Paz Estenssoro, Victor (Oct 2, 1907 - Jun 7, 2001)

Summary Article: Paz Estenssoro, Victor
From The Columbia Encyclopedia

(vēktőr' pās āstãnső'rō), 1907–2001, president of Bolivia (1952–56, 1960–64, 1985–89). An attorney and economist born into a land-owning family, he was a founder (1941) of the moderate leftist National Revolutionary Movement (MNR). He helped lead the revolt that brought the party into power in 1943, but he was forced to flee to Argentina in 1946. While in exile he was elected (1951) president of Bolivia. The army annulled the election, provoking a bloody but successful MNR revolt (Apr., 1952), which gave Paz the presidency.

Upon taking office, Paz immediately launched a program of revolutionary measures. He expropriated the largest tin mines and improved the lot of the Bolivians of indigenous descent by granting them suffrage and instituting land, educational, and welfare reforms. Prohibited a second consecutive term by the constitution, he was succeeded (1956) by his vice president, Hernán Siles Zuazo.

Paz was reelected president in 1960, at which time he was faced with a deteriorating economy and a growing rift within the MNR. He aroused considerable opposition by amending the constitution to permit his reelection in 1964, and although he was reelected, both the right and the left factions bolted his party. In Nov., 1964, Paz was ousted by a military coup. He later settled in Peru, returning to Bolivia in 1971. At the age of 77 he was again elected (1985) president. In his last term he instituted a sweeping conservative austerity program, reducing the government’s role in the economy and controlling inflation, but with enormous social costs.
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