

wiped away. A clear understanding and a fraternal relationship exist between the two most important Communist Parties of Latin America.

As for me, I continue to be the same person who wrote *Camión de gesta*. It is a book I still like. I can't forget that with it I became the first poet to devote an entire book to praising the Cuban revolution.

I understand, of course, that revolutions, and particularly those who take part in them, fall into error and injustice, from time to time. The unwritten precepts of the human race affect revolutionaries and counterrevolutionaries: equally. No one can escape errors. A blind spot, a tiny blind spot in a revolutionary process is not very important within the larger context of a great cause. I have continued to sing, love, and respect the Cuban revolution, its people, its noble protagonists.

But everyone has his failings. I have many. For instance, I don't like to give up the pride I feel about my inflexible stand as a fighting revolutionary. Maybe that, or some other flaw in my insignificant self, has made me refuse until now, and I will go on refusing, to shake hands with any of those who knowingly or unknowingly signed that letter which still seems ignominious to me.

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## *Cruel, Beloved Homeland*

### EXTREMISM AND SPIES

FORMER anarchists—and the same thing will happen tomorrow to the anarchists of today—very often drift off toward a very comfortable position, anarcho-capitalism, the refuge of political snipers, would-be leftists, and false liberals. Repressive capitalism considers Communists its biggest enemies, and its aim seldom misses the mark. All those individualist rebels are delighted, one way or another, by the reactionary know-how, the strong-arm method that treats them as heroic defenders of sacrosanct principles. Reactionaries know that the danger of change in a society is not in individual revolts but in the organization of the masses and in a widespread class consciousness.

I saw all this clearly in Spain during the war. Some anti-Fascist groups were playing out a masked carnival before Hitler's and Franco's forces, which were advancing on Madrid. Naturally, I don't include anarchists like Durruti and his Catalans, who fought like lions in Barcelona.

Spies are a thousand times worse than extremists. From time to time, enemy agents hired by the police, reactionary parties, or foreign governments filter in among the activists of revolutionary parties. Some of them carry out special missions of provocation; others are patient observers. Azev's is a classic case. Before the fall of Tsarism, he took part in numerous terrorist acts and was

jailed many times. The memoirs of the chief of the Tsar's secret police, published after the Revolution, related in detail how Azev had always been an agent of the Okhrana. The terrorist and the informer coexisted in the mind of this bizarre character, whose actions were responsible for the death of a Grand Duke.

Another curious incident occurred in Los Angeles, San Francisco, or some other California city. During the insane wave of McCarthyism, all the activists in the Communist Party in town were arrested. There were seventy-five persons, all told, with complete files on their lives and their day-to-day movements. Well, the seventy-five turned out to be police agents. The F.B.I. had permitted itself the luxury of creating its own miniature "Communist Party," with individuals who were strangers to one another, in order to prosecute them later and claim sensational victories over non-existent enemies. This way of doing things got the F.B.I. into such grotesque predicaments as the one where some fellow called Chambers, an ex-Communist bought by police dollars, kept the most explosive international secrets hidden in a pumpkin. The F.B.I. was also implicated in horrifying acts, among them the execution, or assassination, of the Rosenbergs, which particularly outraged the world.

It was always more difficult for these agents to infiltrate Chile's Communist Party, an organization with a long history and a strictly proletarian origin. On the other hand, guerrilla methods in Latin America opened the floodgates for all kinds of squealers. The spontaneous character and the youth of these organizations made it hard to detect and unmask spies. That's why the guerrilla leaders were haunted by suspicions and had to keep an eye even on their own shadows. In a way, this cult of risk was encouraged by the romantic spirit and the wild guerrilla theories that swept Latin America. This era may have come to an end with the assassination and heroic death of Ernesto Guevara. But for a long time the supporters of this tactic saturated the continent with theses and documents that virtually allotted the popular revolutionary government of the future, not to the classes exploited by capitalism, but to all and sundry armed groups. The flaw in this line of reasoning is its political weakness: it is sometimes possible for a great guerrilla and a powerful political mind to coexist, as in the case of Che Guevara, but that is an exception and wholly depen-

dent on chance. The survivors of a guerrilla war cannot lead a proletarian state simply because they were braver, or because they were luckier in the face of death, or better shots when facing the living.

Now I'll recount a personal experience. I was in Chile, just back from Mexico. At one of the political gatherings I attended, a man came over to say hello to me. He was a middle-aged man, the model man of today, very correctly dressed and wearing those glasses that make people look so respectable, rimless glasses that are clipped to the nose. He turned out to be a very affable person. "Don Pablo, I had never been able to build up the courage to approach you, although I owe you my life. I am one of the refugees you saved from the concentration camps and gas ovens when you put us aboard the *Winnipeg*, bound for Chile. I am a Catalan, a Freemason. I've established a place for myself here. I work as a top salesman of sanitary articles for Such & Such Co., the most important of its kind in Chile."

He told me he lived in a nice apartment in the center of Santiago. His next-door neighbor was a well-known tennis champion named Iglesias, who had been my schoolmate. They spoke of me frequently and had finally decided to invite me to the house and entertain me. That's why he had come to see me.

The Catalan's apartment had all the signs of the comfortable life of our bourgeoisie. Impeccable furniture; a golden and abundant paella. Iglesias was with us all through lunch. We laughed at the memory of the old schoolhouse in Temuco, in whose basements the bats' wings brushed our faces. At the end of lunch, the hospitable Catalan gave a little speech and made me a gift of two splendidly reproduced photographs: one of Baudelaire and the other of Edgar Allan Poe. Splendid heads of poets, which, of course, I still have in my library.

One day our Catalan had a stroke that left him immobile in bed, without the use of speech or facial expression. Only his eyes moved, filled with pain, as if trying to say something to his wife, an excellent Spanish Republican with an irreproachable past, or to his neighbor Iglesias, my friend the tennis champion. The man died without speaking or moving again.

While the house was still filled with tears, friends, and wreaths,

his neighbor the tennis player received a mysterious call: "We know of your close friendship with the dead man. He never tired of praising you. If you want to do a very important service to the memory of your friend, open his strong box and take out a little steel case put away for safekeeping there. I'll call you again in three days."

The widow wouldn't hear of such a thing. Her grief was extreme, she didn't want to know about anything. She left the apartment and moved to a rooming house on Santo Domingo Street. The landlord was a Yugoslav, a member of the resistance, a man toughened by politics. The widow begged him to examine her husband's papers. The Yugoslav found the little metal case and opened it with much difficulty. Then the strangest cat was let out of the bag. The documents which had been put away there disclosed that the dead man had been a Fascist agent. Copies of his letters revealed the names of dozens of emigrants who, on returning to Spain secretly, had been thrown into prison or executed. There was even a letter in Franco's hand, thanking him for his services. Information from the Catalan also helped the Nazi navy sink freighters leaving the Chilean coast with war materials. One of these was our beautiful ship, the veteran *Lautaro*, pride of Chile's navy. It was sunk during the war, with its cargo of nitrate, as it left Tocopilla. The wreck took the lives of seventeen naval cadets, drowned or burned to death.

These had been the criminal acts of a smiling Catalan who invited me to lunch one day.

#### THE COMMUNISTS

... Some years have passed since I became a member of the party . . . I am happy . . . Communists make a good family . . . They have weather-beaten hides and warm hearts . . . They take whacks everywhere . . . Whacks exclusively for them . . . Long live spiritists, royalists, deviates, criminals of every ilk . . . Long live philosophy with its smoke screen but without skeletons . . . Long live the dog that barks but also bites, long live lecherous astrologers, pornography, cynicism, long live the shrimp, long live everyone, except Communists . . . Long live chastity belts, long live the conservatives who haven't

washed their ideological feet in five hundred years . . . Long live the lice of the poor, the free trip to potter's field, anarcho-capitalism, Rilke, André Gide and his sweet little Corydon, long live all kinds of mysticism . . . Anything goes . . . They're all heroes . . . All newspapers should be brought out . . . They can all be published, except the Communist papers . . . Let all politicians into Santo Domingo free as birds . . . Let them all celebrate the death of bloodthirsty Trujillo, except those who fought him hardest . . . Long live the carnival, the last days of the carnival . . . There are masks for everyone . . . Christian idealist masks, extreme-left masks, good-gray-lady and charitable-matron masks . . . But watch out, don't let the Communists in . . . Lock the door tight . . . Don't make a mistake . . . They have no right to anything . . . Let's worry about the subjective, man's essence, the essence of essence . . . We'll all be happy that way . . . We've got freedom . . . Freedom is great! . . . They don't respect it, they don't know what it is . . . Freedom to worry about the essence . . . About the essentials of essence . . . That's how the last years passed . . . Jazz went out, soul arrived, we floundered in the postulates of abstract painting, the war staggered and killed us . . . Everything remained the same on this side . . . Or didn't it . . . ? After so many speeches about the spirit and so many whacks on the head, something was going badly . . . Very badly . . . They had figured it out wrong . . . The people were organizing . . . The guerrilla wars and the strikes went on . . . Cuba and Chile won their freedom . . . Countless men and women sang the Internationale . . . How odd . . . How disheartening . . . Now they sing it in Chinese, Bulgarian, in the Spanish of Latin America . . . We've got to do something about it quickly . . . We must ban it . . . We must talk about the spirit some more . . . And sing the praises of the free world some more . . . We must hand out some more whacks, some more dollars . . . This can't go on . . . Between the freedom to hand out whacks and Germán Arciniegas's fear . . . And now Cuba . . . In the middle of our hemisphere, in the middle of our apple, these long-beards all singing the same song . . . And what good is Christ to us . . . ? What good have the priests done us . . . ? We can't trust anybody any more . . . Not even the priests . . . They don't see

eye to eye with us . . . They don't see how our stocks are plunging in the market . . .

. . . *Mearwibile*, men are soaring into the solar system . . .  
*Shoes track up the moon* . . . *Everything struggles to change*,  
*except the outworn systems* . . . *These outworn systems were*  
*spurned in the immense spiderwebs of the Middle Ages* . . .  
*Spiderwebs stronger than the steel of machinery* . . . *Yet there*  
*are people who believe in change, who have made changes, who*  
*have made the changes work, who have made change burst into*  
*flower . . . Caramba! . . . Nobody can hold spring back!*

#### POETRY AND POLITICS

I have spent almost all of 1969 in Isla Negra. Starting early in the morning, the sea goes into its fantastic swelling-up routine, looking as if it were kneading an infinite loaf of bread. The spilling foam, driven up by the icy yeast of the deep, is white like flour.

Winter is solidly entrenched and foggy. Every day we add to its local charm with a fire in the hearth. The whiteness of the sands on the beach offers us a world forever solitary, as it was before there were any people or summer vacationers on earth. But don't think that I hate summer crowds. As soon as summer nears, girls come to the sea, men and children approach the waves cautiously, leaping clear of danger. It's their version of man's thousand-year-old dance, perhaps the first of all summer dances.

In winter the houses in Isla Negra are covered up by night's darkness. Only mine lights up. Sometimes I think there is someone in the house across the road. I see a light in a window. It's only an optical illusion. There is no one in the Captain's house. It's the light from my window mirrored in his.

I've gone to write every day of the year in the hideaway where I do my work. It's not easy to get there or stay there. For the moment my two dogs, Panda and Chou Tu, have something to keep them happy. It's a Bengal tiger's skin, which I use as a rug in this small room. I brought it from China a good many years ago. Its claws and hair have fallen out. And there's some danger from the moths, but Matilde and I ward them off.

My dogs like to sprawl out over the old enemy. They fall asleep instantly, like victors after a battle, drained by the fight.

They stretch across the door as if to force me to stay in, to go on with my work.

There's always something going on in this house. There's a long-distance call for me. What should the answer be? I'm not in. Someone sends another message. What should the answer be? I'm in.

I'm not in. I'm in. I'm not in. This is the life of a poet whose remote hideaway in Isla Negra has stopped being remote. I am always being asked, especially by journalists, what I am writing, what I am working on. This question has always surprised me because it's so superficial. For, as a matter of fact, I am always doing the same thing. I have never stopped doing the same thing. Poetry?

I had been at it a long time before I realized that I was writing something called poetry. I have never been interested in definitions or labels. Discussions of aesthetics bore me to death. I am not belittling those who have them, but I am as indifferent to the birth certificate of a literary work as I am to the post-mortem on Walt Whitman. And, for all their merits, the paraphernalia of literature should not take the place of naked creation.

I changed notebooks several times during the year. Those notebooks bound together by the green thread of my handwriting are around somewhere. I filled many that gradually turned into books, passing from one metamorphosis into another, from immobility into movement, from glowworms into fireflies.

Political life came like a thunderclap to pull me away from my work. I returned to the crowds once more.

The human crowd has been the lesson of my life. I can come to it with the born timidity of the poet, with the fear of the timid, but once I am in its midst, I feel transfigured. I am part of the essential majority, I am one more leaf on the great human tree.

Solitude and multitude will go on being the primary obligations of the poet in our time. In solitude, the battle of the surf on the Chilean coast made my life richer. I was intrigued by and have loved passionately the battling waters and the rocks they battled against, the teeming ocean life, the impeccable formation of the "wandering birds," the splendor of the sea's foam.

But I learned much more from the huge tide of lives, from the tenderness I saw in thousands of eyes watching me together. This message may not come to all poets, but anyone who has felt it will keep it in his heart, will work it into his poems.

To have embodied hope for many men, even for one minute, is something unforgettable and profoundly touching for the poet.

#### PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

One morning in 1969 the secretary general of my party and other comrades came to my seaside hide-out, my house in Isla Negra. They came to offer me the conditional candidacy for President of the Republic, a candidacy they would propose to the six or seven parties of Popular Unity. They had everything ready: program, type of government, emergency measures for the future, etc. Up until that moment, each of those parties had a candidate and each wanted to keep him. We Communists were the only ones who did not have one. Our position was to back the one candidate designated by the leftist parties; he would become the Popular Unity's candidate. But it was all up in the air, and it could not be left like that much longer. The candidates of the right were in the thick of the race and had their publicity machines going strong. Unless we united under a common electoral cause, we would suffer a crushing defeat.

The only way to achieve some sort of unity quickly was for the Communists to name their own candidate. When I accepted the party's nomination, we made the Communist position quite clear. Our support would be thrown to the candidate who had the good will of the others. If such a consensus was not reached, I would remain a candidate right through to the end.

It was a courageous way to force the others to come to an agreement. When I accepted I told Comrade Corvalán I was doing it on condition that my resignation would be accepted when I tendered it. My withdrawal was inevitable, I felt. It was far too improbable that everyone could be rallied around a Communist. In other words, all the other parties needed our support (even the Christian-Democratic candidates), but none of them had to give us theirs.

However, my candidacy, started that morning in Isla Negra,

beside the sea, caught fire. I was in demand everywhere. I was moved by the hundreds and thousands of ordinary men and women who crushed me to them and kissed me and wept. Slum dwellers from the outskirts of Santiago, miners from Coquimbo, men who worked copper in the desert, peasant women who waited for me hours on end with babies in their arms, the neglected and poor from the Bío-Bío River to beyond the Strait of Magellan—I spoke or read my poems to them all in pouring rain, in the mud on streets and roads, in the south wind that sends shivers through each of us.

My enthusiasm was mounting. More and more people were attending my rallies, more and more women coming to them. Fascinated and terrified, I began to wonder what I would do if I was elected President of a republic wholly untamed, patently unable to solve its problems, deeply in debt—and probably the most ungrateful of them all. Its Presidents were acclaimed in the first month and martyred, justly or not, for the remainder of the five years and eleven months of their tenure.

#### ALLENDE'S CAMPAIGN

It was a happy day when the news came: Allende had emerged as the one promising candidate of the entire Popular Unity. With the approval of my party, I quickly turned in my resignation. Before a huge and happy crowd, I announced my withdrawal and Allende accepted his nomination. The enormous rally was held in a park. People filled every visible space, including the trees; legs and heads stuck out of the branches. There is nothing like these hard-bitten Chileans.

I knew the candidate. I had been with him in three previous campaigns, reading poems and making speeches all through Chile's abrupt and endless territory. Three times in succession, every six years, my persistent comrade had been a presidential contender. This would be the fourth, and the victorious time.

Arnold Bennett or Somerset Maugham (I don't remember just which of the two) tells about a time when he had to share a room with Winston Churchill. The first thing that eminent politician did on waking was to stretch out a hand to take a huge Havana from the night table, the moment he opened his eyes, and



start smoking it, right then and there. Only a healthy cave man, with the iron constitution of the Stone Age, can do this.

None of those who accompanied Allende could keep up with his stamina. He had a knack worthy of Churchill himself: he could fall asleep whenever he felt like it. Sometimes we would be traveling over the infinite arid stretches of the north of Chile. Allende slept soundly in a corner of the car. Suddenly a small red speck would appear on the road, and, as we approached, it would become a group of fifteen or twenty men with their wives, their children, and their flags. The car would stop. Allende would rub his eyes to face the high sun and the small group, which was singing. He would join in and sing the national anthem. And he would speak to them—lively, swift, and eloquent. Then he would return to the car and we would continue on over Chile's long long roads. Allende would sink back into sleep effortlessly. Every twenty-five minutes or so, the scene would be repeated: group, flags, song, speech, and back to sleep.

Facing huge crowds of thousands upon thousands of Chileans, going from car to train, from train to airplane, from airplane to ship, from ship to horse, Allende would carry out the day's heavy schedule, never holding back, during those exhausting months. Almost all the members of his group lagged behind, fatigued. Later, when he was in fact President of Chile, his implacable efficiency was the cause of four or five heart attacks among his co-workers.

#### AMBASSADOR IN PARIS

When I came to take over the Embassy in Paris, I found that I had to pay a heavy price for my vanity. I had accepted the post without giving it much thought, once again letting myself be swept along by the current of life. I was pleased at the idea of representing a victorious popular government, after so many years of mediocre and lying ones. Perhaps, deep down, what appealed to me most was the thought of entering with new dignity the Chilean Embassy building where I had swallowed so many humiliations when I organized the immigration of the Spanish Republicans into my country. Each of my predecessors had had a hand in my persecution, had helped to revile and hurt me. The persecuted would now sit in the persecutor's chair, eat at his table,

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sleep in his bed, and open the windows to let the new air of the world into the old Embassy.

The most difficult part was to let air in. The stifling showplace décor stung my nostrils and my eyes that night in March 1971 when Matilde and I came into our bedroom and got into the illustrious beds where ambassadors and ambassadors' wives had died peacefully or in torment.

It's a bedroom large enough to lodge a warrior and his horse; there's space enough for the horse to feed and the horseman to sleep. The ceilings are very high and finely decorated. The furniture consists of velvety things in a color vaguely resembling a dry leaf, trimmed with horrible fringes, furnishings in a style that shows signs of riches and traces of decadence at the same time. The rugs may have been lovely sixty years ago. Now they have taken on the permanent color of footprints and a moth-eaten smell of conventional and defunct conversations.

In addition, the nervous personnel who had been waiting for us had thought of everything except the heat in the gigantic bedroom. Matilde and I spent our first diplomatic night in Paris numb with cold. On the second night, the heat worked. It had been in use for sixty years and its filters had become useless. The hot air of the antiquated system allowed only carbon dioxide to pass through. We couldn't complain about the cold, like the night before, but we felt palpitations and distress from the poisoning. We had to open the windows to let in the cold winter air. Maybe the old-time ambassadors were getting even with an upstart who had come to supplant them without bureaucratic merits or genealogical crests.

We decided we would have to look for a house where we could breathe with the leaves, the water, the birds, the air. Eventually this idea would turn into an obsession. Like prisoners kept awake by the idea of freedom, we searched and searched for pure air outside of Paris.

Being an ambassador was something new and uncomfortable for me. But it held a challenge. A revolution had taken place in Chile. A revolution Chilean-style, analyzed and discussed a good deal. Enemies within and without were sharpening their teeth to destroy it. For one hundred and eighty years, the same kind of rulers under different labels had succeeded one another in my

came from the most powerful and reactionary family in the country, he was a man of the left, without any party affiliation. What I needed more than anything was an intelligent functionary who knew his work and whom I could trust. Until then, Edwards had been chargé d'affaires in Havana. Vague rumors had reached me of some difficulties he had had in Cuba. Since I had known him for years as a man of the left, I did not consider this very important.

My new counselor arrived from Cuba in a very nervous state and told me his story. I got the impression that both sides were right and at the same time neither was, the way it sometimes happens in life. Little by little, Jorge Edwards repaired his shattered nerves, stopped chewing his nails, and helped me with evident ability, intelligence, and loyalty. During his two years of hard work at the Embassy, my counselor was my best comrade and functionary, perhaps the only one in that huge office building who was politically impeccable.

When a North American company tried to put an embargo on Chilean copper, a wave of feeling ran through the whole of Europe. Not only did the newspapers, television, and radio take up this affair with special interest, but once again the conscience of the people rallied to our defense.

Stevadores in France and Holland refused to unload the copper at their ports as a sign of protest against the aggression. That marvelous gesture stirred the world. Such stories of solidarity teach more about the history of our time than the lecture rooms at any university.

More humble but even more touching incidents also come to mind. On the second day of the embargo, a French lady of modest means, from a small country town, sent us a one-hundred-franc note from her savings to help Chile defend its copper. And a letter of warm support as well, signed by all the inhabitants of the town, including the mayor, the parish priest, workers, athletes, and students.

Messages came to me from Chile, sent by hundreds of friends, known and unknown, who congratulated me for standing up to the international pirates. I received a package by parcel post, sent to me by a working-class woman, containing a maté gourd, four avocados, and a dozen green chili peppers.

country, and they all did the same thing. The rags, the disgraceful housing, the children without schools or shoes, the prisons, and the cudgeling of my poor people continued.

Now we could breathe and sing. That's what I liked about my new situation.

In Chile, diplomatic appointments require the senate's approval. The Chilean right had constantly praised me as a poet and had even honored me with speeches. Of course, it's obvious that they would have much preferred making these speeches at my funeral. In the senate vote to ratify my appointment as ambassador, I squeezed by with a majority of three votes. The rightists and some Christian-hypocrites voted against me, under the secrecy of the little white and black balls.

The previous ambassador had literally covered the walls with a tapestry of photographs of every one of his predecessors in the post, in addition to his own portrait. It was an impressive collection of vacuous people, save two or three, among whom was the distinguished Blest Gana, our small Chilean Balzac. I ordered the descent of the spectral portraits and replaced them with more solid men: five engraved likenesses of the heroes who gave Chile a flag, nationhood, and independence; and contemporary photographs of Aguirre Cerda, progressive President of the Republic; Luis Emilio Recabarren, founder of the Communist Party; and Salvador Allende. The walls now looked infinitely better.

I don't know what the secretaries in the Embassy thought, rightists almost all of them. The reactionary parties had run the country for a hundred years. Not even a doorman was appointed unless he was a conservative or a royalist. Calling themselves "revolution in freedom," the Christian-Democrats, in turn, showed a voracity parallel to that of the ancient reactionaries. Later, these parallels converged until they almost became the same line.

The bureaucracy, the archipelagos of the public buildings, everything was still overrun with employees, inspectors, and counselors from the right, as if Allende and Popular Unity had not won in Chile and the ministers in the government were not socialists and Communists now.

This state of affairs led me to request that the post of counselor at the Embassy in Paris be filled by one of my friends, a career diplomat and an outstanding writer, Jorge Edwards. Although he

At the same time, Chile's reputation had grown remarkably. We had been transformed into a country that actually *existed*. Before this, we had gone unnoticed among the great number of undeveloped countries. Now, for the first time, we had an identity and no one could ignore the great fight we were putting up to build a future for our country.

Everything happening in our country stirred up extraordinary interest in France and all of Europe. Popular rallies, student meetings, books in all languages studied, examined, photographed us. Every day, I had to put off journalists who wanted to know all there was to know and much more. President Allende was a world figure. The discipline and firmness of our working class was admired and praised.

Warm sympathy toward Chile grew enormously as a result of the conflicts arising from the nationalization of our copper deposits. It was clear to people everywhere that this was a giant step along the road to Chile's new independence. Without subterfuge of any kind, the popular government made our sovereignty definitive by reconquering copper for our country.

#### RETURN TO CHILE

When I returned to Chile I was received by new vegetation in the streets and in the parks. Our marvelous spring had been painting the forest leaves green. Our old gray capital needs green leaves the way the human heart needs love. I inhaled the freshness of this young spring. When we are far from our country, we never picture it in its winter. Distance wipes away the hardships of winter, the forsaken country towns, children barefoot in the cold. The memory only thinks of bringing us green countrysides, yellow and red flowers, the blue sky of our national anthem. This time I actually found the beautiful season which has so often been only a dream created by distance.

Another vegetation splorched the walls of the city. It was the moss of hatred covering them with its tapestries. Anti-Communist posters gushing insolence and lies; posters against Cuba; anti-Soviet posters; posters against peace and humaneness; blood-thirsty posters predicting mass murders and Jakartas. This was the new vegetation defiling the city's walls.

I knew from experience the tone and the drift of this propaganda. I had lived with it in pre-Hitler Europe. That was exactly the spirit of Hitlerite propaganda: the extravagant use of lies, with no holds barred; the all-out campaign of threats and fear; parading all the weapons of hatred against what the future promised. I felt that they wanted to change the very essence of our life. I could not understand how there could be Chileans who insulted our national spirit like this.

When the reactionary right had to depend on terrorism, it used it unscrupulously. General Schneider, the army chief of staff, a respected and respectable man who opposed a coup d'état to prevent Allende's accession to the presidency of the republic, was assassinated. Near his home, a motley crew of fiends machine-gunned him in the back. The operation was directed by an ex-general who had been kicked out of the army. The gang was made up of young members of the social set and professional delinquents.

When the crime was proved and the man who was the brains behind it was thrown into jail, he was sentenced to thirty years by a military court. However, the sentence was reduced to two years by the Supreme Court. In Chile, a poor devil who steals a chicken because he is hungry gets double the sentence imposed on the assassin of the commander in chief of the army. This is the class-conscious application of laws elaborated by the ruling class.

Allende's victory came as a weird shock to that ruling class. For the first time, it crossed their minds that laws so carefully fabricated by them could bounce back in their faces. They scurried off somewhere for cover, with their stocks, jewels, bank notes, gold coins. They went off to Argentina, Spain, they even got as far as Australia. Their terror of the people would have made them reach the North Pole in record time.

Later they would come back.

#### FREI

Blocked everywhere by diabolical and legal obstacles, the Chilean road was at all times strictly constitutional. In the meantime, the oligarchy patched up its tattered clothing and transformed itself



into a Fascist faction. The North American blockade became more implacable after the nationalization of copper. In league with ex-President Frei, I.T.T. threw the Christian-Democrats into the arms of the new Fascist right.

The diametrically opposed personalities of Allende and Frei have always preoccupied Chile. Perhaps for the very reason that they are such different men, each in his own way a strong leader in a country without a tradition of strong leaders, each with his own goals and his road well marked out.

I think I knew Allende well. There was nothing enigmatic about him. As for Frei, we were in the senate at the same time. He is a strange, highly premeditative man, a far cry from Allende's spontaneity. Yet he often explodes into violent laughter, strident cackles. I like people who are given to loud outbursts of laughter (I am not gifted that way). But there are laughs and laughs. Frei's break out of a troubled, serious face, very intent on the needle and thread with which he is sewing together his political life. It's a sudden laughter that is a bit startling, like the screech of certain birds at night. Aside from this, his behavior is generally circumspect and deliberately cordial.

I often found his political zigzagging depressing, before it disillusioned me completely. I remember that one day he came to see me in my house in Santiago. At that time the possibility of an understanding between the Communists and the Christian-Democrats was in the air. They were not yet called Christian-Democrats, but Falange Nacional, a horrid name adopted while they were still deeply impressed by the young Spanish Fascist, Primo de Rivera. Then, after the Spanish war, they came under the influence of Maritain, became anti-Fascists, and took a different name.

Our conversation was casual but friendly. We Communists were interested in reaching some kind of understanding with all men and all sectors of good will; we would never get anywhere by ourselves. Although he was naturally evasive, Frei let me know the leftist feelings he apparently had at that time. He made me a parting gift of one of those laughs that fall out of his mouth like stones. "We'll have another talk," he said. But, two days later, I realized that our conversation had ended for good.

After Allende's triumph, Frei, an ambitious and cold politician,

believed he needed a reactionary alliance if he was to return to power. It was merely a pipe dream, the frozen dream of a political spider. His web will not hold up; the coup d'état he sponsored won't do him any good. Fascism does not put up with compromises, it demands submission. Frei's figure will become more obscure each year. And someday his memory will have to face responsibility for the crime.

#### TOMIC

From its beginnings, from the moment it dropped the unacceptable name of Falange, the Christian-Democratic Party interested me very much. It came into being when a small group of Catholic intellectuals formed a Maritain-Thomist elite. This philosophy did not appeal to me. I harbor a natural indifference toward people who are theorists about poetry, politics, or sex. But the practical consequences of that small movement were felt in a special, unexpected way. I got several young leaders to speak out for the Spanish Republic at the huge meetings I organized on my return from Madrid, which was still in the throes of fighting then. This participation was unprecedented, prodded by the Conservative Party, the old Church hierarchy almost broke up the new party. Only the intervention of a farsighted bishop saved it from political suicide. A statement from the Bishop of Talca saved the group that would eventually turn into Chile's biggest party. Its ideology changed completely with the years.

After Frei, the most important man among the Christian-Democrats was Radomiro Tomic. I met him in my senate days, right in the middle of strikes and election stumping in northern Chile. In those days the Christian-Democrats followed us Communists around in order to take part in our rallies. We were and still are the most popular people in the deserts of potassium nitrate and copper—I mean, among the most victimized workers on the American continent. Recabarren came from there, the workers' press and the first unions were born there. None of this would have been possible without the Communists.

At that time, Tomic was not only the most promising Christian-Democrat but their most attractive personality and most gifted speaker.

into a Fascist faction. The North American blockade became more implacable after the nationalization of copper. In league with ex-President Frei, I.T.T. threw the Christian-Democrats into the arms of the new Fascist right.

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Things had changed very much in 1964 when the Christian-Democrats won the elections that carried Frei to the presidency of the republic. The campaign of the candidate who defeated Allende was based on unprecedented anti-Communist attacks, conducted with newspaper and radio warnings intended to terrorize the people. This propaganda was enough to make anybody's hair stand on end: nuns would be shot, little boys would die run through by the bayonets of bearded men just like Fidel, little girls would be torn from their parents and shipped to Siberia. Later, from testimony given before a U.S. Senate special committee, we learned that the C.I.A. had spent twenty million dollars in that savage campaign of terror.

Once he had been anointed President, Frei gave his only big rival in the party a Greek gift: he appointed Radomiro Tomic Chilean ambassador to the United States. Frei knew that his government would renegotiate with the American copper companies. At this time, the entire country was pleading for nationalization. Like an expert sleight-of-hand artist, Frei changed this term to "Chileanization," and with new agreements, he insured the delivery of our major national wealth into the hands of the powerful consortiums, Kennecott and Anaconda. The economic consequences were disastrous for Chile and heartbreaking for Tomic: Frei had wiped him off the map. An ambassador of Chile to the United States who collaborated in handing over the copper would not receive the support of the Chilean people. Of the three candidates at the next election, Tomic took a poor third place.

Shortly after resigning from his post as ambassador to the United States, at the beginning of 1968, Tomic came to see me in Isla Negra. He had recently arrived from the north and was not yet officially a candidate for the presidency. Our friendship stood firm through the political storms, and still does. But we had a hard time understanding each other this time. He wanted a wider alliance of the progressive forces to take the place of our Popular Unity, under the name of the Union of the People. This proposal was impossible; his part in the copper negotiations disqualified him with the political left. Moreover, the two major parties of the popular movement, the Communists and the Socialists, had come of age and could carry a man of their own to the presidency.

Discouraged as he was, Tomic revealed something to me before leaving my home. Andrés Zaldívar, the Christian-Democratic

Secretary of the Treasury, had shown him documents that proved the country's economy was already bankrupt. "We're heading for a fall," Tomic told me. "The situation can't last four more months. It's disastrous. Zaldívar has given me the details, our bankruptcy is inevitable."

A month after Allende was elected, but before he took over the presidency, the same cabinet minister, Zaldívar, publicly announced the country's imminent economic disaster, but this time he blamed it on the international repercussions of Allende's election. That's how history is written. At least that's how it is written by twisted, opportunist politicians like Zaldívar.

#### ALLENDE

My country has been betrayed more than any other in our time. From the nitrate deserts, from the submarine coal mines, from the terrible heights where the copper lies buried and is extracted with inhuman labor by the hands of our people, a freedom movement of magnificent proportions sprang up. That movement raised a man named Allende to the presidency of Chile to carry out reforms and measures of justice that could not be postponed, and to rescue our national wealth from the claws of foreigners.

Wherever he went, in the most far-off countries, the people admired our President and praised the remarkable pluralism of our government. Never in the history of the United Nations in New York had an ovation been heard like the one given the President of Chile by delegates from all over the world. Here in Chile, in the middle of enormous difficulties, a truly just society was being erected, based on our sovereignty, our national pride, and the heroism of the best of Chile's population. On our side, on the side of the Chilean revolution, were the constitution and the law, democracy and hope.

They had everything they wanted on their side. They had harlequins and jumping jacks, lots of clowns, terrorists with pistols and chains, phony monks and degraded members of the armed services. They all rode the merry-go-round of petty spite. Jarpa the Fascist went along, hand in hand with his nephews from "Fatherland and Freedom," ready to break anyone's head or spirit, as long as they recovered for themselves the huge hacienda they called Chile. With them, livening up the show, tripped a

great banker and dancer, spattered with blood, González Videla, the rumba king; rumbaing from side to side, he had long ago handed his party over to the enemies of the people. Now it was Frei who was dangling his Christian-Democratic Party before the same enemies of the people, dancing to the tune these enemies played, dancing, moreover, with ex-Colonel Viaux, whose dirty work he had shared. These were the principal actors in the comedy. They had in readiness all the food they had hoarded, the "migueltros,"\* the clubs, and bullets like those that had inflicted mortal wounds on our people in Iquique, Ránquil, Salvador, Puerto Montt, José María Cero, Futillar, Puente Alto, and so many other places. Hernán Mery's assassins danced with those who should have been defending his memory. They danced with a light heart, as if they could never hurt a fly. They were offended at being reproached for those "silly little details."

Chile has a long civil history with few revolutions and many stable governments, all of them conservative and mediocre. Many little Presidents and only two great ones: Balmaceda and Allende. Curiously enough, both came from the same background, the moneyed class, which calls itself the aristocracy here. As men of principles bent on making a great country out of one diminished by a mediocre oligarchy, the two were steered down the same road to death. Balmaceda was driven to suicide for refusing to deliver the nitrate riches to foreign companies.

Allende was murdered because he nationalized the other wealth of Chile's subsoil: copper. In both cases, the Chilean oligarchy set bloody revolutions in motion. In both cases, the military played the bloodhounds. The English companies in Balmaceda's time, the North Americans in Allende's time, instigated and financed these military actions.

In both cases, the homes of the Presidents were sacked by orders from our distinguished "aristocrats." Balmaceda's rooms were smashed with axes. Allende's home, thanks to world progress, was bombed from the air by our heroic airmen.

Yet these two men were very different. Balmaceda was a captivating orator. His imperious nature drove him to rely more and

\* Probably devised by someone named Miguel, these are clusters of nails sharpened at both ends and bent into a curve. They are dropped along the road to puncture the tires of oncoming vehicles.—*Tyrris*.

more on himself. He was sure of the high purpose of his intentions. He was surrounded by enemies at all times. His superiority over those around him was so great, and his solitude so vast, that he ended by withdrawing into himself. The people, who should have gone to his aid, did not exist as a power, that is, were not organized. This President was doomed to behave like a visionary, a dreamer: his dream of greatness remained a dream. After his assassination, the rapacious foreign businessmen and our creole parliamentarians gained possession of the nitrate: for the foreign dignitaries, the property and the concessions; for the creoles, the bribe money. Once the thirty pieces of silver had been exchanged, everything returned to normal. The blood of a few thousand men of the people dried up quickly on the battlefields. The most exploited workers in the world, those in Chile's northern regions, never stopped producing enormous quantities of pounds sterling for London.

Allende was never a great orator. And as a statesman he never took a step without consulting his advisers. He was the antidicator, the democrat of principles, even in the smallest particulars. The country that fell to his lot was no longer Balmaceda's inexperienced people; he found a powerful working class that knew what it was all about. Allende was a collective leader; although not from the popular classes, he was a product of the struggle of those classes against the paralysis and corruption of their exploiters. This makes the work Allende realized in such a short time superior to Balmaceda's; going further, it is the most important achievement in the history of Chile. The nationalization of copper alone was a titanic accomplishment. As were the ending of the monopolies, the farsighted agrarian reform, and many other objectives attained under his government, whose essential nature was collective.

Allende's acts and works, whose value to the nation can never be obliterated, enraged the enemies of our liberation. The tragic symbolism of this crisis became clear in the bombing of the government palace; it brings to mind the blitzkrieg of the Nazi air force against defenseless foreign cities—Spanish, English, Russian. Now the same crime was being carried out again in Chile. Chilean pilots were dive-bombing the palace, which for centuries had been the center of the city's civic life.

I am writing these quick lines for my memoirs only three days

after the unspeakable events took my great comrade, President Allende, to his death. His assassination was hushed up, he was buried secretly, and only his widow was allowed to accompany that immortal body. The aggressors' version is that they found clear signs of suicide on his lifeless body. The version published abroad is different. Immediately after the aerial bombardment, the tanks went into action, many tanks, fighting heroically against a single man: the President of the Republic of Chile, Salvador Allende, who was waiting for them in his office, with no other company but his great heart, surrounded by smoke and flames.

They couldn't pass up such a beautiful occasion. He had to be machine-gunned because he would never have resigned from office. That body was buried secretly, in an inconspicuous spot. That corpse, followed to its grave only by a woman who carried with her the grief of the world, that glorious dead figure, was riddled and ripped to pieces by the machine guns of Chile's soldiers, who had betrayed Chile once more.

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