History of the Mines of Potosí Retold: The Continuation of Colonialism in the Present

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The following article navigates the broad strokes of Bolivia's history since the 16th century, using the mines and miners of Potosí as the focal points for the research. The cultural and political systems that have arisen around Bolivia's miners exemplify larger trends that are visible in Bolivia's development up until the present. This article will argue that a colonial presence has not left Bolivia since its independence but has instead manifested itself through foreign intervention and the imposition of free-market economic policies. The consequences of these neocolonial influences include, the rise and persistence of acute poverty, inhumane working conditions, and the structuring of a hierarchy between Bolivia and what are considered "western" countries. The following research undermines this buffer between the past and the present and demonstrates that nations, its people, and our perspectives are shaped by our histories. Analysis of historical written and visual documents, oral histories, interviews, and statistics are used in order to provide a detailed and in-depth perspective.

Mining in the Potosí mountain in Bolivia is recounted today as either an infamous period of the region's history marked by violent forced labor conditions, or as a "golden age" characterized by extreme wealth that poured from the mountain and into the economies of countries around the world. In both accounts, the history of the mines of Potosí is always portrayed as a moment in time that remains in the past. However, mining at Potosí continues today and still under extremely harsh and inhumane conditions for its laborers. This reality is interconnected with the manifestations of colonization that have prevailed in Bolivia up until the present. Since its creation as a nation, Bolivia has been embroiled in foreign debt. While more recently foreign intervention and pressure to integrate into the globalized free-market economy have driven a neocolonial hold

over Bolivia.

As recently as the beginning of the 21st century, fourteen-year-old Basilio Vargas and his younger twelve-year-old brother Bernardino would visit and chew coca leaves with the god, El Tio, daily before starting work within the mine of La Cumbre at Potosí. They would sprinkle coca leaves over the statue's hands and ask El Tio for protection inside the mines. El Tio's giant form filled the whole entrance room of the mine and loomed over the two young boys whose small dim headlamps were the only source of light in the dark, cave-like mine. El Tio's unnerving face looked out over the room; his big red eyes bulged out of his head, his pointed ears and long curved horns pointed upwards, and his mouth remained slightly open. His long muscular arms rested regally on his bent legs, and he sat surrounded by his many offerings. Basilio repeatedly warned his little brother that if a miner does not sufficiently satisfy El Tio, he will kill the miner and eat his soul. However, when Basilio realized that his brother cowered before El Tio, he taught Bernardino to not fear El Tio but instead to have faith in him. Basilio explained that one must always give El Tio offerings so that he will protect them during their time underground and grant them the minerals of the mines. During this time with El Tio, Basilio would tell his brother the stories of the origin of El Tio, the mines, and their ancestors and, in doing so, continued the tradition of passing on oral histories.[1]

Four-hundred and sixty years before then, in 1545, the mines of Potosí were discovered by the Spanish Empire. According to Garcilaso de la Vega, Spanish colonists had sent a few Incas held in their servitude to look for precious minerals.[2] De la Vega was born in 1539 as the son of a Spanish conquistador and an Incan princess and grew up in the Viceroyalty of Peru, absorbing the perspectives of both cultures. In his publication on the history of Peru, De la Vega

1 Kief Davidson and Richard Ladkani, "La Mina del Diablo," April 22, 2005, documentary, 10min 30 sec and 25min 10sec, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EEF82oygfgA.

2 Garcilaso de la Vega, *Historia General del Perú ó Comentarios Reales de los Incas*, vol. 5. (Madrid: Villalpando, 1800), 127, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=ucm.5323802489&view=1up&seq=5.

recalled his memory of Potosí. He described Potosí as a mountain located on a plain; the lowest part of the mountain had a circumference of one league (about 3.5 miles), it was four leagues high, and the top of the mountain was flat and presented a beautiful view of the landscape.[3]

At the time, the city of Potosí was situated in a region called the La Provincia de los Charcos which was located within the Viceroyalty of Peru and was surrounded by other regions with productive mines.[4] However, none became as productive or populated as the Villa Imperial de Potosí. According to Braulio, one of Basilio's foreman, Potosí was more populous than London or Paris.[5] Statistics from scholar Pieter Muysken demonstrate that Potosí was the 3rd most populated city in the Western Hemisphere at the time.[6] This was due to the area's increase of Spaniards, indigenous people who had been forced to migrate under the mita system, and enslaved people brought forcibly from West Africa in the early 17th century.[7] The mita system was established by 16th century Spanish Viceroy Francisco de Toledo and required the indigenous communities to send 1/7th of their male populations, between the ages of 18 and 50, to work at the mines of Potosí.[8] Within the mines, this populous multicultural hub gave rise to the syncretism of various cultural beliefs and to the development of a new specialized lexicon from the amalgamation of various languages.[9] The wealth from the silver generated from the mines was colossal and became an integral part of Spain's rapid accumulation of wealth in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Marking the beginning of the global market, the silver from Potosí influenced the economies of many countries around the world. Álvaro Alonso Barba, a 17th century Spanish metallurgist and priest of the Imperial de Potosí, wrote,

> "...the abundance of silver ores that are in the jurisdicción de la Real Audiencia de los Charcas, there is no comparison in the world, they are enough to fill [the world] with riches. In the middle [of the mines of la Real Audiencia de los Charcas] is the never worthily appreciated and

3 De la Vega, *Historia General del Perú ó Comentarios Reales de los Incas,* 128.

4 Álvaro Alonso Barba, *Arte de los Metales: En que se enseña el verdadero beneficio de los de oro y plata por azogue, el modo de fundirlos todos, y como se han de refinar y apartar unos de otros*, (Lima: reimpreso por El Real Tribunal de Minería en la Imprenta de los Huérfanos, 1817), 59-60, https://archive.org/details/artedelosmetales00barb/page/n3/mode/2up.

5 Kief Davidson and Richard Ladkani, "La Mina del Diablo," 55min.

6 Pieter Muysken, "Multilingüismo y Lenguaje Mezclado en las Minas de Potosí (Bolivia)," *Asociación de Lingüística y Filología de América Latina* Vol. 33, Issue 2, (2017): 99, file:///C:/Users/Owner/OneDrive/Documents/tx%20state%202022%20fall/HIST%202312%20world%20history/ContentServer%20(1).pdf.

7 Ibid.

8 Ward Stavig, "Continuing the Bleeding of These Pueblos Will Shortly Make Them Cadavers: The Potosi mita, the cultural identity, and communal survival in colonial Peru," *The Americas* Vol. 56, Issue 4 (2000): 535, https://www-jstor-org.libproxy.txstate.edu/stable/pdf/1008172.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Ad07e1a5b7844b8e7d1d1afcda6eb6a27&ab_segments=&origin=&acceptTC=1.

9 Muysken, "Multilingüismo y Lenguaje Mezclado en las Minas de Potosí (Bolivia)," 97, 103, 109.

admired cerro de Potosí, whose treasures all the nations in the globe have lavishly participated."[10]

When Braulio told Basilio the history of one of Potosí's mines, he related that in the colonial era they had exploited 46,000 fine metric tons of silver from that mine.[11] Despite this abundance of wealth and resources, most of the miners of Potosí struggled to make ends meet under the mita system. During the period of the origin of the mita, Spain was self-conscious of the bad reputation it had acquired internationally since publications such as those by Bartolomé de las Casas had exposed the atrocities committed against the indigenous people of the Americas by Spanish colonizers. The Spanish crown was careful to try to disguise the mita as a fair and humane system instead of forced slavery. Because of this, the mitayos (workers under the mita system) were supposed to be paid a salary 1/3rd to ½ of the amount free workers generally received.[12]

The small amount the mitayos received was not enough to support themselves and their families. As a result, the mitayos were generally compelled to work on the weeks they had "off" in order to make ends meet.[13] According to Basilio's oral history, the mitayos were forced to labor for 6 months out of the year, 20 hours a day with only 4 hours of rest.[14] This intense labor required most mitayos to bring their families with them, including wives, children, and even sometimes parents, in order to assist them in their work.[15] The mita also divided communities and many families, forcing parents to leave small children at home.[16] If a member of a community tried to flee the mita draft, their community would be punished; the governing Spaniards would sell their communal lands and imprison community leaders and members.[17] The work in the mines was extremely dangerous and even outside of the dark caverns the miners were exposed to the toxins of mercury in the process of refining the silver- even though the harmful effects of the element were known at the time.[18] Thus, the mita system not only exploited the indigenous people of the Andes, but also disempowered them by fracturing their communities, killing many of their people through the extreme and harmful labor, and

10 Alonso Barba, *Arte de los Metales,* 59. (Here his words have been translated from Spanish).
11 Kief Davidson and Richard Ladkani, "La Mina del Diablo," 54-55min 10sec.
12 Ward Stavig, "Continuing the Bleeding of These Pueblos Will Shortly Make Them Cadavers," 534.
13 Ibid, 534-535.
14 Kief Davidson and Richard Ladkani, "La Mina del Diablo," 25min 40sec-26min 20sec.
15 Ward Stavig, "Continuing the Bleeding of These Pueblos Will Shortly Make Them Cadavers," 536.
16 Ibid.
17 Ward Stavig, "Continuing the Bleeding of These Pueblos Will Shortly Make Them Cadavers," 531.
18 Dave Eaton, "Back to the Silver Mine: Using Historical Empathy to Teach Potosi and the Mita," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* Vol. 51, no. 2 (2020): 489, file:///C:/Users/Owner/OneDrive/Documents/tx%20state%202022%20fall/HIST%202312%20world%20history/ContentServer.pdf. And Alonso Barba, *Arte de los Metales,* 97-98.

dispossessing them of their land and wealth.

The mita also established a long legacy of reliance on systems of foreign control and hierarchy. The Inca communities were stripped of their own governance and subjected to the Spanish rule of law. The mita system was an integral part of the origin of the world economy to which Potosí contributed. It marked a point in time before the Industrial Revolution when the mass-production of a product was exported across the world and made possible by the exploitation of laborers and the wide stratification of classes. Additionally, the miners were supervised by an overseer who directed and enforced their work- a tangible symbol of the Spanish colonizers' construction of rankings of authority in which they placed themselves as the superior class.[19] Even the miners' living quarters at the bottom of the Potosí mountain were segregated by race and perceived ethnicity of the various communities.[20] Basilio recounted that the indigenous miners rose up against the oppressive mita system, but the Spaniards suppressed these rebellions.[21]

One successful method the Spanish colonizers used to maintain their hegemony was to appropriate the significance of the Inca beliefs around the worship of one of their many gods that, to the Spaniards, looked like a devil with horns and a tail.[22] According to Basilio, the Spaniards instilled fear in the indigenous people by threatening that if the mitayos did not continue to work in the mines, their god would kill them.[23] This god is known today as El Tio. El Tio has survived throughout the years by maintaining his role as both a type of overseer and protector according to the fusion of Spanish and Incan beliefs. The origin of the name El Tio was created from the amalgamation of cultures. His name is derived from the Spanish word for God, Dios. The Incas replaced the D with a T because the quechua alphabet does not include the consonant D.[24] El Tio is still honored today by the indigenous miners who are simultaneously devout Catholics. They believe that in the outside world God is their protector, but once they enter the mines, God loses control and becomes more distant while El Tio rules the underworld. The violence and death attributed to the mines have continued to be viewed in anthropomorphic ways today. The miners still refer to the Potosí mountain as the mountain that eats people alive, because throughout its history, the mines are

19 Anonymous Spanish artist, *The Silver Mine at Potosí*, watercolor on parchment, The Hispanic Society of America, 1585, https://projects.mcah.columbia.edu/hispanic/monographs/silver-mine.php.
20 Ward Stavig, "Continuing the Bleeding of These Pueblos Will Shortly Make Them Cadavers," 532.
21 Kief Davidson and Richard Ladkani, "La Mina del Diablo," 26min 15sec-26min 55sec.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Kief Davidson and Richard Ladkani, "La Mina del Diablo," 26min 50 sec-27min 5sec.

estimated to have taken the lives of 8 million people.[25]

Although the mita system was abolished by Simón Bolívar's decree in 1825, and Peru established independence from Spain in 1821 (Bolivia was still a part of the region at the time), the influences of the colonial era have irreversibly altered the landscape of the land, society, and minds of the region's people. Basilio's story demonstrates that El Tio still maintains control and fear over the miners. Although his presence is no longer forcing people to work within the mines, and the miners realize that the accidents, explosions, monoxide poisoning, and silicosis are the culprits of their high death rates, El Tio continues to represent a persisting memory of the violence and oppression of colonization as well as the survival of a piece of an ancient culture through syncretization. Colonization of the region appropriated a system of hierarchy already in place by the Inca Empire to, over time, subjugate all Incas to a low-class and impoverished status. A population that was also subjugated to the genocide of its people, culture, and political leaders as well as to new societal structures around the violent belief of a social hierarchy based on race. El Tio can be seen as the representation of the persisting influences of colonization that have manifested in different ways beyond its official end, and the consequences of the poverty and death these forces continue to engender. Poverty continues to push many of Potosí's indigenous people to extreme situations. The conditions of the mines of Potosí and the fact that hundreds of children still work within them in order to support themselves and their families, are brought on by the consequences of continued colonization. El Tio requires daily attention, devotion, and intermittent llama sacrifices, so that he will be deterred from taking the lives and blood of the miners. Presently, he is still willing to execute the brutal purpose imposed on him by the Spanish upon his syncretized re-birth in the colonial era.

25 Kief Davidson and Richard Ladkani, "La Mina del Diablo," 54min 30sec.

The rise of the independence of Bolivia did not mark a complete severing of colonial pressures from the region, but instead gave rise to new systems of subjugation based on national debt to foreign entities. During the 19th century, foreign loans locked in the hierarchical and economic relationship between perceived "western" countries and "developing" countries like Bolivia. "Western" countries are defined less by geography than by the economic position they have established for themselves and for every other country in the world. The economies of "western" countries are based on the mass exploitation of raw materials from "developing" countries. "Developing" countries then receive foreign loans in order to construct lines of transportation to efficiently move these products around, and the companies that benefit from the extraction of the resources are primarily foreign. Since the economies of these countries depend on producing few specialized resources, they must import the manufactured food and goods from "western" countries. The rise of this system, held together by the world market, has been maintained by military and political intervention implemented by "western" countries who wish to ensure the stability of the flow of the market, the loyalty of "developing" countries, and the security of their investments.

Bolivia became independent from the remaining Spanish forces in 1825 and, the following year, became an independent region from Peru. The new official region decided to name itself after the famous military leader and statesman who had led the liberation of the former Viceroyalties of New Granada and Peru from Spanish rule - Simón Bolívar. In Cuzco in 1825, Bolívar wrote a letter to the president of the Governing Council explaining that the national debt incurred by the high expenses of war was becoming a serious problem, and it would take a million to a million and a half pesos to repay the debt that had accumulated.[26] Bolívar expressed his disapproval and horror that the cities of the Andes, who have access to the rich mines of silver and gold, were reverting to million dollar foreign loans to pay for their armies and administrations and, thus, creating systems that Bolívar believed would ruin the country.[27] That same year while in Potosí, Bolívar wrote that the debts of Peru were constantly on his mind (at the time Bolivia was not yet considered completely geographically separate from Peru and was referred to as el Alto Perú).[28] He was concerned that the situation had

26 Simón Bolívar, *Reflexiones Políticas,* (Editorial Linkgua USA, 2014), 307, 309, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/lib/txstate/detail.action?docID=3194301.
27 Simón Bolívar, *Reflexiones Políticas,* 309.
28 Ibid, 312.

become dire and that the Ministry of Finance should consider offering all of the region's mines, uncultivated lands, real estate, the rights of all inventions, and "everything that belongs to the government" to English companies in order to pay off the national debt.[29]

It is paradoxical that the struggle for independence caused the region to become enmeshed in a new colonizing force that manifested itself in national debt to foreign countries. This national debt would overshadow Bolivia from its origin until the present and, as Bolívar predicted, has created an unhealthy system and vicious cycle in which the country has continually depended on foreign entities' intervention. Bolívar's observation of the uselessness of the wealth of the mines in stopping a cycle of foreign dependency also became a recurring pattern. Throughout the history of mines, including that of Potosí, the wealth has been distributed unequally and has tended to flow away from the laborers themselves and towards foreign entities and their Bolivian liaisons- instead of empowering wealth and higher living standards among the miners. In the 19th century Bolivia was released from the hold of the Spanish empire, but subsequently became grasped within the intangible forces of foreign debt. The consequences of this transfer of power and influence yielded from afar has extended to the lives of those living and working in Potosí.

Modern colonialism's legacy in Bolivia has given rise to a system in which the perception of progress and advancement of the country is closely linked to depending on "western" countries' intervention. Foreign intervention has contributed to enduring poverty among Bolivian miners. Most of these intervention operations intended to impose free-market capitalism policies to transform Bolivia into an integrated part of the world economy. Juan Lechin Oquendo, the leader of Bolivia's Federation of Miners Union and political leader of Bolivia's 1952 Revolution, explained in a 1987 interview that in the 19th century, after a period of economic prosperity, Bolivia inevitably opened up to a free trade economy.[30] The ensuing loss of national control to the influx of foreign economic domination caused the state to regress back into poverty.[31] Oquendo explained that the free trade system drove the importation of products at a cheaper price than the products produced by Bolivian companies, leading to the increasing closure of national industries.[32]

Oquendo believed that Bolivia should

29 Simón Bolívar, *Reflexiones Políticas,* 309.
30 Carlos de Mesa Gisbert, "De Cerca: Juan Lechin Oquendo," *American Television Presents*, canal 6, 1987, interview, 7min 40sec, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdITPFWiLzM.
31 Carlos de Mesa Gisbert, "De Cerca: Juan Lechin Oquendo," 8min.
32 Ibid, 20min.

imitate the U.S. and put protective tariffs on its imports. He explained that while the U.S. is protective of its own industries, it has imposed free trade through the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, so that it can export products at a lower price to countries like Bolivia that have antiquated industries and less protection in the form of tariffs.[33] The World Bank and International Monetary Fund are international extending institutions based in the U.S. that have a history of asserting modern colonialism through projects and loans that produce detrimental consequences and costs that fall upon the working class people of countries such as Bolivia.[34] However, at the time, Oquendo believed that it is possible for Bolivia to break-off dependency from the International Monetary Fund because the country has a massive amount of resources, especially mineral resources, that could be used to strengthen Bolivia instead of transferring this power and wealth to foreign entities through private companies.[35] His words hauntingly resemble those of Simón Bolívar more than a century earlier.

The Bolivian Revolution of 1952 strived for a radical restructuring of the trajectory of the country. The main objectives of the Revolution were to nationalize the mines, diversify the economy, and raise laborers' wages, among other efforts aimed towards raising Bolivia, especially its labor sector, out of poverty and into a thriving economy that would more equally benefit its people.[36] The Revolution was led by labor unions and leftist parties that believed that Bolivia's state of foreign economic dependence was causing its poverty.[37] However, these efforts for progress were never comprehensively implemented and they paradoxically intertwined with conventional forms of foreign dependency- particularly with the U.S. According to a New York Times article published in 1971, the U.S. financially backed these efforts for progress. The publication states,

> "...the United States made loans and grants of $500-million between 1952 and 1970 to support Bolivia's budget, purchase food supplies, rehabilitate the bankrupt state tin mines, and finance agricultural diversification, industries, transport and social projects. This United States investment of foreign aid in Bolivia's

33 Carlos de Mesa Gisbert, "De Cerca: Juan Lechin Oquendo," 21min 35sec-22min 25sec.
34 Jeffrey D. Sachs, *The End of Poverty: Economic possibilities for our time*, (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005), 100, 104, http://www.economia.unam.mx/cedrus/descargas/jeffrey_sachs_the_end_of_poverty_economic_possibilities_for_our_time__2006.pdf; Muireann de Barra and Aisling Crudden, "Water Raising," 2012, documentary, https://vimeo.com/109807039.
35 Carlos de Mesa Gisbert, "De Cerca: Juan Lechin Oquendo," 35min 25sec-36min 30sec.
36 Ibid, 38min.
37 Juan de Onis, "U.S. Companies in Bolivia Uneasy," *The New York Times*, May 30, 1971, p. 3, https://www.nytimes.com/1971/05/30/archives/us-companies-in-bolivia-uneasy-left-urges-government-to-step-up.html.

development continues at a high rate."[38] Additionally, even though the Revolution spurred a wave of successful nationalizations of Bolivian mines that had previously been conceded to U.S. enterprises, the Bolivian government was obliged to pay these companies large sums of money to compensate for the early termination of the contract.[39] The following governments continued to trade one kind of dependency for another. The Bolivian government even followed the advice of foreign economic advisors who directed them to obtain foreign private investment in order to increase the profit of sectors such as mine development.[40]

A complete reversal of the efforts for Bolivia's economic independence was sealed with the Decree 21060 passed in 1985 in response to hyperinflation. This decree included guiding points laid out by U.S. economist and public policy analyst Jeffrey Sachs. His limited knowledge of Bolivia at the time did not even extend to an understanding of where exactly the country was located on a map. However, because of his economic expertise he was recruited by the Bolivian government to help create a plan to reduce the hyperinflation crisis of 1985.[41] This plan came in the form of Decree 21060. According to Sachs the decree was a success that stopped the hyperinflation within one day and set the groundwork "for Bolivia to move from a statist and closed economy—typical of third world countries of the day—to a market-based, open economy."[42] However, he admitted that it did not help Bolivia's extreme poverty.[43]

Sachs was unaware of an in-depth history of Bolivia and thus did not know, as Oquendo knew, that Bolivia had once been incorporated into the free market economy and that this had caused the state to spiral into poverty as it shifted profit away from national Bolivian companies and enterprises. According to Oquendo, there was a firmly established "feudal mining apparatus" in place during the period of free-market reign, that the Revolution had aimed to destroy.[44] A return to this exploitative system would certainly not mean a road to higher living standards for the miners. Sachs's advice was congruent with the modern western belief that "third-world countries" experience extreme poverty because of isolation from the world economy, mismanagement of finances, and other factors that avoid considering historical connections. These ingrained beliefs

38 Juan de Onis, "U.S. Companies in Bolivia Uneasy," 1971, p.3.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Sachs, *The End of Poverty*, 91-92, 97.
42 Sachs, *The End of Poverty,* 95.
43 Ibid, 96, 103.
44 Carlos de Mesa Gisbert, "De Cerca: Juan Lechin Oquendo," 6min.

in the minds of "western" countries, especially the U.S., and even among Bolivia's government, drive the narrative that Bolivia needs the constant intervention of a foreign authority that has more power and rationale to impose solutions on Bolivia's people. Sachs looked for quick fixes that overlook Bolivia's issues rooted in its colonial history. Within that same year hyperinflation had returned and Sachs was called back to Bolivia by President Víctor Paz Estenssoro to help create another solution.[45] The government blamed wage increases for the hyperinflation.

After Sachs advised the president to sell the country's foreign exchange reserves to stabilize the exchange rate, the president declared that his plan to avoid future inflation was to avoid any wage increase.[46] Oquendo disagreed that wages caused the inflation, but instead argued that the neoliberal model of currency circulation was causing hyperinflation.[47] As the former leader of the union of miners he believed in raising wages for laborers and redistributing the circulation of money within the economy instead of printing more money as the government had done.[48] Oquendo also explained that laborers faced a raise in taxes while private companies had been forgiven of their debts to the government.[49] This policy was most likely intended to attract foreign businesses to the country.

Therefore, it can be argued that former President Paz Estenssoro was using the laborers, who had been striving towards higher wages, as a scapegoat for the situation. Decree 21060, backed by U.S. academics and advisors, was used to also pass oppressive measures in order to demoralize laborers. Among many injustices Oquendo felt the decree authorized, the union's ability to strike came under attack and thus did their ability to defend themselves from the exploitation of capitalists and private companies. After the passage of the decree, Oquendo observed the government attempting to rid the country of the workers' vanguard and any obstacle in between laborers and capitalists.[50]

To add to the forms of foreign interventions permitted during this turn in Bolivian politics, only a year after Decree 21060 was passed, the U.S. began military intervention operations in Bolivia which caused further economic instability and another financial crisis.[51] Additionally, Sachs encouraged the continuation of the trend of trading one type of dependency

45 Sachs, *The End of Poverty,* 98.
46 Ibid, 99.
47 Carlos de Mesa Gisbert, "De Cerca: Juan Lechin Oquendo," 30min 5sec.
48 Ibid, 10min 35sec and 30min 15sec
49 Carlos de Mesa Gisbert, "De Cerca: Juan Lechin Oquendo," 10min.
50 Ibid, 25-27min.
51 Sachs, *The End of Poverty,* 103.

for another: he pushed for the cancellation of Bolivia's foreign debt while at the same time advising Bolivia that a road to stability entailed pursuing more foreign aid- which in turn leads to the accumulation of more foreign debt.[52] As Sachs learned more about Bolivia, he attributed many factors to Bolivia's poverty, with special emphasis on its geography, which he perceived to be a disadvantage to its economy and a major factor isolating Bolivia from the world market.[53] However, none of the factors he listed pertain to Bolivia's history or to the persisting colonial systems and beliefs that have lived on through the globalization of a singular world economy and constant foreign intervention.

A separation from the history of Bolivia can cause a loss of essential perspectives when dealing with issues today that are entrenched in a deep and complex past. The mines of Potosí would not continue to be used today if it were not for extreme poverty that is sustained by structures of power and belief systems rooted in the colonial past and alive in currently imposed economic and social systems. Basilio, Bernardino, Saturnin (their first foreman), and Braulio all stated that they know they are sacrificing their lives for their

families, because they know that their career laboring in the mines will solidify their death at an early age.[54] Basilio made clear that he would not work in the mines if he had the means to support himself and his family.[55] At the same time, Bolivia is still indebted to foreign entities and continues to have foreign intervention in the name of progress and advancement of the country, as well as the belief that "western" countries have more authority of judgment and power to decide how Bolivia should develop itself.[56] Awareness of how these ideologies and policies affect the lives of Bolivia's miners is important to understand the history of the relationship between "western" and "developing" countries.

52 Ibid.
53 Sachs, *The End of Poverty*, 104-105.
54 Kief Davidson and Richard Ladkani, "La Mina del Diablo," 14min, 19min, 1hr 15min 35sec.
55 Kief Davidson and Richard Ladkani, "La Mina del Diablo," 6min 40sec, 1hr 16min 40sec.
56 Muireann de Barra and Aisling Crudden, "Water Raising." And IMF Staff, "Bolivia: 2021 Article IV Consultation-Press Release; Staff Report; and Statement by the Executive Director for Bolivia," 2021, file:///C:/Users/Owner/Downloads/1BOLEA2021001.pdf.

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