# *6* • The Military and Daily Life

War is the extension of politics by other means.

—Carl von Clausewitz

As neoliberal reforms reduce the economic autonomy of public school teachers and other alteños, the state must find ways to control people for both security and development reasons. The growing immiseration of city dwellers threatens the fragile stability of social life, and the state—using the police and the military—must deal with the confusion and unruliness its policies have created. Militant schoolteachers pose the most direct challenge to the established order in El Alto, but many different public sector workers across the country also demonstrated against cutbacks and privatization during the 1990s. Indeed, a week hardly passed in the mid-1990s without some organized protest in El Alto or La Paz. Similarly, despite repeated clashes with state security forces charged with fighting the U.S.-backed "War on Drugs," peasant producers of the Chapare region have consistently confronted the state about the right to cultivate coca. Their numbers have grown because ex-miners and ruined cultivators from the highland valleys are resettling in the Chapare and turning to coca leaf cultivation in the absence of viable economic alternatives.

Order and disorder are recurrent issues for the Bolivian military, which has always harbored concerns about internal "subversion." Not surprisingly, the Bolivian armed forces and those of other Latin American countries have more successfully defended their budgets against cutbacks than those state agencies charged with social welfare responsibilities (Franko 1994). The military and the police force are increasingly the only viable entities through which the state exercises its power in El Alto. Yet the armed forces are themselves confronting new pressures and demands. The end of the cold war has obliged the high command to identify new enemies. So-

called narcotraffickers, who lead the U.S. enemies list, are an obvious choice, but fighting the illegal drug traffic has not been easy. The military's own involvement in cocaine trafficking has compromised the armed forces in the eyes of the United States, the Bolivian military's longtime patron. In addition, the notion of militarizing the drug controversy has little civilian support, and the economic crisis has hampered the military's capacity to develop an external defense mission. Military bases around the country are bereft of supplies, the officer corps is demoralized, and to meet their basic needs conscripts often work illegally for civilians. The armed forces must also confront civilian demands that it respect democratic processes and play a constructive part in national affairs.

The military's search for a new mission and the neoliberal restructuring of the state are generating a significant shift in the relationship between the armed forces and poor men and women in El Alto. Moreover, this shift is permitting the military to extend its influence and control deeper into people's daily lives through the practice of compulsory military service. The state has long used military service for two main purposes: to recruit troops for an ongoing battle against alleged subversives and "communists," and to create particular kinds of "civilized" male citizens by using instruction in military beliefs and practices to instill a sense of belonging and obedience to the nation-state. Nowadays, however, creating nations and citizens has ceased to be a major concern of the Bolivian state, and economic crisis and neoliberal reforms have shifted the burden of troop maintenance from the state to impoverished recruits and their families. Nevertheless, the benefits and entitlements that military service purportedly offer remain extremely important to poor people as state social service agencies wither and viable employment options fail to materialize.

Because they must increasingly turn to the military to deal with their own poverty, poor peasants and urban dwellers are not demanding a radical transformation of the armed forces. Rather, most of them want the military to provide more opportunities, and compulsory military service enjoys a remarkable degree of popular support. This support emerges from the contradictory ways that poor men and women must engage the armed forces to ensure their own daily survival in a society that routinely excludes them. The efficacy of compulsory military service is, however, eroding, as economic restructuring and shifting geopolitics threaten to undermine an unusually effective system of incorporation, co-optation, and political control. The armed forces must therefore find ways to burnish their image.

One strategy, launched in the 1990s, is to use soldiers to implement a variety of development schemes, such as health education programs, agri-

cultural extension projects, and environmental protection initiatives. Military development programs show the public that the armed forces are not needlessly consuming scarce national resources and that they are teaching recruits skills that are useful in a democratic society. They also imply that the military's participation in resolving social and economic problems is legitimate, and they blur the boundaries between civilian and military arenas. Poverty thus becomes the entry point for reinforcing and expanding the repressive apparatus of the neoliberal state. This chapter explores the consequences of this low-intensity version of militarized democracy for the evolving relationship between the armed forces and ordinary people in El Alto.[1]

## *Masculinity, Military Service, and Citizenship*

Thousands of young men from around the country are inducted into the Bolivian armed forces every year. They come from the most powerless sectors of society: Quechua, Aymara, and Guarani peasant communities and poor urban neighborhoods such as El Alto. Two times a year—once in January and again in June—these men must respond to the military's calls for recruits, because one year of military service is a legal obligation for all able-bodied men. Conscripts on El Alto bases come from the city and rural Aymara communities. At induction time they arrive at the army and air force bases with a few personal possessions in distinctive wooden suitcases and line up to be processed. All recruits must undergo a medical exam to determine whether they are fit for service. The military then issues uniforms to the physically fit and shaves their heads. Urban-born young men with high school educations are likely to perform their duty in El Alto, but many others—especially illiterate peasants—are assigned to a variety of other bases around the country.

Although compulsory military service has grown more controversial in recent years, the vast majority of Bolivian men still fulfill their obligations to the armed forces, and they often do so with considerable enthusiasm. Most young men look forward to a stint in the army, where most serve, and family members and friends have generally supported and encouraged the young men to enlist. Why is this the case?

This question has no simple answer; the reasons are both straightforward and complex. On the one hand, military service is a legal requirement, understood as a prerequisite for many forms of urban employment, both public and private. Perhaps more important, young men may have acquiesced to military service in the 1980s and 1990s because Bolivia, unlike Peru and various Central American countries, was not mired in bloody

warfare, nor was it ruled by repressive military dictators. On the other hand, compulsory military service facilitates more ambivalent processes: even as the state uses it to create particular kinds of male citizens, conscripts lay claim to militarized conceptions of masculinity tied to beliefs about bravery, competence, and patriotic duty. They do so to earn respect from women (mothers, wives, sisters, and girlfriends) and male peers, both as defenders of the nation and, more broadly, as strong responsible male citizens who can make decisions and lead others.

Military service is one of the most important prerequisites for the development of successful subaltern manhood, because it signifies rights to power and citizenship and supposedly instills the courage that a man needs to confront life's daily challenges. Through the experience of military service, men assert a dignified sense of masculinity that serves as a counterpoint to the degradation experienced from more dominant males and an economic system that assigns them to the least desirable occupations. Military service has enabled them to challenge their exclusion from full participation in Bolivian society and to contest more genteel notions of masculinity associated with upper-class males who avoid military service altogether.

Yet self-affirmation and the legitimate desire for respect are also intricately tied to ongoing patterns of collusion with hegemonic uses and representations of poor men, and these are bound to evolving relationships of inequality among the subjugated peoples of El Alto. Conscripts collude with hyperaggressive notions of masculinity that demean women, "weaker" men, and civilians in general and that conjoin maleness with citizenship. They further assert an imposed falsehood: soldiers defend the interests of *all* Bolivians from an array of internal and external threats. By so doing, they aggravate the estrangement between men and women and deepen their alienation from their class peers and the history of indigenous peoples in Bolivia. Material constraints and beliefs about gender lead poor men to participate in a state institution that contributes to the oppression of dominated peoples.

Military service is a central arena in which the state struggles to enforce certain forms of identification while discrediting or marginalizing others. This process is very uneven, because it silences and empowers poor men and women in different and contradictory ways. Consequently, cultural claims are formulated against those who exploit and emerge from the historic divisions and animosities that structure social relations within oppressed groups (Sider 1993, 1996). In El Alto these divisions pit men against women, the urban born against immigrants, and the relatively well-to-do against the desperately poor, and so forth. Thus beliefs and practices forged in the context of domination, and at least partially oppositional,

may also serve as instruments of oppression or obfuscation. The construction of masculinity within the Bolivian armed forces illustrates this process; indeed, the military is the premier state institution charged with the legitimate use of force in society, and after years of structural adjustment reforms, the urban poor and peasants have an ambivalent relationship to it.

The state has used the institution of the armed forces to conjoin key concepts of masculinity and beliefs about citizenship that the poor claim as they simultaneously accommodate domination and assert their own interests vis-à-vis each other and the dominant society. Other notions of masculinity and, of course, all notions of femininity are ignored, ridiculed, or marginalized. Conscripts thus become "men" and "citizens" in ambiguous ways, as the young men are used and represented in different ways by the military. Military service both differentiates conscripts from elite white males and incorporates conscripts into society. The process also differentiates military conscripts from their female peers and men who have not done military service. The resulting ruptures that emerge among the poor from these patterns of differentiation and incorporation undermine attempts to shape understandings of masculinity, femininity, and citizenship that can be used to fundamentally transform relations of domination, rather than simply contest some of them.

To appreciate the evolving nature of the relationship between the state and impoverished peoples, and how it is developing in the context of economic restructuring, we must first consider how militarism, masculinity, and citizenship became conjoined. This requires a consideration of two separate but related processes: the U.S.-financed expansion of the armed forces during the cold war, and the Bolivian state's long-term civilizing agenda for indigenous peoples that was abetted by the populist nationalism of the 1952 revolution. The large-scale militarization of masculinity initially occurred on the anvil of anticommunism and nationalism. The discussion then turns to a consideration of the growing financial burden of military service for poor families and a consideration of how the armed forces are harnessing military service to "development" objectives, which threaten to further embed military practices and understandings in the very fabric of society and reinforce the repressive power of the state.

## *The Military and Bolivian Society*

Since 1904 military service has been mandatory for all Bolivian males, but for the first half of the twentieth century, indigenous peoples, who were not

persuaded by appeals to patriotic duty and did not possess a well-developed sense of national identity, shunned the military. Indigenous men not only avoided service during peacetime but engaged in large-scale draft evasion during the Chaco War (1932–1935), a costly and bloody dispute with Paraguay over the arid lands of the Gran Chaco. Draft evasion was so common that the military regularly resorted to violence to conscript a fighting force. The educator Elizardo Pérez, writing about the experiences of one community on the shores of Lake Titicaca, reported that "one day, at four o'clock in the morning, soldiers from the Achacachi base broke into the huts of the Indians and dragged them off to the base without paying any attention to their ages or what they said [and] . . . in less than 24 hours, the poor Indians left Achacachi for the trenches without even being allowed to say good-bye to their loved ones" (1992:167).

Such tactics reflected the army's desperate need for able-bodied men on the Paraguayan front, where enormous casualties were exacting a heavy toll from the Bolivian army. Yet rural landowners and the army high command felt a profound ambivalence about arming Indians. Landlords in the department of Sucre argued that "the army is the most pernicious [place] for the Indian because in addition to completely changing his customs, it deprives agriculture of robust arms and transforms Indians into armed dangers" (quoted in Arze Aguirre 1987:55). Similarly, the prefect of Potosí department claimed that Indians only joined the army in order to use military training in "their struggles against white landowners." He went on to ask, "Will the militarization of the Indian be a new national danger? This is the question that merits thought by statesmen" (quoted in Arze Aguirre 1987:55). Because of these fears the high command stressed that rural indigenous men would not fight on the front lines and sent them to labor in the rear guard, clearing land and building roads. Yet wartime demands for able-bodied men quickly made this policy collapse, and it was never strictly applied.

Social tensions did not ease at war's end. Participation in the army and the experience of the war itself created a new sense of national identity among Indian war veterans. In addition, the enormous loss of life, Bolivia's crushing defeat, and the corruption and incompetence of the white officers provoked a crisis within the armed forces and generated challenges to the entire political system. These tensions erupted in the 1952 national revolution, which brought to power the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR).

In a move to consolidate power the MNR neutralized the army by reducing the budget, eliminating disloyal officers, and cutting the number of

military personnel from twenty thousand to five thousand (Hudson and Hanratty 1991). It then moved quickly to arm the civilian population, which was overwhelmingly loyal to it. Armed civilian militias composed of peasants, tin miners, and factory workers essentially replaced the army for a number of years, until the MNR grew uneasy with these increasingly militant organizations and decided to rebuild the armed forces.

The United States assisted the MNR's efforts to reconstitute the armed forces in the mid-1950s. Caught up in a rising wave of cold war hysteria, the U.S. government increased military expenditures for technical assistance for Bolivia's armed forces. It also began training Bolivian officers, who returned to Bolivia after several months on a U.S. base. Imbued with the teachings of their U.S. counterparts, the Bolivian officers instructed local troops in the skills of soldiering. The MNR, for its part, hoped to keep the armed forces loyal to the civilian government by appointing officers with known MNR sympathies to important command positions and permitting poor mestizos to enter officer-training programs. Its political rhetoric downplayed the deep class and ethnic differences that continued to divide Bolivia and promoted a nationalist discourse that figured Bolivians as equal members of a homogeneous nation. The enfranchisement of indigenous peoples was the first and most dramatic way in which the party created a broad new category of citizen, and military service was another arena in which the state carried out its civilizing project.

The creation of "citizen-soldiers" was possible because U.S. military aid rose from a mere $100,000 in 1958 to $3.2 million in 1964, when the army overthrew the MNR and ruled almost without interruption for the next eighteen years (Hudson and Hanratty 1991). With the continuous influx of U.S. military aid, both before and after the overthrow of the MNR, the Bolivian military could incorporate large numbers of indigenous peoples and poor urban dwellers into the armed forces. Suppressing "internal enemies," who were called communists, became a central goal of the Bolivian military, and it was also the touchstone of U.S. policy, especially in the aftermath of the 1959 Cuban Revolution.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s the Bolivian military encountered little difficulty recruiting the men that it needed. Former soldiers recalled—and news photos from the period show—the long lines of recruits that invariably formed outside the bases in El Alto during the Banzer regime. Substantial U.S. financial support facilitated operations, and living conditions on army bases were better than they would become in the 1980s. More important, the military ruled the country with an iron grip, and draft dodgers were likely to bear heavy consequences for their actions. The uni-

versity, which became an attractive alternative to military service for some men after the return of civilian rule, was also closed for much of the 1970s.

At this point, we might ask how the military has confronted the task of making men out of boys and forging "citizens" out of the male masses. How too do claims about class, ethnicity, and regional affiliation exist in tense dialogue with this totalizing project?

## *Alliances and Defiances*

The efforts of militaries to instill civic consciousness among persons marginalized by their states is a persistent theme in the experiences of many countries (Weber 1976; Enloe 1980; Segal 1989; Glatthaar 1990). In Bolivia a key aspect of basic training and the formation of male citizens is that recruits experience the military as omnipotent and omniscient. The military incorporates the young inductees, controlling and regimenting every aspect of their lives and cutting off or severely restricting their ties to the broader society. To become a man and a soldier requires that recruits be separated from home, especially the care and influence of their mothers, and be controlled by older unrelated males. The military then strives to subordinate the inductees' individuality to the identity of the male group and instill rigid conformity and compliance to military values.[2]

This is a gendered process of moral regulation in which the armed forces define the parameters of appropriate male behavior and link masculinity and citizenship to the successful completion of military service; indeed, commanders link military obligations as closely to civic duty as to the actual practice of warfare. The imposition of acceptable forms of masculinity that prize aggressiveness, male camaraderie, discipline, autonomy, and obedience to authority creates militarized male Bolivians. As certain forms of individual and collective identification receive the official seal of approval, the state denies legitimate expression to others. This is a process that depends on the acceptance of young men and is reinforced by their simultaneous brutalization, an aspect of the "civilizing" experience that is central to military training and much anticipated by prospective recruits. It must overcome deep regional and ethnic cleavages.

Until very recently the military has tried to mix men from different parts of the country in the same barracks in order to break down strong regional sentiments. In addition to the more abstract purpose of creating male citizens who identify as "Bolivian," rather than as Aymaras, lowlanders, and so forth, this policy also has a direct practical rationale: military

leaders believe that conscripts are more likely to shoot "subversives" if they do not come from the same regional or ethnic background. Financial constraints have limited this policy in recent years, but the Bolivian military still sends large numbers of highland conscripts to the lowlands, because of a constant dearth of lowland recruits.[3]

The first three months of military service are dedicated to basic training in which new recruits engage in endless drills and marching. Conscripts also learn how to use weapons and prepare to fight. During this period troops suffer the abuse of commanding officers and the dominance of a more experienced group of conscripts known as the *antiguos,* or old-timers, who entered the service six months earlier. Officers verbally and even physically castigate the newcomers for violations of military discipline, misunderstanding commands, and not carrying out required exercises. Superiors refer to the recruits as *sarna*, or mange, and shape militarized masculinity in these contexts through the symbolic debasement of women and homosexuals. They also call recruits whores (*putas*), faggots (*maricones*), little ladies (*señoritas*), and other gendered insults. Punishment for an infraction of the rules may entail dressing as a woman and parading around the base or, as one ex-conscript described, sleeping naked with another man in a physical embrace.

Closely tied to this rigid hierarchy is an ideology of male equality and bonding. This ideology pervades basic training and conflates combat preparedness with beliefs about masculinity: troops share the same food and living accommodations, wear the same uniforms, display identical shaved heads, conform to the same rigid codes of behavior, and train for war, the ultimate test of their manhood. They are taught to rely only on themselves and each other and to distrust civilians, who are considered weak, incompetent, and lacking the discipline and responsibility of a uniformed soldier. As one ex-recruit described the experience to me: "You learn how to survive in the barracks, because there is no help from your family. You only get help from yourself and those who live with you. It's a really beautiful experience, because you are isolated with others [men] who become even more than your brothers because they share everything with you. The guy who is beside you is more important than your own family." Indeed, the strong self-reliant man who works with other men is the desired product of this training.[4]

Encountering "the enemy" in actual confrontations or, what is more likely, in mock skirmishes and exercises, heightens male bonding and camaraderie among recruits. The identity of the enemy varies with time and place; for example, troops who served near the Peruvian border during the 1980s learned about the Shining Path guerrilla insurgency; the cold war

turned domestic critics into foes; drug traffickers in the 1980s and 1990s posed the most direct hazard for conscripts in Cochabamba and Santa Cruz departments; and those serving near the Chilean border always perceived Chile and its armed forces as the preeminent danger. Opposition to these groups, which are portrayed as threats to Bolivia, creates among conscripts a heightened sense of national identity and nationalism, and military commanders encourage conscripts to see themselves as the nation's most valued defenders.

Yet recruits reproduce in the barracks their class, regional, and ethnic divisions, which threaten to undermine the military's totalizing project, even as conscripts encounter "enemies," bond with each other, and experience overwhelming pressure to conform to military values. Though the military mixes together recruits from diverse regional backgrounds, informants consistently recount that high school graduates, who are more likely to be urban born and fluent Spanish speakers, stand a better chance of remaining on urban bases, whereas authorities send peasants to much more onerous rural and frontier postings. Moreover, peasants often experience greater difficulty in understanding orders and lessons, which are conducted entirely in Spanish, and they must therefore endure more abuse from commanding officers and the old-timers. Authorities are also less likely to choose peasants for advanced instruction after basic training; their destiny frequently is to labor on arduous civic action programs, such as clearing ditches and making roads.

Intense regional sentiments further complicate these class and ethnic divisions. Ricardo Salinas, an urban-born paceño who served in Cochabamba department in 1994, was intimidated by all the *cochabambinos* (residents of Cochabamba department) in his barracks. "The old-timers really scared me," he said. "There were more cochabambinos than paceños. When we [the newcomers] arrived, they asked us who were the paceños and told us to raise our hands. Then they said, 'Sarnas, you are going to die.'" Thus even as the military seeks to undermine class, ethnic, and regional divisions in an effort to enforce a putative nationalism, military training reinforces such divisions.

Some men in fact find military service intolerable and may even go to the extreme of deserting, which undermines the military's omnipotent self-representation and is viewed as treasonous. Félix Chuquimia recounted to me how his commanding officers on a lowland base in the 1980s obliged him and other highland conscripts to beat a paceño deserter who had been captured and returned. In another instance, according to Chuquimia, commanding officers forced two deserters to dress as women: "The officials forced them to trot around the base carrying their [unloaded] guns, bricks,

and old tires. They had to shout, 'I'm a woman, not a man.' One of them even fainted a couple of times, and we [the troops] were ordered to throw water on them. If we did not obey, the officials would punish us. This is what happens to people for deserting. You just have to endure." In this instance, commanding officers identified traitors with women. By involving highland conscripts in the deserters' punishment, these lowland-born officers not only made the conscripts accomplices but also reinforced a militarized male identity closely linked to patriotic duty and separated from specific regional and ethnic identifications.

We have seen that a concerted effort by the armed forces to forge such connections among the lower classes dates only to the 1952 revolution. The populist nationalism of the MNR and, most important, the financial support of the U.S. government were necessary for incorporating large numbers of men into the armed services. Yet because of the inherent difficulty—indeed, the impossibility—of completely incorporating a dominated people into an allegedly homogeneous national community, contemporary examples of peasants, miners, and slum dwellers' actively opposing the armed forces and the state are numerous (Barrios de Chungara 1978; Nash 1979; Justicia y Paz 1975). This opposition has also been passive.

The return of civilian rule in 1982 tempered the military's domination of society, and the armed forces experienced more difficulty filling their troop quotas in the 1980s, when the numbers of young men who responded to recruitment calls declined. After public threats to draft dodgers failed to produce the desired effects, the armed forces on several occasions resorted to kidnapping and conscription sweeps of poor neighborhoods. In the highland city of Oruro, for example, military personnel dressed in civilian clothing infiltrated a soccer game and seized several men who could not prove that they had completed military service ("Religiosos denuncian abusos" 1987). A year later parents and school directors in La Paz denounced the military police for apprehending male students as they left school ("Se denuncia persecución" 1988). Similarly, peasant leaders of the Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB), a national peasant confederation, annoyed the military high command in 1990 with a resolution that urged parents and their sons to ignore the military's calls for recruits. Leaders argued that young men should not lend themselves to the repression of their own people and the further militarization of the coca-producing regions.[5]

By the 1980s young men—particularly those from urban areas—became less willing to dedicate a year of their lives to military service for a

number of reasons. Some felt that military service obstructed their pursuit of higher education and taught them nothing that was useful in civilian life. Those with the means to pursue a public university education in La Paz were most likely to express this view. For others, the revelations of widespread military corruption, fiscal mismanagement, and human rights abuses that became public in the aftermath of military rule diminished the appeal of the armed forces, and conditions on military bases grew steadily worse during the economic crisis. Despite their discontent, however, most of these men were generally not protesting military service per se; rather, they were unhappy with the military's inability to offer them better prospects for the future.

Press accounts reported steep cutbacks of 46 to 56 percent of the annual military budget during 1986.[6] The advent of neoliberalism led to the privatization of fourteen military-operated enterprises, caused supply shortages on several bases, undermined the practice of compulsory military service, and produced a crisis among officers, who complained that their salaries were insufficient to maintain lifestyles commensurate with their rank.[7] The latter claimed that they had to moonlight in other occupations and that their wives had to take jobs. The vision of wives toiling for wages was, they asserted, the most powerful symbol of their collective denigration by the state, and it diminished the prestige of the armed forces.

Nowadays troops often find themselves forced to work illegally for civilians to supplement the inadequate food rations that the army provides. In 1992, for example, the state allocated a paltry 25 cents per day to feed and clothe each soldier. Born in an indigenous highland community, Felix Amaya performed his military service in the 1980s, when he was sent to an army base in the eastern lowlands. The food, according to Amaya, "was really dramatic. There was a time when it was basically just water. We'd get five beans and a piece of bone swimming in water. Just soup." To deal with the situation Amaya and other troops like him sought clandestine work with civilians so that they could purchase food from merchants, even though their activities violated strict army rules. Amaya explained:

> Generally, we went to a small town on Sundays to work for the merchants. They gave us food and a few little things for the week, but it was very dangerous to work there. A few guys were caught and punished by the army, who told them that they had made the institution look bad. From then on, I went to the countryside, where I got to know some people who became almost like family to me. I helped

> them clear their fields and plant corn and yucca. They would feed me on Sundays and give me as much food as I could hide in my knapsack and carry back to the base.

Similarly, Daniel Saval, who served near the Chilean border in the 1980s, commented that "the food was really terrible. Very few provisions reached the frontier [bases]. We ate soup in which a few little noodles danced around. That is why you had to bring your own provisions from home."

The military increasingly obliges families of army conscripts to subsidize its budget with their own meager resources. The armed forces do not publicly acknowledge the burden that poor families are assuming, but one army official, whom I interviewed in 1995, is highly critical of what he privately refers to as an unofficial "enrollment tax" [*tasa de inscripción*]. He describes how the poorest families pay a disproportionate share of this "tax," because their children are commonly posted on remote, poorly equipped bases. Relatives—especially mothers—must travel long distances to take food, bedding, and medicines to their sons, and they incur substantial transportation and lodging expenses in the process.

A female street vendor in El Alto provided more details. When her son entered the army, she had to purchase the requisite boots for him, because the military did not have the money to provide them. Moreover, when the military sent the boy to a cold remote post on the Chilean frontier, she made the long journey to the base every two weeks to take food and other provisions to him. The journeys not only consumed the meager income that she—a single mother—earned as a street vendor but she also had to spend money on what she described as *un hotel de mala muerte* (a bad death hotel), because she could not stay on the base. To make matters worse, the military has stranded some recruits who have completed their patriotic duty, forcing them to pay for transportation to return home. This not only created problems for the young men but also considerable worry and hardship for their family members. On at least one occasion exasperated parents protested the treatment of their sons in front of El Alto's bases.

Hundreds of parents from the peasant communities surrounding El Alto denounced military commanders in 1992 and threatened to go on a hunger strike, because the army had abandoned their sons in the eastern lowlands. The young men had enlisted at the army and air force bases in El Alto and were then shipped out to posts in the departments of El Beni and Pando. Upon completing their tour of duty, however, the military did not return the soldiers to El Alto. Parents, who had been in El Alto await-

ing the arrival of their sons for almost a month, complained that they were being compelled to spend money unnecessarily in the city. They also claimed that the army was no longer supporting their children, who were working for local farmers in order to maintain themselves until the military sent them back.[8]

Despite their unhappiness, however, these parents were not protesting military service; they were simply demanding that the military take better care of its charges. Most Aymara peasant families and urban immigrants continue to support compulsory male military service. Popular ideas about how a boy becomes a man and a citizen in highland communities and El Alto exist in tense interaction with the increasing physical and financial burden that the armed forces place on poor men and their families. Such ideas not only aid the state's conscription efforts but threaten the masculinities of young men who do not serve in the military. Popular notions of masculinity emerge in part from the efforts of male peasants and poor urban dwellers to engage dominant institutions, such as the military, in order to prove their worth, find personal dignity, and establish claims to membership in the nation. But in so doing the oppressed may simultaneously become collusive with their very domination by participating in the creation of beliefs about masculinity, femininity, and citizenship that are destructive within their communities and households.

## *Sissies and "New Citizens": Suffering for Manhood*

A complex array of pressures and motivations prompts young Bolivian men from La Paz, El Alto, and the surrounding hinterland to enlist in the armed forces every year. For some young men the military offers the possibility of adventure and an opportunity to visit other parts of the country. According to the military itself, service provides recruits with opportunities to learn electrical, mechanical, and carpentry skills, yet only one of the men I interviewed mentioned the acquisition of skills useful in civilian life as a reason for serving. Although the reasons have varied over time, two primary explanations for responding to the military's biannual calls for men stand out among former soldiers: the importance of the *libreta militar* (military booklet—essentially an honorable discharge), which documents the successful completion of military duty and is required for key transactions with the state and for obtaining work in urban factories and businesses, and the desire to validate themselves as men in the eyes of families, peers, and communities. Establishing themselves as men requires the competence

necessary to support themselves and a family amid considerable economic adversity and to participate in community positions of authority.

Obtaining the military booklet is not a concern for middle- and upper-class young men who wish to avoid military service. Once past the age of twenty-three, when an individual is no longer eligible for service, a man may pay a fee to obtain equivalent documentation. The cost in recent years has varied from $200 to $500, which is prohibitive for men from poor peasant and urban backgrounds, because they typically earn only a few dollars for an entire day's labor.[9]

For poor men military service is the only practical means of acquiring the military booklet, which is quite literally a prerequisite for citizenship. Only with this document can a man register with the state and acquire a national identity card. The libreta is also indispensable for other key relationships with the state, such as obtaining a passport or a degree from the state university. Similarly, military documentation is essential for obtaining employment in many businesses and factories of urban La Paz, where employers use it to guarantee a disciplined Spanish-speaking labor force.

The military booklet is thus part of the civilizing process that symbolically incorporates young men into the nation and the capitalist discipline of the labor process. Furthermore, with the collusion of their commanding officers, recruits may use the booklet as a way to change their Indian surnames to Spanish ones. But while it symbolically creates citizens, the booklet also facilitates the converse: the categorization of "aliens" within the boundaries of the state, a designation that is all too close to the lived experiences of poor men.

The experiences of former tin miner Raul Gutiérrez illustrate the subtle and overt forms of violence associated with processes of exclusion and incorporation. When I interviewed him, Gutiérrez recognized the importance of the military booklet for the professional aspirations of his son, whom he had sent off to boot camp even though the senior Gutiérrez hates the army and is frightened by the sight of soldiers. Gutiérrez survived a horrific army massacre in the Caracoles tin mine after the 1980 military coup d'état of General Luís García Meza, and intolerable working conditions subsequently forced Gutiérrez and his family to move to El Alto to search for other work. According to Gutiérrez:

> The military entered the mine and went on a rampage. We thought the soldiers were drugged, because they were foaming at the mouth. They beat everybody that they caught and killed innocent people. They raped women and even put dynamite in the mouths of some

> people and blew it up. People had to crawl like dogs to find hiding places, where they were forced to remain for the three days that the army occupied the mine. . . . To this day I hate and fear the army. Soldiers think that they can take advantage of people because they wear a uniform.

Gutiérrez, however, recognizes the importance of military documentation. "It's an indispensable document," he said. "My sons are going to be professionals some day, and they will be asked for their military booklets." Indeed, the military's continuing regulation of society and Gutiérrez's hopes of a professional future for his sons virtually require a passive stance toward the military repression that he has experienced in the past. The military domination of Bolivian society has in this way reshaped aspects of social life.

For many young men the importance of establishing their manhood is also a central reason for military service. They believe that service is indispensable to becoming responsible disciplined men who are capable of making decisions, heading a family, and commanding others. As Felix Mamani, a rural immigrant who resides in El Alto, told me, "In the countryside, people think that you are a coward if you don't go to the barracks; that is, they think you're like a woman. The community pushes young men toward military service, and [we] have to go in order not to be faggots. It's a question of manliness." Residents of highland Aymara communities refer to returning peasant recruits as *machaq ciudadano*, or literally, new citizen, and, if domestic resources permit, celebrate them with eating, drinking, and dancing. Rolando Cusicanqui, a twenty-six-year-old immigrant from the Lake Titicaca region, understood machaq ciudadano as someone who is "able to be fully involved in society and participate with adults. Someone who is considered to be a responsible person and who can fully take part in a series of events, meetings, and so forth." Similarly, when Fernando Huanca falsified his birth certificate in 1974 to enter the military when he was still too young to enlist legally, he did so because he had heard about the "new citizens" and wanted to be one. According to Huanca:

> I was born in Igachi and grew up an orphan. When I was fifteen or sixteen years old, the other boys always acted like they were better than me. Seeing the way that they behaved, I thought, I'm also a man. I'm also someone [*gente*]. What difference is there between someone who goes to the barracks and one who does not? I wanted to understand this. I'd heard about new citizens, and for the pride [of being a new citizen], I enlisted.

In the immigrant neighborhoods of El Alto and La Paz the connections between manhood and citizenship are equally evident, if somewhat more diffuse. Military service is not so directly linked to the assumption of community positions of authority, but young men still hope to earn the respect of families and peers by participating in a rite of passage that is understood as a prerequisite for full male adulthood and a duty of every good Bolivian man. They also hope to obtain the documentation necessary for permanent positions in a factory, business, or state agency and thus escape from the poverty and insecurity of the informal economy.

One day, for example, I was chatting with Orlando Huañapaco, twenty-one, and his fiancée, Alicia Quispe, about their upcoming wedding. When I asked if they were nervous about getting married, Quispe confessed to some premarital jitters, but Huañapaco denied any such unmanly emotions. "How could I be nervous," he asked rhetorically, "when I have done my military service?" He then went on to describe his recent experiences in the army. According to Huañapaco, his commanding officer had forced him to stand naked in front of a large number of troops, and he maintained that the experience had forced him to develop nerves of steel. His account was clearly intended to impress his fiancée and me and to demonstrate that he was a mature adult, capable of assuming the responsibilities of a married man. Yet unbeknown to his fiancée, Huañapaco had never completed military service, because he injured his back in a fight with another recruit and had to seek a medical discharge. Struggling against chronic back pain, Huañapaco, with the help of his grandfather, was quietly saving money to buy his way out of any further military service, and he was clearly worried that others would perceive him as inadequate for doing so.

His anxieties were similar to those of Francisco Pérez. Pérez recalled the mockery of his high school peers, who claimed he was not man enough to bear the rigors of military life. Pérez, a self-described loner, says that these taunts stimulated a flood of self-doubt and that this was among the reasons he enlisted in the late 1980s. He remembered that after completing the obligatory year in the military, his father, who had always encouraged him to enlist, began to treat him very differently. "'You've been to the barracks,'" Pérez said his father told him. "'Now you are a man and can do what you want with your life. You can marry or do anything that you please.'" Like Pérez, other informants recounted how their families prohibited them from consuming alcoholic beverages before they did their military service and how their families invariably lifted this prohibition after their return home.

Key to the transformation of these young men is the experience of suf-

fering. Suffering is not only something that they anticipate before enlisting but also an experience that, when safely in the past, they constantly embellish and reinvent, as ex-soldiers represent themselves to others and assert claims within evolving social relationships. Given the myriad ways in which these young men and their families suffer every day of their lives with poor health, low wages, bad harvests, and racism, it is shocking to listen to them boast of their transformative experiences of hardship, which must be understood as part of a desperate and painful search for dignity and self-worth.[10]

Rufino Amaya, for example, dreamed of and eventually received a posting to a distant frontier base in the tropical lowlands, where living conditions were particularly harsh. The isolation of the base meant that during weekend leaves he could not visit friends and family members, and he frequently did not have enough to eat because commanding officers were selling troop rations for personal profit. The food shortages prompted him to work as an agricultural laborer during leaves so that he could buy bread and other basic necessities, even though working for civilians was a punishable offense. Yet, as Amaya told me, "The person who goes to the barracks, especially from the highlands, suffers a lot during the year, but those who do not serve never experience what corporal punishment is like and are more or less semi-men. [People in my community] criticize the ones who serve nearby. They say that they've just been to the kitchen."

Amaya went on to describe how highland men like himself were better suited for the rigorous tests of military manhood. "[In my group] we were one hundred sixty-one paceños and eighty *orientales* [residents of the eastern lowlands]. The orientales were very weak . . . and when things got rough, they started deserting. But the *colla* [highlander] man—as they call us—deserts very little, because he is able to endure any kind of hard work." Many other informants related similar accounts. One individual even likened the Aymaras' propensity for military service and allegedly superior soldiering abilities to their history as a "warlike people."[11]

We can recognize a number of self-destructive beliefs in these assertions: suffering is a prerequisite for manhood; people like themselves can tolerate suffering more than others; and Aymaras have special abilities for warfare. To make these claims is to participate in the making of a dominant fiction. It creates a virtue from suffering, a condition imposed on the Aymaras by both the military and, more generally, the form that class and ethnic domination takes in Bolivia. It also links extreme suffering in the military with an exalted form of manhood and thereby denies the very real daily suffering of women and other men who cannot or will not participate

in the rituals of militarized masculinity. Finally, it misconstrues Aymara history, in which warfare was integral to the process of Incan and particularly European domination but has little to do with any essential Aymara characteristics.

At this point we must explore in greater depth the way that militarism and men's experiences in the military shape ongoing social relationships in their home communities and neighborhoods. How specifically do militarized notions of masculinity inform the relationships between male peers, between men and women, and between subaltern men and male members of the white middle and upper classes? And how too are these beliefs sustained in the context of inequality?

## *Contending with Militarism in Daily Life*

Recruits never do become true citizens after completing military service and returning to civilian life. This happens despite the civilizing mission of the armed forces, the concerted efforts to produce "real men," and the considerable extent to which young men claim and assert destructive imposed beliefs about themselves in their search for respect. The realization of their continuing marginalization leaves many men feeling disillusioned, and they question the point of dedicating a year of their lives to the armed forces. In most cases, they are no better prepared for a job than before they entered the military, and the few decent jobs that remain in La Paz after years of economic crisis, restructuring, and state retrenchment cannot possibly accommodate everyone. Young men typically return to their impoverished villages or seek a livelihood as gardeners, chauffeurs, part-time construction workers, and vendors in the urban informal economy and in low-paid positions, such as police officer, in the state bureaucracy. Thus excluded from the economic rewards of the dominant society, they remain ineluctably "Indian" in its eyes, and some, not surprisingly, conclude that the entire experience was an enormous waste of time.

Of course, men's military experience varies, as does their understanding of militarism. The experience of military service, once safely in the past, assumes different meanings for them in the context of changing social relationships in the present. Felix Amaya, for his part, understood the military very differently as a university student and former Socialist Party member than he did thirteen years earlier as a teenage army recruit fresh from the countryside. "Look," he told me, "peasants in civilian life understand who the army defends. I went to the barracks with a lot of expectations. I

thought that afterward I would easily get a job [in the city], and I thought that people in the city would respect me. But it wasn't that way. . . . Everything was false. It was then that I realized that the army just protects the bourgeoisie, but that was only after I got out."

In failing to meet the expectations of Amaya and other recruits like him, the military has trained a potential source of opposition. Yet the nature of the opposition is ambiguous. Military service, as mentioned earlier, is key to acquiring certain kinds of urban jobs that provide a modicum of economic security. It is also important for participating in the male world of formal community politics, taking part in discussions and decisions, establishing a family, and being perceived by others as a leader. These men do not easily cast aside the suffering, male camaraderie, and discipline that supposedly made them male citizens in the first place, because these factors help to ratify male empowerment by excluding women and those subaltern men who have not passed through the armed forces. These forms of male entitlement constitute an affirmation of male citizenship, albeit of a subordinate form within the broader context of Bolivian society.

Military experience also provides ammunition for the construction of masculinity and the assertion of male power in other settings. It is typically part of the repartee of all-male social gatherings, such as weekend drinking parties, which closely combine male solidarity and competition. Exaggerated tales of suffering, hyperbolic anecdotes of bravery in the face of fear, and inflated accounts of cleverness when confronted by abusive superiors shape the male bonding that occurs amid the music blaring from cassette players, commentaries on daily life, and invitations to drink.[12] Yet this bantering and one-upmanship can easily move from friendly jousting to violent competition and thus become a form of domination and ranking among men.[13]

Whatever the outcome, though, stories of military life—which, as Broyles (1990:33) notes, are usually false in important details—are always about buttressing the power of certain kinds of men. These stories link a particular concept of masculinity to military performance. Some men use military tales to enhance the importance of their militarized identities and to exclude from key arenas of male sociality both young men and those who have not passed through the armed forces. They also, of course, exclude women, who usually hover in the background during these gatherings and await a summons to bring the next round of beer.

Former conscripts also use the competence and citizenship equated with postmilitary manhood to assert their dignity and claim respect from more powerful middle- and upper-class males. The latter view military ser-

vice as a waste of time they can more usefully spend studying, and they fear the prospect of serving with Indian and lower-class men in a context in which military hierarchies theoretically take precedence over class and ethnic ones. Some even view the soldiers' claims to manhood as presumptuous. One individual, for example, criticized the peasant practice of requiring military service for male marriage partners because it was, he claimed, based on mistaken beliefs about how men acquire a sense of responsibility. Ex-soldiers are highly critical of these men, whom they view as unpatriotic sissies. One scoffed:

> They're mamas' boys. They come from a different social class than we do, and their form of thinking and reasoning is so distinct that they forget about their patriotic duty. They are much more individualistic [than we are]; they forget about the nation so that they can be totally independent. The upper class only thinks about its future and its social position and generally not about the country and what could happen one day.

This man and others like him were particularly critical when, in early 1995, a public scandal enveloped a high-ranking government official who had falsified his military booklet to avoid service.[14] Sixty-year-old Rufino Tejar, for example, was absolutely disgusted. He sneered:

> These parliamentarians say that they are the fathers of the country, but they are the first ones to avoid the barracks. These little gentlemen wouldn't know where to shoot. They always come from privileged families. They're mamas' boys. They can fix anything with money, but then they fill these government positions and demand that everyone else obey the law. They should be removed from their jobs and obliged to serve in the military at their age.

Tejar's remarks that these men claim to be "the fathers of the country" suggest something of the paternalism and the denigration that shapes the reality of actual encounters between men of different classes. It is as waiters, gardeners, chauffeurs, shoe shiners, handymen, and janitors that indigenous and poor urban men typically meet white males of the upper class. These structurally subordinate positions require them to display deference, subordination, and humility. They are not only demeaning but also place men in relationships to more powerful males that are analogous to those of women in male-female relationships. Because lower-class men cannot command the labor power of others and they possess none of the wealth necessary to embellish an elegant lifestyle and control, provide for,

and protect women, these men and those from subordinate ethnic groups experience greater difficulty backing up their claims of personal power and sexual potency than their class and ethnic superiors. Moreover, the class privileges of the latter enable them to develop a well-mannered, dignified, and controlled masculinity, one that is contrasted with the behavior of poor men. Depending on the context, poor men may be labeled weak and ineffectual by elite whites *or* condemned for impulsive and irrational outbursts of violence.

Thus in certain contexts many poor urban and peasant men have considerable difficulty cultivating and defending a positive image of themselves as men vis-à-vis more dominant males. Surviving the trials and tribulations of military service is one way in which they can affirm their masculine power and rights to citizenship. In the absence of recruits from the upper echelons of Bolivian society, poor urban and indigenous men can claim the experience of compulsory military service as strictly their own and use it as a weapon in their ongoing struggles for respect and dignity in a society that routinely denies them both.

We should, however, view their assertions with caution. It is important to bear in mind that subordinate and dominant notions of masculinity degrade women and are premised in large part on the ability of men to control and dominate women. Given this, we might expect to find women in highland Aymara communities and the villas of El Alto considerably less enthusiastic about military service than their male family members. Some evidence does exist to support such a view. Mothers commonly recall the tears and deep sadness with which they dispatched their sons to the barracks; they also remember the fears that their sons would be abused in the armed forces and return permanently disabled. Yet these women hope that completing military service and obtaining the requisite documentation will ensure a more prosperous future for their sons. Indeed, a mother struggling too hard to withhold her son from the military might be seen as depriving him of the chance to attain full male adulthood.[15]

Those women whose sons have no prospects of upward mobility provide the most enthusiastic support for compulsory military service. Many of these women, like men, believe that military training and discipline will produce responsible, mature adult males, and they have ample reasons to want this to occur. Men who are unable or unwilling to support their families; who spend hard-earned cash on drink, cigarettes, and other women; and who are physically abusive frequently disappoint poor women. Military service, the women hope, will develop men into reliable, serious adults and serve as a guarantee to women and their male relatives that a prospec-

tive husband will fulfill his social and economic responsibilities to the domestic unit.

These women are suspicious of men who have not done military service. A street vendor in El Alto, for example, described disparagingly a forty-year-old male acquaintance who never served. "He gets occasional jobs that don't pay well, but he can't go to work in a factory [because he doesn't have his military booklet]," she explained. "This is where irresponsibility comes from. The military booklet structures one's future and encourages responsibility." She went on to discuss how women who get stuck with such men have to work more outside the home to support their families.

Men may in fact become more responsible—in other words, dedicated to family and home—after military service. Rufino Pérez, for example, told me that he "saw things more seriously" after returning from the barracks in the 1990s. "I wasn't the same prankster that I had been before," he said. "My friends noted this and so did my family. In my community, when one arrives from the barracks, people give you more responsibilities because you are now one among adults. I was no longer juvenile and assumed these responsibilities myself. I was another member of society."

Yet men's relationships to militarism do not always bring positive benefits for the women whom they encounter in civilian life. The experiences of Arminda Mamani illustrate how the expectations of women are frequently unfulfilled. Arminda Mamani, forty-five, is a divorcee with two sons. Born into a family of artisans in a small provincial town, she moved to La Paz in 1970 and was working as a secretary when we met. Mamani's two sons lived without a father in the home for most of their lives, and she always encouraged them to pursue respect and economic security through higher education instead of going into the military. She viewed the military as a waste of time and did not want her sons to associate with "Indians" in the barracks. However, her ex-husband, his female relatives, and his six brothers strongly opposed her views. This side of the family maintained a strong tradition of male military service and constantly chided Mamani's elder son, Sergio, for failing to enlist. Sergio, for his part, was content with his decision not to serve. He had not only his mother's full support but a newfound sense of dignity as the first member of his family to attend university.

Despite her success with Sergio, Mamani was frustrated with her younger son. This boy, Pancho, became a juvenile delinquent in high school; he constantly skipped classes, stole household items and sold them on the street, and argued incessantly with his mother. "Every year that he was in school," Mamani said, "I told him that if he didn't study and behave

better, I was going to send him to the barracks." She finally carried out the threat and successfully appealed to an acquaintance with military connections to have the boy sent as far away as possible. She was backed up by her sisters, who, like Mamani, viewed the barracks as a reform school for problem boys. Pancho spent a year in the army on the lowland frontier but, according to Mamani, returned worse than he had departed.

> When he returned, I realized that it had not done him any good, and he was not reformed. The only thing that he acquired was his military booklet, but he was even more obnoxious than before. He thought that he had more rights, because now he was a man, an adult, and could therefore do whatever he felt like. Just because he had his military booklet, he thought he could arrive home at whatever time he pleased and get drunk whenever he wished. He told me that I wasn't a good mother because I didn't give a party when he returned, like all the others [families].

The disappointment that Arminda Mamani felt about her son's sojourn in the military is not uncommon. Indeed, the high level of domestic violence in El Alto suggests that many men are not living up to women's expectations. In 1993, 53 percent of the reported incidences of violence in El Alto involved cases of violence against women, and of these cases the overwhelming majority (87 percent) entailed abuse by spouses or male companions (Subsecretaría 1994). Although domestic violence is far too complex a phenomenon to be reduced to the effects of militarization on men, such abuse does reflect the strains that poverty and another decade of "lost development" are placing on men and women, as well as the misogyny inherent in military training.

Women are not the only people who are disappointed by male military service. As previously mentioned, many veterans are critical of military service because it provided them with little preparation or training for meaningful jobs in civilian life. These complaints, and the complete avoidance of military service by those with access to a university education, pose a growing challenge to the armed forces. How can they sustain the legitimacy of male military service when the "communist" threat has subsided and the military itself is increasingly unable to live up to popular expectations?

The armed forces must increasingly address this question, and a broad sector of the civilian population is pressing them to do so, because these citizens believe that the military should play a more constructive role in a democracy. The armed forces are experimenting with a variety of solutions. Under considerable popular pressure, they implemented a "premilitary"

program in 1996 for high school students that enables them to complete military service on weekends and holidays. The program does not disrupt their studies and enables graduates to pursue work or higher education without sacrificing a year to the army. Some sectors of the armed forces are also seeking to harness military service to social and economic "development" schemes in Aymara communities of the altiplano and in the poor neighborhoods of El Alto. Their halting turn to development is not entirely new. Indeed, a concern for "security and development" preoccupied the armed forces during the cold war and prompted several development and civic action initiatives at the time. The renewed interest emerges from growing concern about the future of the Bolivian armed forces, particularly the direction and continued legitimacy of male military service. The outcome has profound implications for the changing relationship between the armed forces and impoverished peoples.

## *Hearts and Minds*

The growing immiseration of Bolivian society and changing geopolitics have prompted calls for the armed forces to play a more constructive role in ameliorating the economic hardships, one that breaks with the authoritarian and repressive practices associated with the era of military rule. And, although the armed forces would like to play a bigger part in the U.S.-sponsored war on drugs, the involvement of high-ranking officers in the illegal cocaine traffic has limited its ability to do so. The U.S. government is highly suspicious of the willingness and ability of the armed forces to combat cocaine smuggling, and it has partially bypassed the traditional armed forces by training and financing UMOPAR (Unidad Móvil de Patrullaje Rural), a militarized police force also known as the "Leopardos," to fight the drug war. Although UMOPAR has ties to the armed forces, it works closely with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, and career advancement is subject to the approval of the U.S. embassy in La Paz. The traditional armed forces' involvement in the drug war is technically limited to a few key activities: three air force units support counternarcotics operations; the navy assists UMOPAR river patrols for drugs; and the army provides transportation for certain operations (Human Rights Watch/Americas 1996).

Also, militant unions assert the right of peasants to grow coca, and many civilians from various walks of life believe that the cultivation of coca leaves is less destabilizing than the harsh measures that the United States imposes to suppress it. In addition, the U.S. war against drug dealers and

coca growers provokes strong nationalist sentiments among many Bolivians, who believe that the United States should first address the drug problem at home. Most important, however, is that Bolivians understand that laundered drug money sustains the national economy in numerous ways at a time when traditional sources of foreign exchange, such as tin, have collapsed (Léons and Sanabria 1997). For these reasons, then, an expanded military role in the drug war has little support.

With little domestic enthusiasm for fighting a war declared by the United States, and circumvented by UMOPAR, the armed forces must craft a new mission even as structural adjustment reforms have reduced their state-allocated budget. Certain segments of the military elite have begun to stake out new territory by advocating military-inspired social and economic development initiatives. Such initiatives, they claim, demonstrate the willingness of the armed forces to address Bolivia's dire poverty and to participate in a democratic society, and they use this argument to approach international development organizations for the financing to implement these programs.

In 1986, for example, Luis Fernando Valle, then the minister of defense, responded to cuts in his ministry by claiming that "the armed forces are not necessarily charged with military tasks but also teach twenty-five thousand peasant conscripts to read and write every year . . . [and this] benefits the entire nation."[16] Five years later the Defense Ministry acquired financial support from the United Nations to provide literacy training to conscripts.[17] It also obtained financial support from Germany to use army recruits to implement a reforestation scheme, and another internationally financed military project—Campaña de Acción Comunitaria Multiple (CADACOM)—promoted health and infrastructure endeavors in highland communities.

The Centinelas de la Salud program also emerged in the context of the military's civic-mindedness. Initiated in 1992 with funding from the Pan American Health Organization, the World Bank, and other prominent international development agencies, Centinelas de la Salud is in effect on all the nation's military bases. Over a ten-year period its annual goal is to teach basic health concepts and disease prevention procedures to thirty to forty thousand male conscripts. The program takes several weeks; conscripts attend after they finish their three months of basic training, and drill sergeants and low-level officers, who are mestizos, carry out the instruction.

Young men learn about the microorganic causes of disease and the importance of vaccinations for disease prevention. The teaching also focuses on hygiene, diet, and sanitation as cornerstones of good health, and it pays

considerable attention to maternal health, child development, family planning, and sexually transmitted diseases. The objectives are twofold: to educate future male household heads about primary health care and disease prevention, and to use veterans to disseminate this information in poor rural communities and urban neighborhoods after they complete their military service (MDH/SNS 1994).

Instructors use military terminology instead of medical terms to educate young recruits. Thus the program depicts pathogenic microorganisms as enemy invaders, the human body as the Bolivian nation, and the skin as the national border, which is subject to "penetration" by the enemy. Infections become battles between good defenders and bad enemies that are fought with armaments such as pills, or prevented with vaccinations, which carry instructions to the defenders. Instructors then extend these analogies to explain particular diseases. For example, they describe tuberculosis as the work of delinquent subversives, otherwise known as guerrillas, who silently entrench themselves in the lungs. To combat these tenacious enemies, the body's defenders need abundant arms (i.e., medications) and many months to confront and ultimately annihilate the tubercular threat. Soldiers also learn that "enemy invasions" can cause postpartum health complications. Problems arise when women give birth in unsanitary conditions, which permit enemy invaders to penetrate the womb's "unprotected frontiers" and wreak havoc on the female body.[18]

Janette Vidaurre, the national coordinator of Centinelas de la Salud, claims that the program has been a huge success. It boasts eighty thousand trained recruits since its inception, and project supporters eagerly point to the multiplier effect that these individuals, and those still to be trained, will have on society. Vidaurre also defends the use of military language and instructors. She maintains that military terminology is the easiest language for troops to understand after three months of basic training and asserts that military officials make good instructors because of their brutality. She explains that "they teach them with the whip" [*les enseñan con huasca*]. Vidaurre can also produce test results from before and after the program that document conscripts' expanded knowledge, and she has many glowing program evaluations from the soldiers themselves. Yet closer analysis reveals reasons for skepticism about both Vidaurre's claims and the fundamental goal of the project.

The program continues a long tradition of racist paternalism toward peasants and indigenous peoples, whereby the goal of military service is to incorporate Indians into an ostensibly homogeneous nation. Describing what she perceives to be one of the program's major contributions, Vidau-

rre states that children cared for by program veterans are "of particularly clean appearance and had some good habits not commonly seen in the ethnic groups to which they belonged" (Vidaurre 1994:345). Similarly, two colonels found the assimilationist possibilities of the Centinelas de la Salud program encouraging. One told me that the health program "teaches troops how to brush their teeth with toothpaste, which they normally don't know how to do, and then go home and demonstrate the same skills to people in their communities."

The paternalism and the condescension of these officials is overshadowed, however, by far more serious problems. For the military, household heads are male by definition, and the program seeks to strengthen men's positions within households, rural communities, and poor urban neighborhoods. The instruction infuses health care and disease prevention with highly gendered, militaristic beliefs about the body. This militarized medical knowledge empowers men and then encourages them to take control of women's bodies in the context of their homes. Centinelas de la Salud thus aggravates preexisting gender inequalities, and it blurs civilian and military spheres by further embedding military beliefs and values in Bolivian society.

The merging of civilian and military arenas extends well beyond the household. Centinelas de la Salud also seeks to develop ties between public health care workers, ex-soldiers, and the military. Conscripts who graduate from Centinelas de la Salud are encouraged by military officials to register with public health clinics, and to act as unpaid health care extension workers when they return to civilian life. Their volunteer work might include reporting outbreaks of contagious diseases, participating in campaigns to eliminate garbage dumps, constructing latrines and distributing vaccinations, or organizing "community talks" about preventative medicine (MDM/SNS 1994). Public health clinics are also supposed to give preferential treatment to the veterans and the people they refer for treatment. The program thus seeks to provide the armed forces with a role in public health care at a time when civilian social service agencies, particularly those charged with health care, are withering.

Although it is still too early to judge the success of Centinelas de la Salud, the program represents the "soft" side of the military's continuing efforts to control poor Bolivians, who have always been at the center of the armed forces' concerns about order and disorder. "Development" and security concerns are not only issues for the Bolivian military but also a growing consideration of the militaries of the United States and other Latin American countries. For example, the U.S. Defense Department's budget for civic ac-

tion programs in Bolivia expanded by 650 percent between 1996 and 1998 (Latin America Working Group 1998). The U.S. military carries out civic action initiatives during army exercises and training operations that take place primarily in the Chapare and lowland regions, where the United States considers drug trafficking a problem. Civic action in these areas consists of road construction, vaccination campaigns, and well digging, and both Bolivian civilian and military personnel frequently participate.[19]

By appearing to address pressing social issues, the U.S. and Bolivian militaries hope to strengthen their legitimacy in a nominally democratic Bolivian society. The Bolivian military also hopes to capture additional funding from leading international aid agencies, as its longtime patron, the United States, channels funding exclusively to combat the lowland drug traffic. Development funding can help to sustain compulsory military service in Bolivia and bolster the military's pretensions of addressing the country's dire poverty. Yet shoring up patriarchy, militarizing the delivery of health care, and relying on unpaid soldiers to sustain an underfunded health care system are hardly solutions. Such practices could contribute to simmering discontent with the status quo and tempt the Bolivian military to abandon its current willingness to tolerate some forms of political democracy and return to the more oppressive forms of rule that characterized the past. These practices could also continue to incorporate increasing numbers of poor Bolivians and deepen the militarization of everyday life.

The military remains the most important, and increasingly the only, state institution with which poor alteños must contend. As it seeks to define a new mission in the post–cold war era, the armed forces are faced with the growing impoverishment of Bolivian society and the resulting tensions and conflicts. Even if the military manages to respond to the requests of the poor for more skills and opportunities, the life circumstances of impoverished people are unlikely to improve. Young conscripts are even more likely to turn against the world of poor and indigenous people—the very world to which they belong.