

Chile

The Divine Coup



Ovide Bastien

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Other Books Published by Author

[Chili: le coup divin](#) published by “Les Éditions du Jour” in September 1974, in Montreal, Canada. Republished on Amazon as an eBook in 2014 and in paperback in 2015. A Spanish version, [Chile: el golpe divino](#), published on Amazon as an eBook and in paperback in 2017. It includes a new section, Epíloga 2017.

[CHILE: Underside of Economic Miracle](#) published as a class manual at Dawson College from 1995 to 2011. Updated and republished on Amazon as an eBook in 2014 and in paperback in 2015.

[My 9/11 Awakening to America’s Moral Crisis](#) (Diary and Letters, Chile: 11 September 1973 Military Coup), published on Amazon as an eBook and in paperback in 2015.

[Love or Money: What Makes the World Go Round?](#) published on Amazon as an eBook and in paperback in 2015.

[Cry of the Earth – Cry of the Poor](#), published on Amazon as an eBook and in paperback in 2015.

[Globalization Under Attack](#), published on Amazon as an eBook and in paperback in 2017.

Conferences and Interview

To see the talk I gave on Chile during the Social Forum in Ottawa on 22 August 2014:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJqi5bSLN0c>

Christ Dayo from the CHRY News Collective interviewed me in late September 2014. To listen to this half-hour radio interview on the Chilean Coup:

<https://www.mixcloud.com/discover/oide-bastien/>

To see my 5-minute 2014 homage (mostly in French) to Sister Marie Denise Dubois, a woman who dedicated her life to the marginalized in Chile and Honduras:

[Marie Denise Dubois ou l'autre visage de l'Église](#)

To see the talk I gave on Chile – I was invited by the Egyptian Canadian Coalition for Democracy – during the World Social Forum in Montreal on 10 August 2016, go [here](#) (The talk is in French):

This book was made possible thanks to the collaboration, often anonymous and sometimes clandestine, of a large number of people in Chile and Quebec. For security reasons, it is preferable to keep their names silent. A very big thanks to each and every one of them.

To my comrades of Chile. To the living and the dead whose names we will never know, but who have fought and who are still struggling, even in prisons and under torture, for the advent of a society that brings out the best in human beings...

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Notes for English edition

Though *Chile: the Divine Coup* was first published exactly 43 years ago – it was published in French by Éditions du Jour on 11 September 1974, on the first anniversary of the military coup that overthrew Salvador Allende – I believe that it remains relevant today, in 2017, in a context where globalization, and its ideological underpinning neoliberalism, are being increasingly called into question.

In the early 1970s the Popular Unity government of Chile, under the charismatic leadership of Salvador Allende, was attempting to do something about an economy in which the gap between rich and poor was immense and obscene, an economy that for decades had been excluding the poor and marginalized masses. It was making a noble and very courageous attempt to change “business as usual”. To give a voice to the voiceless. To give housing, land and dignity to the landless and homeless, including to the Mapuches who had suffered the most from colonization. To create a public health system similar to the one most Americans dream of having today but that is constantly being blocked by powerful moneyed lobbies and free market fundamentalists. To create a public and free post secondary education system, one that would allow the usually-excluded-masses access to university. To allow Chileans, through the nationalization of large American copper multinationals, to become the real masters and owners of their natural resources. To tackle head on the profoundly undemocratic forces of globalization, forces that grant ever more power to transnational corporations and ever less power to the masses they exclude and view with indifference as so many use-rapidly-and-throw-away objects.

Yes, I know... Many will argue that the Popular Unity government and their leader had it all wrong. That they were leading Chile towards an abyss. That they were destroying the very heart and soul of Chile. Dreaming unrealizable dreams and leading the masses of Chilean workers and peasants down an ill-

conceived and pre-doomed socialist path. Fomenting conflict and class struggle where before there was peace and harmony.

Yes, I know... But having read, not long ago, Joseph Stiglitz's *Rewriting the Rules of the American Economy*¹ in which he argues that the main ills affecting the American economy in the last three decades originate from free market fundamentalist economic policies, policies that have increased the gap between rich and poor, radically weakened the clout of labor unions and diminished the purchasing power, social safety net, and working conditions of the majority, and accelerated climate change; having observed the backlash against globalization in the U.S. expressed both by the astonishing performance of Bernie Sanders who proposed nothing less than socialism – including a public health system – and by Donald Trump's unexpected electoral victory; having observed what happened in the last elections in England when the Labor Party, under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, proposed a program similar to that proposed by Stiglitz, and similar also in some fundamental respects to that of the Popular Unity government – the Labor Manifesto promised to renationalize railways; having observed what has been happening in Greece, where, at the height of the crisis in 2011, factory workers at the Viome factory in the second city of Thessalinki decided to take over their plant that was supposed to close, and, exactly like thousands of Chilean workers had done nearly half a century ago, formed a cooperative that is still thriving today and that is now producing eco-friendly soap and household detergents²; having observed the masses of refugees desperately trying to escape a situation of war, political instability and poverty and often drowning in the Mediterranean Sea as their makeshift boats capsize – a situation in which the most powerful nations of the world have had a heavy, and very

¹ An Agenda for Growth and Shared Prosperity, with Nell Abernathy, Adam Hersh, Susan Holmerg, and Mike Konezal, A Roosevelt Institute book, W. W. Norton & Company, New York – London, 2015.

² Aditya Chakraborty, [How could we cope if capitalism failed?](#) Ask 26 Greek factory workers, The Guardian, 18 July 2017. Retrieved on 6 September 2017.

determining but generally totally unacknowledged role... But having observed all of the above I wonder if what happened in Chile more than 44 years ago does not hold powerful lessons for our world of today.

Joseph Stiglitz is not proposing socialism in his *Rewriting the Rules of the American Economy*. And the socialism proposed by Bernie Sanders during the primaries, and the Labor Manifesto presented under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn are a far cry from the socialism that was being implemented by the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende.

However, there exists a strong resemblance between Joseph Stiglitz, Bernie Sanders, and Jeremy Corbyn, on the one hand, and Salvador Allende's Popular Unity government, on the other: though the role of private enterprise is acknowledged, *priority is given to the public sector* in key areas such as health, education and pensions. Stiglitz even suggests that the US Federal Postal Service "create a 'post card' debit card" that would be available with minimum fees and high protection for consumers, a card that "would force banks and payday lenders to actually compete on price and services rather than confusion and predation".

Chile: the Divine Coup is also relevant in 2017 for another reason. In this book I argue that the Chilean Catholic Church, and even the Vatican, sided with the military in overthrowing the Popular Unity government. The latter, though prioritizing the poor and marginalized through a major expansion of the public sector, was viewed by the Church as promoting atheism, even though a substantial part of the Popular Unity sympathizers were devout Catholics or Protestants, many even nuns and priests. The Catholic Church, by siding with the military, was in effect choosing to maintain the capitalist status quo.

The new leader of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis, seems willing, contrary to his predecessors, to call into question the status quo, and even the system as such. He has repeatedly criticized an economy that leads to an obscene and ever growing

inequality, and that excludes and marginalizes the bulk of the world's poor and destroys the environment. Such an economy, he asserts, kills. He constantly refers to the "globalization of indifference", takes aim at those who deify the "profit motive", wonders why it is easy to rapidly come up with billions of dollars to save banks, but not the marginalized, and does not hesitate to criticize those who adhere to free market fundamentalist policies.

In many respects, one could argue that there is a community of thought between the non-believer, Salvador Allende, and the present leader of the Catholic Church.

In *Chile: the Divine Coup*, which was written during the brutal events that put an end to the socialist experiment of the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende, I accused the Chilean Catholic Church, and in particular its leader Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez, of complicity in the coup d'état. The military wanted to eliminate what they called the 'Marxist cancer' and to restore the Judeo-Christian soul of Chile and the Church supported this brutal and clearly fascist endeavor.

Today, however, Cardinal Silva is considered a national hero and an outstanding human rights advocate during the Pinochet dictatorship. He is described as "a staunch opponent of General Augusto Pinochet" (1973 to 1990), and "was awarded the [Human Rights Prize](#) from the United Nations on 11 December 1978, and the [Bruno Kreisky Human Rights Prize](#) on 19 October 1979."³

And Jean-Claude Ravet, during the fortieth anniversary of the Chilean coup, presents the role played by the Chilean Catholic Church in the following terms: "The horror could have been similar to what happened during the Argentinean dictatorship a

³ [Raúl Silva Henríquez](#), Wikipedia. Retrieved on 23 July 2017. In the French version of Wikipedia, retrieved in July 2015, Cardinal Silva was referred to as "a staunch opponent of General Augusto Pinochet".

few years later – 30 000 disappeared/dead between 1976 and 1983 – had it not been for the decision of the Church, which enjoyed a special status, to offer protection to the persecuted in the name of the Gospel, and ignoring the military diktat: Mind your business and nothing will happen to you!”⁴

In his impressive autobiography, Claude Lacaille, a priest of the Society of Foreign Missions who was a missionary in Chile during the Pinochet dictatorship and knew Cardinal Silva personally, asserts:

“Witnessing the intensity of the repression and regretting having been in favor of the coup d’état, Cardinal Silva decided to defend the innumerable victims of the dictatorship. (...) Immediately after the coup he founded, with Bishop Helmut Frenz of the Lutheran Church, the Peace Committee, which defended human rights. This organization was a constant thorn in the side of the military...”⁵

When Pinochet ordered the closure of the Peace Committee in December 1975, Cardinal Silva acquiesced. However, he demonstrated immense courage and determination by founding, just a few weeks later, a similar organization, the Vicariate of Solidarity.

“Throughout the years of the dictatorship the Vicariate of Solidarity was a constant pain in the neck for Pinochet. It offered the prohibited opposition political parties a space where they could gradually reorganize clandestinely and represented a shelter for all the persecuted, offering them legal services and protection. Under the vigorous leadership of Cardinal Silva, the

⁴ *L'autre 11 septembre*, Relations, n° 767, September 2013. (My translation from French)

⁵ *En mission dans la tourmente des dictatures 1965-1986. Haïti, Équateur, Chili*, Novalis, Montréal, 2014, p. 84. (My translation from French) For a commentary on this book see Louis Cornellier in *Le Devoir* 27 April 2014 : <http://www.ledevoir.com/culture/livres/407751/portrait-du-pretre-en-rebelle>

Church played a role of refuge and allowed union, community and political organizations to come back to life”, comments Lacaille.⁶

Not long ago a friend questioned, with considerable delicacy, my criticism of Cardinal Silva. He remarked:

“Archbishop Oscar Romero was conservative but, observing from day to day the pitiless repression that struck the poor of El Salvador, he was transformed into an extraordinary witness of liberation theology. Why are you finding it so difficult to acknowledge that Cardinal Silva would have experienced the same evolution?”

I did not know how to respond to my friend’s reproach and it bothered me for several days.

However, there are certain comments that I noted when reading Father Claude Lacaille’s book, just quoted above, that I found puzzling and that may explain my difficulty in acknowledging Cardinal Silva’s conversion to liberation theology.

During the funeral mass that he was celebrating in the cathedral for Pope Paul VI in 1978, Cardinal Silva “gave the kiss of peace to Pinochet and the three other torturers who were accompanying him” (Note added by author: Generals Merino, Matthei and Mendoza). “Totally scandalized by such hypocritical behavior, I immediately walked out of the cathedral. I just can’t stand such masquerades!”⁷

Following the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero in El Salvador in March 1980, the Popular Community Leaders of Santiago wanted to organize a last tribute for him in the Cathedral of Santiago. “Cardinal Silva, obviously annoyed, flatly refused their proposal, arguing that Romero was simply an ingenuous man who had been manipulated by the left. This

⁶ *Idem*, p. 84-5.

⁷ *Idem*, p. 100.

courageous Salvadoran bishop who had received death threats, and who every Sunday in his cathedral and on the Catholic radio station constantly denounced the horrors of all kinds - executions, tortures, etc. – committed in his country, this man did not deserve a mass?”⁸

So the very same cardinal, who, during a mass in the cathedral, agreed to give the kiss of peace to the four chief torturers in Chile, refused that a mass be celebrated in this same cathedral for Archbishop Romero, a man who was assassinated because he was denouncing torturers.

This 2017 English version of *Chile: The Divine Coup* is identical to the first French edition of 1974 except for one omission – an appendix in which I had reproduced a confidential report produced by the Peace Committee on the state of repression during the first six months of the coup – and the following additions:

- Excerpts from the diary I kept in Chile and letters I sent from Chile to my friends in Canada.
- Clearly identified new information, sometimes inserted in gray boxes, sometimes in footnotes.
- Epilogue 2017 in which I: 1) show that the complicity of the Catholic Church and its leader Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez with the Military Junta continued several years after the coup. And this despite the prominent role played by the Church, and in particular Cardinal Silva, in providing legal aid and assistance to the victims; 2) criticize a few authors who silence or deny this complicity; 3) comment on the impact of neoliberalism in Chile and describe the current impressive democratic awakening that is taking place in that country.

⁸ *Idem*, p. 115.

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- Appendix 7 – “Wikileaks: The Vatican Collaborated with the U.S. in Supporting Pinochet’s Coup”. This article, published in the Chilean digital newspaper El Mostrador on 8 April 2013, reveals that Pope Paul VI’s top and very powerful assistant, Giovanni Benelli, supported and justified the Chilean coup d’état.

The royalties for this book, which represent 70% of the sale price, will be allocated to the victims of the historic forest fire that took place in Chile in January and February 2017.

According to [ONEMI](#) (National Emergency Office of the Ministry of Interior) 595,042 hectares of forest were destroyed and more than 7,000 lost their homes.

Ovide Bastien
Montreal, 7 September 2017

Foreword by Dominique Boisvert

The story of how this book was written should one day be told.

Writing history as it happens, in clandestine and precarious conditions and without even knowing if what one is writing will ever be read... Working continuously for nearly five months, hiding the manuscript, getting it out of the country clandestinely, and being obliged, because of circumstances, to rely on friends to get it published: all that is out of the ordinary...

And yet that is not wherein lies the main interest of this book!

Ovide Bastien left for Chile with his wife in July 1973 in order to carry out studies in Latin America for two years. Trained as a philosopher he had planned to pursue his studies at university in economics while immersing himself, as much as it is possible to do so in two years, into the concrete daily life of Chileans.

Less than two months after his arrival, however, the coup d'état occurred! And it was followed, for nearly a year, by a 'state of war', heavy repression, and fascism. Instead of following, as planned, university lectures, the author was thus suddenly plunged into the school of daily events! A school where one learns so much more, so much faster, and things so much more meaningful and important.

It was at this school that from day to day, between 12 September 1973 and 1 February 1974, this book was written.

For me, this book first resounds like a cry. A cry of revolt, of faith and of hope.

A cry of revolt, of a deep and heart-wrenching revolt against the never-ending compromises of the Church, the Military, and the moneyed Elite.

A cry of faith, of an authentic faith in Jesus who came to proclaim the Good News of Liberation, but a faith called into

question by the shameless counter-witnessing of the Church.

A cry of hope, a hope that appears like the “last chance” for the Church to reconnect to and represent the authentic Jesus, he who came to liberate the poor and the oppressed.

It is the cry of a believer who, when discovering the true nature of his Church, is shocked and taken aback – it is always in times of crisis that masks fall and that one discovers the naked truth. A believer torn between two solidarities: on the one hand with his Church, and, on the other, with the poor and marginalized.

For to live day by day the horrors of repression, the anxieties of constant and arbitrary manhunts and searches, and the uncertainties of clandestinity, and this at the same time that the Chilean bishops are publicly thanking God for intervening in “History to save Chile from the Marxist yoke”, cannot but lead one to very unsettling questions!

Waking up in the morning and seeing corpses floating on the river that runs through Santiago, hearing accounts of the horrible torture that is being commonly practiced, seeing a man hunted by the military arrive at one’s door, his forehead covered with blood... All this at the same time that one sees, on the front page (and in color) of the main newspaper of Chile, Cardinal Silva Henríquez, the primate of the Chilean Church, giving thanks to God in the presence of the military junta: all this cannot but provoke a deep awakening!

One becomes aware, existentially and in one's skin, of all the pomp and masquerade with which the Church has clothed the Gospel in the course of History.

One discovers, through the very daily events that one is living, that the Jesus who is being presented to us, the Gospel that is being preached to us, and the Church to which we belong, are a Jesus, a Gospel and a Church substantially distorted by the

historical structures of an empire, a Church deeply marked sociologically, politically and economically.

And one starts wondering if the present theological discourse of the Catholic Church as an institution does not convey to us an understanding of Jesus, the Gospel and the Church that is merely that of Western Civilization, its Aristocracy, and its moneyed Elite...

In this book Ovide Bastien provides us with a rigorous and critical analysis of the Chilean institutional Catholic Church, examined in a particularly crucial, and thus particularly relevant, phase of its history. His conclusions have ramifications that extend far beyond the 11 September coup and the Chilean Catholic Church.

In this sense, I must admit that this book has led me to ask myself questions that are still with me today. Is there not a profound similarity between the ideology of the Chilean Church exposed in this book and that of the Catholic Church of Quebec? Is the understanding of the Gospel that justified the attitude taken by the Chilean Church in the context of the coup not similar to the understanding of the Gospel proclaimed by the Catholic Church of Quebec? Does the priority given by the Catholic Church of Chile to episcopal diplomacy to the detriment of the prophetic proclamation of the Word of God not also exist in many ways in our own Catholic Church of Quebec?

It is interesting to note in this respect that important work of critical analysis has already been undertaken in Quebec on the role played by several institutions – the school system, the legal system, the social policies of the State – in maintaining the status quo in our society.

So far, however, no such analysis has been undertaken regarding the role played in this respect by the Institutional Catholic Church of Quebec. *Chile: The Divine Coup*, through its analysis

of the Catholic Church of Chile, invites us to undertake such an analysis.

Dominique Gariépy-Boisvert, 19 August 1974⁹

⁹ Lawyer and activist (nonviolence, voluntary simplicity, environment, peace, social justice...), author of several books, including *L'ABC de la simplicité volontaire*, *Québec, tu négliges un trésor*, *La pauvreté vous rendra libres!* [To see his blog:](http://www.les7duquebec.com/author/dominique-boisvert/)
<http://www.les7duquebec.com/author/dominique-boisvert/>

My diary of 19 September 1973

I have often heard that the Catholic Church was not rooted in the working class. I have often discussed with people who tried to persuade me to believe that the Church sides with the powerful and rich.

At 31 years old, I did not share this view at all. Eight years spent in a religious community studying philosophy and theology, long hours of prayer, the ideal of justice and love that I perceived in the historical Jesus and constantly tried to imitate, the intense joy which I experienced in community life, —all this made me feel that this view of the Church was unfair and biased.

Today something has changed in me. What I have experienced since the coup d'état of September 11th has brutally awakened me. From the window of my apartment, I saw the Chilean Air Force bomb the Presidential Palace of a man who had just received—elections of March 1973—44% of the popular vote, a 44% that represents without doubt the most marginalized and poor sectors of Chile. I heard the last words of this dedicated man, expressed in a calm and very touching manner.

For four consecutive days, I heard constant gunfire outside. I saw jets leave on their mission of destruction. I heard people weep as they told me how their friend had been tortured and shot. I heard a Canadian priest who told me of the president of a JAP in his neighborhood who was shot in front of his wife and eight children. I heard that workers had been shot merely because they admitted they were socialists. I discovered that a Bolivian student at the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences—FLACSO—in Santiago was detained, tortured and then killed; the director of this United Nations institute, called upon to identify the body, said it was very mutilated.

I saw terror spreading like fire among all those the least bit sympathetic to the Popular Unity government. I saw people cut their hair short, get rid of their beards and dress up like the rich, for fear of the military. I found myself obliged, like thousands of others, to get rid of all books and articles of a leftist orientation. I saw people obliged to hide and escape from the country just because of their ideas, or because, as this fine Chilean doctor, they were involved in concrete projects to help the have-nots organize. I saw smiling, high-class Chileans, report a frightened neighbor to the military. I can still hear this Chilean relate to me how he saw the soldiers cut his friend's ears off. To make a prisoner talk, they sometimes pull out fingernails, cut a finger or two, sometimes the entire hand.

In this situation of brutal repression, what does the head of the powerful Catholic Church of Chile do? He offers the military Junta "his complete and disinterested collaboration". He kneels with them and prays the Lord so that he will assist them "in their very noble and difficult task". He calls on all Chileans to collaborate with the patriotic military. Then he takes refuge in noble, vague and pious principles. Accepting to be crucified for matters of principle was okay in the time of Christ, when the Church was still young, somewhat naïve and charismatic, when it had not yet learned to compromise, to make deals with the powerful, to be diplomatic. What the Chilean Church needs today are not values that would make it risk persecution, and possibly torture and death, but rather principles to save it from crucifixion!

That is why Cardinal Silva carefully abstains from condemning the military takeover and the brutal and massive repression that is now underway. That is why he sticks to pious principles: they are universal enough to be true, and too general to be pertinent. He readily speaks of sacrifice but does not have the courage to denounce the

concrete atrocities now taking place. He does not have the courage to convene all his priests and to publicly denounce the massive repression, the wave of hate and fascism that is now rampant in Chile. Nor does he have the guts to stand up to the military, who claim in public that they are acting in the name of God, and to tell them: Basta! Enough! To stay in his Episcopal Palace, assembled with his priests, and to tell the military that he is willing to be bombed for values that are sacred.

Where is love? In these empty words of diplomacy emanating from this “representative of Christ on earth” or in the heart of this atheist who died in his Presidential Palace because he refused to abandon, under the threat of violence, a mandate given to him by his people? What is the meaning of the Cardinal’s political neutrality? What does his silence in the context of this ongoing Human Tragedy really mean?

May those who have an inferior and less noble calling do what they have to do. May they cleanse Chile of that diabolical Marxism that has sown hatred in hearts, that has invented the concept of social classes and class struggle, that has invented domination and exploitation, that has tried to indoctrinate the marginalized masses living in slums so that they would come to believe that that they are not equal to those who live in the ritzy neighborhoods with their big, expensive cars, their large luxurious houses, their servants. As if all Chileans were not equal! Before the law. Before life. As if all Chileans were not, as sons of God and children of Mary, part of one big family. As if “los Chilenos rotos” — “the low-class raggy Chileans” — were not equal to those living in the ritzy neighborhoods. How ridiculous!

Go ahead, dear military, do what you have to do! Use guns and tanks! Meanwhile, we, of a higher calling, will stay neutral. Completely neutral. We will go to our cathedral. We will pray for peace. For love. For justice.

We will pray that the grace of the Lord may be with you when you fill the National Stadium with prisoners, when you execute the communist leader in front of his home, when you shoot the socialist worker in his shop, when you torture the Bolivian immigrant, the Mapúche Indian, when you burn Marxist literature in the streets of Santiago.

When things calm down in three or four years the Church may then decide to denounce the atrocities. But now? Never! Did the military Junta not make it ultra-clear who is the boss, and that it would not tolerate any criticism whatsoever?

Lord Jesus, you have no idea how happy I am that you died on the cross for us. What a beautiful symbol! I can sit here, on the pew of the cathedral and contemplate you for hours on end. Then I feel better inside, liberated. I can leave those modest and unrefined Chileans run in the streets of Santiago, shooting with their pistols at soldiers armed with machine guns, tanks and Hawker Hunter fighter jets. And as these Chileans, who have lost their way, bleed in their hearts and body, I can make the Church bells toll to celebrate the victory of the wealthy elite.

**“The hand of God has intervened to
save us”**

General Augusto Pinochet
Leader of the military junta

11 October 1973

Introduction

Just a few weeks before the September 11 coup, a member of the Popular Unity government, Luis Maira, praised the Chilean Catholic Church for its open and positive attitude towards the emerging socialism of Chile.¹⁰

As a matter of fact the Chilean Church, thanks to its declarations that were increasingly favorable to the oppressed masses, had indeed gained a progressive reputation in Latin America. Not only did it refrain from condemning the socialist government of Salvador Allende as a whole, but it also went so far as to carry out certain actions that considerably upset Chilean conservatives.

After Allende's electoral victory on 4 September 1970 the Chilean Episcopate declared that it welcomed the changes that favored the poor and the search for a new man. On 12 November of the same year, Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez, Archbishop of Santiago and President of the Episcopal Conference, paid a visit to the newly elected Socialist President; he offered him a Bible and, according to the daily *Ultima Hora*, offered support for the “basic reforms included in the electoral program of the Popular Unity government”. On 1 May 1971, Cardinal Silva accepted the invitation of the workers and went to the demonstration of the CUT (Central única de los trabajadores – Federation of Workers Unions). In November of the same year some bishops, including the cardinal, welcomed the revolutionary Fidel Castro during his official visit to Chile. Then in April 1972 the Chilean Episcopate once again expressed its satisfaction regarding the “revolutionary” social advance desired by the “vast majority” of Chileans.

That such actions and declarations would have caused a certain discontent among the Chilean right does not come as a surprise, as they represented a clear break with the traditional attitude of

¹⁰ *La Actitud Abierta de la Iglesia*, in *Chile Hoy*, Año II, no. 59, 27 July to 2 August 1973, p. 6.

the Catholic Church in Chile. One need but recall former days when an Archbishop of Santiago had declared that, “what is good for the Conservative Party is also good for the Church”.¹¹ Or again when a Jesuit historian had written that the “Conservative Party is the right arm of the Chilean Church.”¹²

Such actions also contrasted sharply with the traditional behavior of the Church in countries where attempts had been made to move from capitalism to socialism:

- According to one of the greatest historians of contemporary Italy, Luigi Salvatorelli, the agreements concluded between Pius XI and Mussolini undoubtedly served to consolidate the Mussolini dictatorship and conferred upon it, in the eyes of the people, the papal blessing.¹³
- The historian S. J. Wolf argues that the Catholic Church opened the door both to Mussolini’s fascism and to Hitler’s Nazism; generally partisan of the conservative classes, it would have intervened just at the crucial moment to give these repressive dictatorships its ideological blessing, hoping to be able to use them subsequently as an instrument of clerical conservatism.¹⁴
- The Catholic Church of Spain clearly supported General Franco in 1936 in his massive repression of the socialist left of that country.
- Following the Cuban revolution of 1959 more than 95% of the clergy of the Catholic Church of Cuba fiercely opposed the socialist revolutionary process led by Fidel Castro, using no other tool than faith.
- Then again there is the case of Brazil in 1964. On March 13

¹¹ Jaime Ruiz-Tagle P., *Los Obispos, el Dialogo y la 'Via Chilena'*, in Mensaje, no. 222, September 1973, p. 400.

¹² *Idem*, p. 400.

¹³ Paul Guichonnot, *Mussolini et le fascisme*, P.U.F., « Que sais-je ? », 1971, p. 62 ff.

¹⁴ S. J. Wolf, *El Fascismo Europeo*, Coleccion Norte, Editorial Grijalbo, Mexico, 1970, p. 37 ff (Translated from English by Amaro Gonzalez Banera)

President Goulart announced to the workers the beginning of the agrarian reform and the nationalization of an oil refinery. Six days later, in an obvious reaction to the President's policy, the sectors of the right organized in Sao Paulo a "March with God for freedom" in which about a million demonstrators, many of them dressed in black and holding a rosary in their hands, invoked the Lord that He might save them from communism. A few weeks later the military, defending the interests of the extreme right, carried out a coup d'état.¹⁵

In spite of the many actions and declarations made by the Chilean Catholic Church and which suggest that it has indeed broken with this long bourgeois and conservative ecclesial tradition, I intend to demonstrate in the following pages that it is not so. The sympathy and openness that this Church manifested towards the rising popular movements and the political coalition that represented them was much more a matter of surface than of substance; much more a matter of strategic opportunism than of profound and lucid commitment. The crucial and decisive moment having come, this institution, which had recently gained the reputation of being progressive, suddenly shifted back to its true traditional love. Tested by fire, the Catholic Church lost, at least for a few weeks, its diplomatic appearances: the true color of its solidarity started walking, totally naked, in the street.

Instead of judging the events that shook Chile through the eyes of the Jesus of the Gospel, it judged them through the eyes of the traditions of the national bourgeoisie of Chile, traditions that are fundamentally capitalist with vestiges of feudalism. Instead of appraising these traditional 'national' values and customs on the basis of a concrete and realistic evangelical love, it merely sought to restore them and used the Gospel and religion to justify and legitimize the revival of a type of nationalism strongly marked by bourgeois and aristocratic values, xenophobia and

¹⁵ Luis Maïra, *La Actitud Abierta de la Iglesia*, in Chile Hoy, Año II, no. 59, 27 juillet au 2 août 1973, p. 6

prejudice.

When I say Chilean Catholic Church, I know very well that this term does not cover a uniform and monolithic reality. The Church to which I am referring is the Institutional Church, the Church in its formal leadership.

Another Church exists in Chile... However this Church, just as the members and sympathizers of the Popular Unity government, is doomed to clandestinity and silence.

My hope is that this study will be of some use to this latter, repressed and clandestine Church, and also to all those here in Chile and elsewhere in the world who are engaged in the struggle to liberate that which is human in every person.

BEFORE THE COUP

I - Chilean winter 1973

Elections: In the elections of 4 March the Popular Unity obtains 43.9% of the popular vote (On 4 September 1970 it had obtained 36.3%).¹⁶ This represents a defeat for the right-wing opposition parties whose main objective is to obtain two-thirds of the seats in Congress so that they can legally and constitutionally impeach the President of the Republic, Salvador Allende.

Aborted coup: Following its electoral defeat, the right alters its strategy. On 29 June 1973 an armored regiment surrounds the presidential palace La Moneda. Because of a lack of preparation and coordination and thanks to the impressive loyalty of the head of the Armed Forces, General Carlos Prats, the uprising - [Tanquetazo](#) - lasts only three hours. However, the new strategy adopted by the right, as shown by the events that followed, is not abandoned.

¹⁶ Note added in 2017: The information released by the U.S. government in 2014 is very interesting (<http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v21>). In his 7 March 1973 memorandum to Theodore Eliot, the then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger asserts: "While the UP lost electoral support from its April 1971 highpoint, it does appear to have consolidated its strength at the 40 percent level essentially on urban poor and campesino support for the two Marxist parties, Socialist and Communist. The opposition's failure to obtain a wider margin of victory will be disappointing to those who hoped the results would force Allende to modify decisively the pace and direction of his revolution."

And less than one month before the coup, the memorandum from the Chief of the Western Hemisphere Division of the Directorate of Operations, Central Intelligence Agency (Phillips) to the Deputy Director for Operations, Central Intelligence Agency (Karamessines) notes: "It would seem the lower classes in Chile are still firmly supporting Allende. While rampant inflation, shortages of all kinds, and government inefficiency have seriously affected the middle and upper classes, somehow the essentials seem to be getting to the lower masses from which Allende draws his principal support. Certainly, the economic situation is going to have to deteriorate far more than at present before any significant number from the lower classes would consider leaving Allende."

Fatherland and freedom: Roberto Thieme, who had allegedly died in a plane crash in February 1973 and whose funeral was celebrated by a Catholic priest, 'resurrects' on 16 July in the Bremen restaurant in Santiago, where he gives a press conference. He announces that he is assuming the leadership of Patria and libertad (Fatherland and Freedom), a fascist movement of the extreme right that had been directly involved in the failed coup. From now on my group will be going underground in order to "start actions immediately," he declares.

Assassination: On 27 July President Allende's naval aide-de-camp, Captain Navarro Arturo Araya, is assassinated.

Work stoppages: From 25 July onwards, work stoppages of the same type as those of October 1972 gradually paralyze the country. Once again initiated by the director of the Truckers' Corporation - the owners of the main means of transport in Chile - Mr. Leon Vilarin, these work stoppages have as an objective the distortion and sabotage of the entire economy, an objective that is not at all utopian in a country like Chile that depends so heavily on road transport. As a result, industrial production falls dramatically. Impotent farmers watch as their crops are rotting in the field and others are unable to plant their crops, being deprived of grain and fertilizer. Queues for bread, milk, meat, sugar, margarine, etc. become ever longer and many items simply disappear from the market.

On 3 August transit owners join the work stoppage. The few buses that are still working are very crowded and their drivers are becoming impatient and aggressive. Getting around the city of Santiago becomes ever more problematic and expensive.

At the end of August other corporations of the right - the 'gremios' as they are called in Chile - such as the National Agricultural Society, the Society of Manufacturers and Industrialists, the Lawyers' Association, the Merchants Association, the Corporation of Dentists, etc. gradually join the work stoppage, at first for a temporary strike and then for an indefinite one. Not surprisingly, the Chilean economy becomes

increasingly paralyzed, inflation becomes rampant and the black market flourishes.

And while the government is multiplying its efforts to resolve the supposedly contentious issues, that is obviously a total waste of time since Mr. Vilarin, while increasingly skeptical of any agreement, makes it ultra clear that his only purpose is overthrowing Allende, whom he refers to in a radio interview as the “representative of a bunch of delinquents”.¹⁷

Public health: Controlled by a very conservative leadership, the Medical Association takes the extreme measure of totally suspending, for a certain amount of time, all emergency hospital services. The Secretary General of the association, Edgardo Cruz Mena, justifies this decision in the following stark terms:

“Either people die or the country dies. It’s like a war: nobody is willing to go out on the street to kill, but in a war you have to

¹⁷ Note added in 2017: On 20 September 1974 Seymour MR. Hersh reported in the New York Times - [C.I.A. Is Linked to Strikes In Chile That Beset Allende](#) - that the hand of the CIA was present in the work stoppages: “The Central Intelligence Agency secretly financed striking labor unions and trade groups in Chile for more than 18 months before President Salvador Allende Gossens was overthrown, intelligence sources revealed today. They said that the majority of more than \$8-million authorized for clandestine C.I.A. activities in Chile was used in 1972 and 1973 to provide strike benefits and other means of support for anti-Allende strikers and workers. (...) Among those heavily subsidized, the sources said, were the organizers of a nationwide truck strike that lasted 26 days in the fall of 1972, seriously disrupting Chile's economy and provoking the first of a series of labor crises for President Allende.

Direct subsidies, the sources said, also were provided for a strike of middle - class shopkeepers and a taxi strike among others, that disrupted the capital city of Santiago in the summer of 1973, shortly before Mr. Allende was overthrown by a military coup.

At its peak, the 1973 strikes involved more than 250,000 truck drivers, shopkeepers and professionals who banded together in a middle - class movement that, many analysts have concluded, made a violent overthrow inevitable.”

kill.”¹⁸

The striking doctors argue that the strike is not at all political, but strangely enough a full week goes by before the government is finally given a list of their requests: a lack of bandages and oxygen in hospitals, curative medicine must be reinstated, all patients must be granted the full freedom to choose their doctor...

Several striking doctors continue receiving patients in their private clinics, charging, as they usually do, fees only affordable for wealthy Chileans. An intelligent maneuver, given that this way they are killing two birds with one stone: on the one hand they are cutting the services of the poor, the bulk of whom are supporters of the Popular Unity government that the striking doctors much despise, and, on the other hand, they are making more income than if they were not on strike! (The Popular Unity government required all doctors, by law, to devote at least half of their working time to the free medical public sector, which was used primarily by the poor who were unable to afford, with a monthly salary of only 6,000 escudos, doctor fees that ranged, for a single visit, from 10,000 to 30,000 escudos).¹⁹

Popular organizations mobilize: Strengthened by the experience of October 1972, the popular organizations join efforts in countering the offensive of the right. The JAPs (food distribution organizations created by the government) increase their distribution of food. The Mopare (a group of supporters of the Popular Unity created during the work stoppage of October 1972) intensify and extend their efforts to neutralize the

¹⁸ Joaquín Navasal, *Medicos se declaran en estado de Guerra*, in Chile Hoy, Año II, no. 65, 7-13 September 1973, p. 8. This translation from Spanish to English, as well as all others in this book, are mine.

¹⁹ The value of the escudo, the official Chilean currency at the time of the coup (today it is the peso), was extremely volatile in the weeks and months preceding the coup. Work stoppages resulted in diminishing supply, and the printing of money by the Allende government combined with falling supply led to ever more, and eventually rampant inflation.

detrimental effects of the work stoppage. On weekends, worker-controlled companies use their trucks and personnel to transport goods. Approximately 30% of the doctors refuse to obey the work stoppage ordered by their association and work numerous overtime hours trying to cope with the unmet needs created by their striking colleagues. Groups of students work tirelessly as volunteers loading and unloading trucks.

Increasing acts of terrorism: As the work stoppages initiated by the right continue, acts of violence start mushrooming. From 16 July - the day of Roberto Thieme's press conference - until 31 August, more than 500 attacks are carried out throughout Chile. These attacks increase not only in number but also in their degree of planning and technical expertise. The main objects of the attacks are non-striking trucks and buses, railways, roads, bridges, gas stations, oil pipelines, electricity towers, water grids, the residence of certain leaders of the Popular Unity government, a few ambassadors of socialist countries, and the radio and TV stations of those supportive of the government.²⁰ Results of these attacks: 9 casualties, dozens of wounded, millions of dollars of damage.

Military conduct searches: From 29 June - the day of the failed coup - until 11 September, the military conduct ever increasing and ever more aggressive searches (the Arms Control Act was adopted on 21 October 1972 and presented by the right as the great triumph of democracy²¹) targeting those sectors supportive of the Popular Unity government: factories, trade unions and working-class districts. These sectors find the behavior of the military puzzling and troubling: while everyone knows perfectly well that the increasingly numerous and violent terrorist attacks affecting the country are originating from the extreme-right, and mainly from Fatherland and Freedom, the military are leaving the latter intact and free and only targeting the popular sectors.

²⁰ See Chile Hoy, Año II, no. 64, 31 August-6 September 1973, p. 8.

²¹ El Mercurio, 23 October 1972.

Congress gives green light to coup: On August 22 the Chamber of Deputies, a legislative body dominated by conservatives who are constantly trying to overthrow Allende, adopts a motion - 81 against 47 - in which it accuses the Allende government of violating the constitution not only occasionally, but also permanently and habitually. Although this motion has no legal effect, it boils down to enjoining the military to choose between the legislature and the executive. In fact, the cards are already played: not only is Parliament not interested in putting an end to the work stoppages that are paralyzing the country but it is even encouraging them.²²

Neutralizing pro-Allende elements of navy: During the month of August a hundred sailors and workers in Valparaiso, formally accused of belonging to a subversive movement, are arrested and held incommunicado. Pedro Enriquez, the lawyer defending those arrested, alleges that the only offense committed by them was having left-wing ideas and additionally, for the sailors, having refused to carry out an order to carry out a coup d'état.²³

²² Note added in 2017: The U.S. Senate report Covert Action in Chile asserts (No. 64, p. 30): "The CIA also funded progressively a greater portion - over 75% in 1973 - of an opposition research organization. A steady flow of economic and technical material went to opposition parties and private sector groups. **Many of the bills prepared by opposition parliamentarians were actually drafted by personnel of the research organization** (Bold is mine)" And BBC NEWS reports - [US Undermined Chile's Democracy](#), November 14, 2000 - that according to the CIA's 16,000 secret documents related to covert operations in Chile, made public only in November 2000 thanks to a presidential order of Bill Clinton, "The records show that just three weeks before President Allende was toppled, US officials had approved \$1m in covert aid to political parties and private organisations."

²³ Faride Zaran et Marta Harnecker, *Torturas en la Armada*, in Chile Hoy, Año II, no. 63.23-30 August 1973. p. 32. These incidents concerning the torturing of some members of the navy in Valparaiso was discussed in the very popular TV program, A esta hora se improvisa (The Hour When One Improvizes), which my then wife, Wynanne, and I would watch regularly. One of the animators of the program, Jaime Guzman, who would later become

He points out that the alleged subversive conspiracy was only obtained after his clients had been submitted to prolonged torture.

Coup in the making: At the beginning of September, the most prestigious journal of the left, Chile Hoy (No. 64, 31 August to 6 September, no. 65, 7 to 13 September), publishes information provided by the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR) and indicating that a coup is being prepared. The article provides concrete and detailed evidence of very close ties, in the coup planning, between the Frei sector of the Christian Democratic Party, the National Party, the Armed Forces, the group Fatherland and Freedom, and the main leaders of the striking corporations. It also points out that senior officials of the American embassy have been attending some of the secret meetings that are taking place.

Right-wing press: Mysteriously omitting the precise reports of Chile Hoy showing that a coup is in the making, the right-wing mass media, led by Channel 13 – TV station owned by the Catholic University of Chile – constantly bombards public opinion with their own version of events. They denounce the economic chaos in which Chile is being plunged and the chronic inability of the Popular Unity government to reestablish law and order. While they do report the numerous and growing terrorist attacks, sometimes they suggest that these are originating from “Marxists”, and sometimes they comment that it is impossible to determine from what side they are originating, from pro-government sectors or from anti government sectors. More often than not, however, they stress that one should not point fingers and lay blame for any particular act on anyone before the legal system itself comes into play and carries out its duty. All this violence, they insist, is spontaneous, unplanned and uncoordinated. It is clear, they argue, that the blame can’t be

the main ideologue of the military junta, broke out in laughter when asked what he thought of the incidents of torture. He suggested this was most likely a totally unfounded claim, and then commented that one must allow the legal system to do its thing!

apportioned to only one side, right or left. And it is important to bear in mind that the greatest and most outrageous violence comes from the government itself, which is constantly violating the constitution.

Inciting hatred: On Friday, August 10, *La Segunda*, a newspaper owned by the largest and most influential newspaper of Chile, *El Mercurio*, publishes a letter from one of its readers.

²⁴ The letter is given a prominent place in the newspaper. Its author, who says he is “100% Jewish” and was still living in Germany three days before the outbreak of World War II, explains that he was fortunate to have been able to eventually come to the “paradise” of Chile. The purpose of his letter is simple and clear. He accuses a certain group of Jews in Germany of having provoked hatred between the German ruling class and its leader, Hitler, and thus of having caused the death of six million Jews.

“This same group of Jews is now busy destroying Chile and they are convinced that they will be totally successful in their endeavor. However, I am optimistic and believe that very soon this horrible government will be eliminated. I am proposing that this gang of thieves be punished in the following manner, a punishment they fully deserve. (...) There are hundreds of streetlights from Las Rejas to Las Condes. I recommend hanging one of these criminals of my race, alive or dead, on each one of these posts. Such punishment would be most satisfying for all honorable Chileans of my race. Then in a public statement our representatives should thank the Almighty Lord on behalf of all of us for this just punishment.”

On 25 August the Christian Democratic daily *La Prensa* publishes an article that repeats the same incitement to hatred. Alluding to the punishment that will violently descend on all the sinful at the moment of the Last Judgment, it asserts: “Genuine Chileans must remember that hands will be placed on any person

²⁴ The full text of this letter, as well as the other texts analyzed in this book, can be found in the appendices at the end of this book.

whose name ends in VIC, VICH, LEMY, BON²⁵ and fifty others, and that it will be, as asserted in the Bible, the “weeping and gnashing of teeth”.

On 18 July the newspaper El Mercurio publishes an article titled “Anti-Communist Satisfactions”. Its author Héctor Precht Bañados comments on his recent trip to Brazil in the following terms: “Visiting an anti-communist country like Brazil is very satisfying for people like us who have been suffering so much from communists in Chile for almost three years. There, we find communists where they should be: outside the law.”

Indonesian model of repression: On the same day’s editorial page El Mercurio publishes an article²⁶ titled “Communists Started Jakarta Plan” in which it clearly calls for the adoption of the same model of repression used in Indonesia to massively wipe out the forces of the Popular Unity government in Chile.

We know that in Indonesia in 1965, the oligarchy and the military, with the assistance of the CIA, physically eliminated all organized popular forces and seized power over the corpses of 500,000 communists, notes the Mercurio editorialist. Of course it is not very noble to kill hundreds of thousands of people of the left. But one must bear two things in mind. First, the Communists themselves were the ones who provoked the massacre in Indonesia. They wanted to seize power by liquidating the top generals, whom they regarded as their chief enemy, and when this strategy failed “popular outrage was such that there ensued a massive repression against the communists, one which was spontaneous and horrible.” Secondly, thanks to this timely repression, “Indonesia (...) is now one of the most important South Asian nations, because of its huge population and its potential future economic growth. Its economy has

²⁵ The author of this article, who signs his name with the pseudonym “Historian”, is referring here to those Chileans of foreign origin, such as Faivovich, Lebon, etc.

²⁶ Voir annexe 2.

stabilized and order reigns. Furthermore, what happened in all of Indonesia and not only in Jakarta holds an important historical lesson for us. When a country is experiencing instability because communists are attempting to take over absolute power, they will inevitably clash with the Armed Forces, which represent the established order and have the duty to safeguard our institutions,” concludes the editorialist.²⁷

Third anniversary of Popular Unity government: About one million people – peasants, workers, women, professionals and students – invade the streets of Santiago on 4 September and move towards the presidential palace La Moneda to celebrate, with Salvador Allende and the leaders of the Popular Unity government, the third anniversary of their electoral triumph in 1970. Peasants on their tractors, workers on allegorical floats illustrating with pride and simplicity the products of their factories, the mass of people slowly advance along the entire width of the streets, including sidewalks, to the cries of “¡Allende, Allende, el pueblo está contigo! Poder popular!” (Allende, Allende, the people support you! People power!) In spite of the immense tension that has been reigning for weeks in the country, in spite of the increasingly long and sometimes unsuccessful queues to purchase milk, bread, etc., in spite of the transport difficulties caused by the work stoppages, the

²⁷ Note added in 2017: According to the US Senate report Covert Action in Chile, “**CIA inspired editorials were placed in El Mercurio nearly every day after 1968**” (Bold is mine).

Also see the documents published by the US government in 2014 and which show that the CIA, besides writing editorials for El Mercurio, was also heavily involved in financing it. (<http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v21>). In these documents one learns that William J. Jordan, member of the National Security Council, wrote the following memo to Henry Kissinger on 10 April 1972: “The CIA has made a new proposal to provide additional support to El Mercurio, the largest and most influential opposition voice in Santiago. The new disbursement would be of \$ 965,000. (...) In September of 1971 we had decided to provide El Mercurio with \$ 700,000. We then gave an additional \$ 300,000 between October and December”.

atmosphere that prevails is that of order, simplicity, fraternity, and festivity. Thousands of posters, mostly made by people themselves, can be seen on the streets: “No to a coup d’état! No to fascism! No to civil war!”

The voice of God... While the people are joyfully celebrating their rising power, the establishment and its lackeys, anxious and very worried, are staying in their houses not to hear this uncouth noise. On their TV screens the voice of a popular priest is comforting them by bestowing the blessing and ideological support of religion on their plan to violently crush this menacing popular force: Father Hasbún is proclaiming the Word of God...

**Extracts of my letter to Michael Hartney: 9
September 1973**

Dear Michael,²⁸

We were wondering whether you made it back alive and in one piece to Ottawa and I suppose you were wondering about us too. Well we made it, with a couple of hours stop in Lima, Peru, and we are now trying to get settled down. What makes it a bit hard is that Chile itself, as you might have seen in some small corner of a newspaper, is far from being peaceful yet. Tension and violence seem to be growing, the polarization between the left and right is increasing and everyone is waiting for what’s going to happen next. That could very well be civil war.

One thing seems sure: if the left stays in power, order can hardly be established through legal means because Allende and his Popular Unity government have absolutely no power to pass legislation, Parliament being under the complete control of the conservatives. And these conservatives merely keep on blocking the bills proposed by the government because these bills, it claims,

²⁸ Michael Hartney was a colleague of mine from the Collège de Rouyn-Noranda. My then wife, Wynanne, and I had driven from Montreal to Mexico together. Michael had then returned to Ottawa and we had taken the plane for Santiago, with a transit stop in Lima, Peru.

all have a Marxist coloring. On the other hand, if the right manages to get Allende out it can hardly be through legal means. So it will either be by bleeding the country to death by doing everything to create public disorder, economic chaos, general work stoppages — and that is precisely what is now happening — or it will be through a direct coup d'état. In either case, order will only be re-established, if at all possible, through a massive repression of the left.

What really astonishes me is to see that although the lines people stand in to buy their basic necessities are getting longer and longer, mainly as a result of the general work stoppages initiated by those who control commerce and transportation, the left is as strong as ever.

Last Tuesday on September 4th, over one million people celebrated the third anniversary of the electoral victory of the Popular Unity government. And there were also other celebrations of this kind throughout Chile. These people seem more determined than ever to prevent both civil war and a coup d'état. I think it is this determination, and especially the growing organizational structures that are developing at the grass-roots level as a result of this determination, that are preventing or at least postponing a coup d'état.

Wynanne and I have both started attending lectures at the CEREN (Centro del Estudio de la Realidad Nacional), an institute that is part of the Catholic University of Chile. It takes us three quarters of an hour to get there by bus, when the buses are not on strike. One of my profs, Luis Maíra, is of the Christian Left party, and is a member of the National Assembly. He lectures on the political institutions of Chile and the fact that he has a direct experience in politics should allow him to be very concrete in his teaching. (...)

Be good... Wynanne sends her greetings, Ovide

II- Father Hasbún speaks on behalf of bourgeoisie

“He is among the hardest and most relentless enemies of Marxism. Among the humblest and most charming priests who kneel before a tabernacle (...) Physically he is weak, he can blow away... yet with his words he can confront a giant. An outspoken and very popular TV commentator, a friend of popular singers and soccer players, and an obedient follower of the traditional doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church.”

Such is, according to the description of a reporter of *El Mercurio* (18 November 1973), Father Raul Hasbún. Having been the personal secretary of the Archbishop of Santiago, Cardinal Raul Silva Henríquez, he is presently the executive director of Channel 13, the TV station of the Catholic University of Chile, which is a pontifical institution. On 31 May 1973 Pope Paul VI appointed him a consulting member of the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications.²⁹

It is thus with confidence and emotion, and very conscious of the gravity of the moment, that Father Hasbún addresses the nation through his very powerful television network on 4 September 1973, day of the third anniversary of the electoral victory of the Popular Unity government.³⁰

His purpose is clear: he wants to convince Chileans that the Popular Unity government has lost all legitimacy and that Allende must resign. In order to achieve this he first describes that which bestows legitimacy to any government, and then describes the conditions that would deprive a government of all legitimacy. He then asserts that the absolute chaos that Chile is currently experiencing stems from the Marxist-Leninist orientation of the Popular Unity government led by Allende. His conclusion: either Allende radically changes course - which is obviously impossible - or he resigns.

²⁹ These lines were written before 1 February 1974. For the following events, see the Epilogue 1974.

³⁰ See annex 3 for the full speech of Father Hasbún.

For the theoretical part of his argument, Father Hasbún draws his inspiration from the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* of Pope John XXIII, which he cites from time to time. The legitimacy of any ruler stems from the fact that the authority he or she holds emanates from God, from the divine order. If authority commands dignity, respect and obedience, and if it has limits, it is because of its divine origin. Which does not mean, of course, that authority does not also have a human origin: "People, of course, have the right to elect their rulers, to establish the form of government they desire, as well as the procedures and institutions determining the exercise of authority".

The function of the ruler stems from his *raison d'être*, which is the common good. That is why he must consider himself a servant, authority being by no means an end in itself but a pure means of pursuing the good of all. The ruler must satisfy the basic material and spiritual needs of all citizens, and protect their rights.

Once the legitimacy and function of the ruler are clearly defined, it is easy to determine the conditions that would deprive a ruler of all legitimacy. The ruler who does not recognize "human rights or violates them" fails in his duty and citizens are no longer obliged to obey him. For "the right to command is a spiritual requirement emanating from God". Any directive that goes against this spiritual order, and therefore the will of God, does not in any way oblige the citizen in conscience: "Before obeying man, one must obey God."

To those who would see in these words of John XXIII an incitement to disobedience and insubordination, Father Hasbún states that such is not at all the case. Are not Christians basically non-violent? Were not "the worst despots of history" reigning "when Christ formulated his doctrine of respect and obedience to authority", given that all authority comes from God? No, Pope John XXIII, far from inciting one to civil disobedience, simply points out that there is no peace without organization, no organization without authority, and that the only *raison d'être* of authority lies in the pursuit of the common good. "That is to say:

the blossoming of people as individuals and as communities, the right to food and shelter, land and jobs, culture and health, truth and beauty, and knowledge and faith”.

Father Hasbún then comes to the essence of his propos. Presently Chileans are impoverished, exasperated, torn in their bodies, wounded and sick in their souls. Chile is like a “sinking ship”: deprived of bread, respect, joy and hope, and submerged in anguish, fear, demoralization and hatred. It has “lost what it once had and has no idea what it will become.”

Who is responsible for this state of affairs? The pilot of the ship, Salvador Allende. But Father Hasbún insists he is not accusing anyone: “Who can accuse? Who can penetrate the secrets of the heart? Who is able to discern the mystery of good and evil?” I am not at all accusing, but merely respectfully raising questions, he says.

“Suffering and dilemma: what is one to do? Push ahead in the same direction? The pilot knows very well that this is pointless. And he cannot but know it! His sensitivity as a patriot and a doctor must make him realize that an entire people - present and future - does not accept to continue being sacrificed on the altar of a sacrosanct ideology, imposed as an irrefutable dogma, foreign and incompatible with our national soul; does not accept to be sacrificed because of an ideology that violates the very essence of our human and Christian values. The Marxist-Leninist experience – imbued with a totalitarian obsession, a dream of liberation that is both false and deceitful, a logic of lies and violence that have always characterized it historically – has already illustrated the profound truth of Pope Paul’s assertion: *every time men try to organize the world without God, they end up organizing it against man!*”

The director of the catholic television network begs Allende to abandon his “preconceived and adulterated schemes” and his “ideas that have never been implemented in the past and that are impossible to implement” (...) “and to dare face up to the truth.” He prays the Lord that “his Spirit may violently descend on

Allende, making him finally realize the radical falsity of the ideas he is defending and trying to incarnate, or at least understand that for the good of Chile he must resign.”

And Father Hasbún ends with these ominous words:

“Whatever happens, the Lord of History will be able to give Chile rulers more interested in the people than in themselves”...

What is striking about this noble speech of Father Hasbún is that while relying on one of the first - if not the first - papal encyclicals to foster openness and dialogue with socialism and Marxism, he manages to do exactly the opposite. That is, he condemns this latter ideology in a simplistic and categorical way. In so doing, he respects neither the spirit nor the letter of John XXIII who says in the same encyclical (No. 59): “Insofar as these movements are in accord with the sound principles of reason and respond to the just aspirations of the human person, who would refuse to recognize in them positive and worthy elements?”

On the contrary, Father Hasbún’s scathing attacks against the ideology of the Popular Unity remind us of the words of a pope of the 19th century, Pope Pius IX. In 1849 the latter, who was struggling with social movements that represented an imminent threat for the private property of the Catholic Church - the Papal States - wrote in his Encyclical [Nostis and Nobiscum](#):

“18. As regards this teaching and these theories, it is now generally known that the special goal of their proponents is to introduce to the people the pernicious fictions of Socialism and Communism by misapplying the terms “liberty” and “equality.” The final goal shared by these teachings, whether of Communism or Socialism, even if approached differently, is to excite by continuous disturbances workers and others, especially those of the lower class, whom they have deceived by their lies and deluded by the promise of a happier condition. They are preparing them for plundering, stealing, and usurping first the

Church's and then everyone's property. After this they will profane all law, human and divine, to destroy divine worship and to subvert the entire ordering of civil societies. In this critical period for Italy, it is your duty, venerable brothers, to help the faithful realize that if they let themselves be deceived by such perverted doctrines and theories, these theories will cause their temporal and their eternal destruction."³¹

Obviously, Pope Pius IX and Father Hasbún have much in common. Here and there the socialist ideology is false and corrupt. Here and there it sows a false dream of liberation among the workers and the poor. Here and there it incites the masses to violence and complete lack of respect for order, human rights, the law in its civil and divine dimension, the common good. Here and there, finally, it advocates a world without God, an inhuman world, a world where the soul and body of society are wounded and suffering.

But one must not be fooled: in 1849 Pope Pius IX's primary concern was not the Almighty Lord and in 1973 the primary concern of the director of Channel 13 is also not the Almighty Lord. If Father Hasbún insists so much on the divine origin of all authority while quoting the sympathetic John XXIII, it is because he wants to discredit the authority of the leader of the Popular Unity government, Salvador Allende, who is a religious non-believer. Not being able to discredit this authority by referring to the electoral process – as mentioned above, the Allende government had substantially increased its votes in the last elections of March 1973 – it is only in passing that he mentions this point, and he puts the emphasis instead on God. It is because it comes from God and conforms to the divine will expressed in the natural order that human authority commands respect and obedience. It is for this reason also that it has limits and is not totalitarian.

But Allende does not believe in God. Hence, how can he

³¹ Nostis et Nobiscum (On the Church in the Pontifical States, Pope BI. Pius IX -8 December 1849. Retrieved on 25 July 2017.

command respect and obedience from Chileans, at the very moment when they are plunged into a dramatic national crisis? Is it possible for Allende to give, as president, orders that conform to the will of God, that is to say, to the divine order, if he does not even believe in God? And how can he, a non-believer, distinguish between that which is good and that which is evil? How can Allende submit to a God whose existence he does not even acknowledge? And if he does not submit to the Almighty, who will restrain and limit his power? Will he not, of necessity, fall into totalitarianism? Should one still obey a president whose authority is so precarious and who, fundamentally, enjoys so little legitimacy?

Nor should one be fooled when Father Hasbún insists on human rights and the common good: what matters first and foremost for him are not the exploited and oppressed masses of Chile and of Latin America but rather the established order, that is, the preservation of the traditional structures of Chilean society.

This order, which he perceives, like the Church in the days of Pius IX, as the reflection of the divine will, immutable and eternal...

This order, marked by the divine seal and described using a pure and noble vocabulary but which, as a matter of fact, masks and justifies institutionalized injustices from which constantly flow very traditional and chronic obscene inequality...

This order, which but reflects the political and economic interests of conservative forces that, like Pope Pius IX, feel deeply threatened and worried because they are about to lose their "papal mini-states"...

Thus, when Father Hasbún refers to the right to food and shelter, one would have to be very naive not to understand that what really matters for him is much less the solution to the traditional problem of the undernourishment and malnutrition of the marginalized Chilean masses and their homelessness than the overthrow of the Popular Unity government. For while it is true that people in the last weeks are obliged to queue for hours to

obtain basic goods such as milk, bread, etc., it is no less true that this problem does not merely fall from heaven: it has its causes.

The friends of Father Hasbún, and in particular the leader of the work stoppage Leon Vilarin, have been doing everything possible for more than a month to paralyze the entire transport system of Chile. And the merchants, refusing to become part of the socialist economic system that is beginning to emerge, are stocking up on goods and then selling these in the black market at exorbitant prices. In the meantime, the Catholic TV Channel 13 is leading the battle to defend the rights of these 'exploited' sectors of society, and giving a voice to those who are fighting for 'freedom' and 'democracy'. And it is cooperating with the other conservative mass media networks in spreading the image of an imminent famine, this in order to create an atmosphere of fear and panic and to prepare Chileans for the coming of a Savior. And the United States, for its part, is fully cooperating in this plan to protect the highest Chilean values: it is pretending that all its surplus wheat has already been sold abroad and thus refusing to sell any wheat to Chile.

When Father Hasbún speaks of the right to land and jobs, one must realize that what he really means, even if he is careful not to say so openly, is the right to private property and private enterprise. It is not necessary to have been watching Channel 13 for a very long time to realize this. Because the US media and Channel 13 are one in this respect: in both one finds abundant, invasive and alienating publicity, and the same deep link with corporate interests.

When he refers to the right to culture, truth and beauty, he is undoubtedly referring to the cultural world that his Channel 13 broadcasts every day: Sesame Street, American films, academic discussions on the nature of law, operas and the problems of a society of overabundance and overconsumption. A world that is miles apart from that reflecting the daily lives and aspirations of the masses of Chilean workers and peasants...

When referring to "divine order", "God", and "common good",

one would have to be blind not to see what concrete realities lie behind these words of John XXIII that Father Hasbún is citing.

It is 4 September. Outside on the streets hundreds of thousands of Chileans, mainly workers, peasants and the marginalized, are celebrating the third anniversary of their electoral victory.

Inside their homes thousands of other Chileans, mostly from wealthy backgrounds, are sitting in their armchairs and sofas, deeply worried and impatiently awaiting the intervention of the Armed Forces, encouraging it, and organizing it...

The good that these latter wealthier Chileans are pursuing at all costs is neither as common nor as supreme as Father Hasbún is making it out to be. Spelling such a good with a capital G would be a gross exaggeration. This priest may be religiously repeating the terms “spiritual order”, “divine order” and “will of God”. However, the order that he is talking about, and the will to which he is referring, are neither very divine nor very spiritual.

It is simply the traditional Chilean established order, fundamentally capitalist and with vestiges of feudalism. And it is the very down-to-earth will of conservative sectors to maintain and preserve that order, which they are on the verge of losing.

We witnessed Vilarin and the other truck owners declaring the Allende government corrupt and illegitimate. We witnessed the dentists, engineers, merchants, lawyers and private school teachers doing the same thing. We witnessed the conservative legislators passing a motion on 22 August declaring that Allende was violating the constitution. We witnessed, finally, the same conservative sectors initiating a work stoppage campaign demanding Allende's resignation.

And now it is up to religion to play its role, to give its green light. Yes, even the good Pope John XXIII agrees! Even the will of God requires that Allende resign! The Popular Unity government has not only lost its legal, constitutional and legal legitimacy. It has even lost its theological and spiritual legitimacy!

That the Armed Forces in such circumstances would use violence to depose Allende and initiate a massive repression could hardly be surprising. Such an intervention would only have the appearance of disobedience and insubordination. For when a ruler attempts to govern without God he ends up governing against man. When a ruler ceases to be the faithful interpreter of the divine order and the common good (!) not only do his orders lose their character of constraint, but the ruler himself also becomes a symbol of evil.

That being so, one is left with little choice: Allende must be eliminated. "Before obeying men, one must obey God"...

This explains the wrath Father Hasbún expresses when he refers to "the Marxist-Leninist ideology". An ideology that threatens the common good, and the very essence of the spiritual order; that destroys the soul and body of Chile; that is fundamentally foreign to and incompatible with the national soul; that threatens the humanist and Christian heritage of Chile; that makes Chileans so blind that they adhere to a dream of liberation that is totally false...

Having grasped evil by its horns, Father Hasbún feels no need to waste his time in long sociological, political and economic analyzes outlining the objective errors committed by the Popular Unity government. No. His analysis is precise and rigorous and reflects a broad and very rigorous mind, devoid of any trace of dogmatism!

Still less does Father Hasbún feel the need to address a single word to those who, through their work stoppages, have been literally paralyzing the economy. Or to their friends who have been busy carrying out multiple acts of sabotage throughout the country to create an atmosphere of chaos. Or to the right-wing parliamentarians who, since the beginning of the mandate of Allende, have been constantly adopting an obstructionist and confrontational attitude. Or to Mr. Eduardo Frei, the leader of the Christian Democrat Party who, during his many trips to the United States and Europe from 1971 to 1972, used his prestige to

encourage “businessmen and bankers (...) to use all means possible to boycott the Chilean economy”.³²

Nor does Father Hasbún feel the need to address a single word to those who have recently been torturing workers, members of the navy and Mapuches...

These people do not merit any criticism given that they too are defending the divine and spiritual order.

No. He addresses himself to Allende. He invites him, and even begs him to resign.

He prays the Lord of History...

“In any case (in other words, even if Allende does not resign), God will not leave us alone... He possesses the wisdom, strength and ingenuity to transform our night into a promising dawn. He will give us rulers who will be totally dedicated to serving and loving their people more than themselves.”

The miracle took place one week later, on 11 September.

³² Marcel Niedergang, *Pour qui sonne le glas... ?*, Le Monde, 20-26 September 1973, p. 2.

THE COUP

III - 11 September: destroying the body to save the soul

A - Destroying the body... (Extracts from my diary of 16 September 1973)

If I have not yet written down my impressions and reflections on the coup d'état that took place on 11 September, it is merely because I was in a state of shock. Furthermore, I was too preoccupied with immediate matters like trying not to get killed or hurt, trying to get in touch with my friends here in Santiago to see how they were and merely if they were still alive...

11 September 7 a.m. My alarm clock woke me up. I set it every morning at that time so that I would not be the very last one in line and would be able to get at least one piece of bread. By the time I made it to the bakery, about sixty people were already standing in line. Practically no one was talking. We were wondering if there would be bread in this part of the city. Yesterday, for the very first time, there was none at all.

A newspaper vendor walked by so I decided to buy *El Mercurio*. On the editorial page, there was an article on the international scarcity of wheat. The Popular Unity is wrong, it affirmed, in accusing the United States of discrimination. If they are presently refusing to sell wheat to Chile, it is possibly because they are trying to curb their own inflation. Furthermore, it added, "the American Department of Agriculture says that the United States has completely sold out its existing stock of wheat."

All of a sudden, I noticed two army tanks moving at approximately 70 kilometers per hour in the direction of the Presidential Palace. Somewhat perplexed, I watched to see how the other people were reacting. No reaction....

About one hour later, around 8:30 a.m., I finally made it into the bakery. Someone grabbed me by the arm. It was Olga, my next-door neighbor. "Things are not looking good, she whispered in my ear. Apparently the Moneda — the Presidential Palace — is surrounded by tanks."

After receiving my share of bread, I hurried to my apartment.

Wynanne informed me that she thought she heard Allende's voice on the radio, but that given that it was so early, she had assumed she was mistaken and had just turned the radio off.

We turned the radio on again. Sure enough, Allende was speaking: "Valparaiso — the second largest city in Chile, a port city — is completely occupied by the military. Workers, you can go to work as usual but stay alert in your workplaces. In Santiago, everything is calm and I count on the soldiers of Chile to restore order."

Wynanne asked me to go out and buy vegetables about one block away. When I got there, there was absolutely nothing left on the stand. On my way back, suddenly I heard machine gun shots. My heart started beating wildly. I walked fast but did not dare run. Once I reached the street corner where we live, I noticed two carabineros — the national police force — armed with machine guns and speeding away toward La Moneda. A bit further down the street, there were other carabineros forming a barricade.

Once back in the apartment, we started cooking a large pot of beans and the little fish we had left. We also filled up the bathtub with water. We had not forgotten the night, a couple weeks back, when the entire city of Santiago had been deprived of water and electricity because of an act of sabotage, perpetrated at the very moment that Allende was addressing the nation on radio.

Meanwhile, we continued listening to the radio. All of a sudden, the station we were listening to was silenced. We searched and found another station sympathetic to the Popular Unity. A few minutes later, that one too was silenced. While we were searching for yet another leftist station, we came across one of the opposition. The voice was military. So was the music. "The press, radio stations and television channels serving the Popular Unity coalition must suspend their functions as news media forthwith. Otherwise they shall be attacked by land and air."

Just on the other side of the street from our apartment, about forty feet away, was Radio-Candelaria, a pro-government radio

station. We checked to see if it was still on the air. It was. We did not know what to do and were terribly scared.

Bomber jets started flying over Santiago. Outside, we heard more and more gunfire. Most of the shooting seemed to come from the direction of the Presidential Palace, La Moneda, about ten blocks from our place. Rounds of machine guns. Heavy artillery. Snipers on the roof of our apartment were exchanging shots with the military on the street who were calling for their surrender.

As we were listening to the radio, we heard the Popular Unity song 'Venceremos' —We shall vanquish—, the very same one we had watched thousands of proud Chileans sing as they were marching in the streets on September 4th. Tears came to our eyes. A sense of deep sadness came over us. I could still see that worker on television, very simple and very proud. I could see him asserting that most doctors are more interested in making money than in catering to the needs of the penniless masses. I could see him describing in great detail the behavior of these 'professionals' during the work stoppage. I could see this woman, comparing the health clinics in the wealthy neighborhoods of Santiago, modern and extremely well equipped, to those in the poor ones, very backward and with very little equipment. I could see this incredible cultural liberation that I just found absolutely amazing. Thousands of ordinary citizens not afraid anymore, ready to stand up and defend themselves. Who understood that lawyers all too often are not devoted to fighting against injustice but prefer selling their services to those who have lots of money. Who could understand that those who constantly suffer the greatest injustices, the poor and marginalized masses, are alone and defenseless.

More rounds of machine guns. Fear. Fear of the unknown. Civil war? The massacre of thousands of people? Repression?

The radio announcer informed us that President Allende was now going to speak. Fully aware that what was happening was of

historical importance, we started recording:³³

“I do not have the making of an apostle or Messiah. I am not a martyr but only a social activist who is fulfilling the mandate that the people have given me... I will defend this Chilean revolution and defend the government. I have no choice. Only by riddling me with bullets will they be able to prevent me from implementing the program on whose basis I was elected. Fellow citizens, stay alert to the information given to you in your work sites. Your fellow President will not abandon his people or his worksite. I will stay here in La Moneda even at the cost of my own life.

“Presently planes are flying above us. It is possible that they will attack us. But know that we are here, showing, at least through our example, that there are men in this country who know how to remain faithful to their duty. I am doing this respectful of the mandate given to me by the people, and as a President aware of the dignity given to me by free and democratic elections.

“In the name of the most sacred interests of our people, in the name of our country, I invite you to maintain faith and hope. Neither repression nor crime can stop History. This is a stage that will be overcome. This is a hard and difficult time. They may crush us. But the future will be that of the people, it will be that of the workers, because humanity advances towards the conquest of a better life. I will pay with my life the defense of the principles that are dear to our country.

³³ This text of President Allende's last speech to his people comes from our tape recording. However, the first seven paragraphs, which we were not able to record, come from the novel published by an American friend of ours who was also in Chile at the time, Caroline Richards: *Sweet Country* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York and London, 1979, p. 79-80) and the following sources which reproduce the full speech: <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2006/allende110906.html>. To listen to the actual speech itself: <http://www.cooperativa.cl/noticias/pais/dd-hh/escucha-completo-el-ultimo-discurso-de-salvador-allende/2013-09-11/124950.html>.

“A curse will fall on those who have violated their commitments, failed to respect their word, and acted against the doctrine of the Armed Forces. The people must stay alert and vigilant, but they must not let themselves be provoked, nor should they let themselves be massacred; but they must also defend their conquests. They must defend the right to build, through their effort, a decent and better life.

“Surely this will be the last opportunity I will have to address myself to you. The air force has bombed the towers of Radio Portales and Radio Corporación.

“My words do not come out of bitterness, but rather deception, that they may be the moral punishment for those who betrayed the oath they took as soldiers of Chile, titular commanders-in-chief.... Admiral Merino, who has self-designed himself commander of the Army.... Mr. Mendoza, the callous general who only yesterday declared his loyalty to the Government, has been named director-general of the Police.

“In the face of these facts, the only thing left for me to say to the workers is that I will not resign! Placed in a historical transition, I will pay with my life for the loyalty of the People. I say to you that I have the assurance that the seed that we plant in the dignified consciousness of thousands and thousands of Chileans cannot be forever blinded.

“They have the power and can smash us, but the social processes are not held back, neither with crimes nor with power. History is ours, and the People will make it. Workers of my country: I want to thank you for the loyalty which you always have shown, the trust which you placed in a man who was only the interpreter of the great desires of justice, who gave his word that he would respect the Constitution and the law, and that I did.

“In this definitive moment, the last thing which I can say to you is that I hope you will learn this lesson: foreign capital, imperialism united with reactionaries in Chile, created the climate for the Armed Forces to break with their tradition, that to which General Schneider was faithful and Commander Araya

reaffirmed. They were victims of the same social sectors that are staying in their homes today, waiting for a third party to restore their profits and privileges.

“I address myself above all to the modest woman of our land, to the peasant woman who believed in us, to the working woman who doubled in her efforts, to the mother who knew of our concern for her children. I address myself to the professionals of our land, to those who were patriotic and struggled against the auspicious sedition carried out by upper-class oriented schools, a sedition aimed at restoring a capitalist society geared to the wealthy few.

“I address myself to the youth of Chile, to those who sang, who offered to the struggle their joy and spirit. I address myself to the Chilean man: to the worker, and peasant, the intellectual, to those who will be persecuted. For fascism has been active in our country for many hours, carrying out acts of sabotage and terrorism, blowing up bridges and railways, destroying oil and gas pipelines. All the while counting on the silence of those whose duty it was to stop them... History will judge them.

“Probably Radio Magallanes will soon be silenced and the calm mettle of my voice will no longer reach you. It does not matter: you will continue to hear me, I will always be beside you or at least my memory will be that of a dignified man, that of a man who was loyal.

“Workers of my country, I have faith in Chile and in her destiny. Other men will overcome this gray and bitter moment where treason tries to impose itself. May you continue to know that sooner than later the great avenues through which free men will pass to build a better society will open.

“Long live Chile! Long live the People! Long live the Workers!

“These are my last words. I have the conviction that my sacrifice will not be in vain. I am sure that it will at least be a moral lesson which will punish felony, cowardice and treason.”

A few minutes later this last radio station also stops

III - 11 September: destroying the body to save the soul

broadcasting. Immersed in this great silence that is beginning for the Popular Unity government and its supporters, we hear, seized with anguish and horror, the violent noise of Hawker-Hunter jet fighters descending on the presidential palace, La Moneda, to carry out their mission...



11 SEPTEMBER 1973: THE MILITARY JUNTA DECLARES ITSELF THE GOVERNMENT OF CHILE

B - ...To save the soul

Among the many terrorist communiqués broadcast by the military junta on 11 September, there is one that is of particular importance. It is Decree no. 1 by which the military junta legally declared itself (!) the supreme government of Chile: ³⁴

“The Commander-in-Chief of the Army, General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte; the Co-Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, Admiral José Toribio Merino Castro; the Air Force Commander, Gustavo Leigh Guzman and the General Director of the National Police, Mr. César Mendoza Durán, gathered on this date, and considering:

³⁴ To see all the decrees issued by the military junta from 1973 to 1980: [Bandos de la dictadura chilena de 1973 a 1980](#).

“That the Armed Forces, constitutionally composed of the Army, Navy, Air Force and National Police, represent the organization that the State has given itself for safeguarding and defending its physical and moral integrity and its historical-cultural identity;

“That, therefore, their supreme mission is to ensure above all other considerations the survival of these realities and values, which are superior and represent the essence of the Chilean nationality, and

“That Chile, subjected to a dogmatic and exclusionary ideology inspired from the foreign principles of Marxism-Leninism, is losing the very essence of its nationality;

“Have agreed, in fulfillment of their imperative duty to defend the country, to issue the present Decree:

“As of today we declare ourselves the Supreme and Governing Junta of the Nation, with the patriotic commitment of restoring the *chilenidad* (that which constitutes the essence of Chileans), injustice³⁵ and institutionality, which are shattered, aware that this is the only way to be faithful to our national traditions, to the legacy of the Fathers of our Homeland and to the History of Chile, and to allow our country to move forward and vigorously return to the path of progress, reinserting itself into the dynamics of the present times and the concert of the international community.

“We designate General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte president of the Supreme Governing Junta, a responsibility that he will be assuming immediately.

“We declare that the Governing Junta, in the exercise of its mission, will guarantee the full autonomy of the Judicial Branch and will respect the Constitution and the laws of the Republic, insofar as the fulfillment of its mission in the current situation of the country allows.”

³⁵ A very prophetic typo. In the decree published in *El Mercurio*, and which I am citing, the military junta says it will restore “injustice”, not justice!

What is particularly striking in this decree is the clear insistence on the ideological and cultural aspect. It is almost as spiritual as Father Hasbún's speech. One imagines being in the presence of that physician of the soul discussed by Plato. What the Armed Forces are protecting with their jet fighters, tanks and machine guns is not just the physical integrity of the nation. What they are above all protecting is its soul. Its traditions. Its national values. Its historical-cultural identity. The very being of Chile: the 'chilenidad'.

For the military junta, as for Father Hasbún, the root of evil in Chile lies in the foreign ideology that gave rise to Chilean socialism. For the junta, as for Father Hasbún, this ideology is incompatible with the national soul and contrary to the divine order represented by the traditional capitalist structures of Chile. And both the junta and Father Hasbún hold it in absolute contempt.

However, the strong contempt of the military junta is not merely limiting itself to words; it is now turning into concrete actions and inspiring the junta to perpetrate what will be judged by history as the most massive and brutal repression that Chile and possibly all of 20th century Latin America have ever known. This junta wants to extirpate from the country this devil that is Marxism.³⁶ The Inquisition takes place before the military courts or simply on the very scene of the offense. In the name of the very pure 'chilenidad' and with the explicit intention of restoring the national soul so gravely poisoned, one imprisons, tortures and shoots anyone closely or remotely resembling a sympathizer of the Popular Unity government. One burns tons and tons of books whose doctrine threatens "the divine order". Convinced that this violent ideology is contrary to Chilean non-violent blood, to its fundamentally pacific and Christian national soul, foreigners, especially Latin Americans, and also Chileans

³⁶ See the declaration of Pinochet on 11 October 1973, which is reproduced in *El Mercurio* the following day: "... it's the constant struggle to extirpate the very root of evil..."

considered as foreigners for adhering to the Popular Unity program, are being persecuted. They are heretics...

Of course the junta has other good reasons to accomplish this “cleanup operation”. It outlined them not long after the coup.

The Allende government would be unconstitutional and illegitimate, on the one hand because it ignored both the legislative and judicial powers and did not respect the right of freedom of expression (!), the right to strike (!), the right to assemble (!), etc., and, on the other hand, because it is simply not sufficiently representative. Moreover, this non-representativeness would justify, by itself, military intervention. The Armed Forces, stipulates Decree no. 5, “rely on the will of the great national majority, which in itself justifies, both before God and before History, both their military intervention and the resolutions, norms and instructions they are dictating...”

This last statement, at first glance, may seem harmless. But one would simply have to apply this principle in all countries in the world where there are minority governments to see just how drastic the implications would be! Does the divine order and the will of God to which Father Hasbún refers justify and call for violently removing a democratically elected government, simply because it is a minority government? Have we forgotten so quickly that Eduardo Frei governed Chile in 1968-69 with only 28% of the popular vote? And what about a government like that of Allende’s that substantially increased its popular vote, moving from 36.3% in 1970 to 44.9% in March 1973?

The words are there, however; I am not inventing them. The mere fact of relying on the will of the great majority of the nation is enough to justify thousands of arbitrary imprisonments and tortures, and hundreds of summary executions...

It is impossible to understand how the military junta could be claiming in front of the entire country and the whole world to be acting in the name of the vast majority of Chileans if one does not understand who is, according to this junta, a real and authentic Chilean. In other words, that outside of which there is

no salvation: the 'chilenidad'. Because the fact of the matter is that 44.9% of the population, representing primarily the poorest sectors, strongly supported Allende.

“People, of course, have the right to elect their rulers”, asserts Father Hasbún in his speech of 4 September. But are elections the most important aspect of democracy? What if a significant proportion of the population loses its way and falls into error? What if it strays from the right path and starts abandoning that which constitutes the very essence of Chileans? What if these sectors start losing their “historical-cultural identity”? Is it not then the voice of all authentic Chileans, those of the past as well as those of the future, to which one should listen? And, also and even more importantly, to the voice of God that is expressing itself through these authentic Chileans? Even if this means ignoring the voices of millions of flesh and blood Chileans who, deeply infected by the diabolical cancer of a foreign ideology, are merely uttering total falsehoods?

C- We Give You Thanks, O Lord!

Monsignor Francisco Valdés Subercaseaux,
Bishop of Osorno³⁷
11 September 1973.

Chile: “Lord, where were you?

“The night was filled with darkness and I was plunged into a seemingly endless nightmare. It was more like hell than a copy of Paradise.

“Today the new day has arrived.

God: “I am always with you, people of little faith. Chile, I am with you! I am calling you every day to prayer and inviting you every Sunday to my banquet.

³⁷ Province located in southern Chile. We know that in the provinces, and especially in the south, repression following 11 September was even harsher than in Santiago. In Osorno, the persecution of the workers was already under way a few weeks before the coup.

“I gave birth to you among snowy peaks, fiery volcanoes, forests, lakes, islands, and sea.

“I made you from two brave races never to be dominated by a foreign power.

“I gave you your name in the family of my chosen nations, saved you through the Blood of my Christ.

“I marked your conscience with the metaphysical truth of my Word, the sanctity of my commandments, and the lucid vigor of the Gospel of my Son.

“I opened a bright future for you through baptism, symbolized by a star in the blue of your flag. For I was present in the soul of your great ancestors who gave you culture, independence, order and progress.

“I rejoiced with your joys, I suffered your hardships, I showed you the way and I always bestowed upon you my eternal truth and my creative love.

“But you had gone astray; now you acknowledge this.

“You let yourself be seduced by giants who, like Goliath, fall sooner or later, while your wish was to be David, young, agile and faithful.

“You had forgotten the quality of your race, the depth of your spirit of freedom, the historical meaning of your destiny, with which I gave you prominence in your continent and among the other countries of the world.

“I allowed you to experience servitude, hunger, misery and anguish. Even if I had warned you about all this you arrogantly looked the other way and listened to other masters. And you let yourself be seduced and flattered, ignoring the voice of your conscience. And ignoring your marginalized brothers, abandoned along the way. Money, vile money...

“You allowed yourself to be seduced by a paradise without God, fashionable among the children of darkness. And you learned to

hate, to lie, to destroy and to kill. (...)

“I was always watching you. I would go out every afternoon to pray and to see if you were going to return. You know how much I love you, my Chile. I even gave you my Mother as a model of family affection. When you were still faithful She became Chilean: you declared her Queen – Maria del Carmen – of your Government, your People and your Army. I do not know if you remember. I cannot forget it...

Chile: “You are right, Lord.

“Breaking out of my lethargy on this radiant day of September – day of my liberation – I suddenly recognized the hand with which you are guiding me. I had trouble making out your face, but it was because of my own blindness. Today your smile fills me with joy. Now I know that your love can conquer all. And it is with an indescribable enthusiasm that my soul is celebrating.

“Now the night has gone. I recognize that you are the way, Lord, and I ask you forgiveness.

“I needed to undergo a trial, learning what it means to loose your friendship, and the freedom of your faithful children. Having forgotten your Word, your Christ, and your Gospel I experienced the shame of becoming submitted to a lie turned into a system.

“Forgive me, Lord, for having committed such a horrible blasphemy. For selling my luminous History, my superior destiny, my authentic personality, my Christian soul, acquired by your Passion. Seduced by the brilliance of Lucifer, the theologian of hatred; by a pseudo-science that closes its doors to you; by the inhuman fashion of subjecting oneself to totalitarianism, letting oneself be conscientized by fallacies...

“Now, Lord, everything has become crystal clear. Forgive me...

“How could I ever thank you, Lord, for having rid me of the worst lie and greatest wickedness that poor humanity has ever experienced in all of history? (...)

“Besides giving thanks I would like to place in you my hope for

the future, as did the Fathers of Chile.

“Enriched now by suffering, I will be able to embark with you in the national reconstruction. In the restoration of the moral order. (...) I will be able to shout all over the world and warn my brothers from near or far that our country is not for sale. Far from God there is no justice, no hope, no freedom. For Him and with Him we have succeeded in overcoming the greatest deceit of the century. We have listened to you, O Lord, and TRUTH HAS LIBERATED US.

“Thank you Lord. Abide with us, and we will not depart from You.

Amen.”³⁸

³⁸ This prayer of Bishop Subercaseaux was published on 30 September 1973 in the Mercurio. The magazine Que Pasa (137, December 7, 1973, p.8) described this episcopal prayer as “.. a clear support (to the junta), but devoid of any political judgments.”

IV - 13 September: bishops make a declaration

The first curfew imposed by the military junta lasts until Thursday noon on 13 September. Meanwhile, imprisoned in our apartment, we are helplessly witnessing a battle that is taking place near the building of the Ministry of Public Health, just a couple blocks from our apartment. Pistols against machine guns. To avoid stray bullets, we stay in the corridor located in the middle of our three-room apartment. One ear stuck on our shortwave radio, the other on the remaining local radio stations that are broadcasting the numerous messages coming from the new military legislators – messages that are interspersed here and there with classical music, light Chilean songs, military music and, ironically, plenty of hits in English from American Hit Parade!

In the televised news of Tuesday evening, 11 September, a courtesy of the only TV network still broadcasting, Channel 13 of Father Hasbún, we listen for the hundredth time to the junta justifying its intervention. Not a word from Allende. Neither of the wounded. The atmosphere is one of victory, of peace, and of joy. Occasionally the cracking of a few jokes. We are shown, for at least forty-five minutes, pictures of the house of Allende, which was also bombed. The camera moves around, searching absolutely every corner of the house. Here there are weapons. Here is the bathroom. Here Allende's desk... the camera then stops for a long time showing some of Allende's wicked socialist books. In a storage room fifty light bulbs here, twenty boxes of coffee there ... Ah ah! No wonder there were so many things one could no longer find in Chile before! ³⁹

³⁹ Note added in 2017: It is interesting to note that the same office shown by the camera, supposedly Allende's office, shows up once again years later. Following the American invasion of Panama in December 1989, an invasion that only preceded by a few months that of Iraq, the camera of a television station controlled by the American invaders scrutinized the house of then President Manuel Noriega. It zoomed in for a long time on a desk on the top of which one could see leftist books, and even some pornography. Strangely enough, it was

“We will extirpate the Marxist cancer from Chile at all costs”, solemnly declares the military junta.

On Wednesday morning, the radio commentator reads out a long list of foreigners, mostly Latin Americans, who have to surrender immediately under pain of death. Immediately afterwards and quite ironically he starts playing the song, in English, “Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head...”

On television there is an opera. Which is followed by the same scenario as the preceding day, but this time much more detailed: justifications for the military intervention, camera moving in all corners of Allende’s house, showing stocks of food, wicked socialist books, some pornography etc.

The two commentators end their national, and very Christian report, by making a beautiful prayer to Jesus and then to Mary. They are smiling and very handsome. Chile is returning to unity, peace and love, they declare.

And then they read a few passages from the Gospel...

Mr. Léon Vilarin, on behalf of the Truck Owners’ Association, announces the end of the work stoppage. “What the whole country was waiting for has happened,” he declares. “We have triumphed.”

Then it’s the Dentists’ Association. Then the Medical Association.

Then it’s the Merchants’ Association.

Then it’s the very conservative National Party...

Then it’s the Christian Democratic Party...

exactly the same identical desk and material that had been shown as allegedly belonging to Salvador Allende following the 1973 coup! This detail, revealing the propaganda strategy used by the CIA, appears in the excellent documentary, presently on YouTube, [Panama Deception](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zo6yVNWcGCo), produced by David Kasper, August 1992 (90 minutes): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zo6yVNWcGCo>

The latter asserts that what happened is the fault of the Popular Unity government and that it is against their will that the Armed Forces intervened, assuming a responsibility that they really did not want. It supports the intentions expressed by the military of restoring institutional normality, peace and unity. It expresses the wish that everything be done in justice and respecting the rights of workers, “without hatred or persecution”, and trusts that the past gains of workers will be maintained. It deplores what has happened but stresses that it had done everything possible to avoid it. It asserts that it places the pacification and reconstruction of Chile above all partisan interests.⁴⁰

Then it's the Catholic Church, through the Standing Committee of the Catholic Bishops, which makes a declaration on Thursday evening on 13 September...

The bishops assert that they have no responsibility for the violent outcome of the Chilean institutional crisis, and recall that they had done everything possible to avoid such an outcome. They assert that the military junta itself is the first to regret this outcome. They call for the respect of “those who died in the struggle, and in the first place for he who until 11 September was president of the Republic”. They request that the vanquished be treated with moderation and “that there be no unnecessary reprisals”; that account be taken of the “sincere idealism” that inspired many of those who were defeated; that there be an end to hatred and that there be reconciliation; that the progress made by the working class and peasants under previous governments be not only maintained but accentuated until equality for all in the nation be achieved.

Relying on the patriotism and disinterestedness expressed by those who have assumed the difficult task of restoring institutional order and the economy, they invite all Chileans, in the circumstances, to collaborate in the implementation of this task, and pray for its success. They conclude by expressing the wish that the patriotism of the Chileans and the democratic and

⁴⁰ For all these declarations see the Mercurio, on 13 and 14 September.

humanist tradition of the Armed Forces, may allow Chile to return in the short term, as promised by the junta itself, to institutional normality.

Possibly because of the relatively progressive reputation of the Chilean Church, some outside observers have prematurely interpreted this declaration of the bishops as a pure condemnation of the coup.⁴¹ Nothing could be further from the truth. That the key points in the declaration of the bishops are basically the same as those in the declaration of the Christian Democratic Party is not coincidental and very revealing. Like the latter, the bishops regret the outbreak of violence. They also wash their hands, like Pontius-Pilate, claiming to have done everything possible to avoid it.⁴² They also make it clear that it is against their will and under the sole imperative of patriotic duty that the Armed Forces have assumed power. They also express concern about the rights of workers and demand that everything be done without hatred or persecution. Finally they also conceal their own silent complicity in the face of the

⁴¹ *Informations catholiques internationales*, no. 441, 1 October 1973. An article asserts on page 7 that the declaration of the Chilean bishops represents, "a statement condemning the coup." Such an interpretation is all the more surprising given that, on the editorial page of the same issue, Ernest Milcent argues that it is not yet possible, owing to a lack of information, to form an opinion on the way in which the Chilean Catholic Church is interpreting the coup. "In order to pass a judgment one would have to be in Chile", he notes. This said, Mr. Milcent seems to be remarkably well informed because he acknowledges that there has been an illegal and violent military coup, and that people are being tortured and executed. And he pursues: "On the international level, on the other hand, the Catholic Church - our Church - should not adopt a stance of false prudence." What does this "on the other hand" mean? Would Mr. Milcent have learned somewhere that the Chilean Church, which is in the heart of the events, is assuming a false prudence?

⁴² *Gospel of St. Mathew*, Chapter 27, v. 24: "When Pilate saw that he was not succeeding at all, but that a riot was breaking out instead, he took water and washed his hands in the sight of the crowd, saying, *I am innocent of this man's blood. Look to it yourselves.*"

interminable work stoppages through which the wealthier sectors of Chile paralyzed the economy, as well as the undeniable and shameful fact that it was in the name of these wealthy sectors that the military violently intervened.

Instead of using their immense prestige in Chile to demand that this massive, brutal and criminal repression – mass detentions, torture and summary executions based on ideological motives – cease immediately, the Catholic leaders simply ask, with an incredible meekness!, that the defeated be respected, that there be moderation, and that all unnecessary reprisals be avoided. (In other words, reprisals, yes, but only insofar as it is necessary or useful...)

Instead of recognizing that the Popular Unity leaders had done much for the disadvantaged and marginalized Chilean masses by nationalizing the large copper mines, by enabling the poor and marginalized masses to consume a little more bread, meat and milk for the first time in their lives; by creating among them a very impressive pride and dignity, and a deep and very impressive political and social awareness; the bishops simply assert, in their great Christian compassion, that several of the Popular Unity leaders were nevertheless well-intentioned, and inspired by “sincere idealism.”

In other words the bishops seem to be suggesting that, aside from good intentions, the Popular Unity accomplished next to nothing.

By demanding that the conquests of the working class and the peasants be respected, the bishops are only repeating, almost verbatim, the words broadcast by the junta on the very day of the coup d'état when it ensured the workers that it would be so.⁴³

And a mysterious modesty prevents them from recognizing that these conquests, under the Allende government, were much more rapid, numerous and substantial than under previous

⁴³ Decree no. 1 broadcast at 8.00 am on 11 September 1973 and published in the Mercurio on 13 September 1973: “The workers in Chile can be assured that the economic and social gains they have achieved so far will not suffer any substantial change”.

governments. Omitting this fact, the bishops only use general terms referring to the conquests obtained under previous governments.

Instead of criticizing the military junta directly for stepping completely outside the bounds of legality, the bishops merely acknowledge that it has “assumed the difficult task of restoring institutional order and the economy”, thus allying itself with the wealthier sectors of Chile that do not interpret military intervention as an institutional disorder *par excellence*, but rather as the first major step towards the recovery of this order and of the capitalist economy.

Thus the Catholic Church, which through Father Hasbún’s voice first urged the conservative sectors and Armed Forces to rise up against the Allende government because it had become ‘illegitimate’ and devoid of real authority, now publicly asks all Chileans, through the voice of its bishops, to “cooperate” with one of the most fascist military dictatorships in contemporary Latin America history, because this dictatorship appears to be well-intentioned.

DECLARATION OF THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE OF THE CATHOLIC CHILEAN BISHOPS

13 September 1973

1. We wish to make it very clear to our nation that we bishops have done everything possible to ensure that Chile would maintain its constitutional and legal status and avoid experiencing, as has just happened, a violent outcome. An outcome that the members of the Governmental Junta were the very first to regret.
2. We are deeply troubled and saddened by the blood that has stained our streets, neighborhoods and factories. Blood of civilians and blood of soldiers, and tears of so many women and children. We demand respect for those who died in the struggle, and in the first place for he who until 11 September was President of the Republic.
3. We ask that the vanquished be treated with moderation. That there be no unnecessary reprisals. That it be remembered that many of those overthrown were inspired by sincere idealism. That hatred may come to an end and be replaced by reconciliation.
4. We are confident that the progress made by the working class and the peasantry under previous governments will not be set aside, but instead maintained and accentuated until full equality and participation by all are achieved in national life.
5. Counting on the patriotism and disinterestedness expressed by those who have assumed the difficult task of restoring institutional order and the economy, both so seriously compromised, we ask Chileans, in the present circumstances, to collaborate in the carrying out of this task. Above all, we ask God, with humility and fervor, to help them.
6. The common sense and patriotism of Chileans, coupled with the democratic and humanistic tradition of our Armed Forces,

will enable Chile to return quickly to institutional normality, as promised by the members of the Governmental Junta, and to resume its path of progress in peace.

SIGNATORIES: Cardinal Raul Silva Henriquez, President of the Episcopal Conference of Chile and Archbishop of Santiago; José Manuel Santos, Vice-President of the Episcopal Conference and Bishop of Valdivia; Bernardino Piñera, bishop of Temuco; Orozimbo Fuenzalida, bishop of Los Angeles; Sergio Contreras, bishop of Ancud and ad hoc secretary.

Santiago

V - 16 September: Cardinal Silva supports noble intentions of military junta

Starting Thursday noon 13 September the curfew starts being lifted a few hours every day so it becomes possible to get in touch with our friends again.

A missionary Oblate priest informs me that as of Thursday morning the number of casualties totaled more than 5,000. He obtained this information from a source very close to the junta itself. He also tells me that thousands of people are imprisoned in the National Stadium (normally used for soccer games) and that torture is being practiced there.

A woman living in a workers' neighborhood informs me that people from her area had been shot in their homes. The military even cut off the hands of the young president of our JAP, she says, tears in her eyes.

The news that we are hearing from everywhere - except from the mass media in Chile where everything appears peaceful and orderly - indicate that the country is being subjected to a massive, relentless and very fascist repression.

On 16 September all these things are on my mind and in my heart as I am attending the Sunday Mass celebrated by Cardinal Silva Henriquez in the cathedral located a few blocks from our apartment on the corner of Miraflores and Monjitas. Cardinal Silva himself is giving the homily:

"Beloved sons,

During this dramatic moment in Chile, we the bishops of the Catholic Church spoke to our people. As we had done when celebrating the feast of Our Lady of Carmel, we made this declaration in order "to be faithful to Christ and to our Fatherland, since we do not represent the interests of any particular group or political affiliation, and are only motivated by the well-being of Chile".

"We made our declaration in a state of anxiety, since the

unceasing calls for peace, concord and dialogue that we had made before 10 September had not been heard. We made it apprehensive that resentment and hatred would poison the national soul and render very difficult the rebuilding of our homeland, to which we all aspire.

“But at the same time we wish to declare, together with our brothers of other Christian denominations, that the following deserve our full support: ‘the noble intentions expressed by the present authorities for the restoration of institutional morality, peace and unity among all Chileans; their declarations ensuring that the legitimate gains of workers would be respected; their calls for patriotic cooperation and solidarity; their decisions to go beyond sectarianism and the assertion that it is not a matter of crushing ideological tendencies or currents, and seeking personal vengeance.’⁴⁴

“In our declaration we asserted, ‘Counting on the patriotism and disinterestedness expressed by those who have assumed the difficult task of restoring institutional order and the economy, both so seriously compromised, we ask Chileans, in the present circumstances, to collaborate in the carrying out of this task. Above all, we ask God, with humility and fervor, to help them. ’

“Dear brothers, we have no other desire but to incarnate, in the midst of you, Christ, the Lord. Our only wish is to be a faithful echo of the one who affirmed: ‘Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. What you would have men do to you, do it for them too ... Do good and give without waiting for anything in

⁴⁴ Cardinal Silva refers to the declaration of the Evangelical and Orthodox Churches. They declared that what led them to publicly support the junta was the fact that it had made its commitment before God. (La Tercera, 16 September 1973. Bishop Helmut Frenz, head of the Lutheran Church, sent a letter to General Oscar Bonilla, Minister of the Interior, in which he refers to the Christian values of the junta: "The National Committee for Refugee Aid recognizes the deep human and Christian compassion of the Minister, his words and messages, and his noble attitude". (Between the Lines, Vol. I, no. 7, p. 8)

V - 16 September: Cardinal Silva supports noble intentions of
military junta

return, and you will be sons of the Most High because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.'

"The ideal of love that we would like to live in full and instill in those around us requires sacrifices, struggles and efforts that are difficult to accept and understand. But only this ideal, truly assumed and put into practice can build a better, more human and more just world.

"Only this ideal, incarnated in our Chile, will make it recover its true nature, and will bring back to us the warmth of the home, the bonds of the family, the brotherhood that we so desire. We earnestly desire to destroy hatred so that hatred does not destroy the soul of Chile.

"Your Pastor simply wants to be at everyone's service, and especially the poor, the humble, and the suffering. If he manages to dry a tear, to alleviate a suffering, even if it were at the cost of great misunderstandings, he will be content. He only wants to love and serve: humbly he asks, for this attitude which is his, understanding and respect.

*"May the mother of Jesus Christ and the Mother of Chile grant our country, through Him, justice and peace. May the Lord enlighten our rulers with his grace, so that they may obtain, as they have asserted, the restoration of institutional normality, and all Chileans may become true brothers."*⁴⁵

I would be willing to believe these words if they did not appear so blatantly and sickeningly hypocritical.

To affirm one's complete political neutrality...

To support in a veiled and indirect way a military junta that has just overthrown by brutal force the most representative government of the poor that Chile has ever known...

⁴⁵ The text of this homily was published the following day in the Mercurio.

To silence the tortures, summary executions and massive repression that this same junta is carrying out...

And in the same breath to proclaim, with a very moving and charitable pastoral sense, one's special love for the poor and marginalized masses: if this is not hypocrisy I have never seen it! Diplomacy? If so, a diplomacy totally unknown to the founders of the Church...

People may object: Cardinal Silva cannot really say what he is thinking; his words are being strictly censored by the junta. If he were to speak his mind openly, it might be for the last time. He would be risking being imprisoned or expelled from the country. He would be seriously compromising the future relationship of the Catholic Church with the new government. And this would probably prevent the Church from setting up new charities to meet the new needs created by the crisis...

Total nonsense! Pure silence would be a thousand times preferable to this shameful complicity. Moreover, Cardinal Silva knows perfectly well that the military junta absolutely needs the support of the Church. He knows very well that the Catholic Church in Chile enjoys considerable prestige and remains a powerful social force and that a strong public condemnation on his part could change the course of events. He knows very well that the days of a military junta who dared lay its hands on the head of the Chilean Church would be counted. And he also knows very well that mass imprisonment, torture and summary executions are not very kind. Nor very Catholic. Nor very evangelical. Nor very human. And he also knows what's going on...

You are wrong, people may again object. You're too hard on Cardinal Silva. You do not understand the delicacy and complexity of his position. You're prejudiced against him. He did not really support the junta. Have you noticed how carefully he chose his words? Have you noticed that he never once said: "Dear junta, the Church supports you, and it supports what you're doing?" Analyze his words carefully. Reread them and

V - 16 September: Cardinal Silva supports noble intentions of
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study them semantically. You will realize that all that Cardinal Silva is doing is supporting *the good intentions* of the junta. Nothing more. His support only goes to this precise part of the declarations made by the junta, this part, furthermore, that is in perfect conformity with right reason and the most authentic Christian spirit.

More nonsense! The worker who has never had the chance to go to school and who has never learned to indulge in sophisticated diplomatic skills understands on what side the cardinal stands. He whose numerous colleagues' corpses fill the air of Santiago with the Catholic odor of a military junta determined to save, at all costs, the spiritual order, the common good, the Chilean soul, the supreme values of the Chilean nationality.

She who never dared to go searching for her husband, wounded and bleeding, that patriotic soldiers had taken away... who never dared to go searching for fear of also being detained, for fear of leaving her four small children alone.

Cardinal Silva! She would have readily given, as a good Christian, her other husband to the military, but she has only one. And that one is unique in the world... And that one she loves... And that one is being tortured right now. They are pulling out his fingernails... They are cutting off his fingers... They are applying a Catholic electric current to his Marxist testicles... Three times in a row they pretended to execute him by firing just a few inches above his head.

Cardinal Silva! She is desperately trying, this poor woman whom you love with a very special love, to kneel like you did next to this Catholic military junta. She is trying to bless these patriotic soldiers, to be kind to them, to say all sorts of good things about them, to appear in public with them and to support all their noble intentions. She would also like to give them her gold ring as people in the wealthy neighborhoods are doing and as this bishop

has just done.⁴⁶ She would like to attend this nationally televised religious ceremony during which these gold rings, donated for national reconstruction efforts, are being blessed. But she just can't bring herself to doing this! She has no gold ring... and she also does not have your remarkable spiritual stamina...

Dear "echo" of Christ and representative of God on earth! How can you support, like an angel, the noble intention expressed by the junta of not "*crushing ideological tendencies or currents*" when you know perfectly well that it is precisely for this purpose that the military intervened? When they are saying so and constantly publishing it everywhere? When they are burning, at this very moment, tons of books containing a "foreign" ideology"? When you are fully aware that hundreds and hundreds, even thousands, of your brothers and sisters are suffering, at this very moment, imprisonment, persecution of all kinds, torture and even summary executions because of their ideas?

What exactly do you mean when you say that you "*earnestly desire to destroy hatred so that hatred does not destroy the soul of Chile*"? Is this hatred that you want to destroy at all costs not embodied in a very precise ideology and political orientation that your arduous efforts to appear politically neutral fail to conceal? What exactly is this "true nature" of Chile to which you seem so attached? And what underlies your transcendent attachment to "Christ and the Fatherland"?

What exactly do you mean when you say that your pressing calls for dialogue have been turned down? Who refused them? Why this constant need to repeat to each and everyone that you "*do not represent the interests of any particular group or political affiliation*"?

⁴⁶ Gold rings were also being donated for reconstruction under Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany.

HABRA CUECAS, EMPANADAS Y VINO

ASEGURAN UN "18"

COMO DIOS MANDA



Gospel of St. Matthew (Chap. 23, excerpts from v. 1-34)

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. (...)

“They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; (...)

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! Because you devour the houses of widows, and make long prayers just for the appearance; because of this you will be judged more severely. (...)

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you resemble bleached sepulchers, which appear beautiful outside, and which, inside, are full of bones of the dead and everything unclean.

“You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? Therefore I am sending you prophets and sages and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town.”

VI - 18 September: independence day – “we would like to offer... our full and disinterested collaboration”

“The Christian Churches are an essential element in safeguarding the soul of the German people.”

Adolf Hitler on 23 March 1933⁴⁷

On Chile’s Independence Day – Tuesday, 18 September – the campaign of repression and terror gives no sign of respite.

On my short wave radio I learn that the number of detained reaches 10,000 and of casualties also about 10,000. News circulating by word of mouth in my neighborhood not only confirms these figures but also doubles and sometimes triples or quadruples them.⁴⁸

The president of the junta, General Pinochet, provides a report of the “official numbers”: 4,700 detainees, 95 dead (72 civilians, 14 policemen, and 9 soldiers), 300 wounded. And the report specifies that the “wounds are only minor”!

In a press release it sent to Luxembourg (La Tercera, 17 September), the military junta announces that it gave Allende the chance to surrender four times but that at the last minute he committed suicide. Not a word of the 17 rockets launched by the Hawker-Hunter jet fighters, or the constant attacks by armored tanks, or the fire that erupted in La Moneda... or the fact that Allende’s wife was never allowed to see the corpse of her husband.

⁴⁷ Speech made before the Reichstag, *El Evangelio de Judas* by Guillermo Blanco, 4th edition, Pineda Libros, 1973, Santiago, Chile, p. 46.

⁴⁸ Note added in 2017: We now know that these numbers are totally exaggerated. However, in a context of total censure, and in a climate of massive repression and terror, such exaggerations are to be expected. According to the last report of the Valech Commission published in August 2011 the military junta, from September 1973 to March 1990, would have killed or disappeared 3,065. And the total number of victims according to the testimonies recognized as valid by the commission would surpass 40,000. This latter number includes the dead and missing, the tortured, and the political prisoners but excludes the dozens of thousands who either took refuge abroad or were simply expelled from the country.

Someone informs me that corpses are being thrown by plane into the ocean. While I am still wondering whether this latest and very unsettling news is well founded, I come across an 18-year-old Chilean, P.....,⁴⁹ who works on a fishing boat in Valparaiso. “Sometimes we’re finding corpses instead of fish in our nets”, he tells me.

Note added in 2017

In the diary that I was keeping in Chile, I first noted on 18 September 1973 that someone had informed me that bodies were being dumped into the ocean. Then in my diary of 26 September 1973 I again noted:

Today I met the wife of a Chilean lawyer and her two sons. One of them works on a fishing boat in Valparaiso. He told us that some fishermen had caught bodies in their nets in the last few days.

Some 27 years later, more precisely on 14 July 2000, the newspaper Clarín published an article titled *State Terrorism*. The article reports the testimony of the Christian Democrat Senator, Jorge Lavandero, who chaired the Human Rights Commission of the Chilean Senate in 1998. Lavandero claims that two former members of the secret police under the military regime had told him, during investigations, that at least 2000 Chileans disappeared following the coup. Approximately 1,200 bodies would have been thrown, by helicopter, into the ocean. The others would have been buried. In 1988, the remains of many of the buried would also have been removed and thrown into the sea, since the fact that Pinochet had lost his referendum meant that the families of the victims would start taking actions against the military.

In the same article, the reporter relates that in 1984, Andrés Valenzuela, a member of the Armed Forces who was then working for the Secret Police, told him the following:

“In 1975, one of the helicopters that were participating in this kind of mission arrived in the military base, Aéra de Colina, with about 15 prisoners aboard. It was a helicopter of the Chilean Air force, but at the time the Air Force collaborated very closely with the Secret

⁴⁹ When I wrote these lines I knew the full name of this young man. However, I chose not to publish it because I knew that this would endanger his life. I did not keep his name in my files, and now I have forgotten it.

VI - 18 September: independence day – “we would like to offer... our full and disinterested collaboration”

Police. The helicopter left, and when it returned, I was told by one of the agents who participated in the mission, ‘Fifo’ (Adolfo Palma Ramirez) that they had thrown the prisoners in the ocean, if I remember correctly, in front of San Antonio. He told me that the prisoners were not dead, just drugged. In fact, one of them woke up, and he had been obliged to knock him out. Before throwing the prisoners into the ocean, three army officers would open up their stomachs with their daggers so that they would immediately drown and sink to the bottom”.

It is in this dramatic context that Cardinal Silva Henríquez in Santiago, Bishop Vicuña in Chillán and Bishop Tagle in Valparaíso address the nation to provide the Church’s commentary on Independence Day.⁵⁰

A- SANTIAGO: Homily of Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez in National Gratitude Church

Guests of honor: *Members of the military junta; Ministers of State; Members of the Judiciary; Comptroller General; Former presidents of Chile (Eduardo Frei and Jorge Alessandri)*

Cardinal Silva begins his homily by explaining the meaning of the civic-religious ceremony. According to tradition this ceremony represents a prayer for the nation but today, given the special circumstances affecting the country, its meaning will be twofold, says the cardinal: “We are gathered here to pray for those who have fallen and also and above all to pray for the future of Chile.”⁵¹

On behalf of all those assembled he implores the Lord to “forgive our sins and those of our brothers who have fallen for our country”; so that

⁵⁰ From unofficial but trustworthy sources, it is known that Bishop Gillmore of the Armed Forces put pressure on Cardinal Silva on 17 September so that the ceremony would have the traditional form of a Te Deum and would take place in the cathedral or at the Military Academy. The Cardinal refused these two requests but agreed to make a prayer for the dead and for Chile in the Church of National Gratitude, a church that was built to give thanks to the Lord for the victory obtained by the Chilean Armed Forces in their war against Bolivia and Peru in 1879.

⁵¹ The full text of the homily was published in the *Mercurio* of 19 September 1973. See appendix 4.

an “eternal light shines upon our soldiers and civilians who have sacrificed their lives in the noble, difficult and painful task of correcting our mistakes and ensuring that justice reigns supreme on our land, for all the children belonging to the same country, thus bringing us the much desired fruit of peace”.

Then he comes to what is obviously the main purpose of his address: the future of Chile. “This religious moment is also meant to awaken us to the noblest of enterprises: that of rebuilding our homeland.”

To awaken his listeners to this noblest of enterprises – national reconstruction – Cardinal Silva takes a moment to consider Chile’s past. If we want to know what Chile is to become and what orientation it should now take, we must examine our history, which constitutes a “sacred heritage”. More precisely, we must learn to decipher in our past that which truly constitutes our authentic Chilean values and customs. We must learn to discover the essence of our people and our country, that is to say, its very soul, ‘la chilenidad’: “In order to clarify our common mission, I would like to recall, with humility, some of the dominant traits of our ‘chilenidad’...”

According to Cardinal Silva the ‘chilenidad’ or Chilean soul is marked by five fundamental characteristics: divinity, propensity towards the poorest, spirit of brotherly and family love, love of freedom and attachment to law.

The first characteristic, divinity, is evidently the most spectacular and most important, since from it flow all others. It is the ever-active presence of God Himself “who endows our national being with beautiful characteristics that rightly constitute our pride and that represent all that is meant by the expression *typically Chilean*”. Not only does the “Lord of History” constantly give birth to the “chilenidad”, but he also makes it “to his own image and likeness”.

Originating from a God who is love and harmony, the Chilean soul, embedded in the historical traditions of Chile, will also bear these distinctive traits. Thus, in order to prevent hatred from empoisoning and destroying the soul of their country, “all Chileans” must reconnect with their sacred past, with the traditional family spirit: “We must create a climate of understanding, justice, simplicity, forgiveness and

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fraternity; we must also overcome our divisions and conflicts, forget our differences and divergent opinions.”



18 SEPTEMBER: CELEBRATING INDEPENDENCE DAY IN
NATIONAL GRATITUDE CHURCH

Originating from a God who is free and independent, the Chilean soul – “reflection of the active presence of Christ the Liberator” – will also be free and independent. Although Chileans have conquered and preserved freedom and independence at the cost of “enormous sacrifices”, these are, basically, a “gift of God”. Of a God who wants Chile to remain today what it has been in the past. Of a God who wants the true face of Chile to glow throughout the world. Who wants this “small but noble nation, intelligent and hard working” to express its true character “in the concert of nations...”

In order to accomplish this, we Chileans must remain “faithful to this gift of God” and “not allow foreign values, customs and powers from making us forget who we are, and from subjecting us to a yoke that would become unbearable and deprive us of everything that belongs to us, of what constitutes our most precious heritage and corresponds to what we call *chilenidad*”.

Originating from a God who prefers “order to disorder, authority to anarchy, dialogue to force, justice to violence, and love to hatred”, our “chilenidad” also bears these historical traits. We Chileans are attached to the law. We believe that it is “the best safeguard of our freedom and the best incentive for our development”. But this attachment to the law is neither foolish nor fanatical: “when it has ceased to be just, or effective, we have replaced it with a better one.”

“Originating, finally, from a God who has always favored the poorest and most oppressed, the Chilean soul too, as its sacred history testifies, has an instinctive propensity toward the great oppressed masses.

“In this religious moment our hearts are filled with an immense hope. The hope felt by all those who, in one way or another, are renewing their commitment to the hungry masses who crave for justice; who would like to be the builders of a world that is more human and where there is more solidarity and justice; who would like to be the creators of that peace, for which every human heart yearns and which forms the basis of true liberation”.

“And when the Lord himself fills our soul with renewed vigor, when the Spirit of God blows like a strong wind demanding that the poor be evangelized and the oppressed liberated, he is certainly not calling for the negation or destruction of the Chilean soul!”

Of course Cardinal Silva, however, has neither the naivety nor pretension to believe that the “soul of Chile” is perfect: “There remains in us sin, both personal and collective.” But we must not forget that if Chile is “a nation on which God bestows his love, a family that he chose and to which he wished to belong”, it is precisely “because he saw that it was small, weak and imperfect, and therefore needed him.”

For all these reasons the soul of Chile, however imperfect it may be, is worthy of being welcomed and admired: “How beautiful is the soul of Chile, this gift of God to our nation!” How beautiful is this terrestrial homeland which “announces and prepares” the heavenly homeland! “Admirable mystery of our faith!”

For all these same reasons being critical of the Chilean soul –

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‘chilenidad’ – and calling it into question; refusing to welcome it as “a disciple who is learning” and breaking away from our beautiful Chilean traditions, all this amounts to a “sacrilege.”

“Our true values appear to me as the ever-present emanation of God’s love for Chile and their profanation appears to me as a sacrilegious profanation”, asserts Cardinal Silva.

This being acknowledged, should we not all strive to do everything possible to recover this so noble ‘chilenidad’? Should we not imitate God who “accepted us as we are” and who “respected us in our originality”? Should we not all agree to cooperate fully in this national reconstruction that has been underway since 11 September?

“For the reconstruction of Chile we would like to offer to those who, in these difficult times, have taken on their shoulders the very heavy responsibility of directing our destinies, our full and disinterested collaboration”, declares the head of the Chilean Catholic Church, Cardinal Silva.

In the historical context of 18 September – only seven days after the beginning of the coup – Cardinal Silva’s homily undoubtedly constitutes a substantial support for the Chilean right and, more immediately, for the military dictatorship that has just intervened in order to defend, under the guise of a supposedly humanist and Christian traditional nationalism, the economic interests and privileges of the well-off and wealthy Chileans. For it clearly shows, this homily, that there exists between Cardinal Silva and the Chilean right – represented by the military junta – a fundamental ideological community. This community is rooted in a common interpretation of Chilean history and in a common projection of its future. More concretely, it revolves around two poles: on the one hand the established order, which constitutes in the eyes of the right the very essence of the Chilean nationality, the so-called ‘chilenidad’; and, on the other, that which threatens this historical-cultural identity and proposes to establish a new order: a foreign ideology inspiring the Popular Unity government.

That the cardinal participates in the same ideological world than the Chilean right is already evident in the prayer for the dead by which he begins his homily. Enjoying, as he likes to repeat, perfect political neutrality, one would think that at least on this level he would scrupulously guard against all sectarianism. And by referring to both the soldiers and the civilians who fell this is clearly the impression he is trying to give. However this impression rapidly disappears when he then specifies that he is praying for those “who have sacrificed their lives in the noble, difficult and painful task of correcting our mistakes and of ensuring that, for all the children of the same country, justice reigns supreme in our nation.”

One easily understands that the right would spontaneously consider those who died in perpetrating the coup d'état as heroes, saints, people who sacrificed their lives “for their country”...

One can easily understand that for the conservatives the brutal military takeover would appear a “noble, difficult and painful task”. For “correcting the mistakes” of 44% of the population, and doing so with such rapidity and efficiency, cannot but be hard. And ridding the country of a foreign ideology, especially when this cancer is widespread and has grown long and solid historical roots in universities, colleges and the popular masses, cannot but be very taxing and challenging...

One can easily understand that restoring the unity that prevailed in the past among Chileans would appear as a very noble task; returning to the good old times when there were masters and servants – on the one hand a rich and all-powerful elite and, on the other, a mass of very poor and subdued workers and peasants – but where at least there was lots of fraternity and a good family spirit...

Finally one can also easily understand that for the conservatives the military intervention would symbolize a new élan towards justice for all, peace and tranquility, and the recovery of the economy and institutional order...

But one would find it very difficult to understand why the Chilean left,

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which in the past week is being gathered like cattle and undergoing imprisonment, torture and summary executions, could participate in the universalist spirit of this Christian prayer...

One would find it very difficult to understand that the Chilean left would not perceive the coup d'état as the beginning of a reign of terror and repression, of massive institutionalized injustice and illegality...

One would find it very difficult to understand why the hundreds of thousands of workers and peasants that supported the Allende government would not simply interpret what was happening as an immense and tragic loss, the rebirth of a deep economic and social marginalization, one that has been so familiar and chronic in their past lives that it has practically become second nature to them...

Yes, may the eternal light of Christ shine upon those who have sacrificed their lives in this noble, difficult and painful task of correcting our mistakes and restoring justice and institutional order! Not on Allende! Nor on all those who died fighting against the salvation of these saviors! Nor on these foreigners and on these Chileans-become-foreign for having adhered to a foreign ideology! Nor on those who are still resisting the coup, and who are now referred to as ‘suicidal and subversive elements’!

No. Praying for Allende now, given the special circumstances, would be totally inappropriate in this ceremony during which Chileans are commemorating Independence Day. It would be ignoring the complex and refined diplomatic skills that present and dramatic events are calling for. Openly praying for Salvador Allende who at this very moment is being systematically bad-mouthed and smeared by completely censored mass media – so intense is the censure that people, while standing in front of corner stores, are being detained by the military for ‘spreading rumors’... No! Not right now... Perhaps later and in a much more secure place. Kneeling next to his bed in the archbishopric. During curfew. When soldiers are not spying on him through the window... A very private and discreet prayer!

The fact that Cardinal Silva shares the same ideology as the Chilean right is once again manifest, but this time even more clearly, when he interprets the meaning of Chile’s historical past.

The followers of the Popular Unity government interpret the history of their country as a long and shameful exploitation of the poor, the majority, by the rich elite. According to them the Chilean elite would have accepted to collaborate with multinational capitalist corporations by keeping the Chilean masses in a state of political, economic and cultural servility. From this collaboration the former would have gained the advantage of enjoying a life style and consumption habits very close to those of the well-to-do in developed countries and very far removed from the daily life and concrete situation of the vast majority of Chileans. And the latter would have benefited from abundant and cheap labor and raw materials and very enticing and often-exorbitant profits.⁵² And the icing on the cake of this historical collaboration of the Chilean elite with mainly American corporations: the proliferation throughout Chile of the American Hit Parade, this symbol par excellence of capitalism that is rendered all the more powerful and mysterious by the fact that the vast majority of Chileans do not understand a single word of English!⁵³

On the other hand, right-wing Chileans – whether those of the National Party who advocate the established order, or members of the Christian Democratic Party who favor a slightly revised type of capitalism – interpret their history as being noble and glorious, admirable and exemplary, and even sacred. For them, the established order represents the true nature of Chileans and is as much a part of them as, say, hunger and thirst. This order, furthermore, is not only the expression of an enlightened decision taken by flesh and blood people, but also, and more importantly, it is the reflection of divine reason and divine love. Though embodied in human values, the established order

⁵² In the historical address he gave in front of the General Assembly of the United Nations on 4 December 1972, Salvador Allende stated that a branch of the Kennecott Copper Company, an American copper company, had achieved an average annual profit of 52.8% in Chile from 1955 to 1970. The same company made exorbitant profits in certain years: 106 per cent in 1967, 113 per cent in 1968 and more than 205 per cent in 1969.

⁵³ A person recently visiting Chile informed me that among all the Latin American countries he has visited – and he has been in virtually all of them – it is in Chile that he found that the American Hit Parade was most present on the radio.

ultimately symbolizes values that are transcendental and intrinsically supernatural. For it is the Lord of History himself who chose to plant his tent on Chilean soil. It is he who decided to endow Chileans with the great Western Christian culture, opening their hearts to both capitalism and Christianity and marking their soul with the specific traits that constitute *chilenidad*: love of freedom and love of the law, a spirit of independence, democracy and fraternity, and an irresistible inclination to prioritize the poor and marginalized.

Such an interpretation of their history brings Chilean conservatives to adopt a type of nationalism that is pure, clear-cut and somewhat original. According to this worldview whatever threatens the ‘*chilenidad*’ – symbol of the traditional established order – automatically becomes false intellectually and morally wrong, and the ‘*chilenidad*’ itself appears as the source of all that is beautiful, worthy and true. Thus we end up having on the one hand the very humanistic and Christian soul of Chile, and, on the other, what poisons and destroys it; on the one hand unity and peace, and, on the other, division and conflict; on the one hand order and pluralism, and, on the other, anarchy and totalitarianism; on the one hand the good old capitalist traditions (with vestiges of feudalism) and, on the other, everything that threatens to make it disappear.

However, since this nationalism is based more on class interests than on authentic spiritual and transcendental values – though nevertheless persisting in believing and making others believe the contrary – it is more of a defense mechanism rather than an opinion based on enlightened reason. At the level of spontaneous affectivity, a level that betrays deep and unavowed intentions, it crystallizes around the notion of that which is ‘foreign’. Thus, anyone who threatens the established order, whether Chilean or not, becomes a “foreigner”; a value or an ideology that calls this order into question, whether or not in agreement with reason, is transformed into a “foreign ideology” or even a “sacrilege”; a custom that breaks with this order and that risks destroying it, and this regardless of its intrinsic value, becomes a “foreign” custom; a country whose socialist structure embodies and reflects the opposite of this order, regardless of whether this country has succeeded in eliminating in large part the problem of chronic

poverty in which its popular masses had been plunged for decades, automatically becomes a “foreign power”.

For the real foundation of this strange nationalistic logic is not reason but rather rationalization, in its psychological meaning.⁵⁴ The main virtue of ‘chilenidad’ is neither its intrinsic value nor the degree of its veracity but rather its mere familiarity; and the mortal sin of the individuals, values, customs and countries that threaten it is neither their wickedness nor their inherent falsehood but simply the irrational and unpardonable fact that they are “foreign.”

Thus, according to this strange logic, a Chilean may be more foreign than a foreigner and a foreigner more Chilean than a Chilean. The impressive folklore expressing the great revolutionary aspirations of the Chilean masses during the Popular Unity revolution can be more foreign than the American Hit Parade and the latter can be more Chilean than Chilean folklore. The powerful and impressive historical demonstrations of the Chilean workers and peasants can appear more foreign than the powerful and gross interventions of the United States in Chile, and the latter can appear more Chilean than mass mobilizations of Chilean workers and peasants.

There can be no doubt whatsoever that Cardinal Silva adheres to this ambiguous and unsettling nationalism of Chilean conservatives. Why did he focus his homily on the theme of national reconstruction? Did he not know that this was the slogan of the Chilean right, and this, months before the coup? Did he not, like all Chileans, hear the junta solemnly declaring three days after the beginning of the coup, “Chilean workers: our national reconstruction has begun... Chile is one, Chile is free” (Decree No. 31)?

One would be willing to believe that Cardinal Silva is not taking sides politically. But it is very difficult to do so when the slogan that he adopts is the very one that the military junta has been shouting from the rooftops since its coup of “national liberation.” And when he

⁵⁴ To understand what ‘rationalization’ means in psychology, see the following 11 min. YouTube video: [Psychology: Defense Mechanisms & Rationalization: "Facing Reality"](#), published on 15 July 2013 by Jeff Quitney. Retrieved 3 August 2017.

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constantly proclaims, exactly like the junta has been doing since the coup, that he does not represent any particular sector of Chilean society and has no political connivance whatsoever.⁵⁵

However I was not dreaming when I heard Cardinal Silva publicly proclaiming that to preserve the Chilean soul, this “gift of God”, we Chileans must “not allow foreign values, customs and powers from making us forget who we are, and from subjecting us to a yoke that would become unbearable and deprive us of everything that belongs to us, of what constitutes our most precious heritage and corresponds to what we call *chilenidad*”.

Nor was I dreaming when I was witnessing, in the days preceding 11 September, the fierce campaign being launched against foreigners by the right-wing press. Against those foreigners who came to Chile because they were sympathizers of the Chilean path towards socialism and/or because they had to flee, like so many Brazilians, Bolivians and Uruguayans, other military dictatorships instigated by the right in Latin America.

I was not dreaming when, as we were waiting together in line for bread, a Chilean remarked: “You know, violence is foreign to our Chilean blood. If there is violence in our country, it is because of foreigners.”

And I was not dreaming early in the morning of 11 September when I heard the junta broadcasting on the radio in the midst of the sound of Hawker-Hunter jet fighters descending to fire rockets on La Moneda: “The Armed Forces and the National Police are united in initiating the historical and responsible mission of freeing our nation and preventing it from falling under the Marxist yoke.”⁵⁶ When, a few seconds later, I

⁵⁵ See the very typical speech delivered by General Carrasco to coal miners (El Mercurio, 25 September 1973, p.17), in which he states, inter alia: “This government does not represent any political current. We are not against political ideas. We do not fight them. There will be no persecution against anyone. Those who believe themselves to be Marxists of heart can continue to maintain their doctrine. What we want is that there be no more politics in the work places. One must leave politics for hours of rest or as a hobby.

⁵⁶ Press release no. 1, September 11, in the Mercurio on 13 September, p. 3. The more complete list of press releases published by the Mercurio on 26

heard the same junta accusing the Allende government of having “broken national unity, artificially fomenting a class struggle... leading to a fratricidal and blind struggle, driven by ideas foreign to our idiosyncrasies, and that are false and have proven to be a failure”.⁵⁷ Then this third message stating that “this military movement of national liberation” is against “the foreign mercenaries of Marxism who are murdering our people”...⁵⁸

I was not dreaming when I was reading Decree no. 1 proclaiming that the junta was intervening in order to save our values that are “superior and represent the essence of the Chilean nationality” from this menacing ideology “inspired by the foreign principles of Marxism-Leninism”.

No, I was not dreaming. But Cardinal Silva is dreaming when he astutely suggests that Chile is in the process of recovering justice and institutional order, family spirit and love of the poor, freedom and law, in short, all the components of the Chilean Christian soul.

What exactly is this freedom that Chile is suddenly recovering in great leaps and bounds? And what is this law? And this spirit of love? And this concern for the poor?

The freedom that Chile is recovering is the one to which referred this very sympathetic elderly Catholic couple from a rich neighborhood in Santiago who told me on 28 July 1973, with tears in their eyes, that because of the Allende government they could no longer afford to pay for a servant in each one of their three houses; who were “forced” to rent out one of their houses (they were paid \$120 US a month and changed their dollars on the black market, thus obtaining with this single house a monthly income four times the gross annual average wage of Chilean workers); who complained that they could no longer travel whenever they pleased to the United States and Europe because

September does not contain this element: some press releases were obviously later reedited.

⁵⁷ Decree no. 5 issued on 11 September 1973 and published in *El Mercurio* on 26 September 1973.

⁵⁸ Decree no. 6 issued on 11 September 1973 and published in *El Mercurio* on 26 September 1973.

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of the differential exchange rate implemented by the Popular Unity government;⁵⁹ who finally lamented that with Allende's economic policy – Allende had considerably increased the purchasing power of the poor by raising their wages and fixing the price of several goods deemed essential – it had become very hard to find many things that before were abundant and easy to buy such as meat, high quality clothes, and even taxis...

“We were both born accustomed to having many beautiful and large things, and in great abundance. We have always lived in total freedom and really appreciate it! How sad to see that it no longer exists today in Chile”, they concluded with great sadness.

That before the advent the Popular Unity government numerous Chileans had never known the taste of meat; that millions had never been able to afford taking a taxi; that they could never afford, in the past and even today, traveling abroad since an air ticket was worth about twenty years' gross wages of an average worker; that they were spending on food for their entire families the equivalent of what this couple was spending to feed their dog; that they were living in a house whose market value was not even half of that of the grotto for the Virgin Mary located next to one the houses of this good Catholic couple; that they often lacked drinking water in their poor neighborhoods while the servants of this couple would drown the lawns every day so they would stay green: all this may be true but is of little import to them. After all, the poor were born that way and have never known anything else... And besides there are natural differences between people, and one must also bear in mind that Chileans of a lower rank do not have the same responsibilities as we do...

What an immense joy this couple experienced when they heard the Armed Forces and the National Police declaring on the radio at 7 am on 12 September: “Buenos días, Chile libre!” (Good morning, free Chile!). How amazingly deep was their satisfaction to learn that the

⁵⁹ The exchange rate was advantageous for those purchasing commodities deemed essential, such as wheat, etc., and disadvantageous for those merely wishing to travel abroad for holidays.

Popular Unity government had been caught in the act and crushed, a government that was not respecting “the fundamental rights of freedom of expression, freedom of education, the right to strike, the right to petition, the right to private property, and the right to a secure and dignified subsistence”!⁶⁰

According to Cardinal Silva this law that Chile has been recovering thanks to the military would be the “best safeguard” of the freedom of the poor, the masses who live in the slums around Santiago; it would be the “best incentive” for their integral development...

But how profound, how accurate and sociologically irrefutable is such argumentation! Is there anyone more committed to defending the rights of the poor than the traditional legislators in Chile, than those who adopt laws in parliament (since legislators originate from marginalized sectors of society it is perfectly normal, of course, that they would think first and foremost of their ‘own’ common good)?

And is there anyone more committed to the poor than judges? Those judges who were always so accommodating for the right-wing terrorists because they too wanted to save the Chilean soul...

And finally is there anyone more committed to the poor than lawyers? Those lawyers who constantly flock to the shantytowns surrounding Santiago to volunteer their hearts and skills because they know very well that while these people are penniless, they are the ones who have been suffering the greatest injustices, and this for decades if not centuries...

Yes, it is this law that stimulates progress! Not popular movements! Not grassroots organizations! Not the gradual empowerment of workers and peasants, nor their ever greater say in how things are produced and distributed, in their ever greater control as citizens of the media, of the way they perceive themselves and assert their own needs as individuals and as a community!

No, it’s the law that fosters development... And when this law ceases

⁶⁰ Decree no. 5 issued on 11 September 1973 and published in *El Mercurio* on 26 September 1973.

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to be fair Chileans have always known how to replace it with a new one. And when it continues to be fair but stops being effective they have not hesitated to get rid of it.

What does Cardinal Silva mean when he makes these last remarks? Obviously he is recalling an old philosophical principle according to which human justice should never be limited to a particular code or law. And that reducing it to a set of clear-cut directives and rigidly abiding only by these would be akin to acting like Pharisees.

But today, in the very midst of a brutal coup that is in full swing, what are Chileans to make of these words of their spiritual leader? Does Cardinal Silva wish to legitimize the flexible and permissive attitude regularly adopted by the Popular Unity government when faced with land grabs – known in Latin America as ‘tomas’ – carried out by peasants and shantytown dwellers, since it acknowledged the gross historical justice they were experiencing? Or to legitimize the flexible attitude of the Popular Unity when faced with the takeovers of companies by workers frustrated by the long lockouts whose aim was simply to paralyze the economy and force Allende to resign?

Or does Cardinal Silva want to justify instead the great “TOMA” carried out on 11 September by a military junta that is present in the audience and attentively listening to his every word, a coup that is outright illegal and unconstitutional according to the text of the law – the military owing allegiance to the democratically elected president – but that could be considered legitimate in relation to the greater interest of the nation, that is to say, safeguarding the supreme values of the Chilean soul?

The ambiguity of the assertion is sufficiently well calculated so that neither the right nor the left may find fault with it. But the nationalism and patriotism of the cardinal clearly indicate in what direction his attachment “to Christ and to the fatherland” is leaning.

What are the spirit of love and this great concern for the poor that Chile is now recovering? Would they not be represented by the coup itself?

The “beautiful characteristics” that make up what we call

“chilenidad”, comments Cardinal Silva, are “often imponderable but always valorous and kind”. What imponderability is he referring to? That represented by the recent coup that was celebrated in several very Catholic and apolitical churches of Santiago by the sudden appearance of the Chilean flag? What kindness and valor is he referring to? Those of the military junta that is making its very first public appearance and attending the Independence Day celebration with wide eyes and yearning for congratulations? While Cardinal Silva does not say so in so many words, it is one of the possible interpretations one could give to his words...

Should we recognize this spirit of love and this great concern for the poor in Decree no. 12 issued by the junta the day preceding the celebration that is now taking place? A decree that abolished the juridical personality of the largest trade union federation in Chile, the Central única de los trabajadores (CUT), one of the most organized and powerful federations in all of Latin America, because, the decree specifies, it was “under the influence of a foreign ideology that is incompatible with the national soul”? Or in Decree no. 77 that abolished the juridical personality of the seven political parties making up the Popular Unity government, and of all progressive and left-leaning popular organizations, always on the pretext that they were inspired by a foreign ideology?

Should Cardinal Silva be praised for having shown great spiritual fortitude and focusing his homily on the authentic values embedded in the Jesus of the Gospel? For being able to take a certain distance from the so-called Chilean values and customs and from the supposedly pure and sacred traditions of the national bourgeoisie? For having had the strength and discernment necessary to critically evaluate the so-called “chilenidad” in light of the Jesus of the Gospel, instead of using the latter to justify and legitimate the established capitalist order?⁶¹

⁶¹ Gospel of St. Matthew, Chap. 15 v. 1-3: Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, ²“Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don’t wash their hands before they eat!” Jesus replied, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?”

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Is this not the most appropriate moment, even when the leaders of the marginalized masses are being imprisoned, tortured and summarily executed; when half a dozen concentration camps are being created for thousands of Chileans and another half a dozen refugee camps for thousands of persecuted foreigners; when thousands of Chileans are desperately seeking refuge in embassies; when, in other words, a massive repression is in full swing; is this not the most appropriate moment to declare:

“In this religious moment our hearts are filled with an immense hope. The hope felt by all those who, in one way or another, are renewing their commitment to the hungry masses who crave for justice; who would like to be the builders of a world that is more human and where there is more solidarity and justice.”

And why should this hope be so immense in such circumstances? Because of the religiosity of the moment? Because it is the Spirit of God that is the driving force in the sacred history of Chile?

“And when the Lord himself fills our soul with renewed vigor, when the Spirit of God blows like a strong wind (I can still hear the Hawker-Hunter jet fighters descending on La Moneda...) demanding that the poor be evangelized and the oppressed liberated, he is certainly not calling for the negation or destruction of the Chilean soul,” comments Cardinal Silva.

Dear religion! What would I do without you? If the junta had only been supported by the leading businessmen of Chile, right-wing doctors (about 70%), lawyers, judges, the Court of Appeal, professional associations, in other words by all those whose great historical priority has always been, as everyone knows, the common good, and in particular that of the marginalized masses, that would not have sufficed to legitimize its coup in the eyes of the public. No, it needed more! When the Lord Himself is there pushing behind the tanks. When he urges us to evangelize the poor and free them from the yoke that weighs on them, it is certain that he is not asking that the soul of Chile be denied or destroyed!

Continue, dear soldiers, rebuilding the nation! Continue recovering our national soul – the “chilenidad”! Continue getting rid of hatred by

eliminating those you hate because they are fomenting hatred!
Continue reuniting Chile by wiping out with one big sweeping stroke
and without remorse, on the contrary with joy and spirit of conquest,
44% of the population that supports the Popular Unity government!

For this 44%, having lost their very soul, are no longer Chilean...

The Chileans, the authentic ones, all agree. And the others, “los malos chilenos”, (the bad Chileans) will also eventually agree once they have recovered, thanks to our programs of deconscientization and depropagandization, their national soul. Then, according to God’s will, the true face of Chile will glow in the concert of nations and will reappear this great family where all, rich and poor, embrace one another as children of the same heavenly Father, that same Father to whom you publicly consecrated yourself, dear patriotic soldiers, when initiating the coup d’état!

B- CHILLÁN: Homily Delivered by Bishop Elasio Vicuña in the Cathedral of Chillán.

The beautiful Catholic church, “comments the Mercurio correspondent at Chillán, was packed for a moving ceremony “honored by the presence of the highest provincial authorities (military members of course), departmental leaders and distinguished (note the adjective that betrays an aristocratic mentality) Chilean families”. The faithful were responding “to the call of their bishop to pray and express their gratitude for the new path of progress on which the country has embarked.”

In his very first words⁶², the Bishop of Chillán – city located in Southern Chile where the wave of repression is particularly strong – launches an urgent appeal for the spirit of fraternal love:

“Above all we must love one another. Hatred has been like a cancer gradually corrupting our national soul. Must not hate one another those who were born under the same sky, speak the same language, and share the same history and the same flag. Above all must not hate

⁶² The Mercurio on 19 September 1973 published only excerpts of this homily accompanied by the comments of its correspondent Ricardo Jorquera.

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one another those who call themselves Christians and have as their emblem the cross, which is a symbol of love.”

While at first glance these words do not seem to represent any group interest or partisan political attitude and only seem to emphasize that which is pure and noble in human nature as well as in the teachings of Jesus Christ, such is not their meaning for the worker and peasant supporters of the Popular Unity government. On the evening of the coup, they had seen General Gustavo Leigh, recognized as the mastermind of the four-member-military junta, declaring on television that the new government was going to fight against the “Marxist cancer” that had been destroying Chile for three years and to wipe it out “at all costs”. They had perceived all the anger, all the determination and fascist hatred, of which every tone of his voice and every feature of his face were imbued. And they had immediately understood, seized with terror, that they themselves represented that cancer...

That Cardinal Silva only refers to ‘yoke’ while the junta speaks of ‘Marxist yoke’; that Bishop Vicuña only refers to ‘cancer’ while the junta speaks of ‘Marxist cancer’; this small diplomatic nuance of these great spiritual leaders, who constantly proclaim having no political partisanship whatsoever, does not fool them. They, whose comrades are driven like cattle into prisons, concentration camps or directly into mass graves, and are suffering torture of all kinds; they who are helplessly witnessing the systematic dismantling of all their trade union, political, and popular organizations, conquered after decades of struggle and suffering... they know very well on what political side these noble prelates are leaning.

This year the meaning of this ceremony, given the special circumstances of the nation, is somewhat different, comments Bishop Vicuña. Instead of the traditional Te Deum protocol that has a festive character, our encounter will have more of a spiritual character and will consist in a meditation on what Chile is asking of each one of us for its future.

“Let us raise our hearts to God, in whom we must put our hope.

“Terrorism, the most cruel form of violence, must disappear from

Chile. Because it is doubly reprehensible: not only does it harm innocent lives, but it also hides behind a cowardly anonymity.

“Class struggle, odious social differences, sterile controversies that have caused parents to stand against their sons, brothers against brothers, compatriots against compatriots, all this must stop.

“We form a great human chain that links each one of us together as brothers. Let us open the sacred pages of the Gospel of the Divine Master: “Love one another... Forgive that you may be forgiven.”

Is the bishop of Chillán denouncing by these words the massive wave of terrorism being perpetrated by the military junta since the beginning of the coup? Is he referring to the very well planned campaign of terrorism initiated by the far right in the concerted effort of the opposition to create the economic conditions and psychological atmosphere necessary to bring about a military coup?

If such an interpretation remains possible, it appears, according to the bishop’s words and their context, unlikely. Everything would seem to suggest that Bishop Vicuña is clearly targeting those supporting the Popular Unity government. For it would be hard to accuse the terrorism of the military of being anonymous: it is walking totally naked in the streets of Chile.

Everything seems to suggest that Bishop Vicuña, in opposing the hatred and division created by class struggle, is taking aim at conflict itself while placing on the backburner the obscene income disparities and eventual revolt to which the existence of social classes give rise. Class struggle would run counter to evangelical love but not the scandalous social and income disparities that, once they have entered the field of consciousness, necessarily engender such struggle. Moreover, the very existence of social classes would not be interpreted as a struggle, this qualifier being reserved for the reactions of the workers who want to disrupt the established order.

Thus through his mentality and ideology Monsignor Vicuña clearly reveals that he is siding with the Chilean right for which the military coup does not represent the height of terrorism but instead that which will put an end to it...

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With the Chilean right that, in the weeks preceding the coup d'état, had an incommensurate capacity to perceive the campaign of terror orchestrated by the far right as merely resulting, directly or indirectly, from the foreign and evil ideology introduced into Chile by the Popular Unity government...

With the Chilean right that fiercely opposed, consequent to itself, the conscientization of workers and peasants, a conscientization that was becoming ever more threatening for the sacred 'chilenidad', which symbolized the established order...

With the Chilean right that had strongly opposed the radical and much more democratic educational reform that was being proposed by the Popular Unity government...

Thus, when the Bishop of Chillán calls for the end to “odious social differences” he is merely indulging in wishful thinking. He resembles a good elderly priest who is saying a private mass in the chapel of a distinguished aristocratic family and in his homily reminds those present – the masters of the house and the servant – that they all belong to one single great family and have the same Heavenly Father.

That the servant never had the opportunity to go to school while the sons and daughters of these noble people can choose to pursue their studies abroad – in Switzerland, France, England, or the United States according to their choice; that he does not eat the same food as the distinguished persons he serves day in and day out; that he spends his days rubbing the floor of his masters' garage, and mowing and watering their lawn; that he has never been able to save enough money to visit neither the north nor the south of his small country while his masters can afford to go on vacation in the United States once or twice a year; that he makes a salary of 3,000 escudos per month while his masters are making 200,000 escudos per month; that he is granted two weeks of vacation per year while his masters take four or five months of vacation per year; that he occupies a tiny bedroom located directly on a noisy street while his masters have a spacious and very quiet bedroom in each one of their two houses as well as in their chalet in Viña del Mar...

No... Let us once and for all put an end to the hatred and division sown

in the wonderful Chilean family by a foreign ideological cancer that tends to create, out of the blue, a fictitious class struggle and sterile controversy. May everyone return to work and accept to carry out in all humility the role assigned to each one of them by the “established order”:

“For a nation to progress every citizen must be convinced of his obligation to work. Nations progress when their children are hard working, willing to make sacrifices, and endowed with the spirit of initiative. Furthermore, work in itself is an expression of sincere patriotism. Are patriotic the teacher who teaches, the priest who moralizes, the physician who heals, the peasant who sows, and the worker who builds. (...) Are eminently patriotic the soldiers who defend the borders and ensure that Chile remains peaceful, and the police who ensure our internal security,” asserts Bishop Vicuña.

Congratulations, dear Armed Forces and dear National Police! A little pat on the back for the excellent work that you have done on 11 September and have been doing in the last week. A small, discreet, apolitical, and strictly spiritual and Christian pat on the back...

And you, dear brothers and sisters, instead of spending your time worrying about Chilean society as a whole, instead of devoting yourselves to political and social awareness-raising meetings, instead of trying to expose the ideological underpinnings of our economic system and pointing out the structures and mechanisms of domination underlying our national soul, instead of indulging in idealism and working for system change, learn to be faithful to that specific task to which our society has assigned you!

May the master assume his role of master and the slave that of slave: thus we shall reconnect to the authentic Chilenidad – Chilean soul – of the good old times; thus will be restored peace, order, authority and social tranquility.

May those who normally control the means of production and the mass media continue controlling them. May each and every worker carry out the specific task to which he or she has been assigned. And may everyone be paid according to his or her level of education and market value... Should it happen that the CEO is making \$8,000 per

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months and the worker only \$40, may the latter remember that it is always greater to serve than to be served.⁶³

This being clearly established, Bishop Vicuña recalls the importance of behaving in an ethical manner and stresses that only justice can achieve true social peace. Then he refers to the ongoing coup d'état:

“A sudden change in government has transformed the life of the nation.... Soldiers and civilians fell. The former as victims of their obedience and discipline, and the latter for what they believed to be an ideal but for many was only a regrettable error. We respect the memory of the dead. We pray that both soldiers and civilians will encounter the infinite mercy of God.”

In praying for both soldiers and civilians the Bishop of Chillán avoids the spiritual sectarianism that so clearly emerged, through diplomacy or censorship, from the homily pronounced the same day by Cardinal Silva. His non-partisan attitude, however, prompts him to point out that the ideal for which the supporters of the Popular Unity had fallen was, for many Chileans, only a regrettable error, though he himself prudently abstains from publicly agreeing with this latter assertion.

The fact remains that by inserting this remark in his homily in the circumstances of the moment, he clearly signals his preference. For he could also have mentioned that for many Chileans Mr. Eduardo Frei's frequent visits to the United States and Europe to convince the business community and bankers to boycott Chile; and the employer initiated work stoppages aimed at paralyzing the country and encouraging a coup d'état represented a regrettable error: he scrupulously abstains from doing so.

Bishop Vicuña then also invites, as Cardinal Silva had done the same day, all Chileans to cooperate fully with the new government.

⁶³ Note added in 2017: Obscene in the 1970s, income inequality in Chile remains obscene in 2017. Furthermore, members of the national assembly in Chile are the highest paid among all OECD countries. See the article, [Los diputados chilenos son los mejor pagados en los países de la OCDE](#), which asserts: “A Chilean deputy (...) earns almost 12 times the GDP per capita and 40 times the minimum income.” Retrieved on 12 December 2016.

Invite them to resistance? This would be promoting disorder. It would be inviting people to violence and encouraging class struggle. It would be showing a lack of respect for the legitimate authority of the new government. And the Church, as everyone knows, is in favor of order, non-violence and respect for legitimate authority. Moreover, it does not identify with any political party.

No. I invite you to cooperate fully with the members of the junta. Their task is immense and their responsibility overwhelming. They must “ensure that Chile once again embarks on the path of order and progress”. Without the cooperation of all citizens, they will not be able to carry out “the reconstruction of our nation”. In these decisive hours that we are living we must be ready to serve Chile to the point of heroism, comments Bishop Vicuña.

Finally he prays the Lord so that the repression may be as limited as possible and the new rulers “show humanitarian sentiments and avoid blood being shed unnecessarily.”

C- VALPARAISO: Homily delivered by Archbishop Emilio Tagle Covarrubias

Former Archbishop of Santiago and current archbishop of Valparaiso (the second largest city in Chile), Monsignor Emilio Tagle Covarrubias also refers in his homily⁶⁴ to the foreign ideology that claimed to provide an answer to the aspirations of the poor in Chile.

“Establishing as a basic principle the struggle between man and man we ended up creating division between irreconcilable groups. This gave rise to the domination, not of man on man, but of the state on its citizens. We had reached a very dangerous situation.”

The political ideology of the one who was the first to oppose the profound and more democratic educational reforms proposed by the Popular Unity government – [ENU](#) (La Escuela nacional unificada -

⁶⁴ El Mercurio reproduced, in its Valparaiso edition of 19 September 1973 extracts of this homily.

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Unified National School) – is clear.⁶⁵ According to Archbishop Tagle, the Popular Unity government represents only a simple reincarnation of historical Marxism, which is both erroneous and immoral. Erroneous and immoral because it is based on the principle of class struggle and thus sows hatred and violence in society; because it reduces the human person to a simple cog in a dictatorial and totalitarian state, and deprives him or her of all freedom; because it denies the existence of God and therefore deprives society of what constitutes the very foundation of all moral obligation.

Such an accusation could be found everywhere in Chile before 11 September among the sectors of the right and the opposition. Whether in Congress or in that part of the mass media controlled by the right, the refrain was always the same.

And members of the Popular Unity would constantly reply to such an accusation by pointing out that class struggle is not an ideological invention but a reality embodied in the mechanisms of control and domination established and perpetuated by capitalist society. They would recall that the State is not an abstract entity apart from and above the people, but rather that it should represent and defend the interests of the nation as a whole, that is, the common good. Finally, they would argue that a socialist society not only does not require adhering to atheism but also is in no way opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. On the contrary, if genuinely implemented, socialism can be a much better reflection of the Gospel than the typically business-as-usual capitalist society.

But that debate has now come to a sudden and brutal end. Now living in terror and fear, and reduced to an absolute silence, the workers, peasants, professionals and intellectuals of the now defunct Popular Unity government must listen to the Holy Spirit speaking to them through a representative of God, Archbishop Tagle:

⁶⁵ We know that this project was paralyzed thanks to the Catholic Church and the Armed Forces. The magazine *Que Pasa* (No. 105, 19 April 1973, p.7) comments: “It seemed like an anachronism, but it happened before our own eyes. Last week the Armed Forces and the Catholic Church, two institutions as old as Chile – they arrived in our country with Pedro de Valdivia – gave the coup de grace to the ENU.”

“I will not analyze the current situation but I must underline the conscientious patriotism shown, in a decisive moment, by the Armed Forces in freeing us from this evil. Because of this they deserve the recognition of all Chileans.”

This liberation from evil having been accomplished, the Archbishop of Valparaíso now turns towards the future and renews his pious commitment to justice and in particular to the marginalized masses:

“The mission of Chile is great: creating a more just society; seeking the welfare of all, especially the most needy; building a cleaner, purer and more sovereign country.”

**ARCHBISHOP EMILIO TAGLE SPEAKS ON TV ON
THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING OF THE MONTH
OF MARY**

13 November 1973

This month is dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Chile has its own way of celebrating this month and this year, more than ever, we have special reasons to celebrate it.

True to their oath and acting only in the interests of Chile, our Armed Forces have heard its clamor and have taken the providential step of rescuing it and preventing it from falling forever under the influence of Marxism, of which it is impossible, as history shows, to free oneself.

We feel safe and confident in the government that is leading us today, because we have before us its glorious tradition of patriotism, which is one with our history. And we know that it has sworn to act in the name of God, of our nation and of justice.

Like a patient sentenced to die and then freed by a successful surgical operation, Chile has bled and suffered somewhat: its wounds will have to heal. But the life of Chile as a free and sovereign nation has been saved. And that is the positive and fundamental aspect. (...)

We have known Marxism. Faced with social injustice many welcomed it in the hope that it would lead to liberation. We know that it does not represent a solution and a path of liberation. Though it is no longer in power, it is important that it be wiped out of the minds of all Chileans. It is erroneous and immoral to pose it as a necessary basis for social life, as it leads to confrontation, hatred and violence. The Marxist state claims to liberate some by crushing others, but basically, it crushes everyone. All citizens would become its employees. Its objective is dictatorship, total power, in which man loses his freedom. And to attain dictatorship it sacrifices everything.

Not believing in the existence of God, Marxism cannot establish

the foundation of moral obligation. Is good or true for Marxism only that which contributes to the triumph of its revolution. (...)

(After reading his message on television, Archbishop Tagle handed it to the newspaper La Tribuna that published the above excerpts on 14 November 1973)

VII - The junta is legitimate

In an interview he gave to a Mercurio correspondent on 23 September 1973 Father Osvaldo Lira sscc,⁶⁶ author of several books and articles and professor of metaphysics, theodicy and ethics at the Catholic University of Chile, openly criticizes the leaders of the Chilean Catholic Church for being too reserved and distant with the military junta. He accuses them of gross neglect in not clearly denouncing numerous irregularities committed by the Popular Unity government, and more precisely of not clearly establishing the basis of legitimacy of any government.

“When the Church spoke against violence, it placed on the same footing the violence of he who attacks and that of he who defends himself from attacks. Yet it is evident that one cannot compare the violence of the one who attacks, a violence that is illegitimate, with the violence of he who, quite legitimately, defends himself,” asserts Father Lira.

According to Father Lira, the violence of he who attacks would be that of the Popular Unity government, which allowed workers and peasants to seize by force land and companies that were not legally theirs. And the violence of he who defends himself is that of the opposition forces that organized a massive work stoppage, that constantly practiced obstructionism in Congress, that chose to stockpile goods instead of selling them at the official government-set prices, that chose to initiate a well planned campaign of terror, and that attempted a failed coup on 29 June 1973 and, finally, a successful one on 11 September of the same year.

The Catholic Church was wrong in putting these two categories

⁶⁶ According to absolutely trustworthy sources, Father Osvaldo Lira would be one of the main masterminds of the nationalist ideology of the junta. Moreover, though not himself a public figure, he would exercise a decisive influence on many of the current public figures in Chile.

of violence on the same footing, for in the first case one is talking about the violence of he who simply does not respect the law whereas in the second case one is talking about the violence of he who defends himself against he who is not respecting the law. These two types of violence are very different: the first is totally immoral whereas the second is moral and acceptable. (Father Lira simply chooses to ignore the type of violence embedded in unjust socioeconomic structures. Note added in 2017: it is to this latter violence that Pope Francis refers when he makes the following remarks (p. 45-6), in his encyclical *Joy of the Gospel*, about an economy of exclusion and inequality: “Such an economy kills”)

Thus, given that the Church has appeared, with or without reason, as an accomplice of the Popular Unity government, that it tolerated a wave of disobedience and illegality that led Chile to a profound crisis that rendered a coup d'état absolutely necessary, it should own up to its errors by now assuming, in the present circumstances, a greater responsibility. To facilitate the process of national reconstruction, it should sell all ecclesiastical property that is not strictly necessary for its proper functioning. And it must also recognize the legitimacy of the military junta (which suggests that such recognition has not already been granted).

The uprising of the Chilean Armed Forces and the resulting new institutionalization find their full moral justification in the fact that the coup d'état was fundamentally justified. First of all, the Allende government was no longer procuring the common good (here we find the thesis of Father Hasbún). And secondly, all the peaceful means of restoring the common good having been exhausted, there remained no other means than force. Conclusion: the military junta is perfectly legitimate.

I wonder if Father Lira is aware of the fact that his thesis on violence is very similar to that defended by the most radical elements of the Chilean and Latin American left. When injustice has become massive and chronic; when the supposedly

democratic instances of a country are not lifting a finger to change the values and socioeconomic structures that oppress the marginalized masses, all this while maintaining an ever greater and obscene inequality, while consecrating the privileges and immense wealth, the huge properties and farms, and the often exorbitant though perfectly legal profits of a moneyed elite whose hold on power – economic, political and legal – is totally undemocratic; when all these preceding conditions are prevailing, it is possible that the only solution lies in an armed uprising. Whether this uprising comes from the Armed Forces of a country or its exploited masses matters little in relation to the core of the thesis. For the latter boils down, essentially, to the following: under certain critical conditions, all the peaceful means having been exhausted, violence is morally justifiable in order to get rid of another form of violence.

However, one more qualification must be made. Although it is true that the Armed Forces of a country should find their *raison d'être* in the protection and promotion of its people, it is an incontestable historical truth that in many countries that has not at all been the case. Situations abound in which the Armed Forces of a country are acting mainly to protect the privileges of an oligarchy much more interested in protecting its own material possessions and safeguarding its lifestyle – one close to the wealthy in developed countries and far from the average citizens in their own country – than promoting the common good. And between an armed uprising favoring the moneyed elite and another carried out in favor of the poor, a man who still has compassion in his heart, and a fortiori a Christian, could hardly hesitate...

In this sense there is one detail that is very telling. After the coup of 11 September everyone was trying to dress as the rich...

“Judging from the events that have been taking place in the last week, one can see that the values inspiring the military junta are sound and that it is gradually addressing the problems caused by the previous government. And it is more than ever committed in

eradicating Marxism, a doctrine condemned as intrinsically perverse by Pope Pius XI and all his successors,” notes Father Lira.

What Cardinal Silva and the Bishop of Chillán are expressing in a somewhat veiled and diplomatic manner, Father Hasbún, the military junta, Monsignor Valdés, Archbishop Tagle and now Father Lira are expressing very openly and with utter clarity.

Congratulations dear military junta! Continue with your mass searches! Go on burning all this perverse and immoral ideology and purifying Chile! Should you mistakenly happen to shoot innocent people here and there, my gosh, “that’s something absolutely normal in a time of war” (the latter is what a member of a religious community told me). Is it possible that some are being tortured? That could very well be the case... You have to understand that the Popular Unity government had sown a considerable amount of hatred in Chile. And war is war, is it not?

Dear Christians of Chile, your primary duty is to say a big thank you to the military junta, to support it and cooperate with it even heroically if necessary. Because it enjoys a twofold legitimacy. On the one hand it was forced to intervene because of its very mission, which is to preserve the integrity of Chile. And on the other, when one observes how it has been going about handling affairs in the last week; when one notes with what absolute determination and effectiveness it is crushing this perverse foreign ideology, its actions are highly commendable. So we all owe the military junta obedience and respect. And besides, one must not forget “the words of St. Paul when he proclaims that he who resists authority is resisting God.”

Faced with such philosophical and theological clarity, the Chilean worker has only one thing left to do: fall on his or her knees before this man, the official representative of God among us, and exclaim “Forgive me Father, for I have sinned. I actually resisted, in thought, word and deed, this redemptive junta that is acting in the name of God and the Chilean right. In resisting to it, I was resisting to you, Heavenly Father and source of all love...”

The Catholic Church... one, holy, and above all political contingencies... Focused on the eternal in the temporal...⁶⁷

Other bishops support the military junta⁶⁸

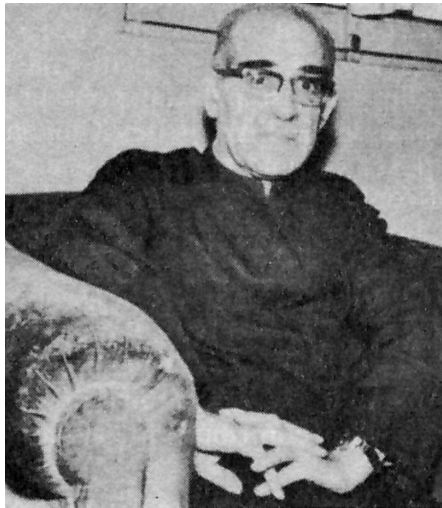
On 10 October 1973 the Mercurio publishes the following comment of the Bishop of La Serena, Bishop Francisco Fresno Larraín: “During the Popular Unity government our population suffered hunger, cold and great humiliations, ... the soul of our people was being destroyed (...) with closed eyes I can say that as far as the coup is concerned, our Armed Forces are not at all fascist... we love and respect them. (...) We will rebuild Chile without hatred and forming a family, a people, and a nation”.

“On 15 October 1973 Carlos González Cruchaga, Bishop of Talca, sends a long pastoral letter to the Catholics of his diocese. The document represents, especially for those who knew the previous actions of this Bishop who was considered 'progressive', a model of ambiguity and opportunism; he focuses his analysis of reality on the opposition “political vs. apolitical”, regrets and condemns the high degree of politicization reached in Chile under the previous government, a politicization that, in his opinion, had turned into “a profane cult”. And he continues: “... has fallen this false God of politicking, which had replaced the one true God” ... (El Mercurio, 2 December 1973).

⁶⁷ “The preoccupations of the Church are above all political contingencies.” *Vatican Explains Why the Catholic Church Pursues its Relations with Chile*, in Osservatore Romano, 4 October 1973, quoted in La Tercera, 5 October 1973, p. 13.

⁶⁸ This information, which was added in 2017, was drawn from : [A Contracorriente](#), p. 15 y 16.

Chile: The Divine Coup



Osvaldo Lira Pérez ssc., *Hispanidad y Mestizaje*, Instituto de Cultura
Hispanica, Madrid, Spain 1952, p. 211

“We continue to deny the democratic nature of regimes such as German Nazism and Italian fascism, even though these regimes relied on the practically unanimous support of their respective population for several years...”

THE POST-COUP

VIII - Capitalism returns by leaps and bounds

Just a few days after the divine intervention in the internal affairs of Chile, other miracles start restoring the nation's authentic traditional nature.

Suddenly reappear on store shelves a host of items that it had been difficult and sometimes even impossible to find in the preceding weeks and months: coffee, tea, meat, wool, soap, sugar, margarine, cooking oil, butter, cream, televisions, refrigerators etc. The mass media having survived the coup, totally controlled by the military junta, attribute this "magic" economic recovery to the new government. To show people that the misery caused by the previous government has come to an end, large photos of meat, fruit and vegetables appear on the front pages of newspapers. Freedom and abundance have returned!

American wheat – a quantity worth \$ 24 million – that the US government had declared not having just a few days earlier, starts arriving.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ On 9 October 1973 Senator Edward Kennedy made the following remarks in Congress about this shipment of wheat:

"Mr. President, the military junta in Chile has not yet ceased its campaign of repression, nor fully acquiesced to the United Nations demands that it strictly comply with the human rights conventions.

The Senate voiced its concern last week by unanimously passing my amendment to the foreign aid bill. It demanded that all economic and military aid, except humanitarian aid, be cut as long as the President cannot certify that human rights in Chile are protected.

Unfortunately, rather than conforming to the spirit of this motion, the administration, by its gesture of the end of last week, simply flouted it. For the first time since the election of Salvador Allende as president of Chile three years ago, the United States approved a credit extension under the Commodity Credit Corporation for a \$ 24 million wheat purchase.

In the agriculture department bulletin accompanying the declaration, the first reason given for the extension of credit to Chile is that it

“BUY NOW AND PAY LATER!” triumphantly announces the Tercera on 18 September 1973. One can find such ads, “to the great joy and surprise of the population”, all over Santiago,” comments the Tercera correspondent.

“Government prohibitions against many types of credit institutions” should be abolished, asserts the Mercurio in its editorial page of 6 November 1973. While such institutions are practically non-existent in Chile they are very common in most civilized countries.

would ‘restore the traditional trade relationship that allowed the entry of US wheat into Chile’.

Obviously, the protracted violation of human rights described in the recent Washington Post editorials is less important than the need to establish a close commercial relationship with the military junta.

The second reason alleged by the administration is that the food problem in Chile has reached such a degree that humanitarian aid would be a justified measure. But it is difficult to understand why just a few days ago when a legitimately elected government was in power the food problem did not appear sufficiently acute to justify the extension (over a period of three years) of a credit of \$ 24 million. And why would the food problem suddenly reach a degree of acuity precisely when a military government has just taken power? (*Congressional Record-Senate*, S18840, Washington, U.S.A., 9 October 1973)

In the months that followed, many other loans were granted to the military junta, both by private banks and by international institutions (International Monetary Fund, World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank) and governments (United States, Canada, Brazil, etc.).

VIII - Capitalism returns by leaps and bounds



ADVERTISING REAPPEARS: "BUY NOW AND PAY LATER!"

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) is now ready to provide a \$ 65 million loan to Chile, the Mercurio proudly announces on 19 September 1973.

A few days later, the junta's minister of foreign affairs travels to the United States and Canada and is very warmly welcomed by the business community. One month after his trip eight US banks and two Canadian banks offer a credit of \$150 million to Chile; the largest loan, comments Que Pasa (No. 136, 30 November 1973) since Allende's accession to power in 1970.⁷⁰

Then it's the stock market miracle! "As if by magic interest in the stock market is reappearing and things are all returning to normal". Investor confidence, which had been so negative for the last three years, is now booming", notes the Mercurio of 22 September 1973.

On the same day the newspaper La Tribuna interprets the coup d'état as the mere triumph of the "inexorable" law of supply and demand.

"No Chilean must underestimate the law of supply and demand – because the fate of our main product, copper, is determined in the London Stock Exchange. And this law gives its verdict in advance and imposes itself with an iron majesty: if share prices were going down Allende just had to go!"

Then it's the miracle of market-determined prices! We are eliminating the artificial prices that led our country to an economic disaster, declares the military junta. From now on, Chileans must learn to submit to the law of supply and demand, they must get accustomed to living with harsh and objective reality. Certain consumer goods deemed essential will no longer be subsidized. Prices exclusively determined by market forces

⁷⁰ Since the writing of these lines, many other loans have been granted to the junta, both by private banks and by international institutions (International Monetary Fund, World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank) and by Governments (United States, Canada, Brazil, etc.). And this list is not exhaustive!

are certainly less pleasant than dreams and illusions but they are infinitely more beneficial.

Thus, overnight, the cost of living rises by about 500%.⁷¹

While the junta does have enough compassion to allow the salaries of most workers to double, the extraordinary price increases translates into a loss, in terms of purchasing power, of at least 250%, leaving the average family with enough money to buy little more than bread.

Meanwhile, merchants and businesses start recuperating their smile and good humor and one sees big sales – of 20%, 30%, 50%, etc. – everywhere in downtown Santiago!

“ADVERTISING IS BACK!” triumphantly announces the magazine *Que Pasa* on its cover (No. 137, 7 December 1973).⁷²

“Freeing market prices,” argues the *Mercurio* on 22 September 1973, “is the best way one the one hand to ensure that goods and services are sold at a price that truly reflects their cost of production and, on the other that these goods are actually produced and available on the market in sufficient quantities. Furthermore, it is the best tool that a government can use to ensure that resources are directed towards the most productive

⁷¹Since then, the rate of inflation has been rising steadily. The National Institute of Statistics, an official body controlled by the military junta, announced in June that inflation had reached 103.3% for the first five months of 1974! The monthly minimum wage in June 1974 was 18,000 escudos. According to several economists, a family of four, considering the price level prevailing at that time, needed at least 100,000 escudos per month to survive (see *Le Monde Diplomatique*, July 1974, pp. 9-10).

⁷² Note added in 2017: Ironically enough the Chilean sociologist Tomás Moulian published some 25 years later (1998) a book titled “[El consumo nos consume](#)” (Consumption is destroying us). The book, which rapidly turned into a bestseller in Chile, describes how Chileans have become so individualistic and consumption-oriented that they are losing basic relational and communitarian values, and are experiencing a form of alienation. The revolutionary changes promoted by the Popular Unity government represented a powerful ideal of social justice and a sense of community.

activities.”

According to Time magazine (22 October 1973), it is possible that the American multinationals Anaconda and Kennecott Copper, which had been nationalized by the Popular Unity government, will be allowed to reassume, in the name of the Chilean government, the management of the copper mines, and will be able to recover, from the profits being made, the compensation that the Allende government had refused to give them for the nationalization. And the same Time magazine on 29 October 1973 reports that General Augusto Pinochet, president of the junta, has declared that “more than 300 foreign and Chilean companies nationalized without compensation would probably be devolved to their owners. Of these companies, about 40 are American...” (See also the Mercurio of 6 December 1973)⁷³

Such is the euphoria of the sectors of the population supporting the coup that some start seeing in the curfew enforced every night after 10:00 pm a golden opportunity for Chileans to start adopting cultural habits closer to those of the developed world and a little more ‘civilized’. Reports a columnist of the Mercurio on 1 November 1973:

“Let’s hope that the curfew will allow Chileans to adopt the way of life of “the vast majority of those living in the developed countries. In New York, London and Frankfurt people have dinner between 6:30 pm and 7:00 pm – not at 9:00 pm or 9:30 pm as we are accustomed to doing here – and they go to the movies or theater at 7: 30 pm, and return home at 10:00 pm. After ten o’clock one finds no one on the streets except delinquents and people of dubious character and, of course, the

⁷³ What General Pinochet announced was actually carried out. On 11 June 1974, for example, CORFO (Corporación de Fomento de la Producción), a state-owned organization, returned to the private sector the shares it held in 40 companies that were previously incorporated in the sector that the Popular Unity government had called the “social economy”. On 13 Jun 1974 CORFO, in an effort to attract American investors, devolved 107 state companies to the private sector.

police who are responsible for handling them. Such a daily schedule, furthermore, is not only more respectful of our biological human nature, but it also considerably boosts productivity, concludes the columnist.

The spectacular return of capitalism and move towards the more civilized mores of the developed world are accompanied by another phenomenon: the effort to rid Chile of the foreign ideology that had been poisoning it becomes ever more radical. All universities and educational institutions are placed under the direct control of the military (in the case of the Catholic University with acquiescence of Cardinal Silva). Heart of this massive reorganization: the recovery of the Chilean soul (the 'chilenidad').

An administrator at the University of Chile discretely informs me that as a result of the ongoing purge the Department of Sociology has lost most of its professors. From a total of 60 – of which 27 were full-time – there are only 8 left! A few would have been executed, others imprisoned, and most would have taken refuge somewhere.⁷⁴

A young priest studying philosophy at the Catholic University of Chile tells me that Thomism is the only school of thought that professors are allowed to teach in the Department of Philosophy.

Chile's image abroad increasingly negative...

Though Chile is in the process of rapidly restoring its genuinely humanist and Christian national values, the international press continues blackening ever more its image abroad. The junta would be fascist; it would be torturing and have caused thousands of casualties; it would have set up several concentration camps; and it would have brutally wiped out

⁷⁴ This brain drain has not stopped since. It has even increased considerably. According to an open letter from Osvaldo Cori, president of the Academy of Sciences, 73% of biologists have left the country since the coup d'état.

popular organizations. In other words, it would be totally illegitimate.

Seized with panic, the military junta intensifies its negative campaign against Allende and the Popular Unity government. It announces that it has 'discovered' a plan – called Plan Z – elaborated by the previous government and that would have consisted in rapidly executing numerous members of the opposition. It 'discovers' pornography in the residence of Allende. It makes public the fact that the former president may have been having an affair with his secretary. It 'discovers' that the Popular Unity government was involved in drug trafficking.

Then it sends abroad leaders of the various business associations, Leon Vilarin in the lead, so that they can correct the distorted image of Chile and tell the 'civilized' and 'democratic' world what is really happening in Chile.

Then it replaces the staff in Chile's embassies around the world with more enlightened people...

Then it sends abroad a team of lawyers...

Then it is Cardinal Silva and Father Hasbún who start packing up their suitcases...

Testimony of a person subjected to torture in the National Stadium

In her novel [Sweet Country](#) (June 1986), Caroline Richards, an American who was also living in Chile at the time of the coup – as we collaborated to get news abroad and to help Chileans subjected to repression to get out of Chile, we rapidly became friends – reproduces parts of the diary of the personal secretary of Mrs. Salvador Allende.

While the name she gives to this secretary in the book – Eva Maria Aráya—is not her real name,⁷⁵ I have every reason to believe that this testimony corresponds to the exact historical diary of Mrs. Allende’s secretary. Why? For a simple reason: Caroline, when preparing her novel, requested to use part of my own diary in her book (The part that appears at the beginning of chapter III in this book). She copied it down verbatim, and it was reproduced, word for word, in her novel (It was written in French; she merely translated it).

Eva Maria was arrested by the military on September 12th, on the second day of the coup. She was detained for a few days in the National Stadium with thousands of others, interrogated, tortured and released. The following excerpts recount two of the sessions of torture she underwent: “I am fairly certain that it was on Friday, 14 September—the third day of my internment, that I was interrogated for the second time.

“I had dreaded another confrontation with the interrogators because my arms still smarted from the burns I had received the other time. I was trembling when I took my place and waited for the process to begin. If my stomach hadn’t been empty, I would have vomited.

⁷⁵ Enrique Sandoval, a Chilean friend who also taught at Dawson College, told me this was not her real name. He once had her as a student when he was teaching in Chile. Like the secretary of Mrs. Allende, Enrique was detained and spent several days in the National Stadium. He told me he had mistreated, but never managed to open up to me about it, even though we were close friends.

“The questions were almost identical to the ones I’d answered before. I was accused of having access, as Mrs. Allende’s assistant, to expensive luxuries — the American cigarettes in my pocket were cited as evidence!; I was quizzed about Mrs. Allende’s reputed bank accounts in Europe; and my relationship with Miguel was dragged up again. After an hour or two I was allowed to rest while the interrogators drew up a report which was then read to me. It was not a confession, and I wasn’t asked to sign it. Nor was it a set of formal charges, for — a fact I didn’t know then — I was going to be released.

“Afterwards I was led by an armed guard to a gallery on the main floor from which one could hear not shouts but howls. I was told to undress. Then I had to sit on a bench outside the door. There were many curses and shouts from within, and finally I was escorted inside. There I saw the table to which I was about to be tied, and the powerful lights above. The torturers put cables on my body, dampened my skin, and began to apply the current to my breasts and vagina. I have no idea how many times they did it, or how long each shower of current lasted, but each time I thought that I would die. In my agony I hardly heard the insults rained down on me, nor did I respond to any questions. I’m not sure any were asked. My biggest fear was that they would kill me by accident, that they would inadvertently apply more current than they meant to. Once I even whispered hoarsely, earnestly, “It doesn’t take as much to kill a small person.”

“Eventually there was a break for a few minutes while the torturers consulted with someone who had entered the room. I remember thinking, “If I die, there will be no poems about me, no great novels or works of art.” It seemed like an important consideration; I wanted desperately to decide if I was resigned to such ignominy and obscurity. There seemed no satisfactory way of approaching the question. Yet once the current was applied again, and I heard myself screaming, I was suddenly struck with the resemblance of my cries to those of other prisoners I had heard, both men and women, and to animals. At its extremist pitch, pain reduces us all to a wordless roar, like the voice of the

sea. "I wouldn't want to be singled out," I thought. "I'd rather take my stand with the great, anonymous swell of those whose lives were tiny affirmations and echoes, hardly audible and quickly forgotten." There were ocean waves transforming themselves into strings of hill, and back again. Sea gulls exploded like fireworks into a rain of colors, which, striking the land, undulated into flames shaped like women. These women sang melodies which assumed square and elliptical shapes as they floated upwards, ultimately converging in an enormous eye which, as it swam towards infinity, shed colored tears on landscapes and on seasons. I was transfixed by my extraordinary vision. When I finally awoke from it, I was once again in the hall where I had first been stationed, my clothes stacked at my side, some other prisoners crying over me.

"I believe it was on Saturday, my fourth day, that "gymnastics classes" were initiated for the female prisoners. I was led, along with perhaps twenty others, into a small basketball court evidently used for practice. There an officer with a whip, something like those that animal trainers use, told us to undress. As we hastened to obey, he smirked at the four or five milicos who were lounging around. The guard who had accompanied us occasionally struck us to make us hurry.

"I have sometimes wondered if the scene which followed was an amateur orchestration of a military man's primitive fantasies or a sophisticated psychological torment designed by experts from the CIA. Perhaps that is a meaningless distinction. In any case, our ordeal was an exquisite exercise in shame. Even as we disrobed, we sensed our own degradation: our clothes, in which some had finally urinated and defecated, reeked; so did our bodies, sticky with blood and sweat.

'Well now, you are all grown-up, married ladies,' the officer began. 'I want you to have a little fun. You must be pretty lonesome for your husbands by now, so I want you to pretend you're with them. That's right, get down on your knees, spread them out. Now: pretend you're humping away, let's hear you sigh. I want to hear you come—all of you.'

“None of the women moved. Some began to cry. ‘What’s the matter with you?’ the officer shouted. ‘Are you all frigid Marxist bitches? Start humping. I want to hear some terrific orgasms.’

“About this time some of the guards began to circulate among the women, threatening to strike them if they didn’t obey. That many did is scarcely surprising or blameworthy, yet when I heard them I was smitten with the most profound despair I had felt since my captivity began. One guard was moving in my direction, and I shuddered.

‘Come, you asshole!’ he shouted at the girl next to me, who was perhaps twenty years old and pitifully thin.

‘Come yourself!’ she hissed at him, and as he struck her with the butt of his gun, I could hear the cracking of her bones.

“About this time one of the other officers felt inspired to join in tormenting us. ‘I know what the problem is,’ he said. ‘Some of you haven’t had a good shit in days, have you? Well, that’s not right, I’m sad just thinking about it. Everybody says you Commie women are the best shitters in the world. You’ve missed it, huh? So spread your legs again, ladies, and this time don’t come, just shit!’

“Once again there was the heartbreaking sound of inconsolable sobbing. At first no one would obey. But as the guards circulated among the group, getting down on their hands and knees and showing the women how they were to grunt, there were those who obeyed. Many defecated in spite of themselves, and I wondered sadly what human beings really are, whose bodies blindly obey impulses at odds with the soul’s deepest longing.

“My turn wasn’t long in coming. One of the soldiers shouted at me, “What’s the matter, girlie? Think you’re too good to shit?”

“I wanted to insult him, spit at him, but my mouth worked soundlessly, like a deaf-mute’s. For a few seconds I knew what it was to be literally a blithering idiot. I neither saw nor feared the blow that mercifully relieved me of consciousness.”⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Caroline Richards, p. 112-114

IX - Cardinal Silva: “the image that the Holy Father has of Chile is not the one we would like him to have”

A - His declarations:

Following a visit to the junta by the Standing Committee of the Episcopate on 28 September 1973, the latter’s secretary Bishop Carlos Oviedo⁷⁷ makes the following press release:

“The Standing Committee of the Episcopate – representing the bishops of Chile – visited the Honorable Governmental Junta to express to the Armed Forces and National Police of Chile its feelings of respect and esteem and to thank the new authorities for the deference that they have shown to the Bishops throughout the country.”

At the end of this same visit, Cardinal Silva informs the Mercurio that the junta agreed to give the Standing Committee a list of the detainees, information that would allow the faithful to know where the missing members of their family are, and also to send them, through Catholic representatives, clothes and food. And he adds:

“On the other hand, the Chilean bishops agreed to explain what is happening in Chile to members of the Catholic Church throughout the world. Thus, they will contribute to improving the distorted image that is currently circulating abroad about our country.”

On 7 October 1973 Pope Paul VI, during his traditional Sunday recitation of the Angelus, declares:

"We are deeply saddened by the news of the Arab-Israeli conflict

⁷⁷ Concerning the attitude adopted by the Church toward the junta, Bishop Carlos Oviedo declared in a long interview that he granted Que Pasa (No. 137, 7 December 1973, p. 10): “On 13 September the Church, through its principal representatives, expressed its gratitude to the junta. At a meeting held shortly thereafter and attended by 23 of the 30 bishops, the latter reiterated their gratitude in a more ample manner. They offered the junta a noble, loyal and patriotic collaboration for the common good...”

and by the violent repression in Chile.”

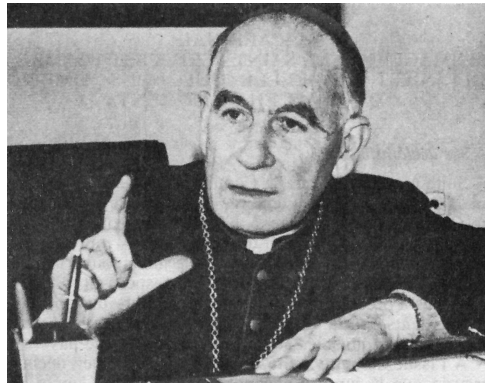
The very next day a Chilean radio animator, obviously quite vexed by this allusion of the Holy Father, interviews the apostolic nuncio to Chile (the latter is the Vatican’s official ambassador in Chile), Bishop Sans de Villaba. The nuncio speaks evasively, pretends not to have read the full text of Pope Paul VI’s declaration, and concludes that he is therefore unable to grasp the exact content of the Pope’s words.

The radio animator thus decides to ask the apostolic nuncio about his own opinion on recent events in Chile. The nuncio replies:

“You know, it’s like surgery. An operation always hurts both the person operating and the person being operated”.

On 9 October the junta pays a visit to Cardinal Silva. The meeting lasts 35 minutes. On leaving General Pinochet, president of the junta, tells reporters:

“We told him that we are all Catholics and that we would always like to count on his support and that of the Church. The Cardinal, for his part, expressed his concern about the bad image circulating about our country abroad.”



CARDINAL SILVA: “WE ACCEPT THE GOVERNMENT THAT THE POPULATION WANTS TO GIVE ITSELF”

IX - Cardinal Silva: "the image that the Holy Father has of Chile is not the one we would like him to have"

Another member of the junta, General Leigh, declares that they had a very positive exchange of ideas with the Cardinal on how the Church and the junta could collaborate. Questioned about the Pope's declaration, General Leigh replies: "The Holy Father has been misinformed."

As for Cardinal Silva, he declares that the junta's courtesy visit to him, in his capacity as president of the Episcopal Conference, was merely a way for the military to show gratitude for the bishops' visit to the junta on 24 September. The Church has always had "cordial relations" with all Chilean governments, he recalls.

"We want to serve. The Church is not called to set up governments, to overthrow them, to recognize them, or not to recognize them. We accept the government that the population wants to give itself and we serve that government. We really want to serve the people of Chile and so we recognize the government they want to have."

"We get along very well with the junta in the task of rebuilding Chile. The task of healing the wounds caused by recent events. That of enabling the country to overcome the great difficulties it faces. We can be useful in many of these areas.

"We have two or three organizations for helping refugees, for helping prisoners. And the junta kindly granted us the type of collaboration we need for this.

"That's what we talked about. The agreement we have reached is that the junta has promised us that it will facilitate our task, which is that of the good Samaritan who wants to heal wounds and relieve suffering.

"Apart from that, we were concerned about the image of Chile abroad. We want to do everything we can to improve that image. I think we can also collaborate with the junta at this level and let the truth about Chile be known throughout the world."

The cardinal then adds that they also discussed the Pope's declaration and that "precisely on this matter" we reached an

agreement: "... we can help each other by informing the Holy Father and all the bishops of the world about what is really going on in Chile."⁷⁸

Then, commenting on the Pope's declaration, Cardinal Silva asserts:

"... It shows that much of the information that the Holy Father is receiving originates not from regular, or official channels, but rather from a multitude of other channels and especially from those priests and nuns who have been forced to leave Chile."⁷⁹
(...) It is because of this that the media in Europe are painting such a black picture of Chile (...) the image that the Holy Father has of Chile is not the one we would like him to have right now."

To the reporter's question – Is it possible that a delegation of the Chilean Catholic Church will be sent abroad to correct the distorted image of Chile that is circulating? – Cardinal Silva replies that he has no idea whatsoever, and that such an initiative would not come from him.

"Does the Church believe in the future of Chile? Does it think that better days are coming?" pursues the reporter.

"Certainly," replies Cardinal Silva. "We have always believed in

⁷⁸ Herein certainly lies the origin of the confidential document sent in December 1973 by the Standing Committee of the Chilean Episcopal Conference to all catholic bishops throughout the world, a document I was able to obtain thanks to a leak just a few days before publishing my book. Excerpts of this document will appear in an appendix at the end of the book.

⁷⁹ However, three days later, on 12 October, about a hundred priests, including a third of Chilean nationality, sent a letter from Santiago to the pope in which they wrote: "Your declaration of 7 October, which represents 'the voice of the voiceless,' shows us that you are well informed about the painful situation of the oppressed and repressed in Chile, and of the poorest and the foreigners who are being persecuted, a situation of which we ourselves are witnesses. (...) Your disapproval of the 'violent repression' that our people are now enduring faithfully reflects our feelings, we, pastors and religious, who are living in the popular sectors of Santiago." (DIAL, D 127, 25 October 1973).

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Chile. We may be suffering, since nations also go through times of suffering, but these are necessary in order to be reborn with greater vigor.”

And Cardinal Silva concludes the interview by insisting that he is visiting the wounded and victims on both sides of the political spectrum...

In Italy...

A week later Cardinal Silva arrives in Italy. Some of the statements that he makes during an interview that he grants to the Catholic daily newspaper of Milan, *Avvenire*, on 17 October cause some stir in the Chilean press as they seem to suggest that he is critical of the junta.

With the express intention of resolving the issue by informing the Chilean public of the full content of the interview, the Public Opinion Department of the Archdiocese of Santiago sends the text of Cardinal Silva’s interview to the *Mercurio*. The latter publishes it on October 25.

The *Avvenire* correspondent addresses two questions to Cardinal Silva. First, he asks him how the Chilean Church intends to regain its peacemaking role in the context of a deepening polarization in Chile caused by a military coup that represents a “harsh anti-Marxist repression”.

Cardinal Silva replies that in his opinion the manner in which the international press is portraying events in Chile is biased and that one cannot characterize the attitude of the military junta as one of “harsh anti-Marxist repression”. It is only reluctantly that the Chilean military eventually intervened. “While there certainly were ‘some unfortunate events’, one must bear in mind the factors that led to the crisis. On the one hand the population was ever more divided and, on the other, the Popular Unity government was trying to impose its ‘ideology’ in a sectarian manner. It is because of this sectarianism – it claimed that ‘its

truth was the only social truth' – that efforts of dialogue with the Christian Democratic Party failed”.

Since the role of the Church does not consist in overthrowing governments or putting them in place, the Chilean Church has kept to its own mission: it has sought “to be the very conscience of Chileans”; to bear witness to the “permanent values of the Gospel” and “to ensure that the rights of all human beings are respected”, always prioritizing, of course, the plight of the poorest, declares Cardinal Silva. And he pursues:

“Our task is challenging. There are moments in the life of the Church when deeds matter a lot more than words”. To this end – to ensure that everyone’s rights are respected – we have established a Committee for Political Refugees and a Peace Committee. The former attends to foreigners wishing to take refuge and the latter to ensure the human rights of all Chileans.

The second question addressed by the *Avvenire* correspondent to Cardinal Silva is more challenging and delicate.

“Today’s younger generations – and that is true of the young in Chile as well – seem to discern in the proposals of Marxism and socialism a solution to the problems we are facing in the world today. This undoubtedly stems from the injustice embodied in our socio-economic system, a system that seems to be accepted by the Chilean Catholic Church. To what extent is the Chilean Church aware of this problem and how does it intend to renew its testimony and message?”

Cardinal Silva recalls that all Christians must, like Christ, work for justice. One cannot empty faith of its content and simply use it as a pretext to turn one’s back on the marginalized who, after all, represent “our own flesh”. Christ “identified with the poor and the oppressed and he will judge us according to our fidelity to this mandate”.

However, one must bear in mind that “Marxism is not the only solution to free human beings”. And many well-meaning

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Christians are wrong because they end up even abandoning their faith, a path that “could never lead to the hoped-for liberation”.

The attitude of those Christians who remain faithful both to the demands of their faith and to the social teachings of the Church, and who, on this basis, seek to build a more just and humane society, “deserves not only our respect but also our support”, concludes Cardinal Silva.

In another declaration that he makes to members of his own Salesian Society on 1 November, Cardinal Silva complains of being misunderstood:

“Before, I was accused of being the ally of the Marxists and now I am being accused of siding with the military junta... I assure you that I have never had any connivance with the Allende regime and that I do not have any with the junta... I only met with President Allende twice and I rarely spoke with him. On the eve of the coup d'état, I intervened to try to prevent confiscations of property affecting people belonging to the middle class.”⁸⁰

Finally, in the *Osservatore Romano* of 5 November 1973 Cardinal Silva declares:

“As cardinal and in the name of the Church I offered to the new government of Chile the same collaboration that I had given to the Marxist government of M. Allende in all the latter's actions for the common good. At the same time I demanded – a request that the new authorities accepted – the same freedom of action that the Church enjoyed under the previous government.

"The Chilean Catholic Church does not feel called upon to give a patent of legitimacy to civil authorities, to establish or to overthrow governments. Its action is not meant to be political, but only religious.

⁸⁰ *Le cardinal Silva Henriquez explique à l'Europe la situation de l'Église du Chili*, in *Informations catholiques internationales*, 15 November 1973, p. 9.

"My trip to Europe is in this same perspective. It is not a political trip and nor does it have a character of representation".⁸¹

B - The true color of his cassock:

When Cardinal Silva's above statements are placed in the general context of his previous assertions and attitude (September 13, 16, and 18), one can only wonder whether he is being truly sincere.

One thing, however, seems indisputable: what he is asserting does not stand up to serious analysis.

One has the impression that the more Cardinal Silva feels the need to repeat that he is not involved in partisan politics, the clearer it becomes that the very opposite is true.

He says he has no connivance whatsoever with the military junta. He says that his trip to Rome, Europe, and then the United States is purely motivated by spiritual intentions and has no character of political representation. He says that his role as leader of the Catholic Church does not consist in establishing or overthrowing governments or granting them legitimacy, and that his only desire is to serve and recognize those governments that the people want to give themselves. He says that faith should not be used as a tool or pretext to turn one's back on the poor and the oppressed.

And yet...

We have seen how the Chilean right attributed all the evils of the last three years to the introduction in Chile of a foreign ideology incompatible with the national traditions and values that shape the Chilean soul, the so-called 'chilenidad'. We have seen how this nationalist pseudo-Christian varnish served as a facade to defend the established order – capitalism (with vestiges of feudalism).

⁸¹ Quoted in *Informations catholiques internationales*, 15 November 1973, p. 9.

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We have witnessed this same ideological attitude in Father Hasbún’s historic speech on 4 September; in Decree No. 1 by which the junta elected itself as the supreme government of Chile; and in the prayer that the Bishop of Osorno wrote on the day of the coup and that was published in the newspaper.

We have witnessed this same ideological attitude, finally, in the declaration of the Standing Committee of the Episcopate on September 13, and in Cardinal Silva’s homilies on the 16th and 18th of the same month.

And we have witnessed the brutal coup that allowed capitalism, whose structures had merely been deeply shaken by a socialist experiment, to reestablish itself with force in Chile in a matter of hours. And the jubilations of a right literally thrilled to see this rapid and spectacular return of the 'chilenidad'.

On 8 October we heard the radio broadcast of the apostolic nuncio comparing the military coup with a “surgical intervention” that “always hurts both the one operating and the one being operated”.

On 9 October we saw Cardinal Silva, after his meeting with the junta, compare, in a subtle and veiled but unequivocal way, the military coup with “times of suffering” that a nation must go through in order to be “reborn with greater vigor”.

On 13 November we recognized the same image in the grateful words to the junta that the Archbishop of Valparaíso, Monsignor Tagle, pronounced at the opening of the month of Mary:

“Like a patient sentenced to die and then saved by a timely surgical operation, the country has bled and suffered somewhat: its wounds will have to heal. But the life of Chile as a free and sovereign nation has been saved. And that’s the positive and fundamental aspect.”⁸²

⁸² It is interesting to compare the mentality that emerges from these texts with that emerging from the patriotic-religious speech that Bishop Carlos Gerike made in the Cathedral of Santa Cruz a few days

As if this were not enough to convince us that the Catholic Church is totally apolitical and has no complicity whatsoever with the junta, we have seen Cardinal Silva agreeing to work closely with the military junta in order to correct the distorted image of Chile abroad.

During the visit of the Standing Committee of the Episcopate to the Junta on 29 September, the latter agreed to allow the Catholic Church to do charitable work for those bleeding, suffering and dying because of its timely 'surgery', and the former accepted in return to inform all the bishops in the world about what was really going on in Chile.

This fraternal collaboration between the Church and the junta continued at their meeting of 9 October. Again the junta pledged to facilitate the work of Good Samaritan that the Church was carrying out, and once again the latter expressed concern about Chile's bad image abroad. "The Holy Father has been misinformed," commented General Leigh; "The image that the Holy Father has formed of Chile is not the one we would like him to have. (...) ... We can help each other by informing the Holy Father, as well as all the bishops of the world, about what is really happening in Chile", added Cardinal Silva.

Only a week later, and after a Mercurio correspondent had let on that he knew more about the prelate's forthcoming trip abroad than Cardinal Silva himself, one finds the leader of Chile's

after the Bolivian right-wing General Hugo Banzer ousted, in a coup d'état on 18 August 1971, the left-wing President Juan José Torres: "As explained in the parable of the Gospel, one recognizes a tree by its fruit. Now it is up to the authorities to distinguish: the good, in order to promote them and the negative and pernicious, in order to reprimand or eliminate them. All healing of a deep evil, all extirpation of a malignant tumor is painful. When one wants to put things in order and correct what is wrong, one has to affect certain people. (...) The victims will of course immediately start accusing the regime of injustice, lack of sensitivity and a multitude of other sins, sustained in this by their groups of sympathizers". (September 24, 1971) (This text was translated from Spanish to French by Rev. Jacques Gagnon, Oblate of Mary Immaculate, and then by me from French to English).

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Catholic Church in Rome affirming to the Italian daily *Avvenire* that in his opinion the news circulating in the international media about the military 'pronunciamiento' is biased and does not reflect what is going on in Chile (like the junta Cardinal Silva carefully avoids referring to the events of 11 September in terms of a 'coup d'état', preferring the same term used by the junta).

And why is this so?

Even if it were true, comments Cardinal Silva, that there have been "some unfortunate events" it would be wrong, in my opinion, to describe the actions of the junta as a "harsh anti-Marxist repression". And one must bear in mind that events have their causes. What happened in Chile originated from the fact that the Popular Unity government was imposing its "ideology" in a sectarian manner by claiming to possess the "only social truth". This is what caused the failure of the dialogue we were encouraging between the Christian Democratic Party and the Popular Unity government and the violent denouement that came about.

Then Cardinal Silva recalls, as he had done in his statement of 13 September, that the junta did not want to intervene and only eventually did so very reluctantly.

He then again emphasizes the Good Samaritan function played by the Church in the present situation. The Church... the very conscience of Chile, and the protector of everyone's human rights, those of the poorest and most marginalized in particular...

Does one really need more proof that the Chilean Church has no complicity whatsoever with the junta and that it is only offering the military, as it has done with all previous governments, its collaboration in the promotion of "the common good"? Is it really convincing to hear Cardinal Silva playing the role of a wise old man who has chosen to remain silent, the better to be able to help the needy? Who is clever enough to avoid speaking out, the better to be able to organize committees to help thousands of Chileans and foreigners, help rendered necessary only because of the brutal persecution being carried out by a

junta that publicly declares itself Catholic?

Does he not know that, under certain circumstances, speaking out represents the most compromising and effective form of action, especially when the speaker occupies one of the most prestigious and influential functions of his country and that his words could change the course of events? How should one react to this prelate's attitude? Congratulate him for being perfectly impartial? For being very objective? For maintaining his composure? For demonstrating outstanding diplomatic skills?

How can he have the audacity to reduce what Chile has been living since 11 September to "some unfortunate events"? How can he dare claim that what is going on does not correspond to "a harsh anti-Marxist repression"?

How many more thousands would have to be tortured, how many more thousands would have to be imprisoned, summarily executed, and deported before Cardinal Silva would deem it necessary to qualify the repression as "harsh"? And how many more libraries would have to be burned, how many more political parties and popular organizations would have to be closed and outlawed before Cardinal Silva would find the repression "anti-Marxist"?

Should one really applaud when Cardinal Silva asserts that the Catholic Church wants to serve and help whatever government Chileans choose to give themselves and that its role does not consist in legitimizing governments? That the Church is the very conscience of Chile? That it prioritizes human rights, and especially those of the poorest and most marginalized? Should one applaud when he is asserting these things at the very time when one can see and feel the immense terror – indescribable and mercilessly cultivated by the military – that is written all over the face of at least 40% of the population, that very 40% mostly formed of the poorest and most marginalized people of the country?

No. Cardinal Silva knows very well what he is doing. He knows very well that the junta needs to have world public opinion on its

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side. He knows very well that for the military it is extremely important to have the Chilean and international Catholic Church on its side. “We are all Catholics and we would always like to count on your support and that of the Church,” General Pinochet told him on 9 October.

But instead of completely dissociating the Catholic Church from the activities of one of the most fascist juntas Latin America has ever known in the 20th century, he agrees to kneel beside this junta. Instead of disassociating the Catholic Church completely from a junta that does not hesitate to leave thousands of people just in the region of Santiago without work – they were fired because of their affiliation to the Popular Unity government – and without any source of revenue whatsoever, he thanks the junta wholeheartedly for the marks of deference it has shown towards the bishops throughout the country; he thanks the junta for allowing the Church to play the role of Good Samaritan – helping the wounded, the persecuted, and the hungry. Instead of using the considerable prestige enjoyed by the Church in Chile to publicly denounce the ongoing atrocities and to demand that all torture, imprisonment and summary executions be stopped immediately, he offers the junta all the Church’s disinterested collaboration... A collaboration that is both ideological and practical: on the one hand, religiously and naively supporting all of the junta’s good intentions, and, on the other, compensating for its massive human rights abuse by works of mercy.

However much he may try to appear innocent and to make us believe that if he is abstaining from speaking out against atrocities, it is only in order better to help the needy and persecuted: his red cassock of cardinal is stained with the blood of thousands of workers.

C – Conflict between Cardinal Silva and the junta:

In spite of the inherently pro-junta character of the few public statements made by Cardinal Silva during his trip to Italy, two points in these statements upset the junta: the fact that Cardinal Silva, though critical of the Popular Unity government, had the

audacity to insinuate that Marxism may represent a certain social truth and a possible path of liberation; and the fact that he declared that he had demanded and obtained from the junta the same liberty which he enjoyed under the Allende government.

One finds the reaction to the first point on the editorial page of the prestigious newspaper the *Mercurio* on 26 October 1973. According to the editorialist – a spokesperson of the National Party and now also clearly of the military junta – the statements of the Archbishop of Santiago would be disturbingly vague and downright heretical. How is it possible that such a high ecclesiastical authority could have affirmed that Marxism is neither the only social truth nor the only possible path of liberation, thus clearly suggesting that it may contain a certain element of truth and may constitute some form of liberation, pointedly questions the editorialist.

“We are certain that Cardinal Silva could never affirm that Marxism represents a doctrine that can liberate man. As a Christian pastor, his Eminence is not unaware that, in accordance with the doctrine of which he is the depositary and preacher, only truth sets us free. And the cardinal is certainly cognizant of the fact that, according to many official texts of the Catholic Church, Marxism is a mistake, an error categorically opposed to the dogmas and teachings of the Catholic Church. Consequently, a sensationalist journalist and an imprudent Department of Public Opinion, would have reported that the Catholic Cardinal affirmed that error can set us free, an assertion that contradicts a well-known biblical text.”

And the editorialist does not stop there. He reproaches the cardinal, politely but firmly, for having not only insinuated something that blatantly contradicts the Catholic faith, but also for appearing insensitive to all the nameless atrocities committed by Marxism both in Chile and elsewhere in the world where it has existed.

No, the editorialist concludes, it is not possible that Cardinal Silva would have made such statements: the journalistic nature

IX - Cardinal Silva: "the image that the Holy Father has of Chile is not the one we would like him to have"

of the interview obviously did not allow him to express what he really meant.

One finds the reaction to the second point in the comments of the junta's Press Secretary, Frederico Willoughby, comments published in the Mercurio on 8 November 1973:

"As Christians we are surprised by certain declarations attributed to his Eminence, and according to which he would have solicited the same freedom of action which he enjoyed under the previous government. (...)

"The Governmental Junta has publicly declared that it wants to rebuild Chile in a humanistic and Christian spirit. This is why we cannot conceive that our relations with the Church would not be closer than those which it maintained with the Marxist regime which, by its own definition, ran counter to the objectives and methods which are the essence of Christianity."

It is impossible that our Cardinal would have made such statements. He himself witnessed the profound damage caused by the Marxist regime in Chile. He himself suffered, like so many others, from "maneuvers destined to destroy, through conscientization, the spirituality of the Chileans". And there is in him a whole trajectory of patriotism, concludes Mr. Willoughby.

No, it is simply not possible: this is obviously a matter of "erroneously transcribing the Cardinal's words."

These two above reactions to Cardinal Silva's declarations would seem to indicate that there exists a real divergence of opinion between him and the junta. The rather crude and obviously hypocritical attempts of the Mercurio and Mr. Willoughby to reduce this divergence to mere transcription errors, or the sensationalism of a journalist, or the fact that the journalistic nature of the interview would not have allowed the cardinal to express the substance of his thought... all these attempts could not deceive anyone.

For it was the Public Opinion Department of the Archbishopric

of Santiago itself that sent the full text of Cardinal Silva's interview in Italy to the *Mercurio*, with the express purpose of putting an end to the rumors that were circulating about him. In addition, it was the official press organ of the Vatican, *Osservatore Romano*, which published the second text in question, which referred to the fact that the Allende government had granted the Catholic Church its full freedom and autonomy. Therefore, their authenticity could hardly be questioned.

This divergence of opinion between the cardinal and the junta originates not from biased or inexact reporting but from a political viewpoint. For a long time Cardinal Silva has been going out of his way to convince Chileans that the Catholic Church is completely apolitical. And since 11 September, the junta has also repeatedly been asserting its total non-partisanship.

The problem, however, is that the non-partisanship of both does not lean in the same direction. That of the junta following the coup of 11 September has clearly been leaning towards the conservative National Party. That of Cardinal Silva has clearly and for a long time been leaning towards the Christian Democratic Party...

Fundamentally, the typical Christian Democrat is the one who sits somewhere between the hardline capitalism of the National Party and the Marxism of the Popular Unity government. That is why, depending on the direction in which the electoral wind is blowing, he can side with one as well as with the other. That is also why he feels both at ease and uncomfortable with both.

As an unavowed Christian Democrat, Cardinal Silva feels at ease with Marxism insofar as it embodies better than capitalism the social and collective dimension of evangelical love. However he is also uncomfortable with Marxism or socialism insofar as the latter seem to lead to atheism and ideological totalitarianism. This uneasiness clearly emerges from Cardinal Silva's homily of 18 September in which he takes aim at the "foreign values, customs and powers" that risk making Chileans lose their sense

IX - Cardinal Silva: “the image that the Holy Father has of Chile is not the one we would like him to have”

of national identity and submitting them to a yoke that that would become unbearable. It also appears in the interview that he granted to the Italian daily *Avvenire* in Rome. On this occasion, he declares that the failure of the dialogue between the Christian Democratic Party and the Popular Unity government is attributable to the sectarian attitude of the latter, which considers its “ideology” as “the only social truth”. While he refrains from blaming the Popular Unity of falling into downright totalitarianism, his statement nevertheless clearly goes in this direction. He also asserts that well-intentioned Christians who are part of the Popular Unity are often led to abandon their faith, something that, in his opinion, could never contribute to liberation.

Above all, however, Cardinal Silva’s discomfort stems from the fact that socialism threatens to change the capitalist structure (with vestiges of feudalism) of traditional Chilean society, to deprive us of “this gift of God”, “of everything that belongs to us, of what constitutes our most precious heritage and corresponds to what we call *chilenidad*” It is foreign, this ideology, because it runs counter to what is familiar: the establishment, the established order... It is dogmatic and totalitarian for the same reason. For the pluralism of “Democracy” also has its limits: it cannot tolerate a worldview that threatens to destroy the one-dimensional system it represents. Or, more precisely, it can tolerate this worldview, but only insofar as it has no real chance of becoming flesh. When it is on the verge of doing so and becomes an ominous threat, one can even ‘Catholically’ kneel next to the weapons that are destroying and torturing this flesh...

With capitalism, Cardinal Silva is uncomfortable because historically it has often represented crass individualism and selfishness. Such a malaise, however, is not very deep since in his opinion capitalism does not comport any structural defect, only individual or societal errors or sins, which are part of the human condition: “We are not, however, a perfect society. There remains in us sin, both personal and collective”. (Homily of 18

September).

Furthermore, these excesses or sins of capitalism can be addressed through reforms that leave its core structure – “the sacred heritage” or “gift of God” – perfectly intact.

For this legacy left in Chile by its Fathers is as fundamental, as universal, and as permanent as that left by Christ to the community of believers constituting the Church. To profane these traditional national values is akin to a “sacrilegious profanation”. To proclaim one’s unwavering and unconditional attachment to these values and customs becomes a patriotic act devoid of all political partisanship or group interest. “We the bishops of the Catholic Church spoke to our people... in order to be faithful to Christ and to our Fatherland, since we do not represent the interests of any particular group or political affiliation, and are only motivated by the well-being of Chile”. (Homily of 16 September).

Thus, it is not surprising that tension should arise between Cardinal Silva and the junta, as between the latter and the Christian Democratic Party. At ease with the National Party to overthrow a government whose foreign ideology was about to serve a deadly blow to the 'common good', the 'spiritual order' and the 'Chilean soul', one immediately becomes ill at ease with this same party once the common enemy has been eliminated. Now that the 'chilenidad' has been spectacularly saved by a happy 'surgical intervention', all eyes are now turned towards the future. What will replace what has been eliminated? Which model will preside over future political decisions: that of the hardline capitalism of the National Party or that of the mitigated and reformist capitalism of the Christian Democratic Party?

The question is of great import. How it is answered determines the depth of repression deemed necessary for those Chileans affected by the Marxist cancer. And how it is answered also determines the type of capitalism that will be re-established. Should all leftist political parties be outlawed? Should military personnel be appointed as directors of all university and college

IX - Cardinal Silva: "the image that the Holy Father has of Chile is not the one we would like him to have"

institutions in order to extirpate the very roots of this ideological plague that has been destroying Chile? Should the teaching of socialist and Marxist theories be altogether banned in all faculties of philosophy, sociology, economics and political science? Should this latter cancer only be analyzed in biology courses?

For the Mercurio as well as for the main leaders of the military junta (of the four members of the junta, only one, General Mendoza, is a Christian-Democrat), the answer no longer remains theoretical: the dead are dead, the tortured are tortured, the refugees are refugees, the deportees are deported and the prisoners are imprisoned; an intense campaign is under way to rid Chile of the inherently evil Marxist ideology; Pope Pius XI is repeatedly being quoted; Marxism is confused with everything that closely resembles socialism, and is portrayed as nothing but lies, corruption and slavery; the Gospel, which says that only truth sets us free, is quoted; and shock and incredulity are expressed to see the leader of the Catholic Church – whose attitude towards the junta has not been so unfavorable! – insinuating that Marxism may have a certain amount of truth and represent an alternative path to liberation...

But Cardinal Silva, like many of his Christian Democrat friends, does not necessarily agree with this hardline view of the conservatives. While he views in a positive light the fact that the Chilean soul has been saved from "foreign values, customs and powers" and that the elements of Chilean society that represented a threat to the "sacred heritage" have been neutralized, he nevertheless believes that there are limits; democracy has been saved but it must not lose its face of respectability and pluralism; traditional freedom of thought must not be abandoned and one must continue to accept the ideas of others, welcoming them insofar as they may contain some truth and goodness.

Repression may be necessary in the circumstances... And also a certain amount of retaliation may be unavoidable... But these must be kept to a minimum.

As for torture, summary executions and concentration camps, it is certain that they leave Cardinal Silva somewhat troubled. However, perhaps because he sees the role of the Church as being perfectly apolitical or because of some mysterious spiritual power, he completely abstains from denouncing them. And it is thus that the one who did not hesitate to publicly denounce the ideological and political intransigence of the Popular Unity government, abstains, through political neutrality or pastoral sense, to make only one single clear public denunciation of the barbarous methods of repression exerted by a junta that is sufficiently well-intentioned to deserve the Church's "full and disinterested collaboration".⁸³

⁸³ These lines were written in January 1974. It was not until the end of April 1974 that Cardinal Silva made a statement on behalf of the Episcopal Conference, a statement that is akin to a public denunciation of repression, and which is analyzed in the Epilogue 1974 at the end of this book.

X - Father Hasbún to reporters: “For me the rooster is crowing...”

A- His declarations:

“Obviously a cardinal, because of his function, had to stay out of the struggle. He had to give the impression of watching over everyone. Me, on the other hand, I’m a sniper.”

At the beginning of October, Father Hasbún also packs his suitcases and leaves for Europe. On the day of his departure he grants a long interview to the magazine *Que Pasa* (No. 128, October 4, 1973). He announces that he is going to Rome to attend a meeting of the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications of which he is a consulting member (“... the pompous character of the title makes me ashamed”, he comments). After acknowledging with pride the important role played by his television channel in the overthrow of Allende’s “corrupt government” – I systematically denounced “all that was anti-Chilean and antihuman in the ideology of the government – he asserts: “I want to tell this story in detail to the Vatican and spread the truth about Chile to the other communications experts I will be meeting there”.

After returning from his one-month trip to Europe – he not only spent time in Rome but also visited Germany and England – Father Hasbún requests to meet with the four members of the military junta.

The meeting takes place at the beginning of November. “I asked for this interview because I considered it my duty as a Chilean citizen to share with my rulers the experience I have had during my trip to Europe,” he explains to reporters upon coming out of the meeting with the junta.

During the four days following this meeting, Father Hasbún gives no less than three interviews to newspapers. The first concerns his meeting with the junta and appears, Wednesday, 14

November on the front page of the Mercurio under the headline: “THE VATICAN DOES NOT SHARE NEWSPAPER VERSION ON CHILE”. The second is about his trip to Europe but also deals with current events; it covers two complete pages of the Segunda of 16 November and is titled: “ONE MUST BE VIGILANT AS THE NUMBER OF FOOLS IS INFINITE”. The last one also deals with his trip and appears in the Sunday edition of the Mercurio on 18 November: “DESTROYING JUSTICE: THE ETERNAL STRATEGY OF MARXISTS”.

According to the director of the Catholic University’s Channel 13 TV station, the image circulating abroad on Chile is completely false and distorted. People believe that Chile is undergoing a “brutal repression”. They believe that the military junta is fundamentally fascist. No sooner is the name of Allende pronounced than he is immediately taken for a saint, for someone who is already “canonized.” In the international media Allende is described as “a revolutionary leader”, loved by his people but assassinated by a “fascist military junta”. No one believes that he committed suicide. They take pity on him, they come to his defense. In short, people do not believe what we tell them because they view everything “through the prism of fascism”, applying to our Chilean reality what happened in Brazil or Spain”...

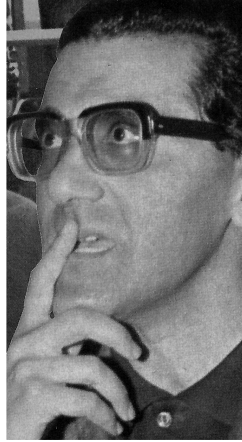
“In the three countries that I visited one does not know whether to be more taken aback by the incredible lies of the Marxist press or rather the ingenuity or even stupidity of certain democratic elements that are flirting with Marxism”, notes Father Hasbún.

And he pursues: “During my stay abroad I came to the conclusion that people simply do not want to know what is really happening in Chile. Chile has become a social experiment from which politicians draw whatever arguments suit their fancy. No one is interested in finding out if Chile has really managed to free itself.”

Those manufacturing a false image of Chile – the Marxist press and certain democratic elements that are sympathetic to Marxism

X - Father Hasbún to reporters: “For me the rooster is crowing...”

– “dominate European public opinion”. All that matters to these people who control the “media” is what happened on 11 September; that is “the sole aspect of the problem” that they see.



FATHER HASBÚN “ME, ON THE OTHER HAND, I’M A SNIPER”

Such is the immaturity of the European press – and he refers specifically to “Le Monde” –, that he claims its correspondents are simply stupid. “There are so many who are just plain stupid. There are so many who obviously have no idea whatsoever where they’re going. And these are precisely the people who are creating a negative campaign against Chile.”

“In my opinion these correspondents suffer from what I would call the ‘Citroneta complex’.”⁸⁴ Citronetas, you know, are small cars that must be driven slowly, and always in the right lane. Some of its drivers, however, do not accept this reality and insist on driving it on the left lane. They cause accidents, sudden braking and loss of control. These drivers are identical to those who, though born in a bourgeois milieu, disguise themselves as poor.

⁸⁴ The Citroneta is the smallest of the Citroën cars, and arguably the most 'humble' car now circulating in Chile.

To those who are born in an environment endowed with determined features and who pretend to change these natural determinants for the mere pleasure of changing”.

If Chile is currently “isolated, ignored, misunderstood and suffering”, it is because of intellectuals who, suffering from the ‘Citroneta complex’, have exerted “an ideological aggression” on our country. They have used Chile as a place to “develop theses that are a priori believed to be correct” but that are in fact totally false and have produced “unpredictable and irreversible consequences”, notes Father Hasbún.

Deeply imbedded in their prejudices and suffering from the ‘Citroneta complex’, these intellectuals are simply not able to see what is really going on.

“You tell them: now people in Chile are back to work”.

– “Pure fascism!” they reply.

“You tell them: people are now donating money and jewelry for national reconstruction.”

– “Pure fascism!” they reply.

“You tell them: the Popular Unity government had a plan to exterminate the whole opposition.”

– “Pure fascism!” they again reply.

Fortunately, Father Hasbún notes, there are sectors of the European population that do not allow themselves to be seduced by this ignorant and dogmatic press. “The reception I received at the Vatican was excellent... decisive levels like the Bishops and the Vatican” are already aware of what is going on in Chile – “the truth about Chile”.

In addition to this very harsh criticism that he addresses to the European press, the television director also takes aim at the late President Allende and the former Popular Unity government.

He who had preached so eloquently in his historic televised speech of 4 September, one week before the coup, that only God

X - Father Hasbún to reporters: "For me the rooster is crowing..."

could judge the infinite secrets of the human heart and discern the spirits – "Who can accuse? Who can penetrate the secrets of the heart? Who is able to discern the mystery of good and evil?" – now abruptly makes a U-turn: "Undoubtedly, Allende was not being guided by the Holy Spirit. Pride, since Lucifer, is the abyss which carries all the good intentions of men, rendering the action of God impossible."

Later in the interview Father Hasbún compares President Allende to a kind of crazed maniac who, everywhere he goes, wreaks havoc and causes destruction: "A general clamor rises up against him and he is finally detained. Then the process starts: people want to lynch him..."

And he pursues: "In this kind of situation one can react in either of two ways: expressing an immense relief because this maniac has been neutralized: finally he's been stopped! Or else thinking: poor him! Why are they hitting him?"

The second reaction, comments the Catholic priest, is that of "European public opinion". The first is obviously his own...

"At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and the teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them. (...) 'He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here.' (...) But they kept shouting, 'Crucify Him! Crucify Him!' A third time Pilate said to them, 'What evil has this man done! I found in Him no offense worthy of death... But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed.'"

Gospel of St. Luke, Chap. 22, v. 66; Chap. 23, v. 2, 5, 22, 23

And always with the same enthusiasm Father Hasbún continues, this time taking aim at the defunct Popular Unity government. His criticism corresponds in general to that which he addressed to Allende in his televised address of 4 September.

"The new government has excellent relations with the Church, contrary to those it had with the Allende regime, which were

hypocritical and interested. The ideology inspired by the Allende government was “antihuman and oppressive.” It was also devoid of the Christian spirit: “Any humanist process that is not imbued with Christianity ends up turning against man.” It is not surprising that the strategy of the Popular Unity government consisted in cultivating “misery and degradation”, since it is precisely in such conditions that Marxism flourishes. The Popular Unity government was “promoting hippies, drugs and sexual promiscuity” and “destroying traditional ties.”

The newspaper correspondent then asks Father Hasbún: “You say you are not a political priest. If that is so, why then did you not hesitate to publicly criticize the Allende regime?”

-- “Politics is one thing but morality another. Chilean Marxism led, through corruption, to the transformation of our human and Christian heritage, those values that shape our identity, our 'chilenidad'. It wanted to transform the Chilean into what Yhlya Ehrenburg calls 'a new man', so new that he was no longer able to recognize himself. Things were such that one could no longer recognize Chile; no one had ever taught us to hate one another. My criticism was not in the political realm but completely in that of morality.”

Expressing his concern about the powerful influence socialism might continue exerting on the Chilean masses, Father Hasbún, citing the Bible, comments: “The number of fools is infinite.”

Then he turns to the much-needed purification of Chilean academic circles. “If there is a group responsible for what happened in Chile, it is the intellectuals. Their deficiency – especially among Christian intellectuals – was surprising. It is alarming to note just how weak our thinkers are.”

To combat this scourge represented by the ideology of the Popular Unity government, it is not enough, according to Father Hasbún, to call it into question on the doctrinal level or as a social movement. For Marxism is not only a doctrine and a social movement, “... it is basically a religion, and even a mystique. Thus the only way to overthrow it is to tackle it

X - Father Hasbún to reporters: “For me the rooster is crowing...”

squarely on that level; to confront it with a religion and mysticism embodying values – moral and spiritual – that are superior and stronger.”

Such a confrontation is exactly what happened in Chile: “the moral reserves of Chile’s citizens – women, peasants, miners, and truck-owners – joined forces with the spiritual stamina of its institutions – Armed Forces, University and Church.”

The extraordinary victory resulting from this confrontation explains the pride and deep joy experienced by the director of Channel 13, which is owned by the Catholic University of Chile: “Never before have I felt as much like a priest than during the last three years. And never before have I experienced my faith in such depth and concreteness. From a strictly human point of view it would be impossible to explain what Channel 13 managed to accomplish. (...) How did we ever manage to muster the immense spiritual energy necessary to tackle this giant head on? How did we manage, like David, to overthrow Goliath? There can be only one answer: faith.”

And the things that he, because of his function, could not say, I was saying

Apart from the image of Chile abroad and the Popular Unity government, a third topic retains the attention of Father Hasbún in the interviews he grants to newspaper correspondents: Cardinal Silva.

On several occasions he insists that Cardinal Silva is “not a Marxist or anything close to that”:

“I am very familiar with what is going on in the Cardinal’s mind. I have lived with him in the same house for four years and I know that many of the things that are attributed to him are unfounded. He is not red, he is not a Marxist cardinal. He is too good a bishop to be compromising the integrity of the faith he has sworn to respect and to uphold when he was consecrated. There are people who do not realize the complexity and delicacy of his position as pastor and head of the Episcopal Conference.

As leader of the Catholic Church he must appear as the pastor of all Catholics. He must harmonize the firmness of truth with the great understanding of charity.”

On two different occasions, on 16 and 18 November, Father Hasbún tries to impress upon his interviewer and the Chilean public that Cardinal Silva’s leadership position simply did not allow him to take a public stand against the ideology of the Popular Unity government. However, he immediately adds:

“One must take the time to reflect a little: my freedom to speak, to do what I have done, was never questioned, nor restricted... It is easy to understand that given our different positions, Cardinal Silva and I spoke our own different languages. And the things that he, because of his function, could not say, I was saying.”

“So both you and Cardinal Silva were of the same opinion”, replies a correspondent.

“Obviously a cardinal, because of his function, had to stay out of the struggle. He had to give the impression of watching over everyone. Me, on the other hand, I’m a sniper”, replies Father Hasbún.

When questioned about the declarations made by Cardinal Silva to the press in Europe, Father Hasbún points out that the Archbishop of Santiago had probably simply “handed over certain documents to journalists and that they had edited them as they pleased and then presented the information as statements”. And he adds that in “Rome and Europe in general, the media were not very friendly and open with the cardinal because they felt he was not being critical enough of the junta”. Should Cardinal Silva really have made such statements – he refers specifically to the cardinal's statement that he would have requested and obtained from the junta the same freedom for the Church as under the Allende regime – I would not agree with him. Everyone knows what I think of the Allende government: “there is no point of comparison between the latter and the present government.” Moreover, should one eventually attempt to make such a comparison, whatever difference one could find

X - Father Hasbún to reporters: "For me the rooster is crowing..."

between the two regimes would be of little import; making a "judgment on a fact" or comparing two governments, all this has nothing to do with faith and dogma..."⁸⁵

The newspaper correspondent asks Father Hasbún one last question: "What do you think of the present government?"

"Believe me, that's not a matter to which I have given much thought. I am a fighter, just emerging from the trenches, and am still engulfed in the smoke of the battle. I do not think any of us who are struggling are clear on this point."

He nevertheless allows himself to say that the junta seems to him well inspired; people are gradually emerging from "political hypertrophy"; are moving away from "salvific ideologies and slogans"; are starting to realize that work is "the source of all redemption"; are ever more ready to make sacrifices and "postpone aspirations"; that all the above flows from the presence of the military, which are allowing people to regain confidence and hope.

B- Reactions to Father Hasbún's interviews:

Surprised and uncomfortable with Father Hasbún's many statements to the press, the Auxiliary Bishop of Santiago, Monsignor Fernando Ariztia, addresses an open letter to the director of the Chanel 13 TV station (see this letter on the

⁸⁵ The meaning of this last statement is not clear. The only one that makes sense, when one considers the general pattern of Father Hasbún's thinking, is the following. The military government, contrary to the Allende government, publicly declares itself as Catholic. Thus, while one government is based on faith, the other one is not (which does not mean that the Allende government was not full of Christians, many of them priests and nuns). Comparing these two governments by referring to the mere powers of reason would be of little import, as faith is not based on reason, or a "judgment of fact". This kind of fundamentalism, which clearly stands out in the notion of 'chilenidad', undoubtedly explains why the Catholic Church and the Armed Forces were the two main institutions opposing the radical revamping of education proposed by the Popular Unity government.

following page). In this letter, dated 20 November but only published in the *Mercurio* on 4 December, Bishop Ariztia reproaches Father Hasbún for having lacked moderation in his assertions and for making excessively harsh judgments on the people of the Left.

In his opinion, this fact would be particularly serious for two reasons: on the one hand those being attacked by Father Hasbún have just been defeated and crushed, and, on the other, they no longer have the opportunity to express their political opinions. Above all, he is concerned about the total lack of compassion shown by Father Hasbún towards the poorest and marginalized, who, regardless of their political allegiance, are always the hardest hit in such events.

Bishop Ariztia's letter immediately gives rise to an immense backlash on the part of the conservatives. And the tone is very harsh. That one of the greatest, and certainly one of the most popular apostles in Chile would be reprimanded in such an arbitrary and unjust manner is totally outrageous, note several commentators. Monsignor Ariztia is systematically caricatured and ridiculed.⁸⁶

On 17 December a professor of philosophy at the Catholic University, Manuel Andeade Alvarado, writes the following scathing critique of Bishop Ariztia in the *Mercurio*:

"Father Raul Hasbún is one of the Chilean priests who, through the exemplary exercise of his ministry, has always lived up to the doctrines set forth by his bishops... (...) True apostles never hesitate to stand up to a government when the latter is going against the holy will of God."

According to Andeade, Father Hasbún should have been congratulated instead of being reprimanded. He recalls that Cardinal Silva and Father Hasbún have been living in the same

⁸⁶ For an example of such caricature, see the article of Jaime Celedon, *Carta Abierta al Padre Hasbún*, in *Que Pasa*, no. 139, 21 December 1973, p. 64.

X - Father Hasbún to reporters: "For me the rooster is crowing..."

house; that the cardinal is fully aware of what Father Hasbún says and does, and that besides the latter has his own good judgment; and that if this were not the case, he would never have been placed in such a high position.

"Furthermore it appears that Cardinal Silva never publicly declared any disagreement with Father Hasbún because the latter would not be conforming to the truths established by Sacred Scripture, or would not be respecting the declarations made by the Chilean Episcopal Conference, or because his declarations would not be describing accurately what is going on in our nation.

"On the contrary, Father Hasbún has received marks of distinction from the Vatican: he was given a function that is directly related to the dissemination of the Gospel. It can therefore be assumed that both our cardinal and the Vatican are approving Father Hasbún's behavior and that, unfortunately, it is that of Bishop Ariztia that is out of line."

When interviewed by the journal Ercilla (No. 2,002, week 12-18 December 1973) about the Hasbún-Ariztia affair, Cardinal Silva made the following comment: "My answer will be very brief: I believe that one should not wash one's dirty clothes in front of others. I regret that divergences existing between priests have been made public and are now giving rise to many commentaries. Some of the latter originate from certain lay sectors, many of them immature, who feel called upon to give lectures to priests and bishops."

Would it be exaggerated to assert that the attitude of the cardinal towards the laity borders on paternalism?

BISHOP ARIZTIA'S LETTER TO FATHER HASBÚN

Santiago, 20 November 1973

Dear Raúl,

I have read your long statements to the correspondents of the Mercurio and the Segunda that have appeared in recent days.

I must inform you that I was taken aback and astonished by these statements and I would like to tell you why, and this in an open letter, because I believe that the public has the right to have a different perspective than the one you are providing.

Two points in your statements troubled me. First of all, you have the opportunity to express publicly an opinion which, whether you like it or not, will have a major political impact. You know that other people, who see things differently, are unable to express themselves. This fact alone should have led you to be more sober and measured in your words. The matter is too delicate for you to start judging other people: the very fact of living in the same house as the cardinal, which does not give you greater authority, should have led you to be extremely careful.

The other point is that you are a very well known personality and a priest. Your word is that of a priest. You define your position and attack those on the left, and you have the right to do so. But how is it possible that your declarations show no compassion whatsoever for the suffering of those who have been defeated?

There is still more: how is it that we do not find in any of your remarks some consideration for the poor and marginalized, which are always the hardest hit? I am not referring to any particular political group. I am referring to the worker, to the citizen of working-class neighborhoods, to the soldier, to this category of the have-nots for whom the Church should also be speaking.

In my opinion the kind of declarations that you made do not contribute to the reconciliation of Chileans and to building a people of brothers and sisters.

I would have more things to tell you. But for the time being, what I've said suffices. I am addressing myself to you, not in a polemical spirit but with the sole desire to serve my nation and the Church, and to communicate to you frankly and fraternally my thoughts.

Cordial greetings,

Fernando Ariztia Ruiz, Auxiliary Bishop of Santiago

The Mercurio, 4 December 1973

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C- Father Hasbún and the Church:

The various reactions provoked by Father Hasbún's interviews with journalists – those of the Auxiliary Bishop of Santiago, the pro-junta sectors of Chilean society and then the Head of the Chilean Episcopate – do not allow one to conclude that Father Hasbún's attitude perfectly reflects that of the Chilean Catholic Church.

On the one hand, as the letter of Bishop Ariztia so eloquently testifies, it is obvious that the Chilean Catholic Church in no way forms a monolithic block. And, on the other hand, it is also evident that Father Hasbún lets himself get carried away and ends up saying things that neither the Vatican, Cardinal Silva, nor the Chilean Bishops' Conference (at least in its majority) would want to or dare to say in public.

Although he appears to be, as noted by one of his interviewers, more energetic and rested than when he was caught up in daily clashes with the Popular Unity government, Father Hasbún obviously did not recover completely from the final battle after emerging from the trenches, in his own words "totally engulfed in smoke". For there is still a fair amount of smoke clouding his ideas: some conflict with the most elementary truth, others are blatantly self-contradicting. For example, on 4 September he declares on television before the whole nation that only the Almighty can judge the secrets of the heart, "this inviolable sanctuary where only God can penetrate"; and on 16 November he declares before the same nation – suddenly feeling endowed with the capacity to judge the secrets of the heart – that undoubtedly Allende "was not being guided by the Holy Spirit." And then he adds that both the members of the Popular Unity government and the manufacturers of the false image of Chile abroad – the left-leaning intellectuals – are akin to Citroneta owners who drive their tiny car too fast and on the wrong 'left' side of the road, ignoring their bourgeois "natural determinants" and attempting to change these "for the mere pleasure of changing".

Following in the footsteps of the Mercurio and the other

spokespersons of the junta, Father Hasbún also tries to mitigate the impact of Cardinal Silva's statements in Italy by pretexting that these probably originate from shabby journalistic reporting.

Such a procedure is totally devoid of intellectual honesty. As we have already noted, the authenticity of the text of Cardinal Silva's interview with the *Avvenire* daily was confirmed by the Public Opinion Department of the Archbishopric of Santiago; and the second part of Cardinal Silva's statements appeared in the official press organ of the Vatican, *Osservatore Romano*.

This said, and even when one factors in the fairly obvious blunders of Father Hasbún, everything seems to indicate that his position does indeed reflect that adopted in this matter by the Vatican, as well as by the most decisive sectors of the leadership of the Chilean Catholic Church. While the latter sets forth its position using a white-glove and diplomatic approach, Father Hasbún presents his position using an approach that is blunt, raw, and very undiplomatic. But in both cases the positions are fundamentally the same.

Indeed, if Father Hasbún does not ideologically enjoy the good graces of the Vatican and the Catholic Church, some facts become very difficult to understand.

- Why has this priest been entrusted with what is, without a shadow of a doubt, one of the most influential posts in the Chilean Catholic Church? Being in charge of the most powerful television network of a nation, at a time when the influence of mass media is ever greater, is no small matter.
- Why was Father Hasbún appointed by the Vatican a consulting member of the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications just a few months before the coup and while he was in the midst of a very open and public struggle against the Popular Unity government?
- Why does Father Hasbún acknowledge having been warmly received by the Vatican and why is he satisfied that this so decisive fraction of the Catholic hierarchy, including all the

X - Father Hasbún to reporters: “For me the rooster is crowing...”

bishoprics in the world, seem to have been some of the few to “understand what is really happening in Chile”?

- Why, finally and quite tellingly, was it considered wise just a few weeks after the coup to appoint channel 13 – the only TV station to have survived the coup – official correspondent of [Vatican Radio](#) in Chile? And why did Father Hasbún himself declare that this decision resulted from his own personal efforts to make known what is really happening in Chile?

Similarly, if Father Hasbún does not enjoy strong ideological support among the most influential sectors of the Chilean Catholic Church, how could one explain that the Chilean Episcopal Conference and especially its leader Cardinal Silva, who, as Chancellor of the Catholic University of Chile, certainly has the biggest say in the choice of whoever directs the destinies of Channel 13, have entrusted to him such a responsibility? How can one explain that Cardinal Silva, as M. Alvarado notes, has never publicly disapproved of the television director’s public statements and actions?

Moreover, why does Father Hasbún himself admit to enjoying the utmost freedom of action and speech in his constant attacks on the Popular Unity government?⁸⁷ He who describes himself, after 11 September, as a “sniper” just emerging from the trenches”? He who candidly declares that the cardinal “is not a Marxist or anything close to that”; that he knows him very well for having lived with him for four years; and that the things that his boss was unable to say, because of the delicacy of his function, he was saying them?

That Cardinal Silva would find this last statement very upsetting is obvious. However, originating from a rather naïve and extraordinarily impulsive Father Hasbún, it is very telling. Especially since, as our preceding textual analysis has shown,

⁸⁷ Ironically, it is the military junta that will eventually put an end to Father Hasbún’s freedom of action as director of Channel 13 a few months later, this, by simply dismissing him. For more details, see Epilogue 1974.

there emerges from the declarations of Father Hasbún and those of Cardinal Silva a common ideological structure. One that is so common as a matter of fact that it is sometimes illustrated by the use of the same, identical words: in his homily of 18 September Cardinal Silva refers to “this gift of God” that corresponds “to what we call *chilenidad*”; and Father Hasbún in his 18 November declarations to newspaper correspondents refers to the “heritage of Christian and human values that shape our *chilenidad*”.

When one observes all this, one is not at all surprised to find that the same archbishop and the same Episcopal Conference that granted full freedom to Father Hasbún to carry out his “priestly” activities, curtailed, however, those of another group of Chilean Catholics known as Christians for Socialism.⁸⁸ Indeed, several priests with a socialist tendency were dislodged from their influential posts with the evident aim of neutralizing them. And in a letter to the Christians for Socialism on 3 March 1972, Cardinal Silva reminded them that a Christian, and a fortiori a priest, would be wrong to see in Marxism “the only solution to liberate man” and that such an orientation would not be in the “line of the Church”. He also reminded them that “the Marxist interpretation of the working class as the only bearer of the future of humanity does not coincide in any way with the evangelical beatitudes of the poor.”⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Group that sees socialism as the path towards the liberation of the poor and oppressed Latin-American masses. This group - initially formed of 80 priests but that later rapidly expanded - organized an international meeting in Chile in April 1972, a meeting that had a considerable impact. On this occasion, the Chilean hierarchy adopted an attitude of benevolent “neutrality”.

⁸⁹ As might be expected, the military junta was able to make good use of this latter statement of Cardinal Silva. It was quoted (with other extracts from the cardinal's interview with the Italian daily *Avvenire*) in the News Bulletin, no. 260, issued by the Chilean Embassy in Washington DC, U.S.A., during the month of December 1973.

While the Christians for Socialism attempt to place the working class at the center of the integral development of a nation, the conservative elements of the Catholic Church, and the Chilean military, tend to glorify poverty as such. A glorification that is absolutely cruel when

X - Father Hasbún to reporters: “For me the rooster is crowing...”

On 11 April 1972 the Chilean Catholic Episcopate declared: “We condemn the partisan political attitude that certain priests have assumed, openly contrary to the orientations of the Church. (...) If someone believes that his vocation is political, we ask him to reconsider his sacerdotal vocation and after a dialogue with his bishop (...) to solicit to be relieved of his priestly ministry.”⁹⁰

Obviously, the above declaration does not concern nor take aim at Father Hasbún. He does not have to request to be relieved of

millions are locked into abject poverty (from reliable sources I recently learned that thousands of people in Santiago only eat two proper meals a week).

One finds such glorification of poverty in the encyclical *Nostis et Nobiscum* of Pope Pius IX in 1849. After recalling that it is normal and necessary that in any nation some dominate others because of differences of talent and intelligence or material fortune, Pope Pius IX asserts that under no pretext is it lawful to encroach upon the property and rights of others: “Because of this, and also because of the very severe remonstrances of our Lord Jesus Christ on the use of wealth and its dangers, being poor and marginalized is more bearable in Catholic countries than elsewhere... The poor and marginalized should not therefore, as Christ Himself teaches us, complain about and regret their status: sometimes poverty is the easiest way to salvation, as long as we bear it patiently and are not only poor in body but also in spirit. God, who created the little ones as well as the great ones ..., cares for all alike and forgets no one.”

⁹⁰ Cited in Ercilla no. 2002, 12-18 December 1973, p. 15.

Subsequently, the Chilean bishops formally condemned “the priests and religious who are part of the Christians for socialism” in a long document published on 16 October 1973 (*Fe Cristiana y Actuación Política*, document of the Episcopal Chilean Conference). (Note added in 2017: to consult this document see:

http://www.archivochile.com/Poder_Dominante/iglesia/PD Iglesia0011.pdf).

The history of this document is particularly revealing. A draft copy was adopted in April 1973 by the Episcopal Conference. Then it was handed over to a commission that was to ensure its final editing, a process that was completed in the following mid-August. By a curious coincidence, it was on only on 13 September 1973, two days after the coup, that the Episcopal Conference approved the document that was subsequently published in Chile in October 1973.

his priestly ministry since what he is doing and saying fully corresponds to his sacerdotal vocation and respects the “line of the Church.” And his actions and words are not involved in partisan politics. Nor do they place the working class on an inappropriately high pedestal or call into question the “evangelical beatitudes of the poor”. They are exclusively in the domain of “morality”. Protecting the values “that shape our chilenidad”, “this gift of God”; attacking the foreign ideology inspiring the Popular Unity government, and which is threatening the survival of this chilenidad... all this transcends party politics. It is only speaking and acting through love of Christ and the Fatherland. It is only seeking the “common good”.

Should one therefore be scandalized that Cardinal Silva, when asked by the journal *Ercilla* to comment on the Hasbún-Arztia Affair, finds nothing better to say than “I believe that one should not wash one’s dirty clothes in front of others”? Should one really be taken aback by Cardinal Silva’s astute and clever attempt to place the blame, not on the outlandish and improper public declarations of Father Hasbún, but rather on Bishop Arztia, who, by publicly opposing Father Hasbún, was starting to wash the Church’s dirty clothes in public? To place the blame on the same bishop, who, taken aback by the fact that many stores in his neighborhood that claimed to have nothing to sell before 11 September suddenly and practically overnight became well stocked after the coup, had dared to express his astonishment and anger.⁹¹ And who since the beginning of the coup d’état has not feared to risk his own life many times in order to save that of a worker or a peasant, to prevent a person from being detained, tortured and possibly summarily executed?

Is Father Hasbún, who has just received a new promotion from the Vatican, not fully justified to publicly and triumphantly proclaim on 16 November: “For me, the rooster is crowing, the sun is rising on Chile and the fog of a nightmare is dissipating”?

⁹¹ *Boletín informativo oficial*, Arzobispado de Santiago, no. 73, p. 15.

X - Father Hasbún to reporters: “For me the rooster is crowing...”

Letter: April 24 (Attempting with Bishop Ariztia to help Chilean to take refuge)

On 24 April 1974 I wrote the following letter to my friends in Montreal, Dominique Boisvert and Diane Gariépy:⁹²

Dear Dominique and Diane,

I’m taking advantage of a safe contact who is now leaving Chile to write to you free of any censorship concerns.

Just last week we provided refuge in our house to a person that the military are looking for very actively. We collaborated with our American friends, Art and Natalie to try to get this Chilean into the Mexican embassy. First we met with Bishop Ariztía who has contacts with the Embassy. Once that was arranged, we developed a concrete strategy. Since the military have been guarding the embassy entrances very closely — in fact more closely than before — getting someone into an embassy is not an easy matter. Ruthie, Art and Natalie’s sixteen year old daughter, spent several afternoons wandering in the park just in front of the Mexican embassy, carefully observing everything that was going on: at such a time, the milk is delivered; at such a time the embassy gates are open; there is a house right next to the embassy where it would be possible to sneak in and jump the very tall wall into freedom. Once her expertise was done, we organized the escape.

Just as it was starting to get a bit dark, we drove to within three blocks from the embassy. Our plan was the following: Art would walk ahead of us, followed by Ruthie, then me, and finally our Chilean refugee. If Art were to see something fishy, he would take his handkerchief out of his pocket and the others would all

⁹² This letter was only added to this book for the 2017 edition.

turn back. Both Ruthie and I were to do the same if we saw something fishy. We felt very nervous and tense. But everything went remarkably well and our Chilean refugee ran into the yard right next to the embassy in order to jump over the wall into safety.

Convinced that everything had gone well, we all drove home to our little house and started celebrating by having coffee and biscuits. As we were celebrating, there was a knock on the door. It was our Chilean refugee, his face covered with blood! He was breathing heavily and had been running hard. He explained what had happened. He did make it into the yard, but there were two girls there with their boyfriends. When he attempted to jump the fence to get into the Mexican embassy, one of the guys ran up to him and pulled him down. That's when he hit his head on a stone on the wall and started bleeding profusely. He was able to break away from the guys who were trying to grab him and ran all the way back to our place.

As we were listening to his story, we were all in a state of shock. Our house is situated in a neighborhood where there are always lots of people on the streets and everything is very promiscuous. The possibility, we thought, that some neighbors, possibly sympathetic to the military government, saw him running with blood on his forehead is 100%! Within a matter of seconds we all abandoned our house, jumped into Art's car, and rushed to their place in the suburbs of Santiago. We stayed there a full three days before we dared come back home. Fortunately, we were able to develop an easier strategy and our Chilean refugee finally made it into the embassy.

Your request that Wynanne and I be the godparents of your child flattered us but we feel you should realize that events here have considerably shaken us up in our faith. We no longer set foot in a Church here in Chile. We feel we must radically dissociate ourselves from an institution

X - Father Hasbún to reporters: "For me the rooster is crowing..."

that has provided such a bloody regime an important support at a very critical moment of the coup.

However, once a week we get together with our American friends to meditate and share our concerns and values. We have been reading Gandhi quite intensely in the last couple months. We are fascinated by him but are not convinced that his solution is the right one for Chile. On the long run, I do not see any other valid philosophical and spiritual orientation one could provide the world with. However, as I was telling our American friends, only he who has the courage to permanently embrace the fate, the economic conditions and the repression which the poor are facing, has the moral right to preach them the doctrine of non-violence. He who lacks this courage should remain silent, or should collaborate with, or at the very least not hinder their plans to resist with violence. In other words, it is not the theory of non-violence itself that creates a problem for us, but rather the extremely heroic attitude it logically entails.

Between the Jesus of the Gospel and Gandhi we can see considerable resemblance. Between the Chilean Episcopal Conference with its seemingly endless ambiguity and diplomacy and this Jesus, we do not see any at all.

If we're staying in Chile, it's because we feel, since the September 11th coup, a certain responsibility. It's also due to the fact that despite our very strong temptation to return to Quebec immediately, we feel that staying our full two years will allow us to grow much more intellectually. (...)

XI - Towards a theology of liberation

“What is the cause of the overthrow of Marxism in Chile? What does this event mean to the world? Leaving aside the role of the mercy of God and the obvious intervention of the Most Blessed Virgin, Queen of Chile, who made use of the Armed Forces of which she is the general, the failure of the Marxist revolution in Chile is due to a number of factors, two of which, because of their special importance, must be retained: the effective resistance of the whole nation in all its social strata, on the one hand, and the very obvious inability of Marxism to conform its action to the “idiosyncrasy of the Chilean people on the other.”⁹³

A- Revolutionary priests:

If the priestly vocation of Father Raúl Hasbún reached its high point in the military coup, for many Chilean and foreign priests 11 September meant the beginning of a brutal nightmare of suffering, terror and persecution.⁹⁴

On 19 September the military detain a 31-year-old Spanish priest, Father Joan Alsina Hurtos. The next day his corpse is found in Rio Mapocho, the river that flows through Santiago. His back is riddled with bullets.⁹⁵

Staff Director at the San Juan de Dios Hospital in Santiago and pastor in the parish of San Ignacio de San Bernardo, Father Alsina was very demanding for himself and highly esteemed by both his fellow workers and parishioners. Such was his solidarity with the poor and marginalized that he had chosen to live among them in a shantytown.

Falsely denounced as a sniper, Father Alsina, conscious of his innocence and despite considerable pressure exerted on him by friends so he would take refuge in an embassy, courageously

⁹³ Miguel Poradowski, *El Significado de la Derrota Marxista en Chile*, in Tizona, Santiago, no. 46, September-October 1973, p. 24.

⁹⁴ Only among the foreign priests, more than a hundred ended up fleeing Chile in the first months following the coup.

⁹⁵ The junta assassinated at least two other priests. Miguel Wuodderd, parish priest and professor at the University of Valparaiso, was interrogated and tortured to death, and Bernardo Poblete, a 31-year-old priest of Don Bosco College, also died under torture.

decides to “face the music”. On the evening of the day when Cardinal Silva is publicly offering the military junta the Catholic Church’s “full and disinterested collaboration,” and just a few hours before his death, Father Alsina writes his last meditation:

Why?

We wanted to put new wine in old wineskins, and we ended up without wineskins and without wine ... for the time being.

We have come to the end of the road... we started walking on a path, and now we find ourselves on stones. Those of us who remain will continue walking. Until when? Let’s hope we manage to find trees to protect ourselves from bullets. (...)

‘There are no more prophets among us,’ only the golden calf remains.

Since two days one finds everything. And since we can no longer talk, we only chew.⁹⁶ And we miss the hard-earned bread, cut and shared in joy and laughter.

We did not understand the words of St. Paul: “We all have to go through the test of fire.” Where are those who claimed they wanted to continue, if necessary, to the bitter end?

The US was allowing us to play a game so painful and so full of limitations that we ourselves could no longer put up with it.

“Holy Democracy, pray for us.” (This part was in English in the original).

While it is easy to preach resignation, it is very difficult to accept to lose. Because to lose means to cease to have and to begin to be. And it turns out that those who had and still have the most, were the least. But while being less, they nevertheless had more power and strength.

“The word was becoming flesh” ... and that we just could not stand any longer ... it’s the scandal of the cross. One we have

⁹⁶ Father Alsina is noting, as Bishop Ariztia had done before him, that after the coup, the shortage of goods experienced before suddenly disappeared. And given that those of the left can no longer speak, they can only ‘chew’, that is, consume.

never tolerated. "We will respect all ideologies.." as long as these do not have the audacity to become flesh and translate into reality; if they dare do so, we will reduce them to smithereens and crush them.

And now what?

Many are those who have been crushed, purified. Seventy-two, according to the official statistics. In Exodus there were forty thousand. And here too. From one side or the other, what does it matter? Civilians or soldiers, they're all from the same people ... "We'll build a new, free and independent country." Different voices, different times. No, the voices are the same. And the dynamics too.

Incapacity to connect to my inner self ... Not knowing who I am, where I come from, or where I'm going. I'll get home. This guy is watching me... This other one could arrest me ... head for cover!

To depend on a key, a will, an intuition, a "confession" forced from someone under torture. Cold.. hot sweat... Alone in a small, cold room. Who's on the other end of the phone? Who's knocking at the door at this hour? Not knowing what to do while knowing full well what they'll do to me... And the most painful: why? Feeling insecure. And with insecurity comes fear. (...)

And the shooting goes on... Especially at night. Who against whom? The people, the people, the people ... of one side or the other... (...) Strategies, groups, declarations. And the people are lying down, asleep or dead.

And impotence. Blood that is boiling ... Words unable to come out ... And to know that words and deeds are doomed to the silence of battered blood and dust.

And our HOLY MOTHER the Church?

One cannot improvise. Equilibrium is only useful in times of 'peace'.

Hope... if the grain of wheat does not die, it will never bear fruit ... A burned down mountain is terrible: but one must wait until from the wet, black, sticky ashes, life starts appearing. (...)

We are like sheep being taken to slaughter.

In your hands I commend my spirit ... (...) Does the population understand what is meant by the Body of Christ? If we drown, it is part of their hope that will disappear. If from the ashes we manage to regain life, part of them will also come back to life. Adios... The Almighty always accompanies us wherever we are.

Testimony of soldier who executed Father Alsina

(Information added in 2017 and drawn from [Joan Alsina Hurtos](http://www.memoriaviva.com/Ejecutados/Ejecutados_A/relato_sobre_alsina.htm)
http://www.memoriaviva.com/Ejecutados/Ejecutados_A/relato_sobre_alsina.htm)

The soldier who executed Father Alsina was 18-year-old Nelson Bañados, who confessed his crime several years later to Father Miguel Jordá. Below, testimony given by Bañados during his trial:

“We left Barros Arana in a jeep. My captain was driving and I was sitting in the back with Joan, who was handcuffed and very pensive. He did not say a word during the trip and offered no resistance whatsoever. When we reached the Bulnes Bridge, my captain stopped the jeep. And, as I would do with each one of those I would execute, I got out, took Joan out of the jeep and started blindfolding him. However he said, “Please do not blindfold me since I want to see you in order to forgive you.” Everything happened very quickly. I remember him glancing towards the sky, making a gesture with his hand, and, as if he were praying, moving his lips and then saying, ‘Father, forgive him...’ I fired and he fell. I was going to shoot him with my pistol but chose my machine gun instead so his death would be faster. The blast was so powerful that it pushed his body backwards and it only took a little push on my part for him to fall into the Rio Mapocho. (...) It was 10 pm and I will never forget that execution.”

Eventually Bañados was so overwhelmed with remorse that he committed suicide



The above poster, which reads “Execute me while facing me so I can forgive you”, is exposed in the [Museo de la Memoria](#) in Santiago, Chile

Four days after the death of Father Alsina, the *Mercurio* publishes an article entitled “Who are revolutionary priests?” The article is composed of excerpts from a publication by a Jesuit priest Fr. Ulpiano López, a missionary with the lepers of Cerrito Island in Argentina.⁹⁷ These excerpts are being published, notes the *Mercurio*, because of they are “extremely relevant” in the present context.

“A careful examination of the history of the Church teaches us that Jesus merely integrated into the societal structure of his time. (...) He neither justified nor contested this structure. His assertion, 'My kingdom is not of this world' is just as true today as it was in the past. The Church established itself in the midst of a world whose structure was unjust,” notes the Jesuit missionary.

For Father López, the true priest is the one who devotes himself to prayer and to the ministry of the sacraments. He who celebrates Mass, carries out baptisms, hears confessions, etc. While he acknowledges that in the past there has often been too

⁹⁷ The *Mercurio* does not indicate the year of publication or the title of the book. It merely states that it was published by Esquiú.

much emphasis, for financial reasons, on the ministry of the sacraments, he argues that today the pendulum is swinging in the opposite direction. From excessive 'cultic verticalism' the Church is moving towards excessive 'anthropocentric horizontalism'. Priests are getting increasingly involved in activities that rightly belong to the laity and this to the point of often prioritizing lay activities instead of God.

Priests who spent too much of their time in lay activities are moving away from that which constitutes the very essence of priestly life, pursues Father López. Priests who are faithful to their vocation must avoid two excesses: one the one hand, putting such emphasis on man in his concrete life that they end up neglecting God and the sacraments, and, on the other, focusing so much on God and the sacraments that they end up neglecting man in his concrete daily life. Authentic priests manage to remain present to the ordinary lives of people while never turning away from God, the ultimate meaning of their commitment.

That priests must remain present to people in their ordinary concrete lives does not mean that they should become involved in earthly struggles, such as fighting against socio-economic structures, however oppressive and exploitative these may be. Doing so would be abandoning their fundamental christifying mission.

This is true for two reasons. First, we must avoid seeing the basic problems of our world as one of socio-economic structures; changing or reforming such structures would not really solve anything. What is needed is to change people's heart, to change their soul, to create new men and women. Secondly, it should not be forgotten that priests should never interfere in the affairs that rightly belong to the laity: "The temporal commitment in the construction of a terrestrial society of justice and peace is the task of the laity", not of priests.

"Priests for the Revolution of Christ: this is what the Church and our world really need. But such a revolution is of a totally

supernatural nature ... Priests are the spiritual leaders of their brothers ... The Church has no place for priests who no longer want to pray, to live their supernatural life and communicate it through the sacraments. The Church (...) cannot retain such men in its ranks: they must leave”, concludes Father López.

At the end of September, the Chilean magazine *Tizona* publishes a special issue (No. 46, September-October 1973) on the coup d'état. In the editorial section (pp. 2-3), Juan Antonio Widow asserts that Chileans in the last three years have had the opportunity to discover the true nature of Marxism, an ideological system that “transforms people into cogs in a wheel”, taking complete hold not only of their body but also “of their very interior soul”. Marxism is much more than just an ideological conviction, asserts the editorialist, who assures the reader that he is totally apolitical. It is a virus capable of leading people “to complete moral corruption” and depriving them of all humanity. This ideology “has the capacity to foment in the human soul a devotion for all that is evil, and a profound hatred for everything in the world that, through its goodness, reflects in some way the Glory of God.”

“Few understand the reason for which Pope Pius XI declared communism – Marxism-Leninism – intrinsically perverse and the profound meaning of that condemnation. Communism is not bad because one poorly interprets it, or because one does not know how to implement it properly, or yet because those adhering to it and trying to impose it are malicious. No, communism is intrinsically bad. Not even a saint or the best intentioned politicians could ever collaborate with this doctrine without automatically becoming directly complicit in its intrinsic and immutable iniquity...”

Then Mr. Widow concludes: “Our present joy and the immense freedom that we are starting to rediscover, make us realize just how much we had lost and are now recovering. In the following days, we should all, from the very depths of our hearts, offer thanksgiving to the Almighty.”



TIZONA is a publication whose purpose consists in identifying the foundation of both the natural order of society and the supernatural order of the Church. Its only norm is objective truth, and the assumption that all people are capable of discovering it.

TIZONA does not belong to or identify with any particular religious or political party or movement. Nor does it try to belong to or found such a movement. Its sole purpose is to know and explain the reasons, universal and valid for any group or person, that explain the nature of the principles that must be applied in order to restore the authentic order of the societies to which we belong by birth and baptism.

In the second article of the editorial section (pages 3 and 4), Gonzalo Ibañez points out that this sacred heritage that Chile has recovered thanks to the miraculous intervention of the Chilean Armed Forces is Western Christian culture itself. The philosophy inspiring the military junta, he comments, is simply that adopted by “all important governments in the history of the Western Christian world in past centuries”. Its motto – “God, Fatherland and Justice” is the exact contrary of what Chile experienced under the Allende government: “Without God, Without a Fatherland, and Without Justice.”

When one says God, one recognizes oneself as a creature, free to do good and avoid evil, but also obliged to submit to the laws embodied in the natural order itself. One also recognizes that a ruler can only govern insofar as he considers himself to be the delegate of “He who rules the whole universe and who is Master and Lord of History.”

When one says Fatherland, he continues, one is acknowledging that a ruler governs not “abstract beings” but concrete beings in flesh and blood, who are not only endowed with an “idiosyncrasy and national values” but whose history is very noble.

Finally, when one says Justice, one recognizes that the power of a ruler is not absolute and that his *raison d'être* consists in seeking “not the good of particular citizens but the common good”; that citizens “have the right to be well governed, to demand that such a right be respected, and, **in an extreme case, to give themselves a good government.**” (Bold is mine)

In another article in the same magazine titled “The Meaning of the Military Intervention” (p. 19), Mr. Ibañez clarifies the meaning of the bold part in the above quote. According to him, the immediate cause of the coup d'état was the fundamentally corrupt doctrine applied by the Popular Unity government in the last three years; but its far more fundamental and remote cause lies in a law adopted by the Chilean national assembly and that allowed this doctrine to be legally recognized.

The real culprit of this national drama is therefore our Chilean

Congress that in 1958 adopted the abolition of the Law on the Defense of Democracy. This bill, by allowing Marxists and Socialists to stand for election, allowed that which is ideologically evil to take root in Chile, and then eventually to give birth to the Popular Unity government. The authors of this 1958 law cannot pretend to be without guilt by claiming that they had no way of knowing what would happen in the future. For evil always engenders evil. Nor can they pretend not being responsible “for rendering necessary the massive and crushing use of violence, since, as we all know, this is the only way a country can save itself from Marxism.”⁹⁸

In one of the six or seven books published by the right since 11 September to justify the coup, one finds, once again, the writings of Mr. Ibañez. In one passage he explains why he is so happy those governing Chile are the Armed Forces.

“The military vocation represents a very high and noble calling. (...) The military career calls for a very select groups of patriots, those known as aristocrats. Not in the vulgar meaning that this term has now taken with its connotation of an absurd class struggle. What is meant here by “aristocrats” is what this term has always signified in the past: that group of people who, by their natural and traditional qualities of intelligence and education, are called upon to assist the government. It is the government by the very best people. And it is precisely because one finds the best people of a country in the Armed Forces that, in a given historical moment, the quality of a country is illustrated through its Armed Forces.”⁹⁹

“The aristocrats are that social group whose purpose is the direction of national life (...); The higher the place occupied by a group in the social hierarchy, the greater the sacrifices and commitment required of those belonging to it, for its immediate

⁹⁸ *Tizona*, Special Issue (no. 46, September-October 1973).

⁹⁹ *Fuerzas Armadas y Seguridad Nacional*, Collective Work, Ediciones Portada, 1973 Santiago, Chile, p. 29.

purpose is the common good.”¹⁰⁰

B- Purification of Church and State :

Father Joan Alsina is dead. If he was pursued, ‘crowned with thorns’ and then riddled with bullets, it is because someone falsely informed the military that he was a sniper. More fundamentally, however, it is because, through his ideas and in his daily life, he expressed a concrete solidarity with the poor and marginalized Chilean masses, and was struggling to change the socio-economic structures underlying their poverty and marginalization.

Father Raul Hasbún is more alive than ever. He says that he has just lived the most meaningful and gratifying priestly experience of his life. If he is receiving considerable attention and enjoying positions of power and glory in the Church, it is because he is siding with the right, with the most powerful and conservative sectors of Chile, with those who are the wealthiest in both Catholicism and money. Proud of being a soldier of Christ and of his nation, he describes himself as a sniper who is just coming out of the trenches.

The Catholic Chilean Church, which claims to be totally apolitical and likes to perform ceremonies where it proclaims its own very special love for the poor and marginalized, seems to perceive Father Alsina as a priest who was unfaithful to his vocation. And, at the same time, it seems to perceive the very popular and outspoken Father Hasbún as a priest not only faithful to his vocation but also worthy of multiple promotions.

Such is the strange logic of a Church that on the one hand promotes peace and social justice and declares itself against violence and injustice in all its forms, and, on the other, does not hesitate to side with the powerful, those who want to safeguard at all costs an establishment that offers them comfort, freedom and obscene wealth on the backs of the exploited many. On the backs of the exploited masses, used as cheap labor either in private homes as servants or on land and in factories as manual

¹⁰⁰ Idem, p. 29.

laborers.

Such is the strange spiritual logic of a Church that is frightened like an angel when some of its priests and laity dare to speak openly about class struggle and armed confrontation that such struggle may lead to in cases of extreme exploitation, but that, at the same time, does not hesitate to kneel respectfully next to a military junta that is ruthlessly crushing the poor and marginalized. Of a Church that is ill at ease with an armed revolution when the latter is of proletarian origin but that does not hesitate to bless the good intentions of a military junta that is intervening in favor of the wealthy elite.

It is not by mere chance that the Mercurio published extracts of Father Lopez's reflections on revolutionary priests just a few days after Father Alsina's body was found in the Rio Mapocho. Nor that M. Widow and M. Ibañez published what they published. Both the Mercurio, which clearly acts as the spokesperson of the Catholic junta, and the two editorialists of the magazine Tizona represent currents of thought that are firmly rooted in the Chilean elite and in large sectors of the leadership of the Catholic Chilean Church. These consider that the national traditions of Chile and the capitalist structures they embody and perpetuate constitute a legacy that is of divine origin, and thus sacred, stable and unalterable for centuries and centuries...

It is with good reason that Cardinal Silva acknowledged on 18 September that the values and customs "that correspond to what we call *chilenidad*" reflect God's ever present love for Chile. And it is also for good reason that, according to a statement made by Father Hasbún (his newspaper interview of 18 November), Cardinal Silva accepted to ratify, as required by his office as Chancellor, the junta's appointment of a Military Rector for the Catholic University of Chile. An appointment whose sole motive was the ideological purge of this milieu.

It is for good reason that Mr. Ibañez asserted in the magazine *Que Pasa* (No. 139, 21 December 1973, p. 59) that Chile's new constitution – the military announced that Chile's constitution needed to be revamped – should include "principles which, once

formulated, would forever remain out of discussion; principles that would never be subject to future voting and that it would be impossible to alter.”

Either a nation’s heritage is sacred or it is not. Either it transcends all political partisanship or it can be subject to discussion and future voting... Now, at the very moment when Chile is being ruled by a brutal dictatorship, is the ideal time to exclude from its constitution, once and for all, that which is erroneous and intrinsically evil. Yes, we must definitively put aside the temptation felt by millions of Chileans, especially the poorest and most marginalized ‘ignorant’ masses, for a foreign and anti-national ideology!

Jesus “neither justified nor challenged” the unjust socio-economic structure of his time. Thanks to the military junta, Chile is now recovering the noble philosophy and values of “Western Christian civilization”. Everyone knows that the only way for a country to escape from the foreign ideology that is poisoning and destroying the soul of Chilean workers and peasants is through “the massive and crushing use of force”. The Church’s role does not consist in legitimizing or disapproving a government; it humbly accepts to collaborate with whatever government the population wants. Priests should stay completely out of politics; their mission is essentially extra-terrestrial and spiritual, and their revolution lies in the realm of the supernatural.

In the end, it is as if the Mercurio, the editorialists of Tizona and the most influential sectors of the Chilean Catholic Church found in the coup not only the opportunity par excellence for Chile to recover its authentic national soul – *chilenidad* – but also a golden opportunity for its priests to recover that in which consists their authentic priestly vocation, their real ‘sacerdotad’.

In other words the very same thing that that allows one to distinguish between a true Chilean and one who has lost his or her way, also allows one to distinguish between a priest who has remained faithful to his vocation, and one who has been led astray...

Dear Chileans, if you are being tortured, imprisoned in the National Stadium and concentration camps, and summarily executed before or after the rapid decision of a Military Court, it's not at all because one enjoys doing this. It's for your greater good! It's being done in the name of Christ and for the superior interests of our nation! It's being done so our country will recover its national identity that was so deeply compromised by an evil foreign ideology that taught hatred and class conflict!

Dear Chilean and foreign priests, if we are treating you in the same manner, it is simply because, unlike Jesus Christ, you did not manage to keep focused on your specifically spiritual and supernatural affairs... you were not minding your own priestly business and becoming involved in politics. And you were abandoning the comfort of your rectories in order to live with the poor and marginalized in working-class neighborhoods and shantytowns.

Suffering from an alarming intellectual weakness, you were putting the sacraments on the back burner, and spending much of your time trying to awaken and conscientize the masses to an absurd class struggle... You were collaborating with left-wing activists and teaching the ignorant poor and marginalized to envy the social conditions of the wealthy... You were even teaching them to envy and want to assume the vocation that properly belongs to the aristocracy, this select group of people who are called upon, because of their natural and traditional endowment of "intelligence and education", to assist the government in all that concerns "the common good". You were teaching Chilean workers and peasants hatred, class struggle, things that had never been seen before in Chile, and that contradict the very essence of our national tradition and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You were inculcating in their hearts all sorts of false hopes and aspirations, such as the stupid and totally unrealistic Popular Unity project of free, publicly funded university education for all. As if there were no natural differences between people! As if God had given everyone a calling to attend university! As if the traditional hierarchy characteristic of our long and noble history was not, like its author God the Father, permanent, immutable, and

eternal...

You see now what can happen to a priest like Father Alsina when he goes astray, does not respect his divine vocation and moves away from the path traced by Christ ... If only you had behaved like true priests, if only you had remained faithful to those strictly spiritual and supernatural values that transcend all historical political contingencies... Like those missionary priests who continued prioritizing the ministry of the sacraments; who knew how to make the most of the black market; who occasionally obtained dirt cheap air travel abroad on the back of the incompetence of the Popular Unity government and thanks to the close collaboration of a very catholic and understanding travel agent; who knew how to use their common sense by exchanging dollars on the black market not long after celebrating mass; who systematically refused to stand in line to purchase things like milk, bread, cooking oil, etc. because they had no time to lose, but who somehow managed to continue eating very well thanks to Divine Providence (in other words, their well-stocked friends in rich neighborhoods); who, while declaring themselves apolitical, clearly sided with the Chilean right...

If only you had behaved like these true revolutionaries of Christ, would you have to take refuge in other countries? Would you find yourself in some prison or the National Stadium and facing the charge of “worker-priest” (I personally know an American priest, Father René Guay, who was imprisoned in the National Stadium and who was officially charged for being a “worker-priest”)? Would you be tortured to death as happened to this young Salesian priest, Bernardo Poblete, in Iquique? Would you be persecuted? Could you not continue sleeping soundly and in peace every night instead of constantly worrying lest soldiers suddenly arrive to detain you?

But no: you abandoned your priestly vocation and went astray! You forgot that what really matters is not the socio-economic structure of a country but its soul, its idiosyncrasy, its supernatural origin! You forgot that all real revolutions occur not on the socio-economic level but in the depths of one’s interior

supernatural self. You forgot that what matters the most, what is sacred, is the historical-cultural identity of Chile, its idiosyncrasy, its noble and beautiful traditions, the 'chilenidad'.

What you, in your intellectual debility, failed to understand, even the US President Richard Nixon had enough international empathy to understand. How else could one explain that among all short-wave radio stations emitting in Chile in the days following the coup d'état, only Voice of America for Latin America faithfully reproduced the exact same official version of events than that being transmitted by the military junta, a version so distorted and ridiculous that even the Chilean right did not believe it? How else could one explain that even though Washington, since Allende's accession to power, had completely cut off all economic and humanitarian aid in Chile, it nevertheless maintained its military aid and then in 1972 even doubled it?¹⁰¹

What you did not understand, dear Chileans and priests who have gone astray, the right understood perfectly well. That is why it consistently practiced obstructionism in Congress systematically blocking the bills sponsored by the Popular Unity government. This is why the great Christian-inspired Democrat, Eduardo Frei, traveled so much abroad to encourage the United States and Western Europe to boycott the Chilean economy. That is why the wealthier sectors of Chile initiated massive work stoppages in October 1972 and then again in August 1973. That is why the Armed Forces attempted a first coup on 29 June and then carried out a successful coup in their 'providential' intervention of 11 September. That is why Father Hasbún made his historical TV address on 4 September... That is why Cardinal Silva offered the new military government the Catholic Church's "full and disinterested collaboration".

¹⁰¹ James Nelson Goodsell, *Playing with Fire in Chile*, in *The Progressive*, United States of America, March 1973. "At the very moment when the United States is cutting off all economic and humanitarian aid to Chileans, Washington hastened to intensify its relations with the Chilean Armed Forces by granting them increased military aid. In fact, military aid was doubled in 1972."

XII - A community of thought

As I was writing my very first reflections in my diary of 19 September 1973 – see the very beginning of this book – on the revolting attitude of the leadership of the Chilean Catholic Church regarding the brutal coup of 11 September, I was under the impression that it was unbelievably naive and primarily lacked courage. The subsequent analysis that I carried out has led me to conclude that this attitude flows, not from naiveté or lack of courage, but rather from the substantial ideological complicity existing between the Catholic Church and the military junta. From the multiplicity of documents and declarations there emerges between the two a fundamental unity of thought and a similar worldview.

Chile was struggling between two radically opposed camps: one whose vast majority of adepts were the poor and marginalized masses, the other the vast majority of which were the relatively well off and very wealthy; one advocating, through a profound transformation of the socio-economic structure, the establishment of a social and economic order in which the freedom and dignity of peasants and workers, who represent the vast majority of Chileans, would cease to be a mere abstract ideal and wishful thinking, and the other that strove, by all possible and impossible means, to prevent such a change from taking place, desperately clinging to a “noble and sacred past”, and, upon sensing that the point of no return was approaching, did not hesitate to use massive violence and repression to impose its “traditional” point of view and thus close the debate.

And how did the leadership of the Catholic Church react in the midst of such polarization? It dropped the somewhat progressive and tolerant stance that it had been adopting over the last few years in order to revert to an old ecclesial tradition: it clearly started siding, or, more exactly, revealed that it had never stopped siding with the haves and the powerful.

Of course the Catholic Church continues repeating almost obsessively that it has absolutely nothing to do with partisan

politics, that it transcends all political contingencies, and that it is only motivated by Christ, superior national interests, and the common good...

But the analysis of its own statements reveals that this is not the case and that, on the contrary, both of its feet – except for a couple toes – are firmly implanted in the ideological world of the right. This ideological collusion crystallizes around two fundamental concepts: first, that outside of which there can be no salvation, the ‘chilenidad’; and second, that which threatens this ‘chilenidad’, a foreign ideology.

The concept, “foreign ideology,” refers broadly to countries that have adopted a form of socialism: Cuba, the Soviet Union, and North Vietnam, for example, are considered “foreign powers”; and Chileans who belong to or support the Popular Unity government, as well as expatriates in Chile who sympathize with the latter, are deemed “foreigners”. More precisely, this concept refers to an ideology in the strong and negative sense of the word, and to an ideology branded with the unpardonable defect of being ‘foreign’. This ideology is seen as intrinsically perverse and immoral; propagating it is therefore viewed as an act of indoctrination, a type of conscientization that is nothing but subversive propaganda. Dogmatic and pseudo-scientific, impossible to implement properly, this doctrine only brings about, wherever it takes root, servitude and oppression, poverty and persecution, violence and dictatorship. This is normal, since it not only rests on atheism but also constitutes a kind of mystique or religion whose author, Karl Marx, is akin to Lucifer, the theologian of hatred (Bishop Valdés). Thus, even the holiest and best-intentioned politician who adopts it ends up being poisoned (M. Widow). This is what happened to Salvador Allende because undoubtedly he “was not being guided by the Holy Spirit”: pride, since Lucifer, “renders the action of God impossible” (Father Hasbún). It is not surprising that it distances priests from what constitutes the very essence of their priesthood, namely the ministry of the sacraments (Father Lopez); that it can lead people to abandon what constitutes the

very essence of Christian life, faith (Cardinal Silva); that it deprives people of their very humanity (M. Widow). Nor is it surprising that it compromises and even destroys that which constitutes the very soul of Chileans (Military junta, Cardinal Silva, Father Hasbún, etc.).

To correct this regrettable error (Bishop Vicuña, Cardinal Silva), it is legitimate to use force and arms once all other “democratic” means have been exhausted (Father Lira). Moreover, “the massive use of force and repression” constitutes, as everyone knows, the only way to extirpate it from a nation (Mr. Ibañez). The Church recognizes and serves this military government that Chileans have chosen (Cardinal Silva says he only collaborates with governments chosen by the people and he is collaborating with the junta).

The first blow having been given to correct this regrettable error, it is important not to stop there; it is necessary to extirpate this cancer from the very heart of all Chileans (Archbishop Tagle, Father Hasbún, Military junta). This purging will have to be carried out especially among the people most infected by this cancer and this yoke: the poorest and most marginalized sectors – workers and peasants – of Chile, as well as their leaders, those intellectuals who have shown an alarming intellectual weakness. Indeed, “The number of fools is infinite!” (Father Hasbún). All socialist political parties must be outlawed, as they were in Chile before 1958. Elections, of course, are important, but we must not forget that “the social order is based on a reality that does not depend on what minorities and even majorities want”.¹⁰² Moreover, elections are legitimate only in so far as “the physical and moral integrity and historical-cultural identity” of Chile are preserved.¹⁰³

Thanks to “the hand of God (that) has intervened to save us” (General Pinochet), “our true values (that) appear to me as the

¹⁰² Gonzalo Ibañez, *El Sentido de la Acción Militar*, in *Tizona*, no. 46 p. 23.

¹⁰³ *Idem*, p. 23. Mr. Ibañez is quoting the military junta’s Decree no. 1.

ever-present emanation of God's love for Chile", have been restored, values "whose profanation appears to me as a sacrilegious profanation" (Cardinal Silva).

As for the concept of "chilenidad", it refers globally to those countries that have adopted capitalism and to those Chileans who favor a free market economy. The United States is thus not considered a "foreign power", and Americans and Canadians are not generally considered foreigners in the strong sense of the term. The concept of chilenidad is not considered ideological and only refers to that which is concrete, factual, objective and scientific. It is perceived as the foundation and point of origin of all that is beautiful and good and that defines the very idiosyncrasy and soul of Chileans. Propagating it is therefore not considered an act of propaganda, indoctrination or conscientization, but simply an educational act par excellence. Democratic and pluralistic, easy to implement properly, this 'non-ideological' notion brings, wherever it takes root, freedom and happiness, respect and order, peace and prosperity. It is even of divine origin, its author, God the Father, the great theologian of love, supporting it at every moment with His active presence, thus providing it with a kind of insurance against all violence and persecution, poverty and exploitation, dictatorship and repression... The social order that it embodies and symbolizes participates in the eternal permanence and stability of its author, the Almighty. The chilenidad, this "sacred heritage" left by the Fathers of Chile to their terrestrial homeland is like the heritage that the Lord left to his heavenly home, the Church, (Cardinal Silva). Between the two, there exists a harmonious, constant, and powerful interflow. Thus, the high priests of the "chilenidad", that is to say, the select group known as the aristocracy ("naturally and traditionally endowed with intelligence and education") encourage and support one another so as to remain faithful to the vocation which God has entrusted to them, some having the duty to manage the affairs of the nation, and others having the duty to minister the sacraments and carry out works of mercy.

Those who protect and defend this sacred heritage by carrying out an armed uprising become heroes, martyrs,¹⁰⁴ soldiers and civilians who have “fallen for their country” (Cardinal Silva); those who were previously threatening it and are now attempting to defend themselves against a brutal and massive attack, become delinquents and extremists, suicidal and subversive groups, criminals and trouble-makers.¹⁰⁵ The latter constitute a threat to the very foundation of “democracy” because they are resisting the new government “that the people want”.

This community of thought that our analysis reveals is not perfect, however. The menacing foreign ideology having been dealt with, it is normal that the tensions that were already present before the coup between the two main political currents of the established order, namely the National Party and the Christian Democratic Party, would be resurfacing. And since following the coup it is the tendency of the extreme right – the National Party – that has been gaining ever more weight within the military junta, it is not too surprising to see Cardinal Silva, who in spite of himself clearly betrays his penchant for the Christian Democrats, getting himself into a certain amount of trouble.

“The sectors that are criticizing me,” asserts Cardinal Silva, “are not very diverse. I would catalog them in two: in Chile, they are people of the extreme right; and in Europe, they are people of the extreme left. In Chile I am being accused of leaning towards Marxism; in Europe I am being accused of leaning towards Nazism. In the face of such disparate judgments, I draw one conclusion: there is something in me and in my behavior that does not satisfy the extreme sectors of society. I believe that my behavior resembles that of Jesus Christ, who in turn was judged, criticized and condemned by the most violent and radicalized extremes of his times. (...) I do not know if it is a vanity on my part to affirm it, but I believe that if Jesus Christ were here today

¹⁰⁴ *Rinden homenaje a los mártires de Carabineros*, in la Tercera, 29 September 1973.

¹⁰⁵ Names attributed by the military junta to the resistance since the coup d'état.

he would be criticized by these same sectors.”¹⁰⁶

That the Christian Democratic Party would refrain from criticizing Cardinal Silva and, on the contrary, go out of its way to defend and promote him: nothing could be more normal. That the military junta and the conservative sectors it represents would criticize him because they find that the Church is not exuberantly and openly enough on their side: nothing could be more normal. That it would be left-wing people abroad, and not in Chile, who reproach him for leaning towards Nazism: here again, nothing could be more normal: in Chile the left is being tortured, pursued, thrown into concentration camps and overcrowded prisons, desperately trying to take refuge in embassies; in other words, it has been reduced to complete silence.

Indeed, Cardinal Silva is perhaps somewhat exaggerating by comparing himself to Jesus Christ. For the latter never indulged in hypocritical diplomacy: Cardinal Silva's declarations are bulging with such diplomacy. Jesus Christ did not hesitate to fulfill his mission in favor of the poor and oppressed; and the establishment then detained him, invented false testimonies against him, tortured him, ridiculed him and then crucified him: Cardinal Silva is still alive and he is actually kneeling beside the torturers and executioners, he is collaborating with them in all their works for the common good...

No. Though imperfect, the unity between the Catholic Church and the Chilean right is there, clear, undeniable and substantial: the president of the Episcopal Conference is a good Catholic; the military junta also declares itself very Catholic; Cardinal Silva affirms that he and the bishops do not represent any political current or group interest; the military junta makes the same claim; he says his sole motive is Chile's welfare and superior interests; the military junta makes the same assertion; he claims to be prioritizing the poorest and most marginalized; so does the

¹⁰⁶ *La Posición del Cardenal*, in *Ercilla*, no, 2,002, 12-18 December 1973, p. 12.

military junta. He says that the profanation of Chile's historical values – the *chilenidad* – by a foreign ideology “appears to me as a sacrilegious profanation”; the military junta is busy burning tons of books containing that ideology.

Cardinal Silva invites all Chileans to collaborate, like him and the bishops, with the new government; the junta is extremely grateful to him for this... The Catholic Church is more than ever engaged in works of charity, in the care of those seeking refuge and asylum, of the poor and oppressed, widows and orphans, those suffering from hunger and those being persecuted and tortured; the military junta offers its full and disinterested collaboration to the Church in the latter's role of Good Samaritan, daily ensuring that it does not lack work...

Santiago, Chile, January 1974



CARDINAL SILVA AND THE JUNTA WALKING OUT
OF CHURCH ON 18 SEPTEMBRE 1973

EPILOGUE 1974

XIII - Six months later

Several months have gone by since I completed the above document. Conscious of the very great socio-political weight of the Chilean Catholic Church and revolted at seeing it as an accomplice of a brutal reactionary and repressive military dictatorship, I had worked intensively in order to have it published as quickly as possible, in the hope that it could make a difference.

However, such a quick publication, in the end, was not possible. One can easily understand that getting a highly critical document out of Chile under conditions of brutal repression and severe censorship entails risks, difficulties and delays, not to mention the many challenges that come with clandestinity. And once the manuscript had finally reached Quebec, the summer holidays meant that Éditions du Jour, my publisher, would postpone publication until September.

With this major drawback, however, comes one important advantage. Today, with the hindsight provided by the last few months, it is possible to make a new assessment of the situation in order to ascertain to what extent the first analysis, carried out from day to day and in the full heat of ongoing events, remains accurate and relevant.

Note added in 2017

I received a cable at the end of July 1974 from my friend Dominique Boisvert in which I was informed that I had to return immediately to Montreal. “Les Éditions du Jour” had accepted to publish my manuscript in September of 1974, he explained to me, but considered that it would be too dangerous for me, given that there are just a handful of French Canadians in Santiago, to use a pseudonym and to remain in Chile. And, anyway, the publisher also felt that I would have to write an update.

But how can one quickly leave Chile, when the normal procedure requires a minimum of three months?

I decided to pretend that my elderly father was dying, and this allowed me to leave for Montreal two days later.

However, once I got to Montreal, I was in such a state of psychological shock that I could not complete the draft that I had prepared for the update. So I transmitted all the information to my friend Dominique and it was he, who, in less than 24 hours, finished writing the Epilogue 1974 for me.

My manuscript was ready at the beginning of January 1974.

I first tried to give it to a high-ranking member of the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, who was on an official visit in Santiago and was about to return to Montreal. After reflection, he refused, since he considered the operation too risky for his religious community.

On 11 February 1974, I gave the manuscript to the Canadian Embassy in Santiago, which had finally agreed to use its diplomatic pouch to transmit my manuscript to Dominique Boisvert, a close friend of mine in Montreal.

The following day I telephoned the embassy and was informed that the manuscript had left the same day.

However, the days went by and, more than a month later, I learned from Dominique that he had not yet received the manuscript.

Informed of the matter, the Embassy explained that there had been a mistake and that my manuscript would be sent out in the next few days.

It is only several years later, after watching Costa-Gavras's documentary film "Missing" (1982), that I started suspecting that what had happened at the Canadian embassy was perhaps not the result of a mere error. The film, based on the 1978 book by Thomas Hauser, tells the story of Charles Horman, an American of about my age, and who was in Chile, as I was, because he admired the ongoing revolution of the Popular Unity government. Soon after discovering mind-blowing evidence showing that the US was behind the coup, Charles was detained by the military, imprisoned in the National Stadium, and tortured to death. After a search that lasted more than one month, Joyce, Charles wife, and Horman's father discovered that Charles was dead.

When Joyce and her father-in-law left to return to the US, the American Embassy in Santiago requested to be paid for the return of Charles corpse to the US and promised it would arrive in "two or three days". It only arrived several weeks later, making an autopsy impossible.

In July 2014, Mary Armstrong, a Canadian film producer from Montreal, gave me digital copies of several of the confidential cables that Mr. Andrew Ross, Canadian ambassador in Chile at the time of the coup, sent to the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She had obtained these cables from the Canadian government, which, after several years, makes such confidential documents available to the public in its archives.

From these cables, I learned that Mr. Ross was following our – my then wife and me – movements in Santiago. For example, Mr. Ross sent the following cable to Ottawa in October 1973:

“Bastiens also have consistently seized upon every Canadian media representative coming to Chile since golpe – except Charpentier of CBC – including Jim Reed of CTV and Adams of Weekend Magazine. Latter currently their houseguest.

“It is unfortunate that there was no Canadian journalist of stature resident in Chile during Allende years, who might have offered objective appraisal of recent upheaval.

“As it is, Bastiens with virtually no personal experience here but apparently strong personal ideological predilections have been able to influence some coverage to own purposes.

“We have not yet seen Adams reports but it may be significant that he has not sought embassy assistance where we might have been helpful in obtaining interview with Frei, for example.”

From these cables, I also learned that Mr. Ross, who fully supported the coup, knew Cardinal Silva personally.

The long procrastination of the embassy in sending my manuscript to Quebec might thus not be a mere error.

XIV- Catholic Church distances itself from junta

In general, what happened in Chile after February 1974 shows that there is a growing rift between the Chilean Catholic Church and the military junta. Some observers, both in Chile and abroad, have rapidly interpreted this as a sign that the Church was starting to oppose the junta, though having until then legitimized it and accepted to collaborate with it.

What is one to make of all this?

One must first recall that such a rift was perfectly foreseeable and that it mirrors another equally predictable rift: that between the Christian Democratic Party and the junta. Indeed, following the brutal crushing of the Popular Unity government, made possible because of a strategic alliance between the Christian Democratic Party and the National Party, the latter party, as previously noted, had gradually succeeded in appropriating the main levers of power. And when, in February 1974, this shift towards the ultra right suddenly increased substantially, the reactions of the Christian Democratic Party were not long in coming.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ The first clashes occurred when the president of the Christian Democratic Party sent a letter to the military junta in which he criticized, among other things, "acts that constitute a denial of justice and a serious violation of human rights" (NC News Service, 25 March 1974).

La Prensa, a Christian Democratic daily, wanted to publish it but was told by Admiral Merino (a member of the junta) that although "in Chile there was complete freedom of the press", the junta could not allow the publication of opinions or declarations "that could blacken the image of the junta" (NC News Service, *idem*). Faced with such a situation, the administrators of La Prensa preferred to close the newspaper definitively.

The confrontation became more evident after the publication, on 10 March 1974, of a document titled "Social Development Policies of Government" published in the Mercurio (10 March 1974), the unofficial spokesperson of the junta. The document severely criticizes both Marxists and Christian Democrats by making them responsible for the "decadence" in which Chile had fallen in recent years. This

And then it was the Catholic Church's turn – it is known that the vast majority of bishops are Christian Democrats – to distance

decadence was engendered then fueled, points out the document, by "partisan and sectarian governments, as well as by the predominance of political doctrines of foreign origin that caused the loss of the sense of nationality and its objectives. (...) Chile's two major political groups, Marxism and Christian Democracy, were international in many ways".

These accusations, though declared two days later by the government spokesperson as "not reflecting the views of the junta", provoked violent reactions among the Christian Democrats. On the occasion of the ceremony commemorating the sixth month of the coup, former President Eduardo Frei sent a letter to General Pinochet explaining that he was refusing to participate in a ceremony presided over by "those who attack the government that I presided and my party" (NC News Service, 25 March 1974).

A month later, on 22 April, the junta imposed the closure of Radio Balmaceda, a radio station belonging to the Christian Democrats, for six days. The reason given: "the inclusion, in the programming of the station, of comments and editorials containing an obvious political and partisan slant". The junta was obviously referring to the comments, made by the advocate and ideologue of the Christian Democratic Party, Jaime Castillo Velasco, and in which he stated that the independence of the judiciary was seriously compromised in Chile. (NC News Service, 22 April 1974).

Subsequently, on 7 June 1974, two military censors were permanently assigned to Radio Balmaceda. Which caused the president of the Christian Democrats, Patricio Aylwin, to send a letter of complaint to the Interior Minister, General Oscar Bonilla. The latter simply replied that the arguments put forward by Mr. Aylwin were "unacceptable, both in form and substance" and stressed that he need not write to him again, even using terms appropriate for a party that would "address itself to the national government with respect". (Le Devoir, 18 July 1974).

Two days later the junta put an end to this ongoing exchange with the Christian Democratic Party, by making it clear that it was "prepared to adopt all necessary measures, however rigorous they may be, to ensure the full depoliticization of public life". An objective that fully represents, it declared, the will of "the vast majority of Chileans who, tired of demagoguery and petty party ambitions, view the depoliticization of public life as indispensable to foster a climate of work and progress". (Le Devoir, 20 July 1974).

itself from the junta.

Here are the main manifestations of this latter rift:

- Father Raúl Hasbún's removal from his position as director of Channel 13, of the Catholic University of Chile.
- Cardinal Silva's 13 April Easter homily in which he criticizes the junta's behavior without saying so in so many words, and announces that he has received a death threat.
- The 24 April Declaration of the Chilean Episcopal Conference, which openly criticizes the junta, highlighting the bishops' preoccupation with human rights violations, the reigning climate of insecurity and terror, arbitrary dismissals, etc.
- The 15 May publication, thanks to a leak to the Mexican newspaper Excelsior, of a secret report of the Peace Committee, which provides detailed information on the massive repression being imposed on Chileans since 11 September.

While one should obviously welcome as a fundamentally positive development this growing rift between the Catholic Church and one of the most brutal Latin American military dictatorships of the 20th century, one must nevertheless proceed to a closer analysis in order to understand its scope and limits.

A- Firing of Father Hasbún

Towards the end of March 1974, Father Hasbún was relieved of his duties by retired Admiral Jorge Swett, appointed by the junta as rector of the Catholic University following the coup.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ From the news being reported in the country at the time, all Chileans believed that Admiral Swett had been named by the junta as rector of the Catholic University of Chile. However, a confidential document of the Chilean Bishops' Conference, which I was able to obtain thanks to a leak only a few days before handing my manuscript over to the editor, and of which the reader will find extracts in Epilogue 1974, makes it clear that it is Cardinal Silva himself who had the last word in naming Admiral Swift as rector. The confidential

Reason given for the dismissal: Father Hasbún's "refusal to apply certain of the rector's instructions".

After losing his job as director of Channel 13, Father Hasbún was offered, by General Pinochet, an important diplomatic post in Spain.¹⁰⁹ He refused. So General Pinochet offered him another important job as director of DIRINCO (Department of Industry and Commerce).¹¹⁰ Once again, he not only turned it down but even took the liberty of circulating a letter in Santiago in which, commenting on his conflict with Admiral Swett, he declared: "I felt that I was in the presence of an arbitrary exercise of power. (...) I reaffirm that I could not in good conscience put the instructions I received into practice, thus becoming, albeit passively, an accomplice of an aberration. (...) Doing so would have meant submitting to power-hungry groups."¹¹¹

The above would seem to indicate a significant change of attitude in Father Hasbún¹¹² and even lead one to wonder whether he would be as fascist as his previous declarations would have suggested. However, the most likely interpretation one can give to this evolution is the following: either the junta, in firing Father Hasbún, deemed him not fascist enough, and/or it found his fascism to be not sufficiently docile and obedient. For if the junta was taking the risk of getting rid of a figure as popular in Chile as Father Hasbún, it was undoubtedly in order to replace him with someone even more in line with its ultraconservative orientation, and/or more docile and obedient than he was.

And this raises a very disturbing question for the Catholic

document states that Cardinal Silva accepted to name Admiral Swift, the military rector appointed by the junta, as head of the Catholic University of Chile, in order "to manifest the understanding to which it is possible to arrive."

¹⁰⁹ The Catholic Register, 11 May 1974.

¹¹⁰ El Mercurio, 18 May 1974.

¹¹¹ Noticias, 30 March 1974.

¹¹² Information illustrating this attitude can be found chapters 2 and 10 above.

Church. As previously noted several times, Channel 13 belongs to the Catholic University of Chile, a pontifical institution that directly depends on Cardinal Silva. And if one could rightly ask in the name of which gospel Cardinal Silva was able to tolerate, as head of Channel 13, as fascist a personality as Father Hasbún, who, shortly after the coup d'état, was named official correspondent in Chile of Vatican-Radio, one can only be even more puzzled and taken aback to see Cardinal Silva accepting Father Hasbún's replacement.

For if the dismissal of the latter may have provoked a "serious rift"¹¹³ in relations between the Church and the junta, what is the value of this rift if the Catholic Church ends up accepting as head of "its" Catholic TV station an individual who is either more reactionary than Father Hasbún was, and/or more docile and obedient to the military junta than he was?

B- Cardinal Silva's Easter Homily

On 13 April 1974 Cardinal Silva pronounces a very moving Easter homily in which he partly abandons his past hypocritical and ambiguous diplomacy and addresses to the military junta barely veiled reproaches.

Cardinal Silva starts by defining Christians as those who recognize the existence of a single God, creator and savior of all mankind, and who heed his commandment to love and respect one another. Then he pursues:¹¹⁴

"Is this commandment of God really being respected in Chile at the present time? Are we really behaving like the children of God? Are we treating our neighbors as our brothers? Are we abiding by Christ's commandment, 'do unto others, as you would have them do unto you'? Do we realize that we should love our neighbor as ourselves? Are we really accomplishing this? This is the question I am asking myself today.

¹¹³ Noticias, 30 March 1974

¹¹⁴ For the full text of Cardinal Silva's homily, see Appendix 5.

“Your Pastor, my dear children, really has immense doubts. He has great apprehension. It is not certain that we are faithful children of our Heavenly Father, that we love in the person of our brothers Christ the Lord who has died and who has risen for us. I have my doubts...

“Why? We have witnessed in the past year the vicissitudes of our history, the pains of our people, the struggles of our children. We have witnessed all this. We have gone through the pain of seeing that our people, our children, who are the children of God and the people of God, have not been able to understand, to respect, and to love one another; we have witnessed the birth among us of fratricidal hatreds.

“We have witnessed the struggle and death of our brothers. We have gone through the pain of seeing bloodshed and war between compatriots. We have tried and done everything possible to avoid this from happening... at least we think so. It is possible that we may have been somewhat guilty and not done everything that we should have.

“We have declared that violence only generates violence and that this is not the way to make a society fairer and better. We have told our people, our government, that one should not ignore basic human rights, that these are sacred, that no one should be violating them.

“We have repeated this message several times but our message was not heard. And that is why today we share the tears of our Father who witnesses the tearing apart of his family, his children fighting against each other, the death of some and the imprisonment and suffering of many others.”

This text, both in tone and content, certainly marks a new stage in the relations between the Church and the junta. Indeed, for the first time Cardinal Silva dares to publicly declare that the situation of human rights in Chile leaves to be desired. And though the critique, given the dramatic situation prevailing in Chile, remains moderate, it is obvious that Cardinal Silva's homily certainly displeased the junta and the sectors of Chilean

society staunchly supporting it.

While one cannot but welcome such an evolution, a careful analysis of this homily nevertheless reveals that once again Cardinal Silva is attempting to spare the junta by substantially diminishing, through the addition of certain diplomatic precautions, the impact of his criticism.

For example, instead of focusing his criticism directly on the coup and the military dictatorship itself, he prefers to extend it to the last twelve months. “We have witnessed *in the past year* the vicissitudes of our history, the pains of our people, the struggles of our children,” Cardinal Silva asserts. (Italics mine) In so doing he is placing on the same footing, for all intents and purposes, both the Allende regime and the fascist military junta, instead of focusing on the latter, which is directly responsible for the massive human rights abuses being perpetrated.

Moreover, after having exposed the sufferings and struggles of his beloved sons and after having denounced the lack of respect for human rights, Cardinal Silva adds:

“Your Bishop wants the suffering of his nation and of his children to come to an end. However, he also avoids exaggerating by suggesting that in Chile right now everything would be suffering, misery and tears. He knows that there are many of us, in fact the vast majority, who are not experiencing fear and are living in peace.”

If we are to believe the cardinal, “the struggle and death of our brothers”, “the pain of seeing bloodshed and war between compatriots”, “the violation of human rights”... all this would be affecting only a minority of Chileans, since, in his own words, “the vast majority are not experiencing fear and are living in peace”. Why, then, should Cardinal Silva be putting so much emphasis on efforts to ward off violence and to uphold human rights? And how must one understand the cardinal’s avowal, “We have repeated this message several times but our message was not heard”?

C- Cardinal Silva receives death threats

In the same homily, Cardinal Silva makes a spectacular and totally unexpected revelation:

“Would you believe, my dear children, that at this very moment your pastor, your bishop, is being told that his life is being threatened, and that he must therefore be constantly escorted for his protection? Would you believe that such a thing would be possible in this land of ours? I keep asking myself, what wrong have I done? I keep wondering, how is it possible that hatred among us would conceivably have reached such a level that an aberration like this would be possible? I cannot believe it; I just can’t bring myself to believing it. I cannot believe that someone would have the intention of harming a simple man, a mere nobody, but one who has accepted to carry on his shoulders the Cross of Christ, one whose head has been anointed by the grace of the Pontificate. I just can’t believe it...”

This stunning news obviously spread like fire throughout the world, automatically transforming Cardinal Silva into a virtual martyr, and thus overshadowing whatever complicity he may have had with the junta.

Not surprisingly, it was the junta itself that was informing Cardinal Silva that his life was being threatened. Taken aback by the fact that the cardinal would have chosen to immediately make public this alleged death threat, the junta rapidly tried to take back the initiative by announcing, on the very next day, that it had become cognizant, as of Thursday 11 April, “of a plan on the part of left-wing extremists to assassinate Cardinal Silva”.¹¹⁵

This maneuver, however, did not deceive anyone, especially abroad. On the one hand, “left-wing extremists” – the term commonly used by the junta for members of the MIR (Movement the Revolutionary Left) – would have absolutely nothing to gain and everything to lose by attacking Cardinal Silva, especially at the very moment when a rift was beginning

¹¹⁵ El Mercurio, 15 April 1974.

to appear between the Catholic Church and the military dictatorship. On the other hand, Miguel Enriquez, the head of the MIR, who is currently underground, immediately sent a letter to Cardinal Silva stating that the supposed death threat either “was nothing more than a huge publicity stunt on the part of the junta to neutralize the impact of your homily” and intimidate the forthcoming Episcopal Conference of Punta de Tralca, or it was a strategy to prepare public opinion for an attack that they themselves were contemplating. And Enriquez pursues, “we do not advocate individual terrorism, and even less have we ever – in the past, in the present or in the future – contemplated assassinating you.”¹¹⁶

So poor was the credibility the alleged plan of “left-wing extremists” to assassinate Cardinal Silva that on Monday, 15 April, the latter requested to no longer be escorted by the military, and this “at his own risk”.¹¹⁷

Although this undoubtedly totally fictitious “death threat” actually accentuated the rift between the Church and the junta,

¹¹⁶ For security reasons of security, one can understand that the source of this letter must be kept secret.

¹¹⁷ DIAL, D, 163, April 24, 1974. A news bulletin of the resistance even suggested that such a “personal guard” undoubtedly served much better the aims of the junta than the protection of the cardinal. For by permanently protecting Cardinal Silva, at the very moment when he was expressing his first public criticism of the junta, the latter was for all intents and purposes “sequestering” the cardinal so that it could watch his every move and keep a close eye on him. Not to mention the psychological pressure such a military escort could not fail to entail on the protected person!

Note added in 2017: In his autobiography – *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, 2 and 3, 1991 – Cardinal Silva confirms the veracity of the claims of the news bulletin of the resistance. He explains that it was General Manuel Contreras, the head of the DINA, who informed him that his life was being threatened. Contreras added, “There are a lot of crazy people out there.” Cardinal Silva asserts that he rejected Contreras’s offer of a 24 hours-a-day guard because he knew that such a guard would allow the DINA to follow every one of his moves. Quoted in Allen, [*From Private Diplomacy to Public Denunciation: The Catholic Church in Pinochet’s Chile*](#) p. 83.)

one can regret the fact that Cardinal Silva, by not publicly refuting the far-fetched interpretation provided by the military – a supposed plan by the MIR to assassinate him – allowed himself to be used by the propaganda machine of the junta.

D- Punta de Tralca declaration of Chilean bishops

A few days after Easter twenty-two Chilean bishops and the apostolic nuncio to Chile held a five-day meeting in Punta de Tralca. In a secluded residence protected 24 hours a day by thirty armed soldiers, they examined – in “freedom” and without “any foreign influence” – the existing situation in Chile and prepared a declaration that was issued on 24 April, on the occasion of the launching of the Holy Year whose theme was ‘reconciliation’.

This public declaration of the Episcopal Conference¹¹⁸ is of utmost importance since it represents the first collective position taken by the Chilean bishops after the coup. The only other declaration of the bishops was that of the Standing Committee of the Episcopate of 13 September 1973, two days after the coup.

Following the example of Cardinal Silva in his Easter homily, the Episcopal Conference expresses its “concern” in even stronger terms about the “climate of insecurity and fear”, the “economic situation”, “increased unemployment”, “arbitrary dismissals”, the “lack of participation in the reorientation of the education system”, the “lack of effective legal protection”, “arbitrary or excessively prolonged detentions”, “interrogations accompanied by physical cruelty”, etc.

The bishops assert:

“The basic condition for a peaceful coexistence is the full validity of the rule of law, in which the Constitution and the Law guarantee the rights of everyone. That is why we are interested in the rapid drafting of a new constitution. And that is why we consider it appropriate that the Government would have already published a Declaration of Principles. The explicitly Christian

¹¹⁸ For the full text of this declaration, see Appendix 6.

inspiration of the latter is worthy, and we believe that, despite certain shortcomings in the formulation of the Christian ideal for social and political life, this declaration constitutes a basis for guiding civic and social action in this emergency situation. May all, both government and citizens, faithfully adhere to its spirit in the pursuit of the common good. Obviously we are the first to desire that Christian principles be incorporated into the very constitution of our country after a discussion in which all citizens can participate actively and consciously, and by virtue of their free acceptance of such a constitution.

“We recall, and the Declaration of Principles itself acknowledges, that while it is lawful to disagree with this or any government, peace and the greater interests of our nation require that we collaborate with the present government in everything that clearly concerns the common good.

“We know very well that our government is well intentioned and full of goodwill. But, as Pastors, we see concrete obstacles to reconciliation among Chileans. Such situations can only be overcome by the unconditional respect of human rights formulated by the United Nations and by the Second Vatican Council, and which the Declaration of Principles itself has rightly described as “natural, and prior and superior to the State.” Respect for the dignity of man is not real unless such rights are respected.

“We are concerned, first and foremost, with a climate of insecurity and fear, the root of which we believe to be found in people denouncing others, false rumors, and lack of participation and information.

“We are also concerned about the social dimensions of the current economic situation, in particular increased unemployment and arbitrary dismissals or dismissals carried out for ideological reasons. We fear that, in order to speed up economic development, our economy is being structured in such a way that wage earners are being forced – they are basically not consulted – to bear the bulk of the burden.

“We are concerned that the education system is being radically revamped and this, without sufficient participation on the part of parents and local communities.

“We are concerned, in some cases, about the lack of effective legal safeguards for personal safety which result in arbitrary or excessively long detentions in which neither the persons concerned nor their family members know the specific charges that motivate them; about interrogations carried out under physical or moral duress; about the lack of legal defense; about the inequality of sentences being imposed in different places for the same accusation; about restrictions being imposed on one’s normal right of appeal.

“We understand that special circumstances may justify the temporary suspension of the exercise of certain civil rights. But some rights affect the very dignity of the human person, and they are absolute and inviolable. The Church must be the voice of all and especially of the voiceless.”¹¹⁹

Beyond a shadow of a doubt the above declaration represents the most daring and scathing public denunciation of the fascist and repressive behavior of the military junta appearing in Chile since the coup d'état. And, in the dramatic context of the time, it certainly required considerable courage.

However, one must regret that its impact was substantially weakened and neutralized. First, by the manner which was chosen to make it public. Second, by the type of vocabulary it used. Third, and more importantly, by the presentation, written by Cardinal Silva, and that preceded it.

As a matter of fact, Cardinal Silva’s presentation even goes so far as to blatantly contradict, in certain passages, the very meaning of the bishops’ declaration.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ This text corresponds to the end of the fourth part of the declaration, which deals with reconciliation.

¹²⁰ Undoubtedly Cardinal Silva was ‘forced’ to write this presentation so that the military junta would allow it to be made public. The

Indeed, once again on this occasion, the imperatives of episcopal diplomacy clearly prevailed over the demands of prophetic and evangelical denunciation. By various means, the Chilean episcopate, guided in this by Cardinal Silva, ends up rendering its public denunciation, though courageous, as harmless as possible for the military junta.

But how can one go about rendering such an apparently clear denunciation inoffensive?

First by hiding it like a needle in a haystack! Whenever one wants to give importance to news in a press conference, one organizes it so that it represents the sole item in the conference. In its press conference of 24 April, the Chilean Episcopate presented no fewer than six different documents! In addition to the text of the Declaration, the Bishops made public the Easter homily of Cardinal Silva, a text titled “Christian Reflection on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”, a communiqué announcing the names of those who had been chosen for the Executive Committee of the Holy Year in Chile, the Message sent by Pope Paul VI to the Episcopal Conference of Punta de Tralca, and, finally, a book of 239 pages which reproduces all the documents published by the Chilean Episcopate during the Allende years, that is, from 1970 to 1973.

The launching of this latter book at the press conference was not a coincidence. As noted earlier – see introduction – the conservative sectors of Chile had often criticized the Catholic Church during the Allende years for being too silent and tolerant with the Popular Unity government in its revolutionary projects. The purpose of the launching of the 239-page book, in the post-coup context and just as the Church was coming out publicly

following part of the presentation strongly suggests that this is indeed what happened: “Our government, informed of the content of this Declaration, have had the noble attitude of respecting our total freedom, which constitutes the best proof that the right to dissent exists in Chile”. According to reliable sources, Cardinal Silva had to hold two last minute meetings with General Pinochet before, after two consecutive delays, the latter granted this “noble attitude”.

with its first criticism of the military junta, was the following: making it ultra clear that though the bishops had some reproaches to make to the military government, it had also not spared the previous Allende government.

Not only did the press conference simultaneously make public six different documents, thus increasing the chances that the reporters would have more difficulty finding the needle in the haystack, but the reporters attending the press conference were told that they could not ask any questions.

A global strategy that seemed to have had its intended effect, at least for Chilean newspapers... For in the very long article titled “What Majority Thinks: Declaration of the Bishops” published in the *Mercurio* on the following day, 25 April, one can read all the various documents made public during the press conference, and, at the very end and discretely inserted in the internal pages, one finds, without comment, the declaration of the bishops.

This kind of publication strategy was not the only means used to weaken the impact of the bishops’ declaration. The type of vocabulary used, as well as the numerous passages favorable to the junta, also considerably weaken the impact of the episcopal declaration. A declaration that remains fairly moderate and timid when one bears in mind the context – thousands of men and women, in flesh and bones, who are still imprisoned or disappeared, who are unable to afford purchasing the bare minimum to feed their children, who are being tortured with ever more sophisticated forms of torture in dozens of centers throughout Chile, or who are forced to undergo mock trials in court...

Nowhere in the declaration, for example, is there any reference to “torture”. The term used to describe this barbaric practice is simply “physical and moral duress (*apremios*)”. Is this kind of linguistic scruple not considerably hypocritical and pharisaic in a country where torture is being massively practiced, as has been illustrated, beyond all doubt, by numerous testimonies originating from numerous sources?

Note added in 2017

The [Valech Report](#), published in 2004, recorded that according to the credible testimonies it had received more than 28,000 Chileans had been tortured during the military dictatorship, and this in some 1,200 enclosures under military or police control

Furthermore and even more importantly, the “concerns” over human rights abuses expressed by the bishops are preceded and followed, in the declaration, by several diplomatic ‘genuflections’ in favor of the junta, the very author of these massive human rights abuses! A few examples of such diplomatic ‘genuflections’, beginning with the classic phrase on “good intentions”:

“We know very well that our government is well intentioned and full of goodwill”... “We recall, and the Declaration of Principles itself acknowledges, that while it is lawful to disagree with this or any government, peace and the greater interests of our nation require that we collaborate with the present government in everything that clearly concerns the common good”.

Commenting on the Declaration of Principles issued by the junta, the bishops assert:

“The explicitly Christian inspiration of the Declaration of Principles is worthy, and we believe that, despite certain shortcomings in the formulation of the Christian ideal for social and political life, this declaration constitutes a basis for guiding civic and social action in this emergency situation.”

“We understand that special circumstances may justify the temporary suspension of the exercise of certain civil rights.”

Its impact thus considerably neutralized and weakened by the publication strategy adopted, the words used, and a few diplomatic ‘genuflections’ towards the junta, the bishops’ declaration is not yet harmless enough to be published. Cardinal Silva completes the process with a presentation of his own making, which not only further weakens its impact but also blatantly contradicts its main message.

This presentation, added at the last minute under the sole

authority of Cardinal Silva, is, and quite revealingly, the part of the bishops' declaration that was given a prominent place in the Chilean media and widely distributed throughout the country. It deserves to be quoted in full:

"1. Following the universal call of the Holy Father, made to all Christians, to celebrate a Holy Year of grace and forgiveness, whose main spiritual purpose is to promote Reconciliation among the people of the whole of Christendom, we, Bishops of Chile, have responded by proclaiming this Holy Year for our country.

"2. The present Declaration is therefore a call to all believers to proceed to authentic reconciliation: with God, with ourselves, and with our brothers.

"3. In drawing our attention to this theme, we Bishops have been able to take a closer look at the situation in our country and have expressed our concerns and our hopes. We do not want this part of our reflection to be considered political. Ours is a judgment of Pastors, who humbly expose to their children their concerns and exhort them to foster reconciliation: we do not make the claim that our judgment would be the only valid one. We respect those who disagree with us. With modesty we express our fears, our anxieties and our hopes.

"4. It is with complete freedom that the Episcopate is making this Declaration. It reflects the thinking of most of the Bishops of Chile, and it was formulated and elaborated without any foreign influence. We were completely free in both elaborating it and also in making it public. Our government, informed of the content of this Declaration, has had the noble attitude of respecting our freedom, which is the best proof of the right to dissent that exists in Chile, and of the prevalence of the rule of law in our country.

"5. Because we have had to touch upon issues that are sensitive, we would like to remind everyone, especially foreigners, that the situation in Chile is incomprehensible if one does not take into account the chaotic state and enormous exacerbation of passion

that existed during the previous government. And to recall that one cannot understand the current situation without taking into account the armed resistance that still exists today on the part of some politicians opposed to the present government: a resistance that seems totally pointless and immensely harmful to our country and to the numerous individuals who end up being the victims of uncontrolled political passions. Finally, we want to remind those abroad who read this Declaration, that it reflects a situation that only concerns Chileans. Chileans who are certain that, despite their differences, they will manage to solve their own problems; who do not want foreigners to meddle unduly in their affairs, not respecting their independence. And who ask you to trust that, as their history testifies, they will once again know how to build a society that is free and respectful of the rights of all.

“6. May God help us to set aside the passions that are troubling us, so that this Declaration may be received by all men of goodwill as an exhortation to achieve a social coexistence based on an ideal of justice, equilibrium and sound understanding.

Santiago, 24 April 1974”

It is very telling that Cardinal Silva, when referring to the criticisms addressed by the bishops to the junta, goes out of his way to make it clear that “this part of our reflection should not be considered political”.

Also noteworthy is the bluntness with which Cardinal Silva takes aim at foreigners. He reminds them “that the situation in Chile is incomprehensible if one does not take into account the chaotic state and enormous exacerbation of passion that existed during the previous government”,¹²¹ and also incomprehensible if one

¹²¹ This represents, once again, an effort to show that while the bishops are critical of the junta, they are also very critical of Allende. An effort also to attribute much of the responsibility of the current situation to “previous government”. This justification of what is happening now by what happened before reflects the current publicity campaign

does not take “into account the armed resistance that still exists today on the part of some politicians opposed to the present government”.¹²² Also and more importantly, he quite emphatically requests that foreigners keep their noses out of Chilean affairs: we “do not want foreigners to meddle unduly in (our) affairs, not respecting (our) independence” as these affairs “only concern Chileans”.¹²³

The above comments having being made, the bishops’ declaration now appears so innocuous that it merits the full respect of the junta. The latter adopts a “noble attitude”, so noble as a matter of fact that the bishops are granted full “freedom”, not only in elaborating their declaration but also in making it public, “which is the best proof of the right to dissent that exists in Chile, and of the prevalence of the rule of law in our country.”

Wow!

But this latter statement of Cardinal Silva blatantly contradicts the basic thrust of the declaration it was meant to present! Indeed, in their declaration the Chilean bishops expressed concern about “arbitrary dismissals or dismissals carried out for ideological reasons”, (...) “the lack of effective legal safeguards for personal safety which result in arbitrary or excessively long

carried out by the junta. People are repeatedly reminded to “bear in mind what preceded when criticizing the present” (Pedro Ewing, Secretary to the Government, June 13, 1974). Newspapers are full of ads referring to the “horrors” of Marxism. Such ads are obviously meant to deflect attention from the current horrors being committed.

¹²² Here Cardinal Silva seems to be making his own the oft-repeated claim of the junta: the “state of internal war” must be maintained (and the massive repression that goes with it) because of armed resistance. Is this not particularly bizarre in the preamble to a declaration that is intended to denounce this same repression?

¹²³ Cardinal Silva, by quite emphatically taking aim at foreigners, adopts the exact same approach as the junta and its supporters who disqualify in advance any criticism coming from abroad. That torture, summary executions, etc. existed in Chile was regularly dismissed as mere foreign communist propaganda. Moreover, Cardinal Silva shows, as he did in his homily of 18 September 1973, that he participates in the nationalist xenophobia of the Chilean right.

detentions in which neither the persons concerned nor their family members know the specific charges that motivate them; about interrogations carried out under physical or moral duress; about the lack of legal defense; about the inequality of sentences being imposed in different places for the same accusation; about restrictions being imposed on one's normal right of appeal".

Does this not represent outstanding proof "of the right to dissent that exists in Chile, and of the prevalence of the rule of law?"

Not satisfied with blatantly contradicting the very episcopal declaration that he is supposed to present, Cardinal Silva, in asserting this gross falsity, even contradicts himself. Eleven days earlier, in his Easter homily, he had asserted: "We have declared that violence only generates violence and that this is not the way to make a society fairer and better. We have told our people, our government, that one should not ignore basic human rights, that these are sacred, that no one should be violating them. We have repeated this message several times but our message was not heard."

Is it possible that "the right to dissent" and "the prevalence of the rule of law" would have returned so rapidly following Cardinal Silva's Easter admonition?

Finally, and this is the most troubling, Cardinal Silva's assertion blatantly contradicts reality itself – what is really going on in Chile. How could a cardinal – a primate of the Church and witness of Jesus Christ – ever dare to write and sign such a hypocritically false assertion, and this in the very midst of ongoing massive human rights abuses and in front of the whole world? How could he claim that the bishops were granted "complete freedom" when everyone knows that it took at least two meetings with General Pinochet and the last minute addition of this reactionary presentation so that the bishops' declaration could be made public? And why would the Chilean bishops be insisting so much on the need for the "unconditional respect for human rights formulated by the United Nations and by the Second Vatican Council", if Cardinal Silva has proof of "the

prevalence of the rule of law”?

After such a hypocritical and illogical presentation, how can one still give credibility to the bishops’ “courageous” declaration?

E-Excelsior Affair

On 15 May 1974 the Mexican daily Excelsior starts publishing a confidential report prepared in March by the Peace Committee. The report is signed by its director Julio Scherer.

In its seventy-eight pages and nine appendices, this confidential report describes the repression imposed by the military during the first six months following the coup d’état. It provides irrefutable proof of several cases it has itself documented.¹²⁴

Published thanks to a leak, this report represents spectacular news in Chile and immediately produces a new rift between the Church and the junta.

As mentioned earlier the Peace Committee was created to play the role of Good Samaritan in the post-coup context, more precisely to provide legal and material aid to dismissed workers and their families, help place refugees abroad, etc. It is attached to the Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Orthodox, and Pentecostal Churches, and also the Jewish Community. Formed in October 1973, it is co-chaired by Bishop Helmut Frenz, of the Lutheran Church, and Bishop Fernando Ariztia, of the Catholic Church.

The publication of this confidential report immediately revived the tensions that already existed between the Church and the fascist military. It provided overwhelming proof of the repression reigning throughout Chile following the coup, citing numerous documented cases of people being tortured using acid, cigarettes, electricity applied to various parts of the body,

¹²⁴ In my first book published in 1974, I had included as an appendix the full text of the first part of this report (review and analysis of the repression). However, given that today there is abundant information, available on the Internet, on the repression imposed by the military, I have chosen not to reproduce it.

especially the sexual organs (one, among the various types of torture that I heard about, was the introduction of a live mouse into a woman's vagina), rape, and people dying during interrogations. The report also provided a detailed analysis of the evolution of repression from the moment of the coup to early April 1974, noting, *inter alia*, that "people were constantly moving out of Chile", that many were being "detained without good reason and without knowing their place of detention", that the military "trials were moving ahead at a very slow pace", that torture was being used "as the usual method of conducting interrogations."

This report of the massive and brutal repression characterizing post-coup Chile, the most serious and most systematic documentation yet to have appeared in the international media, could not but have a tremendous impact. An impact made all the more powerful by the fact that, originating from a committee directly linked to the Churches, it enjoyed considerable credibility.

On the next day, 16 May, the Segunda headline read:

"Drop That Makes Glass Overflow: Scherer (Mexican), Ariztia (Bishop of Santiago) and Salas (Jesuit parish priest): CALOMNIES AGAINST CHILE!"

This spectacular leak, coined "The Excelsior Affair", immediately triggered a barrage of public criticism aimed at the Catholic Church, Cardinal Silva, the auxiliary Bishop of Santiago and co-chair of the Peace Committee, Bishop Ariztia, and the Peace Committee itself.

Such was the public outcry that Bishop Ariztia felt compelled to publish a communiqué on 16 May in which, though not referring to the contents of the report, he denied having transmitted any document or information whatsoever to the newspaper Excelsior.¹²⁵ Then he was summoned with Father Salas, secretary of the Peace Committee, to provide explanations to the

¹²⁵ DIAL, D 173, 19 June 1974.

Minister of Internal Affairs, General Bonilla, and this in the presence of reporters.¹²⁶

On 29 May the spectacular leak also led the Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church to officially announce that it was disassociating itself from the Peace Committee and to ask “its members to withdraw immediately from the Committee”.¹²⁷

While it is clear that the Excelsior Affair, through the incriminating information it contained and the important press campaign it triggered, deepened the rift between the military junta and the Catholic Church, it is dubitable that the latter was at the origin of this rift.

On the one hand, the Peace Committee is not, properly speaking, an organization of the churches, although it is attached to them. Founded primarily thanks to Bishop Ariztia’s own initiative, everything would seem to indicate that it does not act officially in the name of the Churches, as evidenced by the following communiqué of the Evangelical Lutheran Church: “The Evangelical Lutheran Church never officially participated in the work itself of the Committee. If some of the members of our Church have collaborated with it, they have done so only in a personal capacity and for clearly pastoral reasons”.¹²⁸

On the other hand, it is obvious that the publication of this confidential report on repression is entirely independent of the will of the Peace Committee and even more of the churches that sponsor it. The report was made public because of a leak.

In such a situation, the Chilean Catholic Church could have chosen to assume its prophetic and evangelical role and denounced the ongoing massive repression, even though such denunciation would have been triggered by an involuntary leak.

¹²⁶ El Mercurio, 18 May 1974.

¹²⁷ On the following day, the great majority of Lutheran pastors asserted in a public declaration that they “could not resign” and “declared that they would continue to cooperate with the Committee” (DIAL, D 173, 19 June 1974).

¹²⁸ DIAL, D 173, 19 June 1974.

Once the report had been made public, once the prophetic word had burst out, even if only inadvertently, into the public domain, the Peace Committee (and the Catholic Church) could have consciously chosen to assume its prophetic role and taken responsibility for the report that it had indeed prepared, though for confidential purposes. On the contrary the Committee, faithful to the path chosen by the Chilean Catholic Church since the coup d'état merely chose, to resort to the subterfuge of diplomacy and prioritized damage control.

Instead of owning up to the report prepared by his own committee Bishop Ariztia simply declared: "We have only seen fragments of the text published by *Excelsior*, and we believe we see in them personal assessments elaborated by Mr. Scherer from sources we do not know and which have been attributed to the Peace Committee"¹²⁹.

Once again the Catholic Church, instead of confronting and denouncing a fascist dictatorship, chose instead, through its silence and murky diplomacy, to remain the de facto accomplice of the pursuit of repression, and of the crushing of the followers of the Popular Unity government, the bulk of whom are the marginalized and exploited.

¹²⁹ DIAL, D 173, 19 June 1974.

XV- Conclusion

Many events have occurred since I completed my first manuscript in early January 1974. Events that may seem to call into question the main conclusion that I had drawn at that moment.¹³⁰

But has the Catholic Chilean Church really changed? Is it really siding with the poorest and most marginalized, as it spends its time proclaiming on all rooftops?

How much more blood must be shed, how many more Chileans must be imprisoned, disappeared, undergo massive and relentless torture and terror before it stops viewing the perpetrators of such atrocities as “well-intentioned” and “inspired by Christian values”? Before it finally decides to stop limiting itself to the mere role of Good Samaritan, before it ceases to very ‘apostolically’ soothe the wounds of the persecuted while continuing to dine and sleep with those causing such wounds?

One morning on Santa Monica Street in Santiago, a middle-aged worker knocks on the door of the main office of the Peace Committee. He then enters, introduces himself to the social worker who greets him, and, without further ado asserts:

“Yesterday I was reading about the Excelsior Affair in the newspapers. I decided to come because I would like to add my testimony to the many others you have documented in your report. I am one of the many tortured people you mention. I gave this matter considerable thought... and I decided to come anyway. You can make my case publicly known and reveal my name. I am ready to testify for all the others, especially those who, at this very moment, are going through what I have gone through. Yes... I know perfectly well what could happen to me if I testify, but I have decided to come anyway. The truth must be known.”

This worker, who had been a prisoner for several months and

¹³⁰ To see this conclusion, Chapter 12, A Community of Thought.

severely tortured before being released, did not even criticize the Catholic Church or the Peace Committee for having avoided to publicly assume responsibility for its confidential report. He had come to testify...

In defiance of all human logic, with nothing to gain and everything to lose, but because “The truth must be known...”

This, perhaps, is the real Church...

Sister Marie-Denise Dubois

(Note added in 2017)

The above extraordinary testimony of a middle-aged worker was reported to me two days after the event took place by an eyewitness who works for the Peace Committee, Sister Marie-Denise Dubois, a very impressive French Canadian nun from the Congregation of Notre-Dame, who was a missionary in Chile. When my book was first published in 1974, the footnote I inserted following the testimony read, “For obvious security reasons, the person who witnessed this event in the office of the Peace Committee must remain anonymous.” Sister Marie-Denise passed away in 2013. See my tribute in Le Devoir of 6 March 2013: [Libre opinion – Marie Denise Dubois, ou l’autre visage de l’Église](#)

XVI - Last minute information from whistleblower

Just as I was going to hand in my final and updated manuscript to my publisher, Les Éditions du jour, I received the visit of a whistleblower, a Canadian priest.¹³¹ He felt it was his duty, in conscience, to give me a copy of a document that had been classified as “confidential”.

This “confidential” document, whose authenticity has been verified, was sent at Christmas 1973 by the Chilean Conference of Catholic bishops to all Catholic bishops in the world. Its purpose, declare the authors of the document, is to counter the very distorted image of Chile that is circulating in the world because of the international media, including many Catholic newspapers.

This 59-page document allows the Chilean bishops to express their opinions and judgments on the situation in Chile since the advent of the Popular Unity government in September 1973 until Christmas 1973.

One can hardly overemphasize the importance of the fact that this document is confidential, and that it originates directly from the Chilean bishops themselves. For deprived of all usual diplomatic concerns, these representatives of Christ and his Church can now, in all openness, freedom and simplicity, speak their minds. They no longer have to talk between the lines. They

¹³¹ When I first published my book in 1974, I of course did not reveal the identity of the whistleblower. Since the latter has passed away, I feel I can break the secret. His name was Reverend Bill Smith, a remarkably committed priest, of the Scarborough Missions, who then worked as the Latin American Missions Director of the Canadian Episcopal Conference. During the last meal Bill and I shared, he spontaneously confided that he wanted to die “*revolted by the situation the poor have to suffer in Latin America and the rest of the Third World*”. Bill died one week later of a heart attack as he got off the plane in Brazil. He died, as he had wished, revolted.

¹³¹ The Episcopal Conference of a country is made up of all the Bishops of that country. In short, the leaders of the Catholic Church at the national level.

no longer have to make declarations that are vague and general, and that could mean one thing or another; they no longer have to swim constantly in an ocean of cautious and often ambiguous insinuations. They can let go of appearances and resort to straight talk.

Again, a leak has allowed the Chilean Church to reveal itself in all its truth.

A raw truth...

GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF THE EPISCOPAL
CONFERENCE OF CHILE

Ref. No. 15/74

PRESENTATION

Three months after the military coup (pronunciamiento) of 11 September 1973 in Chile, we are sending this information to all Episcopal Conferences to provide them with elements of judgment on the Chilean Hierarchy and the situation prevailing in our country.

The Permanent Committee of the Episcopate deems it necessary to take this step because the international press - including many Catholic organizations - has presented a version of the events in Chile that is so distorted that it has led public opinion to have a very deformed and false interpretation. We felt it important to offer, in some way, more thoughtful elements.

Such is the purpose of what follows.

Carlos Oviedo Cavada
Auxiliary Bishop of Concepción
Secretary General of the Episcopal Conference of Chile
Santiago, Chile, Christmas 1973.

A few highlights of the document

Commenting on the Armed Forces and National Police...

73 - This background reveals that the Chilean Armed Forces and National Police are not at all “coup-makers” or “fascists”, and that their constant tradition has been one of professionalism and non-involvement in the political contingencies of the country. The step that they took on 11 September represented a response to a national requirement and, on the part of the Armed Forces, a consequence of their obligation to guarantee order in Chile (Bold is my own).

Evaluating the years of the Popular Unity government...

76 - What ended in Chile on 11 September 11 1973? For many, for the anonymous followers of the Popular Unity government, it was the end of great hopes based on an emotional bond with the forces of the left, in which historically vast sectors of the population had placed their expectations. We say an emotional bond, because the reforms, the conquests for the people were certainly not successful. The “40 measures” of the Popular Unity’s electoral program, which outlined what would be done in favor of the popular classes, remained but a mere program. Surely not five of these measures were in fact implemented. Later, the opposition regularly recalled these measures to ridicule the Popular Unity government.

Explaining the meaning of the coup...

*79 - For the great majority of Chileans, 11 September 1973 meant the end of a nightmare, a country falling apart, the installation of demagoguery, the interference of foreign politicians (recall Fidel Castro's letter of 29 July 1973 to President Allende), violence in all its forms, the violent impoverishment of the nation and, above all, the implementation of Marxism in Chile. **All this ended thanks to an act of the Chilean Armed Forces and National Police, which represent a true moral reserve of the national soul.** For that majority, 11 September was a true liberation (Bold is mine).*

Bishops Avoid Mentioning US Intervention

Information added in 2017

That the Chilean bishops in their 59-page document would go out of their way to underline very clearly the foreign political intervention of the leader of the tiny nation of Cuba – Fidel Castro – while not even bothering to mention the very momentous and decisive foreign political intervention of the most powerful country in the world – the United States – is very troubling. For this latter intervention had, as it were, been pre-announced thanks to the 1972 publication of [The Secret Documents of the International Telephone and Telegraph \(ITT\)](#) by the American reporter Jack Anderson, documents obtained thanks to a leak. These documents, which were very well known in Chile (the Allende government printed and distributed numerous copies), show that the CIA was collaborating with ITT and some Chilean military to overthrow Salvador Allende in the weeks following his election in 1970.

However, the CIA, aware that the great popularity of the Popular Unity government could prevent the success of a coup, suggested postponing it. It would be preferable, then argued the CIA, to take the time to create the right conditions for a coup to be successful.

The plan suggested by the CIA was the following: first blacken, through news reports in both the Chilean and international press, the image of Allende; destabilize the Chilean economy – “make the economy scream” – by various means, including a financial blockade of Chile in international institutions; grant funding to El Mercurio, the most powerful conservative newspaper of Chile, and also to other media outlets of the opposition; and once the economy is destabilized create a climate of disorder and insecurity by acts of sabotage, such as dynamiting bridges, electric towers, etc. Once all this is accomplished and the conditions for a coup are ripe, proceed to overthrow the person perceived as responsible for the all the chaos, and receive the warm welcome of a people liberated from a nightmare.

That funding was actually granted by the US to El Mercurio is acknowledged in the report produced by the US Senate Committee, COVERT ACTION IN CHILE 1963-1973, <http://www.fas.org/irp/ops/policy/church-chile.htm>. The latter asserts that the “Group of 40” gave \$700,000.00 US to the newspaper El Mercurio on 9 September 1971 and another \$965,000.00 US on 11 April 1972. The report also mentions that the CIA, during the Allende years, had a substantial influence on the content of El Mercurio, and this even to the point of placing in it, often on a daily basis, CIA-inspired editorials.

Anyone interested in finding out just how scientific and long-term the US plan to overthrow the Popular Unity government was, should watch the impressive award-winning 139-minute documentary produced by Armand Mattelart: [La Spirale](#).

That Allende was fully aware of what was happening on 11 September appears, and this quite dramatically, in his last words to the nation before he died: “Foreign capital, imperialism, united with reactionaries in Chile, created the climate for the Armed Forces to break with their tradition”.

However, judging from the information they sent to all the bishops of the world, Chilean bishops see things very differently. For them, the coup carried out by the military and the national police represents the mere “response to a national requirement”, and, on the part of the Armed Forces, “a consequence of their obligation to guarantee order in Chile”. The Chilean bishops do not perceive the military and police as “coup-makers” or “fascists”. On the contrary, they view them as the “true moral reserve of the national soul”.

Thus, that the Catholic Church should help those who suffer, “by imitating the Good Samaritan who only devoted himself to helping the wounded man he found on the road, and who did not go looking for those who had mistreated him” (see No. 123 below) suddenly becomes very logical. For the military and police, who are inflicting the wounds, represent the “true moral reserve of the national soul”, a soul that was wounded and that they are now busy healing and saving.

Explaining why the Gospel calls on the Church to help those on both sides of the political spectrum, left and right...

*123 - The Church would like to do much more in favor of all those who suffer, **by imitating the Good Samaritan who only devoted himself to helping the wounded man he found on the road, and who did not go looking for those who had mistreated him.** But these actions of the Church in favor of the former militants of the Popular Unity government have triggered criticism and objections in the Catholic community itself. The hatred, violence and sectarianism that were unleashed during the Popular Unity government were so profound – ‘the soul of Chile is wounded’, once declared Cardinal Silva – that those who were dismissed or persecuted, or who have suffered under the Allende government, fail to understand that the Church would be involved in works of mercy for the former militants of the Popular Unity government. This has caused a great deal of misunderstanding among the Catholics themselves. (Bold is mine)*

Explaining why, because of the existence of a so-called Plan Z, the junta finds it necessary to prolong the state of war...¹³²

131 - Knowledge of the “Plan Z” is the first factor that explains why the state of war is being prolonged. Sectors of the left and the international press addicted to Marxism have tried to deny the existence of this Plan, which was a self-coup planned by the Popular Unity government. However, abundant information about this plan has been found and published. Even without such documentation, one must ask oneself why civilians had been armed by the Popular Unity government? What is one to make of the discovery that arms and weapons of Czech and Russian origin were being smuggled, and this in quantities sufficient to arm entire Infantry army divisions?¹³³ What is one to make of

¹³² Paragraphs 131, 162, and 163 did not appear in the first French edition of 1974.

¹³³ According to [Informe de la comisión nacional de verdad y reconciliación](#) (Report of the National Commission of Truth and

the fact that medicinal and clinical elements were being stockpiled, if not to prepare health centers for a forthcoming self-coup? One finds the precise answers to these questions in the documents illustrating the Plan Z, whose most known part was made public in the White Book (Libro Blanco) immediately after 11 September.

Plan Zeta

Gonzalo Vial Correa

(Retrieved on 6 November 2016)

On 18 September 1973, exactly one week after the coup, Julio Arroyo Kuhn, a journalist for the newspaper El Mercurio, titled his column of the day “Former Marxist government was preparing self-coup (autogolpe)”. Of course Kuhn was referring to the so-called “Plan Z”, the Allende government’s alleged plan to eliminate the opposition to his government. Though no documentation has ever been found to substantiate the existence of such a plan, the historian Gonzalo Vial, together with several other journalists and politicians who supported the coup d’état, claim to have seen such documentation. Vial said so in so many words when, as author of the White Book (Libro Blanco), he provided a description of the plan of the Popular Unity government to perpetuate itself in power. The plan, asserted Vial, would have been carried out on 19 September 1973 during the celebration of the National Day of the Army of Chile. On that occasion, President Allende would have invited the various heads of the Armed Forces for lunch in the Presidential Palace, La Moneda, at which time the waiters would have riddled them with bullets. Just twenty-four hours after the assassination, the “Democratic People’s Republic of Chile” would be established.

Reconciliation, 1996) (pp. 460-61, 620-24), between October 1973 and August 1977 the Chilean resistance killed no more than 9 soldiers and one policeman. Obviously, the bishops’ claim that massive amounts of arms and weapons were being smuggled into Chile by members of the Popular Unity government was a mere invention, as the entire Plan Z itself, used by the military junta to justify the massive repression it was carrying out.

Such was the plan, according to the documents allegedly found by historian Vial and others at the Central Bank and in the safe deposit box of Allende's minister, Daniel Vergara.

Though the CIA – see its declassified archives – asserts that Plan Z was nothing more than psychological warfare on the part of the Chilean Armed Forces to disrupt Marxism in Chile and to justify the persecution of the members of the Popular Unity government, a large sector of public opinion, including many of the Christian Democrat leaders of the day, initially strongly believed that Plan Z existed.

Extract from my diary in Chile of 15 March 1974

How very deep is our tendency to rationalize. To measure our commitment by the teaspoon, to lie to ourselves! If I am conservative, then I have a servant, I relax comfortably on my chesterfield, dine with fine foods and expensive wine, and I develop, often with the help of a culture, a religion and a feeling of nobility, a mental framework which makes me feel okay. If I am an armchair leftist, I often have a servant and behave exactly like the conservative. I am skilled in the art of justifying my behavior.

If I am obliged to smash the poor to preserve my “material and spiritual peace” I relieve my conscience by giving them a few goodies. If I am obliged to create massive unemployment for the poor, to imprison them, to submit them to torture, I seek the cooperation of my friends: lawyers, judges, reporters, doctors and priests.

Of reporters I ask but one thing: on the one hand, to deny that there are people being imprisoned, tortured and killed here in Chile; on the other, to insist on making very public all the human rights abuses taking place in those countries where another alien or foreign mental framework is predominant.

Of priests, I do not request political support — after all, religion has nothing to do with politics! — but only that they, on the one hand, manifest patriotism by accepting to celebrate nationally televised religious ceremonies in my presence, to dine with me around a table well garnished with fine food and prayers bursting

with noble and pure intentions, and, on the other hand, agree to set up charitable committees to tend to the physical and psychological wounds of those I am in the throes of torturing.

Of lawyers and judges, I merely request that they publicly acknowledge that according to their scientific expertise the rule of law has finally been restored in the country, that freedom has at long last returned to this land, that the constitution, not being sufficiently constitutional, is in need of revision.

Of doctors, I demand that they be very discreet when they treat patients who have been subjected to torture. No pictures, no testimonies.... Simply a patriotic silence.

At first, I claim that I had to smash the poor because their government was not respecting the constitution. Then, a bit later, once they are being smashed, I suddenly discover the existence of a Plan Z, and this plan somehow becomes the primary motive of my coup. Finally, I affirm that the coup was never really meant to restore respect for the existing constitution, since this constitution is basically erroneous (the recent speech, in Mexico, of the Junta's Foreign Affairs Minister, Admiral Ismael Huerta). (...)

Chilean magistrates ask forgiveness for their failings during Pinochet dictatorship

In hundreds of barracks and police stations, write Constable and Valenzuela, prisoners were beaten and tortured in an attempt to extract confessions related to the diabolical Plan Z.¹³⁴

In 1975 the Chief of the Supreme Court of Chile made a speech in which he noted that in Chile "the rule of law and civil rights are perfectly respected."¹³⁵ It was only in September 2013, 40 years after the coup, that the Chilean Magistrates' Association apologized for their failings during the Pinochet dictatorship.

¹³⁴ Constable, Pamela and Arturo Valenzuela, *A Nation of Enemies (Chile Under Pinochet)*, WW Norton & Company, New York, 1991, Paperback, p. 37

¹³⁵ Constable, Pamela and Arturo Valenzuela, *A Nation of Enemies (Chile Under Pinochet)*, WW Norton & Company, New York, 1991, Paperback, p. 117.

See: [Jueces chilenos piden perdón por sus “omisiones” en la dictadura de Pinochet](#), (Chilean Judges Ask Forgiveness for their ‘Omissions’ during Pinochet Dictatorship) Rodrigo Cea, El País, on 5 September 2013.

Justifying the fact that the military junta appointed military rectors in universities, and this even in Catholic Universities...

143 – Obviously, placing all universities under direct military control gives the government a bad image. Such a transcendental step must be understood in the context of the politicization of Chilean university life. Many departments had become centers of extremist activities and were real fiefs of sectors of the Popular Unity government or elements that prone violence (violentistas). At the headquarters of the University of Chile in Osorno one could constantly see the flag of the MIR waving.

*144 – In the case of the Catholic Universities the government adopted a different procedure, respecting the fact that these directly depend on the Vatican and the Episcopal Conference of Chile. **To show what understanding can be achieved, Cardinal Silva appointed Rector of the Catholic University of Chile, the Rector delegated by the government** (Bold in mine).*

Expressing their opinion on the suppression of all political activities in Chile...

148 - The political parties of the Popular Unity government were declared illegal and were dissolved. The activities of the other political parties have been suspended.

149 - This depoliticization was received very favorably. It is seen as necessary to overcome the excessive politicization in which Chile had fallen.

Explaining the inconveniences of censorship...

151 – The government is censoring the media. This censorship, after the second month, has been softening gradually. Public opinion, of course, is experiencing a void, accustomed as it was to previous political exacerbation. The censorship aims to

prohibit attacks or criticisms against the military junta.

Describing how Chileans warmly welcomed the military junta...

154 - Ordinary citizens have welcomed the military junta with gratitude, hope and confidence. Such welcome is shown by the cooperation the junta has obtained throughout Chile for the National Reconstruction Fund: a fund that helps finance the state's deficit. This cooperation has resulted in modest cash donations from individuals and grass roots organizations, to larger amounts provided by institutions and individuals with higher incomes. Several people have donated their gold rings and jewels. Most donors were ordinary citizens.

Describing the task of the Church in the new situation...

162 – Our country is facing a global challenge. It consists in assuring that the new order that is being constituted – the most significant changes are taking place right now – reflects Christian values and those of the social doctrine of the Catholic Church, especially since those in power declare themselves Christians.

Herein lies the great task of the Church: ensuring that the ongoing rupture with a Marxist-Leninist socialist society can truly lead to the establishment of a better, more fraternal and just society.

163 - And when undertaking this task, there are urgent matters that must be attended to immediately: working with youth. In previous years, especially during the Popular Unity government, youth mobilization played a prominent role, and this in a context that was fundamentally political. Today, since political activities are forbidden, youth are plunged into a void, one of action and one meaning. This context represents a golden opportunity for the Church to train young people and to prepare them for the future. This urgency is a pressing challenge for the Church; it is like the Hour of God for our youth. (Bold is mine)

The Chilean Church in all its nakedness..

Need one say more?

Montreal, 4 August 1974

EPILOGUE 2017

**The Chilean Church defended the persecuted...
but after supporting and justifying the coup**

On 4 September 1974, exactly one year after the impressive demonstration of one million Chileans in Santiago commemorating the third anniversary of the Popular Unity government electoral victory, I wrote the following in my diary:

“The Chilean resistance is starting to rebuild its morale and to organize. Carrying out actions of violence directed at those who are organizing the systematic and brutal repression of the Chilean masses is not the top priority at this moment. The urgent task is merely learning to live and to function in the underground. The second priority is slowly getting out of a state of shock and disarray. Developing an understanding of the meaning and origin of what is happening, an understanding without which it is impossible to react, and, eventually to revolt. No one envisions a short struggle. The most probable time frame appears five, ten or even fifteen years.”

The following day, on 5 September 1974, I announced during the book launch in Montreal of “Chili: le coup divin” that all royalties would be donated to the Chilean resistance. As soon as this announcement came to the attention of the Chilean ambassador in Ottawa, the latter immediately protested to the Canadian Government. According to José del Pozo, who recounts the fact in his book [*Les Chiliens au Québec*](#)¹³⁶ (Chileans in Quebec), the Canadian Government considered that it was not necessary to take action against me.

On 11 September 1974, exactly one year after the coup d'état, I mailed a copy of my book to Cardinal Silva Henríquez, using special delivery. On the inside of the book's cover I wrote, in my very rudimentary Spanish - in fact I wrote ‘trahido’ instead of ‘traicionado’ - but with considerable emotion, the following message:

¹³⁶ Les Éditions de Boréal, Montréal, 2009, p. 217

Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez

Mi mensaje a
Ustedes es muy sencillo.
Yo creo que Usted
personalmente y la mayoría
de los obispos chilenos
han traído no solamente
las palabras y el ejemplo
de Jesu Cristo pero también
las exigencias mínimas de
un amor de los pobres que
sea lucido y auténtico. Esto lo
digo con grande indignación, pero
sin odio

Ordo Barbieri
11 de Septiembre 1974
Montreal

English version of my letter

My message to you is very simple. I believe that you and the majority of Chilean Bishops have betrayed not only the words and example of Jesus Christ but also the minimal requirements of a love of the poor that is lucid and authentic. I am saying this with great indignation but without hatred.

Today, a full 43 years after the events, I acknowledge and admire enormously the positive and impressive role played by the Chilean Catholic Church during the Pinochet dictatorship by creating, with other churches, the

The Chilean Church defended the persecuted... but after supporting and justifying the coup

Peace Committee¹³⁷ and then, once the latter was closed by the military junta, by creating the Vicariate of Solidarity. These two organizations played a crucial role in providing material and legal aid to the persecuted and they represented a form of refuge where trade unions, community groups, and political organizations managed to gradually come back to life.

I also acknowledge and greatly admire the leadership and courage that Cardinal Silva eventually showed by openly confronting, in the name of evangelical values, the military junta in defense and protection of the victims of repression. Although providing refuge to members of the MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left) was tantamount to disobeying the military junta, Cardinal Silva did not hesitate to do so. As he points out in his Memoirs, “these fugitives, if captured, faced certain death ... the mandate of the Gospel is unequivocal.” (p. 77).

On 5 November 1975, while there was a barrage of criticism aimed at the Catholic Church in the junta-controlled media for giving shelter to “subversive

¹³⁷ As mentioned earlier, I personally collaborated with Marie-Denise Dubois, a Canadian missionary nun who worked for the Peace Committee. Marie-Denise died in Montreal on 12 March 2013. I wrote an article in homage of her in the newspaper *Le Devoir* on 6 March 2013: [Libre opinion – Marie Denise Dubois, ou l'autre visage de l'Église](#). A quote from this article: “I met Marie-Denise Dubois, a nun from the Sisters of Notre-Dame, in Chile following the Coup d'état that toppled Salvador Allende on September 11, 1973. She would visit us regularly in our small apartment in a popular neighborhood of Santiago in order to provide us with information on the victims of the Pinochet dictatorship: the names of the persons tortured, and of the disappeared, etc. As the military had imposed the absolute censorship of the media, she felt it was of vital importance that the world get to know what she was discovering day by day in her work for the Peace Committee, a committee set up by the Christian churches and the Jewish community. Despite her many health problems, she did not hesitate to put her own life in danger in order to help those who were being persecuted and living in terror.”

elements”, Cardinal Silva declared: “Different is the case of those who, inspired by the demands of the evangelical message, feel compelled in conscience to provide help to those whose life would be in danger, and this regardless of their political options.”¹³⁸

The very next day, the chief legal adviser to the military junta, Jaime Guzman, declared on television that Cardinal Silva was wrong: providing shelter to a fugitive is, he insisted, completely against the law.

And what was Cardinal Silva’s reaction? He publicly repeated that to give shelter to a fugitive, in circumstances where the latter could not receive access to justice, was the duty of every Christian: “It is not acceptable that even the most blameless man may be arbitrarily detained and simply disappear in some prison (...) Adopting any other attitude would, in practice, lead to the establishment in Chile of a kind of spontaneous justice, which starts by morally degrading the image of the accused, and almost inevitably ends up with their physical destruction”.¹³⁹

And Cardinal Silva went even further: he publicly threatened to excommunicate Jaime Guzman.

Two days later, the latter retracted.

In December 1975 the military junta demanded the closure of the Peace Committee. Upon learning that Cardinal Silva, though having accepted the closure, had immediately, in the following weeks, created a similar

¹³⁸ Declaración pública del Arzobispado de Santiago, *Mensaje*, diciembre 1975, p. 596 ; quoted in Michael Allen, [*From Private Diplomacy to Public Denunciation: The Catholic Church in Pinochet's Chile*](#), 2009, p. 124.

¹³⁹ Evangelio y Misericordia: Réplica a un comentarista de TV Nacional, *Mensaje*, diciembre 1975, p. 597. Quoted in Michael Allen, [*From Private Diplomacy to Public Denunciation: The Catholic Church in Pinochet's Chile*](#) p. 124.

The Chilean Church defended the persecuted... but after
supporting and justifying the coup

organization, the Vicariate of Solidarity, General
Pinochet was furious. He exclaimed:

“Mono porfiado! He’s like a stupid monkey!”

And he demanded to meet immediately with Cardinal
Silva.

“What is this about the Vicariate! You’re not going to tell
me that you’re going to refill the Church with
Communists!”

-- “General, I’m telling you that the Church cannot and
never will abandon the defense of human rights...”

“So we’re going to start all over again with the same
thing! It seems that the Church is simply refusing to
understand! What is this?

-- “You cannot prevent the Vicariate! And if you try to,
I’ll put the refugees under my own bed, if necessary!”¹⁴⁰

Despite the profound revolt that I felt when, a week after the
coup d’état, I was watching, in the midst of the ongoing massive
repression, the televised homily in which Cardinal Silva offered
to the military junta his “full and disinterested collaboration” – a
feeling that will be with me until my last breath, I must confess
that the immense courage he eventually manifested in
confronting the military dictatorship is truly impressive.

Not without good reason does one find tens of thousands of
Chileans, many of them of the left, attending Cardinal Silva’s
funeral in 1999, making him an emotional and grandiose
farewell, waving white handkerchiefs, dropping balloons and
covering the streets with flowers and confetti. And repeatedly
chanting, every time the Vicariate of Solidarity was mentioned
during the ceremony: “Raúl, amigo, el pueblo esta contigo!”
(Raúl, my friend, the people are with you!)

¹⁴⁰ Cavallo, Salazar, y Sepúlveda, *La historia oculta del
régimen militar : memoria de una época 1973—1988*, 170-171.

Not without good reason also was Cardinal Silva granted, in 1978, “the United Nations Human Rights Award” and, in 1987, the Peace Award of the United Nations Association in Spain. (...)

On the occasion of the centenary of Cardinal Silva’s birthday in 2007, the then President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, praised him and even suggested that his beatification cause should begin.¹⁴¹

In August 2016 my wife Danielle and I attended an exhibition in Montreal of works of art produced by Chileans during their imprisonment under the Pinochet dictatorship. Our guide was Luis Angulo, a Chilean who lives in Montreal and who himself was detained for months in the concentration camp of Chacabuco. Luis spoke, with simplicity but much emotion, of his experience in the concentration camp. He told us about the visit the prisoners of Chacabuco had one day received from Cardinal Silva and commented: “Without this man, the repression in Chile would have been much worse!”

A bit later in our conversation I happened to mention that I had published a very critical book of Cardinal Silva in 1974. Such was Luis’ admiration for Cardinal Silva that my comment fell on deaf ears.

Restoring the historical truth

Having recognized all the above – which is no small thing! – I nevertheless believe that it is important to avoid distorting history.

In his book *[Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ](#)*¹⁴² theology professor William T. Cavanaugh asserts that if the Chilean Catholic Church, in the first years of the coup, did not confront the military junta for the repression it was imposing, and in particular torture, it is mainly because the Chilean Church then adhered to a Maritainian ecclesiology

¹⁴¹ [Raúl Silva Henríquez](#), Wikipedia, Retrieved on 10 November 2016.

¹⁴² Wiley-Blackwell, 7 December 1998, 286 pp.

according to which a fundamental dualism existed between the church and the nation state. More precisely, “it was assumed that Chile was an organic whole; the State being responsible for Chilean bodies and the Church being responsible for Chilean souls.”¹⁴³ As the Church witnessed the profound and systematic repression being imposed by the State, that ecclesiology gradually changed. In the presence of tortured people, whose lives were totally destroyed, the Church discovered that this practice was threatening its very identity as the true body of Christ, as a community. Torture was not only destroying the lives of individuals but also, through its atomizing and terrorizing impact, the Christian community as such. “Where torture is an anti-liturgy for the realization of the state’s power on the body of others, Eucharist is the realization of Christ’s suffering and redemptive body in the body of his followers.”¹⁴⁴ Refusing to give refuge to a person who, if detained, would surely be tortured and possibly executed by the military, is equivalent to not giving refuge to Christ himself. It is equivalent to renouncing to being a Christian. And that remains true, regardless of the ideology of the person seeking refuge, whether Marxist and/or non-believer.

An example given by Cavanaugh to illustrate this fundamental point: one day two members of the MIR, who were being chased by the military, arrived at the door of a rectory in Santiago. A priest welcomed them but did not agree to give them shelter, forcing them to seek asylum elsewhere. That same night, while everyone was preparing to celebrate Mass, a seminarian who had witnessed the event, objected. We cannot celebrate the Eucharist because we have refused to give asylum to Christ. By refusing to give asylum to those two persons who knocked at our door a few hours ago, we basically refused communion. It is the body of Christ that we refused.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Cavanaugh, p. 15.

¹⁴⁴ Cavanaugh, p. 204.

¹⁴⁵ Cavanaugh, p. 206.

A second example pointed out by Cavanaugh: thanks to Vatican II, the Chilean Catholic Church has regained the true sense of community, one where there exists a spirit of fraternal solidarity and where priority is given to those who suffer. It imitates the sacrifice made by Christ for the salvation of all. It does so, for example, through the Vicariate of Solidarity that offers concrete services to those who are suffering: “through fraternal assistance committees, canteens for children, cooperatives for the unemployed, workshops for the disabled; through the care it provides for the poor, the unemployed, the oppressed, the voiceless.” When the Church carries out such works of charity it is evangelizing, but through deeds, not mere words.¹⁴⁶

In *From Private Diplomacy to Public Denunciation: The Catholic Church in Pinochet's Chile*, Eli Michael Allen asserts that Cavanaugh is wrong.¹⁴⁷ The numerous social works fulfilled by the Chilean Catholic Church before the coup illustrate that it already had an ecclesiology inspired by the spirit of Vatican II, and no longer adhered to a Maritainian dualistic ecclesiology. In his opinion, if the Chilean Catholic Church did not denounce the military junta in the early years of the coup it is essentially for practical reasons, which he refers to as “private diplomacy.” Denouncing repression in that period would only have had the effect of preventing all the humanitarian aid that the Church wanted to implement to assist the victims. Failure to welcome the military junta and to collaborate with it would have meant making it impossible to create the Peace Committee, which played a key and huge role in assisting the marginalized and persecuted. When conditions gradually changed and this to the extent that “private diplomacy” simply no longer worked, the Catholic Church did not hesitate to publicly denounce the repression, torture and state of terror imposed by the junta.

Allen locates this moment when “private diplomacy” entered a crisis stage in the publication by the Chilean press of a

¹⁴⁶ Cavanaugh, p. 110.

¹⁴⁷ Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts, Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut, April 2009, 171 pp.

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supposedly private – off the record – conversation that Bishop Carlos Camus Larenas, the secretary general of the Episcopal Conference of Chile, had with foreign journalists on 30 September 1975. In this conversation, Bishop Camus spoke openly and frankly of the tensions between the Catholic Church and the junta, referring to the suffering being endured by the followers of the Popular Unity government:

“Yes, they have had a harsh experience of suffering, yes they have seen that another person, in the same situation, has been detained, tortured and destroyed, etc. (...) To speak with a person who has been tortured, is to speak with someone who will remain destroyed for many years. I have known active leaders, very remarkable people, who are now very destroyed as human beings.”¹⁴⁸

Bishop Camus also admitted that certain people with Marxist ideas worked for the Peace Committee, argued that the unemployment rate was certainly higher than the official figure of 20% and commented that the aid granted by the wives of the generals to the poor was meritorious but merely palliative.

These statements, which were widely disseminated in the Chilean media, had a large impact and fueled a barrage of right-wing criticism of Bishop Camus, including the accusation that the Church was collaborating with subversives and thus threatening national security.

When, in an already explosive context, it was discovered that the Catholic Church was effectively harboring certain members of the MIR – one even took refuge in the Apostolic Nunciature – General Pinochet ordered, in December 1975, the closure of the Peace Committee.

While acquiescing to this decision, Cardinal Silva showed considerable courage and determination by founding, just a few

¹⁴⁸ Conversación de Obispo Camus con corresponsales extranjeros, *El Mercurio*, October 8, 1975, Quoted in Allen, *From Private Diplomacy to Public Denunciation...* p. 109.

weeks later, the Vicariate of Solidarity, an organization similar to what the Peace Committee had been, but with a stronger legal status, since it was a purely catholic and no longer ecumenical organization and this in a country whose leaders declared themselves Catholics.

The concession made by the Catholic Church? It promised to oblige all the employees of the Vicariate to renounce all violence.

On the fortieth anniversary of the Chilean coup Jean-Claude Ravet, as I noted at the beginning of this book, commented: “The horror could have been similar to what happened during the Argentinean dictatorship a few years later – 30 000 disappeared/dead between 1976 and 1983 – had it not been for the decision of the Church, which enjoyed a special status, to offer protection to the persecuted in the name of the Gospel, and ignoring the military diktat: mind your business and nothing will happen to you!”¹⁴⁹

And Rocío Montes, in an article published on 31 October 2016 in the Spanish daily El País – [Cuando la Iglesia chilena se enfrentó a la dictadura](#) (When the Chilean Church Confronted the Dictatorship) – asserts:

“Contrary to what happened in other Latin American countries like Argentina, ... in Chile the Catholic Church assumed a role of unrestricted defense of human rights from the very moment of the coup of 11 September 1973 and forcefully stood up to the regime of Augusto Pinochet.”

And in explaining the origin of this exemplary attitude of the Chilean Catholic Church in standing up to the junta, Montes cites the lawyer of the Vicariate of Solidarity, Carmen Hertz:

“Liberation Theology, the term coined by the Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutierrez, who defended the preferential

¹⁴⁹ [L'autre 11 septembre](#), Relations, n° 767, September 2013. (My translation from French)

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option for the poor, profoundly marked the Chilean Catholic Church of the 1960s and 1970s. The best grassroots leaders of the Church adhered to the Popular Unity movement during the government of Salvador Allende and the number of worker-priests mushroomed. These influences were decisive immediately after the coup, when the Church, through the creation of the Peace Committee and the Vicariate of Solidarity, institutionalized the defense of human rights.”

Criticism of Ravet and Montes. Reality is much more nuanced than that presented by Ravet and Montes. The latter clearly suggest that the Chilean Catholic Church would have had the courage, in the name of the Gospel in the case of Ravet, and in the name of liberation theology in the case of Montes, to stand up to the military junta and this immediately following the coup of 11 September 1973.

As I have shown, it is completely false to assert that the Chilean Church “assumed a role of unrestricted defense of human rights from the very moment of the coup of 11 September 1973 **and forcefully stood up to the regime of Augusto Pinochet**” (Bold is mine). On the contrary, the Chilean Catholic Church played a key role in the success of the coup, first of all through its ideological contribution; secondly by immediately legitimizing the dictatorship one week after the coup by appearing along side the junta during the celebration of the 18th of September, a celebration that was broadcast on TV throughout the country; and thirdly by going out of its way and even traveling abroad to propagate a positive image of the junta at the Vatican and on an international level. Like the military that carried out the coup and the conservative sectors of Chile that supported them, the leaders of the Catholic Church wanted to restore the wounded soul of Chile – wounded by the foreign ideology inspiring the Popular Unity government; they wanted to allow Chile to recover its identity, its *chilenidad*, and they viewed the coup as an act of moral courage to save Chile from the Marxist ‘cancer’.

It is also completely false to suggest that the Chilean Church would have stood up to the junta because it sympathized with, or was strongly influenced by, liberation theology. On the contrary, the hierarchy of the Church was opposed to the followers of Liberation theology, grouped in Chile in a movement known as “Christians for Socialism”, for the same reasons that it opposed the Popular Unity government. And it should be noted that although the bishops had already formally forbidden, as early as 11 April 1973 (session XVI, n.139), that priests and members of religious communities belong to that movement – the pastoral norm stated: “No priest and/or member of a religious community can belong to Christians for Socialism” – it is only after the coup, on 16 October 1973,¹⁵⁰ that they made that prohibition public in [Fe Cristiana y Actuación Política](#) (Christian Faith and Political Activities).¹⁵¹ And they did so with the following explanation:

“Behind these tendencies one finds (se adivina) the conscious or unconscious desire to manipulate the Church and the Gospel, and this in favor of precise political interests, using the term Christianity as a propaganda tool for certain temporal choices” (No 7, p.4).

¹⁵⁰ Paradoxically it was at the very same time that it made public its prohibition to priests and members of religious communities to belong to the movement of liberation theology that the Chilean Catholic Church, in collaboration with other churches, would create the Peace Committee (later transformed into the Vicariate of the Solidarity), a committee that would help the countless victims of the dictatorship. The Peace Committee was created on 4 October 1973 through Cardinal Silva’s Decree No. 158-73 and [Fe Cristiana y Actuación Política](#) was published on 16 October 1973. It is thus very surprising that Carmen Hertz, the lawyer of the Vicariate of Solidarity, would argue in 2016 that the influences of liberation theology “were decisive immediately after the coup, when the Church, through the creation of the Peace Committee and the Vicariate of Solidarity, institutionalized the defense of human rights!”

¹⁵¹
http://www.archivochile.com/Poder_Dominante/iglesia/PDglesia0011.pdf, Retrieved 26 August 2017.

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The hierarchy wanted to restore the true priesthood, that is, to invite priests whose sacerdotal soul was wounded – those who lived in poor neighborhoods, acted as worker-priests and sympathized with the Popular Unity government – to return to their vocation.

It viewed the coup and the immense “void of action...and meaning” created in the young by the total prohibition of all “political activities” as a “golden opportunity”, as “the Hour of God for our youth”; an opportunity “to train young people and to prepare them for the future” (Confidential document sent to all bishops of the world in December 1973)...

And to train them according to what values? To train them according to the “sacred values” of the Chilean soul, the “sacred heritage” of the Fatherland, the *chilenidad*. “Our true values appear to me as the ever-present emanation of God’s love for Chile and their profanation appears to me as a sacrilegious profanation”, asserted Cardinal Silva, in the presence of the military junta on 18 September 1973, one week after the coup.

Quite obviously the military junta, by carrying out a coup d’état in order to restore these sacred values – even using brutal violence and massive repression – are totally devoid of any “conscious or unconscious desire to manipulate the Church and the Gospel, and this in favor of precise political interests, using the term Christianity as a propaganda tool for certain temporal choices”...

The Church’s commitment to assisting the persecuted did not prevent or diminish, even after two years of brutal and massive repression – it is a known fact that the worst repression occurred in this time period – the deep gratitude of the Church to the military junta for services rendered. In the document [*Evangelio y Paz*](#) (Gospel and Peace) issued by the Standing Committee of the Episcopal Conference of Chile on 5 September 1975, the bishops declare:

“We recognize the service rendered to the country by the Armed Forces by liberating it from a Marxist dictatorship that seemed

inevitable and irreversible. A dictatorship that would have been imposed against the majority of the country and would then have crushed that majority. (...) That these fears were not a thing of the past is demonstrated by, among others, the current situation in Portugal, and what one suspects is happening in South Vietnam or Cambodia. It is evident that the vast majority of Chileans never did want to and still don't want to follow the destiny of those countries that are subject to totalitarian Marxist governments. In this sense we believe it is fair to recognize that the Armed Forces, on 11 September 1973, responded to the desire of the vast majority of Chileans, and, in so doing, got rid of an immense obstacle to peace.”¹⁵²

As I have stressed throughout the book, this gratitude emanates from a community of thought between the Catholic Church and the military junta. As Father Hasbún did in his televised speech to the nation on 4 September 1973, and as the military junta also did at the time of the coup, the Chilean bishops treat as equivalent, in their document *Evangelio y Paz*, the terms violence, hatred, Marxism, socialism, class struggle, atheism, and amorality. And they do so with incredible ease and devoid of the most elementary scientific spirit:

“Marxist atheism derives in effect from an ethical opportunism that boils down to the motto: the end justifies the means. (...) It is certainly an obstacle, a tremendous obstacle to peace. Marxism in its hardness, in the use it makes of lies and slander, to discredit and destroy the adversary, in the power that it gives itself over life and death, over the happiness and pain of men, goes directly against the Gospel.”¹⁵³

¹⁵² *Evangelio y Paz*, III, 1.

¹⁵³ *Evangelio y Paz*, II, 7, 6. Quoted in [A Contracorriente](#), p. 55. This simplistic reduction of Marxism to atheism disqualifies all analysis and radical criticism of society that would attempt to replace the established capitalist order. On page 152 of this same source, one finds the following very relevant comment: “It is interesting to note that the reduction of Marxism to atheism represents an attempt to disqualify all social movements that would use a radical analysis in order to replace the established capitalist order. Identifying atheism with social

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In his homily during the Te Deum of 18 September 1975,
Cardinal Silva thanks General Pinochet and offers him his
“collaboration”:

“The President of the Republic has said that he must defend
those who are the weakest and who are voiceless. We thank you
for your public testimony, which is of the highest moral value
and the most genuine Christian spirit. And we offer you, publicly
also, in this struggle against misery and for justice, the loyal
cooperation of those who recognize, in every face expressing
pain and humiliation, the features of Christ, our judge.”

In celebrating the second anniversary of the Peace Committee in
October 1975, Cardinal Silva asserts:

“We would like to thank, on this occasion, all those who make
possible the existence and great impact (fecundidad) of the
Committee. **Above all the authorities of the Nation.** We know
the difficulties that accompany the exercise of mercy, when its
beneficiaries have had or still have an ideological option
different to the prevailing one” (Bold is mine).¹⁵⁴

To thank “above all” those who are directly responsible for the
immense repression affecting thousands of victims who later
show up at the committee for assistance??

Such an apparently blatant logical inconsistency suddenly
becomes logical, but only under one condition: that one
interprets the coup d’état as an act of liberation from a foreign
and Marxist ideology that was poisoning the soul of multitudes

criticism is a non-rigorous juxtaposition of many different popular
social liberation movements. It also opposes social and religious
liberation.” And later, on page 188, commenting on the criticisms that
the bishops make in *Evangelio y Paz* to denounce the abuses of
capitalism: “The critique and denunciation of the abuses of capitalism
appear as a fundamentally preventive measure. Capitalism is not
condemned in itself, but only to the extent that its excesses can make
possible a resurgence of Marxism. The critique aims to reform and
improve capitalism, not to criticize it at its very root.”

¹⁵⁴ [A Contracorriente](#) p. 96.

of Chileans, transforming them into “internal enemies”; that one interprets repression as an evil, one necessary however to eliminate a much greater evil not wanted by the majority of Chileans.

As Pablo Fontaine points out in *Unidad, Profecía y Evangelización en la Iglesia Chilena* (Unity, Prophecy and Evangelization in the Chilean Church - July 1976), a document that seeks to explain why the bishops were so reluctant to criticize the military junta:

“The Church does not want to be responsible for our country falling one day into the orbit of Russia... It believes that a communist dictatorship would be harsher than the one we are presently experiencing and would leave less room for preaching the Gospel.”¹⁵⁵

Although the subject of human rights in Chile was the main attraction of the sixth General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) organized in Chile in June 1976, the Chilean Bishops, who had in their possession “the most extensive reports prepared by their committees on the drastic situation of human rights in Chile, chose to remain completely silent, and even avoided using this opportunity to make a public declaration on the case of the lawyer Hermán Montealegre”. The latter, who worked for the Vicariate of Solidarity, had been imprisoned “days before the beginning of the defense of 20 peasants being tried by a War Tribunal in the city of Valdivia.”¹⁵⁶ Two weeks before the OAS assembly, “a vast operation was carried out against leaders and militants of the outlawed Communist Party. In the raid fell Victor Diaz, the deputy secretary general of that organization, second man in importance, after Luis Corvalán, of the Chilean communist

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in [From Private Diplomacy to Public Denunciation: The Catholic Church in Pinochet's Chile](#) p. 91. According to Allen the document written by Fontaine can be found in the Vicariate of Solidarity, in Santiago.

¹⁵⁶ [A Contracorriente](#), p. 125.

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hierarchy, the former senator currently confined in the concentration camp of Tres Álamos.”¹⁵⁷

The coup d'état: liberation, not a violent act

Violence exercised in the name of the status quo is not violence, it is only a last recourse, regrettable because of its consequences, but legitimate because of its purpose. Thus ... the Chilean bishops, by legitimizing the coup in the document Gospel and Peace, are basically declaring non-violent all sectors that supported it and made it possible.

[A Contracorriente](#) p. 237

In April 1977, the Standing Committee of the Chilean Episcopate issues a statement “in which it strongly criticizes the regime; intercedes for the disappeared citizens and the recently dissolved Christian-Democratic Party; requests that freedom of expression be restored; and criticizes the economic policies being implemented because of their impact on the standard of living of the masses.”

Such a declaration, quite obviously, substantially diminishes the legitimacy of the dictatorship. However the Chilean Catholic Church, once again faithful to its murky diplomacy, takes a step forward and then one step back: “A few days later, and this after receiving criticism from the government, the Secretary of the Standing Committee ‘clarifies’ that the declaration was not intended to criticize the government, but simply to affirm the principles of Christian humanism and the social doctrine of the Church... Pinochet accepts the apology.”¹⁵⁸

Incredible evangelical and prophetic courage!

A similar ambiguity emerges, as mentioned at the very beginning of this book, in the behavior of Cardinal Silva, who in 1978 accepts to give the kiss of peace to the four members of the

¹⁵⁷ Comienza la VI Asamblea de la OEA en Chile, Camilo Roca, *El País*, 5 June 1976.

¹⁵⁸ [A Contracorriente](#) p. 174 y *El Mercurio*, “Intercambio de cartas entre S.E. y el Episcopado”, 22 April 1977.

military junta – those directly responsible for the ongoing repression and torture – during the funeral celebrated in the Cathedral of Santiago in memory of the then recently deceased Pope Paul VI, but in 1980 rejects the request of Chilean popular leaders of Santiago to say a mass in the same cathedral in honor of the recently executed Archbishop Oscar Romero, the “courageous Salvadoran bishop who had received death threats, and who every Sunday in his cathedral and on the Catholic radio station constantly denounced the horrors of all kinds - executions, tortures, etc. – committed in his country, this man did not deserve a mass? (...) Cardinal Silva, obviously annoyed, flatly refused their proposal, arguing that Romero was simply an ingenuous man who had been manipulated by the left.”¹⁵⁹

The leaders of the Chilean Catholic Church were fully aware that the massive repression being carried out against vast sectors of Chilean society included torture. They knew this not only through the testimony of numerous victims who were constantly knocking at the door of the Peace Committee, but also because General Augusto Pinochet himself had told them so.

In her book *Audacity to Believe*, the British doctor [Sheila Cassidy](#) who treated an injured MIR militant – for which she was imprisoned and tortured – describes events that Bishop Frenz of the Lutheran Church once told her about. One day Bishop Frenz and Bishop Ariztía – the co-directors of the Peace Committee – were meeting privately with General Pinochet when the latter asserted:

“You are pastors and priests and you have to think and act in that way. If I were in your position, I would be acting exactly like you. But bear in mind that I’m the President of Chile. In this capacity I must admit that security is more important than human rights. Miristas (members of the MIR) have to be tortured

¹⁵⁹ Claude Lacaille, *En mission dans la tourmente des dictatures 1965-1986. Haïti, Équateur, Chili*, Novalis, Montréal, 2014, p. 115.

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because they are crazy and sick. Without torture, they do not talk
(cantan)”.¹⁶⁰

Criticism of Allen and Cavanaugh. Although the arguments of Cavanaugh and Allen certainly contain elements of truth, they omit, in my opinion, fundamental aspects.

One need but recall the striking community of thought existing between the leaders of the Chilean Catholic Church and the military junta to understand that Allen, by insisting solely on private diplomacy to explain the public silence of the Church in the face of the brutal and systematic repression being imposed on the followers of the Popular Unity government in the early years of the dictatorship, is certainly omitting the most fundamental factor.

I do not want to deny, however, that the Church's role in assisting the persecuted was essential and truly impressive. And there are even statements that seem to suggest that the Church itself adhered to the thesis set forth by Allen. An example of such a statement is paragraph 160 of the Confidential Report sent by the Episcopal Conference of Chile to all the bishops of the world in December 1973:

“In this action, the Episcopate has made an option, considering the effectiveness of its steps. It has avoided, and will try to avoid, making public statements. Experience teaches that such statements are aimed at the public instead of helping those who are directly involved in cases that need to be addressed; they even complicate things and harden conflicts. For this reason, the Episcopate has acted directly with the authorities, both at the provincial and national level of Chile. At the national level the government has named a few individuals who deal directly with the hierarchy. While we have not managed to obtain everything we requested, the situation has improved and will continue to improve even more. The effectiveness of these steps is

¹⁶⁰ Collins, London, First Edition, 1977 and second in 1980, p. 157-8.

acknowledged by those who have been suffering these situations and their families; they have expressed their gratitude to the Church.”

The weakness of Cavanaugh’s argument stems from the fact that he does not understand that the Chilean military intervention of 11 September 1973 was, in the minds of those who defended and justified it, a divine coup. In this sense, the military were acting not only, and not even primarily, to restore order, but rather to save the soul of Chile, in order to save Chile’s fundamental and traditional values that were being threatened by a foreign ideology. As such traditional values – *la chilenidad* – emanate directly, according to Cardinal Silva, from the love of God, it is not surprising that General Pinochet, in his address to the nation on 11 October 1973, would have referred to the coup as the day that the “hand of God has intervened to save us”.

It is therefore false to argue that the silence of the Church in the face of repression, which was particularly brutal and massive in the early years of the dictatorship, has its origin mainly in the Maritainian ecclesiological conception of the Chilean bishops. Approaching the matter in this way shows that one fails to acknowledge a fundamental and crucial fact: the leaders of the Catholic Church were very relieved and thankful that the military junta had eliminated the ideology of the Popular Unity government, an ideology that was threatening the “sacred heritage” of the nation, its very identity, the *chilenidad*.

Approaching the matter in this way also shows that one ignores the very profound truth contained in the last meditation of Father Juan Alsina a few hours before his detention and execution:

“The word was becoming flesh” ... and that we just could not stand any longer ... it’s the scandal of the cross. One we have never tolerated. ‘We will respect all ideologies..’ as long as these do not have the audacity to become flesh and translate into reality; if they dare do so, we will reduce them to smithereens and crush them.”

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The military intervention was a spiritual act: “All this ended thanks to an act of the Chilean Armed Forces and National Police, which represent a true moral reserve of the national soul” (Confidential Report of the Episcopal Conference of Chile to all bishops of the world, December 1973). One must bear in mind that the [Virgen del Carmen](#) (Virgin of Carmen) is invoked as Queen and Mother of Chile, and the Patroness and General of the Chilean Armed Forces!

That the military junta chose to name military rectors at the head of all the universities of Chile – including the Catholic University of Chile, a pontifical institution that depends directly on Cardinal Silva and the Vatican – was fundamentally a “spiritual” act. When the soul of several thousands of students and teachers is sick and wounded, one must take the necessary measures to purify and cleanse it! Here it is clear that, contrary to what Cavanaugh asserts, there is no Maritainian ecclesiological dualism involved, “the state being responsible for Chilean bodies and the Church being responsible for Chilean souls!” Both State – the military junta – and Church collaborate to fulfill a mission that is essentially at the level of the soul. “To show what understanding can be achieved, Cardinal Silva appointed rector of the Catholic University of Chile, the rector delegated by the government,” asserts the Confidential Report of the Episcopal Conference of Chile sent to all the bishops of the world in December 1973.

Particularly striking is the similarity between the [Carta a los Chilenos](#)¹⁶¹ (Letter to Chileans) written by Augusto Pinochet in December 1998 during his detention in London, England, and the Confidential Report of the Chilean bishops that we have just quoted above:

¹⁶¹ The quotes from the *Carta a los Chilenos* were drawn from [Manifiesto de historiadores](#), (Manifest of Historians) Santiago, Chile, 25 January 1999. To see the full text of Pinochet’s letter: [Carta a los chilenos](#).

- Pinochet asserts in his letter that the “Armed Forces” acted as a “moral reserve of the nation”; they did so to restore the “unity of the nation ... not for any particular sector or party”; to restore “respect for human dignity”, and the “freedom of Chileans”; and to give “real opportunities to the poor and marginalized.” The bishops describe the coup d’état as “an act of the Chilean Armed Forces and National Police, which represent a true moral reserve of the national soul.” They point out that the Armed Forces and National Police of Chile are not at all “coup-makers” or “fascists”, “and that their constant tradition has been one of professionalism and non-involvement in the political contingencies of the country.” “The step that they took on September 11 represented a response to a national requirement and, on the part of the Armed Forces, a consequence of their obligation to guarantee order in Chile.”
- Pinochet states that the political crisis experienced by the previous government was of the exclusive making of the Popular Unity government, whose program consisted in the following: “preaching hatred, vengeance and division”; a “sinister ideology of Marxist socialism”; “the imposition of an atheistic and materialistic vision”; a “system essentially oppressive of fundamental liberties and rights”; “the empire of lies and hatred.” In their report, the bishops, without mentioning even once the obscene American intervention to systematically destabilize the Chilean economy and foment a coup, analyze in detail the errors committed by the Popular Unity government, which, in their view, led to a crisis and a coup d’état. A coup d’état that represented, for most Chileans, an immense liberation: “For the great majority of Chileans, 11 September 1973 meant the end of a nightmare, a country falling apart, the installation of demagoguery, the interference of foreign politicians (recall Fidel Castro's letter of 29 July 1973 to President Allende), violence in all its forms, the violent impoverishment of the nation and, above all, the implementation of Marxism in Chile.”

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Impact of neoliberalism in Chile

As noted above, the Chilean coup was carried out not primarily to restore order but rather to restore the soul of Chile, that is, the traditional capitalist system that characterizes its history. But the path followed in this restoration was extremely radical: what was restored was a radical capitalism, commonly known as free market fundamentalism or neoliberalism: selling public enterprises to private investors; eliminating subsidies for essential goods; radically privatizing education, health and even pensions; drastically reducing trade barriers in order to expose domestic firms to the rigor of foreign competition; eliminating all obstacles to foreign investment; prioritizing exports as the driving force of economic growth, and, last but not least, transforming labor into a very cheap and very flexible commodity. (A radical first step towards achieving this last objective: decree no. 12 that the military junta issued in the very first week of the coup, and which abolished the legal personality of the large Central Unica de los Trabajadores, (National Federation of Unions), one of the most organized and powerful union federations of Latin America.)¹⁶²

On the night of the 11 September coup d'état, as the military were busy systematically eliminating the Popular Unity government and its supporters, a 500 page document was being photocopied full speed by a small group of excited economists. They wanted to make sure every General in the new regime would have a copy by the very next day.

Why the rush and why the excitement? Because the document —known as ‘the brick’— represented the blueprint for a totally new, revamped Chilean economy.

¹⁶² Chile served as a laboratory for the neoliberal theories and practices of the Chicago School directed by Milton Friedman. It was the first country in the world to adopt radical neoliberal policies, and a model that served for the free trade agreements of the 1980s, and for the Uruguay Round that led to the creation of the World Trade Organization in 1995.

Ten economists, soon to become widely known throughout Chile as the “Chicago Boys”, had prepared the document. Middle and upper class students at the Catholic University in the 1950s and 1960s, these economists shared a conservative background, a strong hatred of socialism and a dislike of Keynesianism¹⁶³ as well as contempt for Chile’s ‘free-wheeling, mass democracy’. Eight out of the ten had later been trained at the University of Chicago in the United States by Arnold Harberger and Milton Friedman whom they greatly admired. This experience had served to strengthen and radicalize their conservatism.

‘The brick’ had been produced under the sponsorship of the Society to Promote Manufacturing (SOFOFA), Chile’s major industrial lobby. Its president, Orlando Saenz, had received funding from foreign corporations and most likely from the United States as part of a ‘war plan’ to destabilize the Popular Unity government. Saenz comments:

“At first we tried to coexist with Allende to give him the benefit of the doubt, but by the end of 1971 we realized he wanted to implant a dictatorship of the proletariat. From then on, our vow was to destabilize the government. We didn’t know precisely when the explosion would come, but we kept putting more wood and paper on the fire. Eventually, they were bound to ignite.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Keynesianism, an economic school of thought based on the writings of the British economist and journalist, John Maynard Keynes, holds that governments must actively intervene in the economy to diminish the negative impact of the unavoidable swings resulting from a capitalist economy. When unemployment rises, governments should help create jobs and not merely rely on market forces.

¹⁶⁴ Constable and Valenzuela, p. 201. The information from the four preceding paragraphs was also drawn from this source. As we have seen, a study of the events of the early 1970s leads one to doubt very

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Although the Chilean neoliberal revolution took a radical path only after Milton Friedman's visit to Chile in March 1975, neoliberal ideas were already very influential in the months following the coup. On 3 June 1974, I sent a letter to my friend Jacques Meunier, geography professor at Cégep Rouyn-Noranda, Quebec, in which I described the brutal impact that the elimination of subsidies for basic goods was having and explained the neoliberal plans of the military:

“A friend who works in a medical clinic in Santiago told us three days ago that they are now treating some people who are suffering from third degree malnutrition. Prices of essential foodstuffs have skyrocketed: cooking oil, for example, has gone from 60 escudos per kilo (July 73) to 1,140.... And the harder winter months are only starting. It is clear that the military want to reinforce the role of private enterprise at all levels: in teaching — according to an official document of the Junta all universities will be totally self-financing by 1976, in health — presently some 90% of all hospitals are publicly owned: the plan is to make all of them private,¹⁶⁵ in industry — enterprises that the Popular Unity had nationalized are being returned to the private sector, tariffs and trade barriers are being removed to expose Chilean firms to the rigor of foreign competition, foreign investment is more than welcome. Even the affairs of the nation have been turned over to private initiative — the September 11th coup.”

Many observers attribute the economic success of the Chilean economy in recent years to the radical neoliberal policies imposed by the 16-year dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet and

strongly that Saenz ever wanted to give Allende the benefit of the doubt.

¹⁶⁵ According to the Chilean historian Sergio Grez, the state granted public universities 80% of their funding under Allende. Today that figure is no more than 10 to 15%. See Entretien avec Franck Gaudichaud et Sergio Grez, in “*Chili: mouvements sociaux, crise politique et processus constituant*”, Recherches internationales, No. 107, avril-juin 2016, p. 143-154.

maintained, even in certain aspects strengthened, in the following years of ‘incipient and restricted democracy.’

Chile, a country that currently has free trade agreements with 180 countries worldwide, has grown by an average of 8 percent from 1987 to 1997 – the fastest growth of any economy in the Western Hemisphere – and by nearly 5 percent between 1997 and 2014. It is considered as the jaguar of Latin America and was the first country in South America to enter the OECD. From 1990 to 2013 the poverty rate fell from 68% to 14.4% and the extreme poverty rate from 47.7% to 4.5%.¹⁶⁶

However, many observers stress the fact that there exists a very negative underside of this ‘economic miracle’. The Economist of 7 June 2014 published a letter by the ex-secretary general of the United Nations, Carlos Fortin, in which he states that according to the UN Development Report for 2013 there are only 18 countries, out of 140, whose income distribution is more unequal than Chile’s. And the Chilean political scientist Marcelo Solervicens points out in his [blog](#) of 9 March 2014:

“In Chile the income of the richest 1% is 40 times greater than the per capita income of 80.6% of the population. The latter earn 338 dollars a month, or about 4,000 dollars per year. (...) One percent (73,000) of Chileans receive 33% of total income (...). The 0.01%, that is to say some 1,200 individuals, pocket 10% of the total income of the country while 99% of the population receives only 68%. By comparison, in Canada 1% receive 15% of total income and 0.01% receive 2% of total income.”

¹⁶⁶ [Desigualdad de Ingresos y Pobreza en Chile 1990 a 2013](#), por Osvaldo Larrañaga y María Eugenia Rodríguez, Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, diciembre 2014; véase gráfico 4 y gráfico A-2.

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The democratic awakening of Chile

In her recently published book *Le réveil démocratique du Chili*¹⁶⁷, Marie-Christine Doran points out that Chileans are recovering their collective memory of a great suffering, one that had been repressed for decades in the depths of their subconscious. The suffering caused by the long and massive repression of tens of thousands of Chileans – tortured, disappeared, and executed – many of whose perpetrators continue to enjoy, more than 40 years later, impunity; and the simultaneous suffering resulting from the brutal and long-term imposition of one of the most privatized economies in the world.

The first major eruption of this collective memory was triggered by Pinochet's unexpected and spectacular arrest in England in October 1998 – which rapidly became known in the international media as the Pinochet Affair – and was linked to the suffering resulting from long years of human rights abuses. Openly considered essential only by a minority in the early years of the Concertación civil governments, the issue of human rights becomes central after the Pinochet Affair, an event that made the international headlines for several months. Such was the impact of this ever deepening national demand for justice that in 2003, then President Ricardo Lagos felt compelled to create the Valech Commission – named after Bishop Sergio Valech who presided over it – a commission whose purpose was to make up for the major shortcoming of the previous Rettig Commission (The latter could only investigate on those who had died at the hands of the dictatorship, but did not have the mandate to find the perpetrators of these executions).

The first report of the Valech Commission was released in November 2004. Shortly afterwards – and this event according to Doran represents a key moment in the grand awakening of the Chilean people – a group of Chilean historians published a

¹⁶⁷ *Une histoire politique de l'exigence de justice (1990-2016)* (The Historical Awakening of Chile: political history of the demands for justice), Éditions Karthala, Paris, 2016, 377 pp.

manifiesto – [Manifiesto de historiadores contra los que torturan a nombre de la Patria](#) (Manifesto of historians against those who torture in the name of the nation). It states:

“Chileans have been profoundly moved by the publication of the first part of the Report of the National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture (This was the official name of the Valech Commission). Much more than the Rettig Report or the results of the [Mesa de Diálogo](#) (Human Rights Dialogue)¹⁶⁸, this new and painful eruption of social memory, arising from more than 28,000 testimonies of people tortured in almost 1,200 enclosures under military or police control, has forcefully reminded us of our pending debt in matters of truth and justice,

¹⁶⁸ “The Human Rights Dialogue was convened in August 1999 by the government of President Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle, with the purpose of advancing the search for victims of forced disappearance of the military-civil dictatorship.

“When this is not possible, obtain at least the information of their final destination, information that must be provided by the Armed Forces and National Police.

“The Bureau brought together the most representative elements of the nation, including the highest authorities in the country, and the civil, military, religious and ethical institutions.

“As a result of the agreements reached, in January 2001, the Armed Forces and National Police gave a list indicating what would have been the final destination of 200 victims, including 180 identified and 20 not identified. The families of the victims and society as a whole were deeply affected by this report, which the President of the Republic, Ricardo Lagos Escobar, officially announced to the country, handing this information to the Supreme Court and requesting that the latter strengthen the judicial mechanisms necessary to advance the establishment of the truth and clarify the fate of the disappeared detainees. The Supreme Court, in turn, proceeded to designate visiting ministers, special judges with exclusive mandates and preferential judges, and ordered the reopening of proceedings on the subject, notably streamlining court action throughout the country and, in fact, opening new possibilities for establishing the fate of the victims of the 1973-1990 period.” Source: Mesa de Diálogo de Derechos Humanos, Retrieved on 30 August 2017; <http://pdh.minjusticia.gob.cl/mesa-de-dialogo/>

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and has also shown, once again, that one can simply not force people “to forget” by decree.

“This time we have all had to face the power and raw truth that emanates from those testimonies. No one, except those who are the guiltiest, will be able to go on denying that in Chile an enormous number were tortured and their human rights violated, and this simply using the name of the nation. (...)

“In order to put an end to the horrors that have occurred, it is not enough to go on constantly repeating: “never again”, “mea culpa”, “I ask you forgiveness”, or calling for reconciliation with a voice full of remorse, or applauding anyone who dares ‘to pray such litanies’ in public. In order for the “never again” to be historically and politically effective, it is first necessary that we as citizens educate and re-educate those groups and institutions that, through brutal force and in a totally illegitimate manner, have taken over the reins of power and violated the sovereignty of Chileans.

“Secondly, we as citizens must educate ourselves and come to realize that national sovereignty is really ours, and this, not only to make possible the disappearance of policies of repression and torture against an alleged 'internal enemy', but also to build a more democratic, participatory society and with a fairer distribution of the wealth it produces.

“Until now, our history clearly shows that Chile, since 1830, has never been able to build a democracy and a market of that nature. Civic and social movements have often tried to bring about this type of society, but have paid dearly for it. Those who hold the bulk of power, though illegitimately, have systematically thwarted each time the sovereign will inspiring these movements.”

The final report of the Valech Commission was released in August 2011 and concludes: “In total, when one adds up the cases of the disappeared, executed, tortured and political prisoners recognized by these inquiries – excluding the exiled and their families – the number of victims of the Pinochet

dictatorship exceeds 40,000. Of the latter, there are 3,065 dead or missing between September 1973 and March 1990.”¹⁶⁹

During President Michelle Bachelet’s first term, right-wing representatives, with the support of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, “tried on two occasions ... to present a bill to overturn the sentences of some soldiers convicted of human rights violations and who had reached the age of 75, this in the name of reconciliation and for humanitarian reasons. (...) Though people in Chile were massively mobilizing during the years 2003-2005, the Catholic Church did not join the movement that was demanding justice: on the contrary, it multiplied public statements that repudiated this movement, considering that such a demand merely amounted to ‘seeking revenge’,” comments Doran.

And she pursues: “Following 2005, the Catholic Church’s efforts took a new turn: it tried, through legislative initiatives aimed at strengthening the amnesty law, to influence the government so that it would soften the punishment of human rights violators. It did this with the collaboration of the Pentecostal Churches and in an attempt to thwart the impact in Chile of the ongoing strengthening of international criminal law, especially in cases of the ‘disappeared’. Two different bills, calling for the cancellation of sanctions against several defendants, including by the military convicted of crimes committed during the dictatorship but not covered by the amnesty law, were presented. Following the categorical rejection by the Chilean Congress of a first bill presented by right-wing senators in 2009, the Catholic Church took the initiative to present, in June 2010 and on the occasion of the Bicentennial of the Independence of Chile, its own bill to annul the sanctions imposed on the military condemned for human rights violations. At the same time, the Mesa Ampliada de Iglesias Evangélicas (A broad grouping of the Evangelical Churches) also presented to the government of the Alliance for

¹⁶⁹ [Chile reconoce a más de 40.000 víctimas de la dictadura de Pinochet](#), Manuel Délano, *El País*, 20 August 2011.

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Chile, led by right-wing President Sebastian Piñera, a bill that advocated the same measure of cancellation of sentences for indicted military, thus illustrating that there existed a remarkable and concurrent convergence between the two religious institutions.”

“Unleashing a protest in Congress, where some deputies and senators threatened to call on international organizations if the bill was admitted for discussion, the latter was nevertheless defended by representatives of the Catholic hierarchy who opposed the request for pardon to that of justice, calling the request of justice a 'call to hatred'. In response to questions from journalists who argued that the bill would strengthen impunity, the president of the Episcopal Conference of Chile Alejandro Goic declared: “Did you want us to foster hatred? We are calling for forgiveness because that is essential.” Author of the bill, the Archbishop of Santiago, Monsignor Francisco Javier Errázuriz, referring to one of the main slogans of the Chilean justice movement – 'Ni Perdón Ni Olvido' (Neither Pardoning Nor Forgetting), asserted: “It is incompatible with a nation with deep Christian roots”.¹⁷⁰

Paradoxically, the same Chilean Catholic Church that in 1973 interpreted the coup d'état not as fascist revenge but as an act of the Armed Forces – “the moral reserve of the nation” – to liberate Chile from hatred that was destroying the profoundly Christian soul of the Chilean people, interprets, almost forty years later, the demand for justice of tens of thousands of victims of torture and of families of disappeared as a vengeance and a call to hatred that “is incompatible with a nation with deep Christian roots”!¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ *Le réveil démocratique du Chili*, Marie-Christine Doran, p. 256.

¹⁷¹ Doran points out (page 78) that after 1984 protests against the dictatorship and human rights abusers continued but only in the shantytowns; such protests were condemned and considered unlawful acts of violence by the Catholic Church, the Christian Democrats, and even, as of 1986, by the Socialist Party. In 1987, Pope John Paul II carried out a purge of progressive bishops and all the missionaries

Though it is true that the courts have stopped appealing to the Amnesty Law since Pinochet's arrest in London in 1998; and though it is also true that President Michelle Bachelet, after commemorating the 41st anniversary of the coup d'état with the words – "Many have died waiting for justice, many have died in silence. Enough of painful waiting and unjustified silence. [...] It is time to face up to the truth!" – immediately forwarded to Congress a bill whose purpose was to repeal the Amnesty Law; Chile's Congress, as incredible as it may seem, has not yet repealed as of 2017 the 1978 Amnesty Law imposed by the

involved in popular struggles were expelled from Chile. Doran comments: "It should be emphasized here that the Chilean case demonstrates a significant change in the position of the Catholic Church in its social work in Latin America since 1992 and the Episcopal Declaration of Santo Domingo whose objective was to definitively eliminate whatever liberation theology was still present in some sectors. The struggle against conflicts - internal to the Christian Catholic Church - and in countries experiencing a democratic transition, would become the official orientation of the Church, dictating a position favorable to reconciliation and the Church's complete withdrawal from the defense of human rights and of all work involving building 'social awareness' in poor neighborhoods. Thus, in 1992 the Catholic Church, considering the human rights issue resolved, closed the Vicariate of Solidarity."

If this evolution underlined by Doran – Pope John Paul II getting rid of progressive bishops and eliminating all traces of liberation theology – certainly partly explains why the Catholic Church in Chile agreed that the military should be forgiven for their human rights abuses, it leaves aside, in my opinion, a basic and very fundamental point. As clearly shown in the document published in 1975, Gospel and Peace, the Chilean bishops, even at a time when repression in Chile was at its peak and the Vicariate of Solidarity was very busy assisting numerous victims, saw the military as heroes who had liberated Chile from the cancer of Marxism. With such a narrow conception of human rights, however valiantly these may have been defended, it makes sense to forgive the military! Why would someone want to condemn those very heroes who saved the soul of Chile?

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Pinochet dictatorship, a law that still allows the military to try to
escape punishment.¹⁷²

A reconciliation still unfulfilled

In *Une langue politique postpopuliste: l'épilogue de l'affaire Pinochet* (Post Populist Political Language: Aftermath of Pinochet Affair), André Corten compares the transition that took place in South Africa to that of Chile. He affirms that while the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa was able to ensure that pardon be accompanied by a formal recognition of the unacceptability of Apartheid, the Chilean commissions have not led the military to acknowledge the unacceptability of acts committed during the years of the dictatorship. *On the contrary, in Chile, declarations of forgiveness have always failed because the institution of the Armed Forces never acknowledged the unacceptability of the acts committed*, notes Corten.¹⁷³

And in its 3 August 2015 editorial, *La doctrina militar del Estado de Chile* (Military Doctrine of the State of Chile) El Mostrador notes: "Despite the timid actions of his commanders over the years and ambiguous declarations of "Never Again!" that in the end simply bog things down, the Army has never acknowledged that the violations that occurred until 1989 represented an institutional policy. And even though the Army has become basically respectful of democracy as of 2006, the institution has never accepted that its commanders until 1990 acted in dishonor and against the internal regulations in force at the time."

¹⁷² On 7 February 2017 Fernando Seymour notes, - [Ley de Amnistía: FF.AA. acusan su no aplicación y organizaciones de DD.HH. exigen anularla](#) – "that a group of former members of the Armed Forces and National Police presented a complaint against former judge Alejandro Solís in early January 2017" accusing him of not applying the Amnesty Law in a fair and indiscriminate manner. "While those in the Army are not allowed to make use of the Amnesty Law, those prosecuted for acts of terrorism are allowed to and thus benefit from reduced sentences."

¹⁷³ *Politique et Sociétés*, Volume 22, numero 1, p. 7.

The second breakthrough of the collective memory is linked to the Chilean radical neoliberal model. Chile is a country where quality education and health are nothing more than a privilege of the wealthy elite, and where pensions, practically all managed by private institutions known as AFPs (Pension Fund Administrators), favor the wealthy few at the expense of all others who basically receive miserable pensions. Even a fundamental asset such as water has been radically privatized in Chile, which is causing serious problems.

Notes Daniel Gallagher (September 15, 2016):

“With water availability to Chile’s capital predicted to fall 40% by 2070, legislators are being called on to prioritise human and ecological needs over profit. (...)

“In Santiago, the nation’s capital, millions of people are regularly left [without running water](#) for days at a time and experts are [warning](#) of water scarcity to come across the country as [temperatures rise](#) and [glaciers retreat](#). (...)

“Francisca Fernández, spokeswoman for the [Movimiento por la Recuperación del Agua y la Vida](#) campaigns for public ownership of water. The organisation emerged four years ago at a time of mounting climatic stress in Santiago.

“A recent protest saw at least 2,000 people take to the capital’s streets to demand the repeal of laws that privatised Chile’s water supply. At the heart of the protest and others like it in recent years lies frustration that the privatisation of water has kept prices unnecessarily high, delivered poor service and done little to address concerns over insufficient supply in the future. (...)

“Aguas Andinas, for example, a subsidiary of transnationals [Agbar and Suez](#), monopolises Santiago’s market today, selling water to 6 million of the city’s 7.2

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million residents at [one of the highest tariffs](#) in Latin America.”¹⁷⁴

Ever more frustrated by a privatized education system based on the search for short-term profits and that prioritizes the needs of the wealthy, Chilean students initiated a [massive series of demonstrations in 2010](#). A wave of demonstrations that was absolutely historical, and that took the whole world by surprise.¹⁷⁵ The demonstrations lasted a full three years, they were backed by the majority of the people, and they led to the ever-greater calling into question of the neoliberal economic model itself. So much so that they contributed to the electoral victory of the New Majority, a government led by Michelle Bachelet and that promised to reverse neoliberalism, in particular in education, and to set up a process for the eventual adoption of a new constitution, free of the neoliberal constraints enshrined in the one adopted during the dictatorship.

In August 2016 another [historical demonstration](#): millions of Chileans from all walks of life massively invaded the streets throughout Chile requesting that the government put an end to the privatized pension system, known as AFP.¹⁷⁶ A system that serves the elite very well, providing it with immense profits, sometimes obtained through fraud, and that leaves the majority of citizens with miserable pensions.

In March 2017, yet another massive protest against the private pension system. “According to organizers,

¹⁷⁴ [The heavy price of Santiago's privatised water](#), Daniel Gallagher, The Guardian, 15 September 2016. Retrieved 30 August 2017.

¹⁷⁵ Wikipedia, Movilización estudiantil en Chile de 2011, https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movilización_estudiantil_en_Chile_de_2011, Retrieved on 30 August 2017.

¹⁷⁶ To watch a 12 min. TV report on these demonstrations: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGWRnRcwwaQ>, Retrieved on 30 August 2017.

800,000 took part in demonstrations in Santiago and a further 2 million across the country.”¹⁷⁷

Comments the Chilean doctor [Alberto Larraín](#) in his blog of 7 September 2015:

“The suffering of Chile has been growing since the dictatorship. To the pain of our exiled compatriots, the tortured and disappeared, has been added, since the return to democracy, the pain of indifference and unbridled individualism. Chile is one of the most unequal countries in the world and it hurts; Chile is the second country in the world with the highest growth rate of teen suicide and the country in South America with the biggest problem of depression and alcohol consumption, and the lowest level of interpersonal trust... a reality that is very painful. Chile is a country where corporate power is such that corporate corruption goes unpunished – price collusion in pharmaceutical firms and large poultry firms, a multi-firm scam in La Polar, this, in country which has the second highest rate of imprisonment in the Americas. (...) In Araucanía one finds several of the poorest communes of our country but no one speaks of this violence, only of the Mapuche comuneros as if their incendiary violence had nothing to do with the pain of hundreds of years of marginalization and humiliation. The immense suffering of our children is ignored, the suffering of the 130,000 children who are in the SENAME. People try to blame the latter institution, but fail to understand that when children arrive there, it is already too late.”¹⁷⁸

In such a situation, it is perhaps not very surprising that the popularity of Augusto Pinochet, symbol of the dictatorship, would have been constantly falling, while that of Salvador Allende, symbol of the dream of the Popular Unity government, would have been constantly increasing.

¹⁷⁷ [Organizers say it was the largest-ever protest against the private pension system in Chile](#), Telesur, 27 March 2017.

¹⁷⁸ Me duele Chile, <http://www.elquintopoder.cl/sociedad/me-duele-chile/>. Retrieved 30 August 2017.

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According to a [popular poll](#) taken on 17 September 2008, Chileans considered Salvador Allende the greatest Chilean personality of all times.¹⁷⁹ Surveys conducted in 2003 by the Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Contemporánea (CERC) (Center for Contemporary Reality Studies), showed that 33 percent of Chileans remembered the coup as a salvation from Marxism and 29 percent remembered the dictatorship as “good” or “very good”. However the same surveys conducted by CERC in 2013 showed that 56 percent of Chileans considered that the years of the dictatorship were “bad” and only 8 percent remembered it as “good”. (...) And 76 percent of respondents considered Pinochet a dictator and only 9 percent considered him to be one of the greatest leaders of the twentieth century.

Unfortunately the New Majority government, after creating an immense hope that economic policies would be radically revamped – increase of corporate tax, profound reforms transforming education into a public, and thus ever more gratuitous good, etc. – and that a new constitution would be democratically adopted in order to rid the present one of its dictator-imposed neoliberal straightjacket, has proved to be profoundly disappointing. And the New Majority government of Michelle Bachelet, though it has enacted some positive measures – for example ending the binominal voting system, and, very recently, decriminalizing abortion in extreme cases –¹⁸⁰ has seen its popularity plummeting.

¹⁷⁹ Sergio Grez, “Grandes chilenos de nuestra historia : Rápidas reflexiones a propósito de un programa de televisión, La Historia y la Memoria”, *Espacio Regional, Revista de Estudios Sociales*, Vol. 5, No 2, 2008, pp. 119-122.

¹⁸⁰ In Chile therapeutic abortion was legal from 1931 until 1989, when Augusto Pinochet, just as his dictatorship was about to end, criminalized it. Reports Mónica Roa in *El País* (21 August 2017): “Two weeks ago, the Chilean parliament passed the law that decriminalizes abortion in the most extreme circumstances: when there is a risk of life for the woman, fetal unfeasibility or when the pregnancy is the result of rape. With this decision and on the initiative of President Bachelet, Chile is trying to get out of the shameful list of

While it is true that the economic situation may have complicated matters for the government – falling copper prices and decreasing investments, weak growth (1.9% in 2014, 2.7% in 2015, 1.5% in 2016) – there are two other fundamental factors that can explain this plummeting popularity: failure to implement the promised reforms and/or their substantial weakening, and a series of scandals, some in the economic sector – fraudulent price fixing of baby diapers, fraudulent price fixing of chicken meat in the three large supermarkets, fraud in a fund managed by the Army – and some affecting the entire political class, including a major scandal involving President Michelle Bachelet’s own family.

In the municipal elections of October 2016 – in Chile, municipal elections reveal the strength of the national political parties – the New Majority parties suffered a major defeat. And no less than 65.5% of Chileans simply chose not to vote, an extremely high historical rate of abstention.

Comments Alvaro Ramis: “The own goal metaphor seems to be the tragic fate of the New Majority. With an unusually weak right after its electoral disaster in 2014, everything seemed to indicate that Michelle Bachelet would manage to carry out reforms, which, though limited, would put the country ‘up to date’ on fundamental matters. The uncovering of the Penta case,¹⁸¹ the internal fractures in the right, the elimination of the binominal voting system... all this seemed to be very promising.

countries that absolutely penalize the interruption of pregnancy in the region - El Salvador, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic and Malta - in the middle of a debate that has not been peaceful and has not yet reached its end”. A few days later Chile’s constitutional court approved the law.

¹⁸¹ Pascale Bonnefoy, As Graft Cases in Chile Multiply, a ‘Gag Law’ Angers Journalists, The New York Times, 7 April 2016. “Prosecutors and investigative reporters in [Chile](#) have for more than a year been exposing an intricate web of illegal campaign contributions, [bribery and corruption](#), embarrassing top business executives and politicians, including members of Congress and [the president’s family](#).”

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But the good news proved short-lived. The Caval case,¹⁸² orchestrated as a trap by the UDI, as has been judicially demonstrated, dismantled much of the promised reforms, forcing the president to rely on the more conservative sector of the Christian Democratic Party, with Jorge Burgos as minister of the Interior. From that moment, the own goals began to be scored from within La Moneda: the draft of the new Constitution was torpedoed, the promised tax reform was substantially weakened, the new public education program was gutted, and the proposals to find a solution in the conflict with the Mapuche nation were shelved. (...)»¹⁸³

Thus, notwithstanding major new developments, it seems very unlikely that the great dream of the majority of Chileans for a Constituent Assembly that would end the neoliberal model, one enshrined in the constitution adopted under Pinochet and that continues imposing a straightjacket on democracy, will be fulfilled. As the Chilean historian [Sergio Grez](#) points out, all previous constitutions in Chile have been adopted by the elite; and the claim that the history of Chile is that of a great happy and peaceful family whose very foundational values emanate from the love of God is no more than a powerful myth.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Pascale Bonnefoy, Daughter-in-Law of Chile's President Faces Corruption Charge, The New York Times, 29 January 2016. "Prosecutors on Friday charged President [Michelle Bachelet](#)'s daughter-in-law, Natalia Compagnon, and 12 others in a corruption case that touches the presidential family and has damaged Ms. Bachelet's popularity. (...) The Caval matter is one of [a series of high-profile corruption scandals](#) that shook the corporate and political establishment of [Chile](#) over the past year, involving collusion and price-fixing by major industries and companies, illegal corporate financing for electoral campaigns and misuse of military spending."

¹⁸³ Alvaro Ramis, Nueva Mayoría: perdiendo por autogoleada, [Punto Final](#), No 881, 4 August 2017. <http://www.puntofinal.cl>, Retrieved on 30 August 2017.

¹⁸⁴ See Sergio Grez Toso [Procesos constituyentes a la chilena : la inveterada tendencia de las élites a arrogarse la soberanía](#), *Rebelión*, 16 July 2016.

Unless Chile's democratic awakening triggers massive and persistent mobilizations,¹⁸⁵ everything would seem to suggest that this "sacred legacy" in the name of which the 1973 coup d'état was carried out, a legacy that the military not only recovered but even strengthened by radically directing the country towards free market fundamentalist capitalism, will continue to govern Chile.

My Diary of 15 February 2017

"Killing the soul is worse than killing the body".

These words that I read last night deeply impressed me, since they perfectly reflect the reason for which I experienced such a profound revolt when witnessing the brutal Chilean coup of 11 September 1973, when hearing the decrees being issued by the military junta and when witnessing, a few days later, Cardinal Silva offering to this junta the "full and disinterested support" of the Chilean Catholic Church, and this in a religious ceremony being broadcasted on TV nationwide.

The Chilean military destroyed thousands of bodies, often making them simply disappear, and tortured dozens of thousands of other bodies in order to save the sacred soul of Chile. They wanted to restore the *chilenidad*, that is to say the supposed deep historical moral values of the country.

The military junta's decree no 1 stipulates that its "supreme mission is to ensure above all other considerations the survival of these realities and values, which are superior and represent the essence of the Chilean nationality," values that, "as a result of a dogmatic and exclusionary ideology inspired by the

¹⁸⁵ For an encouraging sign of such mobilization, watch a video – [Otra política es posible](#) – showing the interventions on November 13, 2016 of six Chilean social leaders, presented by Víctor de la Fuente, editor of the Chilean version of the *Monde Diplomatique*.

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foreign principles of Marxism-Leninism” are being totally destroyed.

On 18 September 1973 Cardinal Silva, moments before offering “the full and disinterested collaboration” of the Church to the junta, declares: “Our true values appear to me as the ever-present emanation of God’s love for Chile and their profanation appears to me as a sacrilegious profanation”.

In his address of 11 October 1973, General Pinochet refers to the coup d’état as the day on which “the hand of God has intervened to save us.”

In December 1973 the Chilean bishops, in their Confidential Report to all the bishops of the world, affirm that the coup d’état was carried out by the Armed Forces and the National Police, which “represent the true moral reserve of the national soul”.

And as we have just mentioned, in the document [*Evangelio y Paz*](#) issued by the Standing Committee of the Episcopal Conference of Chile on 5 September 1975, the bishops declare, and this in the aftermath of the two most brutal years of the dictatorship: “We recognize the service rendered to the country by the Armed Forces by liberating it from a Marxist dictatorship that seemed inevitable and irreversible.”

These words that I read last night – “killing the soul is worse than killing the body” – are not words pronounced by the Chilean military or representatives of the Chilean Catholic Church! No: they are words pronounced more than a decade after the Chilean coup – more precisely in 1984 – by another leader of the Catholic Church, the then president of the Nicaraguan Episcopal Conference, Bishop Pablo Antonio Vega. And they were pronounced in the following context.

A few days before the first presidential elections of the government of the [Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional](#) (Sandinista National Liberation Front - FSLN) at the end of October 1984, a group of [Contras](#) “launched a mortar attack on the rural community of San Gregorio in the department of Boaco” riddling with bullets “a peasant woman and her six children” who were being sheltered in a refuge.

“This event rapidly made the headlines throughout the world, not only because it was one of the first infanticides claimed by the Contras, but also because the massacre was publicly and explicitly endorsed by the leadership of the local Catholic Church whose main figure, Archbishop Miguel Obando y Bravo, emerged as the spiritual leader of those opposing the Sandinistas,” writes Gabriela Selsa, correspondent of the newspaper [Barricada](#)..

To find out what the leadership of the Catholic Church in Nicaragua thought about this horrible event, Selsa went to interview Bishop Vega in the Episcopal Chancery. She wanted to know the latter’s opinion on what had just happened – the brutal killing of six defenseless children and their mother by a Contra strongly supported by the United States – and this in the very midst of a crisis situation in which the US was routinely “using collective psychosis techniques by repeatedly flying over Nicaragua’s airspace with SR 71 high altitude jet fighters, better known as Blacksparrows, which, upon breaking the sound barrier, would cause explosions similar to bombs, sowing fear and terror in the population. By then, the Contra attacks had already caused 7,000 deaths – the death toll would rise to more than 35,000 in the ensuing years – and millions of dollars of economic damage.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ This quote and the information on Nicaragua in this section comes from a recently published book, *Banderas y Harapos: Gabriela Selsa*, Managua, Nicaragua, 2016. As I have been doing every year for the

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“All imperialism is bad. Economic imperialism through a regime of force; but also ideological imperialism, which is a bomb that penetrates the soul and eventually subjugates a nation”, Bishop Vega replied to Selsa’s question.

– Does this mean that the Church does not consider the killing of defenseless children a crime? I just can’t see how...” immediately objected an American professor, who happened to be accompanying Selsa that day.

“Look,” Bishop Vega exclaimed, abruptly interrupting the professor. “Many other children have died, not just those appearing in the newspapers. And, as I just told you, a bomb that penetrates the soul is more serious.

last twenty years, I traveled to Nicaragua for three weeks in January 2017. The night before I left Managua, Carlos Fernando Chamorro briefly visited me at the Hotel Santa Maria near Ticabus, the Costa Rican bus station in Managua. He told me about the book *Banderas y Harapos*, recently published by Gabriela Selser, a Barricada correspondent in the 1980s. A book that he says is worth reading, especially for its intense and very raw truth.

My first meeting with Carlos took place in 1976 in the McGill University Library in Montreal. I was doing an investigation on Chile for my course, Macroeconomics, and suddenly the person sitting next to me at the nearby desk turned to me: “Could I take a look at the essay that you’re writing? I am very interested in what is happening in Chile.”

That was the beginning of a friendship with Carlos that has lasted to this day. Carlos is the son of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, the famous La Prensa director who was assassinated by the dictator Somoza in January 1978. This event represented a key moment in the acceleration of the movement to overthrow Somoza, and Carlos was named, in the days following the triumph of the revolution – on 19 July 1979 – director of Barricada, the newly created and official newspaper of the Sandinista government, a role he held throughout the revolution.

When Selsa interviewed Bishop Vega, I happened to be in Nicaragua as an international observer for the elections of 1984. I myself witnessed for several consecutive days the breaking of the sound barrier by the US jet fighters, Blackspawns. Indeed, the explosions these caused in Managua were extremely menacing and frightening.

Subjugating a man means killing his soul, and killing the soul is worse than killing the body.”

Destroying the body.... To save the soul...



Some of the children executed in San Gregorio, Boaco
Source: *Banderas y Harapos*, p. 122; photo by Leonardo Barreto

Allende's voice echoing through time

“Chile is... a country... where millions of people have been forced to live amidst conditions of exploitation and misery, of open or concealed unemployment. (...)

“The outlook which faced my country, just like many other countries of the Third World, was a model of reflex modernization, which, as technical studies and the most tragic realities demonstrate, excludes from the possibilities of progress, well being and social liberation more and more millions of people, destining them to a subhuman life. It is a model that will produce a greater shortage of housing, that will condemn an ever-greater number of citizens to unemployment, illiteracy, ignorance and physiological misery. (...)

“In a programmed and coherent manner, the old structure, based on the exploitation of the workers and the domination of the main means of production by a minority, is being overcome. It is being replaced by a new structure – led by the workers and placed at the service of the interests of the majority – which is

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laying the foundations for a growth that will represent real development, that will include the entire population and not exclude vast sectors of people and doom them to poverty and marginalization (...)

“The change in the power structure that we are carrying out, the ever growing leadership role played by the workers, the national recovery of our basic natural resources, the liberation of our country from its subordination to foreign powers... are all crowning points of a long historical process; of efforts to impose political and social freedoms, of the heroic struggle of several generations of workers and farmers to organize themselves as a social force to obtain political power and drive the capitalists from economic power. (...)

“We are faced by a direct confrontation between the large transnational corporations and the states. The corporations are interfering in the fundamental political, economic and military decisions of the states. The corporations are global organizations that do not depend on any state and whose activities are not controlled by, nor are they accountable to any parliament or any other institution representative of the collective interest. In short, the entire world political structure is being undermined.”¹⁸⁷

In your letters and in our meetings, you have mentioned the many forms of exclusion and injustice that you experience in the workplace, in neighborhoods and throughout the land. There are many of them and they are diverse; and you are coping with them in multiple and diverse ways.

¹⁸⁷ For the full text of Allende’s speech in Spanish: [Discurso de Salvador Allende en la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas, 4 December 1972](#).
For text in English:
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/allende/1972/december/04.htm>
To watch the video of the speech itself: [Discurso de Salvador Allende en la ONU](#)

Yet there is an invisible thread joining every one of the forms of exclusion. These are not isolated issues.

Can we recognize the invisible thread that links all of them together?

I wonder whether we can see that those destructive realities are part of a system that has become global. Do we realize that that system has imposed the mentality of profit at any price, with no concern for social exclusion?

If such is the case, I would insist, let us not be afraid to say it: we want change, real change, structural change.

This system has become intolerable: farmworkers can no longer put up with it, laborers can no longer put up with it, communities can no longer put up with it, nations can no longer put up with it...

The earth, entire nations and individuals are being brutally mistreated. And behind all this pain, death and destruction there is the stench of what Basil of Caesarea – one of the first theologians of the Church – called “the dung of the devil”. An unfettered pursuit of money rules. This is the “dung of the devil”. The service of the common good is left behind.

Once capital becomes an idol and guides people’s decisions, once greed for money presides over the entire socioeconomic system, it ruins society, it condemns and enslaves men and women, it destroys human fraternity, it sets people against one another and, as we clearly see, it even puts at risk our common home, our mother earth.¹⁸⁸

Just as the commandment “Thou shall not kill” sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say “thou shalt not” to an economy

¹⁸⁸ Speech of Pope Francis at the meeting with the popular movements gathered in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, 18 July 2015. To watch the video of the speech itself: [Discurso completo del Papa Francisco](#).

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of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. (...)
Today everything comes under the laws of competition
and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed
upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people
find themselves excluded and marginalized: without
work, without possibilities, without any means of escape.
¹⁸⁹

The paragraphs immediately preceding the gray-boxed
area are excerpts from the historical discourse delivered
by Salvador Allende before the General Assembly of the
United Nations on 4 December 1972.

The first paragraphs in the gray-boxed area are excerpts
from the impressive speech of the current leader of the
Catholic Church, Pope Francis, which he delivered during
his meeting with popular movements in Santa Cruz,
Bolivia, on 18 July 2015. The last paragraph in the gray-
boxed area is a quote from his Apostolic Exhortation, *The
Joy of the Gospel*, published in 2013.

Perhaps the words of Pope Francis represent Salvador
Allende's voice that is echoing through time...

¹⁸⁹ *La alegría del evangelio*, Papa Francis, 2013, p. 45-46.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - They didn't manage to destroy Germany, but are destroying Chile

La Segunda, 10 August 1973

Mr. Director: Your renowned newspaper published a letter signed F.I., and whose contents I happen to partly agree with. And I say 'partly', because later I will make proposals regarding the type of punishments that would be more drastic, that is to say, of Cuban or savage style, where according to recent news robbers are being punished by having their arms cut off.

A few words about my background. I was born in Berlin, the former capital of Germany, on 18 December 1906. I am 100% Jew, from both my father and mother's side. I lived in Germany the years of pre-Nazism and 6 years of this tragedy also inside the country, leaving my country three days before the outbreak of World War II. I then spent three months in France and then emigrated to the Chilean paradise. So much for my background. I do want to stress that I have been a Chilean citizen since 1948.

As for the above-mentioned article, I would like to draw attention to the fact that both in Germany and here in Chile, my second and beautiful country, the tragedy was triggered by the same type of Jews to which belong Mr. Jaime Faivovich W., Mr. Schatz and Mr. David Silbermann and many others whose name I can't remember, and who, directly or indirectly, came from the POLISH GHETTO. What is repugnant in the behavior of these characters is not an 'idealism' that led them to excesses but plain and simple 'selfishness.' They failed to destroy a country like Germany: that was the privilege of the crazy HITLER. But it is the behavior of these 'gentlemen' that provoked hatred and the ensuing six million victims.

However, this same kind of people of my race succeeded in destroying Chile and they want to make sure the job is fully achieved. *I, for my part, am optimistic and I believe that in the short term this sinister government will be eliminated with all this gang of thugs. And I propose, in this eventuality, the following punishment, one that these 'gentlemen' from the*

Ghetto deserve: from Las Rejas to Las Condes there are several hundred new street light posts. I recommend hanging on each of these posts one of these criminals of my race, alive or dead. It would be the best satisfaction for the honest Chileans of my race. In a public statement our representatives should thank the Almighty on behalf of all of us for such a just punishment (Italics are mine).

I really hope that after this hell our country experienced the Chilean people and their future political leaders will not make us pay, we the good and honorable Jewish – citizens or foreigners – who inhabit this beautiful country, by unleashing an odious anti-Semitism that would end in a massacre. Unfortunately, such anti-Semitism is already appearing.

Yours faithfully,

G. N. P.

Appendix 2 - Communists started “Jakarta Plan”

Editorial, EL Mercurio, 18 July 1973

Marxist propaganda has long insisted on mentioning the so-called Jakarta Plan as an example of anticommunist perfidy. It is said that reactionary forces in Indonesia, allied with the military and stimulated by US agents, plotted to liquidate the Communist Party of that country, killing half a million of its members. The historical truth is different. It was the Communists, instigated and equipped from Beijing, who tried, in September 1965, to take over the country by liquidating the military high command, which they considered their main enemy. Some generals managed to escape from the massacre that occurred on the night of 30 September 1965, and, heading the troops loyal to them, dominated the situation. President Sukarno, who had previously sympathized with the Communists, co-operated with the military and order was restored. Then came the reaction of the anticommunists, virtually all Muslims, which resulted in the death of hundreds of thousands of leftists.

But the Communists were the ones who started all this.

Sukarno ruled in 1965 supported by a triangle that he called "Nasukom", which included the nationalist Muslims ("Na"), the Armed Forces ("Su") and the Communists ("Kom"). The balance was unstable and the three groups looked at each other with suspicion. The Communist Party was powerful and called for the creation of popular militias. The Chinese sent arms in clandestine fashion. Some military units had moved on to Marxism. The Indonesian economy was bankrupt. Nationalist and Muslim students held massive demonstrations daily in the streets.

The entire situation was maintained in delicate stability thanks to Sukarno, viewed as the liberator of the country, and whose individual prestige was considerable. But on the afternoon of 15 September 1965, during an act in the main stadium of Jakarta, capital of Indonesia, the President suffered a heart attack. Many

believed, upon seeing him collapse, that he had died. And the Communists decided to immediately proceed to the coup that they were preparing, for fear that, without Sukarno's cooperation, they would fail in their purposes.

It is on that night that the Jakarta Plan was set in motion. Units of the presidential guard, commanded by Colonel Untung, detained Sukarno, and Air Force groups whose chief, General Omar Dani, had approved the formation of popular militias, went to the houses of the most important generals to kill them. The Chief of Staff of the Army, General Ahmed Yani was executed and barbarically mutilated, as were also six other generals. But the commander in chief, General Nasution, was saved thanks to the heroism of his aid, who, having dressed himself with the uniform of Nasution, gave himself up to the rebellious soldiers and was executed. Nasution managed to escape and then organized the resistance of the troops and the police.

By morning it was clear that the communist coup had failed. Nasution did not want to be a political leader, and thus transferred responsibility to General Suharto, who still rules the country. President Suharto succeeded in staying in power until his death – although devoid, at the end, of the substance of power – and the Communist leader Aidit, who had headed the largest Communist party in Asia after the Chinese, fled from the country.

Upon discovering the atrocities that the rebels had committed against the generals, popular outrage was such that there ensued a massive repression against the Communists, one that was spontaneous and horrible. In a country where progress has not yet tamed primitive instincts, the massacre became widespread and many innocent people died.

Indonesia survived the coup, the subsequent massacres and the eclipse of Sukarno, and is now one of the major South Asian nations, important because of its huge population and future potential. The economy has stabilized and order reigns. Communism was outlawed and the Chinese lost a foothold for

its southward expansion. Australia is now relieved and less worried.

But what happened in all of Indonesia and not only in Jakarta holds an important historical lesson for us. When a country is experiencing instability because communists are attempting to take over absolute power, they will inevitably clash with the Armed Forces, which represent the established order and have the duty to safeguard institutions. The formation of popular militias is a way of eluding or replacing the might of the military. But, sooner or later, the clash occurs and the military chiefs are the targets of the terrorist action.

Hand of the CIA?

Note added in 2017

As mentioned earlier, according to the US Senate report Covert Action in Chile, “**CIA inspired editorials were placed in El Mercurio nearly every day after 1968**” (Bold is mine).

Also see the documents published by the US government in 2014 and which show that the CIA, besides writing editorials for El Mercurio, was also heavily involved in financing it.

(<http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v21>). In these documents one learns that William J. Jordan, member of the National Security Council, wrote the following memo to Henry Kissinger on 10 April 1972: “The CIA has made a new proposal to provide additional support to El Mercurio, the largest and most influential opposition voice in Santiago. The new disbursement would be of \$ 965,000. (...) In September of 1971 we had decided to provide El Mercurio with \$ 700,000. We then gave an additional \$ 300,000 between October and December”.

The Plan Z, a plan that would have been allegedly made by the Popular Unity government in order to assassinate, on 19 September 1973, the high command of the Chilean Armed Forces, was a mere invention of the Chilean military to justify the coup of 11 September 1973, and to justify the ensuing massive repression of the followers of the Popular Unity government. As mentioned earlier, this revelation comes from the very archives of the CIA.

What these archives do not mention, however, and, in my opinion, seems very plausible, is that it would have been the very CIA that would have advised the Chilean military to adopt the Plan Z strategy. Black propaganda, after all, is one of the specialties of the CIA and they are undoubtedly among the top world experts in the matter.

This hypothesis becomes even more plausible when one considers the striking resemblance between the Mercurio editorial and Plan Z. The editorial presents a version of the events affecting Indonesia that many, and perhaps most observers flatly refuse. Noam Chomsky, for example, has seriously documented the massacre that occurred in Indonesia and lays the blame squarely on the CIA. The black propaganda interpretation of events in Indonesia corresponds exactly to the false Plan Z invented by the Chilean military.

Appendix 3 - Father Raul Hasbún's televised address

TV Channel 13 on 4 September 1973 and reproduced the next day in the Mercurio

The sole raison d'être of a government lies in the common good," wrote Pope John XXIII ten years ago.

This he declared in the encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. The Good Shepherd wanted to show how to bring about the fulfillment of the greatest historical yearning of man: peace on earth.

He thus dedicated the entire second part of his document to the problem of authority. Authority is necessary, the Pope said. Authority comes from God, from which emanates its dignity, with the consequent obligation to obey it. From this, too, come its limits: all authority must submit to right reason, and to a moral order superior to it and that recognizes God as its author. People, of course, have the right to elect their rulers, to establish the form of government they desire, as well as the procedures and institutions determining the exercise of its authority.

"The sole raison d'être of a government lies in the common good," said the Pope. A ruler must provide to every citizen material prosperity and the goods of the spirit. He must strive to create the social conditions that allow each person to rapidly attain full, integral development.

By making this affirmation, Pope John was simply applying to the political-social realm the great doctrine which, in the matter of authority, Christ proclaimed and incarnated in the Gospel: authority is service; those who govern are servants; power, royalty, authority are a means, not an end; a privileged means to seek the good of others. "The essential office of all public power, Pope John reaffirms, is to protect the rights of the human person and make possible, and bearable, the fulfillment of their duties."

"When rulers, pursues the Pope, do not recognize human rights, or violate them, they are failing in their duties, and citizens are no longer obliged to obey the orders that they give."

That is because “the right to command is a spiritual requirement emanating from God. If the rulers, according to the Pope, give any order that is contrary to the spiritual order, and therefore opposed to the will of God, citizens are in no way obliged in conscience to obey it. “Before obeying man, one must obey God.” Moreover, in such a situation, authority itself collapses completely and turns into an iniquity...

When Pope John wrote these words he was not at all inciting people to disobedience or insubordination. The Christian is a son and an architect of peace, he does not love violence, he does not believe in it. The worst despots of history reigned in the world when Christianity formulated its doctrine of respect and obedience to authority, “because all authority comes from God.”

What the Pope wanted was to remind us that there can be no peace on earth without an organized society, and no organized society without authority; and that the sole *raison d'être* of authority consists in serving the common good. The common good: in other words the right of every citizen to fulfill his destiny on earth and in heaven; personal and community growth in the possession of bread and work, of culture and health, of land and housing, of truth and beauty, of knowledge and faith. Indeed, the health and well being of a nation represent the very *raison d'être* of a ruler who wants to be faithful to his mandate and to become worthy of the obedience and collaboration he claims. Such is government by the people and for the people; such is authority: fostering growth, organization, unity and fulfillment.

In this light it is easy to understand the greatness of a ruler: to govern is to serve; to serve is to reign. The joy of a ruler: to see that his people are growing, that his people are improving, that his people are one. Such is also the drama of a ruler. To watch his people being impoverished, becoming desperate, torn in their bodies and wounded and sick in their soul. Especially when he has been incarnating a great hope. Bearer of a promise, of a virtually guaranteed rapid redemption...

It's a drama. And it would be a personal drama if the ruler belonged only to himself. But ruler and people are bound in a common destiny. When a nation is drowning, it drags its ruler into frustration and failure. Not in vain does the term "ruler" in Greek have the same root as "pilot."

Now Chile looks like a sinking ship. It's no use looking the other way: we all realize it. We only differ as to whom to blame. We are a sinking ship. Without knowing why. Without being overloaded or having been hit because of war. Why? What for? In the name of what sacrosanct ideology, sacrificed to what remote new continent or future?

The question, the complaint, inevitably falls on a person. He is responsible for the course of the ship.

It is a question, a complaint: not an accusation. Who can accuse? Who can penetrate the secrets of the heart? Who is able to discern the mystery of good and evil, the impenetrable mystery of a man's freedom to do or not do what he should have done; to be or not to be what he should have been?

We do not accuse: we respect. We respect the mystery of the depths of the soul: inviolable sanctuary where it is only lawful for God to penetrate. We also respect personal pain. We imagine that no one suffers as much as the pilot the shipwreck of his boat. Because his person and his destiny are linked to it. Because it is from his ability to steer it well or badly that flows the image he will leave in History! Because we must believe in the sincerity of his desire to serve his people, in the honesty of his efforts to heal them and not to make them ill.

We do not accuse: we respect. We understand, we ourselves almost feel his pain and dilemma: on the one hand, a hope, a promise, a program. The hope of the poor, of the always left behind! Joy, euphoria of believing: finally there is justice, excitement, fame, books, speeches, lectures, journeys, interviews, multitudes... and finally joy, euphoria!

But then frustration and failure. A bleeding nation. Evidence,

evidence, statistics, statistical evidence of everything that is missing: bread, respect, joy, hope: evidence of everything that abounds: anxiety, fear, demoralization, hatred. Photographic evidence of a people who have become unrecognizable, who lost what they had and still do not know what lies ahead. Or who do know, and who do not like what is coming, and reject it.

Suffering and dilemma: what is one to do? Push ahead in the same direction? The pilot knows very well that this is pointless. And he cannot but know it! His sensitivity as a patriot and a doctor must make him realize that an entire people - present and future - does not accept to continue being sacrificed on the altar of a sacrosanct ideology, imposed as an irrefutable dogma, foreign and incompatible with our national soul; does not accept to be sacrificed because of an ideology that violates the very essence of our human and Christian values. The Marxist-Leninist experience – imbued with a totalitarian obsession, a dream of liberation that is both false and deceitful, a logic of lies and violence that have always characterized it historically – has already illustrated the profound truth of Pope Paul's assertion: *every time men try to organize the world without God, they end up organizing it against man!*"

Suffering and dilemma: a country organized against man. Brothers against brothers, compatriots against compatriots ... "The sole raison d'être of a ruler is the pursuit of the common good of his people"... And if the ruler, the pilot cannot rectify the course; if he finds that, objectively, conditions do not exist for him to fulfill his solemn and essential commitment, his raison d'être as ruler...; what must he do?

A painful dilemma: either stay on as ruler, knowing full well that the road ahead can only lead to disaster, or resign, and leave the job to someone else, and thus enter History as leader of a false hope.

None of us would want to have to face such a dilemma. Every person has the right and duty to love himself or herself and save his or her own image in the face of History. It is an

excruciatingly hard and painful decision. Making such a decision would require calm, time, inner silence, distance, perspective. Something a ruler just does not have when his ship is sinking. He faces constant and overwhelming pressure. Some want him to speed up on the path already being followed. Others, the majority, would like him to adopt a new path and, if he is unable to, they simply want a new pilot. Either way he knows that his reputation threatens to be darkened and dissipated in the cloud of History.

Probably not. Probably history will remember with gratitude, with affection, the image of a man who embodied a great dream; who symbolized the pain and longing of a people thirsting for redemption, who honestly undertook the path he believed was conducive to liberation and one day, just as honestly convinced that the road ended in the abyss, felt that his people were worth the sacrifice of his own humiliating resignation.

In short, people only remember, and love, those men who loved their people more than themselves. And a ruler is, by definition, a man who has no other *raison d'être* than the good of his people; even at the cost of his personal pain.

Difficult, painful dilemma. These are days and moments when decisions are made for centuries. Such decisions are entirely personal, no one else can take them for us, and they can never be obtained under the constraint of force.

Energy and spiritual strenght: that is what is called for. To create an atmosphere, a moral climate in which we can all see and hear; everyone, especially the pilot. An atmosphere that will allow him to see the situation of his people, not through a preconceived or adulterated ideology, but the genuine and dramatic situation as it really is. So that he can hear the voice of his people – and why not? – through that voice, the voice of God himself. The voice of a nation that has something to say to him, with more or less deference but always with anguished sincerity. The voice of a people the majority of whom do not feel understood, or even listened to, and who only claim their right to question their

leader, requesting him to account for his mandate. The voice of a people who do not deserve to be immolated to impracticable and never implemented ideas, and to be ignored in their longing and right to blossom. The voice of a people that, in the end, are merely asking to be taken seriously, as the *raison d'être* of their ruler.

And the voice of God! ... Of a God, silent and discreet, that one only hears when there is silence and humility in the soul, who only speaks when asked to speak...

Twenty centuries ago, a disciple of Christ, Paul of Tarsus, taught all the Churches to pray for the rulers: to pray and offer thanksgiving for kings and all those who were depositories of authority, so that they could lead a quiet and peaceful life. "This is good," he said, "this pleases God, our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and come to know the truth."

Ancient admonition, venerable liturgical tradition, which today assumes unsuspected relevance. Let us pray, let us continually pray; let us even anticipate thanksgiving for our authorities and especially for the President of the Republic. Let us pray and pray; let us almost fight as if in a fierce battle of prayer with God, so that, by force of our supplication, he may allow all – and in particular the President of the Republic – to know the truth. Let us provoke the Spirit of God, in a display of crazy hope, so that he pours out – as he usually does – and violently descends into the heart of our ruler and shows him the path that he must follow, and gives him the strength to follow it.

Whatever happens, the Lord of History will not leave us alone; he will be able to give Chile rulers more interested in the people than in themselves. He possesses enough wisdom, strength and ingenuity to turn our night into a promising dawn.

Appendix 4 - “We love freedom”

Cardinal Silva’s Easter Homily¹⁹⁰

On 18 September 1973 in the Church of National Gratitude, and directly broadcast on Channel 13 television. Published the following day in El Mercurio

In the name of all those who believe in God, and for that reason respect man, I want to interpret the sense that we attribute to this liturgical celebration.

We have gathered in this Temple to pray for our country, thus fulfilling an old and uninterrupted tradition, which year after year has united us to pray for Chile, in the occurrence of the anniversary of the First Independent Government of the Fatherland.

Today, given the painful circumstances we have experienced, this celebration takes on a double meaning: we come here to pray for the fallen; and we come, also, and above all, to pray for the future of Chile.

We ask the Father of Mercy to forgive our faults and those of our brothers fallen for the country. We trust in his infinite goodness, and we hope, through the Redeeming Blood of Christ, that the eternal light shines upon our soldiers and civilians who have sacrificed their lives in the noble, difficult and painful task of correcting our mistakes and of ensuring that justice reigns supreme on our land and for all the children belonging to the same country, thus bringing us the much desired fruit of peace.

We are all builders of the most beautiful thing: our homeland. An earthly homeland that prefigures and prepares the homeland without frontiers. Our homeland

¹⁹⁰ For the full original text in Spanish:

http://www.cardenalsilva.cl/pdf/40_amamos.pdf; Retrieved on 2 September 2017.

does not begin today, with us; but it cannot grow and blossom without us. That is why we welcome it with respect and gratitude, as a task begun many years ago, as a legacy that both makes us proud and calls on our commitment. Our look towards the past, near or remote, would like to be more inquisitive than condemnatory; more open to discovering the positive than to judge omissions; the look of a disciple eager to learn instead of that of a teacher who wants to impart learning. We welcome our homeland as a sacred deposit and an unfinished task.

In this religious moment our hearts are filled with an immense hope. The hope felt by all those who, in one way or another, are renewing their commitment to the hungry masses who crave for justice; who would like to be the builders of a world that is more human and where there is more solidarity and justice; who would like to be the creators of that peace, for which every human heart yearns and which forms the basis of true liberation.

In order to perform such a noble task, all Chileans must create a climate of understanding, justice and wisdom, forgiveness and fraternity. We must overcome our divisions and struggles, we must forget our differences and our contrasting opinions, we must put an end to hatred so that it does not poison and destroy the soul of our country.

We ask the Lord that there be no winners or losers among us. For the reconstruction of Chile we would like to offer to those who, in these difficult times, have taken on their shoulders the very heavy responsibility of directing our destinies, our full and disinterested collaboration.

Today, in order to illuminate the task that lies ahead, I would like to humbly go through some of the main characteristics of our Chilean personality, to discover in them the traces of God's love for us, which has endowed our national being with beautiful characteristics that

rightly constitute our pride and that represent all that is meant by the expression 'typically Chilean'.

Our true values appear to me as the ever-present emanation of love God's love for Chile, and their profanation strikes me as a sacrilegious profanation.

We love freedom. During the long years of our life as a nation, we have made enormous sacrifices to obtain it, to preserve it, and to increase it. Is not this, perhaps, the reflection and work of the presence of Christ the Deliverer? Is this not the will of the Father to make us live our lives, to develop our potentialities, our values, our riches, to express in the concert of nations the virile and haughty features of a small but noble people; intelligent and confident in carving and driving their own destiny?

To be faithful to this gift of God means to increase in Chileans and Chile true liberty; fight to make it the patrimony of all; to prevent foreign values, customs or powers from making us forget what is ours, and to subject us to a yoke that would become unbearable and deprive us of everything that belongs to us, and which constitutes our most precious heritage that we call Chileanity (chilenidad).

Together with our love of freedom there is love and respect for the law. We have believed that it was the best safeguard of our freedom and the best stimulus for our development. We have respected the law, and when it is no longer fair, or efficient, we have changed it for a better one. We have preferred order to disorder, authority to anarchy, dialogue to imposition, justice to violence, love to hatred. In all authority we have revered the person and the investiture, obeying his legitimate decisions, without renouncing the right – also legitimate – to feel otherwise.

How beautiful is the soul of Chile, gift of God to our people! And when the Lord himself fills our soul with renewed vigor,

when the Spirit of God blows like a strong wind demanding that the poor be evangelized and the oppressed liberated, he is certainly not calling for the negation or destruction of the Chilean soul!

We are not yet a perfect society. Personal and collective sin subsists in us. We are like the chosen people, like humanity itself, a land that God looked at with love, a family that He preferred, and to which He wanted to belong, because He saw her small and weak, imperfect and in need of Him. And God made himself one of us. And he accepted us as we are. And he respected us in our originality and in our shortcomings. And he walked, and continues to walk with us, sustaining our aspirations for freedom, encouraging our conquests, denouncing our weaknesses. He respects us. Believes in us. Hopes and trusts in us.

Admirable mystery of our faith! The faith of a people who expect everything from their God. The faith of a God who expects everything from his people.

That is why on this day, when our souls are mixed with grief and hope, we come here to implore the Lord of History, Christ, our Brother and our Redeemer, to enlighten our way, strengthen our souls, comfort our pains, and give us the blessed gift of Peace that He promised us.

So be it.

Appendix 5 - “Are we Christians?”

Easter Homily of Cardinal Silva, 13 April 1974¹⁹¹

“We have always said that violence only generates violence and that this is not the way to make a society more just”

On this night, the whole of Christendom, and we with it, have gathered to pray to anticipate the commemoration of the Mystery of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our faith, the tradition of our fathers and the Holy Church, have conveyed to us the joyful news that Christ, after his death, has risen.

We, like so many of our brethren, have come here tonight to celebrate this mysterious event upon which is founded faith, the religion of Christ, the Lord. It is because Christ has risen, my dear children, that we believe in Him. I would like, in our country today, in this year of Grace 1974 as we Christians call the years that have followed the transcendental fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that we should stand before this faith of ours, based on Jesus Christ, believed by the Church, proclaimed by generations of Christians and also by us, before this collection of faith, that preaching of the Gospel, that good news that Christ has brought, to conform our life with that proclamation of salvation that the Lord brought to us and that comes to be corroborated, affirmed, by his glorious resurrection.

Today, in our homeland, we, who are Christians, what should we say when confronted with the message of the Lord and our own lives? What should we do, confronting these two realities? Christ who loves us, Christ who came to redeem us, Christ who has poured into each one of us the holy water of baptism, his redeeming grace, to make us new creatures, to create a new people, the people of God! What should we be declaring, my dear children? When we look at our lives, are we really new creatures? Has the baptism that we have received in our souls

¹⁹¹ For original text in Spanish:

http://www.cardenalsilva.cl/pdf/42_somos.pdf. Retrieved on 3 September 2017.

transformed our society, our community of men, who live in this beautiful land that God has given us? Do we form a community of Christians? This is the question that I ask myself.

This is the challenge that the history of Salvation presents today to us, to our nation. Are we really the children of Jesus Christ? Are we authentic Christians?

Your Pastor, my dear children, is aware of what this means: being Christian. Your Pastor recognizes his weakness, his littleness, and the enormous distance between his own life and the ideal that Christ wished to bring on Earth.

However, trusting in the Lord, trusting in his goodness, in his grace, in the promise made to him and also to all his people, today he dares to question himself and to question all Christians about this reality. Are we Christians? What does it mean to be a Christian?

Above all, it means recognizing God who is the only one who has the right to demand of us a total and unconditional love. It means to recognize our God as Our Creator, to recognize that he has the right to impose His laws upon our lives. It means to recognize Him, too, as our Judge. But above all else, to recognize him as Love that has become Flesh, and that has come to live among us to redeem us.

This God who is our Creator, who has created all things – as revealed to us in the holy books in very simple words, suitable to us, men – this God who has given us life and on whom we are totally dependent, has chosen to be a humble child, to become Flesh, to live among men, to be exposed to arguments between people, adversities and human struggles. He has become one of us and has been a victim of human passions dying for us, requesting of us not the blind and fearful obedience of the slave, but the love of the son, who recognizes his father, who loves and obeys with immense affection.

Being a Christian means, my dear children, to recognize our God and know that He wants us to love.

What else does it mean to be a Christian? It means, my dear children, that we are all children of the same Father and recognize ourselves as brothers. It means that we must respect each other, because none of us are inferior to others before the Lord. It means that we must also respect ourselves, because love does away with distances, knows how to overcome differences and knows how to forgive weaknesses. Two great loves lie in the heart of every Christian: the love of his God and the love of his neighbor. This is the law.

And now I ask myself: is this commandment of God really being respected in Chile at the present time? Are we really behaving like the children of God? Are we treating our neighbors as our brothers? Are we abiding by Christ's commandment, 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you'? Do we realize that we should love our neighbor as ourselves? Are we really accomplishing this? This is the question I am asking myself today.

Your Pastor, my dear children, really has immense doubts. He has great apprehension. It is not certain that we are faithful children of the Father of Heaven, that we love in the person of our brothers Christ the Lord who has died and who has risen for us. I have my doubts.

Why? We have witnessed in the past year the vicissitudes of our history, the pains of our people, the struggles of our children. We have witnessed all this. We have gone through the pain of seeing that our people, our children, who are the children of God and the people of God, have not been able to understand, to respect, and to love one another; we have witnessed the birth among us of fratricidal hatreds.

We have witnessed the struggle and death of our brothers. We have gone through the pain of seeing bloodshed and war between compatriots. We have tried and done everything possible to avoid this from happening... at least we think so. It is possible that we may have been somewhat guilty and not done everything that we should have.

We have declared that violence only generates violence and that this is not the way to make a society fairer and better. We have told our people, our government, that one should not ignore basic human rights, that these are sacred, that no one should be violating them.

We have repeated this message several times but our message was not heard. And that is why today we share the tears of our Father who witnesses the tearing apart of his family, his children fighting against each other, the death of some and the imprisonment and suffering of many others. However, my dear children, in spite of our weaknesses and our faults, we nevertheless have hope.

We trust in Christ, we trust in the Lord and we ask Him, with the anxieties of the Father who is afflicted by the pain of His children, to bring peace to our land; that your children understand each other; that all of us, all without exception, can work for the greatness of this land that we love and that He has given us, as a sign of his inextinguishable love.

We have confidence and hope.

Would you believe, my dear children, that at this very moment your pastor, your bishop, is being told that his life is being threatened, and that he must therefore be constantly escorted for his protection? Would you believe that such a thing would be possible in this land of ours? I keep asking myself, what wrong have I done? I keep wondering, how is it possible that hatred among us would conceivably have reached such a level that an aberration like this would be possible? I cannot believe it; I just can't bring myself to believing it. I cannot believe that someone would have the intention of harming a simple man, a mere nobody, but one who has accepted to carry on his shoulders the Cross of Christ, one whose head has been anointed by the grace of the Pontificate. I just can't believe it.

I have a hope: I love my people. I love my people and, indeed, if it were necessary to give my life for them, I would ask the Lord to give me strength to carry his cross to the extreme. But I would

like my people to live in peace, that the men of my land could get up every morning and see the sun that enlightens them, to see the mountains, the valleys, the seas, and not have to live in fear and worry about someone pursuing them. To realize that the grace of God fills everything and belongs to everyone.

I would like that to be the case, my dear children. And I trust that such will be the case. Your Bishop wants the suffering of his nation, of his children, to come to an end. However, he also avoids exaggerating by suggesting that in Chile right now everything would be suffering, misery and tears.

He knows that there are many of us, in fact the vast majority, who are not experiencing fear and are living in peace. But I must tell all the men of this earth that there are those who suffer, and invite them to be more fraternal, so that they may understand and help those who suffer. All those who are happy and well, we ought to thank the Lord for the graces we have received, promise to Him that we will use our joy, our grace, the goods He gives us, to make our brothers more happy, and to comfort the suffering, to wipe the tears of the weeping, to fulfill the Gospel.

Is this asking too much? Is it not this, my dear children, that God wants from us? One, only one died for all of us. One alone was the innocent victim who gave himself up to redeem all humanity, and that single family in Jerusalem two thousand years ago wept bitterly for the death of the beloved son, the friend, the brother, the Master. That single human family with its pain, has served to redeem all of humanity and to give us the drop of happiness that we have.

Blessed be the sorrow of Christ who has come to heal our miseries and sorrows. That is why today, your Pastor, in your company, comes to ask the Lord, trusting in the goodness of men, understanding for all. That we may know how to wipe away tears, comfort the afflicted, give freedom to the captives and liberate men.

So be it.

Appendix 6 - Declaration of Chilean Episcopal Conference

24 April 1974¹⁹²

To see the full text in Spanish, including Cardinal Silva's presentation that appears earlier in this book: [Presentación y declaración](#)

RECONCILIATION IN CHILE

Dear Christians,

A few days ago we participated in the most beautiful and significant ritual of the Christian Liturgy: in the darkness of the night we set out following the light of the risen Christ. The Church is this: a pilgrim people who, in their march towards the fullness of the Kingdom of God, recognize no other light than the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We know that the Lord has entrusted to us, Bishops united to the Holy Father, the task of guiding His People along this path. Aware of this inalienable and non-transferable responsibility, we want to share with you the hopes and concerns that have arisen between us as we reflected on the challenges presently facing us in the light of the Gospel.

Such a task seems all the more urgent to us given that other voices sometimes let themselves be heard that, without having the authority given by Christ, seek to guide the People of God and only succeed in introducing into their ranks disturbances and bewilderment.

We invite you, then, to strengthen the bonds of our community to continue in this march towards Christ, who represents the vocation of the Church.

¹⁹² This declaration was made public on April 24, preceded by a presentation by Cardinal Silva, which was analyzed in Chapter XIV – Catholic Church Distances Itself from Junta. (Note added in the 2017 edition: For the original Spanish text, including the presentation, see

1. Holy Year

In this march of the Church, it has become a custom that every twenty-five years the Holy Father summons Christians to celebrate the “year of the Lord's mercy.” Such a custom provides us with the opportunity to become aware of our status as pilgrims and to review some of the profound demands of our faith.

Echoing the voice of the Holy Father, we have taken up this call to express our communion with him and with the other Bishops of the Church.

The Pope wants this Holy Year to be for the whole Church “Year of Reconciliation”.

The particular circumstances in which the People of God find themselves in Chile renders this appeal especially relevant. Mutual resentment and the desire to seek revenge, make this Year of Reconciliation all the more urgent in Chile. May we, among Christians and within the very People of God, manage to achieve reconciliation: that would be the best contribution we can make to our country. Such is our own task: evangelizing, illuminating with the light of Christ and the flavor of his salt all human institutions.

Reconciling means: reconciling with God, with ourselves, and with others.

2. Reconciling with God

Let's start with this aspect, since the origin of all evils, personal or social, lies in a man's false relation with God. There are those who deny his existence. There are those who speak about God in terms so vague that it is as if he simply did not exist. There are those who, while claiming to believe, entertain such confusion in their minds that they do not manage to form an image of God as the light and the way. There are those who do not even pose the problem. There are those who say they believe but live as if they did not believe. There are many, in fact a great many, who believe, but with a faith that is weak and in need of support.

The conversion to which the Holy Year calls us is to accept God fully as the Lord of our life and therefore to reject the dominion of sin in ourselves and in the world with its wake of injustice, of anguish, of frustration and suffering.

It is time to turn away from sin and seek God to welcome his friendship, rediscover Christ and fully reincorporate the Christian community to enrich it with our faith and our life. This is reconciliation with God.

3. Reconciling with ourselves

Reconciling with ourselves means always living in accordance with the truth that we believe. It also means knowing how to live in the truth of the hour of today, of history, of life. Of course we each have our ideas and we want to be faithful to them. But we must also learn the lesson of events and, rather than stay in a past that will not return, prepare the future that we are going to build together. Life teaches: experiencing pain and defeat, as well as triumph, is enriching when one knows how to understand these experiences and does not allow oneself to become depressed or over enthused by them.

4. Reconciling with others

Reconciling means shaking hands as a sign of peace and friendship, but the hand that is extended must be guided by an interior attitude that really recognizes the other as a brother. It is what we call conversion. In other words, to reconcile means to treat one's brother as God himself treats him, that is, with respect. And that is why reconciliation involves our conversion to God.

In fact, Christ teaches: "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift" (Mt 5: 23-24).

There are two fundamental attitudes that cannot be absent in those who believe in the Gospel: two attitudes that by restoring lost trust make possible a future of peace; and that re-confer full

stature on the person who embodies them.

a) Those who are aware of having failed their brother, not only through a positive offense but also by simply failing to show love when a situation called for it, must ask forgiveness.

b) But those who have been offended must also manage to forgive those who have offended them. Forgiving one's enemy, praying for those who persecute us and blessing those who curse us (Luke 6: 27-28): these are not beautiful words written simply to move those who read them, but represent the only possible way to found a stable coexistence.

Christians should not only reconcile themselves with their former or present enemy or adversary. They must also be "artisans of peace" (Mt 5,9). For the sake of our country we have to cooperate in forming a community in which all Chileans can live and feel like brothers. We want to briefly indicate what, in our view, are the minimum conditions to achieve this goal. But before we begin to describe them, we believe that it is essential for everyone to sincerely ask himself or herself whether they really want to reach that goal. Without such a real and effective desire, declarations and recommendations, however abundant, are useless.

The basic condition for a peaceful coexistence is the full validity of the rule of law, in which the Constitution and the Law are a guarantee for all. That is why we welcome the rapid drafting of a new constitutional text. And for that reason we are pleased that the Government published a Declaration of Principles. The latter's explicitly Christian inspiration is valuable, and we believe that, despite certain shortcomings in the formulation of the Christian ideal for social and political life, it constitutes a basis for guiding civic and social action in this emergency situation. May all, both rulers and governed, faithfully adhere to its spirit in the pursuit of the common good. Of course we are the first to desire that Christian principles be incorporated into the Constitution of our country by virtue of the free acceptance of our people and after a discussion in which all citizens can

participate actively and consciously.

We recall, and it is stated in the Declaration of Principles, that it is lawful to disagree with this or any government, but that the peace and well being of our country requires that we collaborate with the present government in everything that clearly concerns the common good.

We know that our rulers are well intentioned and good willed. But, as Pastors, we see objective obstacles to reconciliation among Chileans. Such situations can only be overcome by the unrestricted observance of human rights formulated by the United Nations and by the Second Vatican Council and which the Declaration of Principles has rightly described as “natural, and prior and superior to the State.” Respect for the dignity of man is not real without respect for these rights.

We are concerned, first and foremost, with a climate of insecurity and fear, the root of which we believe to be found in delusions, false rumors, and lack of participation and information.

We are also concerned about the social dimensions of the current economic situation, including increased unemployment and arbitrary dismissals or dismissals carried out for ideological reasons. We fear that, by accelerating economic development, the economy is being structured in such a way that wage earners must bear an excessive burden, without having the desired degree of participation.

We are concerned that the education system is being radically revamped, without sufficient participation of the parents and the school community.

We are finally concerned in some cases by the lack of effective legal safeguards for personal safety which result in arbitrary or excessively prolonged detentions in which neither the persons concerned nor their family members know the specific charges that motivate them; in interrogations with physical or moral constraints; in limitation of the possibilities of legal defense; in

unequal sentences for the same causes in different places; on restrictions on the normal use of appeal rights. We understand that particular circumstances may justify the temporary suspension of the exercise of certain civil rights. But there are rights that touch the very dignity of the human person, and they are absolute and inviolable. The Church must be the voice of all and especially of those who are voiceless.

5. The Sacrament of Reconciliation

We must not forget that it is God who calls us to reconciliation; and it is he who offers us forgiveness in the sacrament of Penance. That is why we make our own the words of St. Paul: “We beseech you in the name of Christ: let us be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5,20).

May the rich teachings with which the Holy Father accompany the promulgation of the new Rite, which will soon be put into effect to celebrate this important sacrament, help us all, of course, to recognize with greater clarity the real dimensions of sin in our lives and to convert our heart more effectively to the Lord.

6. Mary, a sign of reconciliation

By referring to reconciliation, of fraternal encounters, we are already alluding to the Virgin Mary. It is she who “with her maternal love cares for the brothers and sisters of her Son, who walk and struggle between dangers and anguishes and fight against sin” (L.G. 62). That is why we recognize her as a living image of the Church, since, under her protective mantle, we all have a place where we can feel welcomed.

We invite you to conclude the celebration of the Holy Year of Reconciliation in our Country, in the National Sanctuary of Maipú, which we will consecrate in the spring of this year. The pilgrimage we will undertake from all corners of our country to this meeting place will be a visible sign of our wish for peace and fraternity. Let us now prepare ourselves for this event by asking the Virgin to strengthen the bonds of brotherly

coexistence in our country, to render the latter strong and just.

Conclusion

We hope that our words will be welcomed not only by Catholics but also by all our Christian brothers and also by those who are not. And we ask God that these words may contribute to the well being of Chile, which is the only thing that has moved us to write them.

We greet you with renewed affection,

On behalf of the Bishops of Chile

† Raúl Cardenal Silva Henríquez

Archbishop of Santiago

President of the Episcopal Conference of Chile

† Carlos Camus Larenas

Secretary of the Episcopal Conference of Chile

Appendix 7 - Wikileaks: the Vatican collaborated with the U.S. in support of Pinochet's coup

[El Mostrador](#) 8 April 2013¹⁹³

WikiLeaks revealed the link between the Vatican and the coup that overthrew Salvador Allende on September 11, 1973.

According to the Spanish newspaper Publico.es, it is in a cable dated 18 October 1973, that the substitute Vatican secretary of state, Giovanni Benelli, expressed to US diplomats “his grave concern, and that of Pope Paul VI, on the successful leftist international campaign being carried out to completely distort ongoing events in Chile.”

At that time, notes the Spanish newspaper: “Benelli was in practice the Pope’s top assistant, since the Secretary of State, Cardinal Amleto Giovanni Cicognani, was too old to perform most of his functions and thus merely passed these on to his replacement. This meant that Benelli (a Florentine born in the village of Vernio, very close to where Machiavelli was born) worked closely for a decade with his former teacher, Paul VI. Such was his leadership at the top of Vatican diplomacy – aggressive, almost authoritarian – that he was even nicknamed “The Vatican’s Kissinger”.

And the newspaper pursues: “Such was the importance of Benelli in the Vatican that it was he who personally received Richard Nixon at the foot of the helicopter in which the US president landed in St. Peter’s Square in 1969 to seal the anti-communist alliance between the White House and the Holy See that gave rise to the most cruel military coups in Latin America. Following Pinochet’s coup, Benelli called the exaggerated coverage of events [in Chile] as possibly the greatest success of communist propaganda, and underlined the fact that even moderate and conservative circles seemed very willing to believe

¹⁹³ <http://www.publico.es/internacional/vaticano-colaboro-eeuu-apoyando-golpe.html>; Retrieved on 5 September 2017.

the most crude lies about the excesses of the Chilean junta” reported the US Embassy in Rome, on a cable classified TOP SECRET.

“Realizing that Allende’s fall was one of the greatest setbacks for the Communist cause, Benelli asserted” (as the US diplomatic cable ROME 10729 puts it), “leftist forces have largely minimized the damage by convincing the world that the fall of Allende was due exclusively to fascist and external forces, rather than to the failures of his own political management, as actually happened. Benelli expressed fears that the success of this communist propaganda campaign could influence the world’s free media in the future,” notes the diplomatic cable.

“The accounts of the international media according to which there would have been brutal repression in Chile have no basis,” asserted the Pope’s top assistant. Referring to the repression imposed by the military regime, Benelli said: “As one would normally expect following a coup d’état, we must admit that there has been some bloodshed in the cleaning operations in Chile, but the Nunciature in Santiago, Cardinal Silva and the Chilean Episcopate in general have assured Pope Paul that the Junta is doing everything possible to bring the situation back to normal and that the accounts of the international media according to which there would be a brutal repression are false”, he says.

According to this source, Benelli (who was a candidate for the Pontificate after the deaths of Paul VI and John Paul I) argued that “the validity and sincerity of Cardinal Silva’s interpretation could not be called into question because he was one of the most outstanding progressives within the Church. The Pope has been under severe internal pressure in the Church, especially from France, to speak out against the excesses of the Junta” of Pinochet. And Benelli adds that “despite the efforts of the Vatican, leftist propaganda has had such remarkable success that even with some of the most conservative cardinals and prelates seem unable to consider the situation objectively. The result is that leftists have succeeded in creating a situation in which the

Appendix 7 - Wikileaks: the Vatican collaborated with the U.S.
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Pope would be attacked even by moderates if he were to defend the truth in Chile”.

“The Vatican is convinced – and the Nunciature has confirmed this information – that during the last months of Allende’s government, the Cuban Embassy was distributing weapons manufactured in Eastern Europe to Chilean workers,” says Benelli.

The secret report of the US Embassy to the Vatican ends with a short sentence, undoubtedly downplaying the issue as it leaves it to the end:

“The Vatican reported last week to a leftist contact that the Pope could not receive Isabel Allende, and Benelli says this will provoke further criticism of the Vatican. SECRET ”.