

**SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE  
QUESTIONS OF CLASS ANALYSIS**

Igor P. Ampuero

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of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in  
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# **Social Movements in Latin America and the Question of Class Analysis**

*Igor Ampuero*

September 2004

## **ABSTRACT**

Social upheavals are occurring with greater intensity across Latin America in recent years. While specifics vary between countries, they share common features: (1) they arise in response to adverse socio-economic conditions caused by prevailing neoliberal policies; (2) are led by social movements composed of rural peasants, indigenous peoples and urban workers excluded from party-institutional structures; and (3) are increasingly challenging for state power.

The paper examines various analytical frameworks, including post-modernism, structuralist class analysis, and the 'community development' model, used to interpret these struggles in theory, and influence their course in practice. The role of NGOs in Latin America as intermediaries between international finance capital and the rural and urban poor in these countries, is also discussed.

The primary case study focuses on the popular resistance movement which has recently shaken Bolivia. The landless movement in Brazil, the Bolivarian Revolution (Venezuela), the unemployed movements in Argentina, the Colombian insurgency, and indigenous struggle in Ecuador are also examined.

The thesis concludes that a structural approach, based on class analysis, is the most effective framework to provide a clear understanding of the dynamics of these Latin American movements and struggles.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Abstract</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Table of Contents</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>List of Acronyms</i>	<i>vii</i>
<b>Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 Thesis Statement</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.3 Theoretical Framework</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.4 Methodology</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2.1. Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2.2. The Postmodernist Perspective</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>2.2.1 Modernization Theory</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>2.2.2 Neoliberalism in Theory and Practice</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>2.2.3 Postmodernism In Practice</i>	<i>16</i>
<b>2.3. The Structuralist Perspective</b>	<b>17</b>
<i>2.3.1 Class Analysis Revisited: Social Movements And The         New Peasantry</i>	<i>19</i>

2.3.2	<i>Challenges to Structuralist Theory</i>	20
2.3.3	<i>Demographic Considerations</i>	21
2.3.4	<i>Modernization, Agrarian Reform, Market-oriented versus Peasant Struggles</i>	23
<b>2.4.</b>	<b>Community Development</b>	25
<b>2.5.</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	30
<b>Chapter 3: LATIN AMERICAN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS</b>		
<b>IN PERSPECTIVE</b>		
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	32
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Brazil: MST, The Movement Of Landless Rural Workers (MST)</b>	35
3.2.1	<i>The Social Base of the MST</i>	39
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Venezuela, Bolivarian Movement</b>	41
3.3.1	<i>Bolivarian Circles: Revolutionary Organizational Units In Venezuela</i>	43
3.3.2	<i>The Counter Revolutionary Coup of April 2003</i>	44
3.3.3	<i>How Mass Uprising Defeated Coup</i>	44
3.3.4	<i>The Collapse of the Lockout</i>	45
3.3.5	<i>The Pressure Of War</i>	47
<b>3.4</b>	<b>Social Movements in Argentina</b>	48
3.4.1	<i>The Unemployed Workers' Movement (MTD)</i>	50
<b>3.5</b>	<b>Colombia, Insurgency in the context of National Liberation</b>	54
3.5.1	<i>The Armed Movement In Colombia</i>	54
3.5.2	<i>Attempts at Peaceful Resolution to the Colombia Conflict</i>	57

3.5.3 <i>Results From The Last Peace Process</i>	58
3.5.4 <i>Current Situation</i>	59
<b>3.6 Ecuador, Indigenous Social Movements</b>	60
3.5.1 <i>The events of January 2000</i>	61
<b>3.6 Conclusion</b>	63
<b>Chapter 4: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE STATE: THE BOLIVIAN</b>	
<b>CASE</b>	64
<b>4.1 Introduction</b>	64
<b>4.2 Historical Tensions</b>	65
<b>4.3 The Popular Assembly of 1971</b>	70
<b>4.4 Another Formative Moment 1979</b>	73
<b>4.5 Reform of The State And Oligarchic Re-composition</b>	77
<b>4.6 Reform of The State, Social Reform and the New Movements</b>	82
<b>4.7 The Contemporary Struggles And Forms Of Collective Action</b>	86
4.7.1 <i>Social Movements And The Crisis Of The State</i>	86
4.7.2 <i>The War of Water</i>	86
4.7.3 <i>September 2000</i>	89
<b>4.8 The Electoral Process—2002</b>	93
<b>4.9 Conclusion</b>	102
<b>Chapter 5: General Conclusions</b>	106
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	109

## List of Acronyms

ADC	<i>Alianza Democrática de Campesinos</i>
ADN	National Democratic Action
CCIM	Central of Mojeno Indigenous Councils
CDIB	Central of Indigenous Peoples of the Beni
CEPAL	Comisión económica para América Latina y el Caribe
<i>CIA</i>	<i>Central Intelligence Agency</i>
<i>COB</i>	<i>Bolivian Central Workers</i>
CONAIE	Confederación de Nacionalides Indígenas de Ecuador
<i>CONDEPA</i>	<i>Conciencia de Patria Nation's Conscience</i>
CSUTCB	United Union Central of Peasant Workers of Bolivia,
DNTR	National Department for Rural Workers
CPT	Pastoral Land Commission
CSO	Community Services Organizations
<i>CTV</i>	<i>Venezuelan Central Workers</i>
CUT	United Workers Central
EGTK	Tupac Katari Guerrilla Army
EZLN	Zapatista Army of National Liberation
FARC-EP	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – Peoples' Army

<i>FAO</i>	<i>Food and Agriculture Organization</i>
<i>FSTMB</i>	<i>National Federation of Workers Miners</i>
<i>FTAA</i>	<i>Free Trade Area of the Americas</i>
<i>GRO</i>	<i>Grass Root Organization</i>
<b>IDB</b>	<b>International Development Bank</b>
<i>IFIs</i>	<i>International Financial Institutions</i>
<i>INRA</i>	<i>National Institute of Agrarian Reform law</i>
<i>IMF</i>	<i>International Monetary Fund</i>
<i>IU</i>	<i>United Left</i>
<i>LPP</i>	<i>Law on Popular Participation</i>
<i>MAS</i>	<i>Movement Towards to Socialism</i>
<i>MIP</i>	<i>Indian Pachacuti Movement</i>
<b>MIR</b>	<b>Left Revolutionary Movement</b>
<b>MITKA</b>	<b>Tupac Katari Indigenous Movement</b>
<b>MNR</b>	<b>Nationalist Revolutionary Movement</b>
<b>MST</b>	<b>The Movement Of Landless</b>
<b>MTD</b>	<b>Unemployed Workers' Movement</b>
<b>NFR</b>	<b>New Republican Force</b>
<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non Governmental Organization</b>
<b>NSM</b>	<b>New Social Movements</b>
<i>NSP</i>	<i>New Social Policy</i>
<b>POR</b>	<b>Revolutionary Labour Party</b>
<b>UDP</b>	<b>Popular Democratic Union</b>
<b>UN</b>	<b>United Nations</b>
<b>UNCTAD</b>	<b>United Nations Conference on Trade and Development</b>

UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UDR	Rural Democratic Union
US	United State
WB	World Bank

# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

The social upheavals faced by Latin America in recent times do not all come in situations of crisis, as in Argentina; they have an organic link to the national power structure as well as to developments at the international level. They happen when there is a realignment of economic and political power and changes at these levels.

The specific form of social upheaval, and the political dynamics of the popular struggle against an established power structure, largely depend on conditions within each specific nation state. I suggest, these conditions, -with reference to my own review of the scholarly literature- have much to do with the specifics of the existing power structure. In most cases, this power structure is composed of or related to a class of big landowners, the landed oligarchy, bankers and the bourgeoisie at the head of corporations which make up the “big economic groups” in the national and regional economy.

Although this dominant class is often divided politically due to diverse conflict of interest between them, it is in most cases able to exist as the ruling class. This class has the ability to control the state or at least a great deal of influence over the actions and the policies of the state. In this regard, there is also clear evidence over the past 2 decades of a general dependence on decisions made, and government policies designed, the economists at the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other International Financial Institutions (IFIs) managed by what has commonly been termed the “new international capitalist class”.

As a result most countries in the region have been forced to adopt the globalization projects of this class. This obliges them undergo structural adjustments programs, which include the privatization of state enterprises, the liberalization of overseas trade, movements of capital and the deregulation of private economic activity - primarily, the flexibility of the labour sector. This agenda is commonly referred to the “neo-liberal model”. This neo-liberal model itself constitutes the system against which the socio-political movements in Latin America are oriented in their actions.

According to Petras and Veltmeyer, social movements in Latin America that contain the forces of resistance against and opposition to the neo-liberal model and “the system”, have come in four waves.

The first wave came to Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s. This predominantly took the form of an anti-systemic, revolutionary struggle against the oligarchic or capitalist state and its economic policies. Organised labour and the rural peasantry constituted the major social forces mobilized in the popular struggle for land in the rural sector, higher wages and better working conditions in the urban centres.

According to Veltmeyer and Petras, the most dynamic of these social movements turned out to be the FARC-EP. Is the only movement of the type that managed to survive the government programmes of the 60’s, 70’s, and 80’s of alternative rural development, to accommodate with the governments, disarticulate the organizations involved and repress any mobilizations of opposing forces.

“The second wave occurred in the 1980’s and gave rise to an urban-centred movement, with a broad heterogeneous social base in the urban poor that included neighbourhood associations and diverse social issue-oriented groups. This wave was formed under conditions of a major debt crisis, implementation of the structural adjustment program and a process of re-democratization (which amounted to a retreat of the armed forces to their barracks), the return of elected constitutional regimes and the decentralization of the government.” Veltmeyer and Petras, 2000

The third wave was a result of the social movement of peasant producers, rural landless workers and indigenous communities in Mexico, Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia and Paraguay among others. Like FARC-EP in Colombia, these social movements were peasant-based and constituted the most dynamic forces of resistance against government policies and the neoliberal model of the 1990's.

The fourth wave of anti-systemic social movements is represented best by the movement of unemployed workers (*los piqueteros*) in Argentina. This movement was formed under conditions of the most severe crisis of Argentina's history; a crisis that can be directly attributed to the implementation of the neoliberal model in its most extreme form. Argentina has been in crisis for five years now and is generating the objective and subjective conditions of a major social upheaval and social movement rising from Latin America's 'new working class' in the streets. These movements generally contain the most dynamics forces of resistance against the neoliberal model; it represents a reflection of government policies across Latin America.

Within the popular movement, these four waves present the revolutionary option of change; not just of groups within the system, but of the system itself. However, it is by no means the only option available. As in the 60's, the reformist option is represented by government programmes of economic, social or rural development. This option was constructed in the 60's as a means of avoiding pressure for the more radical or revolutionary changes, realized by the Cuban revolution.

Over the years, this reformist option has been represented by two systems (i). A system of electoral politics and policies of negotiation and dialogue, rather than direct action and confrontationalist politics. (ii). The community development project. According to Veltmeyer and O'Malley, this is a series of projects designed to utilize the participation of grassroots organizations in the design of projects implemented in local spaces. This is followed by the intermediation of NGOs and the politics of dialogue and non-confrontation, rather than direct action or local and participatory development.

This approach towards social change is being experimented with in most countries of the region, with the assistance of tens of thousands of NGOs, seeking to

mediate between the GROs and the donor organizations. Although unsuccessful, the best example of this approach can be found in Bolivia, where the government has gone to considerable lengths to implement a facilitating policy framework to provide the country's indigenous communities, peasant producers and rural landless workers with an alternative to the option presented by the country's unions and the "cocaleros" (a coca-producing peasantry, whose leader almost gained control of the state apparatus via a process of presidential elections [Petras and Veltmeyer, 2004]).

## **1.2 Thesis Statement**

Until the 1980s the dominant analysis of the most effective form of organizing and mobilizing the forces of popular resistance and opposition for change was one form or another, of structuralism, particularly Marxist class analysis.

The focus of this approach was the structure of the rational system and the forces of opposition generated by the objective conditions to this structure. In the 1980's, however, this approach, was challenged in all of its forms, (especially Marxist); giving rise to various forms of post-structuralist approaches towards analysis and a postmodernist perspective on the process of social change and development.

One result of this change in the dominant form of analysis was a rejection of structuralism in general and class analysis in particular, as ways of understanding the dynamics of forces for change. However, I will argue in this thesis that class analysis needs to be resurrected and habilitated as the best way of understanding the context of Latin America today's. social movements.

Specifically, the thesis of this study is that class analysis leads to a better assessment of the social forces that could be mobilized in support of various political and developmental projects. Structural approach, based on class analysis, is an effective framework to provide a clear understanding of the dynamics of social movements and of the struggle at the ground level in Latin America.

### **1.3 Theoretical Framework**

Class analysis takes various forms, sometimes emphasizing on the structure of objective (for example, economic) conditions, and sometimes with emphasis on the subjective conditions of class-consciousness and struggle.

Karl Marx (1818-83), founder of scientific communism the philosophy of dialectic and historical materialism, and scientific political economy<sup>1</sup>, argued the need for a dialectical approach to class analysis that combines an analysis of the objective and subjective, and of the interplay between them. On this basis, he established some general principles to guide an analysis (what is commonly known as historical materialism) as well as a general theory about the economic, social and political dynamics of development under the capitalist system.

For the sake of this analysis, I will make reference to this general theory and its principles as a framework for useful ideas, but I will do so using only the specific context of contemporary Latin America.

In this framework, I will make extensive use of ideas generated in the section for academic literature on both social movements in the region and community development practice. In this section, I have organized these ideas in to three categories: (i) various structuralist theories of social change, including Marxism; (ii) a postmodernist approach popularized in the theory of new social movements; (iii) ideas associated with the community development movement in Latin America.

In these alternative sets of ideas, there are basically two modalities of change. The first is anti-systemic or revolutionary social movements, and the second, is the reformist projects of political change and socio-economic development.

Further there are two ways of understanding these modalities of change. These are structural (Marxist and non-Marxist) and post structural (postmodernism). In this particular theoretical context, I will use a Marxist dialectic approach towards class analysis, constructing ideas and using them as needed to argue the thesis of this study.

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<sup>1</sup> Dictionary of Philosophy, Progress Publishers, Moscow. 1967

## **1.4 Methodology**

I have undertaken the analysis of the available data at three levels: first, I have analyzed the available body of studies to outlining the historical process of the struggles in Latin America as they have developed to the present time: I have described the process of social change in Latin America and the effect that various social, political and economic ideologies have had on parts of the continent. Secondly, I have reviewed the academic literature written about the major social movements, to identify the objective and subjective conditions of the class struggle involved. At this level, I have analysed the social movements formed in Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina, Colombia and Ecuador. Thirdly, I have presented a detailed regarding the dynamics of reformist and revolutionary efforts for social change in Bolivia. This case study will use a structural method to analyze and reinterpret the data available. It employs a narrative descriptive method and a dialectic approach in its analysis of historical data.

The source of the data comes from a vast store of available resources that includes research journals, books, media reports, newspapers, articles posted on the internet, as well as and many of my personal encounters with NGOs in the field, activists, and political figures. Most importantly, I have obtained a lot of data as a result of being a third party observer of and an active participant in events that have happened in Bolivia over the last 25 years or so.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

“During the last quarter of the 20th century social movements in Latin America have experienced a 180 degree turn with respect to what was habitual at least since the 1940’s” (Breton 2001.27). For that reason, in the same 25 years the region's social structures and the political systems have undergone modifications. The population has doubled and urban centres grown immensely, generating the predominance of the industrial sector, alteration in the population distribution in the sectors of economic activities, alteration in the structure of employment, and the transformation of the life-style of a large portion of population towards a consumerist tendency characteristic of modern capitalist societies. Similarly, those populations undergoing profound changes as a result of the populist regimes at the end of the sixties ended up with the rise of military dictatorships. With the transition to the 'new democratic model', the economic, political and social transformations were more rapid and profound, due to the crisis that devastated the region.

In the face of these changes, very few thinkers doubted a basic revision was necessary to confront the theoretical and practical challenges that reality imposed. For many social investigators, the theoretical renovations made a drastic break from the

framework constructed in the past. Others, also accepting the need to revise theories and concepts that appeared to be limited in their ability to explain the changes, believed theoretical reconstruction must begin from criticism. That meant in the first place the recovery of the tradition of class analysis and into second place construction of a new framework of analysis, explanation and forecast. Once its theoretical dimensions had been clarified, ( Sanches, 1996)

This chapter deals with the arguments that make it possible to separate and describe three theoretical perspectives for the analysis of the social movements.

The first part constitutes a critical analysis of the post modernist perspective which sees social movements in a non structural manner – post structural, as a thoughtful practice with a social base; not in terms of class, but of numerous heterogeneous social forces, In the urban sector it ties its analysis to the new social movements (NSM) in Latin America.

The second part situates social movements from the structuralist or Marxist perspective, in its different forms of analysis, starting from the fact that the social forces are mobilized under objective, structural conditions such as poverty and subjective conditions such as politics with their base in the working class. They exist as direct producers of wealth as seen in the case of the peasant movements in Latin America.

The third section presents the ‘community development’ perspective. Here the assumptions are based on the idea of having a democratic society mainly focused on civil society. Sustainable development is the final goal, and the main thrust of the state and market institution is towards the urban poor and its development with the help of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Finally the confrontation of the once-bitter adversaries has been replaced by a peaceful negotiations. As a result the market and state are seen as productive forces rather than exploitive components of the production process.

So proceeding, the fundamental point of this exercise is to build a theoretical framework with which we can analyze these different approaches of social .

## 2.2 The Postmodernist Perspective:

The sociology of the 1980s was dominated by the theme of social subjects and movements. The often cited "end of the utopias"<sup>2</sup> served as the argumentative basis for beginning a process of "renewal" within Latin American social sciences that "all but displaced Marxism" (Veltmeyer:2000), which in the 1960's and 1970's had dominated these fields. The purpose was to construct a supposedly new theoretical and conceptual framework. This path has run through the "postmodernist" current of thought, which is in style today as the critical current in social sciences. Thus, an array of concepts began to spread gradually and form part of a common language among social researchers. Holloway, de Negri and Hardt belong to the broad space opened by authors that, disillusioned by the revolutions influenced by Marxism, rejected everything that sounded like structure or institution (Boron:2002:167). They based themselves in interpretations of the new practices that were generated after the fall of the Berlin wall, like those in Chiapas, those of the diverse New Social Movements of the Assemblies in Argentina and, the anti globalization movements generally. It is in this sense that these concepts are used to analyze socio-political processes.

However, the problem in making a more profound analysis is not rooted in judging whether a certain political subject, actor or movement is newer than another, but to explore the qualitative aspects that distinguish them. For this, they considered it an essential, starting point, to introduce the restructuring of the model of domination caused by the implementation of the new neo-liberal policy.

---

<sup>2</sup> Cuban philosopher Isabel Monal, National Social Science Awardees, disputes Hobsbawm's work as follows: "the century has had, as I believe, two great inseparable contradictions. This is that contradiction of socialism verse capitalism, and that of imperialism versus oppressed or dependent countries. Obviously, imperialism is a stage of capitalism and the century's history also shows how little room there is for independent countries to achieve its development liberation if socialism is not embraced as the only way that can really conduct toward a radical change."

If this last assessment is correct, then Hobsbawm forgot to give the revolutions of the century all their weight as references. As much for the century that ended as for the one that began, three of those revolutions seem be essential and determinant: the Russian, Chinese and Cuban revolutions. Of those only the Russian revolution is awarded the importance and a place of significance in history by the author. To place the closing of the century with the fall of European socialism does not seem unfortunate, not only because it means "the end of socialism" is falsely reported -as the title (and the content) of one of the sections of the Third Part indicates- but because it opened and precipitated a new phase of imperialism and capitalism in general. This is a new stage of the internationalization of capital (to say it with Marxist terminology) and the multiple globalizations in general.

It is understood that the neoliberal policy tends to provoke the opposite reaction in the social sphere to what it does in the economic. While on the one hand it gives rise to a strong concentration of capital and requires the integration of the markets and economies, on the other hand in the social sphere it leads to disintegration, the destruction of traditional organizational forms, or promotes their dispersal. The post modernist perspective introduced this element of the diversity of circumstances in order to refocus the discussion.

The postmodern way of thinking sees individuals instead of systems. With this, an apparently forgotten dimension was recovered. The micro dimension and reflection about the limits were evident. On one hand, the new conditions of economic globalization left no option for Latin America but to adapt their economies, state and social apparatuses; on the other, and linked to the former, at the beginning of the nineties the outcome of the historical conflict between capitalism and socialism seemed to show definitely that any project linked to the latter was invalid. These postmodernist ways of thinking have often been accepted as of critical importance, largely because many of them alluded to situations and phenomena that other concepts failed to acknowledge.

### ***2.2.1 Modernization Theory***

Modernization and the concept of “progress”, or the idea of a development process as reflected in 18th century thought was categorized into three main components: economic, political and social (Veltmeyer: 1997).

The economic component dwelled on the growth of productive forces in a society, or the output of wealth, to improve people’s basic standard of life. These models envisioned economic growth as a series of stages along a unilinear path. According to these models, in the initial stages of growth state intervention and strategic investment was needed to overcome the inertia associated with ‘traditional’ societies. However,

once a country's economy gained momentum, it would become self-sustaining and eventually enter into a blissful age of 'high mass consumption'.<sup>3</sup>

The political component focused on the emancipation from oppressive and restrictive structures and institutions, and focused on the individual and his potential for self-realization. This is a democratic ideal.

The social component reflected on the creation of a society with equal conditions for all in an environment of social justice (Veltmeyer, 1997). This is the social justice ideal. The key to getting past the initial stages was the accumulation of capital stock through high rates of savings and investment (both domestic and foreign, state and private). Since it was generally believed that the entrepreneurial upper class had a higher propensity to save and invest, the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few (at least in the initial stages of development) was seen as a necessary condition for rapid economic growth, which was equated to progress and development. Eventually, the fruits of development would trickle down to the middle and working classes to raise their standards of living.<sup>4</sup>

To realize this, conditions had to be met so that there was, first and foremost, industrialization that would move the population from an agrarian based occupational mode to that of industrial based mode. Accompanying this was the transformation of the structure of production and capitalist development, based on wage labour and the market, the driving force of development. The second condition was of modernization, which necessitated a change of value system from the traditional to modern. The final condition was that of democratization, hence the political structure of the government had to be democratic. Thus, the conditions for modernization were met.

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<sup>3</sup> The "age of high mass consumption" is often cited as the fifth and final stage of economic development in W.W. Rostow's stages-of-growth model. The first four are: traditional society, pre-conditions for take-off, self-sustaining growth, and take-off.

<sup>4</sup> This was stated most explicitly by Simon Kuznet, who believed that income inequality would necessarily worsen in the early stages of industrialization only to improve in the later stages. This hypothesis was presented with an "inverted-U" curve in which the peak of the curve represented the highest instance of income inequality.

It was during the late 1950's that this concept of modernization for development was challenged<sup>5</sup> as having been exhausted or no longer relevant; it gave way to what the advocates called 'the new post-industrial period'. Among many sociologists of the time, there was C. Wright Mills, who pronounced that faith in the Enlightenment ideals of reason and freedom, together with ideologies grounded in these ideals (liberalism, socialism, etc) were no longer meaningful explanations of the world and humanity.

The trend was not unanimous. Many sociologists did not share the notion of an emerging post-modern, post-industrial or post-capitalist society. They felt that the sociology of development and its theory of modernization were still far from reaching maturity. The two groups reached an impasse in the 1980's unable to reconcile on the sociological theory of development. (Booth, 1985; Corbridge, 1990; Schuurman, 1993).

This impasse and the crisis of the mainstream theorists and practitioners could not withstand the attacks made on their postulates and propositions, neither from the left, (i.e., advocates of the Marxist-oriented theories of dependency and imperialism) nor from the right, (i.e., advocates of the neo-conservative economics and neo-liberal policies of structural adjustment). One result of this crisis was what has been called a "counter-revolution' in theory and policy" (Toye, 1987) that gave rise to the formation of a new 'Washington consensus'<sup>6</sup> on correct thinking and policy. This has been known as the neo-liberal approach to development.

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5 The method that postmodernists use to challenge these assumptions is to 'deconstruct' the discourse of modernity. This is done in two ways. The first, originated by Jacques Derrida, is based on a linguistic theory known as 'post-structuralism'. Post-structuralism posits that there is no direct correspondence between signifiers (i.e. words) and the signified (i.e. what the word represents). Instead, every signifier conjures up an infinite number of signified images, and by extension, every discourse, or text, has an infinite number of interpretations. Taken to an extreme, this position can be used to argue that it is impossible for any discourse to represent objective reality, whether it be modernist or otherwise. The term 'post-structuralism' is associated with two unrelated theories. The first is a linguistic theory that questions the structural integrity of language itself, and argues that it is impossible to find the central meaning of any text. The second is a theory that aims to discredit 'structuralist' theories, such as Marx's theory of historical materialism, which uses a base/superstructure model to explain human progress. In the social sciences, the term 'post-structuralism' is often used synonymously with the term 'postmodernism'.

<sup>6</sup> One of the elements of the regime where the established guidelines by the USA and the international economic organism co-opted by this country in the Washington Consensus of 1989 can be found. It set forth 10 policy instruments to carry forward its objective of a global capitalist system based on market freedom. In it, the "most able" predominate (in a kind of social Darwinism) and social life is conceived as governed by the laws of competition and conflict, resulting in a natural selection of survival of the fittest and the elimination of the weaker.

This approach to conceptualization influenced the path analysis and theorizing could and would take. In its extreme form, it brought about a total disbelief and scepticism regarding scientific knowledge, structural determination, or systems in which objective and determining conditions existed. Rather, it assumed a heterogeneity and subjectivity, in which a historically situated individual is able to socially make and determine his or her own reality.

But how does this approach of poststructuralist and postmodernist analysis apply in practice? Clearly, it has had a significant impact in some areas, such as international development and peasant studies, and on explaining the internal dynamics of what has been defined as “new social movements”. These movements have largely been analyzed in the context of societies regarded as industrial, capitalist democracies in Europe and North America.

However, when it comes to identifying conditions for the new social movements<sup>7</sup> in Latin America, specifically during the 1980’s, the literature grew in regard to the social movements as well as the internal dynamics of peasant communities. Despite vagueness and muddled insight, an obvious fact is this approach was largely designed to reject and thus replace the Marxist structural discourse and class analysis that has dominated the analysis of social conditions for the greater part of the past century.

The postmodernist approach based upon the poststructuralist critique of structuralism and Marxist class analysis has developed several concepts and principles within a new framework of analysis. The central concept is that of a self-constituted

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The so called "consensus" was in reality a document adopted from a meeting that took place in Washington in 1989 involving North American intellectuals and economists, US Government, World Bank and IMF functionaries. It was not a consensus of the "international community" in an open debate regarding necessities and options of the world toward the XXI Century.

<sup>7</sup> In the past two decades social scientist have introduced several new approaches to the study of political, social and economic modernization in developing areas, the analysis and conceptual location in the contemporary era have to come “to evoke controversy and engender new spheres of reflection” (Slater, 1994:11) especially in regards to the present crisis. The emergency to be termed “new social movements” out of the recent historical developments within late capitalism and the crisis of modernity have furthered the shift in contemporary discourses and led to the culmination of a crisis in theories. That is because of the focus on heterogeneity and pluralism. The new social movements do not fall within the traditional interest groups of politics. Despite dramatic advances in some sectors and some countries, Latin America remains and underdeveloped region (Herrick, 1995)

subject or social actor<sup>8</sup> who is able to draw up a script, construct an identity, improvise a corresponding role or line of action, and act it out on a stage set up in the particular setting in which participants in the action find themselves (Veltmeyer, 2000).

The principal concepts, as they are applied broadly to the dynamics of social movements and peasant communities in Latin America, can be categorized into three components: subjectivity, heterogeneity, and contextuality. Subjectivity points to the conscious experience of an idea that is predominantly subjective in nature. It is both the source of social identity and the constituent (or determinant) component of social action. Heterogeneity denies the concept of underlying causes bringing about a form of consciousness or the actions resulting from it. Finally contextuality considers about the context, particularly specific historical contexts, giving meaning to the social action rather than their cause.

### ***2.2.2 Neoliberalism in Theory and Practice***

Around the period of the theoretical shift in the approach to social development from a structuralist to a postmodernist one, the international economic situation was also undergoing changes in the way the North was dealing with the South. The rich countries in the North made demands on the South that had to be met in order for these countries to receive financial support for social development projects. Stringent measures were imposed in order to meet these conditions. These measures included structural adjustment in the local economy of the state that requested for the financial aid.

Structural adjustment<sup>9</sup> has become a central feature of economic policy since the early 1980s as a result of pressures from multilateral finance and development institutions

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<sup>8</sup> The "New" Social Movements are Old but Have some New Features. The many social movements in the West, South and East that are now commonly called "new" are with few exceptions new forms of social movements, which have existed through the ages. Ironically, the "classical" working class/union movements date mostly only from the last century, and they increasingly appear to be only a passing phenomenon related to the development of industrial capitalism. On the other hand, peasant, localist community, ethnic / nationalist, religious, and even feminist / women's movements have existed for centuries and even millennia in many parts of the world. Yet many of these movements are now commonly called "new", although European history records countless social movements throughout history. Ten the thesis on social movements Andre Gunder Frank

<sup>9</sup> In the 1980s, in the context of massive cuts to government spending on social welfare programs, this strategy gave way to one of "structural adjustment with a human face", which "targeted" some of the

such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. What this means is that national economies must adapt to the new conditions of the world economy, which in turn is characterized both by technological changes that demand greater flexibility within enterprises and greater decentralization of production and by more competitive and unstable world markets (Cortázar, 1989).

The policies involving structural adjustment include stabilization (of prices and national bookkeeping), privatization (state enterprises), liberalization (of trade and capital flows, removing protection over local produce in contrast to imports) deregulation (of business practices in private industry: affecting, for example, health standards) and financial austerity (reducing expenditure on social programs).

Structural adjustment brought varying degrees of resistance from the social actors<sup>10</sup> (especially among the trade union movement, business associations, professional associations and high public officials) who influenced the government in the form of structural adjustment it proposed to implement. In this way strong resistance was met with gradualist policies while conversely weak resistance allowed “shock policy”. The resistance of the social actors is determined by two factors: first, their degree of political identification with the government in question; and second, their level of organization. The less the degree of political identification of the social actors with the government, the greater their resistance to the adjustment will be. Therefore, they become more powerful, and their resistance more effective.

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poorest communities and elicited their ‘participation’ (i.e. consent and provision of labour) in the implementation of top-down projects. For an outline of these mainstream ‘basic-needs’ strategies see: Veltmeyer, 1996

<sup>10</sup> When we talk or write about social actors we inevitably need Marxist analysis because no other basis on hand allows a more precise definition of what we refer to by “social actor”. In other words, we cannot call any group that suddenly appears on scene, expressing demands or signs of discourse, a social actor. These demands and signals are the result of conjunctures because such groups are tied to concrete interests that give it a reason to exist. Far from stopping at those demands, they attempt to transform the state or part of its institutions to make historical sense of the satisfaction of its historical demands.

At the times of the initial processes of industrialization, asserts the Bolivian writer Julio Aliaga Lainara, during the early stages of capitalism, actors were expressed as contradictions between labour and capital. In other words, there were not any others besides those Marx referred to as social classes. According to Max Weber, the emergence of these social actors in history is the product not only of the contradiction between labour and capital but also from the groups acquiring the objective status of social actors, fighting not only over the property of the means of production but also for access to markets, limited to a very reduced group of merchants and consumers.

The power of the social actors is also related to the existing level of corporatism in the societies and the degree of severity reached by the economic crisis (an open crisis weakens the social actors structurally and organizationally and thus reduces their capacity to block government politics).

The political strength of governments is another factor conditioning the type of adjustment applied. A government which is strong because it has broad electoral support, because it is backed up by a majority coalition, or because it has the backing of powerful armed forces will have more ability to implement shock policy and, if necessary, overcome the resistance of the social actors, as seen in the case of Chile under Pinochet.

### *2.2.3 Postmodernism In Practice*

The term postmodernism has been used in numerous contexts to refer to a variety of different concepts, paradigms, and trends. It was first used in the 1950's in the fields of art and architecture to refer to art that was different from modern art, and to describe architectural designs that moved away from the "pragmatic, efficient, rationalist functionalism of modernist architecture" (Appleby et al., 1994: 201).

In the context of international development, 'postmodernism' is used to refer to two interrelated concepts. First, it is used synonymously with the terms post-industrialism, post-capitalism, and post-Fordism to refer to the latest phase in capitalist development. It is said to have begun in the 1970's and is characterized by (inter alia), an increase in the internationalization of capital, a decrease in the power and importance of the nation-state, the establishment of a New World Order designed to facilitate capitalist development and international free trade, the international dispersion of assembly activities, a new international division of labour, a drop in the real value of wages, and an increase in unemployment and underemployment (Schuurman, 1993; Veltmeyer, 1998).

For many reasons the direction of theoretical and philosophical studies on development in Latin America changed in the 1980's from studies of class themes to studies focusing more on global market forces, international financial institutions and technocratic state elites. Interest in social reform and the empowerment of minor sectors

through the traditional class actors, such as unions was no longer encouraged. Rather, the 'new kid on the block' was the grassroots popular organizations that were seen as agents of real cultural and political change in tune with market conditions. This was seen as the ideal and acceptable form of interest and study. The method in question was the postmodernist approach to dealing with the study these social components.

The postmodernist approach has been used with the 'new social movements'. For one, it identifies common features of the diverse movements: the limited scope of their demands for change, their political limitations and economically defensive actions, as well as search their for cultural identity.

However, at a different level, this theory about New Social Movements (NSMs) went off track in terms of understanding their true nature and dynamics - they placed the actors incorrectly. This has been observed and argued by de la Cruz, Calderon, Laserna and others (in Camacho and Menjivar [1989]): "very few of these movements displayed or existed with a class-conscious awareness of their objectively-shared position in relationship to the economic system or the neo-liberal government policies that created objectively similar conditions for them".

For example, take poverty as an objective condition shared by all created as a result of the austere circumstances instituted by the neo-liberal agenda. In terms of these 'objective' conditions, it should be possible to analyze the social basis of the new social movements in class terms. The major elements of the population compose what has been loosely defined as the "the new working class". This new working class has evolved differently from the one analyzed and theoretically constructed in traditional Marxist analysis.

### **2.3 The Structuralist Perspective**

The "classical" working class and labour union movements can now be seen to be particular social movements, which have arisen and continue to arise in particular times and places. Capitalist industrialization in the West gave rise to the industrial working class whose struggle for fair and better living conditions was expressed through organized labour or union movements.

However, these movements are related to the particular circumstances of their region and time in each sector during the industrialization period, and as a function of the particular demand for just conditions. Internationalist slogans like "Workers of the world unite" and "proletarian revolution" inspired these groups to struggle, and illustrated that they were not alone in their demands for social justice.

As time went on with the domination of the postmodernist approach heavily encouraged on the field, reality did not readjust itself to align with the theoretical concepts put forward by the postmodernists. In fact reality lashed back: their concepts simply did not work. Take, for example, the situation in Brazil, where the whole idea of confrontation was replaced with consensus to appease the big landlords. When land reform becomes an unacceptable word, theory has to be re-visited to create the term 'democratization of land'. The period from the election of Fernando Henrique Cardoso as president of Brazil on October 3, 1994 to his inauguration two months later spawned surprising changes in the agrarian-reform debate in Brazil. First, the Rural Democratic Union (UDR, the landowner group which had become the leading opponent of agrarian reform), decided to close its doors, announcing that its work was done. 1994 also ended with one of Brazil's leading intellectual and political supporters of agrarian reform questioning the efficacy of using the term "agrarian reform" in the 1990s. "The expression 'agrarian reform' gives rise to ideological confrontation". For Herbert "Betinho" de Souza, coordinator of the Citizens' Action against Hunger and Misery, it was important to seek consensus and results. The Campaign against Hunger decided that henceforth it would use the term "democratization of the land."

The two actions seem to suggest that agrarian reform in the country with the most uneven distribution of land in the hemisphere is off the political agenda for the foreseeable future. The reality, however, is more complex. While Brazil's large landowners appear to be relaxed and unthreatened, social movements (with NGOs as the key sector working in support of the rural poor) have not given up the struggle. Rather, they have decided to rethink their strategy. (NACLA Magazine, 1997).

### ***2.3.1 Class Analysis Revisited: Social Movements And The New Peasantry***

Peasantry as seen in a number of contexts (Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and elsewhere) has a decidedly ethnic or indigenous character. It is an important part of the rural social structure in many Latin American societies and an equally important agent for social change and development. As both the object and subject of diverse social forces at work in rural society, peasants have been subject to the most diverse and conflicting interpretations, particularly regarding the dynamics of their struggles. Conversely, it is widely viewed as a pre-industrial social category, fighting a losing battle with the forces of change and development that have marginalized it from on-going processes and reduced its numeric relevancy.

In Hobsbawm's view "the death of the peasantry" is the "most dramatic and far-reaching social change of the second half of this [the twentieth] century" (1994: 289). Contrast this with a post or anti-structuralist analysis which views the peasantry as a post-industrial category; an advance representation of a new era of localized day-to-day struggles for ethnic and social identity or land, a social actor seeking to reclaim its popular culture and affirm its collective identity. In this post-modern tradition, the focus of analysis is on the ethnic rather than the class character of the minor social movements involved, or on the peasantry in terms of its collective identity.

Then there are those who see the peasantry in class terms. Take both the economic and political structures that constrain both the peasants's freedoms and their own consciousness or self-perception. In these terms, the peasantry is viewed as neither pre- nor post-modern, but as a highly modern social class. It is a catalyst for antisystemic change, as well as a dynamic force in an on-going modernization process, in which it seeks to create a just and better form of society wherein the participants are free from oppression, in control of an economy that provides a livelihood for all members of the society, and possessed of a decent standard of living within a framework of dignity and respect for cultural values.

### *2.3.2 Challenges to Structuralist Theory*

The last decade saw the peasant and rural landless workers rising to some extremely significant confrontations with national governments and international agencies. This presents a serious test of the ideas of many structuralist theorists like Roger Bartra or historians like Hobsbawn (1994), who have argued that structural changes based on a globalized economy have shrunk the rural sector in size and in percentage of the gross national product. They assert that the peasantry and rural workers are no longer the significant transformative force that they once were."

Yet Latin American reality is of large scale peasant based guerrilla movements, as in Colombia, which has the most potent peasant based insurgency in its history. There is also a movement of national rural landless workers in Brazil that goes beyond that of the peasant leagues of the 1950's and early 1960's in both scope and effectiveness. Then, there is the sustained peasant and indigenous movements in Ecuador that took control of the National Congress for a few hours in January 2000, resulting in the ruling elite being forced to give up power. Also, there is the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, which like the 1990 uprising of peasant and indigenous peoples in Ecuador challenged the existing power structure with an alternative view of politics, as well as with antisystemic action. These examples raise serious empirical doubts about the claims of structuralist theorists regarding the disappearance of or the need to bypass the peasantry or rural labour force.

Reality points to the importance and immense significance of the peasantry in the structural change of a society. The assumptions by some structuralists that the current movements are on their last legs of existence or use 'a dying anachronistic class' cannot be taken seriously, given the systematic organizational structures of these movements, their long-term activity and their increasing effectiveness over time. The depth and scope of these movements suggests a revealing point: it is time for these theoreticians to go back to the drawing board and reformulate their concepts of social change to fit reality rather than reformulating reality to fit their theories.

### *2.3.3 Demographic Considerations*

One structuralist argument treats rural movements in North America and Europe as identical to those in Latin America. This is a mistaken assumption. It assumes that Latin American countries follow the demographic pattern of Euro-America in which rural to urban migration eventually led to the death of popular rural movements. A subsequent argument was based on a comparison of past and present demographic data showing rapid urbanization and a sharp decline of the rural population. From these demographic comparisons, structuralists argue that only a shrinking minority of rural peasants and rural workers can engage in a support role, which is just delaying their final exit from history.

However, the correlation between percentages of the labour force and political efficacy is hardly convincing, especially if we consider the role of bankers, generals and the bourgeoisie in shaping or making the political agenda. With this quantitative criterion we could dismiss the significance of all social classes including the industrial workers in large plants and public employees. By the same argument, the only class which might be considered the majority is the under paid service workers in the so-called informal economy, and hardly any scholar has identified this group as the spearhead of any process of change.

Deductions from aggregate demographic trends tell us very little about the crucial determinants of socio-political actions and motivations. First, they fail to explain the persistence of the existence of the peasantry, their refusal to leave the countryside and those urban sectors which re-migrate to the countryside when conditions in the rural areas offer better opportunities than in the city. Where successful agrarian reforms have occurred in a context of urban depletion and economic crises the demographics were reversed. Second, organized and cohesive minorities of peasants can be the majority in the best organised sectors of society and can exercise great leverage against unpopular regimes. In other words, a strong capacity for mobilization among the peasantry and landless rural workers can provide a more effective political movement than an immobilized urban middle or working class.

Some structuralists focus on specific country cases to argue the thesis of the "decline of the peasantry" or the "lost promise of agrarian reform." For example, by focusing on Chile and Peru and comparing activities in the 1960's and early 1970's to those of the 1990's, Kay (1981, 1982, 1999) generalized the effect of modernization as reducing the size and influence of rural labour and its political role. However, the decline of rural labour in Chile had at least as much to do with the harsh repression of the Pinochet regime and the retrograde rural labour legislation of the post-dictatorial regime. Secondly, in both countries, the major peasant confederations were fragmented by left wing sects, dependent on and manipulated by electoral parties (in Peru) or subordinated to the ruling regime (in Chile), thus undermining any possibility of independent political action. Thirdly, the reversal of agrarian reforms in both countries -- a kind of political counter-reform policy -- seriously eroded and undermined the morale and cohesion of the peasantry and rural labour. Hence, while few would argue that Chile or Peru have advanced rural movements today, this lack is not related to any general concept of modernization. It has more to do with the specific political circumstances under which the economic transformation towards the free market took place, as well as an internal dynamic growth rising from the actions of better-off peasants.

On this point, studies on peasant dynamics by Brass (2000) in Peru, Zamosc (1986) in Columbia and de Vylder (1976) in Pinochet's Chile are instructive. The issue, identified most clearly by Brass (2000), is the loss of dynamism in the struggle for social change in rural Latin America; the unravelling of the land reform movement is not simply a question of neoliberal capitalist development. Rather it relates in part to the efforts of the big landowners and the rich peasantry, who seek to transform themselves into rural capitalists in order to use land reform as a means of penetrating and dominating the production cooperatives of peasant smallholders, and in the process to erode them from within. Needless to say, this dynamic is not entirely absent from the countryside today and needs to be factored into any analysis of rural political dynamics.

### ***2.3.4 Modernization, Agrarian Reform, and Market-Orientation versus Peasant Struggle***

Structuralists, both Marxists and liberals, frequently agree that the new economy and the demands of the market and international competitiveness have worked against any peasant-based agrarian reform. Some, like Kay (1999), argue that modernization has made the whole concept of radical agrarian reform irrelevant or anachronistic.

However, one has to clearly define what is meant by 'modernization'. One group views modernization as a process dependant on existing free market economics while the other views modernization as a process leading to raised living standards, increased marketable surpluses, improved productivity and the combination of credit, technical know-how and skilled labour to expand the reproductive capacity of investments.

Modernization within a free market or a neoliberal doctrine is a product of a particular configuration of class-based and power totally under the control of the elite. In structural terms modernization under elite control means the exclusion and displacement of peasants and rural workers. It largely benefits large-scale exporters, big landowners and multinational agribusiness. In these circumstances, modernization is equated with export surpluses, a high return to big investors, and high capital/labour ratios.

Viewed from the perspective of rural workers and peasants, the free market version of modernization has not resulted in an improvement of living standards and of their future prospects. Rather, it has become a regressive form of modernization. Millions of peasants have been displaced from the market and forced into relations in to subsistence production. Many have become rural refugees swelling the under-productive, low-income sectors of the economy. Free market modernization has deprived landless workers and small peasant producers of access to means of production; they do not have sufficient or sometimes any access to land, technology or credit.

Thus, the struggle in the countryside is not really a conflict between the new ways and the old ways; rather it is a confrontation of two alternative forms of modernization. One puts exclusive control of progress in the hands of the elite (the big landowners), and

the other focuses on progress and development in the lives of landless workers and peasants. The persistence of this conflict is not due to traditional rural sectors stubbornly holding on to their land and resisting progress but to a struggle over the means of production and state aid.

Discussions of the nature of rural movements and the viability of agrarian reform revolve around the notion of modernization. Neo- or social-liberal structuralists, such as Randall (1996), Seligson (1995), and the scholars associated with CEPAL, the IDB and FAO define the process essentially in technoeconomic terms with reference to technologies linked to large-scale capital-intensive export units. The imperatives of accumulation and investment are linked to big investors who have access to financial markets and export networks.

This version of modernization regrettably overlooks the class relations that define ownership of land, access to credit, technical assistance and market choice. Notwithstanding their strong belief in the multiplicity of development paths, neoliberal structuralists tend to assume that modernization can only be achieved by a single socio-economic configuration.

They measure modernization by parameters such as export markets and corporate farming in large-scale private units. By definition other forms of farming and social classes are relegated to a worthless and, marginal role. By giving modernization an elevated value that transcends class and state relations, it is clear why neoliberal structuralists do not consider agrarian reform and land-less peasant worker struggles as an alternative route to modernization. By associating modernization with one particular configuration of power and economic strategy they conveniently ignore alternative configurations, routes, agencies and property forms within which modernization could occur.

In practice, the results of neoliberal capitalist development and modernization are mixed. Productivity gains measured by output per worker are counter-balanced by declining output measured on the basis of output per acre of land. Large pieces of land never get cultivated, as the market value is not only based on how much productivity

occurs on that land, but also how it would fair in a speculative market. Secondly, much of the economic progress measured in terms of increases in exports is the result of heavy government subsidies and cheap credits and not the imputed market efficiency of large-scale production.

In this context, rather than describing socio-economic realities, the neoliberal structuralist conception of modernization leans heavily on ideological considerations justifying a particular power configuration and denying the relevance of agrarian reforms and the importance of peasant struggles as an equally legitimate strategy for modernization. In this context, neoliberal structuralists argue that the marginalisation and elimination of peasants and rural workers from the productive process is a natural technological outcome.

## **2.4 Community Development**

The concept of civil society first came into usage with the “Enlightenment” thinkers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Initially its purpose was to differentiate between social and political acts and institutions. In the 1990’s, this concept became an important feature for discussion of the development theorists and practitioners. This revival and conceptual reformation was due to the pursuits of two lines of thinking and interpretation in academic studies. One of them was liberal thought, which was concerned with political process, economic development, and the empowerment of the civil society to act as guardians of democracy and good governance (UNDP, 2000). The second was the post-structuralist, modernist, Marxist, or Gramscian line on the left of the ideological spectrum (Cox, 1987; Bobbio, 1979; Kumar, 1993; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Mouffe, 1988).

The interest in the concept of civil society on the part of international organizations and governmental agencies tends to lean on the former (liberal) interpretation which includes all manner of organizations found between the family and the state, including the business associations that make up what is still termed the ‘private sector’ (Rooy, 1998).

The civil society framework allows international development agencies to exercise significant control: first, by propagating a non-state and market-oriented approach to development, as per ideas advanced in the counter-revolution in development

theory and practice that characterized the 1980s (Toye, 1997); second, by reducing reliance on 'third sector' NGOs for the execution of development programs and to turn towards the 'strengthening of civil society' (that is, capacitating the myriad of informal associations in civil society including neighbourhood and women's self-help groups) so as to broaden the social basis for a more participatory and equitable form of development and good governance (Mitlin, 1998; UNDP, 1997); third, by pursuing the preferred strategy of international donors and government agencies forming partnerships with business associations incorporating the private sector into the development process (Palazzi, 2000; UN ); fourth, by providing an alternative to organizations and movements with anti-systemic agendas and confrontationalist approaches towards change and thereby providing a counter-force against the recent appearance of 'rural activism in different parts of the world's rural societies - a bulwark against the persistent search by class-based social movements in these societies for radical or anti-systemic solutions to the problems of land and reform'. The concern is to minimize or avoid the conditions of political conflict that characterized earlier phases of land reform (now, in the discourse on civil society and sustainable livelihoods, dubbed 'asset redistribution' )

The second line of thinking regarding the concept of civil society in the broad range of structural analysis is not at all heterogeneous in its conceptualization. Generally speaking the postmodernist approach covers the sub-schools of the post (or non) structural form of analysis or the postmodernist approach to society. There is also the Gramscian-type of analysis that deals with the mobilization of forces to oppose and resist globalization projects and the corporate neo-liberal agenda and then to create in its wake an alternate counter hegemonic form of development (Kumar, 1993; Morton, 2001; Wignajara, 1993)

In the latter category fall the diverse social actors of civil society that are components of the counter-hegemonic forces (Castells, 1983; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985), the 'spontaneous grassroots movements' (Wolfe, 1991: 1) and a range of indigenous organizations and communities (Stavenhagen, 1994, 1997). These are the

non-class based civil organizations (that is, they fall into the category of either peasant or urban worker). They are community based (Mallon, 1995).

These organizations generally take the form of 'spontaneous grassroots movements' when their primary concern is around a single issue like the environment or when there is a heterogeneous social base concerned with politics of identity (Alvarez, et. al., 1998; Calderón, 1995; Escobar, 1992; Escobar and Alvarez, 1992; Melucci, 1989; Olofsson, 1988). In such a context, this kind of social formation is in opposition to the state. It can never include profit-oriented enterprises or other organizations of the hegemonic class, including associations of big landlords, chambers of commerce and paramilitary forces.

The theoretical and political poles of these divergent lines of thought regarding civil society have their followers. The liberal notion is favoured by the banking community and international and governmental development agencies. The Gramscian notion of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic power has its backers amongst the increasingly complex and diverse networks of nongovernmental organizations that see themselves as a primary agency of international development, acting in support of grassroots- or community-based development (Biekart, 1996; Carroll, 1992; Howell and Pearce, 2001; Kothari, 1996; Macdonald, 1997; Swift, 1999; Wignajara, 1993).

The position of the development NGO's is that of intermediaries between the international banking community and the urban and rural poor who are the target beneficiaries of the aid programs. During the 1980s, these third sector NGOs were supported by the international banking community as project partners at the local community level.

However, these CSOs (Community Services Organizations) range from international advocacy networks to community-based organizations pursuing alternative agendas of environmental protection, human rights, social development, and opposition to the corporate agenda. They generally lean toward a policy of resistance. In addition, they are generally committed to what could be termed

'Another Development' - development from within and below rather than outside and above; people-centred, human in scale or form, socially inclusive, sustainable in terms of both the environment and livelihoods; participatory and empowering (Veltmeyer and O'Malley, 2001)."

Why are the politics of this conception of civil society associated with an international movement of NGO's? In one word: reformism. Virtually all scholars and practitioners in the field believe in the need for institutional or structural change as a precondition and method of allowing fundamental change.

This commitment to the need for institutional or structural change varies according to the kind of change desired. Very few scholars prescribe a radical approach to the fundamental overhaul of the existing systems and power structures. 'Social revolution', a prerequisite for fundamental change in the 1970's, was no longer currency; the prerequisite was watered down to 'social transformation'. This point was the demand of organizations such as the Alianza Democrática de Campesinos (ADC) in El Salvador and other protagonists in the struggle for social change.

As seen in El Salvador and Guatemala, the peace accords prevented any radical approach to the issues of land and land reform. Even class-based social movements such as the MST in Brazil or the EZLN in Mexico having agendas of far-reaching structural change fell into the accord trap. A similar situation existed with the Alianza Democrática de Campesinos (ADC) in El Salvador and the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de Ecuador (CONAIE), two other such class-based or indigenous organizations and movements. Therefore they decided to work within the limited space created by a program of democratization and political reform ('decentralisation') by virtually all governments in the region (Veltmeyer, 1997a).

The desire to push for an extension and a deepening of these reforms was the least they could have. At most, they sought to mobilize the forces of opposition and resistance into collective actions on particularly pressing issues, hoping thereby to foment conditions for more far-reaching change in the direction of economic

development (access to land and credit), democracy (political 'autonomy') and social justice. On this point see Stedile and Frei (1993) and Wilber (2001) with regards to the MST, and Macas (1999) and Lluco Tixe (2000) with regards to CONAIE.'

Such conditions brought the 'Social Left' and NGOs into Latin America to involve themselves deeply in the development process . The result was that various organizations and political parties on both the Left and the Right sought favours from the NGOs. The struggle for this attention was for fundamental change on the left, for the reform of existing system towards equality and greater freedom to participatory involvement by the liberals, and for the maintenance of the status quo on the right.

The international agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, UNRISD and ECLAC) and banking community (World Bank ) push for 'another development' as an alternative model and strategy geared to reform. Under the UNCTAD, the focus is on political reforms decentralizing government decision-making and the institutions of electoral politics -- democratization of the political apparatus, economic reforms designed for macroeconomic stability and structural adjustment, and social reforms in the form of a New Social Policy (NSP) that is directed towards greater equity for and protection of the most vulnerable groups among the poor (Morales-Gómez, 1999; Veltmeyer and O'Malley, 2001).

In instituting the reform process, the conditions vary, with some reforms being deeper and more extensive than others. The goal of the reform process was to create conditions favourable for a strategy of popular participation and partnerships with municipalities, communities, developmental NGOs and other elements of 'civil society'.

Consider Bolivia, which unlike other governments has unconditionally adopted the political dimension of this reform process (Veltmeyer and O'Malley, 2001). The NSP is a totally different scenario. Chile is an excellent example of this. The conditions brought about by widespread debt and the development crisis in the 1980s induced economic reform which was further radicalized and extended to the four holdout countries in the region - Brazil, Venezuela, Peru, and Argentina. On the dynamics of

this process see, inter alia, Veltmeyer and Petras, 1997, 2000; and Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has dealt with 3 different approaches to the development process. In the beginning, the post-modernist approach dealt with numerous social groupings that sought change isolated to their localities and small populations. This was followed by the structuralist approach that looked at the traditional forces seeking change with the organized labour and rural peasant movements as the major proponents for change.

The postmodernist approach creates smaller social groupings that in fact exist in a much larger social context. It breaks all the demands for change into single, unconnected issues. In contrast, the structural approach deals with much larger social groups in context of class analysis. The demands are not broken into single issues but are broadly represented as interconnected and related.

The effectiveness of the post-modernist theory was limited to the minor area where the struggle is concentrated. Therefore it is very limited in both strategies and results. The demands were also limited to event based, for a particular issue at a particular time. In contrast, class analysis allows for a continuity in time and place in dealing with issues of development.

Central to the approach of community development is the concept of civil society. This concept is inadequate for the description of social processes. For one, it confuses more than clarifies the dynamics of the development process. Secondly, the combination of strategic approaches and the structural factors involved in the development process are better analyzed through the concept of class analysis.

Class analysis gives a more adequate positioning of individuals in the larger structure of economic and social relationships, in both rural and urban society. In addition, class analysis generally leads to a better assessment of the social forces that could be mobilized in support of various political and development projects. Structural approach based on class analysis is an effective framework to provide us with a clear

understanding of the dynamics of social movements and of the struggle at the ground level in Latin America.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Latin American Social Movements in Perspective**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Although Marxist currents dominated the theoretical analysis of the social movements until the 1980's with the world capitalist crisis in the background, the 60's and 70's were a period of intense mass mobilization, and in many cases saw real landmarks in the history of class struggle. This was true as much for the centres of the capitalist system as it was for countries oppressed by dependent or colonial and neo-colonial relationships and the socialists' camp.

In the dependent capitalist countries, in tandem with the immense brutality of the application of counterinsurgency doctrine (as in Indonesia, Vietnam, and of course Latin America), events of great significance took place.

At the beginning of the 70's came the most important of these events, the Popular Assembly in Bolivia and the formation of the Popular Unity government in Chile. These are still today fundamental reference points in the history of the Latin American revolutionary movement, as were the processes of armed struggle in other countries. The

Argentine military coup of 1976 closed the cycle of armed insurgency in the Southern Cone (Argentina, Uruguay, Chile), but certainly was not the definitive victory of counter-revolution in the region. (Sanchez: 1986) The revolutionary focus shifted towards the Central American countries of Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala where the Sandinista movement triumphed twenty years after the Cuban revolution of 1959.

Another fundamental reference point was the guerrilla struggle in Colombia, which went almost unnoticed by social science researchers and investigators of social change. It raised serious questions about the feasibility of armed struggle, a tactic that had been all but abandoned by the Left as a result of repeated failures and the destruction of many organisations that had taken up arms in the 1960's and 1970's. (Veltmeyer, 1997)

The turbulent political processes of the last forty years and the political growth of the guerrilla movement in urban and rural areas has forced an examination of these events. The purpose of this examination is to pursue possible outcomes and interpretations for political and social life, particularly in Colombia with inevitable implications for the rest of Latin America. The dimension the guerrilla struggle has acquired is so great that it transcends what is presented in news reports, which amount to a chronological record or a series of denunciations.

Other important aspects necessary to consider in the analysis of the dynamics of social movements in Latin America is the resurgence of the peasant movements. Especially important is the mobilization of peasants and indigenous Latin Americans reclaiming land rights. In Bolivia, for example, peasant organizations have broken ties with the parties and are actively engaged in debating ideas and the need to form their own

“political instrument.” In Paraguay many leaders of the Peasant Federation have launched their own political revolutionary socialist movement. In Ecuador the National Confederation of Indigenous Peoples (CONAIE) has called for a new “national indigenous uprising” and has formed its own political instrument, even launching its own Presidential candidate in the last elections. (Veltmeyer, 1997). In Mexico the insurrection of indigenous peasants in Chiapas not only put an end to the ruling class’s and parties’ illusion of social peace and stability, but also brought to centre-stage the long and hard struggles of indigenous peoples in Mexico and elsewhere. It had a significant impact on what we could term the sociology of social movements -- the way in which movements of resistance and social change are conceived.

In addition we see the rise of a new set of faces in the struggle of social change, such as the case of the unemployed of Argentina (well-known in the local scene as the piqueteros). In August of 2001 a nationwide mobilization of highly organized unemployed groups, numbering over 100,000 people, shut down over 300 highways in Argentina and paralyzed the economy.

The present chapter analyzes class struggles in the dynamic of the social movements in Latin America, based on the distinct presence of social movements and their immense influence in the daily struggle which have made it possible to destabilize the structural nature of the neo-liberal project by opposing the prescriptions of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first part is the character, organization and form of the struggle of the Landless Movement, MST (Movimiento de

os Sem Terra do Brazil) as a new form of organization within the context of the peasant movement. The second section deals with the nature of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela that is daily withstanding the counterrevolutionary threats masterminded and supported by the U.S. The third section draws attention to the struggle of the unemployed workers' movement of Argentina which in its desire to resolve problems of the state has used strategies of struggle that recur in history. Making them effective represents a new challenge for the social movements. The fourth part deals with the development of the armed struggle in Colombia. This struggle reflects a determined pursuit of a political solution based on social justice. The last and fifth section deals with the indigenous movements in Ecuador which have made allowed a change of state power twice in a row within a decade.

### **3.2 Brazil: The Movement Of Landless Rural Workers (MST)**

The agrarian question has deep roots in Brazilian history, dating back to the Portuguese colonizers who gave immense land tracts (*capitanias hereditarias*) to a small group of settlers (*donatarios*) to establish plantations based on slave labour. Up to the late 1950's rural workers faced obstacles to organizing. The obstacles were composed of either legal constraints or landowner engineered violence (provocateurs and thugs).

Nonetheless, in the late 1950's and early 1960's peasants struggled against traditional forms of political domination by claiming the right to remain on the rural properties they used and to gain legal title to the land. The rural landowners were losing the traditional mechanisms of social control that had operated up until that time. President João Goulart, who assumed power in 1961, sought to carry out agrarian reform as part of his broad-based program of "grassroots reforms" (*reformas de base*).

The army overthrew Goulart in 1964, claiming the need to re-establish “order” and put a halt to the "Communist threat." During the ensuing 26 years of dictatorship peasant movements were severely repressed. Nonetheless, the military had to respond to the social pressures in rural areas. As a distraction it drafted the most radical agrarian-reform legislation in the country's history, but failed to implement it.

The key element of this legislation was the 1964 Land Statute<sup>11</sup>, an ambiguous law that sought to modernize agriculture with land reform as one of its instruments. The Land Statute established a legal framework for later government subsidization of the overhaul of traditional latifundios<sup>12</sup>. These, in turn, became more capital-intensive as they developed into agro-industrial complexes. Tenant farmers (Moradores) were expelled from these properties. Millions became rural wageworkers, and millions more migrated to the industrial cities. A part of rural poverty changed location, becoming urban poverty.

At the same time the Land Statute defined rules for the expropriation of large idle rural properties and others not ‘efficiently exploited’. This expropriation of land did not take place largely because of the influence of large landowners on the Brazilian political system. This influence stemmed from the fact that rural states in the North, mainly the Northeast, elected proportionally more members of the National Congress than the industrial and more populous states of the South and Southeast, perverting the principle

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<sup>11</sup> The land statute (law 4504/64) provides the first conceptual definition of latifundio in a legal document creating a legal distinction between latifundio or traditional large landed estate and a rural enterprise. See reforma agrarian e estatuto da terra - Rio de Janeiro: Grafica Auriverde, 1987 pg 66 and 80. Ricardo Tabares, Land and Democracy, Reconsidering the Agrarian Question, NACLA Magazine Report On the Americas Vol XXXVII, No. 6 May /June 1995 pg 23

<sup>12</sup> well-known term to define large landowners

of "one person, one vote." This distortion in the Brazilian political system, established in 1930, allowed the military to rely on the landed oligarchy as one of its main bases of support on the one hand while increasing the power of the large landowners on the other.

Over the course of the military regime, three important actors on the Brazilian rural scene developed national policies to support the demands of peasants and rural workers. These were the Catholic Church, the National Confederation of Agricultural Workers (CONTAG), and the social movements associated with the Workers' Party (PT) (Tabares, 1995). The "political opening" - the gradual and steady political easing of tensions begun under General Ernesto Geisel 1974 to 1979 - provided opportunities for waging open struggle for social rights in the countryside. Thousands of groups including rural agricultural unions, urban trade unions, movements of the landless peasants, associations of small rural producers, and the NGOs organized the struggle across the country.

The Church chose agrarian reform as a key issue in its pastoral work nation-wide, setting up the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) in 1975. In agricultural frontier areas priests and bishops sided with the posseiros (squatters who work the land but have no legal title) against the grileiros (colonists with fraudulent title) and large landowners in a struggle which often became bloody (Tabares: 1985)

In the first half of the 1980's, the MST and the National Department for Rural Workers of the United Workers Central (DNTR-CUT) were both formed. The MST began a new form of struggle for the land, acting principally in the three states of southern Brazil (Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina and Paraná) setting up campamentos

(makeshift encampments) on roads alongside large estates and occupying land considered unproductive. The CUT and MST adopted a strategy of confrontation with the state as they pressured for social reforms by holding mass demonstrations in the countryside (Stedile, 1993).

In 1985 agrarian reform became the key issue in national politics, achieving even greater prominence than the challenge of inflation. The MST multiplied the number of its occupations (squats) of large estates to pressure the government to carry out the reforms.

Over 200,000 families have been settled into co-operatives from the founding of the MST in 1984 to the present. (Petras, 1998). The biggest occupation of all was in 1996, on Fazenda Giacometti in Paraná. The property took up 80,000 hectares (nearly 200,000 acres) of good fertile land, covering three municipalities. It was an insult to society that this land was lying unused. (Stadile, 2000).

The occupants have increased the cultivation of the land, increased their living standards (improved health, education and housing) and produced a marketable surplus, including significant coffee exports to overseas markets. During the 1999-2000 period the MST engaged in direct action protests, demanding greater credits and financing to stem the outflow of bankrupt small holders and impoverished landless rural workers fleeing to the cities in pursuit of underpaid and unproductive urban employment. (Stadile, 2000). 80,000 families camped on roadsides or on unused properties. Their problems remain unresolved. They are in the frontline of the battle against the government. 20,000 activists are involved in this campaign. Their training is ongoing and well organized from the local level to the state level.

The national and regional leadership of the MST has passed through advanced training programs, many sponsored by the organization, where invited lecturers, including university professors and technical experts, teach courses on modern agriculture, co-operative management, and contemporary political economy (Caldart, 1997).

### 3.2.1 *The Social Base of the MST*

The indigenous peoples are a minority in Brazil. Unlike the indigenous peoples of Andean or Aztec America, they were traditionally hunters and gatherers, and not farmers as in Ecuador, Peru or Mexico where indigenous peoples work inside the farmers' organizations. Relations with the indigenous peoples of Brazil start with the recognition that they are the original inhabitants. There is no discussion about that. All the land they claim is theirs, and they should do with it what they wish. (Stedile, 2000). Ethnic composition varies depending on the state. There are very few blacks in the MST, and there are very few Sem Terra farmers in the areas of Bahia, Pernambuco, Maranhão.

Pedro II, ruler of Brazil at the time, implemented Law 601 in 1850, preventing freed black slaves from becoming landowners as soon as they were emancipated. They had to migrate to the ports and work in the docks. Blacks were excluded from the formation of the Brazilian farming classes, which has had a lasting influence on it. To this day the farming strata is composed mainly of mestizos in the Northeast and European immigrants in the South. This is clearly reflected in the composition of the MST.

Because their struggle involves whole families, the MST has broken from the traditional model of men-only farmers' movements. However, this does not mean that

there is not still a strong macho culture among the men in the countryside. As has been observed in the way their movement is organized, the women have played a significant role. (Stedile, 2000) In an encampment there are as many women as men, and even more children. In general, women are very active in the committees set up to solve everyday problems. Family life imposes restrictions that impede women's broader participation at state and national levels. All the same, even though a quota system exists, 40 percent of the 21 members on the national executive committee are women who got there by contesting elections against men. No places were saved for them, although the social agenda includes gender and racial equality. In this context the conflict is not between a "modernising" agribusiness elite versus a pre-modern peasantry, but a struggle between two distinct modernising strategies with different socioeconomic bases, strategies, markets and social values. In part, particularly in dealing with land speculators and traditional landlords, the conflict is between the modernising strategy of the MST directed toward employment and production and the "rentier" mentality that still pervades in many regions of the country.

Within the institutions of the dominant capitalist system, the MST has widened its agenda from agrarian reform to include banking, credit reform, foreign debt moratorium, conservation of the Amazonia and protection of domestic producers. It has called for greater social spending for public health and education and is part of a nation-wide project working towards greater national autonomy within the international economy. It has been an active participant in many of the most important national and international conferences dealing with globalisation, environmental issues, gender, and minority rights (Stedile, 2000).

The MST has been the leading force in organizing urban alliances to counteract the neo-liberal agenda of privatization and budget cuts. It has mobilized trade unions, political parties, universities and religious groups through a campaign called “consulta popular”. In the late 1990’s the MST led a march of 100 000 urban and rural workers to Brasilia, drawing urban support along the parade route across the country. The productive units and activities organized by the leadership of the MST are directed towards modernising agriculture against the opposition of unproductive landlords on the one side and speculators on the other, both of whom invest little in increasing productivity and producing a marketable surplus. (Stadile and Frei, 1993)

The effectiveness and prominence of the MST in national and Third World politics is based precisely in its "modern" character and its capacity to build a modern program adapted to the primary demands of the landless rural workers and impoverished small landholders. (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001)

### **3.3 Venezuela, Bolivarian Movement**

The Venezuelan process of social change presents a special focus within the analysis of the most recent experiences of governments that have chosen alternative paths of development other than that imposed by neo-liberalism. To begin with, let us verify an issue of discussion, as to whether the process of change in Venezuela is a revolutionary one or not.

One line of thinking emphasizes the element of violence as a means of taking power, and the verticality in the exercise of power in the formation of government and the new state. Even though the present government does not conform in kind to many other Latin American government that came to power by force, the military origin of

Hugo Chavez, the leader of this process, is questioned and so is the supposed absence of a strategy for revolutionary program.

However, it can be proved that Venezuela is indeed going through a stage of planned republican transition. With the success of implementation of some reforms in the country that have changed the economic, social and cultural system, the power of the structures and the political players of the past (who ruled for some 40 years) have been drastically reduced.

Venezuela's process can only be understood in the context of the upheaval gripping Latin America. From Colombia to Ecuador, Brazil to Argentina, people are rebelling against decades of grinding poverty generated by the policies imposed by the U.S., European powers, trans-national companies, and the worsening of conditions resulting from the global capitalist economic crisis that began in the 1990s. The movement fighting for Venezuela's current path views itself as part of a continent-wide struggle that takes many forms, including electoral victories, mass protests and guerrilla warfare.

The unfolding revolutionary process in Venezuela has survived many difficult trials in the past year, including a short-lived coup, internal economic sabotage by the capitalist elite, and U.S. political pressure to depose popularly-elected President Hugo Chavez.

The US has drawn up an expansionist, belligerent plan for Latin America, embodied in the FTAA. One of its elements, Plan Colombia, places special emphasis on

Venezuela and Colombia as countries of the Andean region that constitute an important obstacle to the imposition of its hegemony over the continent.

The growing organized activity of workers, peasants and the urban poor to defend the revolutionary process and push it forward has been the key to its success. After winning office in 1998 and again in 2000, Chavez used his mandate from Venezuela's oppressed to dismantle the entrenched two-party political system.

Chavez has named the social movement initiated by his election the "Bolivarian Revolution," after the great 19th-century liberator, Simon Bolivar. Under his leadership, a National Constituent Assembly was formed. A new Constitution was written and approved by the masses.

Chavez championed measures to redistribute the country's oil wealth to benefit the 80 percent of Venezuelans who live in poverty. He called for the distribution of the 60 percent of arable land owned by 1 percent of the population to poor peasants. He fought for a foreign policy independent of U.S. interference, including friendship and solidarity with Cuba. Chavez has in fact become a world symbol of resistance to U.S. domination. In 2000 he became the first head of state to defy Washington by breaking the travel blockade to Iraq.

### ***3.3.1 Bolivarian Circles: Revolutionary Organizational Units In Venezuela***

Across Venezuela over a million people are organized into 30,000 Bolivarian Circles, neighbourhood-based organizations that constitute an embryonic form of worker and peasant power. This broad, militant organization of the people made victory over the

coup possible. Contrast these Bolivarian Principles in action to the use of slogans from the past governments based on Bolivarian Principles to delude the masses.

### *3.3.2 The Counter Revolutionary Coup of April 2003*

Chavez government's move from political reform to measures directly aimed at the oligarchy's control of industry and land initiated last April's counter-revolutionary coup. Chavez signed 49 economic and land reforms proposals into law in November 2001. Following the classic counter-revolutionary model refined and tested by the CIA in Chile and other countries, the oligarchy mobilized its loyal base among small and medium-sized capitalists to march in the streets calling for Chavez's overthrow, abusing the freedoms granted by the constitution and thus giving it the appearance of democratic opposition. These demonstrations were given extensive coverage by both the privately-owned Venezuelan media and the U.S. corporate media.

### *3.3.3 How Mass Uprising Defeated Coup*

Little more than one year ago, on April 13 and 14, the wealthy Venezuelan oligarchy and a handful of military officers, with the full aid and support of the Bush Administration, staged a coup d'état in Caracas. President Chavez was arrested; Pedro Carmona, the head of the business association Fedecamaras, named himself president. The US government, not missing a beat, immediately recognized the new government. One does not wonder at the strength of speculations of CIA and ambassadorial linkage (under US ambassador Shapiro) to this abortive coup d'etat, in which the alliance of the Fedecamaras business association, groups claiming to represent 'civil society', Primero Justicia, the bureaucratic and opportunist leadership of the CTV (Venezuelan Workers'

Central) and the most reactionary sector of the military forces formed the new government in a fateful 48 hours.

If it were not for the mass base of support created by the revolutionary changes during the rule of Chavez, the new government would not have met any resistance. However, the Bolivarian masses and the loyal military forces brought President Hugo Chavez Frias back to power.

One cannot forget the fact that Chavez was elected with the largest number of votes ever in recent decades. Nevertheless, the conspiracy continues and preparations are underway to remove Chavez from power by whatever means possible. The Bush Administration has been clear about its belligerent Venezuelan policies.

#### *3.3.4 The Collapse of the Lockouts*

It appears the Bolivarian movement has successfully weathered another trial. On Dec. 10, 2002, Fedecamerasa, in collaboration with the corrupt union federation CTV, staged a national lockout in an attempt to force Chavez from office. The lockout was identified as a "strike" by the U.S. media, even though the bosses rather than the workers organized it. Its principal aim was to sabotage the state-owned oil industry, and its corporation, Petroleos de Venezuela S.A.

Oil is Venezuela's main source of revenue and its major export, amounting to 60 percent of the country's annual budget. Oil production plunged from 3 million barrels a day to 300,000. But oil workers soon took matters into their own hands, reopening closed facilities and running them without the union bosses and managers. This further exposed the anti-worker character of the CTV.

By late January, some 75 percent of manual workers and 50 percent of administrators had returned to work. Chavez ordered the National Guard to liberate stores of food and beverage being hoarded by the union bosses during the lockout and distribute them to the poor. The right wing staged daily demonstrations in December and January calling for Chavez's ouster. However, their base of small capitalists quickly lost steam, disillusioned by the support provided to them by the oligarchy.

By the time the lockout collapsed in early February, 50 percent of small businesses were in danger of going bankrupt. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of poor and working class people continued to rally to Chavez's defense. Western media kept on reporting violence during this upheaval. Some U.S. and British media have acknowledged 'the despair many of the privileged feel after the collapse of their "strike."' "Fearful that their homes and lives are in danger of violent attack by angry hordes from the city's sprawling slums, residents of middle and upper-class neighbourhoods all over the city are meeting to draw up contingency plans," the London Times reported Jan. 20. "Discussions vary from stocking up on food and water, to making inventories of available weapons."

"Depressed isn't the word for it. I'm totally crushed," pharmacist Maria Jose Alonzo told Reuters March 10. The report went on: "Alonzo's pessimism reflects a mood swing among the middle classes, the backbone of the opposition, whose marches often ended in street battles with Chavez's mainly poor supporters." Carlos Fernandez, the new head of Fedecameras, was placed under house arrest for his role in organizing the lockout. Arrest warrants were issued for seven former executives of the state oil company. On March 26, the government guaranteed safe passage to CTV head Carlos

Ortega, who was granted asylum by Costa Rica after an arrest warrant was issued. Ortega had been summoned directly to Washington by the U.S. State Department on Jan. 11, an indication of the level of White House involvement in the lockout.

### *3.3.5 The Pressure Of War*

Another factor in the lockout's collapse was a change in course by the Bush Administration. Venezuela is the third-largest supplier of oil to the United States. With a protracted war looming in Iraq, the White House seemed to have decided that the oil must flow again, and did not hesitate to lessen its hostility to President Chavez or the Bolivarian movement. By mid-March, the hard work of the employees returned the oil industry to near its pre-lockout levels. The government of Venezuela backed up its claims to foreign customers that all of its oil contracts for March would be fulfilled normally. (Los Angeles Times, March 20)

In another blow to the oligarchy, the Venezuelan government took control of all foreign currency exchange, taking the power of U.S. dollars out of their hands. The government instituted price controls on food and other staples. Soldiers confiscated heavy weaponry from the opposition-controlled metropolitan police in Caracas. However, the affairs at that moment showed that the crisis had hardly ended. In growing desperation, the Venezuelan ruling class will again resist Chavez, with the full support of the US administration, if he moves to further enact his economic program.

The continued growth and strengthening of the Bolivarian Circles as an alternative source of political power and militant action could be decisive in the battles that lie ahead. In the words of Caracas street peddler Antonio Lopez: "The people are with Chavez. They know he's fighting the rich who are responsible for all this mess."

### **3.4 Social Movements in Argentina**

This section deals with elements that outline the conditions presented by the ongoing crisis in Argentina in order to adequately assess the nature, content and perspectives arising from social protest. It is necessary to identify certain definitions related to the structural process, to put the policies implemented as the neo-liberal strategy was set in motion into this framework, and to observe the situation being challenged by the struggles of social confrontation.

This framework implies a continual pursuit of innovative strategies corresponding to social, economic and cultural reality and as a function of the distinct factors in permanent evolution.

Let us start from the fact that 1976, the year after the military coup, saw the beginning of the abandonment of a model of accumulation centred on import substitution moving towards industrial development. The main goal of that government policy was to provide for internal consumption.

This change in policy was seen in many other countries which were at the time influenced by massive debts to international financial institutions. It became an option to take funds from the international market and place them, in financial terms, in the local market to obtain high returns and consequently subordinate overall economic activities to this logic. Financial investment predominated, to the detriment of productive investment. Simultaneously, in opening up to imports, the destruction of the productive apparatus was in motion, generating a process of de-industrialization and the consequent growth of unemployment and reduction of income.

In order to give dimension to the crisis caused by the effects of the long cycle of neo-liberalism, it is sufficient to point out that 1975 Argentina had two million people living in poverty in a population of 22 million, while today it has 14 million poor out of 37 million inhabitants. Of a population growth of 15 million people in the last quarter century, 12 million fall below the poverty line. This statistic allows us to measure the character of the prevailing social decline. This means that while the population increased by almost 50 percent in the last 25 years, the number of poor increased by 700 percent.

During the 1990's one can observe important transformations in social protest in Argentina, taking into account that social protest is a constant reference point for Argentina's political life. In the history of that country's social struggles labour conflict traditionally played an outstanding role. Remember that contrary to the great majority of Latin American countries the labour market in Argentina had been characterized by its low levels of unemployment. It used to be a showcase of Latin America.

One of the decisive structural factors in this context is that in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the labour movement, composed of powerful unions, managed to fight for their interests with their historical weapon: strikes. However, another reference point not to be ignored were the resistance movements against genocide throughout the period of the dictatorship initiated by the 1976 military coup, with "the movement of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo" constituting an impressive symbolic source for the development of the social movements in Argentina. The social movements, like the unions, are transforming in respect to classic identities associated with social mobilization. More important is the appearance of new forms of struggle: there are new actors and themes involved in this particular form of political action.

### *3.4.1 The Unemployed Workers' Movement (MTD)*

What began as sporadic, localized, and often spontaneous demonstrations in response to the neo-liberal restructuring at the beginning of the 90's, at the end of the decade became new forms of resistance such as cortes de ruta or road blockades (Iñigo, Carrera and Cotarelo, 2001). This was a result of the unprecedented levels of open unemployment and under employment. Of course, the road blockade has not been used exclusively by the unemployed in Argentina, but the special thing about this case is that it involves the only means of force at their disposal, the only instrument of struggle that allows them to establish themselves on the national scene.

The most novel feature in this country is that now we see a new player in the arena of struggle: the unemployed as an organized group who use the roadblock as a method of struggle to win alternative employment plans. Note that the unemployed as a group is a necessary component for the functioning of a capitalist system. The unemployed as a group is not a new element, per se, but the unemployed as an organized body contradicts its previous role in that it is an active participant of the struggle and not a passive element waiting to be employed.

The successive protests of the unemployed extended across the whole country linking up in general terms with the demand for continuation and expansion of such plans and strategies. Compare the old and the new. In the past the General Motors workers picketed the factory gates which impeded entry to the factory. They lay barricades on the highway, demanding reemployment of those laid off, and the barrio barricaded streets or roads demanding job plans. These are all methods of protest that have generalized in time

with the pressure of unemployment. Now the unemployed are not waiting for the government to create jobs. They themselves demand to take over the strategy of job planning.

According with Nuestra América magazine, October 2002, one of the special skills the MTD of Solano Lanus and Almirante Brown possesses is the transformation of unproductive aid plans of the government into truly productive projects. In the beginning, the work plans were exclusively dedicated to municipal duties: drainage, construction of neighbourhoods, and repairs to basic units of the Justicialista Party.

As they proceeded, they self-managed and defined the work to be carried out, as these projects did not depend on the local municipality or the local mayor. The municipalities no longer exist as an intermediary. The unemployed workers have direct control over their job plans. Their aim was not that the benefits would be to the people participating in these projects, but to encompass the entire barrio or the local community. Projects involved a solidarity bakery in the barrio, a metal workshop, a place for skills training in electricity and masonry and popular library, etc.

Transforming the government's employment plans into a tool of struggle and organization, these movements have managed to consolidate themselves and advance in the articulation and co-ordination with other organizational elements in the struggle. They have converted local projects into real alternatives, weakening the program of structural adjustments.

The plans extracted from the government by the pickets that stop road traffic and merchandise on the Argentinean roads are administered autonomously and give rise to a

series of productive enterprises (bakeries, concrete block making, metal working and carpentry shops, etc.) and various initiatives that fulfill barrio necessities (popular libraries, day cares, cafeterias, clothing shops and community pharmacies, etc.).

In this way each victory on the picket strengthens the development of the organization. The demands based on structural requirements promote open meetings where the representatives of various barrios participate. Meetings where issues such as job plans are discussed make possible greater coordination and attendance in the marches, blockades and encampments.

The community centres and participation grow quantitatively. The demand for food packages from supermarkets or at union organizations ready to distribute them is added to the demand for job plans. The daily gathering to eat together came about naturally, turning into a space for debate. "...For us it is good, because the people don't eat at home..., although that is not our final objective", a leader pointed out. Definitely, this is a matter of the appearance of a new political culture based on equality, on solidarity and on the conviction that social change is built day by day.

From the beginning the road blockades came to constitute a fundamental mechanism of struggle for the unemployed organizing around the MTD. In the media they are called "pickets". A picket consists of the interruption of free circulation of commodities on the country's roads until a response is given to the demands put forward. It involves material improvements in return for movement or solidarity with the struggles of other organizations.

This form of popular protest, which caught the attention of a public opinion aroused by the devastating effects of the economic policies of the 90's, demonstrated a high level of effectiveness, achieving the demands that had been made. When the unemployed workers no longer receive a wage, they no longer have access to the means to guarantee subsistence. Their daily existence is no longer tied to the factory so their organization is no longer the union, but rather takes form at the barrio level. It is in this framework that the roadblock becomes their most potent mechanism of struggle.

It is a tool that makes it possible to obtain subsidies (job plans) from the state agencies which benefit are the unemployed. In any case it is worth noting that such subsidies have the principal objective of promoting and re-enforcing a network of ties of patronage intended to pacify protest. Aware that this social control is built into the plans, the MTD tries to re-appropriate them and use them to strengthen their struggles. We can say that the MTD has managed to turn the job plans of the state into a means of generating greater organization.

However, they look towards the future. The objective is that the various productive undertakings be co-ordinated to satisfy the material needs not only of the members of the MTD but of the barrio as a whole, above and beyond the job plans. Social protest in Argentina is closely linked to the general crises. However, it retains the particularities of its reality, going back to the peculiar combination of multiple causes that present themselves in social phenomena. Thus, to take the words of Marx (1885), "It seems better for us to study those who make hats, than ... to study about how to make hats."

### **3.5 Colombia, Insurgency in the context of National Liberation**

The purpose of this section is to outline the remarkable differences and similarities of the evolution of social struggle in Colombia to others in Latin America. The social problems there rose to such levels that an additional armed component was added to the struggle because all options for non-violent confrontations had been exhausted. The adversary, in this case, is the state and the oligarchy determined to retain power and to not give any concessions whatsoever to the people struggling for social justice. Then there is another component to this struggle: the total backing of the state by the United States, an external power whose funding does not seek to strengthen the base of the elite, but to give massive aid – armaments - to the ruling class.

The social movements in Colombia have many components where the army started to control the work of their work and actions. Most cases involved creating impasses that forbid even the smallest improvements in the standard of living of the peasants or the urban workers. As the government increased its pressure on the people, depriving them of their basic rights, the people reacted by rethinking their forms of struggle and taking up arms to face a brutal adversary.

#### ***3.5.1 The Armed Movement In Colombia***

"The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, People's Army (FARC-EP) was born in 1964. It was created to solve the land issue in the country. In the past the members had been guerrillas belonging to the liberal party that had struggled for land distribution, but this movement faded away as its leadership sought alliance with the conservative government and the issue of land was neglected. The policies of repression

and starvation of the rural population continued and grew as the peasants tried to fight back with whatever means available. And so the contemporary guerrilla movement evolved from scattered and isolated protests into a massive armed force of resistance. It resisted the institutional violence of the Colombian State that represented the interests of the landed oligarchy and the liberal-conservative alliance.

The Colombian State unleashed its greatest military extermination operation in 1964 in Marquetalia with 16,000 soldiers against a small contingent of defenders under the leadership of Manuel Marulanda Velez. The Congress of the Republic (influenced by Alvaro Gomez Hurtado) authorized President Guillermo Leon Valencia to attack Marquetalia, accusing it of being a renegade “independent republic”. The attack had the unlimited support of the military high command (which was advised by the Pentagon and CIA officials), the chiefs of the traditional political parties and the big landowners. The circle of generals thought three weeks would be more than sufficient time to wipe out the brave group of 48 campesinos and provide the militarists with an unqualified victory. Stiff resistance and the assistance of the local peasantry managed to rebuff the attack. This event signified the birth of the armed struggle.(Historical Outline, 2000)

From Marquetalia to the present, events have changed the conditions dramatically. The guerrilla movement has spread dramatically all over the country. It was based in peasant settlements that had developed a degree of autonomy from the national government and were therefore perceived as a threat to its control. The attempt of the Armed Forces to exterminate these peasant communities led to the formation of the FARC-EP, which evolved in time from an armed formation dedicated to defending the peasantry from the attacks of the national government and landlords into a national

political-military force of about 25,000 active combatants that have influence in almost all the municipalities of the country.

The central focus of the FARC-EP program has always been the issue of agrarian reform which had originally necessitated its birth. The following quote states the FARC-EP's approach to the agrarian question:

"The Revolutionary Agrarian Programme will provide the peasants the benefits of technical assistance, infrastructure, tools, and work animals for proper economic exploitation of the land. The Revolutionary Agrarian Programme is the indispensable condition to vertically raise the standard of material and cultural life of the whole peasantry, free it from unemployment, hunger, illiteracy and the endemic illnesses that limit their ability to work. To eliminate the fetters of the large landholding system and to promote the development of agricultural and industrial production. The Revolutionary Agrarian Programme will confiscate the lands occupied by the US imperialist companies whatever title they may have and to whatever activity they may be dedicated". (Historical Outline, 2000)

From birth the FARC-EP has confronted the state using all forms of struggle including talks to achieve new political mechanisms and fundamental changes in the state structure itself. Thus the successive governments would realize that the factors generating the political, economic, social and armed confrontation was a result of wasting national budget resources on the unlimited growth of the military and police forces. These immense resources are raised by means that go beyond normal taxation: the people are taxed to the point of extortion in order to finance a war against themselves.

### *3.5.2 Attempts at Peaceful Resolution to the Colombia Conflict*

During the government of Belisario Betancourt (1982-86), it became possible to hold the first dialogues between the government and the FARC-EP. The two sides signed the Uribe Accords. Those accords generated sympathy and hope in almost all social sectors of the country. In spite of the obstacles mounted by the militarists who vigorously opposed to the talks and a political solution, on May 28 1984 the first bilateral cease-fire was signed and simultaneously announced to the country by the President Betancourt and by the Chief Commandant of the FARC-EP, Manuel Marulanda Velez. After the cease-fire and as a result of the Uribe Accords, the Patriotic Union, a new and pluralist political force in the country, was born as a political alternative distinct from the traditional parties. (Resistencia Magazine, issue 22: 24 )

These accords were not favourably received by the military or the oligarchy. They generated increased activity in the paramilitary organizations which were infamous as the death squads. Threats, torture, disappearances, selective assassinations and massacres of members and leaders of the Patriotic Union political movement, the Communist Party and popular and labour union leaders became common. This was known as the rule of forced displacement. Such experiences have been borne by the people of the "southern cone" (Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay). All are a part of the CIA inspired 'Operation Condor', or 'the dirty war'. The US would not tolerate a repetition of the socialist revolution that had freed Cuba from their domination anywhere in South America.([www.Farcep.org/documentos](http://www.Farcep.org/documentos))

Virgilio Barco's government continued the dialogue process initiated by Betancourt with no significant progress while the dirty war escalated to the point that the then Minister of Government, Cesar Gaviria, publicized the existence of more than 150 paramilitary groups all formed by state security agents. (Historical Outline, 2000)

The government of Ernesto Samper (1994-98) offered dialogues to the FARC-EP, but in the midst of war. The FARC-EP expressed their willingness to talk with the new President when and if he demilitarized the municipality of La Uribe in the Department of Meta. But the Armed Forces, headed by the then General Harold Bedoya Pizarro, opposed such an idea and threatened a coup d'etat if the President accepted the FARC-EP request.

### *3.5.3 Results From The Last Peace Process*

The last peace process was between 1999 and 2002. In this period, much improvement was made in the living standards of the population of the five municipalities designated demilitarized zones. For the first time there was an assembly of people (Public Audience) in complete security to discuss the issues of the country: social, economic, educational, cultural, or land issues; youth problems related to drugs; and gender and minority issues such as the status of aboriginal nations and the African-Colombian issues. It was also during this time that the CEO of the New York Stock Exchange visited these territories to get acquainted with the FARC-EP secretariat and discuss issues of global nature in the event that the FARC-EP gained the rule of the country. The third important event that FARC-EP organized was an international gathering of governments and NGOs to provide a forum for discussing the growing drug

problem. 43 governments sent their official representatives; NGOs from the US attended. It is important to mention the FARC-EP's proposal to substitute the growth of the coca plant for another form of economic activity that could provide livelihoods for the farmers. This proposal is called the Cartagena de Chaira Project.

The development projects accomplished in the five demilitarized municipalities during this brief period are worth mentioning. Compare this area prior to the period in question: there were only 200 kilometres of asphalt roads in contrast to 5,000 kilometres after. The number of schools grew from 7 to 28. Hospitals and clinics for each municipality grew significantly. The presence of the civic police, whose existence was a condition of the demilitarized zones, had a great impact: at the local community level, the incidents of domestic violence, delinquency, and other family related problems decreased from 170 per year to 7. The civic police actually replaced the regular police force, a largely corrupt and coercive entity, and brought about better public order and a sense of security. ([www.FarcEP.org/documentos](http://www.FarcEP.org/documentos))

#### ***3.4.4 Current Situation***

Meanwhile, as the class struggle sharpens within the country day by day, the government further strengthens the Armed Forces with more professional soldiers, police, and paramilitaries. It is enforcing more anti-popular laws and increasing the use of informers to manage its so-called rule of the country against growing popular opposition to the current neo-liberal policies imposed by the United States through the International Monetary Fund - the innocuously named "Plan Colombia". The recent elections were fraudulent, poisoned by corruption and violence, and manipulated by the large

communications media, making their results illegitimate. As all incentives to continue the dialog grow weaker, the FARC-EP recently announced the formation of a parallel government in opposition to the one of Bogotá.

### **3.5 Ecuador: Indigenous Social Movements**

One of the most outstanding phenomena in Latin America near the end of the 20th century was the emergence of the indigenous peoples as an organized social movement. The last two decades have produced rapid and dynamic growth of numerous indigenous organizations. Coming from a wide range of ideological positions, they have come together in an increasingly co-ordinated broad movement of continental consequences. They demand self-determination and the redefinition of the nation state as multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. Any serious political project in the region must now take them into account (Fernandez, 2000).

The most developed indigenous movements at present are those organizing and allying, at the national level, people of the altiplano and the forests in a common front. The cases of Ecuador, Bolivia and Guatemala present many similarities in this sense.

In Ecuador, the object of this section, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) was formed in 1986. It was the culmination of a complex process of organization of the indigenous of the 'sierra' on the one hand, and those of the lowlands on the other.

Three fundamental streams came together in the dynamic process which gave birth to the uprising: the struggles for land in the sierra with influence from the Left; the struggles for dignity and against exclusion with influence from the committed church

(whose ideology was that of liberation theology) which made possible the organization of the ECUARUNARI, and the struggles for identity of the Amazonian ethnicities and nationalities. In the 1980's, it was the Shuar Federation that first put forward the demand for recognition of the rights of the indigenous nationalities.

The January 2000 action was part of the complex internal political processes of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement, which throughout the 1990's experienced a series of qualitative transformations in its discourse and organizational forms. These profound transformations were emerging in society and their point of inflection can be established starting from the indigenous uprising of 1990 which established the indigenous peoples as powerful social actors on the national scene.

From that uprising to its political participation in 1996 through the creation of the Pachakutik political movement, the Ecuadorian indigenous movement changed the basic orientations of its discourse. It went from the struggle for land that characterized its demands from the 1950s to the 1980s to the struggle for the rights of all nationalities, in essence questioning the legal structure of the state itself. This marks an important qualitative transformation.

### ***3.5.1 The Events of January 2000***

If we look for the antecedents of the indigenous uprising of January, we find them in the proposal of Ecuadorian President Mahuad to dollarize the economy. Dollarization meant fixing the exchange rate at 25,000 Sucres to the dollar in a country where minimum wage was the equivalent of \$53 USD and the basic costs of a family were \$200 USD. Unemployment and underemployment were (and are) close to 70%.

The response came rapidly. CONAIE announced the occupation of the capital city, Quito, for the 15th of that month. It also called together the Parliament of the Peoples of Ecuador, which decided to remove the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial powers of state, accusing them of direct responsibility for the crisis, corruption and the generalized chaos.

This was a qualitatively special situation in the character of social struggle. It was made evident that collective action not only caused a rupture of the dominant political order via the January 21st insurrection, but that it also strengthened the historic dimensions of its protagonists, namely the indigenous nationalities.

Having the vision of a different society, their action and presence (together with the rest of the social movements and nationalist sectors of the army) showed the constitution of a double power that put in crisis the institutional structure upon which the nation-state was based. With a vision of its own which was put forward to gain leadership of the country, it not only placed itself at the centre of the struggles of the social movements, but also acted as a gravitating force in national life.

This meant the uprising of January 2000 started a process of political transformation of the indigenous movement, characterized by the development of a radical criticism of the state. In effect, the call for the dissolution of the three powers of state and the creation of a government of “National Salvation” in which the indigenous people would have direct participation constituted a departure from the historical demands of the indigenous movement, and at the same time inaugurated a new dimension of power in organizational dynamics.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

We can see that the economic weakness of the developing countries in Latin America and their structural economies predetermine the peculiarities of their class structure. At the same time, the class struggle may vary from passive resistance to hostile clashes and violent conflicts. The class struggle may be open and concealed or spontaneous and conscious. Every variation of class struggle is determined by various changes and differences in the situation, by the acuteness of contradictions between the interests of the different classes, and by the level of development of each particular class (Yervakova, 1986). In the class struggle even radically different social groups ally when faced with the common enemy like imperialism. This is very clear in the context of a worldwide class struggle against capitalism and neoliberalism (Veltmeyer, 2003)

The forms class struggle takes are associated with forms of class organization. We find vivid illustrations of this using the example of the working class struggle and of the peasant movements wherein land occupations appear as part of a broad land reform strategy that privileges direct action. In the particular context of Latin American countries the driving force behind this strategy is the peasantry, a socioeconomic and political category whose capacity to act politically and as a force for revolutionary change has been dismissed by many.

## **Chapter 4**

### **SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE STATE: THE BOLIVIAN CASE STUDY**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Bolivia is a country where the working class once had a political voice through the medium of strong worker's organizations; these forums were badly weakened over time by a system of unrepresentative party politics which served the interests of the established ruling class and the neo-liberal agenda. However, diverse groups such as the peasantry, indigenous groups, workers, and the urban poor who suffered the social and economic ills facilitated by this self-serving political system have managed in recent years to gain political influence through the use of non-traditional political forums and social movements. Through this influence, the masses may have recently succeeded in getting their foot in the door of electoral politics. However, the danger remains that any party claiming to represent them may be incorporated, as others have before, into the

traditional self-serving and corrupt party system, leaving the masses without an organized political voice once more. This danger seems to suggest a need for an ongoing tension or relationship between traditional and non-traditional political forums. No other country in the region provides as clear a lesson as Bolivia about the political dynamics involved in the relationship of the state with social movements. The dynamics of this relationship and its theoretical and political implications are central concerns of this chapter.

## **4.2 Historical Tensions**

Bolivia is one of the poorest countries on the continent. To understand this poverty and the conditions that continue to allow it, it is necessary to delve into the past, both the recent past (like the 1952 revolution that generated a new dynamic in Bolivian society and politics) and the more distant past of European conquest, colonial rule and post-colonial developments. (Veltmeyer, 2004). Bolivia is also a country marked by the instability of its institutional structures and by its isolation: it is not very well established on the world scene. Perhaps because of these conditions, it is a country where certain things tend to happen before they happen elsewhere. In the 1950's, it experienced a proletarian insurrection which preceded the successes of the labour movement in various other Latin American countries. Likewise, in the 1960's, the authoritarian tide of military government came to Bolivia earlier than other countries. At the end of the 70's and beginning of the 80's, it was the scene of a return to democracy.

In 1985, five years before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Bolivia witnessed the collapse of the Left perspective that had been forged over the previous 40 years, due to the failure of a left coalition that plunged the country into economic stagnation. At the end of the 80's, while other nations pursued an alternative route to state-centrism and to

neo-liberalism via populist government, Bolivia entered a radical process of economic and cultural neo-liberalization that turned a generation of highly vocal “socialist” radicals into advocates of the free market, 'consensus governance' and privatization.

Over an 18 year period, these radical policies drastic changed society. Control of 35% of the GDP was handed over to transnational corporations, leaving the state an international beggar. The local police increased its role of maintaining order in the disruption that was created as a result of these changes; the poor got angry and had to be subdued. The patterns of economic development were altered as well. The state as producer gave way to international capital as the economic motor, while local capitalists retreated to the role of intermediaries for investment in subordinate areas of commercial and productive activity.

In this framework Alvaro Garcia Linera identified three distinct forms of society and politics in Bolivia, each evolving into a world of experience that is at once distinct and yet articulated and superimposed one upon the other (García Linera, 2004). The first is based on a capitalist mode of production. It takes the ideal-typical form of a class-divided society, a market economy, modern industry based on bourgeois relations of production, a capitalist state and a culture of possessive individualism and competitiveness. Another ‘civilization regime’, to use Garcia Linera’s terminology, or ‘social formation’, to use a term fraught with fewer difficulties, is based on a simple (or domestic) mode of production, articulated with the dominant capitalist mode but with its own superstructure of relations among small landholders, artisans and family-based (non communitarian) peasant producers (parcelarios)—relations that are projected symbolically and represented politically in a culture of autonomy and communitarian

democracy (García Linera, 2004). A third form of society or civilization is rooted in a communal mode of production and characterized by institutions that generate a spirit of community, solidarity and reciprocity among individuals who prioritize ‘the community’ and the sharing of productive resources over private property.<sup>13</sup> In the Bolivian context this sociocultural regime is embodied in the community or commune<sup>14</sup> that defines the way of life, religious values and traditional form of political authority shared by diverse indigenous groups—predominantly Aymara and Quechua.<sup>15</sup> The indigenous population of Amazonia represents a fourth form of civilization and society that is communal in form but smaller in scale, rooted in a hunting and gathering economy and characterized by the absence of a state. (Veltmeyer, 2004)

An analysis of the social and political dynamics of this agenda is one objective of this chapter. But there is another reason for reviewing political developments in Bolivia. Since the 1952 ‘revolution’ which came, after more than 125 years of post-colonial rule, as a point of profound social transformation. It is termed a *democratic revolution*. No other country in the region provides as clear a lesson about the political dynamics involved in the relationship of the state to social movements. The dynamics of this

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<sup>13</sup> In an interview with *Punto Final* (May, 2003: 16-17) Evo Morales, leader of the major political force on Bolivia’s Left, the Movimiento al Socialismo-Instrumento Político para la Soberanía de los Pueblos (MAS-IPSP), defined socialism in terms of ‘communitarianism’. This is, he notes, because ‘in the aylla (the principal aymara territorial unit) people live in community, with values such as solidarity and reciprocity’. ‘This’, he adds, ‘is our (political) practice’.

<sup>14</sup> On the defining character of the ‘comuna’ (comuna) and ‘the ‘comunidad’ (community) as the central institution of the indigenous peoples of Bolivia and elsewhere in Latin America see ...

<sup>15</sup> It is estimated (by Evo Morales, 2003) that 60% of the total population is indigenous and belong to the predominant original peoples of Bolivia, the Aymara and the Quechua; and from 80 to 90% of the altiplano peasants have parents belonging to these two indigenous nationalities. In addition, official statistics suggest that a smaller but growing proportion of the population, dispersed across the amazon, the eastern lowlands and the Chaco region, belong to some 32 ethno-culturally distinct groups such as the Guareaní and Chiquitanos, who collectively make up less than 3% of the national population.

relationship and its theoretical and political implications are also central concerns of this chapter. (Veltmeyer, 2004)

Alongside the mapping of Bolivian culture provided by this scheme, the views of many Bolivian scholars and intellectuals seem very relevant here, among them especially Rene Zavaleta Mercado's<sup>16</sup>, who identifies four phases or categories to map the historical context from the revolution of 1952 to 1984. The characterization of these phases is important to explain how the Bolivian social movement went from one phase to another.

(i) The phase of hegemony (total undivided rule) of the masses. The major proponents of change during this historical period were the participants in the general democratic movement. This included the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement Party (the MNR, born from the national revolutionary process in 1952), the workers' movement (led by Workers Movement and Miners National Federation FSTMB, allied with the peasantry and the MNR ) and other popular sectors. In the first phase, hegemony belonged to the working class led by the Bolivian Central Workers COB<sup>17</sup>. *The agrarian reform by themselves thus organized the rest of the people.* In order to implement the new revolutionary measures, the people in arms now replaced the repressive state apparatus of the past. This was called by Zavaleta “the insurrectional moment” (Zavaleta, 1988). While the working class of the new state dominated the most intense period of the revolution (having played much large role in the process), it was openly generous to its partners in government as they formed the block against the oligarchy;

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<sup>16</sup> Sociologist, Journalist, writer, Bolivian university professor (1937 –1984)

<sup>17</sup> The Central Obrera Boliviana (COB), formed on April 17, 1952 with the organization of over 25,000 miners under the leadership of the Juan Lechín, became the principal political instrument of the labour movement, playing this role throughout the subsequent 50 years of political developments (Veltmeyer, 2004)

they followed democratic principles. However, this generosity led to an uneven division of power and the working class ended up with a subordinate role (Zavaleta, 1988). The reason for this was that the ethics of the working class were bound by intellectual and moral considerations rather than the more typical “street trader” ethics one generally sees in the political arena. (Tapia, 2000)

This led to their loss of political leadership to the national bourgeoisie party, the MNR. It was powerful, having the arms monopoly after the insurrection. It was armed, organized, and had the ability to nationalize; however it was still incapable of reorganizing the state on the basis of its central political and historical role (Zavaleta, 1974).

(ii) The semi-Bonapartist phase of power. In this second phase the phenomenon of mediation took place. Through it, the nationalist party became the new state of bureaucracy, though it did include labour and peasant leaders at the centre of power structure. During this phase the state achieved relative autonomy due to the ongoing changes in modes of production, from highly feudal-oligarchic to bourgeois-industrial due to the revolutionary process.

The relative autonomy of the state emerged as a random intersection: a correlation of modes of production in flux and the delayed expression of one mode of production over another caused by the revolutionary process.

The relative autonomy was produced with the displacement and substitution of the landlord class and the capitalist mining oligarchy, and by the absence of a new

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bourgeoisie, which would only appear as a result of the state capitalism that would finance and subsidize it.(Zavaleta, 1984: 78) During that situation of flux, the centrists of the MNR were able temporarily to present their leadership role as being in the general interest of the reorganization of the state, since they had come from the bureaucratic and modernizing backgrounds. The margin of autonomy and the degree of Bonapartism articulated by the MNR was possible because it ideologically penetrated and dominated the labour movement.

(iii) The military-peasant phase. This third phase was characteristic of the state bureaucracy that allied with the U.S.<sup>18</sup>, an influence doing all it could to create a wedge between the MNR and their partners in the labour movement. It was also in alliance with the conservative sectors that had somehow benefited from the land reform. This phase culminated in the displacement of the civilian bureaucracy by the military, which announced the military-peasant pact as the new internal axis of the state (Tapia, 2001).

(iv) The military-bourgeois phase came about when a new bourgeoisie allied itself with the military right wing. This was a dictatorship over the working class, as was the previous phase.

### **4.3 The Popular Assembly of 1971**

The structure of the popular assembly was based on the Bolivian Labour Central, COB. It was a very advanced form of organization and class representation at the political level. It created the kind of political power that could be the alternative to the government of the country. In the Popular Assembly, the labour unions and parties in

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<sup>18</sup> The US government lead by Eisenhower administration decided that rather than confront the revolution it would disarm it. By providing substantial food aid, development assistance and subsidies to the

which unions dominate come together. Primarily, it was a form of class organization and representation with political ends. It was a forum to allow participation in politics and to begin to prepare the forms of government.

The Popular Assembly is something that began to organize itself in embryonic form parallel to the government of Torres and to the army that had not been touched or modified. The Popular Assembly began with tasks of organization, representation and deliberation. The organization of the Popular Assembly gave leftist organizations in Bolivia something to think about, particularly the Revolutionary Labour Party (POR): specifically, the idea that a dual power had been constituted in the country.

Political intellectuals and academics discussed this characterization, not with merely formal or academic ends to determine if it existed or not, but to try to find out what the causes of the defeat of the labour movement were, and also to go back to the revolution of '52 itself.

Zavaleta thought that the Popular Assembly did not go so far as to offer itself as the second in a dual power system in Bolivia, but only as a germ of such power. There was a possibility of dual power because with the Popular Assembly a kind of soviet-styled organization took form, a kind of autonomous organization of the working class and its allies. It was an organization that attempted to prescribe a new kind of state, or at least a new form of government of a state which was not an artificial institutional apparatus. *Rather it came out of the foundations of the history of the Bolivian labour*

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beleaguered tin industry Washington gained influence with the moderate centre-left of the governing party, the MNR. (Veltmeyer, 2004)

*movement*. It was a phase in the development of political ideology of autonomy and the process of separation from the state of 1952. (Zavaleta, 1997)

According to Zavaleta, there were three principal determinants which stopped the Popular Assembly from turning into a twin power or forming a dual power in the country.

(i) For there to be a duality of powers in the country, there would have to be two states confronting each other. (ii) The Popular Assembly did not go so far as establishing itself as another power base in the complete sense, because it lacked its own coercive apparatus (its own armed wing or army). This was the principal element missing from the Popular Assembly and it paid for this lack heavily in August 1971 when the Bolivian ruling class, (iii) the right-wing and the army organized the overthrow of Torres and the military coup that put an end to the Popular Assembly.

That assembly formed and organized in the heart of the existing Bolivian state that Torres governed with the support of the workers and the popular sector. The labour movement and its progressive allies took advantage of the democratic margin of tolerance and acceptance of worker freedoms in the Torres government in order to envisage and organize towards their own form of government. However, the Assembly was not an organ of power that had the ability to compete with or substitute itself for the existing state; it developed parallel to it. Conversely, conditions were complicated in the existing state and in a political environment in which the army of 1952 had not disintegrated at all, and which in recent decades had developed its capacity of bureaucratization and coercion under the new conditions of US covert action in the country.

According to Zavaleta, of equal importance is the fact that there had not been a maturation of two other key components. One of these was the political vanguard or party structure and the capacity of the class, through its party, to offer a new direction or government to the society. To this was tied the question of having won over the majority of the society. For a brief time, the Assembly was able to exist. Indeed from the time Torres rose to government, the labour movement had been trying to recover some of its previous accomplishments: on one hand, joint management of the state enterprises and the nationalization and re-nationalization of oil and certain mining companies, and on the other hand active labour representation in the government using the knowledge acquired from the experiences the labour movement had in 1952 as well as during the government of the Popular Democratic Union (UDP) in 1982.

These two factors - joint management and participation in government - and the fact that in 1952 and after armed workers had the monopoly of physical force in a large part of the country, above all through the unions have led the Trotskyites in particular to assume that in 1952 there was a duality of powers.

#### **4.4 Another Formative Moment—1979**

Throughout this entire period of history, the working class organized throughout the country through the efforts of the labour unions. The unions grew in the diversity of trades they protected. These unions were then consolidated in a central structure under the COB, the Bolivian Labour Central, to represent their interests.

This process of expansion of the working class led to the thought that just as COB was a synthesis of the people as the army was a synthesis of the state. In the post

revolutionary period that followed, the state transformed itself into a series of essentially anti-worker military governments.

What afterward would be called a 'forged spirit of the class' made it possible for the Bolivian labour movement to resist during the long years of Banzer's dictatorship in the 1970s. They reorganized themselves to become the hinge for the mass organization and mobilization that put the Banzer's dictatorship into crisis at the end of the 70's. They won elections, making a transition possible.

In November of 1979, a great popular mobilization rose to resist Natash Bush's coup d'etat that was interrupting the transition to democracy. A new kind of inter-subjectivity revealed itself, taking the form of masses of people. It was a phenomenon that transcended the mobilisation and organization of the working class, coming to fruit after long years of advances and retreats in the centrality of labour in Bolivian history.

In November 1979, the COB called for a general strike. It was the first time the peasantry supported a general strike called for by the urban working class. This marked one of the most important aspects of the 1979 crisis: the re-aligning of major forces in the Bolivian society in the convergence between the urban working class and the peasants. It was a replay of the 1952 alliance. Even more important, with the union of the masses, the incorporation of classical methods of agrarian struggle in the insurrectional pattern of the urban working class could take place.

Inter-subjectivity can be defined here as being a part of the consciousnesses of actors interacting within a situation, resulting in a fusion of the 'consciousnesses' to give birth to a new, combined form of consciousness.

It was a case of the working class calling upon the broad pre-capitalist masses. In November of 1979, there were two important confluences around the central role of the working class, broadening it. One of them was this axis of political communication between the urban workers and peasants, and the consequent fusion of their methods of struggle. The other was that in this context the incorporation of representative democracy took place, permitted by the configuration of the inter-subjectivity taking place in the working class and by the broadened horizon of the masses. Zavaleta synthesizes this in the following way:

The masses that had always been clandestine with respect to representative democracy now composed an angry multitude behind the standard of representative democracy that was being incorporated into its mass memory or accumulation in the heart of the class. Whatever the evolution of general thinking about the labor question might be, there was no doubt that here the mass had come together around the call of the working class. (Zabaleta, 1982)

The successful call of the working class in November had the capacity to become political maturity thanks to the long years of the working class expansion. Thus, this did not appear to be a simple matter of duplicating a historical pattern of proletariat action. Rather it consisted of a wide-ranging series of initiatives, autonomous or specific to each of the participating human groups who nevertheless merged into the leadership of the working class in the common situation, as a result of its long historical accumulation of experience.

That November, a new element emerged as a result of the re-alignment of the forces in the Bolivian society. The birth was not sudden or unreasonable; it had been in the works for a long time. One of the forces behind it was the peasantry, which reasserted itself in Bolivian politics. In the post-revolutionary period, the state had attempted to lure the peasantry into forming the social basis of its bourgeois reform policy solely to counterbalance the working class's capacity for autonomous political development.

During at least ten years of the Barrientos dictatorship, the regime merged some peasant syndicalism into a military-peasantry pact, as the basic political arrangement of the dictatorial phase of the '52 state. This began to break down in the wake of the massacres of Tolata and Epizana in 1974, and then under the Banzer dictatorship. This is when the peasants' alienation from this axis of state became legitimization.

In November '79, the peasants appeared in a radically new merger: the worker-peasant axis around the banner of the urban working class of the COB. According to Zavaleta: 'it will one day allow the labour movement to leave its confining corporate structure to respond to the proposal arising from the peasant movement'. (Zavaleta, 1982)

This sentiment was translated into reality with the Popular Assembly which seemed to be the deployment of politically autonomous body. The November crisis was without doubt the greatest expression of the autonomy of the masses, an act of defiance to the hegemonic models of the 1952 state. This was the most serious crisis faced by the state since 1952, as those who at one time had been one of the components of its social

base had now entered a process of creating a new historical bloc, ideologically and politically in opposition to that state.

Note here, the state is that same institution of government power. It was a crisis of decomposition of the 1952 state. The crisis was more severe than ever. On one hand, there was a constructive aspect in national politics brought about by this new worker-peasant alliance. On the other hand, there was the reactionary move by the state to transform itself politically and disassociate from its origins in 1952.

#### **4.5 Reform of The State And Oligarchic Re-composition**

At the end of the 70's, the emergence of the Democratic and Popular Unity Party or UDP was due to a broad mobilization. The most prominent component here was the labour unions which by nature were the ultimate expression of the people who had voted for the UDP, letting it win three successive elections in 1978, 1979 and 1980. Successive military coups for some time prevented the UDP from forming a government. But at the end of 1982, the UDP ascended to power.

The political front represented the mobilization. In it were certain new tendencies and realities of social organizations (or new forms of social expression other than traditional ones like the unions) forming the government. Basically two themes can be briefly identified: (i) the incorporation of these non-traditional forces into the central project marked for state reform and (ii) the parallel project of restructuring the oligarchic forms of politics in Bolivia.

The Bolivian state has generally excluded the masses. The general assumption has been that any participation of the masses will lead to a breakdown of order, even

though the state itself has been disorganized. The political reaction of the masses to the largely authoritarian and exclusionary character of the state has always been 'confrontational, tactical and provisional'.

But since conditions have not evolved simultaneously while remaining relevant in their relationship with the Bolivian political history, the various trends within the people (when they happened to put forward proposals to reform the state) do not coincide with the way in which the state can achieve this transformation. While on the one hand there is some fluidity in the state, in contrast there is an equal and opposite rigidity since it has almost no traditions of reform for integrating the society.

At this moment of democratization, Bolivian society was once again confronted with the lack of a social optimum and the fact the people and the state have different traditions and guidelines for dealing with each other; the people have always been flexible in their approach while the state has reacted rigidly. (Zavaleta: 1974)

The state resides within conditions defined by the context and history. In order to actualize the transformation needed (Zavaleta: 1974) the Bolivian state must actualize two central programmes that would ensure participation. The first would be a reform of the state that would involve an overhaul of its manner of interpreting and responding to society. The second would be the construction of new devices and avenues of mediation that actualize the broad state-participatory aspirations of the masses.

This task is not an easy one. The COB, immersed in a proposal for the participation of the popular sectors in Bolivia, has been faced with its inherent difficulties. The COB has had a great capacity for resistance, organization, durability and

maturation through its long history. This was so because generally it had to become the reference point of the resistance against the state's authoritarian and dictatorial rule. It is not invested with the task, ongoing and regular, of having to deal with the reform of the state nor is it integrated into the governing institution (the Bolivian state and politics) that regulates the workings or the behaviour of the state. In other words, the COB came from a tradition of resistance and not of institutional politics.

Conversely, the political parties have a lesser capacity to present proposals with respect to state reform and the creation of a new institutional system that would legalize the forms of political participation, some already traditional and others emerging and broadening in the context.

On one hand, political movements put forward a definition of democracy based around participation; that is, democracy as a synonym of participation. On the other hand, the reestablishment of representative structures in the heart of the state began to reconstitute the oligarchic concentration and formulation of politics under new conditions. These were two dimensions that did not maintain a give and take relationship in the process of democratization and enforcement of political representation in the country.

Two forms of thought and practice emerged in the process of democratization in the country. First, there was the current that could be called democracy through participation. This was the predominant tendency in the subjects acting in the heart of the people. Secondly there was the current based on democracy as representation.

The subjects from both the currents advocated their own strategy and vision for the reorganization of the state. The situational problem was that the strategy favouring representation was the one that allowed the conditions for oligarchic re-composition of political power in the country. A proposal of institutional reform that would integrate the masses in some way, making democratization in Bolivia politically constitute the possibility of a social optimum, was not being produced.

The impasse was created by both sides of the spectrum. One side rejected speaking in terms of reform of the state. They used more revolutionary language or discourses but without proposals for resolving the political tasks of the moment, as the forces and the previous process were not those of revolution, but precisely those of state reform. The other side was the political forces related to the government. They spoke of political reform but without a proposal for institutional reform of the state.

Indeed, what was needed was a reform of the state that would integrate the recent developments, leading to the participation of the masses in Bolivia. The left wing of the UDP government did not present the problem of institutional political reform of the state that would incorporate the participation of the people. If it had, it would have generated the forces and resources for the reforms through economic policy and other social policies. This segment of the left presented the problems on the level of the simple formulation of economic policies that would seem to benefit the popular sectors, but would fall short of integrating them significantly into the reformed political structure of state.

Part of the labour union movement proposed the slogan of "all power to the COB", and the left in the government failed to institutionalize the forms of political participation existing historically in the country. The crisis and economic misgovernment together with the rightist parliamentary block defeated both of these forces in 1985.

After the electoral triumph of the right, there began a process of modification of the pattern of private accumulation and of the system of mediations between the state and the people. One of the conditions for its realization was the weakening and dismembering of the COB and the main social movements that had fostered the revolution of '52 and the transition to democracy at the end of the 70's.

This reform project meant dismantling the principal social base of the reform processes, redistributing wealth and democratizing political life. In this sense, it was clearly a counter-reform process, though done under cover of a discourse about modernization of the state and the economy.

The economic crisis and the world market situation permitted an attack on the nucleus of the labour movement, starting with the miners. The neo-liberal model was installed in 1985. The legal institutionality of this model was established by Presidential decree rather than congressional legislation—decree 21060 (1985). This decree, which among other measures included the closure of the tin mines and the 'relocation' (firing) of the 10,000 miners who formed the backbone of the economy was supplemented and modified by subsequent 'supreme presidential' decrees in 1987 (DS 21660) and 2000 (DS 22467). Together these executive decrees constitute the legal/institutional foundation

of the macroeconomic policies implemented over the past two decades on the basis of the 'new economic model': neo-liberalism. (Veltmeyer, 2004)

Since the centre of the labour movement was constituted of state enterprise unions, the closing or privatization of these enterprises directly affected it, as did the process of labour flexibilization that took place in the sphere of private enterprise. This involved a double process of dismemberment for the workers as a direct social effect of the neo-liberal economic-political reforms. During these years, the labour movement entered a defensive phase and went through moments of political-military defeat due to the two stages of siege. Privatization of the state factories, railways, telecommunication and hydrocarbon industries, the nucleus of financial support for the state, followed the closing of the mines.

#### **4.6 Reform of The State, Social Reform and the New Movements**

Since labour was the principal social movement, social mobilization had a labour union form which was very visible in its organization. What was peculiar about the country's political composition after 1952 was that the people were predominantly organized by a social movement - the labour movement - translated at the national level by the COB. The COB articulated a broader and a more radical version of the state project of nationalization, and at the same time surpassed its original mandate.

State reform began in 1985. It was thought of and carried out as a reform of society as well. The reform of the state required the society to stop being the main economic agent via state monopolies of natural resources and other basic services, and start being an agent creating the legal conditions for the new pattern of accumulation that transferred ownership of the above sectors to private capital monopolies. In Bolivia, only

ownership has changed: the regime of production has remained almost static. Thus the elements that receive and make use of the surplus are altered, but the material basis of its production is not. (Tapia 2002)

The state-centred economy had as its counterpart a civil population within which the unions of the large enterprises functioned. The first phase of the installation of the neo-liberal model had to overcome the resistance of the people, who were organized on the basis of the state economy and nationalization.

The Bolivian policy from 1985 to 1990 was characterized by a high degree of conflict and confrontation between the government and the COB at each stage of the economic reforms. It began with a big package professing a policy of selective rejection of demands put forward by the COB. (Tapia 2002)

At this time, the labour movement was forced into a defensive role, as were the popular sectors in general. As the COB had to confront the implantation of the economic model internally, it also had to face a change in the relation of forces; above all the demand of the peasant sector to increase its organic representation and the dispute within the very leadership of the workers' central containing them.

The COB remained the bastion of resistance and protest against the new neo-liberal political-economic regime until the end of the 1980's, when the nucleus of the social conflict revolved around the closing or privatization of public enterprises, wages and the national budget. At the beginning of the 1990's, the composition of national politics changed. The spectrum of the subjects and the political space broadened and became more complicated. The country experienced the emergence of organizations of

the native peoples of Amazonia and the Chaco. Starting from their traditional structures of authority, they built new forms of regional and inter-community organization and representation: the Central of Mojeno Indigenous Councils (CCIM) and the Central of Indigenous Peoples of the Beni (CDIB).

In 1990, these organizations initiated a march for land and dignity with demands for recognition of traditional lands in the face of devastation brought about by companies exploiting the forest by seeking to convert it into large land holdings. At the same time, these organizations were concerned with demanding recognition of the citizenship of the indigenous population, who previously had not been taken into account in national politics.

The indigenous population representatives were not linked to the COB or the CSUTCB (the United Union Central of Peasant Workers of Bolivia, which came into existence with the assistance of COB) except in some sectors of the seasonal agricultural workers. They were not linked to the political parties either. The most important thing about these emergent indigenous political elements was their autonomy.

Here we have a social movement that did not arise from collective action generated in the heart of the modern structures of social life; rather it came from the community structures of non-modern societies and cultures. Still, it used a political platform to demand greater integration and recognition from the government. It was able to act within the principal modern political form, the nation-state. They mobilized against the destructive effects of the outside exploitation of their territory and communities.

This was not a social movement acting to reform the social and political order of a society in which it was an organic but uninvolved and neglected part. Rather, it was the action of a separate society subordinated by colonization, acting to change the structures of the dominant society. In this sense, it was an anti-colonial social and political movement, although the peoples of the Chaco and the east did not use that language to describe it. They were not pursuing independence with respect to the dominant society's state; rather, they wanted to reform the dominant society in such a way that they would possess equality, citizenship, and the capacity to participate in the nation-state. The recognition of their territories was the nucleus of their demands, which they saw as the most effective way of forcing recognition of their culture and of gaining the level of citizenship that would integrate them into the state whilst allowing recognition of the natural conditions of their lives.

As a result of the march to La Paz for land and dignity in 1990, they obtained recognition through decree of four indigenous territories. The winning of territory by these indigenous groups was an important triumph but it did not redefine the Bolivian state as multi-national and multi-cultural. That it institutionally become so was the essential demand of the indigenous people who marched to La Paz over 34 days in the possession the solidarity of the whole people and who confronted pressures from the government, business and even the Catholic Church to abate their activities.

The weekly Magazine AQUI later stated, "... the decrees contain everything possible, because in this confrontation of the indigenous people and the people against the corporation and the government, although the leaders of the indigenous peoples undertook to clarify that their action was not against anybody,... it was a confrontational

political action against the state that did not take into account the interests of the indigenous people and instead protected the lumber and cattle ranching interests.”

## **4.7 The Contemporary Struggles And Forms Of Collective Action**

### ***4.7.1 Social Movements And The Crisis Of The State***

During the 15 years of reforms and continuation of its party system, the country had gone through a sort of moral and intellectual reform that gradually became an array of nationalist beliefs forming part of the model of state capitalism based on a body of liberal ideas compatible with reforms, market discourse, competition, globalization, modernization via privatization, etc. This spread above all in the cities, in the middle strata, and the state bureaucracy.

Nevertheless, the conflicts that arose as a consequence of the accumulation of force in the popular sector made it possible to visualize forms of resistance that in one way or another put in question the character of the neo-liberal model and the struggles that today arise in the society as a whole. We will review two of the most interesting events that took place during the last three years.

### ***4.7.2 The War of Water***

When it appeared that the forces of popular resistance had finally surrendered to the political and economic model, in April of 2000 Cochabamba, the third most important city in Bolivia, erupted into an intense social conflict which became known as the War of Water. The social mobilization had the objective of abrogating the contract with the “Aguas del Tunari Company”. The government had decreed the commercialization of water services in the department through the process of capitalization (Tapia 2002). This

consisted of a form of privatization in which 50% of the public enterprises would become the property of private capital committed to investment on a definite but very slow schedule of 8 to 10 years. It meant that the investment would be made with the on-site profits, and not with the investment of new capital. Leadership and administration passed to the hands of the companies investing 'capital'. In the face of this policy of privatization and the growing commercialization of water on the part of the private monopolies, committees of irrigation water consumers had been organizing for some time, above all in the urban peripheries and rural regions, to defend their access to natural sources. On the base of the urban Federation of Manufacturing Workers FDTF (Federación de trabajadora fabriles), the 'Water and Life Coalition' was set up and it called for the 'Struggle of April' to expel the trans-national enterprise.

There were several days of intense warfare in the city, in which the people of the neighboring communities came together in collective action: youths, housewives, professionals and workers all shoulder-to-shoulder. 'We called this mass politics for vital necessities' (Gutierrez, Garcia Tapia, 2000).

A defining feature, new and central to the April 2000 mobilizations, was the fact that these were not organized by the unions. This was a break from the historical tradition of resistance in Bolivia. In their place, the committees of irrigators and then the Coalition arose, which while having an element of manufacturing union support was more a network of assemblies and direct democracy politics in which diverse social organizations participated. Another differentiating feature was that the movement was not constructed around ethno-cultural interests, although there was a clear dispute about the local surplus wealth. Rather it was about water, a natural resource crucial to life.

This fact - that the object of the conflict was a natural resource - made possible the broad range of the Coalition vocalizing its anti-monopoly politics in a city that has historically suffered from a lack of this resource. The conflict broke out because of a hike of about 100% in water rates for the purpose of financing the investments in the projects to solve the water problem in the region. The reasoning was if the people of Cochabamba themselves are going to finance the investment, what is the need for the presence of the trans-national?

The demand to terminate the contract was accompanied by a proposal that they themselves take control of the water enterprise. The anti neo-liberal struggle outlined a framework of self-management that is still in discussion today. The alternatives of self-management of water in Cochabamba were discussed once the Coalition and the people of Cochabamba won the War for Water.

In the days of struggle, the people in action annulled the artificial policy of the state in Cochabamba. The Coalition and the strike committees controlled the city. The state was reduced to an army and police presence that barricaded themselves in their quarters and occasionally came out to attempt to stifle the protest or retake the streets and the central plaza occupied by the 'water warriors'.

A popular mass movement grew around the axis of organizations united in a collective action that had taken over the city, and succeeded in expelling the trans-national corporation. This created a breakdown of the state's economic model of monopoly privatization.

In this way, the consumption of natural resources was linked to a reform of political life in the heart of society. This was the key feature regarding the emergence of the Coalition and their politics. It was not just a cooperative struggle over a natural and social resource, but a political movement that reformed society and began to reorganize the popular and labour sectors, which had gone through a period of silence, disillusion and defeat.

The days of struggle made Coalition a reference point of articulation and reorganization, since it was victorious. The War of Water was a war against neo-liberal policies; after it the Coalition passed to a phase of expanding its mandate and vision. The social struggle has moved from the struggle for wages, jobs and the national budget to the sphere of dispute over the ownership and use of basic natural resources: water and land. Therefore, we can call these new forms of collective action the politics of vital necessities. (Gutierrez, Garcia, Tapia, 2000)

Around these definitions and the conditions for their fulfillment, a process of political reform in the heart of the people is also taking place, a democratization which in essence breaks the monopoly of a constitutional party system political structure shown to be inefficient, corrupt and unrepresentative.

#### ***4.7.3 September 2000***

In September 2000 another situation of intense social conflict took place, condensing various regional and sectoral conflicts. The Coalition of Cochabamba again mobilized, demanding fulfillment of the April accords. The coca growers of Chapare blocked the roads of the tropics, demanding that no more military posts be built in the

zone and that permission be given for a quarter hectare of coca secure from eradication for each farmer. Parallel to this, the unions of rural and urban teachers mobilized and held almost daily marches in La Paz, demanding a wage increase of 50%.

Although the movement began in Oruro, a former mining centre, what acquired strength in the course of the conflict was the mobilization and roadblocking in the region of Altiplano (a cold and arid region south west of the country) carried out by the CSUTCB. It mobilized the peasant unions and indigenous communities with a demand to annul the National Institute of Agrarian Reform law (INRA) before the parliament regulated the administration of land ownership as well as the water law. In addition, there was an array of secondary demands that resulted in a 50-point accord with the government. Central among them was the revision of the INRA law that today is in discussion through commissions of representatives from both sides, and the definitive removal of the water law, which must be substituted with another project.

In the environment of crisis and increasing mobilization and road blocks, other small sectors came forward to formulate their demands. Perhaps the most relevant is the configuration of a movement of the landless of the southern department of Tarija, bordering on Argentina. The makeup of the subjects and perspectives of action of the September crisis need to be analyzed here.

The union form of organization apparently seemed to predominate: coca growers, teachers and peasants. However, from these only the teachers had a demand related to the value of their labour power (their wages) typical of union action. The coca growers' unions were fighting against greater militarization of Chapare and against the

US/governmental policy of coca eradication in Chapare. This involved combating corporate interests. However, it is important to observe that these movements evolved far beyond the traditional forms of struggles in Bolivia.

The CSUTCB, the peasant union central, had as its base the indigenous communities and traditional structures of authority rather than the parallel structures existing in a formal union. These traditional structures in some cases surpassed the unions. It was a struggle led by a central union which nevertheless had the content and substance of a community form of mobilization for survival and political struggle on the Altiplano. It is worth remembering that the majority of the so-called peasant unions are not agricultural working class organizations. Rather, they comprise under modern nomenclature non-capitalist forms of labour and land ownership, as well as community based traditional structures of organization and representation.

In this sense, the September mobilizations did not witness the appearance of a new social movement, since they were more the mobilization of the country's oldest social and political structures moving to a higher form of struggle.

A series of changes in the leadership and composition of the CSUTCB has occurred. In 1998, Felipe Quispe, who had a long history as a katarista (Rivero: 2000), was elected executive secretary of the CSUTCB. He entered the field in the 1970's in the organization of the Tupac Katari Indigenous Movement (MITKA) and participated in the Tupac Katari Guerrilla Army (EGTK) during the 1980's and early 1990's until the principal members of the organization were jailed in 1992. After regaining his freedom, he was elected executive secretary of the CSUTCB as it was passing through a crisis of

internal division. It was this new leadership that has since then prepared the new offensive wave of struggles over land, water, political equality, and for some the national autonomy of the Aymara as well.

In the case of the Altiplano movements, there is a greater complexity that contains features of the deployment of a social movement even as they make demands about the administration of land tenure and projects for the discussion and elaboration of reform. They want to change that part of society pertinent to themselves as rural workers. These mobilizations have both a peasant and indigenous identity, so that today indigenous issues are not only ethno-cultural in nature, but also national.

The colonial relationship that overwhelmed but did not destroy the social matrix of the rural sector puts a focus on land. Land is not only important for work, but also for its place in world views and for its relationship to the whole social fabric. Land was regulated by the institutions of the colonial power, which was the dominant society. The nucleus of the subordinate civilization was under the administration of the dominant civilization.

Thus, the struggle for land has greater meaning than that of property administration, and acquires the dimensions of a conflict between nations and societies. The unique contribution of the Coalition was that it provided a reference point to landless people, allowing them to organize, express themselves, and act. They then saw themselves affected by the economic reforms, labour flexibilization and the new monopolies. The Coalition is even a reference point for street youth, shoe shiners,

students and homemakers. It provided a rallying point in times of poverty, desolation, and hopelessness brought about by the brutal neo-liberal influence on the society.

Briefly described, these social movements now dispute the local surplus in the country and the legal structure of the state, as well as the pattern of consumption, management, property, legislation and government. Things are coming together in the conflict after the fragmentation produced by the array of neo-liberal reforms, like iron filings combining into one magnet.

#### **4.8 The Electoral Process—2002**

The results of 2002 electoral process allow one to formulate a series of hypothesis about what can be called the ‘fluctuation of forces between venues and non-venues of politics’.

Zavaleta often said that crises are moments of revelation showing what is not visible and intelligible during the normal periods of established and institutionalized rule. At the same time, he thought that one of the features of representative democracy was a means to knowledge.

Both ideas are necessary to interpret the current state of Bolivian politics. It was the crises of April and September 2000 and the conflict in 2001 that first revealed the array of the new social and political forces and the capacity for action in old subjects. These emergencies revealed the existence of an alternative political subsoil denied by the Bolivian system of state institutions. This put the government in crisis and at the same time revealed the superfluous, banal and misleading nature of the party system. (Tapia, 2002)

Political crises generally turn out to be a negative experience for the dominant institutions, and a positive experience, or at least one of political development and maturity, for those forces that initiate the crisis when they separate from the mediation and subordination practices that promulgate the dominant institutions.

To get the ruling institutions into a state crisis is part of a victory; it is an achievement or a conquest. While the crisis may be general or may cover the entire political horizon of the country, the experience and evaluation of it will be diverse. The crisis allows a positive self evaluation by the subordinate forces in the process of constituting their autonomy.

The first cycle of the crisis of 2000-2001 took place in the context of ascendance of the popular camp which was in a process of articulating criticisms of the economic, legal and political structures of the Bolivian state.

The vote for the MAS and the MIP can be seen as a result, but not the final one, of a process of historical-political build up over the years. The political re-composition of the popular camp has come about through a proliferation of political non-venues as the popular subjects had been expelled from the political venues, which in Bolivia usually correspond to official institutional spaces.

This expulsion was accomplished through the reform of the economic model and the artificial centrality of the party system, financed by the Bolivian state and the other states intervening in Bolivia's politics. In the second half of the 1980's and increasingly in the 1990's, the party system turned into a political space in which businessmen

converted their economic power into a defined amount of electoral support. Thus it was, and is, a means to the division of responsibilities and access to executive power.

Some popular subjects were brought up by the CONDEPA (the nation's conscience) with its special populist leadership in La Paz, which nevertheless continues to be the party of businessmen. In any case, it is not an autonomous party of workers, nor a project developed by them. The principal parliamentarians of CONDEPA became or originated as professional politicians; that is, they were mediators rather than representatives of autonomous popular politics.

Since 1997 popular presence on the basis of an autonomous party was through the MAS, which entered the parliament under the acronym of the IU. The fact that the union, popular and leftist forces were defeated in the 1980's and were experiencing increasing disintegration, patronage, and corruption resulted in the competition in the heart of the party system, developing strong contention among parties of different factions of the ruling class.

Coalitions that included all the feuding parties in changing combinations were the constant result. The fact the workers had been expelled or had not entered the party system made it possible for the electoral competition to be organized around the political divisions in the heart of the dominant political block. The illusion had been created that consolidation of the parties' schemes of monopoly was synonymous with the consolidation of democracy; the popular camp was conveniently excluded from the parliament and the executive.

The parliament and the elections manifest a dimension of class struggle that takes place in the heart of the politically dominant block. After the 2002 election results, it is believed that the class struggle has re-entered the parliament, which will probably become an institutionalized space for it.

It is also quite possible that a significant part of the vote followed class lines on both sides. The ruling class voted for the MNR, NFR, MIR and ADN, manifesting perhaps for the last time alternatives for government in this spectrum, and contradictions among these parties and their leaders. The patronage vote of ADN seemed to have migrated to NFR, which arose from within it. In this way there were transfers of votes within the right.

The party system in the 1990's was characterized by political competition in the heart of the right. Now a new right-left axis has been restored at the heart of political competition. This could have been due to an unexpected emergence of various processes that have condensed in the electoral growth of the MAS.

The vote for the MAS may have been basically a vote by workers for a workers' party. In this sense, the election weighed the class composition of the party, of its leaders and also of the criticism and opposition to the US political and economic model; that is, the national question and that of local sovereignty. The fact the people voted for a party of workers makes a class dimension appear in the vote.

This propensity of the popular vote was prepared by previous processes and events. One line of causation is the process of mobilizations of the Water Coalition in Cochabamba and the CSUTCB in the Altiplano, which reversed the process of

continuous defeat of the popular camp, giving it a greater self perception of its powers and organizational reference points. There is another political learning process in the heart of the liberal institutions due to the municipalization process.

Through the Law on Popular Participation, many indigenous people put forward as candidates entered the municipal councils and even become mayors. However, they are still subordinate to the monopoly parties. In some cases, the communities are the ones that have chosen the candidates and then negotiated their candidacy with the parties.

In so far as the parties do not possess an organic life or political attraction in the heart of the people, they need candidates with collective support. These have been offered by the communities, unions and other institutions of the society. In turn, they needed the mediation of the parties to take up public positions of representation and government.

Consequently, they have experience with political participation and public management, especially at the municipal level. It appears that now the step has been taken from a phase of political work for others to one for themselves through party organizations led by the workers.

In this context, electoral unpredictability has not exhibited motion without structural reference points; instead, it shows more of a transfer of the votes of workers, who before voted in part for the bosses' parties, and who now vote for parties representing workers and the indigenous people. Therefore the voting orientation has changed significantly. The previous voting pattern sanctioned the political division between the rulers and the ruled; the ruling class and its political functionaries would

identify with the former and the workers with the latter. The fact that the workers voted for workers meant the issue of political equality arose as a viable possibility and, consequently, candidates and popular leaders from popular parties were promoted.

In this sense, the electoral results are interpreted as an advance for political equality in the country. For a long time, this will pass through a reactivation and restructuring of the class struggle in the political space of the party system in a parallel yet secondary way in relation to the other spaces of political life activated in recent years.

Until the last elections, the parliament and the system of parties was characterized by a predominance and monopoly of the parties led by businessmen. The parliament was a place belonging to the political class of the bourgeoisie. In this sense, it was an exclusive space for the ruling class. It continues to be so, but now it has been forced to make room for the workers. As can be seen, the sharing of political space is not the result of the "democratic will" of the ruling class and governing political block; rather, it is the result of the accumulation of force in the popular sector's political capacity for exploiting the spheres of public life recognized in law, starting from their collective organization and mobilization activity.

It is hypothesized that the political changes resulting from the April 2000 crisis, principally the electoral results placing the MAS as the country's second political force, not far behind the MNR, have been conciliated mainly, but not exclusively, by the unions. In the experience of the organization of the Water Coalition, the union of manufacturing workers played an important role as an articulator. In the mobilizations on the Altiplano, it has been the CSUTCB union central that organized and articulated the

demands, the discourse and the action, although the community structures were operating beneath it in a combination of syndicalism and communitarianism.

In Chapare, it is clear that the unions of coca growers have organized the resistance to US and governmental policy. Starting from union organization, they have organized their own party. First, it won municipal elections, and then in the last elections of 2002 it turned out to be the second most-voted force in the country.

The clearest and most explicit class conscious nucleus of the country is the coca unionism; because of that, it is also the most representative. Now that it is, it still has the capacity to develop and articulate other dimensions. In fact, the MAS vote in 2002 has a class conscious conduct, on the one hand, and political opinion over the national, on the other. There is a popular, class-conscious nucleus that is articulating a political opinion and option articulating a vision and sentiment of the destiny of the country. This class conscious and popular nucleus is the production space of politics from within and from the bottom up, in contradiction with the practice of politics from above and from outside, which has characterized the dominant political block.

In the historical and cultural conditions of the country, the MAS has taken the political path of classical social democracy. This means that labour rising from the unions has financed the organization of a party allowing self-representation in the parliament which could come to govern the country, as it did for a good part of the 20th century in Europe.

This is changing the limits of the relationship between the unions and parties that prevailed in the era of the centrality of the mineworkers in the COB. The left parties

revolved around the COB and worked for the unions, allowing them to practice politics for themselves as well. The COB was always above the parties and there was never one that came to represent and include the majority of the working class.

Today, it seems that precisely at the moment of the COB's weakness, a party has succeeded in articulating or condensing the vote of a significant part of the workers, albeit in an unexpected way but with a structural historical basis. Collecting these various elements of analysis, the following interpretation proposes itself as a way of a synthesis, in which various phases of causal relationships are distinguishable. There is a first step in which the popular mobilization articulated by the unions and the labour movement managed to win the restoration of political rights and the restoration of a representative regime of parties and elections. In that moment of transition, the social movement in its turn experienced the limits of its capacity for reforming the state. A liberal regime of competition through a system of parties was restored, and a monopoly over politics was provided to it. It has tried to replace the centrality of the union movement in the country's politics with that of the parties.

This has been decided by law, but has not happened in practice in reference to the political composition of the country. The legal monopoly of politics in the hands of the political parties in the 80's and 90's produced a fragmented but exclusionary party system, since the fragmentation took place within the dominant class, and above all, has generated a high degree of corruption, patronage, privileges and the tendency to exclude those who do not belong to their class using the legislative branch in relation with the executive.

These processes caused real politics to be reduced and to even disappear from the parliament and the executive, which dedicated themselves to administer and legitimize decision making processes, invisible and out of place with respect to the Bolivian state and its public spaces.

The state became a frivolous and trivial yet authoritarian and inefficient political forum. There was an abandonment of politics at the heart of the state. The official political venues became spaces of contact, competition, struggle and negotiation between factions of the bourgeoisie and its parties, and between them and the international and supranational powers. That is, they were forums of interaction between the dominant parts of the country and other external states and powers.

The political venues did not and do not contain relations with the rest of the country. The model in force is a means to build a primordial relationship between the state and the people that favours a relationship or organization between the dominant pillar within the people and the external economic and political powers, ignoring organization toward the inside and from within. In consequence, in Bolivia, it is a weak and vulnerable primordial form, since even the internal organization of the dominant factions is in part organized from outside. In contrast, the crises of 2000 and 2001 have revealed the articulation of the social movements that made and are causing political effects outside traditional venues.

The political force and destiny of the popular political parties depend on the organization and mobilization of forces in the changing or mutating political non-venues, from where their strength comes. If the ruling class and the state with their system of

parties manage to break that flow or circulation of forces between the non-venues configured by the popular camp, and the venues of political action and representation in the heart of the liberal institutions of state, they will have once again defeated or disarticulated the world of the workers.

Perhaps a key to prolonging this wave of popular ascent would be to promote the proliferation and autonomy of the non-venues of politics, which could end up giving more strength to the parties that are already acting in the heart of the parliament.

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

In conclusion, these movements within the people and the state that have been reforming the country's political configuration have modified the venues and forms of politics. By way of synthesis, in relation to the guiding concepts of the introduction, the following conclusion can be drawn. The project of reforms of state and country tried to institute a system of parties as the favoured place for politics, disarming the union networks that had formed a more or less extensive series of alliances in the heart of the organizations of workers in the society.

For a long period up until today, there have been two large arenas or venues in politics. One of them is where the elections and system of parties is organized, with their sphere of action in the parliament and the executive branch of the government. The other is the field of social conflict, which is not so much a political venue, since it is not a space with boundaries. Nor does it have regular institutions to deal with. It erupts in different locations but begins to spread through the society and other political arena when collective action becomes a social movement.

In so far as the system of parties is not the place of representation, deliberation or solution to the principal problems and demands of the country, there is almost permanently a parallel, changing, discontinuous and multiform political dynamic that constitutes and reconstitutes and gives rise to reformers.

The space configured by the social movements is a force field more than a political venue. While there is a mobilization of forces, demands and projects, they occupy an arena and there is a sweep of actions, but these do not tend to stabilize and identify with a defined, institutionalized political dynamic.

When that happens they become merely a confined grouping of people. In this sense, the force field configured by the social movements is not a political venue; it is a transit zone of social conflict. It is also like a transitory wind that can uproot and move others from their places. The social movements restore the fluidity of the society and focus on the problem of the political order—the very crux of the problem. It is that part of society that formulates the questions and criticizes the irrationality of some forms and principles of social organization and distribution.

The mobilizations that began in April of 2000 have created conditions under which questions can be asked and criticisms can be made vis-à-vis the social strength related to economic and political model and in connection with the history of the country. These mobilizations constitute the political non-venue in the country, which nevertheless has been the most intense moment of political growth there in recent times.

Today, the centre of politics is not in the institutionalized venues of representation, mediation, the state administration and the parties. Rather, it is in the non-

venue of the social movements. The forces putting tension on the structures of the present model (and that may break it or formulate distinct alternatives) are being articulated in that non-venue. In the venues of main stream politics, neo-liberal officials attempt to camouflage the façade of representation under the pretext of modernization when in reality it is an imposition of the IMF and the World Bank policies in an atmosphere of ‘negotiation’: accept the little that we give or lose everything.

The spread of these mobilizations and the structures of action they are generating represent a conflict over the purpose of national politics. They are the incarnation of a politico-moral or ethical-political conflict. The aim of official politics is the liberalization of the economy and the state, which means the local and transnational monopolistic appropriation of the country’s principal enterprises and economic activities.

The aims of the parties are participation in political monopolies, and through them the private ownership of public wealth. The aims of the social movements are fulfillment of basic necessities and the recovery of control over the natural conditions of the production and reproduction of social life, as in water, land and labour.

The expropriation of the conditions and product of labour have generally involved or been accompanied by the removal of politics to exclusive venues and subjects. Its re-appropriation is being carried out through the production of political action from the places of social production and reproduction that had been depoliticized as a condition and result of the expropriation, but as a collective action that acts to modify what they target as areas of injustice. The social movements we are experiencing are forms of reconnection between productive life and political time, or the generation of capacities of

local self organization and self government. This was and is present in the experience of the Water Coalition, as it was on the altiplano. When politics becomes a non-venue, a society (or a part of a society) goes in motion as an autonomous body; it is governing itself, or rather it is co-governing those that participate in it.

A feature of social movements is that their politics do not generally translate into institutions, i.e., they have a low capacity for political institutionalization, hence their transient nature. When they do institutionalize reforms or their organization and action, their practices become a new array of political venues and social and economic life.

Today Bolivia still experiences the fluidity restored by the social and societal movements, which put together changes to the laws and policies of the government without changing the overall structures. It has not been possible to assimilate these changes or to bridge them so as to achieve their domestication. These forces are still a wild force field that can reactivate itself confrontationally at any time in specific and concentrated situations, because they are forces that continue to move along paths, never exhausted, always moving, flaring up when the need comes along. Societal movement here refers to the group involvement in social change based on a community of people rather than the society at large.

## **Chapter 5**

### **General Conclusions**

The thesis of this study is that class analysis leads to a better assessment of the social forces that could be mobilized in support of various political and development projects. Structural approach based on class analysis is an effective framework to provide a clear understanding of the dynamics of social movements and of the struggle at the ground level in Latin America.

This thesis is supported by evidence drawn from the literature on social movements in Latin America as well as a case study of popular movements in Bolivia. Each case of social movement in the region substantiates the claim made by class analysts that the crux of the social movement is its class basis and its relation to the state, the basic repository of political power in society.

In other words, the fundamental dynamics of social movements have little or nothing to do with the political imaginings of postmodernism (the construction of political identity); it is based on a struggle for political power – a class struggle.

Class analysis is not either subjective (political) or objective (structural) in form; it is both. Postmodernism, in its critique of structuralist determinism and universalism (the struggle for freedom, equality, etc.), dissolves the objective in a political fantasy of subjectivism – the imagined quest for political identity. However, an analysis of the dynamics of social movements show a fundamental concern within these movements for class issues—improved access to land, for example, on the agrarian situation in Latin America and other means of social production or changes of macroeconomic policies (neo-liberalism) that favour the dominant capitalist class and that for the popular sector create conditions of economic exploitation, social exclusion and political oppression. Class struggle is a political struggle – for power.

There are various ways to political power, particularly that of electoral politics taken by political activists organized into political parties, which are, as Max Weber noted many years ago, ‘organizations that pursue power’. In theories of class and power this argument has been generalized: norms, values, and ideas are explained as the result of the power inequalities between groups with conflicting interests.

The most influential theory of this type has been Marxism, or historical materialism. The Marxist view is succinctly summarized in Marx's phrase that "the ideas of the ruling class are, in every age, the ruling ideas." These ideas are regarded as reflections of class interests and are connected to the power structure, which is identified with the class structure.

However, in Latin America, not all forces are moving in the same direction, due to an incomplete construction that forces the existence of a subterranean flow of social

processes that disarticulate the national state and economic order. They are socio-political movements, struggling against the free market policies of privatization, deregulation, and export promotion (Petras, 1997). In this sense, some processes are not only social movements - that is, political mobilization and action of a part of society for the purpose of reforming its structures. In some cases they are also other forms of struggle incorporating social movements, which as Viera rightly says “are the combination of all forms of struggle that make peoples rebel”.

Analysis of political dynamics in Latin America suggest that electoral politics is a trap for social movements, a means of co-opting their leadership, demobilizing their social forces of opposition and resistance, and subjecting the social base of the movement to rules that are designed by the dominant political class and rigged in their favour. Some social movements have learned this lesson the hard way, leading them to opt for another path towards social change and political clout – the ‘armed revolutionary path of struggle for power.’”

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