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Comparative Study of Two Protest Marches for Disabled People's Rights (Spain 1933 – Bolivia 2011)

Gildas Brégain

Abstract

This article aims to shed light on the *Caravana de la integración en sillas de ruedas* (wheelchair integration caravan), a group of around 20 physically disabled people, who travelled more than one thousand kilometres in wheelchairs from the Bolivian city of Trinidad to the capital, La Paz. The trip lasted 90 days (from 15 November 2011 to mid-February 2012) and aimed to assert their right to receive an allowance of 3,000 Bolivian pesos. In examining the specificity of this social movement, it seems relevant to compare it to another march organised by a group of Spanish disabled people in September 1933 between Zaragoza and Madrid. These Spanish activists were asking for employment in the government administration, and lifetime benefits for those who were not able to work. This comparison will look at both the environments that fostered the development of such protests and how this type of action has changed over time and adapted to the economic, social and technological changes in the 20th century. We will also look at the different political impacts of these two marches.

Introduction

On 15 November 2011 in Trinidad (Bolivia), 17 physically disabled persons started a march of over one thousand kilometres with the intention of reaching the capital, La Paz. Their objective was to claim the right to receive an allowance of 3,000 Bolivian pesos. Their journey ended on 23 February 2012. On the whole, more than a hundred disabled persons rallied for this march. What were the stakes of this march, which the activists themselves called the *Caravana de la integración en silla de ruedas* (wheelchair integration caravan)?

In examining the originality of this social movement, it seems relevant to compare it to another march organised in September 1933 from Zaragoza to Madrid (Spain) by disabled people (referred to as “invalids” at the time). These activists were asking the government and other administrations to employ “invalids” in low-ranking civil service positions and for lifetime benefits for those who were not able to work.

Over the last ten years, social science researchers in France have taken an interest in this type of protest action – protest marches – because such marches involve a major physical commitment and large time investment from participants.² This type of protest movement also has a strong territorial dimension and is a way for a group to assert itself as the voice of a community. Protest marches are defined by the fact that people “walk long distances from one city to another city, passing through one or several countries, in order to raise awareness of an injustice among the population of the regions through which they travel and challenge public opinion and the authorities.”³

² See Michel Pigenet/Danielle Tartakowsky: Les territoires des mouvements sociaux: Les marches aux XIXe et XXe siècles, in: *Le Mouvement Social* 202:1 (2003), pp. 3-13.

³ Author's translation. Jean-Marie Muller: Lexique de la non-violence, in: *Revue Alternatives non-violentes* 68 (1988), p. 48. Quoted by Pierre-Marie Terral: L'histoire en marches, de l'inscription de la 'Marche des beurs' dans l'histoire d'un mode d'action protestataire, in: *Migrance* 41 (2013), p. 42.

The Spanish march of 1933 and the Bolivian march in 2011 are both social movements, that is to say “collective action designed to promote a common good or prevent a public scourge, setting opponents to fight against in order to make the participation, redistribution or recognition processes possible.”⁴ These two marches were totally collective, had a common opponent (the State) and struggled for a public good, even though the particular good differed depending on the people involved.

Literature on social movements distinguishes between two types of successive social movements in the 20th century. Before the 1960s, “old” social movements were generally organised by the working class and trade unions, and aimed to redistribute wealth and access to State power. In contrast, the “new” social movements that emerged in Western countries in the 1960s and 1970s have less to do with a specific social class and are defined by the use of specific organisational models valuing decentralisation and local democracy, a tendency to fight for one cause only, the assertion of lifestyles, and the use of new, less institutionalised kinds of protest where the body often plays an important role.⁵ By pointing out the dichotomy between “new” and “old” but not specifying the geographical limits of the validity of this theory, this literature implicitly suggests that this transformation in social movements can be observed worldwide throughout the course of the 20th century. Furthermore, the relevance of this classification is increasingly challenged by researchers. Indeed, some researchers insist on the fact that several elements connected with “new” social movement can also be seen in some protests prior to the 1960s and that many contemporary protests have materialistic objectives (employment, wages and social issues).⁶

We prefer to examine the specificity of each social movement based on a study of societies that are distant in both time and space,⁷ drawing on several written and digital sources.⁸ This comparison of two similar events (a long protest march of several disabled persons in two societies distant from each other both in time and space) allows one to raise the questions of the factors that fostered the development of such protest actions, the transformation of this type of action in conjunction with the economic, social and technological changes of the 20th century, and the differentiated political impacts of these marches.

The Factors Fostering the Development of Long Protest Marches

Individuals’ participation in these two marches was not motivated by the prospect of material benefit (an allowance, a job) only. Literature on social movements has already proven that several factors can favour the creation and development of a social movement: a high degree

⁴ Author’s translation. Daniel Cefaï: *Pourquoi se mobilise-t-on?: Les théories de l’action collective*, Paris 2007, p. 15.

⁵ Erik Neveu: *Sociologie des mouvements sociaux*, 5th ed., Paris 2011, p. 62.

⁶ Erik Neveu: *Sociologie des mouvements sociaux*, p. 66.

⁷ Taking the approach recommended by Marcel Détienne: *Comparer l’incomparable*, Paris 2000.

⁸ This research is based on a review of the daily pages of local newspapers in the Aragon region (*Heraldo de Aragón*, *La Voz de Aragón*) between 1 July 1933 and 29 November 1933 and of articles from several Bolivian national newspapers available online (*La Patria*, *Los Tiempos*), using a keyword search on several search engines (Hemeroteca digital Los Tiempos, Google news). Bolivian newspapers are highly politicised and most belong to private groups, the Church or powerful families, which are often opposed to Evo Morales’ government. We have tried to ensure a diversity of information sources and take into account the coverage by government-friendly media (Agencia Bolivia de Información, *La Razón*). We selected about fifty online articles about the Bolivian march from 2003 to 2013. To complete these sources, we also consulted the local Zaragoza archives and analysed the videos posted on YouTube about the Bolivian march and two Facebook pages written by Carlos Mariaca, one of the leaders of the march. Referring to other web sources (Facebook, YouTube) is all the more legitimate – even essential – given that Bolivian activists used web resources to spark and broadcast their actions. For the use of online archives, see Philippe Rygiel: *De quoi le web est-il l’archive?*, in: Jean-Philippe Genet/Andrea Zorzi (eds.): *Les historiens et l’informatique: un métier à réinventer*, Rome 2011, pp. 289-308.

of social frustration, the process of constructing meaning, the targeting of an opponent,⁹ existing resources to be used as tool to spark off a social movement,¹⁰ and the variable openness of the authorities to the demands of social movements.¹¹ Building on the research, we have identified several factors favouring these long marches: a feeling of injustice in response to the development of concepts such as disabled rights and the failure of public disability policies, the existence of political leaders with resources enabling them to rally people, media coverage, and a political context of democracy.

A Feeling of Injustice Caused by the Failure to Grant Certain Rights Seen as Legitimate

These walks were undertaken by disabled persons who believed that their rights were being denied. In fact, these marches happen to have been part of a series of actions led by the same teams over different lengths of time (two months in the Spanish case; four years in the Bolivian case) to obtain specific benefits (a job, an allowance) from the authorities. In both cases, disabled people started their protest marches after having already used other kinds of actions to get the attention of the public authorities: negotiations, demonstrations, building occupation. These multiple actions had all failed, fuelling a growing feeling of injustice among disabled people.

The rallying of invalid people in Zaragoza was aligned with a major mobilisation of invalid workers for access to low-ranking civil service jobs in Madrid that started in 1931. On several occasions, a committee of invalid students at the *Instituto de reeducación profesional de invalidos del trabajo* (the national vocational rehabilitation centre of disabled workers) met with the Minister of Labour to request better access to jobs in the public service. On 3 March 1933, Mr Azaña, Head of the Government, had an audience with Doctor Manuel Bastos and a commission of invalid students from the *Instituto de reeducación profesional*.¹² A few days later on 14 March 1933, the Council of Ministers submitted a draft bill to the Assembly; this bill addressed public employment and would have granted invalid workers rehabilitated at the *Instituto de reeducación profesional* privileged access to vacant positions in the public service.¹³ Shortly thereafter several politicians in charge expressed their resistance to this bill arguing that employment policy did not fall under the jurisdiction of the State, but under that of local councils.

The announcement of the submission of the bill triggered great hope among disabled people. Since April of that year, an association of disabled people, named the *Pro-Invalid Commission of Madrid* and run by Gregorio Paz, had not ceased its efforts to obtain from the President of the Government the extension of these employment possibilities in low-ranking administration positions to all disabled persons who could actually work.¹⁴ This commission also asked that access to an allowance or placement in healthcare facilities be granted for those who were not able to work. Branches of this organisation were rapidly created in many

⁹ The deprivation theory was elaborated by Ted Gurr in 1970. It says that people become frustrated when there is a gap between socially constructed expectations and their perception of the present situation. See Ted Robert Gurr: *Why Men Rebel*, Princeton 1970.

¹⁰ Thanks to resource mobilisation theory, we learn that a social movement does not come into being without individuals (“leaders”) working to rally organisational resources; these resources may differ depending on the situation. See Daniel Cefaï: *Pourquoi se mobilise-t-on?: Les théories de l’action collective*, pp. 228-236.

¹¹ The hypothesis that political opportunity structures exist and can favour the birth of social movements comes from the assessment that the State is capable of repressing, authorising or integrating a certain degree of social rallying. It is not these political opportunity structures themselves that favour the development of the rallying, but rather how they are interpreted and assessed by the people involved. See Daniel Cefaï: *Pourquoi se mobilise-t-on?: Les théories de l’action collective*, p. 279.

¹² ABC Madrid: *Informaciones y noticias políticas*, 3 March 1933.

¹³ *Diario de sesiones de las Cortes constituyentes de la República Española*, Madrid: Proyecto de ley leído por el Sr Presidente del Consejo de Ministros sobre provisión de destinos publicos, 14 March 1933.

¹⁴ La Cruz, Tarragona: *La comisión pro-inválidos*, 22 April 1933.

provinces to support the cause defended by the leaders in Madrid. In the region of Zaragoza, a branch of this organisation was created in July 1933, with disabled civilians (lame persons, one-armed persons and blind people) of both sexes. From July 1933, the Zaragoza commission demanded that some public jobs at the local council be reserved for disabled persons (doormen, accountants, typists, clerks, etc.).¹⁵ But none of the local authorities paid attention to their demands. This drove them to publish a manifesto in the newspapers to protest their critical situation and the fact that the authorities were turning a deaf ear to their “legitimate aspirations.”¹⁶ The leaders of the *Pro-Invalid Commission of Zaragoza* give evidence of the inactivity of local authorities, who were supposed to provide disabled people with jobs.

Gathered in an assembly in Zaragoza on 27 August, disabled people requested that both the governmental and parliamentary assemblies pass the bill of 14 March 1933, and include all Spanish disabled people among the beneficiaries of this law.¹⁷ The following day they met with the mayor of Zaragoza, who merely promised them that he would review the issue. Additionally, the national authorities continued to ignore their demands despite the fact that they had the support of some Members of Parliament coming from Aragon.

In the Bolivian case, the walk was one of the many actions taken by the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons (COBOPDI) since 2007 in an effort to force the authorities to develop support policies for disabled people, and in particular grant them a substantial allowance. Founded in 1989, the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons aims to advocate the social integration of disabled persons and rallies national associations of disabled people (the blind, the deaf, physically disabled people, parents of intellectually disabled children) within nine regional federations. Its head office is located in Santa Cruz. During the 2007-2012 period, Jaime Estivariz was the head of the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons.

Some of the activist and leaders of the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons chose to carry out radical actions to make sure their demands would be met, while others opted for more moderated courses of action. The radical activists in the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons performed several drastic actions in early May 2007 (such as a hunger strike and the occupation of public buildings); these actions resulted in an agreement being signed with Evo Morales’ government on 14 May 2007. To dissuade them from their protest plans, he agreed to one of the association’s main demands – the creation of a national solidarity fund designed to finance an integrated support programme for disabled people (rehabilitation facilities, etc.). Although the government was definitely against granting an annual allowance of 5,000 Bolivian pesos demanded by the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons, it finally admitted that it was necessary to review the issue and made the ambiguous promise of a future benefit in a quite smaller amount than originally demanded.¹⁸ A year later, from the end of July, some activists in the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons began their radical actions (hunger strike, violent protest marches, occupation of industrial facilities) again to demand the introduction of an annual allowance of 3,000 Bolivian pesos. Their actions were supported by the leaders and activists of independence organisations, and especially the Santa Cruz Youth Union (*Union Juvenil Cruceñista*), during the protest marches in the Santa Cruz city centre. On 21 August 2008, the Parliamentary Assembly

¹⁵ Letter from Miguel Duaso Marcén to the Mayor of Zaragoza, 11 August 1933, in: Archive of the City Hall of Zaragoza (AAZ): Government Section, Box 3376, Document no. 3422/1933.

¹⁶ Heraldo de Aragón: Un manifiesto, 9 August 1933, p. 4.

¹⁷ Letter from Miguel Duaso Marcén to the Government of the Spanish Republic, 27 August 1933, in: Archive of the City Hall of Zaragoza (AAZ): Government Section, Box 3376, Document no. 3422/1933.

¹⁸ Los Tiempos: Discapacitados levantan huelga tras acuerdo, 16 May 2007, available online at: http://www.lostiempos.com/diario/actualidad/nacional/20070516/discapacitados-levantan-huelga-tras-acuerdo_10698_11881.html (accessed on 6 March 2014).

adopted a law creating a national solidarity and equality fund for disabled people financed by an annual direct debit of 40 million Bolivian pesos from the National Treasury. Going against the desires of the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons, which wanted this fund to finance annual allowances above all, the use of these funds was not specified in the law and remained subject to future regulations. Eventually, these funds were used exclusively to finance the ten new integrated rehabilitation centres in the country.

Dissatisfied with the content of this agreement, radical activists in the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons repeated their protest actions in August 2009, October 2010 and January 2011, demanding an allowance of 3,000 Bolivian pesos. Each time the government managed to end these radical actions by using political repression against the protesters and signing agreements with some of the more moderate leaders of the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons. Each time the government promised to consult organisations on the use of the national solidarity fund, or promised to introduce an annual benefit.

In autumn 2011, Jaime Estivariz defended the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons' proposals by submitting a bill to Parliament on the preferential treatment of disabled people; the bill provided for an integrated protection system, and the annual payment of a "vivir bien" (live well) pension in the amount of 3,000 pesos for the seriously disabled who cannot work.¹⁹ Seventy percent of the national fund's annual resources would be used to pay this pension. This preliminary bill also proposed a mandatory hiring quota of ten percent disabled persons in the civil service and public companies.

At the same time, the government prepared a new bill and consulted the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons; but differences of opinion remained, especially about the amount and recipients of the pension and the level of the mandatory employment quota.

Leaders Rely on Association Structures to Recruit Volunteers

In both cases, the protest marches were launched by leaders with different (economic, intellectual, political and media coverage) resources that they used to organise the marches and publicise them. They used their associations' resources to recruit volunteers for the protest marches. Unlike the Spanish march organised by one man, the Bolivian march was led by several men with different profiles. However, sources do not allow us to analyse the hierarchy within each social movement or how the participants perceived their leaders.

In the Bolivian case, the organisers of the march were the leaders of the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons, most of whom lived in the Santa Cruz region: Jaime Estivariz Bustillos, Camilo Bianchi, Carlos Mariaca, Ely Pedriel and Mario Torrico Canaviri. They are physically disabled men with extensive activist experience, who have taken part in previous radical actions by the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons. Jaime Estivariz is a paraplegic Member of Parliament who belongs to *Convergencia Nacional*, a right-wing conservative political party opposed to the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (the left-wing political party, Movement for Socialism). He is a member of the upper class. Carlos Mariaca is a 40-year-old quadriplegic man who can only move his head and some of his fingers and teaches meditation courses at the Ministry of Health. Mario Torrico Canaviri, head of the Santa Cruz Federation of Disabled Persons, is a lawyer with an amputated hand. Camilo Bianchi is a sports journalist in his 50s, president of the Sports Journalists' Association in Pando.

In the Spanish case, Miguel Duaso Marcén promoted and organised the protest march for disabled people. He attended school up to the age of 16, and from the age of 19 worked as a storekeeper. He was extremely eloquent and at the age of 17 agitated for the Spanish Republic

¹⁹ La Patria: Codepedis socializara proyecto de ley de preferencias, 17 December 2011, available online at: <http://lapatriaenlinea.com/?t=codepedis-socializara-proyecto-de-ley-de-preferencias¬a=92359> (accessed on 4 May 2016).

with his older brother. His father was a musician and his mother a housewife, both of whom were literate. In July 1933, Marcén became the representative of the Pro-Invalid Spanish Commission in the region of Zaragoza. He does not seem to have had any impairment himself.²⁰ His commitment was therefore probably due to the disability of a family member (probably his father).²¹ Like the Bolivian leaders, the Spanish leader had cultural resources and political relations, but unlike them he had no economic resources of his own and no contacts with national media.

These protest marches were not spontaneous. A few weeks before the marches, the leaders informed their colleagues, the media and the authorities that they were going to take radical action. In the Bolivian case, the leaders did not specify which type of action was planned, while in the Spanish case they specified a “march to Madrid.” At the time of the second national summit of the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons, from 30 October to 1 November 2011, the members of the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons decided to send a letter to the legislative authorities, so that a law on the preferential treatment of disabled people could be approved quickly.²² The members of the organisation also decided to conduct large-scale action to obtain the inclusion of an annual pension in this law. In the Spanish case, the disabled people of Zaragoza announced (in a manifesto dated 9 August) that they were ready to start a march to Madrid “to inform the government of our critical situation and our rightful claim.”²³ A few days later, out of fear of the negative impact such a march could have on the government’s image, the regional governor tried to neutralise the threat of a protest march to Madrid by giving them two free return train tickets to Madrid so that they could meet with members of the government, but this offer was declined. At the beginning of September, Miguel Duaso Marcén proceeded to select candidates for the march, men only. He even apologised for refusing some volunteers for practical reasons.²⁴

Political Contexts of Democracy

These two protest walks were carried out in different contexts of democracy, in places where the ruling governments were quite tolerant of protest actions. The Spanish march took place in autumn 1933, two years after the proclamation of the Republic and the rise to power of the coalition between Republicans and Socialists. The Bolivian march took place two years after the start of Evo Morales’ second term of office, who was the representative of the left-wing political party *Movimiento al socialismo* (Movement for Socialism). This former trade unionist with Aymara heritage rose to power in January 2006 for the first time, as part of the indigenous people’s mobilisation to nationalise oil, coal and gas companies. In both countries, the democratic situation and tolerance of protests allowed the activists to envisage protest marches without immediate repression.

Moreover, in both Spain and Bolivia, the governments were progressive and developed different types of new social policies. For this reason, association leaders believed that a new social policy for disabled people would be possible. The first government of the Second Republic undertook a reform of education and professional relations, which proved to be

²⁰ His legal record for a case of fraud two years later gives no information on any impairment either. Lawsuit files of Miguel Duaso Marcén, 1935, in: Historical Archives of the Province of Zaragoza: A/7457/000005.

²¹ We consider this possibility because of a strange coincidence: Miguel Duaso Marcén’s father is listed in the city census as a musician (and unemployed person), and Miguel Duaso Marcén fought with the city council so that blind musicians could be hired as teachers at the music school.

²² This fact is mentioned by a leader of the march, Carlos Mariaca Alvarez, in a long testimonial on the Bolivian march, which he posted on Facebook on 2 July 2012. Posted by Arkano Carlos Mariaca Alvarez: El sueño de una reglamentación legítima de la Ley no. 223, 2 July 2012, available online at: <https://facebook.com/groups/caravanadeintegracion> (accessed on 4 May 2016).

²³ Heraldo de Aragón: Un manifiesto, 9 August 1933, p. 4.

²⁴ Heraldo de Aragón: Marcha sobre Madrid, 16 September 1933, p. 1.

efficient and lead to the creation of new public schools and higher wages for workers.²⁵ Government policy under Evo Morales consisted of a new development model based on industrialisation, a different distribution of wealth and the expansion of citizens' rights.²⁶

However, the associations to which the activists belonged did not have the same relations with the ruling political class and trade unions. The Bolivian government was very close to many social movements, whereas the Spanish government at the time was closely affiliated with the *Union General de los Trabajadores* (General Union of Workers). In their speeches, the Spanish marchers declared that they did not depend on any political or trade union authority.²⁷ Nevertheless, Miguel Duaso Marcén had regular contact with left-wing parties, in particular with the Radical Republican Party; and another marcher, Felix Torcal, was the president of the National Confederation of Workers (*Confederacion Nacional de los Trabajadores*) of Calatayud.²⁸ During a congress, Miguel Duaso Marcén said that he had the support of some members of parliament in Zaragoza from different political parties: Socialist member José Algora Gorbea, Radical Republic Party member Basilio Paraiso Labad, and Santiago Guallar Poza, defender of Social Catholicism and member of the union of right-wing parties.²⁹

Brought to power by the mobilisation of Bolivian indigenous people, Evo Morales' government often defined itself as "a government of social movements."³⁰ However, the actual bond with social movements had weakened over the years and government action was by then characterised by pragmatism and aimed to meet the demands of a certain number of stakeholders in return for their political support. The State also tried to place people loyal to the government at the head of social organisations. In the realm of disability, the State had included the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons in the negotiations on public policies for disabled people since the end of the 1990s. Indeed, the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons represented disabled people in the National Committee of Disabled People and received sustainable public subsidies. However, this existing network of sustainable connections with the authorities had not been sufficient to obtain the constant cooperation of the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons. Indeed, since these regular negotiations had not met the association's demands, a number of Bolivian activists no longer trusted the government. This is why some of the Bolivian marchers tolerated the support of the main opposition party, the *Convergencia Nacional*.

One of the biggest differences between the political situations in Bolivia and Spain comes from the multiplicity and division of the Spanish political elites in power compared to the cohesion of the political elites in the Movement for Socialism in power in Bolivia. In Spain, the tension between the ruling parties had grown by the time the march started. On 9 October, ten days after the arrival of the Spanish marchers in Madrid, the President decided to dissolve Parliament. On 19 November 1933 new elections were held, which were won by the right wing parties, because the left wing parties stood as separate parties in an electoral

²⁵ Stanley Payne: Antecedentes y crisis de la democracia, in: Stanley Payne/Javier Tusell (eds.): La Guerra civil: Una nueva visión del conflicto que dividió España, Madrid 1996, pp. 17-120, 29.

²⁶ Pablo Stefanoni: La "indianización" del nacionalismo o la refundación permanente de Bolivia: Continuidades y rupturas en la (re)definición de la comunidad política, in: Gabriela Delamata (ed.): Movilizaciones sociales: ¿nuevas ciudadanías?: Reclamos, derechos, Estado en Argentina, Bolivia y Brasil, Buenos Aires 2009, pp. 31-43, 32.

²⁷ Heraldo de Aragón: Una nota aclaratoria: La marcha "sobre Madrid" de los inválidos aragoneses, 29 September 1933, p. 3.

²⁸ Letter from police officer Ortega to the chief of Calatayud's Police, 6 October 1932, in: Municipal Archives of Calatayud, Box 275.

²⁹ La Voz de Aragón: Impresión viajera: Los inválidos aragoneses que fueron a Madrid, 5 October 1933, p. 4.

³⁰ Pablo Stefanoni: La "indianización" del nacionalismo o la refundación permanente de Bolivia: Continuidades y rupturas en la (re)definición de la comunidad política, p. 40.

system that favoured coalitions. In Bolivia, the members of parliament in the Movement for Socialism formed a single block inside Congress. Among the opponents of the Movement for Socialism there was a majority of political forces claiming the independence of oil-rich regions such as Santa Cruz and Tarija.

This division of Spanish elites allowed the marchers to find temporary support in the ruling majority, while the unity of the Movement for Socialism prevented the Bolivian marchers from finding support among the elites in power in their country.

A Regular Call for People's Solidarity and a Test of Endurance

The Spanish march started on 17 September 1933 at Constitution Square in Zaragoza and arrived in Madrid on 26 or 27 September 1933. The Bolivians began their march on 15 November 2011 in the town of Trinidad (Department of Beni), then stopped off in various cities, including Cotoca, Cochabamba and Oruro. They arrived in La Paz city centre on 23 February 2012. The distance walked by the Spanish (324 kilometres) was considerably shorter than that walked by the Bolivians (1,520 kilometres). The Bolivian march gathered many more participants than the Spanish march (one hundred compared to eight participants). There were five men in the group leaving Zaragoza: in addition to Miguel Duaso Marcén, one was blind, one was armless, and others moved with crutches. Two more one-legged men (Felix Torcal and Pedro Marta) joined the march in Calatayud. Felix Torcal gave up along the way, and Pedro Mostajo, another disabled man, joined them in his stead. Thus, a group of seven people reached Madrid. The group starting from Trinidad was composed of 17 people, and dozens of others joined them throughout the march, showing that people were strongly drawn to the protest. This progressive swelling of the crowd can be explained by its duration, support of committees in a few cities and support of media personalities, in particular Jesuit priest Miguel Manzanera. More than 70 people, including a large number of women, joined the group during the last stages of the march. Between one half and two thirds of the participants were disabled. A large number of them were in wheelchairs. Such a march was made possible by tarmac roads that facilitated circulation in wheelchairs even when it rained, and help provided by the families of disabled persons. When they arrived in La Paz, dozens of new supporters joined them, and around 130 protesters reached the city centre.

Each time they stopped, the marchers called for solidarity from the local authorities and population for food and accommodations for all the marchers. Indeed, marchers cannot carry much luggage with them, and thus have to count on the kindness of local councils for accommodation and meals, unless they buy what they need locally. In many of his writings, Miguel Duaso Marcén tells of the very warm welcome they received from several local councils that gave them lodging and food.³¹ Because popular solidarity is unpredictable, they sometimes had to march further than planned, and some days they had to content themselves with bread and sardines. Locals regularly offered the Bolivian marchers rice, pasta, coffee and bread; but the marchers were also the victims of some dishonest municipalities that denied them the meals they had promised to give.

This call for local solidarity was not intended to portray them as recipients of local charity, but rather to help them overcome the practical difficulties of the journey and promote the movement in order to win more support. However, in practice they asked for a favour, since they depended on the arbitrary decisions of local authorities and people.

The Bolivian and Spanish marchers made their journeys carrying all their personal belongings in backpacks or pushing them along in wheelchairs. Unlike the Spanish marchers, the Bolivians benefited from vehicles used to carry heavy equipment (tents, spare parts for wheelchairs) since a truck followed them all the time. Following the example of many

³¹ La Voz de Aragón: La representación de los inválidos aragoneses prosigue su excursión, 23 September 1933, p. 7.

contemporary protest marches, the Bolivian marchers resorted to the convenience of cars to avoid carrying heavy and bulky equipment, normally a major constraint on marches.³²

The endurance of the Spanish and Bolivian marchers was put to the test, sometimes in the extreme. The long journeys demanded great and prolonged physical efforts, while at the same time they had little or unsuitable food. In both cases, they regularly suffered from bad weather conditions. The Spanish faced a hail storm on the afternoon of Wednesday 20 September, and the Bolivians regularly suffered from rain and cold in the mountains above 2,000 meters altitude. In these conditions, some marchers were in particularly deteriorating health. Most of the Spanish marchers suffered from hunger and physical pain, and one of them had badly bleeding armpits from the friction of his crutches.³³ In the Bolivian case, doctors or nurses were regularly present throughout the march to monitor the marchers' health. Despite this regular medical assistance, several people still suffered from sunstroke, bad food and the cold, and needed to abort their journey. A 55-year-old man died after leaving one of the protest actions.

The Bolivian marchers' willingness to spend so much time in this state of mobilisation and to cope with difficult circumstances (cold, hunger, pain) shows that this march was a fundamental issue: the recognition of their human dignity and the guarantee of a decent life.

Although similar factors facilitated the emergence of these two marches, there are notable differences. The Bolivian march took place after a long period of deep frustration (4 years of renewed hope and disappointment). This probably explains the time devoted and physical commitment of the Bolivian marchers. In contrast, the Spanish march took place several months after the first claims for disabled people's rights in the province of Zaragoza. The Spanish march was led by a single man whose economic resources and relations were limited compared to the Bolivian march. Moreover, the Spanish march was not covered by the media or by its players in a partisan manner, whereas the Bolivian march was marked by the significant support of the opposition party, the *Convergencia Nacional*. In both countries, the activists kept hoping that the governments, which called themselves progressive, would ultimately meet their demands.

The Transformation of Marches due to Technological, Political, Economic and Social Upheavals of the 20th Century

The main differences between the two protest marches are indicators of the political, technological, economic and social upheavals around the world in the 20th century: the emergence of intergovernmental organisations, the final swings towards liberal economic rationales, progress in the recording and broadcasting of images, the introduction of new types of communication via the internet, and a different relationship with the body.

Changes in the Normative Framework for Disabled People's Rights: Are International Organisations Guarantors of their Rights in 2012?

Distant in time and space, these two protest marches developed in two different national and international normative contexts as regards disabled persons. The idea of a right to employment in the civil service for all disabled people able to work, supported by Spanish activists, was an emergent claim in Europe during the 1930s. This idea had been promoted by several associations of disabled workers in some European countries following World War I (France, Germany and Italy). In these countries, the social achievements obtained by associations for disabled war veterans are publicly known. A high percentage of positions in

³² Michel Pigenet/Danielle Tartakowsky: *Les territoires des mouvements sociaux: Les marches aux XIXe et XXe siècles*, p. 5.

³³ Heraldo de Aragón: *Una marcha sobre Madrid*, 23 September 1933, p. 5.

the civil service and private companies were reserved for disabled war veterans. Associations of disabled workers and civilians were inspired by these social achievements to raise their own demands. During the interwar period, the League of Nations and the International Labour Office started to consider the issue of disabled workers' and disabled children's rights, but did not adopt a binding text affirming their right to vocational rehabilitation and employment.³⁴ In Spain, several medical rehabilitation specialists stood up for the rights of disabled civilians to have vocational rehabilitation, but they were reluctant to talk about employment quotas. César Madariaga, a worker at the *Instituto de Reeducación Profesional* argued against a legal quota as long as a climate of trust with employers had not been established.³⁵ Therefore, the Spanish marchers adopted a rather new idea in the national and international context.

In contrast, the Bolivian marchers took advantage of a more binding national and international normative context regarding disabled people's rights, but this context did not entirely legitimise their demand for a substantial cash allowance. Articles 70, 71 and 72 of the new Bolivian constitution adopted in 2009 guarantee the disabled the right to be protected by the State, receive free education and health care services and the right to work for a fair wage, but it does not specify the right to receive an allowance. To legitimise their request, the activists based their demand on previous legislative acts and the substantial allowance which blind people have received since 1967 (nearly 5,000 Bolivian pesos per person annually in 2012) due to their indigent circumstances³⁶. On several occasions they also mentioned the possibility of approaching the United Nations for help if a law in favour of an allowance was not passed. They seem to have recognised the United Nations as an organisation that would guarantee their rights. But was that the case?

One of the most recent international normative texts on public policies for the disabled is the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted by the United Nations on 13 December 2006. This convention requires each State to take measures to guarantee the economic, cultural and social rights of disabled people "to the maximum of its available resources."³⁷ The signatories therefore commit to strengthening social welfare for disabled people, developing rehabilitation services and providing them with affordable health services. As for a possible cash allowance, it compels States "to ensure access by persons with disabilities and their families living in situations of poverty to assistance from the State with disability-related expenses, including adequate training, counselling, financial assistance and respite care."³⁸ The obligation to provide a cash allowance is therefore limited. Indeed, an allowance is just one measure among a hundred others to be implemented, and its amount only covers the costs specifically related to the impairment with no reference to national minimum wages; additionally, this help is limited to "poor" disabled persons.

In their *World Report on Disability* (2011), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank insisted on the negative effects of disability allowances, which (according to

³⁴ Gildas Brégain: L'internationalisation imparfaite d'une modernité nord-atlantique: Essai d'histoire croisée des politiques publiques du handicap en Argentine, au Brésil et en Espagne (1956-1982), PhD thesis, Université de Rennes II, 2 June 2014, pp. 119-122.

³⁵ César Madariaga: La reeducación profesional, Madrid 1931, p. 408.

³⁶ Presidente Constitucional de la Republica : Decreto supremo n°8083, 28 de agosto de 1967.

³⁷ United Nations: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 4.2: General Obligation, published on 13 December 2006, available online at:

http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convention_accessible_pdf.pdf (accessed on 4 May 2016).

³⁸ United Nations: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 28.2.C: Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection, published on 13 December 2006, available online at:

http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convention_accessible_pdf.pdf (accessed on 4 May 2016).

them) dissuade the disabled from working.³⁹ In order to encourage all disabled people to work, these institutions recommended reducing these allowances (to be distinctly lower than wages), limiting them to the costs related to the impairment (without taking into account employment situations), or restraining their duration (short periods of unemployment, etc.), and limiting the number of recipients of these allowances as much as possible. At the same time, these institutions put into perspective the need for the State to develop public services to grant assistance to disabled people and foster the direct payment of cash allowances to disabled persons requiring permanent assistance so that they could select the support services they need and buy these services directly.⁴⁰ There is no doubt that these policies follow a neo-liberal ideology. Neo-liberalism is quite compatible with this light form of redistribution of wealth – cash benefits for excluded disabled persons – since this direct help “is a way to reintegrate excluded people into the economic game without disturbing its mechanisms.”⁴¹

The Bolivian government favoured the development of integrated rehabilitation services over disability allowances, which were seen as a great expense. The Minister of Economy and Public Finances, Luis Arce, argued that the General Treasury of the Nation did not have sufficient resources to guarantee the sustained payment of a disability allowance. To justify its refusal, the government stated that disabled people did not need an allowance but rather vocational rehabilitation that gave them access to employment.⁴² Other government members justified this position by pointing out that an allowance could be misused for personal benefit.

Contrary to this position, the Bolivian marchers asked the government to prioritise payment of an allowance over the development of integrated rehabilitation centres and to allocate 70 percent of resources of the national solidarity and equality fund to this aim. Deciding to do so, without any corresponding budget increase, would involve cutting the services offered by public integrated rehabilitation services and the impossibility of creating other more inclusive rehabilitation structures (such as rehabilitation departments in hospitals). We consider that this would lastingly fix disability issues in a liberal economic framework since public authorities would be less involved in reducing inequalities. By “reducing solidarity to a simple financial allowance,”⁴³ this policy therefore ceased to address the causes of inequalities.

The Impact of Technical and Technological Progress in the Capture and Transmission of Images of Protest Marches

It is useful to analyse the media coverage of each march, because the media can help convey social movements to new audiences and new participants and can directly influence authorities' attitudes to social movements. Media coverage of the 2011 march was definitely different from the coverage of the 1933 march, particularly because of technical progress in the field of photography in the second half of the 20th century. André Gunthert has already analysed the post-1990s transition to digital photography, which became a means of conversation when posted on social networks (Facebook, etc.).⁴⁴

³⁹ World Health Organization/World Bank (eds.): *World Report on Disability* (French version: *Rapport mondial sur le handicap*), Geneva 2011/2012, p. 278.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

⁴¹ Pierre Chambat: *Service public et néolibéralisme*, in: *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 45:3 (1990), pp. 615-647, 639.

⁴² *La Patria*: *Segun el gobierno, discapacitados no requieren bono sino rehabilitación*, 17 December 2011, available online at: <http://lapatriaenlinea.com/?nota=92349> (accessed on 3 April 2014).

⁴³ Pierre Chambat: *Service public et néolibéralisme*, p. 639.

⁴⁴ André Gunthert: *L'image conversationnelle: Les nouveaux usages de la photographie numérique*, in: *Études photographiques* 31 (2014), available online at: <https://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/3387> (accessed on 4 May 2016).

We found only four reproductions of black and white photographs of the 1933 march, published in the newspapers *La Voz de Aragón*, *El Bien publico* and *Luz*. They are group photographs taken by professional journalists at the departure in Zaragoza and the arrival in Madrid. The marchers posed for the photographer on three of these photographs, lined up in front of the crowd and with their banner reading “Zaragoza’s pro-invalid commission.” These photographs served different purposes: they informed readers of the existence of the march, they introduced all the players to the newspapers’ readers (showing obvious signs of impairment, particularly crutches) and they captured the moment in a souvenir image. It therefore has testimonial value.



Copy of a photograph taken on 17 September 1933 by Abelardo de la Barrera for the departure of the march and published in *La Voz de Aragón*.⁴⁵

Media representations of the 2011-2012 march were much more diverse, coloured, and appeared in a variety of media. Thanks to the introduction of digital photography at the end of the 20th century and its gradual spread, the players themselves were able to take numerous photographs and film the march with cameras or smartphones. They were able to show their own representation of the event.

In general, the images of the 2012 march can be sorted into two groups: those representing the whole group walking in a single line on the edge of tarmac roads (sometimes with the Bolivian flag in order to assert their citizenship), and those showing them taking part in radical and sometimes violent actions in a few cities (Santa Cruz, La Paz). The latter are more common and were filmed more often. They often show confrontations between the police and the demonstrators in a dichotomous way (disabled person isolated or weakened, half naked, surrounded by or opposing security forces that are lined up). These images have an activist purpose; they aim at condemning police violence and the extreme deprivation of disabled people. They emphasise the disabled persons’ anger and despair. These images, created and disseminated as propaganda, are completely different from the images of the 1933 march that were created to inform and that do not show any negative emotions.

Unlike the 1933 march, which was barely covered by the media, and covered with delayed reporting in the press and on the radio, the Bolivian march was broadcast through multiple media (press, radio, television) simultaneously. The 2011-2012 march enjoyed regular media coverage and tracking in the morning programme *Hola País* on the *Paceña de Television* channel, which broadcast live interviews with the leaders of the march. Furthermore, Bolivian citizens and particularly the marchers themselves published news on their blogs, social

⁴⁵ *La Voz de Aragón*: En demanda de apoyo: Una comisión pro invalidos marcha a pie y sin recursos a Madrid, 19 September 1933, p. 16.

networks (Facebook⁴⁶, Twitter), or video sharing sites (YouTube, Dailymotion). Some Internet publications contributed to the building of a collective memory of the Bolivian march by turning the marchers into heroes and recounting the number of kilometres travelled, the duration of the march and the difficulty of the journey. However, if the various TV appearances helped reach a wide audience, the various web publications did not reach many people. The videos have generally been watched less than five hundred times.

The Political Use of Half-Naked and Suffering Bodies in the 2011-2012 Protest March

During the march, disabled people strategically removed their clothing on several occasions (14 December, 2 February and 23 February) to grab the media's attention and to sway public opinion in their favour. When they arrived in the town of Santa Cruz on 14 December, several marchers stripped half naked, got out of their wheelchairs, threw themselves to the ground and crawled for half an hour to the main square in Santa Cruz while shouting "*bono o muerte*" (allowance or death).



Copy of a photograph published in *Bolivia Te Vemos*, showing half-naked marchers crawling in the Santa Cruz city centre on 14 December 2011.⁴⁷

By highlighting the fragility of their bodies and their nudity, they offered the media sensational photographs while making the public feel sorry for them. Indeed, some marchers did not hesitate to use their bodies as tools of propaganda and use citizens' emotions as a political tool. Their bodies became "a significant way to show the qualities of the group, or the qualities they want to be credited with."⁴⁸ This media strategy worked perfectly, since a large number of media broadcast images of this action, putting considerable political pressure on members of the government, who were seen as insensitive to the suffering of disabled people.

This representation of disabled people as miserable is all the more surprising given that the Bolivian marchers were campaigning for their recognition as the subjects of rights and they gave an ethical dimension to their march by naming it the "integration caravan". The Bolivian march portrayed a highly ambivalent image of disabled people, unlike the Spanish march, which simply presented disabled people as the subject of rights.

⁴⁶ The Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons' Facebook page is dedicated to the march and named *Caravana en silla de ruedas Bolivia*; it is available online at: <https://www.facebook.com/boliviacobopdi?fref=ts> (accessed on 4 May 2016).

⁴⁷ *Discapacitados Ilegan a Santa Cruz*, published on Boliviav.net, 14 December 2011, available online at www.boliviav.net/2011/12/discapacitados-ilegan-santa-cruz.html (accessed on 8 May 2014).

⁴⁸ Emmanuel Soutrenon: *Le corps manifestant: La manifestation entre expression et représentation*, in: *Sociétés Contemporaines* 31:3 (1998), pp. 37-58, p. 42.

The economic, social and technological transformations of the 20th century provided the Bolivian marchers with new media impact and strategic possibilities to legitimise their cause: they maintained contact with the press and television to broadcast daily information on the march. They took advantage of the media's appetite for sensational images and offered them a show of half-naked crawling individuals. Finally, they threatened to appeal to the United Nations, presenting the UN as the guarantor of their rights.

The media impact of the 1933 march did not extend beyond the national level, whereas the impact of the 2012 march has definitely been transnational. Informed by the media, some international players did not hesitate to join in the public debate. The Vice-President of Ecuador, Lenin Moreno, himself disabled, sent a letter to Evo Morales to condemn the "violent repression of his disabled Bolivian brothers"⁴⁹ and offered to act as a mediator to solve the conflict. His proposal was rejected by the Bolivian Vice-Minister for the coordination of social movements.

Political Impact of the Marches

The political impact of the Bolivian march was of a different nature and on a greater scale than that of the Spanish march. This was primarily due to the major national media coverage and the participation of a great number of marchers, but other factors contributed to it: the successful inclusion of the Bolivian march in a historical tradition of great protest marches organised against the government, and the use of anger and violence.

Fitting Each March into a Different Tradition of Protest Marches

In their speeches, the activists hardly ever connected their marches to other past actions, whether on the national or international scale. However, these marches correspond to different national historical traditions. Indeed, some activists had used these means of action before and defined their forms and implementation.⁵⁰ In Spain, during the first decades of the 20th century, marches were mainly organised by workers to defend their rights. The 1930s were a period of radicalism, during which numerous protest marches were carried out by unemployed workers in many countries such as France and the United States.⁵¹

In Bolivia, protest marches were mainly organised during the 1990s and 2000s by natives, who travelled on several occasions from Santa Cruz to La Paz and from Trinidad to La Paz to campaign for the respect of indigenous territories.⁵² The Bolivian disabled activists drew their inspiration from these marches. They wanted to end their demonstration at Murillo Square, where the Quemado presidential palace is located "as the natives of the Isiboro Sécure National Park and Indigenous Territory and the coca leaf growers of Conisur had done before."⁵³

Organising these protest marches implied, for the disabled people involved, that they "reinvent this kind of action" with the resources they had at their disposal.⁵⁴ Even if the

⁴⁹ Televista: Continúan Protestas de discapacitados en Bolivia, 24 February 2012, available online at: <http://noticierostelevisa.esmas.com/internacional/408542/continuan-protestas-discapacitados-bolivia> (accessed on 4 May 2016).

⁵⁰ Michel Offerlé: Retour critique sur les répertoires de l'action collective (XVIIIe-XXIe siècles), in: *Politix* 81:1 (2008), pp. 181-202, p. 196.

⁵¹ Michel Pigenet/Danielle Tartakowsky: Les marches en France aux XIXe et XXe siècles: récurrence et métamorphose d'une démonstration collective, in: *Le Mouvement Social* 202:1 (2003), pp. 69-94, p. 85.

⁵² Alvaro Garcia Linera (ed.): *Sociología de los movimientos sociales en Bolivia: Estructuras de movilización, repertorios culturales y acción política*, La Paz 2010, p. 152.

⁵³ Boldpress: Discapacitados prohibidos de marchar en plaza Murillo, published online on 24 February 2012, available online at: <http://www.bolpress.com/art.php?Cod=2012022402> (Accessed on 4 May 2016).

⁵⁴ Etienne Penissat: Les occupations de locaux dans les années 1960-1970: processus sociohistoriques de "réinvention" d'un mode d'action, in: *Genèses* 59:2 (2005), p. 88.

protest marches mentioned seem similar, they did not hold the same meaning for the marchers since they fit into two different structural patterns.

The journey was much more important to the Bolivian marchers than to the Spanish marchers, whose main concern was to march *sobre* (on) Madrid.⁵⁵ Moreover, even though the Spanish marchers were appropriating a type of action generally organised by workers' organisations, they did not manage to attract the same media coverage as workers' marches had because of the small number of participants. Unlike the Bolivian march, the national media did not see their march as highly symbolic. By contrast, travelling from Trinidad to La Paz, the Bolivian march successfully fit into a historical tradition of great protest marches and was identified as a great struggle against the government, even by the participants themselves.

Anger, Violence and the Political Exploitation of the March

Before they arrived in La Paz, the marchers informed the authorities that they would take more radical action if President Evo Morales refused to meet them. On Thursday 23 February, they wanted to reach Murillo Square where the presidential building is located, as a large number of protest marches had done before. Several hundreds of police officers were on site with orders to prevent access to the square. After half an hour of unsuccessful negotiations with the police commander, the marchers tried to reach Murillo Square by pushing the police officers aside but the latter managed to hold them back thanks to a second line of policemen who were also blocking access. As they were unable to reach Murillo Square, anger grew rapidly among the activists, who shouted slogans against the government and the police. Some activists used sticks, crutches or pieces of wheelchairs to try to break through the police roadblock. The police officers dealt with this violence by responding with shield blows and firing tear gas. They arrested four non-disabled people for violent acts. These violent events hit the headlines in the press and on national television. Some right-conservative and neo-liberal (*Convergencia Nacional*) members of parliament immediately used these acts of police violence to lament the government's irresponsibility and indifference.⁵⁶ Several leaders of the march from the Santa Cruz region (Jaime Estivariz, Mario Torrico, Camilo Bianchi) used the same critical remarks as the neoliberal right wing party against the president.

Although they attempted to delegitimize the government, these leaders wanted to secure an appointment with members of the government. That's why they tried thereafter to calm things down by promoting more peaceful types of action (hunger strikes, sit-ins, etc.).

The Evo Morales' Government's Strategy to Delegitimise their Demands

The government's defensive strategy was educational and also tried to make the protesters' demands seem illegitimate. Indeed, ministers tried to deal with the matter by taking an educational approach explaining why it would be impossible to increase their financial contribution. After the activists passed through the town of Santa Cruz on 15 December 2011, President Evo Morales stated that it was economically "impossible" to give an allowance to disabled people, because it would imply considerable costs if allowances were to be extended to all disabled people (300 million pesos).⁵⁷ He also said that the distribution of allowances had never been part of the Movement for Socialism's programme. Furthermore, members of the government reiterated the ambiguity of the activist's demands due to the variability of the amount (often 3,000 then 5,000 pesos) and the types of allowance requested (at first an

⁵⁵ Heraldo de Aragón: *Marcha sobre Madrid*, 16 September 1933, p. 1.

⁵⁶ Boldpress: *Discapacitados prohibidos de marchar en plaza Murillo*, published online on 24 February 2012, available online at: <http://www.bolpress.com/art.php?Cod=2012022402> (Accessed on 4 May 2016).

⁵⁷ La Patria: *Presidente dice que es "imposible" dar el bono a los discapacitados*, 16 December 2011, available online at: <http://lapatriaenlinea.com/?nota=92249> (accessed on 4 May 2016).

incapacity allowance and by the end of January a contributory allowance)⁵⁸. Then the government insisted on the need to respect the agreements they had signed with the leaders of the walk on 21 January and 5 February 2012. In this agreement, the government agreed to give a specific subsidy of 1,000 bolivianos to seriously disabled people and carry out a study on the distribution of an annual pension or a contributory revenue of 1,000 pesos in coming years.⁵⁹

After these violent events, several members of government said that the activists were being used by right wing parties, pro-independence groups or protesters, the *Movimiento sin Miedo* (Movement without Fear). The Transports Minister of Bolivia, Amanda Davila, accused the march of being infiltrated by violent individuals sent by political groups opposed to the government.⁶⁰ The Minister showed pictures proving that the police detected several persons faking their disabilities who had at some point set their crutches aside and donned masks to attack police officers.

By portraying the protesters' demands as illegitimate, members of the government masked the fact that the mobilised people were indeed living in difficult circumstances because a number of vital needs for the families of the disabled were not covered by public services.

The Partial Political Success of the Marches

In both cases, one of the objectives of the marches was to open a dialogue with the government authorities and members of parliament. The leaders of the two marches succeed in achieving political negotiations with political and administrative high ranking officials. These negotiations lead to the adoption of new legal procedures, but this only partially met the activists' demands.

The first day of their arrival in Madrid, the marchers from Aragon meet with Madrid's mayor, Senor Rico, and many members of parliament.⁶¹ Thanks to support from members of parliament from Aragon, other meetings were planned the following day with the president of the province of Madrid and the head of the government,⁶² but there is no evidence as to whether or not the meeting with the head of government actually took place. These political officers promised to support the disabled, but the dissolution of the parliament a few days later killed the hope of an employment law. Finally, on 17 October, the Council of Ministers approved a decree giving priority to disabled people rehabilitated within the National Institute for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons to occupy vacant posts as workshop assistants, clerks and low-ranking positions in training schools. However, the main demand voiced by marchers in Spain – for instance the passing of the bill on the employment of disabled persons and its application to all disabled people – was still not met. The disabled from Aragon threatened to carry out a much larger march on the capital on 15 January 1934,⁶³ but this march never materialised.

In the Bolivian case, the government refused to negotiate with the marchers for several weeks. From mid-December 2011 on, the political situation became very tense after the staging of the half-naked demonstrators in the streets of Santa Cruz's city centre. The government then decided to open negotiations with the Secretary General of the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons, Roberto Nacho, who did not actually participate in the

⁵⁸ The contributory allowance is given as a counterpart of some contribution and is part of an insurance system. On the contrary, the incapacity allowance is given without any contribution and is part of a solidarity system.

⁵⁹ See part III. D. regarding the content of the two agreements.

⁶⁰ El País: Gobierno denuncia existencia de infiltrados en marcha de discapacitados, published online on 24 February 2012, available online at: <http://www.bolivia.com/noticias/autonoticias/DetalleNoticia46679.asp> (accessed on 4 May 2016).

⁶¹ La Voz de Aragón: Impresión viajera, 5 October 1933, p. 4.

⁶² Heraldo de Aragón: Un viaje penoso, 28 September 1933, p. 8.

⁶³ La Luz: Se proyecta una marcha de 44000 inválidos sobre Madrid, 18 October 1933, p. 8.

march. Robert Nacho and the Minister of the Executive Offices signed an agreement on 21 December in which the government promised to create a technical commission rapidly with representatives of the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons in order to reach a consensus on the bill on preferential treatment, while Roberto Nacho promised to demobilise the activists of the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons. The majority of the leaders of the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons ratified this agreement. Those of its leaders who took part in the march rejected it because they had not been consulted regarding its content and the agreement did not settle the amount of the allowance.⁶⁴

In mid-January, faced with an increase in protests, the government decided to negotiate with the people protesting. The two parties signed an agreement on 21 January at Quillacollo: disabled activists agreed to temporarily suspend their march and the government promised to ratify the law before 20 February and give an allowance (in the amount of 3,000 pesos in 2013) to the neediest people following the completion of a study. Ten days later, on 31 January, the marchers felt that the government was not respecting the agenda for the adoption of the law and decide to take up the march to La Paz again. Under renewed pressure, the Council of Ministers hurriedly decided to concede by means of a decree (no. 1133): a temporary benefit of 1,000 pesos for people with disabilities in urgent situations was granted in the hopes of putting an end to the march. But the disabled marchers' leaders felt that the amount of the benefit was insufficient and that it was an act of charity rather than disability support. The two parties continued to negotiate and a new agreement was signed by the government and the leaders of the march (Jaime Estivariz, Carlos Mariaca, Ely Pedriel) on 5 February. This agreement planned to allocate 50 percent of the Solidarity Fund's budget to pay an annual allowance to disabled people, extend the annual allowance of 1,000 pesos to seriously disabled persons (that is 13,000 persons), and study an annual or contributory allowance of 1,000 pesos (or 3,000 pesos depending on the sources) in the coming years.⁶⁵ The disabled participants in the march quickly made known their dissatisfaction with the insufficient amount and type of allowance provided (non-contributory). This pushed the leaders of the Bolivian Confederation of Disabled Persons to renege on the signed agreement. They said that the march must continue to La Paz in order to obtain the payment of a contributory allowance in a decent amount (meaning 5,000 pesos).

Finally, after the conflicts in La Paz, the disabled marchers' leaders re-began negotiations with members of parliament who belong to the Movement for Socialism, but these were unsuccessful. The parliamentary assemblies approved a general law on people with disabilities (law no. 223) that was immediately ratified by Evo Morales on 2 March 2012.⁶⁶ This law makes provision for preferential treatment of disabled people in different areas (education, health, rehabilitation, access to credit, etc.) and the payment of an annual allowance set by regulation. The absence of a specific sum stated for the allowance upset the marchers who had joined the "caravan". They felt that this law was approved without their consent. Finally, the government managed to partially pacify them by promising that they would be consulted on the development of the regulations specified in the law. After this promise, the marchers stopped their protest.

⁶⁴ Los Tiempos: Discapacitados rechazan acuerdo con Gobierno, 21 December 2011, available online at: http://www.lostiempos.com/diario/actualidad/politica/20111221/discapacitados-rechazan-acuerdo-con-gobierno_154163_320801.html (accessed on 6 October 2014).

⁶⁵ Óscar Ordóñez: El gobierno reitera que cumplió demanda de discapacitados, in: La Razón, 27 February 2012, available online at: http://www.la-razon.com/sociedad/Gobierno-reitera-cumplio-demandas-discapacitados_0_1567643250.html (accessed on 4 May 2016).

⁶⁶ Asamblea legislativa plurinacional de Bolivia: Ley 223: Ley general para personas con discapacidad, 2 March 2012.

Conclusion

In both countries, disabled activists had a full spectrum of potential actions but they chose to organise protest marches in order to offer a stage for their demand for their rights and force the government to fulfil their requests. The Bolivian march differed from the Spanish march in many ways: its duration, its extent, its public, its transnational dimension, the violence used and experienced during the march, the spectacular staging of the demonstration including half-naked and injured bodies, the ambivalent image of disabled persons presented to the media (both subjects of rights and objects of pity), daily media coverage, and the variety of communication media involved as well as the rapid development of a written and visual memory of the march. The Bolivian march was also part of a historical tradition of strong protest marches against the government, giving a larger symbolic dimension to their approach than the Spanish march. All these elements helped put strong pressure on the government and the Movement for Socialism to cast doubt on their claim that they represent social movements. The government therefore had no choice but to quickly ratify the law on preferential treatment for disabled people in order to quell the debate. However, they only agreed to pay an annual allowance of 1,000 Bolivian pesos. Over the long run, this has angered some of the disabled activists who decided to organise new marches in February 2013, in May 2014 and in March 2016 to increase the amount of the allowance (to 3,000 pesos or 5,000 pesos annually, and after to 500 pesos monthly).

Despite the significant differences between the Spanish and Bolivian social movements, it does not seem appropriate to view the Spanish march as an “old” social movement and the Bolivian march as a “new” one because they both imperfectly match pre-established models. The Spanish march was organised by an association of disabled persons who were not directly connected to a trade union or political party, and the Bolivian march, like the Spanish march, had a materialistic aim (for employment, wages and social issues). While we can clearly see changes connected to the transformation of societies over the course of the 20th century in the two social movements led by persons with disabilities, there are also elements of discontinuity in this development (such as the permanent materialistic goals, the predominant role of men and the use of the same type of action, protest marches) that invalidate the concept of a radical and linear transformation of social movements over the 20th century on an international scale.

To quote :

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⁶⁷I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers of the periodical for their suggestions and Eve Gardien for her relevant comments that have enabled me to greatly improve the first draft of this article.