Education and Social Stratification in Contemporary Bolivia

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EDUCATION AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN CONTEMPORARY BOLIVIA*+

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The Bolivian Revolution of 1952 is regarded by many as the only significant social revolution in contemporary South America. Whether or not this revolution effected any radical change in the stratification system, however, still remains open to question, since Bolivia has received a minimum of scientific attention in comparison to most other Latin American countries. This paper attempts a limited analysis of this critical question through the examination of one key area of social activity, that of education. While the dangers of a relatively narrow focus on a multifaceted problem are many, I should stress, in defense of the procedure, that the core importance of education makes it a productive point of exit for the study of complex social systems. As anthropology shifts to research of complex sociocultural units, the theoretical and methodological necessity for the systematic development of such vantage points becomes obvious.

To place the substantive argument which follows in clearer perspective, I must first deal briefly with two linked issues—first, the functions of education in society; and, second, the social structure and stratification system of traditional Bolivia.

In any social system, those institutions integrally involved with education can have but one of two basic social functions. The first and most significant function is to maintain and to facilitate the existing social order. This function appears to have been operative in the overwhelming majority of societies known. Education, in these cases, provides a fundamental mechanism for maintaining the sociocultural status quo through systematic and culturally acceptable training of the young for effective participation in the system. In general, the more stable and enduring the society and its culture are, the more congruous is the fit between education and the total system. Where stability is the operative function, any disjunction between education and the social system is predictably remedied through reform of the educational institutions and not through reform of the society. The ob-

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+An abbreviated version of this paper was presented at the 65th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Pittsburgh, Pa., November 17-20, 1966.
jective of such institutional reform is to correct the balance and congruity, thereby readjusting the threatened social equilibrium.

In a number of relatively rare cases, the function of education is revolutionary in nature—to promote and secure the restructuring of a given society through the deliberate introduction of a type of education significantly different from that offered to the older generation. In these cases, educational change historically has followed drastic social, political, and economic upheaval and has been utilized by the new leadership to consolidate, to protect, and to refine the revolutionary gain. Education, in these instances, plays a more dynamic and creative social role, helping to reformatulate the structure and reorient the values of society. This is a more positive and, I believe, a more defensible view than that taken by Talcott Parsons, who argues that the extreme concern of revolutionary regimes with "education" reflects their need to "discipline," in terms of revolutionary values, the population over which they have gained control but which did not participate in the revolutionary movement (Parsons, 1951, p. 528).

Historic examples of the revolutionary function of education are relatively uncommon. Certainly for the 20th century there are only limited examples even though this century has probably experienced more "revolutionary" activity than any comparable period in the past. Turkey under Kemal Ataturk in 1923, the Soviet Union in the 1920's, present-day China with its Red Guards and drastic educational upheaval, and undoubtedly Castro's Cuba, supply us with illustrations of thoroughgoing revolutionary systems of education. In these nations, as in a few others, education was or is being used to carry forward the social restructuring by preparing young citizens for life in a manner and with a content which radically breaks with the traditions of the past. In essence, a true revolution requires the development of a new education to help build the new society as well as to safeguard against social reaction and regression and the possible collapse of the new system. However, if over a period of time, the revolution is consolidated and protected, the function of education shifts from revolution back to one of social maintenance—to help assure the stability of the new order. Consequently, while the revolutionary function in education is of fundamental importance in any radical and permanent reformation of society, it is, almost by definition, transitional in nature. The social raison d'etre for its existence diminishes once the social reorganization has been established. If this argument holds, every "revolutionary" society, to be in fact revolutionary, needs to initiate and support a revolutionary education, even if only for a relatively limited period of time. It follows then that an analysis of education in a society labeled "revolutionary" should be uniquely suited to assess the intensity and social impact of any centralized attempts to change the traditional patterns of stratification since such attempts are the keys to a successful and completed revolution and education an integral part of the process. In addition, through the examination of the organization, operation, objectives and content of education, a significant portion of the conscious and unconscious intent of a "revolutionary" regime can be gauged. It is with these particular ends in mind that I turn to an examination of pre- and postrevolutionary Bolivia.

Bolivia has an estimated population of only 3½ million, one of the smallest in South America, despite the fact that it is the fifth largest country on the continent. In economic terms, it competes with Haiti as the poorest nation in

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1 Accurate economic statistics are difficult to obtain, but estimates such as those of the World Bank suggest that Bolivia has the lowest per capita income in Latin America. The World Bank estimates that Bolivia's GDP per capita is approximately $900, making it one of the poorest countries in the world. The Guardian (2019) reported that Bolivia's GDP per capita was estimated to be around $900 in 2018, making it one of the poorest countries in the world.
the New World, with an estimated per capita income of approximately $150 a year.\(^1\) Culturally, Bolivia is almost prototypical of the Indo-American culture area as defined by Elman Service (1955). Fully two-thirds of the population are racially and culturally identifiable as Aymara or Quechua Indians, the impoverished descendants of the Incaic high civilizations of aboriginal America. The high density of this indigenous population at the time of conquest, the complexity of the pre-Hispanic Indian societies, the harsh nature of the highland environment and the specific forms of socio-economic exploitation were all significant variables in the formation of a social system which existed throughout much of the country’s colonial and Republican history, and in some aspects persists to the present day.

Following the Conquest, a sharply segmented society developed consisting, at first, of two absolutely differentiated, hierarchically placed social sections, articulated only through the economic and regulatory pressures of the socially superordinate segment, which was and remained numerically very small. Composed of the original Spanish settlers and their descendants and of a small but steady infusion of other Europeans, this superordinate group was the carrier of either Hispanic or Western European culture or the creolized variants of it. With its control of the latifundia and the other strategic resources of the territory, with its domination of a theoretically centralized but essentially loosely integrated political system, and with its preference for Castilian to the almost total exclusion of native languages as mediums of communication, this closed social segment developed aristocratic values and the behavior to match. Not unexpectedly, then, the sociocultural gulf between the groups and the requirements of the economic system gave rise to upper segment convictions and rationalizations that Indians were subhuman, no more than beasts of burden, and carriers of a culture that could only be despised.

The subordinate segment was totally Indian, and it included the vast majority of the colonial population. Its adaptation to European cultural patterns was selective and incomplete. Only those European elements necessary for social and economic survival were assimilated or syncretized. Consequently, a considerable portion of the culture of this social segment remained indisputably either Aymara or Quechua and, over time, even European-derived patterns developed an identifiably Indian cast.

As in the rest of the Andean highlands, two organizational alternatives were possible for the rural indigenous population, depending to a large degree on local circumstance. For inhabitants of economically marginal lands, the modal reaction to the Conquest was social retreat and coalescence into substantially closed, corporate communities with the concomitant development of defensive attitudes and behavior. For the indigenous inhabitants in fertile and accessible regions there was no choice; forced labor on the latifundia was the rule. In either situation, the Indian population was relegated to subordinate, sometimes almost slave-like, positions in the social

\(^1\) Accurate economic statistics for Bolivia are difficult to obtain. However, the 1966 edition of the Gallatin Annual of International Business puts Bolivia’s per capita income at about $154, the second lowest in Latin America, Haiti being the lowest. This positioning compares favorably with that established in Mikoto Usui and E.S. Hagen’s reliable 1957 survey, World Income, which lists Bolivia’s per capita income as $99, the lowest in Latin America, and Haiti’s at $110, the second lowest.
hierarchy, positions which generated deferential cultural attitudes and styles toward members of the upper segment. Deference and servility were the reactions to force, and there is no evidence to indicate that this behavior and the accompanying values demonstrated even grudging acceptance of or consensus about the rights of the social system. A peasant, speaking of the life of less than twenty years ago, said:

Before we were slaves because we were stupid, we didn’t understand what was going on. We didn’t have anybody to defend us and we were afraid to do anything for fear that the patron would beat us. We didn’t know why we were beaten. We didn’t know about our rights. (Muratorio, 1966, p.5)

Throughout almost all of its post-Conquest history, Bolivia was socially and culturally segmented: The blancos, or masters and exploiters, were culturally European, and they occupied the highest status points in the society; the indios, or exploited workers, were culturally Aymara or Quechua, and they filled the lowest status position of the system. A structurally intermediate social segment developed later. Generally referred to in Bolivia as cholos, the members of this stratum are analogous to the mestizos and ladinos of other Latin American countries. Primarily town and city dwellers, cholos, of either Indian or mixed descent, have taken much of the Hispano-Bolivian national culture, but they are not culturally homologous to the superordinate segment. Concentrating on small businesses, middlemen operations and transport, cholos traditionally have been disliked by the elites, feared by the Indians, and avoided by both.

In political terms, early Bolivia and the viceroyalty of which it was a part can best be categorized as a conquest state with a stratification system based on the unilateral application of force. Later developments during the Republican period did little to effect fundamental changes in the bases of social inequality. Social accommodations to force did not lead to acceptance of the system. In this regard, Bolivia was never feudal, as was Medieval Europe, where unequal distribution of opportunity could be part of the normal order of things and where social consensus could validate inequality (Smith, 1966, p.166). In a recent article, M.G. Smith has referred to a variety of basically nonconsensual societies as ‘unstable mixed systems.’ He notes for the Latin American variants in this category, among which I would include Bolivia, that:

Systems of this sort may endure despite evident inequalities, dissent and apathy, partly through force, partly through inertia, partly because their organizational complexity and structural differentiation inhibits the emergence of effective large-scale movements with coherent programs. (Smith, 1966, p.172)

For present purposes, it is not necessary to find the precise sociological label for traditional Bolivia. It suffices to state that rigid stratification was at the root of the system, that aspects of cultural and social pluralism were evident, and that the structure successfully inhibited social mobility. Status in traditional Bolivia was characteristically ascriptive, based on birth into a particular social stratum and community. Differential

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3During the Colonial period, cities and large towns, were unimportant with independence, public education was not widespread. At this time, Marshal Sucre promoted the establishment of elementary and vocational institutions in all of the country. In the 20th century, the structure and organization of educational institutions were those of a large population country, and the educational mission led by Dr. G. Decroly, the noted Belgian educato
Rewards accrued to each social segment, and the system of distribution of such rewards was first protected by naked force and then by a juridical and political system dominated by the elites.

In such a social framework, it is not difficult to understand why systematic formal education for the Indian population was not considered a necessary governmental or social function for well over four centuries. The efforts made in education, particularly on the university level, were essentially reserved for the children of the social elite and were located in urban centers of population. Urban education in Bolivia has long continuity. Aside from occasional lip service to the idea of Indian education and the occasional mission or parochial school in the countryside, almost no educational facilities were extended to the Indian until 1929. In that year, the State decreed that agricultural proprietors with more than 25 workers were obliged to establish primary schools on their estates for the Indians and that these schools were to be under the direction of the Minister of Public Instruction and the Rector of the University (Flores Moncayo, 1933, pp. 340-343). From the little evidence available, and given the temper of the majority of landholders, the edict had little practical effect. From the early 1930's through 1951, there was growing agitation from the more socially conscious members of the elite for the development of educational facilities for the rural masses. In part, this agitation stemmed from the socially broadening experiences of the Chaco War (1932-35), in which Indians were taken into the army and, for the first time, left the Altiplano and the high valleys (Quétin, 1963, p. 2). For some Bolivians with high status, the unique experience of fighting alongside the Indian against a national enemy allowed for the development of more benign attitudes toward the indigenous population. It is during this difficult period of Bolivian history that the problems of the Indian began to be considered seriously by the intelligentsia and that the first hesitant action was taken to provide the Indian with a modicum of education. Just prior to the war, in 1931, WARISATA, the forerunner of the Nucleos Escolares Campesinos, or Indian nuclear schools, had been opened (Pérez, 1962, pp. 80-95). The nuclear model, a radical concept in rural training, provided for a central school which was located generally in a large pueblo and which supported a number of smaller and more limited sectional schools in surrounding villages and hamlets. In 1935, a supreme decree authorized 16 such nuclear clusters throughout Bolivia, a very limited step towards the solution of the problem of Indian education. Nevertheless, the rhetoric and stated intent of this decree is of significance in that the lack of social cohesion in Bolivia is clearly enunciated and the value of education in effecting a change is posited:

2During the Colonial period, educational institutions, located principally in the cities and large towns, were under the direction of the Roman Catholic Church. With independence, public education became the responsibility of the government. At this time, Marshal Sucre promulgated legislation establishing primary, secondary and vocational institutions in all capitals of departments. During the first decade of the 20th century, the structure and content of Bolivian education, still primarily located in areas of large population concentration, was strongly influenced by a Belgian educational mission led by Dr. George Rouma, a pupil and colleague of Dr. Ovidio Deenoly, the noted Belgian educator.
It is the obligation of the State to integrate the native classes into the life of the country, invigorating their education in all the centers of the Republic and to assist equally the different ethnic groups that comprise the nation. (Flores Moncayo, 1953, p. 349)

In the early years, from 1931 and up to 1944, the curriculum of the nuclear school was formal and academic, similar to that of the urban primary schools and other rural schools maintained for non-Indians. It had little or no specific relationship to the needs of the campesinos (Nelson, 1949, p. 22). In 1945, however, on the advice of an American educational mission, all rural education was reorganized. While retaining the nuclear school format, the basic objective became preparing Indians for rural life. In theory, these schools offered to the campesino child a four-year curriculum emphasizing agricultural and vocational subjects and personal hygiene and giving secondary importance to reading, writing, and arithmetic. The language of instruction in these schools tended to be Spanish. Justification for a markedly different system and content of education from that offered to the urban population was seen in the distinct needs of the campesino, "...a man who works the land, who holds the spade and plow and who has a different life from the urban man." (Quitón, 1963, p. 2)

Despite these stirrings, the expansion of educational facilities in the countryside before 1952 was fundamentally limited. Up to 1946, only 41 nuclear centers with 839 small sectional schools had been established (Nelson, 1949, p. 16). On the eve of the Revolution, these numbers had not changed significantly. By 1951 (and here I must utilize unreliable government figures), only 12.9% of the rural school-age population—ages five to fourteen—had ever been matriculated at any school (Plan Biennial, 1965(?), p. 10). At that time, the official illiteracy rate for Bolivia was about 70%, from which I estimate an illiteracy rate for the rural population of well over 90%. Linguistically, the process of castellanización, or the attempt to make Spanish speakers of the Indians, had made little headway. Few rural Indian women knew Spanish, and a very large majority of men remained monolingual in either Aymara or Quechua. Semi-trained teachers, an emasculated curriculum, lack of financial and political support from the government, and attacks from local landlords kept expansion and progress to a minimum. From all indications, it can safely be concluded that the impact of formal rural education in pre-Revolutionary Bolivia was weak, that it had little apparent effect in integrating the social segments, and that it had accomplished little, if anything, towards the amelioration and economic uplifting of campesino life. In the Bolivia of 1951, there remained an almost perfect congruence between the pattern of social stratification and the marked differences in the national allocation and use of educational resources.

In September 1944, an agreement was signed between the Bolivian Ministry of Education and the United States Government creating the Cooperative Educational Program to assist in the development of Bolivian education. In 1948, this organization was replaced by the Inter-American Educational Cooperative Service (SCIDE), which was sponsored, in conjunction with relevant Bolivian ministries, by the United States' International Cooperation Administration. SCIDE gave technical assistance in rural education, industrial education, and agricultural vocational education.

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In 1952, a combination of social and economic events forcibly propelled Bolivia into the 20th century. After a series of coups and countercoups, the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR) assumed power. The MNR, a party of urban intellectuals and politicians with widely differing ideologies, led, guided and occasionally diverted the several elements in Bolivian clamoring for change and recognition. With a sweeping platform of social reform, in total opposition to the ideas and wishes of the traditional elite, the MNR had to assure itself of the support of the Indians, that social segment which until this time had never been allowed participation in Bolivian national life. To ensure this support, a number of basic socio-economic actions were taken which transformed the power shift of 1952 into a frontal attack on the traditional order of Bolivian society. First, universal suffrage was granted to all adults, with no requirements for literacy or understanding of Spanish. Secondly, pressured by the tin miners, the most highly politicized workers in the country, the MNR nationalized the vast holdings of the three most important tin barons. Finally, and most importantly, propelled more quickly by the extralegal seizures of latifundia lands by organized campesinos, the government legislated a national agrarian reform, returning to the Indians land that once belonged to their forefathers. Through this legislation and its execution, the government, supported by campesino strength, weakened the power of the superordinate segment. The partial redistribution of the country's national resources and the newly mobilized, but politically potent, force of the campesinos formed the scene for social change.

Although the social fabric of Bolivia was unquestionably altered during the 12 years of MNR control, the extent and form of this restructuring is as yet unclear. In addition, significant questions still remain as to how far the revolutionary leadership intended to carry its reform, to what extent it was willing to institutionalize and legitimize change, and to what degree they were ready and able to incorporate the Indian into the new system so as to permit his free competition for position in society. In short, was the government the fulcrum for deliberate change of the traditional principles which regulated access to advantageous status positions? Satisfactory answers to these questions are difficult to find; inadequate and sometimes misleading national statistics lack of archival research, and the pervasive fog of official propaganda tend to obscure the issues, as important as they are to both scholar and administrator. However, as I have already indicated, an examination of education since the Revolution of 1952 should suggest some answers. Theoretically, if the political transformation of 1952 was revolutionary in its essence, education should clearly reflect this fact.

The Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario was founded in 1940 by Victor Paz Estenssoro and Hernán Siles Zuazo with a platform of social change and nationalism. In 1951, the MNR unexpectedly received the largest number of votes in the general election, but the takeover of the government by a military junta prevented the party from taking power at that time.

Utilizing one issue, these are the same fundamental questions raised by Richard W. Fatich (1960) and Dwight B. Heath (1963) in their debate over whether agrarian reform in Bolivia was a result of grassroots pressure or of central government action.
Despite the social and economic crises which beset the new government, by 1955, it had implemented a new Code of Education, laying out the structure of an educational system which exists to the present. The basic goal of the new education was to integrate the nation. In the words of President Paz Estenssoro in 1955, "The educational system which we are introducing corresponds to the interests of the classes which constitute the majority of the Bolivian people." (SORO, 1963, p. 206.)

Organizationally, the Code provides for a multiple division of educational responsibility, allocating such responsibility to a number of governmental and quasi-governmental bodies. In this schema, the Ministry of Education, for example, has direct authority only for urban education — the formal schooling of children living in the cities, the capitals of departments and provinces, and other large population centers. In this urban system, legal provision is made for pre-school, primary, secondary, technical-vocational and university cycles for the clientele which it serves. Furthermore, the Ministry has the additional responsibility of training teachers for its own school system, of preparing the curriculum, of setting the length of the school year, and of almost all other academic and administrative matters. Philosophically, the objectives of urban education are little different from those of pre-Revolutionary days and fall well within the Western tradition from which they were derived. On the primary school level, for example, the school is seen as the catalyst for the cultural formation of the child, taking into consideration its idiosyncratic characteristics and its biological, physical and social needs. The social structural significance of this practically independent section of Bolivian education is that it coincides, to a very considerable degree, with the Spanish-speaking sectors of the population and with those geographical areas dominated by the descendants of the traditional elites, the small and amorphous middle class, and the cholos. In this regard, the urban system continues, with minor modifications, the Bolivian tradition of a classic, academic education for the socially and economically privileged segments of the nation.

The Ministry of Asuntos Campesinos, or Peasant Affairs, is responsible for the education of the rural population as well as for other activities directly relevant to rural life. Through fundamental education, the goal is to train the campesino child to function in his milieu and to aid in the uplifting of the rural community. Deliberately, all instruction is given in the Spanish language, continuing the policy of castellanizacion, so that eventually, in theory, a common language will unify the nation. Provisions are made for nuclear schools, sectional schools, vocational-technical schools, and rural normal schools, but none for secondary schools or for university level work. The stated objectives of rural education are basically different from those of urban education: to develop good living habits in the campesino child; to teach literacy; to teach him to be an efficient agriculturist; to develop his technical and vocational aptitudes; to prevent and to terminate the practices of alcoholism, the use of coca, the superstitions and prejudices in agronomy; and finally to develop in the campesino a civic conscience that would permit him to participate actively in the process of the cultural and economic emancipation of the nation (Ministerio de Educacion y Bellas Artes, 1956, p. 136). This system of rural education, in essence, is a continuation and expansion of the experi-

6The purpose of the Consejo de los Asuntos de la Comunidad, the Committee of the People's, is to represent the interests of the nation. It includes, among others, the Dirección General of Education, the National Education Board, the Director of Primary Education, and the Director of Vocational Education.

7This is a three-year project of the Peace Corps Grant No. 95-39, which envisions an epidemiological study to assess the effects of mining on Bolivia and to provide sociological studies of Sorata, community studies of Sorata, and a community studies of Sorata, crushing, as well as several shorter, selective.
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emissions of the 1930's and 1940's. While it is a system designed for the cultural
and economic uplifting of the campesinos, significantly, it provides no
 mechanism for the movement of the rural student into the secondary and
university cycles. Structurally, except for the possibility of limited training
in the rural normal schools or through migration to the cities, the campesino
terminates his education at the end of the primary cycle, if he is fortunate
enough to reach that stage.
Several numerically less important systems of primary education also
exist. For example, the Corporación Minera de Bolivia (Comibol), the
national mining corporation, administers and supports schools in the mining
areas, and Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos (YPFB), the
national oil corporation, is responsible for schooling in the oil and oil-
refining territories. Although an educational coordinating council exists, with
representatives from all agencies concerned, in fact, each agency with
educational responsibility has de facto control of the educational destinies
of its clientele.

With well over a decade having elapsed since its inception, what have
been the results of this educational structure for rural Bolivians? Most
importantly, there has been a substantial physical expansion of the rural
school system. By 1965, there were 5,250 government and private schools
in the countryside, a fivefold increase over pre-Revolutionary days. Admit-
tedly, many of these schools are little more than crude adobe shelters.
Nevertheless, by 1964, 38.2% of the rural school-age population was regis-
tered at school, an increase in enrollment of about 250% since 1951 (Plan
Bienal, 1965, p. 10). In six Altiplano and Yungas communities with rural
schools which were studied by anthropologists during the period from 1964
6 to 1966, the percentage of inhabitants who claimed any elementary schooling
ranged from 31.3% to 49.4%, with a mean of 43.4%. However, few campesinos
in these communities progress further than the second year. For example,
in one Yungas high valley community from this sample, composed of long-
residual Negroes and transplanted Aymara, the mean number of years of
education for ages 12 to 22 is 2.2 years for the Negroes and 2.0 years for the
campesinos. The mean number of years of education for those over 22
years, and therefore less affected by the educational reform of the MNR,
is 0.12 years for the Negroes and 0.71 years for the campesinos (Newman,
1966, p. 78).

The purpose of the Consejo de Coordinación Educativa is to ensure the basic
unity of Bolivian national education. It is chaired by the Minister of Education and
includes, among others, the Director General of Education, the Director General of
Rural Education, the General Inspector of Education for the Schools of the State Mines
and Petroleum areas, the National Director for the Protection of Minors and Children,
and the Director of Vocational Education. Other interested ministries are also
represented.

7This is a three-year project of the Research Institute for the Study of Man under
Peace Corps Grant No. PC(W)-397. The basic objectives of this anthropological-
epidemiological study are to assess the impact of Peace Corps public health programs
in Bolivia and to provide social scientific guidelines for future public health program-
ing in Bolivia and in structurally similar contexts. The research included intensive
community studies of Sorata, Corioco, Reyes, San Miguel, Compi and Villa Abecia,
as well as several shorter, selected studies of surrounding villages.
One sign of the value placed on education by Indians is that the majority of rural schools have been constructed by campesinos with materials donated and gathered by the community and with only limited State aid. Schweng reports on Pillaí, an expropriated hacienda near Lake Titicaca:

...the interest in education the campesinos showed was moving.
After the first school was built in 1955 at the expense of the project, the other schools were built by the campesinos themselves. They made the adobe bricks, leveled the ground, dug the foundations and provided all the unskilled labor. (1966, p. 54)

However, a serious drawback is that over 90% of these schools lack adequate furniture and sufficient teaching materials. The rural normal schools lack laboratories and libraries; the few industrial schools lack machinery for practical lessons and, as a result, students and student teachers learn only theory without practical experience.

Despite rudimentary facilities, however, the educational aspirations of the campesinos are very high. Many campesinos perceive education as the catalyst for social mobility, as the means by which they or their children will escape from the hard and unremitting toil on the land. Theoretically, by learning Spanish and attaining literacy, they can more readily move to the urban centers and find better employment; if they choose, they can begin the process of becoming cholas. Others see education as a general panacea for their life condition but have little idea as to what specifically can be gained from it. For some in this group, education is endowed with magical qualities. There are even a few campesinos who view education as necessary for the preservation of a traditional way of life. This particular point of view was lucidly presented by a jillikata, or leader of a traditional ayllu in an isolated community in the hills overlooking the Altiplano. His position, while simple, was structurally revealing: Since the central government requires literacy as a prerequisite for holding local political office, the paucity of eligible candidates makes it possible for traditionally unacceptable persons to be selected. This often has lead to intracommunal clashes between the official and the traditional systems of authority. Consequently, in one old man's opinion, schools were necessary to provide a supply of literate and traditionally acceptable leaders. In essence, he was choosing to change just enough so as not to have to change. Formal education, where it exists, may well have different meanings for the population. Nevertheless, as noted by Olen E. Leonard in a recent study of the Altiplano:

The school is the source of greatest pride in each community. Almost all the heads of families seem to admit that the improvement of their educational system has been one of the better attainments of communities during the last decade. (1966, p.26)

8This is a community in the Province of Carangas situated at approximately 14,000 feet above sea level. It is possible, from the pueblo site, to view almost the entire Altiplano region of the Andes. The community is part of an enclaves of Aymara-speaking campesinos, partly surrounded by Quechua populations. Archeologically and anthropologically, this relatively inaccessible and little studied section of Bolivia offers much to the serious scholar.

9Although in 1964, 38.2% of the population officially counted as being registered was and continues to be illiterate (p. 159) is that only about one in ten...
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However, for the less than a third of the rural school-age population attending school, the possibilities for learning are limited. To begin with, the teacher is required to teach in Spanish even though he may be less fluent in that language than in his native Aymara or Quechua. The non-Spanish-speaking Indian children are instructed in the first grade, therefore, in a language they cannot understand. To compound the problem, an extreme form of rote instruction is utilized: As the teacher speaks, the child copies the words into his course book, which is graded for accuracy, neatness and artistic quality. Memorization and recitation are uniformly stressed almost to the complete exclusion of the use of observation and experimentation. Lack of equipment and lack of training on the part of the teachers effectively preclude any vocational or technical training, so that the student generally receives only rudimentary instruction in the fundamentals of reading, writing, and arithmetic. With the language barrier, which is never completely surmounted, much of even this hard-learned literacy is eventually lost. Schweng makes much the same point for his Altiplano community:

In their educational effort, the schools were handicapped by the Government’s insistence on using the schools as an instrument of “castellanization,” for forcing the use of Spanish on non-Spanish speaking Indians to the exclusion of their native tongue. The mother tongue of the children of Pilapi was Aymara and no other language was spoken at home; the women spoke Aymara only and there were only a few fathers who spoke even a little Spanish. But in the schools, from the first grade, the language of instruction was Spanish and Aymara was not taught at all. The continuation of this policy after the Revolution was in strange contrast with the cult of the Indian encouraged by the Government and the freedom given for the use of Indian languages, Aymara and Quechua, in politics. Forcing Spanish made teaching very difficult and the educational effort wasteful. Without opportunity for using the language most children soon forgot the little Spanish they picked up at school in the two years they customarily attended. They learned less than would otherwise have been the case. (1966, pp.54-55)

The policy of castellanización has also compounded problems of cultural and ethnic identity. If one of the basic objectives of the rural school is to cultivate a sense of pride in being an Indian and a campesino, then instruction in Spanish, a language inextricably associated with the superordinate elements of Bolivia and of little direct value in an Aymara or Quechua community, widens rather than narrows the social gap. The language of instruction in this case tends more to divorce, rather than weld more closely, the student and his rural context. In any case, the goal of making Spanish the cornerstone of national cohesion is far from being realized. For example, of the four basically Aymara communities in the study sample, none had more than 1.2% monolingual Spanish speakers, and these were almost

9Although in 1964, 38.2% of the school-age population in the rural areas were officially counted as being registered in schools, the number actually in full attendance was and continues to be much lower. One estimate for 1981 (SOBO, 1983, p. 199) is that only about one in ten rural children attended school.
always government officials assigned to the community. Aymara monolingu- 
guals ranged from a high of 84.4% in one community to a low of 42.5% in 
the most acculturated village. Self-professed bilinguals in Spanish and 
Aymara ranged from a low of 10.5% to a high of 49.6%. 10

Aside from linguistic barriers and a truncated and unrelated curriculum, 
the low quality of rural education is also a function of the inadequacies of 
rural teachers. While urban teachers are required to have a secondary 
school and a normal school diploma, rural teachers need only a primary 
school certificate, plus six months in a rural normal school. In many cases, 
even these minimal requirements are not met, so that a large number of 
rural teachers have not completed the primary school. Teachers' salaries 
are low in all parts of the country, averaging about $40 a month. As a result, 
teachers' attendance in school is often sporadic, since other work is sought 
to augment the income. This is particularly true of male teachers. In 
addition, with a politically strong teachers' union which makes it almost 
unimpossible to fire a teacher, the educative process stagnates. A normally 
short school year is shortened further by student participation in scores of 
national and religious holidays which require days of special preparation 
before the event, by political crises which close the schools, by teachers' 
strikes, and by teacher absenteeism.

As a consequence, the campesino child receives, from the rural school 
system, little formal preparation for modern life, and this is clearly re-
flected in the educational statistics. Student absenteeism rates are very 
high and usually attributed to the need for the child to assist in family work, 
but they are also related to the actual, as opposed to the stated, content of 
the programs, the lack of teacher preparation, and the scarcity of teaching 
bits and classrooms. The desertion or dropout rate is extraordinarily 
high. Of each 100 campesino children ages five to seven years, only 37 
enter the first grade, and six complete the sixth terminal year (Plan Bienal, 
1965(?), p.15). Finally, the problem of illiteracy has not been solved. While 
the official illiteracy rate has been modestly reduced from 68.9% in 1950 
to 63.0% after 14 years (Plan Bienal, 1965(?), p.3), I would speculate that 
even this limited gain was made in the urban areas.

In providing expanded educational opportunities for the campesinos, the 
MNR corrected what it believed was a glaring injustice of the old order. 
As far as a limited economy permitted, the campesino was granted the right 
of formal schooling, which in the past had been essentially reserved for the 
privileged classes. In this regard, the government provided an institutional 
structure to help meet the rising aspirations and demands for education. In 
many of the remote areas of Bolivia, the school, for the first time, became a 
factor in the socialization of the campesinos child. Abstractly then, the very 
extension of educational services to the rural masses can be considered 
revolutionary.

An analysis of the structure and content of rural education, however, 
leads to diametrically opposed conclusions. The balkanization of the educa-

10 Data on language were generated from a census collected at an early date in 
all communities studied by the Research Institute for the Study of Man. A com-
prehensive sociological survey, which included a long section on language and 
education, was undertaken at the close of the field study in 1966. These data are 
currently being computer processed and will be utilized as the basis for several 
forthcoming papers and reports.

I am grateful to the Research City, to the Institute of Intern
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Education enterprise, the multiple allocation of responsibility, the differing educational goals for different socio-economic groups, in my opinion, lead inevitable to further qualitative distinctions between these groups. In fact, the more efficient each sector of the total educational system is in the training of its wards, the more distant becomes the ideal goal of integration through education. Furthermore, since the divisions in Bolivian education correspond closely with the old social divisions of Bolivian society, and since the rural segment is virtually barred from participation on the secondary and university levels, the effect is to institutionalize, in education, the stratification patterns of the past. Given the structure of education, there is no opportunity, short of physical relocation and cultural transformation, for the campesino to receive that level of training which will allow him to compete successfully for the advantageous positions in society. It is of more than academic interest to note that most of the sharply stratified societies which have made resolute moves toward modernization and toward a consensual form of social structure select unitary systems of education to aid in the process.

Conservative rather than revolutionary thought is also seen in the content of rural education. Subject matter and mode of instruction reflect both patronizing and paternalistic features. A leitmotif of the educational philosophy is the suppression of all cultural elements in campesino life which are considered dysfunctional, but little is offered to replace that which is suppressed. When this is combined with the central decision to give highest priority to training for rural life, the campesinos, from an educational perspective, are sealed off from social movement in the society. A short-run gain for the national economy is a long-run investment in the continuance of a sharply stratified state. I do not argue here for absolute homogeneity for all sectors of Bolivian education, but for Bolivian youth to have institutionalized opportunities to move, if qualified, from one differentiated educational sector to the other. This would provide an important condition for an open society and would decrease the social dangers which will ensue when unrealistic aspirations hinged to education are not realized.

This cursory review suggests that, in education, the Revolution of 1952 and the 14 years of MNR dominance did little to modify the hierarchical order of the socially significant segments of Bolivian society and did little, if anything, to provide new, institutionalized forms of social articulation. It is obvious that, whatever else the directives were that emanated from the center of the system, they were not revolutionary in effect. The considerable social change which Bolivia has experienced during the last 14 years seems to be more the result of a partial splintering of the traditional order than a thoroughgoing social reform. It is a change generated, in the main, by an uncoordinated but mass pressure from a discontented social base. One can then speculate that the post-1952 phase of Bolivian history represents a period of campesino coalescence and emergence which, if not diverted, will lead to serious upheaval before resulting in reform and social regrouping. In this present process of coalescence, any opportunity for formal education is of value. This is perhaps the true legacy of the present system.

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