economic and social relations in the countryside of the Altiplano. Gustavo A. Navarro, an early socialist who wrote under the pen name Tristan Marof, peppered his 1934 critique of Bolivian society, La tragedia del altiplano, with images evocative of medieval Europe: “The mansions of Upper Peru are enormous, with the appearance of ruined castles: thick adobe walls, colonial bars, three patios and a corral in the style of Andalusia or Castile. Long, silent corridors.” He decried the abusive, feudal service of *pongueaje*: “In wealthy homes, two or more *pongos*

often labor, and they feed themselves with leftovers; in poorer homes, the *pongo* fights for bones with the dogs.”⁵⁷

Why is the search for a rural working class in the Bolivian countryside such an important investigative task? Without a large pool of rural, landless wage laborers the independent development of alternative, socialist ideology among the peasantry is unlikely. Some Marxists historians seek a rural working class where none existed; without one, they cannot adequately explain radical movements among the peasantry or those exciting and rare instances of social revolution in Latin America. Historians hostile to Marxist historiography seek to demonstrate the absence of a rural working class hoping to prove the inapplicability of Marxist analysis to and the futility of social revolution in Latin America. Thinkers like Theda Skocpol have their own theoretical problems.⁵⁸ Skocpol’s work typifies the political and academic fascination with the peasantry that developed in the 1970s and 1980s. It also mirrors much contemporary “subaltern” scholarship:

Agrarian bureaucracy has been the only historical variety of complex society with differentiated, centralized government that has, in certain instances, incubated a lower-class stratum that was *simultaneously strategic* in the society’s economy and polity (as surplus producer, payer of rents and taxes, and as provider of corvée and military manpower), and yet *organizationally autonomous* enough to allow the ‘will’ and ‘tactical space’ for collective insurrection against basic structural arrangements.⁵⁹

The working class produced by industrial capitalism might also wear the labels “strategic” and “organizationally autonomous”; additionally, industrial workers possessed

⁵⁷ Tristan Marof (Gustavo A. Navarro), La tragedia del altiplano (Buenos Aires: Editorial Claridad, 1934), 54-55.

⁵⁸ Theda Skocpol, States & Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, & China (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

⁵⁹ Theda Skocpol, “France, Russia, China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions,” Comparative Studies in Society and History, vol. 18, no. 2 (April 1976), 192.

an intimate understanding of modern capitalism that the peasantry never achieved. In a country like Bolivia, experiencing the uneven advance of industry, the peasantry on its own (in the absence of a true rural working class) never formulated a forward-thinking alternative to the inequities of industrial capitalism. The rural masses could provide the decisive numbers to overthrow oligarchic rule in Bolivia, but only if captained by other socio-economic groups.

What did landowners in early twentieth century Bolivia demand of their tenants? A pair of 1930s rental contracts from the department of Oruro illustrates the sort of labor services *colonos* (hacienda residents) provided. In 1933, twenty *colonos* (they are described as “Indians” in the contract), resident on the rural property of Anocariri located in the Paria Canton of the Cercado Province, signed a detailed agreement with the landowner Walter Miranda. These *colonos* likely represent the male heads of families or households resident on the property in question. The owner promised his tenants, “the use of the estate’s lands in the customary form, in exchange for obligatory services, that they will execute in the customary way.” The use of the word “customary” deserves a bit of additional explanation. “Customary” is shorthand for labor practices and land-use patterns sanctified by long practice. Ideally, both the landowner and his tenants agreed what the term meant, though practice frequently failed to adhere to the ideal. “Customary” often served as a rhetorical tool and contested point of reference employed by both hacienda owners and *colonos* in times of labor unrest. In this 1933 contract, “custom” compelled the tenants to perform a variety of personal services for the landowner in exchange for access to agricultural land:

The tenants...are voluntarily and individually obliged to fulfill all of the established services for the benefit of the estate's owner, according to how they have always labored...plowing, sowing, harvesting, irrigating, repairing canals, tending to the livestock, working as *cachas*, transporting the harvest wherever the landowner wills, *pongo* and muleskinner all according to established norms.

The contract did not detail the specifics of all the required tasks; after years of repetition, both the owner of the hacienda and the *colonos* supposedly understood the particulars of the listed obligations. Those demands presented in greater detail indicate that landowners pressed their tenants for more than just labor. Hacienda residents traveling to Oruro for their term of service in the landowner's home had to arrive with two loads of firewood (while serving in this domestic, urban capacity tenants were called *pongos*). The contract also required tenants laboring as muleskinners to supply the landowner with firewood. Finally, Walter Miranda even demanded that his tenants build and maintain all of his hacienda's buildings: "The cattle shed will be repaired and put in good condition by all of the tenants, the hacienda's house shall also be repaired."⁶⁰ At various times of the year, hacienda residents abandoned their own homes and fields for extended periods of service as demanded by their landlord. As *pongos* they lived in the landowner's house in the city; as shepherds they had to relocate to the cattle shed (*tropeña*). That the tenants of Anocariri found any time to attend to their own animals and fields is surprising.

A 1930 contract from Hacienda Challapampa Hacienda in the Cercado Province of Oruro provides an even more detailed picture of tenant obligations and the compensation they might expect. The subprefect of the province oversaw the

⁶⁰ "Cópia legalizada del acto de compromiso voluntario de cumplimiento de obligaciones, suscrita entre el señor Walter Miranda y los colonos de la finca Anocariri," Matías Tórrez in the Juzgado Parroquial of the Paria Canton, 18 April 1933, "Bloque N° 2 documentos y otros gestion 1911-1949," APO-SC.

negotiations that eventually resulted in this particular rental agreement. The *colonos* paid the bulk of their rent in labor:

Each tenant's payment to cover the value of the rent shall be: A.-To receive 5 loads of potatoes weighing 110 pounds each; 5 quintals of barley grain; to sow them on new and appropriate land, to harvest them, and to transport the product to my home in Oruro, with no more compensation than a small amount of coca already known. B.-To serve by turn as a muleskinner caring for the hacienda's animals and others. C.-To transport from the valleys of Mohoza the grains that will serve as seed for their [farming] obligations with a compensation of 0.50 Bs. per *fanega*. D.-All of the tenants must serve by turn as shepherds, pasturing those [animals] that belong to the hacienda. E.-To re-thatch the hacienda house each year before the rainy season.

Surprisingly, the boss (in this case an urban entrepreneur renting the hacienda from its actual owner) did not demand *pongueaje* services from his tenants. Instead, the contract established a framework by which José Gutiérrez might employ the *colonos* as wage laborers "however many times he judges convenient." The agreement established a standard wage of one Boliviano for eight hours of work. The tenants of Challapampa still labored under a whole litany of heavy obligations, yet they seem to have successfully negotiated an end to *pongueaje*. In exchange for their labor, each *colono* received one hectare of land (10,000 square meters) to farm, "with crops that they felt convenient." The tenants also had the right to pasture their animals freely on hacienda land, "with no more restriction than respecting the hacienda's fields...and avoiding damage to the Hacienda's crops." Finally, the landowner promised to cover the "land tax or any other that might target property" rather than shifting the tax burden to his tenants.⁶¹

The life of a hacienda tenant, loaded down with labor obligations, was one of ever-threatening economic insecurity. While hacienda residency might protect *colonos*

⁶¹ The subprefect of the Cercado, Oruro, 7 October 1930, "Bloque N° 2 documentos y otros gestion 1911-1949," APO-SC.

from some state demands placed upon Indian communities (the “territorial contribution,” postal service duties, etc.), they did not enjoy the guaranteed access to land of *ayllu* members. Hacienda residents had few legal guarantees; they might be stripped of their land and evicted at any time. A complaint from 1931 illustrates the precarious and vulnerable position of hacienda *colonos*. In that year, four “Indian” tenants of the Hacienda Pisaqueri in Oruro appealed to the subprefect of the Cercado Province for protection against their impending eviction at the hands of the widow Delicia R. de Delgado. The petitioners claimed more than twenty-two years of residence on the estate, during which time they had “always fulfilled all of their obligations...such as sowing, harvesting, and preparing the ground...such as *pongueaje* and other similar services.” In exchange for their labor, the four received “the right of use to a few plots of ground for the sowing of fields for our own particular use.” The petition omits the widow’s reasons for the eviction, but the *colonos* indicate that from their perspective the eviction lacked justification and was malicious in its timing. For the current year, they had already “prepared the land for the planting of barley and potatoes, having already finished with the sowing of quinoa,” all for the benefit of the widow. As for their own rented plots, initial preparations had already been made for planting. The *colonos*’ lawyer acknowledged his clients’ tenuous legal position but demanded consideration of the labor already performed for the landowner:

We would not feel inconvenienced leaving the estate, if we were not so far advanced in our agricultural labors, and if we had not already served the landowner in all of our obligations; but what in reality is happening is that the owner hopes that we will leave the property and renounce our previous labor corresponding to the agricultural year of 1932.

The petition makes explicit the limited avenues of appeal available to hacienda tenants. “We have no one to whom we might appeal demanding justice,” they wrote, “if not to your authority, who is designated to mediate the differences between owners and tenants.”⁶² The case’s final resolution could not be found in the subprefecture’s archive.

Hacienda residents exhibited a variety of responses to eviction. On 6 October 1931, three Indian *colonos*, Francisco Tomás, Hilarión Sajama, and Tiburcio Tomás, met their landlord’s representative in the office of the subprefect of the Cercado Province to discuss complaints that they had lodged against the owner of the Pisaqueri hacienda and the eviction notice that the landowner had filed against them. The three tenants complained of “poor treatment” at the hands of the *hacendado*. César Renjal, the landowner’s representative at the meeting, declared that he had never heard the complaints before and did not believe them to be true. Furthermore, he threatened the three saying that to avoid eviction they must “promise to observe all of the obligatory services established by custom,” most especially the service of *pongueaje*. Two of the *colonos* declared that they “were not disposed to carry out their *pongueaje* obligations,” and they agreed to abandon the hacienda if the owner paid them a small “indemnity.” The third hacienda resident at the meeting, Tiburcio Tomás, preferred not to leave the hacienda, “because he had been raised there since he was young,” and he promised to fulfill all of his “obligatory services” including the service of *pongueaje* when “it was his turn.”⁶³

⁶² To the subprefect of the Cercado Province, 5 October 1931, “Bloque N° 2 documentos y otros gestion 1911-1949,” APO-SC.

⁶³ The subprefect of the Cercado, Oruro, 6 October 1931, “Bloque N° 2 documentos y otros gestion 1911-1949,” APO-SC.

Despite the precarious legal and economic position of many hacienda tenants, some fought landowner threats outside official channels of appeal. The tenacious resistance of Calixto Condo, a *colono* on the rural properties of Alantañita and Caravi, provides a vivid example. The Mining Company of Oruro owned both haciendas but rented them to Sebastián López and Esteban Arévalo for 6,000 Bolivianos annually.⁶⁴ López and Arévalo's relationship with their tenants indicates that perhaps some entrepreneurs hoped to transform their *colonos* into a true rural working class—a process hacienda residents vigorously opposed. In October 1930, the residents of these two haciendas outside the towns of Machacamarca and Poopó complained that López and Arévalo demanded daily labor for the “miserable wage” of forty cents a day. In an attempt to make the wage-labor relationship even more coercive, the two imposed a fine of one Boliviano a day on those who missed or refused to work. Led by Calixto Condo, the hacienda tenants resisted these demands, decrying it as “a most complete slavery.” The *colonos* seemed to prefer the more traditional land-for-labor rental agreements found on other rural properties. Semi-feudal arrangements, despite their own odious aspects, still allowed tenants greater liberty and control over their own time than did wage labor. “We have not a single day when we might work for ourselves, nor attend to the most pressing needs of our wives and our young children,” they reported.⁶⁵ López and Arévalo not only sought to transform labor relations on the haciendas, they also attempted to harden the boundaries of property on their estates.

⁶⁴ Esteban Arévalo and Sebastián López to the subprefect of the Cercado Province, Oruro, 21 November 1930, “Bloque N° 2 documentos y otros gestion 1911-1949,” APO-SC.

⁶⁵ Antonio Quiroga to the Prefect and Commander General of the Departamento, Oruro, 18 October 1930, “Bloque N° 2 documentos y otros gestion 1911-1949,” APO-SC.

The two entrepreneurs jealously guarded their private property from the encroachment of their tenants. The *colonos* accused López of unleashing his dogs to attack the tenants' livestock if it strayed too close to the official pastures of the hacienda.⁶⁶ The *colonos* also asserted that the entrepreneurs barred access to *paja brava* (a tough Andean bunch-grass) and *tola* (a low plant with a thick woody root) growing on marginal hacienda lands. These plants provided an important source of combustible material for both domestic use and for sale in nearby mining towns. López and Arévalo denied the second accusation.⁶⁷ The businessmen also began to demand a portion of the rent in cash rather than labor.⁶⁸

To combat the exactions of their new landlords, Calixto Condo led his fellow *colonos* in a series of protest actions. Condo, a widower and the father of three children, had refused to pay rent for over a year.⁶⁹ When Condo failed to appear for work, López and Arévalo seized his two oxen in retaliation, leaving Condo's family with just thirty sheep and eight llamas to sustain themselves.⁷⁰ Eventually, the two entrepreneurs began legal proceedings to evict Condo; his response—he “convinced the other tenants not to show up to work contending that we...are swindling them in everything.” Complicating the situation, López and Arévalo owed their workers one month's worth of back wages. The two businessmen eventually obtained an order of eviction against Condo from a

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Esteban Arévalo and Sebastián López to the subprefect of the Cercado Province, Oruro, 21 November 1930, “Bloque N° 2 documentos y otros gestion 1911-1949,” APO-SC.

⁶⁸ Antonio Quiroga to the Prefect and Commander General of the Departamento, Oruro, 18 October 1930, “Bloque N° 2 documentos y otros gestion 1911-1949,” APO-SC.

⁶⁹ Esteban Arévalo and Sebastián López to the subprefect of the Cercado Province, Oruro, 21 November 1930, “Bloque N° 2 documentos y otros gestion 1911-1949,” APO-SC.

⁷⁰ Antonio Quiroga to the Prefect and Commander General of the Departamento, Oruro, 18 October 1930, “Bloque N° 2 documentos y otros gestion 1911-1949,” APO-SC.

judge in Machacamarca; Condo ignored the order.⁷¹ The *colonos*, captained by Condo, argued that previous owners “generally were more considerate, more humanitarian,” but they tempered this praise noting that most landlords considered every *colono* complaint from Alantañita and Caravi as an “Indian insurrection.” In one petition, the tenants made a generational claim to their residence on the hacienda; they asserted that their “parents and grandparents” left them their homes—the landlords had only transitory rights.⁷² In November 1930, the dispute arrived at the desk of the Cercado’s subprefect—again the archive of the subprefecture did not contain a draft of the dispute’s final resolution.

Pongueaje and other labor services put enormous pressures on hacienda residents, but the previous case indicates that some tenants might prefer a “traditional” or “customary” land-for-labor rental agreement rather than capitalist entrepreneurial innovation. Another rural dispute from 1932 makes this preference explicit. The residents of the Sepulturas Hacienda, located in the Cercado Province of Oruro, addressed a complaint to the subprefect denouncing the estate’s owner Macedonio Ochevez and his administrator; the landowner sought to substitute cash payments for the traditional labor services demanded of hacienda tenants: “The Boss has replaced the *pongueaje* service that we all did for a week...with a contribution of 15 Bs. that we must pay in cash; we have been paying now for several years.” Annually, the fifty Sepulturas *colonos* paid Ochevez a total of 720 Bolivianos rather than performing traditional *pongo* labor in Ochevez’s home in Oruro. The tenants viewed these cash payments as

⁷¹ Esteban Arévalo and Sebastián López to the subprefect of the Cercado Province, Oruro, 21 November 1930, “Bloque N° 2 documentos y otros gestion 1911-1949,” APO-SC.

⁷² Antonio Quiroga to the Prefect and Commander General of the Departamento, Oruro, 18 October 1930, “Bloque N° 2 documentos y otros gestion 1911-1949,” APO-SC.

“exaggerated and unprecedented” and preferred the more traditional labor services of the past.⁷³

While the relationship between hacienda tenants and their landlords sometimes took the form of wage labor, this was only a small part of a much larger and more varied economic and social relationship. Semi-feudal labor arrangements still governed the lives of *colonos* in Oruro and northern Potosí during the first three decades of the twentieth century; a variety of agricultural tasks performed for their landlords governed the lives of hacienda residents: plowing, planting, and harvesting; tending the *hacendados*’ herds; maintaining the infrastructure of the estate; and even performing personal domestic service in the landlords’ homes (*pongueaje*). Hacienda residents hoped for greater security in their lives: protection against eviction. *Colonos* often fought to defend customary, semi-feudal rental agreements in the face of modernizing economic programs; they opposed wage-labor and a cash rent. When urban radicals and working-class union leaders promised land, the *colonos* might respond, but the greater part of proletarian ideological programs calling for the overthrow of industrial capitalism failed to speak to the lived experience of many hacienda residents.

Peasant Political Movements

To measure the independent revolutionary potential of the Bolivian peasantry, it is important to examine not just examples of everyday resistance and minor revolt, but to consider also the large-scale Indian rebellions that occurred in Oruro and Potosí during

⁷³ Silvano Flores, etc., 14 March 1932, “Bloque N° 2 documentos y otros gestion 1911-1949,” APO-SC.

the time period that is the focus of this dissertation, the Federalist War of 1898-1899 and the Chayanta rebellion of 1927. The heterogeneous political programs that informed these two important rebellions and other minor acts of resistance might be divided into two broad ideological categories: parochial and reformist. Neither political current provided the basis for true social revolution. The parochial strand of peasant political thought generally sought limited, practical concessions from the oligarchy and the state; more aggressive parochial movements hoped to emancipate Indian communities and free hacienda residents of outside interference and imposition. The second strand, the reformist vision, sought to make Indians true citizens of the Bolivian nation and to open the world of liberal-democratic politics to their direct participation.⁷⁴ While both the parochial vision (in its more expansive form) and the reformist vision sought a dramatic restructuring of Bolivian politics and society, their practical implementation proved impossible. The aggressive parochial strand of peasant thought sought to wish the dominant classes out of existence. Peasant reformists—believers in liberalism and Indian citizenship—failed to understand the limits imposed by the uneven economic development of Bolivia. Additionally, an Indian reformulation of bourgeois liberalism could never completely emancipate the popular classes; even if the peasants became citizens, Bolivia's dominant classes would still control the commanding heights of capital and industry. First, a consideration of minor rebellion and everyday acts of peasant

⁷⁴ Of the two strands of peasant political thought: utopian and reformist, the existence of reformist ideological programs is the most difficult to prove and the most controversial. As an independent peasant conception of citizenship goes against the dictates of Marxist historiography, the subject must be approached with caution. J.V. Stalin, Marxism and the National Question (Calcutta: New Book Center, 1971). In the introduction to this dissertation I pointed out that Florencia Mallon argues for an independent, peasant conception of citizenship in some parts of Mexico during the nineteenth century; I am skeptical of her claims. Mallon, Peasant and Nation.

resistance to complement those cases already addressed in this chapter and in Chapter Two.

While early twentieth-century Bolivia was profoundly racist, race did not always function as a tool of oligarchic repression; frequently Indians touted their racial status as a support for legal claims to land on the Altiplano—a colonial legacy. In the parts of Oruro still dominated by *ayllus*, community residents sought to use not only their status as *contribuyentes* (tax-paying Indians) to defend their land against both haciendas and smallholders, they also employed race as a guarantor of access to land. In October 1933, Manuel Troncoso, an “Indian tax-payer of the Marka de Sanjerónimo Challa *ayllü*” sought the aid of departmental officials against one Mariano Vásquez. He argued, “As I am a tax-paying member of this community, I cannot be deprived of my land by this individual who is not an Indian.” Troncoso claimed that Vásquez “was only a mestizo,” and as such, he could have no valid claim to the land. The subprefect of the Cercado Province agreed with Troncoso’s arguments, but the *corregidor* of Challacollo refused to act on the issue with any speed.⁷⁵ As discussed in chapter two, most rural residents did not limit themselves to administrative or judicial appeals; in seeking redress, they often simultaneously engaged in acts of violence and rebellion.

Acts of minor rebellion in early twentieth-century Oruro fall primarily into the parochial school of peasant political thought. While parochial revolts sometime expressed unrealistic hopes for autonomy, they generally employed rational tactics for limited, practical ends. A special subset of parochial peasant ideology sought rural emancipation by irrational means: messianic movements of resistance. Messianic

⁷⁵ René Ruy a lawyer to the subprefect of the Cercado, Oruro, 2 October 1933, “Bloque No 2 documentos y otros gestion 1911-1949,” APO-SC.

declarations and ideas generally played a minor or supporting role in early twentieth century peasant rebellion in Bolivia, yet the period was not without its messianic characters and incidents. In discussing messianic rebellion, the historian must proceed with caution. Government documents often exaggerated the irrationality of peasant insurgency; officials tended to belittle the intelligence and reason of the nation's Indian population. Frequently they ascribed messianic motivations and goals to movements and individuals where none existed. Despite the tendency in bureaucratic correspondence to distort peasant motivations, a few messianic flowerings did occur during the first decades of the twentieth century in Oruro.

One minor messianic disturbance occurred in the provincial capital of Poopó in 1923. The subprefect of Poopó, Achá Danoso, simply described the protagonist, a woman identified in departmental correspondence as Venancia N., as an "older Indian." The subprefect accused her of traveling in the region, passing herself off as a "miraculous virgin," and of "miserably deceiving the Indian class." Despite the supernatural trappings, Venancia spoke to a very real, long-simmering resentment on the part of Poopó's Indian population: a frustration with the constant demands of the Bolivian government and local officials for goods and labor. She advised her followers in Poopó that they "provide nothing and that she would, with her black magic.... cause fire to rain down and cause other ills to afflict Poopó so as to liberate them from their obligations." The subprefect's detention of Venancia illustrates the sometimes-haphazard organization of the Bolivian state in the countryside, and the occasional need to recruit social groups sympathetic to local officials to enforce the law. Achá Danoso reported that "he captured her in conjunction with a few residents of this town because he lacked an armed force,

and there was the danger of an attack by Indians seeking to revolt and invade this Subprefectual Office.” The principle official in Poopó relied upon the petty bourgeois and oligarchic elements of the town to seize Venancia. Achá Danoso concluded his report on Venancia’s arrest by labeling her “a vagabond and a misguided individual deserving of serious correction,” and he planned to prosecute her for “fraud and other appropriate crimes.”⁷⁶

In addition to numerous minor revolts, two major rural rebellions punctuated the years 1899 to 1929 in Oruro and northern Potosí providing additional examples of parochial demands at work (sometimes with slight messianic currents) plus a few tantalizing hints of the more reformist pole of peasant political development—an experimentation with liberal-democratic and republican ideology. The Federalist War and the Chayanta Rebellion of 1927 saw significant peasant mobilization in a broad swath of the Bolivian Andes. Of the two, Indian peasant participation in the Federalist War, led by the Aymara chief Pablo Zárate Willka, was the most widespread and clearly posed the greatest threat to the Bolivian oligarchy and the state.

This chapter began with a quick narrative of peasant participation in the Federalist War, 1898-1899. Rural insurgency in the departments of La Paz, Oruro, Potosí, and Cochabamba played a decisive and deciding role in awarding military victory to the Liberal Party and the oligarchy of La Paz in the civil war, but peasant violence often transgressed the limits of what urban Bolivians expected. Peasant insurgents most certainly had their own reasons for participating in the conflict; Ramiro Condarco Morales, the author of the most authoritative history of the Federalist War, argues

⁷⁶ H. Achá Danoso the subprefect of the Poopó Province to the Prefect and Commander General of the Department in Oruro, 8 October 1923, 298, “Tesoros, Subprefecturas, Policías, 1923, P.O.,” APO.

persuasively that many peasant insurgents sought a redress of their territorial grievances.⁷⁷ Anger with the growth of haciendas at the expense of Indian communities in the late nineteenth century propelled many peasants into the rebellion (especially in the department of La Paz). Other Indians joined for similar or related parochial grievances: hacienda tenants might hope to eliminate their landlords and revert to the communal administration of the land; *ayllus* not in any way threatened by hacienda expansion might still resent their political and economic subordination; and finally, the rebellion created a chaotic and bloody window of opportunity for peasants to act on local feuds and petty grievances. Despite the parochial concerns of most peasant insurgents in the Federalist War, a few tantalizing documents hint at the development of a more sophisticated ideology among some peasant leaders. Indian leaders might have begun to experiment with and modify the federalist, republican, and liberal-democratic ideology of the oligarchic Liberal Party.

To what extent did Indian leaders in the Federalist War understand and then employ the political program of the insurgent Liberal Party? A letter purportedly composed by Pablo Zárate Willka 20 March 1899 provides some surprising clues. In part, this letter addressed to Juan Lero, an insurgent leader in the community of Peñas, Oruro, read, “Patriotism demands in these moments a certain level of abnegation, you cannot have everything in achieving the triumph of the great cause that proclaims the regeneration of Bolivia.”⁷⁸ Ramiro Condarco Morales notes that the language used in this missive mirrored that employed in official Liberal Party proclamations and

⁷⁷ Condarco, Zárate, el “Temible” Willka.

⁷⁸ Pablo Saraven I Mnl. Villca and Fidel Lazarte a public scribe to the Governing *Casique* of the Tapacari Parcialidad in the Vice Canton (Peñas), Poopó Province, the General Quarters in Tambo de Iro, 20 March 1899, PROCESO PEÑAS, c. 7°, f.66. quoted in Condarco, Zárate, el “Temible” Willka, 309.

propaganda; the author of the letter demonstrated a familiarity with the phraseology of Liberal ideological programs. Unfortunately, Willka cannot be confirmed as the intellectual author of this note.⁷⁹ If Willka could be confirmed as the author, this note would suggest that at least the leadership of the peasant insurrection possessed a rudimentary understanding of Bolivian liberalism. Other documents indicate that perhaps the order to Juan Lero was not an isolated or untypical declaration for the Aymara chief. In June 1900, he stated in an interview with a judge in Oruro that he preferred death to “prison and the lawsuits that hound me for having served and sacrificed for the country; I am not a lettered man so as to expound in vainglorious tones my positive services for the triumph of republican institutions in the Bolivian fatherland.”⁸⁰ This statement also indicates that the peasant leader had a rudimentary understanding of both liberalism and nationalism.

Liberalism and nationalism could never be reformulated in such a way as to emancipate the peasantry of Bolivia. Since the nineteenth century administration of the strongman president Mariano Melgarejo (1864-1871) and continuing into the early twentieth century, the dominant classes in Bolivia sought to eliminate the communal economic system of the *ayllu*. The oligarchy sought to force a bourgeois conception of landed property—private property—on the nation’s Indian communities. The liberal economic ideology that government officials sought to impose in Bolivia originated in Western Europe and North America—a central element of the eighteenth and nineteenth

⁷⁹ Condarco Morales lays out three possibilities to explain its providence: 1) the author simply copied the language of a similar note sent to Willka by other Liberal Party commanders, 2) the “scribe” Fidel Lazarte composed the letter for Willka, and finally 3) Willka himself dictated the note. Condarco, Zárate, el “Temible” Willka, 309-310.

⁸⁰ “Confesión de Pablo Zárate,” PROCESO PEÑAS, c. 8°, f.19. quoted in Condarco, Zárate, el “Temible” Willka, 99.

century bourgeois assault on feudal economic relations. The result in Bolivia was not without a bit of catastrophic irony. The Bolivian bourgeoisie, so embryonic and weak, was incapable of carrying out such a thoroughgoing transformation of the nation's economic structure. Where land reform advanced against the tenacious resistance of the Indian communities, bourgeois private property was not the final result. Instead, liberal land reform in Bolivia promoted the expansion of the semi-feudal hacienda in several regions of the country. The ideologies of liberalism and nationalism could never be reformulated by the Indian population of Bolivia to craft a stable understanding with the oligarchy of the country. The Bolivian state, subservient to the economics of capitalism, was no ally of the peasantry in this struggle.

How does one justify labeling the Bolivian state as capitalist? This question is of special importance when discussing the relationship between the state and the nation's Indian population. Between 1899 and 1929, institutions colonial in origin continued to mediate the relationship between the state and the *ayllus*. This fact might lead some observers to conclude that the state was pre-capitalist in character. The confusion is easily dispelled if one defines the central role of the Bolivian government during the first three decades of the twentieth century. The state, in all societies, is an instrument of class repression—the means by which one class imposes its will upon another. Under capitalism, the state is a tool in the hand of the bourgeoisie, i.e. a “capitalist state”. What economic class did the Bolivian state serve during the years 1899 to 1929? During this period, the state clearly served the interests of the bourgeoisie, especially the interests of the mining industry. A capitalist state need not necessarily serve exclusively a national class of capitalists; in a dependent economy like Bolivia's, it served primarily the

interests of a foreign bourgeoisie. The structure of state and economy prohibited the emancipation of Bolivia's peasant population no matter their skill in reformulating liberal and nationalist ideology. Only through an alliance with a powerful and ideologically conscious social group outside of the oligarchy and the state might the peasant majority of the country hope to free themselves from their subject position. During the 1920s, other social groups in Bolivia began to express an acute concern for the welfare of the peasantry; some even sought a strategic alliance with the rural masses. The urban middle class, artisans, and the growing working class all had their own reasons for entering into dialogue with the population of the countryside

Social historians interested in the Federalist War tend to focus their analysis on the actions, grievances, and social origin of the peasant insurgents in the conflict. What of the participation of other segments of Bolivia's popular classes: the urban popular classes and the mining proletariat? In the 1920s, "*tierra al pueblo y minas al estado*" ("land to the people and the mines to the state") became the unofficial battle cry of political movements opposed to continued oligarchic governance.⁸¹ The slogan implied a union of peasant and proletarian grievances. What sort of contact and cooperation did these two important segments of Bolivian society share during the first decades of the twentieth century—the time period that falls between the Federalist War of 1898-1899 and the onset of the Great Depression in 1929? Bracketed by civil war and economic collapse, Bolivia during these three decades enjoyed relative economic and political

⁸¹ The early Bolivian socialist Tristan Marof (Gustavo A. Navarro) is credited with coining this cry in his quasi-historical, political essay: *La justicia del Inca*, published in Brussels, Belgium while the author lived in Europe. Tristan Marof (Gustavo A. Navarro), *La justicia del Inca* (Brussels: Librería Falk Fils, 1926) quoted in Lora, *Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano*, 3:306. Guillermo Lora reminds his readers that calls for the nationalization of the mines and the expropriation of large estates and their redistribution to the peasantry appeared earlier in several political programs on the left. As an example of this he mentions the Partido Obrero Socialista of La Paz and their program of 1920.

stability. Despite sporadic rural rebellion and a growing tension between capital and labor, the country experienced overall economic growth with the advance of industrialization and modernization. An oligarchic government with a liberal, *laissez faire* economic orientation weathered political infighting among the dominant political parties and successfully encouraged foreign capital investment. Did Bolivia's peasant majority find an ally in the growing proletariat of the country's mines and cities? Did the two groups confront the nation's oligarchy in unison or alone?

An important reference for any project exploring the difficulties of a political alliance between Bolivia's miners and its peasantry is the sobering work of Olivia Harris and Javier Albó, Monteras y guardatojos, campesinos y mineros en el norte de Potosí, first published in 1974 and then reissued in 1984 with a new epilogue. On the back cover of this short book the authors write, "It is often repeated that the alliance between the miners and the peasants is a 'natural alliance'. Necessary, it certainly is. But it is not easy!" Many of the explanations presented in Monteras y guardatojos, outlining the sometimes-formidable impediments to a lasting and stable alliance between the peasants and miners of northern Potosí during the second half of the twentieth century, mirror the points of this dissertation for the first three decades of the century. Harris and Albó diagnose both structural and socio-cultural impediments to a strong political union between the urban working class and rural laborers. The proletarian wage laborer occupies a position in the Bolivian economy completely dissimilar from that of the peasant; peasants own land (the means of production) while the miners own nothing

except their own labor.⁸² Miners tend to identify with the cultural heritage of *mestizaje* (a mixture of European and Indian traditions) while the peasantry of highland Bolivia embraces a Quechua or Aymara indigenous heritage. The contrasting cultural heritage of the working class and the peasantry can sometimes lead to damaging arrogance and insensitivity on the part of the mining proletariat; Harris and Albó quote an unnamed peasant leader who complained, “ that the miners speak a lot about cooperation and the common fight; but afterwards, when they go out on the street, they call a peasant to carry their loads and they pay him with a bit of bread.”⁸³ Leftist political thinkers and social movements seeking to combat the power of the Bolivian oligarchy confronted similar impediments during the first three decades of the twentieth century.

Between 1899 and 1929, the working class and the peasantry suffered the common exploitation of the dominant classes and the state. Later Bolivian history has shown that only the unified rising of both peasant and miner could hope to destroy the economic, social, and political forces holding the popular classes in bondage. In the twentieth century, the peasant-miner alliance has proven both elusive and unstable; the social history of the first thirty years of the recently completed century illustrates the difficulties involved. Industrial capitalism only incompletely and unevenly transformed Bolivian society and economy: semi-feudal and quasi-colonial socio-economic relations continued to color life in the country. Radically different structural ties bound the working class and the peasantry to the export-oriented mining economy and the Bolivian

⁸² Harris and Albó look at the Bolivian peasantry after the 1953 agrarian reform. Landless hacienda tenants no longer make up a sizable percentage of the highland rural population. Prior to 1953, many peasants lacked access to their own land.

⁸³ Olivia Harris and Javier Albó, Monteras y guardatojos, campesions y mineros en el norte de Potosí en 1974 (La Paz: CIPCA, Editorial e Imprenta Alenkar Ltda., 1984), 100-103, 106-107, 109, back cover.

state. The miners worked as wage laborers in the nation's most important and modern industry; no segment of the peasant population experienced a prolonged and undiluted contact with industrial capitalism. As corollary to the peasantry's indirect contact with capitalism, the Bolivian state addressed the most pressing peasant demands, keeping tension in the countryside to a low simmer; rural peasant victories did not threaten the primary concern of the Bolivian state—the mining economy. Finally, ethnic and cultural friction spawned significant fault lines fracturing the popular classes into sometimes hostile and antagonistic factions; a marked chauvinism on the part of the *mestizo* working class when addressing itself to the peasantry proved especially debilitating.

As mentioned earlier, the peasantry of the Altiplano lent enormous support to the insurgent Liberal Party of La Paz hoping to win concessions from the nation's oligarchy. The role of the working class in the Federalist War was more ambiguous. Relying upon the report of one Demetrio Toro, a soldier in the Constitutionalist or Conservative Army, the Bolivian historian Ramiro Condarco Morales states that the popular classes of Corocoro, La Paz cooperated with the peasantry of the region in driving the Sucre Squadron from the town. "The townsfolk armed with revolvers and rifles, the mine workers with dynamite, the peasantry with their traditional arms [the sling, the club, and the spear]...began to fight the Squadron with unrestrained impetuosity," writes Condarco. During several hours of combat, the squadron suffered only 2 casualties while the attackers saw 27 of their number fall to the detachment's bullets. Despite the imbalance, the intensity of the assault convinced the unit to abandon the mining town to the Liberal cause. With the retreat of the Sucre Squadron, the insurgents turned their ire on the perceived sympathizers of the Constitutional government resident in Corocoro.

The two Scandinavian administrators of the Corocoro Company of Bolivia, the most important mining enterprise in the town, Standstad and Thorgersen, hid themselves in the company's mines for four days to avoid the victorious supporters of the Liberal Party. On 27 January 1899, the two men along with Standstad's wife sought to flee the hostile town for the Chilean border; while the three waited for their passports at Puente de la Concordia, the Indian residents of the area discovered their presence. A series of explosions demolished the adobe hut in which the two men and Mrs. Standstad had sought refuge, killing them.⁸⁴

Was the cooperation between miner and peasant at Corocoro an anomaly? Guillermo Lora, historian and Marxist politician, in volume one of his four-volume history of the Bolivian labor movement, hints at labor difficulties in the mines of Colquechaca associated with the Federalist War but gives no details.⁸⁵ The mining town of Oruro provides a more detailed example of proletarian participation in the civil conflict, only in Oruro the miners sided with the Constitutional cause not the Liberals. The role of the Alonso Battalion in the war and the social origin of its soldiers provide a cautionary counter-point to the peasant-worker cooperation in the Corocoro uprising.⁸⁶ Ramiro Condarco Morales reports that the Alonso Battalion of Oruro became the most reliable and disciplined detachment in the Constitutional Army. The battalion enjoyed

⁸⁴ Condarco, *Zárate, el "Temible" Willka*, 218, 234-236.

⁸⁵ Lora also contends, "The first proletarian nuclei, those that appeared in the mines, were invariably followers of Pando. The hoarse voice of young wage laborers shook the enemies of liberalism." Lora, *Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano*, 1:251-252.

⁸⁶ This discussion of the Alonso Battalion relies upon the work of Ramiro Condarco Morales as did the previous gloss of the conflict in Corocoro. The participation of the urban popular classes and the mining proletariat in the Federalist War was not the primary focus of Condarco's work; more research is needed on this specific subject before conclusive conclusions might be made. This dissertation simply asserts the ambiguity of proletarian participation in the conflict: sometimes favoring one side, sometimes the other. This is a clear contrast with the seemingly unanimous support offered the Liberal cause by the Indian population of the Altiplano. Condarco, *Zárate, el "Temible" Willka*.

the leadership of skilled officers and was well equipped with arms and abundant ammunition. The unit also counted a homogeneous proletarian soldiery. The Constitutional government recruited all three hundred men in the detachment from the mining camp of San José on the outskirts of Oruro. Why did these miners choose to support the Constitutional cause in the civil war? Peasant insurgents participated in the conflict believing the Liberal Party and Colonel Pando would address their rural grievances. As for the miners of San José, paternalism might best explain their participation in the conflict on the side of the Constitutional Party. Severo Fernández Alonso, the embattled president of Bolivia, was the principal stockholder in the mines of San José.⁸⁷

The three-hundred-man Alonso Battalion received its first important mission in March 1899, escorting a shipment of 200 rifles and ammunition from Paria, Oruro to the besieged Constitutional prefect of Cochabamba.⁸⁸ This assignment would bring the proletarian soldiers of San José into direct conflict with the peasant army of Zárate Willka. The Aymara chief himself led the assault, drawing recruits from the small communities scattered among the mountains separating Oruro and Cochabamba; he sought to annihilate the Constitutional detachment and seize their valuable shipment of arms. Willka prepared his ambush in the steep valley of Huayllas with some 3,000 men. The Alonso Battalion enjoyed the advantage of better training and better arms. In the first encounter, the Indians sought to overwhelm the proletarian soldiers with the force of

⁸⁷ Ibid., 157, 311.

⁸⁸ For the besieged prefect's recollections of this conflict see: Rodolfo Soria Galvarro, Últimos días del Gobierno-Alonso. Reportage para la historia por Rodolfo Soria Galvarro. Antiguo Diputado Nacional, ex-Ministro Diplomático, ex-Prefecto y Comandante General del Departamento de Cochabamba, etc. (Valparaiso, Chile: Imprenta del Universo de Gmo. Helfmann, 1899).

numbers. Alonso's followers calmly countered the onrush forming a solid square around the shipment of arms three ranks deep on each side. When Willka's men closed to within one hundred yards, the Alonso Battalion's soldiers opened fire throwing the 3,000 attackers into bloody and headlong retreat. After regrouping, Willka ordered a second suicidal assault with the same results. That night the Constitutional detachment occupied and fortified the small settlement of Huayllas. The following morning, hoping to take advantage of the early morning darkness, Willka ordered a third and final assault. This time the Alonso Battalion followed-up their bloody repulsion of the insurgent assault with a counter-attack to rout Willka's men from the slopes of the valley. The fighting now resembled a one-sided massacre, and it continued until three in the afternoon. Willka saw his 3,000-man force decimated; he fled to the Altiplano to rebuild his following. Despite the Constitutional victory at the Battle of Huayllas, the Alonso Battalion's mission ultimately failed; Cochabamba had fallen to the liberals before the shipment of arms could arrive.⁸⁹

In early April 1899, the Alonso Battalion returned to Oruro to rejoin the bulk of the Constitutional army then preparing for its final encounter with Pando's Liberal insurgents. During the decisive last battle of the conflict, the unit again acquitted itself with steady determination. During the Battle of the Second Crossroads (10 April 1899), a resounding Liberal victory, the Alonso Battalion stood as the last Constitutional unit to withdraw from the field of battle; the proletarian soldiers of San José covered the retreat of the other Constitutional units, losing according to its commander Emilio Benavides

⁸⁹ Condarco, Zárate, el "Temible" Willka, 306-315.

some 40 percent of its men.⁹⁰ Workers fighting in defense of their bosses' interests were common in both the countryside and the mining camps of early twentieth-century Bolivia. The working class had not yet developed a consistent autonomy of political and social action; that would change by the 1920s, creating new possibilities for an alliance between Bolivia's workers and the peasantry.

In the late 1920s a new organization appeared seeking to defend the interests of Oruro's rural population: the Pro-Indian League of Oruro ("La Liga Pro-Indio de Oruro"); this organization represented a manifestation of worker and artisan concern for the well-being of the peasantry. The president of the League, José F. Avila, once served as president of the Mutual Aid Society of Artisans ("Sociedad de Socorros Mútuos de Artesanos") in Oruro.⁹¹ Avila also played a critical role in establishing Oruro's first Labor Federation in 1916, serving as that organization's first president.⁹² At the end of the 1920s, the League began to appear prominently in letters of protest sent to various government officials on behalf of peasants throughout the department. The League was perhaps seeking to fill a role traditionally played by urban lawyers—that of intermediary between rural residents and the Bolivian state. The epithet generally used to describe these lawyers, *tinterillos*, translates as "ink men"; government officials, oligarchs who confronted them in court, and even Bolivians sympathetic to peasant complaints all universally condemned these men of the law. The early Bolivian socialist Gustavo Adolfo Navarro, aka. Tristan Marof, wrote of the *tinterillos*:

⁹⁰ Ibid., 320-321, 327, 342.

⁹¹ José F. Avila the president of the Mutual Aid Society of Artisans Oruro to the prefect, Oruro, 3 July 1916, 228, "Recibido de Varios, 1916," APO.

⁹² José F. Avila of the Worker's Federation to the prefect, Oruro, 12 August 1916, 228, "Recibido de Varios, 1916," APO.

The schemes of the Altiplano's lawyers are several to convince their clients and charge them fees. Once, a poor Indian went to the office of one of these predatory men. He explained his case to the lawyer...and asked how he might receive justice. The lawyer quickly put the following question to the Indian, indicating two books: one voluminous and the other small. "With this big book," he said, "one wins every case; the defense costs 500 pesos. While with this small book, there is no such assurance of success; it costs 200. With which do you prefer that I defend you?" The Indian did not hesitate; he preferred the big one, but at that point the lawyer demanded his payment ahead of time.⁹³

Some lawyers working for peasant clients deserved the criticism—others did not. As for the Pro-Indian League of Oruro, the organization seemed respectable and honest. The League claimed political impartiality. In one 1927 document, the League wrote, "it has nothing to do with the upcoming election, nor with any political party. Its statutes prohibit its members from directly intervening in politics, and subjects them to strict sanctions."⁹⁴ In the late 1920s, workers and peasants began to establish closer ties—a difficult but important rapprochement.

The Chayanta Rebellion of 1927, the largest Indian uprising in Bolivia since the Federalist War some three decades earlier, saw a flirtation between peasant leaders and the organizers of the urban working class. A quick description of the rebellion appears in chapter two of this dissertation; here the discussion will focus on the evidence for a link between urban socialist thinkers—the rising leadership of the working class—and Indian insurgents in Chayanta. Olivia Harris and Xavier Albó saw an early, fleeting indication of a peasant-worker alliance in the Chayanta Rebellion—they viewed the person and the work of Tristan Marof (Gustavo A. Navarro) as a unifying force.⁹⁵ The observation of these two scholars is not universally accepted; both Erick Langer and Silvia Rivera

⁹³ Marof, *La tragedia del altiplano*.

⁹⁴ José F. Avila the president and J. de la A. Escóbar the secretary of the Pro-Indian League of Oruro-Bolivia to the subprefect of the Cercado, Oruro, 17 March 1927, Bloque 2, APO-SC.

⁹⁵ Harris and Albó, *Monteras y guardatojos*, 68-69.

Cusicanqui generally discount accusations of a “communist” influence in the revolt. They identify this accusation as oligarchic or government propaganda.⁹⁶ In her study of the Chayanta Rebellion, Silvia Rivera prefers to keep the focus on the peasant insurgents in the conflict.⁹⁷ Erick Langer argues that urban socialist thinkers sought to direct the rural insurgency, but they failed in their attempts.⁹⁸ The arguments in this section are guided by the more recent interpretation of Forrest Hylton. He contends “Socialists *did not* enjoy broad support in the Bolivian countryside in 1927.... Indians *did* take the initiative, organizing themselves on the basis of their ayllus.”⁹⁹ But a tenuous understanding did exist between urban labor activists and some peasant leaders on the eve of rebellion.

The evidence for a connection between Indian leaders in Potosí and Chuquisaca and urban socialist thinkers derives from relations established between the two groups before and during the Third National Workers’ Congress in Oruro in April 1927; the government accused Alberto Murillo Calvimonte, a lawyer and president of the Socialist Party in Potosí, Tristan Marof (Gustavo Navarro) founder of the Socialist Party, and Rómulo Chumacero, president of the Worker’s Congress and Socialist Party leader in Sucre, of being the liaisons with the Indian insurgents.¹⁰⁰ Guillermo Lora notes that 20 Indians attended the Congress, and the meeting touched on several subjects important for the Indian population of the country.¹⁰¹ Congress attendees hoped for the organization of

⁹⁶ Erick Langer, “Andean Rituals of Revolt,” 227-253; Rivera C., *Ayllus*; and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, “La expansión del latifundio en el altiplano boliviano. Elementos para una caracterización de una oligarquía regional,” *Avances* 2 (1978).

⁹⁷ Rivera, *Ayllus*, 49, 56.

⁹⁸ Langer, “Andean Rituals of Revolt,” 251.

⁹⁹ Hylton, “Common Ground,” 17-18.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

¹⁰¹ Lora, *Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano*, 3:21.

Bolivia's rural population along lines mirroring that of urban workers and artisans. "The liberation of the Indian will be his own accomplishment, just as the redemption of the workers will be theirs," declared the Congress, "as such, all labor organizations should work towards the creation of federations and unions among the Indians, this will be the only means by which the Indian ceases to be the pariah he is today."¹⁰² The Congress also used the exploitation of the Indian population to launch several anti-clerical attacks on the Catholic Church. Worker delegates sought the extension of civil marriage, "so that the benefits of civil marriage that the law extends to all whites, might be extended to the Indian, so that they will be placed on an equal footing in national law."¹⁰³ The Congress also discussed plans to expand education in the countryside, leaving open the possibility of worker tutelage and political guidance. "Not forgetting the subject of Indian Education, the Government was asked to decree special measures so that the Indians might establish schools in any part of the Republic, without impeding that, the Confederation of its own volition, in the provinces and in the cantons, might instruct the natives with leftist orientation," resolved the gathered labor delegates.¹⁰⁴ Finally, the Workers' Congress called for the indemnization of hacienda tenants in the case of eviction, and importantly, the expropriation of land "for the benefit of families and rural communities."¹⁰⁵ Several Indians from Chuquisaca and Potosí who attended the

¹⁰² Quoted in Ibid., 3:25. I disagree with Forrest Hylton's interpretation of this passage. He writes of the resolution: "This suggests that urban radicals did not consider themselves an enlightened vanguard of managers who needed to control the Indians for their own good." Hylton, "Common Ground," 43. Urban socialist thinkers and labor organizers did not necessarily renounce their perceived tutelage of rural movements by saying that Indians would be the agents of their own emancipation—the question of leadership is left murky in this declaration.

¹⁰³ Quoted in Lora, *Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano*, 3:24.

¹⁰⁴ Bolivian Confederation of Labor, Third Workers' Congress, "Conclusiones," Oruro, April 1927 quoted in Delgado G., *100 años*, 81.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Guillermo Lora, *Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano*, 3:24-25.

Congress already had a pre-established relationship with several important Socialist Party leaders. Despite the dialogue and the declarations of the Third National Workers' Congress, once the Chayanta Rebellion began workers played no part in the insurgency.

During the early twentieth century, peasant resistance movements sought either parochial or reformist objectives. Parochial movements sought to strengthen local political and economic autonomy—they hoped to fight the intrusions of perceived outsiders: the state and wealthy, aggressive oligarchs. They failed to place their demands in an ideological framework applicable to the whole of the nation. Despite, the rhetorical and political limits of parochial peasant resistance, such movements could and did achieve victories; in Oruro and northern Potosí, between the years 1899 and 1929, Indian communities and other peasants seeking parochial gains scored a number of successes that surprise when compared to other Bolivian departments. Rural movements driven by reformist ideology—while more rare than parochial movements—did seek broader engagement with political programs applicable to the whole of Bolivia. The experimentation of Zárate Willka with liberal-democratic ideology during the Federalist War stands as the clearest example of reformist peasant politics. Movements that sought to make Indians equal citizens of Bolivia failed miserably during the first decades of the twentieth century; the oligarchy and the Bolivian state could not tolerate their success, whereas they might accept local, parochial peasant victories.

Ayllu members and hacienda tenants were not the only social groups in early twentieth-century Bolivia at odds with the state and the oligarchy; some professional, middle-class urban residents found themselves in disagreement with the tenor of national politics. Urban lawyers (honest ones) might aid Indian clients in their judicial

complaints. The working class, growing in number and organizational strength, seemed a natural ally for an unhappy and marginalized peasantry. The political slogan “land to the people and the mines to the state” that emerged onto the national scene in the 1920s suggested a natural alliance between the social and economic groups; crafting that alliance was not easy. The century began with the Federalist War, a conflict in which peasants and urban workers sometimes found themselves on opposite sides of the firing line. The 1920s ended with no stable understanding established between these two critical components of the Bolivian popular classes, but the Chayanta Rebellion of 1927 suggested the beginning of an important dialogue.

Conclusion

Indian communities, because of their indirect relationship with industrial capitalism, could only distantly understand the driving force behind the Bolivian government and economy. Tributary and tax practices inherited from the colonial period—the territorial contribution, the road tax, and various other involuntary labor drafts—continued to structure the economic and social relationship between the *ayllus* and the rest of the nation. While Indian communities made a significant contribution of both labor and capital to the industrialization and modernization of the Bolivian economy, they had little direct exposure to industrial capitalism. The position of the *ayllus* in both Oruro and northern Potosí at the beginning of the twentieth century might be described as quasi-colonial; in isolated stretches of the countryside, the Bolivian state

delegated important tasks to the Indian communities, like the defense of its own national territory against foreign incursion.

If the *ayllus* afforded rural residents few opportunities to observe industrial capitalism, the institution of the hacienda also isolated its tenants from the ethos of capital and wage labor. Hacienda *colonos* labored under a variety of semi-feudal rental agreements; Oruro and northern Potosí never produced a large class of landless wage-laborers. While some entrepreneurial hacienda owners and managers sought to modernize the collection of rent on their rural properties—the innovations frequently failed to take root due to the tenacious resistance of hacienda tenants. They interpreted any change in rent or labor agreements, changes that might eventually lead to the proletarianization of the rural population, as an assault on their standard of living and an affront to their already limited economic autonomy.

In the absence of any real contact with industrial capitalism, the dynamic core of the early-twentieth-century Bolivian economy, rural residents could not develop ideological programs of resistance that might transcend capitalism or offer a comprehensive vision for political action to the whole of the nation. Parochial peasant resistance might achieve important, local reforms, but these isolated rebellions never threatened the Bolivian state or oligarchy. The reformist strain of peasant ideology modified bourgeois liberal-democratic political thought in an attempt to incorporate Indians into the nation as equal citizens; the state and the oligarchy defeated the call for reform completely. Additionally, the peasant reformists offered no economic or political plan for the nation that might transcend capitalism. Because of their ideological limits, the peasants needed the assistance of other socio-economic groups in the country for their

complete emancipation. The growing working class of the early twentieth century appeared as a natural ally; crafting a sturdy alliance between workers and peasants was not easy. In this chapter and the previous chapter we have developed a general picture of the position and political development of the peasantry in Oruro and northern Potosí during the first thirty years of the twentieth century. In the next two chapters we will turn our analysis to the urban popular classes, most especially the working class, during the same period.

Chapter Four: Organization and Ideology

The proletariat, even in Bolivia, constitutes the most excellent of social revolutionary classes. The mine workers, the most advanced and combative sector of the national proletariat, define the fighting spirit....

The Syndicalist Federation of Bolivian Mine Workers, Tesis de Pulacayo (1946)

On 1 May 1923, some five thousand workers from the most important mining towns in northern Potosí gathered on the soccer field of the provincial capital Uncía to organize a parade celebrating the *Fiesta del trabajo* (Labor Day, i.e. May Day) and to commemorate the *Mártires de Chicago* (Martyrs of Chicago). At two in the afternoon, the workers began their procession through the principal streets of the town to the cries of “Long live Labor Day! Long live the First of May! Glory to the Martyrs of Chicago!” and occasionally “Long live the Labor Federation of Uncía!” The parade finished in the Plaza 6 de Agosto, where the workers listened to a number of speeches emphasizing the transcendent importance of the holiday. After the speeches, the congregation engaged in a symbolic act of charity: they distributed clothing to the children of their deceased comrades. The afternoon of ceremony finally culminated with the official foundation of the Central Labor Federation of Uncía.¹

The Federation sought to unify the whole of the region’s working class in one labor organization; urban artisans as well as workers from northern Potosí’s most important mining companies: the Chilean Tin Company of Llallagua and the Simón I. Patiño’s La Salvadora Company, all played an active role in the foundation and

¹ In Spanish the name of the new union is “Federación Obrera Central Uncía” (FOCU). This narrative of events for 1 May 1923 in Uncía comes from Gumerindo Rivera L., La masacre de Uncía (Oruro: Universidad Técnica de Oruro, 1967), 18-19.

leadership of the new union. The Central Labor Federation of Uncía represented an important step in the continuing development of a horizontal class-consciousness among Bolivia's growing corps of industrial laborers (this solidarity extended beyond the working class itself to include other segments of Bolivia's popular classes). While not the first federation of its kind in Bolivia, the Uncía organization posed a special threat to the power and autonomy of capital in the nation's all-important mining industry; the region around Uncía contained the country's richest and most productive tin mines. The companies controlling the area's mines exercised enormous political influence over both local and national government. The founders of the Central Labor Federation of Uncía exhibited surprising prescience of trends both in the national and international capitalist economy—the progressive consolidation of capital into larger and larger international corporations. In 1924, Simón I. Patiño would buy out his Chilean rivals, the Tin Company of Llallagua, and form the gigantic Patiño Mines and Enterprises Consolidated, Inc. The new company, incorporated in Wilmington, Delaware, would control all of the major mines and mills in the region of Uncía, mines and mills in the neighboring department of Oruro, and the Machacamarca-Uncía Railroad to tie it all together. But in 1923, the tin magnates refused to tolerate the creation of a regional labor federation—a federation uniting the workers of all of the mines, mills, and companies in the area—a process that mirrored perfectly the consolidation of capital.

This dissertation began with a quick glimpse at the repression of the Central Labor Federation of Uncía: the evening of 4 June 1923, the Bolivian military gunned down protesting workers in the Plaza Alonso de Ibañez in Uncía. The leaders of the Federation suffered arrest and deportation. Both working-class Bolivians and historians

remember this violent episode as the “Massacre of Uncía.” The struggle in northern Potosí was not the nation’s first; nor was it the first time the Bolivian government employed deadly force in dealing with the country’s working class. But the massacre still marks a symbolic beginning. For many workers, the events of 1923 signaled the start of an epic struggle between Bolivian laborers and the forces of capital (both national and international) for control of the republic. This class conflict dominated Bolivian history for the rest of the twentieth century.

In 1899, the national economy had only just begun the surprisingly painless transition from silver mining to a focus on the country’s tin reserves. During the final decades of the nineteenth century, the proletarianization of Bolivia’s miners had already begun; the process accelerated during the years 1899 to 1929. Tin required greater industrialization and a greater volume of production than silver; contract labor arrangements gave way to wage labor as larger and more expensive machinery accelerated the flow of ore through the mills of Oruro and northern Potosí. As proletarianization advanced, the bonds of paternalism slipped from the labor force: workers began to seek new forms of organization to defend themselves from the whims of their employers. Artisans and their local mutual aid societies provided an early model, but industrial workers quickly began to experiment with more aggressive organizations seeking to build regional and even national federations. Ideologically, workers and their artisan allies began the century befuddled by the political thought of the dominant classes: liberalism, republicanism, and nationalism. While they never completely extirpated the ideology of the dominant classes from their organizations, workers began to experiment with both the ideas of anarcho-syndicalism and socialism by 1929. Just as

their ideology experienced a progressive advance during the first three decades of the twentieth century, the workers' understanding of the Bolivian state underwent a significant transformation during the same period. Pivotal and violent events such as the Massacre of Uncía in 1923 taught workers that government, despite a rhetoric of republican inclusion and mediation, primarily served industrial capital over the life-and-death interests of the working class. By 1929, Bolivian workers had accumulated a solid history of experience with aggressive labor organizations, a practical understanding of national politics and economy, and an important familiarity with radical political ideologies. The shocks of the 1930s and 40s further refined and crafted the Bolivian labor movement into the irresistible revolutionary agent of 1952.

Laboring in the Boss's Shadow, 1899-1915

What did the Bolivian working class look like at the beginning of the twentieth century? The national census of 1900 provides a glimpse. The census recorded 12,625 individuals in 1900 who reported their occupation to be that of "miner." Just three departments in Bolivia contained the overwhelming bulk of this occupational group: Oruro, La Paz, and Potosí. Three cities enjoyed a substantial concentration of mine workers (more than 1,000): the cities of Potosí and Pulacayo in the department of Potosí; and the city of Oruro, capital of the department of Oruro. The miners of Potosí numbered 2,230, Oruro counted 1,913, and the town of Pulacayo contained 1,720. Despite the concentration of laborers in these three settlements, miners spread themselves across the whole of highland Bolivia in small camps huddled around rich or promising seams of ore.

The mine laborers of the country formed a substantial migratory socio-economic group with a long history in Bolivia. They occupied a cultural position in Bolivian society somewhere between that of a peasant and that of an urban artisan—shading more toward the mestizo pole of the urban artisan. While mining camps received a constant influx of new workers from the countryside, the core of this socio-economic group had long historical roots stretching deep into the colonial period. The miners of Bolivia were both centuries and days removed from the countryside. A more detailed examination of the working-class population of both Pulacayo and Oruro provides a glimpse at this unique socio-economic group on the eve of the twentieth century.²

Of the three largest concentrations of miners in Bolivia in 1900, Pulacayo figures as the easiest to explore in detail. Oruro and Potosí depended upon mining, but other economic and administrative activities made important contributions to the character of these two cities. Both served as the capital of their respective departments, attracting numerous commercial enterprises and a large concentration of urban professionals. Without mining, Pulacayo would not have existed. Pulacayo in 1900 possessed all of the superficial characteristics of an isolated industrial enclave and company town. The settlement sat in an arid, and sparsely populated quarter of the Bolivian Altiplano. One industry and one company—the Huanchaca Mining Company—dominated the town's economic life, but in some respects Pulacayo's demographics surprise. The ratio of men to women in town actually reflected a concentration of women close to the national average. Men in Pulacayo comprised 50.3 percent of the population, women 49.7 percent; nationally, the average was 50.7 percent male and 49.3 percent female. Racially,

² Oficina Nacional de Inmigración, Estadística y Propaganda Geográfica, Censo general...1900, 236, 47, 116-119.

Pulacayo was distinct from the rest of Potosí where Indians represented 57.3 percent of the departmental population. In the mining town, 13.5 percent of the population claimed to be white, 69.3 percent figure in the census as mestizo, and only 16.2 percent of the settlement's residents appeared as Indians. Pulacayo also demonstrated a higher level of education than both the rest of Potosí and even Bolivia. Among individuals over the age of seven, 23 percent in Pulacayo claimed some classroom experience. In the department of Potosí as a whole, only 8.2 percent of the population enjoyed some sort of classroom instruction. The residents of Pulacayo enjoyed better educational opportunities than the Indian inhabitants of the countryside; the culture of the mining settlement was more mestizo and urban than that of the steppes and highlands surrounding it. The city of Oruro and its collection of mining encampments presented a similar demographic picture in the national census of 1900.³

A small quirk in the execution of the census in Oruro makes an exploration of the city's mining population easier than that of Potosí's. The census divided the inhabitants of Oruro into two categories: urban and rural, yet the rural population of the city was not agricultural in character—it was industrial. Census officials counted the resident population of the Itos and San José mines as rural despite their proximity to the city of Oruro. In all, the two mining camps located outside of the urban core and one camp located in the heart of the city, the Socavón Mine, held 2,927 inhabitants; the city proper contained 12,971 residents (many of whom might also have worked in the mining

³ Ibid., 2:19, 32, 98-101, 294.

industry).⁴ The population of the three major mining settlements associated with the city demonstrates the migratory character of Bolivia's mine laborers. Of the 704 individuals living in the Socavón Mine in Oruro: 40.9 percent claimed to hail from the department of Oruro, 55 percent from other departments in Bolivia, and 4.1 percent from outside of Bolivia. Of the 756 individuals living in the Itos Mine: 48.8 percent hailed from the department of Oruro, 48.9 percent from other departments in Bolivia, and 2.2 percent figured as foreign born. Of the 1,567 individuals living in the San José Mine: 39.6 percent hailed from the department of Oruro, 58.2 percent from other departments in Bolivia, and 2.2 percent was foreign born. This contrasts with the 12,971 inhabitants of Oruro not living in one of the region's three mining settlements: 59.5 percent claimed the department of Oruro as their place of birth, only 35.7 percent had moved there from other parts of Bolivia, and 4.8 percent was foreign born. Left unexplained, as the national census of 1900 did not contain statistics allowing for an exploration of the subject, was the exact origin of the migrants to the mining encampments of Oruro: rural or urban, agricultural or industrial, with previous experience in mining or without? Despite a few unanswered questions, the 1900 census suggests that the mine workers of both Oruro and Pulacayo enjoyed a higher level of education than the rural population of the nation, a different racial identity (mestizo) from that of the Indian majority of the country, and a personal history of migration in search of employment. In the twentieth century, the expansion of tin mining in Bolivia significantly swelled their numbers.⁵

⁴ The Socavón mine is located only a few blocks from Oruro's central plaza. The census recorded the residents of the Socavón's camp as part of Oruro's urban population. Using figures located elsewhere in the census, I was able to separate the Socavón's 604 residents from the rest of the city's population.

⁵ Oficina Nacional de Inmigración, Estadística y Propaganda Geográfica, "I. Departamento de Oruro," in vol.1, Censo general...1900, 1:16-17.

The workforce of Bolivia's tin mines grew rapidly as production accelerated through the years 1899 to 1929. Antonio Mitre, a Bolivian historian, estimated the labor force of Bolivia's tin mines in 1900 at 3,000; for 1910, his estimate climbs to 13,147, reflecting the explosive growth of previously unimportant mining settlements like Llallagua and Uncía and the transition from silver mining to tin in older mining camps like Oruro and Huanuni. By 1920, Bolivia counted 21,813 workers in its tin mines; even during the Great Depression and the social dislocation of the Chaco War, Bolivia's tin mines still employed 26,353 in 1935. Mitre notes that the mining population of the country never exceeded 3.5 percent of the national population during the first decades of the twentieth century (this calculation includes workers and their families), a number dwarfed by the peasant majority of Bolivia.⁶ Yet the small percentage of the population employed in the mining industry should not be viewed as an impediment to the miners assuming a lead role in organizing the popular classes in opposition to the dominant classes and the state.⁷ The scholarship of Charles W. Bergquist illustrates that workers employed in the critical export industries of twentieth-century Latin America, despite their relatively small numbers, wielded enormous political influence on the national stage.⁸ What was the broader political, social, and economic context of Bolivia during this period of explosive industrial growth in mining?

With their victory in the Federalist War (1898-1899), the Liberal Party seized political control in the republic. In October 1899, José Manuel Pando assumed the

⁶ Antonio Mitre, Bajo un cielo de estaño, 220-221.

⁷ Leon Trotsky, The Permanent Revolution & Results and Prospects (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1970), 62-63.

⁸ Charles W. Bergquist, Labor in Latin America: Comparative Essays on Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, and Colombia (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986).

presidency of Bolivia, beginning a two-decade period of Liberal Party rule.⁹ The Liberals in office resembled the defeated Constitutional Party in their zealous guardianship of political power and intolerance of dissent. An editorial from the newspaper Ideales of Oruro captures the new (some might say old) political climate perfectly:

Once master of the political situation, the Liberal Party, promised to implement a complete reform...that all guarantees would be respected; that meritorious men of honor and talent would participate in all branches of public administration; that hostility towards political adversaries would cease; that both the majority and the minority would participate in the Legislature, as a manifestation of genuine public opinion; that the soul of Bolivia would be fortified by union and fraternity. But what has happened? It is sad to say: an unprecedented persecution of the adherents of the fallen party began in various forms; criminal prosecution for invented crimes, imprisonment for supposed misdemeanors; whippings in the barracks for the crime of having been a Constitutionalist (in Tarija and Cinti); [and] bold-faced fraud in the last election, in which those who spent the most money have triumphed, in the greater part of the electoral districts, according to the accusations in the press; the total exclusion of members of the Constitutional Party from Congress, from the Municipalities, and all other branches of Administration.¹⁰

The ascendant Liberal Party immediately abandoned the principals of federalism. In 1899, the Pando-Montes' wing of the party blocked all attempts to reform the centrist constitution of 1880. In 1904, Ismael Montes succeeded Pando in the presidency.¹¹ Montes cast a long shadow over Bolivian politics for the next two decades.

Born in La Paz in 1861, Montes served as an officer in the disastrous War of the Pacific; after the conflict, he left the military and began work as a lawyer in his native city. Fighting in the Federalist War alongside Pando, Montes rose to the rank of general and won appointment as Minister of War in the new government. As president, Montes

⁹ Klein, Parties, 38.

¹⁰ Editorial, "Actualidad," Ideales (Oruro, Bolivia), 26 August 1900.

¹¹ Klein, Parties, 37-39.

did much to shape the intolerant and authoritarian character of Liberal rule; with an iron hand, he bent the full authority and focus of the Bolivian state towards national development: industrialization and modernization. The profits of tin and the indemnities awarded the Bolivian government by both Brazil and Chile for lost territory contributed mightily to the national treasury. Montes initiated the construction of railroads connecting the Bolivian cities of La Paz, Cochabamba, Potosí, and Sucre to the existing rail network that linked Oruro with Antofagasta, Chile. Unfortunately for Bolivian economic sovereignty, the treaties promoting the development of the national rail lines virtually guaranteed foreign capitalist control (mainly British) of the network. An ally of Montes succeeded him in office, Eliodoro Villazón (1909-1912); in 1913, Montes returned to the office of the presidency.¹²

In addition to the political change from Constitutionalist to Liberal rule, Bolivia started the twentieth century with an important economic transition from silver mining to tin. With the collapse of silver's international value in the 1890s, the discovery of a new resource for export became imperative for the Bolivian state and the export-oriented oligarchy of the nation. Since the colonial period, the mines of Alto Peru (Bolivia) produced both silver and tin; because of a primitive transportation network and little demand in Europe, the region's tin rarely circulated outside of the local market. In the late nineteenth century, the construction of railroads during the peak of the silver boom, a growing industrial demand for tin, and a production collapse in Europe's own tin mines

¹² Ibid., 40-44. During Montes' presidency Bolivia finally negotiated a peace treaty with Chile. In exchange for renouncing Bolivia's lost territories on the Pacific coast and all pretension to a sovereign port, Bolivia received an indemnity of £300,000, a railroad connecting Arica and La Paz, promises of future investment in Bolivian railroads, and an agreement by which Bolivian commerce might flow through Chilean ports.

created favorable conditions for the massive expansion of tin mining in Bolivia. The silver oligarchs of the nineteenth century generally failed to make the transition from one metal to the other with the same ease as the Bolivian economy as a whole; tin attracted a number of new foreign companies to the country and allowed for the rise of a new group of Bolivian entrepreneurs.¹³ For Oruro and northern Potosí, Simón I. Patiño emerged as the most important of these new businessmen.

In both the nineteenth century and early twentieth, the Bolivian state and the oligarchy did make half-hearted attempts to ameliorate the country's dependence on just one export commodity, but no other product ever came to occupy a lasting position in the country's list of exports to rival either silver or tin. Both nitrates and wild rubber made ephemeral contributions to the national budget, but the isolated position of these two products—far from the populous, highland heart of the nation—attenuated the state's supervision and defense of these two seemingly promising industries.¹⁴ Bolivia lost the nitrate fields of the Pacific coast to the invading Chileans in 1879; in 1903, the Brazilians captured the rubber-rich Acre from an over-extended Bolivian military. Those rubber-producing swaths of the Amazon Basin retained by Bolivia lost their value in the early twentieth century when the British started their own rubber plantations in Asia. Bolivia's economic dependence on just one mineral export during the early twentieth century continued a pattern first established by the Spanish in the sixteenth century—a historical continuity with important implications for the twentieth-century Bolivian economy.

¹³ Klein, *Bolivia*, 161, 163. The Aramayo family stands out as the only members of the silver oligarchy to make a successful transition from silver to tin.

¹⁴ Herbert Klein notes that in 1898 rubber accounted for 49 percent of Bolivia's exports; in 1902, tax receipts on rubber accounted for 38 percent of the government's income. Klein, *Parties*, 33.

Bolivia depended upon one export, and a handful of massive companies came to dominate the production of tin. Not all government officials in Bolivia lauded the ongoing industrial consolidation, but the dissenters never took effective or vigorous action to slow the process. In his study of tin mining, Antonio Mitre notes that in 1909 large companies (those producing more than 1,000 tons of metal a year) accounted for 74 percent of Bolivia's annual production. Of the eight companies that Mitre classes as large, five were located in the department of Oruro or northern Potosí. In Oruro, the mining town of Huanuni loomed large. Two of the department's three largest producers lay in that settlement: the Penny and Duncan Company and the El Balcón Mining Company. To the south of Huanuni, outside of Pazña, the Avicaya Company figured as the department's other large producer. In northern Potosí, the Llallagua-Uncía region alone produced 37 percent of Bolivia's tin; there, the Llallagua Tin Company and Simón I. Patiño's La Salvadora Mine dominated production.¹⁵

By 1925, ten large companies accounted for 81 percent of Bolivia's tin production. Yet this statistic does not do adequate justice to the level of industrial concentration that mining had reached in Bolivia by the mid-1920s. Mining companies owned by Simón Patiño in the Llallagua-Uncía region of northern Potosí and the mining settlement of Huanuni in Oruro accounted for one-third of Bolivia's tin exports. The progressive consolidation of mining in just a few hands continued until the 1940s. At the beginning of that decade, mines owned by Patiño accounted for 48 percent of Bolivia's annual tin production. The three largest mining concerns in Bolivia: Patiño's companies,

¹⁵ Mitre, Bajo un cielo de estaño, 104-106.

the Hochschild group, and the Aramayo family accounted for 80 percent of the nation's tin exports in 1940.¹⁶

Economic growth and stability did occasionally stumble during the first decades of the twentieth century. The mining industry of Oruro and northern Potosí suffered through several significant but ephemeral depressions during the years 1899 to 1929 as the international value of tin fluctuated and war disrupted important European markets. Tin production experienced a quick, sharp depression in 1908. On the eve of the First World War in 1913 and 1914, the industry experienced another serious contraction. Between 1920 and 1922, the international price of tin again took another dip; stocks of metal accumulated in Asia during the insecurity of the First World War began to flow into Europe and North America, and the United States started to dump some of its war reserves back onto the market. Economic difficulties in the United Kingdom also aggravated the situation. In 1923, tin made a strong recovery, and the price remained high throughout the 1920s until the international economic collapse of capitalism in 1929. The cycles of this market did have a profound impact on Bolivian politics and the activity of the nation's nascent labor movement.¹⁷

The economic difficulties of 1913 and 1914 caused immediate problems for the second Montes' presidency. Out of this political ferment emerged a new political party that sought to challenge the dominance of the Liberals. Officially founded in January 1915, the Republican Party (*Partido Unión Republicana*) counted among its organizers some of the personalities that would dominate Bolivian politics for the next couple of decades: Daniel Salamanca and Bautista Saavedra. Daniel Salamanca came from a

¹⁶ Ibid., 114, 116, 124-125.

¹⁷ Ibid., 34-38, 44-45.

wealthy landed family in the fertile valley of Cochabamba. Educated as a lawyer, he first entered politics in 1899 when Pando suggested he run for congress. A skilled and intelligent orator, Salamanca became the early leader of the Republican Party despite his reserved and introverted demeanor. The second significant leader of the new party, Bautista Saavedra, was a native of La Paz. A lawyer, Saavedra also had an interest in history and sociology; his best-known work was a study of traditional Indian communities, the *ayllus*. The future Republican president served as the minister of education during the interim Liberal presidency of Eliodoro Villazón; in 1913, Saavedra ran for public office as an independent and won. Between 1914 and 1920, Saavedra headed the La Paz section of the Republican Party making him the most important party leader in the country after Salamanca.¹⁸

The newly organized party made purely political demands of Montes and the dominant Liberal Party. They sought clean elections and a limitation on the president's power to influence the congress and the courts. The party also suggested minor social reforms and a move toward greater economic nationalism (a preference for national private capital as opposed to foreign capital). Herbert Klein sees the antagonism between the Liberal and Republican parties as a "classic pattern of 'ins' versus 'outs'." The two parties shared a similar political ideology and represented politicians from identical economic and social backgrounds—all from the dominant classes of the country. Despite the similarities, the contest for political power generated significant violence.¹⁹

Urban clashes among party militants often accompanied the electoral competition between Liberals and Republicans. In the 1910s, Bolivian elections still proceeded

¹⁸ Klein, *Parties*, 43, 45-48, 67-68, 127-128.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 48-50.

without the use of the secret ballot; voters cast their public ballots in the main square of each town or city. This system permitted all sorts of political and physical machinations. Both parties maintained political gangs that sought to intimidate or prevent the opposition from voting.²⁰ In 1920, the prefect of Oruro, D. Ascarrunz, had to explain to the central government his use of two army regiments during the May 2 elections. He insisted that he had always subscribed to the philosophy that, “military detachments should not get mixed up in political affairs, except in those cases when it is necessary to preserve public order, and there is a deficient police presence.” In meetings before the election, the prefect asserted that, “the representatives of the Liberal and Republican parties...insistently solicited that military detachments intervene on election day, something I flatly rejected.” He added that Florián Zambrana, the president of Oruro’s electoral commission, requested command of the army regiments on the day of the election—a request also denied by the prefect. Ascarrunz asserted that he called upon the two army regiments as a last resort, when “the clashes began in a manner that suggested eventual deadly consequences,” and only after the president of the electoral commission and representatives of both parties requested military intervention.²¹

Despite the pretension of impartiality, the Republican militants bore the brunt of military intervention on election day; the prefect stated that the most alarming development on 2 May 1920 was, “the planned assault by a Republican group upon the police.”²² The municipal police in Bolivia often actively defended the interests of the

²⁰ Ibid., 50-51.

²¹ D. Ascarrunz to the Ministro of State in the Office of War in La Paz, 11 May 1920, 270, “Copiador de Ministerios de 11 de Mayo de 1920 hasta el 27 de Agosto de 1921,” APO.

²² Ibid.

Liberal Party, operating as a legal political gang.²³ By May 1920, months of bad blood had festered between Republican militants and the municipal police of Oruro; on 14 December 1919, a violent clash between adherents of the Republican Party and the Oruro police produced several deaths. The prefect completed his defense with the explanation: “the bulk of the opposition considers the police force bias, and this belief has only grown more accentuated with the lamentable events of last December 14; any intervention by agents of the Police provokes openly hostile resistance.”²⁴ Republicans lost the hard-fought May elections. Only two months later in July 1920, the Republican Party finally defeated their Liberal opponents, but victory did not come through the ballot box, it came instead at the point of a bayonet. We will return to this subject later in this chapter.

What was happening with the urban popular classes, most especially the working class of Bolivia’s tin mines, during the first two decades of the twentieth century, an era marked by industrial expansion and Liberal Party rule?

In the last chapter, we saw the workers of the San José mine rally to the cause of their embattled boss Sergio Fernández Alonso, the President of the Republic, during the Federalist War (1898-1899). Workers fighting in defense of their bosses’ interests occurred with common frequency in both the countryside and the mining camps of the early twentieth-century Bolivia. The working class had not yet developed a consistent autonomy of political and social action; paternalism weighed heavily upon the mine workers of the country. Just a few years after the Federalist War, the man who would become Bolivia’s wealthiest tin magnate in the twentieth century, Simón I. Patiño, called

²³ Klein, *Parties*, 51.

²⁴ D. Ascarrunz to the Minister of State in the Office of War in La Paz, 11 May 1920, 270, “Copiador de Ministerios de 11 de Mayo de 1920 hasta el 27 de Agosto de 1921,” APO.

upon his workers to help him defend his mining claim La Salvadora against attack. Patiño bought a stake in the La Salvadora mine in 1895; in 1897, he bought out his partner Sergio Oporto and became the owner of a 90 percent stake in the northern Potosí claim.²⁵ Legal disputes hampered Patiño's development of the mine; Pedro Artigue, a Frenchman, asserted that his own claim La Negra overlapped that of Patiño. Artigue had never formally occupied his claim, its exact location was shifting and nebulous, but he insisted upon pursuing a suit against Patiño. In 1901, Patiño's workers discovered a surprisingly rich seam of tin ore in the main shaft of the La Salvadora mine. When Pedro Artigue—frustrated by several years of wrangling in the courts—heard of the discovery, he rushed to seek the administrative backing of the prefect of Potosí.²⁶ With that official's approval he set about preparing to seize the claim by force; the attack occurred 25 May 1901.²⁷ The Frenchman recruited a well-armed band of approximately seventy men; Patiño, with considerably fewer followers, scraped together an irregular assortment of firearms and distributed them among his most trusted employees. Outnumbered, the future magnate planned to use the mountainous terrain of northern Potosí against his attackers; he instructed his unarmed workers to roll boulders down the precipitous slope of the claim just as Artigue's men began their climb. Patiño's men defended their position through a whole day; the future magnate himself received a minor bullet wound in the fighting.²⁸ As nightfall approached, the would-be usurper's followers abandoned their positions convinced that Patiño planned a ferocious counter-attack the following

²⁵ Through a series of transactions, Patiño's former employers Germán Fricke y Cia. came to own a 10 percent stake in the claim.

²⁶ Geddes, *Patiño*, 45, 48, 52, 63-65.

²⁷ "Otra vez Uncía: Cuadrillas que organizan en Potosí," *El Vapor; Diario de la mañana* (Oruro, Bolivia), 22 Septiembre 1901.

²⁸ Surprisingly, only one person died in the fighting. Ibid.

day. While wrangling in the court would continue to occupy Patiño and his lawyers for years, the tenacious physical defense of his claim guaranteed the man from Cochabamba the foundation of his future empire.²⁹ Just as the miners of San José answered the call to arms of their employer President Alonso in 1899, Patiño's worker's fought to defend their boss's claim at the beginning of the twentieth century. The paternalism of their employers continued to weigh heavily upon the development of the Bolivian working class during the first years of the twentieth century. An incident from Huanuni, Oruro in 1911 provides further illustration of paternalism in the mines.

In 1911, a series of confrontations broke out between the workers of two competing mining companies in Huanuni. The problems began when tunnels belonging to the Mining Company of Huanuni and those of the Penny and Duncan Company intersected underground on 27 March 1911. The prefect hoped to head off any conflict between the two companies by dispatching the subprefect of the Cercado Province to Huanuni to place an "iron grate where the intersection between the workings of the two companies occurred."³⁰ The measure only postponed the conflict as the case moved into the courts; the potential for an armed confrontation between the workers of the two companies persisted in Huanuni. On 21 July 1911, the prefect informed the police intendant that smoke from the Mining Company of Huanuni's shafts and tunnels had filled those of the Penny and Duncan Company, and that the smoke was "asphyxiating

²⁹ Geddes, *Patiño*, 65-67. A 22 September 1901 newspaper report in Oruro suggested that Artigue was recruiting another mercenary band in Potosí, but nothing ever came of this second attempt. The newspaper was sympathetic to Patiño ridiculing Artigue: "Artigue...alleging to claim eight hectares with the title La Negra, whose location must be on the moon, because in Uncía there is not a hand span of open land." "Otra vez Uncía: Cuadrillas que organizan en Potosí," *El Vapor: Diario de la mañana* (Oruro, Bolivia), 22 September 1901.

³⁰ Morales the prefect of Oruro to the Minister of Finances in La Paz, 28 March 1911, 163, "Telegramas desde marzo 17/1910 hasta noviembre 10/1911," APO.

the workers.”³¹ On the night of 23 July, the Mining Company of Huanuni again began burning “sulfur and chili peppers” in their shafts, resulting in the following consequences for the Penny and Duncan Company: “all of their people had to abandon the mine and their labors have been paralyzed.”³² The following day in the morning, actual fighting broke out as the workers of the Penny and Duncan Company sought revenge: “Workers employed by the Penny and Duncan Company blew up two bridges with dynamite.”³³ One of the workers in the Harrison mine (the Mining Company of Huanuni) also received a bullet wound in the leg and was reported to be in “a very grave state.”³⁴ Eventually the prefect of Oruro and other government officials in the region succeeded in calming the situation, but similar conflicts occurred with common frequency. Because of the clashes in the preceding months, when the Penny and Duncan Company reported another intersection of tunnels in Huanuni on 16 October 1911, this time with the Balcón Company, the prefect ordered immediate action. He contacted the management of both companies and ordered the police intendant to ensure that the companies, “suspend all of their work in the place where the communication occurred, and that they prevent conflicts between their workers.”³⁵ Aside from sympathy and familiarity with their employers,

³¹ Morales to the intendant of Huanuni, 21 July 1911, 163, “Telegramas desde marzo 17/1910 hasta noviembre 10/1911,” APO.

³² Castaños the intendant to the prefect of Oruro, Huanuni, 24 July 1911, in Castaños the intendant to the prefect of Oruro, Huanuni, 24 July 1911, 163, “Telegramas desde marzo 17/1910 hasta noviembre 10/1911,” APO.

³³ Castaños the intendant to the prefect of Oruro, Huanuni, 24 July 1911, in Morales to the Minister of Government in La Paz, 25 July 1911, 163, “Telegramas desde marzo 17/1910 hasta noviembre 10/1911,” APO.

³⁴ Castaños the intendant to the prefect of Oruro, Huanuni, 24 July 1911, 163, “Telegramas desde marzo 17/1910 hasta noviembre 10/1911,” APO.

³⁵ Morales to the President of the Republic in La Paz, 18 October 1911, 163, “Telegramas desde marzo 17/1910 hasta noviembre 10/1911,” APO.

workers succumbed to the lure of paternalism because of the contract labor arrangements common in many Bolivian mines at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Labor agreements that fell short of a wage-labor relationship contributed to the workers' propensity to defend the owners' property (the mining camp, the mills, the shafts and tunnels) as their own. Contracts based on the sharing of ore created the illusion of proprietorship. Several scholars have identified the rural origin of some mine workers as an impediment to the development of a working-class identity; they employ the phrase "barrier to proletarianization" to describe the phenomenon. Historians theorize that the intimate connections that some mine workers still enjoyed with rural communities allowed them to avoid a complete dependence on industrial labor; during times of economic distress they could always retreat to subsistence agriculture. A second and more important barrier existed to the development of a working-class consciousness within the mining industry itself: workers in early twentieth-century Bolivia often labored under contracts that tended to obscure their abject dependence on the mining magnates.

The mining industry of the twentieth century inherited a number of labor practices from the nineteenth century and the colonial period that circumvented wage labor. In 1900, the administrator of the Colquechaca-Aullagas Company of Bolivia, Juan Prout, reported on the ruinous financial position of the enterprise: "There is nothing promising or satisfactory...without its own capital to advance its works; with enormous debts owed to numerous creditors; caught up in lawsuits motivated by contracts that will never make sense." Because of the company's weak economic state, the administration had no money to implement a wage-labor system in the mines; instead, they relied upon the "ruinous system of *kajchedabor*." *Kajcheo* was a special type of contract labor in which

the owner of the mine split the ore with his workers; *kajchas* worked for a cut of raw mineral rather than wages.³⁶ The administrator inherited the system of *kajcheo* from his predecessor, but took steps to modify it “with special contracts, with strict terms, and for a limited time.” Prout feared that otherwise the workers might “claim acquired rights that could jeopardize future negotiations.”³⁷ What did the system of *kajcheo* look like in Bolivian mines during the first decades of the twentieth century?

Kajcheo arrangements in the Colquechaca mines of northern Potosí varied according to the amount of labor required to extract ore from a company’s various shafts. An example of this from the Colquechaca-Aullagas Company of Bolivia: prior to 23 October 1899, the workers extracted all of the ore from the Amigos mineshaft “on their backs and carried it to the Amigos camp.” Because of the labor involved in the manual transport of ore, the workers and the company split the ore fifty-fifty. After 23 October 1899, the workers began extracting ore by the Desmond mineshaft, rather than the Amigos shaft; the change improved the efficiency of ore extraction making it less labor intensive: “the extraction of their ore cost them much less, and they had more equipment for it, we assisted them with the free use of carts and an engine.”³⁸ Because of the change, the company began keeping 60 percent of the ore.

While requiring little capital investment, the results of *kajcheo* did not always please the mineowners of Colquechaca. Since most contract workers earned their money through the extraction of ore alone, routine maintenance cost them time and money. The

³⁶ As mentioned in chapter one, *kajcheo* in the colonial period meant illicit mining and the theft of ore. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the term also came to mean contract labor built around the concept of ore-sharing.

³⁷ Colquechaca-Aullagas Company of Bolivia, Novena memorial del directorio: Informe del administrador general (Sucre: Imprenta “Bolívar” de M. Pizarro, 1900), in the Colección Jiménez, Biblioteca y Archivo Nacional de Bolivia (hereafter cited as BANB-BNB), 1-2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

administrator of the Colquechaca-Aullagas Company of Bolivia complained, “all of the principal tunnels and paths in both sections appear completely abandoned with rubble that has built up because of the work done by the *kajchas*.” The Colquechaca-Aullagas Company of Bolivia also suffered periodic invasion by individuals seeking to steal ore; some of the trespassers worked or had worked for the company as *kajchas* in the recent past. The administrator attributed some of the mine’s disrepair to one Mariano Loreto Alvarez and “his various invasions of the company’s interests.” To alleviate some of the ills of contract labor, the company did employ a number of wage laborers. A company report from 1900 cited the employment of 100 laborers hired at 1.20 Bolivianos a day. The administrator of the mine employed these men in the operation of pumps to keep important sections of the mine from flooding and in the perforation of new tunnels through rock with no ore content, tunnels the *kajchas* refused to labor in.³⁹

At the beginning of the century, contract labor was sometimes employed for the advance of new tunnels and the maintenance of those already dug, but *kajcheo* (ore sharing agreements) did not appear as a part of these contracts. In 1907, the Andacaba Company in Cuchu Ingenio, Potosí employed several contractors in its mines. Because the mine offered little in the way of rich ore, the company opted for more conventional mining contracts rather than *kajcheo*; workers refused to labor in Cuchu Ingenio under ore-sharing agreements. The Andacaba Company’s contractors worked primarily in the rehabilitation of the mine.⁴⁰ In the San Francisco shaft, the company employed two different contractors: one employed three laborers and the other eight. In the Purísima

³⁹ Ibid. 8-10, 12.

⁴⁰ Arturo Quesada Alonso to the President of the Cia. Andacaba in Sucre, Cuchu Ingenio, 16 July 1907, Administración de la Compañía Andacaba, Correspondencia, 1907-1911, Giménez Collection, BANB-ANB.

shaft, one contractor labored with three workers. And in the Rasgo shaft, another contractor employed three workers as well. Only in two of the company's five shafts did the administration employ their own workers. In the San José shaft, one employee labored with five workers, and in the Oroya shaft, another worked with five men "who labored for wages."⁴¹ All of the contractors working in the Cuchu Ingenio mine received a set sum of money for every meter they advanced the Andacaba Company's tunnels.

What did a mining contract of this type look like? For more details, we can look to the Colquechaca mines in 1907. In October of that year, the administration of the Consolidated Company complained that one Matías Paredes, the contractor employed by the company to rehabilitate the mines, charged too much for his services. Paredes demanded 70 Bs. per meter that his work crew advanced the shaft; the administrator hoped to find another contractor to replace him. Zacarías Ponce, the administrator of the mine, searched for but could not find a contractor willing to take the job for less than 70 or 80 Bs. per meter. He returned to negotiations with Matías Paredes, reasoning, "he should be preferred as a long-standing worker of the Company and dependable."⁴² Finally, Ponce signed another contract with Paredes. In the contract, the company agreed to loan Paredes: "a cart and the necessary tools...which he will return when his contract ends;" Paredes agreed to "cover the cost of materials, the repair of the tools etc., etc., at no expense to the company." The contractor accepted an assignment to advance the Daza shaft 30 meters at the pace of at least 2 meters a week. The company agreed to pay him

⁴¹ Julio M. Trigo to the president of the Andacaba Company in Sucre, Cuchu Ingenio, 17 September 1907, Administración de la Compañía Andacaba, Correspondencia, 1907-1911, Giménez Collection, BANB-ANB.

⁴² Zacarías Ponce to Germán Zelada the president of the Consolidated Company in Sucre, Colquechaca, 12 October 1907, Compañía Consolidada. Libro de Cuentas, (1907-1913), Giménez Collection, BANB-ANB.

60 Bs. for each meter. Payment was to be made at the rate of 50 Bs. for each meter he advanced in a given week with a bonus of 300 Bs. upon completion of the contract. The company stipulated the dimensions of the shaft Paredes was to cut: one meter and 80 centimeters high by one meter and fifty centimeters wide. Paredes agreed to transport the waste rock from the shaft head to the San Miguel section of the mine. The contractor also enjoyed complete liberty in hiring assistants to aid him in the completion of his assignment. If Paredes broke any part of the contract, he agreed to pay a fine of 50 Bs.⁴³

Despite the strict terms of this contract, other workers and contractors did find ways to manipulate early-twentieth-century employment practices to their advantage. As indicated earlier in documents from Cuchu Ingenio, Potosí, some workers continued to raid mines at night and on the weekends. *Kajcheo* agreements lent themselves to an assortment of deceptive practices—practices that sought to tip ore-sharing in the workers’ favor. *Kajchas* frequently withheld the richest ore from their employers turning over only low-grade rock. Even contracts not employing the practice of *kajcheo* created opportunities for deceptive enrichment. Documents indicate that potential laborers, both contract workers and wage laborers, sometimes took advantage of cash advances offered them by mine and mill owners. In June 1909, mill owner Carlos Ayala complained to the departmental authorities of Oruro of “being many times the victim of fraud and tricks on the part of persons that present themselves asking for work and then not completing it; people asking for cash advances and then not working.”⁴⁴ The historical literature on labor in the agricultural sector of Latin America’s economy contains substantial

⁴³ Contract between Matías Paredes and Zacarías Ponce, *Compañía Consolidada. Libro de Cuentas*, (1907-1913), Giménez Collection, BANB-ANB.

⁴⁴ Prefect of Oruro to the corregidor of the Paria Canton, Oruro, 17 June 1909, 155, “Varios, 1909,” APO.

discussion of this practice; numerous complaints mirroring those of Carlos Ayala's suggest the practice was widespread in the mining industry of Bolivia as well.

Employers sought official aid in putting a stop to the practice.

The mineowners of Oruro and northern Potosí not only confronted the attempted deceptions of their own laborers; they also competed for the attention of Bolivia's working class with employers in other countries. Departmental officials in Oruro complained constantly of labor recruiters from Chile seeking Bolivian workers for the nitrate fields and mines of northern Chile. The complaints emanated from a pair of concerns on the part of the Bolivian government. First, officials expressed concern over working conditions, pay, and unpredictable fluctuations in the mining economy; Bolivian citizens often sought repatriation at government expense when they could no longer find employment in Chile. Secondly, bureaucrats worried about the impact a migration of Bolivian workers might have on the industrial development of the country; they feared that mining companies in Oruro, La Paz, and northern Potosí might suffer a shortage of workers because of competition with Chilean employers.

In May 1908, the new prefect of Oruro complained to the central government that prior to his arrival, Chilean labor recruiters had already visited Oruro twice that year. In February, the recruiters persuaded 80 Bolivians to make the trip to the nitrate fields, and in early May, another group of 103 workers immigrated, "triggering the depopulation of Oruro and a scarcity of workers for the mines." The prefect lamented that every worker leaving the country will, in the near future, "petition for repatriation complaining of poor treatment and a lack of work in the exterior." In an attempt to gain greater control over the situation, the prefect ordered recruiters then active in Oruro to ensure that every

worker enlisting for a trip to Chile first visit the prefecture to ensure that they went “voluntarily and have been offered guarantees.”⁴⁵ The competition between employers both Bolivian and Chilean suggests a dearth of qualified laborers during the first decade of the century, giving skilled mine workers a variety of employment options.

Mine workers in Oruro at the beginning of the twentieth century enjoyed certain flexibility in their negotiations with employers. Skilled miners might choose between a variety of labor contracts: *kajcheo* or ore sharing agreements (most appealing when a mine was producing high-grade ore), contracts where workers earned a set amount of money for performing certain tasks, and finally conventional wage labor. Many of these contracts allowed for various types of manipulation and illicit enrichment. Workers could also choose between the many mining companies in Bolivia and work in the exterior such as in the nitrate fields and mines of northern Chile. Yet, for the development of class-consciousness, *kajcheo* agreements and other labor contracts tended to sabotage the growth of horizontal class sympathy; workers often developed a close identification with the administration of the mines in which they labored. This led to a debilitating paternalism. In the Federalist War, the mine workers of San José in Oruro sacrificed their lives to defend the cause of their employer—the embattled president of the Republic. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Simón Patiño’s workers stood shoulder to shoulder with their boss defending his claim in northern Potosí. And in Huanuni, Oruro the laborers of rival companies battled one another for the benefit of their respective employers. Paternalism could not last as the mining operations of the region

⁴⁵ Prefect Ascarrunz to the Minister of Government in La Paz, Oruro, 24 May 1908, 153, “Copiador de Telegramas desde Mayo 8/1908 hasta Marzo 8/1909,” APO.

expanded and grew more impersonal in their labor relations; the sympathetic appeal of the bosses began to fray during the second decade of the twentieth century.

The Growth of Association, 1916-1923

During the second half of the decade beginning in 1910, the department of Oruro saw an explosion of organization among the urban popular classes. While the intensity of organization and political ferment among the working class would experience peaks and valleys for the rest of the twentieth century, after 1916 it remained a central factor in Bolivian politics. The mining unions and labor federations originally founded in Oruro began as offshoots of the decades-old artisan mutual aid societies, but they quickly broke from these more traditional organizations to develop more vigorous economic and political programs. By the 1920s, labor federations in the region had begun to employ the power and threat of the strike for political ends in addition to more traditional workplace concerns and grievances against abusive supervisors, long hours, and poor pay. Before 1923, the ideology of socialism had begun to make inroads among the workers of the department, but the bulk of Oruro's workers and the federations that represented them continued to believe in the promises of liberal-democracy and the politicians of the oligarchic Liberal and Republican Parties. That faith would begin to dissipate with the Massacre of Uncía in June 1923.

Artisan mutual aid societies in Bolivia dated to the late nineteenth century. In 1876, artisans in Oruro founded the Industrious Society of Artisans ("Sociedad Industriosa de Artesanos"), a direct precursor of the later Artisans' Mutual Aid Society

("Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos de Artesanos") still in existence today.⁴⁶ The regulations of the society illustrate the objectives, social composition, and ideology of these nineteenth-century organizations. In the first article of their constitution, they stated that the primary goal of the new society was to, "Unite all of the artisans for mutual protection and aid." The stated objective was expansive and vague, subject to varied interpretation, but the complete and detailed regulations provided more clarification. The organization sought the "intellectual, moral, and industrious" improvement of its members, even if that meant "a paternal Supremacy so as to educate them as to their duty, order, work, and morality." The new organization based itself upon a citywide grouping of older, smaller, established artisan guilds. Despite the federated character of the new organization, the Industrious Society of Artisans claimed extensive regulatory power over the guilds that elected to join it. While the guilds might still name, "their respective masters, officials, and other employees according the methods of their own special regulations or according to established custom," the new Society claimed the right to supervise these elections and to schedule them in late December. The Industrious Society of Artisans even claimed the power to intervene in the personal life of its individual members: "To impose small corrective penalties and to seriously rebuke any artisan who has fallen into frequent drunkenness and the vice of gambling." Finally, membership in the new organization was nearly irreversible: "No collective guild nor any individual master...might separate themselves from the interests of the artisans, without the consent of all artisans."⁴⁷ Organizations such as the Industrious Society of Artisans and the later

⁴⁶ Delgado G., 100 años, 31.

⁴⁷ Sociedad Industriosa de Artesanos, Reglamento Manuscrito, Oruro, Bolivia, 22 August 1876, Archivo Presidencial de la Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos de Artesanos quoted in Delgado G., 100 años, 31-32, 34.

Artisans' Mutual Aid Society of Oruro, played a pivotal role in creating disciplined and educated elements among the Bolivian urban popular classes.

During the second decade of the twentieth century, a few mutual aid societies began to express an interest in forming a federation transcending local issues and making itself felt at the national level. The May 25th Mutual Aid Society (“Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos 25 de Mayo”), established in the city of Potosí 2 October 1908 provides an example of these greater aspirations.⁴⁸ On 1 August 1912, this association of Potosí's artisans circulated a letter of invitation to other mutual aid societies throughout Bolivia to form a national federation. The letter said:

Taking into consideration the great universal and altruistic principle of fraternity, the society that I have the honor to preside over...has decided with a unanimous vote, to form a federation of all analogous societies that might exist in the republic's territory.... when realized, there will come into being in Bolivia one of the most powerful of organizations.... The federation will organize our force and power, amplifying our members' work, facilitating the interchange of ideas, and finally, forming a true confraternity among those who end up joining our ranks.

Despite the goal of a national federation of mutual aid societies, the May 25th Mutual Aid Society's proposal did not necessarily modify the traditional role of a mutual aid society at the local level. Instead, the proposed national federation mainly sought to make it easier for artisans to move around the country and transfer their membership and privileges from one local organization to another. When an artisan moved from one city to another, “he will carry a president's certificate that testifies to his good conduct, accompanied by a recent receipt that testifies to his most recent membership payment.” With this, the individual artisan, when settled in the new city, would “enjoy all of the usual benefits, in either the society to which he used to belong or the society to which he

⁴⁸ Delgado G, *100 años*, 55.

has moved.”⁴⁹ The proposed national federation did not represent an amplification of the mutual aid society’s traditional activities, an expansion of its membership, or even greater participation in national politics.

By the mid-1910s, labor societies founded by artisans began to make a concerted effort to reach out to and address the concerns of Bolivia’s mine workers. The artisan organization the Defense of Labor (“Defensa del Trabajo”) in the city of Potosí sought to expand the social base for its May Day celebration in 1915. In a letter to the prefect, the society noted that the year’s commemoration would be the third time the holiday was observed in Potosí. The Defense of Labor’s itinerary for the day was typical of May Day celebrations in Bolivia during the early decades of the twentieth century. The artisans and workers of Potosí used the holiday to demonstrate their solidarity and collective power; they also planned a significant educational initiative to spread an appreciation of May Day among workers indifferent to or ignorant of the day’s history and meaning. At ten in the morning, the Defense of Labor’s members planned to visit workshops in the city, inviting artisans and workers to participate in the holiday’s festivities. At noon, they encouraged the suspension of work “in commemoration of the date.” The artisan character of the Defense of Labor emerged clearly in the act planned for two in the afternoon. At that hour, the Society of Tailors was to approve their bylaws with the collaboration of the carpenters and barbers. Later in the afternoon, the organization continued of their educational activities with the publication of the first issue of a worker’s newspaper: Idea Roja. At three, the Defense of Labor planned, “A propaganda tour through the miners’ neighborhoods to encourage the attendance of the workers at the

⁴⁹ Rigoberto E. Toro et al. the president of the 25th of May Mutual Aid Society of Artisans, Potosí, 1 August 1912 quoted in *Ibid.*, 57-58.

rally that night.” The evening rally began with a procession through the city. Between seven and seven thirty, the workers and artisans gathered in the Plaza “25 de Mayo” and from there began a march through the principal streets of Potosí concluding with a rally in the 6 de Agosto Plaza at nine in the evening.⁵⁰

The expansion of traditional artisan organizations into broader, aggressive labor unions accelerated as the 1920s approached. Guillermo Lora, author of the important four-volume reference work Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano, dates the foundation of the Workers’ Labor Federation (*Federación Obrera del Trabajo*) in Oruro to 1 May 1919.⁵¹ This was not the first Workers’ Federation organized in Oruro; on Bolivia’s Independence Day, 6 August 1916, several mutual aid societies formed the Worker’s Federation (“Federación Obrera”). Documents suggest that the Federation founded in 1916 and that mentioned by Lora in 1919 might actually be the same organization or at least closely related. Two of the founding institutions of the 1916 Federation appear again in the 1919 Federation: the May 1st Workers’ Philharmonic (*Filarmónica Obrera 1º de Mayo*) and the Workers’ Union of Bakers (*Unión Obrera de Panaderos*).⁵² Also, the president of the Workers’ Labor Federation of Oruro in 1922 was Donato Téllez; Téllez appeared in the founding document of the 1916 Federation as treasurer.⁵³

A week before Bolivia’s Independence Day in 1916, a collection of mutual aid societies and social clubs announced their intention to participate cooperatively in the

⁵⁰ “Defense of Labor” to the prefect of the Potosí Department, Potosí, 28 April 1915, P.D. 3831 (Varios) 1915, enero 4-diciembre 24, CNM-AH.

⁵¹ Lora, Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano, 2:287.

⁵² José F. Avila the president of the Workers’ Federation to the prefect of Oruro, Oruro, 12 August 1916, 228, “Recibido de Varios, 1916,” APO; Lora, Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano, 2:287.

⁵³ José F. Avila the president of the Workers’ Federation to the prefect of Oruro, Oruro, 12 August 1916, 228, “Recibido de Varios, 1916,” APO; Lora, Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano, 2:295.

official celebration and to organize events to commemorate the holiday. The four cooperating organizations were the Mutual Aid Society of Artisans (probably the oldest and most important of the four organizations), the May 1st Workers' Philharmonic, the Tunari Cooperative, and the Workers' Union of Bakers. At the beginning of August, these associations participated in a series of activities, both official and unofficial, celebrating Bolivia's independence. The night of 5 August 1916, the societies participated in a patriotic parade with their own "allegoric float." On 6 August, the four organizations participated in the official Civic Procession, passing before the "Patriotic Altar." Afterwards, they retired to the reception hall of the Mutual Aid Society of Artisans for a more private act featuring the distribution of "gifts among poor working families, prepared by the four societies." The following day, the four societies celebrated the opening of a new night school in Oruro installed in the building of the May 1st Workers' Philharmonic. This was a private affair of the four societies, but the prefect of the department attended as an honored guest at the ceremony; he also received an honorary diploma from the new school for his "valuable cooperation." On 9 August, the four organizations organized a series of athletic competitions to be held in the new Model Barracks; the next day, they prepared a picnic at two in the afternoon "made pleasant by a grand orchestra."⁵⁴ The whole list of planned events testifies to the depths of nationalist sentiment among the artisans and workers of early twentieth-century Oruro; the artisan societies' promotion of educational, cultural, and sporting events; and an important sympathy for workers mired in less fortunate economic circumstances. A few days after

⁵⁴ José F. Avila the president of the Mutual Aid Society of Artisans to the prefect of Oruro, Oruro, 3 July 1916, 228, "Recibido de Varios, 1916," APO.

the more celebratory events ended, the artisans and workers of Oruro banded together in a larger labor association.

On 12 August 1916, the pre-existing mutual aid societies in Oruro announced to the prefect the formation of a new organization—the Workers’ Federation. The long-standing Mutual Aid Society of Artisans held a dominant position in the new society. Its president, José F. Avila, also served as the president of the new Federation. The May 1st Workers’ Philharmonic, the Tunari Cooperative, and the Workers’ Union of Bakers also supported the new federation as did a fifth group: the Workers’ Union F.B.C. (*Unión Obrera F.B.C.*).⁵⁵

The new Workers’ Federation immediately gave the indication that it planned a more vigorous political existence than that of pre-existing mutual aid societies in Oruro. It also demonstrated an interest in representing more than just the interests of artisans; the leadership of the organization also sought to reform the working conditions of the mines. On 23 August 1916, José F. Avila penned a letter of complaint to the prefect of Oruro about unsafe working conditions in the mines of Oruro and the seeming callousness of certain mineowners. The specific incident discussed in the Workers’ Federation’s letter of complaint featured one unfortunate miner, N. Loaiza. On 21 August, a cave-in in the mines of the Socavón Mining Company trapped Loaiza; unfortunately for him, none of his co-workers or his supervisor noticed his absence. Only, “the insistent questions of the wife sparked their eventual discovery that...Loaiza was still alive buried in a place overlooked by the other workers.” They did not succeed in rescuing him until three in the morning two days after the accident. The Workers’ Federation complained that the

⁵⁵ “F.B.C.” may stand for “Football Club.” José F. Avila the president of the Workers’ Federation to the prefect of Oruro, Oruro, 12 August 1916, 228, “Recibido de Varios, 1916,” APO.

mining company did not “guarantee the life of its workers.” But as yet, the Workers’ Federation did not have the power to place direct pressure on the company; instead, they asked the prefect to, “intercede with said company, so that it might extend greater consideration to the working element and guarantee their lives.”⁵⁶ Despite the appeal to the prefect in the case of the unfortunate Loaiza, the Workers’ Federation also confronted perceived government abuse of artisans and workers.

In October 1916, the Workers’ Federation in Oruro, captained by vice-president Julio Saavedra and secretary N. Leclere, penned a letter of protest to six congressional representatives complaining of the police abuse of one Feliciano Mérida, artisan. The night of 5 October 1916, the police roused a drunken Mérida from his home and carted him off; en route to the police station, the Federation complained of being “cruelly punished en route by two officers.” In framing their protest, the Federation quoted a doctrine of Bolivian law: “The drunk should be extended all possible consideration by agents of the police, just as one who is ill.” Saavedra and Leclere argued that, in defiance of the cited law, “the police, whether day or night, in full public view, carry off drunks with the use of blows and other abuses.”⁵⁷ The congressional delegation asked the prefect to look into the charges and “to severely punish those who might be found guilty.”⁵⁸ Within just a few years of this incident, the Workers’ Federation no longer limited itself to penning letters of protests and began to organize successful strikes and work stoppages.

⁵⁶ José F. Avila the President of the Workers’ Federation to the prefect of Oruro, Oruro, 23 August 1916, 228, “Recibido de Varios, 1916,” APO.

⁵⁷ Julio Saavedra the vice-president and N. Leclere the secretary of the Workers’s Federation to the six representatives of Oruro in La Paz, Oruro, 7 October 1916 in the Congress of Deputies to the prefect of Oruro, La Paz, 19 October 1916, 228, “Recibido de Varios, 1916,” APO.

⁵⁸ Congress of Deputies to the prefect of Oruro, La Paz, 19 October 1916, 228, “Recibido de Varios, 1916,” APO.

In 1920, a political revolution brought to power a new presidential administration that initially supported some of these artisan and working class campaigns. In July, the insurgent Republican Party overthrew the Liberals, who had dominated Bolivian politics for a little over two decades, and seized control of the national government. Bautista Saavedra led the Republicans in this political “revolution” and became the new president of the republic. The Republican Party’s relationship with the urban popular classes had an important impact on the political consciousness of workers during the third decade of the twentieth century. The historian-politician Guillermo Lora wrote of the period that Saavedra’s administration so deceived the expectations of the working class that “it fortified among the laboring vanguard the need to give birth to a revolutionary party belonging to the workers.”⁵⁹ Initially, the workers of Oruro and northern Potosí rejoiced at the victory of the Republicans and the ascendancy of Bautista Saavedra; they took advantage of the political change to launch a number of successful strikes and press home a litany of complaints against their industrial employers. By 1923, the euphoria had devolved into dismay and shock.

Labor’s discontents bubbled to the surface on the eve of the Republican coup; this economic and political instability contributed to the swift and bloodless change of July 1920. The urban popular classes hungered for a new government. In May 1920, an organization calling itself the Workers’ Democratic Institution (*Institución Democrática Obrera*) wrote the Ministry of Development and Industry in La Paz to complain about the preferential treatment accorded to Chilean workers in the Antofagasta-Bolivia Railroad and Bolivian Railway Company and its discrimination against Bolivian workers. The

⁵⁹ Lora, Historia del movimiento obrero Boliviano, 2:355.

minister César M. Ochávez penned a scathing reply and forwarded a copy of his response to the prefect of Oruro. The minister declared that his office “has always been and continues to be actively concerned for addressing all justified complaints that have been presented whenever our citizens truly suffer an offence on the part of the railway companies.” Despite the high-minded declaration, the minister continued his letter with insults directed at the “notoriously deficient” Bolivian worker:

Sincerely many Bolivian workers do not satisfy their superiors in the execution of their labors and as in the railroad business, the attention must be efficient and constant, because if it was any other way the lives of the passengers would be in immediate risk; there is reason then that the Bosses concern themselves with the selection of the personnel that they have as their dependents, because the responsibility for any accident might justly fall on them as those responsible for supervising the traffic. In these circumstances one cannot but approve of the methods of internal discipline and order adopted by the Bolivian Railway Company.⁶⁰

His only constructive proposal to remedy what he saw as a lack of skilled Bolivian railway workers was a proposal forwarded to the administration of the company calling for the establishment of a machinist’s school in Uyuni for the training of maintenance personnel.

The railway workers of Oruro and Potosí struggled continuously with the intersection of nationality and class. The disputes and discontents expressed above actually tore the laborers’ own union apart in 1920. One of Bolivia’s most important early railroad workers’ unions appeared in La Paz on 3 August 1919 as the League of Railroad Employees and Workers (*Liga de Empleados y Obreros de Ferrocarriles*); Oruro and Potosí’s Railway Federation (*Federación Ferroviaria*) resulted from a schism

⁶⁰ César M. Ochávez the Minister of Development and Industry in the Development Section to the president de la Institución Democrática Obrera, La Paz, 17 May 1920 in César M. Ochávez the Minister of Development and Industry in the Development Section to the prefect of Oruro, La Paz, 17 May 1920, 271, “Ministerios, Hacienda, Industria, Guerra, 1920, Prefectura, Oruro,” APO.

in the older organization only a year later. The split illustrates the difficulties of organizing across company lines and across international borders. The original League of Railroad Employees and Workers sought to craft a national organization incorporating workers from Bolivia's several railway and tramway companies. A labor dispute in Chile led to the fracture of the League and the emergence of the Railway Federation in Oruro. In December 1919, some League members employed by the Antofagasta-Bolivia Railroad and the Bolivian Railway Company, a multi-national corporation with railroads and offices in both Bolivia and northern Chile, requested that strike funds controlled by the organization be sent to striking workers in Chile; the League's leadership denied the request citing its weak economic situation.⁶¹ Because of this negative decision, workers in Oruro and Uyuni, Potosí requested a reorganization of League allowing for greater autonomy of action at the local level. Eventually, workers employed by the Antofagasta-Bolivia Railroad and the Bolivian Railway Company abandoned the larger, national organization and formed the Railway Federation in Oruro on 6 March 1920: "removing ourselves from the association and subsequently breaking it."⁶² Company pressure also played an important role in breaking the workers of the Antofagasta-Bolivia Railroad and the Bolivian Railway Company away from the larger, national League. Luis Herrero, the president of the new Railway Federation, indicated as much in his correspondence with the president of the faltering League, Héctor Borda. On 23 March 1920, Herrero informed Borda that the Company would not negotiate with the League because it did not

⁶¹ Lora, *Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano*, 2: 402-404, 409.

⁶² "Memoria del Sr. Pdte. del Directorio Central de la Liga...", La Paz, 1920 quoted in Ibid.

represent an association of purely Antofagasta-Bolivia Railroad and the Bolivian Railway Company employees and laborers.⁶³

The break proved lethal for the League of Railroad Employees and Workers. In answer to a communiqué sent to Uyuni, Potosí in June 1920, the central committee of the League received the following disheartening response:

In response to the letters that have arrived here addressed to the President of the Committee of the League of Railroad Employees and Workers...I must inform you that said association no longer exists here since the organization of the Railway Federation...by unanimous agreement, the League members have decided to extinguish the League and form a new association with new statutes and a different constitution, without a dependent relationship on any other body, with an exclusive membership of this company's employees and rail workers....If you wish a relation with the Railway Federation, please direct yourself to its Secretary General.⁶⁴

The older association faded from the national political scene soon after receiving this devastating rebuke. The leadership of the League closed out its organizational existence with the recommendation that former members organize their own associations similar to the new Railway Federation, "as this is the only solution for the proletariat so as to guarantee in some way their rights."⁶⁵ The railway workers of Oruro and Potosí used the subject of international solidarity among the laborers of the Antofagasta-Bolivia Railroad and the Bolivian Railway Company to torpedo a national association of Bolivian workers organized across company lines. In the wake of the Republican Party's political "revolution" of 12 July 1920, the Railway Federation would occasionally return to the subject of nationalism and nationality, but as an independent organization, they often

⁶³ Lora, Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano, 2:416.

⁶⁴ L. Solórzano, Uyuni quoted in *Ibid.*, 2:410.

⁶⁵ "Memoria del Sr. Pde. del Directorio Central de la Liga...", La Paz, 1920 quoted in Lora, Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano, 2:410.

launched political attacks on Chilean workers laboring in Bolivia. This strong sense of nationalism among the urban popular classes often found reason for expression during the early years of President Bautista Saavedra's administration as part of a larger assertive trend on the part of the working class.

In the aftermath of the Republican coup of July 1920, mine workers around the city of Oruro launched a disciplined strike and won a series of concessions from their employers. The prefect of Oruro, Demetrio Canelas, presided over the resolution of the labor conflict on 16 August 1920 between four different mining companies and their workers: the Mining Company of Oruro, San José of Oruro, the Tetilla, and Santo Cristo Mining and Agricultural Company. Ricardo Perales—a member of the Socialist Party, a lawyer with a history of representing poor clients, and a future representative to the Bolivian Congress—attended the meeting along with Donato Téllez and Justo Montaña as representatives of the Workers' Federation of Oruro. The laborers of each mining company involved in the dispute also sent their own elected representatives to the meeting.⁶⁶ This was the first comprehensive and detailed labor contract ever won by striking mine workers in the department of Oruro. The session began with a reading and consideration of the workers' petitions. Eventually, those in attendance at the meeting came to an agreement on 23 different points. The companies accepted the power of the delegates in attendance to represent the workers that elected them, "in all that relates to the defense of their rights." The companies also promised to reverse some of their most

⁶⁶ Antonio Frías, Rómulo Chumacero, Alejandro Asteti, and Demetrio Torrez represented the workers of the Mining Company of Oruro. Elias Cárdenas, José R. Ponce, Nestor P. Rodríguez, Félix Bejarano, and Juan Mérida represented the workers of San José of Oruro. And Victor Ortiz represented the workers of the Santo Cristo Mining and Agricultural Company. Because of damage to the document, the names of the delegates representing the workers of the Tetilla could not be recovered.

draconian decisions in the labor conflict. “All of those workers who have been fired because of the current petition will be returned to their jobs,” the companies promised. The contract also established a strict schedule of labor for the mines. Between 7 am and 8 am, workers had an hour to prepare themselves for the workday; this included the traditional *aculli*, the almost ritualistic chewing of coca leaves. The mine laborers then confronted a workday structured as follows: work from 8:00 am to 11:30 am and lunch from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm. The workday ended at 4:30 pm. This schedule guaranteed the workers a daily “nine-and-a-half hour stay in the workplace with seven hours of actual labor.” The unions also won a five to ten percent pay hike “in proportion to the needs of the workers,” and the Council of Workers had a say in the actual award of raises.⁶⁷

The four companies also accepted three points limiting their power to manipulate the company stores of each mining encampment to the detriment of their workers; these same points also eliminated the ability of administrators to regulate commerce in the shadow of their industrial installations. Prices in the company store had to reflect the price of supplies in Oruro as a whole. The Council of Workers also claimed the power to “control and test the weight and price of goods;” workers engaged in these regulatory inspections enjoyed a guaranteed leave from work to complete the task. Finally, the managers agreed to the “liberty of commerce in the established encampments, and the companies could not under any circumstances obligate their workers to make their purchases in the company stores.”⁶⁸ This concession benefited not just the workers and

⁶⁷ “Meetin 16 de Agosto,” Acta, Oruro, 24 August 1920, 286, “Copiador Asuntos Administrativos, Comensando en 22 de Mayo 1920. Terminado en 2 de Junio de 192,..” APO.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

their families, but several segments of the urban popular classes engaged in petty-mercantile activities—activities the mining companies traditionally sought to regulate or even abolish.

The newly-won contract also spelled out detailed regulations protecting workers and their families in instances of illness, injury, and death. The companies pledged to take “all efficacious steps to guarantee the life and health of the workers with the strengthening and reinforcement of the galleries, shafts, etc., as recommended in the mining law.” Also, “The companies are obliged to protect the worker victims of accidents on the job.” The striking workers also imposed a strong support system of medical assistance on the four enterprises operating in the vicinity of Oruro:

In the case of illness, the workers will have a right to medical attention and a pharmacy paid for by the company plus a half-day’s pay, except in instances of illness brought on by drunkenness. In cases where there is a dispute over the type of illness involved, a doctor employed by Public Assistance will subject the sick worker to an exam whose certification will stipulate the obligation companies’ obligations.

Finally, in the case of fatal injury in the workplace caused by “falls, cave-ins, or any other professional risk,” the companies assumed the obligation to pay the unfortunate worker’s family an indemnity of one year’s full pay, “in conformity with the mining law,” plus “the cost of funeral expenses.”⁶⁹ Some of the points discussed in this paragraph make clear that mining companies often ignored the provisions of Bolivia’s mining codes; workers had to force a recognition of their responsibilities and obligations upon their employers through the use of a strike.

As a result of the August 1920 strike, workers imposed policies protecting wage laborers as well as contract workers in their employers. The new agreement promised a

⁶⁹ Ibid.

double wage when miners had to work on official, legal holidays. The company also promised to pay wage-laborers every fifteen days and to abolish “valueless tokens that cannot serve in commercial circulation.” For contract laborers, those bound up in ore-sharing agreements with the mineowners (*kajche*), the document contained a provision allowing workers to conduct an independent assay of their ore to establish its true value. “The companies are obliged to provide the contractors...a packet of ore...so that they might of their own account assay and establish a control over the measurements conducted by the companies,” read the document. Contract workers also earned a level of protection against runs of bad luck in the mines. When they lost money in the execution of their tasks, the owners agreed to compensate them for their time at the rate of 3.50 Bs. a day. The workers also demanded greater job security and greater respect and trust in the workplace. The agreement read:

No worker or laborer can be fired or suspended from their employment by lower-level management, they must limit themselves to informing their superiors of the infractions that might have occurred, and only the manager or the administrator might decree the dismissal after hearing from the accused and when it might be necessary from the Council of Workers. When a worker’s dismissal has been declared they will give him a fifteen-day warning or a salary indemnity equivalent to said time, except in cases of grave negligence.

The mining companies also agreed to abolish fines and corporal punishment—practices the workers considered insulting to their honor. Workers also sought an improvement in their housing. “The mining companies are obligated to provide hygienic housing to the workers in relation to the size of their families,” stipulated the agreement. The Council of Workers also won a voice in regulating the middle management of the mining companies so as to prevent a trampling of workers’ rights. “The abuses that are

committed by middle-management employees that are harmful for the workers, can be reported by them or through the Council of Workers to the management or administration respectively.” The workers also won the abolition of corporate security forces “not recognized by the government and when they duplicate existing officials.”⁷⁰

The mining companies won one concession from their striking workers. The laborers agreed to a prohibition against “the sale of alcoholic beverages in the established encampments, especially in the company store.” Management also won the right to “fire workers who show symptoms of drunkenness.”⁷¹ Despite this one concession on the part of the miners to management, the August 1920 agreement certified by the prefect of Oruro signaled a substantial victory for the working class of the region. Unfortunately for the laborers involved, enforcement of the new agreement was not always easy, and workers in other parts of Oruro and neighboring northern Potosí encountered difficulties forcing a similar accord on their employers.

Labor unrest also shook the mining camps of northern Potosí in the wake of the Republican Party’s overthrow of more than two decades of Liberal Party rule. Demetrio Canelas, the prefect of Oruro who negotiated an end to that city’s labor difficulties, proposed a similar settlement for the towns of the neighboring department. On 24 August 1920, Canelas wrote the Republican council in La Paz that, “The recent conflicts that have developed in this mining town between employers and workers have been resolved in a satisfactory manner. Today we held the last conference in which the final conditions of a broad agreement were reached.” The prefect proposed the extension of the Oruro accord to northern Potosí to pacify the striking workers of that region. “I have

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

sent a copy of this agreement to Uncía,” he reported, “instructing the subprefect to summon the management of the two mining companies in that town and to convince them of the need to enter into concessions.”⁷² Laborers in the region eventually won concessions, but their gains did not match those of their counterparts in Oruro.

The implementation of the August labor accords suffered several difficulties even in Oruro. On 19 August 1920, the prefect wrote the administration of the Itos Mining Company:

The labor federation of this town sent me a report yesterday that informed me of the suspension from their jobs of the workers Romelio Peñaloza and Aniceto Canedo, who were representatives to this office of the Itos mine belonging to the company that you manage, they worked to resolve the list of grievances composed by the workers.

The prefect gave the mining company the benefit of the doubt, suggesting that an employee “ignorant of the extent of the agreed-upon stipulations” had dismissed the two workers in clear violation of the clause that prohibited retaliation against labor representatives.⁷³ The government representative pushed for the reinstatement of the two dismissed men.

During the first year of Republican Party rule, workers in Oruro employed the strike as a tool for more than just wringing from their employers workplace demands such as better wages, job security, a social safety net, and a minimum workers’ control over the shop floor. Several unions began to employ work stoppages for political ends. In January 1921, several labor associations in Oruro paralyzed industry in the city to protest an exchange between rival politicians in the Bolivian Congress. The workers of

⁷² Prefect of Oruro to the Secretary General of the Government Council in La Paz, 24 August 1920, 263, “Copiador de Varios Oficios de 16 de 1919 hasta el 15 de Septiembre de 1920,” APO.

⁷³ The prefect of Oruro to Francisco Blick the manager of the Itos Mining Company, 19 August 1920, 263, “Copiador de Varios Oficios de 16 de 1919 hasta el 15 de Septiembre de 1920,” APO.

Oruro leapt to the defense of Representative Ricardo Soruco Ipiña, a member of the Salamanca faction of the Republican Party, when another Representative, Abel Iturralde, verbally assailed his character during a congressional session on 20 January 1921.⁷⁴ The Railway Federation of Oruro played a critical role in the wave of strikes that followed the insult to the honor of Representative Soruco Ipiña. The politician and lawyer had a close relationship with members of the Federation. In December 1920, Soruco Ipiña attended the first Railway Convention, a meeting of 80 delegates drawn from labor organizations across Bolivia.⁷⁵ The representative declared at the Convention: "If the Republican Party wishes to throw itself against the rights of the working class in a hostile manner, I prefer to abandon my obligations to the Republican Party and become nothing more than a railway representative, taking my seat in the Congress on the extreme Left."⁷⁶ Angered by the slight to a close political ally, the Railway Federation of Oruro paralyzed rail traffic in the department. "Yesterday at 5 pm the railway workers declared a work stoppage. Railroad lines on the Machacamarca-Uncía route as well as some services to La Paz are on strike," the prefect reported.⁷⁷ In solidarity with the Railway Federation, several other worker and artisan organizations in Oruro put an end to their labors as well. The Workers' Federation informed the prefect of:

A resolution approved in a great assembly of the working class held last night. A general strike has been decreed by a unanimous decision of all of the artisan associations that have a pact of solidarity with the Railway Federation, which finds itself today engaged in a work stoppage until the congressman Mr. Iturralde makes the asked for apology for his slanders

⁷⁴ General Tejada the prefect to the President of the Republic, 28 January 1921, 278, "Copiador de Telegramas de 20 de Julio de 1920 , Hasta 28 de Septiembre de 1921," APO.

⁷⁵ Lora, *Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano*, 2:416.

⁷⁶ Ricardo Soruco Ipiña quoted in *Ibid.*, 417.

⁷⁷ Tejada the prefect of Oruro to the prefect of Cochabamba, 278, "Copiador de Telegramas de 20 de Julio de 1920 , Hasta 28 de Septiembre de 1921," APO.

directed at the working classes in the person of Dr. Ricardo Soruco. The decision was that we begin today a general work stoppage among the artisan associations; it will be conducted in an environment of culture and respect for society and the authorities.⁷⁸

Departmental authorities feared that if not resolved quickly, the conflict might spread to the mining companies of the region, “where popular feeling is already tense because of the suspension of pay in some [mines], and the reduction of personnel and salaries in others.”⁷⁹

The strikes and work stoppages of late January 1921 angered several government officials; the political aims of the movement clashed with the bureaucrats’ conception of the limited, “legitimate” circumstances in which the working class might employ their right to strike. The prefect of La Paz, Óscar de Santa Cruz declared that in the current dispute “the working class has cast shame on the principal object of the right to strike, taking as their cause for declaring a stoppage of the railroads, an incident that occurred between Honorable National Representatives in one of the sessions of the Convention.”⁸⁰ The prefect obviously believed unions should only strike over limited wage disputes, not for political reasons. Despite the hostility of some government officials, official mediation quickly resolved the dispute. On 28 January 1921, the workers, the two politicians involved, and the prefect of Oruro reached a three-point agreement ending the dispute. First, Abel Iturralde agreed to send Ricardo Soruco a note of apology reading “that in the congressional incident dating to the 20th of this month, it was not his

⁷⁸ Donato Téllez the president and R. Perales to the prefect of the Department, Oruro, 28 January 1921 in General Tejada the prefect to the President of the Republic, La Paz, 278, “Copiador de Telegramas de 20 de Julio de 1920 , Hasta 28 de Septiembre de 1921,” APO.

⁷⁹ General Tejada the prefect to the President of the Republic, La Paz, 278, “Copiador de Telegramas de 20 de Julio de 1920 , Hasta 28 de Septiembre de 1921,” APO.

⁸⁰ Óscar de Santa Cruz the prefect of La Paz to the prefect of Oruro, La Paz, 29 January 1921, 282, “Fiscalías, T.N. de Cuentas, Aduana, Corte S., Municipalidades y otros, 1921, Prefectura, Oruro,” APO.

[Iturralde's] intention to offend the Railway Federation or the national proletariat in the person of the Honorable Congressman Mr. Ricardo Soruco." The final two points of the resolution sought the release of "the workers who because of their solidarity with the railway men's strike have been arrested," and protections against further persecution. "No further action shall be initiated, neither civil nor criminal, against the President, Secretary, Committee members, or railway men associated with the stoppage of railway traffic and the damages that they might have caused."⁸¹ The first years of Republican Party governance created a window for the working class of the country to insert themselves into national politics. In the wake of the conflict sparked by Iturralde's insult of Soruco Ipiña, the Railway Federation organized Bolivia's first national labor conference in Oruro in 1921. The meeting failed to create a durable framework for coordinating the actions of the nation's various local labor and artisan organizations. The influence of oligarchic political parties, especially that of the Republican Party, introduced a disruptive amount of political partisanship to the congress.⁸² Despite that, several politicians supported by the working class took advantage of the window offered by the political shake-up of 1920 to win seats in the Bolivian Congress.

Ricardo Perales, one of labor's representatives at the August 1920 negotiations that won important concessions from the mining companies of Oruro, won election to the Bolivian Congress in 1921; in January 1922, he began a short but vigorous congressional career pushing for social legislation favorable to the urban popular classes and the mining proletariat. As a lawyer in Oruro, Ricardo Perales fought for working-class clients in the

⁸¹ General Tejada the prefect to the President of the Republic, La Paz, 28 January 1921, 278, "Copiador de Telegramas de 20 de Julio de 1920 , Hasta 28 de Septiembre de 1921," APO.

⁸² Lora, Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano, 3:11.

courts and in the halls of the prefecture; many of the concerns that he saw there eventually appeared in the legislation he presented to congress. On 9 August 1921, Ricardo Perales and his client Francisco Chávez, a twenty-year employee of the Mining Company of Oruro, met in the prefecture with representatives of that enterprise, Ricardo Asebey and Gabriel Palenque. At that meeting, Perales protested Chávez's dismissal from his position at the mine. Various witnesses declared Chávez a reliable employee with two decades of experience with the company. One witness, Francisco Lazo, witnessed the incident that led to Chávez's dismissal. A foreman "wished to force him [Chávez] to labor in a gallery where Chávez declared work to be impossible because no one had yet done preparatory work there, because of this negative reply they fired him immediately," reported Lazo. Almost all of the witnesses called before the prefect to give testimony agreed that, "the Administrator...treats the workers poorly." The company refused to return Chávez's job, but the prefect did decree "that it is strict justice to have a certain consideration for an employee who has grown old in the service of an enterprise; the Mining Company of Oruro should pay him an indemnity of one month's salary."⁸³ Perales fought for a seat in the Bolivian Congress to fortify the job security and living standards of workers like Francisco Chávez.

While in La Paz, Ricardo Perales cooperated closely with Ricardo Soruco, another politician closely linked to the working class of Oruro, in drafting legislation that sought to improve working conditions in the mining industry. Perales proposed the creation of independent unions with substantial power in all of the nation's mines. Ideally, the unions would maintain a strong bargaining position vis-à-vis management;

⁸³ Oruro, 9 August 1921, 286, "Copiador Asuntos Administrativos, Comensando en 22 de Mayo 1920. Terminado en 2 de Junio de 1926," APO.

Perales also proposed that they control pricing in the company stores and regulate the assay of minerals—the quality of which sometimes affected wages. He sought to break the power of administrators over the mining camps. Liberty of commerce was to be guaranteed and regular civil authorities were to replace company police. As for the regulation of employment and wages, Perales proposed written and binding contracts, union control over the firing of workers, and two weeks pay as compensation for all dismissed workers. The proposed legislation also called for double pay on holidays and the elimination of company fines for worker infractions. Perales and Soruco also proposed a separate law promising a secure retirement and pensions. The Bolivian Congress failed to pass Perales' legislation. Eventually, the cooperation between Perales and Soruco broke down. Ricardo Soruco had grown cozy with President Bautista Saavedra and his wing of the Republican Party. In 1923, the Socialist Party and Perales broke with Soruco completely. As for Ricardo Perales, he served only one term and failed to win reelection.⁸⁴ Much of what Perales proposed actually appeared in the August 1920 labor contract that he had helped to negotiate in Oruro. That the Bolivian Congress failed to approve concessions already won from mining companies indicated the growing moderation of President Saavedra and the Republican Party and the rapid adaptation of the mining companies to the political shake-up of 1920.

Self-declared socialists like Ricardo Perales viewed the political coup of 12 July 1920 and Bautista Saavedra's rise to power with enormous hope. Yet even before winning election to the Bolivian Congress in 1921, Perales began to express disappointment with the new administration. "What a great deception we have suffered

⁸⁴ Klein, Parties, 73-74.

in witnessing the election in which the Republican Party debuts in power; deep bitterness we have felt at seeing Republican workers, urged on by their candidates, pursue and persecute independent citizens,” he wrote.⁸⁵ Ricardo Perales was one of the primary promoters of the Socialist Party in Oruro. The party hoped to win the working class of the country away from the parties of the oligarchy, the Liberals and the Republicans. A December 1919 pronouncement made clear the intention of the Socialist Party to form an independent workers’ party. It stated

The laborers have grouped themselves around the red banner; those who have taken bread to the victims of Uncía; those who have succored the miners of Huanuni, Monte Blanco, and Colquiri; those who have asked for labor laws from the Legislature; those who have established a night school to educate worker high school graduates; in total, those who have dedicated their lives to the service of labor’s cause, they have sworn a solemn oath in the name of God, the Homeland, and Honor to unite and call together their brothers to defend the sacred banner of the proletariat.

Workers: you who are still blindly devoted to the bourgeois parties, you should think upon the harm you do to your class and your cause.

Workers: Are you on the side of the rich or that of the poor?
If you are poor, unite with us!⁸⁶

Until 1923, many workers in Oruro and northern Potosí refused to believe that President Bautista Saavedra and the Republican Party did not represent their interests. Had they not made unprecedented strides in their political organization since 1916? Had not the bloodless political coup of 1920 opened a window of opportunity for several associations in the region to press home a series of successful strikes? The violent repression of workers in Uncía, Potosí in June 1923 shattered many illusions.

⁸⁵ Ricardo Perales quoted in Guillermo Lora, Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano, 2:355

⁸⁶ “A la clase obrera de Oruro,” Oruro, 1 December 1919 quoted in Guillermo Lora, Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano, 3:137.

The Massacre of Uncía, 1923

The government's violent reaction to the northern Potosí strike surprised many workers. Most laborers saw the Republican government of Bautista Saavedra as a receptive ally; the Massacre of Uncía shattered this impression. The crackdown stripped many workers of their faith in oligarchic republicanism and liberal-democratic government; artisans and workers viewed the rise of Saavedra as a victory for the working class—the fulfillment of their growing faith in the promise of democracy. Many hoped that a liberal-democratic government could successfully balance and mediate among the various social and economic groups that made up the nation. Since independence, the government of Bolivia consistently failed to live up to this dream. Educated elements among the popular classes hoped that the dream might become reality if only the republic found the correct balance of laws, leadership, and representation. This faith in the promises of liberal-democracy dominated the nascent Bolivian labor movement during the first decades of the twentieth century. Competing ideological currents such as anarchism, socialism, and Marxism lay in the background, only occasionally bubbling to the surface. The Massacre of Uncía severely tarnished the prestige of republicanism allowing for the growth of more radical political philosophies.⁸⁷

This chapter opened with a narrative of a few of the ceremonial activities surrounding the foundation of the Central Labor Federation of Uncía: a march, speeches, and symbolic acts of charity. After the morning's events, the workers and artisans of

⁸⁷ Guillermo Lora severely questions Bautista Saavedra's credentials as a social reformer. Other scholars credit him with enacting substantial social reforms during his presidency. Lora instead credits the long-term growth and agitation of the labor movement; workers began fighting for reforms during the two-decades long period of Liberal Party rule. Lora, *Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano*, 2:353-354.

Uncía and Llallagua met in a “grand popular assembly” to finalize the foundation of the new Federation. The assembled workers vowed to transcend political differences and construct the new organization along fundamental class lines, as they perceived them. “By unanimous agreement, all of those in attendance resolved to found the Central Labor Federation of Uncía for the ends of patriotism, struggle, and worker solidarity casting out from its bosom political rancor and disagreement that only contribute to the dispersal of the working element’s strength,” they wrote.⁸⁸ While the founding membership of the Federation sought to minimize political division within their organization and place the collective concerns of the urban popular classes above all other considerations, the Central Labor Federation of Uncía was not completely apolitical; it did not explicitly prohibit politicking or political affiliation among its membership. Ideas propagated and promoted by the traditional oligarchic parties such as Bolivian nationalism and patriotism permeated the Federation and its membership as a whole.

In addition to naming the leadership of the new organization, the Central Labor Federation of Uncía’s founding document devoted a hefty paragraph to a delineation of labor’s friends and enemies in northern Potosí.⁸⁹ The Federation singled out the subprefect of the Bustillos Province, David Michel, and the intendant of the security police, Gerardo Tórrez Ruiz, for a “vote of applause,” because of their “patriotic and just stance in defense of the rights and prerogatives of abused and oppressed workers.” As

⁸⁸ Quoted in Rivera L., *La masacre de Uncía*, 19-20.

⁸⁹ The leadership of the Central Labor Federation of Uncía was: Guillermo Gamarra, president, representing “the workers of the La Salvadora Company of Mr. Simón I. Patiño”; Gumercindo Rivera L., first vice-president, representing the artisans of the region; Manuel Herrera, second vice-president, representing the workers of the Tin Company of Llallagua; Julio M. Vargas, treasurer, an artisan; Ernesto Fernández, general secretary, an artisan; Marcián Arana, secretary of acts, of the La Salvadora Company; and Ezequiel Pareira, Melquiades Maldonado, Espectador Mendoza, Julio Soto, Francisco Irusta and Rigoberto Oquendo, representatives. The Federation drew its replacement representatives from, “All of the Presidents, Vice-presidents, and Secretaries of the distinct Societies that exist in this place.”

for enemies of the working class in the region, the Federation identified two—Emilio Díaz, manager of the Tin Company of Llallagua and that company's lawyer, Germán Noya. The leadership of the Federation vowed to immediately dispatch a letter of protest to the government in La Paz denouncing,

The unqualified abuses and outrages frequently committed by said Company against the national working element, we hereby declare the previously mentioned Manager an unwanted person by the laboring element and in consequence we request his immediate deportation from the Republic, so as to avoid future abuses that might provoke disagreeable consequences for the tranquil development of the mining industry.

In their first declaration, Central Labor Federation of Uncía emphasized the language of nationalism; the manager Emilio Díaz was Chilean, as was the company he worked for (at least in name). The artisans and workers of northern Potosí sought to use the ideology of nationalism to bridge the chasm of class separating them from the Bolivian state. The Federation hoped that President Saavedra, as a Bolivian, would react with outrage at Díaz and Noya's "reiterated campaigns of violence against national workerism."⁹⁰

The Republican government of Saavedra dispatched a special delegate to northern Potosí to defuse the growing tension between labor and capital. Yet because of the perceived bias of the government's emissary, the Federation resolved to send their own commission to the capital to confer with the central government. The delegation consisted of four Federation members: Gumerindo Rivera L., a vice-president of the Federation; Marcián Arana, representing the workers employed by Simón Patiño's La Salvadora Company; Juan L. Sotomayor, a delegate from the Tin Company of Llallagua; and finally, Melquiades Maldonado, representing the artisans of Llallagua and Uncía.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Quoted in Rivera L., *La masacre de Uncía*, 20-21.

⁹¹ Rivera L., *La masacre de Uncía*, 71-72.

Several scholars have argued an anarcho-syndicalist influence on the earliest of Bolivia's labor federations, yet in the May 1923 instructions to the four labor delegates from northern Potosí there was little of the distrust of governmental authority generally associated with anarchist political thought; one finds instead a surprising faith in liberal-democratic institutions and the Bolivian government: "We have faith in the justice of our cause and more faith in the acts of our Government."⁹²

In its petition to Saavedra, the Central Labor Federation of Uncía further elaborated on its objectives; the four representatives of the union placed the document directly into the hands of the President just four days later. The Federation primarily sought to defend its right to organize in the face of unrelenting company persecution. The workers and artisans continued to push for the deportation of Emilio Díaz, the Chilean manager of the Tin Company of Llallagua. The petition identified him as an inveterate opponent of unionization, and the Federation again labeled him "an unwanted person by the laboring element." Among his various offenses, the union cited, "his despotism, his abuses, and his depressing outrages...against national workerism." In point two of the petition, the Federation criticized the lawyer Noya. Unlike Díaz, Noya was a Bolivian citizen, and as such, they attacked him for defending the interests of a Chilean company over the "national dignity of his compatriots." In point three, the members of the Federation assailed Díaz's underlings and thugs in the workplace as "blind instruments of abuse and of tyranny." The workers singled out three security guards employed in the Catavi Mill, accusing them of "brutal and dishonest words" directed at workers' wives. In the final five points of the petition, union members laid out

⁹² Guillermo Gamarra the president and Ernesto Fernández the secretary to Gumercindo Rivera L., Melquiades Maldonado, Marcián Arana, and Juan L. Sotomayor, Uncía, 15 May 1923 quoted in *Ibid.*, 72.

the steps they felt the government should take to ensure labor's right to organize in northern Potosí. First, they sought the reinstatement of fifteen workers fired from the Tin Company of Llallagua because of their membership in the Federation. Beyond that, they called for unmolested access to the Tin Company of Llallagua's dependencies for the "free development our ideas, organization, and negotiation." The union also demanded the legal recognition of their organization on the part of the two most important mining companies in northern Potosí—the aforementioned Tin Company of Llallagua and Simón Patiño's La Salvadora Company. They sought guarantees against "hostilities" and demand the right to "legal meetings...inside the camps." Finally, the members of the Federation closed their petition to President Saavedra by assuring the government that they only sought the "improvement of the working class," and that all of the criticism and propaganda against the Central Labor Federation of Uncía, accusing it of "pernicious political goals," were nothing more than "calumnious and biased accusations"⁹³

In addition to appealing directly to the Bolivian government, the Federation sought the solidarity of other labor associations across the country. The union ordered its delegates to meet with and strengthen the organization's relationship with other groups in both the departments of Oruro and La Paz. Before the 1930s, no national body existed to coordinate and unify Bolivia's local laboring societies. In the instructional guide given the Federation's delegates in May 1923, several points provided guidance in building a relationship with other associations and crafting cross-class political alliances. It suggested:

⁹³ "Pliego de Peticiones que la 'Federación Obrera Central Uncía' presenta ante el Excmo. Presidente de la República, Doctor Bautista Saavedra," Uncía, 14 May 1923 quoted in Rivera L., La masacre de Uncía, 85-87.

Establish an agreement with all of our sister Federations in Oruro, Machacamarca, Corocoro, and La Paz, talking and consulting with them as to the best means by which we might consolidate our strength; promising in return, in the name of this Federation, to provide them analogous assistance when the moment comes for them to clamor for their rights and prerogatives.

The workers also sought to allay exaggerated fears among the dominant classes of the country; they did this by entering into a reassuring communication with the press in the cities of Oruro and La Paz. “The Central Labor Federation of Uncía has no political affiliation, nor has it attacked the Companies or the foreign element,” they reported, “they have the right to make their home in the Republic, with all of the guarantees that are granted by our Constitution.” Despite the declarations of political neutrality, the Federation considered some politicians more sympathetic to their cause than others. The workers and artisans of northern Potosí especially identified with representatives of the Socialist Party. The instructions carried by the four delegates to La Paz recommended that they consult with Ricardo Perales, Ricardo Soruco Ipiña, and H. Pedro N. López, politicians who “have always aided the proletarian cause, eternally swindled and deceived.”⁹⁴

The Federation’s solidarity campaign produced immediate results in neighboring Oruro; labor organizations there responded sympathetically to the plight of workers in northern Potosí. The Machacamarca-Uncía Railway Federation dispatched the following telegram to the leadership of the Central Labor Federation of Uncía:

We have come to learn that the Federation is going through a rather difficult period because of the machinations practiced by that despotic and pernicious foreigner who goes by the name Emilio Díaz, Manager of the

⁹⁴ Guillermo Gamarra the president and Ernesto Fernández, Uncía, 15 May 1923 quoted in Rivera L., La masacre de Uncía, 73

Llallagua [Company], and he is accompanied by a lawyer Noya, they seek nothing more than to sidetrack the grand and just proletarian ideal.

In our sadness at these events, let me inform you that with satisfaction this Federation has chosen to accompany you with our decided moral support, and in effect we have sent a telegram of protest to the Minister of Government.⁹⁵

The Central Labor Federation of Uncía thanked the Machacamarca-Uncía Railway Federation for its support and the letter to the government. The northern Potosí labor association also assured its ally of its numerical strength, the unity of the organization, and its determination to fight; it expressed confidence in an immediate victory by stating:

At the moment the federated membership stands at 1,800 men, between workers and laborers of both companies, united and firm as if one man and resolved to fight until the end if the circumstances require it. With this potent, proud, and wise strength, we have the right to demand a radical solution to the evils that, since Emilio Díaz has managed the Llallagua Company, our working countrymen have had to suffer. And even more, we have faith in the triumph of our HOLY CAUSE when we see that all of our sister organizations in the Republic accompany us with valor, with integrity, giving us the essence of their boundless patriotic energy, and their manhood. A thousand thanks for that comrade.⁹⁶

The Central Labor Federation of Uncía demanded little of their counterparts throughout Bolivia, only “their moral support in the form of letters to the President of the Republic.”⁹⁷ The Federation had enormous faith in the goodwill and sympathies of the Republican Party administration in La Paz; union workers in Llallagua and Uncía sought to exhaust all legal avenues of appeal before resorting to a strike.

After meeting with President Bautista Saavedra on 18 May 1923, the Federation’s four delegates returned to the tense political environment of northern Potosí. Even before

⁹⁵ B. Mújica the president and S. Sierra A. the secretary to the President of the Federación Obrera Central Uncía, Machacamarca, 14 May 1923 quoted in Rivera L., *La Masacre de Uncía*, 76-77.

⁹⁶ Guillermo Gamarra the president and Ernesto Fernández the secretary to the president of the Federación Ferroviaria Machacamarca-Uncía, Uncía, 15 May 1923 quoted in Rivera L., *La masacre de Uncía*, 78.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

the return of the worker representatives, the mining companies of the region were making their own overtures to the Bolivian government. During the evening of 20 May 1923, the administrator of the La Salvadora Company in Oruro dispatched the following telegram to his manager in Uncía: “I have just met with the Minister.... He has shown himself determined to take all of the necessary measures to repress the type of subversion that the Federation members are planning to carry out and to capture and expel the agitators.”⁹⁸ On 31 May, the new police intendant in Uncía sought to capture Ernesto Fernández, secretary general of the Federation, and lock him in the train station; a handful of nearby workers intimidated the intendant into releasing Fernández.⁹⁹ As the Central Labor Federation of Uncía prepared its membership for a strike to force a resolution in the region, the government of President Bautista Saavedra mobilized the Bolivian military to fortify the mining camps of northern Potosí. On 2 June 1923, four regiments began armed patrols through the streets of Uncía.¹⁰⁰ Both the La Salvadora Company and the Tin Company of Llallagua worked to win the sympathies of the officers and soldiers assigned to the region. As units from Oruro began their mobilization to northern Potosí, the companies sought to receive them in relative luxury. Said one mine manager:

For the lodgings of the officers.... I have today purchased eight cots and five complete beds, sheets and blankets, a lavatory set...chairs, etc. that I am carrying. Add to the furniture in each room a washbasin, taking them from the employees’ house. Detail the necessary personnel to do a detailed cleaning of all of the mentioned bedrooms.

⁹⁸ “Conferencia celebrada entre el señor P.D. Pacheco de Oruro y el señor F. Blicke de Uncía. De horas 21.33 a 22.10 del 20 Mayo de 1923,” “Telegramas, Mayo 1 a Mayo 31 de 1923,” Archivo de la Casa Simón I. Patiño, Universidad Técnica de Oruro (hereafter cited as ACSP-UTO).

⁹⁹ Lora, *Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano*, 2:385.

¹⁰⁰ The government dispatched the following four regiments to northern Potosí: the “Sucre,” the “Ballivián,” the “Camacho,” and the “Batallón Técnico.” Ibid., 2:386.

The company store should take care of...the troops' food, and everything should be of the highest quality and abundant.

The commanders and officers will eat in the administration's dining room; you shall order a cook and servants to be ready to attend them.¹⁰¹

In one telegram, the administration of Simón I. Patiño's La Salvadora Company described Díaz's preparations in Llallagua: "Díaz is sparing no expense; he has given orders to treat them [the soldiers] like kings."¹⁰² All of the exaggerated attention to the military regiments paid off for the companies when the government declared a state of siege during the first days of June 1923.

At 11 in the morning on 4 June 1923, two military officers and the manager of the La Salvadora Company visited Guillermo Gamarra, president of the Central Labor Federation of Uncía, at his place of work in the Company's machine shop. The three invited Gamarra to the office of the subprefect to talk over the Federation's demands once again. Numerous workers counseled their president not enter the subprefecture; Gamarra dismissed their suspicions. Once inside, he discovered that government officials had begun rounding up union officers and their sympathizers at 9:45 that morning. By the time Gamarra arrived, the military had already detained four other individuals: Gumercindo Rivera L., one of the Federation's vice-presidents; Meltión Goytia, president of the local Republican Party; Silverio Saravia, a judge in Uncía; and Gregorio Vicenti, another lawyer. The military detained the final three men because of their suspected sympathies for the Federation's cause. When news of the detentions spread, crowds of

¹⁰¹ "Conferencia celebrada entre los srs. Scott y López de Llallagua y el Sr. E. Díaz de Oruro. De hrs. 14.10 a 15.-5 del 22 de Mayo 1923," "Telegramas, Mayo 1 a Mayo 31 de 1923," ACSP-UTO.

¹⁰² "Conferencia celebrada entre el Sr. P.D. Pacheco de Oruro y el señor F. Blicck de Uncía. De hrs. 16.20 a 17.-5 del 22 Mayo de 1923," "Telegramas, Mayo 1 a Mayo 31 de 1923," ACSP-UTO.

workers began to gather in the Alonso de Ibañez Plaza facing the office of the subprefect.¹⁰³

At five in the afternoon, the day shift finished with their labors in the mines and flooded the plaza, adding the weight of their number to the workers already gathered there. The growing body of men, women, and children continued to demand the release of the detainees, shouting at the military officials and soldiers, “Shameless men, you have sold out to the companies!” In an attempt to calm the gathered workers, the officers in charge forced Guillermo Gamarra to address the crowd. He said,

Comrades: we are grateful for the solidarity that you have shown us with such a mass gathering in this plaza to demand our liberty; be convinced that we have committed no crime, yet they have reduced us to jail like common criminals and have told us that we are going to be carried off to prison, where we will go not as detainees, but as the victims of infamous intrigues. Please return to your homes and rest comrades; you surely need it.

When the military men forced Gumercindo Rivera L. to address the assembly, he repeated Gamarra’s words and added:

If we are taken to La Paz, as they have told us, we will go with a serene and proud demeanor...we have done nothing more in organizing the Federation than to demand that the rights of the workers be respected by the Companies; that the contracts be real contracts...that they pay you what you have really earned with so much labor and sacrifice; that the workers have relatively comfortable and hygienic housing rather than the hovels in which you now live. Even though we have not yet asked for all of these things, the management and their lawyers already know that these demands are inevitable, and because of this, they have resorted to all sorts of intrigues to destroy the Federation, and because of this they have denounced us...as conspirators against the government...and the government, instead of looking into the reality of things using impartial persons...they have given credence to false and bias reports...they have sent to this mining camp almost the whole of the military as if it were some punitive campaign. The government has been deceived by its own Delegates, as we have informed them several times; but as the word of the

¹⁰³ Lora, Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano, 2:388-389; Rivera L., La masacre de Uncía, 132-133.

workers is little believed by the government, we today find ourselves detained...we will go wherever they want to take us with a tranquil conscience and the satisfaction of having organized the Central Labor Federation of Uncía, whose leadership we are temporarily forced to leave because of the circumstances, we believe that among the thousands of comrades who are left, those who are ready will place themselves at the head of the Federation, and they will perhaps direct it better than we have done. Please return to your homes, comrades.

Rivera's pronouncement infuriated the military officials detaining him: "You, instead of pacifying the angry tempers of the workers, you have stirred them up even more with your provocative words!"¹⁰⁴ At this point, the shooting began in the plaza. The soldiers killed four workers and wounded twelve; during the next couple of days, three of the wounded would die.¹⁰⁵

The day after the killings, the Central Labor Federation of Uncía declared a general strike in northern Potosí. The military deported Gamarra and Rivera to the department of Oruro on 5 June 1923 at 10:00 o'clock in the morning. The government held them in the isolated provincial town of Corque until November 28. The authorities eventually shipped, to Corque, two other Federation members—Primitivo Albarracín and Néstor Camacho. The administration of President Bautista Saavedra exiled Ernesto Fernández to Peru; Melquiades Maldonado fled to Argentina. Back in Llallagua and Uncía, the strike continued until June 9; on that day, the government imposed a resolution on the Federation unfavorable to its members. The authorities split the association in two, prohibiting a union between the workers of the La Salvadora Company and the

¹⁰⁴ Rivera L., La masacre de Uncía, 136-138.

¹⁰⁵ Lora, Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano, 2:392.

Llallagua Tin Company; regional unity across company lines had been the principal objective of the Central Labor Federation of Uncía.¹⁰⁶

Tensions in the workplace continued after the massacre between a number of laborers and employees who had remained loyal to management. On 4 July 1923, Patricio Álvarez, chief mechanic in Patiño's La Salvadora Company, exchanged heated words with his supervisor. Bliet, the manager of the mining company, ascribed the argument to "the antagonism that exists between strikers and those employees who remained loyal to the Company during the recent strike." The administrator of the mine immediately suspended Álvarez; the mechanic protested exchanging words with the administrator, "giving rise to another incident between him and the administrator." Bliet himself eventually had to intervene in support of his underlings, "giving the definitive order that employees must maintain discipline in a strict and just manner."¹⁰⁷

The Bolivian state and the mining companies of northern Potosí cooperated in dismembering the Central Labor Federation of Uncía, yet the workers demonstrated enormous prescience of the consolidation of industrial capital in the region. In 1924, Simón I. Patiño made public his majority stake in the Llallagua Tin Company, giving him a monopoly control of mining in northern Potosí. The announcement was the culmination of Patiño's secret, nine-year plan to slowly buy a controlling stake in the rival company. In the United States, Patiño created a new holding company, the Patiño Mines and Enterprises Consolidated Inc. in July 1924. The new entity officially merged the Llallagua Tin Company, the La Salvadora Company, and the three-year-old

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 2:392-393.

¹⁰⁷ "Conferencia con Uncía. De horas 10.35 del 5 de Julio 1923," "Telegramas, Mayo 1 a Mayo 31 de 1923," ACSP-UTO.

Machacamarca-Uncía railway.¹⁰⁸ The unification of northern Potosí's most important mines typified the consolidation of mining in the hands of just a few companies during the first decades of the twentieth century. When the workers attempted a similar unification of their interests, they met with the bullets of the Bolivian military.

The organization of the Central Labor Federation of Uncía, the union's ensuing appeal to the government of President Bautista Saavedra, and the workers' disbelief at the violent repression of their movement in northern Potosí illustrate perfectly the level of ideological and organizational development attained by the Bolivian labor movement during the first two decades of the twentieth century; the events of 1923 also stand as proof of what still needed to be done to strengthen the independence and ideology of syndicalist organizations in the country. In the wake of the massacre in Uncía, workers began to express a growing skepticism in the more traditional oligarchic parties and the Bolivian state in general. The violent confrontation between miners and the military established a pattern of relations between the nation's unions and the military that would dominate the history of Bolivia for the rest of the twentieth century. The workers never completely extirpated the oligarchy's republican thought from the country's labor movement, but after the killings of 1923, the appeal of alternative ideologies—socialism and anarcho-syndicalism—only grew stronger

An Ideology of their Own, 1924-1929

¹⁰⁸ Geddes, Patino, 180-183.

Two post-1923 developments illustrate the new, more autonomous growth of the Bolivian labor movement after the violence in Uncía. One was the rising influence of Tristan Marof's socialist thought on the working class of the country, and the other was the organization of the Third Workers' Conference in Oruro in 1927. Marof encouraged workers to abandon their faith in the traditional oligarchic parties and establish their own political groupings. He proposed the overthrow of traditional economic relations, demanding land reform in the countryside and the nationalization of the mining industry. Many of his proposals became the goals of Bolivia's working class. The Third Workers' Conference, held in Oruro four years after the Massacre of Uncía, towered over previous national meetings in both attendance and ideological vigor. Labor associations across Bolivia continued to inch their way toward the creation of a durable, national workers' federation; all of this in a political environment where the Republican Party and its various factions continued to dominate the presidency and the congress.

In the wake of the Massacre of Uncía, President Saavedra clamped down on his political opponents. In 1924, he crushed several political rebellions and eventually succeeded in calming the anger, if not resentment, of the urban popular classes with a series of modest social reforms. During the final months of his presidency, he engineered the victory of a seemingly pliant successor in the May 1925 elections. When the president-elect José Gabino Villanueva began to espouse a more independent political line, Saavedra had the election annulled; this sparked a new crisis within the Republican Party. Eventually Saavedra accepted the elevation of a party rival to the presidency: Hernando Siles, and agreed to a comfortable political exile in Europe.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Klein, Parties, 82-85.

Siles joined the Republican Party in 1920; he allied himself with Saavedra who was engaged in power struggle with Daniel Salamanca for control of the party and eventually the office of the presidency. Siles recruited an important following among younger party members and the military. He played a pivotal role in imposing labor peace in northern Potosí in 1923 (a peace hostile to the workers); eventually Saavedra came to resent his growing popularity. The majority of the Republican Party imposed Siles' candidacy on Saavedra in the crisis environment of 1925. Despite the occasionally strong opposition of labor organizations, a radical movement among university students, border clashes with the Paraguayan military, and the collapse of the international capitalist economy in 1929, Siles' presidency lasted until 1930. In June of that year, a group of pro-Salamanca military officers seized power; in February 1931, Daniel Salamanca became the new president of Bolivia. Against this backdrop of Republican Party infighting, the working class of Oruro and northern Potosí continued to experiment with new ideological programs and to push for the creation of a national labor federation. The city of Oruro even hosted the Third Workers' Conference of 1927. The socialist ideas of Gustavo A. Navarro, a.k.a. Tristan Marof, occupied a place of honor at the gathering.¹¹⁰

Gustavo A. Navarro, born 1898 to a poor family in Sucre, grew up scarred by the aristocratic pretensions of Bolivia's former capital. He started his political life in 1920 as a militant in Bautista Saavedra's Republican Party. In the aftermath of the July coup, he enjoyed a 24-hour appointment as the governor of the National High School in La Paz; jealous political rivals quickly drove him from the post. Eventually President Saavedra,

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 85-131.

whom Navarro greatly admired, appointed the young man consul in Geneva, Switzerland. In Europe, Marxist and socialist thought exerted a profound influence on the expatriate South American intellectual.¹¹¹ A press in Belgium produced his first overtly political work in 1926, La justicia del Inca; with the publication of this short book, Navarro adopted the pen name Tristan Marof.¹¹²

In La justicia del Inca, Marof looked to an idealized Andean past for political inspiration. The work of M. Rouma, L'Empire des Incas et son communisme autocratique, convinced the young Bolivian intellectual that the Inca Empire practiced a primitive form of communism. "During the Inca domination of the nation that is called Bolivia, it undoubtedly enjoyed greater benefits than those provided today by a republican regime," Marof argued. He denounced the politics and government of 1920s Bolivia and the class structure they held in place. According to his text,

It does not matter if an electoral victory belongs to the Liberal, Progressive, Radical, Blue, or Conservative Party, the personalities are the same, and their programs are with small variations identical, their methods identical. All share a tacit agreement to exploit the indigenous class and to maintain their privileges. Their only objective: private property and political power in their hands. The rest must labor to maintain the politics of bourgeois ambition, simple hate, imbecilic pretensions, and work the land without owning it. In other words, a happy life for twenty percent of the population at the cost and sacrifice of the rest.

What the young Bolivian socialist proposed was a return to the supposed communist ideals of the Andes' Inca past, but with "the advantages of modern advances, efficient machines that economize time, leaving the spirit free for other speculations."¹¹³

¹¹¹ Lora, Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano, 3:296-298, 302-304.

¹¹² Marof, La justicia del Inca.

¹¹³ Ibid., 7, 18, 25.

In his thinking, Marof drew lessons from the Russian Revolution of 1917; he acknowledged Bolivia's relatively limited industrial development—the uneven advance of capitalism in the country. Despite the poverty of the nation, he still called for an immediate socialist revolution. “The formidable fighting spirit of the new continent cannot tranquilly wait with arms crossed its material evolution.” He argued, “Spirit and utility should begin the socialist era without believing that capitalist development is first necessary.... Capitalist development in the new states will simply turn them over with their hands and feet bound to the Yankees.” In part, this was Marof's own reformulation of Leon Trotsky's idea of the “Permanent Revolution,” that in underdeveloped nations, revolutionaries should seek to leap over a capitalist stage of economic development and government directly into socialism. But this was only a partial reformulation; Trotsky warned against the isolation of socialism in a handful of impoverished nations. Socialism in one country could not ultimately succeed. Marof was less careful on this point. “I declare that the American revolution should not wait for a capitalist flowering;” he asserted, “it should capture its own national capital and harmoniously begin its own development.” In making this proposal, Marof employed a rather flexible definition of “capital.” “The capital of America is the mines, the oil wells, the thousands of workers, the intelligence in service to the State,” he asserted.¹¹⁴ All of Marof's proposals for Bolivia depended upon the nationalization of the mining industry.

Marof played an important role in popularizing the slogan “*Tierras al pueblo, minas al estado*” (“The land to the people, mines to the state”). With the expropriation of large, private landholdings and their redistribution to the rural poor, Bolivian

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 15.

revolutionaries might reverse one of South America's historic injustices, but agrarian reform would not provide a financial base for further change. "Taxing agriculture makes no sense as articles of consumption should not be exported," he argued.¹¹⁵ Because of the country's poverty, Marof saw only one source of secure revenue for a socialist Bolivia, and that was "the exploitation of the mines by the State." With the profits of a nationalized mining industry, the country might pay its international debt and revitalize the nation's railroads. Ownership of the railways was a special point of honor. "These Bolivian railroads, built with Bolivian money and the sacrificial sale of national territory!" Once the country controlled the mining industry, Marof envisioned the creation of a planned, self-sufficient economy. "We must open new horizons according to a central plan that studies the economy of the country," he proposed, "and we must build factories to make necessities in such a manner that we are liberated from Europe and the United States."¹¹⁶ Marof's was an ambitious program that appealed to a growing working class struggling to consolidate its strength.

The young socialist thinker did not attend the Third Workers' Congress held in Oruro in 1927, but his ideas pervaded the reunion's deliberations. At the Congress's opening, the teacher Vargas Vilaseca read a message from Marof to the gathered workers. The playing of "The International" (the anthem of the global socialist movement) at the ceremony signaled a growing awareness among Bolivia's workers of important ideological and political currents emanating from Europe. Leadership in the Congress fell to a tailor from Potosí and Sucre, Rómulo Chumacero; a long-time labor

¹¹⁵ At the beginning of the twentieth century Bolivia relied upon import and export taxes. Aside from the proposal to nationalize the mining industry, Marof did not really propose new types of taxes to expand the country's tax base.

¹¹⁶ Marof, *La justicia del Inca*, 27, 54-56.

activist, he also held the position of president during the Second Workers' Congress held in the city of La Paz in 1925. The Third Workers' Congress spent a significant amount of time discussing the plight of Bolivia's rural population—the "Indian question." The Congress's resolutions and declarations on this subject have already been discussed in Chapter Three of this dissertation. The gathering also continued to struggle with the creation of a durable, national labor association. In an earlier Congress, that of 1925, the Bolivian working class resolved to organize a National Confederation of Labor, but the actual structure and powers of that umbrella union remained points of discussion and debate. The 1927 Congress failed to produce a definitive decision, and a national association of Bolivian workers would not emerge until another Congress in 1936.¹¹⁷

While the Third Workers' Congress failed to produce a viable National Confederation of Labor, the meeting did issue a number of important declarations that illustrate the continued leftward movement of the Bolivian working class. In its Declaration of Principles, the delegates argued, "the primary proletarian struggle is to destroy the whole of the bourgeois economic system." Despite the revolutionary rhetoric, the workers' movement still planned to contain their political and economic actions within the existing framework of the Bolivian state. The Declaration advocated the use of direct action "to pressure the bosses and even the State to secure our rights by employing boycotts, strikes, actions in the streets, and demonstrations."¹¹⁸ The workers did not yet advocate the overthrow of the Bolivian government as a servant of capital; they continued to push for a transformation of society with progressive social legislation.

¹¹⁷ Lora, *Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano*, 2:122-131, 3:23-24.

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Lora, *Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano*, 3:30.

The administration of President Hernando Siles moved immediately to suffocate the working-class movement and destroy any momentum gained at the Third Workers' Congress. Denouncing a supposed "communist" plot to overthrow the government, Siles exiled Tristan Marof and a number of other radical political and labor leaders. During the Third Workers' Congress at Oruro, the delegates resolved to hold their next gathering in the city of Potosí on 5 June 1928 (that date was chosen to honor the victims of the Massacre of Uncía); an extended state-of-siege forced the cancellation of the gathering.¹¹⁹ Despite the repression, the political and social agitation of the working class and its allies continued to destabilize the Siles' government and that of his successor Daniel Salamanca (1931-1934). The Massacre of Uncía shattered the illusions of many laborers who continued to believe the government an impartial arbiter of labor relations; after 1923, socialist political proposals began to lay deep roots among the Bolivian working class. Tristan Marof figures at the principal popularizer of socialist proposals for Bolivia. The Third Workers' Congress in Oruro, while not an entire success, witnessed a significant left-ward shift in the politics of the urban popular classes.

Conclusion

The working class of Bolivia's mines began the twentieth century laboring in the paternal shadow of their employers. In 1899, the workers of the San José mine just outside of the city of Oruro mustered out to defend their embattled boss—President Sergio Fernández Alonso. Just two years later in northern Potosí, laborers fought side-

¹¹⁹ Klein, *Parties*, 97; and Lora, *Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano*, 2:28, 32.

by-side with their employer, Simón I. Patiño, to secure his mining claim against the violent attack of a determined rival; the wealth of Patiño's mine eventually made him the most prosperous man in Bolivian and one of the richest men in the world. Labor arrangements between workers and employers during the first decade and a half of the twentieth century sometimes inspired in the miners a close identification with the interests and property of their employers. Ore sharing agreements such as *kajcheo* and contract labor undermined a feeling of collective sympathy among the workers of different firms. As the mines further industrialized, expanded, and consolidated their operations, workers began to lose their close relationship with their bosses.

In 1916, the political landscape of Oruro and northern Potosí changed significantly with the foundation of the Workers Federation—a new more aggressive type of labor association. By 1920, labor associations in Oruro began to successfully employ direct actions like the strike and work stoppages to win significant concessions from their employers. Industrial workers had by January 1921 begun to use the leverage of the strike to further their political goals. During the 1920s, the support of the working class elevated pro-labor politicians to the Bolivian Congress; this was the case with Ricardo Perales and Ricardo Soruco Ipiña. For a few years, workers truly began to believe that liberal democracy and republicanism might represent and advance their interests.

The Massacre of Uncía in 1923 introduced a strong feeling of skepticism to the working class of the mines; they began to detect a hint of unreliability in the more traditional, oligarchic political parties of the country. Many workers had viewed the political ascent of the Republican Party and Bautista Saavedra with sympathy and hope, but Saavedra ordered the violent repression of the Central Labor Federation of Uncía, the

exile and imprisonment of its leadership, and the union's eventual dismemberment. The years 1924 to 1929 witnessed trends hinting at labor's desire for an independent political voice in national politics. The writings of Tristan Marof inspired the workers of the country with more radical economic and political proposals. The Third Workers' Congress in Oruro in 1927 signaled the continued aspirations of the working class to found a militant national federation. In the 1930s, this dream would become a reality.

Epilogue: The Permanent Revolution Triumphant

Every strike is the potential beginning of a civil war and for that we must be properly armed. Our objective is to win, and for that we must not forget that the bourgeoisie can count on the army, the police, and fascist gangs. We must then organize the first cells of the proletarian army. All of the unions are obliged to form armed squads with their youngest and most combative elements.

The Syndicalist Federation of Bolivian Mine Workers, Tesis de Pulacayo (1946)

The ideological and organizational advance of the working class during the first three decades of the twentieth century provides a striking counterpoint to the continuity of organization and thought among the rural population of the country during the same period. The miners and other segments of the urban popular classes in Oruro and northern Potosí began the twentieth century laboring in the paternalistic shadow of the bosses. The small size of the mining enterprises, the prevalence of contract labor, and the diversity of ownership all influenced workers to identify with the interests and property of their employers. As the mines and mills of the region grew larger and more industrialized and as a handful of entrepreneurs slowly cemented its near monopoly control of the mining industry, the relationship between owner and employee grew more impersonal. Beginning in the 1910s, the urban popular classes and the country's mine workers began to shed the paternalistic tutelage of their employers and the Bolivian oligarchy. Vigorous artisan and labor associations emerged in the departments of Oruro and Potosí to defend the collective interests of the urban popular classes. By the 1920s, these organizations frequently employed the coercive power of work stoppages and strikes to win both economic and political concessions from the industrial enterprises of the region and the Bolivian state. Many workers and artisans continued to believe in the

promise of republicanism and liberal-democratic thought; they believed that the government, especially the Republican administration of President Bautista Saavedra, was an institution capable of moderating among the competing class interests in the country. The violent repression of the Central Labor Federation of Uncía in northern Potosí in 1923 shook working-class faith in the Bolivian state. Toward the end of the 1920s, radical ideological programs like socialism and anarcho-syndicalism began to make serious gains among the working class. However, in the countryside of Oruro and northern Potosí, the rural popular classes failed to experience a similar ideological and organizational ferment.

In the early twentieth century, the Indian communities of the region still occupied a relatively strong economic position in the countryside; the industrial and transportation innovations of the nineteenth century, especially the railroad, marginalized their participation in the market economy. But they preserved much of their land. Additionally, traditional tactics of resistance continued to work for the *ayllus*. The communities intimidated their *hacendado* neighbors, and they employed violence to stifle the implementation of unpopular government policies. During the first decades of the twentieth century, the Bolivian state lacked a durable and powerful presence in the countryside; this contrasted with the relative strength and organization of the police and military in the towns and mining camps of the region. The landed oligarchs of Oruro and northern Potosí relied upon the courts to mediate between them and their powerful Indian neighbors. In the late-1920s, administrators and lawyers for the wealthiest industrialist in Bolivia, Simón I. Patiño, preferred the mediation of a judge to a direct conflict with an

ayllun northern Potosí over a long -standing property dispute. The mediating role of the courts in Andes dates to the Spanish colonial period.

Despite the seeming strength of traditional Indian communities in Oruro and northern Potosí, the Bolivian state and the mining operations of the region found ways to wring labor and capital from the *ayllus*. Relying upon traditional methods inherited from the colonial period—tribute payments, the road tax, and involuntary draft labor—the oligarchy and foreign capital tapped the resources of the rural population to build and maintain the modern transportation and communication infrastructure necessary for the advance of industry. Because the relationship between the Bolivian state and the *ayllus* did not fundamentally change from the colonial period until the first decades of the twentieth century, the Indian communities felt no pressure or impulse to experiment with new political ideologies and new models of social organization. Despite their majority presence in the countryside of Oruro and northern Potosí, *ayllum* members were not the only rural inhabitants laboring in highland Bolivia at the beginning of the twentieth century; hacienda residents (*colonos*) also formed a significant part of the rural population. In the department of Oruro, private estates huddled close to the city of Oruro—the transportation hub of the region and the principal urban market. Labor relations on these agricultural and ranching establishments continued to adhere to pre-capitalist models first established in the Spanish colonial period. Hacienda residents tenaciously resisted capitalist entrepreneurial innovation, they viewed the proletarianization of their agricultural labor as an assault on their already limited autonomy and security. Oruro and northern Potosí never developed a rural proletariat during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Rural people, both *ayllum* members

and hacienda residents, struggled to maintain a long-established status quo rather than experimenting with new ideological and organization practices.

The cultural and economic divide separating the mine workers and other segments of the urban popular classes from the rural, peasant population of the countryside dates to the decades right after the Spanish conquest of the Andes. The centuries-old division is one of several surprising continuities within the mining industry of the Bolivian Andes. Poorly capitalized mining and milling operations controlled by the popular classes shadowed the better-financed and more advanced enterprises of the dominant classes. During periods of economic dislocation or crisis, the small-scale artisan miners contributed significant amounts of mineral to overall production in the Andes. Despite the resiliency of mines and mills controlled directly by the popular classes, the Spanish colonial state and the later Bolivian state consistently worked to promote the growth and profitability of enterprises run by the dominant classes. By the end of the 1920s, intellectuals associated with the labor movement clearly identified the inherent bias of the Bolivian government and began to advocate its overthrow.

Oligarchic Mismanagement, 1929 to 1946

In the 1930s and 1940s, the Bolivian state and industrial capital increased the pressure on the popular classes of the country. The disastrous Chaco War stands out as the most blatant of these new provocations. A few months after the military's ouster of Hernando Siles in 1930, Daniel Salamanca finally assumed the presidency of Bolivia following years of ambitious scheming. Salamanca's administration, unable to resolve

the economic crisis facing the nation and frustrated by the rising power and assertiveness of the working class, plunged Bolivia into the disastrous Chaco War as a vainglorious distraction. When the government ordered a national mobilization on 21 July 1932, it became clear that the popular classes of the country, both urban and rural, were to bear the brunt of the fighting; the military dispatched squads of soldiers to all corners of the republic to impress resistant peasants and workers into the army. In three years of fighting, Bolivia lost 52,397 killed in action and another 4,264 died in Paraguayan prison camps. On 27 November 1934, the Bolivian military deposed Daniel Salamanca because of his disastrous mismanagement of the war effort; Vice-President José Luis Tejada Sorzano assumed the reigns of government. With the consent of the Bolivian military, the Tejada Sorzano administration negotiated an armistice with the Paraguayans that went into effect on 14 June 1935. The aftermath of the fighting created political anarchy in the country; the working class saw the instability as an opportunity to push a demand for higher wages long-delayed by combat in the Chaco. The military, led by a group of young officers seeking to put a stop to the chaos, overthrew Tejada Sorzano on 17 May 1936. This was the effective end of nearly sixty-years of oligarchic governance; the Liberal and Republican Parties soon went the way of the long-deposed Constitutionalist or Conservative Party and faded from the political scene. The reform-minded military administrations of first David Toro and then Germán Busch began to experiment with new political and social models for the nation.¹

Something they termed “military socialism” mirrored the rise of fascism in Europe; the military men and civilian politicians who cycled in and out of government in

¹ Klein, Parties, 152, 155, 184, 187, 226-228.

the 1930s and 1940s espoused eclectic left-of-center economic and political policies seeking a reformed and regulated capitalist development of the country. These Bolivian “socialists” called for limitations on the political power of the largest mining concerns and sought to persuade foreign capital to reinvest profits in the continued economic growth of the republic. Eventually, these ideas coalesced in the formation of a quasi-fascist, quasi-populist political party named the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (*Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario*, MNR) in 1940 and 1941.²

The traditional oligarchy made a brief political comeback between 1940 and 1943 during the more conservative military government of General Enrique Peñaranda. In 1942, the Bolivian working class suffered the most significant massacre of striking miners since 1923. In the northern Potosí town of Catavi, 9,300 workers employed by Simón Patiño’s firm agitated for a Christmas bonus and the enforcement of labor laws long ignored by the company. On the morning of 21 December 1942, the military twice opened fire on the working-class residents of Catavi; the first clash between miners and the army left 35 dead. When thousands of women and children gathered to rally against the killings, the soldiers again opened fire slaying hundreds of peaceful protesters. Popular revulsion at the Catavi Massacre eventually led to the fall of the conservative military administration. In 1943, the reformers again captured the presidential palace when Major Gualberto Villarroel overthrew Peñaranda with the cooperation of the civilian Nationalist Revolutionary Movement.³

During the Villarroel presidency, the miners of Bolivia organized a more combative union and broke with the existing national labor organization—the ineffective

² Ibid., 234-235, 337.

³ Ibid., 355-356, 368.

Syndicalist Confederation of Bolivian Workers (*Confederación Sindical de Trabajadores de Bolivia*, CSTB). In June 1944, thirty union delegates met in Huanuni, Oruro to form the Syndicalist Federation of Bolivian Mine Workers (*Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Mineros de Bolivia*, FSTMB), which just eight years later would lead the Bolivian popular classes to victory over the nation's oligarchy. The ferment of post-Chaco era politics also began to resonate in the countryside during the Villarroel administration. In May 1945, the MNR-military government organized the First National Indian Congress—an important political milestone for Bolivia's peasantry, but indicative of the slow ideological and organizational progress of the rural popular classes when compared to their urban and working-class counterparts. The urban popular classes and the miners began their first autonomous organizational congresses in the 1920s. By 1946, an eclectic left-right alliance developed to confront the Villarroel and MNR administration; calling itself an anti-fascist front, this motley assortment of political parties and interest groups combined to overthrow the reformist military-civilian government. The popular-front movement combined the Stalinist Revolutionary Left Party (*Partido de la Izquierda Revolucionaria*, PIR); university students; elements of the older national labor federation, the Syndicalist Confederation of Bolivian Workers, of which the mine workers of the country were no longer a part; and the remnants of the traditional oligarchic parties—the Liberals and the Republicans. Eventually this coalition coalesced in the form of a popular revolt in the city of La Paz on 14 July 1946—a revolt the military declined to repress. A mob dragged President Villarroel from the

presidential palace, lynched him, and hung him from a lamppost in the city's principal plaza.⁴

The participation of the Revolutionary Left Party in the ensuing coalition government that controlled the country from 1946 to 1952 completely discredited it in the eyes of the Bolivian working class. The Trotskyist Revolutionary Workers' Party (*Partido Obrero Revolucionario*, POR) quickly occupied the dominant ideological position on the far left of the country's political spectrum. Trotskyism came to have an enormous impact on the powerful Syndicalist Federation of Bolivian Mine Workers. In the wake of the July 1946 overthrow of Gualberto Villarroel's government, the Federation met in the mining town of Pulacayo, Potosí to hold an "Extraordinary" Miners' Congress and define their response to the new eclectic popular-front government; Guillermo Lora, the leading ideologue of the Revolutionary Workers' Party, occupied a position of theoretical ascendancy at the meeting.⁵

The Thesis of Pulacayo

Guillermo Lora Escóbar was a native of Uncía, Potosí and a law student in La Paz. The miners of Llallagua elected him a voting delegate to the Congress, but the working class of the mines did not extend him a universally warm welcome. Several representatives of the Federation objected to his attendance, as he was not a mine worker

⁴ Ibid., 375-376, 379, 381-382.

⁵ Ibid., 384. Herbert Klein identifies the November 1946 reunion as the Fourth Miners' Congress. Guillermo Lora reports that the meeting in Pulacayo was not one of the FSTMB's numbered congresses. The statutes of the Federation allowed for only one Congress a year. Because of the overthrow of Gualberto Villarroel, the organization called for an "Extraordinary" Congress to define the position of the union in relation to the new government. Lora, Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano, 4:435.

himself; the delegation from Colquiri, La Paz, headed by Raúl Aspiazu, mounted a particularly vociferous protest.⁶ At the November 1946 Congress, Lora and other members of the Revolutionary Workers' Party proposed to the gathered union delegates the Thesis of Pulacayo—an expression of the Trotskyist idea of “permanent revolution” and its application to the Bolivian context. Marxism guided the Syndicalist Federation of Bolivian Mine Workers; Lora persuaded the gathered miners to pay homage to the Russian Revolution of 1917 and gave a speech on the subject. But workers opposed the two-stage approach to socialist revolution pushed by Stalinism and represented in Bolivia by the politics of the Revolutionary Left Party. The Thesis of Pulacayo cast its gaze back over 120 years of Bolivian republican history and concluded that the dominant classes of the nation had failed—because of their dependence on foreign capital and foreign imperialism—to carry out the most basic of liberal democratic and nationalist objectives. Only the working-class could carry out the democratic and socialist transformation of the republic, and this had to be done in one decisive stroke.⁷

The Thesis of Pulacayo identified Bolivia as capitalist nation, but—because of the country's limited economic development—a strange amalgam of pre-capitalist and capitalist labor relations continued to reign: “the most primitive of economic forms and the latest word in technology and capitalist civilization exist together.” The country was

⁶ Guillermo Lora's comprehensive history of the Bolivian labor movement, Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano, has informed much of this dissertation. Lora himself becomes an important political figure in Bolivia beginning in the 1940s. In volume four of his study of the labor movement, he provides a short description of how he views himself and his place in the class structure of Bolivian society. “Guillermo Lora was certainly no worker, he was instead an intellectual who had descended from his pedestal and the dusty libraries to lose himself among the exploited and to learn how to express, in the best form possible, their most pressing necessities and the grand destiny that awaited them.” Lora, Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano, 4:489.

⁷ Klein, Parties, 384; and Delgado G., 100 años, 183-184.

a “backward capitalist nation,” and lagging economic development retarded political and social reform.

The Bolivian peculiarity arises because there is no bourgeoisie on the political scene capable of liquidating the *latifundio* [the semi-feudal hacienda] and other pre-capitalist economic forms, of unifying the nation, and of liberating it from the imperialist yoke...these bourgeois-democratic objectives must be carried out immediately.

In South America, the dominant classes were so compromised in their dependency on foreign capital that, “the proletariat of a backward nation is obliged to combine the struggle for bourgeois-democratic objectives with the struggle for socialist change.”⁸

To carry out this radical socialist restructuring of the nation, the working class had to overthrow the Bolivian state. At its core, the Thesis of Pulacayo asserted, the government stood in fundamental opposition to the interests and well being of the popular classes. “The feudal-bourgeois state exists as an organ of violence to maintain the privileges of the landowner and the capitalist,” the Thesis continued. “Only traitors and imbeciles can continue to argue that the state is capable of elevating itself above the various social classes and paternally decide what is best for each group.”⁹ At one point during the Congress, labor delegates sympathetic to the popular-front government then in power in La Paz had to flee for their lives through the windows of the theater in which the miners were gathered.¹⁰ The miners’ theoretical program called for the complete political independence of the working class and derided the “popular-front” governments of the 1930s and 1940s. “The FSTMB will never form a part of bourgeois governments, for this would signify a frank betrayal of the exploited and forget that our line is the

⁸ Tesis de Pulacayo: Tesis política de la Central Obrera Boliviana (1978), 23-24.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁰ Lora, Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano, 4:435.

revolutionary line of class struggle,” the Thesis argued. In placing the proletariat at the head of the future revolution, the Federation overstated the ideological independence of the working class in Bolivian history: “The Bolivian proletariat has remained almost virgin in its political aspect, because it has no tradition of parliamentarianism and class collaboration.”¹¹ While the union delegates at the 1946 Congress underestimated the influence of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois political thought on the working class in the past, they formally renounced the leadership of other social classes in the future.

While the Syndicalist Federation of Bolivian Mine Workers claimed a position of revolutionary leadership for the working class of the mines, they recognized the need for collaboration. “The proletarian revolution in Bolivia does not mean the exclusion of other exploited groups in the nation,” the Thesis asserted, “but a revolutionary alliance of the proletariat with the peasants, the artisans, and other sectors of the urban petty bourgeoisie.” The miners’ Federation classed the rural, peasant majority of the nation with other “petty-bourgeois” groups that might ally with the working class of the country in the overthrow of the Bolivian state and the capitalist economy. Yet in a typical formulation of Trotskyist thought, they expressed a strong pessimism as to the independent revolutionary potential of the peasantry and other non-working-class segments of the popular classes. The Thesis de Pulacayo declared, “the class independence of the petty bourgeoisie is a myth.” The document argued that in times of domestic tranquility, the petty bourgeoisie followed the political lead of the dominant classes. “Petty merchants and small property owners, technicians, bureaucrats, artisans, and the peasantry have not until now been able to develop a politics of class

¹¹ Tesis de Pulacayo, 27, 36.

independence, and they will not be able to do so in the future,” asserted the 1946 declaration. In times of social ferment, the working class had to lead the unhappy and exploited segments of the popular classes in revolt if a new socialist order was to be established: “The leader of the revolution will be the proletariat.” To that end, the Federation proposed a systematic program to recruit the numerous and decisive peasantry of the country: “The workers must organize peasant unions and work together with Indian communities. For this, it is necessary that the miners support the struggle of the peasants against the *latifundia* and second their revolutionary activities.”¹² In the wake of the April 1952 overthrow of the Bolivian oligarchic state, a newly reorganized national labor federation—the Bolivian Workers’ Central (*Central Obrera Boliviana*, COB), built around the Syndicalist Federation of Bolivian Mine Workers—began a concerted effort to organize the rural population of the country into effective peasant unions.¹³ The revolutionary agrarian reform law of 1953 was a response to aggressive land seizures effected by peasants across Bolivia with the support of the Bolivian Workers’ Central.

Just six years after the “Extraordinary” Miners’ Congress in Pulacayo, the membership of the Syndicalist Federation of Bolivian Mine Workers seized the opportunity to become the principal arbiters of national politics. In 1952, an alliance of the miners and the popular classes of La Paz overthrew the last vestiges of oligarchic power in the country. The miners destroyed the military as they swore to do in the Thesis of Pulacayo, but they refused to take the reins of the republic in the wake of their

¹² Ibid., 25-26, 28, 54.

¹³ For a first-hand account of these efforts in the fertile valley of Cochabamba see Sinforoso Rivas Antezana, Los hombres de la revolución (La Paz: Ceres; Plural Editores, 2000). For a comprehensive history of union activity and agrarian reform in Cochabamba see José M. Gordillo, Campesinos revolucionarios en Bolivia: Identidad, territorio y sexualidad en el Valle Alto de Cochabamba (La Paz: Promec; Universidad de la Cordillera; Plural Editores; CEP, 2000).

triumph. Between 1952 and 1964, the petty-bourgeois MNR and the rebuilt army successfully mobilized the demographic weight of the peasantry to suffocate the permanent revolution—already partially betrayed by a vacillating and scheming union leadership.¹⁴ Despite the betrayal of some central precepts adopted and ratified in 1946, the Thesis of Pulacayo correctly predicted that only the popular classes led by the working class of the mines had the will to carry out fundamental liberal-democratic reforms long ignored by the dominant classes. In the wake of the 1952 National Revolution, the illiterate peasant majority of the nation finally won the right to vote (both men and women). In 1953, peasants across the country—organized by new rural unions—pushed through a sweeping revolution in rural land-tenure patterns. Peasant unions seized hacienda after hacienda. The semi-feudal rural oligarchy virtually disappeared. And finally, the Syndicalist Federation of Bolivian Mine Workers forced the government to expropriate of the nation’s principal mines, expelling the bosses from the republic.

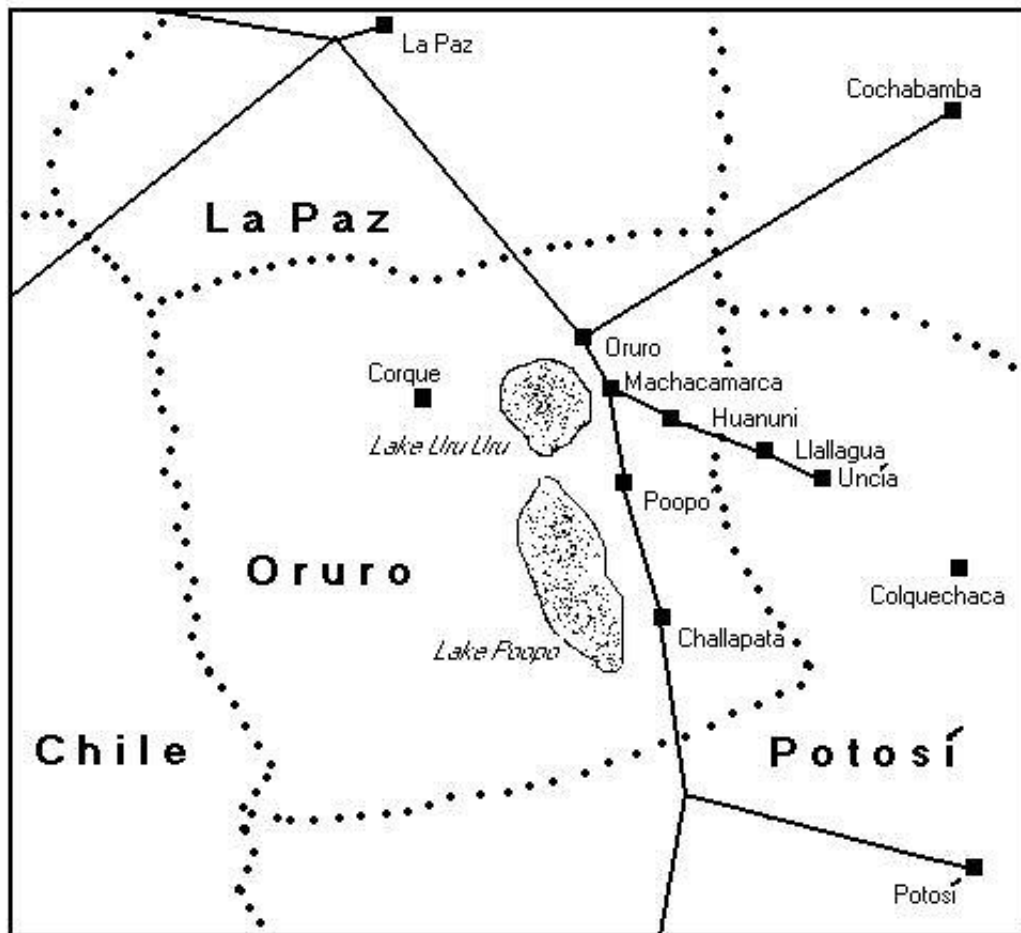
The history of the popular classes during the first three decades of the twentieth century hinted at the eventual physiognomy of Bolivia’s 1952 National Revolution. Among the popular classes of the country, the great Quechua- and Aymara-speaking

¹⁴ In the wake of the popular classes’ victory of April 1952, important leadership elements of the Syndicalist Federation of Bolivian Mine Workers began to break with the Revolutionary Worker’s Party and instead aligned themselves with the petty-bourgeois Nationalist Revolutionary Movement. Mario Tórrez Calleja, only days after the defeat of the military, turned recent political events inside-out and upside-down when he explained that, “the POR [Revolutionary Workers’ Party]...did not represent anything more than a miniscule group of petty-bourgeois individuals or intellectualized workers with no connection to the laboring masses, with no clear national program, and absolutely incapable of revolutionary action.” In contrast, he called the middle-class Nationalist Revolutionary Movement the “only party, which demonstrated during the government of the martyr president [Gualberto Villarroel] its natural closeness to the laboring classes, presented itself as the natural, logical, and essential ally of the revolutionary union movement.” Mario Tórrez Calleja, El Diario, La Paz, 18 April 1952 quoted in Delgado G., 100 años, 208.

peasant majority lacked a unifying ideological program that might lead to a revolutionary transformation of the republic. During the same period (1899 to 1929), the urban popular classes, most especially the working class, began the long struggle to craft autonomous representative national associations. The working class of the mines also began to divine the unbreakable linkages between the Bolivian state and the economic and class interests of the dominant classes. The developments among the popular classes during the years 1899 to 1929 prophesied that any push for the thorough popular remaking of Bolivian society would first explode from the ideological and organizational ferment of the urban popular classes—not the brackish continuity of the countryside.

Map 1

Railroads, Towns, and Cities of the Bolivian Altiplano



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