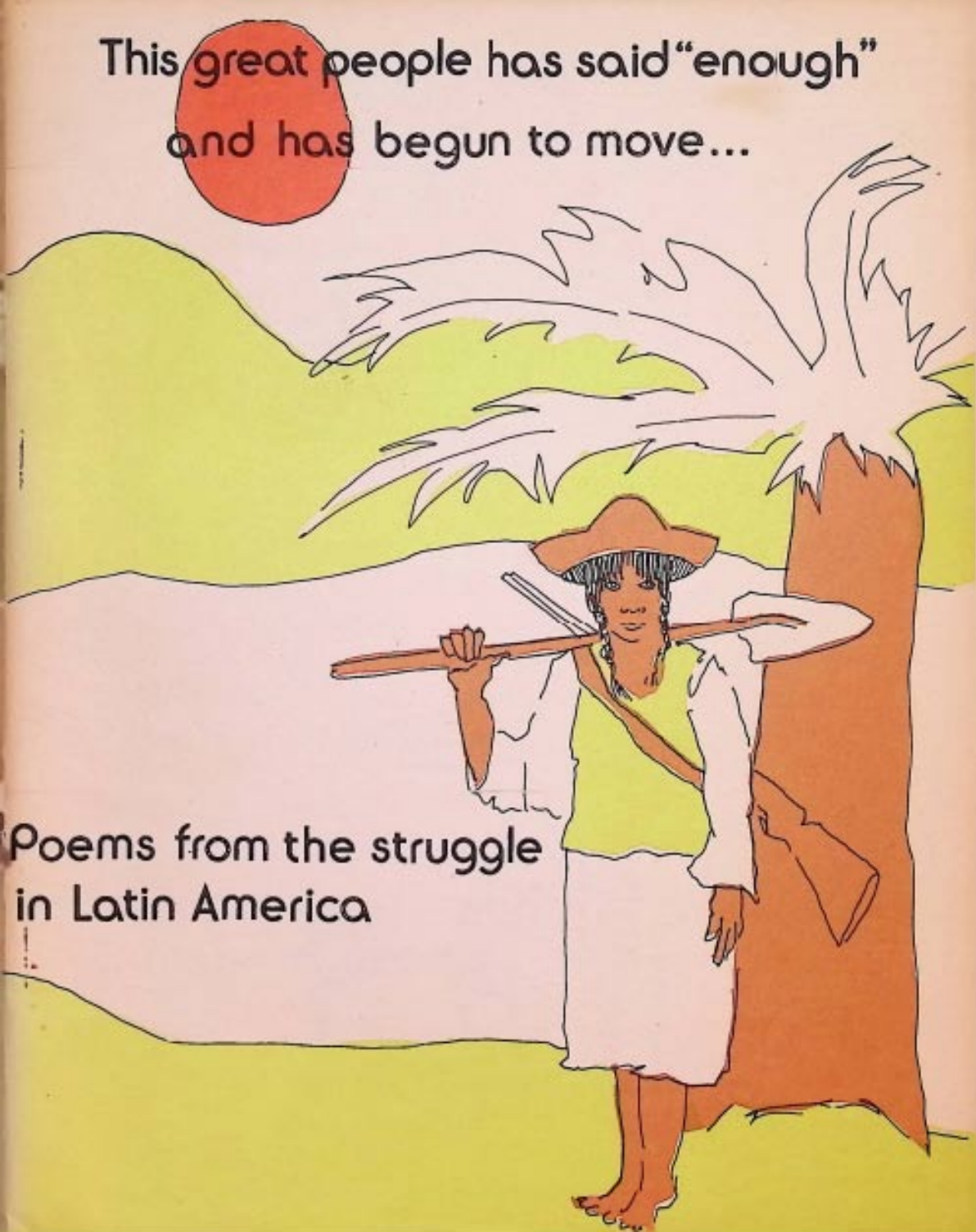
This great people has said "enough"
and has begun to move...



Poems from the struggle
in Latin America

This book was produced through the collective efforts of some of us from Peoples Press and some of our friends. The poems were translated by Margaret Randall. She also wrote the introduction. Some of the photographs are from Cuba, some from Liberation News Service and various other sources.

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THIS GREAT PEOPLE HAS SAID: "ENOUGH!"

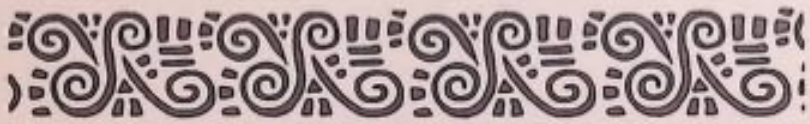
AND HAS BEGUN TO MOVE . . .

(poems from the struggle in Latin America
selected and translated by Margaret Randall,
with a note to be read before reading the poems)

CONTENTS

Most of the great South American continent—including Central America and Mexico—fell into Spain's bloody hands in the sixteenth century, and its great cultural and social development was stagnated. Portuguese explorers landed in Brazil; it is the largest country in Latin America (the fifth largest in the world) and, as opposed to most other countries on the continent whose official languages are Spanish, Brazilians speak Portuguese today. The thousands of original languages and dialects deep in Latin America's roots have been pushed into second place in all these countries, though large sectors of peoples still speak these tongues. (One of the most interesting aspects of the progressive Peruvian government's proposed educational reform is the redemption of Quechua—spoken by a majority of the 46% indigenous population—as an official language.)

During the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the peoples of Latin America were consolidated in their role as cheap slave and feudal labor force for the European courts. In the nineteenth century great continental liberators like San Martin (who crossed the Andes with 5,000 men, 1817–1819, and defeated the Spanish crown to free what are now Argentina, Chile and Peru) and Bolivar led the series of Independence wars that eventually cut the European umbilical cord. These men were forerunners of Jose Martí's vision of "Our America"—one united American nation, free from foreign oppression.



Haiti was the first independent Latin American nation. Martí's Cuba was the last, in 1898, and he played a principal role in Cuban independence. Tragically, that "independence" was accompanied by a U.S. governor who simply came and set up office. The U.S. colonization of other Latin American countries was not always so obvious, but in all cases it was a brutal reality.

As early as the mid-nineteenth century the U.S. saw profit in her "neighbors" to the south; and the Louisiana Purchase, the Monetary Conferences in the late 1800's, the expansionism into Mexico, the Monroe Doctrine, the Platt Amendment, the Panama Canal, the Hickenlooper Act, General Walker's intervention in Nicaragua and the murder of Sandino, the overthrow of Guatemala's Arbenz in 1954 and Brazil's Goulart ten years later, the 1965 invasion of the Dominican Republic, the Alliance for Progress, the Peace Corps, AID, innumerable "private" protestant missionaries, endless attacks on free Cuba as well as hundreds of thousands of corporations, mining trusts, oil subsidiaries, anthropologists, sociologists and "teachers" have all been attempts—brutal or subtle—to subjugate and abuse Latin Americans and Latin America.

For decades, U.S. intervention seemed forged for success. But the balance of powers in the world is changing. Vietnam is a living example that the time has come for the power of the people to win over the Man's technology. In Latin America this change is also

apparent. Cuban patriots defeated the U.S.-backed mercenary invasion at Bay of Pigs in 1961; this was the first triumph over imperialism on the continent.

U.S. "advisors" thought that by murdering Che Guevara in Bolivia in 1967 they had won the war. It was an important battle, but it wasn't the war. Their strategy boomeranged, and guerrilla groups—both rural and urban—all over the continent attest to Che's "two, three, many Vietnams. . . ."

In Uruguay the Tupamaros (National Liberation Movement) are a parallel power that has scored such hits as fleecing the Marine Arsenal without firing a shot, engineering the escape of 106 political prisoners, operated a people's system of justice capable of imprisoning, exchanging and executing enemies of the people, and brought an oppressive dictatorship to one crisis after another.

In Chile a socialist popular government has been elected by democratic vote, and Chile is not the only country defying U.S. "right" to exploit its national resources till the end of time; Peru and Ecuador, though far from communist in their forms of government, are nevertheless asserting their independence towards the United States in control of resources, foreign trade and they even received Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro on his return from Chile early this year.

The U.S.-controlled Organization of American States may no longer be able to dictate who has relations with whom, who trades with whom, who recognizes whom in Latin America. Just a few months after the Popular United Front's rise to power in Chile, that country renewed relations with Cuba; they had been broken since the OAS imposed that break in 1962. Under the Torres regime in Bolivia, the Peace Corps was ousted from the country; in 1971 Panama also did away with this particular form of U.S. intervention (Panama also has a long history of popular struggle in repudiation of the Panama Canal Treaty, and this struggle becomes more intense all the time.)

What are the conditions of life for most Latin Americans, subjugated to U.S. imperialism to the north and their own national bourgeoisie which supports that control? As compared to the great precolumbian culture of three thousand years ago, how many Latin Americans have access to any kind of education at all? Only about a third of the population on the continent is congregated in the cities; two-thirds is rural, and most of these peasant people do not know how to read or write.

The overall illiteracy rate in Bolivia is 68%, in Haiti it is 90%, in Guatemala 60%, in Honduras 55%, in Nicaragua 50%, in Peru 39%. (It should be remembered that *overall* illiteracy includes large metropolitan areas. In all of these countries the illiteracy rate rises sharply in the countryside, and among peasant *women* it is close to 100% in many areas.)

Five thousand years ago our Latin American ancestral sisters and brothers lived and worked on this land which is 12% of the planet. Three thousand years ago—that is, a thousand years before the zero-point of modern times—this civilization reached its maturity in the rich and complex cultures of the Incas (Peru), the Mayas (Central America: Honduras, Guatemala and southern Mexico), Monte Albán, Tenochtitlán and Teotihuacán (Mexico).

Few U.S. students are unfamiliar with the Egyptians, but just as few have been given a sense of the scope and richness of American culture. There is ample evidence that our original Americans were more advanced than their North African contemporaries—without any conclusive proof of contact between them.

In the pre-columbian (before Columbus) cultures, primitive communism was the most common form of government. (The Incas had the first socialist society in America.) Land was communally owned and worked. Collectivity was the way of life. A combination of religious (spiritual) and government (civic) leadership showed itself in most original Latin American peoples. The arts and sciences were highly developed: the Incas are known to have practiced brain surgery, the Mayans discovered the concept of zero, the Aztecs have left us a calendar by which many future centuries of cosmic movements can be read, and the architecture, ceramics and objects of precious metals not destroyed during the Conquest can be "admired" in our museums.

The Conquest—when Spanish aggressors invaded America—took place some 500 years ago. It was the greatest genocide ever perpetrated in the history of the human race. In most conquests some kind of transculturation took place. The conquerors of America, however, not content with destroying the people they found in the "new world," destroyed their culture, traditions and values as well.

In general (because development and customs differed according to area), the Meso-American social order was much superior to that which came to destroy it. Many historians have admitted that one of the overwhelming reasons why the indigenous population could be conquered, was its inability to conceive of human beings with the conduct and values of the conquerors. Private property was unknown in most of the original American societies. The words "yours" and "mine" were not part of the language. Competition was not a virtue. Hospitality was. Slavery was unknown as an economic institution. Robbery was almost nonexistent. The Aztecs and the Incas organized production and distribution in extraordinarily densely populated and non-industrialized areas (each one of them larger than all of Europe today), through the use of principles only now beginning to see experimentation in our modern societies.

In ancient America, equality of the sexes was at a high level: virginity in women was simply a condition (with neither a negative nor positive value placed on it), women had control over their own bodies (abortion was common). Women were doctors, administrators, militarists; they held high government offices and organized large groups of workers. In some societies (such as what is now Venezuela), women cultivated the fields and took care of the home, while men dedicated themselves to hunting. In others (present-day Nicaragua), it was the men who occupied themselves with agriculture while women attended to commerce.

In spite of the Indian's inability to conceive of the kinds of values which brought the Spaniards to colonize and christianize them, it wasn't long before they understood the true nature of their conquerors. Hatuey, the great indigenous leader of precolonial Cuba, saw the aggressors coming, and after a careful analysis of the situation, explained the white man's conduct to his people in the following way:

"They adore a king we know very well . . . (Hatuey uncovered a basket filled with gold as he spoke). . . . Here you see the lord they honor and serve, the lord they love and follow. Because of this lord, they cause us anguish, for him they persecute us, for him they have killed our fathers and brothers and all our people and our neighbors. . . ." Hatuey told his people "even if we swallow our gold they'll take it from our guts," so they threw their riches in the river. They sang and danced, knowing they had no alternative but to face annihilation by vastly superior forces.

All the original Cubans were assassinated (that's why the Spaniards were later faced with the necessity of importing so many black Africans to Cuba as slaves), and Hatuey was burned alive. Tied to the stake, a Franciscan priest offered him christian baptism so he might "attain heaven," and the chief asked if heaven were the destiny of christians after death. When he was told it was, he refused the baptism on the grounds that he preferred hell to the company of such cruel men!

The Spaniards couldn't deal with the democratic councils usual among the indigenous tribes, and replaced them with their colonial form of government: local governors, lords, viceroys, etc., who answered to their king in Spain—and perpetrated their "christian" ethic to justify slavery, rape, genocide and exploitation which continues throughout most of Latin America today. Only Madrid has been replaced by Washington. The Royal Expeditions have given way to more modern AID programs and Peace Corps contingents. People are no longer burned alive; they are massacred or sterilized instead. The rape of life and culture has been refined to a more "dignified" imperialist economic exploitation and cultural penetration.

For every 1,000 babies born in Bolivia, 108 are doomed. The life expectancy is 48 years in Haiti (where U.S. firms have set up a brand new kind of exploitation through which human blood is now an export!). In the Bolivian mining towns our brothers and sisters can only expect to live to the age of 29. Throughout Bolivia there is only 1 doctor for every 2,680 inhabitants.

Only one-fourth of Honduras' labor force is economically active (another way of saying three-fourths of the population is unemployed!). In this Central American country which was once the center of Mayan civilization, there are now only 259 miles of surfaced roads.

All over Latin America, the vast majority of the population is raped of its culture, its health, its potential, its very life. Most Latin Americans go to bed hungry and wake up hungry every day of their lives. Most have no access whatsoever to medical aid—either preventive or curative. Most live in abysmal housing.

The Brazilian *favelas*, the Bolivian mining towns, the squalid misery-belts around all the big cities and the peasant isolation throughout rural Latin America: these are life situations where it is not uncommon for mothers to maim their children at birth to assure them at least the "occupation" of beggar. And in the midst of this desperation, in spite and because of this extreme oppression, Latin America is rising up: in her miners, in her peasants, in her workers, in her students, in her descendants of Che.

Only in Cuba—where a people's revolution was successful in 1959, declaring itself socialist in 1961—is there a different reality. Fidel Castro leads his people in their reclamation of land, resources, health, education, culture, life. On this Caribbean island there is no unemployment, there is no child without school, there is no hungry human being. Malaria, which claimed 7,000 cases in 1958, has been totally eradicated. So has polio.

Perhaps the best illustration of the success of the health program in socialist Cuba is the infant mortality rate which, according to the Report of the Inter-American Development Bank, "in nine Latin American countries exceeds 80 per thousand live births, and in two countries is in excess of 100 per thousand." In no other Latin American country is infant mortality less than 32 per thousand live births. But in Cuba, in 1966, it was already down to 37.7 per thousand live births. (For non-whites in the U.S., in 1966, it was 36.7; for whites, 20.6). Eighty-five per cent of Cuban babies are born in hospitals now, as opposed to 20% before the Revolution came to power.

Statistics alone convey a very partial picture of revolutionary Cuba—a country where the people have taken their destiny into their own hands, where they have said NO to imperialism, where an island of eight million stands alone in this hemisphere against exploitation and oppression and for independence and justice. Statistics alone don't give a full sense of what it's like to be involved in meaningful work, what a lack of alienation is like, what having the means of production in your hands really feels like, what kind of an experience making your own laws can be. In Latin America, Cuba is the "free territory in America," the example for those struggling for revolution on the continent.

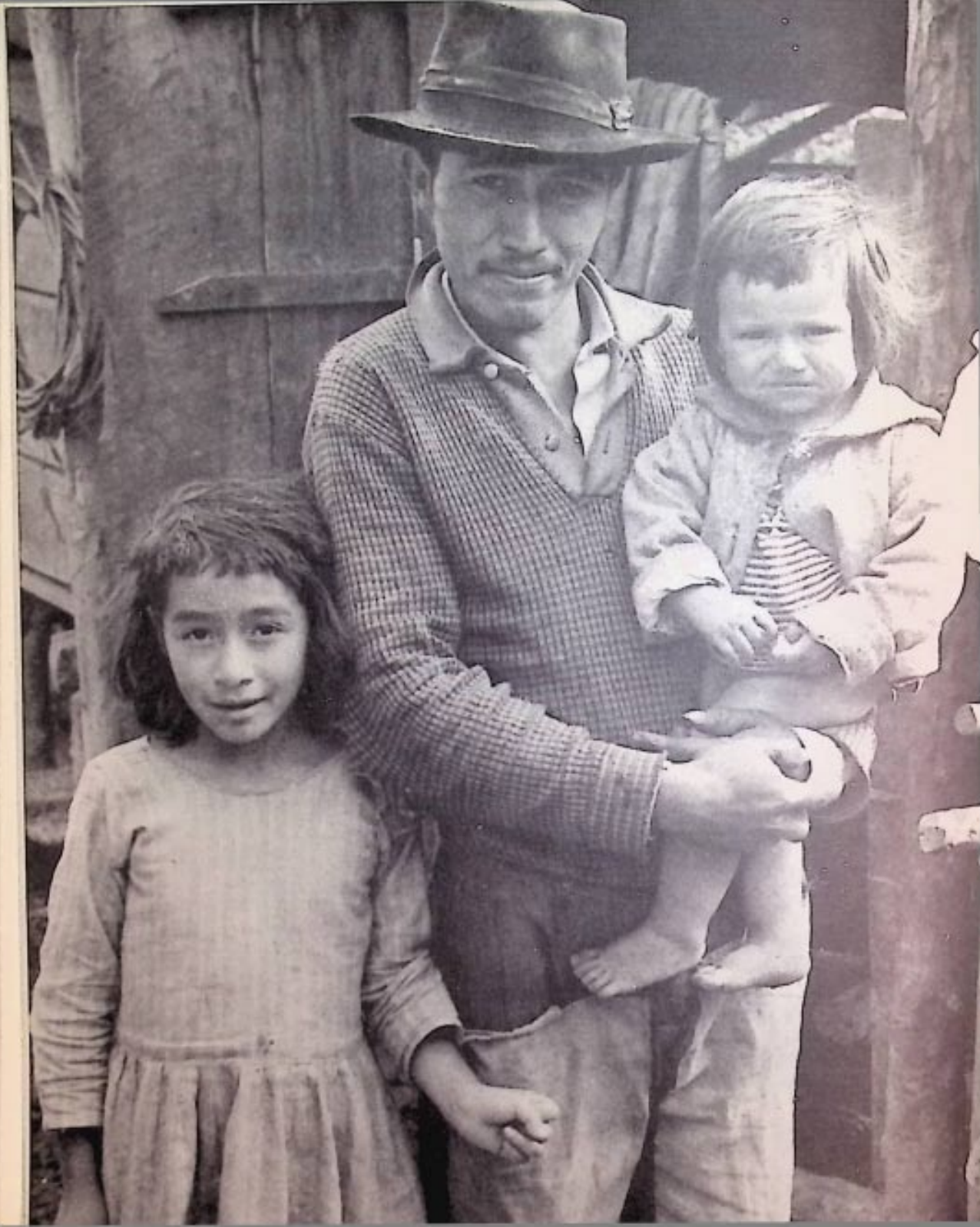
The poetry that sings and shouts on this continent is not written by the children of the ruling class on their return from universities abroad, as they prepare to take their fathers' place at the head of the conference table or edit the government "liberal" arts magazine in the capital.

In Latin America, young men and women are moved to write about the rape they see before their eyes every day. They know how much money U.S. companies take out of their countries as opposed to how much they "put in." They have seen the Peace Corps volunteers sterilizing Indian women. They are acquainted with the latest torture methods the AID officials teach their local police because they've experienced them in their own flesh. And they remember Mexico 1848, Nicaragua 1934, Guatemala 1954, Brazil 1964, Dominican Republic 1965, Bolivia 1971.

The poems, letters, the song in this collection speak of and out of this struggle. They were written in trenches, mountains, prisons, exile, in hiding in the cities and—in two cases—in the freedom of a Revolution won. In every case, they are made by people whose dedication is to revolution; the destruction of the oppressor or the construction of the new society. The words analyze that, exhort to it, tell its story, sing its praises. This poetry reflects the transitional stage in which the people search back to their raped and battered culture in an effort to find the base on which they new revolutionary culture will be built.

Margaret Randall
Havana / April, 1972

Note: Although a lot of research material was used in writing this note, for many reasons I'm especially indebted to the revolutionary anthropologist Laurette Sejourne, and in particular her book América Latina, antiguas culturas precolombinas, *Siglo XXI Editores, S.A., Mexico, D.F., 1971.*



HUGO BLANCO (Peru)

TO THE POET REVOLUTIONARIES, TO THE REVOLUTIONARY POETS

To you, poet comrades, comrade poets, if one of you dies (which wouldn't bother me that much) tell Vallejo and Heraud to come back to life because we need them badly. We need poets who write on assignment, and that of course leaves you out.

You are free poets, wide wings to the wind; no one can chain you, you fly in the skies that suit you best,

And it happens that "the others," the non-poets, who also belong to the human species, with your permission, need those common people, chained; like Vallejo and Heraud, like Melgar and Tello.

Because we want poets on assignment, and *we only like two styles.* And you're free! You wouldn't let anyone impose a style on you!

We like Heraud's style, the way he wrote in red in the waters of the Madre de Dios River; that style he got from Melgar who wrote in the same way in the Sierra; Tello's style in Ayacucho. That's the kind of style we like!

And we like Vallejo's style, too, living in Spain and dying in Spain.

We need those chained, common poets now, those poets who write on assignment. Because Heraud, Melgar and Tello wrote their poems on assignment. Peru commissioned them, urgently.

Hugo Blanco is a Peruvian revolutionary. When he wrote this poem he was serving a 25-year sentence in the El Frontón prison. He was released last year, after serving about a third of the time. Melgar, Tello and Heraud were Peruvian revolutionaries; Heraud was killed in battle at the age of 21 in the middle of the Madre de Dios River. Vallejo—great Peruvian poet—wrote for Spanish towns and men; Hugo Blanco asks Peruvian poets now to write for Peruvian towns and men, to give themselves to the struggle.

Vallejo also wrote a lot on assignment. Here are some examples: Malaga, fatherless and motherless, commissioned him to write. The republican volunteers compelled him to write until he cried out in desperation: "I no longer know what to do, where to go: I run, write, praise, cry, watch, destroy."

Father Polvo de Durango, rising from the wreckage, asked for a poem and Vallejo gave him one. The same as when one of the world's beggars asked him.

He wrote commissioned by the family of Ramon Collar, who it seems was illiterate, asking him not to succumb weakly, to hold out; and on his own he decided to kill as well as write.

He also took on the job of copying what others had written; so he copied what Pedro Rojas traced in the air with his huge finger: "Long liv our brothers!" Later, illiterately influenced by Pedro Rojas' style, instead of writing poetry he took time out to commission the wind's paper, like a vulgar reporter, passing the news on fast: ". . . they've killed him, go on! Advis all the brothers rite away!"

There's proof that he wrote commissioned by an Extremenian born of death and fighting that the individual might be man.

Guernica commissioned him to write the chronicle of the weak souls fighting the weak bodies.

Later he wrote on commission from Irun, Talavera, Madrid, Bilbao, Santander, Ernesto Zuñiga, etc.

He had become so truly the faithful servant of Spain with her assignments, with her demands, that before he died beside her, knowing the men of the world wouldn't find her anymore, he told the children of the world to go and look for her.

And he told Spain—at the end, before he fell for being like the world, Spanish to death, he told Spain:

> Beware of him who before the cock crows
> denies you three times
> and he who denied you, after the cock crowed, three times!

I don't know if he was talking about you, you'll have to ask those Vallejo scholars; Peru is full of those specialists in the expert examination of his poems.

I'm only someone who heard him say: "If I awake pale it's from my work and if I awake red it's from my worker," and who needs him in order to give him a mountain of assignments related to Peru, where the distant never attacked so close and where pain grows by the hour:

The Mala miners, massacred in their vanguard, need a poem on assignment.

The communards of Chocco who came to Lima to reclaim their lands need another.

Bambamarca, poisoned by the lava of a mining trust, needs another badly: at least that's what its children, its flowers and its corn say.

The Huancayan communards, prisoners, hardened invaders, need one; I think they need it to invade their lands again.

The women workers from Lolas who in his own office spit in the Chancellor's face, need another.

Juliaca and Puno found out that Vallejo received assignments by return mail from combatant villages, and they want something like what he wrote for Malaga, Irun, Talaveras.

Remigio Huaman, Simon Oviedo, Carmen Caudia, Benito Cutipa, sister Esther from Huancayo, and many others, want poems like the ones he wrote for Ramon Collar or Pedro Rojas; because they're like them, common illiterate people who only know how to fight to death for their brothers and sisters; they're not revolutionary idols; that's why they need Vallejo who wrote for people like them, while the great poets write for great men and great events.

The thing is, there are only great poets now, and no one writes for common people or the common struggle.

We have to assign all this to Vallejo.

Because if, after so many words, the word can't survive; if, after all the birds' wings the bird itself can't fly, the truth is you'd be better off just saying fuck it all, and we'll forget it.

That's why I ask you, comrade poets, poet comrades; if you die I don't care that much, but tell Vallejo to come back, his people need him desperately.

Come back brothers: there's a lot to do!

El Frontón ! 1969

CESAR VALLEJO (Peru)

THE MASSES

At the end of the battle
the combatant was dead and a man came up to him
and said: "Don't die, I love you so!"
But the corpse, ay, it kept on dying.

Two came and they repeated:
"Don't leave us! Courage! Come back to life!"
But the corpse, ay, it just kept on dying.

Twenty came, a hundred, a thousand, five hundred thousand,
clamouring: "So much love, and not to be able
against death!"

Millions of individuals crowded around
with a common plea: "Stay, brother!"
But the corpse, ay, it kept on dying.

Then everyone on earth
surrounded him; the anguished corpse saw them, was moved,
stood slowly,
embraced the first man, began to walk . . .

Cesar Vallejo (1892–1938) was the greatest poet of the Spanish language, a militant Communist, and he is a living influence in Latin American poetry. This poem is from *Spain, Take This Cup from Me*, and was written November 10, 1937 (thirty years before Che's death).

OTTO-RENE CASTILLO (Guatemala)

LET'S GO, COUNTRY

1. Our voice
2. Let's go, country
3. Away from your face

1.
So that the road doesn't cry for me,
So I don't bleed through the words,
I sing.
For your face, the soul's frontier
born in my hands:
I sing.
To say you have grown transparent
in the bitter bones of my voice:
I sing.
So no one need say —my land!
with all the force of nostalgia,
I sing.
For those who must not die, your people,
I sing.

Otto-Rene Castillo was born in Quezaltenango, Guatemala, in 1936. He was a student organizer by 1954 and was exiled for the first time at the age of 17. During the next ten years he was imprisoned and tortured several times but managed to study at the universities of Guatemala and Leipzig, write a couple of books of poetry, and share the Central American poetry prize in 1955. He returned to Guatemala in 1966 and joined the FAR (Revolutionary Armed Forces). In March 1967, after having eaten nothing but roots for fifteen days, Castillo and a woman comrade, Nora Pais, were ambushed and captured. They were tortured to death on March 19.

Walking out over my voice, I say:
you, interrogation of fruits and wild butterflies,
you will not lose your way in the scaffolding of my cry,
for there is a Mayan potter in your heart
who, under the sea, within the star,
smoking in root, palpitating world,
catches your name in my words.
I sing that name, joyful as the violin which is plough:
my human pain's encounter still to come.
From the sea's arm to the arm of the wind they look for me

to break the tolerance of dusk in my mouth.
The sacrifice of being man accompanies me,
keeps me from going down to the place where treason's born,
where the fool chained his heart to shadow, denying you.

2.
Let's go, country, I will go with you.

I will descend the depths you claim for me.
I will drink from your bitter cups.
I will go blind that you may see.
I will remain voiceless that you may sing.
I will die that you may live,
so your flaming face appears
in every flower born of my bones.

That is the way it must be, unquestionably.

Now I am tired of carrying your tears with me.
Now I want to walk with you, strike lightning.
Go with you on your journey, because I am a man
of the people, born in October to confront the world.

Ay, country,
the colonels who piss on your walls:
we must pull them out by the roots,
hang them from the tree of bitter dew,
violent with our people's anger.
For this I say, let us walk together, always
with the agrarian peasants
and the union workers,
with him who has a heart to know you.

Let's go, country, I will go with you.

3.
My small country, sweet torment,
a bed of love lifts my pupils
and my throat fills wild with joy
when I say country, worker, swallow.
A thousand years I have wakened in death
and laid my cadaver to sleep on your great name,
floating over all of freedom's breath,
Guatemala, saying, my country, little *campesina.*

Ay, Guatemala,
saying your name I come back to life.
I rise from the cry in search of your smile.
I raise the letters of the alphabet to A
where the wind flows out in gladness
and I return to contemplate you as you are,
a root growing towards the human light
with all the pressure of the people on your back.
Damned be the traitors,
earth,
mother,
damned!
They shall know the death of death until death!

From a loving mother, how are these vile sons born?

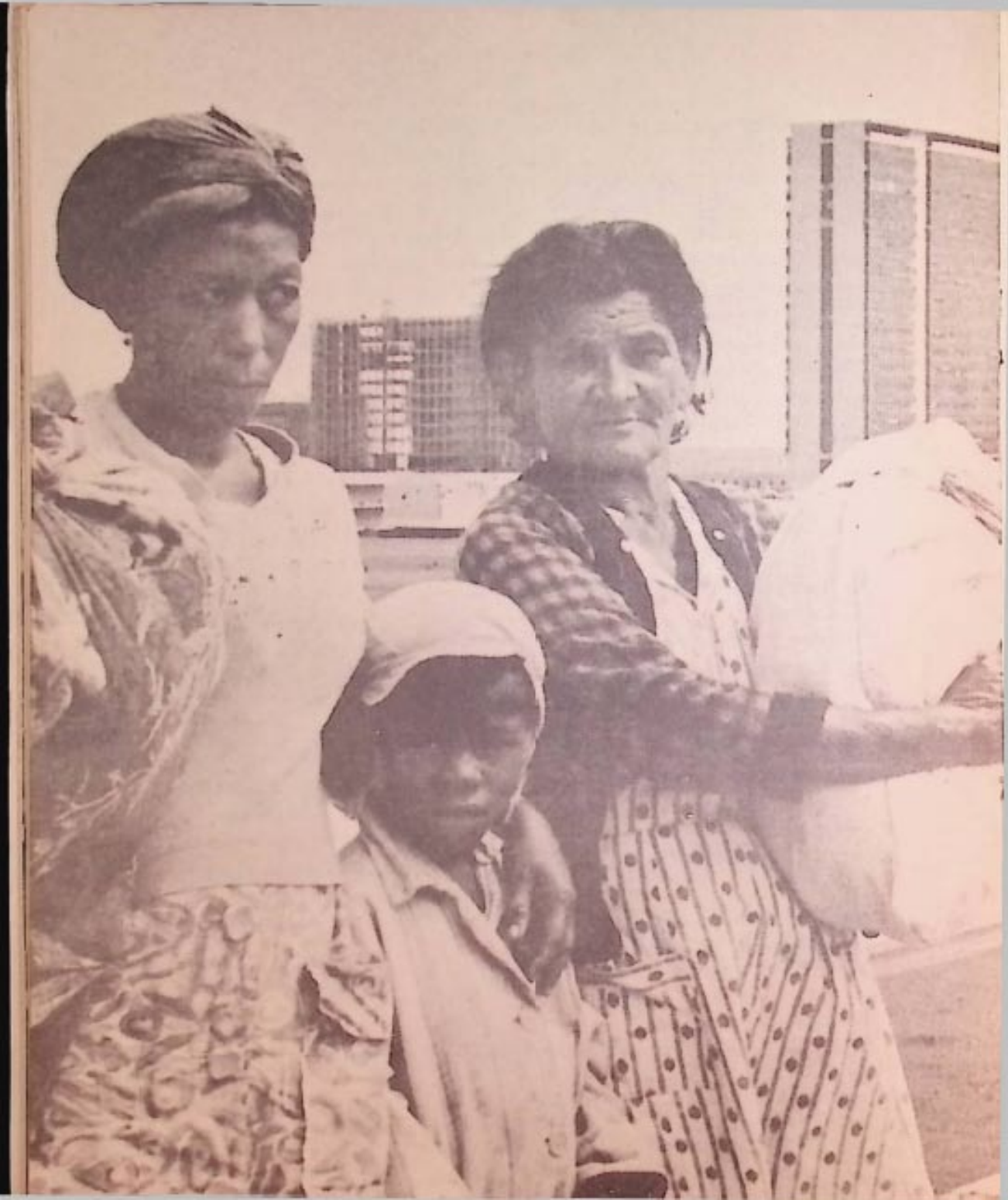
This is the life of the people, bitter and sweet,
but her fight will put a human end to all.
For that, my country, dawns will be born of you,
when man revises luminously his past.
For that, my country,
when I say your name I reveal my cry
and the wind escapes its condition of wind.
The rivers leave their meditated course
and demonstrate, their arms about you.
The seas, on their waves and horizons,

swear your name, wounded with blue words, clean,
to carry you to the people's piercing cry,
where fish swim with auroreal fins.

The fight of men redeems you in your life.

Country, small, man and land and liberty
carrying hope on morning paths.
You are the ancient mother of suffering and pain.
She who goes with a child of corn in her arms.
She who invents hurricanes of love and cherry shoots
and blossoms out over the peace of the world
so that all will love a little of your name:
a brutal piece of your mountains
or the heroic hand of your guerrilla sons.

Small country, my sweet torment,
song settling in my throat
from centuries of rebel corn:
for a thousand years I carry our name
like a tiny future heart,
whose wings begin to open tomorrow.



LEONEL RUGAMA (Nicaragua)

THE EARTH IS A SATELLITE OF THE MOON

The apollo 2 cost more than the apollo 1
the apollo 1 cost enough.

The apollo 3 cost more than the apollo 2
the apollo 2 cost more than the apollo 1
the apollo 1 cost enough.

The apollo 4 cost more than the apollo 3
the apollo 3 cost more than the apollo 2
the apollo 2 cost more than the apollo 1
the apollo 1 cost enough.

The apollo 8 cost a whole lot but you didn't feel it
because the astronauts were protestants
they read the bible from the moon,
bringing glad tidings to all christians
and Pope Paul VI blessed them when they returned.

The apollo 9 cost more than all the rest together
including the apollo 1 which cost enough.

The great-grandparents of the people of Acahualinca were less hungry than
the grandparents.
The great-grandparents died of hunger.

Leonel Rugama was a member of the Sandino National Liberation Front. He and another comrade were trapped in a house in the city of Managua in January, 1970. The house was surrounded by troops and war materiel. The two men put up a courageous fight which lasted several hours. When their ammunition ran out, the army finished them off. Rugama was 20 years old.

The grandparents of the people of Acahualinca were less hungry than the parents.
The grandparents died of hunger.

The parents of the people of Acahualinca were less hungry than the people who live there now.
The parents died of hunger.

The people of Acahualinca are less hungry than their children.
The children of the people of Acahualinca are born dead from hunger, and they're hungry at birth, to die of hunger.

The people of Acahualinca die of hunger.

Blessed be the poor, for they shall inherit the moon.

Where can I write you? You'll tell me anywhere, to a Bolivian miner, a Peruvian mother, to the guerrilla who's there or isn't there but will be. I know all that, Che; you yourself taught me, and anyway that letter wouldn't be for you. How can I tell you I haven't cried so much since the night they killed Frank, and this time I didn't believe it. Everyone was sure, and I said: it's not possible, a bullet can't put an end to infinity. Fidel and you must live; if you don't live, how can we? Fourteen years of this, of seeing those I love so greatly die, that now I'm tired of life, I think I've lived too long, the sun doesn't look so good, the palm: I don't feel the pleasure of seeing it. Sometimes, as now, in spite of my great love for life—for those two things alone, the sun and the palm, it's worth opening your eyes every morning—I feel like closing them forever, like them, like you.

How can it be true, this continent doesn't deserve this; with your eyes open Latin America had her own road. Che, the only consolation would have been to have gone, but I didn't go. I'm with Fidel, beside him, I've always done what he wanted me to do. Do you remember? In the sierra you promised me, you said: "You won't miss the coffee; we'll have *mate*." For you there were no frontiers, but you promised you'd call for me when it was in your Argentina, and how I waited for that. I knew you would keep that promise. Now it can't be, you couldn't, I couldn't. Fidel said it, it must be true, what sorrow. He couldn't say "Che," he called on all his strength and said "Ernesto Guevara," that's how he told the people, your people. What tremendous sorrow, I cried for the people, for Fidel, for you, because I can't bear it. Afterwards, at the wake, this great nation didn't know what rank Fidel would give you. He said: *artist*. I thought all the ranks were too few, too low, and Fidel, as always, found the right one: everything you made was perfect, but you

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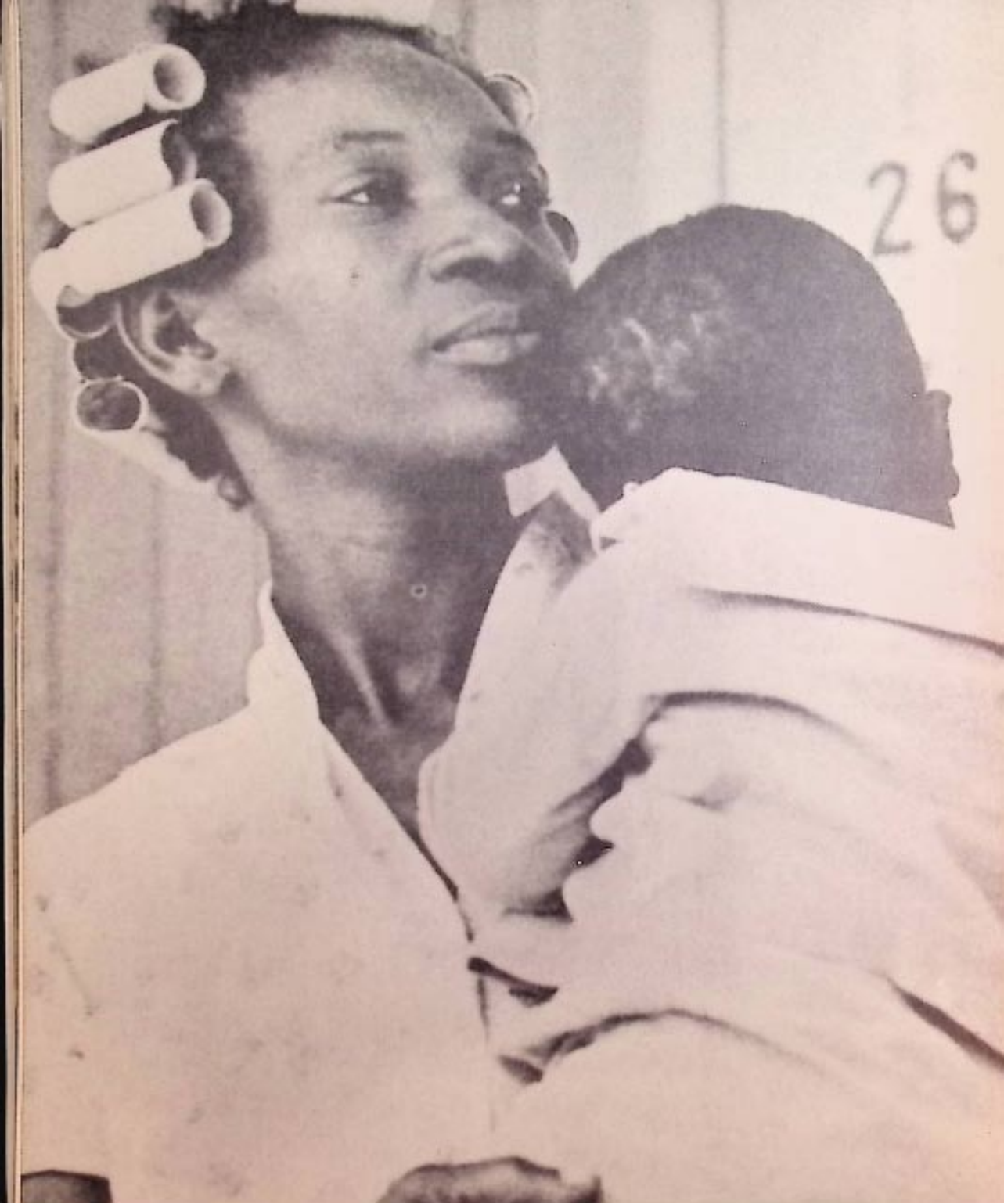
Haydee Santamaría was one of the two women involved in the initial action of the Cuban Revolution: the attack on Moncada Barracks. She was active all through the insurrection and now—during the period of socialist construction—is a member of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party and director of the Casa de las Americas. This letter was a personal expression of grief at Che's death, and was first published against her protest.

created one thing above all others, you made yourself; showing the possibility of this new man, so we would all see that this new man is a reality, because he exists, he is you. What else can I tell you, Che? If only, like you, I knew how to say things. Anyway, you once wrote me: "I see you've become a literate person with control of language, but I admit I like you best in my image of that New Year's day, all the shot gone and cannons blaring around us. That image and the sierra (even our fights of those days are good to remember) are those I will take with me for my own use." That's why I won't ever be able to write anything about you and you'll have that memory forever.

Hasta la victoria siempre, Che love.

Haydee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SILVIO RODRIGUEZ (Cuba)

SONG OF THE CHOSEN ONE (song)

Whenever you tell a story
you talk about an old man, a child, or yourself,
but my story is hard:
I'm not going to talk to you about an ordinary man.
I'm going to tell a story
about a man from another world,
a galactic animal.
This is a story about the Milky Way,
it's a buried history,
it's about a being from outer space.
He was born in a storm of nighttime sun,
in the next to the last month.
He went from planet to planet
searching for drinking water;
maybe searching for life or searching for death,
that's something we'll never know.
Maybe searching for silhouettes or something like that—
something adorable
or at least likable, kissable, well, lovable.
He discovered King Solomon's mines
are to be found in the sky
and not in flaming Africa
like people think.
But the stones are cold
and he wanted heat and happiness,

Silvio Rodriguez is one of Cuba's best-known young singers and composers. He works for the Experimental Music Group at the ICAIC (Film Institute). The words for this song were taken from phrases of a talk Haydee Santamaría gave about the experience at Moncada. She was addressing a group of Young Communists, and she talked about her brother, Abel Santamaría, tortured and assassinated after the Moncada battle. "The chosen one" is Abel.

the stones had no soul,
they were only mirrors, brilliant colors.
And at last he came down to war
(pardon me, I meant to say earth).
He learned history in one blow
he felt the ground glass in his head
and understood that the war
is the peace of the future.
The most terrible things you learn in a moment,
the most beautiful cost us our life.
The last time I saw him go
amid smoke and gunfire
content and naked.
He went killing pigs with his gun of the future.
He went killing pigs with his gun of the future. . . .

CARLOS MARIA GUTIERREZ (Uruguay)

STATEMENT TO THE INTERAMERICAN PRESS SOCIETY

I smile bearded haven't washed for a week
I'd have to take off my sweater disorganize my undershirt
to scratch there where it itches
but I smile anyway
I even thank the cricket who stops singing and fears me
if I had with what
I'd write my gratitude
my joy in 30-pt. type rimmed in an 8-pt. box

what minister of state can stand against this people
what general can force them to carry out his braying
what president will be pardoned when the noose tightens round his neck
if Juan's there

of course that's not his name but it'll do

this Juan with his rifle and seven kids
enlisted for a year to get off misery's list

"We're going to give you the lodging you deserve"
said the colonel pistol on his hip italian belly
and all he could invent for me was this dungeon without a cot poor guy
at night in the casino he's the one who feels cold on his tenth whisky
who can't sleep when he goes whoring
who dies of hunger at the banquets

"here there'll be none of those papers or magazines
none of that marxist crap"

Carlos María Gutiérrez is a revolutionary journalist from Uruguay. He is well-known throughout Latin America for clarifying articles on the struggle in different places, and has a definitive book on Che in process. In 1970, with his first and only book of poems (*Prison Diary*), he won the Casa de las Americas poetry prize. The collection reflects his own prison experience the year before, which ended in exile. This poem is from the book.

recommended the major who actually reads
who learned all the tricks of the press from Reader's Digest
and when he's in the shower rubbing his groin
his wife in Pocitos
rejects and nurses the fantasy
of Lucy Johnson on her wedding night a Playboy foldout anglo saxon breasts
Panama black girl smelling of pineapple[1]
Fort Bragg in his memory not this dump called Minas

"no newspapers allowed here"
said the ensign blushing and it's only natural
I initiated the boy I'm his first prisoner
sometimes as a student he read my articles secretly
now he sees the grey in my beard my face with runny eyes
he can listen to my old snores smell my solitary nightmares
I'm his first civilian in humiliated state
the only vietcong within his modest reach

"the latrine's ready"
Juan said in military jargon taking his post
and he looks at his boots avoiding my eyes
immersed in his *mate*[2]
each slow word
pensive *gaucho*[3] poker face over a royal flush and waiting

then
I've asked permission the request's gone out the permission's come back
and next to the john on the rusty nail
is today's paper in careful pieces in hygienic texts

the regulation five minutes
but I read the cables
Armstrong stepped on the moon and says it's very sad

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1. This line is in English in the original: imperialism having its effect on the Spanish language, via United Fruit, Inc.
2. *Mate* is a strong herb drink popular in Uruguay and Argentina.
3. The *gaucho* is the cowboy of the Argentine and Uruguayan plains.

I'll come back later to read the police reports keep tabs on the boys
if I make a schedule and nobody else asks to go
though there are a few with hepatitis
I'll get to the obituaries the editorials
before they march us out for the lowering of the country's flag
that old army habit of theirs

I smile grateful to this Juan so poor so soldier
compañero sitting before my door
poet of this beautiful parable about the news and its double use

what general minister president
what colonel major young ensign
can stand up against this Juan against this people
against these silent joys

ROQUE DALTON (El Salvador)

O.A.S.

The President of my country
nowadays is called Colonel Fidel Sanchez Hernandez.
But General Somoza, President of Nicaragua,
is also President of my country.
And General Stroessner, President of Paraguay,
is also a little bit President of my country, though less
than the President of Honduras, that is to say
General Lopez Arellano, and more than the President of Haiti,
Monsieur Duvalier.
And the President of the United States is more President of my country
than the President of my country,
who, as I said, nowadays,
is called Colonel Fidel Sanchez Hernandez.

Roque Dalton is a poet from El Salvador who has been active in his country's revolutionary movement for many years. Among other incidents, his history includes having escaped from the CIA when an earthquake crumbled the walls of the jail they were holding him in. He currently lives in Cuba, and these two poems are from his *Tavern and Other Poems*, which won the Casa de las Americas poetry prize in 1969.

ON HEADACHES

It's beautiful to be a communist
even though it gives you lots of headaches.

And the thing is that the communist's headaches
are supposed to be historical, that is to say
they don't go away with aspirins
but only with the realization of Paradise on Earth.
That's how it is.

Under capitalism our heads ache
and they decapitate us.
In the struggle for the revolution the head is a time-bomb.

In the construction of socialism
we plan headaches
which doesn't make them any less frequent, just the other way around.

Communism will be, among other things,
an aspirin the size of the sun.

ARQUELES MORALES (Guatemala)

PASCUAL

For men like you, Pascual,
history and this land waited four centuries,
Rabinal and other communities,
all the men and women of your race
eating away at that false silence,
counting the *katunes*[1] of hunger, one to another,
chalking up resentment in every blow received
and we came along, Pascual, the young men
grown in the cities like artificial plants,
halfbreeds educated for oblivion,
the Great Weak Ones, as Orlando says,
we came along talking so much bullshit,
theorizing on the expressiveness of the stone,
on syncretism and straw men,
advertising the brotherhood in which we always saved
the older brother's place of honor
for ourselves.

But you came with a group of your men
when the new hour began to ripen,
you came to the market place of our lives
and had nothing to sell, no strange object
to offer to the wisemen's scorn,

1. The *katune* is an ancient indian measurement of time.

Arqueles Morales is Guatemalan. He was born in 1940. His poems have twice won the Central American poetry prize. He studied film in East Germany, worked in Cuba, and is now the Prensa Latina correspondent in Panama.

only your hate, Pascual, your cold hate
tempered by the mornings of the high plateau,
sweated in the fevers of the cottonpickers,
your hate rotten with lice, bitten by the rage of disease,
scabbed over by the land that was never yours,

a profoundly human hate, Pascual,
like—we might say—the most perfect Guatemalan hate
that history's ever seen.

Those who knew you said you rarely spoke,
surprise at your silence, Pascual?
What could you say if words
were never worth much to you or your people?
The thing is, there in the midst of the nation's life
you didn't say anything but you said it all, you
were silent when it was the hour for silence and when it wasn't
your acts spoke for you, your unforgettable audacity,
your damage in the victory,
your great knowledge in the mountains, your courage.

The theoreticians kept on repeating that your race
gathered sleep in its eyes, slept dulled
into long dreams of gods and symbols,
while you, Pascual, in the mountain,
spoke to the Comandante every day,
you gave us the lesson of the century,
offered advice for the next action,
took perfect aim at the enemy,
stomped on the theories of the indifferent with your acts,
came down on the lies with mathematical rifle butt.

You knew only too well, Pascual, that death is a simple accident
in the life of war. But maybe you didn't know
(you only knew how to do your part)
that your name trembled the structure of deceit,
that you were more dangerous than a battalion of guerrillas

because your example lit great fires,
burned the bridges of the indecisive,
consumed forever the enemies' houses.

And one day, two tanks, an unknown number
of secret police, military police, soldiers and officers,
an armored helicopter,
jeeps with heavy artillery,
the enemy came down on you with all this one day,
they needed all that to win your death in the city,
and you, sick with your swollen face
(damned tooth that tooth of yours that brought you to death)
and there are only a few shells left to drag your life out,
and only the pistol prolonging your hardened skill,
and your two comrades and you, no longer aware of the pain,
more aware of the pain of history's teeth,
no more Rabinal, your flowering dream,
only the cold peace of the shot now,
the knowledge that in the mountain
they never would have ambushed you like this,
and the metal against you was too much, Pascual,
the shot from a guerrilla's pistol never lasts in real life
like it does in the gunslinger's movies,
and you had to die fighting like a lion,
scratching the hated dust of the big city,
knowing in one glaring moment
you'd never see the day of the Great Brotherhood.

For men like you, Pascual, I repeat,
this country waited hundreds of years.
Your death means a lot, compañero.
But your example means more. And that stays.