

# BOLIVIA IN THE ERA OF EVO MORALES

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**Unresolved Tensions: Bolivia Past and Present.** Edited by John Crabtree and Laurence Whitehead. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008. Pp. ix + 309. \$65.00 cloth.

**Los ritmos del Pachakuti: Movilización y levantamiento indígena-popular en Bolivia (2000–2005).** By Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar. La Paz: Ediciones Yachaywasi and Textos Rebeldes, 2008. Pp. 335. Paper.

**Revolutionary Horizons: Past and Present in Bolivian Politics.** By Forrest Hylton and Sinclair Thomson. London: Verso, 2007. Pp. xxiv + 177. \$22.95 paper.

**El poder del movimiento político: Estrategia, tramas organizativas e identidad del MAS en Cochabamba (1999–2005).** By Jorge Komadina and Céline Geffroy. La Paz: Centro de Estudios Superiores Universitarios and Dirección de Investigación Científica y Técnica, Universidad Mayor de San Simón, and Fundación para la Investigación Estratégica en Bolivia, 2007. Pp. xvi + 156. Paper.

**Reinventando la nación en Bolivia: Movimientos sociales, estado y poscolonialidad.** Edited by Karin Monasterios, Pablo Stefanoni, and Hervé Do Alto. La Paz: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales, Plural Editores, 2007. Pp. 171. Paper.

In his magnum opus, *Europe and the People without History* (1982), Eric R. Wolf drew on Marxian categories to explain how the acceleration of capitalist development in eighteenth-century England amplified pressures against the ruling class and the state that did its bidding, as new laboring classes came into being and struggled for their rights.<sup>1</sup> In this context, Wolf asserts: “The specter of disorder and revolution raised the question of how social order could be restored and maintained, indeed, how social

1. Throughout this essay, the term *social movement* refers to “those sequences of contentious politics that are based on underlying social networks and resonant collective action frames, and which develop the capacity to maintain sustained challenges against powerful opponents.” See Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 2

order was possible at all.”<sup>2</sup> In another classic text of a rather different ideological persuasion, Samuel Huntington fetishized the problem of political order in the modernizing third-world societies of the 1960s, stressing the dangers of excessive political participation in so-called praetorian states. “In a praetorian system,” Huntington suggests, “social forces confront each other nakedly; no political institutions, no corps of professional political leaders are recognized or accepted as the legitimate intermediaries to moderate group conflict. . . . The wealthy bribe; students riot; workers strike; mobs demonstrate; and the military coup.”<sup>3</sup>

It is hardly surprising that in the context of effervescing social movements—or “mass praetorianism,” in Huntingtonian language—the central concerns of mainstream sociologists and political scientists writing about Bolivia during the past number of years has been the specter of revolution and the concomitant need to contain the rebels from below and reestablish order from above. A five-year period of left-indigenous revolt began in 2000 with the Cochabamba Water War against privatization in that city. This was followed by the 2003 and 2005 Gas Wars, whose protagonists called for, among other things, nationalization of the hydrocarbons industry. The insurgents successfully overthrew President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, and later Carlos Mesa, when their demands were not met. These protests set the stage, of course, for the electoral victory of Evo Morales, leader of the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS; Movement toward Socialism), in the December 2005 general elections.

For those radical scholars who saw neoliberal rule in Bolivia during the 1980s and 1990s as fundamentally premised on racialized class injustice, these rebellions raised different concerns from those of the mainstream, leading these scholars to ask how such discontent might be channeled into a full-fledged transformation of Bolivia’s social and political structures to meet the interests of the indigenous, proletarian, and peasant majority.<sup>4</sup>

The books under consideration here reflect how intellectual debate on the Bolivian scene has polarized in step with political realities on the ground. These texts can usefully be situated on an order-to-insurrection continuum, beginning with what I would term *the guardians of order*, followed by *masista loyalists*, and finally *the critical left*. These are blurry rather than discrete categories, of course, with authors at times bridging the divides.

2. Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 8.

3. Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), 196.

4. See Jeffery R. Webber, *Red October: Left-Indigenous Struggles in Modern Bolivia* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2010).

## THE GUARDIANS OF ORDER

The collection of essays edited by John Crabtree and Laurence Whitehead emerged out of a pair of conferences held in Oxford and La Paz in 2006 and 2007. *Unresolved Tensions* centers on issues of ethnicity, regionalism, state-society relations, constitutional reform, economic development, and globalization. Seemingly rushed into print (typographical errors and awkward translations abound), it is an uneven and unsatisfactory attempt at a panoramic perspective on the opening phase of Morales's rule, ostensibly from a wide range of theoretical and ideological vantage points. But although Whitehead assures the reader that the collection is "not designed to promote any one particular standpoint" and that the editors are "sympathetic but uncommitted outsiders" (255), the deliberately circumscribed range of debate on offer belies the pretense of objectivity and passive neutrality.

The contributions are decisively weighted toward liberal and conservative perspectives on Morales's administration and broader questions of Bolivian historiography, politics, society, and economy. Of fourteen substantive chapters (excluding the brief introduction but including the conclusion), there are but four exceptions: Xavier Albó's thoughtful anthropological study of the long memory of ethnicity; Rossana Barragán's institutionalist-historical overview of the central state's collection and distribution of fiscal revenues to distinct regions since the founding of the republic; Carlos Arze's brief Marxist account of economic and social developments under neoliberal globalization; and Luis Tapia's sophisticated, critical, and *masista* overview of constituent versus constituted power under Morales. For the sake of brevity, I focus on the volume's overarching thrust, which is defined not by these exceptions but by the other analyses by liberal and conservative guardians of order.

The chapter by José Luis Roca provides one helpful entry into this morass by arguing the astonishingly reductionist thesis that regional conflict in Bolivia has, as a rule, subsumed class and ethnic tensions and continues to define the central axis of division in the country to this day. In proposing, as a solution and in opposition to the alleged centralism of La Paz, that autonomous powers should devolve to each of Bolivia's nine departments, Roca aligns himself ideologically with conservative autonomists of the eastern lowlands, or *media luna*—particularly those of its leading edge, the elite of the department of Santa Cruz. This scheme, which Roca had presented in greater detail in *Fisonomía del regionalismo boliviano*, would purportedly decentralize political power and perhaps ensure Bolivia's viability as a single country.<sup>5</sup> However, it also willfully obfuscates

5. José Luis Roca, *Fisonomía del regionalismo boliviano* (La Paz: Editorial Los Magos del Libro, 1980).

the massive concentration of natural gas, agro-industrial landholdings, and industrial and financial capital in the departments of Santa Cruz and Tarija, at the expense of other regions. In opposition to what Roca contends, Bolivia's main popular movements call for a radical redistribution of wealth down the social hierarchy along geographical, ethnic, and class lines. Whatever their rhetoric, demands for autonomy emanating from the eastern lowlands reflect a political campaign to destabilize, and thus halt, each and every modest step by Morales's government toward the end of redistributing wealth.<sup>6</sup>

Elsewhere, Roca follows the notoriously racist novel *Pueblo enfermo* (1909), by the historian Alcides Arguedas, in lamenting "the obstinacy of the Aymaras of La Paz" (18). The largely Aymara and Quechua populations of the western departments are, for Roca, "strongly influenced by traditionalism" and therefore desire a retrogressive "return to pre-Hispanic societal modes across Bolivia" (74). Roca's chosen people of the media luna, by contrast, are refreshingly modern, broadly supporting "neocapitalist development and market economics" (74).

Franz Xavier Barrios Suvelza's chapter on Bolivia's state-society nexus stands out for its Huntingtonian view that a dangerously praetorian Bolivia faces the danger of overpoliticization under Morales: "the current process of change in Bolivia involves a tendency . . . to reshape the style of the state in the direction of an unbounded and unconstrained democracy, one lacking restraint on the passions—what we might call in Stoic terms a pathetic state," that is, "a style of state where democratic and politicized forces have come to permeate the state" (125). The increasing involvement of popular classes in democratic politics is the specter, and for Barrios Suvelza, the solution is the reassertion of the "apolitical" and "a-democratic" realms of the state (125). We are to recoil in horror from "[t]he way in which democracy has overflowed into the decision-making sphere" under Morales "to the detriment of a-democratic and apolitical state functions" (133).

Liberal guardians of order tend to a more realistic account of the reforms Morales has actually implemented, as distinct from his radical sophistry. Unlike conservative critics, they are predisposed to accept the existence of his regime, as there is no viable right-wing alternative and the regime continues to chart a path of moderation. Morales may even be a stabilizing force for good in their eyes. "In recent years," writes George Gray Molina, head of the UN Development Program (UNDP) in Bolivia, "much attention has shifted to the relative strength of social movements and the weakening of traditional political parties, democratic institutions,

6. See, among other sources, Mark Weisbrot and Luis Sandoval, *The Distribution of Bolivia's Most Important Natural Resources and the Autonomy Conflicts* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2008).

and the rule of law, among other dimensions of the state-society balance" (109). He cites a UNDP survey published in 2007 that found that "Bolivians feel that laws are not enforced, because most feel that 'laws are unjust' and that 'unjust laws may be broken.'" As well, "Bolivian public opinion has identified the worst transgressors as 'the rich' and 'politicians'" and "most Bolivians continue to advocate 'universal' enforcement of laws while at the same time reserving the right to transgress, protest, overturn law" (120).

For Gray Molina and other liberals, these are worrying trends and the priority of the day should be to construct a *modus vivendi*, or institutional apparatus, of state-society relations able to dampen the rising tide of radical discontent and to make cosmetic changes to the status quo without altering its socioeconomic foundations. To this end, the best bet for liberals might be to hazard some "institutional pluralism," allowing "state holes" or "places where bureaucratic or legal state presence is tenuous . . . where authority, legitimacy, and sovereignty are continuously contested" (113) by unions, indigenous communities, and social movements, so long as the latter are ultimately contained and liberal capitalist rule is not threatened at its core. By and large, Gray Molina concludes, state-society relations under Morales reflect this objective in many ways and, indeed, present continuities with the neoliberal model.

#### MASISTA SCHOLARS

Despite a flurry of publications in the wake of Morales's election, there is as yet no theoretically sophisticated, empirically rich, comprehensive account of the social origins and political trajectory of MAS. Suggestive journalistic monographs and articles by investigators sympathetic to MAS have appeared,<sup>7</sup> as have descriptive texts of the relations between social movements and the state under Morales.<sup>8</sup> Despite important empirical insights, these works tend to lack historical and theoretical depth, and they often uncritically parrot official dispatches from the party. At best, they offer only a partial picture of the present.

Unfortunately, Jorge Komadina and Céline Geffroy's *El poder del movimiento político* does not escape these tendencies, instead continuing the tradition of impressionistic and partial analysis. Although it makes frequent claims about the overarching course and significance of MAS's de-

7. The most important of these works are Pablo Stefanoni and Hervé Do Alto, *Evo Morales: De la coca al palacio: Una oportunidad para la izquierda indígena* (La Paz: Malatesta, 2006); Shirley Orozco Ramírez, "Historia del Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS): Trayectoria política e ideológica," *Barataria* 1, no. 2 (2004): 16–22; Pablo Stefanoni, "MAS-IPSP: La emergencia del nacionalismo plebeyo," *Observatorio Social de América Latina* 4, no. 12 (2003): 57–68.

8. María Teresa Zegada, Yuri F. Tórrez, and Gloria Cámara, *Movimientos sociales en tiempos de poder: Articulaciones y campos de conflicto en el gobierno del MAS* (La Paz: Plural Editores, 2008).

velopment, the study is circumscribed geographically to the department of Cochabamba and temporally to the period between 1999 and 2005. The theoretical framework presented at the outset of the book is a derivative combination of European new social movement theory (Alberto Melucci, Alain Touraine, Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau), French post-structuralism (Michel Foucault), and American liberal institutionalism (Charles Tilly, Sidney Tarrow). Though cited, these influences are often not integrated into the authors' analysis, breaking its flow while adding nothing by way of insight. The political-economic backdrop of neoliberal crisis and its role in fostering left-indigenous movements and MAS itself is mainly absent, with not a single reference to the voluminous literature by economists and sociologists at the La Paz-based Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo Laboral y Agrario (CEDLA), for example. The treatment of opposing analytical viewpoints frequently descends into caricature, as in the discussion of Marxism in chapter 1. As well, descriptions of well-known phenomena and concepts such as political movement (as distinct from political party and social movement) are presented as major theoretical breakthroughs. Nonetheless, the book is rooted in an impressive array of interviews, ranging from rank-and-file members of the party to officials in its highest institutional echelons. Important empirical data can therefore be gleaned from a careful reading of the book, despite its theoretical shortcomings.

Komadina and Geffroy begin by opposing their analysis to that of orthodox Marxists (who characterize MAS as reformist rather than revolutionary socialist), to that of liberals and conservatives (who label MAS as populist in a pejorative sense), and to that of autonomist Marxists (who portray MAS as closer to a social movement than a political party). In what follows, they examine the strategic and tactical orientation of MAS in relation to formal electoral politics and street protests during the past decade. A principal thesis is that the 2002 general elections were a turning point, shifting the party from extraparliamentary, insurrectionary change to electoral politics. To the surprise of everyone, Morales came a very close second to Sánchez de Lozada in those elections, making success at the national level increasingly plausible. The party began, therefore, to court the urban middle class, moderating its anti-neoliberal rhetoric in an effort to secure victory in the next scheduled elections of 2007.

However, MAS certainly did not abandon extraparliamentary activism altogether, lest it lose its social base in increasingly radical and well-organized popular sectors. As Komadina and Geffroy correctly point out, when MAS militants took to the streets in the 2003 and 2005 Gas Wars, party leaders offered support strategically, distancing themselves at all times from the more radical sectors; privileging negotiated constitutional solutions to state crises rather than mass insurrection; and moderating the demands emanating from social activists, especially those calling for a



constituent assembly and full nationalization of the hydrocarbons (natural gas and oil) industry. As in much liberal institutionalist literature on the formation of ethnic parties in Latin America, the descriptive account of MAS's origins emphasizes the opportunities opened by institutional changes to municipal politics under the Popular Participation Law of 1994 and by the rapid decline in legitimacy of traditional political parties over the late 1990s and early 2000s. Once again, the socioeconomic crisis engendered by neoliberalism, arguably the most important single cause of the latter parties' collapse, is hardly addressed. Instead, the authors stress MAS's origins in the coca growers' movement in the Chapare region of the department of Cochabamba and the ongoing effects of those ties on MAS's structure. The party's procedures and its formal and informal institutions are never clearly depicted. More important, we learn nothing about its changing class composition over time. The party's relationships to urban unions, movements of the urban poor, and popular community struggles go virtually unexamined. The city is implicitly treated as a relatively homogeneous middle-class domain, distinct from the peasant-dominated countryside. As a result, the shift in party strategy beginning in 2002 becomes yet one more technical policy choice rather than the political expression of the urban and rural middle class's growing influence over the party's highest officers and leaders.

In summary, Komadina and Geffroy are sympathetic to the moderately reformist trajectory of MAS in the early 2000s and hostile to those whom they characterize as orthodox Marxist and right-wing critics of the party. The book's strength lies in the extensive empirical data gathered through serious field research on the political origins and ideological trajectory of MAS in the department of Cochabamba between the late 1990s and the December 2005 elections. However, readers interested in theoretical sophistication and the wider historical significance of MAS for Bolivian politics as a whole will need to look elsewhere.

Ideologically similar but much richer analytically is the collection of essays edited by Karin Monasterios, Pablo Stefanoni, and Hervé Do Alto. With a limited grounding in the close observation of reality, Mario Blaser's introduction misconstrues Bolivia's current struggle as one with modernity itself. But the volume quickly improves with Stefanoni's discussion of domestic and foreign right-wing mythologies created to delegitimize the Morales administration. An Argentinean sociologist and journalist who has resided in La Paz for a number of years, and has an intimate appreciation of political dynamics both within and outside the presidential palace during Morales's ascent to office, Stefanoni begins by soundly demolishing the absurd—but nonetheless recurrent—assertion by the Bolivian right that Morales's government practices reverse racism by excluding whites and mestizos from formal and informal spheres of political power. With more patience than many could muster, Stefanoni

undoes this accusation with a systematic accounting of the ethnic and political diversity of Morales's first cabinet in 2006. He also demonstrates why we ought to dismiss as conspiratorial drivel the popular notion that Hugo Chávez was behind the rise of left-indigenous social movements in Bolivia since 2000 and now effectively controls the Morales government from behind the scenes.

Shifting gears in an effort to soothe the anxieties of the liberal right, Stefanoni also takes on the question of whether MAS is in fact "a government of social movements" (29), as its official discourse suggests. He points out that, although the executive and legislative powers symbolically pay more attention to indigenous movements, their access to key ministries—especially those directly relating to the economy—has been completely restricted. Strikes by teachers and doctors were declared illegal during Morales's first year in office, public-sector workers received miniscule salary increases in 2006 and 2007, and the party has practiced strict fiscal discipline in its macroeconomic operations. Nonetheless, Stefanoni sees Morales's rise as embodying a post-neoliberal turn. In this respect, like Komadina and Geffroy, he is hostile to Marxist criticism of the Morales regime. He treats uncritically the government's claim that it nationalized the hydrocarbons industry in 2006, despite ample evidence to the contrary.<sup>9</sup> Stefanoni is in the main sympathetic to Vice President Álvaro García Linera's characterization of MAS's economic project as Andean-Amazonian capitalism, a multifaceted program that intends to put 30 percent of the economy under state control, and he implicitly follows García Linera's view that socialism is not feasible in the Bolivian context, at least at present, and that a "new moderated version of state capitalism" is the best that can be achieved (36). Do Alto, a French sociologist and frequent collaborator with Stefanoni, echoes many of the same contentions in describing, more than analyzing, MAS's origins and trajectory since 1995. Despite important insights, readers are much better off with their very readable and detailed book, *Evo Morales: De la coca al palacio* (2006).<sup>10</sup>

The chapter by the Bolivian political theorist Luis Tapia offers penetrating insights, yet is casual in its treatment of historical processes. Tapia begins by discussing in sweeping terms the colonialist and increasingly capitalist nature of the Bolivian state since independence in 1825 and its role in fostering exploitation, domination, and political and economic inequality by upholding the sanctity of private property. In calling the emergence of

9. See Jeffery R. Webber, "From Naked Barbarism to Barbarism with Benefits: Neoliberal Capitalism, Natural Gas Policy and the Evo Morales Government in Bolivia," in *Post-Neoliberalism in the Americas*, ed. Laura MacDonald and Arne Ruckert (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 105–119.

10. Pablo Stefanoni and Hervé Do Alto, *Evo Morales de la coca al Palacio: Una oportunidad para la izquierda indígena* (La Paz: Malatesta, 2006).



the working class “la expresión *de facto* de la falta de universalidad de este derecho a la propiedad” (50), Tapia makes it a product of the systematic and often violent dispossession of a peasantry compelled by the market to sell its only remaining possession: its labor. Departing quite radically from transitology literature in North American political science, Tapia conceives of democratization as a movement “que haga posible que los no propietarios también puedan ingresar al espacio de poder y circular junto a otros en el mismo” (51). In contrast, neoliberalism is a form of colonial domination, particularly by means of rampant privatization and the concentration of the privatized sectors in the hands of transnational capital. The dual transition toward electoral democracy and neoliberal economics in Bolivia in the early to mid-1980s was thus a paradox, for Tapia, because domination and inequality deepened and strengthened in the so-called democratic era. In alliance with transnational capital, the domestic ruling class was essentially uncontested between 1985 and 2000. However, neoliberal hegemony came increasingly under fire from left-indigenous and mass movements from below, beginning with the Cochabamba Water War, laying the basis for the eventual electoral victory of Morales.

Although Tapia is ultimately a critical MAS loyalist, he is uncommonly conscious of the contradictions involved in MAS’s implementation through the institutional apparatus of the liberal, colonialist, and capitalist state of what were once radically anticapitalist and indigenous-liberationist projects. Because Tapia holds the self-organization and self-activity of the oppressed and exploited to be necessary to their emancipation from capitalism and racism, he indicates the incongruity of MAS’s attempts to control, redirect, and co-opt their agency, particularly in his discussion of the constituent assembly.

Karin Monasterios’s essay on feminism “in the contexts of internal colonialism and the fight for decolonization” (111) is theoretically rich but underdeveloped empirically. Attention to the specificities of women’s involvement in the left-indigenous movements of 2000–2005 has been sparse.<sup>11</sup> Monasterios makes strides toward addressing this void by mounting a sustained critique of the gender technocracy of liberal feminists associated with externally funded nongovernmental organizations to show their neglect of the racism and class injustice endured by the majority of women who, in Bolivia, are indigenous and of popular classes. These women played an important role in the uprisings of 2000, 2003, and 2005.

11. Admirable exceptions include Denise Y. Arnold and Alison Spedding, *Mujeres en los movimientos sociales en Bolivia 2000–2003* (La Paz: Centro de Información y Desarrollo de la Mujer and Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Aymara, 2005); Forrest Hylton, Lucila Choque, and Lina Britto, *La guerra del gas: Contada desde las mujeres* (El Alto: Centro de Promoción de la Mujer Gregoria Apaza, 2005).

Focusing on women's participation in the constituent assembly since 2006, *Monasterios* contrasts the positions of the Federación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas de Bolivia-Bartolina Sisa, a peasant movement with more than two hundred thousand female members, and the liberal Coordinadora de la Mujer. Whereas the former demands a plurinational state, the latter opposes this anticolonial reorganization, instead defending a delimited liberal version of democratic representation while treating women as abstract individuals and distancing itself from left-indigenous sectors.

*Monasterios* is fully cognizant of the weaknesses of indigenous women's movements in Bolivia, whose political demands do not reflect a consciousness of specifically gendered oppression. However, the participation of indigenous women in political struggle has increased in recent years of revolt, and if any movement emerges among women to overcome the internally colonial, racist domination of the indigenous majority, it is far more likely to come from the popular left than from liberal nongovernmental organizations financed by the World Bank.

The final section of *Reinventando la nación en Bolivia* consists of a lengthy interview by Maristella Svampa and Stefanoni with Vice President García Linera. Born in 1962 to a middle-class family in Cochabamba and politicized by the opposition to the dictatorship of Hugo Bánzer (1971–1978), García Linera studied mathematics at the Universidad Autónoma de México, where he became deeply involved in solidarity with the Central American guerrilla insurgencies of the 1980s. Returning to Bolivia, he rose to prominence in the Ejército Guerrillero Túpac Katari (EGTK) and, under the pen name *Qananchiri* (meaning "one who clarifies things" in Aymara), wrote his first books: *Crítica de la nación y la nación crítica* (1989) and *De demonios escondidos y momentos de revolución* (1991). After a five-year imprisonment (1992–1997), he became a professor of sociology at the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés in La Paz and was a founding member of La Comuna, a forum of critical intellectuals named after the Paris Commune of 1871. As one of the most widely recognized leftist intellectuals in Bolivia, he was made vice presidential candidate of MAS in 2005, though he had never previously been a member of the party.

Unfortunately, the shift from radical intellectual and political activist to state official has seemingly dampened García Linera's critical abilities. The interview transcribed for this volume is notable for García Linera's defensiveness and rigid advocacy of each and every policy of the MAS government. He claims that the state has assumed control over 19 percent of the country's gross domestic product and that this will increase to 30 percent in coming years. According to García Linera, this constitutes a veritable shift toward post-neoliberalism. He also defends MAS's development model of Andean-Amazonian capitalism against leftist critics, whom he labels "radical idealists" (160). This program ostensibly combines state promotion of modern industry, microenterprises of urban artisans, and

the modernization of peasants (151). This variant of post-neoliberalism is irreducibly capitalist, according to García Linera, but nonetheless points in some unexplained way to a postcapitalist future (160). Culturally, García Linera compares Morales's election to the "symbolic revolutions" of indigenous heroes such as Túpac Katari, who led an uprising against Spanish conquistadors in 1781, or Zárata Willka, who commanded insurrectionary indigenous forces during the Bolivian Federal War of 1898–1899. García Linera dismisses radical indigenous critics of the MAS government as "romantic and essentialist" (157).

#### THE CRITICAL LEFT

Forrest Hylton and Sinclair Thomson's *Revolutionary Horizons* and Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar's *Los ritmos del Pachakuti* stand out among the works under review for their historical and philosophical erudition, and for their commitment to the emancipation of the oppressed. A main contention of Hylton and Thomson is that the power of recent mass mobilizations in Bolivia stems from the combination of a long-standing tradition of indigenous resistance—dating back to anticolonial rebellions of the eighteenth century—and a "national popular" tradition that previously "culminated in 1952[–1953] when working-class, peasant, and progressive middle-class forces overthrew an oligarchic order established after Bolivian independence in 1825" (7). These two seditious cultures coexisted in tension with each other for much of the twentieth century, so that, though their intersection in 2000–2005 is not entirely unprecedented, it is an outstanding feature of the time. A second argument in *Revolutionary Horizons* is that the protests of 2000–2005 should be understood as Bolivia's third revolution. This revolution came to "a provisional close" after the ascension of Morales in January 2006, and the subsequent fragmentation and demobilization of social movements (127). The first two revolutions occurred in 1780–1781 and 1952–1953. Hylton and Thomson explore these and other contextual factors—capitalist expansion with the boom in silver in the 1870s and 1880s, indigenous insurrection within the Federal War of 1898–1899, the Chayanta rebellion of 1927, and the National Revolution of 1952—before treating the neoliberal era of the 1980s and 1990s and the revolutions of 2000–2005. In each case, they focus on the agency of the indigenous peasant and worker majority; the making of history from below; and in the insurrections of 2000–2005, the formation of popular power through assembly-style democracy, particularly during the Cochabamba Water War and the first Gas War of 2003.

The theoretical treatment of Bolshevik and anarchist strategies of revolution in chapter 2 and the (premature) labeling of the recent insurrections as Bolivia's "third revolution" are certainly open to debate as they have been cast in this book. Even the more commonly held idea that neoliber-

alism has collapsed in Bolivia ought to be more cautiously interrogated, given the commitment to fiscal austerity, flexible labor markets, low inflation targets, and minimal social spending under Morales. These issues aside, however, *Revolutionary Horizons* is a consummate sociological treatment of popular Bolivian politics, the best book to turn to for an understanding of the current period through a profoundly historical lens.

Gutiérrez's *Los ritmos del Pachakuti* is at once deeply philosophical, revolutionary, and a personal meditation on the meaning of the 2000–2005 revolts. It is dense and difficult in parts, but it ultimately rewards with unusual originality and unwavering ethical and political commitment to the dispossessed. A Mexican citizen, Gutiérrez studied mathematics alongside García Linera at the Universidad Autónoma de México. They fell in love; were active together in solidarity with Central American guerrillas; and then moved to Bolivia, where they both took up leading roles in the EGTK. Gutiérrez was captured and imprisoned at the same time as García Linera and, like him, spent five years in jail. Upon release, she, too, participated in La Comuna. Gutiérrez returned to Mexico in the early 2000s to pursue a doctorate in politics under the supervision of the renowned autonomist Marxist John Holloway, and she returned to Bolivia in 2006 for participatory fieldwork with the most important popular movements in Cochabamba, La Paz, and the surrounding rural areas. *Los ritmos del Pachakuti* is a revised version of the doctoral thesis that emerged from these amassed experiences.

Gutiérrez stresses the dignity that the popular classes recovered in their struggles against what they perceived as an unjust and impermissible social order, the autonomy that they won through assemblist forms of grassroots democracy, and the capacity for cooperation among rural and urban groups that these struggles reveal. Gutiérrez uses the concepts of dignity, autonomy, and cooperation to frame her analyses of urban worker and neighborhood movements in El Alto and La Paz, the coca growers' resistance in the Chapare region of Cochabamba, and the struggles of Aymara peasants in the western altiplano. One objective in this is to make intelligible the insubordination of the oppressed in Bolivia between 2000 and 2005. Another is to extrapolate the "horizons of desire" expressed by actors in these moments, so as to reflect on how they might promote a fuller emancipation from capital and the state in the future. This combination of theory and praxis seeks not to merely understand the world but to change it.

*Los ritmos del Pachakuti* is much more satisfying than much of the autonomist Marxism reverberating throughout Latin America because Gutiérrez takes seriously the need for concrete, grounded analysis of real-world events. The abstractions that she draws are meaningful precisely because they relate to her own experience as an activist-observer. Her commitment to revolutionary anticapitalist transformation, and her skepticism

that this can come about through mere electoral occupation of existing state apparatuses, makes Gutiérrez a much more penetrating analyst of the Morales government than the legions of masista loyalists who spend the bulk of their time apologizing for the government's limitations. At the same time, her theoretical framework tends to dismiss all too easily the complex history of anti-Stalinist, Marxist debates on state power and revolutionary parties. Her advocacy of the self-activity and self-organization of the exploited and oppressed is to be emulated, and her sophisticated, nonsectarian critique of masista reformism is exemplary. However, Gutiérrez has less to offer in regard to revolutionary strategies for power. Whatever qualms I have with its specific political formulations, *Los ritmos del Pachakuti* is the most important philosophical-political commentary on recent Bolivian developments from a revolutionary perspective.