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PARTIES AND
POLITICAL CHANGE
IN BOLIVIA
1880-1952

BY

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PREFACE

Bolivia's political and institutional history conforms in a large degree to the pattern of nineteenth- and twentieth-century political development in Latin America. After a period of severe independence wars, Bolivia went through its age of civil strife and *caudillo* rule. By the latter decades of the nineteenth century it developed its own variant of the liberal-conservative political party system with its characteristic limited political participation and upper class rule. Like the other states of the continent it experienced an influx of foreign political ideologies, beginning in the nineteenth century with European liberalism and positivism, followed by anarchism, fascism and various forms of Marxism in the twentieth. Although these ideologies were expressed in Bolivian idioms and adapted to local needs, the dominant ideas were imported. Even its vital pro-Indian ideology of *indigenismo* acquired a large part of its vocabulary from non-national authors.

Both this imported thought and the political experiences which it shared with many other states of Latin America appeared in Bolivia much later than elsewhere. Bolivia's political growth was often a generation or two behind similar developments in the more advanced states of the continent and its European originated ideologies frequently arrived after being filtered through Chilean or Argentine experience.

But this time lag was dramatically overcome in the middle decades of the twentieth century. In the revolution of April 1952 Bolivia experienced a total breakdown of its traditional political structure and underwent a profound social revolution far in advance of anything which had occurred in any other state in South America. This revolution destroyed a land-tenure and rural labour system that originated in colonial times and nationalized the dominant Bolivian export industry. It saw the adoption of a revolutionary ideology and the effective introduction of the Indian masses into national political life on a scale hitherto unknown except for the Mexican experience.

That such a revolution occurred at all raises of course an important question, but that it occurred in backward Bolivia is

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even more of a challenge to analysis. Bolivia exhibited the same patterns of exploitation of the masses, harsh inequalities of wealth, feudal agrarian structure and organized radical opposition, as almost all the other republics of the continent. In fact, because of its extreme retardation even by Latin American standards, rapid industrialization and urbanization caused less disruptive tension than in most of the republics. What then brought revolution to this most traditional and backward of states? What was the 'accelerating factor', or catalyst, which set in motion one of the very few social revolutionary processes that Latin America has experienced?

To almost all Bolivians, the key to the understanding of the revolutionary process lies in the disastrous results of the Chaco War of 1932-5. Though all agree that this event is the primary catalyst for the 1952 revolution, few have attempted to present a careful and documented evaluation of its impact, and fewer still have attempted to determine just what mechanisms were set in motion by the bitter defeat at the hands of Paraguay.

While most commentators have assumed that the Chaco War created social discontent and economic dislocation, a careful examination of the post-war period reveals neither of these effects. The Indian peasant masses were easily reabsorbed into the feudal land system after the conflict, and the urban proletariat felt no unusual adverse effects or bitter hostility toward the system. As for the popularly accepted thesis of economic dislocation, this too is a myth. The national economy during and immediately after the war showed surprising resilience, and the immediate post-war years brought full employment, constantly rising imports and exports in a favourable balance of trade, and at first only moderate inflation caused by these booming economic conditions. The impact of the war must rather be seen in terms of political dislocations and basic changes in the political structure of national leadership and ideology.

The aim of this book is to describe the origins and development of the Bolivian political system as it evolved into a stable two-party régime, and to analyse the causes which led to the mutation of this system and the rise of class politics and social revolutionary movements in the third and fourth decades of this

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century. Finally I have attempted to show how these basic changes had led by the 1940s to such a fracturing of the traditional system, that social revolution was made almost inevitable.

The field research for this study was initially undertaken on a grant from the Henry L. and Grace Doherty Foundation which enabled me to spend a year in Bolivia from December 1960 to December 1961. Further assistance in the form of a Fulbright Travel grant and aid from the Social Science Division of the University of Chicago allowed me to return to Bolivia in 1963 to expand my earlier work, and a final stay in August 1966, was sponsored partly by a Ford Foundation grant.

As in any such research into a foreign culture, I was deeply dependent on others for guidance and support. I wish especially to thank Professor Bernardo Blanco-González, formerly of the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, and now at the University of Chicago, who was an indispensable friend and mentor throughout all stages of this work. Others who freely aided me with their knowledge were Señor Guillermo Lora of La Paz, Professor Charles Arnade of the University of South Florida, and Professor James Malloy of Pittsburgh. I am especially indebted to Señor Lora for the use of his excellent clipping and manuscript collection and for permission to use many of his own studies on political and labour history which were still in manuscript form. From the several directors and staff of the Biblioteca Municipal Mariscal Andrés Santa Cruz of La Paz I have received only the most courteous assistance and aid in working through their excellent newspaper collection, for which I am deeply grateful. I would also like to thank the several scholars and friends who criticized the work at its various stages, among whom were Professors Robert J. Alexander, Walter Johnson, Stanley M. Elkins, Richard Wortman, Richard Schaedel, and Dr Gunnar Mendoza, of the Archivo Nacional of Bolivia. The journals *The Americas*, *Inter-American Economic Affairs* and the *Hispanic American Historical Review* have kindly permitted me to use articles of mine which have recently appeared.

Finally, of course, my wife in this, as in all my work, has been my constant assistant, editor and crucial supporter.

H.S.K.

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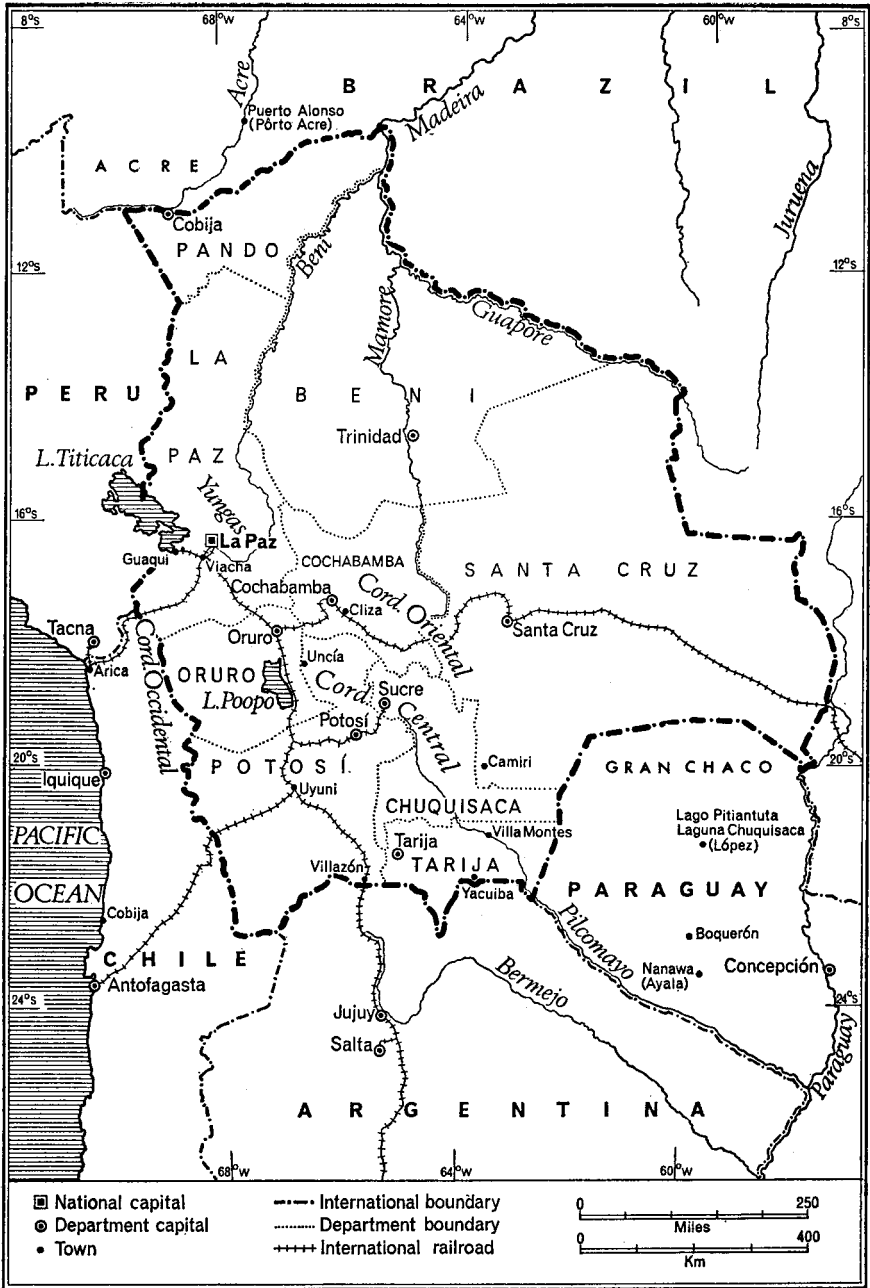
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ABBREVIATIONS

AEP	Asociación de Ex-Prisioneros
ANDES	Asociación Nacional de Ex-Combatientes Socialistas
ANPOS	Asociación Nacional Permanente de Organizaciones Sindicales
ASBG	Acción Socialista Beta Gama
CEPAL	Comisión Económica para América Latina
COB	Confederación Obrera Boliviana
COMIBOL	Corporación Minera de Bolivia
CSB	Confederación Socialista Boliviana
CSL	Confederación Sindical Latino Americana
CSR	Célula Socialista Revolucionaria
CSTB	Confederación Sindical de Trabajadores de Bolivia
CTB	Confederación de Trabajadores de Bolivia
EMG	Estado Mayor General
FDA	Frente Democrático Antifascista
FIB	Frente de Izquierda Boliviana
FOI	Federación Obrera Internacional
FOL	Federación Obrera Local
FOT	Federación Obrera del Trabajo
FSB	Falange Socialista Boliviana
FSTMB	Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Mineros de Bolivia
FUB	Federación Universitaria Boliviana
FUS	Frente Único Socialista
LEC	Legión de Ex-Combatientes
MNR	Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario
MNRA	Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario Auténtico
PCB	Partido Comunista de Bolivia
PIR	Partido de la Izquierda Revolucionaria
POR	Partido Obrero Revolucionario
POS	Partido Obrero Socialista
PRS	Partido Republicano Socialista
PSE	Partido Socialista de Estado
PSI	Partido Socialista Independiente
PSOB	Partido Socialista Obrero Boliviano
PSR	Partido Socialista Revolucionario
PSU	Partido Socialista Unificado
PURS	Partido de la Unión Republicana Socialista
RADEPA	Razón de Patria
YPFB	Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos

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