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Bolivia’s Remarkable Socialist Success Story

thenation.com/article/economics-socialism-bolivia-evo

As I strolled through the Bolivi an village of Sahuiña on a bright afternoon in March, the loudest

sounds I heard were bird songs. Nestled in the Andes mountains and perched on t he se cluded coast

of a peninsula jutting into Lake Titi caca, Sahuiña is an enchantingly quie t place. It’s also an

independent one: Thanks to many years of government decentralization across Bolivia, the village

has a gre at deal of freedom to do as it wishes without answering to the state.

At its entrance a Wiphala flag, a seven-colored square representing the indigenous peoples of the

Andes, flappe d in the breeze. No natio nal flag symbolizing the Bolivian republic stood beside it. A s I

crossed the hamlet, the people of Sahuiña chatted with one another in the local indigenous language

of Aymara. They spoke slowly, walked slowly, chewed slowly on coca leaves. They boasted about t he

crisp air and the scarcity of crime. Most of them fished or farmed for a livil f es, ous

inequality, by a stunning 19 percent. For much of Bolivia’s majority-indigenous population in

part icul ar, his tenure marks the f irst time that th ey’ve lived above poverty and benefited from t heir

country’s tremendous natural resources.

It’s now clear that a redistributionist agenda has not been ruinous to Bolivia’s economy. Far from it:

During the Morales era, the economy has grown at twice the rate of the Latin American average,

i nflation has been stable, the government has amassed substantial savings, and an enterprising and

optimistic indigenous middle class has emergPഀmd ss iaaܰver

The first of t hese is what could be called a cautiously optimistic ref ormism. Morales aligned himself

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As I traveled through Bolivia this spring, I asked scores of people what the term “socialism” meant to
them personally. Time and time again, people spoke about how jo

strongman. “President Morales is no longer part of the present, and much less of the future. He is

part of the past ,”� s