Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui

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How to cite:

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The changes that have taken place in Bolivia since the year 2000, marked by massive and radical indigenous and popular mobilization, brought an indigenous cocalero president to power in the 2005 elections and unleashed a wave of hope and expectations within the antisystemic movements of the world. However, the articulation of ethnic demands and nationalist discourses, as well as the adoption of developmentalist models and the reinforcing of statist centralism, have put the depth of these changes into question. The paradigmatic case of new forms of "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey) is the highway project between San Ignacio (Beni) and Villa Tunari (Cochabamba), which threatened environmental degradation and ethnocide of the Moxeño, Yuracaré, and Tsimane communities in the Indigenous Territory of the Isiboro-Sécure Park (TIPNIS). The intent of this article is to analyze the struggle in defense of the TIPNIS as a concrete instance of what Argentine sociologist Maristella Svampa calls "the eco-territorial turn in social struggles" (2011: 5). The aim is to understand the political dynamic of ethnicity as a "strategic" project (Baud et al. 1996) and as a field of struggle between the state and indigenous peoples, in this case in the Bolivian lowlands.

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[1] Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui is an Aymara sociologist and historian. Text translated by Anne Freeland for http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2015/11/5/strategic-ethnicity-nation-and-neocolonialism-in-latin-america.

[2].This text was first delivered as a talk at the Conference on Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion in Latin America in Guadalajara, Mexico (4–6 September 2013). This article was originally published as a chapter in: Rivera Cusicanqui, Silvia (2014), Mito y desarrollo en Bolivia. El giro colonial del gobierno del MAS. La Paz: Plural Editores. It was been translated and reproduced here with permission of the author.

expectations within the antisystemic movements of the world. However, the articulation of ethnic demands and nationalist discourses, as well as the adoption of developmentalist models and the reinforcing of statist centralism, have put the depth of these changes into question. Contradictions have arisen between the rights of indigenous peoples, peasant organizations—particularly the coca growers—and the state. Privileging an economistic conception of the territory, Evo Morales's government has implemented oil, open pit mining, and transport infrastructure projects that have provoked the resistance of various indigenous communities throughout the country. The paradigmatic case of these new forms of "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey) is the highway project between San Ignacio (Beni) and Villa Tunari (Cochabamba), which threatened environmental degradation and ethnocide of the Moxeño, Yuracaré, and Tsimane communities in the Indigenous Territory of the Isiboro-Sécure Park (TIPNIS).

The intent of this article is to analyze the struggle in defense of the TIPNIS as a concrete instance of what Argentine sociologist Maristella Svampa calls "the eco-territorial turn in social struggles" (2011: 5). Drawing on several of Svampa's texts, in the last part of the article I give an overview of the primary features, achievements, and setbacks of these movements in Latin America, focusing on two cases from Argentina and Brazil studied by Svampa and Porto-Gonçalves (2001). My aim is to understand the political dynamic of ethnicity as a "strategic" project (Baud et al. 1996) and as a field of struggle between the state and indigenous peoples, in this case in the Bolivian lowlands. But I also want to see how the hegemonic nation reproduces, on the basis of this discourse, forms of "colonial administration" (Guerrero 2002) of the territory and the population that reduce the inhabitants of the Park to mere objects, domesticated and passive, of their multicultural policies.

Neoliberal reforms of the nineties and the indigenous question

One aspect to be considered is the shift that took place, beginning in the last decade of the twentieth century, in the discourses on and representations of indigenous peoples formulated by the Bolivian state. In the 1990s, a global current of opinion

transformed the conception of indigenous peoples from one of a population to be domesticated, civilized, and "integrated" into the dominant national cultures into one that recognized the "right to difference." In this context, the right to a distinct language and culture, to territory and autonomy that the indigenous movements demanded was formally recognized, within certain limits. The reasons for this shift are complex, but there is no doubt that it is in part a result of the emergence of indigenous movements across the continent, in particular in Mexico, Ecuador, and Bolivia. Their growing public visibility and the articulation of their demands with the defense of human and environmental rights expanded the meaning of indigenous struggles and contributed to the universalization of their project of radical change.

Donna Lee Van Cott (2000) has called these neoliberal multicultural reforms (reflected in the new constitutions of the 1990s in Bolivia and Colombia) "a friendly liquidation of the past." Undoubtedly, the paradoxical result of their "pro-indigenous" elements that sought to affirm the ancestral rights of the peoples designated as such has been to constrain and mold a definition of the "indigenous" emphasizing its minority status and static, unchanging nature, expressed in a series of external forms: dress, dance, ritual, always associated with the rural and anchored in a space of production (agricultural-livestock-ritual cycle). I have called this the "permissible Indian" [indio permitido] (Rivera 2008), one who assumes an ornamental role in the new state and consents to being confined to "ethnic reserves" (the TCOs) to play his part in the staging of "ecotourism" and "ethnic tourism" that would make a restricted and theatrical form of indigenous identities profitable, turning the population of these reserves into exotic objects of consumption.

The idea of the "World Bank Indian" (as I called it then) arose from a page in a travel magazine that I found on a plane, where there was a drawing of an Andean Indian, with his lluch'u and poncho, tending a business that produced "modern" bottled water from the glaciers of the Cordillera seen in the background. He was alone, depicted as an individual-entrepreneur. In addition to appearing disconnected from his community, and even from his family, he was bottling nothing less than the water from the most sacred collective possession: an

Achachila, a protector mountain that the community honors with offerings and rituals. The image was an advertisement for Hewlett-Packard, publicizing a program that donated computers to entrepreneurial initiatives like that of the Indian in the drawing. The multicultural reforms of the nineties, undertaken under the auspices of the World Bank, are symbolized in this ad. The idea was to "incorporate" indigenous people into the market as merchants of their own cultural heritage, even of their own tutelary deities. This translated into a promotion of tourism, into an eco-ethno-tourism model that presented the sacred landscapes of the communities, their ritual practices, and the people themselves, who had to display their otherness in accordance with the expectations and stereotypes of the tourist, with their pursuit of the "noble savage," as exotic and in harmony with nature.

The multiculturalist legislation of the nineties began with a constitutional reform (1994) that recognized Bolivia as a multicultural and multilingual country. This was followed by municipal decentralization (the Popular Participation Law of 1994), intercultural and bilingual educational reform (1994), and the INRA law of 1996, which recognized "first nation community lands" [tierras comunitarias de origen] (TCOs) as the collective property of indigenous peoples. Despite the fact that these reforms empowered the communities and indigenous peoples in various ways in recognizing them as legitimate actors in society, they also effected a certain "domestication" of the demands that they had been fighting for since the seventies and eighties. They contributed in a subtle way to the transformation of a majority with the consciousness of a majority (the Katarism-Indianism of those two decades) into a majority with the consciousness and practices of a minority, confined to the "small space" of local power and excluded from politics and the state as a whole. In fact, in the reforms of the nineties, only the lowland peoples were recognized as Indians, since the altiplano and the Andean valleys, with a Quechua- and Aymara-speaking population, were considered "peasant" regions, integrated into the market and inhabited by private landowners. This was the case despite the fact that it was the Aymara mobilization of the altiplano that put the question of ethnic identity and collective rights on the agenda of national political debate. Or perhaps for this

very reason: because the state authorities were not willing to discuss those demands, they resolved to strip them of their majority status, and of the democratic and transformative political power that they embodied.

Moreover, the stunned reaction of the Bolivian middle and upper classes to the blockades of November and December of 1979 was already a repetition of the terror provoked by the Indian siege of 1781. By the end of the twentieth century, the inclusive and homogenizing reforms of the MNR had been reversed. The terror of the elites was therefore perhaps a response to the autonomy of that uprising and its demands. Explicitly and implicitly, these undoubtedly had the potential to provoke a "paradigm shift," a complete refoundation or reversion, in the de-colonizing sense, of society and politics. This was the fundamental reason for the terror that invaded the q'ara world of the cities, with the emergence of the indigenous majority into the political arena with radical and legitimate demands.

The long-term memory (memoria larga) of the siege of La Paz had imbued the Katarista movement of the seventies and eighties with an exceptional force (Rivera 1984). From both sides—the dominant q'ara world's fear of a vengeful Indian invasion and the Aymara consciousness of being a majority with control over the territory and capable of strangling the city—the political hegemony of the elites found itself profoundly fractured. But the moment of insurgency was ultimately neutralized. First with the "capture" of the CSUTCB (Single Confederated Union of the Peasant Workers of Bolivia) by the left, in 1988, and then with the electoral subordination of the Katarista-Indianist leaders (this was the case with Víctor Hugo Cárdenas, Genaro Flores, Luciano Tapia, Constantino Lima, Felipe Quispe, etc.) to the pacted democracy of the neoliberal period. Toward the end of the 1980s, the consolidation of the neoliberal reforms seemed inevitable. The CSUTCB lost its mobilizing capacity and was unable to organize successful protests or blockades that would replicate those of November–December of 1979.

Although in 1990 the "pax neoliberalis" was unexpectedly broken by the March for Territory and Dignity (which we will consider below), it would still be another decade before the conditions for a new wave of insurgency on a national scale arose. Nonetheless, upon reaching La Paz, this march of over a thousand indigenous

people belonging to diverse lowland peoples—men, women, children, elders—put political questions that had never before been seriously debated on the table. On the one hand, the issue of the environment began to be increasingly visibilized, and the idea of territory became the political nucleus in a new configuration of indigenous demands. And on the other hand, the first meeting in mass numbers of peoples from the altiplano, the valleys, the yungas, and the Amazon lowlands took place in October of that year at La Cumbre, the highest point on the road between the Yungas and La Paz. A spark of the "majority consciousness" of the Katarista era was reignited, although this time with an Amazonian-Chaqueño predominance that had been absent before.

The eco-territorial turn of the struggles of the nineties expresses the multiple changes produced as a result of the neoliberal reforms of the mid eighties. Bolivian society had urbanized, emigration from the countryside had increased, new circuits in the informal economy had provided work for the uprooted, inequality had risen and the discharge of tens of thousands of workers swelled the informal sphere to massive proportions. But at the same time, the dismantling of the state economy granted unrestricted access to the Bolivian territory to transnational corporations, from neighboring countries as well as from Europe and North America. With the change of government of 2005–2006, these tendencies were only partially reversed. While the state had appropriated extensive resources with the 2006 "nationalization" of oil and gas and the subsequent price increase, which enabled ambitious redistributive policies that were repaid in electoral support, Bolivia's profile as an exporter of primary products was only reinforced. The industrialization projects in the hands of the state, private enterprise, or the "communal economy" were never even started. With the exception of the textile sector in the hands of thousands of small or mid-sized "informal" or semi-formal businesses, under Aymara or indigenous leadership, the only private industry that survived the neoliberal dismantling and Morales's capitalist strategy was undoubtedly cocaine (as sulfate or as chloral hydrate). The kind of "self-fulfilling prophecy" whereby the government would have close ties with the cocaine industry ca be illustrated by an anecdote: In Evo Morales's first enthronement ceremony in Tiwanaku (January

21st, 2006), the yatiri who presented him with the ruler's staff was called Valentín Mejillones. Some years later, (July 27th, 2010), Valentín Mejillones, now considered not just a yatiri but a true philosopher,3 was caught with 350 kg of cocaine, which he was selling to a Colombian client. This fact perfectly symbolizes the "strategic ethnicity" that had become a disguise and a performance. Its function is to act as if the Indians governed, as if the country were Plurinational (with only 7 seats of 130 in the Chamber of Deputies and 166 in the Legislative Assembly), as if the Armed Forces could be intercultural and democratic allies of the Indians. This as if was sustained by a performative discourse and identity that ultimately masked the (neo)colonial continuities with the past under the label of the "process of change." And in this case, it also concealed more prosaic facts, like the covert alliances between the cocalero project and mafia capitalism.

The crisis of neoliberal multiculturalism and the rise of Evo Morales

The exhaustion of the liberal model is betrayed in its unfulfilled promises of jobs and welfare, in flagrant corruption, and in the arbitrary administration of power. At the dawn of the third millennium, the political empowerment of certain subaltern sectors, like the cocaleros in their struggle against forced eradication, along with the demands of the subaltern population of the cities, represents a radical break with the "pax neoliberalis." A wave of simultaneous mobilizations shook the country from the beginning of 2000. In Cochabamba the Water Coordinating Committee was formed, made up of industrial unions, neighborhood councils, peri-urban irrigation committees, unemployed youth, and unionized cocaleros, were mobilized between February and April. In the altiplano, brought together by the CSUTCB, under the leadership of Felipe Quispe, the "Mallku," the communities organized massive blockades around La Paz and Oruro that reached their climax in April with a confrontation between the army and the protesters in which several people were

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3 The German philosopher Josef Estermann considers Velentín Mejillones to be among the most distinguished "Indian philosophers" (Gustavo Cruz, 2013).

killed. Over the course of those weeks, the supplies of the city of La Paz were depleted, and the paranoia of the Indian siege once again beset the ruling classes.

We must take the social composition of these uprisings into account. Over the course of this process of insurgency, the notion of the "indigenous" was reformulated and expanded on the basis of ideas such as "sovereignty" and "dignity." Thus, El Alto, which expressed a desire for modernity and acculturation of its migrants up until the 1980s, became an "Aymara city" in the 2000s. In La Paz itself, a significant percentage of the population identified as "indigenous" in the census of 2001, and the same occurred in Cochabamba, Oruro, Potosí, and even Sucre. In some way, the notion of the indigenous was broadened to include a heterogeneous array of identities and networks, urban as well as rural. Identification with some "indigenous people" in the whole country reached 62% of the population in the 2001 census, despite the fact that only 49% of the population claimed to speak an indigenous language. This proves that a large portion of the urban cholo and mestizo sectors, even those who did not speak an indigenous language, considered themselves to be Indian.[4]

But although they did not always explicitly identify as "indigenous," the communities mobilized during the Water War and the Gas War adopted Aymara and Quechua forms of organization and action. The El Alto uprising in September–October of 2003 brought together informal communities, decentralized, semi-autonomous networks, neighborhood "microgovernments" (as Pablo Mamani called them) based in adjacent and closely interconnected territories. These communities worked under a shift system that applied to all activities, from the blockade to supply lines, logistics, and communications to the "cargos." Spontaneously organized, they nonetheless relied on the leadership of those with the most "experience" or knowledge of the terrain or, as state repression grew more

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[4] The results of the last census, which show a steep decline in the proportion of the population that identifies as indigenous, from 62% to just over 40%, cannot be analyzed here. But we could see this as a result of the success of Evo Morales's policy of turning the indigenous majority into a minority, and of subtracting the urban sectors, ch'ixis and mestizos who in 2001 had begun to be seduced by the share of dignity and autonomy conferred by affiliation with the communities of the various regions. The colonial turn of the "process of change" has ensured that none of the substantive demands, from Katarismo on, of the majority of these indigenous communities and peoples has been seriously taken into account.

violent, on the boldest and most vigorous among them (youth and women). Finally, another indigenous feature of the protests was the use of indigenous languages, in face-to-face communication as well as over the radio. At the height of the conflict, the Aymara stations were the ones that offered the most accurate and current information (thanks to their networks of reporters on bicycles) and provided up-to-the-minute coverage as state repression and the number of victims grew (ultimately reaching 67 dead and more than 400 wounded).

Indigenous identities and struggles in the "process of change"

The political capitalization on this whole process of accumulation focused on the notion of the "indigenous" was undoubtedly a well thought-out strategy on the part of the emergent cocalero movement and its indisputable leader, Evo Morales. Morales had been catapulted into the political arena after a meteoric rise within the coca growers' union, winning a seat in parliament in 1997, and the presidency in 2005. His political discourse was centered on notions of sovereignty and dignity, which were in some way expressed by the mobilized people, more as a semiopraxis than as an explicit discourse. Morales's most astute move was to identify these two rallying cries: Sovereignty and Dignity, an ethos of his political project that is at once Indian and national. The political arm was founded in 1994 as the IPSP (Instrumento Político por la Soberanía de los Pueblos, Political Instrument for the Sovereignty of the Peoples), and the subject of dignity was undoubtedly a re-appropriation of the language of the indigenous march of 1990. But the cocalero project included no substantial part of the demands of that march.

The paradox is that Evo Morales was himself a product of the "indigenous majority" configured first in the reorganization of the peasant unions in the seventies and eighties, then in the insurgent struggle, and finally in the electoral sphere. However, the "indigenous policies" of his government repeat and in fact deepen the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s. In the first place, they transformed the indigenous majority back into insignificant minorities, confined to delimited territories (TCOs) and located only in rural areas. Upon rechristening the TCOs as TIOCs (Territorios Indígena-Originario-Campesinos), other forms of land

ownership and modes of relation to the market were authorized, and the gradual invasion of the TIPNIS (for example) by peasant-mercantile colonization was legalized. With the recognition of "36 indigenous nations," the indigenous front was fragmented and contained in essentialist definitions that excluded the urban, chi'ixi, and modern sectors that had identified with it in the 2001 census. Far from interpreting the (often elective) predominance of the indigenous in the identity of the population as a potential for a radical paradigm shift, for example, with respect to the relation between human society and nature, the government made the Indians back into inconsequential ornaments, reducing the notion of "decolonization" to a culturalist bureaucratic appendage, devoid of any political significance.

In this way even the gains the lowland indigenous peoples had made during the neoliberal governments (like the recognition of the TCOs in the Parque Isiboro-Sécure, Madidi, and others), within the multiculturalist model of the "permissible Indian," were lost. This is what occurred with the redefinition of the TCOs as Indigenous, First Nation, and Peasant Territories (TIOCs) with the Law of Communal Redirection of Agrarian Reform (Ley de Reconducción Comunitaria de la Reforma Agraria, 2010)—mentioned above—which allowed the peasant "invaders" in indigenous lands to be recognized as members of the TCO, as was the case with the coca growers of Polígono 7 of the TIPNIS.

Lowland indigenous peoples march to the capital (1990–2010)

Since the late eighties, the lowland indigenous peoples had entered into the public space through a new kind of mobilization, recovering traditional modes of resistance, first at the local level and later formulating national demands to the "plurinational" state from their underpinning developmentalist and colonizing perspective. The first March for Territory and Dignity, between September and October of 1990, brought some seven hundred indigenous people from different communities from the Amazon, the eastern lowlands, and the Chaco, after having walked more than 600 km, to the seat of the government.

Territory and Dignity are two key words that resonate with a revitalized Indian identity that is both ancestral and modern. The first because the forest, the "big house," is at once a physical space, a web of imaginaries and representations, and a linguistic and semiological fabric that interweaves a community internally and with the cosmos in a permanent process of self-construction. But at the same time, this reading, or rather this semiopraxis of the territory, posits a political and economic model that is completely "other," alternate, and alternative to the mercantile state model of territorialization. "Territory" implies productive space, community, self-government, polis: space in which Life is reproduced, through a tacit accord between humanity and all the animate and inanimate beings of whose totality it is an inextricable part. It is a cosmocentric and relational conception of the land, one that is opposed to the anthropocentric, rational, and instrumental conception of space, that is, to the colonial plundering of the land that the modern nation-state perpetuates, which has now taken the form of a developmentalist invasion of the forests and plains of the Amazon.

Dignity is, in turn, an "impure," ch'ixi form of a liberal notion: respect among human beings, the right to equality, but without implying an abdication of the cultural and civilizational difference embodied in indigenous alterity. This is enunciated from a specific position: that of the colonized subject. In this sense, it is a universalist demand, and emerges from the practice of a denial of citizenship that was—and is—colonial domination. But it is also a harrowed indictment of history, for it comes from centuries of usurpation, plunder, massacres, and forced servitude, founded upon an arbitrary hierarchy of "civilization" and "barbarism." Dignity is, in sum, an anticolonial demand translated into the language of modern pluricultural citizenship.

Between 1996 and 2000 these central themes evolved, interweaving politics, development, and "natural resources" in different ways, as we can see in the second and third marches of the lowland indigenous peoples.[5] These new connections

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[5] The Second Indigenous Peoples' March for Territory, Development, and Political Participation took place in 1996 and the March for Land, Territory, and Natural Resources in 2000 (Third March).

mark different shifts and negotiations with respect to their specific formulation as indigenous alternatives in their original enunciation. By the year 2002, the Fourth March launched a slogan of greater political scope: Popular Sovereignty, expressed in the demand for a Constituent Assembly (Tórrez et al., 2012: 90). Certainly, over the course of Evo Morales's electoral ascent (2002–2005), this political dimension would be expressed in the (partial and limited) inclusion of some of the leaders of these movements in MAS's party ranks and in the paltry seven parliamentary seats to which the demand for autonomous political inclusion had been reduced. The fifth and sixth marches, now in the context of the "indigenous" government of Evo Morales, voice specific demands: the recuperation of indigenous territories and the modification of the INRA (Fifth March, October 2006, ibid.: 93), and the "Communal Redirection of Agrarian Reform" (Sixth March, July 2007), which led to the legal reforms of the same name, and were the result of negotiations between the state and a common front of indigenous (CIDOB and CONAMAQ) and peasant (CSUTCB, Women's Peasant Unions and "Intercultural communities" previously called "colonizer") groups, which formed a "Unity Pact" that carried significant weight in the Constituent Assembly (2006–2007). We must note that the Sixth March took place in the context of the fierce regional struggle between the "media luna" (Pando, Beni, Santa Cruz, Chuquisaca, and Tarija) and the Morales government, which almost brought down the Constituent Assembly. It is a march that traversed precisely what would become the crux of that conflict, which culminated at the end of 2008: from Santa Cruz to Sucre.

By the year 2010, the expressions of regional support and unity that had brought the Indigenous and peasant groups of the east and west together in Morales's electoral campaign and in the struggle against the "media luna" had been exhausted. Despite their crushing electoral victory in December 2009, which gave MAS a majority in parliament with more than 60% of the popular vote, the position of the lowland indigenous peoples shifted from one of disappointment to legal battles, and then to more large-scale political expression, with their share of Gandhian passive resistance and bodily sacrifice: the long marches to the city. Two years earlier, in the context of the intense struggles with the oligarchy of the "media luna," the

government had approved the construction of a highway through the heart of the TIPNIS, arranged its financing, and offered a contract to a Brazilian company to build it. The demand for "prior consultation" and other rights recognized by the new CPE was a response to the breach of the state-indigenous pact of reciprocity, provoked by the unilateral de facto decision to sign agreements without any form of consultation, violating the norms that MAS itself was forced to adopt as part of the process of "refounding" the state. In this way, the Seventh March for Territory, Autonomy, and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was a "prelude to the rift between the government and the organizations of the indigenous movements" (Tórrez et al., 2012: 96). This break between the government and indigenous peoples, which was also the breach of the Unity Pact between the Indigenous and peasant organizations, was consummated in 2011–2012 with the eighth and ninth marches from the TIPNIS to La Paz.

The eighth and ninth TIPNIS marches

The Eighth Indigenous March for the Defense of the TIPNIS and the Dignity of the Indigenous Peoples of Amazonia, the eastern lowlands, and the Chaco—which the press rechristened the March for Life and Dignity—set off from Trinidad on the 15th of August of 2011 toward La Paz. Its course was punctuated with blockades, betrayals, repression, and failed negotiations. San Ignacio, the last town on the projected highway, set up a blockade to force the marchers to negotiate with government representatives. In Yucumo, a blockade of colonizers threatened to violently obstruct their path. In this context, the government deployed 400 police officers, who, beyond merely "preventing" violence between the opposing groups, impeded the marchers' access to water from a nearby stream. This unleashed the fury of the nation, and vigils were held in support of the march in La Paz and Cochabamba. The police intervention in Chaparina on the 25th of September not only turned out to be deceitful in claiming that the marchers had "kidnapped" the Minister of Foreign Affairs, David Choquehuanca,6 but was also a complete failure.

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6 It has recently been revealed that the Ministry of the Interior had planted a female police officer in the march for the purpose of provoking a violent incident against Minister Choquehuanca. In effect, in the
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The spontaneous action of the people of San Borja and Rurenabaque, mestizo as well as indigenous, blocked the buses taking detained marchers to Air Force planes readied to transport them to an unknown destination. In San Borja, the people blocked the line of buses, welcomed the leaders who were able to escape the besieged camp, and lent their support to the marchers, providing them with food and water. In Rurrenabaque, some 400 townspeople and 150 indigenous Tacana people from the surrounding area followed suit and lit fires to stop the planes from landing while the town stopped the buses and freed the marchers. This network of urban alliances allowed the march to gain momentum and media attention, and the general solidarity with which they were received by the people of La Paz ultimately gave the indigenous mobilization a national and global political dimension.

This march put a number of issues on the table. In the first place, it unmasked the government's rhetoric and revealed the falsity of its environmentalist and pro-indigenous platform. The developmentalist project of the highway recalls the crusades of the 1960s to "colonize the jungle" and occupy the "empty space" of the forests and plains of the Amazon. In fact, the advance of the coca-growing colonizadores in the TIPNIS, the occupation of Polígono 7, and the overstepping of the "red line" established in the preceding years to limit this process of invasion in the TIPNIS clearly illustrated the divergence of interests between the peasants—mercantile producers, individual owners, organized under the "modern" form of the union—and the indigenous people of the park, whose way of life and mode of production was radically "other."

On the other hand, the march sets out from a specific territory and in response to a specific act of aggression by the government: the construction of a highway, the first and third sections of which had already been started, and the third financed and contracted to the Brazilian company OAS. It is, therefore, a march in defense of the TIPNIS, a concrete territory, and not for the abstract notion of Territory upheld by the previous marches. But it is also a march for the Dignity of Peoples, and here the

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photos published in the press this officer is seen among the women who forced the minister to walk five kilometers to cross the Yucumo colonizers' blockade. We see here the Machiavellian schemes on the part of the state that were later used as a pretext for police intervention.

Amazon, the eastern lowlands, and the Chaco are included. It represents a contestation of the whole framework of legal resources and economic policies that enable the invasion of indigenous territories by oil, mining, and construction companies on the basis of a particular violation of the rights of the inhabitants of the park.

In fact, the participation of CONAMAQ—an organization that did not belong to any of these three regions—in the uprising, and particularly that of the Aymara and Quechua Mama T'allas (female leaders) of that organization, who called a vigil in the Plaza San Francisco in La Paz, was of crucial importance. In a radio program directed by Amalia Pando, Mama Alberta, from the North of Potosí, explained that the battle for the TIPNIS was her own, because there the doors might be opened for the mining companies to invade the indigenous territories of the highlands. At this point, some of them had been labeled TCOs, and they saw their rights threatened by the opening of the TIPNIS to foreign capital. Large mineral reserves had been identified in her community. A new, extremely liberal mining law was to be discussed in parliament, in which the right to prior consultation of the indigenous territories recognized as TCOs would be revoked.

But on the other hand, the urban vigils and the massive turnout of the people of La Paz to welcome the marchers in their triumphant passage through the city on the 19th of October reveal the importance of the question of the environment, the indigenous interpellation by a new paradigm, and the issue of human rights as axes of a new, more universal kind of citizen demand. This fact also characterizes the "eco-territorial turn" of the mobilizations against transnational capital in other South American countries. Over the course of the march and upon reaching La Paz, the indigenous marchers succeeded in gaining the support of a variety of youth, environmentalist, feminist, Indianist, and cultural activist organizations, as well as a good number of anarchist groups, which marched with their own flags and banners. Their presence in the media was immense: innumerable blogs, web pages, listserv messages, Facebook and other social media posts circulated, so that the actions did not even need to be announced through more formal media like the press or the radio. The multitude in La Paz that welcomed and joined the march during

negotiations with the government was so large that it recalled the heroic days of the "Gas War" in October of 2003.

After a few long days of negotiations, the government finally approved Law 180 for the Protection of the Indigenous Territory of the Isiboro-Sécure Park that declared this territory to be "untouchable" and explicitly canceled the construction of the section of the highway that was to pass through it. The notion of "untouchability," however, would become a double edged sword, because taken to the extreme it could imply the prohibition of any kind of productive or extractive activity in the Park by the indigenous peoples themselves. This, and the orchestration of a "counter-march" of the CONISUR, the organization that represented the encroachment of coca growers of Polígono 7 and a few Yuracaré communities who had taken up coca farming, clearly revealed the government's intentions to backtrack on the law and insist on the construction of the highway. The CONISUR march garnered little attention in the media and no support from the people along its course or upon its arrival at the capital. Its participants were frequently transported in buses provided by the coca-growers' unions and by the government itself. The cocalero population in the south of the TIPNIS is made up of some 20,000 families, while the indigenous population of the rest of the park is less that 2000 (Soto 2013: 44–46). However, the territory allotted to each group is inversely proportional, which has led the coca growers to call the indigenous people "latifundistas." But what is remarkable is that the "strategic ethnicity" of the CONISUR (Indigenous Council of the South) allowed it to mask the interests of the peasant/small-holder/mercantile population, that is, of its members. The coca production of the CONISUR is in fact a link in the chain of the illegal economy of production and transport of cocaine base. Over the course of the months leading up to the arrival of the Eighth Indigenous March in La Paz, no fewer than 80 maceration pits or home coca paste labs were found in Polígono 7. The leader of this organization himself, its self-styled "cacique," Gumercindo Pradel, had been arrested years earlier under Law 1008 for operating one of these labs. The "strategic ethnicity" of the coca growers of the CONISUR then appealed to the Plurinational State from the position of an indigenous discourse that served as a screen to be

considered part of the TIPNIS and therefore to be taken into account in a future "consultation," which was the primary demand of the march.

The government, for its part, could argue that according to the new laws, the TCO had become a TIOC, Indigenous-First Nation-Peasant Territory, meaning that the "settler" peasants (renamed "intercultural communities") who had invaded indigenous territories would be included in the jurisdiction. Finally, with all the development infrastructure provided by the government—the "environmental battalion" of the Army, the ADEMAF,7 the Ministry of the Presidency—in addition to the propaganda war and the creation of all kinds of sinecures, the government laid the foundations for an illegitimate and illegal process of "consultation" that was even criticized by the UN. It is significant that the central question of the consultation was not whether or not people wanted the highway, but the choice between "untouchability" and "development." Put in this abstract way, and the first term understood as a prohibition of all productive activity in the park, it was clear that many of the people consulted would opt for the second. But the selection of people to be consulted, the inclusion of communities that were inexistent or represented by a small fraction of their population, the media war, and bribes were effective resources, at least insofar as they produced internal—inter- and intra-community—disunity that still persists today. However, an unofficial meeting of TIPNIS leaders convened last June (2014) by Gumercindo Pradel in which they attempted to overthrow Fernando Vargas, the elected leader of the TIPNIS Subcentral (the main organization representing the indigenous population of the park) unleashed a spontaneous indigenous uprising throughout the park that succeeded in expelling Pradel, after a few lashes. This led to criminal proceedings and threats of imprisonment against Fernando Vargas, Adolfo Chávez, and Pedro Nuni. This exemplifies the tendency of the state, as in the rest of South America, to criminalize indigenous and environmentalist protests, accusing them of sabotaging national development.

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7 Agency for the Development of the Macro-Regions and Border Areas, an entity created by Evo Morales's government after the events in Pando of September 2008.

In the legal sphere, the CONISUR "counter march" also had deleterious effects for the gains made by the eighth march. The government passed Law 222, of Prior and Informed Consultation of Indigenous Peoples of the Isiboro-Sécure Park, which annuls Law 180 in making it subject to the results of the consultation. The TIPNIS communities responded with a ninth march at the end of April 2012, now in the hostile context of pending legal charges. The marchers were not even able to speak with president Evo Morales, and the vigils, marches, and camps were suppressed with water cannons and tear gas. Moreover, perhaps as a result of the media campaign, urban support for the ninth march was much lower and did not have the momentum that the eighth march had when it reached La Paz in October of the previous year.

What is at stake

The Bolivian case perfectly illustrates the tensions of the new era—the tension between the Creole Nation and the Indian Nation, and the tension between peasants and indigenous people. This is a battlefield between two worldviews: the first has internalized the evolutionist development paradigm, the ethnocentrism, Eurocentrism, and anthropocentrism of the North. The second considers human societies as belonging to a larger cosmic whole. In contrast, the evolutionist paradigm constructs the indigenous world as "nature": static, vestigial, and savage, as an obstacle to development and civilization. The internalization of the Euro-North American ethos is evident in the case of Roberto Coraite, leader of the CSUTCB, which at the beginning of the Eighth March declared that he "did not want his indigenous brothers in the Park to continue to live as savages" (La Prensa, 12 August 2011). According to a mercantile-capitalist logic, the coca growers of Polígono 7 posit "progress" and "development" as the promise of transcendence of a state of poverty, ignorance, and backwardness. In other words, they seek to turn Indians into peasants. They thus negate the validity of the indigenous way of life and deny the inhabitants of the 66 TIPNIS communities their rights to territory, to their own forms producing, signifying, and representing the world, and to self-government.

The primary feature of the social practices of the coca growers is aligned with capitalist developmentalism: it is based on private property, union affiliation, and complete integration into the market (albeit an illegal one). This model, which the coca growers—who are also indigenous, although they do not identify as such except as a sort of simulacrum—have fully internalized, actively subordinates them to the logic of capital and profit. Its campaign against the Indians has as its goal the opening of the entire Park to small-holder mercantile production of coca, wood, and other resources (and their industrial products) under the aegis of a (neo)colonial state policy. Colonization, selective land clearing, and the expansion of the capitalist commodity chain (in which the coca growers are only the weakest link) are sustained by a discourse, an idea of the nation-state, and a political apparatus: MAS.

From another perspective, the TIPNIS conflict reveals the limits and dangers of collective practices articulated around a "strategic ethnicity." The Quechua-speaking coca growers of the CONISUR, like the Moxeños, Yuracarés, and Tsimanes of the TIPNIS, have invoked a "strategic ethnicity" as the basis of their demands and mobilization. The coca growers have allied themselves with a political-state project of vast scope, inspired by and heir to neodevelopmentalist multiculturalism. The three indigenous peoples of the park have positioned themselves within a national and global network of environmentalists, human rights activists, alternative collectives, as well as local political allies of various ideological stances who interpret their demands in a more or less instrumental way.

"Strategic ethnicity" is therefore also a field of contestation with the state, at the local, national, and global levels. The very fact that our state calls itself "plurinational" reveals a displacement of the field of representations and the configuration of a new terrain where various meanings of the social converge.

Let's break this down. In the first place, the primacy of the nation and its departmental administrative units becomes a straightjacket for the indigenous territorial maps, which usually (especially in the Andean region) cut across provincial, departmental, and even national borders. Secondly, as long as the "discourse of Indianness" is co-opted by the state, indigenous people, as living

populations, political entities, and "micro-governments," withdraw to a "tactical ethnicity" constructed within the fabric of the everyday life of the communities of hunters, gatherers, fishers, farmers, and artisans who satisfy their basic needs without having to participate in the market. In this sense, it has been, and continues to be, a threat to the expansion of the processes of capital accumulation that, as Harvey aptly said, operates through "dispossession," through the appropriation of land and resources, to integrate them into the global systems of circulation and production.8 Even though the coca growers use the Indian flag for their organization and primarily speak Quechua, this is not enough to consider them "indigenous." In any argument in defense of the TIPNIS, the issue of private smallholder property was used to deny the legitimacy of the CONISUR as an interlocutor on the subject of the highway. The reasons for this position are clear: cocalero colonization is at the forefront of the threat of environmental and cultural destruction of the Isiboro-Sécure Park, through a highway that not only serves Brazilian corporate interests but also contributes to the opening of the park as a new space of internal "colonization," connected to the commodity chain of the world cocaine market (as well as markets for other resources).

In order to grasp the political dimensions of the conflict, we must take into account another, scarcely visible actor: the Armed Forces, in particular the Air Force. In the aborted kidnapping operation of September 25th, planes commanded by Coronel Tito Gandarillas were to transport marchers to unknown locations and thus eliminate the threat posed by the Eighth March at a stroke. Since the planes were not even able to land in Rurrenabaque, this fact went unnoticed. A few days later, Gandarillas declared to the press that he had decided to support the operation with aircrafts "on his own initiative," going over the head of the High Command of the Armed Forces, and that he had done so for "humanitarian reasons."

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8 Mercantile production of coca is clearly fully articulated with the industrial production of coca paste, which constitutes a powerful incentive for the expansion of the coca fields and systematic deforestation. Moreover, Evo Morales's government has proposed contracting the construction of the second section of the highway to a company of rich cocaleros, once the contract with OAS has been terminated.

Having these military men on the side of the "process of change" has entailed grave and to a certain point gratuitous programmatic and political concessions. The state's systematic refusal to declassify military documents from the time of the dictatorship has produced a syndrome of impunity that casts its shadow over several other illegal activities on the part of the army. The repression in Caranavi and in Chaparina, the covert alliances between military and civilian drug mafias, the persecution of indigenous resistance movements, and murders of conscripts and women in the barracks, have all been met with impunity. The military is the "spearhead of the national development," as vice president García Linera said recently in Mexico.9 This development has legal and illegal versions: the COSSMIL's sulfuric acid factory in Eucliptus, the murky business of coca paste production and trafficking, in which police and military agents are also involved. There is therefore a military version of "development" that solidifies its territorial control of the national parks, enables the creation of spaces of impunity and mafia hubs within the state, and dresses all this in an "indigenous," anti-imperialist, and "environmentalist" discourse.

The TIPNIS march, on the other hand, at the level of political representation, was notable for its ability to interpellate vast sectors of the population, especially in the cities, and to launch a debate on the nature of the various development paradigms. In this sense, as in Argentina, Peru, and Ecuador, movements in defense of indigenous lands against their subjection to transnational corporations have succeeded in forging alliances with multiple citizen, youth, feminist, environmentalist, and alternative groups, constructing national and transnational networks of great scope. In fact, the development debate has transcended the framework of "sustainability" to recognize the need for a radical "paradigm shift" capable of combining the findings of modern science with the practices of conservation and care for traditional—primarily indigenous—peoples' environments in a common arsenal to face the immanent disasters of global

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9 Personal communication with Huáscar Salazar.

warming, spiraling consumption, and the precarization and impoverishment of large swaths of the population.

Faced with the iron determination of states to solidify their regulatory power and their supremacy in the management of development projects, the mobilization of ethnicity as a political strategy has proven to have limitations both from the position of the state and from that of the indigenous movement. In the first case, the hegemony of the nation and of the "national identity" goes hand in hand with the validity of colonial forms of plunder and appropriation of resources. All this has been clothed in an essentialist discourse not without its share of ultra-leftist voluntarism, in which nationalism, an emblematic indigeneity—reduced to a simulacrum—, and a powerless anti-imperialism cede sovereignty to a number of different forces, sugarcoated with a pachamama-ist rhetoric. It is a discourse that does not admit any plurality at all and that ultimately denies all possibility of self-representation of the allied indigenous subjects, excluding them from the cultural and political debates that indigenous societies are demanding. The worst part is that the projects underway (which would entail the systematic destruction of the Amazon rain forest and other spaces) directly endanger the very survival of several lowland and highland peoples, whose territories are being opened up to corporate plunder and condemned to environmental degradation, to the proliferation of the mafia economy and to cultural destruction.

But the state has also made use of this strategic ethnicity, precisely because it was constructed in the cultural context of neoliberal reforms. The World Bank Indian, the "permissible Indian," served Evo Morales's government to articulate a discourse of emblematic "Indianness," making the Indians into props in the state's performance and turning a majority into minorities. In fact, the results of the 2012 population census prove that the strategy has been effective. The ethnic disaffiliation of a large percentage of the population (the proportion of the population that identifies indigenous is down from 62% to 40%) reveals a hegemonic crisis of the political strategy of the indigenous movements and organizations that emerged since the Katarist era.

Epilogue: The regional context

The marches in defense of the TIPNIS could be inscribed within Maristella Svampa's (2008, 2001) broader analysis of the restructuring of formerly "unproductive" spaces in South America, from the rain forest to the Andes, into "extractivist" enclaves that open those spaces to the world market, principally through open-pit mega-mining, oil, hydroelectric, and highway projects. She defines extractivism "… as that pattern of accumulation based on the overexploitation of largely non-renewable natural resources, as well as the expansion of their arena into territories previously considered 'unproductive'" (Svampa 2008).

The broad scope of the struggles against these transnational projects considered in Svampa's study also reveals the diversity of subjects leading them. The notion of "territory," a central element of indigenous cultural-political strategy, has been resignified in a number of ways: as "inherited" territory, "chosen" territory, or "originary" territory. There are more than sixty Citizen Assemblies in Argentina, self-organized and held in small cities and towns of the interior, that have led mass protests against these projects and the incursion of transgenic soy into the Pampa. While many of these struggles have been defeated, the Assemblies organized to oppose big mining have succeeded in passing legislation prohibiting these initiatives in seven provinces. The self-organized Argentine Assemblies have made use of a variety of means and have brought together people from a wide range of cultural sectors and political affiliations. Their successes, while partial and precarious, are founded on their openness to a plurality of voices (of indigenous people, women, local residents, alternative urban groups) to denounce the big mining companies that are depleting their water sources and robbing entire towns of resources vital to their way of life. The activities of these organizations, at the local and national levels, are supported primarily by young people seeking to forge an alternative way of life through the formation of all kinds of urban and rural collectives, organized around sustainable urban farming, recycled art, vegetarianism, veganism, and etc. In other countries (like Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia), territory considered "originary" is constituted by the memory of ancestral occupancy, governed by a different

episteme, other ways of conceiving the organic world and nature, other ways of organizing work for life, and of self-governance.

Among the features of the Citizen Assemblies of Argentina that Svampa highlights are their constitution as autonomous associations that convene democratic assemblies to arrive at consensual decisions, from the bottom up, without permanent leadership and with horizontal forms of debate. They are characterized by high levels of participation of women and young people, by the fluidity of their activities, the use of a variety of media in the combination of cultural and political strategies, and by the forging of regional, local, and planetary alliances.

The siringueiro movement of the 1970s in Brazil, which culminated in the recognition of an unprecedented mode of relation to the forest—the extractivist reserve (Porto-Gonçalves 2001)—is a good example of the kind of the creativity and inventiveness exhibited by some of these organizations. At first sight, this seems to be a contradiction in terms, since "conserving" (reserving) and exploiting (extracting) are antithetical concepts. It is precisely the articulation of this duality in an intermediate and ch'ixi unity that gives it its force. Its protagonists are caboclos, mestizos, immigrants from the northeastern interior who associated and intermixed with local indigenous populations, learned their sustainable practices of harvesting products from the forest, and acquired from them a knowledge of the territory and its seasonal cycles. In response to the successive crises of the rubber export economy in Acre, the siringueiros became free "occupants" of the rubber tree paths, and formed "posts" based on a group of domestic units that combined activities for personal consumption (gathering, agriculture, hunting, and fishing) with rubber production for the national market. The extraction of latex, Brazil nuts, and other forest products, and the diversified and sustainable use of its various resources, enabled a productive form of environmental conservation that, far from reserving the forest as a pristine space untouched by human activity, enables a creative symbiosis between use and conservation. The notion of untouchability was a strategic weapon in the hands of the state, in the TIPNIS case as well as in that of the "extractivist reserves" of the siringueiros, because it ultimately reconfigured the space, which had been autonomous, making it into a colonized space. This was the

challenge that ended in the murder of Chico Mendes in 1988, although the movement as such has survived to this day.

Taking into account the composition of the Citizen Assemblies that formed in Argentina against big mining and the expansion of soy cultivation, and that of the Acre Federation of Rubber Producers, we see a heterogeneous configuration of identifications and agencies that recreated, through local notions of territory, a universalist citizen articulation with a firm social base, which in the first case is expressed in the notion of "common goods" and in the second as "extractivist reserves." The "culture of resistance" that emerges in these two cases thus constructs an idiolect compatible with, and at once alternative to, the hegemonic notions of development at the local, national, and global levels.

If we compare this situation with the one in Bolivia in the TIPNIS, we can see that here too there is an interpellation at these three social levels or scales, and that the "defense of the environment" or "defense of natural resources" was the banner under which they achieved such influence. However, there are substantial differences between the two cases. In the TIPNIS, the practices of the indigenous organizations had an element of vertical, hereditary, patriarchal leadership of the old missions. Likewise, it carried the baggage of old patron-client relations that date back to the colonial period. I don't think that there, beyond the strictly local level (the community or the town council), there were self-organized assemblies that sought democratic consensus and were able to extend their demands from the bottom up, without visible leadership or individual exercise of power. In the TIPNIS, the insufficient formation of collective subjects, the broad reach of the state, and a national-popular developmentalist program blocked the democratic processes and leaderships of a "new kind" (Ernesto Noe, Tomás Ticuazu, and Marcial Fabricano) that were launched into the political sphere with the March for Land and Dignity of 1990 and ended up subordinated to the neoliberal parties. Like the Katarist leaders, several of them were co-opted by the state. Marcial Fabricano, the most visible leader of that march, even became a vice minister in Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada's government (1992–1997). The initial alliance of the principal leaders of the lowland indigenous movement with Evo Morales in the

Unity Pact was broken over the course of his first term in office. By the time of the seventh march in 2010, indigenous protest against the reduction in the number of seats reserved for indigenous peoples, from the 16 proposed by the Unity Pact to only 7 (out of a total of 130 representatives), shows that MAS was not ready to tolerate more than an indigenous minority in the Plurinational Assembly. The march was aborted in Santa Cruz without having achieved any of its objectives.

With the eighth and ninth TIPNIS marches, and with the (posterior) consultation organized by the 2012 government, the indigenous organizations remained on the defensive, were fragmented and co-opted by overwhelming clientelistic concessions, and lost much of their original impulse. The criminalization of the protest, together with divide-and-conquer politics, has been effective in neutralizing the enormous force that the lowland indigenous insurgence had acquired. In this process, the "strategic ethnicity" brandished by the indigenous groups and by the state alike gave way to a "tactical ethnicity" that keeps the spirit of rebellion alive within the communities, inscribed in their daily practices of production and consumption, in their modes of communication and in their cycles of rituals and feasts. We therefore cannot and should not say that the defeat of the indigenous peoples of the TIPNIS is a fait accompli, or that the spark of resistance has been irreversibly extinguished.

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