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Cruceños into Cambas: Regionalism and Revolutionary Nationalism in Santa Cruz de la Sierra,

Bolivia (1935-1959)

A Dissertation Presented

by

Hernán Pruden

to

The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements

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Doctor of Philosophy

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The Graduate School

Hernán Pruden

We, the dissertation committee for the
above candidate for the *Doctor of Philosophy* degree, hereby recommend acceptance of this
dissertation.

Brooke Larson –Dissertation Advisor

Ph. D. History

Paul Gootenberg - Chairperson of Defense

Ph. D. History

Ian Roxborough

Ph. D. History and Sociology

Sinclair Thomson

Ph. D. History, New York University

This dissertation is accepted by the Graduate School

Charles Taber

Interim Dean of the Graduate School

Abstract of the Dissertation

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This dissertation explores the relationship between a regional elite and the central state, focusing on Santa Cruz, a resource-rich department in Bolivia's eastern lowlands. It traces this relationship from 1935 to 1959, a period marked by the region's transformation from a marginalized space—in both the political territory and the national imagination—to a privileged place driving national development. The regionalist trends that have long shaped the historiography tend to overlook the critical role played by the central state in fomenting economic development in Santa Cruz. By examining the relationship between the regional elite, the central state, and the U.S. government, this study illuminates the tensions and alliances that underlie the region's integration into the national space. In addition to national and transnational politics, this study also explores how the regional intelligentsia used the past to frame physical integration and development, using both history and archeology to legitimize their demands for increased autonomy and self-governance.

In loving memory of my father.

a mi corazona, por desafiarme

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Introduction

My dissertation challenges two conventional assumptions about Santa Cruz, which are constitutive of Santa Cruz regionalist historical memory. The first is that the relationship between the region and the central state was one of eternal conflict. The second is that Santa Cruz was untouched by the 1952 national revolution. Instead, my research shows that for a crucial decade from the late 1940s to late 1950s, Santa Cruz became central to nation-state consolidation and Santa Cruz was transformed by the national revolution. This is evident in the following four ways.

First, after the 1952 revolution, regional economic contradictions were seen as resolvable through the *Marcha al Oriente* (including the development of agribusiness, oil exploitation, expansion of transportation networks and colonization). Santa Cruz regional elite, the MNR government, and the US State Department found during the first years of the revolution common cause in this project, each for their own reasons. The *Oriente* was seen as the locus for the construction of the *Nueva Bolivia*.

Second, mass-mobilization politics stemming from the highlands and valleys as well as universal suffrage brought about changes in Santa Cruz. The region responded by transforming itself from an exclusive seigneurial political preserve to one in which institutions like the Comité Pro Santa Cruz and its youth-military branch, the Unión Juvenil Cruceñista, sought to represent and mobilize the population (*el pueblo* Camba) across traditional class lines.

Third, this political shift was accompanied by a transformation in regional identity as Santa Cruz intellectuals moved from a Hispanophile to a mestizaje discourse, reimagined the

past and revalued the role of regional indigenous populations such as the Chiriguano and Guaraní.

Finally, by establishing a new consensus about the primacy of economic development in the eastern lowlands, the revolutionary government consolidated a partially and temporarily successful hegemony. It is a conventional view that the MNR established such hegemonic pacts with workers and peasants, helping to overcome longstanding ethnic and class rifts in the country. However, my research shows that the MNR was able to overcome (again, only partially and temporarily) the longstanding regional rift in the country through economic concessions (oil royalties especially, but also sugar subsidies, etc., and an agreement not to alter lowland land tenure structure). Despite its limitations, and due to the fragile characteristic of the Bolivian central state, this pact with Santa Cruz elite represented an impressive hegemonic achievement of the national revolution that remains largely overlooked in the Bolivian historiography.

Literature

In 1973, Laurence Whitehead published a pioneering investigation of the Santa Cruz regional conflict during the 1950s. Bolivia, according to Whitehead, is an interesting example of a weak state with rather large regional imbalances. Moreover, the case of Santa Cruz in the 1950s poses a challenge to what is stereotypically the case with revolutionary centralization. It shows how Santa Cruz, a weak peripheral region, was able to influx the centre through a mobilization based around local issues. Whitehead explores the responses of the Santa Cruz elite to the changes arising in the 1950s due to popular mobilization, territorial integration and an economic boom; he also analyzes how the elite was able to present, through the Comité Pro Santa Cruz, an alternative to

revolutionary politics through the "cabildo abierto" that allowed for non MNR and non unionized people to experience direct political participation. The objectives of the regionalist movement were "maximum of central government concessions" and "minimum of central government influence or control in the city."¹

In his study of Bolivian regionalism, José Luis Roca, traced regionalism roots even to prehispanic times, because of the existence of Aymaras, Quechuas and Chiriguano.² He also understood regionalism as part of a colonial heritage originating in the 1782 Borbon Reforms, particularly the institution of "intendencias," due to its varied attributions that "equate [to] a modern Nation state."³ He described the "cabildo" and, particularly, the "cabildo abierto" as clear expressions of local power. Perhaps Roca's most controversial statement is that the force that drives Bolivian history is regional struggle rather than class struggle. Roca's study has a wealth of suggestions and data, however, sometimes he reproduces some core ideas belonging to the regionalist movement; for instance, he naturalized the regional conflict by associating it with issues related to pre-Hispanic ethnicities and, furthermore, tended to erase class difference in order to emphasize regional ones.⁴

¹ Laurence Whitehead, "National power and local power: the case of Santa Cruz de la Sierra." *Latin American Urban Research* 3 (1973): 38.

² José L. Roca, *Fisonomía del Regionalismo Boliviano* (La Paz-Cochabamba: Los Amigos del Libro, 1980), 139. See also José Luis Roca, "Observaciones en torno a la cuestión regional," in Fernando Calderón y Roberto Laserna (comp.), *El poder de las regiones* (Cochabamba: Ceres, 1985).

³ *Ibid.*, 141. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

⁴ Three theses on Santa Cruz and regionalism circulate underground. Despite being excellent works they were never published. They are Ronald Bruce Palmer "Politics of modernization: A case study of Santa Cruz. Bolivia," PhD diss. (UCLA. Los Angeles, 1979); Moore, Winston. "Revolutionary nationalism and the restoration of criollo hegemony: aid, decapitalization and ethnicity Bolivia (1952-1964)," PhD diss. (University of Essex. Colchester, 1984); and Zéline Lacombe, "Le mouvement régionaliste de Santa Cruz, Bolivie. Strategies et discours," *Memoire DEA*, (Institute des Hautes Etudes de l'Amérique Latine. Paris III, Paris, 1999-2000). There is an article based on Palmer's dissertation in Ronald Bruce Palmer, "Los conceptos de modernización en Santa Cruz," *Historia Boliviana* III, no. 2 (1983): 253-269.

Gustavo Rodríguez Ostría's focus is an intellectual history of two regions, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz, and their relationship with the central government. Rodríguez analyzes this relationship using the internal market and explains regionalism as a response to changes that occurred within this market. Rodríguez shows that when the oligarchic state grew, even if it was weak, with liberal policies and an economy oriented towards exports, regional demands appeared. Regionalism is, in this sense, a demand to be part of the internal market and to enjoy the mining boom. He also shows how Santa Cruz intellectuals were able to propose a regional project that included both integration to the nation, through access to markets and decentralization.⁵

In recent years, Rossana Barragán did a study of the relationship between the regions and the central state in twentieth century Bolivia by observing state budgets. Barragán shows that budgets represent a relation of forces and, therefore, reflect a process of negotiations and/or impositions. Barragán questions the idea, so present in regionalist discourse, of a strong central state that neglected the weak regions. Instead, she shows that the central government subsidized regions through mineral rent and indigenous tax. Barragán traces the origins of regionalism in the first decades of the twentieth century when the *Liberales* in government were obtaining loans for railways and roads. Regionalism was triggered by the dispute over the destiny of these credits.⁶

Authors like Lesley Gill and Roxana Ybarnegaray investigated the development of capitalism in Santa Cruz. Gill shows that the MNR government, in coalition with US cooperation

⁵ Gustavo Rodríguez Ostría, *Poder central y proyecto regional, Cochabamba y Santa Cruz en los siglos XIX y XX* (Cochabamba: ILDIS-IDAES, 1993).

⁶ Rossana Barragán, "De Hegemonías y Ejemonías: una perspectiva sobre los recursos del Estado," in John Crabtree, George Gray Molina and Laurence Whitehead (eds) *Tensiones irresueltas: Bolivia, pasado y presente* (La Paz: PNUD-Plural, 2009), 93-123.

programs, stimulated "large scale agro-industrial development" in Santa Cruz, favoring the creation of an "entrepreneurial minded class of capitalist farmers."⁷ A combination of opening markets through the Cochabamba - Santa Cruz highway, a credit policy and subsidized machinery for field preparation, allowed for a rapid development of Santa Cruz agriculture. She also questions the radicalism of the 1953 Bolivian agrarian reform, explaining that one of the categories of the law, "agricultural enterprises," that unlike "*latifundios*" were in some sense already modernized and therefore protected from expropriation. This category implied capital investment, modern technology and wage labor. It was clearly designed to promote the substitution of importation on the basis of preexisting enterprises. Even the colonization plans in Santa Cruz were, according to Gill, a way of securing a labor force for the sugarcane harvest. Showing that the real priority was the creation of an agro-industrial bourgeoisie.

Roxana Ybarnegaray wrote an economic history of the Santa Cruz development, showing, as Gill also does, that the MNR in the 1950s encouraged agricultural transformation on the base of sugarcane alcohol industry that was growing since the Chaco War. The 1952 revolution favored giving access to markets through the construction of highway, providing capital in the form of credits and land through agrarian reform, the transformation of agriculture into an agro-industrial bourgeoisie in an accelerated development via "landholding capitalist" (via *junker* instead of *farmer*, Ybarnegaray would say following Lenin).⁸

In relation to the existing literature, the Santa Cruz case contrasts with the diffusionist model of a center propagating national characteristics to the periphery, proposed by the historian Eugen Weber when analyzing the turn of the century France. In his explanation of the case he

⁷ Lesley Gill, *Peasants, entrepreneurs, and social change: Frontier development in Lowland Bolivia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 37.

⁸ Roxana Ybarnegaray, *El espíritu del capitalismo y la agricultura cruceña* (La Paz: CERID, 1988).

shows how the central state was built over regional differences, imposing national standards within the different levels: i) material by means of communication; ii) economic creating a national market; iii) political, through the rationalization of politics and the overcome of patrimonialism and local politics; iv) military; and vi) cultural imposing literacy an a national language.⁹ In this sense, the Santa Cruz case is closer to the critics of this diffusionist approach, among them, the critic Michael Hechter. He applies the concept of "internal colonialism" to a *longue durée* study of the Celtic fringe case. This study is particularly useful because he demonstrates that the process of development is not linear and, moreover, in certain circumstances it can have the opposite effect with adverse reactions. Hechter's work demonstrates that a specific ethnic group became resistant to the process of integration.¹⁰ Another challenge to Weber's approach that could be useful in understanding the Santa Cruz case comes from Peter Sahlins. In his study of the Catalonian border in seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, he shows how communities negotiated and appropriate nation-state policies instead of passively receiving them, a grassroots state building of sorts, in relation to local problematic.¹¹ The developmentalist vision implied in the diffusionist model of Eugen Weber presupposed a universalistic state in constant expansion over regional particularisms; therefore, it described regionalism as negative and counterproductive. While focusing on 20th century China, Prasenjit

⁹ Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: the modernization of rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

¹⁰ Michael Hechter, *Internal colonialism: the Celtic fringe in British national development, 1536-1966* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

¹¹ Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: the making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

Duara inverted the terms, stating that regionalism is not a "stick on the wheel" of state-making but rather part of the struggle for the shape and nature of the state.¹²

The fall of the Soviet Union, a centralized state *par excellence*, together with the subsequent mushrooming of nations and nationalisms gave some legitimacy to the study of regionalism as proto-nationalisms – Barbara Weinstein explained.¹³ This came hand in hand to the late “discovery” of an article by Bourdieu, where he utilized his classic scheme this time to approach the regional problem, questioning the idea of a region as a “natural” phenomenon and observing the intertwines between regional identities and racial discourses that prove to be inspiring for analyzing regionalism.¹⁴

Weinstein is interested in the ways in which region and race are intertwined, and how difference among regions appeared in racialized hierarchical terms. Weinstein investigates Sao Paulo regional identity in a moment of crisis with the central government--the 1932 regionalist revolt. Weinstein utilizes this case to question the standard narrative of Brazil as a "racial democracy." In fact, Weinstein shows how Paulista identity was at the time defined by its intellectuals in a hierarchical way as white, modern and civilized as opposed to the *nordeste*, the

¹² Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing history from the nation: questioning narratives of modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

¹³ Barbara Weinstein, “Race, region and Nationalism in Early Twentieth-Century Brazil: a view from Sao Paulo,” manuscript (1999).

¹⁴ Bourdieu’s influential article was: Pierre Bourdieu, “L’identité et la représentation,” *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 35 (1980): 63-72. also appeared as Pierre Bourdieu, “Identity and representation: elements for a critical reflection on region,” in *Language and symbolic power* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991). For examples on subsequent research on region in Latin America: Nancy Appelbaum, *Muddied waters: race, region and local history in Colombia 1846-1948* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); “The language of race, place and nation in Colombia,” *America Negra* 2 (1991): 41-65; Barbara Weinstein, “Racializing Regional Difference: São Paulo vs. Brazil, 1932,” in N. Appelbaum, A. Macpherson and K. Roseblatt, eds., *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 237-262; Marisol de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos: the politics of race and culture in Cuzco, Peru, 1919-1991* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); James P. Woodard, *A place in politics: Sao Paulo, Brazil, from seigneurial republicanism to regionalist revolt* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Stanley E. Blake, *The vigorous core of our nationality: race and regional identity in northeastern Brazil* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011).

"backward region." The conflict was therefore racialized. Weinstein is particularly interested in regional identities, under the assumption that they are the basis for creating a national identity. Weinstein even argues that these hierarchical racialized identities impeded, in the 1930s, a "more progressive and democratic national culture."¹⁵ Stanley Blake, instead of studying an economically dynamic region, focuses on the "other" of the paulista elite, the *nordestino*. Blake is interested in understanding how the idea of *nordestino*, and one of his promoters, Gilberto Freyre, permitted the construction of the notion of "racial democracy" that was so influential in Brazil. Lastly, he is interested in understanding how a peripheral region provided the nation with an enduring interpretative scheme that was, despite its limitations, a more open and democratic idea than that of 1930s paulistas.¹⁶

Both Weinstein's and Blake's works offer plenty of suggestions and insights in order to approach the Santa Cruz case. They also provide an interesting contrasting case in relation to Santa Cruz. Santa Cruz in the 1930s was not the avant-garde of industrial development that Sao Paulo was for Brazil. Both regions, however, used during that time period the claim of whiteness as a source to legitimize political projects that were contesting the advance of the central state.

In her study on racialized regional identities in Riosucio, Colombia, Nancy Appelbaum proposed an interesting insight for approaching the Santa Cruz case--that *mestizaje* is not always the antithesis of whitening.¹⁷ This is clear in Santa Cruz, where social Darwinism left an important mark, and it allows for a better understanding of the spread of the idea of *mestizaje*

¹⁵ Barbara Weinstein, "Racializing Regional Difference: São Paulo vs. Brazil, 1932."

¹⁶ Stanley E. Blake, *The vigorous core of our nationality*.

¹⁷ Nancy Appelbaum, *Muddied waters: race, region and local history in Colombia 1846-1948*.

Camba.¹⁸ (It is also important to bear in mind that in the 1950s in Santa Cruz, these ideas appeared as a response to revolutionary mobilization ideas, in a similar way to Mexico in the 1920s, where after the revolution José Vasconcelos was promoting his idea of *Raza Cósmica*, or Brazil in the 1930s case, where Gilberto Freyre's ideas on mestizaje were in dialogue with the political situation that led a few years later to the *Estado Novo*.)

Background

During colonial times, Santa Cruz was a "frontier society" that existed primarily to contain Portuguese advances.¹⁹ It was distant from the area of influence of Potosí and its mining economy and therefore Santa Cruz economy produced more toward subsistence than to the market.²⁰ It did trade with the mining centers, however; particularly sugar and, in less quantities, cotton and some rawhide.²¹ The commodities had to be transported on mule back through bridle paths, therefore heavier agricultural produce had a prohibitive transportation cost.²² The situation

¹⁸ On Social Darwinism in Santa Cruz, Marie Daniele Demelas, "Darwinismo a la criolla: el darwinismo social en Bolivia, 1870-1910," in *Historia Boliviana* 1, 1, (1981): 55-82. For studies on mestizaje in Bolivia, see Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, "La raíz: colonizadores y colonizados," in Xavier Albó and Raúl Barrios (eds.) *Violencias encubiertas en Bolivia*, vol. 1 (La Paz: CIPCA-Aruwiyiri, 1993), 27-139. "Ethnic identity and market relations: Indians and mestizos in the Andes," in Brooke Larson, Olivia Harris and Enrique Tandeter, *Ethnicity, markets, and migration in the Andes: at the crossroads of history and anthropology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995). Rossana Barragán, "Identidades indias y mestizas: Una intervención al debate," *Autodeterminación* 10 (Octubre 1992): 17-44. Brooke Larson, *Cochabamba, 1550-1900: Colonialism and Agrarian Transformation in Bolivia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998). Laura Gotkowitz, *A revolution for our rights: Indigenous struggles for land and justice in Bolivia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 164-191, Matthew R. Gildner, "Indomestizo Modernism: National Development and Indigenous Integration in Postrevolutionary Bolivia, 1952-1964," PhD diss., (The University of Texas at Austin, 2012).

¹⁹ José María García Recio, *Análisis de una sociedad de frontera: Santa Cruz de la Sierra en los siglos XVI y XVII* (Sevilla: Excma. Diputación Provincial de Sevilla, 1988).

²⁰ Gustavo Rodríguez Ostría, *Poder central y proyecto regional*, 79.

²¹ Gerrit Koster, *Santa Cruz de la Sierra: Desarrollo, estructura interna y funciones de una ciudad en los llanos tropicales* (La Paz: UMSA, 1983).

²² Hernando Sanabria Fernández, *Apuntes para la historia económica de Santa Cruz* (La Paz: Don Bosco, 1968), 30.

continued through the nineteenth century, until the modernizing policies of the *Conservadores* from 1879 onwards.

In 1892, the Antofagasta - Oruro railroad was completed.²³ The collapse of the silver economy and the subsequent transfer of seat of government from Sucre to La Paz – from southern silver to northern tin – altered the regional balance in Bolivia. Meanwhile, the new railroad lines transported minerals to the port and returned with a cargo of various products, including food supplies. The *altiplano* plazas were thus stocked with imported products that subsequently displaced more expensive Santa Cruz products. This coincided with a period of high rubber production that provided Santa Cruz farming products with a substitute market, and also supplied profits of Santa Cruz entrepreneurs embarked in one way or another on the rubber enterprise. The year 1900, however, marked a decline in rubber prices, which fell to their lowest point in 1903.²⁴ For Cruceños, this exposed the fragility of their economy that was dependent on rubber and, subsequently, the fluctuations of the international market; a market they considered, as Rodríguez observed, “fragile, artificial and circumstantial.”²⁵

It was in this way, while discussions were underway in 1904 for a railroad strategy using the monies offered by Brazil in compensation for the territory of the Acre, that three members of the Cruceño elite, part of the Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos de Santa Cruz de la Sierra -Plácido Molina Mostajo, Benjamín Burela and Cristian Suárez Arana- suggested in a *Memorándum*, directed “to the H. Congress and the nation,” that “the only truly national railroad, a result of political and economic advantages, starts from the Paraguay river or the Pilcomayo,

²³ Cesareo Aramayo Avila, *Ferrocarriles bolivianos. Pasado presente futuro* (La Paz: Imprenta Nacional, 1959), 51-52.

²⁴ *Memorias del Ministerio de Hacienda e Industria 1890-1926* y Manuel Ballivián, *Monografía de la goma elástica*, La Paz 1912. Quoted in María del Pilar Gamarra, "La participación estatal en la industria de la goma elástica. Legislación fiscal y economía gomera," *Data* 4 (1993): 33.

²⁵ Rodríguez Ostría, *Poder central y proyecto regional*, 87.

passes through Santa Cruz and connects with Cochabamba or Sucre.”²⁶ The idea guiding this proposal was to escape from Chile and the ports controlled by other nations in order to establish their own port on the Paraguay or Pilcomayo rivers. They asserted that this was “evidently the rational, unifying national policy.”²⁷ Lastly, they emphasized that railroad integration would allow for territorial control against external threats: Paraguay would be restrained.²⁸ The project would, moreover, provide the government with an effective method of exercising power within the national territory.²⁹ In other words, integration would allow Bolivia to become a stronger (or, at least, less weak) republic.

The proposals were not limited to the integration of the *Oriente* with *Occidente*, but also advanced critical points for a developmentalist economic policy. They proposed import substitution, which meant the allocation of *Oriente* production, and justified demands for the construction of local roads and labor force provisions through colonization.³⁰ The *Memorandum* programmatically contained a diagnostic and solution for the problems of Santa Cruz and the nation: railroad networks linking the lowlands with the *altiplano* that would allow for the economic integration of regions considered complementary, as well as to occupy and defend the national territory.

During the rubber boom, Santa Cruz capitalists did not reinvest any significant portion of their profits in the region. Some "casas comerciales" (import-export houses), often operating

²⁶ "Memorandum: dirigido al H. Congreso y a la Nación," *Boletín de la Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos*, 6 (1905): 166-167.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ "Memorandum: dirigido al H. Congreso y a la Nación," *Boletín de la Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos*, 13-15 (1906): 446.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ "Memorandum: dirigido al H. Congreso y a la Nación," *Boletín de la Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos*, 13-15 (1906): 438.

with German capitals, expanded in relation to the rubber economy, diversified into distilling sugarcane alcohol, cattle ranching and timber.³¹ The combination of cheap prices of British Malaya rubber and the inauguration of the Madeira - Mamoré railway in July 1912, allowed for foodstuff to arrive to the Bolivian rubber producing area the situation in Santa Cruz even worsened.³² The Bolivian internal market seemed to be the better prospect.

In the 1920s, in Santa Cruz the elite, with landholding and commercial interests, wanted to enjoy the "benefits of the mining bonanza and the expansion of the internal market related with the increase of mine workers."³³ On the other hand there were expectations related to Standard Oil exploring in the southern part of the Bolivian *Oriente* and after 1925 extracting crude oil.³⁴

Hopes and expectations in Santa Cruz clashed in 1921, when Bautista Saavedra government proposed the Cochabamba – Santa Cruz road, an alternative to the railroad. An insurrection arose whose main slogan blatantly stated "Ferrocarril o nada" (railroad or nothing). The *Orientalista* movement was organized. Three years later, in 1924, another insurrection demanding railway occurred against the central government. The movement was discredited as separatist and severely repressed.³⁵ The 1924 rebellion did not excite "popular participation" for

³¹ Lesley Gill, *Peasants, entrepreneurs, and social change*, 27-28.

³² Frederic Vallve, "The impact of the rubber boom on the indigenous peoples of the Bolivian lowlands (1850-1920)" (Washington DC: Georgetown University, 2010) and J. Valerie Fifer, "The Empire Builders: A History of the Bolivian Rubber Boom and the Rise of the House of Suarez," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 2, no. 2 (November 1970): 113-146.

³³ Gustavo Rodríguez Ostría, *Poder central y proyecto regional*, 106-107.

³⁴ Stephen Cote, "Drilling for Oil and Constructing Difference in Eastern Bolivia." *World History Connected* 8, no. 2 (2011); and Gerrit Koster, *Santa Cruz de la Sierra*.

³⁵ José L. Roca, *Fisonomía del Regionalismo Boliviano*, 1980: 189-191. On the 1924 insurrection de 1924 see also Porfirio Díaz Machicao, *Historia de Bolivia: Toro-Busch-Quintanilla, 1936-1940* (La Paz: Juventud, 1957), 172-173; Valerie Fifer, *Bolivia. Territorio, Situación y Política desde 1825* (Buenos Aires: Francisco de Aguirre, 1976), 327; Roland B. Palmer, "Politics of modernization: A case study of Santa Cruz. Bolivia." PhD diss. (UCLA. Los Angeles,

it was an "internal conflict between the ruling classes of *altiplano* and *Oriente*."³⁶ The Junta Revolucionaria was comprised from three different parties--Republicano (pro-government), Pablo E. Roca, Liberal (opposition), Guillermo Añez, and Regionalista (local), Cástulo Chavez. A clear indicator -as José L. Roca pointed out- that they were oriented more by "regional objectives" than by partisan directions.³⁷

The tendency of some "apolitical" groups to build on the idea of integration became even more acute, as we will see, after the Chaco War. Then, civic organizations were directed by members of the traditional elites, "neglected and frustrated industrials, merchants and landowners and intellectuals with university education whose *habitus* [...] was--the integration of the *Oriente*."³⁸

Organization

This dissertation is divided into three parts. The first part examines the years immediately following the Chaco War (1935-1939). After the war, the integration of the *Oriente*--demanded for more than three decades by the Santa Cruz elite--finally entered the national agenda. In this part, I concentrate on a propaganda campaign that proposed the separation of Santa Cruz from Bolivia, based on the brotherhood between the people from Santa Cruz and the Guaraní, and the immediate response by Santa Cruz intellectuals, denying any connection to the Guaraní. I then analyze the 1938 constitutional convention, which was intended to establish the institutional

1979), 61-65; Rodríguez Ostría, *Poder central y proyecto regional*, 113-114.

³⁶ José Luis Roca, *Fisonomía del regionalismo boliviano*, 207.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 190.

³⁸ Gustavo Rodríguez Ostría, *Poder central y proyecto regional*, 138.

basis for a new Bolivia. Here, I focus on the different conceptions of nationhood debated—particularly, what would be the better system of government for Bolivia—centralized or decentralized. This was an especially important moment because after the decentralization initiative lost, representatives from the *Oriente*, founded a regionalist party, Partido Oriental Socialista, based on the historical, geographical, and racial characteristics of the region. In the capital of La Paz, Nationalists in both the government and the press reacted against this new party and strongly criticized its leadership. In order to defend themselves from the accusation of being racist, the members of the new party explained that they were trying to protect the indigenous of the *Oriente*, equating their position to the *indigenismo* and rural education prevailing in the western highlands. This period was, however, characterized by historical and ethnic descriptions of the Santa Cruz population as being white, Spanish descendants in a predominantly indigenous country. They deployed this discourse of ethnic purity as the primary reason that they deserved to be territorially integrated while maintaining some degree of self-government.

The second part, the interlude (1939-1951), explores the moment during which the integration of the *Oriente* entered the international agenda. During the Second World War, Washington's need of strategic materials enabled Bolivia's central state to obtain technical and financial aid in exchange for supplying the US with such critical materials as tin, wolfram, rubber and other goods. In 1942, the US sent a technical mission to Bolivia in order to design a development plan in coordination with the central state. The plan called for the substitution of food imports with domestic production and to increase production in the oil industry. The rationale was to strengthen the Bolivian economy—that is, to transform the country from a single-product mining economy founded on *altiplano* to a food and oil producing national one

based in the *Oriente*. The US not only agreed with the Bolivian central state to integrate the *Oriente*, but they were also providing the financial resources to do it. During this period of great expectations from the *Oriente*, in which the MNR as a multi-class political party was gaining traction, both in Santa Cruz as well as in the country, the region's elite changed its message. Intellectuals began to attribute positive qualities to the indigenous groups from the *Oriente*, as well as the peculiar mestizos produced between the Guaraní and the Spaniards. It is notorious that during this period there were almost no demands of self-government from the Santa Cruz elite.

The third, and final, part of this dissertation examines the first two governments of the National Revolution (1952-1959). In this period the Bolivian central state initiated the national development plan designed during previous decade. With unprecedented financial support from the US, the government constructed roads, railroads, and other essential infrastructure and encouraged the creation of an agro-industrial bourgeoisie in Santa Cruz that would ensure the success of national development. Enjoying the benefits of the import substitution program, the Santa Cruz elite had neither complaints nor demands on the central state in La Paz. After high rates of inflation wracked the government for the first years of the revolution, La Paz official implemented a Stabilization Plan and drafted an Oil Code as a condition to receive continued US financial assistance. The Oil Code opened the sector to private investment and generated high expectations about the foreign investing in Santa Cruz. A conflicting interpretation over who would get the 11% royalties of oil exploitation—the department or the central government--triggered a conflict in Santa Cruz. The Comité Pro Santa Cruz, recovered the political space lost in the first presidential election with universal suffrage on 1956, representing the regional interests lead the opposition against the MNR, gaining significant political power over the

national government. This period was, moreover, characterized by historical and ethnic descriptions of Santa Cruz that recovered the struggle of the indigenous from the *Oriente* against the Incas, describing Santa Cruz population as predominately mestizo, or Camba.

To conclude, this dissertation offers a reflection on the dialogue between Santa Cruz regional elite and Bolivian central state. My objective is to understand not only the changes that occurred from a moment when politics were restricted to a moment of revolutionary mobilization, but also the strategies that the regional elite employed to recover its influence while obtaining resources from the central state. This dissertation also examines the cultural and intellectual changes that took place among the regional elite during this period, showing how the elite described the region's population first as Cruceños, white-Spanish descendants, and then as mestizo-Cambas, explaining this change in relation to its potential to mobilize opposition to the central state during times of revolutionary mobilization.

Part 1: Cruceños and the post Chaco war

This dissertation begins in 1935, immediately following the end of the Chaco War. This was a crucial period in which the need to integrate the *Oriente* became increasingly self-evident in the aftermath of the war and the new territorial losses that accompanied it. The Santa Cruz elite had systematically demanded integration since 1904, at the same time as parliament was debating how to utilize the compensation Brazil gave for the Acre and a *Memorandum* was presented demanding a railway that would link Cochabamba and Santa Cruz and introduce tariffs for imported agricultural produce. Both measures combined would provide a market for agricultural production from Santa Cruz, a production hindered a decade earlier by *laissez-faire* economic policies and the prioritization of railways between mine centers and ports in the Pacific.

A separatist propaganda campaign was organized from Paraguay during the war by prisoners of war and some Cruceños, including the politician Carmelo Ortiz Taborga. They emphasized the brotherhood between the Santa Cruz and Guaraní peoples. This idea clashed with the pretensions to “whiteness” very much present in historical accounts written by Santa Cruz intellectuals of the time, the so called “*generación del 25.*” These intellectuals retaliated by emphasizing that they were white and enemies of the Guaraní as claiming whiteness was, at the time, a way of legitimizing the demands for integration and self-government.

I analyze this debate because it allow us to understand earlier representations, where relational bonds are established between the Santa Cruz and Guaraní populations, as well as to explore the reaction of the Santa Cruz elite that, through a detailed historical reconstruction, deny any link with the Guaraní and go so far as depicting them as enemies. In this analysis, I try to understand how historical accounts and ethnic self-depictions were not only intertwined but a

response to this particular moment.

The effects of the 1929 crisis combined with the fall in mineral production and market prices, as well the political corruption following the Chaco war, were all factors that made evident the need for change. A military reformist group, the so-called *socialistas militares*, assumed power after the war. They supported the necessity of territorial linkage; they also had a nationalist economic agenda where the state had an important role in regulating economy and society. They viewed the state as an agent of change and they supported an economic nationalist agenda, as was clear when in 1937 they expropriated Standard Oil. Despite Santa Cruz elite and the central government sharing many points on the agenda - namely protectionism and integration - there was nonetheless an issue to be resolved: the system of governance. This topic was intensely debated in the 1938 constitutional assembly. This was the venue where the new Bolivia was to be designed. The *socialistas militares* and the intellectuals supporting them were clearly in favor of a strong central state but the majority of the representatives from the *Oriente* were, despite political allegiances, in favor of decentralization.

The convention showed that the need for a *Marcha al Oriente* was clearly shared by all the representatives. It was already part of the national agenda. The debate and subsequent vote are particularly relevant because they show the clash between two opposing ways of conceiving the government—centralism and decentralism. It was an interesting moment because the postures in relation to the system of governance were, in the case of representatives from Santa Cruz and the *Oriente*, more related to the regional allegiances than to partisan ones.

Having lost the vote on decentralization by a narrow margin and having a president from the *Oriente*, Germán Busch, seemed to gave confidence to the representatives from Santa Cruz and other departments from the *Oriente*. They founded a regional political party, the Partido

Oriental Socialista, which claimed to have a different geography, history and even “race.”

The news of the formation of this new political party spread quickly in the media, as well as in the government. Busch was very clear that he would not allow for claiming difference and threatened the POS members. As a way of defending themselves from accusations of racism, they explained their project as being related to the *indigenismo* movement in the highlands and described it as a way of protecting the savages. It was clearly a pragmatic and thoroughly improvised way of avoiding accusations of racism.

The post Chaco War period was characterized by an emphasis on Spanish descent and “whiteness” incessantly made by Santa Cruz intellectuals. The idea of a brotherhood between the Santa Cruz Guaraní peoples, argued by the separatists, did not appeal to the Santa Cruz elite. On the contrary, they emphasized the opposite: the Guaraní were their enemies.

The predominant way of reconstructing the regional history of Santa Cruz, as we are going to observe, was to emphasize the idea of being part of a Spanish enclave. Therefore, the Santa Cruz founder, Ñuflo de Chavez, was a central figure in those historical reconstructions. We are going to analyze how Ñuflo history allowed Santa Cruz intellectuals to refer to crucial issues in this region as having a different origin than that of the *altopereanos*. It allowed these intellectuals to present the fact of belonging to Bolivia not as a natural consequence of ethnic origin and a common history and geography but rather as a civic decision; furthermore, it highlighted the controversial issue of Cruceños being governed on a local and national level by *forasteros*. Due to these motives, the figure of Ñuflo de Chavez, from whom they claimed lineage, condensed and explicated key points of the Cruceño question. On one hand, it embodied the myth, which allowed to present as legitimate, demands for integration, autonomy, and material resources (i.e., protected markets, railroads). On the other hand, we can view this

identification with Ñuflo, and consequently with the Spanish, as allowing the Cruceños to position themselves as deserving of a special place in a predominately *indigenous nation*.

1. Separatism and integrationism

The Chaco War was an attempt by the dominant classes in Bolivia to emerge from a political and economic crisis during the early 1930s. President Salamanca, confident in having an army almost twice the size of Paraguay's, generated a series of border incidents that sparked off the military conflict that took the lives of 65,000 Bolivians. During a war that lasted almost three years, the Paraguayan army demonstrated the value of good strategy and knowledge of the region's language and terrain, over the superior quantity of Bolivian soldiers and weapons.³⁹

Over the course of the confrontation, the Paraguayan army took the settlement of Charagua, a few kilometers south of Santa Cruz: the Paraguayan invasion of Santa Cruz came close to becoming a reality. Meanwhile, newspapers in Asunción circulated separatist propaganda claiming that the people of Santa Cruz wanted to secede from the rest of Bolivia.

The separatist propaganda campaign was orchestrated from Paraguay under the apparent auspices of the Paraguayan government, headed by the Cruceño regionalist Carmelo Ortíz Taborga and included the participation of a group of Cruceño prisoners. It was proposed to provoke the separation of Santa Cruz from the rest of Bolivia, with the long-term objective of becoming an independent republic. This propaganda appeared in a series of books, newspaper articles, pamphlets and radio programs, which were almost all produced in Asunción or Buenos Aires. In various publications, a complete "national kit" appeared: map, hymn, flag, coat of arms and history. The basic elements of the campaign were ethnic and historical.

³⁹ On Chaco War, cf.: Herbert Klein, *Historia de Bolivia* (La Paz: Juventud, 1996); Roberto Querejazu Calvo, *Masamaclay: Historia política, diplomática y militar de la Guerra del Chaco* (La Paz: Los Amigos del Libro, 1975); David Zook, *The conduct of the Chaco War* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1961); Bruce Farcau, *The Chaco War: Bolivia and Paraguay, 1932-1935* (Westport: Praeger, 1996). On Peace Conference, cf.: Leslie B. Rout, *Politics of the Chaco Peace Conference, 1935-39* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970).

Towards the end of the Chaco war, the suspicion of separatism hung over Santa Cruz: the separatist campaign had enjoyed a certain success. While not persuading Cruceños towards emancipation from Bolivia, it had at the least sown the discord that echoed in the La Paz press.

In 1935, Santa Cruz parliamentary representatives decided to put an end to the climate of suspicion and requested an audience with the War Minister to explain all that was known about Cruceño separatism. The meeting was requested only two weeks after the cease-fire was declared, and required a level of secrecy (the absence of parliamentary transcribers), due to the “many repercussions for national defense.”⁴⁰ Parliament members were not only troubled by the accusation, but were also apparently unsure of how the war minister would respond.

The minister, Enrique Baldivieso, who would later be vice-president under Busch, was clear-cut: “despite Paraguayan propaganda, attempts to erode the Bolivianist sentiments of Santa Cruz have been unsuccessful.”⁴¹ In the meetings dealing with the subject, the need for “nationalism”⁴² was expressed, and a coded revision of the “federalist” history of Santa Cruz underscored the patriotism demonstrated by the Cruceño people during the Chaco War and the need to integrate Santa Cruz with the rest of Bolivia. The “*Marcha al Oriente*” was becoming a shared idea between Cruceños and the central government.

This was the official response to the propaganda campaign organized from Asunción, conducted initially through *El Diario* of Asunción Sunday edition and later systematized in a book edited in the Paraguayan capital, called *Santa Cruz de la Sierra* (1935). It was written by the

⁴⁰ Sesiones reservadas del Congreso Extraordinario, July 16, 1935, Documentos reservados, Caja #24, Archivo histórico de la Honorable Cámara de Diputados. 2.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² The representative from Chiquitos, Enrique Mercado, referred to "nacionalismo" as the contrary to "regionalismo." He expressed the need to "crear el sentimiento de patria, arraigarlo desde el hogar, la escuela, el cuartel y en cuanta manifestación social nos sea dado inculcarlo." Ibid.

Chilean-born journalist (later nationalized Paraguayan), Raúl del Pozo Cano, and with the supposed collaboration of “Cruceño university students” under supervision of Ortíz Taborga. The book contains articles signed by “Cruceño prisoners,” who as prisoners of war would have fraternized with Paraguay; it is difficult to ascertain up to what point they did this for the liberty of Santa Cruz, in exchange for some kind of specific favor requested from prisoners, or as a result of a threat. In any case there was clearly some kind of voluntary collaboration on the part of Ortíz Taborga.

A few months later, another separatist book appeared, *Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Una Nueva República en Sud América* (1935), written by the well-known Argentine historian, Enrique de Gandía. This book was far more academic in form and, since the author was neither Paraguayan nor Cruceño and the book had been edited in Buenos Aires, it was also “neutral” in tone. It counted on the collaboration of Ortíz Taborga, especially in relation to the conflicts between Santa Cruz and the central state. The book was supposedly financed by the Paraguayan government. However, Gandía’s early interest in the issue of the northern Chaco⁴³ can be confirmed, as well as the existence of Argentine interests in Paraguay.⁴⁴

Cruceños in favor of integration did not delay in reacting to the separatist propaganda. *El sentimiento bolivianista del pueblo de Santa Cruz* (1935) was the first book to appear. Written by Rómulo Herrera, it responded to the book by del Pozo Cano. The way in which he justified Santa Cruz as belonging to Bolivia, as the only rational option that allowed them to locate their products

⁴³ In 1927, at Fuerte Sorpresa a Paraguayan soldier was killed by a Bolivian bullet in a border incident. Fifer, *Bolivia. Territorio, Situación y Política desde 1825*, 330. Two year after, in 1929, Gandía published a book about the Chaco Boreal. Enrique de Gandía, *Historia del Gran Chaco* (Madrid: J. Roldán y compañía, 1929) and Enrique de Gandía *Historia crítica de los mitos de la conquista americana* (Madrid: J. Roldán y compañía, 1929). Gandía was a member of the Comisión Nacional de Límites del Paraguay.

⁴⁴ On Argentinean interest in Paraguay, see Luis Porcelli, *Argentina y la guerra por el Chaco Boreal* (Buenos Aires: CEDAL, 1991).

within their natural markets, and the fact that it was published in Santa Cruz leads us to conclude that it was aimed at Cruceños.

Later on, *Observaciones y rectificaciones a la "Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Una nueva república en Sudamérica"* (1936) was published by the Cruceño historian, Plácido Molina Mostajo, and responded to Gandía's book. This book seems to have been directed to the nation as a whole, since it was published in La Paz and hinged on the question of border frontiers that had not yet been resolved.

The third of the integrationist books, *El "separatismo" de Santa Cruz* (1936), was written and published from exile by Lorgio Serrate, a Cruceño youth who relates in autobiographical form the vicissitudes he went through after being accused of being a separatist in the III National University Congress in February 1936. In his book he made the position of his generation, the integrationist Cruceño youth, very clear.

As we have seen up and now, the integrationist version appeared *a posteriori*, as a response to separatist provocations; however, this was reversed with the book by Serrate which provoked the appearance of another separatist book written by a youth who presented himself as a Cruceño. *Porque fui a la Guerra. La independencia de Santa Cruz* (1937), by Modesto Saavedra, was also written in an autobiographical style and was published in the Argentine capital. The book recounts how Colla attitudes toward Santa Cruz provoked disappointment in a "unionist" (integrationist) and caused him to switch sides in favor of separatism. I locate this book as part of the separatist trilogy and, although it was written in 1937, it contains two fundamental characteristics for defining it as such: it contains the author's correspondence with the omnipresent Ortíz Taborga and a prologue by Gandía.

Who were the integrationist authors? The integrationist authors were Plácido Molina Mostajo (1875-1970), Rómulo Herrera (1898-1940) and Lorgio Serrate (1913-1975), representatives of the Santa Cruz elite from different generations: in 1936 their respective ages were 51, 38 and 23 years old. All three men had studied law. The elder two were practicing lawyers and the younger one still a student. Serrate and Herrera came from professional parents who practiced law and medicine. Molina had been University rector (1909-1911) and, beginning in 1932, was procurator at the Supreme Court; Herrera would become dean at the Faculty of Law and rector of the university years later. Molina had been one of the founders of the Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos de Santa Cruz. Herrera joined the integrationist cause in the pro-railroad struggles during the 1920s, as a member of the *Orientalista* group. Serrate started his activities during the Chaco War, offsetting his youth with claims of “lineage:” he was the grandson of the renowned businessman and colonizer of rubber territory, Dr. Antonio Vaca Díez.⁴⁵

My initial suspicion that it was possible to understand separatism within a generational framework, as the “excesses of youth,” proved inadequate with the presence of three generations within the latter integrationist authors. This framework also proved erroneous when confronting the biography of the main instigator of separatism, Carmelo Ortiz Taborga (1897-1951), and the biography of Rómulo Herrera, an outspoken supporter of integrationism. Although these men held opposite allegiances, they were nonetheless from the same generation.

Ortiz Taborga and Herrera were born within a year of each other. Both studied law at the University of Santa Cruz. Taborga received his degree in 1919, followed by Herrera two years

⁴⁵ Biographic data from, about Molina in Hernando Sanabria Fernández, *Cruceños notables* (La Paz: Juventud, 1998), 105-108; Oscar Alborta, *Hombres de Santa Cruz* (Santa Cruz: El Mundo, 1986), 60-61, and Nicole Charbonneau, *Antología de autores cruceños. Desde el siglo XVII hasta nuestros días* (Santa Cruz: Casa de la Cultura, 1988), 163-167. About Herrera in Sanabria Fernández, *Cruceños notables*, 75-77, and “Dr. Rómulo Herrera, Rector de la UMGRM,” *Revista Universidad* 1 (1938): 3. About Serrate in Sanabria Fernández, *Cruceños notables*, 201-202, and Alborta, *Hombres de Santa Cruz*, 81.

later. Both participated in the *Orientalista* group during the Cochabamba-Santa Cruz railroad demands at the beginning of the 1920s, a time when they appeared clearly united: regionalism, integration claims, criticisms of central state at the same as being described as being separatists. Both were also elected town council members in 1922. Both died young, one in exile in Argentina and the other on an official flight to the opening act of the Corumbá-Santa Cruz railroad. It could be said they lived parallel lives or, rather, almost parallel: Ortíz Taborga diverged during the Chaco War and his love for his native land and probably, “his imagination” (referred by Sanabria⁴⁶) made him diverge further still. Perhaps it is possible to understand separatists and the character of Ortíz Taborga as irreducible members of a generation unwavering in their opinions of the separatist cause, as many of his companions had done (according to him). In one of his letters, he made a declaration defining his determined position. Taborga writes: “I am the one who has taken off the mask that conceals every Cruceño and have said to the press and everywhere ‘Long live Santa Cruz and down with Bolivia’;”⁴⁷ As with the idea that appears in del Pozo Cano, on the existence of Cruceño intellectuals in the pocket of the collas;⁴⁸ Ortíz Taborga did not believe in submission to the Collas, nor did he have the patience to wait for the day when Cruceños would steer the direction of the country.

The separatist and the integrationist positions appeared in three books each—One propagandistic, one academic and another autobiographical. I shall take the version of each side as a whole despite being distributed in three separate books. Within this I will subdivide as

⁴⁶ Sanabria Fernández, *Cruceños notables*, 118.

⁴⁷ Letter from Ortiz Taborga to Modesto Saavedra, dated December 21, 1935, in Salta, quoted in Modesto Saavedra, *Porque fui a la guerra. Tributo a una ideología (La independencia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra)* (Buenos Aires: n.p., 1937), 98. The same idea appeared in a letter signed by “un cruceño de Santo Corazón” sent to *El Diario* (Asunción), dated in Corumbá, July 25, 1934, where we can read: “la revolución [separatista cruceña] está en todos los espíritus, y no es aventurado afirmar que haga crisis a raíz de nuevos reveses de las fuerzas collas en el Chaco” quoted in Raúl del Pozo Cano, *Santa Cruz de la Sierra* (Asunción: n.p., 1935), 54.

⁴⁸ del Pozo Cano, *Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, 47.

follows: a) the way in which each version perceived the past, b) the diagnostic of the present made by each and c) perspectives on the future of Santa Cruz.

The past

On the basis of descriptions of the past, I will take the data that, to my understanding, defines the position of Santa Cruz in relation to Bolivia, according to each position. The separatist version can be summarized as follows: The expedition of Ñuflo de Chavez originated in Asunción and created an independent government. Later in 1825, the military government of Chiquitos attempted to annex itself to Brazil but the Brazilian emperor Pedro I did not allow it. When independence was declared, Santa Cruz representatives were not present at the signing act. During the republic, Santa Cruz went through a series of frustrated attempts for emancipation from Bolivia, the one lead by Andrés Ibañez (1876-1877), during the 1920s in the so called “pro railway struggle” and even during the Chaco War.

As a result of these events, the separatists deduced that Santa Cruz had been independent from its inception and had been tied to Paraguay, had never decided to form part of Bolivia and had sought to become independent during the republic.⁴⁹

On the basis of the same events, integrationists presented another interpretation: Ñuflo de Chavez arrived from Asunción, broke off relations with the Guaraní capital, joined the

⁴⁹ The references I utilized for this synthesis of the separatist version, are for each topic: N. de Chávez and the foundation del Pozo Cano, *Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, 11-12 and Enrique de Gandía, *Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Una Nueva república en Sud América* (Buenos Aires: Talleres gráficos Argentinos de L. J. Rosso, 1935), 72, 84, 252; the annexation of Chiquitos to Brazil del Pozo Cano, *Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, 31 and Gandía, *Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, 183-184; about the Cruceño representatives and the signing of Independence del Pozo Cano, *Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, 30 y Gandía, *Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, 182; about the struggles between Santa Cruz and the Bolivian central government Gandía, *Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, 241.

viceroyalty of Perú and asked the viceroy Andrés Hurtado de Mendoza to form a “political and administrative entity independent and superior to Paraguay.” The Chiquitos annexation attempt is not denied; it is explained with erudite technicalities: in those days there was no “military government” but only “parties” dependent on the intendency of Santa Cruz; false speculations lead to false conclusions. Cruceño representatives were present at the signing of the declaration of independence (they demonstrated this through secondary sources that quoted enactments and documents; they claimed a lack of time prevented them from resorting to the original documents). The conflicts between Santa Cruz and the central state was seen as a tension between federalism and the disproportionate centralism of distinct *altiplano* governments.⁵⁰

The integrationist posture was clear: from its foundation Santa Cruz was a different and superior entity to Paraguay that chose adherence to Bolivia and while the region had always called for a federal government it had never wanted to separate from the nation.

The present

The two postures shared a common thematic axis in their diagnostic of the present. As before, similar events were interpreted differently. The key themes in this case centred on the “racial composition” of Santa Cruz inhabitants, the question of being governed by non-Cruceños, belonging to Bolivia and the question of connection.

⁵⁰ The references I utilized for this synthesis of the separatist version, are for each topic: N. de Chávez and the fundación Plácido Molina Mostajo, *Observaciones y rectificaciones a la "Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Una nueva república en Sudamérica"* (La Paz: Urania, 1936), 26; the annexation of Chiquitos to Brazil (ibid., 117); about the Cruceño representatives and the signing of Independence (ibid., 107-112); about the struggles between Santa Cruz and the Bolivian central government (ibid., 144-149).

The issue of “race” was crucial. These were times when it was again argued that “race” was the essence of the nation. Both separatists and integrationists agreed that the inhabitants of Santa Cruz were different from those of the *altiplano*. However, the separatist version was not unequivocal on this conflictive issue; contradictory versions can be found even within the same book and stem from the difficulty of combining, on one hand, fraternity with the Paraguayan people, establishing the Guaraní condition of Santa Cruz inhabitants, while sustaining, on the other hand, the notion of hispano-Cruceño purity. How to define them as Guaraní or mestizos and simultaneously emphasize their white “purity”? As far as one can see, the only solution they found was to affirm both things, even if they were contradictory.

In the same book we can find, for example, a description of the “population of the State of Santa Cruz [who are] [...] a majority white race and a small percentage of Spanish and Guaraní mestizos,” which does not necessarily suppose a brotherhood with the Paraguay people; two paragraphs further down, the book reads, the “majority of the [...] white population, are not [...] of pure Spanish blood but, as in Paraguay, are mixed with Guaraní.”⁵¹ As if to reduce the impact of describing the Cruceño people as mestizo, the following distinction is made: “The mestizaje of the State of Santa Cruz is completely different from the cholaje of the *altiplano*: while the latter is [...] indolent and only concerned with politics and intrigue, Cruceños dedicate themselves with all their strength to work, which is life and redemption.”⁵² This idea of a privileged mestizaje is found in other parts of the book: “We Cruceños have, and proudly carry, blood from the brave Guaraní and the arrogant Spaniard, the latter predominating [...] a product

⁵¹ del Pozo Cano, *Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, 15.

⁵² *Ibid.*

of a virgin race free from the vices of the Guaraní. We have inherited only the virtues of our indo-Hispanic progenitors.”⁵³

The integrationist version of this theme was categorical: they accepted the difference but did not accept having indigenous origins. Without qualms, they emphasized: “‘Cruceños’ are not Chiriguano, Guaraní, Chiquitos or Mojos, but descendants of the Spaniard from the conquest and masters of those autochthones.”⁵⁴

The separatists quoted a news article that appeared in a Buenos Aires daily that related the adhesion of “Cruceño peasants” to the Paraguayan army.⁵⁵ This motivated integrationist to give a definition of Cruceño and to deny that the autochthones of the department, such as those who had joined the Paraguayan cause, were Cruceños: “Those indigenous people are ‘Cruceño’ in the sense that they were born in the county of a Cruceño province, and in this sense they are also ‘Bolivian’; but they are not ‘Cruceño’ in our sense of the word: ‘born in Santa Cruz and its surroundings, Spanish descendants from the conquest’ and subsequently racially different and superior to the autochthones of the region.”⁵⁶

The opposition of inhabitants from the city of Santa Cruz, Cruceños, and “savages” from the outskirts was, without a doubt, characteristic of a society that prized its endogamy; the vehemence with which Cruceños affirmed this opposition, based on the “purity” of their blood, can give us an understanding of mestizaje and the relation between both groups and attempts to

⁵³ Ibid., 40.

⁵⁴ Molina Mostajo, *Observaciones y rectificaciones a la "Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Una nueva república en Sudamérica"*, 89.

⁵⁵ *La Nación* (Buenos Aires), March 20, 1935, quoted in Gandía, *Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, 244-245.

⁵⁶ Molina Mostajo, *Observaciones y rectificaciones a la "Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Una nueva república en Sudamérica"*, 149.

hide the former.⁵⁷ “Santa Cruz is one of the freest and most conscious of Hispanoamerican peoples- a circumstance produced by the racial unity among its inhabitants and within 20 leagues, such as is rare in Iberoamerican cities.”⁵⁸

Herrera provided the integrationist solution to the question of racial difference on the first page of the first integrationist book. He commenced by assuming the difference only to diminish its importance in terms of national belonging: “It is very true that the Cruceño race is different from the inhabitants of the *altiplano* [...] But, are we to conclude that as a result Santa Cruz cannot form part of the Bolivian nation?”⁵⁹

As a result of the racial question, the problem of being governed by *forasteros* took precedence. In Santa Cruz, as in all of Hispanic-America, governors foreign to the region seem to have become the rule since the Bourbon reforms. When the separatists referred to this issue, they did it alluding to “Colla tyranny” over Cruceños; “A superior [Cruceño] race, while being a minority, cannot be assimilated by a majority that is culturally and racially inferior [the altiplanic]. The cultured race subjected by force will always attempt to recover its autonomy by shaking off the yoke of oppression.”⁶⁰

Once again, integrationists showed themselves to be optimistic, declaring themselves the most capable group, more prepared to issue commands than to be commanded: “In a decisive, conscious and dedicated way, Santa Cruz aspires not to be the capital – as the representative Saucedo Sevilla suggested in a spontaneous and witty intervention worthy of his race; but

⁵⁷ Thierry Saignes suggested to study the “antigua, tensa y ambigua convivencia hispano-guaraní.” Thierry Saignes, *Ava y Karai* (La Paz: Hisbol, 1990), 82.

⁵⁸ Molina Mostajo, *Observaciones y rectificaciones a la "Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Una nueva república en Sudamérica"*, 130.

⁵⁹ Rómulo Herrera, *Sentimiento bolivianista del Pueblo de Santa Cruz* (Santa Cruz: Tip. Industrial, 1936), 1.

⁶⁰ del Pozo Cano, *Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, 26.

certainly, the most free, intellectually and economically capable people in the Bolivian community, since bearing the condition of its brilliant historical antecedents, its Caucasian racial unity, the community of language [...] promising a magnificent future."⁶¹

On racial issues, the separatist strategy revealed a clumsy approach. In contrast, the integrationists took advantage of the provocation and reaffirmed their difference not only from the inhabitants of the *altiplano*, but also from the Paraguayans. They also made it clear that their project was to shine within Bolivia.

In the integrationist version, their adherence to Bolivia was argued to be the result of a rational and economic decision. These ideas lead us to imagine, by the kind of reasoning expounded that for some people and at some point, Bolivian membership was under scrutiny. Only then can we explain the extreme pragmatism involved in establishing this position. A form of pragmatism supplemented with patriotic references, as can be clearly read in following paragraph:

The Cruceño people have always kept the ardent desire alive in their soul to be part of the Bolivian nationality, understanding well that in the heart of the nation lies her resurgence, and a full and exact understanding, that the market for her products does not lie in Brazil or Argentina, but in the towns of the *altiplano*, where the tropical produce offered by the exuberant lands of Santa Cruz cannot be found, and also because they have a profound respect for their historic traditions that makes them appear a patriotic people.⁶²

The concrete problem behind demands for integration had always been the physical integration of Santa Cruz and the *altiplano* – railroads were initially requested, followed by roads. In this sense, separatists wanted to take advantage of the chronic dissatisfaction of

⁶¹ Molina Mostajo, *Observaciones y rectificaciones a la "Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Una nueva república en Sudamérica"*, 154.

⁶² Herrera, *Sentimiento bolivianista del Pueblo de Santa Cruz*, 72-73.

Cruceños in terms of their isolation. The separatist diagnosis explained that the isolation of Santa Cruz resulted from the voluntary policies of the paceño central state to impede its development; subsequently, the development of Santa Cruz would derive from the region's independence from Bolivia: "Santa Cruz is isolated due to political reasons. Bolivia understands that if Santa Cruz de la Sierra could rely on a railroad that would gradually increase its progress [...] Cruceño ideals of independence would then become a reality."⁶³

The position of the integrationists was very clear. While coinciding with the issue of the region's isolation, they persevered in their demands for territorial integration, since this would allow them to "drive their industries," confirm "national unity forever," "function as they deserve in the Bolivian association," "obtain exchange," "save Santa Cruz from misery and death," and avoid "capital flight" through the allocation of Cruceño products in *altiplano* markets and "consolidate the geographic, political, economic and spiritual structure of the nation."⁶⁴

The integrationists took advantage of their demands for territorial integration to demonstrate their wishes to be part of Bolivia:

Further irrefutable proof of the tendentious Paraguayan propaganda, that attributes separatist ideas to the department of Santa Cruz, is no more than a mere illusion of the senses of intelligence, that the strident desire of the people of Santa Cruz is to connect with the rest of the country through a railroad; the only way to resolve both the commercial objective as well as to reaffirm unity and national solidarity, a desire conceived since Bolivia came into independent life as a free and sovereign nation and which, sensitively, has been indecently postponed, by the misunderstandings of our governing men, without which Santa Cruz would

⁶³ Gandía, *Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, 229. The same idea with some variations in del Pozo Cano, *Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, 21, 29, 39; Gandía, *Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, 206.

⁶⁴ Molina Mostajo, *Observaciones y rectificaciones a la "Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Una nueva república en Sudamérica"*, 7, 132, 132, 163; Lorgio Serrate, *El "separatismo" de Santa Cruz* (Buenos Aires: Cultura Boliviana, 1936), 7, 8, and synthesis from a resolution from the III Congreso Nacional de Universitarios de Bolivia in 1936, quoted in Serrate, *El "separatismo" de Santa Cruz*, 15.

have fainted in requesting, amidst the concert of Bolivian peoples, what legally corresponds to her: its effective incorporation into the heart of nationality, through the construction of the Cochabamba – Santa Cruz railroad.⁶⁵

The future

The prospective vision adopted by both positions shared a particular similarity: that the independence of Santa Cruz was to be carried out over a medium or long term period. The separatist version viewed emancipation as fact, it was just a question of time: perhaps “neither the author of this book nor ourselves can see [...] the independence of Santa Cruz de la Sierra [...] [but] we write [...] driven on by the dream that our children will see this become a reality.”⁶⁶ Or as Carmelo Ortiz Taborga wrote in a letter: “The independence of Santa Cruz will not be achieved in a moment; but over 5 to 10 years and through the committed efforts of all Cruceños.”⁶⁷

The integrationists saw the eventual separation of Santa Cruz not only as a question of time, but also as a possible alternative in the event of failure to integrate with the rest of the country. In this sense it served them as a subtle threat with which to accelerate the achievement of their objectives: “The Republic of Santa Cruz might be achieved in a, more or less, remote future if the progress of commercial integration through the railroad (started, as it is, by car and airplane) were to be reversed as a result of an inconceivable misunderstanding leading to family

⁶⁵ Herrera, *Sentimiento bolivianista del Pueblo de Santa Cruz*, 3.

⁶⁶ Gandía, *Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, 15.

⁶⁷ Carmelo Ortiz Taborga in a letter to M. Saavedra quoted in Modesto Saavedra, *Porque fui a la guerra*, 125. The same idea in Gandía, *Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, 7, and in Gandía’s prologue to Saavedra, *Porque fui a la guerra*, 12.

links, interests and historic experience becoming obscured by the breath of protests and complaints, which does not seem to be a possibility.”⁶⁸

Something similar was suggested at the III National University Congress in February 1936: “In the event that these demands [of integration] are not implemented which affect the security and greatness of the Republic, any [alternative] proposal capable of protecting the Oriente would be justified to ensure its existence and wellbeing in concert with all free peoples.”⁶⁹

Serrate himself quoted the promising Leonor Ribera Arteaga in his book, who two years later as a student leader at the faculty of Law reorganized the University of Santa Cruz, and eventually became a member of the Supreme Court.⁷⁰ Both his father and grandfather were lawyers, with the latter being the illustrious author of the foundation hymn of Santa Cruz that includes the words “Cruceños, let us always be free.” He had a similar profile to other integrationist authors. Ribera Arteaga underscored that Cruceño separatism did not exist, while at the same time blaming *altiplano* separatism that kept Santa Cruz in isolation. In reference to Cruceño separatism he wrote: “if the wish is to affront ‘Cruceño separatism’ as a future possibility, then it must logically proceed directly from the abandonment suffered by Santa Cruz for a century.”⁷¹

⁶⁸ Molina Mostajo, *Observaciones y rectificaciones a la "Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Una nueva república en Sudamérica"*, 163.

⁶⁹ From III Congreso de Estudiantes de Bolivia quoted in Serrate, *El "separatismo" de Santa Cruz*, 15.

⁷⁰ Sanabria Fernández, *Cruceños notables*, 148-151; Charbonneau, *Antología de autores cruceños. Desde el siglo XVII hasta nuestros días*, 177-183; and Alborta, *Hombres de Santa Cruz*, 71-73.

⁷¹ Leonor Ribera Arteaga, "La República del Altiplano y la República Oriental" *Diario Popular* (Santa Cruz), March 17, 1936, quoted in Serrate, *El "separatismo" de Santa Cruz*, 20.

* * *

One of the key aspects of the separatist campaign organized from Asunción was a historical reconstruction. In that reconstruction, separatist emphasized the Guaraní origins of Santa Cruz inhabitants and implied a fraternity between Cruceños and Paraguayans. At the time, the integrationists among the Santa Cruz intellectuals could not accept the implication of indigenous origins and strongly reacted against this, clarifying that they were very different from the Guaraní. They also claimed, in line with a tradition of thought in Santa Cruz, to be of Spanish descent. They utilized their alleged ethnic difference as a basis to legitimize their demands for physical integration with the rest of Bolivia and the right to self-government.

2. The 1938 Convention

As we have seen, the Chaco War not only provided the excuse not to implement the decentralization reform, but also revealed the limits of the concept of nation that the dominant class had handled up until that moment. After facing defeat in the war against Paraguay, a common sense emerged that it was no longer possible for andino-centrism to continue. Policies of territorial integration and development that went beyond the *altiplano* and valleys became necessary. Towards the middle of May in 1936, a coup displaced the liberal president, José L. Tejada Sorzano, and installed colonel David Toro as leader of the military Junta. The new coalition in power was composed of “young officials close to Toro and Busch, Baldivieso socialists and Saavedra’s socialist-republicans.”⁷² Shortly after the coup, the press circulated the new government’s “minimum program,” set out in 52 points. The first points referred to the settlement of border limits with Paraguay and the establishment of a “functional democracy” (the period’s euphemism for corporative representation), to be implemented on municipal and parliamentary levels.⁷³ Immediately after, and taken up in the fourth point, the issue tackling the “Reform of the political administrative regime” reappeared.⁷⁴

In an attempt to give his project institutional backing, Toro created a commission to assess the political constitution of the State, which he legalized with the enactment of a Supreme Decree on the 12th of September 1936. The objective was to “undertake the juridical reorganization fundamental for the Republic,” which would be “in charge of complementing or

⁷² Herbert Klein, *Orígenes de la Revolución Nacional Boliviana la crisis de la generación del Chaco*. (La Paz: Juventud, 1968), 263.

⁷³ Herbert Klein, “David Toro and the Establishment of ‘Military Socialism’ in Bolivia,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 45, 1 (1965), 42.

⁷⁴ “El gobierno socialista ha aprobado un programa mínimo de acción,” *La Razón*, May 26, 1936, 9.

proposing the fundamental norms inspired by the political, economic and social needs of the nation.”⁷⁵

In July 1937, the lieutenant colonel Germán Busch displaced Toro to become the president of the Governing Military Junta. The objective of the displacement was to “rectify” some of Toro’s deviations; it would seem that Toro had been devising ways to extend his position and consolidate his project for a State Socialist Party that would exclude traditional groups.⁷⁶ The inauguration of Busch seems to have encouraged the traditional political parties, which even asked him to reinstate the Magna Carta of 1880.⁷⁷ It was in this way that on the 29th of July 1937, Busch issued a decree validating the Political Constitution of 1880, which included the modifications and reforms introduced by the 1920 Convention and the 1931 referendum, as well as the laws, decrees, existing government dispositions, and all those not in opposition to the decrees and laws dictated and to be dictated until the institutional normalization of the country.⁷⁸

The illusion of the traditional political parties was brief. A couple of weeks later, the chief of staff announced elections would be held to unite a “Convention in charge of reforming the constitutional text, in accordance with the political and social reality emerging from the contest.”⁷⁹ The convention was another attempt by “military socialism” to generate a legal framework for their project. Their two main objectives were – in the words of Busch himself – to “elect the Executive Authority and study the reform of the Political Constitution of the State or to

⁷⁵ República de Bolivia, *Anuario Administrativo de 1936*, vol. 2 (n.p.: Unidas, 1940), 1883-1884.

⁷⁶ Ferrán Gallego, *Ejército, nacionalismo y reformismo en América Latina: la gestión de Germán Busch en Bolivia* (Barcelona: PPU, 1992), 15.

⁷⁷ Díaz Machicao, *Historia de Bolivia: Toro-Busch-Quintanilla, 1936-1940*, 65.

⁷⁸ República de Bolivia, *Anuario Administrativo de 1937*, vol. 3 (La Paz: Unidas, n.d), 97-98.

⁷⁹ *El Diario*, August 15, 1937, quoted in Gallego, *Ejército, nacionalismo y reformismo en América Latina*, 21.

adopt a new one that would conform to the present requirements of the country.”⁸⁰ The political parties, pejoratively termed as “traditional” at the time, suggested a “political truce” with the government; however, while the date of the elections came closer, they decided that conditions for a just electoral contest were not in place, and subsequently, the elections were cancelled. Not all the members kept to their word. In fact, some of them from the Frente Único Socialista (FUS) appeared on the pro-government list lobbying for a Busch presidency.

As the historian Porfirio Díaz Machicado has recognised, it was a novelty to have representatives who were “authentically workers,” although they lacked “ideological or theoretical orientation.” He notes that there were a “few intellectuals” and the rest were just a “disassociated faction of the traditional parties.”⁸¹ Augusto Céspedes, a convention delegate, who already presented himself as a key intellectual of what would later become the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR), optimistically underlined the “sociological richness” of the Convention that, for the first time, was in harmony with the reality of the country.⁸² The Convention in general, and the FUS in particular, were very diverse.⁸³ Among the members was the linotypist Waldo Álvarez, representative of the printing press syndicate, and even the general chairman of the Casa Suarez, Napoleón Solares. Representing the city of La Paz were two priests, Tomás Chávez Lobatón and Luis A. Tapia, leaving the FUS in second position. Only seven delegates had been present in the previous parliament of 1935.

⁸⁰ Germán Busch, *Mensaje del Presidente de la Junta Militar de Gobierno Tcnl. Germán Busch a la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Unidas, n.d), 23.

⁸¹ Díaz Machicao, *Historia de Bolivia: Toro-Busch-Quintanilla, 1936-1940*, 92.

⁸² Augusto Céspedes, *El dictador suicida* (La Paz: Juventud, 1987), 177.

⁸³ Herbert Klein, “‘Social Constitutionalism’ in Latin America: the Bolivian experience of 1938” *The Americas* 22, no. 3 (1966): 258-276.

The press, at the time, linked to mining interests or to the traditional parties in general, placed its gaze on the Convention and systematically dedicated time to underline, in the words of Céspedes, “all the vices inherent to parliamentarianism as the exclusive chores of that assembly.”⁸⁴ The Convention reacted by enacting laws against the right wing press. If part of the press called for the closure of the Convention, some of the Convention members called for those newspapers to be closed down, in particular *El Diario*, the main paper to voice criticism.

The debate between decentralists and centralists started almost at the same time as the analysis of the Magna Carta. Among those supporting decentralization, was the position calling for articles 1 and 2, on the “shape of the nation,” to include legislations on the “administrative and economic autonomy of the departments, to be allowed to constitute compatible regional blocks.”⁸⁵ The centralists strategically opted to postpone and limit the debate to the so-called “interior regime,” which was later imposed in article 101.⁸⁶

The delegates hoped that the presidency would send them the constitutional proposal formulated by Toro’s commissions for that purpose. That project was to be submitted to the Comisión de Constitución y Policía Jurídica of the Convention, which was made up of seven delegates from the pro-government FUS and by a liberal.⁸⁷ The Convention commission presented a majority report proposing, in line with the Busch decree already mentioned, to “use the constitution of 1880 including the reforms as a base.” The minority report presented by Eduardo Rodríguez Vásquez, senator for La Paz and a member of the FUS, proposed taking the

⁸⁴ Céspedes, *El dictador suicida*, 182-183.

⁸⁵ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 2:433.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 445.

⁸⁷ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1939), 5:553; *Última Hora*, March 17, 1938, March 14, 1938, February 18, 1938, March 5, 1938 and, March 17, 1938; *El Diario*, February 18, 1938 and, February 22, 1938; *Renovación*, February 18, 1938.

commission project formed by Toro as a base.⁸⁸ In order to reconcile differences, the convention members of the FUS, José Antezana and Otoniel Quiroga proposed a conciliatory synthesis that was approved.⁸⁹ Here it was established that: “the investigation proceed on constitutional reform proposals or for proposals to be suggested during the course of the debate, on the basis of the Magna Carta of 1880.”⁹⁰ The distinct positions within the commission leads us to understand the degree of diversity within the FUS and the lack of party discipline; in fact, the three distinct positions inside the commission were approved by members of the FUS, despite being substantially different.

The Constitution bills

When the presidency remitted, with a note from Busch and the chief of staff captain Elías Belmonte, the result of the commission’s work organized by Toro, he underlined “the regression resulting from a federal system that challenges the concept of strong national unity.” The task of the commission was to “revise” the constitution of 1880.⁹¹ In this way, the text presented did “not deviate fundamentally from the other.”⁹² Consequently, the project clarified that “those activities will be prohibited that tends towards breaking national unity, the provocation of

⁸⁸ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 2:318.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 412.

⁹⁰ República de Bolivia, *Informes de Comisiones* (La Paz: Trabajo, 1938), 109-110.

⁹¹ *Última Hora*, June 8, 1938.

⁹² *Ibid.*

struggles over race, class or religion.”⁹³ Some newspapers on the following day committed the interesting lapsus of referring to the “struggle between regions.”

While the word decentralization was used in the article on the interior regime, its reach was limited in accordance with the reform approved in the Referendum of 1931:

Article 122.-Each department constitutes an autonomous jurisdiction where citizens can directly administer local interests in accordance with the law, assuring a regime of administrative decentralization from the State, but where the supervision of all jurisdictions as well as the coordination and unification of the countries general policies will correspond to the Central Government, without obstructing the free action of the former, and conversely, supporting any economic cooperation or further aid as needed.⁹⁴

The press at this time registered diverse and contrasting attitudes in response to the Constitution project of the Toro commission, sent by Busch. On one hand, the editorial of *Última Hora*, which belonged to the mining baron Mauricio Hochschild,⁹⁵ supported the project sent by the executive, clarifying that he was not from the “extreme left.”⁹⁶ On the other hand, *El Diario*, linked to the Liberal Party and the other big tin baron Simon I. Patiño, who held a good part of the paper’s shares,⁹⁷ published an editorial on the same day that referred to the delusiveness of believing the nation could be changed by altering the laws that governed it:

The ideas informing our reformers is vain: they imagine that only by changing our constitution will the structure of the country be transformed and that, simultaneously, a higher level of institutional and material progress will be

⁹³ República de Bolivia, *Proyectos de Ley* (La Paz: Trabajo, 1938), 42.

⁹⁴ República de Bolivia, *Proyectos de Ley*, 89.

⁹⁵ Jerry Knudson, *The Press and the Bolivian National Revolution* (Lexington: Association for Education in Journalism, 1973), 19.

⁹⁶ *Última Hora*, June 8, 1938.

⁹⁷ On *El Diario* and its relationship to the Partido Liberal, Eduardo Ocampo Moscoso, *Historia del periodismo boliviano*, 459. On Patiño’s interest, Knudson, *The Press and the Bolivian National Revolution*, 6, and Gonzalo Viscarra Pando, *Prensa y país: los periodistas en el proceso político y social de Bolivia* (La Paz: Critica, 1977), 18-19.

achieved. Without well grounded convictions and a lack of capital and industries, the reforms will not proceed beyond fiction, while the rhythm of inveterate habits continue its course because these cannot be modified without the influence of education and a respect for the law.⁹⁸

At the other extreme of the political spectrum we find *La Calle*, a paper aligned with the centralist position, linked within this period to the Socialist Party as well as the intellectual basis for what would later become the MNR.⁹⁹ In an editorial on the same day, they pettyfied the changes proposed, questioned the conservatives who maintained the “intangibility of the Magna Carta of 1880” and suggested that the need to adjust the Constitution was obvious; as was the need to “install a new organic regime according to the state of Bolivia’s economic evolution. These are not even revolutionary measures, but a simple adaptation to new realities, not taken into account by the constitution of 1880.”¹⁰⁰

The commission project organized by Toro was not the only one to be presented. The delegate Eduardo Rodríguez Vásquez, member of the Constitution commission presented his own minority report. In his justification, he understood decentralization as a kind of preparation that would someday lead to the arrival of a “*Federal Regime* that, while not currently the case, is the necessary complement to any democratic system, if the biological laws are obeyed that social organisms are subject to and constituted in the State.”¹⁰¹

In his statute project, Rodríguez Vásquez was even more explicit on how decentralization should be implemented. In a position almost identical to the decentralization reform approved in the 1931 referendum, he proposed the establishment of Departmental Assemblies to be

⁹⁸ Editorial, “Las labores parlamentarias,” *El Diario*, June 9, 1938, 6.

⁹⁹ Knudson, *The Press and the Bolivian National Revolution*.

¹⁰⁰ Editorial, “Proyecto de Constitución,” *La Calle*, June 9, 1938, 4.

¹⁰¹ República de Bolivia, *Informes de Comisiones*, 471.

integrated by “representatives from the Capital and the Provinces.” These Assemblies would be in charge of proposing a short list of three candidates for prefecture. The Assembly and the prefect would be exclusively in charge of the “internal administration of the Department.”¹⁰² On the other hand, the Departmental Assembly would be assigned an active economic role in the promotion of industries, colonization, as well as public works, taxation policies and education.¹⁰³

The mention of the 1931 referendum allows for an explanation. On 11th of January, a military junta led by Carlos Blanco Galindo, called a referendum to vote on administrative decentralization, university autonomy and habeas corpus. The decentralization reform was ratified by 22,458 votes against 6,251, that is to say, 78 percent for and 22 percent against.¹⁰⁴ Nonetheless, there are certain clarifications to be made that obscure the democratic character of the referendum: apart from being called by a military junta, voting was generally restricted at the time, turnout was noticeably low and blank votes were counted as affirmative.¹⁰⁵ To make things worse, *El Diario* denounced that “most of the answers counted as affirmative were blank votes.”¹⁰⁶

The junta led by Blanco Galindo incorporated the constitutional reform by enacting the Law of the 23rd of February 1931¹⁰⁷ while the National Congress came to decree the Organic Law for Departmental Administration on the 17th of November 1932.¹⁰⁸ Once the approval of congress was

¹⁰² República de Bolivia, *Proyectos de Ley*, 157.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 157-158.

¹⁰⁴ *El Diario*, February 24, 1931.

¹⁰⁵ 51.000 registered to vote in the elections, *La Razón*, January 7, 1931. We could make an approximation about the population around 2.000.000. In 1900 were according to the Bolivian census 1.633.610; and 3.080.921 in 1940; numbers quote in Rossana Barragán, “Ciudadanía y elecciones, convenciones y debates,” in Rossana Barragán and José Luis, *Regiones y poder constituyente en Bolivia* (La Paz: PNUD, 2005), 300. Electoral participation to previous elections was 79.281 in 1917 and 54.068 in 1925 (*ibid.*). Blank votes as “yes” votes, República de Bolivia, *Anuario Administrativo de 1930*, 1911.

¹⁰⁶ Editorial, “La reforma constitucional,” *El Diario*, January 16, 1931, 6.

¹⁰⁷ República de Bolivia, *Anuario Administrativo de 1931* (La Paz: Unidas, n.d), 291-293.

¹⁰⁸ República de Bolivia, *Anuario Legislativo de 1932* (La Paz: Unidas, 1933), 90-100.

granted, the Organic Law for Departmental Administration was presented to the Executive Authority. The president Daniel Salamanca vetoed the reform because he considered it was unadvisable to loosen “the bulwarks upon which national defense depends” while the country was facing an international conflict.¹⁰⁹

The issue reappeared during the legislative term of 1934. In the midst of the Chaco War legislators it was debated on whether or not to accept the presidential veto of the decentralization reform. The vote was nominal. The “yes” vote (that is, against the veto) won in the senate and the “no” vote (in acceptance) won in the chamber of deputies. In total there were 39 “yes” votes and 38 “no” votes. While the absolute majority insisted in favor of the law, the necessary two thirds was not achieved and the reform was subsequently shelved.¹¹⁰

There was a third Constitutional project presented at the 1938 convention by the delegate for Omasuyos, Félix Eguino Zaballa, who was also a member of the FUS.¹¹¹ Despite being established as a project, it was only a simple indication of the possible contents for the new Constitution.¹¹² The Constitution commission, after revising the three projects, presented a report emphasizing that foreign ideological formulas should not be imported. The commission could thus show its complacency by saying: “None of the initiatives mentioned suggest the alteration of the State structure [nor] the erection of a totalitarian State or of any other type, under the influence of European ideas or concerns foreign to our nationality.”¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 101.

¹¹⁰ República de Bolivia, *Redactor del H. Congreso Nacional* (La Paz: Unidas, 1936), 317.

¹¹¹ *Última Hora*, March 5, 1938. On the coalition inside the FUS, “Se constituyó el Frente Unico Socialista,” *El Diario*, February 18, 1938, 7.

¹¹² República de Bolivia, *Proyectos de Ley*, 166-169.

¹¹³ República de Bolivia, *Informes de Comisiones*, 51-52.

On the other hand, the report made reference to a series of reforms, approved in the Referendum of 1931, describing them as part of an “ascending effort of progress.”¹¹⁴

In the case of the proposal by Rodríguez Vásquez that adhered to the 1931 Referendum reforms, the economic section of the Interior Regime article of the constitution projects, limited the authority of Departmental Assemblies to the collection of departmental tax for use in public works (such as the all-important opening of roads). The other two projects did not mention the sources of departmental funding or the ways in which their resources would be used. However this issue appeared in other ways: in the discussion over departmental allocation of oil revenues and even more implicitly in the agreements over railroad linkage with Argentina and Brazil.

In 1929, during the government of Hernando Siles, the national congress sanctioned a law that was based on the Supreme Resolution of the 25th of July 1922 and destined 11% for the State and assigned 30% of those 11% to departmental treasuries. Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos (YPFB) did not yet exist at the time and, consequently, it was the private companies who provided that percentage. The fund was to be administered by a “junta impulsora” made up of “the Prefect, the President of the Municipal council, the President of the Commerce Chamber, a notable person named by the President of the Republic and a member of the comptroller general.” The destination of funds would be for “public works, roads, irrigation, promotion of the farming industries and public education.”¹¹⁵ These “juntas impulsoras” appear to have been an early precursor to the development corporations that were created decades later in each department and were key to regional development such as the Corporación de Desarrollo de Santa Cruz (CORDECRUZ).

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 53.

¹¹⁵ República de Bolivia, *Anuario Administrativo de 1929* (La Paz: Unidas, n.d), 1360-1361.

During the Convention of 1938, 27 delegates support a proposed law to raise the percentage to 17%.¹¹⁶ When the project was presented to the Convention, La Paz delegate Jorge Ballón Saravia, considered this percentage “excessive” and proposed reducing it to 10%.¹¹⁷ The delegate Facundo Flores Jiménez, representing Santa Cruz, responded by suggesting that it should be raised.¹¹⁸ It fell to Victor Paz Estenssoro, the Tarija representative at the time and a proponent of the 17%, to propose the compromise solution of fixing departmental allocation at 11% arguing that as YPFB “is in a period of establishing itself” and “subsequently needs an enormous amount of capital to consolidate its operations [...] and recover the colossal costs accumulated to formally establish extraction.”¹¹⁹ Paz Estenssoro's subsequent position was applied and the motion approved.

The law was promoted by delegates who came from diverse regional backgrounds and party origins. Among the proponents there were liberals, members of the FUS, members of the Partido Republicano Socialista (PRS) in the FUS as well as independents and representatives of the 9 departments (only one from Santa Cruz). From the group of proponents, 12 later voted for centralized administration and 6 for decentralization. This leads us to understand how the issue of natural resources, particularly hydrocarbons, was at the time separate from that of administrative decentralization.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ República de Bolivia, *Proyectos de Ley*, 129-130.

¹¹⁷ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz, Universo, 1938), 2:46.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Proponents of the project, district represented and partisanship: *El Diario*, February 18, 1938, February 22, 1938, March 11, 1938, September 25, 1938; Gallego, *Ejército, nacionalismo y reformismo en América Latina*, 60; República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 1:613; *Última Hora*, March 5, 1938; *Renovación*, February 18, 1938; voters in República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1939), 4:47.

It should be mentioned that, within Cruceño regionalist historical memory, this law is remembered to this day as the “Busch Law.” The preference is significant because it excludes the National Congress of Hernando Siles, and the Tarija delegate Paz Estenssoro who originally proposed the modifications in 1938. In this way, at least in its construction, the genealogy from Busch to Melchor Pinto Parada and to the “civic struggles for the eleven percent” of the 1950s, effectively protects the version where “the development of Santa Cruz is [only] the work of Cruceños.”

The debate

Once the Constitution projects were put forward, the cards were on the table and the debate commenced. The proponents of maintaining centralism were clear. The argument that was repeated most that the centralist regime needed to be maintained and the process deepened in order to guarantee national unity and consolidate the construction of the nation. One of the main proponents of this position was the Arani delegate Walter Guevara Arze, an elected member of the FUS list and who in the following decades would become so influential in national politics.¹²¹

La Calle considered decentralization to be a “regression to a position of institutional disintegration which is opposed to the firmness of the State” and underlined the fact that:

It is precisely those who inexplicable claim to be moderates –the liberal sectors– who now pretend to fundamentally revolutionize the constitutional regime of Bolivia, installing a form of government which, often responding to demagogic objectives or sentiments, has been approved but which was never applied in

¹²¹ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 3:500, 671.

practice, since the reality of the country has consecrated a unitary system as an indestructible fact.

The principle of the nation is consecrated in the State as one and indivisible. The weakening of the State during moments of national reconstruction is something that can only be explained through the ignorance of the basic principles of our national structure. This radical reform, the most violently revolutionary to be proposed at the Convention, is not even justified by the usefulness it would have for the departments, since it is not with written laws that, from night to day, a poor country will be turned into a productive economy capable of providing equally for all the areas of the nation.¹²²

Those, such as Guevara Arze, in favor of a strong State, assumed at the same time that only the State would be able to limit the damaging effects of imperialism.¹²³ Conversely, at a time when the word socialism appeared in all types of interventions with varying degrees of significance, mainly acquiring a positive connotation, it was also associated to centralism, as its political expression.¹²⁴

Another tactical argument deployed by centralists, who never lacked in rhetorical flare, was to criticize the decentralization project while at the same time recognizing that both federalism as well as decentralization were potentially positive. However, they underscored that it was not the right historical moment: the country was not yet ready.¹²⁵ Following this argument an editorial in *El Diario* highlighted the fact that the majority of the Convention delegates had: "Categorically exposed, without verbiage, the dangers that would conduct the country toward attitudes of exaggerated regionalism, which would not matter if the systems of administrative decentralization had been put into practice. In reality, Bolivia, badly affected by the scarcity of her demographic density, still has to wait a long time to follow the example of other [nations]

¹²² Editorial, "Por la unidad del régimen estadual," *La Calle*, September 2, 1938, 4.

¹²³ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 3:500.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 522.

¹²⁵ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 3:493.

where it has been possible to decentralize the administration of their inherent resources and the enormous riches they exploit."¹²⁶

For centralists it was indispensable to change the economic profile of the country. For this to happen, the State was to be called in to accomplish a directive role in the economy. Towards the end of the 1930s, the example of rapid development in the Soviet Union and the Keynesian policies applied in the United States to pull it out of the depression, as well as the nationalist-socialism of Germany, Italian fascism and much closer, the Brazilian Estado Novo, influenced the way in which the economic role of the State was perceived.¹²⁷ In a more classical way, when it came to suggesting possible solutions, the centralists proposed the need to substitute the importation of food supplies. Some of the Convention delegates suggested this economic model in opposition to mining, which had badly damaged the nation; a delegate from the Oriente belonging to the PRS within the FUS, while proposing the same solution, was simultaneously quick to laud the historic significance of mining in the country.¹²⁸ Guevara Arze succinctly underlined that the substitution of foodstuffs should be implemented with the resources produced from mining.¹²⁹

The diversity of Bolivia was a basic reality for the delegates and appeared in the descriptions by decentralists as well as centralists. The difference stemmed in finding a way to confront this situation. Guevara Arze suggested that the way of resolving the problem was

¹²⁶ Editorial, "La descentralización administrativa," *El Diario*, September 4, 1938, 6.

¹²⁷ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 3:609.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 611.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 688.

through a strong State.¹³⁰ In a similar vein, Augusto Guzmán, from the FUS for Cochabamba, described that the means of communication would allow the “conjunction of races.”¹³¹

The centralists not only presented themselves as the solution; but also made strong criticisms against decentralization. Among these, the most recurrent was the idea that nationality would disintegrate. This idea appeared in distinct ways: that the country would be dismembered, that it would disintegrate and, in a more extreme version as suggested by Guevara Arze, that it would be “polonized.”¹³² It was an erudite commentary on the partition and disappearance of Poland at the end of the XVIII century, and also clairvoyant of the Nazi invasion of that country.¹³³ This comment by Guevara Arze, provoked a reaction in an editorial appearing in *La Razón*, the newspaper belonging to the mining baron Carlos V. Aramayo, calling the idea of “polonization” as “inexact and dangerous” and a phrase “unworthy of us or our neighboring nations and it is deplorable that it has been mentioned inside the constitutional convention as a pessimistic prognostication.”¹³⁴

Another of the centralist arguments against decentralization was the question regarding the fate of “poor departments.”¹³⁵ This argument was repeated paradoxically, by both the FUS as well as independent delegates, who suggested that the most disregarded departments would not be represented and that arguments in favor of decentralization appeared in the mouth of altruists who represented the “rich departments.”

¹³⁰ Ibid., 495.

¹³¹ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 3:520.

¹³² República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 3:669, 671.

¹³³ I thank Ben Martin for pointing this to me.

¹³⁴ Editorial, “Idea inexacta y peligrosa,” *La Razón*, September 11, 1938, 6.

¹³⁵ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 3:493, 572, 612.

One of the most recurrent criticisms was that decentralization was equal to the hegemony of the local oligarchy over local politics. The rule they applied was that a reduced State presence resulted in more power for local elites.¹³⁶ This was an argument that echoed the ideas of José C. Mariátegui that had made a deep impression on the vision of the Latin American left on the issue of regionalism.¹³⁷ In a similar vein, it was understood that if the Central State had less power, imperialism could have a divisive effect or exert a deeper influence on a local level;¹³⁸ it was also suggested that the departments would have less power to confront the capitalists and that this would weaken the central state.¹³⁹ Only in the more extreme versions was decentralization equated with separatism.¹⁴⁰

“Socialism” appeared in the convention with a positive connotation while, in contrast, “liberalism” appeared as something negative that was associated with the previous order of things. It was in this way that centralists came to suggest that decentralization was a liberal policy, not only to discredit the motion but also to denounce that two of the delegates sustaining it belonged to the Liberal Party.

The decentralists defended their position, with counterarguments for each of the criticisms they received. One of the most recurrent counterarguments was that decentralization did not endanger national unity, but on the contrary: that it would guarantee national unity and

¹³⁶ Ibid., 499, 601, 613.

¹³⁷ José C. Mariátegui, “Regionalismo y centralismo,” in *7 ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana* (Lima: Biblioteca Amauta, 1928).

¹³⁸ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 3:524; *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1939), 4:40.

¹³⁹ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 3:524.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 610.

that in no way would Bolivia be “polonized.”¹⁴¹ On the other hand, it was emphasized continually that the argument over decentralization and federalism was becoming confused;¹⁴² decentralization would in no way produce separatism or disconnect departments from the central state;¹⁴³ or would the influence of capitalists be increased, although, as a delegate underlined, capitalists already had considerable freedom.¹⁴⁴

According to the Frente Único Oriental from Ichilo, Santa Cruz, decentralization would not harm the general interests of the nation.¹⁴⁵ For the liberal delegate Eduardo Fajardo, nor would poor departments be disadvantaged, as the centralists had suggested.¹⁴⁶

The centralist maneuver of postponing the issue indefinitely –until a different period in the development of the country and until decentralization could be studied in depth– was responded to with the reservation that the issue had already been well studied and that neither was it a new project.¹⁴⁷ The decentralists asked for the constitutional legitimacy of their project to be recognized, by connecting it to the 1931 Referendum, which they had won.¹⁴⁸ The press echoed this argument. In an editorial by *La Razón*, it was taken for granted that decentralization enjoyed a legality well earned in the referendum: "Only autonomy and decentralization are the decisive factors that assure the progress of a people prepared to govern and resolve their own

¹⁴¹ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 3:516, 521, 576, 607, 618, 621; República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1939), 4:38.

¹⁴² República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 3:515, 521, 568, 576, 606, 621.

¹⁴³ República de Bolivia, República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1939), 4:12, 38; República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 3: 573-376.

¹⁴⁴ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 3:570.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 608.

¹⁴⁶ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1939), 4:12.

¹⁴⁷ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 3:573-574.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 492, 506-508, 561, 569, 573, 616-617.

issues, in relation to the previous regime. We should not retreat from having reached these conquests."¹⁴⁹

Decentralization advocates coincided with centralists in the diagnosis of the geographic and ethnic diversity of Bolivia. For decentralists, however, different laws should respond to that diversity and different types of government.¹⁵⁰ Instead of homogenization under a strong State – as centralists suggested– they proposed to accept specificities and provide legislation accordingly.

On the other hand, they suggested that decentralization would open new possibilities for departmental development,¹⁵¹ allowing for a more efficient use of resources,¹⁵² and also as a way of avoiding corruption.¹⁵³ It would also encourage prefects to get to know the reality of the place they were allocated to govern¹⁵⁴ and make an end to the favoritism of the parties as well as the president himself.¹⁵⁵ In this way, the criticized figure of the forastero prefect could be brought to an end.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, in contrast to centralist arguments, decentralization would produce a balance between the departments and the central state.¹⁵⁷

¹⁴⁹ Editorial, “Autonomía y descentralización,” *La Razón*, September 4, 1938, 6.

¹⁵⁰ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 3:494, 575, 606, 614.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 492, 503, 571.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 570, 608.

¹⁵³ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1939), 4:12-13.

¹⁵⁴ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 3:524.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 508, 569; República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1939), 4:12, 37.

¹⁵⁶ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 3:498.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 576, 607.

The pro decentralization camp bolstered their arguments by using examples of prosperous federal countries such as the United States, Argentina, Brazil, Switzerland, Germany and Russia.¹⁵⁸ Guevara Arze, spoiled the party by saying that Argentina, Mexico and Venezuela were only “hypothetical federalists.”¹⁵⁹

For decentralists, both federalism and decentralization was seen as a way of making democracy more effective and *last but not least* was also presented as being associated to socialism.¹⁶⁰

For decentralists, the solution was -as the Santa Cruz delegate José Serrate suggested- to create Departmental Assemblies, such as was put forward in the Referendum of 1931. The liberal delegate E. Fajardo, in facing the critics, suggested that a possible intermediary solution to avoid disputes was for Departmental Assemblies to involve corporative or “functional representation,” or even national representatives, in order to save on the costs produced by an election.¹⁶¹

The main criticisms against centralism were political and economic. On a political level it was suggested that centralism as a system would lead to the destruction of the nation; that despite more than a century of republican life, national unity had not been secured and was even the cause of regionalism.¹⁶² All this appeared in relation to another of the main criticisms: that centralism could not provide real solutions, since a prefect’s power and legitimacy did not come from the people he governed, but from the designation of the president, and as a result governors

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 606, 615-616.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 673.

¹⁶⁰ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 3: 615-617.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 607; República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1939), 4:11-12.

¹⁶² República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 3:38, 492, 567, 614.

tended to ignore local realities.¹⁶³ In the debates, centralism appeared almost synonymous with totalitarianism and as one of the causes of corruption.¹⁶⁴

On an economic level, it was suggested that centralism was the cause of the stagnation and the “economic macrocephalism” that characterized Bolivia.¹⁶⁵ According to the delegate from the Frente Único Oriental for Santa Cruz, Walter Suárez Landívar, this system was the cause of the abandonment of certain departments.¹⁶⁶

One of the centralist arguments was to deflect the problem of centralism towards imperialism,¹⁶⁷ an argument that noticeably bore the imprint of Lenin’s classic intervention on imperialism. The decentralists denounced this argument as a ploy and came to deny the existence of imperialism. In order to sustain this argument it was explained that capitalists such as Simón Patiño or Nicolás Suárez were Bolivian while the liberal delegate, Fajardo, formulated a defense of Patiño.¹⁶⁸ The centralists retorted that imperialism did exist, and that Patiño was no more than a clear expression of the latter.¹⁶⁹

When the hour came to defend their position, centralists blamed the men who had governed the country as those responsible for its ills and even national representatives were

¹⁶³ Ibid., 494, 565, 569.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 571, 577; República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1939), 4:13.

¹⁶⁵ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 3:617-618.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 493.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 495, 618, 671.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 499, 616, 619-620; República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1939), 4: 9.

¹⁶⁹ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1938), 3:502, 619.

responsible for not carrying out their duties properly.¹⁷⁰ Centralism or the unitary system was never mentioned in their defense.

But who was who in the debate? The majority of those supporting centralism were from the pro-government front as is evident from their party origin (ten belonged to the FUS and five to other groups). In relation to the departments represented, six came from La Paz, three from Cochabamba, three from Chuquisaca, two from Pando and one from Santa Cruz. On the opposing side among those who intervened in favor of decentralization, only five were from the FUS, four had liberal backgrounds and three were independent. Among those who had spoken in defense of the decentralization project, three were part of the last ordinary congress in 1935 and were linked to the Liberal Party. In 1934 they voted in favor of the decentralization reform following the referendum against the Salamanca veto. They included Lucio Lanza Solares, Angel Mendizábal and Fajardo¹⁷¹ -the last two were still active in the Liberal Party in 1938.¹⁷² In contrast, among those who had supported centralization, in discourse or with votes, none had been a parliamentarian in the congress of 1935. On a departmental level, of the speakers in favor of decentralization, five were from Potosí, two from Oruro as well as Santa Cruz, and only one for Tarija, Cochabamba and Chuquisaca respectively.¹⁷³

The protracted debate closed in apotheosis. Aquino Ibañez Soruco, who had not pronounced himself during the debate or in the election in favor of one position or the other, and who was a member of the Legión de ex-combatientes of Santa Cruz and the Frente Único

¹⁷⁰ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1939), 4:13.

¹⁷¹ República de Bolivia, *Redactor del H. Congreso Nacional* (La Paz: Unidas, 1936), 317.

¹⁷² Fajardo y Mendizábal listed as participating at the Convención del Partido Liberal in “La convención liberal se reunió ayer,” *El Diario*, September 25, 1938, 4.

¹⁷³ República de Bolivia, *Anuario Legislativo de 1935-1936* (La Paz: Unidas, 1936), XXIV.

Oriental, proposed that: “The Oriente has lived and still lives in a truly miserable condition; this is why we want to change the Government system: we want the people to rise up of their own will and through their own means: so that they will cease being slaves or live under the domain of the Casa Suárez...”¹⁷⁴

In response to this intervention, another Cruceño delegate, Serrate, who was also part of the Frente Único responded that: “it cannot be said the Santa Cruz is under the dominion of the casa Suárez nor of any other capitalist.” Soruco, countered by saying: “can truths not be told here? It is because we Bolivians are used to adulation, submission and deceit...” According to the transcriber, there were “Protests and disorder in the room” and it was decided that, “since there is neither order or composure in the discussion, the Presidency concludes the session.”¹⁷⁵

The vote

In the subsequent session on the 12th of September 1938, a vote was held to choose one of the respective positions. The results of the election were very close: in favor of maintaining centralism a total of 44 “yes” votes were counted, while the opposing motion came to 35 “no” votes. When we compare the list of delegates with those who actually emitted their vote, 10 delegates appear not to have voted. This could be interpreted as the number who abstained.¹⁷⁶

The vote was carried out, as is the case with other conflictive issues, in a nominal fashion. This allows us to see that at a departmental level the “yes” vote won among

¹⁷⁴ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1939), 4:43.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁷⁶ Delegates present, voters and “absents,” *ibid.*, 43-47.

representatives from La Paz, Chuquisaca, Cochabamba and Pando. In contrast the “no” vote was cast among representatives from the departments of Santa Cruz, Beni, Tarija and Potosí, with a draw in Oruro. Of the thirty-two delegates senators and deputies for Santa Cruz, Beni and Pando, twelve voted “no,” that is to say in favor of decentralization; eight voted “yes,” that is to say in favor of centralization; four were present but did not emit their vote, and can be interpreted as regional abstainers; six were absent; and, lastly, two do not figure as being present or absent.¹⁷⁷

* * *

The issue of whether Bolivia should be a centralized or decentralized country was passionately debated during the constitutional convention. Each side of the debate reflected regional rather than partisan loyalties. The advocates of decentralization argued that the centralized state had not been able to integrate Bolivia. The representatives of the Bolivian *Oriente* also explained that, because of the region’s historical, ethnic and geographical differences from the rest of Bolivia, a different system of governance was needed. For their part, the centralists believed in a strong state capable of imposing itself over local powers since a weak state was synonymous with a powerful local oligarchy. When the vote was taken, the decentralizing project lost by a narrow margin.

¹⁷⁷ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1939), 4:47, compared with list of delegates by department, República de Bolivia, *Anuario Legislativo de 1938* (La Paz: Unidas, n.d.).

3. The Partido Oriental Socialista

As the year 1939 progressed, Franco's falangists advanced in Spain and Bolivia was willing to formally recognize his government;¹⁷⁸ two months earlier systematic anti-Semitic persecutions were carried out in all Germany and a contingent of Jews waited in the port of Antofagasta for authorization to enter Bolivia.¹⁷⁹ Meanwhile a "wave" of anti-Semitism was registered in the press;¹⁸⁰ the Falange Socialista Boliviana (FSB) had existed for more than a year.¹⁸¹

At the same time the *Oriente* representatives who were present at the constitutional convention of 1938 became weary and disillusioned with promises of integration with the rest of the country that were offered by each of the successive governments and which never materialized.¹⁸² The fact that four months earlier, during the constitutional reform, the project for

¹⁷⁸ *El Diario*, February 25, 1939, 2.

¹⁷⁹ "6.000 judíos se hallan en Antofagasta listos para venir a Bolivia. Su invasión implica una amenaza para el país," *La Nación* (Santa Cruz), January 19, 1939, 1.

¹⁸⁰ In the last page under the title "Cuentos Judíos" there were some "humor" notes, that complementing alarmist covers as the one mentioned in the previous footnote, allow to have some sense of the times:

"Salomón e Isaac juegan a las cartas. De repente el primero exclama:

-Isaac hace trampas.

-Te equivocas no las hago.

-Mientes ... ¡Tramposo! ¡Canalla! Eres bien digno de tu familia. Tu padre murió en presidio, tu madre fue una sinvergüenza, tu hermano un estafador y tu tramposo ¡Canalla!

-¡Vaya, vaya, Salomón! -dice Isaac con mucha calma- ¿A que has venido aquí? ¿A charlar o a jugar a las cartas?"

"Cuentos Judíos," *El Frente*, February 10, 1939, 4.

There is another story about a woman that value more two potatoes than her husband's life.

¹⁸¹ Céspedes, *El dictador suicida*, 261.

¹⁸² The motto of the newspaper *El Frente* inscribed in its front page "un diario de Santa Cruz para todo el Oriente", framed by a palmtree and a locomotive, It was founded in 1936, directed by Sixto Montero Hoyos, representative from provincia Florida and member of the POS. This newspaper published an article griten by one of the better known journalists of the Oriente that was written almost three decades before, in the 1910 Santa Cruz anniversary, claiming that: "Es un lugar común en el lenguaje de las cortesías oficiales y la literatura de los candidatos, aquello que el Oriente es el porvenir de Bolivia y el más bello girón del territorio nacional. La frase es tan vieja como la República." According to Céspedes this journalist was one of the POS leaders. Céspedes, *El dictador suicida*, 179.

decentralization had lost to the centralization motion by a slim 35 to 44 votes must have been both a harsh blow and an encouraging signal.¹⁸³ However, not everything was unfavorable for Cruceños: for the first time they were governed by a president, who while not Cruceño in a strict sense –as in Placido Molina’s definition: “inherent to Santa Cruz and its surroundings, descendants of the Spanish from the conquest”– he was in any case from the Oriente.¹⁸⁴

As Céspedes came to explain, this group¹⁸⁵ became incited by the event of being governed by one of them¹⁸⁶ and dared to loudly proclaim what was previously uttered in sotto voce:¹⁸⁷ that they were different to the inhabitants of the *altiplano*. The Cruceños had made these affirmations while reconstructing their history in the integrationist books and became the living truth of their nationalism expressed in the parliamentary tributes made every 24th of September; these ideas, I suggest, came to form part of their common sense. What was unprecedented therefore, was how the vindication of ethnic differences and a separate Cruceño history, came to form an integral part of their party politics and subsequently, a message directed to the nation as

¹⁸³ The vote on article 109, implying the "rechazo [a](...) la aprobación del capítulo de la descentralización administrativa." Among the 21 delegates that later adhered to the POS. List in *El Frente*, February 5, 1939, 1 and February 14, 1939, 1. 13 voted: 9 for “no”, meaning that "se considerarán los proyectos sustitutos," in other words for decentralization and 4 for “yes” to centralization (4 delegates were present but they do not appeared in the nominal list of voters and 3 were absent). Among the Santa Cruz delegates, only one among the group that later were members of the POS voted for centralization--representative from provincia Velasco, Facundo Flores Jiménez. República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1939), 4:45-47.

¹⁸⁴ Molina Mostajo, *Observaciones y rectificaciones a la "Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Una nueva república en Sudamérica"*, 149.

¹⁸⁵ I was able to identified only 21 delegates that were members of the POS in *El Frente*, February 5, 1939, 1 and *El Frente*, February 14, 1939, 1. An editorial from *El Frente* referred to "25 representantes orientales" “que están con la verdad de su pueblo y no los 5 rezagados que renuncian a interpretar esa verdad," *El Frente*, February 9 1939, 3. It is difficult to measure the support to the POS in the Santa Cruz population, but we could easily do it among its representatives and senators. The two senators and ten among its representatives were members of the POS. Only 3 representatives were out of the party--A clear majority.

¹⁸⁶ Céspedes, *El dictador suicida*, 178.

¹⁸⁷ An editorial from *El Frente* stated that "todos los puntos contenidos en el nuevo partido no son nuevos." Editorial, "El Pan-orientalismo," *El Frente*, February 14, 1939, 3.

a whole; no longer as part of a mythical or legendary narrative of that Hispanophile history, but as a constitutive part of the present, a gamble for the future, to be settled in the political arena.¹⁸⁸

It was in this way that two ways of understanding the nation confronted each other: on one hand were the Cruceños who thought they were able to proclaim themselves different within the nation; and President Busch on the other, who saw the inhabitants of the national territory as the same and understood attempts by one group to proclaim themselves different as an affront to the nation.

Day by Day

What later came to provoke a scandal occurred when the Partido Oriental Socialista (POS) signed the “Cobija Declaration” in January 1939, at the mythical Cachuela Esperanza, headquarters of rubber empire of the Casa Suarez. They declared their intentions to: “proclaim the intangibility of the oriental territory’ ‘accept as a basic principal the integrity of each and every oriental department, establishing the defense of our racial identity’ ‘sustain the principal of the defense of our race’.”¹⁸⁹

The Santa Cruz newspaper *El Tiempo* registered the first reaction. This paper was directed by Lucas Saucedo Sevilla, who in his youth had been against regionalism -at least it seemed- since president Bautista Saavedra appointed him intervener of the municipal council of

¹⁸⁸ The newness was the audience for the message. Enrique Finot's 1946 novel, *Tierra Adentro*, about separatism in the 1920s is straightforward about this topic. The public version was a Partido Autonomista and the real separatist intention was only expressed inside the secret lodge. Enrique Finot, *Tierra adentro* (La Paz: Juventud. 1980).

¹⁸⁹ Quoted in "Tendencias del partido orientalista," *El Diario*, February 9, 1939, 6.

Santa Cruz: the uprisings over the railroad during the 1920s were against his presidency.¹⁹⁰ In an editorial he expressed his concern questioning how the “intangibility of the Oriental territories,” or “[our] historic and racial identity” that maintained the principal behind “the conservation of our race,” could be talked about when “the same political organization bares one flag and one shield.” He further expounded that: “the establishment and conservation of racial difference, the proclamation of the good and the better, tall or short, in a country seeking to maintain the socialist principles of equality [are] [...] conclusions typical of totalitarian States.”¹⁹¹

In addition to this, a member of the organization of delegates from the *Oriente*, Gonzalo Cuéllar Jiménez, a representative for Yacuma, Beni, became the mouthpiece for the opposition to the POS from the *Oriente* itself. He affirmed that racism “does not exist and has never existed” among the Cruceño people; however he made an interesting clarification, “as the political ideal of the Cruceño people.”¹⁹² This reinforced the idea of distinct spheres: that racism exists in the quotidian life of Cruceños was one thing, but it was serious once it attempted to enter the political sphere. Later in telegram style language he clarified that a “Partido Oriental Racista” would be justified, “if the president would be a stranger in our environment or attempted to postpone Oriente ideals.”¹⁹³ In other words: it would be justifiable if he were a Colla and did what almost all governments had always done since the seat of government came to La Paz. He wrote a didactic article explaining how the federal vindication of Santa Cruz was always misunderstood and dubbed as separatist.

¹⁹⁰ Sanabria Fernández, *Cruceños notables*, 193-196.

¹⁹¹ "Declaración racial-cívico-política," *El Tiempo*, January 28, 1939, 2.

¹⁹² Gonzalo Cuéllar Jiménez, "Algunas consideraciones sobre el 'racismo' cruceño," *El Tiempo*, February 2, 1939, 1.

¹⁹³ "El sentido doctrinal de la campaña regionalista," *La Nación* (Santa Cruz), January 11, 1939, 3.

Among all his ideas, perhaps the most interesting was the way in which this method of racial differentiation in a nation that wanted to become equalitarian, is a form of separatism, as he explained, when: “representatives proclaimed [...] the question of race to be a political principal guiding the nourishment of future generations. It is not only regionalism that illuminates the minds of new prophets, it is something more, it is ‘racism’, equivalent to separatism, as an encrusted minority in the Bolivian State.”¹⁹⁴

From the *altiplano*, the press from La Paz showed its surprise underlining how unprecedented it was for “race” and historic identity to be part of a political party’s program.¹⁹⁵ In an editorial appearing in *El Diario*, one can clearly read the tragic way in which this “insurgence” was lived, for questioning what for them, were the pillars of the nation:

In effect the unity that defines the sovereignty of the nation is destroyed; as is the political structure of the State and the profound consciousness of Bolivianness that animates in one effort all the wills of the country, from the moment when, from one of the territory’s angles 15 NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES raised a flag not representative of a political party borne of the nation, but expressing with astounding clarity the incubating mind of another sovereignty with its own definitions of geographic order, historical trajectory and racial ancestry.¹⁹⁶

In the same article, the editorialist recalled, as someone recollecting old sins, the separatist books registering “names and events” that testify about the unsuccessful separatist campaign.¹⁹⁷

A few days later, another retort to the POS appeared in the column “Urbi et Orbi” published by *El Diario*, and signed with the pseudonym Fra Moreale. This highly elaborate article was written with scientific pretensions. The author denounced the POS as “a veritable betrayal of Bolivia’s

¹⁹⁴ Gonzalo Cuéllar Jiménez, "Algunas consideraciones sobre el 'racismo' cruceño," *El Tiempo*, February 2, 1939, 1.

¹⁹⁵ "Tendencias del partido orientalista," *El Diario*, February 9, 1939, 7.

¹⁹⁶ Editorial, "Hora de afirmación nacional," *El Diario*, February 10, 1939, 6.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

destiny, and the country's racial, economic and geographic unity"¹⁹⁸ and recommended a strong reprobation because, "its future is threatened and the very existence as a free and independent nation."¹⁹⁹ He also appealed to the specter of Acre's separatism, and in relation to the racial issue he wrote: "Again there is talk of a Cruceño race [...] but only the Aztecas, Mayas, Aymaras and Keschuas have been races as such [...] [The] concept of race has never been applied [to] [...] certain errant tribes [...] who never gained enough culture, such as language and other signs of civilization that characterize all the true races. Guaraní never was, and this is clearly the case if we take into account that the Keschuas got to Paraguay in their conquests, as we can confirm [...] in any linguistic study."²⁰⁰

The maneuver of Fra Moreale was clear; seeing that the Cruceños were intent on talking about "race" (not as "whites" anymore, due to the controversy produced, but as something "autochthonous" in their comparisons expressed in "Manifesto to the nation," an attempt to convert that racism into an indigenist vindication), the columnist choose to make it clear that orientales were "savages" and, as such, did not merit the title of "race." Afterwards, just in case they wanted to insist on white "purity," he clarified that they, as all Hispano Americans were mestizo: "As the Indian nations mixed under the shadow of Spanish banners, today, as Ganivet has said there is only one indo-arab-hispanic race. Such is the definite reality, not only in Bolivia, but also in any Pan-American nation, that to raise the racist flag is simply infantile."²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Fra Moreale, "El partido regionalista," *El Diario*, February 12, 1939, 9.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Fra Moreale, "El partido regionalista," *El Diario*, February 12, 1939, 9.

Meanwhile, the POS invited President Busch to join the cause;²⁰² but he did not react as they expected, as an *oriental*, but –in the code left by René Zavaleta to understand the Busch phenomenon– as part of the “only centralized element [the army] in a country that has not fulfilled the function of its centralization.”²⁰³

In the responding telegram, Busch made it clear that the declaration of the POS did not express the feelings of the Oriental departments embarked on the cause of the nation and made a reference, as Molina had done years earlier,²⁰⁴ to the participation of the peoples from the *Oriente* in the wars of independence, the Pacific, Acre and the Chaco, as definitive evidence of their belonging to the nation. In the same telegram, partly as a threat, he gave a definition of the nation:

As president and a military officer, I cannot conceive of any other political tendency other than that which proclaims the integrity of the nation as an indivisible unit, with a historic, geographic and racial solidarity and aims for the unity of all Bolivians, to work as one, in all the confines of the republic, for the growing transcendence of Bolivia. Any other modality [...] will always seem to me to be damaging to the superior interests of the nation and I will fight these wherever I find it with all the strength and passion that gives me my sincerity and my patriotic fervor.²⁰⁵

²⁰² “El Presidente de la República ha reprobado la organización del Partido Orientalista,” *El Diario*, February 11, 1939, 6.

²⁰³ René Zavaleta, *50 años de historia* (Cochabamba: Los Amigos del Libro, 1992), 42.

²⁰⁴ Molina Mostajo, *Observaciones y rectificaciones a la "Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Una nueva república en Sudamérica"*.

²⁰⁵ “El Presidente de la República ha reprobado la organización del Partido Orientalista,” *El Diario*, February 1, 1939, 6. My emphasis.

Before this generalized and adverse reaction the POS denied all the accusations one by one. They attributed bad intentions to the “damaging or badly intentioned press” for alleging they had “antipatriotic intentions.”²⁰⁶ They clarified that they were well received in Santa Cruz.²⁰⁷ Furthermore they suggested that the Casa Suárez spent “its money without selfishness or interest” and only then, for the “redemption” of the “three departments of our race.”²⁰⁸ They emphasized their being within the law expressing their adhesion to the “constitutional Busch government.”²⁰⁹

On the other hand, in a telegram sent to Busch subsequently published as the main story of an edition of *El Frente* and taking up half the front page, two senators and ten representatives from the POS, made a series of clarifications:

If we establish the historical and racial identity of the three departments, our intention is within the strictest scientific-sociological concept and because we know that of the three racial elements that make up the unity of Bolivia, the most abandoned is ours, which does not enjoy even the intellectual environment such as the one which been created around Tiahuanaco and the indianist tendencies [that in] [...] La Paz is based on the experimental schools with investigational societies and museums, whose objective is the study and achievement of the altiplano race.

With the same unswerving patriotism as the men of politics and study from that region, we believe it to be our corresponding right to watch over, in the first sense, our autochthonous families, whose majority is still in a primitive state in the jungle, subtracting hands from agricultural labor.²¹⁰

²⁰⁶ "Un senador y tres diputados telegrafaron al presidente explicando su 'orientalismo'," *El Diario*, February 11, 1939, 6, and *La Nación* (Santa Cruz), February 14, 1939, 3.

²⁰⁷ "Un senador y tres diputados telegrafaron al presidente explicando su 'orientalismo'," *El Diario*, February 11, 1939, 6.

²⁰⁸ "Explican su actitud los fundadores del Partido Orientalista," *El Diario*, February 12, 1939, 7.

²⁰⁹ "Un senador y tres diputados telegrafaron al presidente explicando su 'orientalismo'," *El Diario*, February 11, 1939, 6.

²¹⁰ "Define su ideología el partido ORIENTAL SOCIALISTA," *El Frente*, February 14 1939, 1. The article was 3/5 of the cover page.

This was a defensive strategy where they made a shift towards a type of indigenismo, vindicating the “autochthonous families” of the *Oriente*. In so doing, and as is the case even in the 21st century, they could not avoid reflecting a concept of ownership over the latter as well as projecting the classic demand for labor.

Some days later they circulated the *Manifiesto a la nación*, their formal farewell and a species of delayed apology. With respect to the “race” issue, they tried to emerge on a strong footing by explaining what had been said, drawing their own parallels with other autochthonous “races” in Bolivia, in a novel brand of indigenismo, that now avoided Hispanic purity, and taking root in the telluric: “If we talk about the Oriente race, it is with the same scientific speculation that refers to the Tihuanacotas, Aymara or Quechua, and with the same objective of conserving their traditions and stimulating their virtues.”²¹¹

In the same document, they re-elaborated the concept of nation that they were handling. Rapidly they adhered to an idea in the best “democratic” sense, according to which all those born inside the territory were the same and made up part of a family: “We never had the idea of introducing prejudices, mistrust or suspicions within the Bolivian family, which is part of us as well as all of those born inside the republic, and much less break or weaken national unity, which is the fundamental essence of our sovereignty.”²¹²

²¹¹ “Los representantes orientales se abstuvieron de seguir ejercitando sus deberes en virtud de la orden del Pdte. De la República,” *El Diario*, February 18, 1939, 7; also appeared in *El Frente*, February 24, 1939, 3 and *El Tiempo*, February 25, 1939, 3. The telegram was signed by senators G. Chávez, N. Solares and representatives W. Suarez Landívar, J. Antelo and F. Hurtado Pedraza.

²¹² “Los representantes orientales se abstuvieron de seguir ejercitando sus deberes en virtud de la orden del Pdte. De la República,” *El Diario*, February 18, 1939, 7.

One week later in *El Frente* of Santa Cruz, the senator Solares clarified that retirement from the political arena was momentary: “The POS will subsist in the next congressional meeting, but for now it has resolved to abstain from all political activity in agreement with the government.”²¹³

* * *

Following the disillusionment caused by the failure of the decentralization proposal in the 1938 constitutional convention and, relating that with the prerogatives of party politics on a national scale, the majority of the representatives from the *Oriente* decided to form a regional party, the POS. According to them, the historic, geographic and racial identity of the Bolivian *Oriente* made a regional party necessary in order to represent the specificities of their region. Busch, representing the central government, reacted energetically calling for the dissolution of the party, explaining that the Bolivian nation was – historically, geographically and racially – an “indivisible unit.” Representatives of the POS, in an attempt to justify its actions, tried to equate themselves with the *indigenismo* movement centered in the Tihuanaco region. The limits of this pragmatic and sudden claim to *indigenismo* was evident in the way they described the “autochthonous” as “primitive,” the use of a paternalistic tone in referring to them as “ours” and productivist point of view when describing them as a waste of workforce.

²¹³ “El senador Solares hace interesantes declaraciones,” *El Frente*, March 3, 1939.

4. The Cruceños

As we have seen, the fundamental ideas of the separatist campaign were based on an interpretation of history and certain ethnic characteristics that were attributed to the population of Santa Cruz. On one hand, the Cruceños were described as the product of the fusion between Spanish and Guaraní, and as such mestizos, but of a distinct type from *altiplano* mestizos: in the low lands they had inherited the best of the Spaniard and the best of the Indian; in contrast to the natives from the *altiplano* who had received only the “bad” characteristic of each group. I suggest calling this kind of mestizaje “differential mestizaje,” since the indigenous groups from the lowlands were attributed a eugenic quality that enabled them to “whiten” themselves with more facility than the indigenous of the highlands.²¹⁴ The Chilean Paraguayan historian Raul del Pozo Cano was explicit in this respect. According to him – as we saw above – the “altiplano cholaje” was “indolent and only interested in politics and intrigue” while the Cruceños “dedicated all their strength to work, which is life and redemption.”²¹⁵

The emphasis on the brotherhood between Cruceños and Guaranís was not inconsequential; on the contrary, it was one of the two pillars upholding the explanation of why Santa Cruz should separate from Bolivia and become a protectorate of Paraguay.

On the other hand, and tied to the ethnic question another pillar appeared: the reconstruction of a past that explained why Santa Cruz should not be part of Bolivia. It was in this way that separatist authors reached back into the XVI century, and to Ñuflo de Chavez. They underlined how his expedition had been part of a colonizing current that traveled up the Río de la

²¹⁴ Hernán Pruden, “Santa Cruz entre la post-guerra del Chaco y la Revolución Nacional: cruceños y cambas,” *Historias* 6 (2003): 41-63.

²¹⁵ del Pozo Cano, *Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, 15.

Plata, and more precisely from Asunción, instead of the current from Lima that had founded the cities of the *altiplano*. Particular emphasis was placed on the fact that Ñuflo had created an “independent governance.” From republican history, they went straight to the foundation of Bolivian, stressing that Santa Cruz representatives were not present at the signing of the treaty of independence. Almost at the same time, in 1825, the military government of Chiquitos had attempted annexation with Brazil but failed following the refusal of emperor Pedro I. Later attempts to separate were carried out at different moments, such as the uprising led by Andrés Ibáñez and the egalitarians (1876-1877), the pro-Cochabamba railroad struggles of the 1920s, and during the Chaco War.²¹⁶

Separatist’s reconstruction of the past had been explicit: Santa Cruz had been created independently from Bolivia, and had not expressed its will in the process and since the birth of the republic, had attempted to separate from the latter.

In reaction to the separatists, a group of integrationists appeared, principally members of the Cruceño elite, who responded to those who denied that Santa Cruz belonged to Bolivia. They underlined their bolivianness: by affirming their condition as “civilized” Cruceños and underscoring their position as intense enemies of the “savage” Guaranís. As Romulo Herrera suggested: "Far from having their roots in that race [Guaraní] retarded by their vices and passions, they were always their fiercest enemies and the civilizing process they unraveled in the

²¹⁶ The separatist versión on Ñuflo de Chavez: del Pozo Cano, *Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, 11-12; Gandía, *Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, 72, 84, 252. On the absence of Santa Cruz representatives in the Independence signature: del Pozo Cano, *Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, 30 and Gandía, *Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, 182. On Chiquitos annexation to Brazil: del Pozo Cano, *Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, 31 and Gandía, *Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, 183-184. On Santa Cruz attempts to secede: Gandía, *Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra*, 241.

fields of the Chaco, was always backed by the fervent desire to destroy what constitutes an embarrassment for the cultures of the South American peoples."²¹⁷

In addition, the integrationists reinterpreted the tense history between Santa Cruz and the central government, which replied to the separatist version by interpreting it as an expression of successive demands for the physical and economic integration of the nation, and also for political autonomy: federalism.

In the integrationist version, Ñuflo de Chavez was described as being from Asunción, but at the same time it was underlined how he had broken off relations with that administration, and had latter asked the viceroy Hurtado de Mendoza for integration with the viceroyalty of Perú. In reference to the absence of Cruceño representatives, they quite simply showed how (with secondary sources) they had been, in fact, present. The Chiquitos annexation attempt was simply corrected by underlining that, at that time, there was no “military government” as the separatists pretended, but only “parties,” and by vitiating the argument they subtracted importance from their interpretation. The series of conflicts between the central government and Santa Cruz were explained as demands for federalism in response to the overbearing centralism of the *altiplano* governments.²¹⁸

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²¹⁸ The integrationist versión on Ñuflo de Chavez: Molina Mostajo, *Observaciones y rectificaciones a la "Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Una nueva república en Sudamérica"*, 26. On the presence of Santa Cruz representatives in the Independence signature: Molina Mostajo, *Observaciones y rectificaciones a la "Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Una nueva república en Sudamérica"*. On Chiquitos annexation to Brazil: Molina Mostajo, *Observaciones y rectificaciones a la "Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Una nueva república en Sudamérica"*, 117. On the struggles between Santa Cruz and the central government: Molina Mostajo, *Observaciones y rectificaciones a la "Historia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Una nueva república en Sudamérica"*, 144-149.

The positioning of the integrationists as underscoring their civilized Spanish stock in opposition to Guaraní savagery is easily understood as part of a Santa Cruz historiography that was introduced by Gabriel René Moreno and includes the so called “generación del 25.” A good part of this Santa Cruz historiography was articulated in emphasizing every Spanish characteristic while, simultaneously, hiding all indigenous elements the Cruceños possessed. In general, we can say this was the predominant position taken during the region’s period of “isolation” from the end of the 19th century until the middle of the 20th century.

Beginning in 1879, the conservative’s modernizing policies had generated the displacement of Cruceño products from the *altiplano* markets. The breaking point had been the construction of the railroads connecting the pacific ports with the mining centers. The situation was made worse by liberal free trade policies and the collapse of the Southern axis articulated around Sucre-Potosi and the silver economy, as well as the shift to the Northern La Paz-Oruro axis centered on tin. At that time, disenchantment must have added to the objective economic situation: the Santa Cruz elite that had supported the La Paz group during Federal War, suffered the deception of realizing that the liberals were not going to implement federal policies as promised, but continue with the preexisting centralist system. At this time, Santa Cruz demands were, on the one hand, physical integration with the rest of the country and, on the other, the autonomy of local government. The method of presenting these as legitimate and rightfully theirs as part of the Bolivian nation, were sustained by historical arguments and –mixed in with these – descriptions of the ethnic composition of their population.

In the historical reconstruction made by integrationists concerning the foundations of Santa Cruz, a revision made during a delicate period in the post war era, the figure of Ñuflo de Chavez allowed for references to problems confronted by the Santa Cruz elite in relation to

issues of origin and bolivianness. Ñuflo had come from Asunción, later meeting up with Andrés Manso and came before the viceroy, who recognized his legitimacy. Regardless, the son of the viceroy was sent to govern the province. Ñuflo's history allowed Santa Cruz elite to make reference to: i) a Hispanic origin distinct from the *altoperuanos*, ii) the civic decision to belong to Bolivia (instead of a natural consequence of ethnic origin and a common history and geography), and iii) the conflictive issue of Cruceños being governed on a local and national level by *forasteros*. Because of these motives, the figure of Ñuflo de Chavez, from whom they claimed lineage, condensed and clarified key points of the Cruceño question. On one hand, it embodied the myth that allowed the legitimate presentation of demands of integration, autonomy, and material resources (i.e., protected markets, railroads). On the other hand, we can view this identification with Ñuflo, and consequently with the Spanish, as allowing the Cruceños to position themselves as deserving of a special place in a predominately indigenous nation.

The end of the Chaco War marked the beginning of a new Bolivia and Santa Cruz achieved a central place in the national agenda. The political scenario was radicalized. The Santa Cruz elite had to accommodate to the new setting. In the constitutional convention they realized that the “traditional parties,” characteristic of seigniorial pre war times, were gone. They understood the difficulties of presenting regional demands through national political parties.

The founding of the POS was groundbreaking for the vindication of ethnic differences and a separate Cruceño history came to form an integral part of their party politics and, subsequently, became a message directed to the nation as a whole; no longer as part of a mythical or legendary narrative of Hispanic history, but as a constitutive part of the present, a gamble for the future, to be settled in the political arena. In 1939, after President Busch's rejection of the POS' attempt to emphasize difference, the Santa Cruz elite came to acknowledge

the problems in presenting themselves as white in a predominantly indigenous country as a way of claiming legitimacy for territorial integration. Despite the fact that, in 1935, they were denying any brotherhood with the Guaraní, during the separatist-integrationist debates in the years following, they began to pragmatically use *indigenismo* in an attempt to defend themselves against accusations of racism. They surely learned the lessons of what could and could not be said in the national political arena.

Part 2: The interlude (the Bohan Mission and the expectancy of the Santa Cruz elite)

The Second World War opened up the possibility for repositioning some Bolivian commodities in the international market. While the US was preparing to enter the war, Bolivian materials (tin, tungsten, rubber, quinine) became a strategic priority. The Bolivian government traded these materials at a fixed price, below its market price, and declared war with the Axis and received in compensation financial and technical aid. After settling the pending issue of Standard Oil expropriation, through a modicum compensation, the US sent a technical mission to assess the Bolivian economy. They agreed with the Bolivian government that it was crucial to link the *Oriente* to the highlands. Instead of the long demanded railway they proposed a highway to link Cochabamba and Santa Cruz. The rationale behind the plan was to sanitize the economy while avoiding the use of foreign exchange to pay for foodstuff – that would instead be provided by the *Oriente* – and, finally, to also produce oil in this region. In this way, Bolivia would be able to pay its debt to the US and –according to the Department of State - would possess a far more stable economy.

Bohan's ambitious plan was to be realized by the Corporación Boliviana de Fomento. In fact, the two primary propositions in the plan – the construction of the Cochabamba-Santa Cruz highway and the initiation of oil production – were both advantageous to the private sector (with help of US tax dollars). US cooperation decreased significantly after the coup d'état against pro-US Enrique Peñaranda, the coup that put Gualberto Villarroel in power. Alleged pro Axis sympathies within this new Bolivian government froze any further cooperation between the US and Bolivia.

The Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) was part of Villarroel government and, therefore, became stronger in this period. This affected the MNR in Santa Cruz, which also

grew, and where its constituency was an alliance between artisans and the middle class.²¹⁹ The coup d'état against Villarroel was led by the PIR (the Stalinist pro Soviet party); nevertheless, in the period following the coup, the PIR was profoundly discredited as a viable option for leadership, opening the political space for the MNR to grow.

In the midst of an economic crisis, with low international prices for tin and domestic inflation, the MNR organized, in August of 1949, the so-called *Guerra Civil*, led by Hernán Siles Suazo. Santa Cruz was the “epicenter of the combat” and the location for the provisional headquarters.²²⁰ This so-called *Guerra Civil* not only revealed an alliance between the middle and working class, as well as between the MNR and sections of the POR, but also the level of support that the MNR held in Santa Cruz.

We will observe the interregnum between the abrupt dissolution of the POS, following Busch's threats for claiming difference in a country of equals, and the revolution. This period in Santa Cruz was marked by the expectations that accompanied the Bohan Mission and the newly created Corporación Boliviana de Fomento. For most of this period, there were almost no references to self- government of any kind. Furthermore, there existed a notorious specialization in discourse—one aimed at the intraregional level and the other at the nation as a whole. At the intraregional level, intellectuals from Santa Cruz argued that being part of Bolivia was a rational choice that was related with being economically complementary; they simultaneously insisted on their claims to whiteness. At the national level, they referred to the economic complementarity but also added the "blood tribute" in the wars of Acre, Pacífico and Chaco, as an example of “paying their dues” to Bolivia.

²¹⁹ Roxana Ybarnegaray, *El espíritu del capitalismo y la agricultura cruceña*, 47.

²²⁰ Gustavo Rodríguez Ostría, *Poder central y proyecto regional*, 145 and Herbert Klein, *Historia de Bolivia*, 229.

We are going to analyze references to a particular kind of mestizaje in this period, what I call “mestizaje diferencial,” where the mestizos in the *Oriente* believed that they had been “whitened” with a particular ease in contrast to those in the Altiplano. Some ideas arising out of Eugenics are present in this depiction of mestizaje. Nevertheless, at the time, there was also a certain amount of praising the bravery of the indigenous groups of the *Oriente*.

1. United States and Bolivia during the Second World War

The Bohan Mission arrived in the midst of the Second World War, right before the “Hawaii Operation,” commonly known as the Pearl Harbor attacks, were about to occur. While the US had not yet declared war on Japan, it was stockpiling strategic raw materials for the war industries and forming alliances with different countries. Bolivia possessed many of these materials, including tin, tungsten, rubber, and quinine. With the exception of rubber, none of these were produced in Santa Cruz. Beyond having these products, Bolivia’s location in the Americas eliminated the need to cross danger oceans, making it even more strategic to US interests. These raw materials had many strategic uses in a war economy: tin and tungsten were used in military alloys, tungsten also for making lamps, rubber for pneumatics and aviation masks, and quinine for the treatment of malaria, something essential for fighting in tropical areas. The Department of State initiated a program of agreements with countries in the Americas. They offered defense assistance, through Lend Lease Bills, and credits for production, through the Export Import Bank, in exchange for raw materials for the war industry, strategic facilities, like ports and airports, and political alignment.

In Bolivia, after the tragic death of Germán Busch in August 1939, General Carlos Quintanilla became president. The traditional parties, Liberal and Republican, joined under *La Concordancia*, pressured Quintanilla to call for elections. *La Concordancia* backed Enrique Peñaranda. The group of “*socialistas nacionales*” that participated in the 1938 constitutional assembly and that was later crucial for the MNR, also backed Peñaranda, the turn to the left in politics was evident even during censitary suffrage times, where among a total population of around three million only 58.000 had voted. José Antonio Arze, a Marxist professor that soon

after would organize the Partido de Izquierda Revolucionaria (PIR), got 10.000 votes.²²¹ The winner of 1940 election was Peñaranda. However, the tendency towards radicalization was more acute by the May 1942 elections, when the traditional parties got only 14.163 votes versus 23.401 for the non-traditional ones.²²² This was the internal political context while the negotiations between the US and Bolivia were held.

The Negotiation

The Bolivian government successfully lobbied through her representative, Enrique Finot, for the Second Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics, in July 1940 to declare that the Arica-Santos railway had strategic importance for continental defense and therefore recommended to finance the “section still to be constructed.”²²³ The sections then not yet built were: Corumbá-Santa Cruz and Santa Cruz-Vila Vila, a few kilometers from Cochabamba. The Corumbá-Santa Cruz section was already covered by an agreement with Brazil; they would build the railway in exchange for oil. However, the Vila Vila-Santa Cruz section was vital and there was no clarity as to whether or not it would be built.

The Bolivian government, through their diplomatic channels, asked the Department of State to send a technical mission to conduct a feasibility study of a railway that finally would link Santa Cruz with Cochabamba. In 1941, a group of engineers from the US Army arrived. They did the calculations and concluded that a railway would cost four times more than a

²²¹ Herbert Klein, *Orígenes de la Revolución Nacional boliviana: La crisis de la generación del Chaco*, 385.

²²² Herbert Klein, *Historia de Bolivia*, 222.

²²³ "Second Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics," *The American Journal of International Law* 35, no. 1, Supplement: Official Documents (January 1941), 13.

highway.²²⁴ Keeping in mind the amount of steel needed to build a railway, and steel's place among the strategic war materials, clearly the US was not going to send it during the war. The engineers recommended a highway instead, to be built, utilizing machines, engineers and companies, all from the US, following the Eximbank policies.²²⁵

The Bolivian government attempted to present the railway as strategically important. The North American engineers were, however, very clear in stating that due to inclinations and the angles of curves, the railway could supply neither the US Army nor any other army.²²⁶ To sum up, it had no strategic value. A highway with year-round traffic could move 800 vehicles a day, and was therefore, more cost-efficient. However, as a member of the Bolivian parliament noted, the highway would indirectly foment the US automobile industry, by using and requiring auto parts, motor oil, tires, road machinery, and technicians all from the US. Part of the Eximbank responsibilities, as a sort of New Deal institution, was to promote the exports of goods and services from the US.

The parliament was part of the opposition to the executive power, and systematically interpellated the cabinet, producing fierce debates. At that moment in Bolivia, everybody wanted a railway. The big question was: who would accept the US offer of financing a highway and postponing the railway that had been the epitome of the idea of progress for many decades?

However there were further obstacles for the US cooperation: Standard Oil and the condition that required governments to declare the war on the axis powers. In 1937, shortly after

²²⁴ "The Minister in Bolivia (Jenkins) to the Secretary of State," La Paz January 6, 1941. *Foreign relations of the United States diplomatic papers. The American Republics*, vol. 5. (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1940), 555.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 558.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 553.

the end of the Chaco War, the Bolivian government of David Toro, claiming that Standard Oil had sold Bolivian oil to Paraguay, through Argentina, decided to expropriate the company. The legal issue was never solved. During the negotiations between Bolivia and the US, the issue reappeared.

After long diplomatic conversations, spiced up by a strike in Bolivia against the Standard Oil,²²⁷ the Bolivian government utilized the threat of potential anti-North American popular actions in order to convince the US to find a solution.

The Department of State pressured Standard Oil to reach an agreement. Standard Oil, mainly property of the Rockefeller family, did not want to set a precedent of forgiving an expropriation and therefore did not want to cede without compensation. Their solution was for the company will sell a series of maps and studies to the Bolivian government for 1.5 million dollars, even when they had supposedly invested 17 million dollars in Bolivia.

According to Bryce Wood, this was part of a new policy that prioritized political interests in having good relations with Latin America over the interests of US business enterprises.²²⁸ However, leftist groups in Bolivia reacted and depicted the agreement as a sell-out anyways.²²⁹ The negotiations continued. As it was clear for the US Chargé in Bolivia, Allan Dawson, the Bolivians aspire to maximize US concessions in exchange for the help we give them.²³⁰ José Antonio Arze, who had just come in second in the presidential election after Peñaranda, was teaching at the time at a Massachusetts college. He took the advantage of the momentum while

²²⁷ "The Minister in Bolivia (Jenkins) to the Secretary of State," La Paz March 27, 1941. *Foreign relations of the United States diplomatic papers. The American Republics*, vol. 6. (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1941), 466.

²²⁸ Bryce Wood, *The making of the Good Neighbor Policy* (New York: Norton, 1967), 194.

²²⁹ "Conserve su derecha. Democracia de pongueaje," *La Calle*, November 29, 1941, 4.

²³⁰ "The Chargé in Bolivia (Dawson) to the Secretary of State," La Paz, 13 December, 1941. *Foreign relations of the United States diplomatic papers. The American Republics*, volume 6, 432.

Peñaranda was visiting the US. In a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* he stated that the word “communist” had served in the past as a “pretext to harass domestic enemies. Now some Latin-American governments are using the pretext of Nazism for the same ends (and also to get loans in the United States).”²³¹

The Bolivian parliament was planning to send a group of government representatives along with industrialists to explain what they expected from the Bohan Mission. However, the Department of State noticed this and ordered one of its diplomats to dissuade the Bolivian government from doing any such thing until the mission delivered its plan.²³² The active posture of the Bolivian elite, demanding from the US certain actions to develop the country, contrasts with Arturo Escobar’s depiction of development as an exogenous discourse imposed from abroad.²³³ In fact, when Bohan finally arrived to Bolivia, the government and institutions like the *Sociedad de Ingenieros*, were welcomed and the “solutions” to Bolivian problems were exposed to him.²³⁴

Not only there were a series of different potential solutions for the Bolivian problem, but there were positions diverging from the government’s about the terms of the agreement with the US and how to best take advantage of the war situation.

As we explained before, the parliament had, at the time, the ability to obstruct Executive initiatives. Interpellation was one of the opposition’s usual techniques. In one of the

²³¹ Letters to the Editor, José Antonio Arze, *New York Times*, November 23, 1941, 38.

²³² "The Charge in Bolivia (Dawson) to the Secretary of State," La Paz, 28 October, 1941. *Foreign relations of the United States diplomatic papers. The American Republics*, vol. 6. (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1941), 444.

²³³ Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The making and unmaking of the third World*.

²³⁴ "The Charge in Bolivia (Dawson) to the Secretary of State, " La Paz, 17 Nov 1941. *Foreign relations of the United States diplomatic papers. The American Republics*, vol. 6. (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1941), 448.

interpellations to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, after the minister read a letter from president Franklin Delano Roosevelt to president Peñaranda, he stated, probably unaware of his clairvoyance, that “US cooperation is not circumstantial collaboration but a process that is just beginning.” The same day, the Minister of Finance, Joaquín Espada, in a speech attempting to justify the terms of the agreement, stated that helping the US was promoting the triumph of “Christian civilization.”²³⁵ He also justified the aid to the US as a way of avoiding an “isolationist policy.”²³⁶

The Minister of Finance had clarity about the necessity of technical and financial aid in order to prosper. He criticized the “unconscious” way of utilizing the external loans in the past, proposing this time instead to invest in “productive works.”²³⁷ That was the reason behind inviting the mission headed by Bohan; When Bohan studied the Bolivian deficit and the balance of payments, he proposed a policy essentially oriented towards import-substitution, particularly of the high-demand products.²³⁸

The Minister of Finances faced a big challenge —To explain that the US loan was not intended for the Cochabamba-Santa Cruz railway. Public opinion in Santa Cruz and the rest of the country, as well as its parliamentary representatives, all inclined towards the railway instead of a highway. Therefore, it would not be easy to convince them of the contrary. The minister opted to refer to the role of railways in the progress of countries, explaining that it was impossible to build them on the base of “national savings” and therefore foreign loans were

²³⁵ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la H. Cámara de Diputados*, Congreso Ordinario de 1942 (La Paz: Editorial La Paz, 1943) vol. 1, 301.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 300.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 302.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 302-303.

needed. The issue was that, besides Argentina and Brazil financing the Yacuiba and Corumbá Santa Cruz railways, the possible financial source was, according to the Minister, the US. As long as the US was at war and needed steel to satisfy war demands, they would not allocate steel for railways in Bolivia. But the Minister explained that the Corporación Boliviana de Fomento would conduct a feasibility study of the railway, with the “understanding that it will be done after the war.”²³⁹

The criticisms expressed in the parliament and in the press were almost immediate. In the parliament, these criticisms were headed by Víctor Paz Estenssoro and the newly founded Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario, whose position appeared not only in the parliamentary sessions but also in the newspaper *La Calle*. The MNR criticized the defense of the democracy rhetoric surrounding the agreements with the US, especially in relation to the mineral and rubber supply and the loans for the projects recommended by Bohan. In the newspaper *La Calle*, they claimed that it would be better if the Minister of Finance, Joaquín Espada, did not begin the “poem of dollars” with the “fanfare of the 'democracy' bards” because “they made the whole country dream about a dance of millions of dollars in every region of the country, especially in Santa Cruz.” They also criticized the fact that the bankers “dosify the loan, conditioning it that the investments were previously ‘justified’.”²⁴⁰ A US diplomat explained in an internal document that Bolivians interpreted “economic cooperation” as unilateral assistance from the US to Bolivia. 241

²³⁹ Ibid., 305.

²⁴⁰ “Conserve su derecha. Pasó el momento del optimismo poético,” *La Calle*, November 22, 1941, 4. My emphasis.

²⁴¹ “The Charge in Bolivia (Dawson) to the Secretary of State,” La Paz, 17 Nov 1941. *Foreign relations of the United States diplomatic papers. The American Republics*, vol. 6. (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1941), 451.

The Santa Cruz newspaper *El Frente*, the organ of the *Partido Socialista Obrero de Bolivia* (PSOB) then led at the national level by Gustavo Navarro (aka, Tristán Marof), criticized the celerity of the Bolivian government signing of the agreement for strategic materials, because it limited their leverage. It was clear that the US would give technical and financial cooperation in exchange for strategic materials. The newspaper's position implied that natural resources belonged to the nation along with the project to integrate the *Oriente*.

Alongside these criticisms, there were also defenses of the agreements with the US and criticisms that the parliamentarians were being obstructionist. The newspaper *Ultima Hora*, owned by miner Mauricio Hochschild,²⁴² stated in an editorial that the deputies were dedicated solely to “innocuous bills and flamboyant oratory exhibitions blocking the action of the central state and searching for a parliamentary dictatorship of sorts” and that “pro anarchy groups” from the chamber were:

...hindering the cooperation with the US with demagogical and dilatory objectives that will have nefarious consequences for the whole nation. The majority of the deputies live a half a Century behind in ideological and international political culture terms. To talk about 'Yankee imperialism' and of 'economic serfdom to the dollar' when the international context is being transformed, preparing the terrain for a new financial and juridical regime that will regulate the relations among the peoples, is an unacceptable anachronism on part of the Bolivian legislators.²⁴³

Paradoxically, in order to defend world democracy, Hochschild's newspaper even seemed to call for closing the Bolivian parliament.

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²⁴² Knudson, *The Press and the Bolivian National Revolution*, 19.

²⁴³ Editorial, “La Cámara de diputados contra los intereses de la Nación,” *Ultima Hora*, August 21, 1942, 5.

The US was, in the early 1940s, preparing to enter the Second World War – stockpiling strategic materials and establishing political alliances. At the time, Bolivia was able to provide raw materials without the need for overseas transportation, as it was conveniently located in the Americas. The US had strategic interest in Bolivia’s economic and political stability, in order to assure a country whose government would be unwavering in its alliance. The Bolivian government was, as we saw, aware of its capacity to negotiate and intended to obtain economic aid to integrate and develop the *Oriente*. Despite lacking the funds to realize this integration of the *Oriente*, it remained among the nation’s foremost priorities after the Chaco War. Therefore, not surprisingly, the arrival of the Bohan Mission generated high expectations.

2. El Plan Bohan

When Bohan was about to leave La Paz, after five months of research, a *New York Times* journalist interviewed him. Bohan expressed frankly: “Bolivia has many resources, awaiting only the fertilizing influence of capital. The United States has abundant capital. The question the economic mission had before it always was: How can that capital be used safely from the standpoint of both Bolivia and the United States?”²⁴⁴

When Bohan presented the plan to the Bolivian press he emphasized the “fertilizing” metaphor and he added comparisons of the relationship between Bolivia and the US at the moment with the one the US had with Europe 75 years before, when Europe lent money to the US. “The economic mission neither wants to promise that the program it’s undertaking will transform Bolivia overnight, nor promise that since the beginning all Bolivian regions will be included immediately it’s development program.”²⁴⁵

The Recipe

The plan was prepared in two stages. The first one, lasted around five years and aimed to equilibrate the balance of payments. Bohan stated to the press that in ten or twelve years the economy would be “favorably readjusted.” The first stage of import substitution required, in the first five years, the linking of the *Altiplano* and the *Oriente* via a transportation system, industrialization of oil, and becoming self sufficient in “sugar, rice, cotton, cattle and wood,” and later even wheat. There would be technical and economic aid for mining. In this way, the plan

²⁴⁴ "Expert describes U.S. Aid to Bolivia," *New York Times*, May 24, 1942, 13.

²⁴⁵ "En forma concisa, Bohan concretó el programa de la Corporación. No hizo alardes democraticos," *La Calle*, May 16, 1942, 4.

aimed to save three or four million dollars a year, money that at the time was spent on imported goods. The second stage included plans of “road works, water intake, electrical plants and sanitary installation, etc.”²⁴⁶

However, while the plan outlined ambitious projections of the nation’s development, there were lingering reservations expressed at times about the feasibility of the two-stage scheme. In the very same plan, Bohan makes an interesting observation: "As simple as it may seem the solution, there are many obstacles for the realization of a rational plan. The most important ones are psychological and financial [...] Many people in Bolivia believed that the wealth of the country is unlimited and the economic researcher all the time is being informed that the country posses huge economic possibilities. It is true that Bolivia has many resources not yet developed, but the possibilities of fast development are decidedly limited."²⁴⁷

The entire political spectrum recognized the technical qualities of the plan. *La Razón*, the newspaper owned by mine owner Carlos V. Aramayo, stated that US cooperation foretold “better times for Bolivia.”²⁴⁸ “Merwin L. Bohan’s words convince the nation that US cooperation is absolutely real and will be concreted in important areas. We could say that it lays the basis for the economic resurgence of Bolivia and subsequently will bring about an independence more real than the ones that preach, the ones that are incredulous about interamerican cooperation.”²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Informe de la Misión Económica de Estados Unidos a Bolivia vol. 1. English version August 15, 1942. Translation into Spanish by G. V. Bilbao la Vieja, August 3, 1943, 7. My emphasis. Archivo Histórico de la Asamblea Legislativa en Vicepresidencia del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia. The agriculture aspects appeared also in: Ben Hur Thibodeaux, *An economic study of agriculture in Bolivia* (Washington, DC: US Mission to Bolivia, 1942). One portion of the report appeared in Spanish in: *Plan Bohan* (La Paz: Carmach 1988).

²⁴⁸ "La fuerza de la razón," *La Razón*, May 16, 1942, 5.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

La Calle recognized the technocratic and pragmatic value of the plan as highly positive because it presented a concise program, and unlike the Bolivian politicians and their fantasies “did not do the democracy extravaganza.”²⁵⁰ These ideas appeared in an article titled with one of Bohan statements, “The cooperation will not transform Bolivia overnight.” There they quoted Bohan explaining that: “Neither the US cooperation will transform Bolivia overnight, nor all Bolivian regions, but they will benefit, if they follow the plan, increasing the wealth of the country and [creating] a favorable situation of the balance of payments [...] To sum up, Bohan’s exposition, concise and simple, referred to the cooperation in its just terms, clarifying the nebulous atmosphere that surround it for a year.”²⁵¹

It is very interesting that the MNR showed an early pragmatism that later during the National Revolution would characterize its relationship with the US. In the beginning they had some objections to the loan agreements, but when they saw the plan they recognized its virtues.

But going back to the question: How well-diffused was the idea of the need of a I among politicians? As explained previously, the Santa Cruz elite posited in 1904 the need to integrate Santa Cruz with the *Occidente* of the country. While debates were being held in the parliament over how to utilize the money that Brazil had given as compensation for the Acre, the *Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos de Santa Cruz* had sent a *Memorándum* demanding integration. This demand’s momentum had grown in the 1920s, when “railway or nothing” was the slogan of a protest. But, the revolt was suffocated.

²⁵⁰ "En forma concisa, Bohan concretó el programa de la Corporación. No hizo alardes democraticos," *La Calle*, May 16, 1942, 4.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

It was only after the Chaco War that a critique of Andean-centered policies became "common sense." The main concern of these policies had been to the linkage of mining centers to ports, creating exits for the minerals and entrances for the imported goods that supplied those centers. The politics of the *Rosca* were not able to build a nation.

The trauma of the Chaco war evidenced the need for a policy of integrating the Bolivian Oriente. In a secret session of the Parliament, just two weeks after the end of the war, where the issue on the table was whether or not a separatist current existed in Santa Cruz,²⁵² it was made clear that Cruceños were a patriotic people, something clearly shown during the Chaco war. They advised the Bolivia must occupy the national territory, and link Santa Cruz to the rest of Bolivia. The *Marcha al Oriente* was, at the time, an idea shared by the Santa Cruz elite and the government, and was a crucial component of the Bolivian state agenda.

In the 1938 Constitutional Convention the issue of a railway connection between Cochabamba and Santa Cruz reappeared, and also during Peñaranda's government. In his 1940 presidential speech to the parliament, he stated the desire to realize the Cochabamba-Santa Cruz railway before the railway links with Brazil and Argentina were finished.²⁵³ According to Peñaranda it was "more dangerous to keep these zones in an inertia, than achieve the development of its wealth and channeling it for the nation's profit."²⁵⁴ He also explained that building this railway was a priority for his government. This statement about railway integration was repeated in the 1941 and 1942 presidential speeches. The idea of linking the *Oriente* to the *Occidente* was not an abstraction, it aimed to connect areas producing foodstuffs with areas

²⁵² Sesiones reservadas del Congreso Extraordinario, 24 July, 1935, Documentos reservados, Caja #24, Archivo histórico de la Honorable Cámara de Diputados. 2.

²⁵³ República de Bolivia. *Memoria que presenta al Honorable Congreso Nacional el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto* (La Paz: Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto, 1940), 8, 44.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

demanding them, and to change the profile of the country from a mining one to an agricultural one, substituting food imports for oil production in order to equilibrate the balance of payments. During one of his presidential speeches, Peñaranda stated that: “Government policy is based on the need to coordinate the different economic sources of the country. Agriculture should occupy a place of priority, as a stable source of wealth [...] A state with a vast territory and a deficient agricultural capacity that does not satisfy its exigencies, suffers an anguishing inertia at its roots; a serious indictment of the past.”²⁵⁵

Unlike mining, agricultural wealth appeared “unlimited.”²⁵⁶ Mining, due to the prices for minerals during the war, would enable the transfer of resources needed to foster agriculture.²⁵⁷

The public sphere shared these preoccupations. Actually, the need for a change was a sentiment so widespread that even an editorial in the newspaper *La Razón*, property of the tin baron Aramayo, advocated for a change in the country’s profile:

We should highlight a contradiction in the economy: while the mines export in an unusual way, the people endure hardship; there is a supply crisis. This fact shows the basic error in our economic orientation. The state is rich and has important liquid assets: as consequence of this bonanza, internal debt is being repaid and the backing of the currency is stronger. Meanwhile, as a mockery of this artificial wealth, there is no bread, rice, sugar or gas. We think that the wealth that comes from mining can only supply balances and the treasury. Agribusiness wealth instead, though unexploited now, is the only one that would be able to feed the people.

As a reflection of this economic malaise, consequence of our single product country, there is a social unrest that is translated into regional demands, strikes for better salaries and other expressions, equally anarchic.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 65.

²⁵⁶ República de Bolivia. *Memoria que presenta al Honorable Congreso Nacional el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto* (La Paz: Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto, 1941), 59.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 58.

²⁵⁸ Editorial, “Panorama de la situación boliviana,” *La Razón*, March 11, 1942, 4.

For the editorialist of newspaper *La Razón* this problem could be solved if “Bolivia could be self-sufficient for foodstuffs” and this would be possible thanks to the US cooperation that would allow us to “remediate the problems we have pointed out: foment mining, and initiate the policy of agricultural and road development.”²⁵⁹

Aramayo’s newspaper was therefore part of what we could understand as a ‘common sense’ sentiment at the time about the need for change. Other newspapers like *La Calle* also expressed the need to change the country’s profile, but raised other issues related to sovereignty adding that in addition to the necessary foodstuffs self-subsistence there also existed a need to encourage —through tariffs— the development of national industry. Contesting the idea put forth by Benjamin Sumner Welles, from the State Department, of eliminating all tariffs in Latin America, they stated that:

In this respect, the Bolivian government should analyze, very carefully, the position that Bolivia occupies in the international economy in order to defend its interest. A country that produces strategic minerals must receive in exchange, affluence in the form of foreign currency that could serve to strengthen its economy, and be used to organize its industry and agriculture, which would guarantee it a stable economy once the mineral boom has passed. If they accept the lifting of tariffs it would be prejudicial for Bolivian industries and would favor only our neighbors who would invade our markets, while we would be have no way to take advantage of the trade and customs freedoms they offer to us.²⁶⁰

While *La Calle* and *La Razón* did not coincide, as we will see, on how to do it, they did coincide on the need to do it. That need was at the time, common sense.

The US wanted strategic materials in order to increase production at the lowest possible cost. But, why did the US want to integrate the *Oriente*? Why would they want to substitute

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Editorial, “Es necesario crear y proteger la industria nacional,” *La Calle*, January 23, 1942, 4.

foodstuffs, oil and wood imports? Why would they want to equilibrate Bolivian balance of payments? Why would they be interested in reorganizing the economy?

One, it was what the Bolivian state asked for in exchange for the strategic materials, and what they understood would make Bolivia more feasible as a nation. In addition, if Bolivia reorganizes its economy, it would have the capacity to repay loans. It would not demand oil that could go to the US. It could stabilize its internal politics and therefore become a dependable provider of strategic raw materials. Finally, but not least, it would not give these resources to the axis powers.

Sergio Almaraz, wrote in *Petróleo en Bolivia* that the new deal “lasted as long as the war.”²⁶¹ After the war, the international context changed: the US has a good stockpile of strategic materials, and a synthetic substitute for quinine was discovered.²⁶² Synthetic rubber was mass produced by the end of the war. Gualberto Villarroel’s coup, which had MNR support, who at the time did not sympathize with the US, froze the US cooperation. As the war ended, Bolivia’s leverage notably decreased. It was just after the 1952 National Revolution that Bohan recipes reappeared.

* * *

The Bohan Plan aimed at sanitizing the Bolivian economy, substituting imports in order to equilibrate the balance of payments. Producing food and hydrocarbon and its derivatives that then were imported. Oil was located in the *Oriente* and mechanized agriculture could also be done well in this region. The Bohan mission coincided with the demand of the Bolivian central

²⁶¹ Sergio Almaraz, *Petróleo en Bolivia* (La Paz: Juventud, 1958), 146.

²⁶² Kenneth Lehman, *Bolivia and the United States: A limited partnership* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999), 83.

state – a policy that, at that time, almost seemed like national common sense – the need to integrate the *Oriente*. Even the MNR, that at the time was very much against US imperialism, recognized the virtues of a plan that proposed to change the country’s profile from mining to agriculture and oil producing. Although the idea was nothing new, the novelty of this situation was that Bolivia was finally presented with a potential financier for the project – the United States.

The Intellectual Ferment of Santa Cruz Development

In this section, I will present the diagnostics produced by the Santa Cruz elite about the region’s situation, as well as the plans they drafted in order to solve regional and national problems. Their diagnostics and solutions were closely linked to a general vision of the region’s history: a crucial topic that allowed them to explain as well as legitimize their position. The explanation was not only historical; from the Cruceño elite perspective, their explanation was also based on the assertions of certain “ethnic features” they ascribed to the population of Santa Cruz.

The positions of the elite were probably not shared by the whole population of the city or the department. I will not focus here on the conflicts and tensions among different classes and groups. Inside the elite, on the contrary, the diagnoses, the solutions, as well as the vision on the region’s history were indicators of the high levels of cohesion and consistency among the group.

After the disillusion that came with the defeat of the decentralization project and the subsequent adventure –and reprimand by Busch to the Partido Oriental Socialista, the Bohan mission revived the hopes of the Santa Cruz elite. We will observe in this section. thoughts and debates among Santa Cruz intellectuals from the Bohan Mission up to the 1952 Revolution. In

these texts, we can read the intellectual ferment of the Santa Cruz development.

3. Being Bolivians

National belonging was understood and explained to the region through the *Revista de la Universidad* and the *Boletín de la Sociedad Geográfica*. The interventions in the Congress and the Constitutional Convention were counterpoints of sorts, aimed at an official national audience. For the interior of the region, post Chaco war, it seemed unnecessary to explain the reasons for national belonging. In fact, when the topic was raised, it was done without romanticism, on the contrary with certain economic pragmatism. Rafael Chávez Ortiz for instance, expressed just that: “Bolivia isn’t and won’t be a true nationality, so long as the *Oriente* is not economically connected to the Altiplano via the common linkage of commercial interchange of products.”²⁶³

When the ideas were addressed explicitly to the whole nation at the parliament, they were more dedicated to explaining national belonging. On one hand, there was an argument –close to the economic pragmatic one- that refers to the complementarity between *Occidente* and *Oriente*. According to deputy from Velasco province, Facundo Flores Jiménez, Santa Cruz de la Sierra: “*was incomplete* and only ripened for history when it discovered those elements, which integrated its existence over the course of centuries, nurturing its spirit with the presence of the blue hills and mountains one sees from this eastern city.”²⁶⁴

The key argument –and the one most reiterated in the parliament- was, however, that the proof of being Bolivian was given on the battlefield: the blood tribute offered by Santa Cruz to

²⁶³ Chávez Ortiz, “El problema del Oriente Boliviano,” *Revista de la Universidad Mayor ‘Gabriel René Moreno’* 1, no. 4 (n.d), 187.

²⁶⁴ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de La H. Cámara de Diputados*, CXXVIII legislatura [1941], vol. 2 (La Paz: n.p, n.d.), 78. On the complementarity *Occidente-Oriente*, see also República de Bolivia, *H. Convención Nacional de 1944*, vol. 3 (La Paz: Editorial La Paz, 1944), 5.

Bolivia. The deputy from Chiquitos, José Saavedra Suárez, referred –as usual- to the blood tribute offered during the wars of Independence, Acre, Pacific and Chaco:

Santa Cruz has offered up its tribute to the nation in torrents of blood: at times, for the formation of the nation and at others in resistance and to repel the almost certainly fatal blows a foreign enemies dealt to the peaceful and weak Bolivian nation. In Pari, la Florida, the Acre, the Pacific, and the Gran Chaco, there exist eloquent testimonies of the undeniable heroism of Cruceños during those most solemn moments of national tribulation.

Santa Cruz ofreció a raudales su tributo de sangre a la patria. Unas veces, por la formación de la nacionalidad, y otras, para resistir y repeler los golpes casi definitivos que el enemigo extranjero asestara a la débil y pacífica nación boliviana. En el Pari, la Florida, el Acre, el Pacífico y el Gran Chaco, existen testimonios elocuentes, inconfundibles del heroísmo de los Cruceños en las horas solemnes de tribulación nacional.²⁶⁵

Rodolfo Landívar, deputy from Ichilo, emphasized Santa Cruz’s “deep Bolivianist feeling.” He also explained the paradox that Santa Cruz nationalism was neither based on convenience nor on “remembering common glories [...] very rare in our country, but rather on the feeling and remembrance of the pains in common and the inalienable desire to die and live together.”²⁶⁶ On the other hand, in case having professed nationalist faith y having described themselves as part of the Bolivian nation were not enough, they explained, like the integrationist books, that they were not separatists. The epithet of separatist appeared paradoxically when they demanded to be integrated to the nation. In the words of Heberto Áñez, deputy for Santa Cruz: “The people of Santa Cruz were painted as regionalists because they asked for the construction

²⁶⁵ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la H. Cámara de Diputados*. Congreso Ordinario de 1943, vol. 2. (La Paz: Escuela Tip. Salesiana, 1944), 186. See also República de Bolivia, *Redactor del H. Senado Nacional*, Legislatura Ordinaria de 1940, vol. 1 (La Paz: Litografía e Imprentas Unidas, 1940), 612.

²⁶⁶ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional 1945* vol. 3 (La Paz, n.p, n.d.), 233. The senator from Santa Cruz, Oswaldo Gutiérrez, was more optimistic, underlining Santa Cruz “fe nacionalista.” República de Bolivia, *Redactor del H. Senado Nacional*, Legislatura Ordinaria de 1948, vol. 1 (La Paz: Editorial Don Bosco, 1949), 663.

of the Cochabamba-Santa Cruz railroad. They've been called separatists precisely because they asked for the the union of the region, via stable and solid means, with the rest of the country."²⁶⁷

Following the idea that appeared in the 1904 *Memorandum*, they insisted that separatism had its origins in the *altiplano*. They described *orientalismo* as a “political and economic reivindicacion that confronted the SEPARATIST work, from governments as well as our ‘fraternal’ departments implied in our centennial isolation from the rest of the republic.”²⁶⁸ Or, as Leonor Ribera Arteaga expressed it: "Mutilators of our nation; all of our governments can be categorized as such because they have maintained us in our isolation, segregating us from the whole of progress, as if we were were something apart from the other departments of the Republic. We haven't been a weight upon Bolivia, for our sacrifices in times of peace or our martyrdom in war; but never for the benefits that we deserve, not only because of the force of our basic and unsatisfied needs but also for the sense of national interest."²⁶⁹

* * *

The Santa Cruz elite explained why they were Bolivian in various ways, depending on if the audience was intraregional or national. They seemed to have learned to acquire a certain amount of flexibility in their discourse after the dissolution of the POS. When directed to the region, they explained being Bolivian in pragmatic terms, closely link to issue of access to and dependence on altiplano markets. However, when explained to the nation, it was presented in a softer way, as part of an economic complementarity between the *Oriente* and *Occidente*.

²⁶⁷ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la H. Cámara de Diputados*, Congreso Ordinario de 1948, vol. 2 (La Paz: Editorial La Paz, 1948), 734.

²⁶⁸ “Las actuales cabezas directivas de nuestra Universidad”, *Revista Universitaria. Órgano Oficial de la Universidad Mayor ‘Gabriel René Moreno’* 1, no. 1 (1938): 32.

²⁶⁹ Leonor Ribera Arteaga, “Hacia una nueva urbanización de Santa Cruz,” *Boletín de la Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos* 30, no. 28 (1947): 125.

Furthermore, the blood tribute offered by the people of Santa Cruz was reason and proof of belonging to Bolivia.

4. The right to integration

The demand for geographic integration and participation in the government was also justified and legitimized by using history. At a local level, the justification implied claims a Hispanic tradition, presenting themselves as ethnically different. The Hispanic claim appeared hand in hand with *anticolla* and *anticholo* positions. Almost every time, in order to express these positions, Gabriel René-Moreno was made to talk, and by doing so, they seemed to be un-lialle. Claims of ethnic difference, and superiority, were also highly critical of the indigenous from the *Oriente* and of mestizaje between them and Spaniards. Logically, these ideas that criticized “cholo” and “Colla” did not transcend the local and were not expressed in the Congress. They were, however, expressed at the Congress Hispanist definitions of Santa Cruz.

During this period, the history and origins of Santa Cruz and the composition of its population were clearly linked with Spain, envisioned as the motherland. The adjectives *castellano*, *andaluz* and *hidalgo* appeared all over to describe such disparate things as steeds, shawls, patios and -last but not least- blood. In counterpoint to the altiplano, these arguments emphasized a racial peculiarity, a positive difference: "From here was born the revolutionary spirit of the generation of “800” and it was crystallized in the idea of Federalism; revealed to the *civismo* of our grandfathers as a panacea with which to correct the error of a republican constitution that never took into account the geographic or racial makeup of a people that were incubated historically within a climate, nor the ethnic composition of a people radically different from the conglomeration of highland Andean ‘types’.”²⁷⁰

²⁷⁰ Gonzalo Cuéllar Jimenez, “Los jalones del ideal cruceño,” *Revista de la Universidad Mayor ‘Gabriel René Moreno’* 1, no. 4 (n.d): 205. My emphasis.

The other half of these descriptions differentiating themselves was to describe the Andean “other.” Following René-Moreno line of thinking, they ripped on the product of Andean mestizaje, cholos:

Now if the ideology that Rene-Moreno’s sociological conceptions were based on cannot today be blindly accepted, the crude reality of the ‘ethnic phenomenon’ remains standing, confirming the reason of the lettered Cruceño. I won’t discuss here whether transformism is a truth or not, or whether race-mixing is good or bad. The conclusions state that when whites and Indians come into contact, they disappear, and the product of the mix is an idiot, to the point that by selection, the caucasian blood converts into pure “criollo” [...] If this race and caste cannot, in vital concurrence with the white, struggle with advantage, and if they are beaten, then we submit ourselves to this solution and by increasing the number of Caucasians, move towards the unification of the national race which would have as its purpose to perform in concert with the grand destinies of that which called our America, be it Indian, Caucasian, or Cosmic. With virile force we should be prone to these realities.²⁷¹

What at first sight was a eugenic position had a profound political aspect. They did not limit themselves to a biological or phenotype description. Rather, they attributed to these differences particular political features: "Rene-Moreno’s convictions, in total accordance with those of Nicómedes Antelo, are that in Bolivia, ‘the indigenous brain and the mestizo brain are cellularly *incapable of comprehending republican liberty with all its deliberative pride and requirements for civic activity.*’ These brains weigh average between 5, 6, and 7 ounces less than the brain of someone who is pure White."²⁷²

They were not only described by the things they were unable to do, handicapped in republican life, they had special capacities for *caudillismo*, that were also supposedly related to their phenotype: "Mestizos, a hybrid and sterile caste, for this present ethnological study are like

²⁷¹ Humberto Vázquez-Machicado, “La sociología de René Moreno,” *Revista de la Universidad Mayor ‘Gabriel René Moreno’* 1, no. 4 (n.d.): 28.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 23. My emphasis.

the mule produced by the transformation of the donkey and horse species. *Mestizos, with their thorax raised for appetites and their spirit yoked by instinct to the proselytisms of caudillaje*, represent a subaltern variety of the human species that corresponds to a confused degeneration of Spanish impetuosity and indigenous timidity."²⁷³

In case that was not enough, they were associated with animals and described as the cause of the perpetuation of a despotic political system. "Can there be a scoundrel more harmful than the cholo lawyer, or a mountain lion more rapacious and wild than the bossy cholo? The caste has a notorious propensity for idleness, fighting, servility, intrigues, the starting of rumors and rows, and *caudillaje*; and as on the other hand, *the stupidity and cowardice of the Incan Indian adapts itself to the point of perpetuating despotism in the society.*"²⁷⁴

Indigenous groups and mestizos of the *Oriente* were considered enemies—they were not needed yet to face the central state. The strategy was claiming whiteness, as a way of implying their deserved-ness of integration. Judging by the racist tone, the *anticolla* and *anticholo* part of their position, presenting themselves as white was a form of being legitimately deserving of a privileged place in a predominantly indigenous and mestizo country. In an excerpt by René-Moreno that was published out of context in the *Revista de la Universidad* we can read: "*Tratábanse de tú los iguales; el inferior hablando con el superior usaba de la segunda del plural.* The Chiquitano or Colla, just as a white servant could've done they dared to use 'vos' to just anyone of the Spanish race, they spit in your face and there was no one you could complain to."²⁷⁵

²⁷³ Ibid., 23-24. My emphasis.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ "Evocación del Santa Cruz Colonial (Fragmento de la obra *Mojos y Chiquitos* de René-Moreno)," *Revista de la Universidad Mayor 'Gabriel René Moreno'* 1, no. 3 (n.d): 62.

The Camba was also excluded from the imagined community of the Cruceños of that time. His vindication began, as we will observe, at the end of 1940s, gained momentum during the struggle for oil royalties in the late 1950s and can even be traced to the statements of the group Nación Camba. In this moment, the Colla and the Camba were still referred to, putting the late René-Moreno's and Nicómedes Antelo's to speak, as part of the same group of Cruceño's "enemigos del alma" ["soul enemies"]. The strategy at this moment was clear—to hide any indigenous trace, claiming to be white and different from indigenous, from mestizos and from the external enemy—the Luso-Brazilian: "Evokes the Colla, the Camba, and the Portuguese as enemies of the soul; it makes clear to us the fear of the lusophone invader and usurper; it flows from him in each moment in defense of our noble race and our noble women; repeatedly affirming that our ancestors were of Castillian stock and proudly resisted mixing their blood with indian blood."²⁷⁶

Some intellectuals did describe mestizaje in a positive way; poetically, as the fusion between "Don Quixote's sidereal soul and the heart of the tropics," accepting that mestizaje did in fact exist.²⁷⁷ At this time, mestizaje was explained as a consequence of the temptations of indigenous women.²⁷⁸ This was not so much as an endorsement of it, but rather used a disdainful and permissive tone for the ones that had fallen in the face of the understandable weakness of flesh. Hernando Sanabria Fernández wrote a gracious description of these issues, how he imagined the times of the Ñuflo de Chávez's entry: "Beautiful woman, dressed in strings of pearls, appear in the windows, and call to those good children of Spain, inflaming and provoking

²⁷⁶ Julio Salmón, "René Moreno, Sociólogo," *Revista Universitaria. Órgano Oficial de la Universidad Mayor 'Gabriel René Moreno'* 1, no. 2 (1938): 8.

²⁷⁷ "Las composiciones premiadas," *Revista de la Universidad Mayor Gabriel René Moreno* 1, no. 4 (n.d): 97.

²⁷⁸ Hernando Sanabria Fernández, "Ñuflo de Chávez. La gran entrada," *Revista Universitaria. Órgano Oficial de la Universidad Mayor 'Gabriel René Moreno'*, no. 6 (1940): 71.

their appetites, that have been increased by days of forced abstinence [...] El Dorado, Candire-Guazú, land of Moxos!No more deprivations in the Asunción; now more rows over a miserable golden sequined dress or for a *coarse indigenous woman with flacid flesh and roman nose...*"²⁷⁹

It was at the end of the 1940s, when the MNR was in Santa Cruz part of a class alliance between peasant and middle classes, when the highway from Cochabamba was being built and connection therefore appeared as feasible, and when Santa Cruz had become the bulwark against the central state, during the 1949 "Guerra Civil," that more vindications of mestizaje appeared. During the civic battles over the 11% of the oil royalties, during the late 1950s, and possibly also as a result of the end of the Second World War and the subsequent sense of shame over public expressions of racial prejudice, the vindications of mestizaje become constant.

After awareness of the consequences of the Nazi racial politics spread, the continuation of radical anticolla-anticholo-anticamba positions became less feasible, even in Santa Cruz. Chiriguanos were not praised, but they were included in a "civilizing" plan. At the time there were references to "reduction of the savages,"²⁸⁰ and about civilizing "the savages that were swarming our forests and assaulting the roads." It was noted that this would be done without "delivering them

²⁷⁹ Ibid. My emphasis. See also Óscar Alborta Velasco, "El embrujo de la selva," *Boletín de la Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos* 30, no. 27 (1946): 65. Other example of the acceptance of the *mestizaje* in the early days of the city in Hernando Sanabria Fernández, "El padre Cristóbal de Mendoza," *Boletín de la Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos* 30, no. 28 (1947): 60-61.

²⁸⁰ "La Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos de Santa Cruz se interesa por un nuevo mapa del departamento," *Boletín de la Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos* 30, no. 27 (1946): 29. My emphasis.

to exploiters.”²⁸¹ In another article, an 1878 pamphlet was quoted, that referred to how “‘thousands were taken out from barbarism in order to expand the phalanx of Christianity and Civilization’.”²⁸²

The Cruceños did not feel allowed to criticize their political enemies in racial terms, but they still felt allowed to morally or strategically emphasize Santa Cruz’s ethnic difference in relation to the rest of Bolivia. This was done in various ways: with references to the numerous “white population” that Santa Cruz “the old wet nurse, dispersed their children to the four winds in the epic of the conquering the jungle”²⁸³; with descriptions that explained the high education levels in the eighteenth century as expression of the “noble quality of the race”²⁸⁴ and even with idyllic images of white peasants practicing Latin. In 1846, it appears that Viscount D’Osery: “‘heard in Santa Cruz, when returning one afternoon from its fields, two cart drivers, whose bare and white feet hung from the cart, who brought out for show, bidding on a good memory, a list of declensions in Latin of Utor.’”²⁸⁵

By the end of 1940s, Santa Cruz was a MNR bastion. The 1948 municipal elections demonstrated clearly, as later elections did and with more intensity during the 1949, that Santa Cruz was stronghold supporting the MNR during the civil war of 1949. Thus, Santa Cruz earned the nickname of “nationalist capital.”²⁸⁶ It was not by chance that during these times it became

²⁸¹ Plácido Molina Mostajo, “En el día de la Patria,” *Boletín de la Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos* 30, no. 28 (1947): 6.

²⁸² Ribera Arteaga, “Hacia una nueva urbanización de Santa Cruz,” 155-156.

²⁸³ Óscar Alborta Velasco, “Las encantadas tierras de Buena Vista,” *Boletín de la Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos* 30, no. 27 (1946): 4.

²⁸⁴ Humberto Vázquez-Machicado, “Orígenes de la instrucción pública en Santa Cruz,” *Boletín de la Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos* 31, no. 31-32 (1950): 53.

²⁸⁵ Julio A. Gutiérrez quoted in Vázquez-Machicado, “Orígenes de la instrucción pública en Santa Cruz,” 57.

²⁸⁶ On the 1949 “Guerra Civil,” the growth of the MNR in Santa Cruz, in 1948 municipal elections, Palmer, “Politics of modernization,” 208-220 and Winston Moore, “Revolutionary nationalism and the restoration of criollo hegemony: aid, decapitalization and ethnicity Bolivia (1952-1964).” PhD diss. (University of Essex. Colchester, 1984). 177-179. On Santa Cruz as “capital nacionalista” and about the combination of regional objectives and the MNR ideology,

common to describe the social structure of the city as having almost no social differences. This was not only in reference to racial homogeneity, but also to equal access to education. This was reflected in high literacy rates. It goes without saying the electoral importance of such egalitarianism during times when reading and writing were conditions for suffrage. They even imagined “all social classes” speaking Latin: “It is evident that in the University of Charcas, the study of Latin had neither the breadth or popularity that it does in Santa Cruz. The duplicity of language, as in all quechua and aymara departments, was an obstacle in providing for all classes a good taste of the language of Virgil. In Santa Cruz, there existed a uniformity of race and language, a circumstance that is undoubtedly the foundation for the high levels of literacy.”²⁸⁷

The description of Santa Cruz as an egalitarian society was accompanied by an analysis of Santa Cruz mestizaje that I propose to call “differential mestizaje.” Humberto Vázquez Machicado, for instance, noted a phenomenon that, according to him, “would be a good topic for Mendel in order to develop his famous laws about heritage” that explained “predominant Spanish racial homogeneity” in the cities of the Bolivian *Oriente*.²⁸⁸ According to Vázquez Machicado:

Mestizaje in Eastern Bolivia occurred with the same intensity as in the rest of the Americas, but because of certain circumstances, due to biological factors, it did not have the same characteristics as it did in other regions. The autochthonous races of the jungles and plains first demonstrated a fertile embrace, a resistant biological character, and by the second and third generation disappeared, leaving behind the white settler who had absorbed them completely. In contrast, in other regions, where the native races are much stronger biologically speaking, they withstood the mixing with white, leaving evidence

Rodríguez Ostría, *Poder central y proyecto regional*, 145-146. On nationalist program of the MNR in Santa Cruz, Roca, *Fisonomía del Regionalismo Boliviano*, 208.

²⁸⁷ Julio A. Gutiérrez quoted in Vázquez-Machicado, “Orígenes de la instrucción pública en Santa Cruz,” 56-57.

²⁸⁸ Vázquez-Machicado, “Orígenes de la instrucción pública en Santa Cruz,” 59-60.

of their blood for many generations, and in many cases displacing the white blood completely.²⁸⁹

Hernando Sanabria, in an article where he recovered the Guaraní language, also described a similar whitening process: “The Mestizaje progressively advances, even due to the negative biological qualities of the Chiriguano that persist, a phenomena that has been amply observed by now. The human product of this mixing, slowly distances himself from his indigenous progenitor and each time approaches more closely his white progenitor.”²⁹⁰

As we observed above, the post Chaco war period was characterized by claims of Hispanic heritage. Until late 1940s, there were almost no positive references to the indigenous groups from *Oriente*. There are just a few comments, without grand adjectives, in a 1939 issue of *Revista Universitaria* de 1939, to the book by Argentine historian Enrique de Gandía –the more erudite among the separatist- where he quoted a 1917 article by Erland Nordenskjöld, that is the origin of references to Guaraní invasions of Inca territories.²⁹¹ Three years later, at the congress, a parallel was drawn between Cruceños and Chiriguanos that left both in a good position: the “Chiriguanía never surrender to the Spanish colonizer, nobody will uproot the profound Bolivian feeling from the heart of the Cruceño people.”²⁹²

In 1946, the year after the Second World War and two after the construction of the Cochabamba-Santa Cruz Highway had begun, references to the indigenous people of the *Oriente* began to appear, with positive connotations. In the *Boletín*, they referred to how the Governor of

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 59. My emphasis.

²⁹⁰ Hernando Sanabria Fernández, “El idioma guaraní en Bolivia,” *Boletín de la Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos* 32, no. 33-34 (1951): 49.

²⁹¹ Leonor Ribera Arteaga, “Dos grandes fechas de nuestra historia,” *Revista de la Universidad Autónoma ‘Gabriel René Moreno’* 1, no. 3 (n.d.): 83.

²⁹² República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la H. Cámara de Diputados*. Congreso Ordinario de 1942 vol. 2 (La Paz: Editorial La Paz, n.d.), 757.

Santa Cruz, since the year “1600, *attempted* to subject the indigenous nations”²⁹³: the implying that they never succeed.

By the end of the 1940s, mentions of how indigenous groups from *Oriente* had forced the Incas to retreat, thanks to their qualities, became recurrent: “The Guaraní, vigorous, strong, daring and highly trained in arts of war, quickly imposed himself on the gentle and industrious Chané, destroying his nascent nuclei of civilization and punishing him to the point of near extinction, at the same time that he force the retreat of recently established Incan colonies.”²⁹⁴

The accounts (some including *innuendos*) made reference to how “the man from the forest climbed the foothills and penetrated in the warm intermediate valleys.”²⁹⁵ More precisely they described Guaraní penetrations as: “Vaguely oriented in the direction of Charcas, or moreover towards the mountains of the Caracará [...] Certainly during those daring incursions, the men of the forest would’ve sustained bloody and fierce fighting with the people of the invaded lands, ending with their victory over them and the imposing of the yoke of their domination.”²⁹⁶

The Chiriguanos “were always the terror of the Quichuas, that inhabit big portions of Alto Perú, even Cochabamba, La Plata and the Laguna or Tomina.”²⁹⁷ Apparently, not only could they defeat highland indigenous people, but even “Viceroy Toledo in person unsuccessfully attempted to dominate them, being chased and almost defeated and put in a

²⁹³ Óscar Alborta Velasco, “El embrujo de la selva,” 64. *Mis cursivas*.

²⁹⁴ Sanabria Fernández, “La provincia de Cordillera: esquema histórico,” *Boletín de la Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos* 31, no. 29-30 (1949): 31. See also references to how “la nación guaraní en su incontenible invasión” displaced the Chané, in Sanabria Fernández, “El idioma guaraní en Bolivia,” 55.

²⁹⁵ Sanabria Fernández, “El idioma guaraní en Bolivia,” 43.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

²⁹⁷ Leonor Ribera Arteaga, “Hacia una nueva urbanización de Santa Cruz,” 156.

difficult situation.”²⁹⁸ The Chiriguano area of occupation was described as an immense reign “that begins at the Atlantic coast and ends just in the Bolivian plains and hills.”²⁹⁹

Notably the repertoire of adjectives that were utilized before to define the Spanish things during the Hispanist claim period, were now utilized to refer to the indigenous groups from the *Oriente*. Referring to language Sanabria states: “Chiriguano is the more pristine form, or more *castiza*, of the *classic Guaraní language* that the first Spaniards of the conquest heard,”³⁰⁰ while also referring to other recently discovered qualities of the “Guaraní stock.”³⁰¹

On the other hand, and paradoxically, while the braveness of these groups was noted, their condition of good Christians was also emphasize, as if to say that they were able to be “civilized,” culturally integrated, but also able to subject themselves to a labor regime. As Sanabria wrote in 1949: “The business of subduing these restless and wild people, civilizing through the cross, began almost at the same time as the Spanish penetration of Chiriguano lands [...] [the Jesuits] founded some communities, in which settled, well, it appears, hearty groups of Chiriguanos. Moreover, there were occasions when they themselves petitioned Spanish authorities for missionaries to come and evangelize them.”³⁰²

The class alliance of the regionalist movement was changing. The elitist Hispanic claim had shown its limits. The colonial institution of the Cabildo Abierto, however, appeared as political inspiration in a 1951 influential article by Leonor Ribera Arteaga. The Comité Pro Santa

²⁹⁸ Hernando Sanabria Fernández, “La provincia de Cordillera: esquema histórico,” 35.

²⁹⁹ Hernando Sanabria Fernández, “Los chanés: Apuntes para el estudio de una incipiente cultura aborigen prehispánica en el Oriente Boliviano,” *Boletín de la Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos* 31, no. 29-30 (1949): 85.

³⁰⁰ Sanabria Fernández, “El idioma guaraní en Bolivia,” 61. My emphasis.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

³⁰² Sanabria Fernández, “La provincia de Cordillera: esquema histórico,” 39.

Cruz was described as a potential representative of the common good, from which should be excluded “all subaltern interest from group or party, in order to only dedicate to superior and permanent interests of the collectivity in general.”³⁰³ It was an appeal to the citizens of the community to take “the work of progress” into their own hands through this institution that represented the “people en masse.”³⁰⁴ Ribera Arteaga insisted that the “direction of the social activity should be basically a technical question rather than a simply a political one [...] It can not be the exclusive patrimony of any class.”³⁰⁵ According to Ribera Arteaga, probably influenced by some Weberian reading, a bureaucracy or technocracy of sorts would be a guarantee against one class occupying and having usufruct dominion of the regional institutions or government. The objective was to “arrive to the supreme synthesis of a society without humiliated classes.”³⁰⁶

In the genealogy that Ribera Arteaga constructed for the Cabildo Abierto, it appeared as a democracy pre-democracy, close to a type of rational bureaucracy. On one hand, “its staff was not elected among the superior classes, but rather among honest and independent men, zealous of the common good and with an honorable record’.”³⁰⁷ On the other, Ribera Arteaga conceived the Cabildo as a space for popular participation: “It is worth insisting, for the autonomist and popular principles that are traditionally controlled the municipality, and that continue with vitality and transcendence since the colony, that the ‘Cabildos were the only American institution that did

³⁰³ Leonor Ribera Arteaga, “El Cabildo Abierto como institución histórica y de derecho natural y público. Antecedentes y conclusiones,” *Boletín de la Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos* 32, no. 33-34 (1951): 114.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 102.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

³⁰⁶ Ribera Arteaga, “El Cabildo Abierto como institución histórica y de derecho natural y público. Antecedentes y conclusiones,” 128.

³⁰⁷ Horacio Urteaga, quoted in *ibid.*, 119.

not emanate directly from the King, and that within it permitted the interference of the *natives and the people*’ ...”³⁰⁸

* * *

In the beginning of this period, the late 1930s, Santa Cruz elite continued legitimizing their right to integration describing themselves as part of a Hispanist tradition, distinguishing from indigenous and mestizos from the highlands as well as mestizos from the *Oriente*. But in the mid 1940s, when the MNR was growing in Santa Cruz as part of class alliances between artisans and the middle class – at the point of being the core of the resistance during the 1949 Guerra Civil – the highway between Cochabamba and Santa Cruz was being built, positive references to the indigenous and mestizos from the *Oriente* more elaborated than the pragmatic defense done in 1939 by the POS were done.

³⁰⁸ Ribera Arteaga, “El Cabildo Abierto como institución histórica y de derecho natural y público. Antecedentes y conclusiones,” 127.

5. Constructing the Nation

To build the nation, according to the Santa Cruz intellectuals, it was necessary to integrate *Oriente* and *Occidente*. Following the 1904 *Memorandum* formula, they stated the need of what Jaime Mendoza called “the terrestrial reintegration of Bolivia, as opposed to the reintegration to the Pacific Ocean that concerned so many people.”³⁰⁹ In addition to the 1904 idea that it was important to “gravitate more strongly to the Atlantic,” integration was praised as a way to deepen “internal order.”³¹⁰ “The powerful nexus of modern forms of contact and communication, capable in themselves of generating a diverse order of linkages, most of all economic ones; when they create commercial currents between geographically opposed zones, there will always exist the possibility of an intense interchange and of effective progress... Our people live divorced, geographically, and because of this there exists the historical imperative of the creation of the Republic.”³¹¹

In the *Revista Universitaria*, what could be described as the intraregional sphere, integration was mostly associated with potential markets, commercial exchange and, secondly and as a consequence of these exchanges, to the creation of the nation.

An example of the unlimited potentials that were associated with the integration, the sonnet “Biografía de un pueblo inédito,” that got the, worth to mention, third place in a competition around 1939:

Your men and your people, faithful to their fate
Suddenly become human beehives

³⁰⁹ “Jaime Mendoza”, *Revista Universitaria. Órgano Oficial de la Universidad Mayor ‘Gabriel René Moreno’* 1, no. 2 (December, 1938. January and February 1939): 35.

³¹⁰ Clovis Jordán, . “Una obra indispensable por lo que toca a la colonización en el oriente,” *Revista de la Universidad Mayor ‘Gabriel René Moreno’* 1, no. 4 (n.d.): 20.

³¹¹ Plotino, “Programa y Obra Nacionalista del Estado: La minería y sus divisas extranjeras,” *Órgano Oficial de la Universidad Mayor ‘Gabriel René Moreno’* 5 (1940): 32.

Your plains are barns. Your cities are orchards;
Your environments are saturated with emotion of hosannas

Brazil and Argentina offer contact
They admire your Amazon with a speechless nod
And the Andes covet your admirable exaltation.

How immense is your future! Free Land of Warnes
Like a virgin resting within her flesh
The celestial miracle of a magnificent pregnancy.³¹²

The poem gives in its verses that unify the Amazon and the Andes, Argentina and Brazil, a hint of the hopes posited on integration, particularly through railways. The Santa Cruz elite warmly welcomed Busch's advances in relation to railway agreements with Brazil and Argentina, even though its biggest hopes were always on the Cochabamba-Santa Cruz line. All three lines together would permit the "so longed for national unity" and would therefore make the "New Bolivia" possible.³¹³ Lucas Saucedo Sevilla, senator for Santa Cruz, was extremely clear about connecting with *Occidente*, to Cochabamba more precisely, as a priority over the link with neighbor countries: "They announce us that the progress is coming from Brazil and Argentina. With the railway; but the Cruceño soul, honest and patriot, regarding these economic imperatives of the continent, aspires and will aspire in first place that the railway descend from the highlands, bringing to the plains the feelings of true fraternity making in this way the ideal and true Bolivia."³¹⁴

³¹² "Las composiciones premiadas," *Revista de la Universidad Mayor 'Gabriel René Moreno'* 1, no. 4 (n.d.): 105.

³¹³ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la Convención Nacional de 1938* (La Paz: Universo, 1939), 4:412-416. Emphasis on "vinculación efectiva con el mundo exterior" in Cuéllar Jimenez, "Los jalones del ideal cruceño," 205. About the impossibility of surviving "aislado[s], en una muralla china" Santiago Jordán Sandoval, "Nuestros límites con el Brasil en función económica," *Revista Universitaria. Órgano Oficial de la Universidad Mayor 'Gabriel René Moreno'* 5 (1940): 20.

³¹⁴ República de Bolivia, *Redactor del H. Senado Nacional*, Legislatura Ordinaria de 1940, vol. 1 (La Paz: Litografía e Imprentas Unidas, 1940), 613. See also República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la H. Cámara de Diputados*, Congreso Ordinario de 1942, vol. 2, (La Paz: Editorial La Paz, n.d.), 757. See Manuel José Justiniano, representative from Santa Cruz, about the necessity of linking to the altiplano markets, rather than Brazil and Argentina, due to tropical

In the congress, the lack of connection was also expressed, even done in extremely poetic ways, typical of the discursive expectations of the genre. The emphasis was on integration as a way to build the nation. As Santa Cruz senator Enrique Aponte expressed in 1944:

We, Bolivians need to organize our arterial system and make the heart stronger; strengthening it not only in order to assure a long-lasting real brotherhood, but to resist the attacks that adversity directs against peoples who are in but the preamble of their grandeur; strengthen it too to temper its energies and to form one body of resistance, invulnerable to all attacks and aggressions in whatever form they might come, make one nerve, because what a people yearning for economic, political, and social improvements needs most are nerves, forged for the struggles of the future. But, how to obtain this? Putting together the dispersed fractions up to now, linking the distant nuclei, invigorating their faith and giving to their hopes an aspect of reality³¹⁵

With a less poetic lexicon, the same senator stated that: "... that the winds from the millenarian forests bring to the altiplano their nostalgic echoes, of this species of geographical Prometheus that is Bolivia, and that from here flow the hallelujahs of the vestal virgins of the Inca who from the skies of their former glory must be watching over the motherland."³¹⁶

Raúl Otero Reiche, deputy by the MNR for Santa Cruz,³¹⁷ without hiding his abilities as a poet, justified connecting Santa Cruz with a populist syncretism of patriotism and Christianity:

when I said that we should arrive at the Altiplano like Christ, barefoot and bleeding. To conclude, representatives, I want the anti-Bolivian sentiment to end at the same moment that a patriotic and Christian consciousness forces those to see what they do not want to see; that it is impossible to live trapped between walls like the prince in [Edgar A.] Poe story. For what belongs to the people, vices or virtues, will pass through the stone, penetrate the castle, so that they comprehend

agricultural produce from these countries. República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la H. Cámara de Diputados*, Congreso Ordinario de 1948, vol. 2, (La Paz: Editorial La Paz, 1948), 734.

³¹⁵ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la H. Convención Nacional de 1944*, vol. 3 (La Paz: Editorial La Paz, 1944), 1835.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1836.

³¹⁷ Alfredo Ibañez Franco, *Historia de la fundación del M.N.R. en Santa Cruz* (Santa Cruz: Sirena, 1997), 62.

that everything should come from the people, and therefore we should work for the well being of the majority of Bolivian citizens.³¹⁸

Railway integration was described as an indispensable condition for the consolidation of the nation. As Oswaldo Gutiérrez, senator for Santa Cruz, expressed: "It is necessary [...] that all the people of Bolivia make the largest aspiration of the nation a reality: the immediate construction of the Cochabamba-Santa Cruz railroad. Progress cannot exist, *there will be no unity among the Bolivian family*, never will the men of the Altiplano and the plains will feel themselves definitively united if the railway is completed, which *is the only public work that can consolidate national unity in any definitive way*."³¹⁹

For other representatives the causality was the inverse. First "union and fraternity" should be achieved and then "obtain the connection among all peoples from Bolivia."³²⁰ According to convention "the vertebration of the nation" would even allow for a "*fusion of all its races*, of all its peoples, all its interests, all its feelings."³²¹ Connection would "build the *capital of America*, because here will be the happy conclusion of the dialectical process of thesis and antithesis, of Altiplano and Oriente, Atlantic and Pacific."³²²

In the post Chaco war period, the previous model of the nation showed its limitations. It was clear that the mining *rosca* and its political representatives could no longer continue to be in charge of the government, because they did not have a national vision for the country, but rather

³¹⁸ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la H. Convención Nacional 1945*, vol. 3 (La Paz: n.p., n.d.), 221.

³¹⁹ República de Bolivia, *Redactor del H. Senado Nacional*, Legislatura Ordinaria de 1948, vol. 1 (La Paz: Editorial Don Bosco, 1949), 663.

³²⁰ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la H. Cámara de Diputados*, Congreso Ordinario de 1948, vol. 2 (La Paz: Editorial La Paz, 1948), 734.

³²¹ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la H. Convención Nacional 1945*, vol. 3 (La Paz: n.p., n.d.), 233. My emphasis.

³²² Leonor Ribera Arteaga, "Cruceños de todas las provincias, uníos," *Boletín de la Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos*, no. 29-30 (1949): 102.

a business one. Mining was blamed for the failure as nation, both for being a single-product economy and for being the source of political power for the rulers of the country up to then.³²³ This was how ideas from the 1904 *Memorandum* were recovered as developmentalist solutions. Besides the already mentioned connections and infrastructure, the necessity of substituting imported foodstuff was emphasized, as well as a demand for protectionist policies that would make food production competitive and would avoid buying imported goods, thereby reinvigorating the national economy.

With this diagnosis of the state of the nation, the *Oriente* was in the perfect position to operate or manage the transformation of the country: “The vast Northeastern plains, where the powerful elements of the future nation meet: the transformation of the capitalist and mining economy into the agrarian economy of the masses, evolved in their spirits and wills.”³²⁴

Rómulo Herrera, dean of the Santa Cruz University, expressed the need for “agrarian promotion” in order to achieve “self sufficiency,” and in order to be a “defined nation with its own personality, strong, big and prosperous.”³²⁵ Chávez Ortiz, quoted an old demand, referring to the Partido Regionalista that in the 1920s had demanded a “rational system of *protection of national industry*, forbidding the imports of similar articles and suppressing taxes that interfere with the region’s economic development.”³²⁶

³²³ On the “sistema monoprodutor del altiplano” as “causa de estancamiento económico,” see Plotino, “Programa y Obra Nacionalista del Estado: La minería y sus divisas extranjeras,” 32.

³²⁴ Cuéllar Jimenez, “Los jalones del ideal cruceño,” 205.

³²⁵ “Orientación de nuestra Universidad,” [excerpt of a report presented by university rector Rómulo Herrera at the 1940 inauguration]. *Revista Universitaria. Órgano Oficial de la Universidad Mayor ‘Gabriel René Moreno’* 5 (1940): 79. On import substitution of foodstuff see also: Wilhelm Kenning, “El problema agrario,” 20; Wilhelm Kenning, “Las estaciones experimentales ganaderas,” *Revista de la Universidad Mayor ‘Gabriel René Moreno’* 1, no. 4 (n.d.): 36 y Chávez Ortiz, “El problema del Oriente Boliviano,” 186.

³²⁶ Manifiesto from the Partido Regionalista, November 18, 1920, quoted in Chávez Ortiz, “El problema del Oriente Boliviano,” 189. My emphasis.

Chávez Ortiz inserted a twist into the Bolivian regional problem. He combined being the son of a regionalist leader, Cástulo Chávez, nephew of Carmelo Ortiz Taborga, the main separatist intellectual, and the same time he was a trotskite-*marofista* (from the Partido Obrero Revolucionario). While positing in his diagnosis that mining was the cause of the Bolivian problems, Chávez Ortiz positioned the Oriental problem as part of the national agenda, together with other unsolved issues such as imperialism and the indigenous question. In some way his was a preview of what would be the agenda of the National Revolution; a sort of Tesis de Pulacayo for the *Oriente*. At once accusing the “big miners of the Altiplano” of an “exclusive interest in the exploitation of tin and other minerals” and also stating that their “hegemony on Bolivia’s economic policies, aimed to serve the big imperialist Trusts from England and the US.” Concluding that: “Only coordinated action at the national level, action that would unite Collas and Cruceños into a grand national movement against the engrossing power of the mining *Rosca*, would be able to offer a solution to the problem of the Oriente and other agonizing problems that trouble our country.”³²⁷

As this shows, the technical mission headed by Merwin Bohan followed the demand from the Bolivian State to design a plan that would change the Bolivian productive structure. And, as the Santa Cruz elite was expressing for almost four decades, the plan expressed the need to equilibrate the balance of payments, and avoid the flight of capital due to importation of foodstuffs. On the other hand, it proposed to diversify the Bolivian economy, in order to reduce its vulnerability to tin prices. The place imagined for this transformation was –again- Santa Cruz. The US mission considered many of the demands of the Santa Cruz elite –mediated and

³²⁷ Chávez Ortiz, “El problema del Oriente Boliviano,” 191.

represented through the Bolivian State. The only difference was that instead of connecting the *Oriente* by rail, the US mission proposed a road.

The idea of connection through a road had appeared before the Bohan mission, but it was rare.³²⁸ However, after the mission, it began to be accepted by the Santa Cruz elite. The acceptance was not, by any means, immediate, we can see in the long-lasting demand for a railway in the congress, appearing even in 1950. "Transformed by the road connections, the structuring of Bolivian nationality will be the immediate work of the economy. The diversity of the country's regions and the products of all its different zones, makes it such that this country, which may appear so absurd, constitutes a complete and compact whole [...] the tropical regions of forests and plains [...] are integrated into the Andean massif which in turn complements the Bolivian tropics."³²⁹

The criticisms of a national economy based on mining already existed by the end of Chaco War, in the intraregional sphere; at the national level, and at the parliamentary homages. However, it was not fully heard until the Bohan mission presented the plan.³³⁰ Connecting the nation, as one parliamentarian explained, would produce "material and spiritual independence," and "economic liberation."³³¹ Another parliamentarian quoted a bill presented, that addressed the

³²⁸ Kenning, "El problema agrario," *Revista de la Universidad Mayor 'Gabriel René Moreno'* 1, no. 4 (n.d.): 20.

³²⁹ Humberto Vázquez-Machicado, "Labor social: Notas para una Geopolítica Boliviana," *Boletín de la Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos* 30, no. 26 (1945): 14.

³³⁰ See R. Chávez Ortiz comments above and also the reflections about weaknesses of a single product economy based on mining that imports food and beverages and, about agricultural foment as the solution. "La anormalidad de nuestra condición de país monoprodutor por excelencia, constituyéndose nuestro edificio económico fiscal sobre bases no muy sólidas y de fijación propiamente extranjeras, sin que ello dependa lógicamente de la voluntad nacional" Wilhelm Kenning, "Las rutas del tráfico: contribución esquemática a la geografía comercial boliviana," *Boletín de la Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos* 31, no. 29-30 (1949): 7.

³³¹ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la H. Convención Nacional 1944*, vol. 3 (La Paz: Editorial La Paz, 1944), 1835.

need to invest “25% of mining profits [...] in fostering agriculture.”³³² Others even more audaciously expressed the need to nationalize the mines in order to begin to “displace our mining industry towards the organization of other, more stable and safe [industries].”³³³ The enthusiasm generated by the US mission is visible in the idea that Santa Cruz will finally “enter in functions of Bolivian-ness” contributing to the national “concert” its “potential and the vigor of its economic wealth.”³³⁴ The necessity of the *Marcha al Oriente* that had been mentioned insistently since the Chaco postwar, appeared at this time as an idea shared by all and soon to be realized. As the senator for Santa Cruz Oswaldo Gutiérrez expressed: “Bolivia knows very well where lie the causes of our stagnation; it understands it very well, and because of this, for some time there has existed a unanimous movement of opinion that pushes Bolivians to look to the Oriente. But it is necessary that crystallizes in concrete actions that could realize this national desire in the short term.”³³⁵

The Santa Cruz elite had been aware, for a long time, of shortages of labor.³³⁶ Some were notorious for the practice of indebting labor for rubber harvest. This need was also present at the 1904 *Memorandum*, but the authors demanded European immigration as a solution. During the post Chaco war period, many references also appeared about how to best foment immigration. They utilized history to show how old the demand was, quoting declarations from the Asociación Federal from 1875, one year before the Andrés Ibáñez uprising, that referred to the unitarian

³³² Ibid., 1840.

³³³ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la H. Cámara de Diputados*, Congreso Ordinario de 1948, vol. 2 (La Paz: Editorial La Paz, 1948), 734.

³³⁴ República de Bolivia, *Redactor de la H. Convención Nacional 1944*, vol. 3 (La Paz: Editorial La Paz, 1944), 1839.

³³⁵ República de Bolivia, *Redactor del H. Senado Nacional*, Legislatura Ordinaria de 1948, vol. 1 (La Paz: Editorial Don Bosco, 1949), 663.

³³⁶ Ana María Lema, *El sentido del silencio: la mano de obra chiquitana en el oriente boliviano a principios del siglo XX* (Santa Cruz de la Sierra: UPIEB, Editorial El País, 2009).

power flaws and to the subsequent “*right to govern themselves and to work on local improvement,*” opening roads to “*export their produce, call foreign inmigration.*”³³⁷ A poem by Raúl Otero Reiche, “Salutación al inmigrante de América,” referred in his way to the immigration, not only with rhyme but with a clear idea about whitening:

You are the necessary one
to forge of cosmic alloys
the *new kind of man*
that unravels the red hymn of the ruby
and the green fire of the emerald.
Your son will be the winner,
optimist *Gringo*³³⁸

After the Bohan mission report, where there were references to migration from the Altiplano as a way to solve the lack of workforce in the *Oriente*, the Santa Cruz intellectuals began to talk about colonization without the idea of immigration attached to it. There were no references to this in parliament, probably because it was too detailed, but also probably due to fears that means of communication would bring immigration up, and –as they asked at the *Boletín de la Sociedad Geográfica*– “would it be the owners of the house the ones that direct these flattering destinies or would they end up postponed and cornered, begging at their own house for what belongs to them?”³³⁹

³³⁷ Felipe Leonor Ribera, “Contribución a la historia de la idea federalista en el Oriente Boliviano,” *Revista de la Universidad Mayor ‘Gabriel René Moreno’* 1, no. 4 (n.d.): 200.

³³⁸ “Poema de Raúl Otero Reiche. Salutación al inmigrante de América,” *Revista de la Universidad Mayor Gabriel René Moreno* 1, no. 4 (n/d): 71. My emphasis.

³³⁹ Julio Murillo, “Sobre un tema de capital importancia,” *Boletín de la Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos* 30, no. 27 (1946): 70.

We saw what we could call socio-economic recipes to solve the problem of the Oriente. They were complemented by political recipes. The main one was about the need for self-government. Logically, after the defeat of the bill for administrative decentralization at the 1938 constitutional convention, it was timidly expressed and almost exclusively discussed at the intraregional level. As with other sensitive issues, they utilized historical characters in order to present and legitimize their positions: “Declarations of the Federal Association in 1875 [...] [that] only applying the federal system in the country could realize the longed-for improvements, particularly in the departments of the Oriente. FEDERATION OR DEATH!! LONG LIVE THE ORIENTE OF THE REPUBLIC!!”³⁴⁰

In the federalist position it is possible to glimpse the idea of ethnic difference:

From here was born the revolutionary unrest of the generation of “800,” that crystallized into the idea of federalism, as a panacea, revealed to our grandparent’s civism, that would exorcise the flaws of a republican constitution that did not take into account the geographical reasons nor the racial structure of a people incubated historically in the peculiarities of a certain climate, and of an ethnic configuration, radically different in its nature, from the highland Andean type.³⁴¹

³⁴⁰ Ribera, “Contribución a la historia de la idea federalista en el Oriente Boliviano,” 200-201.

³⁴¹ Cuéllar Jimenez, “Los jalones del ideal cruceño,” 205. My emphasis.

The lucid Santa Cruz intellectual, the already mentioned Rafael Chávez Ortiz, to call a spade a spade: federalism and administrative decentralization, as well as separatism, are expressions of a “profound autonomy desire of the Bolivian Oriente.”³⁴² Without falling in racialized explanations, but rather from a materialistic point of view, he expressed that autonomist aspirations were just because “a different economy needs a different economic policy, and subsequently a different political administration.”³⁴³

The three articles from which I excerpted the previous quotes about federalism appeared in the same issue of the *Revista de la Universidad*, during 1939. Later, with the exception of some minimal reference to the commemoration during the one hundred year anniversary of Andrés Ibáñez’s birth, taking the opportunity to describe him as “martyr of the Bolivian federal idealisms,”³⁴⁴ there were no references in the *Revista* or in the *Boletín* for more than a decade. Apparently, either the topic became a taboo or was not relevant any more when, after the Bohan mission, development and integration were seen as more feasible and close to realization.

The topic of self-government reappeared in the early 1950s, in the Ribera Arteaga article about the *Cabildo Abierto*. There he praised the advantages of a federal regime that would allow for “mixed forms of government.”³⁴⁵ The real focus of his article was on the municipal level. The article emphasized, “big States were born from a political regime more or less autonomous of the cities.”³⁴⁶ “There is no better education for a people who wish to come to maturity in civil life [...] Than to accustom themselves to a *government of themselves*, to the principle of local *self-*

³⁴² Chávez Ortiz, “El problema del Oriente Boliviano,” 186.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 191.

³⁴⁴ Plácido Molina Mostajo, “Archivo Social. Memoria Presidencial de la gestión 1944-1945,” *Boletín de la Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos* 30, no. 27 (1946): 35.

³⁴⁵ Leonor Ribera Arteaga, “El Cabildo Abierto como institución histórica y de derecho natural y público. Antecedentes y conclusiones,” 123-124.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 128.

government—the autonomy of cities, of municipal regimens— must be affirmed and consolidated [...] And by these means stimulate the formation of a ‘typical’ and communal personality, combined with the rich varieties of character, culture, civilization, etc.”³⁴⁷

At the parliamentary homages, the topic did not reappear except to clarify that they wanted to play a role in what would today be describe as development planning: “Santa Cruz wants [...] to have direct responsibility in the creation and realization of the works that interest her.”³⁴⁸

It is worth noting that in the years prior to the revolution it was possible to read allusions and justifications about the necessity of a revolution. In the middle of an article full of technicalities, about the philosophy of law, oriented to a specialized reader, Ribera Arteaga wrote, quoting the “Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen”: “Insurrection is for those instances when the government violates the rights of the people; insurrection is for each individual the most sacred and the most indispensable of their duties.”³⁴⁹

A year later, in the same direction he expressed that: "Faced with the crisis of the vast majority of political parties, the center of gravity that these parties had previously occupied in the institutional life of a country, has been transferred to the people en masse —without distinctions or party divisions— through exercising their rights to freedom of opinion, petition, initiative,

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 130.

³⁴⁸ República de Bolivia, *Redactor del H. Senado Nacional*, Legislatura Ordinaria de 1948, vol. 1 (La Paz: Editorial Don Bosco, 1949), 663.

³⁴⁹ Leonor Ribera Arteaga, “La filosofía del derecho y la sociología ante los problemas jurídicos y sociales,” *Revista de la Universidad Autónoma ‘Gabriel René Moreno’* 3, no. 8 (1950): 66.

meetings and lastly, revolution; these represent, each of them, forms or derivations of the natural and popular institution of the *Cabildo Abierto*.”³⁵⁰

Otero Reiche, in a metaphor, uses René-Moreno to speak to a conception of the poets. He wrote: “those poets of the Bolivian romanticism forced to raise their weapons to fight the barbarian caciques.”³⁵¹ It seems that not only was the revolution approaching, but some Santa Cruz intellectuals saw it as a necessity.

* * *

The Second World War opened up the possibility for repositioning some Bolivian commodities in the international market. The Bolivian government traded strategic materials with the US at a fixed price, below its market price, and declared war with the Axis and received in compensation financial and technical aid. The US sent the Bohan mission to assess the Bolivian economy. The plan aimed to sanitize the economy while avoiding the use of foreign exchange to pay for foodstuff – that would instead be provided by the *Oriente* – and, finally, to also produce oil in this region. The *Marcha al Oriente* was part of some international agenda and finally has a financier.

We observed how the Santa Cruz elite had, during this period, a systematic and coherent regionalist discourse that ranged from economic diagnoses to a clear historical vision of the region. This discourse was interwoven with an idea of a Bolivian nation, or more precisely, ideas about how to build the nation. It was articulated in two forms: the intimate, intraregional, that appeared in the

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 129.

³⁵¹ Raúl Otero Reiche, “Concepto del escritor y del poeta. Glosas a René Moreno,” *Revista de la Universidad Autónoma ‘Gabriel René Moreno’*, no. 9 (1951): 67.

Revista and the *Boletín*, where Santa Cruz intellectuals speak to the region; and the national, in parliament, where they presented their positions to representatives from the rest of the country.

At the intraregional level, during the postwar period, they argued that being part of Bolivia was a pragmatic decision, associated to an *Occidente – Oriente* complementarity that, more specifically, provided access to *altiplano* markets. They wrote extensively to explain the differences between themselves and the rest of Bolivia: Cruceños presented themselves as heirs of a Hispanic tradition, in a country predominantly inhabited by indigenous. As a way to distinguish Santa Cruz from the rest of Bolivia, they strongly criticized indigenous groups from the *Occidente* and the *Oriente*, as well as mestizos resulting from mixed unions between indigenous and Spanish individuals. Presenting themselves as Hispanic was a way of legitimizing their demands for integration and, to some degree, for self-government.

At the national level, they explained belonging to the Bolivian nation as something beyond a doubt, because it was paid for with a “blood tribute” during the various wars Bolivia had been involved in from Independence to Chaco. The need for integration was presented mainly as a way of building the still uncompleted nation and a way to avoid more territorial loss.

At the intraregional level, important changes had occurred. After the Second World War, when the Cochabamba-Santa Cruz road construction had begun and the Nacionalismo Revolucionario won importance in Santa Cruz, ideas sympathetic to mestizaje began to appear. Granted, this was a differential mestizaje, a mestizaje that saw the product of a mixed union between indigenous peoples from the *Oriente* and Spaniards as a whitening process and, therefore, an improvement. This kind of mestizaje was counterposed to the mixing that occurred in the *altiplano*. Simultaneously, a revindication of indigenous groups from the *Oriente* began, which attributed a series of qualities, particularly that of being “brave,” good for struggle.

Part 3: The National Revolution and the Cambas

In 1950 the situation in Bolivia was not very promising. The main source of income for the central state came from mineral exports, particularly tin; however, after the Second World War, prices dropped significantly. Agricultural production in the country was also in critical situation due to the long-standing land tenure system; this system allowed for the control of 92% of arable land by hacienda owners that represented only a mere 6% of the population; despite having, according to a 1950 census, 72% of the working population dedicated to agriculture and related industries, Bolivia was still not self sufficient in food and, therefore, depended on imports.³⁵² The situation had changed very little since the arrival of the Bohan Mission a decade earlier, which recommended the substitution of food imports to equilibrate the balance of payments in the context of a country aggravated by the end of the war and bad markets for tin.

The MNR, a political party that was involved with the *socialistas militares* reformist project during both the Busch and Villarroel governments, took advantage of a series of tactical errors committed by the PIR, the Marxist pro-soviet party, and were able to win a majority of votes in May of 1951.³⁵³ However, a coup d'état prevented them from taking office. The party developed into a “bloc of three classes—the worker, peasant and middle classes.”³⁵⁴

In April of 1952, the MNR organized a rebellion backed by factory workers and miners that lasted several days. Due to the fragility of the Bolivian state, it was unable to repress the rebellion and the coalition was victorious. Although some historians describe the rebellion as having moderate leaders and limited objectives, as long as the state was demolished and the masses were in possession of weapons, there is no doubt that there existed a social revolution.

³⁵² Herbert Klein, *Historia de Bolivia*, 234.

³⁵³ James Malloy, *Bolivia: La revolución inconclusa* (La Paz: Ceres, 1989), 201.

³⁵⁴ James Dunkerley, *Rebellion in the veins: Political struggle in Bolivia, 1952-1982* (London: Verso, 1984), 41.

Once in office, the MNR supported the workers movement and fomented the creation of the COB, a national workers organization, at the time dominated by miners. The COB pushed for its demands to be part of the agenda: nationalization of the mines, agrarian reform and liquidation of the army (substituting it with peasant and miners militias). The MNR established universal vote and abolished the hacienda system, thereby destroying the *hacendado* class.³⁵⁵

The MNR had to face the critical economic situation, as well as a lack of food supply after the 1953 agrarian reform and were in need of capital. The radicalism that accompanied the nationalization of mines and land re-distribution in the valleys and highlands was balanced in the lowlands with the legal figure of the “*empresa agrícola*” (agricultural enterprise).³⁵⁶ This allowed for the distribution of bigger plots of land and encouraged capitalist transformations by respecting the land that was utilizing modern agricultural methods and techniques (i.e, agricultural machinery and wage labor, etc). Santa Cruz did not have agrarian problems like the valleys and highlands of Bolivia. There was a lot of underutilized land in the lowlands and not enough work-force. In fact, there was an incipient labor force market, dissimilar to the classic hacienda system in the valleys and the highlands where “*servicios gratuitos*” were still in use until the 1952 revolution. The preexistence of sugar mills and alcohol distilleries also provided a base for capitalist development. Moreover, the existence of oil reserves in the lowlands offered a potential exit from a dependence on mining. Santa Cruz was thus the space for the transformation of the country, from a mineral extractive economy into a hydrocarbon extractive and agro-industrial self-sustainable economy.

The Corporación Boliviana de Fomento that was created a decade earlier, as part of Bohan’s recommendations, was in charge of building the Cochabamba-Santa Cruz highway

³⁵⁵ Herbert Klein, *Historia de Bolivia*, 238, 242.

³⁵⁶ Lesley Gill, *Peasants, entrepreneurs, and social change*, 32.

under the leadership of the MNR government and with resources provided by Eximbank. Once officially inaugurated, in 1954, the highway allowed for intensification in the traffic of commodities and workforce. Settlers that were seasonally employed by the sugarcane harvest formed an important part of the workforce. They later became equally important to the cultivations of cotton and, much later on, in the coca harvest.

While there were certain tensions and fears among the elite and local leaders, concerning some of the radical measures the MNR government had taken – expropriations, land reform and the liquidation of the army - during their first years in power, generally speaking, the local government and the elite had mutual interests. The import substitution project based in Santa Cruz seemed more than beneficial for the Santa Cruz agro industrialists. The subsidized price of sugar, the availability of international credits, the advances on the Cochabamba – Santa Cruz road and the railroads to Brazil and Argentina, all helped to facilitate relations.³⁵⁷

However, the period of coinciding interests did not last forever. The nationalization of mines and, as a result, the capital flight of big mining corporations, meant the government faced a serious lack of operative capital that it sought to remedy through increasing the circulation of money. Adding to other factors, the issuing of money produced a spiraling inflation that reached a critical point during the government of Hernán Siles Zuazo. Subsequently, George Jackson Eder appeared on the scene, the main economic advisor and a member of the Stabilization Commission created on the initiative of the IMF and with the support of the United States.³⁵⁸ Towards the end of 1956, Eder delivered his recommendations to Siles in the form of the

³⁵⁷ On railways see Mario Arrieta et al., *Agricultura en Santa Cruz: de la encomienda colonial a la empresa modernizada, 1559-1985* (La Paz: ILDIS, 1990), 185, and Cesareo Aramayo Avila, *Ferrocarriles bolivianos: pasado presente futuro*.

³⁵⁸ James Dunkerley, *Rebelión en las venas*, 83.

Stabilization Plan. The plan advised eliminating price controls, freezing salaries and establishing a fixed exchange rate.³⁵⁹

The Stabilization Plan provoked a rupture in the COB as well as in the MNR. The sector of the COB that was more impacted by the plan, the miners, closer to the POR and to Juan Lechín opposed it.³⁶⁰ Railway and factory workers, formerly related to the PIR, supported Siles and were converted into the “Bloque Reestructurador.”³⁶¹ On the other hand, disagreements between the Siles government and the Santa Cruz elite became evident when Siles, in an attempt to reduce the fiscal deficit, failed to implement the interpretative law that would give the producing departments 11 percent oil royalties.³⁶² This was interpreted in Santa Cruz as an abrupt end to both the development plan for Santa Cruz that the MNR was implementing and to the much-desired urban public works that were to be funded with the royalties. From that moment onwards, a civic movement that rallied around the demand for eleven percent in royalties emerged; it was led by the Comité Cívico Pro-Santa Cruz, which although claiming to be apolitical and nonpartisan, relied on the support of the Falange Socialista Boliviana, responsible, in the 1950s, for a number of coup attempts.

Clashes between MNR caudillo Sandoval Morón and the Unión Juvenil Cruceñista (armed branch of the Comité Cívico), in addition to some FSB organized coup attempts triggered repression and the occupation of Santa Cruz by peasants, miner militias and the army. The combination of an easy to share motto as oil royalties for urban public works and the outrage produced by the military occupation of the city and the martyrs, through constant press coverage

³⁵⁹ James Dunkerley, *Rebellion in the veins*, 87.

³⁶⁰ Robert Alexander, *The Bolivian national revolution* (New Brunswick: 1958), 217

³⁶¹ James Malloy, *La Revolución inconclusa*, 302.

³⁶² Roland Palmer, "Politics of modernization," 277.

in Santa Cruz, intensified the opposition to the MNR in Santa Cruz. The central state “retook” Santa Cruz in 1959 but its base was severely weakened. The Comité during this period successfully reacted to the universal vote, establishing its representation over the democratically elected representatives, and allowed displaced politicians to re-enter the political sphere. A few months later, the president of the senate signed a decree that gave the 11 percent royalties to the producing department.

We are going to observe how in this period, while politics became more open and popular, Santa Cruz historiography moved towards embracing its indigenous and mestizo origins instead the exclusionary ideas of white-Cruceño. The vindication of the Camba seemed to better serve the objective of creating an alliance among the different classes in Santa Cruz.

The revolution changed many things as we have seen: it established the universal vote and led to the building of the Cochabamba – Santa Cruz road that joined the lowlands and the *altiplano*. Politics ceased to be restrictive and the elitist Cruceño discourse diminished in its ability to mobilize and, particularly, in its attempts to oppose the populist policies of the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR).³⁶³ These policies, which were implemented at a local level mainly by MNR caudillo, Luis Sandoval Morón, included radical measures such as urban reform that signaled the redistribution of land in the urban area of Santa Cruz.

³⁶³ The change in political participation is evident in numbers. In June 1951 elections the "Número total de inscritos" meaning people that could vote were 204.649. Five years later, in the first election with universal suffrage, on June 7, 1956, the potential voters were 1.119.047. Carlos Mesa, *Presidentes de Bolivia: entre urnas y fusiles* (La Paz: Gisbert, 1990), 140-141.

1. The 1952 Revolution

As we have seen, from the beginning of the 20th century, the Santa Cruz elite demanded links to altiplano markets through territorial integration and economic protectionism. Following the Chaco War these ideas became common sense and part of the electoral platform of Bolivia's political parties. During the Second World War, the Bohan Mission developed, on request of the Bolivian state, a plan to sustain political stability, pay the external debt and make the nation a viable enterprise. The development plan coincided with state objectives as well as the demands of the Santa Cruz elite. As if this were not enough, financial support was also offered to implement the project.

With the deterioration of economic conditions during the 1950s, the need to change Bolivia's profile became very evident. As we saw in the previous chapter, both the political and economic situation, made it clear that change was indispensable.

The MNR was finally able to take power in April 1952, despite winning a majority of the votes and being unable to assume office in 1951. The MNR adopted a political platform that was widely shared following the Chaco War: to change the economic profile of the country and break the national dependence on mining markets. Economic diversification and food security were indispensable, and this would be made possible with the integration of Santa Cruz into the Bolivian economy.

The Bohan Plan, outlined by the mission sent by the United States at the beginning of the 1940s, also coincided with the country's imperatives. However, times had changed considerably. During the 1940s, the State Department had the objective of "stockpiling" strategic material such as tin and was subsequently prepared to help Bolivia financially and technologically. Bilateral

relations had been facilitated initially by Pro-U.S administrations such as Enrique Peñaranda's government, but were later thrown into doubt when Gualberto Villaroel came to power amidst allegations of connections to Nazi Germany. The MNR was at the time criticized for being pro-fascist.

In 1952, things had changed considerably. The United States had a good stockpile of tin and the Truman administration was not particularly interested in helping Bolivia. Furthermore, the first government of the National Revolution confronted serious economic problems. The situation was not promising: low mineral prices, a decline in mine productivity and higher production costs. This was a result, among other things, of improvements in miner's working conditions – a key figure in the revolutionary process. Moreover difficulties in importing food supplies was exasperated by an exchange rate differential geared towards subsidizing certain production areas and a quota system that generated a black market of overpriced goods in a context of scarcity. The MNR government decided to resort to receiving aid from the United States.

Following the first months of the National Revolution, the United States was prepared for "Business as usual." The fact that the MNR would have obtained majority votes in the year before the revolution facilitated things, which, in a different situation, would not have been quite so automatic. In August 1952, for example, in a meeting between Víctor Andrade, Bolivian Ambassador in Washington, and Rollin S. Atwood, Director of the State Department of South American affairs, both sides agreed: "economic diversification and increased agricultural production are essential to the economic well-being of Bolivia."³⁶⁴

³⁶⁴ "Memorandum of Conversation, by Milton Barall of the Office of South American Affairs," August 18, 1952, Talk con Victor Andrade (Bolivian Ambassador). *Foreign relations of the United States, 1952-1954. The American republics*, vol. 4 (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1952-1954), 501.

We can imagine that both the Santa Cruz elite as well as the State Department would have been uncomfortable with the slogan “*Tierras al indio, minas al estado*” (land for the indian, mines for the state). The Santa Cruz elite was more concerned about agrarian reform, while the state Department was more worried about the nationalization of Bolivia’s mines. Probably both were worried about the precedent established through either land distribution or the expropriation of private property. The United States government chose to clarify things to the Vice President, Hernán Siles Zuazo, saying that they had two interests in relation to the nationalization of mines: “that American stockholders be treated justly and equitably” and that “as a friend of Bolivia, the United States is interested in that country's development and progress.”³⁶⁵

When the nationalization decree was read at the “María Barzola” mining field in Catavi a brief history described the effects of mining on the economy and Bolivian politics. Among the justifications of the nationalization decree, it was claimed:

That constant capital flight has determined the continued impoverishment of the country and disallowed the possibility for the creation and development of an internal market, with all the... consequences for agriculture, industry, commerce and transport.

That the nations subordination to the interests of the big mine owners, halted farming and industrial development in extremely rich areas of our territory [...] the importation of foreign consumer goods deprived the incentives for national produce.³⁶⁶

³⁶⁵ "Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State", Washington October 7, 1952. Siles Zuazo, Andrade, The Secretary, Mr Bennet OSA. W. Tapley, Jr. Bennet, Deputy Director of South American Affairs. Ibid., 509.

³⁶⁶ “Por medio de un Decreto Supremo el Gobierno dispone la nacionalización de las que forman los grupos mineros de Simón Patiño, de Hoschild y Carlos V. Aramayo,” [Read at the “Maria Barzola” Camp, Catavi, 31 october 1952, 10:20 am] *La Universidad*, November 8, 1952, 2.

With the exception of the characterization of a semi-colonial Bolivia subjected to imperialism, other fragments, such as the previous quotation, expressed at the act, could well have been extracted from the Bohan Plan.

A couple of weeks after nationalization it was suggested in an editorial piece from the Santa Cruz newspaper *Universidad*, that the mining sector had hindered “the diversification of industries that would have promoted general welfare,” and was carried out by “the big mine owners whose objectives were to preserve their economic power and with this, their political power.” This is why the editorial suggested that: “In theory, we also express our agreement with this serious act and if we have any doubt over its effectiveness, in reference not so much to nationalization decree, but rather the fact, proven through experience, that the State is bad administrator... [...] We trust that with the current government’s big promises, thing will develop in a different way.”³⁶⁷

Two weeks later, an editorial in the same newspaper, declared its support for nationalization and expressed its satisfaction that Siles Zuazo had announced in Washington that former owners of the nationalized mines would be compensated. The editorialist stated that this was the right thing to do. On the other hand, the editorialist expressed relief that the radical alternative of worker control had not been accepted, since it would have meant: “the establishment of a true soviet which, having absolute control of the mines, would leave the State completely subordinate, not only in relation to mining, but in any field, since money is power: we have seen this for fifty years.”³⁶⁸

³⁶⁷ Editorial, “La nacionalización de las minas,” *La Universidad*, October 16, 1952, 4.

³⁶⁸ Editorial, “Alrededor de la Nacionalización de las minas,” *La Universidad*, November 6, 1952, 4.

It is very probable that concerns over the control of mining profits could have been related to a possible veto of development projects in Santa Cruz by the mining unions.

The MNR government was clearly aware of the specter alluded to in the Santa Cruz editorial: the Soviet. To be portrayed as a communist government during the Cold War would risk losing American financial and technological support that the MNR considered essential for their survival in power. The tin barons also understood this and had employed a public relations company lobbied by the law firm belonging to former democratic senator of Maryland, Millard Tydings.³⁶⁹ Both worked towards portraying the Bolivian Revolution as a Communist revolution.

The intensification of the Cold War and the arrival of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, elected a few days after the nationalization of the mines, signaled a change in the agenda of the State Department. While the priority during the Second World War was to secure strategic raw materials, readily provided by Bolivia, the priority following the Revolution and the onset of the Cold War was to prevent communism from advancing.

During the first difficult years of the national revolution, the combination of low tin prices, the concomitant difficulty in acquiring an imported food supply and the disarticulation of limited agricultural production, presented a problematic scenario. The MNR understood that the United States was a possible short-term solution to the Situation. Subsequently, Víctor Andrade, Bolivian ambassador to Washington, was obliged to deny rumors of the revolution's communist

³⁶⁹ Víctor Andrade, *My Missions for Revolutionary Bolivia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1976), 157-164, and James F. Siekmeier, *The Bolivian Revolution and the United States, 1952 to the present* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 62.

tendencies and even used the same specter of communism in his favor, to secure help for Bolivia.³⁷⁰

With few resources, Andrade hired a public relations agency³⁷¹ and took advantage of his relationship with Nelson A. Rockefeller and the contacts he developed with the American press. Upon the arrival of Milton S. Eisenhower, the President's brother, who was later responsible for a report on US - Latin America relations, the objective was to present Bolivia as a reformist and democratic administration that would inhibit the advance of communism while allowing the development of capitalism.³⁷²

For the Santa Cruz elite, nationalization presented two problems. On one hand, it was seen as a lack of respect for private property, and on the other, the administrative capacity of the State was questioned. Both were clearly associated with communism. In this sense, the Santa Cruz elite was more anti-communist than the US, since, for the State Department, the MNR was not communist.

³⁷⁰ "Memorandum of conversation, by William P. Hudson of the Office of South American Affairs," Washington, December 9, 1952, *Foreign relations of the United States, 1952-1954. The American republics*, vol. 4. (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1952-1954), 511.

³⁷¹ James F. Siekmeier, *The Bolivian Revolution and the United States, 1952 to the present*, 62 and James F. Siekmeier, "Trailblazer Diplomat: Bolivian Ambassador Victor Andrade Uzquiano's Efforts to Influence U.S. Policy, 1944-1962," *Diplomatic History* 28, no. 3 (June 2004): 385-406.

³⁷² "The Secretary of State to the Director of the Foreign Operations Administration (Stassen)," Washington, September 2, 1953. *Foreign relations of the United States, 1952-1954. The American republics*, vol. 4 (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1952-1954), 535. On Bolivia's dangerous situation due to low tin prices "Bolivia faces economic chaos. Apart from humanitarian considerations, the United States cannot afford to take either of the two risks inherent in such development: (a) the danger that Bolivia would become a focus of Communist infection in South America, and (b) the threat to the United States position in the Western Hemisphere which would be posed by the spectacle of United States indifference to the fate of another member of the inter-American community." The report was later published in 1953 as: Milton S. Eisenhower, *United States-Latin American relations; report to the President*, Inter-American series, 47 (Washington: Department of State, 1953).

When the miners' union suggested disbanding the military, *La Universidad* published an editorial piece in defense of the army as a national institution. Following the miners' threat to mobilize the masses, if they were not granted the right to veto, the editorialist asked:

what can a government do if it lacks the means to defend itself? Would it be a real government, in such conditions as to be subjected to the will and whim of the illiterate masses? Here in [a country] where the proletariats government and the abolition of private property has recently been declared, without the response of the leaders, is this because the leaders have no say? It is not enough to send delegates to the United States to say we are not communists; it is necessary to prove it, and prove it with deeds not with simple affirmations. The declarations of the C.O.B have not been heard even in Guatemala, where communism rules the government.³⁷³

However, while Santa Cruz criticized state interference in certain areas they nonetheless sought state assistance in other areas. During the beginning of the revolution, there was a series of topics that resurfaced in the Santa Cruz press. The state was asked to protect their products, such as sugar and rice, and to provide technical and financial support, agricultural machinery, an agricultural bank, and integration with altiplano markets.

In reference to the optimism generated by new railroad links, a piece in *La Universidad* suggested that: "Although the beginnings of a better dawn rises on the frontiers, cheered on by the echo of powerful locomotives, Santa Cruz knows that on the day of the railroad opening ceremony, it must still greet visitors in interior clothing. Something more: perhaps the paradox of that historic day will be the banquet offerings of sugar from Cartavio [Peru's northern coast],

³⁷³ Editorial, "Programa de Gobierno," *La Universidad*, December 30, 1952, 4.

Uruguayan rice, Brazilian coffee, served on a table cloth woven from Paraguayan cotton, where an Argentine barbeque will be eaten."³⁷⁴

In the same piece, it was admonished that agro-industries in Santa Cruz were “rarely encouraged by an incomplete stimulus by the central authorities,” and if this were not enough, “permanently attacked by the fictional system of cheap imports with preferential exchange rates.” Agriculturalists and cattle farmers had the “arduous and sorrowful task of subsisting in the face of state indifference.”³⁷⁵ The solution, from their perspective, was for bank agencies to change their role and become “stimulus referents and generators of industrial prosperity.”³⁷⁶

This version, expounding the negative effects of the international railroad was contested in another article proposing that the way to avoid the banquet of foreign products, was by recapitalizing the Agricultural Bank.³⁷⁷

The election of Eisenhower in November 1952 was received with enthusiasm in Santa Cruz. He was differentiated from the outgoing Harry S. Truman in an editorial suggestively titled “Eisenhower and the ‘good neighborhood’” and compared to Franklin D. Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. The Truman trauma came from the expectations generated by the United States over the exchange of aid for strategic materials during the Second World War. At a time when the US was willing to help Latin America for its own interest and later when they lacked the “terrible urgency for our natural resources [...] which turned into closed policies [...] and

³⁷⁴ Editorial, “Alrededor de la Nacionalización de las minas,” *La Universidad*, October 16, 1952, 4. Viador Moreno Peña, “La Agricultura y Ganadería de Santa Cruz,” *La Universidad*, October 18, 1952, 2.

³⁷⁵ Viador Moreno Peña “La Agricultura y Ganadería de Santa Cruz” *La Universidad*, October 18, 1952, 2.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Luis Oyola, “Resurgimiento Agropecuario en Bolivia,” *La Universidad*, November 13, 1952, 2.

ignorance of Latin American's decisive role in the affairs of world politics."³⁷⁸ Note the reference to "our natural resources," which underscores a view of the nation that incorporated the rest of Bolivia's natural resources, such as the altiplanos' mineral wealth, as belonging to the Bolivian nation.

The editorial's high expectations of Eisenhower were based on a quotation from a Brazilian daily that described him as: "A firm believer in the need for closer ties with the sister republics of America and the maintenance of mutually beneficial economic and cultural policies."³⁷⁹

Eisenhower's policies described in the Brazilian daily and quoted by the Santa Cruz newspaper, was to a great extent part of a policy of "containment" which was guided by the objective of avoiding the advance of communism.³⁸⁰ The MNR was doing a good job of convincing the State Department that they were the best option to avoid that happening in Bolivia; however, as the editorialist of *La Universidad* suggested, "it is not enough to send officials to North America to say we are not communists." One of the ways of demonstrating this was to open the Bolivian economy to private investment.

During a meeting in Washington, Walter Guevara Arze, minister of foreign relations at the time, showed John M. Cabot, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter American Affairs, proof that they had an "open door policy" in terms of petroleum investments and that they were also "studying legislation which would provide for the participation of private capital in the operation of certain of the nationalized mines." Cabot was quick to clarify that "the United States

³⁷⁸ Editorial, "Eisenhower y la 'Buena Vecindad'," *La Universidad*, November 15, 1952, 4.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ On containment policies, see: David Green, *The containment of Latin America; a history of the myths and realities of the good neighbor policy* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971).

Government was not seeking to force an entry for new private capital in Bolivia.” The Bolivian government was to decide in terms of its own interests, but “American capital should be respected once it had entered Bolivia,” otherwise “difficulties would arise.” Guevara Arze suggested, “the only practicable fields of operation for private capital in Bolivia today were mining and petroleum exploitation.”³⁸¹

As we have seen, while the Santa Cruz elite had high expectations and demands with respect to potential changes following the revolution, it also harbored suspicions of MNR reforms. One of the most sensitive issues was agrarian reform. The fact that “farmers” and rural societies had been initially excluded from the initial agrarian reform discussion committee provoked annoyance, which appeared in an editorial of *La Universidad*. According to the author, it was necessary to educate the Indians before any action was taken: “Instead of thinking seriously and patriotically in starting things from the beginning, which implies the education of the Indian and his proper incorporation into civil life, they want to unionize them without thinking – or thinking – that for the Indian, syndicalism simply means a way to ‘bury the patron as deep as possible’.”³⁸² For the commentator, this type of unionization signaled “imminent rebellions” in Cochabamba.

A few weeks before the agrarian reform decree was signed, a letter was sent by the directive of the Santa Cruz Sociedad Rural to Oscar Alborta Velasco, the landowners’ representative at the agrarian reform commission in La Paz. This letter was reproduced in full-page installments in the newspaper *El Deber*.

³⁸¹ “Memorandum of conversation, by William P. Hudson of the Office of South American Affairs,” Washington November 4, 1953. *Foreign relations of the United States, 1952-1954. The American republics*, vol. 4 (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1952-1954), 539-540.

³⁸² Editorial, “La realidad agraria actual,” *La Universidad*, January 22, 1953, 4.

The letter referred to the agrarian problem in Bolivia taking up the line suggested by certain Santa Cruz representatives at the 1938 convention, which emphasized the differences between Bolivia's regions in term of land issues. "The land situation in the so-called Oriente and its subsequent possession has deprived no one of his rights; 'this immense and ignored region, human effort implied audacity and disdain for life, overcame the inconveniences of natures rebelliousnous and established settlements and work, rifle in hand and in constant struggle with the savages. This deserves special consideration, essential study and careful decision.'"³⁸³

Without a doubt what was needed was an "essential study" since, at first sight, the idea that "its possession had deprived no one of his rights" contradicts the epic tale of the colonizer "in constant struggle with the savages." The letter tells us about a new interpretation of the idea that "land belongs to he who works it." The person who does not work the land in the agro-capitalist sense, has no work. As the letter later clarifies "the freedom to work in the *Oriente* is done through acquiring cultivable parcels of land."³⁸⁴

In the same letter the Sociedad Rural emphasized the "wisdom" of the Paraguayan Agrarian Law by clarifying that Paraguay had "similarities with the departments of the Bolivian *Oriente* in race and customs and ways of living" and that regional needs were taken into account, with more than 20,000 hectares for large estates in the Chaco area. They ended with the conclusion that the Agrarian reform in the Bolivian *Oriente* needed to take on the "character of a technical and economic process that was neither social or territorial," since in the Bolivian *Oriente* "the land problem, or feudal arrangements of production and exploitation" did not exist.

³⁸³ "Las Tierras del Oriente y la Reforma Agraria. Fundamentales consideraciones de la Sociedad Rural de Santa Cruz," *El Deber*, June 24, 1953, 2.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

This is why they asked for a “broad program for agribusiness development, which includes the improvement of the peasant population’s living conditions.”³⁸⁵

In another installment from the letters of the Sociedad Rural, it suggested that in order to have fast results, it was indispensable to base agribusiness development on the “agricultural establishments” that were already in production, it and called for the transformation of “medium estate production” into “large businesses of an industrial character.” Consequently, the objective was to avoid the established social order from changing. On the other hand, they were quick to clarify, as if to reduce the risk of expropriation, that those regularly named “large agriculturalists [...] can in reality scarcely be categorized as medium sized.”³⁸⁶

The Sociedad Rural would make a detailed description of the problems affecting the farming world and possible solutions. In the “financial economic order,” they suggested that the lack of capital had to be solved, among other things, by investing in the agricultural bank. They proposed to rationalize farm labor by importing machinery, and expand the Servicio de Extensión Agrícola and that agricultural associations (that is to say Sociedades Rurales) manage currency revenue according to their needs instead of accepting state management. They referred to currency revenue deals in the press of the period. They also demanded roads to link “the productive regions with consumer markets,” as well as plague and illness control for plants and animals. They asked for more resistant varieties and cheaper “deforestation and woodcutting systems.”³⁸⁷

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ “Las Tierras del Oriente y la Reforma Agraria. Fundamentales consideraciones de la Sociedad Rural de Santa Cruz,” *El Deber*, June 27, 1953, 2.

After listing in detail the “industrial possibilities of the *Oriente*,” they clarified that it would all be done using “one hundred percent national raw materials” and “without touching any another source that was not agriculture, the solid base upon which the Bolivian economy must rest.” The agenda of the Bohan Plan is revealed through this letter, where we find many coincidences with the MNR project that was also inspired in Bohan’s study. The differences between the MNR and the Sociedad Rural, beyond opposing state management of the economy and emphasizing the regional differences which implied an agrarian reform specific to the Oriente, were related to landlords fears about peasant unrest, or the “problems of social order.” This was exemplified by “state of agitation and anarchy which reigns in the countryside, motivated by political influences that answer to foreign slogans.”

While our department lacks the level of agitation, reach and consequences which affect the interior of the republic – due to the wage labor system employed by Cruceño producers – this process consolidates the idleness of the laborer who, incited by the rabble rousers preaching, thinks the revolution has been carried out so that he can live without working. – If, as a consequence of this uncontrollable endeavor that has for many years systematically penetrated the peasant classes, Cruceño production has suffered for the lack of security to have a stable work force at its disposal and – due to the ever lower productivity of the farm laborer – now this anomaly has reached the extreme where many producers have had to restrict their operation as a result of not having skilled workers.³⁸⁸

As a result they suggested establishing work regulations that took into account the specific characteristics of the Bolivian Oriente, stipulating that: “Work contracts with duration of no less than two years, with the obligation to comply with the latter, risk forfeiting the ability to be hired by any other landowner unless a certificate of availability is presented and supplied by the last contractor or relevant authority.”³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

Compliance with a compulsory contract seems to resonate with old work practices like the forced peonage system or “*enganche*.”³⁹⁰ The Sociedad Rural proposed to send a delegate, who would be present, alongside state and peasant delegates, at discussions concerning the minimum wage. They also raised the issue of the need to regulate the “working conditions and the average productivity of the worker per day, stipulating the minimum number of working days per week.” They even suggested the “absolute prohibition of alcoholic beverages on Sundays – from midday onwards – in order for workers to be in condition for work on Monday.”³⁹¹

Upon returning from La Paz, after having represented the farming sector in the commission for Agrarian Reform, the engineer Oscar Alborta Velasco, said in an interview with *El Deber* that the “agriculturalists from the Bolivian Oriente, who luckily had overcome pre-feudal and feudal structures in their estates, were given special treatment.” According to Alborta: “The colonization achievement of more than half the territory of the Republic by *Orientales*, which had been undertaken without any official support and at the cost of incredible sacrifices, made the committee of the Agrarian Reform realize the need to consider the Bolivian Oriente, worthy of the law.”³⁹²

Alborta would also underline the region’s benefits since “the pressure of demographic density does not exist” and “there are lands for all men of good will who desire to work them.”³⁹³ On the other hand, he emphasized the efforts of the *Orientales* who were government members

³⁹⁰ On this topic see Ana María Lema, *El sentido del silencio: la mano de obra chiquitana en el oriente boliviano a principios del siglo XX*.

³⁹¹ “Las Tierras del Oriente y la Reforma Agraria. Fundamentales consideraciones de la Sociedad Rural de Santa Cruz,” *El Deber*, June 27, 1953, 2.

³⁹² “Con la conciencia del deber cumplido, hoy debo afirmar, que hice todo lo humanamente posible, en defensa de los agricultores” dice el Representante de los agricultores en la Comisión de la Reforma Agraria Ingeniero Oscar Alborta Velasco,” *El Deber*, September 9, 1953, 2.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

and –such as Ñuflo Chávez Ortiz- had acted patriotically and honestly in defense of the Bolivian Oriente”. Having said that he recognized that: “we are living through a revolution, a historic process that nobody can now detain. Under these circumstances, the landowner’s representative can do little, even when he is exceptionally gifted with all the qualities of intelligence and courage.”³⁹⁴

Lastly he showed himself to be hopeful that the Agrarian Reform “indicated a concrete step towards the agricultural development of the Oriente, and that we are entering a new era of peace, work and real progress.”³⁹⁵

Once again, and in repetition of the 1940s, no critiques of centralization appeared during the first years of the National Revolution, nor demands for decentralization, federalism or autonomy. In *La Universidad* an editorial piece appeared mentioning the cost of having to undertake proceedings in La Paz and suggested decentralizing the process by allocating procedures, especially those dealing with land issues, to the prefectures.³⁹⁶

This was far from the heyday of the Comité Pro-Santa Cruz. For example, in a meeting to renew the organization’s directive, quorum was not even reached. An article by *La Universidad* described as “lamentable that a crucial act for Cruceño life was given no importance by local institutions.” Instead of this extreme “apathy,” the election should “awaken the interests of all Cruceños.” “While it is true that lately the activities of the Comité have been scarce, this is due to the county’s situation, known to all, which does not allow for vigorous and energetic action.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Editorial, “Centralismo Administrativo,” *La Universidad*, November 20, 1952, 4.

Despite this, the former directive has accomplished a great feat in maintaining the integrity of this cruceñist organization against all odds.³⁹⁷

During those years, various articles in the Santa Cruz press were published on apolitics and non-partisanship that can be linked with the tradition of the Partido Oriental Socialista. Disappointments following the 1938 constitutional convention, which set out the possibility of defending the general interest of the region far from the party banners, had strong repercussions for the oil royalties struggle and was a position already present in the inaugural ceremony of the CPSC.

* * *

After the 1952 revolution, the Santa Cruz elite expressed expectations in line with their demands and attempts to orient the revolutionary process. On the one hand, they asked for state stimulus and funding for agribusiness, particularly through capital that could be administered by an agrarian bank. On the other, they worried about agrarian reform and the nationalization of private property. They wanted to develop already existing agribusiness to respect and reinforce the status quo. They feared the disarmament of the army and the organization of miners and peasant militias. In general, however, during the first years of the revolution, the Santa Cruz elite seemed to welcome the MNR's government policies. There were no criticisms of MNR's centralism, nor were there proposals of decentralization, federalism, or autonomy. All assumed a common posture – self-identified as “apolitical.”

³⁹⁷ “Comité PRO—SANTA CRUZ,” *La Universidad*, January 24, 1953, 4.

2. The Highway

After more than ten years of construction works and having shifted, as the press emphasized, “six million six hundred and eighty thousand and three cubic meters”³⁹⁸ of earth, the decision was made to inaugurate the Cochabamba-Santa Cruz highway in 1954. While the asphalt had not yet been finished, it seems to have been more important to make the inauguration ceremony coincide with the 24th of September, the Santa Cruz department celebration. The media operations were not only intended to show the Bolivian public the benefits of linking Oriente and Occidente of the country, but were also directed to the US State Department. The objective was to show how much progress was being made so as to facilitate requests for financial support to implement the necessary construction works for the diversification of the Bolivian economy.

The official committee for the highway inauguration ceremony included Henry F. Holland, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter American Affairs, Bourke B. Hickenlooper, republican senator for Iowa, their respective wives and a well-known American journalist, Drew Pearson.³⁹⁹ Bolivian journalists were also present from the pro-government *La Nación*, and the traditional opposition newspaper *El Diario*. The delegation had a picnic hosted by the construction company Macco Pan Pacific responsible for one of highway sections. Afterwards, they made their way to Portachuelo. Once they arrived, 500 horses one kilometer from the town received them and Victor Paz Estenssoro and the international guests were invited to stage a mounted entry into the town where they were welcomed by arches of flowers and people in the

³⁹⁸ Editorial, “La carretera Cochabamba-Santa Cruz,” *La Nación*, September 28, 1954, 4.

³⁹⁹ Drew Pearson was mentioned a decade later as “most popular” columnist in a survey. “Judging the Fourth Estate: A *Time*-Louis Harris Poll,” *Time*, September 5, 1969, vol 94, issue 10, 48-51. His column “Washington Merry-Go-Round” “was carried by more than 650 papers, almost twice as many as any other column...” “The Tenacious Muckraker,” *Time*; September 12, 1969, vol. 94 issue 11, 86.

streets. The reception seems to have been organized by the MNR, since both the party leader and the mayor took charge of welcoming the guests. It was the first time a president of the republic had arrived in the town.⁴⁰⁰

The reception seemed to have been effective and Holland expressed his surprise both for the affection of the people towards Victor Paz Estenssoro, as well as the efforts Estenssoro made to serve his people. The Republican senator came to say that of the 56 countries he had visited, he had never seen anything like it. Similar comments were published in Drew Pearson's daily column, which according to the United States Information Service was published in more than 100 U.S newspapers at the time.⁴⁰¹

A few weeks later, the highway inauguration also received coverage in an edition of *Life* magazine. At the time, *Life* was one of the highest selling magazines in the United States. Ernest Hemingway had published "The Old Man and the Sea" in its pages two years earlier and in 1954, he was awarded the Nobel peace prize. The magazine was illustrated. The piece about the highway was preceded by a three-page automobile publicity for Chevrolet Motoramic. This automobile, which came in a V 8 cylinder model, appeared to provide a true representation of the "American dream" and an invitation to the American public to drive it on the Bolivian road. The piece starts with a spectacular panoramic photograph of the winding highway and is entitled "Bolivia Opens sky high road."⁴⁰²

In accordance with the visual rather than written style of the magazine, the report was inter-dispersed with advertisements for lubricant, oil filters and men's clothing. The photographs

⁴⁰⁰ "Fue recibido con júbilo en Portachuelo el Presidente de la República, Dr. Víctor Paz Estenssoro," *El Deber*, October 10, 1954, 7.

⁴⁰¹ "Holland y Hickenlooper bien impresionados con la democracia boliviana," *El Deber*, October 17, 1954, 7.

⁴⁰² "Bolivia opens sky high road," *Life* 37, 19, November 8, 1954, 63-68.

represented the engineering prowess of how the mountains were cut open to make the road. The march of modernization represented by a horse drawn carriage passing on the tarmac through a reinforced concrete archway, a truck-born house for the workers, the hired tanker trucks and the crosses of three workers who plunged to their death over a 900 foot (274meter) precipice.⁴⁰³

The *Life* article made it clear that the road had been made with US monies, companies and technicians, while stating that Victor Paz Estenssoro “like any good politician,” “did not mind claiming much of the credit for the new road.” It was as if he were forgiven for being a politician. In the light of the conversation that took place between Holland and Paz Estenssoro, we can imagine that he was also forgiven for being the guarantee that communism would not advance in this part of Latin America. The question is that, as *Life* magazine underlined, Victor Paz “was hailed the highways real hero as his brown convertible led the opening-day procession over the Andes.”⁴⁰⁴ In order for the situation to be understood by the million or so readers of *Life* in the United States, it was necessary to project the image of the American dream: the hero of the highway in a convertible.

It is worth pointing out that further suggestive details beyond the text can be found in the photographs. In the last page of the article, there are two pictures worthy of attention: one shows Paz Estenssoro embraced by “indians who will now produce more food for shipment over the new road.”⁴⁰⁵ In the other, we can see Paz Estenssoro with his back to the camera greeting a crowd of peasants with the MNR traditional V sign, while the peasants respond likewise from the

⁴⁰³Ibid., 64 and 67.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., 68.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

other side of a puddle. From his rear pocket a Colt revolver can be made out. The caption tells us that the revolver was a gift from – no other than – an American banker.⁴⁰⁶

The closeness between the United States and Bolivia was seen with curiosity and documented in detail by British diplomats in Bolivia. We can imagine that in postwar years, when the United States became a global power, Great Britain lost influence but maintained an active diplomatic network that observed North American foreign policy with mistrust.

From the British embassy in La Paz, the Foreign Office in London was informed that Holland's visit to Bolivia was an "unqualified success" although everything was to be later approved by Washington. They also noted "no outward sign of animosity against the United States which is normally not far from the surface in this country." According to the British diplomat, in reward for the welcome received, Holland adopted "the jargon of the governing party, [and] invariably addressed the Ministers as 'Comrade'" and when the Oil and Mines Minister, Juan Lechín, asked him where he had learned to use the expression, Holland responded "like you I belong to the Party..."⁴⁰⁷

In the Santa Cruz daily, *El Deber*, a translation of a *Washington Post* column by Drew Pearson appeared, the journalist who was part of the committee.⁴⁰⁸ He quoted Holland asking the public's permission to call them "compañeros" which was received with 'delirious enthusiasm' with the people chanting, "Long live compañero Holland!"⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ FO 371/109221, British Embassy, La Paz, November 4, 1954.

⁴⁰⁸ Drew Pearson, "U.S. Backs Bolivia Land Reform," *The Washington Post*, October 7, 1954, 55.

⁴⁰⁹ Drew Pearson, "Estados Unidos apoya a Bolivia," *El Deber*, October 24, 1954, 2. "Feracidad de las tierras de Santa Cruz," *El Deber*, October 3, 1954, 1.

Afterwards, Pearson sensing the confusion of the British diplomat reading the document clarified the difficulties of translating the term “compañero” saying that the word “does not have exactly the same meaning as ‘comrade’” and that using it Holland was “identifying with the new agrarian reform, the nationalization of mines and other drastic measures put in place by the MNR.”⁴¹⁰

Neither the press at the time nor the British diplomat had access to the conversations between Holland and Paz Estenssoro and his cabinet. It was speculated, however, that more financial aid was being requested. From Holland’s memo on the meeting, we know that Paz Estenssoro had referred to “Bolivia’s exchange deficit”, and had asked for 9 million dollars “of trade to go to capital goods, machinery, and equipment,” but - as we know for Holland’s notes - “on the assumption they would receive only \$7 million.” On the other hand he asked for “\$7 million of agricultural surpluses including wheat, cotton, lard and milk.” Food aid would later be sold and that money would go to construction works approved by the State Department.⁴¹¹ He asked for loans from Eximbank to finish laying the asphalt on the newly inaugurated Cochabamba-Santa Cruz road and to build a bridge over the Piraí river which he had promised his enthusiastic followers hours before. He also asked for an oil pipeline from Santa Cruz to Cochabamba with further pipelines to La Paz and Arica and also a tin smelter. He also referred to tin and wolfram contracts and the amount to be paid in compensation for – in the words of the North American functionary – the “appropriated mines.” Paz Estenssoro also proposed “Bolivia’s default of foreign debt.”⁴¹²

⁴¹⁰ Drew Pearson, “Estados Unidos apoya a Bolivia,” *El Deber*, October 24, 1954, 2.

⁴¹¹ Víctor Andrade, *La Revolución Boliviana y los Estados Unidos* (La Paz: Gisbert, 1979), 274

⁴¹² "Memorandum of conversation With Bolivian President Paz Estenssoro and Members of His Cabinet, by the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Holland)," La Paz, September 30, 1954. *Foreign relations*

Furthermore, the question of “Bolivia’s attitude toward private enterprise” was also assessed. Paz Estenssoro explained that the Bolivian Government “wants to retain control of the tin smelter, if built” and also its “traditional monopoly on the manufacture of matches.” However he clarified that Bolivia “will welcome private capital in any other enterprise, including the oil and gas industries.”⁴¹³ We can imagine that this conversation provided the basis for the approval of the Oil Code the following year. This would reopen the oil industry to private enterprise and included the interpretative article over departmental royalties that would cause so much upheaval in the coming years.

However, coming back to Holland’s memorandum of the meeting. In the documents we can read that, towards the end of the meeting, he took Paz Estenssoro to one side and – in line with Eisenhower’s position in favor of private enterprise - said that for the oil pipeline and the tin smelter he should seek private capital. He asked if his “government could adopt fiscal revisions suggested by either the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) or the Eximbank and designed to increase Bolivia’s borrowing capacity.” Paz Estenssoro assured him that “he would try to follow any suggestions.” Lastly, he asked if “he felt confident of his ability to control the communist problem in Bolivia.” Paz Estenssoro said that “he did.”⁴¹⁴

The opening of the road received wide coverage in the Bolivian press and was an opportunity for the pro-government paper, *La Nación*, to reflect on the historical tensions between Santa Cruz and the central state. On the historic 24th of September, a couple of days before the road's inauguration, an editorial piece took up the Cruceño argument expounding that

of the United States, 1952-1954. The American republics, vol. 4 (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1952-1954), 566.

⁴¹³ Ibid., 566.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 566-567.

regionalist sentiment was caused by the government and not by Santa Cruz. He gave justifications rooted in the past: "It was logical that every region, that is to say each department, considered itself to be a different geographical entity, with its own racial idiosyncrasy, its own customs, distinct idioms and even a different music. Geography had marked Bolivia with a fatalist stamp: with the lack of roads and communication networks further disabling the means to connect men materially and spiritually. As a consequence each department experienced its own life in self-centered isolation and misery..."⁴¹⁵

According to the editorialist and the newspaper's director, Saturnino Rodrigo, "instead of curing the ailments [of regionalism], the medics encouraged the conditions for it to take root."⁴¹⁶ The editorialist even came to suggest in another article that: "they were almost two separate countries belonging to the same nation."⁴¹⁷

Another article suggested a historical reconstruction where the Chaco War was the trigger for the emergence of a "national conscience" that "saw the necessity to unify a country, profoundly disjointed by successive failed governments (desgobiernos)."⁴¹⁸ This idea was popularized -and became part of the common sense- by Augusto Céspedes through his historical novels and established academically by Herbert Klein's doctoral thesis.⁴¹⁹ In any case if the war was responsible for generating national consciousness, the party began to articulate that process by:

⁴¹⁵ Editorial, "Regionalismo," *La Nación*, September 24, 1954.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Editorial, "La carretera Cochabamba-Santa Cruz," *La Nación*, September 28, 1954, 4.

⁴¹⁸ "La carretera al Oriente," *La Nación*, September 28, 1954, 4.

⁴¹⁹ Herbert Klein, *Orígenes de la Revolución Nacional boliviana*.

collecting all the aspirations and hopes of the majority classes, [came out] onto the stage to give Bolivia a new direction; the MNR kindled the hidden aspirations of the people which when defeated, took refuge in popular determination and strength, and also a new sense of patriotism began to flower; during the resistance [1946-1952] it was enough to be part of the movement and issue the victory sign for all regionalist sentiments to disappear and for everyone to be Bolivian determined to defend equality and unity.⁴²⁰

The MNR presented itself as the means to overcome regionalism: as the State in a Hegelian sense, as representing the common good and, perhaps responding to or forestalling criticisms, explain the reason for investing all the countries money in the development of one region: "All the construction works to be undertaken are for no other reason except the good of the national, the big projects are not implemented unless they are put to the service of Bolivia, what does it matter if the funds come only from here, if the construction of the works are for the good of the whole country: if today we are investing money into sugar refining in Santa Cruz, that sugar will be consumed in La Paz as well as Sucre and Potosi; that is to say, the larger the population the larger the benefit."⁴²¹

According to *La Nación* the road was "the vital artery through which the powerful current of the economy is to circulate."⁴²² It was the only thing lacking for Santa Cruz to become an "emporium of wealth" where "the work of her children will do the rest; from sugar production and fruit orchards to precious wood, petroleum and minerals, the nations economy will be renewed with vigor."⁴²³ In his words we can clearly see the project of import substitution based in Santa Cruz, as a crucial part of the recommendations of the Bohan Plan.

⁴²⁰ Editorial, "Regionalismo," *La Nación*, September 24, 1954.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² "24 de septiembre," *La Nación*, September 24, 1954.

⁴²³ Ibid.

Sign of the times, the newspaper caption would pray from its front page: “Unity is Strength.” Following this line, another article suggested that: “Bolivia is not one single geographical entity, but begins to be a solid spiritual entity, since the dream of being a grand nation is felt in all the spheres of the country, where all her children live in peace through the produce of her fertile land.”⁴²⁴

* * *

Half a century after the 1904 *Memorandum*, when the Santa Cruz elite demanded integration with Cochabamba, the highway was inaugurated. It was constructed under the MNR government with US funding. Santa Cruz was the site of transformation within the country, converting from a mining economy to an agricultural and hydrocarbon economy. It was, moreover, the site of development for a national agro-industrial bourgeoisie that could balance the radicalism of miners and peasants. Once Santa Cruz was linked with Cochabamba and later with Argentina and Brazil, new demands for resources were going to be heard.

⁴²⁴ "La carretera al Oriente," *La Nación*, September 28, 1954, 4.

3. The “*luchas cívicas*” (civic struggles) for the 11% of oil royalties

As we have seen in the previous chapter, another of the agreements between the Bolivian government and the US State Department had been to open certain areas of the economy to private enterprise. One of these were hydrocarbons, which under both the Bohan Plan and the MNR's economic plan, would provide energy self-sufficiency and also save on currency earnings.⁴²⁵ Still under the Paz Estenssoro administration, the Oil Code was approved on the 26th of October 1955. At that time the lack of a functioning parliament implied the absence of formal participation in the formulation of the code, which had in fact been written by a North American consulting company. This was the reason why it was christened with the consulting firm's name: the Davenport Code.⁴²⁶

The opening of oil extraction to foreign capital generated optimism in Santa Cruz,⁴²⁷ but a close reading of the code quickly diminished expectations. In article 104 it established that “The state will retain 11% share of revenue from crude oil, natural gas, crude asphalt and other substances extracted and profited from by the concessionary.”⁴²⁸

On the 16th of June 1956, the first universal elections were held in Bolivia. The leftwing of the MNR agreed to allow Hernán Siles Zuazo to be candidate for president, since one of theirs, Ñuflo Chavez Ortíz, who was Cruceño, would be candidate for the vice presidency, and

⁴²⁵ Walter Guevara, *Plan inmediato de política económica la Revolución Nacional* (La Paz: Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto, 1955).

⁴²⁶ The “Código Davenport” became a law on October 25, 1956. It was drafted by Worth Davenport, “senior partner of the New York law firm of Schuster and Davenport” under a contract for ICA (International Cooperation Administration). *Foreign relations of the United States, 1955-1957. American republics: Central and South America*, vol. 7 (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1955-1957), 550.

⁴²⁷ Ronald B. Palmer, "Politics of modernization," 277.

⁴²⁸ 26 octubre 1955. Código de Hidrocarburos, DL N° 4210.

because they had the majority of parliamentary candidates.⁴²⁹ The MNR's formula emerged victorious with 790,000 votes, followed by the Falange Socialista Boliviana with 130,000 votes.⁴³⁰ The ballot demonstrated, as James Malloy explained that the MNR was losing its support from part of the urban middle classes.⁴³¹ Apart from the Oil Code, another of the inheritances Hernán Siles Zuazo received from Paz Estenssoro was high inflation and the planned arrival of a commission to stabilize the economy.

The commission, under the auspices of the International Monetary Fund and the United States Government, and the direction of George Jackson Eder, was responsible for writing the Stabilization Plan.⁴³² Following its approval on the 15th of December 1956 it became law. A few days earlier, the MNR representative for Santa Cruz, Virgilio Vega proposed an interpretative law for article 104 of the Oil Code. Using a law from the 15th of July 1938 as the basis, he underlined that as far as state royalties, revenues corresponded to the departments where the hydrocarbons were extracted. The law was approved both in the chamber of senators and in the chamber of deputies. However the executive authority did not approve the law.

The months past, and as the situation did not change a certain anxiety began to emerge. The Federación Universitaria Local of Santa Cruz said it “was uneasy about the state of misery and abandonment which our people find themselves in” and decided to initiate a “pro progress crusade for the public good” of Santa Cruz.⁴³³ This was how an invitation in the Santa Cruz press was circulated, suggesting that “the only way of doing something in the collective interest”, was:

⁴²⁹ James Dunkerley, *Rebellion in the veins*, 97.

⁴³⁰ Herbert Klein, *Historia de Bolivia*, 247.

⁴³¹ James Malloy, *Bolivia: La revolución inconclusa*, 304.

⁴³² James Dunkerley, *Rebelión en las venas: La lucha política en Bolivia, 1952-1982* (La Paz: Quipus, 1987), 83.

⁴³³ “Se acordó restablecer el Comité ‘Pro-Santa Cruz’,” *El Deber*, June 7, 1957, 2.

“Combining all the community forces of Santa Cruz, without distinguishing political banners or religious differences, into an organization galvanizing the defense of the people’s wishes and anxieties.”⁴³⁴

The Comité Cívico Pro-Santa Cruz had existed since 1950, but after the 1952 Revolution, its activity and profile declined. The Federación Universitaria Local suggested its restitution, and to this end they convoked the old board of directors to call for elections. Meanwhile, the representatives of Santa Cruz, Omar Chávez Ortiz, Jorge Flores Arias, Virgilio Vega and Omar Chávez Paz, issued a radio message to the Executive Authority - also circulated in the press - calling for the interpretative law on royalties and a solution to the issue of drinking water for Santa Cruz, particularly the pipes which were, at the time, stranded in Brazilian port of Santos. According to the representatives, it was not possible to maintain “the problems of an urban character and essential to any civilized population without a solution.”⁴³⁵

The pipes were stranded in Santos because the government had not authorized the corresponding payments since it contradicted the politics of expenditure reduction dictated by the Stabilization Plan. In fact, the idea of reducing the state’s income revenue by giving up oil royalties, whether from the state owned YPF or from a private company to the treasury of the producing departments, did not square with the logic of deficit reduction outlined in the Plan. However, the Executive Authority proposed that a “commission duly authorized by Cruceño parliamentarians” to be “urgently constituted” to deal with the water piping issue and the “oil royalties that YPF owe to Santa Cruz.”⁴³⁶

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ “A favor de los intereses de Santa Cruz,” *El Deber*, June 28, 1957, 5.

⁴³⁶ “El Presidente de la República atenderá las necesidades de Santa Cruz,” *El Deber*, July 10, 1957, 5.

Meanwhile, in the Santa Cruz press, the journalist Pablo Cardona, who would later become the secretary for the Comité Pro Santa Cruz, strongly criticized Santa Cruz parliamentary representatives saying that in fifteen years they had done nothing to “make the law a reality.”⁴³⁷ According to Cardona, if YPF had “made just one settlement” to the departmental treasury, “the road surface problem would have been solved with glass and marble, and the energy shortage with nuclear power while Neptune could be hired to provide drinking water.”⁴³⁸

Cardona suggested, “Santa Cruz, in all its social strata, warns, judges and condemns” their senators and deputies “whose carelessness has permitted her greatness to fall into disregard.” In this way criticism of the representative channels of democracy was combined with the idea that the interests of Santa Cruz were something that went beyond social differences.

At the same time, as part of the reinstatement of the Comité Pro Santa Cruz, the preparation of a statute project was initiated by delegates from the Colegio de Abogados, and the Federación de Empleados Bancarios and the Cámara de Comercio e Industria. In the public memo they presented, they first tackled, unsurprisingly, the 3rd article. The proposal suggested that the Comité Pro Santa Cruz was “fundamentally non partisan” and that “no questions of a political nature will be discussed or suggested, nor will high ranking public officials be permitted leadership of the Comité.”⁴³⁹ This apoliticism was, on one hand, one of the sources of legitimacy which allowed them to appeal to militants from the whole political spectrum and, on the other, a way of securing their survival at a time when the MNR controlled almost all the political domains.

⁴³⁷ Pablo Cardona, “El federalismo, los petróleos cruceños, sus causas y sus efectos,” *El Deber*, July 14, 1957, 2.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁹ “Conozca Ud, los fines del Comité Pro-Santa Cruz,” *El Deber*, July 14, 1957, 6.

Later, and almost as a response to the concerns of the journalist Cardona, one of the objectives of the Comité was to clarify that they would take care of “all the great and small departmental problems.” As if this exhaustive undertaking was insufficient, they underlined that they would primarily be in charge of upholding “the cities fundamental urban works” to be ready in time for the IV centenary of Santa Cruz. Among their objectives included safeguarding sanitary services, the promotion of industry and agribusiness, YPFB refineries, accelerate rail and road communication links, housing credits, the promotion of artistic, cultural and sports activities, University direction “in accordance with the economic necessities of the region” and the circulation of a monthly newsletter by the prefecture so that “all good Cruceño citizens be made aware of how departmental revenues and their own contributions are invested.”⁴⁴⁰ Very few issues usually under state management were excluded from their objectives.

In this regard, while national representatives did not comply with their obligation to represent, the sphere of politics came to be presented as an issue of common sense and without a distinction of classes. Royalties, as well as the administration of dividends were now presented as a right. The universality of slogans appealing for urban improvement, for example, allowed the Comité Pro Santa Cruz to galvanize a heterogeneous group. The attempt to take custody over social and economic issues that appealed to the general public would later be apparent in the idea that the Comité is the “moral government” of the Cruceños.

The directive of the recently re-established Comité sent a letter to Siles Zuazo asking him to approve the royalty’s law, for the purpose of financing “drinking water, drainage systems, surface paving and energy for the city” in view of the approaching IV centenary. The letter

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

clarified that the Comité represented “the social forces of Santa Cruz: institutions, guilds, associations and syndicates” who desired to put Santa Cruz “on a level with civilization.”⁴⁴¹

At that precise moment, in *El Deber* of Santa Cruz, the stance was made apparent: president Siles would be supported – in the hope that he would apply the law and as a token of respect for democratic institutions – but from a non-partisan position. In a memo by one of the representatives of the Federación Universitaria Local and signed by one of the reorganizers of the Comité Pro Santa Cruz, Hernando García Vespa, it was suggested, in line with the editorial position of *El Deber*, that “...the country has had enough of politics and is eager for realities as the broad support for the President of the Republic demonstrates...”⁴⁴²

Simultaneously, new references to federalism were again made in the Santa Cruz press, something that had not occurred save for sporadic references, since the 1938 convention and the following dissolution of the Partido Oriental Socialista in 1939.

On one hand, references to the history of federalism in the XIX century began to emerge that recalled Andrés Ibañez as a martyr and how the federal project had lost by a thin margin at the 1899 constitutional convention.⁴⁴³ On the other hand, the denunciation was made that they had been dubbed federalists or separatists and that they had confused the terms “to silence [...] requests or protests” and to “execute reprisals and retributions.”⁴⁴⁴ It was also made clear that to

⁴⁴¹ “El Comité Pro-Sta. Cruz se dirige al Presidente de la República,” *El Deber*, July 19, 1957, 6.

⁴⁴² Editorial, “Lo que pide y ansia el pueblo,” *El Deber*, July 24, 1957, 4. See also Hernando García Vespa, “La defensa de nuestro petróleo,” *El Deber*, August 25, 1957, 3.

⁴⁴³ Pablo Cardona, “El federalismo, los petróleos cruceños, sus causas y sus efectos,” *El Deber*, July 14, 1957, 2.

⁴⁴⁴ “Federalismo,” *El Deber*, August 9, 1957, 2.

“ask for a federal or a monarchist system of government does not to equate to separatism” and that “many of the better unified peoples of the world have a federal system.”⁴⁴⁵

Once again, as had occurred during the 1938 convention, geographic and cultural diversity was related to a necessary diversity of political organization. An article in *El Deber*, signed with the pseudonym of Captain Z, suggested that: “Three are the geographic spaces of our nation: Altiplano-Valleys-Plains. Three are their characteristic populations: Aymaras-Quechuas-Guaraníes. Three should be their federal states.”⁴⁴⁶

A notorious difference with 1938 was that at that moment, demands were being made on the basis of being Guaraní, something that would have been strange in the 1930s.

The author himself confessed that among the reasons for his optimism that federalism was becoming more likely was: “the great hegemonic currents of the two strongest federal democracies in the South American continent [Brazil and Argentina], with their steel similarities, gravitate over Santa Cruz, as the old Cinderella of Bolivia prepares to direct her own destiny...”⁴⁴⁷

As if to avoid being misinterpreted as separatist again, the author makes a pledge of Bolivian patriotism: “maintaining the resolute objective and high interests of the nations greatness.”⁴⁴⁸

The round table in charge of discussing the question of oil royalty’s met on the 20th of September 1957. The Santa Cruz commission included executive authorities such as the prefect

⁴⁴⁵ “¿Hay Separatismo en Santa Cruz?” *El Deber*, November 6, 1957, 2.

⁴⁴⁶ Capitán ‘Z’, “El concepto federal en Santa Cruz,” *El Deber*, May 26, 1957, 3.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

and mayor, as well as judicial representatives such as the president of the district court. Other representatives came from public institutions and included the university rector, associations of local elite such as the presidents of the Club Social 24 de Septiembre, the Rotary Club and the Club de Leones, as well as representatives of the Central Obrera Boliviana and the Federación de Campesinos. The MNR caudillo, Luis Sandoval Morón, was also present.⁴⁴⁹ Melchor Pinto Parada had been invited by the Government to represent the Comité Pro Santa Cruz, but he could not make it; instead, the historian, Hernando Sanabria Fernández, went in his place.⁴⁵⁰ They met in La Paz with the President Siles Zuazo, the chief of staff José Cuadros Quiroga, the minister of agriculture Edil Sandoval Morón and the YPF president, José Paz Estenssoro.⁴⁵¹

One of those present, Mario Sandoval Saavedra, wrote a report of the conference at the palace that was published in *El Deber*. He had been first secretary in the first directive of the Comité Pro Santa Cruz and later, as delegate of the Colegio de Abogados de Santa Cruz, had participated in the democratization of the Comité regulations.

According to Sandoval Saavedra, president Siles Zuazo started by underlining the fact that his government had provided 7.000.000.000 Bs. of state funds in piping for water and other works, when other departments in the country had received only 2.000.000.000 Bs. He reminded

⁴⁴⁹ It was signed by: "Wálter Suárez Landívar, Rector de la Universidad; Romulo Lozada, Presidente de la Corte Superior del Distrito; Rodolfo Weiss[sic], Presidente del Club Social; Hernando Zanabria [sic], Delegado del Comité Pro-Santa Cruz; Luis Sandoval Morón por el MNR; Alcibiades Velarde, Prefecto del Departamento; Adán Weber, Alcalde; Sr. Antonio Rodríguez, Central Obrera Boliviana; Dr. Humberto Bruno, Presidente del Rotary Club; Dr. Jorge Valdez Loma, Presidente del Club de Leones; Eduardo Trigo, Secretario Ejecutivo de la Federación de Campesina; por la prensa y radios, Señores Antonio Santillán, Aristóteles Martínez y Emiliano Peña y señores Santillán Alfredo Jordán; Dr. Mario Sandoval, Dr. Oscar Gómez, Belisario Dominguez, Guillermo Menacho y Camilo Ardaya." "Fuerzas productoras del Oriente apoyan la política petrolera del gobierno del presidente H. Siles," *La Nación*, September 21, 1957, 1.

⁴⁵⁰ "Bajo el nombre de comités pro-intereses regionales funcionan verdaderas máquinas de hipócrita conspiración reaccionaria," *La Nación*, November 4, 1957, 1 y Alfredo Ibañez Franco, *Dr. Melchor Pinto Parada: arquetipo y vigía de la Cruceñidad* (Santa Cruz: n.p., 1978), 75-76.

⁴⁵¹ "Fuerzas productoras del Oriente apoyan la política petrolera del gobierno del presidente H. Siles," *La Nación*, September 21, 1957, 1.

the conference that there were outstanding debts for the railroad construction to Argentina and Brazil, the Cochabamba road and the Guabirá sugar mill. Furthermore, he suggested that, since the mining sector was in decline and agriculture was recently “emerging,” oil was “the nation's economic hope to reactivate the nationalized mines and amortize fiscal obligations.”⁴⁵² If oil royalties were handed over “the possibilities for the recovery of the nations economy would be annulled.” On the other hand, Siles Zuazo proposed “foreign capital in the oil industry, would provide a contribution to the acute scarcity of currency.”⁴⁵³ The ideas of the Bohan Plan resounded behind the diagnosis and solutions Siles Zuazo provided.

Hernando Sanabria Fernández spoke on behalf of the Comité Pro Santa Cruz and asked for the promulgation of the “interpretative law allocating 11% of royalties from private oil companies, to the producing departments, excluding the state.” Sanabria underlined that the round table was “the first time in Bolivian politics” that a “president has made direct contact with citizens, in a clear exercise of democracy.”⁴⁵⁴ The intention behind Sanabria’s comment to the first president elected through universal elections, attempted to hide the fact that Sanabria was present more as a “notable” than a representative of the “people”; that is he was a representative of the Comité, within which he was representing the Rotary Club; that is to say he was something like a delegate to the third degree.

Sanabria declared, among other things, that while “he personally desired to reach an equitable agreement [...] the instructions he brought from the President of the Comité Pro Santa

⁴⁵² Mario Sandoval Saavedra, “La Conferencia de Mesa Redonda y las regalías del petróleo,” *El Deber*, October 25, 1957, 5.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Mario Sandoval Saavedra, “La Conferencia de Mesa Redonda y las regalías del petróleo,” *El Deber*, October 25, 1957, 5.

Cruz were definite and non-negotiable...⁴⁵⁵ The posture of Melchor Pinto, seems to have been unequivocal.

Three points of accord emerged from the round table. On one hand the premise that the 11% royalties from YPFB would act “as the base for financing public works in the department of Santa Cruz.” On the other hand the creation of a commission by a decree of the executive authority: “which assess the royalties regime of the private oil companies, taking into account the obligatory services contracted by the state for the construction of road and rail works and the promotion of the countries economic development in addition to the participation of the producing departments.”⁴⁵⁶

Lastly it was agreed that the commission would be organized by: “two specialist members named by the executive authority,” one senator and one deputy member and their representatives from the meeting, the Comité Departamental de Obras Públicas de Santa Cruz, the Comité Pro Santa Cruz and the Comité Regional de la Central Obrera Boliviana from Santa Cruz.⁴⁵⁷ The round table recognized the “patriotic spirit and broad democratic sense” with which Siles Zuazo faced “the solution of the royalties issue in securing the progress of the Bolivian Oriente.”⁴⁵⁸

We can see the level of support received by the MNR representative, Virgilio Vega for his proposal, when the representative’s chamber approved a communication bill aimed at the executive authority so that “unapproved or vetoed laws are returned to the national senate, for

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ "Fuerzas productoras del Oriente apoyan la política petrolera del gobierno del presidente H. Siles," *La Nación*, September 21, 1957, 1.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

congress to enact them in accordance with the constitution.” Almost at the same time another bill was passed in the senate. The bill “reestablished funds for the Comité de Obras Públicas,” and “modified the applicability of the 11% oil royalties” and interpreting article 104 of the Oil Code. The Santa Cruz press was quick to underline the importance of these bills for the department.⁴⁵⁹

Neither these advances in the legislative field nor the negotiations with the executive seem to have calmed the mood of the president of the Comité Pro Santa Cruz. When the Federación de Transportistas “16 de Julio” found out that the machinery used for the construction of the Camiri to Santa Cruz oil line was to be transferred to another department, they contacted the Federación de Ex Combatientes, La Unión Juvenil Cruceñista and the Comité Pro Santa Cruz to avoid it.⁴⁶⁰ The machinery was to be used for the construction of the Sica Sica to Arica oil line, something unexplained in the Santa Cruz press but reported in the pro-government paper, *La Nación*, in La Paz.⁴⁶¹ Subsequently, on the 26th of October, the Federación de Transportistas, transferred the machinery to the city of Santa Cruz, while the Cruceño press emphasized the “general public support of the decision taken by the transportistas (bus drivers).” In the words of Melchor Pinto: “In the name of the people of Santa Cruz [...] the machinery was handed over to the Honorable Mayor for the maintenance of the streets and the construction of avenues and also to cover the needs of the provinces of this department.”⁴⁶²

Notoriously, the illegal action was glossed over with legal terms while even appealing to legitimacy: it was emphasized that the decision was taken “unanimous” by the people regardless

⁴⁵⁹ “La cuestión de las regalías para los departamentos productores,” *El Deber*, October 23, 1957, 1.

⁴⁶⁰ “Santa Cruz vivió emotiva tensión con motivo de traslado de maquinarias,” *El Deber*, October 30, 1957, 3.

⁴⁶¹ “Bajo el nombre de comités pro-intereses regionales funcionan verdaderas máquinas de hipócrita conspiración reaccionaria,” *La Nación*, November 4, 1957, 1.

⁴⁶² “Santa Cruz vivió emotiva tensión con motivo de traslado de maquinarias,” *El Deber*, October 30, 1957, 3.

of age or social class and that the machinery had been entrusted to the Mayor. During the manifestation, Pinto claimed to represent the will of the people. As the pro-government *La Nación*, underlined, it was easy to proclaim that they should be used to surface streets and to construct sanitary services, in doing so “championing the progress of the city and of Cruceño interests.” On the other hand, sensing the peoples “support, since nobody could say they opposed the works,” Pinto, according to *La Nación*, had placed himself on “seditious grounds” for having given the government until the 8th of November for the urban works to commence.⁴⁶³

On the 28th of October, two days after transferring the machinery, the bimonthly meeting of the Comité Pro Santa Cruz was moved from the university auditorium to the main square, in what the Comité called, a “Cabildo Abierto.” As we saw in the previous section, in 1951 Leonor Ribera Arteaga had published a justification enabling the institution to represent the “people *en masse*.”⁴⁶⁴

Once in the plaza and speaking to the crowd “from the top of the construction machines” stood among others: Melchor Pinto Parada, the president of the Unión Juvenil Cruceñista Carlos Valverde, the historian Hernando Sanabria Fernández, and the president of the Unión Femenina Cruceñista. They spoke of “the problems facing Cruceños [...] and the right to life of their people, the welfare of their children and the general progress of the region for the good of the nation.”⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶³ “Bajo el nombre de comités pro-intereses regionales funcionan verdaderas máquinas de hipócrita conspiración reaccionaria,” *La Nación*, November 4, 1957, 1.

⁴⁶⁴ Leonor Ribera Arteaga, “El Cabildo Abierto como institución histórica y de derecho natural y público. Antecedentes y conclusiones,” 102.

⁴⁶⁵ “Asamblea del Comité Pro-Santa Cruz que se convierte en Cabildo Abierto,” *El Deber*, October 30, 1957, 5.

During the rally it was crudely admonished that “whoever encumbers or interferes with the organizations actions will be considered a traitor to the Cruceño cause.” This concept reappeared during the Evo Morales government, where those seen to be collaborating with the government were termed "*muertos civiles*" (civil deaths) and which allows us to understand one of the motives why parliament members or executive authority delegates, such as the prefect, were so concerned about being aligned to the Comité Pro Santa Cruz.

Celebrating the diversity of the meeting, *El Deber*, presented the event as a “congregation of men without distinguishing creed or political tendencies, women and children and of all ages in resounding union.” It was decided that the 8th of November would be the government’s deadline “to solve the royalties question and delivery of the road machinery” while the Comité was to convene and evaluate the outcome of events and agree on the corresponding action to be taken.⁴⁶⁶ After the assembly, Melchor Pinto sent the following message to president Siles Zuazo and the president of the Senate: “Last night great manifestation peoples cabildo abierto agreed request government enactment interpretative law article 104 oil code STOP Respectfully invoke democratic spirit Hon Presrepublic and Nat Congress justice action will resolve favorably unanimous peoples request calm anxiousness and agitation assuring necessary tranquility difficult hour country lives STOP.”⁴⁶⁷

Subsequently, on the 29th of October a decree was approved that whereas “conspiratorial intentions [...] that have gone to the extreme of provoking reactions of a regionalist character,” a state of siege was enacted.⁴⁶⁸ On the following day, Siles Zuazo sent a parliamentary commission

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷ Quoted in Alfredo Ibañez Franco, *Dr. Melchor Pinto Parada*, 49.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

of 15 senators and deputies from Santa Cruz, Beni and Pando. One of the deputies was Edil Sandoval Morón, brother of the caudillo Luis, and the Minister of Agriculture.⁴⁶⁹ Meanwhile in Santa Cruz, the population knew that Radio Illimani in La Paz spread news about “decree, and congress approval of the declaration of a state of siege in response to the ‘march of a reactionary conspiracy which attempts to garner support from regionalist sentiments’.” The report provoked what, according to the Santa Cruz press, was the indignation and surprise of “...[the] people of Santa Cruz now fed up with the intrigues, infamy and slander, the pretension and tendency to judge her rights and anxieties through a lens that damages her dignity and patriotism.” Subsequently, “far from complying with the dispositions of the state of siege which seeks to control the gathering of people” a “meeting in the main square of more than twenty thousand people” was convened.⁴⁷⁰

Among the speakers were many who had attended the rally two days previously, such as the leaders of the Comité Pro Santa Cruz, the Unión Juvenil Cruceñista and the Unión Femenina Cruceñista. The historian, Hernando Sanabria Fernandez was also present.⁴⁷¹ Once again, the press underscored the presence of “people of all social classes.” During the assembly “a 24 hour strike was decreed in protest against the state of siege and the mention of Santa Cruz as a revolutionary population.”⁴⁷²

During the assembly, leaflets were circulated with separatist and falangista slogans such as: “‘ROYALTIES OR NOTHING’, LONG LIVE THE FSB’, ‘LONG LIVE THE CAPITAL,

⁴⁶⁹ Editorial, “Unidad nacional,” *La Nación*, October 30, 1957, 4, and Alfredo Ibañez Franco, *Dr. Melchor Pinto Parada*, 50.

⁴⁷⁰ “Extraordinaria reacción del pueblo cruceño,” *El Deber*, November 1, 1957, 1.

⁴⁷¹ “Asamblea del Comité Pro-Santa Cruz que se convierte en Cabildo Abierto,” *El Deber*, October 30, 1957, 5. “Extraordinaria reacción del pueblo cruceño,” *El Deber*, November 1, 1957, 1.

⁴⁷² “Extraordinaria reacción del pueblo cruceño,” *El Deber*, November 1, 1957, 1.

DOWN WITH THE PROVINCES’, LONG LIVE THE COMITE PRO SANTA CRUZ’, [...] ‘SANTA CRUZ OR BOLIVIA, BOLIVIA OR BRAZIL’, LONG LIVE PINTO’, IN WITH PETROBRAS’, LONG LIVE UNZAGA’, LONG LIVE PINTO’.’⁴⁷³

The president of the Comité Pro Santa Cruz explained a few days later that the printing press on which the flyers had been printed did not exist in Santa Cruz, which provided evidence that they were introduced from outside. He drew attention to the suspiciousness of the slogans appearance in a La Paz newspaper the following day.⁴⁷⁴ Other versions in the press maintained that the house representative and Minister of Agriculture, Edil Sandoval Morón, had delivered the flyers.⁴⁷⁵

On the following day, with a general strike announced by the Comité Pro Santa Cruz, the radio station Grigotá broadcast a “municipal instruction ordering all business to open.” Immediately:

a group belonging to the Juventud Cruceñista approached the municipality against the demand and trusting that they were entering the house of the people. However, the burst of machine gun fire took the life of a youth, Jorge Roca, who, gunned down by murderous bullets, died instantly. They were members of the Control Político, famous organization that has brought tears and mourning to the homes of all the Republic's population; an organization that took hold of that building and mocked the suffering of our people [...] the people amassed in front of the closed doors of the municipality, with the jeep used by the thugs to mount their raids becoming burned; the people issued demands and made threats; the authorities promised to hand over the murderers, but the incensed crowd tired of promises insisted. Under those circumstances cadets and aviation officials presented themselves at the house of the people together with representatives of the Juventud [Cruceñista]. It was there that the official Perez was identified as the

⁴⁷³ “En un manifestación en Santa Cruz circularon volantes separatistas,” *La Nación*, October 31, 1957, 1.

⁴⁷⁴ “Mensaje al Pueblo Boliviano,” *El Deber*, November 8, 1957, 3.

⁴⁷⁵ Alfredo Ibañez Franco, *Dr. Melchor Pinto Parada*, 50.

main aggressor, who confessed to have received orders to open fire from two people ...⁴⁷⁶

Roca was the first martyr in the royalties struggle. *El Deber* called for popular support for the family of the deceased, a widow and two children, and offered an “initial donation” of 25,000 bs.

In the version that appeared in *El Deber*, the violence inflicted by the machine gun is not clear. Another version appeared in *La Nación* where the general secretary and MNR delegate for the Comando Zonal of Santa Cruz and the president of the Federación Campesina de Santa Cruz, gave their own accounts of the events:

Gregorio Pérez was a 28 years old *compañero* who was married with two children. He was an Oruro native, profoundly revolutionary, a mechanic by profession and chief of the Comando Zonal de San Roque. While in his position as zone chief [...] he had initiated the transfer of an enormous extension of property belonging to Mr. Juan Antonio Roca, located on the beltway road. In accordance with the law dated 27th august 1954, and with that lands being paid for, c. Perez intended to provide his militant work force with housing. When c. Perez was seen by Mr. Jorge Roca, who was leaving a meeting with the mayor in the company of a group of people. Upon their descent, Jorge Roca (the son of the affected land owner and a personal enemy motivated by these events) and his company violently assaulted Mr. Perez in a commotion that lamentably resulted in his injury. It must noted that the Control Político agents fired in the air but the rebels also fired with small arms making it impossible to determine the source of the bullet which injured Mr. Roca with certitude because, instead of offering him medical aid, some of the rebels lifted Mr. Roca’s body and threw him into a pickup truck and disappeared without any further consideration. They have refused to allow an autopsy to determine the source of the bullet.⁴⁷⁷

In *La Nación*, an attempt was made to deflect all responsibilities by “making it clear that the people of Santa Cruz did not in any way participate in such acts...” According to the article,

⁴⁷⁶ “Desde la casa del pueblo se asesinó a un ciudadano,” *El Deber*, November 1, 1957, 1.

⁴⁷⁷ Signatures: Ruperto Mendieta P., Secretario General Permanente de Comandos Zonales del MNR de Santa Cruz, Juan Molina, “p. la Federación Campesina de Santa Cruz.” “El pueblo de Santa Cruz no promovió los últimos ingratos acontecimientos,” *La Nación*, November 16, 1957, 4.

“falangists and pursistas directed by Carlos Valverde” formed a tribunal led by a “*gamonal*” who ordered the death of Gregorio Perez to prevent him from clarifying “what he had been obliged to declare.” In any case it was noted that Melchor Pinto had been opposed, and so had “certain persons” of the Comité Pro Santa Cruz, to the “formation of murderous tribunal mentioned.”⁴⁷⁸

On the same day as Roca’s death, Santa Cruz senator Omar Chávez Ortiz, the ex vice-president Ñuflo Chávez Ortiz’s brother, send a radiogram to President Siles Zuazo and the Senate President, Juan Lechín, saying: "make know to all Bolivia cowardly crime against Santa Cruz people by order of pro-government agents and Reppresident who this morning from peoples house have murdered protesters who peacefully asked enactment interpretative law Art. 104 Oil Code to be sanctioned by Honorable congress last December STOP This law was made by MNR parliamentary brigade STOP Administrations attitude unwillingness to enact is a violation of congress because interpretative law cannot de vetoed."⁴⁷⁹

Siles Zuazo replied to Chávez Ortiz on the same day with the following radiogram: “severe judgment of history will establish intellectual responsibility behind this sedition.”⁴⁸⁰ The MNR administration began to find that regional loyalties could be stronger than party loyalty.

President Siles Zuazo traveled to Santa Cruz and the following day the newspaper *La Nación* headlined: “The people of Santa Cruz triumphantly receive President Siles.”⁴⁸¹ On his return to La Paz, Siles Zuazo explained that: “it is not through exasperation and discord that the legitimate aspirations of Santa Cruz will be reached” and that “he was pleased to have seen the

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁹ Alfredo Ibañez Franco, *Dr. Melchor Pinto Parada*, 56.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., 57.

⁴⁸¹ *La Nación*, November 3, 1957, 1.

prevailing nationalist and pro-bolivian sentiments of the people of Santa Cruz,” and that he was “thankful [...] for the demonstration of affection” and “greatly impressed” by the “representative elements of Cruceño efforts” who understood “the best way to reach the aspirations and progress of Santa Cruz.” He suggested that the government receive: “representative members in order to channel the patriotic sentiment of the people and present their points of view concerning departmental royalties from oil production, with the objective of reaching an equitable and just decision which contemplates the national interest and development of all the peoples of the republic.”⁴⁸²

The parliamentary delegation for the *Oriente*, which Siles Zuazo sent to evaluate the situation in Santa Cruz, presented a report published under the grand title: ““Santa Cruz aspires to be the capital of the republic, and not the tail end of a neighboring country.” The title was a phrase previously used in the 1920s by Santa Cruz deputy, Mariano Saucedo Sevilla, to a parliament facing rumors of “separatism.” According to *El Deber* this was “the banner of yesterday, for today and always.” Among the results of the report, it was specifically underlined that “in no way does a separatist movement exist in Santa Cruz.” In a slightly obscure fashion they also declared: “neither does a favorable climate for a federal system exist.” The analysis underlined with good sense that:

the displaced politicians from the national victory in April [the 1952 revolution] have been able to galvanize collective sentiments around the basic needs of the Cruceño capital, such as water, electricity, drainage and road paving. Capitalizing on the discontent produced by the absence of these essential works in their favor, and deliberately forgetting that the M.N.R is the only government

⁴⁸² “El Presidente de la Republica vindica al pueblo cruceño,” *El Deber*, November 8, 1957, 1.

after 50 years of oligarchy that has reached those lands with objectives that signal the economic transformation of the Oriente and of the whole country.⁴⁸³

Meanwhile the government proposed to the delegation that 11% of royalties from YPFB production, be destined to the producing departments. In terms of the 11% royalties pertaining to private enterprise, allocation would be as follows: "a) Six percent as national income, for the payment of public works implemented on a national scale and to be implemented in the producing departments and for which the state will be liable [...] b) The remaining 5 percent will be applied as a permanent departmental amount in favor of producing departments for funding public works in the capital and provinces, as well as other works on a departmental level."⁴⁸⁴

The proposal had been designed to "take the opinions of national representatives and party leaders into account."⁴⁸⁵ It was presented at the Comité Pro Santa Cruz conference and accepted through a "unanimous nominal vote."⁴⁸⁶ All 76 delegations from the Comité Pro Santa Cruz voted.⁴⁸⁷ On the 26th of November, one of the commission delegates, Lucas Saucedo Sevilla, sent the result of the vote in a congratulatory radiogram to Siles Zuazo, expressing gratitude.⁴⁸⁸

Siles Zuazo responded in a similar tone, asking for a written version of acceptance, to which they obliged taking the opportunity to thank the people of La Paz who refused to believe

⁴⁸³ Signed by: Gil Coimbra O, Beni; Rodolfo Suárez M, Beni; Juan Alpire D, Beni; Jorge Arteaga F, Pando; Oswaldo Brasilinio Z, Pando; Julio Ponce de León, Pando; Cesar Peña Córdova, Santa Cruz. "No existe separatismo en Santa Cruz," *El Deber*, November 8, 1957, 5.

⁴⁸⁴ Pablo Cardona, "Documentos sobre el reconocimiento de las regalías del petróleo," *El Deber*, November 27, 1957, 1-2.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ "Sobre el asunto de las regalías," *El Deber*, November 29, 1957, 1.

⁴⁸⁷ "Comunicado del Comité Pro-Sta. Cruz," *El Deber*, December 6, 1957, 3.

⁴⁸⁸ "Sobre el asunto de las regalías," *El Deber*, November 29, 1957, 1.

the infamy of those who attributed the Cruceño people with “tendencies not inspired in the purest and most profound loyalty to the nation.”⁴⁸⁹

Meanwhile, Luis Sandoval Morón returned to Bolivia from his New York post at the United Nations, on -according to himself- the request of president Siles Zuazo.⁴⁹⁰ Once in La Paz however, they asked him not to travel to Santa Cruz. Regardless, he arrived in Santa Cruz on the 29th of November.⁴⁹¹

According to the version published in *La Nación*, in the early morning the *emenerristas* left the departmental building “singing the M.N.R hymn and led by a band of music,” whereupon they were attacked by gunshots from the Club Social 24 de Septiembre where there was dance in full swing. The police protected the attendees of the “popular indignation” party.⁴⁹² The news was complemented by a communiqué from the MNR Comando Departamental and signed by Sandoval Morón, where he related that Alfonso Anzaldo, “worker,” and chief of the Avanzada Nacionalista, suffered an intestinal injury and was in “a state of agony.” The MNR Comando Departamental, as well as protesting, declared the “immediate mobilization of all the party's organizations” and requested a lawsuit against those responsible.⁴⁹³

The version of events that circulated in the Santa Cruz press was considerably different. According to this version, once Sandoval Morón had returned, they roamed the “streets and

⁴⁸⁹ Signed by: Humberto Vázquez Machicado, Elfi Albrech, Lucas Saucedo Sevilla, Luis Ruben Terrazas y Carlos Valverde Barbery. Ibid.

⁴⁹⁰ Luis Sandoval Morón, *Revolución y contrarrevolución en el Oriente boliviano, 1952-1964* (Santa Cruz: UAGRM, 2010), 165.

⁴⁹¹ “Relación de los sucesos ocurridos en Santa Cruz hasta el amanecer del sábado 7 pasado,” *El Diario*, December 10, 1957, 6.

⁴⁹² “Se atentó contra la vida del jefe del comando departamental de Santa Cruz. Agoniza el compañero A. Anzaldo,” *La Nación*, December 1, 1957, 1.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

squares” of the city threatening “to hang rosqueros and take women ‘for whoever’, as a prize for the banditry and assault.” Later, it was claimed that they joined their lieutenant Pedro Ribera Méndez, where they proceeded to drink leaving shortly afterwards aboard three trucks, drunk and armed. “The spirits are high fed by the promises offering that the properties of the ‘rosqueros’ would in a few days belong to the ‘wage earners’.” At the “humble birthday party” a “citizen is shot and injured in the right thigh.” According to the newspaper it was later said “the victim suffered the shots of a machine gun vomiting fire with a modern and unknown weapon from the windows of the club against a peaceful manifestation.” From there they entered the Club Social 24 de Septiembre celebrating the 1957 graduation of the Colegio Alemán but those present threw from the premises.⁴⁹⁴

While all versions differ considerably as to who was responsible, they all coincided in describing a violent situation. The return of Luis Sandoval Morón to Santa Cruz signaled the return of confrontation. Two days later larger clashes occurred in the early morning of the 5th of December, when dynamite exploded in a house belonging to Pablo Seng, a relative of Melchor Pinto Parada. According to a statement from the Comité Pro Santa Cruz this “could have resulted in the deaths of Mr Seng’s three young grandchildren” and was the “final demonstration of the savagery of the union leader Morón.”⁴⁹⁵

In a telegram sent to the president of the republic, and published in *La Nación*, Sandoval Morón described the explosion as a “preparatory ruse” and that Melchor Pinto “had exploded firecrackers or dynamite that night in a nephews home to tarnish my name and justify the abuses

⁴⁹⁴ “¿Quién tejió con mano oculta el drama de Santa Cruz?” *El Deber*, December 11, 1957, 3-4.

⁴⁹⁵ “La tragedia de Santa Cruz. Comunicado del Comité Pro Santa Cruz,” *El Deber*, December 8, 1957, 1.

occurred.”⁴⁹⁶ The question is that while there were no injuries or deaths, since the house was empty, a furious reaction was produced. On the afternoon of the Friday 6th of December onwards, a hunger strike was initiated in protest against the violence with the “desire to achieve peace, tranquility and guarantees for this subjugated people.”⁴⁹⁷ Simultaneously, the Unión Juvenil Cruceñista sacked the homes of Sandoval Morón and his mother. Meanwhile, Sandoval Morón and his company withdrew to the outskirts of the city, to a district named at a later date Villa San Luis. Following hours of clashes, during which the civic struggles added a second martyr, Gumercindo Coronado, Sandoval Morón's group began to retreat.

In a public prayer, Melchor Pinto expressed his gratitude that “the people had defeated a band of delinquents” and had confronted the “thugs.” He also asked the Cruceño people to carry down “in history, the indelible memory of experiences lived over the last two months,” which were a “terrible material loss, but of sublime inspiration and moral substance.”⁴⁹⁸

The hunger strike lasted less than four days. On the intervention of the foreign consuls residing in Santa Cruz, the minister of foreign relations agreed to offer guarantees.⁴⁹⁹ It was in this way that on the 12th of December, a few days after the expulsion of Luis Sandoval Morón and the Control Político, the oil royalties decree was passed. In his memoirs Sandoval Morón related how the government had told him to hold his ground and that he would receive reinforcements, but that the reinforcements never arrived. Sandoval Morón inferred that the royalties law could have been passed earlier on and the violence avoided, but the moment was

⁴⁹⁶ “Turbas aleccionadas actúan peligrosamente en S. Cruz,” *La Nación*, December 1, 1957, 1.

⁴⁹⁷ “Representativas del heroísmo y abnegación de la mujer cruceña,” *El Deber*, December 8, 1957, 6.

⁴⁹⁸ “Oración patriótica al final de la jornada,” *El Deber*, December 13, 1957, 5.

⁴⁹⁹ Pablo Cardona, “La decisión de las mujeres de Santa Cruz,” *El Deber*, December 11, 1957, 2.

purposefully delayed in order to allow the civic movement to displace him.⁵⁰⁰ In the memoir of a member of the opposing band, vice president of the Unión Juvenil Cruceñista, José Terrazas Velasco, Sandoval Morón's explanation seems to be confirmed. Terrazas publishes the military plan of the *unionistas* to evict Sandoval Morón and relates a meeting held with the army's seventh division established in Guabirá, where coronel Armando Escobar Uribe assured them that "the army will not play Cain to the Cruceño brothers."⁵⁰¹ It is understood that the Government laid a trap for Sandoval Morón in order to get rid of him, by holding the army back, and giving the Unión Juvenil Cruceñista *carte blanche* to attack him.

The displacement of Sandoval and the Control Político emboldened the *cívicos* who defiantly wrote that the ucureños would never succeed in installing terror in Santa Cruz.

The threat came when peace was installed through the decisive and heroic action of our youth; it is a shame, because we have lost the opportunity to familiarize ourselves with the Ucureña, who are famous 'for the glorious attacks on the *latifundios* [large estates] of the Cochabamba valley' where terror was successful, but terror will never succeed in Santa Cruz because this land knows how to bury bossy caciques, tyrants and thugs. Santa Cruz is not a land of children to intimidate; many lessons have been taught as is evident in our history, which is there for all to read.⁵⁰²

On the 11th of December MNR militants from Santa Cruz sent a radiogram to president Sile Zuazo, asking for the party to intervene in Santa Cruz and "to uproot the *matonaje* (bullying) and the unjustifiable acts which the people would find difficult to endure again." (*matonaje* was the euphemism for Luis Sandoval Morón). Siles Zuazo was also asked to urgently resolve the "legal mechanisms to recognize the oil royalties" as had been proposed by the

⁵⁰⁰ Luis Sandoval Morón, *Revolución y contrarrevolución*, 169.

⁵⁰¹ José Terrazas Velasco, *La Unión Juvenil Cruceñista en las luchas cívicas por nuestras regalías de hidrocarburos* (Santa Cruz: n.p., 1994), 194.

⁵⁰² "Se perdió una oportunidad: Ucureña en Santa Cruz," *El Deber*, December 11, 1957, 5.

government and “adapted by the people of Santa Cruz through their base organization the Comité Pro Santa Cruz.” New police chiefs and a brigade commander were also requested. If the petitions were accepted, the undersigned maintained, “peace would reign” and the “meeting with the president of Argentina would be received with jubilation by the people of Santa Cruz.”⁵⁰³

Apart from the issue of royalties, the radiogram sent by the MNR militants also asked for the resolution of two important themes relevant at the time: the internal dynamics of the MNR and the pacification of Santa Cruz, before the arrival of Argentine president Pedro Eugenio Aramburu for the inauguration ceremony of the Yacuiba railroad. Thus on the 12th of December and following the agreement between the Santa Cruz delegation and the government, a Supreme Decree was passed to legalize the oil royalties. Oil production pertaining to YPFB whether directly or with the participation of private capital “would allocate 11 percent as permanent income revenue in favor of the oil producing districts.” In contrast, the 11 percent revenues sourced from private enterprise would be allocated as follows:

45,46%, the equivalent to 5% of total production, would be allocated as permanent income revenue in favor of the treasuries of oil producing districts, for the funding and maintenance of public works, for both departmental capitals and the provinces, as well as to foment agriculture, cattle farming and industry [...]

54,54 percent of the said royalty and equivalent to 6% [...] would be destined to state obligations in the undertaking of national communication links with the producing districts. Once these obligations have been completed this amount will permanently remain national income revenue.⁵⁰⁴

It was also underscored that royalties could be used to guarantee the funding of departmental public works on the condition that they were first authorized by the Consejo

⁵⁰³ “El MNR de Santa Cruz defiende su prestigio y acción,” *El Deber*, December 15, 1957, 3.

⁵⁰⁴ “Reglamentó las regalías petrolíferas el Supremo Gobierno,” *La Nación*, December 13, 1957, 1

Nacional de Estabilización Monetaria.⁵⁰⁵ The day after the approval of the Supreme Decree, Melchor Pinto sent an effusive radiogram to President Siles: "People of Santa Cruz received news approval of royalties law with jubilation which permit realization highest most legitimate aspirations of progress for the whole department establishing the greatness and prosperity of the nation STOP. Gratitude to honorable president favorable solution unjustifiably jeopardized by people interested on damaging our people, expresses our hope for lasting peace and tranquility returned to our homes and a common labor and order for future of Bolivia."⁵⁰⁶

The celebration of the law was carried out in the Plaza 24 de Septiembre on the night of the 14th of December. According to the press it became a "popular festival" of "unequaled happiness, with the dancing including all the social layers of the city. Music, drink, joy and lighting were given to the people for free..."⁵⁰⁷ "the dancing took place for the whole night to the music of Negro Barrientos '11 percent' carnival rhythm."⁵⁰⁸

Mirroring the subsequent expectations and speculations of growth in Santa Cruz, a small publicity on the front page of the newspaper suggested the purchase of land: "The future of Santa Cruz is secured by the oil royalties, secure your future by acquiring property in Villa 'Parque Centenario' [...] land investment is a secure investment. Land investment is always the best investment, Santa Cruz will grow and so will the value of land."⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ "Solucionada la cuestión de las regalías, se transmite la satisfacción y regocijo de Santa Cruz. Prosperidad, paz y grandeza para el porvenir," *El Deber*, December 15, 1957, 1.

⁵⁰⁷ "La verbena del 14 del presente," *El Deber*, December 18, 1957, 8.

⁵⁰⁸ Ricardo Catoira Marín, *Las luchas sociales en Santa Cruz* (Santa Cruz: Editorial Universitaria, 1998), 112.

⁵⁰⁹ "Regalías," Advertisement, *El Deber*, December 25, 1957, 1.

Melchor Pinto declared that the Comité Pro Santa Cruz and president Sile Zuazo had “signed a solemn contract to comply with the law, the established authorities and at the service of the nation, the activities of work and order.” This is why Pinto asked “the people of Santa Cruz” to support the agreement. In previous conversations Pinto had asked the government to avoid “reprisal measures” for the October and November events, clarifying that “acts of violence and thuggery against the people will not be tolerated,” and to respect the law and authorities demanding that positions of authorities be “designated to good people who enjoy the sympathy and respect of the people,” and that “the people of Santa Cruz should go back to work” and the army to return to their bases.⁵¹⁰

The following year, a plot by the Falange Socialista Boliviana, which included the participation of the Unión Juvenil Cruceñista, provoked the army to return and the ucureños marched to the city.

* * *

The MNR sought cooperation with the US as a way out of the economic crisis. However, the collaboration of the US was conditional: Bolivia was to eradicate communism and its economy was to be sanitized and opened up to the private sector. The Oil Code and the Stabilization Plan were among the conditions that derived from agreements between Bolivia and the US. The Oil Code opened the region to foreign capital. Santa Cruz had high expectations for the arrival of capital and potential income for the Departmental treasury. According to the Oil Code, oil royalties were to go to the National treasury, however, this contradicted a 1938 law that Santa Cruz wanted to abide by. Nevertheless, to give up the percentage of the oil resources

⁵¹⁰ “S. E. El Presidente de la República Dr. Siles Zuazo, anunció para Santa Cruz era de paz, tranquilidad y trabajo,” *El Deber*, December 25, 1957, 4.

contradicted the spirit of the Stabilization Plan and so the royalties were denied. Subsequently, there was a reaction in Santa Cruz, lead by the Comité Pro Santa Cruz, which demanded that the oil royalties be utilized for urban development projects. As a result of the conflict and the death of two people, martyrs of the regionalist cause were created, which rapidly popularized opposition to the central government. The Comité and the Unión Juvenil Cruceñista displaced the MNR caudillo Luis Sandoval Morón and his followers. The Comité Pro Santa Cruz could be understood as an answer to the recent implementation of universal suffrage. In the sense that the Comité's corporative representation allowed politicians that were not part of the MNR to have a voice again and engage in "non-partisan" opposition to the government.

4. Terebinto

Carlos Valverde, then leader of the Unión Juvenil Cruceñista, who maintained close ties to the Falange Socialista Boliviana, explains in his memoirs that Enrique Achá, leader of the Falange Socialista Boliviana, had called him in May 1958 to inform him of a nationwide coup to bring down the MNR and invited him to take part. Valverde apparently asked him to act prudently since they lacked a chance of winning and if defeated they would lose all the advances made in Santa Cruz which enabled government opposition to live in relative peace.⁵¹¹

Among the *falangistas* the news had been spread during a *salteñada* [brunch with pasties] that the coup was gaining ground in the rest of the republic and weapons had been distributed. Many of the youths, who also belonged to the Unión Juvenil Cruceñista, took the prefecture and other public buildings. During the night the organization's leader paid Valverde a visit. According to his version, Achá told him that he left him in charge of the city since the national coup had failed. Valverde pulled some clothes over his pajamas and ran to the city square to warn the youths to leave their weapons and escape. He waited for a couple of hours and then released the imprisoned MNR officials.⁵¹²

Meanwhile, the recently released *emenerristas* proclaimed a Junta and offered guarantees that the city would not be invaded. Up until that moment there were no deaths. The government named Ruben Julio Castro as intervener and put him in charge of the whole operation. Later the VIII division of the army arrived.⁵¹³ Peasant militias entered the city shouting “death to Pinto,

⁵¹¹ Carlos Valverde Barbery, *Apuntes para la historia de los movimientos cívicos cruceños* (Santa Cruz de la Sierra: C. Valverde Barbery, 2002), 244-246.

⁵¹² Carlos Valverde Barbery, *Apuntes para la historia de los movimientos cívicos cruceños*, 247.

⁵¹³ *La Nación*, May 18, 1958, 1.

death to Valverde and where are the Cruceña whores.”⁵¹⁴ The *cívicos* then declared Santa Cruz an “open city” to avoid confrontations with government forces.⁵¹⁵

The militiamen met up with the intervener, Ruben Julio, and the minister of agriculture, Jorge Antelo, on the outskirts of the city and were sent, supposedly with the order of taking no prisoners. On the outskirts of Terebinto they found the seditious rebels who were in the process of escaping and killed four of them. What occurred in Terebinto was related in a wealth of detail in a book published eight years later, when the National Revolution had ended, by Hernán Landívar Flores. This book provided many of the images of the “barbarian” indigenous *emenerristas* against Santa Cruz and is, to a large extent, one of the factors for anti-*emenerrista* and anti-indian sentiment in Santa Cruz.

The coup attempt of the Falange Socialista Boliviana that resulted in the events of Terebinto produced a split in the gentleman’s agreement between president Siles Zuazo and Melchor Pinto. Consequently Pinto fled into exile. At his farewell he said: “The political passions on one side and the shock rooted in the betrayal of the Santa Cruz community, it has been impossible to maintain the peacefulness and freedoms that our land enjoyed and achieved with so much sacrifice a few months ago.”

He also called for collaboration with the authorities “especially in relation to our oil royalties and the construction of public works.” Upon Pinto's departure, the *Comité* was left in the charge of the vice president and MNR railroad worker, Lorgio Serrate.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹⁴ Carlos Valverde Barbery, *Apuntes para la historia de los movimientos cívicos cruceños*, 247.

⁵¹⁵ *La Voz del Pueblo* citado en *ibid.*, 293.

⁵¹⁶ “El Dr. Melchor Pinto Parada, Presidente del Comité Pro Santa Cruz, delegó sus funciones,” *El Deber*, June 1, 1958, 5.

In La Paz, *La Nación* published the headline saying “Melchor Pinto escaped with the *falangistas*” followed with the sub-heading “The objectives of ‘president’ Pinto are now revealed.”⁵¹⁷ The maneuver of associating Pinto with the Falange could not have been more explicit, and as if this were not enough, they dubbed the truth of his exile by describing it as his escape. On the 14th of May the Comité declared its “absolute exclusion from party struggles.”⁵¹⁸

Years later, in an interview with Alfredo Ibañez Franco, Pinto mentioned that: “Nevertheless, that the sub-chief of the Falange Dr. Mario Gutiérrez G., publically declared his leadership, in spite of everything, the objective was to compromise my person and the civic entity of the Comité. The only thing the Comité did was to protest and express indignation over the mass murder perpetrated against a group of university students in Terebinto.”⁵¹⁹

Lorgio Serrate, president in charge of the Comité Pro-Santa Cruz, wrote a letter to president Siles Zuazo on the 23rd of May 1958. In the letter he suggested, among other things, that it was not possible “that the error, the passion, the ignorance or short slightness should convert Santa Cruz into a species of South American Hungary.” This was the reason for asking that “the Ucuireña Indians return to their bases.”⁵²⁰ The comparison with Hungary was, without a doubt, an exaggeration if we recall that during the occupation at the end of 1956, 2500 Hungarians and 700 Soviets had died, while the combined death toll of the civic struggles and Terebinto was six Cruceños. Perhaps it was an attempt to refer to certain aspects of the MNR, which they considered were totalitarian.

⁵¹⁷ *La Nación*, May 18, 1958, 1.

⁵¹⁸ “Comunicado del Comité Pro-Santa Cruz,” *El Deber*, May 16, 1958, 6.

⁵¹⁹ Alfredo Ibañez Franco, *Dr. Melchor Pinto Parada*, 228.

⁵²⁰ Quoted in Nino Gandarilla Guardia, *Héroes del Civismo: Las Luchas por el 11% de regalías petroleras, 1957-1959* (Santa Cruz de la Sierra: Fundación Nova, 2008), 239.

During the month of June 1958, a series of articles appeared in *El Deber* all carrying the title “The Comité Pro-Sta. Cruz is supported by the Cruceño people,” and where all kinds of institutions that made up the Comité offered their support. Meanwhile talks were initiated in an attempt to secure the return of Pinto. Since parliamentary elections were approaching, president Siles Zuazo decreed an amnesty for political exiles.⁵²¹ Thus, on the 18th of June, Pinto returned to Santa Cruz. *El Deber* published the following invitation from its front page: “Cruceño people: today Dr. Pinto Parada returns. Congregate to welcome him!”⁵²²

On the 20th of July 1958, parliamentary elections took place. A few days earlier, MNR propaganda could be read in *La Nación* saying: “People: on the 20th of July, your only weapon will be the pink ballot paper [the MNR]. Vote with it.”⁵²³ In the ballot room, many people opted for the other weapon and choose the Falange Socialista Boliviana, which enjoyed good results, particularly in the cities.⁵²⁴ Within this favorable context for the opposition, Pinto wrote a “Manifiesto to the people” three days after the election. As if to avoid misunderstandings, he underlined his “respect for the legally constituted authorities” and his wish for “peace and tranquility.” He justified the apolitical tendency of the Comité underlining that: “We are not interested in political passions of any type. The winds of sectarianism that blow in from the frond towards the roadside are by their nature, transitory and moveable, we desire something more solid for the Cruceño people.”⁵²⁵

⁵²¹ “El 20 podrán regresar los desterrados y los detenidos saldrán en libertad,” *El Deber*, June 18, 1958, 1. “Está autorizado el retorno del Pdte del Comité Pro Santa. Cruz,” *El Deber*, June 22 1958, 1.

⁵²² *El Deber*, July 18, 1958, 1.

⁵²³ *La Nación*, July 12, 1958, 3.

⁵²⁴ “Las últimas elecciones,” *El Deber*, July 27, 1958, 5.

⁵²⁵ Signed on July 23, 1958. Melchor Pinto “Manifiesto al Pueblo,” *El Deber*, July 30, 1958, 3.

He defended himself from accusations that Santa Cruz was separatist and expansionist. Admonishing the falsity of the accusations, he repeated the old argument of national belonging invoking the wars lost and making a tribute to the blood spilt during the wars of the Pacific, the Acre and the Chaco. He spoke of the oil royalties and reaffirmed the intention to “benefit from the riches of our oil,” whether “produced and exploited by national, private or foreign owned companies,” as well as the “urgent need for revenues to be implemented on construction works on a grand scale and entrusted to the Comité de Obras Públicas.” He ended on an optimistic note confirming his “faith in the future that already belongs entirely to us.”⁵²⁶

On the 7th of October 1958, an interpellation to the cabinet was initiated. The first three points of appeal were related to issues internal to the MNR, which representatives considered a violation of “syndicalist privilege.” These stemmed from deaths as a result of clashes between MNR factions in Colquiri and for having “ignored parliamentary immunity.”⁵²⁷ The last three points were related to Santa Cruz; which accused the government of “undermined the good faith” of congress for suggesting the existence of a “separatist and annexationist movement”; for dictating an “unconstitutional state of siege” on the 29th of October 1957; for having “usurped due procedure” of congress by dictating “on the 12th of December 1957 the Supreme Decree pertaining to oil royalties” and for “having attempted to jeopardize international relations and the security of the state.”⁵²⁸ The representative Severiano Julio Castro, brother of Rubén and step brother of Froilán Callejas, adhered to the initial interpellation document, a request asking the cabinet to explain why they “accepted as truth the campaign against the people of Santa Cruz, in naming the region as separatist and expansionist,” something which should be proved “with

⁵²⁶ Ibid, 3 and 6.

⁵²⁷ República de Bolivia, *Redactor Cámara de Diputados*, vol. 3 (La Paz: n.p., 1958), 105.

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

definitive and truthful documents” thereby “incurring the highest crime of national treason” for failing to have done so. Lastly they brought the cabinet to task instructing them to: “Take advantage of producing proof from the proclamation of the Republic, against the nationalist sentiments of Santa Cruz, taking into account that not only has the government insulted the Cruceño people but also the previous oligarchic regimes of the last and present centuries.”⁵²⁹

Among the interpellators of the initial document, including later adhesions, were fourteen deputies. Four deputies for Santa Cruz: Jorge Flores Arias, Virgilio Vega, Oscar Chávez Paz, Alfredo Ibáñez Franco; four representatives for Potosi, two for Beni, two for La Paz, one for Pando and one for Chuquisaca. For over two weeks parliament sessions were almost exclusively dedicated to the interpellation, amidst jeering and booing from the bar, and in the presence of all the members of the interpellated cabinet and with the active participation of ministers defending government policy which included: chief of staff Walter Guevara Arze, minister of foreign relations Victor Andrade, and the minister of agriculture, cattle farming and colonization Jorge Antelo.⁵³⁰

In the parliamentary chamber Santa Cruz representatives again deployed the same arguments heard time and again since the end of the Chaco war: that Santa Cruz was not separatist, but on the contrary; the possibility of balkanization was suggested to be the aim imperialist forces.⁵³¹ References were made to the oil royalties which had been debated and

⁵²⁹ Ibid., 106.

⁵³⁰ Ibid., 104.

⁵³¹ Denying separatism: *ibid.*, 145, 231, 233, 240, 244; on possible balcanization: *ibid.*, 193.

approved in the 1938 convention;⁵³² royalties which during the civic struggles were seen as a possible source of money for the implementation of urban public works in Santa Cruz.

The MNR deputy for Santa Cruz, Virgilio Vega, who had presented the interpretative royalties law of article 104th was, as expected, very critical. He questioned the cabinet for misinformation and presenting Santa Cruz as separatist, and also for having subsequently dictated the state of siege in 1957, when demands were limited to the fulfillment of their rights written by law; for not having implemented the interpretative law in due cause and on top of that, for having “usurped due procedure” by reaching an agreement between the government and the Comité Pro-Santa Cruz which resulted in the supreme decree of the 12th of December 1957.⁵³³

Vega expressed that the MNR government had linked the “Oriente with the rest of the country with the construction of the Cochabamba-Santa Cruz road,” but he lamented that they had forgotten about the public works for urban improvement that were central to the establishment of capitals.⁵³⁴ His discourse suggested that: “The problem of national unity is essential to the National Revolution, whoever does not take into account this indispensable element, betrays the Bolivian people and the Revolution.”⁵³⁵

According to the congressional record “Jeering and applause” were heard.⁵³⁶

Despite further issues pending discussion, one pro-government deputy suggested the

⁵³² Ibid., 146.

⁵³³ Ibid., 144-147.

⁵³⁴ Ibid., 148.

⁵³⁵ Ibid., 149.

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

subject had been “discussed sufficiently.”⁵³⁷ Subsequently, before leaving the chamber the representative Ayala Mercado, suggested: “our empty benches will have more eloquence than our strangled phrases.”⁵³⁸ Sharing the frustration of the group, Santa Cruz representatives also abandoned the chamber since they were not given the chance to “voice their protest and demonstrate to the chamber the slander against the people of Santa Cruz.”⁵³⁹ An agreement to stop the discussion was put to the vote: 34 voted in favor and 5 voted against. Edil Sandoval Morón had joined the interpellation but after seeing its failure withdrew and instead proposed giving homage to the people of Santa Cruz. With less than an hour to midnight on the 23rd of October, and with the usual eloquent talk Edil Sandoval Moron expressed that: “we recall with devotion that Santa Cruz de la Sierra is the highest bastion of nationality, the great stronghold which will not yield to anything.” Amidst a “big round of applause” the chamber rose and gave “homage of atonement.”⁵⁴⁰

The following months Santa Cruz managed to coexist without any further disquieting events. According to José Terrazas Velasco, who was at the time vice president of the Unión Juvenil Cruceñista, the police shared the joint objective of keeping Luis Sandoval Morón and his followers out of the city and this was achieved, among other things, with *unionista* patrol teams tolerated by the police.⁵⁴¹

According to intelligence reports, the prefect was in Pinto’s pocket and asked him for authorization on all accounts. The newspaper *La Nación* described the situation as running under

⁵³⁷ Ibid., 469.

⁵³⁸ Ibid., 470.

⁵³⁹ Ibid., 471-472.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., 475.

⁵⁴¹ José Terrazas Velasco, *La Unión Juvenil*, 93, 104.

a “super government” and started a campaign against the prefect of Santa Cruz. He was criticized for allowing non-governmental armed groups to exist; for working as a lawyer for the company San Aurelio belonging to Ramón Darío Gutiérrez, which was guilty of tax evasion and manufacture of sugar cane alcohol and alcohol; for defending Melchor Pinto; for receiving support from “*pintopursistas*”⁵⁴² of the Comité Pro-Santa Cruz and *El Diario*; as well as having increased the number of representatives of the Comité de Obras Públicas. The closeness between the Comité Pro-Santa Cruz and the departmental authorities made the government uncomfortable. The executive decided to change local authorities.

In an editorial appearing in *La Nación*, at the time directed by Augusto Céspedes, on the “Decadence of localism,” the “instrumental and political character” of the regionalist institutions was underlined, and he stated “the components of the nationhood should express through the bodies created by popular representation. In this way when it comes to talk of the rights belonging to a city or a region; those in charge of doing it are the ones who have been invested with the authority and legitimacy stemming from the vote of the people. Any other procedure implies usurping and is self-awarded.”⁵⁴³

The objectives of *La Nación* were clear: to subtract legitimacy from regionalist institutions and resituate that legitimacy under the idea of popular sovereignty and in the election of those empowered by the novelty of universal suffrage. Taking a similar line, an anonymous article appeared a few weeks later, written most probably by René Zavaleta Mercado, who at the time had already published pieces on the Comité Pro-Santa Cruz.⁵⁴⁴ The article suggested that

⁵⁴² Word play that refers to the past of Melchor Pinto, both as a former supporter of the PURS (Partido de la Unión Republicana Socialista) and as part of the cabinet when the PURS was in power in the 1940s.

⁵⁴³ Editorial, “Decadencia de localismo,” *La Nación*, June 22, 1959, 3.

⁵⁴⁴ I thank Luis Tapia for generously allowing me to get a copy from René Zavaleta’s newspaper articles archive.

regionalism stemmed, among other things, from economic demands, such as royalties and in the “incitement of hatred against the colla.” The article also described how the Comité Pro Santa Cruz had appropriated “*motu proprio* a representation which the Cruceño people had never granted and claimed to give orders based on the sentiments of the people.” The article referred to a clear contradiction that: “the Comité was anti-kolla [...] but the people of Santa Cruz were not.” Following the editorial line it was underlined that people “were Bolivian over there” and that it was the Comité “who made anti-Bolivian efforts in fracturing the national state system.”⁵⁴⁵ They placed the Santa Cruz situation within the national context clarifying that what was unfolding: “in all parts of the territory, is a historic discussion between the Bolivian people and the oligarchy who, failing in all the regular political channels, take refuge in a civic-*rosca* and endorse subversive acts using all methods at their disposal, especially regionalism and racism.”⁵⁴⁶

* * *

Falange Socialista Boliviana planned a coup d'état. Despite the fact that this group was not originally related to the regionalist movement, it had important effects on the tense relationship with the central state. Peasant militias and the army arrived in Santa Cruz with the intentions of repressing this seditious group. The persecution resulted in 4 deaths and the exile of the Comité Pro Santa Cruz president, Melchor Pinto Parada. The occupation fueled outrage and animosity against the MNR and an exaggerated anti-indio prejudice that lasted a very long time. The press organized a joint campaign with the Comité and its different organizations to demand

⁵⁴⁵ “Como último recurso la rosca cruceña se refugia en el ‘anti-collismo’,” *La Nación*, July 10, 1959, 3.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

the return of Melchor Pinto Parada, converting him into a popular leader. Upon his return, Pinto insisted on an “apolitical” position.

5. The central state “retakes” Santa Cruz

When Haroldo Zambrana assumed the prefecture of Santa Cruz, he enforced the state of siege that was declared following the coup attempt by the Falange Socialista Boliviana where its leader Oscar Unzaga de la Vega died.⁵⁴⁷ In his inauguration speech he established that he was not going to allow “the existence of organizations or entities that usurp functions that are not legally theirs by the express mandate of the law.”⁵⁴⁸ In this way the state attempted to recover the monopoly over the use of legitimate violence.

At the time, a falangista recognized a member of the Control Político in the main square who, he claimed had tortured him. His surname was Aguilar. The falangista and his companions kidnapped Aguilar, shaved his head and later threw him onto a curbside.⁵⁴⁹ In his pocket, they found a list of people from the opposition he was supposed to watch.⁵⁵⁰ This confirms the presence of intelligence operatives working at the time in Santa Cruz. What neither the unionistas nor the falangistas could have imagined at the time, was the extent to which their organizations had been infiltrated by Control Político (Secreto Police) informants.

In his correspondence, the coordinator of the intelligence operative named the agents who were working for him since the 23rd of May of that year, on a steady pay roll and with extra bonuses, according to the quality of the information gathered. One of them was Hernán Ardaya Paz, a falangista who, after the fall of the MNR, wrote *Ñanderoga* in which he indignantly told about the abuses committed by the MNR. Ardaya Paz dedicated his book to “all those who were

⁵⁴⁷ James Dunkerley, *Rebellion in the veins*, 97.

⁵⁴⁸ Complete Prefect’s innagural speech in “Gobernar dentro del orden es ‘amenazante’ para los fines subversivos del pintismo,” *La Nación*, July 14, 1959, 3.

⁵⁴⁹ “Empieza a crear clima subversivo la Unión Juvenil de Santa Cruz,” *La Nación*, June 25, 1959.

⁵⁵⁰ “Una relación de los primeros hechos ocurridos en Santa Cruz,” *El Diario*, July 2, 1959, 9.

trapped within the powerful network of tyranny's secret intelligence, suffered all kinds of abuses with bravery and dignity."⁵⁵¹ It is not clear from the sentence whether this was dedicated to himself or those who had suffered the effects of the network where he had been the one who had been "trapped." Over time Ardaya, became increasingly prominent within his party, the Falange Socialista Boliviana, until he became the "elected president of the court of honor."⁵⁵² He figures in the book *Héroes del civismo* in the list of "Cruceños who acted and/or contributed to the struggles for the rights of Santa Cruz or were victims of persecution."⁵⁵³ In 2004 a street in the Avaroa district (UV 35) in the city of Santa Cruz was named after him. His position in the party, his name on the list, as well as the street name after him seem to suggest that his role as a government informer was never made public.

In an interview with the chief of police, the president of the Unión Juvenil Cruceñista, José Gil Reyes, expressed his desire to "collaborate with the authorities," and asked that the Control Político remain disbanded and suggested that the unionists could collaborate with the authorities by doing their "nocturnal patrols." The police chief of Santa Cruz communicated his suggestions to the chief of staff in La Paz. The chief of police communicated the negative answer to Gil Reyes.⁵⁵⁴ Meanwhile, in the main square the church bells tolled and a commotion ensued with shots fired and where corporal Antonio Coaquira Aguirre was killed.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵¹ Hernán Ardaya Paz, *Ñanderoga: El holocausto de un pueblo sojuzgado* (La Paz: Tall. Gráf. Bolivianos, 1967), 8.

⁵⁵² "Falange Socialista Boliviana esclarece posición ante el colapso de la patria," *Hoy*, June 12, 1987, 10.

⁵⁵³ Nino Gandarilla, *Héroes del civismo*, 436.

⁵⁵⁴ "Una relación de los primeros hechos ocurridos en Santa Cruz," *El Diario*, July 2, 1959, 9.

⁵⁵⁵ In different newspaper articles the victim appeared with different names: "Antonio Huaquira Llana" "Los restos del carabinero asesinado en Santa Cruz serán traídos a La Paz," *La Nación*, June 29, 1959, 3. "Antonio Cuaquira Mamani" "Ha sido plenamente consolidado el orden y la paz en Santa Cruz," *La Nación*, June 29, 1959, 4; "Antonio Coaquira Aguirre" "Inhumaronse los restos del carabinero Cuaquira," *La Nación*, June 1, 1959, 1.

Once the corporal had been killed, the troops mobilized both regular army troops and peasant and miner militias. The unionists were at the time led by José Gil Reyes. Gil tended less to open confrontation than did his predecessor Carlos Valverde. To avoid clashes a “tactical retreat” was organized and composed of 300 *unionistas*, while Santa Cruz was declared an “open city” that is to say, no resistance would be offered to the occupying government forces.⁵⁵⁶ Meanwhile the *unionistas* headed toward the Andean foothills close to Buena Vista.⁵⁵⁷ The government offered guarantees to all those who surrendered. As days passed, the *unionistas* started to fall; some were imprisoned and others exiled. Melchor Pinto together with *unionista* leaders fled to Lima. The Comité Pro Santa Cruz ceased to operate until the end of the National Revolution. It reopened in March 1965.⁵⁵⁸ In 1966, José Gil Reyes, at the time Mayor of Santa Cruz, awarded a Loseta de Oro (golden tile) to Melchor Pinto Parada. A few years later during the government of Hugo Banzer Suárez, Mario Gutiérrez Gutiérrez of the Falange Socialista Boliviana, at the time minister of foreign relations, awarded Pinto the “Cóndor de Los Andes (andean condor).” In his acceptance speech Pinto took the opportunity to refer to another award, the “medalla de oro del Gran Grigotá (golden medal of the Gran Grigotá)” which he had received together with Carlos Valverde Barbery.⁵⁵⁹ The Unión Juvenil Cruceñista was reorganized during the Banzer regime in 1973.⁵⁶⁰ This mutual awarding of prizes confirmed to some extent the interpretations being written at the time in *La Nación* that referred to the links between the Falange Socialista Boliviana and the regionalist movement.

⁵⁵⁶ “Una relación de los primeros hechos ocurridos en Santa Cruz,” *El Diario*, July 2, 1959, 9.

⁵⁵⁷ A chronicle of the fled to the forest in: José Terrazas Velasco, *La Unión Juvenil Cruceñista* and in Isaac Sandoval Rodríguez, *Surutú: "la retirada estratégica"* (Santa Cruz de la Sierra: Fundación NOVA, 2005).

⁵⁵⁸ Carlos Valverde Barbery, *Apuntes para la historia*, 339.

⁵⁵⁹ Alfredo Ibañez Franco, *Dr. Melchor Pinto Parada*, 261.

⁵⁶⁰ Carlos Valverde Barbery, *Apuntes para la historia*, 339.

Once the storm of confrontation between the Comité Pro Santa Cruz and the government was over, Virgilio Vega, MNR deputy for Santa Cruz and the original driving force behind the interpretative law of article 104 pertaining to the royalties, visited the brand new president of the senate, Ruben Julio on the 22nd of December 1959 and said to him: “do this favor for your people, my friend. Damn, you are Camba...and you’re not delivering, as a Camba should, in your mission as a parliament member...decree the law which will benefit not only Santa Cruz, but the country as a whole.”⁵⁶¹ To which Julio replied: “I admire you Virgilio. I admire your tenacity and persistence. You have come at the time when I can grant you satisfaction. Give me here [...] I hope Virgilio that your people will thank you for it, although I doubt it.”⁵⁶²

Ruben Julio was a Siles supporter until the MNR convention nominated Víctor Paz Estenssoro as a candidate. At that moment Julio changed direction and signed the decree. Thus, after two years a decree was passed that clarified the terms of the oil royalties laid out in article 104, specifying that state royalties in the oil code would “correspond to the producing departments in accordance with the law set out on the 15th of July 1938.”⁵⁶³

In an interview with *El Diario*, Ruben Julio justified having signed the decree, though admitting to a certain demagogy. He explained that because the executive authority had not legalized the interpretative law put forward by Virgilio Vega, protests broke out in Santa Cruz and Tarija leading to the censoring of his predecessor, Federico Alvarez Plata, at the congress presidency:

⁵⁶¹ Ricardo Catoira Marín, *Las luchas sociales en Santa Cruz*, 118-119.

⁵⁶² Ibid.

⁵⁶³ Honorable Cámara de Diputados, *Anuario Legislativo de 1959*, 32.

I consider – he continued – that my response will generate a reaction from certain sectors regardless I believe that I have acted in the defense of the interests of the great majority, since with the benefits generated from the oil royalties the implementation of public works of a grand scope for those regions which have until now been abandoned and, which in the near future, after the works in the department capitals have been concluded, other works in the provinces will be increased, most importantly: the construction of roads. We must not forget that in the Oriente and in the south east of the Republic, the need for road construction is vital for the welfare and progress of the regions economic activities.⁵⁶⁴

* * *

After the expulsion of Luis Sandoval Morón and his followers, there was a period of peaceful coexistence between the Santa Cruz prefect, the majority of Santa Cruz representatives and the Comité Pro Santa Cruz. Once again the regional allegiances were stronger than partisan ones. The central state designated a new prefect in order to break this cooperation, to stop the Unión Juvenil Cruceñista patrols, in short to regain control of the city. After a minor incident, the army and the peasant and miners militias headed to Santa Cruz. The Unión Juvenil Cruceñista retreated to the jungle to avoid confrontation. Pinto and other leaders of the Comité went into exile. Soon after, when Siles was about to end his term and was losing power inside the MNR, the bill interpreting the distribution of oil royalties was approved as it was presented by deputy Virgilio Vega two years before.

⁵⁶⁴ “Promulgó el Presidente del Senado Ley sobre Petróleo que afecta las regalías,” *El Diario*, December 22, 1959, 7.

6. The Cambas

The attempt to generate a wide opposition to the MNR based in Santa Cruz, seem to have presented the Cruceño intelligentsia with the difficult task of galvanizing a regional cross-class alliance. On one hand the local MNR attempted a class alliance both in the interior of the region and on a national scale; and on the other, the regionalist objective was to engender vertical loyalties by erasing class differences and attempting to align them around an alleged common good.

It is difficult to imagine this project, which could be described as inclusive, based on a class alliance, combined with the exclusionary idea of the Cruceño as a social category. We might suppose that one of the first steps in creating this regional alliance, was the necessary attempt to erase class differences; differences which in Santa Cruz, seem to have been explicitly detailed with racialized language which previously opposed –as in the famous phrase by René Moreno– Cruceños to Cambas. This is why – as can be imagined – the vindication of the Camba appears with such strength.

As we observed in the previous part, Humberto Vázquez-Machicado characterized in the late 1940s the Bolivian *Oriente* -as the rest of Americas- as produced by mestizaje, he did however made a caveat explaining the "mestizaje diferencial" of the *Oriente* where the white blood easily displaced the indigenous blood.⁵⁶⁵ Immediately after the 1952 revolution, in April, he published an article where he described as "childish pretension" to claim "Hispanic purity"

⁵⁶⁵ Humberto Vázquez-Machicado, "Orígenes de la instrucción pública en Santa Cruz."

when there were no women -Spanish or *collas*- among the Santa Cruz original founding contingent.⁵⁶⁶

Hernando Sanabria Fernández continued Vázquez-Machicado's path. Sanabria systematically expounded the vindication of the Camba in his works, not at the beginning of his career but in the 1950s. At that time he started work on a Spanish-Guaraní dictionary and undertook archeological excavations in the discovery of the native civilizations of the eastern lowlands.⁵⁶⁷ It was not by chance that the work fell to a non-Cruceño to direct the project. Born in Vallegrande, it was probably easier for him to say things that for a Cruceño would have proved torturous. At the same time, the objective of studying an un-researched topic could have been a strategy to acquire academic legitimacy, and even a way of settling the fact that he was not a Cruceño in the strict sense of the term. Sanabria, with all the dedication of the newly arrived, dealt with a variety of themes and produced a profuse and varied work: poetry, songs, narratives and textbooks on the geography and history of Santa Cruz and Bolivia and read in the Schools of Santa Cruz as well as the rest of Bolivia.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁶ Humberto Vázquez-Machicado, "Orígenes del mestizaje en Santa Cruz de la Sierra," originally published in *El Orden*, May 21, 1952, 2-3. I am quoting from its reprinted version appeared in Humberto Vázquez-Machicado and José Vázquez-Machicado, *Santa Cruz de la Sierra: Apuntes para su historia (Siglos XVI al XX)* (La Paz: Don Bosco, 1992), 135.

⁵⁶⁷ The dictionary was prepared by Hernando Sanabria Fernández and published in parts in "El idioma guaraní en Bolivia," "Vocabulario comparativo (Español, Guaraní, Chiriguano, Guarayo)," *Boletín de la Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos*. no. 33-34 (1951): 75-92. "Influencia del Guaraní en el habla popular de Santa Cruz," *Revista Universitaria*, no. 12 (1958): 43-47. The archeological findings were published in "Los Chanés."

⁵⁶⁸ I will not analyze Sanabria Fernández's strategies in search for prestige in the Santa Cruz elite. It is impossible not to mention his successful career as a *valluno* (born in Vallegrande) into the elite. His legitimacy was consecrated with the position of vicepresident of the Club Social "24 de septiembre" during 1959 and particularly for being considered the same year of his death as "Hijo Ilustre" from Santa Cruz by the city council. His important role in the Santa Cruz intelligentsia is observable in the fact that was the president of the Sociedad Geográfica from 1948 to 1950 and from 1955 to 1976. He was member of this society since 1943. He was the director of the Universidad Autónoma Gabriel René Moreno library. For biographical data see: Marcelino Pérez, *Hernando Sanabria Fernández (1909-1986) Inventario Bibliográfico* (Santa Cruz: UPSA, 1995). una leve referencia a las iniciales ambiciones políticas de Sanabria en Gustavo Medeiros, "Mi amigo Hernando Sanabria Fernández," *Historia y Cultura* 10 (1986): 117; Alcides Parejas, "HERNANDO SANABRIA FERNANDEZ (1912-1986), HISTORIADOR. In

While indigenous identity was being discovered the process was emblemized particularly by what I shall term the myth of Chiriguano bravery. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Swedish archeologist, Erland Nordenskjold had passed through the Bolivian Oriente. Part of the research resulting from his journey was published in 1917.⁵⁶⁹ In the article, Nordenskjold refers to Inca expansionism and the resistance presented by the inhabitants of the lowlands. Apparently, the idea provoked no reaction in Bolivia at the time, apart from a reference mentioned in the *Revista Universitaria* in 1939, citing the Argentine historian Enrique de Gandía who encouraged Santa Cruz separatism. It was only in 1950 that Nordenskjold's article was published in Spanish. It is surprising that three decades were needed for the translation and publication of his work.⁵⁷⁰ The delay could well be explained as simply a result of the slow process of translation-dissemination, or conversely we could underline that the article's slow uptake of over more than three decades had more to do with the appearance of a situation where it could be usefully applied: the potential expansion of the state from the altiplano into the lowlands.

The appropriation of Nordenskjold's article not only took a long time but also implied a modification of the original argument. In the English version the article focused on an anomaly of the Inca expansionism: the rare event of chiriguano troops attacking the powerful Inca empire. The idea that various Santa Cruz authors took from the article centered on the ferocious resistance presented from the lowlands. The Cruceño appropriation reached its apotheosis in an idea still widely circulated today: that "the Inca could not get down." This version was upheld by

memoriam." *Historia Boliviana* 6, 1-2 (1986): 129-131; José Roberto Arze, *Diccionario biográfico boliviano. Historiadores y cronistas* (La Paz: Los Amigos del Libro, 1989), 155; Charbonneau, *Antología de autores cruceños. Desde el siglo XVII hasta nuestros días*, 184-187; Alborta, *Hombres de Santa Cruz*, 78-79.

⁵⁶⁹ Erland Nordenskjold, "The Guarani Invasion of the Inca Empire in the Sixteenth Century. An Historical Indian Migration," *The Geographical Review*, no. 4 (1917): 103-121.

⁵⁷⁰ Erland Nordenskjold, "La invasión guaraníca del Imperio Incaico en el siglo XVI: Una emigración india histórica," transl. Gloria Antelo, *Boletín de Estudios Históricos y Geográficos*, no. 29-30 (1949): 10-23.

the existence of the archeological site of Samaipata, “the fort,” presented as the physical evidence that the Inca could “no pudo bajar.” What could be interpreted as a representation of Inca Imperial power, was interpreted as a weakness of the Inca, or even as the evidence of the fortitude of populations inhabiting the area a bit further down. This version does, of course, not take into account whether the Incas were interested in coming down or not.⁵⁷¹ In reference to the fort of Samaipata, Hugo Lijerón wrote: "The legend recounts well, how the Incas arrived to these regions and faced something up until then unknown to them: the Jungle. In the secular echo of those mountains the agony of that legendary NON PLUS ULTRA still rings, as if ending the vast and powerful expanse of the Inca Empire. ‘No further’ the Inca said, while contemplating the impenetrable jungle. ‘Further on, the green hell, and we are not its vassals; we remain here to defend our empire for ever’."⁵⁷²

It is not difficult to associate this powerful show of posturing with what seems to have been one of the Santa Cruz elite’s fears at the time: that a massive influx of immigrants from the altiplano would take place or a military occupation facilitated by the brand-new road. It is interesting to note that Lijerón related the inability to penetrate the jungle, with the idea that the Incas were not vassals of the jungle; he reifies the jungle as though it were a political system to which the Incas were to submit to. Further still, the description develops the idea that the Incas would “stay forever” in the highlands; an expression of desire which appeared -as Eric

⁵⁷¹ Nordenskjold wrote: "It is clear [...] that the group of Guaraní Indians who came from the upper Rio Paraguay did not succeed in making any conquest in the Inca Empire but only reached the boundary of that dominion. After their defeat they withdrew to the woods where, as has been stated, their descendants still live." Nordenskjold, "The Guaraní Invasion of the Inca Empire in the Sixteenth Century. An Historical Indian Migration," 115.

⁵⁷² Hugo Lijerón, "La Leyenda de 'El Fuerte'," *Revista Universitaria* 11 (1953), 52.

Hobsbawm would describe it- as a "reponse to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations."⁵⁷³

The bravery of the Chiriguanos, became commonly popularized in the late 50s. For example, the volume published by the University of Santa Cruz, marking the IV anniversary of the city, is littered with references such as the following quotation of Nordenskjold by Humberto Vázquez Machicado: "These barbarous warriors had attacked the Inca Empire."⁵⁷⁴ But this was not all, since it confronted the task of worshipping, what was then considered, the two currents that had nourished Santa Cruz. The problem was that both were on opposing sides. Consequently, the way of resolving the situation was to describe their struggle as a "struggle of two titans."⁵⁷⁵ Machicado even managed to include some chivalric descriptions of the Chiriguanos: "These chiriguano tribes were so ferocious, so audacious, so brave and so rebellious that they remained unvanquished for almost three centuries [...] they demonstrated the ability to use firearms and above all to ride on horseback having domesticated the wild herds [...] while the Indians of Peru jealously complied with the prohibition against riding horses, the Chiriguanos were expert horse riders who rivaled the Spanish in mastery and bravery."⁵⁷⁶

With the image of the region's Indians now clean, the "mixed" heritage of their descendants, the people of Santa Cruz, could be vindicated; as Antonio Landívar described:⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷³ Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in Eric Hobsbawm y Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2.

⁵⁷⁴ Humberto Vázquez Machicado, "Avatares de Santa Cruz de la Sierra: Procesos de fundaciones y traslaciones de esta ciudad," *Revista Universitaria*, no. 15 (1961): 5.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁷ Antonio Landívar Serrate (1910-1992) was a lawyer. He was acting dean of the UAGRM in 1947 and dean (1950-1954). He was a member of the board of the Comité Pro Santa Cruz in 1951. He was also a member of the Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos de Santa Cruz since 1943. He was vicepresident of the Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos (1955-1956). He was an emeritus member of the Club Social "24 de septiembre."

the “Camba, in who’s veins runs Guaraní blood mixed with that of the Spanish colonizers of these lands.” But this vindication did not refer to any *camba* but of the “inhabitant who lives in the countryside and forests of Santa Cruz; not the inhabitant of the cities and towns, where customs have become corrupted.” In Landívar’s article, a nostalgic tone is clearly evident, of one who is witness to a process of “modernization”; a tone that is symptomatic of the authors anguish in the face of the possible extinction of the *camba* “uncorrupted” by urbanization. This nostalgia also seems to have been related to another traditional condition where the *camba* was recognized as being property, or, in the words of Landívar as “my father’s *camba* laborers.”⁵⁷⁸

As part of the acceptance of Santa Cruz inhabitants as mestizos, Sanabria Fernández came to suggest that the racial character of the founders of Santa Cruz who arrived with Ñuflo de Chavez, was to great extent mestizo. Santa Cruz was according to Sanabria, founded by “Ñuflo de Chavez, with people who came from Paraguay [...] among them a good portion of individuals born in the *asuncena* colony, the reason for a great part of them being called ‘*mancebos de la tierra*’. It must be presumed that these people, and in particular the latter, would have received the influence of the Guaraní language.”⁵⁷⁹

The interesting part of Sanabria’s case is that not only is he the key articulator of chiriguano vindication, but that during the 1940s he had formed part of the Hispanist vindication. At that time, when he was not yet in the project for discovering the contributions of the Guaraní and Chiriguano, he made a reference to the population of Santa Cruz as “mainly composed of

Biographical data from *Boletín de la Sociedad de Estudios Geográficos e Históricos de Santa Cruz* 50 (1996), 35, 43; Mario G. Hollweg, *Leonor Ribera Arteaga: Vida y obra de un humanista* (Santa Cruz: n.p. 1991), 138. A short bio in "Recordando al Dr. Antonio Landívar Serrate en el día de su natalicio" *El Deber*, Suplemento Extra, August 6, 1995, 6.

⁵⁷⁸ Antonio Landívar Serrate, "Sobre la vida y el carácter del *camba*," *Revista Universitaria* 12 (1954), 50.

⁵⁷⁹ Sanabria Fernández, "Influencia del Guaraní en el habla popular de Santa Cruz," 44.

white people; uncontaminated descendants of the conquistadores and Spanish colonizers, a reduced percentage of mestizos were a product of the uncommon cross between Indian people and a few hundred pure Indians, to which a few dozen black slaves or mulattos must be added, known under the regional designation of pardos.”⁵⁸⁰

That the same author is seen to maintain -at different points in time- opposing arguments allows us to understand these changes not simply as part of generational change, but something more complex: the vindication of the *camba* as a result of the shared struggle for the oil royalties against the MNR government. Max Weber explained that a shared political struggle tended to generate a belief in shared kinship.⁵⁸¹ In the Cruceño case this could be one of the explanations that I think we could develop in the sense that the description of a common past can also be understood as the way of galvanizing a call for struggle. In this sense, the belief in a common kinship that binds people who struggle would provide the necessary condition to bind members of different social classes into a common struggle against a common enemy and certain political objectives. Lastly, it could be understood as a search for examples of bravery that serves as inspiration and gives cohesion to the group.

In this way the Chiriguano vindication referred to i) distinct origin, which permitted to valorize the product of their mixture with the Spaniards: the *Camba*, and ii) the resistance capacity against certain advances originating in the *altiplano*, whether migrants or the state in a variety of forms (i.e., prefects, repressive forces).

⁵⁸⁰ Hernando Sanabria Fernández, *Bosquejo de la contribución de Santa Cruz a la formación de la nacionalidad* (Santa Cruz: Editorial Santa Cruz, 1942), 38.

⁵⁸¹ Max Weber, *Economía y Sociedad* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1999), 322.

To make the idea of a common kinship acceptable, beyond vindicating the Chiriguano, it was necessary to clarify a series of concepts. It was in this way that Sanabria Fernández, in the midst of the “eleven percent struggles,” came up with the key concept: "*Camba* is a common term, and although in a singular sense it is applied to the lowland Indian, whether of Guaraní extraction or not, it is generally used more significantly to generically name all the individuals native to the eastern lowlands of the country. In Paraguayan Guaraní, *Camba*, means a black individual. It must be underlined that this is not the meaning in our regional vocabulary, but rather similar in meaning to the chiriguano word for *inu* (friend), in an approximate and cordial sense."⁵⁸²

The key seems to have been to de-indianize and whiten the *Camba*, making the concept more acceptable for the elite who had grown up with the idea of the unpolluted Spanish blood of Cruceños.

In the case of chiriguano vindication, emblemized in the reflections on the ruins of “el fuerte” at Samaipata, we saw how Nordenskjöld’s hypothesis had taken Cruceño authors more than three decades to popularize. In the case of the *camba* vindication, the process seems to have been the reverse. The first references are made by local authors and later developed by the American anthropologist, Dwight Heath. In both cases the scientific gaze of the foreigner acquires the authority and objectivity of science. This is clear in the way Heath’s articles were appropriated in the journal publication celebrating the fourth centenary of Santa Cruz (and even in the 21st century by the Nación *Camba*).⁵⁸³

⁵⁸² Sanabria Fernández, "Influencia del Guaraní en el habla popular de Santa Cruz," 47.

⁵⁸³ It is interesting the way in which Nación *Camba* appropriated Heath’s ideas and made them functional to their political project. They claimed to quote Heath’s concept, but they wrote "Nación emergente" instead of "pueblo emergente" as Heat wrote in his article. Confronting the uses of Heath and Nordenskjöld articles they have in

Heath had done his fieldwork between 1956 and 1957, during the initial period of the civic struggles for the eleven percent of oil royalties. Within this context, we can imagine that the struggle must have made a strong impression on his interpretation of events. In one of his articles he stated: “camba is a mestizo.” He is a descendant of the colonial Spanish and the local Indians.⁵⁸⁴ The interpretation of his statements added certain dynamism to the category by underlining a cultural rather than a biological character: “Today the true Indians are becoming Cambas [...] and the Cambas number 80,000.”⁵⁸⁵ This statement gave way to an interesting correction on behalf of the article’s translator. In a footnote, José F. Roca wrote: “the concept of Camba is wider than Mr. Heath’s observation. If we interpret the category uniquely as mestizo, the number surpasses 200,000.”⁵⁸⁶ Suddenly - as one counting soldiers before or after the battle - the more inclusive the category and the larger the number of Cambas, the better.

* * *

The limits of the national revolutionary process are revealed in Santa Cruz. On one side, preoccupations over the fiscal balance deriving from the Stabilization Plan, designed with the influence of United States, ensured that there would be no predispositions to concede 11% of oil production revenues. On the other hand, the effects of the violence unleashed by groups close to Luis Sandoval Morón and the Control Político started to become a nuisance for the executive. As

common to be an external source of scientific legitimacy; however, they are different in the sense that Heath wrote and his article was translated and published rapidly. The Nordenskjöld article instead took three decades to be published in Spanish. One after the Guerra Civil, the other immediately after the civic struggles. Dwigth B. Heath, "Normas de beber del Camba Boliviano," *Revista Universitaria* 15 (1961): 112-126. This article was complemented by another one published the same year: Dwigth Heath, "Los cambas un pueblo emergente," in Antonio Velasco (ed.). *Album Conmemorativo del IV Centenario de Santa Cruz de la Sierra* (Buenos Aires: Lumen, 1961), 165-169. Movimiento Autonomista Nación Camba, *Memorandum* (Santa Cruz: n.p., 2001).

⁵⁸⁴ Heath, "Normas de beber del Camba Boliviano," 113.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid. footnote 3, 125.

the situation became uncontrollable, the decision was made to dispose of them. Therefore, we could speculate that the executive waited to concede to the royalties law in order to provoke the civic movement into disposing of Sandoval Morón first. Actually, once under framework of violence, where the regionalist movement gained two martyrs and with a press campaign, organized by *El Deber*, the main Santa Cruz newspaper at the time, and a cause that no one could oppose, such as the urban improvement, all the conditions were present to massively expand the regionalist movement.

Furthermore, it is interesting to connect the re-establishment of the Comité Pro-Santa Cruz with the democratization process initiated by the MNR. It must be underlined that among all the reforms implemented, universal elections stand out. Subsequently, it does not seem casual that in the same year, in 1956, the first elections were held where everyone could vote for parliamentary representatives, a president and vice president; where the vice president elected, who would later resign, was from Santa Cruz; and, finally, that the Comité was re-established. Without a doubt this was related to the chronology of the Oil Code and the expectations generated by the opening of the oil industry to private capital. It is also related to a certain space opened within the political field by Siles Zuazo, but can also be understood as an attempt by notables to recover representational ground. The fact that the Comité has a corporative structure, where a delegate represents each institution, shows a representational dynamic that does not respond to one-person one-vote. It became a space, where people who did not belong to the MNR and were excluded from the political game, could return to claim themselves as both legitimate and representative of the people.

The emphasis made by the media and the Comité, that all social classes were being represented, demonstrates the attempt to legitimize the struggle. The demands, as I have noted,

were very easy to spread and the military occupation of May 1958 and June 1959 also helped to generate opposition to the government. This also showed the limitations of armed insurrection, at least when it did not count the support of the military, as would be the case more than a decade later with the coup instigated in Santa Cruz in 1971, led by Hugo Banzer Suarez against Juan José Torres.

Conclusions

One of the first features that stand out when looking at the history of Santa Cruz during the first half of the 20th century is that while their intellectuals and politicians demanded integration, the general interpretation was that they wanted to separate from the rest of Bolivia. Such confusion and mixed message was related to the fact, that apart from integration, Santa Cruz' regional elite also asked for a degree of self-government. During some periods, demands centered on decentralization, during others, on federalism, and others still, on autonomy.

From the perspective of the central state, demands for self-government were a zero-sum game: if the department of Santa Cruz won, the country --not to say the central state-- would lose. This explains in part why regional demands for self-government were often represented as an attempt to secede from Bolivia. If we see the demands for self-government within the context of the time, they coincided with periods when the state was attempting to implement distribution policies related to wealth, land or revenues from resource extraction in the department. In this sense, the demands for self-government can be better understood as attempts to obstruct the efficiency of the central state's distributive policies.

The integration of the *Oriente* demanded by the Santa Cruz intellectuals since the beginning of the twentieth century became an integral part of the national agenda following the Chaco War. Subsequently, it became part of the Bolivian government's requests to the US State Department during the Second World War, in exchange for the strategic materials that Bolivia provided. Washington supported regional integration and the import substitution program since, apart from being what Bolivia asked for, it made the economy more viable and consequently, they concluded, a more stable political regime. Following the Revolution of 1952, the MNR

finally implemented the recommendations of the Bohan Plan with the support of the US State Department. Bolivian and US officials not only wanted to make the economy more viable, but also develop an agro-industrial bourgeoisie based in Santa Cruz. For the State Department, private enterprise represented a way to counter-act the state capitalists project imagined by MNR officials. For the MNR it represented a way to counteract the radicalism stemming from their political base, linked to the proletarian miners. Time has demonstrated how this bourgeoisie would later oppose the MNR, after 1957.

The objectives of the MNR and the Santa Cruz elite generally coincided in terms of national integration and the development of the *Oriente*, during the initial years of the Revolution and both factions maintained a friendly relationship. Once the question of royalties was raised in 1957, however the relationship grew tense. The royalties offered Santa Cruz elite a legitimate cause for opposing the centralized rule of the MNR. They cleverly took advantage of the situation to unite popular will around the cause of public works and urban improvement. Since the universal suffrage law obstructed a return to traditional politics, the opposition was capable of establishing a representational organization outside democratic channels through the Comité Pro Santa Cruz. Meanwhile, the MNR government facilitated things for the Comité by militarily occupying the city of Santa Cruz, on 1958 and 1959. At the same time the leading figures of the civic movement, such as Melchor Pinto Parada, José Gil Reyes and Effi Albrecht, gained stature through the newspaper *El Deber*. In this way the local opposition to the MNR was able to rally around regionalist slogans.

Accompanying these broader political processes were new forms of conceiving the region's past. As we have seen, during times of census suffrage, regionalism was mostly circumscribed to the local elite. After the 1952 revolution and with the first universal suffrage

election held in 1956, the Santa Cruz elite reacted to the newly established channels of representational democracy. In this way, the Comité Pro Santa Cruz was strengthened through corporative forms of representation, while claiming to represent the divergent social classes. The Comité began to give instructions to parliamentary representatives for Santa Cruz as well as discrediting as traitors any representative who did not follow their directives. They also began to negotiate directly with the state, without resorting to parliamentary representatives. Meanwhile, the invasion of Santa Cruz by MNR militia and army forces from the government provoked a generalized animosity to the central state and the project of the MNR.

An examination of Santa Cruz's regional historiography demonstrates the contradictory ways the regional elite constructed its specific identity--first as Cruceños in 1930s, and later as Cambas in 1950s. The Santa Cruz elite used these contradictory historical arguments to confront critical political situations. Two such moments: the Spanish-Cruceño vindication of its unique historical origins centered on the figure of Ñuflo de Chávez, and the Chiriguano-Camba version centered on Samaipata and the idea that the "*Inca no pudo bajar.*" Both moments reflect the tension between the Santa Cruz elite and the central state and the emergence of a strong regionalist identity through the lenses of both race and history.

In the first period (1935-1939), Cruceño claims were only possible at a time of census suffrage when politics were almost exclusively in the domain of the elite. Following the revolution of 1952, and the opening of political channels through universal suffrage, it became impossible to maintain the elitist idea of the white Hispanist-Cruceño. Therefore the appearance of claims under the banner of the Camba is understandable. Proposing Spanish ancestry would imply assuming that they were not *originarios*. They would, therefore, lack legitimacy in confronting the arrival of people from other regions of the country. This could explain the timing

for self proclaiming Camba ancestry, implying to descend from the indigenous populations of the *Oriente*.

From the perspective of the Santa Cruz elite, subsequent appeals to Camba brotherhood were indispensable if they wished to attain a broad popular base in their challenge to the MNR and the central state. In terms of its success on the inside, we can surmise that they sought to galvanize a heterogeneous alliance, while providing an example of bravery and struggle, which suggested that if the powerful Inca empire was incapable of descending from the highlands, their descendants would be even less likely to succeed.

Having said this, I do not wish to suggest that Ñuflo de Chavez did not exist or that the Chiriguanos were pacific. My intention is to show how foundational myths were turned into regionalist symbols at crucial political junctures, allowing us to make clear – beyond any attempt to disguise “these facts” – that history and identity dance to the rhythm of politics.

* * *

On 1971, the agro-industrial bourgeoisie that grew with the support of MNR policies and US funds during the National Revolution reacted to the radicalization of Juan José Torrez government and supported Colonel Hugo Banzer Suarez coup. During the times of the Asamblea Popular, Sugar mills were taken in Santa Cruz and the radical maoist group Unión de Campesinos Pobres (UCAPO) took some haciendas and even intervened the Comité Pro Santa Cruz.⁵⁸⁷ The agro-industrial bourgeoisie was not willing to risk its privileges and, unlike the *hacendado* class in the 1950s, had a bigger ability to react.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁷ Carmen Dunia Sandoval, Ada Sandoval, Marco A. del Río, Franz Sandoval, Carlos Mertens, Claudia Parada, Santa Cruz economía y poder (Santa Cruz: PIEB, 2003), 96.

⁵⁸⁸ Laurence Whitehead, "National power and local power: the case of Santa Cruz de la Sierra," 39.

Banzer was loyal to his supporters and payed back with lands –through agrarian reform and loans. The 1970s oil crisis was favorable to Santa Cruz departmental oil royalties and the high cotton prices for the agro-industrialists. But when the cotton prices dropped in 1975 and 76, some turned into sugar and others into illicit commerce. Some elements of the elite had already begun experiencing huge profits from smuggling, taking rubber from Santa Cruz to Argentina during Second World War where prices tripled what US offered in its allied Bolivia. During the 1970s, however instead of rubber, they smuggled cocaine. Cocaine was not new in Bolivia. Actually, since the 1950s when it was banned in Peru some chemists moved to revolutionary Bolivia an established an important network through Buenos Aires.⁵⁸⁹

Agro-industrials coming from sugar, cotton and cattle ranching opted for the profitable cocaine industry. The illicit elite exported sulfate mainly to Colombia and clorhydrate for different locations were exported.⁵⁹⁰ The links between cocaine industry and the government only got tighter, appearing to involved family members of Banzer as well as his ministry of health, Carlos Valverde, who was a couple of decades before the president of the Unión Juvenil Cruceñista that opposed the MNR.

But returning to present times, when taking the road from the airport of Viru-Viru to Santa Cruz city centre, one of the landmarks that stands out is a sculpture trapped between a tunnel and a bridge and rendered almost invisible in the maze of reinforced concrete. It is the monument to the “National Revolution.” This hidden monument reflects, in a way, that the National Revolution is almost entirely forgotten in the city of Santa Cruz.⁵⁹¹ Certain

⁵⁸⁹ Paul Gootenberg, *Andean cocaine: The making of a global drug* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 275-286

⁵⁹⁰ René Bascopé Aspiazú. *La veta blanca: coca y cocaína en Bolivia* (La Paz: Ediciones Aquí, 1982). James Dunkerley, *Rebellion in the veins*, 315-325.

⁵⁹¹ José Luis Roca, *Fisonomía del Regionalismo Boliviano*.

historiographical works even come to ignore the revolution completely, chronologically excluding the event.⁵⁹² The slogan of regionalism is “The development of Santa Cruz is work of Cruceños” to which we might add “only Cruceños.” The attempt to erase the work of the Bolivian central state in general, and the National Revolution in particular, is a way of clarifying that Santa Cruz does not owe anything to the other departments of the country. The resentment towards the MNR Revolution is also a result of the political violence during the period, which includes the martyrs of the civic struggles and those killed in Terebinto. But if one looks at the basic economic and social data on Santa Cruz before April 1952 with later decades it is evident that many things have changed during those years.

The Camba vindication that started to emerge during the 1950s intensified over time until the beginning of the twenty-first century, when some radicalized regionalist claimed the existence of “Nación Camba” and recovered a series of images and slogans related to both the Camba and the Guaraní. This maneuver is based, paradoxically, on the demands of their traditional regional “enemy”: the so-called nación Aymara. They would deploy a discourse presenting themselves as victims of internal colonialism, avoiding the fact that since 1952, the department of Santa Cruz has enjoyed the privilege of industrial and agricultural credits while the government cabinets of the second half of the twentieth century contained a notorious number of Santa Cruz ministers.

Building in early 2000s Santa Cruz elite experienced rising of Aymara power and posed an autonomy agenda in face of state crisis, as after the 1949 Guerra Civil. Following 2005, during the Evo Morales government, and particularly during the constitutional convention of

⁵⁹² Paula Peña, Rodrigo Barahona, Luis Enrique Rivero, Daniela Gaya, *La permanente construcción de lo cruceño: un estudio sobre la identidad en Santa Cruz de la Sierra* (Santa Cruz: PIEB, 2003).

2007, tensions between the central state and the Santa Cruz elite erupted once again. Regionalism was allowed--by government clumsiness--to carry the flag of autonomy, while the government discredited the movement as harboring demands from the Santa Cruz oligarchy.⁵⁹³ The conflict reached crisis point in September 2008 with the violence that broke out in Pando and Santa Cruz resulting in deaths and injuries.⁵⁹⁴ The following month, in negotiations with the opposition behind closed doors, agreements were made to limit the scope of the new political constitution, and also to restrict the potential re-implementation of the agrarian reform. For the moment, regional conflict was alleviated, but only by limiting the redistributive agenda of the central state.

⁵⁹³ In recent years, many studies on different aspects of contemporary conflict between Santa Cruz and the central state were published: Willem Assies, "La 'media luna' sobre Bolivia: nación, región, etnia y clase social," *América Latina Hoy* 43 (2006): 87-105; Isabelle Combes, "Las batallas de Kuruyuki. Variaciones sobre una derrota chiriguana," *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Etudes Andines* 34, no. 2 (2005): 221-233; Kathleen Lowrey, "Bolivia Multiétnico y Pluricultural ten years later: White separatism in the Bolivian lowlands," *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* 1, no. 1 (April 2006): 63-84; Martín Sivak, *Santa Cruz: una tesis: el conflicto regional en Bolivia, 2003-2006* (La Paz: Plural, 2007); Adrian Waldman, *El Habitus Camba* (Santa Cruz: El País, 2008); Bret Gustafson, "Los espectáculos de autonomía y crisis, o lo que los toros y las reinas de belleza tienen que ver con el regionalismo en el oriente boliviano," *Willka* 2, no. 2 (2008): 145-187; "Performative Politics: the camba counter movement in eastern Bolivia," *American Anthropologist* 36, no. 4 (2009): 768-783; Joshua Kirshner, "Migrants' Voices Negotiating Autonomy in Santa Cruz," *Latin American Perspectives* 37, no. 4 (2010): 108-124; Karim J. Zegarra, "El Proyecto Político Regionalista Autonomo: Estrategias de seducción y discursos racistas generados por la élite cruceña," in *Observando el Racismo*, Agenda Defensorial no. 13 (La Paz: Defensor del Pueblo, 2009); Claudia Peña and Nelson Jordán, *Ser cruceño en octubre* (La Paz: PIEB-Editorial Gente Común. La Paz, 2006); Wilfredo Plata Ximena Soruco, Plata, y Medeiros, Gustavo. *Los barones del oriente* (Santa Cruz. Fundación Tierra, 2008); Isidora Coria et. al., *La despolitización de la raza. Organizaciones juveniles en la ciudad de Santa Cruz* (La Paz: Observatorio del Racismo 2010); Eduardo, Paz Gonzales, "La historia como componente del nacionalismo camba," MA thesis. (CIDES-UMSA. La Paz, 2011).

⁵⁹⁴ Foro Permanente de las Naciones Unidas para las cuestiones indígenas, Misión a Bolivia, *Informe y recomendaciones*, 2009, 27.

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