

iNDiGENOUS UPRiSiNG

Bolivia and the Latin American Revolution

By Carlos Torchia, Cecilia Rosalia Paiva,
and Raul Burbano



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INTRODUCTION

This pamphlet presents the views of three Toronto-based Latin American social and solidarity activists on the present upsurge in liberation struggles in their region. It focuses on the leading role of indigenous peoples, particularly in Bolivia, under the indigenous-led government of Evo Morales.

This is the second pamphlet published by Toronto Bolivia Solidarity, of which all three authors are members. As Juan Valencia said in our preceding pamphlet (*Bolivia Rising*), the values that we in Canada hold dear “are under attack in Bolivia. The process in Bolivia is our struggle.”

The first article, by Chilean-Canadian socialist Carlos Torchia, was first presented at a forum October 9, 2008, in honour of Che Guevara. It takes up how Latin America’s rebellions today continue the spirit of Che.

Cecelia Rosalía Paiva focuses, in her contribution, on the her experience at the Indigenous Social Forum held in Guatemala in October, 2008. Her article, which reflects discussions with many indigenous women at the forum, takes up the relationship of indigenous struggles in Bolivia and elsewhere to the traditional Andean-Amazonian cosmic vision.

Raul Burbano, an activist from Colombia now based in Toronto, gave this talk as an educational at a planning meeting of Toronto Bolivia Solidarity. Burbano examines point by point Bolivia’s new constitution, which is being put to a vote in January 2009.

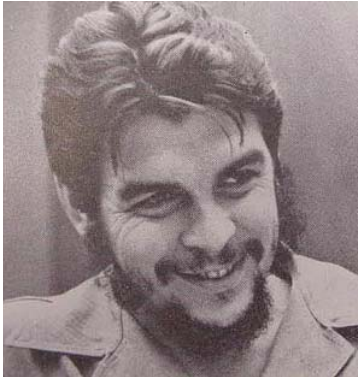
Suzanne Weiss, January 12, 2009

Che Guevara and the New Rise of Latin American Revolution

By Carlos Torchia

On October 9, 2008, the newly formed Latin American Solidarity Committee in Toronto organized a meeting on “Defending People’s Democracy in Bolivia and Venezuela.” At the meeting, co-sponsored by Toronto Bolivia Solidarity, the Venezuela We Are With You Coalition, Barrio Nuevo, OPIRG Toronto, and the CUPE International Solidarity Committee, an audience of 122 heard speakers from Bolivia and Venezuela. The following remarks by Carlos Torres introduced the meeting.

Good evening. Welcome to this celebration of solidarity with the participatory democracies of Venezuela and Bolivia. This event takes place on October 9, which commemorates another anniversary of the heroic death of Commandante Ernesto Che Guevara. The popular rebellion against the empire that is shaking Latin America today can be characterized as the continuation of Che’s mission: to struggle



for the liberation of those oppressed by imperialism. It’s no coincidence that Che’s image is once again held up by the multitudes who struggle to liberate themselves from poverty in La Paz, Buenos Aires, Quito or Caracas.

What do these peoples see in Che’s legacy? They see a man who did what he said. The people admire his determination and realize that’s exactly what has been missing from Bolivar’s continent – his internationalism and loyalty to the cause of the oppressed, even at the cost of his own life. There’s no doubt that Che was alive in Allende’s actions, in the strength of Fidel, in the bravery of Subcomandante Marcos, in the consistency of Commandante Chavez and Evo. May these words and this meeting pay tribute to his life, Commandante Che Guevara....present today and always!!

The winds of rebellion against neoliberalism and the empire are

blowing across all of Latin America. Neoliberalism is suffering a crisis of credibility, including in the imperialist heartland. In the past 20 years the oppressed and poor from the cities and rural areas, women and youth, have begun to say no to poverty, inequality, exploitation by transnational corporations, and the dominance of the local oligarchies. As a result of the neoliberal policies, the rich in Latin America today are richer and the poor, poorer. From the far reaches of the continent, Central America and Mexico, the original inhabitants have risen in struggle for their existence and autonomy, so that they may control their destiny.

- This new anti-neoliberal rebellion had its first outbreak in Caracas in 1989, when the Venezuelans rose up against the dictates of the International Monetary Fund.
- In 1994, as NAFTA entered into force, the Zapatista National Liberation Army announced to the world that the workers of Chiapas, Mexico, would fight against those policies and for their ancestral lands.
- In Brazil since 1984, the movement of landless people without land has mobilized millions who declared “the land is for those that work it.”
- In 2001, the poor and middle class of Argentina rejected five presidents in less than one year, protesting poverty and unemployment caused by the policies of the IMF. The Argentinean workers occupied abandoned factories deserted by their owners and put them back into production.
- In Bolivia from 2002-2005 the social movements opposed the privatization and launched water and gas wars, expelling the transnationals and removing various neoliberal presidents. In 1992, the people from Uruguay mobilized by the Broad Front approved a referendum that prohibited the privatization of public resources.
- In 2006 in the state of Oaxaca Mexico, the people rebelled against poverty and corruption by the governor and developed autonomous forms of popular power.

From these popular struggles and other social and political movements in Guatemala, El Salvador, Haiti, Colombia, Peru and Chile have arisen various progressive governments in the region; Venezu-

ela, Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Uruguay, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and recently in Paraguay. All these governments, with more or less commitment from the poor, are looking for alternatives to the neoliberal economical model. Millions of Latin Americans now have hope that a new world is possible.

However, it is the democratic revolutionary processes that have evolved in Venezuela and Bolivia that constitute the continued advance of the wave of resistance and liberation that were inaugurated by Cuba in 1959. Hugo Chavez and Evo Morales lead governments that have taken up Allende's legacy of struggling to utilize natural resources to better the standard of living for the masses. For the first time in history the majority of people in Venezuela have access to free healthcare, education, and subsidized food. They have access to land, they form cooperatives. They are actors in a democratic, participatory process that is no more than a dream for the masses in North Americans or Canadians.

The large vote of support for Evo in the recent recall referendum of August 10 reaffirmed his democratically elected government in front of the world. Evo has more democratic legitimacy than Bush and Harper. The reason for this large support is that Evo is completing his promises to the people: nationalizing the deposits of Petroleum and natural gas, ending internal colonialism, returning political power to the indigenous people and their ancestral land. These are the same objectives for which Che Guevara struggled and gave his life.

Chilean Experience

Yet we know from the experience of Chile that imperialism does not like the changes that are affecting the interests of the capitalist class, nor do they welcome the politics of independence and sovereignty of Venezuela and Bolivia. They don't like the nationalization of natural resources, publicly owned property, or the evolution of popular power that has evolved from the grassroots movement like communal councils. Imperialism does not like ALBA (Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas) the alternative model that President Chavez proposes, because it proposes integration and solidarity among the communities of Latin America and opposes the free trade agreements that only serve the transnational and local oligarchies.

The empire does not approve of socialism is once again resonating



across the continent and or that Cuba is no longer isolated. Hence their politics of intervention in Venezuela supporting the oligarchy's subversion and their newest attempt to assassinate Chavez. From them emanates the attempt to Balkanize Bolivia or-

ganized by the US Ambassador in coordination with the separatist oligarchy of the "Half Moon" states.

As I said, new winds are blowing in Latin America. The people do not want a repetition of the Allende tragedy. They have declared that today in Latin America there's no place for another Pinochet and that sovereign governments that represent the people ought to be respected. This is what the governments of the countries that form UNASUR (Union of South American Nations) declared in Santiago on September 15, in pledging total support for the government of Evo Morales. They repudiated the attempted coup d'état and any actions that attempt to destroy the institutions and territory of Bolivia. We are asking the Canadian government to support the declaration of Santiago.

As members of the Latin American Solidarity Network, we feel it's urgent to develop a new level of solidarity with the struggles of the people of Venezuela and Bolivia and to condemn the attacks on their democratic governments aiming to reverse the profound reforms that have benefited the people. Even more, this internationalist stand is based on our understanding that the process of change that have developed in Latin America is not distant from or alien to our personal lives, because the struggles for healthcare, the rights of women and children, for education, for work, for the autonomy of indigenous peoples, for defense of the wellbeing of Mother Nature, also the challenges that we face here in Canada.

Report from the Guatemala Indigenous Social Forum

By Rosalia Paiva

The following report was given by Rosalia Paiva on November 27, 2008, to a Toronto report-back by delegates to the Third Social Forum of the Americas, which took place October 7-12 in Guatemala. Sponsors of the meeting included the Toronto Social Forum and Toronto Bolivia Solidarity (torontobolivasolidarity@gmail.com).

Rosalia Paiva is a long-time leader of the woman's liberation movement in Peru, Canada, and other countries and a prominent spokesperson for the indigenous movement in the Andes. She is a member of the Federation of Indigenous Peoples of Peru and of the Bolivia Action Solidarity Network.

Sisters and Brothers:

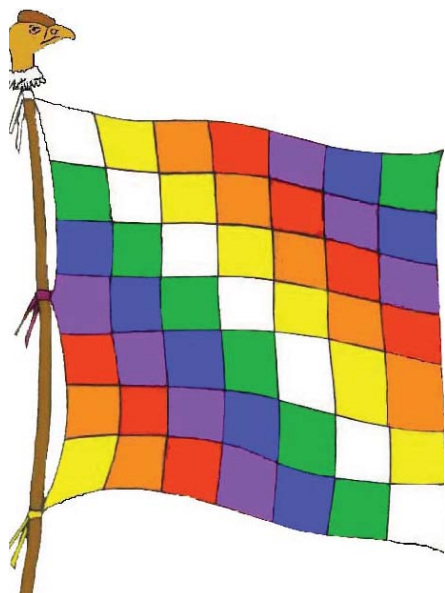
Our grandmothers and grandfathers taught us that human beings must be respectful toward Mother Nature. We must live in harmony with her, love her, and care for her, in return for what we receive from her, which is life. Therefore let us say, sisters and brothers:

Let the land sanctify our body; the water sanctify our blood; the air sanctify our breath; the fire sanctify our spirit, so that from this blessing of our internal divinity may arise the love that is our power.

* * *

Sisters and Brothers, compañeras and compañeros:

We met in Iximulew, Guatemala, in the Social Forum of the Americas, to share our experiences of resistance and struggle, our demands and our proposals, and to advance together.¹ Nonetheless, looking at the program, we saw many Non-Governmental Organizations [NGOs] heading up the speakers' list, taking the place in some cases of genuine social movements, and giving the floor only to delegates who paid their own travel costs. There must be an end to this. If we are talking of democracy, we must end these abuses that afflict the entire Left.



We were much moved when we witnessed participation in discussion and action of indigenous people, as leaders of their struggles. They are fearless in speaking out and conveying their message. This is what is needed to regain our rights as peoples and individuals.

We came to agreement on many things at the Guatemala forum – above all regarding the failure of the capitalist system, which is based on speculation and exploitation. Huge capitalist enterprises have now been

exposed as deceptive and immoral.

Sisters and brothers, this capitalist system produces exclusion, marginalization, and violence. It has irreversible impact on our life and that of our Mother Earth (Pachamama), reflected in global warming. Our work must therefore aim to banish neoliberalism. This effort must find expression in an agenda of many types of struggle and resistance: against militarization, against the Empire's plans like the Merida Initiative, the Colombia Plan, the Security and Prosperity Partnership, the military bases, the School of the Americas, the Fourth Fleet.²

We therefore demand the permanent shutdown of the U.S. military bases and cancellation of plans to deploy the Fourth Fleet. In the light of the September 11 massacre this year, we are resisting the criminalization and repression of the struggles of social movements.³ We are redoubling our denunciation of these evils and affirming our peoples' unity and solidarity with all those who suffer from repression and persecution.

We are very pleased that this summit gathering adopted as its own the demands of indigenous peoples of our continent. These demands include the refoundation of the states rooted in colonialism, recognizing their plurinational and multi-ethnic character. This pro-

vides a foundation for “Living Well,” or *allin kausay*, which teaches us to develop in step with time and with Mother Nature, that is, in harmony and with respect. The indigenous message permeates the awareness of the social movements – and for us this is a source of joy and satisfaction.

Of special importance, therefore, was the solidarity expressed to the Guatemala forum by President Evo Morales of Bolivia,⁴ who is working consistently with his people to build a new multicultural and plurinational society. We seized the occasion to condemn the racism of the Bolivian oligarchy and defend the inalienable right of the Bolivian people to self-determination.

Nor did we fail to express our solidarity with the heroic Cuban revolution. We condemned the blockade and demanded that it be immediately ended. We called for the immediate liberation of the five Cuban heroes held in prison in the United States.⁵ We initiated global and hemispheric campaigns for this goal, to be carried out by social movements.

As indigenous people, we set out to coordinate our struggles, strengthen our organizations, and give new life to our centuries-old cosmovision, which stands as an alternative to the capitalist system. Indigenous and non-indigenous participants alike agreed that the enemy number one for the entire species inhabiting this planet and universe is capitalism. Today it goes by the name of neoliberalism, subjecting our peoples and nationalities to a new colonialism.

This brutal capitalism strives to maximize the wealth of transnational corporations. It finds expression in neoliberalism and its megaprojects, in “free trade” agreements, and in the extractive transnationals (minerals, petroleum, wood, hydroelectric, and so on). They are pillaging our peoples and territories in the same way their predecessors did starting 516 years ago, in 1492.

We utterly reject this, because it is a policy that kills and annihilates our peoples. This policy is imposed and sustained by militarization and the provision of advanced weapons. This leads to genocidal confrontations, in which women are treated as the booty of war. Women are expelled and forced into exile, to live as political refugees. The slaughter of women and other crimes against humanity are carried out with impunity on a daily basis.

Sisters and brothers: water, electricity, education, health, and basic services must be established as human rights and not privatized.

Feminists spoke at our conference of the daily reality they face – one shaped by the oppressive demands of capitalist patriarchy, which imposes inequality and institutionalizes its control of women’s sexuality, reproductive capacity, and labour power. This system excludes women from decision making in both public and private spheres. When women get out of line, it responds by violence done to their bodies, as well as through criminalization, condemnation, and repression of women’s movements across the continent.

As indigenous women, we proclaim women’s right to decide freely regarding their lives, their bodies, their sexuality, and the territory they live in, with its natural and cultural wealth. We reaffirm that women’s autonomy is the precondition for establishing relationships. Women are protagonists in the process of change and transformation. There can be no democratic change without women’s involvement.

Indigenous Vision of Existence

Against the narrow feminism of the West, we counterpose a feminism based on the concept of parity.

Present-day capitalist society, the structure of its world, in all its complexity, arises as an expression and a reproduction of a concept of unity. In this framework, anything that is different is invalid. This society wages an eternal war against what is different, rejecting everything that obstructs its path. There is no call for coexistence or consultation, and no concern for means or methods. Its sole concern is to impose its “truth” and its goals, whatever the price, and it does so through unlimited coercion. This reality reflects its unitary and singular cosmic vision.

By contrast, the Andean indigenous cosmovision maintains that everything originates in parity, which is the principle of all existence. Parity combines two different elements, two essences that are complementary, two universes that are parallel but combine, without forming a unity. The two elements stand in a correlation that may or may not find expression at any given moment. Time contains two aspects and moves along two paths. Grasping the unity of these two complementary opposites is a precondition for understanding the human condition. The individual can know him or herself only in relationship to others.

We see this duality expressed in the pairing of sky and earth, sun

and moon, fire and water — and also of woman and man. Theirs is a natural unity based on respect, reciprocity, and circularity. It forms the basis for our participatory democracy – in which no one can be leader all the time. It is the basis for an indigenous government based on parity, where women play an equal role.

This is our understanding and was that of our ancestors. European colonization and invasion imposed patriarchy, separating the man from the woman. Since the conquest, however, we have held to our beliefs. We will stand true to them up to the moment for which we are working, when the prophecy regarding the Eagle and the Condor will be fulfilled.⁶

Defend Bolivia

As indigenous peoples, we reassert our solidarity in defending Bolivia and other revolutionary processes in gestation in the south of the continent, we must either accept subjugation or break the chains of imperialist oppression. We hail the firmness of Evo Morales, the indigenous president of Bolivia. He took a stand against imperialism, expelling from Bolivia the U.S. ambassador, USAID, and the U.S. drug administration, because of their engagement in financing and conspiring with those opposed to the Bolivian people's government and state.

We deplore the political revenge taken by the Bush government in expelling the Bolivian ambassador and removing Bolivia from the list of beneficiaries of tariff preferences that were proclaimed with much hullabaloo, including promises by Washington to cancel Bolivia's debt to the U.S., in the time of the oligarchic government of Sánchez de Lozada.⁷

We note that the U.S. was the only country in the world that did not take a stand against the September 11 massacre of peasants in Pando, where the Bolivian oligarchy this year murdered more than 180 indigenous people of this department.

Sisters and brothers, our ancestral peoples have always lived as a community. From our ancestors we have received moral principles that are with us today, concepts that include the interrelationship of all being, the principle of correspondence, and the principle of reciprocity.

Bolivia today presents today an alternative of peace. It is a democratic laboratory, in which processes inherited from our ancestors

combine with our democratic reality, providing the basis for a revolution in our culture. That is why the world is looking to Bolivia today. But Bolivia has many enemies – among them the servile media and the encrusted oligarchies, supported of course by U.S. transnationals who have always enjoyed free access to all the wealth of Bolivia and of all our peoples across the continent.

We are confident that Bolivians – including Quechuas, Aymaras, Chiquitanos, Guaranís, and other indigenous nationalities – will weave their own history. They will bequeath it as a gift to the world from our Inca ancestors. We will work together, from this day, to meet this challenge. We therefore call on all democratic forces to become part of this process and to defend it.

This will be the inheritance that they leave to their grandchildren and to generations to come.

Translated from Spanish By John Riddell

Notes

1. First of all, I must tell you that simply participating in the Third Social Forum of the Americas, which took place October 7 to 12 in 2008, was a victory. Just buying the ticket was no small matter. I am a woman of the Quechua nation and a political refugee in this country, which I love. Under these conditions it was difficult for me to pull together the funds needed for this trip. Fortunately, Pachamama provided me with friends, marvellous and generous sisters and brothers like Judy Rebeck of the Social Justice and Democracy chair at Ryerson, Suzanne Weiss, John Riddell, my husband Arturo Valencia, and my sister Mabel Ernest, who encouraged me. I still owe a little money. I am quite happy because they all helped me fulfil the promise that I made to my sisters of the Indigenous Women's Movement, Tz'ununija', in Guatemala, to be at the forum. They asked me to speak in the forum on the impact of mining on the lives of indigenous women.—Rosalía Paiva
2. The Merida Initiative is a pact between the governments of the U.S., Mexico, and Central America for military and police collaboration, supposedly to combat the drug trade and crime.
The Plan Colombia is a U.S.-sponsored "anti-drug" initiative that entails a massive military and paramilitary build-up in Colombia and extensive spraying of aerial herbicides that eradicate both coca and other, legal crops.
The Security and Prosperity Partnership is a wide-ranging agreement among Canadian, the U.S., and Mexican governments and major capitalist business to align policies and regulations for heightened profits.
The School of the Americas (now called the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation) is a Georgia-based branch of the U.S. government that indoctrinates Latin American officers and police.
The Fourth Fleet, a major command of the U.S. navy, was reactivated as of July 1, 2008, to patrol the eastern shores of South America and the Caribbean.
3. On September 11, 2008, rightists in Bolivia carried out an unprovoked and murderous attack on unarmed demonstrators in the Pando Department. The resulting popular upsurge dealt a severe blow to the U.S.-backed destabilization campaign.
4. For the greetings sent by Evo Morales to the Guatemala Social Forum, see www.narconews.com/Issue54/article3208.html
5. Cuban patriots Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, Fernando

González, and René González – the “Cuban Five” – have been jailed in the U.S. under onerous conditions since 2001. They provided the Cuban government with information that enabled it to defend itself against terrorist aggression sponsored by the U.S. government.

6. In the legend of the Condor and the Eagle, known to many indigenous peoples of the hemisphere, the coming together in the sky of the two great birds symbolizes the unification of indigenous peoples, north and south, in achieving a new world of freedom and harmony. For more on the Andean indigenous cosmovision, see the Spanish-language website www.mamapacha.org/.
7. Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, twice president of Bolivia between 1993 and 2003, is best known for having imposed neo-liberal “shock therapy” that privatized and wrecked Bolivia’s national economy. He was forced out of office by a mass upsurge protesting his policy on development the country’s natural gas resources.

New charter to refound Bolivia through democratic means

A Study of Bolivia’s Proposed New Constition

By Raul Burbano

Raul Burbano is a member of Toronto Bolivia Solidarity (torontoboliviasolidarity@gmail.com) and the Latin American Solidarity Network.

Bolivian President Evo Morales has called for a national referendum on the country’s new draft constitution on December 7. The demand of the Bolivian people for a new and socially, politically and economically inclusive constitution is at the heart of the present political upheaval in that country.

Right-wing forces representing the country’s traditional ruling oligarchy have launched a secessionist movement to Balkanize the country, in an attempt to block the constitutional referendum. They have organized murderous fascist gangs to terrorize the population.

They are backed by the U.S. government, whose ambassador, Philip Goldberg, has recently been expelled from Bolivia for his support of the opposition and openly admitted interference in Bolivian political life.

On the other side of the pendulum the vast majority of the Bolivians, more than 67% of whom just voted support President Evo Morales in a recall referendum.

The constitutional struggle in Bolivia has thus become linked to the broader regional struggle in Latin America of who will benefit

from its wealth – the masses of the continent or its traditional oligarchy backed by Washington.

The demand for a new constitution is not limited to Bolivia. In fact, over the past 15 years there's been a demand for a Constituent Assembly to propose such a document in virtually every Andean country in Latin America; Colombia (1991), Peru (1993), Ecuador (1998), and Venezuela (1999). All countries have written or modified their Constitutions. In contrast to some of these experiences, the demand for a constitution in Bolivia emerged from grassroots movements and has widespread national support.

Lengthy constitutional struggle

Bolivia's demand for a Constituent Assembly is not a recent development and goes back to the early 1990s. It emanated from the Guarani people with their "Great March" from the eastern lowlands of Bolivia to La Paz; their slogan "Land, Territory and Dignity" was rooted in the demand for a Constituent Assembly. Then in early 2000 we saw the demand for a Constituent Assembly taken up by both urban and rural social movements who had suffered at the hands of previous governments' neoliberal policies. This culminated in the Water Wars of Cochabamba, where residents poured into the streets to protest Bechtel's takeover of their water system and attempted nationalization of their gas – hence the Gas Wars in La Paz. It was during this turbulent period that the call for a Constituent Assembly merged with the call for a referendum on the gas issue.

In 2005 the MAS (Movimiento al Socialismo) under Evo Morales was elected under a platform to "refound" the country's political institutions through a Constituent Assembly. This was seen as the only way to bring about change and address the endemic inequalities in the country. The magnitude of inequality that the MAS is trying to rectify can be summed up by the issue of land. According to the United Nations' Development Program, 25 million hectares of prime farmland is controlled by 100 families. In contrast, the remaining five million hectares of farmland in the country are shared among two million campesinos. This profound inequality is endemic and represents what is being challenged with the new constitution.

Constituent Assembly

The Law Convoking the Constituent Assembly resulted from a negotiated process between the political parties in the Bolivian Congress and the executive branch headed by Evo Morales. Bolivians in each of the 70 voting districts elected three delegates. The party that received the most votes sent two representatives from the district and the second or third place party sent one, thus guaranteeing that no party could monopolize the assembly. The only condition was that a minimum of 30% of the delegates had to be women. On July 2, 2006, Bolivians elected 255 delegates for the Constituent Assembly. The MAS sent 137 delegates (64 were women), the opposition 99, and the rest were independents.

There are 411 articles in the new constitution. Many are progressive and outright revolutionary promising to refound the country to the benefit of the majority. The new Constitution is controversial, but the majority of Bolivians, the indigenous people, fully support it, as was seen in the August 2008 recall referendum.

Focus of controversy

The following are articles or sections of articles from the new constitution that are most important to the indigenous majority of Bo-



livia and also the most controversial.

- Bolivia is a unitary, plurinational, communitarian and democratic State: This means that all 36 peoples, cultures, languages have the same rights and opportunities, and are recognized equally before the law, institutions, and society. It refers to a Bolivian unity that respects autonomy – i.e. municipal, departmental, regional, indigenous-originario, campesino and peasant autonomies. This guarantees the unity of the state and the democratic decentralization of power.
- Plurinational public administration: This refers to all public functionaries and requires them to know the dominant indigenous language of the region where they work. This will enable them to be able communicate with the people they represent. They are also to know the Spanish language, to enable them to communicate with the rest of the Bolivians; and a foreign language, as a link to the outside world.
- The nationalization of natural resources, renewable and non-renewable, under the control and ownership of the Bolivian people: This would forbid the ownership of gas, oil, mining resources, water, land, and forests by foreigners. All natural resources will be the property of Bolivians, for use by Bolivians for the benefit of Bolivians, and administered by the state.
- Sovereign natural resources: It is totally prohibited for non-state organizations to directly involve themselves in the administration, management, control and preservation of forests, parks, and natural reserves, as well as biodiversity, all of which are under the control of the state.
- Social and communitarian economy: The state will participate in the strategic sectors of the economy. Foreign private investment will be subordinated to national development plans. Private property should guarantee that it plays an effective social function for the benefit of human beings. Ownership in the economy will be public, private and communitarian. Medium and small rural producers, agrarian communities and productive associations will receive state protection, economic support, credits, technology, and infrastructure in order to guarantee the well being of society. A mixed economy is proposed to reassure business interests and maintain market stability.
- Expropriation without indemnification of latifundios: The goal

is to redistribute land amongst producers including those from the countryside and city who are willing to produce for the benefit of society. This is a major blow to the giant landholders – the Ronald Larsens and Branko Marinkovics of the Media Luna (eastern) departments.

- Reelection and revocation by popular mandate of any elected authority: Never again will authorities be untouchable owners of their positions. The people are sovereign and the people can ratify or change their authorities when they so desire.
- Election of all authorities of the Judicial Branch, including the Supreme Court: This is a change from the current undemocratic model of appointment by congress, which has seen nepotism flourish in the courts. It looks to redress the balance of power that has for so long being in the hand of the elites.
- Recognition of communitarian justice as an alternative, complementary and ancestral form of solving differences and conflicts: The indigenous systems of justice would be given the same standing in the official hierarchy as the existing system.
- A plurinational Parliament with only one chamber: In essence, this is a reengineering the political institutions. This would guarantee the same number of currents representative for each department and no more chambers of elites and privilege. The goal is to break the oligarchies' traditional monopoly in the Senate that has traditionally acted as an obstacle to all progressive governments.
- All Bolivians have the right to free health care and education in equal conditions.
- Total elimination of illiteracy.

Other articles in the constitution that are relevant :

- A new capital of Sucre: Sucre is to be acknowledged as Bolivia's official capital.
 - Ban on sexual orientation discrimination: Bolivia would be only the second country in the world, after South Africa, with this constitutional provision.
 - Bolivia is a country of peace that promotes the culture of peace.

Bolivia repudiates all war of aggression and prohibits the installation of foreign military bases on its national territory.

- Water is considered a human right.
- All the cultural rights for indigenous people are also accorded to the Afro-Bolivians.
- A wide number of social rights are established for children, youth and older people, never before seen in 183 years of Bolivian history.

Ratification procedure

The national assembly approved the new constitution in December 2007. The country's main opposition party boycotted the assembly vote on the new charter. The constitution now requires ratification by at least 51% of Bolivian voters in a national referendum. If voters reject the draft, the country's existing constitution will remain in effect. It's important to note that a number of articles have to be approved directly by Bolivian voters.

Among them is an article that would limit the size of individual land holdings to a maximum of 10,000 hectares. This is bitterly opposed by the country's agribusinesses and big landowners of the Media Luna region in the East. If passed this would have a major impact on the lowland departments of Santa Cruz, Beni, and Pando, and finally address the historical injustice of unequal land distribution.

The opposition claims the constitution proposes the creation of two Bolivia's: "one for indigenous people and another for non-indigenous people," as one opposition member said, "with separate and parallel judicial systems and languages effectively making the indigenous people first-class citizens and everyone else second class citizens." The opposition parties claim that the government is trying to establish a Cuban-type one-party-dominated state that will put an end to pluralism. They also argue that the government is just following in the footsteps of Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez.

Those who support the constitution feel that its plurinational communitarian aspect is a decolonization of the state that for centuries has discriminated and marginalized the indigenous majority. They believe that it is designed to give every citizen equal access to Bolivia's resources. Others see it as confronting the neoliberal doctrine and replacing it with a viable alternative – the cosmovision of the

indigenous people (communitarian land and rights for nature) – thus creating a more humanist and just society.

Vice-President Álvaro García Linera called it a first step in the new road towards “*capitalismo Andino Amazónico*” (Andean-Amazonian capitalism) which will “improve the possibilities of the emancipation of the worker and community forces in the medium term”. The Agencia Nodo Sur (South Node Agency) explains that “Andean-Amazonian capitalism is neither socialism nor neoliberalism, but a system catering to the contemporary realities of Bolivia which recognizes communal, state, and private forms of economic organization as being equal under the law”



Copies of the pamphlet can be ordered from Toronto Bolivia Solidarity at torontoboliviasolidarity@gmail.com. "Bolivia Rising" sells for \$3 a copy; bundles can be ordered for \$2 each.

Toronto Bolivia Solidarity (TBS) includes people from many backgrounds: different generations, nationalities, and political beliefs. Bolivians, Latin Americans from many countries, and those born in Canada are who participate in promoting solidarity with Bolivia. You can reach us at torontoboliviasolidarity@gmail.com and get on our email list for announcements of our continuing activities. You can reach our sister organizations in Ottawa and Vancouver at www.grupoapoyo.org/basn