

Message Text

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E.O. 12065: N/A
TAGS: SHUM, BL
SUBJECT: 1979 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT: BOLIVIA

TEXT OF 1979 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT FOR BOLIVIA FOLLOWS:

(BEGIN TEXT) INTRODUCTION

1. LOCATED IN THE HEART OF SOUTH AMERICA, LAND-LOCKED BOLIVIA ACHIEVED ITS INDEPENDENCE AUGUST 6, 1825. SINCE THAT TIME POLITICAL INSTABILITY HAS BEEN AN IMPEDIMENT TO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROGRESS WHICH IN TURN HAS RESULTED IN AN UNEVEN RECORD IN TERMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVANCE. HOWEVER, THIS TREND BEGAN TO CHANGE IN 1977 WHEN PRESIDENT BANZER INITIATED A LIBERALIZATION OF VIRTUALLY ALL MAJOR RESTRICTIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS, RELEASING ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS, ALLOWING EXILES TO RETURN AND SCHEDULING ELECTIONS FOR JULY 1978. THE MOMENTUM OF HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRESS HAS CONTINUED FOR THE SUCCEEDING TWO YEARS, WITH THE SOLE DRAMATIC EXCEPTION OF THE VIOLENT 15-DAY RULE OF COUP LEADER ALBERTO NATUSCH IN NOVEMBER 1979.

2. THE HUMAN RIGHTS MOMENTUM WAS NOT CHECKED BY THE PEREDA COUP (AUGUST 1978) OR THE PADILLA TAKE-OVER (NOVEMBER 1978). INSTEAD,
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WHILE REPRESENTING BRIEF INTERRUPTIONS IN THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS, BOTH GOVERNMENTS CONTRIBUTED TO THE IMPROVING HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION: PEREDA BY ABROGATING THE FEARED STATE SECURITY LAW, AND PADILLA BY HOLDING IN JULY 1979 PERHAPS THE MOST DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN BOLIVIA'S HISTORY.

3. SINCE NONE OF THE EIGHT PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFULS

ACHIEVED THE NEEDED MAJORITY OF THE POPULAR VOTE IN THE JULY 1979 ELECTIONS, THE CONGRESS SELECTED SENATE PRESIDENT WALTER GUEVARA ARZE TO BE INTERIM PRESIDENT WITH NEW ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR MAY 1980.

4. GUEVARA'S GOVERNMENT CAME TO AN ABRUPT END NOVEMBER 1, 1979, WHEN A GROUP OF MILITARY OFFICERS AND CIVILIANS UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF ARMY COLONEL ALBERTO NATUSCH BUSCH SEIZED THE GOVERNMENT. STRONG POPULAR REACTION AGAINST THE COUP AND ITS INTERRUPTION OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS, RESULTED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PRESS CENSORSHIP, A STATE OF SIEGE, AND MARTIAL LAW. UNCONTROLLED MILITARY ELEMENTS CONFRONTED PROTESTING BUT UNARMED CIVILIANS, RESULTING IN THE CONFIRMED DEATH OF APPROXIMATELY 208 PERSONS, THE WOUNDING OF 207 OTHERS, AND THE UNACCOUNTABLE DISAPPEARANCE OF 124 CITIZENS, NOW PRESUMED DEAD. POPULAR DISCONTENT, AN UNPRECEDENTED SEVEN-DAY STRIKE BY THE CONFEDERATION OF BOLIVIAN WORKERS (COB), AND NATUSCH'S REPRESSIVE MEASURES HASTENED THE DEMISE OF HIS REGIME.

5. CONSEQUENTLY ON NOVEMBER 16 HE WAS FORCED TO RESIGN AND WAS REPLACED BY CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES PRESIDENT LIDIA GUEILER ACCORDING TO AN AGREEMENT REACHED BETWEEN THE CONGRESS, THE COB, AND THE ARMED FORCES. PRESIDENT GUEVARA, WHO HAD BECOME A RESISTANCE SYMBOL IN HIDING DURING THE NATUSCH REGIME, RETURNED TO HIS FORMER SENATE POSITION. MS. GUEILER IS TO BE BOLIVIA'S INTERIM PRESIDENT UNTIL THE INAUGURATION ON AUGUST 6, 1980 OF THE WINNER IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MAY ELECTIONS.

6. BOLIVIA'S DIRE ECONOMIC SITUATION WILL UNDOUBTEDLY COMPLICATE MATTERS. FACED WITH DWINDLING FOREIGN RESERVES AND DECLINING PRODUCTION OF PETROLEUM AND TIN, THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE TO TAKE STRONG ECONOMIC MEASURES TO RETURN BOLIVIA TO ECONOMIC SOLVENCY.

SECTION 1 - RESPECT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON, INCLUDING FREEDOM FROM:

A. TORTURE

1. THE BOLIVIAN CONSTITUTION CLEARLY PROHIBITS CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT. PRESIDENTS PADILLA AND GUEVARA RESPECTED THIS CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEE; THERE WERE NO REPORTS OF TORTURE DURING THEIR BRIEF GOVERNMENTS. ALLEGATIONS OF TORTURE DURING THE SHORT-LIVED NATUSCH REGIME REMAIN UNSUBSTANTIATED, BUT ARE CURRENTLY UNDER INVESTIGATION BY THE PERMANENT ASSEMBLY ON HUMAN RIGHTS (PAHR).

2. THE ASSEMBLY WAS ALSO TASKED BY THE BOLIVIAN CONGRESS ON NOVEMBER 19 TO DOCUMENT ALL CASES OF PERSONS KILLED, WOUNDED, OR MISSING AS A RESULT OF NATUSCH'S REPRESSIVE TACTICS. WHEN

COMPLETED, THESE LISTS OF NAMES WILL BE MADE PUBLIC, ALTHOUGH IT IS QUESTIONABLE WHETHER SUCH EVIDENCE WILL LEAD TO ANY TRIALS AND CONVICTIONS IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

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B. CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT

1. NO REPORTS OF CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT WERE RECEIVED DURING THE PADILLA OR GUEVARA GOVERNMENTS. ALLEGATIONS AGAINST THE NATUSCH REGIME REMAIN UNSUBSTANTIATED, EVEN THOUGH RUMORS HINT AT BEATINGS OF POLITICAL AND LABOR LEADERS DETAINED DURING THAT PERIOD. WHILE THE BOLIVIAN CONSTITUTION CLEARLY PROHIBITS THIS TYPE OF TREATMENT, PAHR REPRESENTATIVES CLAIM INFRACTIONS DO OCCUR. ACCORDING TO THEM, SOME POLICEMEN HAVE BEATEN PERSONS ACCUSED OF COMMON CRIMES DURING INTERROGATION TO FORCE CONFESSIONS. MOST PRISONERS DO NOT FILE COMPLAINTS, EITHER BECAUSE THEY ARE UNAWARE OF THEIR CIVIL RIGHTS OR BECAUSE THEY ARE AFRAID OF REPRISALS. THE NUMBER OF POLICE OFFICIALS WHO ENGAGE IN SUCH PRACTICES IS FEW. PAHR OFFICIALS FEEL THAT THE SITUATION CAN BE REMIDIED BY CONDUCTING A GENERAL HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION CAMPAIGN WHEREBY BOLIVIANS MAY COME TO KNOW AND ACCEPT THE RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS CALLED FOR BY THEIR CONSTITUTION. AT THE SAME TIME, THE ASSEMBLY IS ATTEMPTING TO DOCUMENT CASES OF MISTREATMENT UNDER INTERROGATION SO THAT OFFENDING POLICEMEN CAN BE PUNISHED.

2. PRISONS CONSTITUTE ANOTHER AREA OF CONCERN UNDER THIS TOPIC. MOST PRISONS IN BOLIVIA ARE OLD AND OVERCROWDED. SANITARY
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CONDITIONS ARE POOR, AND THE DIET OF PRISONERS INADEQUATE. THE CONDITIONS ARE PARTIALLY A FUNCTION OF BOLIVIA'S LOW LEVEL OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ASSOCIATED POVERTY. MANY PRISONERS, HOWEVER, ARE SAID TO SUBSIST DECENTLY WITH THE MONEY, FOOD, CLOTHING AND MEDICINES RECEIVED FROM RELATIVES OR FRIENDS. OTHERS PERFORM SERVICES FOR FELLOW PRISONERS, OR MANUFACTURE SMALL ITEMS FOR OUTSIDE CONTRACTORS IN EXCHANGE FOR MONEY OR FOOD TO SUPPLEMENT PRISON FARE.

3. EVEN THOUGH PRISONERS MAY BE ABLE TO AMELIORATE PRISON CONDITIONS THROUGH OUTSIDE HELP OR THEIR OWN INGENUITY, THEY HAVE NO OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME REHABILITATED IN THE SENSE OF LEARNING JOB SKILLS OR IMPROVING THEIR EDUCATION WHILE IN PRISON. PRISON OFFICIALS RECOGNIZE THE PROBLEMS INHERENT IN THE PRESENT SYSTEM, BUT ARE UNABLE TO MAKE IMPROVEMENTS BECAUSE THEY LACK THE REQUISITE FUNDS.

C. ARBITRARY ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT

1. NEITHER THE PADILLA NOR GUEVARA GOVERNMENTS IMPRISONED PERSONS FOR THEIR POLITICAL BELIEFS OR ACTIVITY. MOREOVER, SOON AFTER GUEVARA ASSUMED THE PRESIDENCY, A GROUP IN THE CONGRESS OBTAINED THE RELEASE OF OSVALDO "CHATO" PEREDO, CONSIDERED BY SOME TO HAVE BEEN A POLITICAL PRISONER.

2. A PROFESSED MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION ARMY (ELN), PEREDO WAS ARRESTED IN 1978 WHILE ROBBING A MONEY EXCHANGE HOUSE. (NOTE: THE ELN, A LEFTIST TERRORIST GROUP, WAS ACTIVE DURING THE GUEVARA GUERRILLA PERIOD AND TWO OF PEREDO'S BROTHERS WERE REPORTEDLY KILLED DURING THAT TIME.) WHEN BROUGHT TO TRIAL, HE CLAIMED HIS CRIME WAS POLITICAL, STATING HE INTENDED TO USE THE PROCEEDS TO CONTINUE HIS FIGHT AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. MANY OBSERVERS, HOWEVER, CONSIDERED THIS

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A CONVENIENT PRETEXT TO AVOID CRIMINAL CHARGES.

3. BOLIVIA'S CLIMATE OF TOLERANCE CHANGED TEMPORARILY WITH THE OVERTHROW OF GUEVARA. DURING EARLY NOVEMBER, BEFORE PRESS CENSORSHIP WAS IMPOSED BY NATUSCH, NEWSPAPERS AND THE RADIO REPORTED THE ARREST OF SEVERAL LABOR LEADERS AND POLITICIANS NATIONWIDE. THESE PEOPLE WERE ONLY HELD BRIEFLY BY FORCES LOYAL TO THE NATUSCH REGIME. AFTER CENSORSHIP WAS LIFTED, THERE WERE ADDITIONAL REPORTS OF THE ARREST OF CITIZENS WHO OPPOSED THE NATUSCH REGIME, BUT THOSE ARRESTED WERE ALSO RELEASED SOON AFTER DETENTION.

4. PERSONS ARE FREQUENTLY ARRESTED AND HELD FOR BRIEF PERIODS WITHOUT CHARGE IN BOLIVIA. HABEAS CORPUS EXISTS BUT NO WRITS WERE NEEDED UNDER PRESIDENTS PADILLA OR GUEVARA. EVEN DURING THE EVENTS IN EARLY NOVEMBER, NO HABEAS CORPUS PROCEEDINGS WERE INITIATED BECAUSE THOSE ARRESTED WERE RELEASED USUALLY WITHIN A FEW HOURS.

D. DENIAL OF FAIR PUBLIC TRIAL

PERSONS ARRESTED IN BOLIVIA ARE ENTITLED BY LAW TO A FAIR PUBLIC TRIAL. HOWEVER, JUSTICE CONTINUES TO MOVE SLOWLY BECAUSE OF INHERENT FAULTS IN THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM--ANTIQUATED PROCEDURES, SHORTAGE OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL, ETC. DEFENDANTS MAY HIRE THEIR OWN COUNSEL, AND MAY CONFER WITH THEM IN PRIVATE. CIVIL COURTS ARE INDEPENDENT OF THE MILITARY AND CIVILIANS ARE NOT TRIED UNDER MILITARY COURTS.

E. INVASION OF THE HOME

NO REPORTS OF INVASIONS OF THE HOME WERE RECEIVED DURING EITHER THE PADILLA OR GUEVARA GOVERNMENTS. HOWEVER, DURING THE SHORT-LIVED NATUSCH COUP TROOPS AND POLICEMEN IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES CONDUCTED SEARCHES OF THE HOUSES OF PERSONS OPPOSED TO HIS TAKE-OVER--MAINLY LABOR LEADERS AND POLITICIANS. THESE TROOPS SEARCHED FOR WEAPONS AND MEMBERS OF THE GUEVARA "GOVERNMENT IN CLANDESTINITY." THEY DID SO WITHOUT WARRANTS, AND WHILE HEAVILY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ARMED. AS OF NOVEMBER 23, PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE ABUSES OF POWER HAVE NOT BEEN REPRIMANDED OR RELIEVED OF THEIR DUTIES. HOWEVER, THE NEW INTERIOR MINISTER, JORGE SELUM VACA, TOLD THE PRESS NOVEMBER 19 THE GUEILER GOVERNMENT WILL DISBAND FORMER STATE SECURITY ORGANS.

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SECTION 2 - GOVERNMENT POLICIES RELATING TO THE FULFILLMENT OF SUCH VITAL NEEDS AS FOOD, SHELTER, HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION

1. WITH AN ESTIMATED PER CAPITA INCOME OF \$360, BOLIVIA FOLLOWS HAITI AS THE SECOND POOREST COUNTRY IN LATIN AMERICA. ITS ECONOMY IS 65 PERCENT IN THE HANDS OF THE STATE, WITH MOST OF ITS RURAL POPULATION BARELY Eeking OUT A SUBSISTENCE FROM THE BARREN SOIL OF THE ALTIPLANO. SINCE 1975, HOWEVER, SUCCESSIVE BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENTS HAVE ATTEMPTED TO IMPROVE THE LOT OF THE PEOPLE THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A FIVE-YEAR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE 1976-80 PERIOD.

2. THE PLAN, PROPOSED UNDER PRESIDENT BANZER, EMPHASIZED A RAPID GROWTH, EXPORT-ORIENTED STRATEGY. AMONG ITS GOALS WERE IMPROVING NATIONAL INCOME DISTRIBUTION, INCORPORATING THE RURAL (MOSTLY INDIAN) POPULATION INTO THE MODERN LIFE OF THE COUNTRY, AND IMPROVING THE OVERALL WELFARE OF THE POPULATION THROUGH EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS. UNFORTUNATELY, BOLIVIA'S WORSENING ECONOMIC SITUATION PREVENTED THIS AMBITIOUS PLAN FROM BEING FULFILLED. SPECIFICALLY TO BLAME WERE THE DROPS IN PRODUCTION OF TIN AND PETROLEUM, DECLINING FOREIGN RESERVES, FREQUENT STRIKES, AND AN APPARENT UNWILLINGNESS TO ADOPT NECESSARY CORRECTIVE ECONOMIC MEASURES BECAUSE OF POSSIBLE ADVERSE
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POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES.

3. THE ABOVE MENTIONED ECONOMIC WOES DO NOT SEEM TO HAVE TOUCHED THE ENTIRE POPULATION. A RECENT STUDY RELEASED BY THE INTER-AMERICAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL OF THE OAS CLAIMS FIVE PERCENT OF THE BOLIVIAN POPULATION CONTROLS 36 PERCENT OF THE NATIONAL INCOME.

4. BESIDES INCOME MALDISTRIBUTION, OTHER PROBLEMS AFFECT BOLIVIAN SOCIETY. FOR EXAMPLE, THE AVERAGE LIFE EXPECTANCY FOR A BOLIVIAN MALE IS 47 YEARS, AND FOR WOMEN 51. ONLY 11.2 PERCENT OF THE RURAL POPULATION LIVES IN AREAS WHICH HAVE ADEQUATE SEWAGE DISPOSAL; ACCESS TO POTABLE WATER IS AVAILABLE TO ONLY 12 PERCENT OF THE SAME GROUP. THE NATIONWIDE CRUDE DEATH RATE IS ESTIMATED AT 18.5 PER THOUSAND. MOREOVER, THE INFANT MORTALITY RATE FOR CHILDREN UNDER ONE YEAR OF AGE IN RURAL AREAS IS 235 PER THOUSAND. FURTHERMORE, ACCORDING TO

A SEPTEMBER 9 ARTICLE IN PRESENCIA, "1,810,000 PERSONS--ADULTS AND CHILDREN--ARE AFFECTED BY MALNUTRITION. THIS AMOUNTS TO 36 PERCENT OF THE COUNTRY'S TOTAL POPULATION." THE SAME ARTICLE ALSO POINTED OUT MANY BOLIVIANS SUFFER FROM CHAGAS DISEASE, TUBERCULOSIS AND OTHER ILLNESSES AND INDICATED THE GOVERNMENT ONLY ALLOCATED 2.9 PERCENT OF ITS ANNUAL BUDGET TO SANITARY PROGRAMS.

5. IN THE SAME VEIN, ANOTHER ARTICLE IN PRESENCIA, THIS ONE DATED OCTOBER 16, 1979, NOTED THAT "THE AMOUNT IN THE NATION'S BUDGET DESTINED TO THE EDUCATIONAL SECTOR IS APPROXIMATELY 30 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL BUDGET." THIS SEEMS AT ODDS WITH DATA SHOWING THAT OF THE TOTAL POPULATION OVER FIFTEEN YEARS OF AGE, 60 PERCENT ARE ILLITERATE. PARTLY TO BLAME MAY BE RURAL POVERTY WHICH FORCES CHILDREN TO NEGLECT THEIR STUDIES TO WORK TO HELP THEIR FAMILIES. COMPLICATING THIS SITUATION IS THE FACT THAT SCHOOL SESSIONS ARE OFTENTIMES INTERRUPTED BY LABOR STRIFE OR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POLITICAL ACTIVITY. IN SUMMARY THEN, WHILE PUBLIC EDUCATION IS FREE THROUGH UNIVERSITY, THE QUALITY LEAVES A LOT TO BE DESIRED.

6. WITH REGARD TO SHELTER, ADEQUATE HOUSING IS A SERIOUS PROBLEM EVEN THOUGH BOLIVIANS SPEND APPROXIMATELY 16 PERCENT OF FAMILY INCOME ON HOUSING. THE PROBLEM IS MORE ACUTE IN RURAL THAN URBAN AREAS. GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO ALLEVIATE THIS AND OTHER DIFFICULTIES, ARE HAMPERED BY THE STATE OF THE BOLIVIAN ECONOMY COUPLED WITH CORRUPTION IN GOVERNMENT. SUCH DIVERSION OF FUNDS AS EXISTS, HOWEVER, DOES NOT SEEM TO PREVENT CITIZENS FROM RECEIVING VITAL SERVICES.

SECTION 3 - RESPECT FOR CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES, INCLUDING:

A. FREEDOM OF SPEECH, PRESS, RELIGION AND ASSEMBLY

1. UNDER THE PADILLA AND GUEVARA GOVERNMENTS, THERE WERE NO REPORTS OF VIOLATIONS OF ANY OF THESE FREEDOMS. SOON AFTER ASSUMING POWER, COLONEL NATUSCH, HOWEVER, IMPOSED PRESS CENSORSHIP, A STATE OF SIEGE, AND MARTIAL LAW. THE LATTER CALLED FOR A 10 PM TO 6 AM CURFEW AND PROHIBITED MORE THAN THREE PERSONS FROM MEETING AT HOME, OR EVEN WALKING THE STREETS TOGETHER. AFTER AN UNPRECEDENTED SEVEN-DAY GENERAL STRIKE CALLED BY THE COB, NATUSCH AGREED TO LIFT THESE MEASURES IN EXCHANGE FOR AN END TO THE CRIPPLING STRIKE. THE NATIONAL PRESS ASSOCIATION (ANP), AND THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE BOLIVIAN ECUMENICAL CONFERENCE, AMONG OTHERS, PROTESTED THE PRESS CENSORSHIP AND THE SILENCING OF SEVERAL RADIO STATIONS--INCLUDING THE JESUIT-RUN RADIO FIDES--DURING THE RECENT MILITARY TAKE-OVER. RADIO ANNOUNCER AND PRESS UNIONS ALSO SHOWED THEIR DISAPPROVAL OF NATUSCH'S TACTICS BY EXPELLING FROM THEIR RANKS MEMBERS WHO COLLABORATED WITH THE REGIME DURING THE CENSORSHIP PERIOD. AMONG THE REASONS FOR THEIR

EXPULSION WAS THE DISSEMINATION OF STATE-PROVIDED INFORMATION IN AN EFFORT TO WIN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR COLONEL NATUSCH AND HIS REGIME.

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2. PRIOR TO THE NATUSCH COUP, THE PRESS IN BOLIVIA EXERCISED A DEGREE OF "SELF-CENSORSHIP," OSTENSIBLY TO AVOID POLITICAL CONTROVERSY THAT COULD JEOPARDIZE THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS.

3. CURRENTLY UNDER THE INTERIM PRESIDENCY OF LIDIE GUEILER, ALL OF THESE FREEDOMS HAVE BEEN RESTORED.

B. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WITHIN THE COUNTRY, FOREIGN TRAVEL AND EMIGRATION

ONLY UNDER THE TWO-WEEK NATUSCH REGIME WERE THERE ANY RESTRICTIONS ON TRAVEL. NEITHER PRESIDENTS PADILLA, GUEVARA, NOR NOW GUEILER, ENACTED ANY LAWS RESTRICTING FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WITHIN AND OUTSIDE BOLIVIA.

C. FREEDOM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS

1. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE FIRST TWO WEEKS IN NOVEMBER WHEN COLONEL NATUSCH TOOK OVER THE GOVERNMENT, BOLIVIANS HAVE LIVED UNDER A CONSTITUTIONAL AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT SINCE AUGUST 1979. HOWEVER, EVEN BEFORE THAT, SPECIFICALLY SINCE EARLY 1978 WHEN BANZER LIFTED PREVIOUS RESTRICTIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES AND LABOR UNIONS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO OPERATE FREELY IN BOLIVIA. IN JULY 1979,
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FOR EXAMPLE, EIGHT POLITICAL PARTIES OR COALITIONS PARTICIPATED IN THE GENERAL ELECTIONS; NONE WAS "OFFICIALIST."

WHILE THE ELECTIONS WERE NOT WITHOUT ALLEGATIONS OF FRAUD FROM ALL MAJOR POLITICAL COALITIONS, IT IS GENERALLY ACCEPTED THAT THE ELECTORAL COURT DID ITS JOB WELL AND THAT FRAUD WAS KEPT WITHIN ACCEPTABLE BOUNDS, WHICH FOR BOLIVIA IS AN ACHIEVEMENT.

2. CONSONANT WITH BOLIVIA'S PRESENT POLITICAL FREEDOMS, ALL CITIZENS 21 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER MAY VOTE.

3. TWO GROUPS THAT HAVE RECENTLY GAINED SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE IN BOLIVIAN POLITICS ARE LABOR UNIONS AND WOMEN. TRADITIONALLY WOMEN HAVE NOT ENJOYED EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IN BOLIVIA. HOWEVER, THIS IS CHANGING. FOR EXAMPLE, BEFORE BECOMING INTERIM PRESIDENT, LIDIA GUEILER HAD BEEN ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES AND AWARDED THE ORDER OF THE CONDOR, BOLIVIA'S HIGHEST DECORATION, FOR HER POLITICAL ACTIVITIES. IN ADDITION, TWO WOMEN PRESENTLY SERVE IN THE CONGRESS, AND TWO IN THE CABINET. FURTHERMORE, INDIAN WOMEN IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS CONTINUE TO PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN THE COMMERCIAL SECTOR AND CONTRIBUTE SUBSTANTIALLY TO FAMILY INCOMES.

4. THE SECOND GROUP, LABOR UNIONS, ALSO WEILD CONSIDERABLE POWER IN BOLIVIAN SOCIETY, BUT DO SO INDIRECTLY. THE GENERAL STRIKE DECREED BY THE COB IN EARLY NOVEMBER, TO NAME JUST AN EXAMPLE, DEMONSTRATED THE STRENGTH OF UNION POWER WHEN USED AS POLITICAL FORCE. WHILE BOLIVIAN TRADE UNIONS PROFESS TO MAINTAIN POLITICAL NEUTRALITY, UNION MEMBERS OFTEN PARTICIPATE IN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES AS INDIVIDUALS.

SECTION 4 - GOVERNMENT ATTITUDE AND RECORD REGARDING INTERNATIONAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

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1. THE PERMANENT ASSEMBLY ON HUMAN RIGHTS (PAHR) IS BOLIVIA'S PRINCIPAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION PROMOTING RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. ACCUSED BY SOME OF NOT BEING TRULY APOLITICAL, IT WAS STILL RESPECTED BY THE PADILLA AND GUEVARA GOVERNMENTS FOR ITS WORK IN THIS AREA. AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE NATUSCH REGIME, THE BOLIVIAN CONGRESS TASKED IT TO COMPILE THE LIST OF VICTIMS TO BE USED IN ANY ASSISTANCE EFFORT AND POSSIBLY TO ASSIST IN DETERMINING THE GUILT OF THOSE WHO CONDUCTED THE REPRESSION IN EARLY NOVEMBER. THE PAHR ALSO HAS BEEN THE RECIPIENT OF MANY DONATIONS, INCLUDING ONE FOR 100,000 PESOS FROM THE US AMBASSADOR, TO ASSIST THE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE PERPETRATED BY THE NATUSCH

REGIME.

2. THE PAHR MAINTAINS CLOSE CONTACT WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS, WHOSE MEMBERS OFTEN TRAVEL TO BOLIVIA FOR CONSULTATIONS ON THE STATE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THAT COUNTRY. AMONG THE PAHR'S MANY OBJECTIVES IS THE RATIFICATION OF THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS AGREEMENTS NOT SIGNED BY THE BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENT, PARTICULARLY THE ONES CONCERNING POLITICAL AND CIVIL RIGHTS AND REFUGEES.

3. NOTABLY BOLIVIA IS THE ONLY LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRY WHOSE PARLIAMENT HAS A HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE IN EACH HOUSE. AS PART OF ITS EFFORT TO IMPROVE HUMAN RIGHTS, BOLIVIA THIS YEAR BECAME A SIGNATORY TO THE AMERICAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (SAN JOSE PACT). (END TEXT.)
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Review Release Date: N/A
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SAS ID: 589164
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