

SOCIAL MOBILITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: THE VITAL PARAMETERS OF THE BOLIVIAN REVOLUTION

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In 1952, Bolivia experienced the most thorough-going social revolution in Latin America since the Mexican upheaval early in this century. In the twelve years which have followed, the Andean republic has made remarkable progress in breaking down centuries-old societal gaps and forging an integrated nation. The *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (MNR), which inspired the revolution and which has retained firm political leadership of the nation, has played a vital role in politically activating the traditional Indian segment of the population. Prior to 1952, there had been very little communication between this indigenous majority and the Westernized minority; this "vertical" cleavage was one major barrier to the political socialization¹ of Bolivia. On a "horizontal" plane, the process was further complicated by cleavages among the various Indian groups² and, predominantly along regional lines, among the relatively homogeneous whites.

Economic development and increased opportunity for social mobility are the most promising processes available for successful bridging of these gaps. The revolution of 1952 made achievement of these goals a realistic possibility, and itself produced a breaking-away from traditional settings, habits, and commitments — the first step in the process of social mobilization. The second step, the induction of the population into relatively stable new patterns,³ is the painful process through which Bolivia is now feeling its way.

¹ Political socialization is defined as "induction into the political culture," resulting in a set of attitudes toward the political system, its roles and actors. "It includes knowledge of, values affecting, and feelings toward the inputs of demands and claims into the system, and its authoritative outputs." Gabriel A. Almond and James S. Coleman, ed., *The Politics of the Developing Areas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 27-8.

² Primarily the Quechua and Aymara, descendants of the Incas who have traditionally populated the *altiplano*, and the numerous smaller ethnic groups of the eastern lowlands.

³ Karl Deutsch, "Social Mobilization and Political Development," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. LV, No. 3 (Sept., 1961), p. 494.

Social Mobility: From the Chaco War to Acculturation

The first inroads into the rigid traditional social structuring of Bolivia resulted from the Chaco War, an otherwise disastrous undertaking for the Republic. Previously, mobility was possible only through the military, through acquisition of wealth or formal education, or through politics, all of which were open only to a very few individuals outside the urban European minority. For the first time, significant new ideas were brought to the Indian segment of the population. Reliant on them to man the front lines, white officers used propaganda to stir the Indians to maximum effort, preaching the equality of their status and attempting to convey the idea that they, too, had a vital take in the outcome of the conflict. As a result, the Indian began to view more liberally his prospective role in the national society. Coupled with these ideas was an increased sense of participation and, also for the first time, travel to unfamiliar parts of Bolivia and thus the beginning of a new national awareness. The Army and government, mainstays of the old régime, were discredited as the war came to its inglorious end. The economy had been severely disrupted, new ideas had been spread among the rural peasants and the miners, the caste system had been seriously undermined, and discontent among the intelligentsia — who were to provide the ideological bases of the revolutionary political parties — was sowed.⁴ Social consciousness, clearly a prerequisite for social mobility, and an aroused nationalism, often the vehicle for such change, were fomented in the minds of some middle- and upper-class youths.

As Professor Deutsch points out, the key to social mobilization is the shift of emphasis, from parochialism by the traditional sector and from internationalism by the élites, to preoccupation with a supra-local but less than world-wide unit.⁵ In modern time, this unit is the national state. As already mentioned, both shifts occurred in Bolivia as a result of the Chaco War. The traditionalist Indians, of whom roughly 100,000 participated directly, saw activities outside their own village or plot of land which could concern them; and some segments of the politically-dominant white groups, having seen the ineffectiveness of the *status quo* starkly revealed, became increasingly interested in a new order for Bolivia.

Social unrest found only limited access to the political arena before the 1952 revolution, although the historical equilibrium, dependent upon the servitude of the Indian, had been disturbed. Liberal governments after 1936 sought to pacify this unrest by passing new laws more favor-

⁴ Robert J. Alexander, *The Bolivian National Revolution* (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1959), p. 22.

⁵ Deutsch, *op. cit.*, p. 500.

able to the Indian, but tradition-bound governments neglected them. The administration of Major Gualberto Villarroel, in which the MNR was influential in Bolivia for the first time, was the most amenable to these goals, but the reactionary régimes of Enrique Hertzog and Marmerto Urriolagoitia, during the so-called "six-years" from 1946 to 1952, were dominated by traditional interests.

The 1952 revolution, however, virtually wiped out the upper class of traditional Bolivian society. Expropriation razed the economic props of the aristocracy, its lands and mines. Inflation, already serious, accelerated and wiped out much accumulated wealth. The political climate resulting from accession to power by the MNR prompted many professional and managerial people to leave Bolivia. The economic results of the revolution, as could be expected, were exceedingly bad. But seen from the social viewpoint, achievement of status became possible; ascription was no longer the exclusive means to acquire position in Bolivia. Richard Patch reasons that the *latifundistas* were the most significant single element blocking racial identity, and that their elimination strikingly increased the potential for homogeneity in the rural areas.⁶

No important middle class had ever developed in Bolivia. The businessmen, manufacturers, and professional people who stayed there after the revolution were also severely hurt by the economic decline, and, in any case, were not quantitatively powerful enough to effect the new processes in any important way.

The result of the new open society in Bolivia has been a development unique in the Indian nationals of Latin America. True acculturation, probably the most effective form of political socialization, is taking place.⁷ The traditional pattern of social mobility, where it has existed at all in the Andean countries, has found the Indian leaving home to move to the city. There he has acquired *mestizo* habits and status symbols and become part of a despised *cholo* urban minority. In the cities, one culture is slowly assimilated into another. But if the Indian returns to his original home, he abandons *mestizo* patterns and resumes the traditional life.⁸

In Bolivia, however, a true amalgamation of cultures is taking place. Perhaps even more significantly, this amalgamation is occurring grad-

⁶ Richard W. Patch, "Bolivia: The Seventh Year," *American Universities Field Staff Reports Service: West Coast South America Series*, Vol. VI, No. 1 (Feb., 1959), p. 18.

⁷ Lucian Pye, "The Non-Western Political Process," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Aug., 1958), p. 469, refers to acculturation as the alternative to ascription in such a context.

⁸ Patch, "A Note on Peru and Bolivia," *AUFSRS: WCSAS*, Vol. VI, No. 6 (July, 1959) p. 25.

ually; there is no sharp, painful, transition. The group, rather than the individual, is the locus of change. In the typical case, previously outlined, the new social mobility of the individual has no effect upon his community. Individual Indians in Bolivia are not behaving as conventional acculturation theory would expect, but whole communities are. A true mixture of Spanish and Indian traits is developing, to the extent that *mestizos* may even be found speaking Quechua.⁹ No high prestige is placed on mestizo traits as a whole by the *campesinos*; *mestizo* characteristics are not adopted simply through admiration or desire to emulate. The *campesino* takes on *mestizo* traits when it is convenient, or necessary, for external reasons. The old patterns remain alternatives, and function when these external factors are not operative. Cultural traits thus exist side by side, and simple social mobility from one status to a desired different status is rejected.

A rough survey taken by Richard Patch as early as 1955 indicated the beginnings of this process, with respect to the speaking of Spanish, school attendance, civil marriage, sleeping on beds rather than on the ground, the use of new medicines, and travel into urban areas.¹⁰ He also found that the process was not necessarily cumulative; the acquired *mestizo* traits may not persist in succeeding generations. If there were a high degree of uncertainty concerning the cumulation of the process, its value could legitimately be questioned. His finding, however, is inconclusive: the age of the "children" concerned is not stated. If they are very young, it is probable that the external factors mentioned above have not become important to them; if they are older, it is possible that the anxiety of changing identity forces a reaction and induces acceptance of traditional, "safe" patterns. The reaction may recede as the youth matures and finds personal participation in the acculturation process useful. In learning Spanish, "retrogression" is understandable: previously, a knowledge of the language was essential for upward mobility whereas now it is not a *sine qua non*.

The results of this process are highly favorable to the development of a politically-socialized society in Bolivia. New ideas have been accepted: the accumulation of wealth is now considered acceptable, and even desirable; uprooting from the traditional home to seek greater opportunities for economic improvement is favored; and education is sought above all else. The colonization projects have capitalized on these new ideas. Traditional fatalistic precepts have vanished, as the *campesino* in a new setting is no longer afraid of crop destruction by drought or

⁹ Patch, "Bolivia: The Seventh Year," p. 15.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 22. Results of inquiries concerning these functions are presented in tabular form. Fifty family heads in each of three Quechua-speaking communities were included in the survey.

hail. New foods, and new clothing for a different climate, are readily accepted and even sought.¹¹ The "mobile personality," seen by Daniel Lerner as the key to social mobility and typified by the person who has the capacity to see himself in another's position, is rapidly developing in Bolivia.¹²

A new class, mixing traditional Indian and modern *mestizo*, will probably develop and become increasingly important in Bolivian society. Intra-class boundaries may then form along occupational lines, with mobility to higher levels possible in succeeding generations, especially for those who take advantage of the new educational opportunities.¹³ The vertical cultural gap is the one mainly affected by these developments, but horizontal cleavages may remain. Indeed, on the Indian side, Quechua-speakers are far more active in the process herein described than Aymara-speakers. The various elements in the white population must be welded together by another process, that of economic development.

Economic Development: Peril Point of the Revolution

The progress made in political socialization by the development of open social mobility is retarded, to a large degree, by the failures to date in the field of economic development. (This vast field will not be covered here in detail, except as it relates directly to the social and political processes on which this article is focused.) Gross national product pre capita has not yet regained the 1950 level of about \$118 per year, tin production is still far smaller than before the revolution, and even the influx of huge amounts of foreign aid has been unable to get Bolivia on the road to anything approaching self-sustaining growth. The republic is probably the most economically-under-developed South American country.

To solidify the gains of the revolution, and provide long-term stability, economic development must be accelerated. The capabilities of the government must be increased to satisfy the rising demands of the newly-mobilized population. Gains in the social and political fields have far outstripped those in the economic field, as political socialization via social mobility, political agitation, and revolution has probably exceeded

¹¹ Agnes N. Lockwood, "Indians of the Andes," *International Conciliation*, No. 508 (May, 1956), pp. 390-1.

¹² Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1958), p. 50. He calls this characteristic "empathy," and refers to it as indispensable to mobility. He also sees confidence with respect to the manipulability of the future as necessary; this trait too seems to be increasingly present in Bolivia.

¹³ Patch, "Bolivia: The Restrained Revolution," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 334 (March, 1961), p. 130.

the progress made in these areas by most other nations in the period of transition to a modern society. The Bolivian Government is clearly aware of the needs in the economic field, and has taken a series of politically-courageous steps in attempting to ameliorate the situation. Its *Economic and Social Development Plan for Bolivia 1962-71*, however, was rejected by the "Nine Wise Men" of the Alliance for Progress because of a lack of detail. This committee has instead recommended an immediate crash program to alleviate the most urgent problems, using the Plan simply as a frame of reference.¹⁴ The Plan's optimistic projections of an average growth rate of per capita income of 5.6 per cent per year through the decade covered are subject to much doubt, despite the abundant resources of Bolivia, the basic reforms undertaken, and the commitment of the government and most segments of the nation to the development effort. An overwhelming majority of the Bolivian people is firmly behind the Plan, especially since its rejection by most of the outside world. This nationalistic sentiment, added to the overall emotional response to having such a program at all for the first time, may help galvanize all available resources and permit a maximum effort.

The lack of economic development has impeded the emergence of a perceptible middle class, usually cited as a necessary condition for progress toward a more modern society. Such a class helps to mitigate the conflicts of modernization, such as are now transpiring in Bolivia, and to penalize extremist groups while supporting more moderate elements.¹⁵ Nationalism is more likely to take on a constructive tone, as well, if guided by these groups.¹⁶ Without such development on the economic side, it is difficult for any amount of cultural change to produce a middle group. The *campesinos* have now become an identifiable lower class, but no middle class has evolved. President Víctor Paz Estenssoro has gone on record as favoring the development of both rural and urban middle classes, but Luis Adolfo Siles, half-brother of former president Hernán Siles Zuazo, has voiced the opinion that the MNR purposely persecutes the middle class.¹⁷ Although many of the view-

¹⁴ Committee of Nine, Alliance for Progress, "Measures Designed to Speed Economic Development in Bolivia Under the Alliance for Progress," mimeographed, May, 1962, pp. i-iii.

¹⁵ Seymour M. Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. LIII, No. 1 (March, 1959), p. 83.

¹⁶ Kalman H. Silvert, *The Conflict Society: Reaction and Revolution in Latin America* (New Orleans: The Hauser Press, 1961), p. 16.

¹⁷ Patch, "Bolivia's Developing Interior," *AUFSRS: WCSAS*, Vol. IX, No. 3 (April, 1962), p. 13. Alberto Ostría Gutiérrez, *The Tragedy of Bolivia*, trans. by Eithne Golden (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1958), p. 192, charges the MNR with encouraging the workers "to hate the middle class".

points accorded by Johnson to the "middle sectors" are present in Bolivia — emphasis on public education and industrialization, state intervention in the economic processes, and nationalism, with urbanization present to a lesser degree and the use of political parties somewhat similar to the Mexican example he uses — the middle groups themselves are not.¹⁸ Whatever the government's attitude toward the middle class, its emphasis on economic development, if successful, cannot fail to encourage such a class to develop; without success in the economic field, this vacuum is likely to remain and be an important brake on modernization of Bolivian society.

The development of social overhead capital facilities is the part of the economic development program most directly relevant to the process of breaking down the cultural gaps in Bolivia. Education and communications play significant roles in both widening the base of political participation and opening avenues through which this participation may be channeled. Most vital to bridging the horizontal gaps, however, is construction of a modern transportation system.

As previously mentioned, geographic regionalism has been the primary cause of the horizontal cultural gaps. Bolivia has been accurately described as comprising three countries: one of mountain and plateau, one of high valley and gorges, and one of tropical lowland.¹⁹ Efforts to solve this immense problem, therefore, take on the most crucial importance in integration of the nation. Primarily undertaken for purposes of economic development, the system of roads, railroads, and, to a lesser extent, air and river routes, cannot fail to enhance the possibility of contact between the various regional groups. The chief criterion for determining transportation priorities in the Ten-Year Plan, moreover, is the contribution which a particular investment will make to national integration. The Plan calls for a system of basic, complementary, and subsidiary local roads which will eventually link 90 per cent of the Bolivian population.²⁰

The first, and still most important, inter-regional transportation link-

¹⁸ John J. Johnson, *Political Change in Latin America* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1958). More than proving anything about Bolivia, this shows the fallacy of Johnson's approach to the prevalence of these groups in the process of change in Latin America. He argues that the presence of these attitudes, *ipso facto*, indicates the presence of a middle class. The converse is probably true, but the attitudes, at least in Bolivia, exist without their being any semblance of a middle class.

¹⁹ Harold Osborne, *Bolivia: A Land Divided* (Welwyn Garden City, U. K.: Broadwater Press, 1954), p. 3.

²⁰ Bolivia, National Planning Board, "Economic and Social Development Plan for Bolivia 1962-1971," translated by Peter Gil, Assistant, Committee of Nine, Alliance for Progress, mimeographed, pp. 190-1.

age was the Cochabamba-Santa Cruz highway, completed in 1954 after ten years of work. The importance of this artery in making travel possible between key cities in the two major sections of Bolivia cannot be overstressed, and was cited as far back as 1942 (in the Bohan report) as indispensable to Bolivian development. To a large extent, this road has made the lowlands colonization program possible. A disappointing result, stemming from completion of the highway, has been deteriorating relations between the *altiplano* Indians who have migrated to the lowlands and that area's indigenous inhabitants. Bolivian authorities hope that this reaction is only transitional, but it is possible that the two areas of the republic, so long isolated, have reached a point where assimilation is impossible. Only with growing economic interdependence and national consciousness, as the national economy diversifies and grows, will integration of a permanent nature be likely to take place.

A series of roads to link all major regions is now under construction or consideration, but in many cases the Aymara and, more so, the Quechua, are moving spontaneously over penetration roads of minimal proportions. In some places, in fact, the government is actually trying to slow the pace of colonization in order to "catch up" with roads, medical facilities, and other basic necessities. It is now clear that old assumptions about the geographical immobility of the Andean Indians are patently untrue. UNESCO anthropologist Alfred Métraux has echoed Patch's findings, and concluded that "despite reports to the contrary, they [the Andean Indians] adapt themselves well enough to the conditions of life in a tropical environment."²¹ This new factor is incorporated in the Ten-Year Plan, with three areas programmed to provide new homes for fully one-seventh of the entire Bolivian population within the next decade: the Beni region, with its accessibility from La Paz and connection to the northern plateau; Chaparé, linked to the Cochabamba valleys; and, as previously mentioned, the Santa Cruz area.²² There is some thought that the Beni area, east of La Paz and closer to centers of population, is more suited to development than the land around Santa Cruz. More efficient transportation, to assure colonizers of access to markets, is necessary to consolidate the process.²³ Better transportation, coupled with extended communications and the provision of minimum essential services, has proved to be a strong inducement for voluntary internal migration.

²¹ Alfred Métraux, "The Social and Economic Structure of the Indian Communities of the Andean Region," *International Labour Review*, Vol. LXXIX, No. 3 (March, 1959), p. 238.

²² Bolivia, National Planning Board, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

²³ This is the major factor cited in the failure of past colonization efforts in Bolivia. Raymond Crist, "Bolivia," *Focus*, Vol. X, No. 4 (Dec., 1959), p. 6.

Even with colonization, the gaps between Aymara and Quechua seem to persist. Cliques along home village lines determined the role and status of the colonizers early in the process, and there is little evidence that progress in assimilating the two groups has been made as time has passed.²⁴ There has been greater integration between the migrating *altiplano* Indians and the local residents, mainly because of the great resistance of the *altiplano* women to migration. While this factor has deterred some migration, it has made marriage to a local girl mandatory for a colonizer wishing to stay in the lowlands. Although the *Cruceños* have remained dubious about the success of the colonies in their area, the necessity of inter-marriage could prove to be the long-run turning point in breaking down one of the most serious horizontal cleavages.

Colonization is probably the single most important key both to national integration and to increased agricultural productivity, which in turn is vital to the economic development of Bolivia. Progress has been sporadic, but is clearly possible. Vital to this progress is further development of the transportation system, which is largely responsible for the limited successes already recorded. While acculturation is attacking the vertical societal gaps, this process must be relied upon to break down those on the horizontal plane. While this analysis has focused on the *campesino* segment of the population, which includes over half of Bolivia's four million inhabitants, closer contact between the urban centers will make possible a lessening of rivalries between their *mestizo* and white elements or, at least, an increased economic interdependence and thus greater tolerance.

Political socialization, made possible by the revolution, is progressing most rapidly through social mobilization by acculturation. Less success in economic development is slowing the process, and may imperil the gains achieved through the other methods. Policy implications are thus evident, both for Bolivian leaders and U. S. officials considering foreign aid. If the process of social change now underway is deemed a favorable one, economic development must be given top priority to consolidate the gains of the revolution. Cleavages which have traditionally divided Bolivian society and precluded its emergence from pre-national status are being eroded, and remarkable success in forming a nation in a short twelve years has been achieved.

²⁴ Sakari Sariola, "A Colonization Experiment in Bolivia," *Rural Sociology*, Vol. XXV, No. 1 (March, 1960), p. 84.