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CHILE

THE AGRARIAN REVOLT IN CAUTÍN

Part I: Chile's Mapuches

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The peasant insurgency erupted in Cautín Province among *the Mapuche Indians: landless peasants harrowed by hunger and misery that threatened them with extermination. There the Mapuches she wed their revolutionary capability. The rural agitation then spread rapidly southward; the regions of the Old Frontier and the southern lakes saw the rural poor awaken and revolt. Joining the struggle were the lumbermen of Panguipulli and the agricultural workers of Valdivia, Rio Buteno. Llanquihue and Puerto Mona, the poorest peasants joined the struggle and at times were the most explosive. The mobilization of the rural poor and the death-threat to the great agrarian bourgeoisie spread throughout the South, and this mobilization rode with greater force upon the shoulders of thousands and thousands of peasants and agricultural workers awakened to the struggle. The agitation moved northward through the provinces of Malleco, Traiguén, Concepción, and Arauco. It went on to Ñuble, then reached Linares, gained more strength among the agricultural workers and today advances steadily through the Central Valley. Peasants without land, small subsistence farmers,* afuerinos [*seasonal and migrant workers],* inquilinos [*permanently settled workers on large farms], the agricultural semiproletariat, rural unemployed and peasant women join in ever-stronger union against the great exploiters of the countryside.* From the National Secretariat of the MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left), "The Policy of the MIR in the Countryside: A Response to the Attacks of the Communist Party."

I

The *toma,* or seizure, of the Tres Hijuelas farm came just a few weeks after the inauguration of the Marxist *Unidad Popular* regime of President Salvador Allende, and was the visible beginning of the present wave of peasant insurrection, agrarian reform, and sporadic violence that since has been spreading over the Chilean countryside. Shortly before dawn on November 30, 1970, 20 Mapuche Indian families from the neighboring *Reducción Alhueco* quietly threaded their way across the wheat fields of Cautín Province in southern Chile to pitch crude tents of wheat sacks and old blankets under a hillside cluster of eucalyptus trees on the farm with which they had a boundary dispute lasting many years. The Mapuches posted guards at the deserted clapboard farmhouse of the Fundo Tres Hijuelas—the Owner, Carlos Taladriz, lived in the neighboring town of Lautaro and was away in Santiago at the time—as well as at the machine shed, at the roadside entrance to the farm and at the bridge of planks that crossed over a small stream to the house. The only persons living on the 1,250-acre farm at the time were a shepherd and a tractor driver.

The Mapuches, following what seemed to be a carefully prepared script, festooned the house arid the farm's principal installations with red and black banners of the Castroite MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left) and of its peasant affiliate, *Movimiento Campesino Revolucionario* (MCR). On the next morning the provincial newspaper, *El Diario Austral,* printed a front-page photograph of the Mapuches, armed with cudgels and pitchforks, massed at the entrance to the farm, which had been barred with eucalyptus poles that bore a glowering portrait of Che Guevara. Above their heads a large banner was tied to the gateposts that read: CAPAMENTO LAUTARO. TIERRA O MUERTE. VENCEREMOS. MOVIMIENTO CAMPESINO REVOLUCIONARIO. The newspaper reported "total intransigence" on the part of the Indians, who alleged that the lands were stolen from their community in the past and insisted upon remaining on the farm until it was expropriated by the Agrarian Reform Corporation (CORA).

Entrance to the Fundo Nehuentue shortly after the *toma* or seizure of the farm under MIR leadership in Mach 1972

It was shortly after the fall harvest when I visited the farm in April 1972, roughly a year after its expropriation. The commune or municipality of Lautaro is the richest wheat-producing district in Chile, a rolling country of black earth studded with big oaks, fertile volcanic soil stretching westward between the eroded hillocks where the Indians lived, rising gently into the Andes toward the snowy top of the great Llaima volcano. The fields were empty, when I visited what was now the Campamento Lautaro, and were awaiting to be plowed and seeded with winter wheat. The recent harvest had been poor because of the great confusion of the land seizures and the agrarian reform, and there was considerable uneasiness about what would come. The green façade of the clapboard farmhouse was painted with the tall, spectral, black-and-red figure of Moises Huentelaf—a young Mapuche killed in an attempted seizure of another farm a few months before—rudely drawn in a pon-cho and broad-brimmed *huaso* hat, holding a club or cudgel aloft. Beneath the figure was the legend: NOBODY WILL BLOCK OUR WAY. When I asked the new occupants of the farm to tell me the story of the *toma,* one of them said: "We camped for a month on the hillside because we didn't want anyone to accuse us of ruining or looting the farmhouse. When the Carabineros (police) and later the Governor came to ask us why we took the farm, we told them it was because our great need, because we have no place to live, because among the Mapuches the sons and the Sons' children must live for many years with their fathers because there is no work and no land."

In the year that followed the *toma* of the Fundo Tres Hijuelas, some 120 farms in Cautín Province were totally or partially seized by Mapuches and by seasonal and part-time workers known as *afuerinos,* or outsiders, under the extremist leadership of the MIR, generating the most important agrarian uprising in Chile's modern history. It was, at bottom, the political expression, endorsed by a sympathetic Marxist government, of the desperate and long-accumulating demographic pressures on an overloaded pattern of *minifundia* exploitation. Cautín Province is not only Chile's largest producer of wheat and other key agricultural products, but also is the heartland of what for centuries has been known in Chile

as the Frontier, the area where the Araucan Indians held out successfully for four centuries against the authority of the Spanish Crown and the republican government of Chile, where the racial and cultural distinctions between a Mapuche and a "Chilean" are still valid, where freely expressed contempt for the Indian on the part of sons and grandsons of European colonists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—Germans, Swiss, Frenchmen, and Spaniards—tends to distract from a tangled history of conflict over land.

Beyond all these considerations, the agrarian revolt in Cautín has been the detonator of a political and economic conflict of great importance, both within the *Unidad Popular* coalition of President Allende, and between Chile's Marxist government and its increasingly powerful and articulate political exposition. This debate has called into question both the legality and efficacy of the government's procedure in taking over *fundos* in the countryside and factories in the cities, and has intensified as the *tomas* have steadily spread northward into the rich Central Valley and as Chile has slipped deeper and deeper into what clearly is its worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Moreover, the conflict in the countryside, distorted and amplified in the press by both political extremes, has sparked the imagination of the Chileans, one of the most urbanized and civic-minded of Latin American peoples, into lurid talk of civil war. So far this much-discussed civil war has not materialized, and probably never will. However, during three weeks of travel in Cautín, this reporter found graver and more lasting reasons for concern than the minor incidents of rural violence so lavishly presented in the opposition press, concerns which are at the heart of the extralegal land seizures that have dramatized some of the larger political issues in Chile. These concerns may be expressed in terms of human pressure on available productive resources, and the scarcity of available land with which to both do justice to the rural poor and to improve productivity to feed a population which is 76 per cent urban.

While the area of land in crops has expanded by roughly 20 per cent since 1940, the population has increased by 80 per cent. According to a 15-year agricultural plan published in 1965, "the gross supply of nationally-produced agricultural products per capita is less than in the mid-1930s." During World War II, Chile's agricultural foreign trade surpluses ceased—after centuries of exporting wheat—and Chile became a food importer in ever-increasing volume, with net food purchases abroad roughly doubling with each passing decade to reach about $160 million per year toward the end of the Christian Democratic regime of President Eduardo Frei (1964-1970). Shortly after his narrow victory in the September 1970 elections—he won a 1.4 per cent plurality in a three-way race with only 36 per cent of the vote—President-elect Salvador Allende told me: "Chile cannot continue as a country that must import each year $160 million worth of meat, wheat, lard, butter and vegetable oils, when there is enough good land to feed twice our population." However, in the first full year of his presidency (1971), food imports more than doubled to around $335 million, and are expected to reach around $400 million in 1972, due to a combination of production declines and inflated consumer demand. While Chile's export income stagnated because of declining world copper prices and production problems in the newly-nationalized mines, imports of consumer goods—mainly food products—skyrocketed to deplete Chile's foreign exchange reserves from a record $450 million in November 1970 to less than $50 million a year later, forcing the *Unidad Popular* regime to declare a moratorium on its foreign debts in November 1971 and forcing the government to confront the politically-explosive discontent arising from food shortages in the cities.

In its turbulent first 18 months in power, Chile's Marxist coalition regime—composed of the Communist, Socialist, and Radical parties and two radicalized splinter groups that broke away from the reformist Christian Democrats—dramatically accelerated the agrarian reform begun in the mid 1960s, expropriating some 3,000 *fundos* by May 1972, compared with less than 1,500 expropriations under the Frei administration However, these 3,000 expropriations practically exhausted the amount of land available under the 1967 agrarian reform law, which was passed only after two years of acrid Congressional debate and which entitles landowners to retain a minimum reserve equivalent to 80 hectares (200 acres) of irrigated land in the rich Central Valley as well as their buildings, machinery, and animals.

Although roughly one-half of Chile's arable land has been expropriated by now, the agrarian reform still has done little to relieve the pressure for land. While the number of men engaged in agriculture has increased by less than 15 per cent over the past three decades and has declined proportionately from 43.5 per cent to about one-fourth of Chile's male labor force, there is still an enormous labor surplus and land shortage among the 700,000 men working in the agricultural sector. The 1955 Agricultural Census showed that 40 per cent of the farm population were either subsistence farmers, sharecroppers, or landless peasants. The 1965 Agricultural Census showed that 61 per cent of Chile's 253,492 farms were beneath the minimum subsistence area of 10 hectares (25 acres), and nearly half were less than five hectares. However, by January 1972 the successive agrarian reforms had given new land rights to only 55,000 peasants, or about 7 per cent of all men engaged in agriculture. Moreover, most of these were among Chile's 173,000 *inquilinos* (permanently settled workers on large estates) rather than the 269,000 peasants who had no land or had undersized *minifundia* holdings. Indeed, the *inquilinos* who inherited large estates from their expropriated masters generally have stiffly resisted the assignment of more peasants to their *asentamnientos,* the new cooperative enterprises that replaced the traditional *fundo* under the Frei land reform, even though their lands were underutilized and could easily support additional farm families. This has created a bitter cleavage in the peasantry between the new kulaks of the *asentamientos* and those. who have remained waiting outside. At an international land reform conference in Lima in November 1971, the Communist head of CORA, David Baytelman, an experienced and respected technician, analyzed the national agrarian problem as follows in what long has represented the thinking of many land reform specialists of different political persuasions:

Chile has 75 million hectares [one hectare = 2.47 acres] of which some five million hectares are arable, 16 million are natural pastures and 20 million are covered with natural forests. Its 1.25 million hectares of irrigated land is its most valuable, generating 60 per cent of the value of national agricultural production. Of this irrigated land nearly halt or 530,000 hectares, already has been expropriated. Besides this, 1.25 million hectares of nonirrigated arable land have been expropriated as well as 5.38 million hectares of nonarable land. In total, 7 million hectares have been expropriated. This represents 2,877 out of a total of 3,600 *latifundios* [large estates. The total of agricultural properties, including *minifundios* [tiny subsistence plots], is 250,000. The economically active agricultural population is around 700,000 persons. Of these no more than 10 per cent dwell on the *latifundio.* This evidently obeys an [economic] law within this land tenure structure, by which the *latifundio* displaces the peasant population, pushing it into the *minjfundio.* This means that, even if all the *latifundios* were to be expropriated, only a minority of peasants without land would directly benefit. For this reason, there is no other alternative for absorption of the landless peasantry than a planned agriculture onented toward heavy capitalization of the reformed sector. This implies a fundamental change in the use of soils, especially those with irrigation. Only a small fraction of the irrigated soils of the *latifundios* are used for intensive cultivation—such as fruit orchards, vineyards, and vegetable truck farming—while a high proportion of these lands are used for production of grains, especially wheat, for natural pastures and in artificial pastures of medium productivity. In the nonirrigated sector there is an enormous excess of natural pasture in proportion to the number of animals, with the same number of cattle existing in 1971 as in 1936, while Chile's population has doubled since then. In the irrigated sector there are about 60,000 hectares of fruit orchards and 50,000 hectares of vineyards, while there are 500,000 hectares highly suitable for this type of cultivation. The simple fact of switching the irrigated soils now used for wheat into fruit orchards would mean an increase in the demand for labor from seven man-days per hectare annually to 140, and in the use of pastures from extensive cattle raising to intensive dairy farming would increase employment from five man-days per animal annually to 40 man-days. On this basis a gross projection has been made on what intensification of soil use would mean by 1980 in solving the critical agricultural problem of generating employment.

The Forntier: Recently cleared woodland in Cautín Province, Chile

With most of Chile’s irrigated farmland concentrated in the rich Central Valley, the main issue underlying the agrarian revolt in the southern province of Cautín was the simple scarcity of land in view of the demographic pressures and soil exhaustion within the Mapuche *reducciones,* which contain the bulk of the province’s rural population. In a provincial peasant labor force of 65,545, only 10,860 had regular paid employment at the end of 1970 and another 862 were members of agrarian reform settlements *(asentamientos);* the over-whelming majority of peasants, mainly Mapuches, were either sharecroppers or subsistence farmers. According to the mimeographed government- report that gave these statistics, “those who think seriously of a profound structural transformation in the agrarian sector cannot accept in any way that this process should limit itself to the expropriation of the farms of more than 80 hectares basic irrigation equivalent. This would mean a transfer of only 17.7 per cent of the arable land, while most of the peasant population, working 68.3 per cent of the land, would be excluded from the process. If one pretends to speak of agrarian reform, one should contemplate a strategy that goes beyond expropriation in incorporating into the process this majority of peasant *minifundistas* which today remains isolated from all technical progress and lacks elementary services such as medical care, education, etc. The situation would not differ greatly in Cautín if the present law were changed to reduce the landowners’ minimum reserve by half, to a 40 hectare equivalent, since the additional land to be expropriated would be only 14 per cent of the arable surface of the province. Given the high demographic density, especially in the Mapuche area, and the high unemployment and underemployment that exists, it is clear that the solution to these problems cannot be achieved through the incorporation of the excess labor force into new production units resulting from expropriations. The increasing demographic pressures on available land have generated a floating population of seasonal and migrant workers known as *afuerinos,* who follow the harvests from province to province and who often settle at the fringes of small towns. The *afuerinos* and the idle hands living miserably on Mapuche *reducciones* have been most responsive to the political call of the MIR to seize land, and with it a measure of security and dignity. A surly, 45-year-old Mapuche involved in the *toma* of the Fundo Tres Hijuelas told me: “Many of us were living in our fathers’ house without work. I was living on one hectare of land on the *Reduccion Alhueco* with my wife and nine children. I had gone to Santiago for one year to work washing wine glasses in a canteen and then worked as a waiter. For years 1 worked as an *afuerino* in Cautín and the Central Valley in Talca and Linares, and the summer before the *toma* I worked especially hard because I knew we were going to take the land and we would need money while waiting for CORA to expropriate the *fundo.* Now we each earn 30 escudos daily as advances against our harvest from the *Banco del Estado,* and we receive this wage throughout the year.”

II

About a decade ago Cautín was visited by the French agronomist René Dumont, who observed that “the hills are disturbingly ravaged by erosion. in this southern part of central Chile, the Araucan Indians held out till 1886. Only alcohol, skillfully handled by the

occupiers, seems to have had a truly adverse effect on them. There they still are anyway, corralled west of Temuco, in narrow reservations, where each generation is granted less land, and where, obviously, there is no question of teaching them how to work the land properly. M. Duhart, who is no less than the professor at the Agricultural College at Trianon, refused to take me to that reservation. 'With the Indians, you see, alcoholism is the trouble; it has degraded them but not quite killed them off, unfortunately.'

The name Mapuche means, literally, People of the Land. Even before the Inca conquest of most of what is now Chile in the late fifteenth century, the Mapuches (or Araucans), as they were known during colonial and most of the Republican times, were a sedentary farming people growing corn and potatoes, the food staples of the higher civilizations to the north, and the Mapuche vocabulary contains many Quechua or Incaic root words. In the dense forest of Araucanía, which must have resembled pre-Roman Britain, they dwelled in separate and autonomous family clusters about one mile apart under strict-patriarchal rule; as in Old Testament times men could have several wives and they believed in a Supreme Being." Unlike the Inca and later Spanish conqueror who could never quite establish themselves in the Araucan heartland south of the Rib Maule, the Mapuches had no notion of formal and permanent political entities such as states or nations.

A Spanish Governor of Chile once said that "the war of Arauco has cost more than the conquest of all the rest of America." In 1664 Jorge Eguía y Lumbe wrote to the King of Spain that "until now 29,000 Spaniards have died in the war and more than 60,000 indian and mestizo auxiliaries. The *conquistadores* easily gained control of Chile's rich Central Valley in the mid-sixteenth century, but the valley's aboriginal population was being depleted rapidly by epidemics and by slave labor in the placer gold mines, forcing the Spaniards to penetrate into the Araucan forest redoubt in search of more Indian labor. One of those captured in one of these early forays was a 15-year-old boy named Lautaro, who escaped and returned to his people in 1553 after serving for three years as a page to the first Governor of Chile, Pedro de Valdivia, a member of Felipe II's court, veteran of the Spanish campaigns in Italy and Flanders, and one of Pizarro's most trusted lieutenants in Peru.

In the four years between his return to Arauco and his death while leading a reluctant Indian army in an attack on Santiago, Lautaro proved himself a military ;genius of the first rank. Using what by now have become known as classic guerrilla warfare and tactics of annihilation. Lautaro quickly destroyed the Spanish forts that had been established in the Araucan forests and in December 1553 wiped out Valdivia and his company of 40 men after luring them on several days' journey away from their fortress at Concepción by reports of an Indian uprising in the interior. Another illustrious Spanish soldier, Alonso de Sotomayor, wrote in 1585 to Felipe II of these guerrilla tactics: "And one can wander for a year and find nothing but an old woman if they don't want to fight, because the terrain is so difficult and they so free-moving and we so overburdened with supplies, cattle, and attendants that our movements have no effect. And every day they steal our horses."

Although it was the Spaniards who introduced the horse to America, the Mapuches had begun to use cavalry in battle on a fairly large scale as early as 1568. Long before the close of the sixteenth century they were beginning to use firearms. Not only did these loosely associated Indian clans provide the only successful resistance to the European conquest of America, but they attracted an important number of defectors from Spanish ranks. Lautaro met his death when the Spaniards counterattacked his improvised fort not far from Santiago, where he had stopped his offensive because the Araucan chieftains refused to follow him outside their homeland and the new Indian army that he gathered on his way north apparently hesitated to attack the colonial capital. However, the numerous Indian uprisings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries forced the Spaniards to end their efforts to conquer the Araucanía and to treat the Indian chieftains as equals. Each new Spanish Governor would ritually travel to a meeting place on the Araucan frontier to bring the native *caciques* greetings from the King of Spain, and to spend a few days and nights with them in flattery and drinking. Toward the end of the seventeenth century the white man tried a new

approach. This was to send merchants into the Indian territory for trading purposes, bribing the *caciques* and introducing large quantities of wine and *aguardiente.*

The peaceful relations between the Spaniard and the Indian, despite intermittent rebellions, developed to the degree that the Araucans supported the Royalist cause in the Wars of Independence, even while Bolivar was calling them "the proud republicans of Araucanía" and Chilean independence leaders described their struggle as the "war of Araucanían independence" and evoked the Rousseauian ideal of the noble savage "ignorant of the usage's of Europe and the vices of the outside world." The frustration felt after three centuries of futile and costly efforts to conquer the Araucanía was now embossed with a romantic idealization of the Indian that checked all new plans for conquest. This physical and psychological inviolability of Araucanía remained intact until shortly after December 28, 1861, when a strange Frenchman knocked at the door of an army sergeant in the frontier village of Nacimiento and offered the man 50 pesos to guide him to the house of a Mapuche chieftain. In a note to the Chilean government dated November 17, 1860, the Frenchman, Antoine de Tounens (1820-1878), had already identified himself as Orelie Antoine I, King of the Araucanía and Patagonia. A recently deceased Mapuche *cacique* had predicted the coming of a King of the Araucanía, and Orelie Antoine was duly elected at a conclave of chieftains after promising to urge the Chilean government to "respect Indian property and to inform it that it has no right to establish towns this side of the Río Bío-Bío, which is the frontier line bequeathed by your forefathers." A week later the new king was captured in the forest by a police platoon, and after an extended judicial inquiry in Santiago was deported to France, where he later published his memoirs. These developments, however, profoundly changed Chilean attitudes toward the Frontier, making many people wonder how long a vacuum could be allowed on Chilean soil without another nation exploiting it for its own purposes.

Under a very cautious colonization scheme begun a decade before, the model town of Negrete was on the south bank of the Bío-Bío as an example to show the Indians the advantages of civilization. The town contained 1,500 inhabitants who were attacked in the Indian uprising that supported the 1859 revolt of the northern and southern provinces against the central government, with the Mapuches killing the men, destroying the crops, and carrying off the women and the cattle. One of the army officers who put down the 1859 revolt, Lt. Col Cornelio Saavedra, Then proposed to President Manuel Montt (1851-1861) a program of pacification of the Araucanía that would advance the frontier southward from the Bío-Bío to the Río Malleco, along which a line of new forts which would be built to protect large numbers of European and Chilean colonists to be settled on the most fertile land between the two rivers. Despite outraged criticism in the Chilean press, divided ministerial cabinets and the vacillation of successive Chilean presidents, this was the policy followed for the next quarter century. By the end of the War of the Pacific (1879-1884), in which Chile wrested the northern Atacama desert, rich in nitrates and copper, from Peru and Bolivia, the sites of all the Spanish forts that had been destroyed by the Araucans in the sixteenth century were inhabited again by troops and settlers and an embryonic regional capital was founded at Temuco in 1881. Chile's leading historian, Francisco Enema, brilliantly describes the Frontier scene at the time:

At the same time as it was the commercial emporium of the Frontier, Angol was the seat of the political and military authorities, the civil and criminal courts, the scribe, the inspector of lands and colonization, of the lawyers and the doctors. The Huincas and Mapuches who had to buy merchandise or sell their products or move some administrative or judicial matter, came to this city from the most remote confines of Araucanía. At any hour of the day you could hear the creaking of the small, wooden-axle carts of the Indians, loaded with sacks of wheat, masses of wool, pigs, sheep, turkeys, hens, strings of garlic, medicinal herbs, clay pots and pitchers, ponchos, ginger and strawberries. The Mapuche women, with their *cupelhues* [vertical cradles] on their backs, came seated on the wheat sacks or the masses of wool. The Indians, mounted on their slow-gaited, tricky horses, wearing their dressy robes *[chiripás]* and long, embroidered capes, rode between the carts and went directly in small groups to the canteens where they were assiduous customers. While the carts of the *fundos*

under the foreman's supervision, and those of the colonists and merchants, went directly to the storehouses to deliver wheat or to load merchandise, the Indians' carts were tied for long hours to the hitching posts in front of stores and government offices, jamming the streets with theft waiting horses and carts. Upon dismounting, the Indians went to their favorite stores and started to bargain amid repeated libations of *aguardiente.* Little by little, drunkenness began to raise the spirits of the Indians and their women in the canteens that liberally served *aguardiente* made from fennented grain and grape. The liquor aroused a compulsion to drink more and more, and when their scant money and credit were gone, they sold or pawned their capes, their silverments and often their oxen and cart. Men and women lay strewn on the sidewalks, or slept off their drunkenness in the interior patios of the stores, if they were old clients. [From Encina, XVIII, 263-65.]

It is indeed striking, especially in a country where alcoholism long has been recognized as the leading public health problem, how the association between liquor and the Indian appears on virtually every scrap of writing on the Frontier. But the defeat of the Indian, with liquor as the most folkloric instrument of this defeat may be ascribed as well to the steady penetration of Chilean squatters and European colonists into Araucanía. These settlers stripped away the protective forest cover that for centuries was the Mapuches' main fortification against the outside world. In his classic study of *Chile: Land and Society,* George MacBride wrote that by the mid-nineteenth century "white squatters... - had been filtering into the Indian territory, settling among the Indians and intermarrying with them, while Chilean outlaws found the region a haven of safety from prosecution. Little by little the more venturesome of the Araucanians also became accustomed to visit the adjacent white settlements." The pressure from the north by Chilean squatters was matched by the incursions from the south by German colonists recruited by Chilean immigration agents in Europe who found an increasing eagerness of liberal Germans to emigrate following the failed European revolutions of 1848.

With the passing decades the great forest was replaced gradually by undulating wheat, the virgin volcanic soil and its mantle of organic material accumulated over the centuries producing extraordinary yields of between 25 and 35 bushels per acre. By the 1880s mechanical harvesting machines, only recently introduced on the North American prairie, were being employed on the rich lands of the frontier well before modern farm machinery was employed elsewhere in Chile. These were the years when the Chilean economy was bursting its seams from the riches generated in the nitrate deposits in the newly conquered northern deserts. The nitrate boom brought in more European immigrants and motored the expansion of cities, especially Santiago, providing an ever growing demand for the wheat and timber of the newly cleared southern forests. The flow of merchants, peddlers, soldiers, squatters, land speculators, colonists, farmhands, and government officials pouring into the Frontier increased the population of Cautín Province from 52,589 to 92,585 between the censuses of 1885 and 1895, and to 176,471 by 1907. Meanwhile the land tenure situation became the cause of increasing violence and confusion. Political insiders won concessions of large tracts of land for colonization projects that never materialized, while the Mapuches were stripped of much of their lands in the officially assigned *reducciones,* containing some of the most fertile soil in the region, despite laws prohibiting alienation of Indian lands. According to Enema, "this created the systematic exploitation of the Indian by lawyers and *tinterillos* (scribes). They could buy parcels of Indian lands for a handful of peso notes and some barrels of wine or *aguardiente,* and at once legalized the transfer of ownership with false documents that evaded the legal prohibition. Much more numerous were the transfers of ownership that, following the same procedures, were executed in behalf of merchants, landowners, and colonists who had gotten the land directly from the Indians, annexing them to other properties auctioned by the government or bought from other owners. The Indians did not always accept the sales made in a moment of credulity or drunkenness, and tried to recover their lands by recourse to law or violence. Apart from incidents of bloodshed and revenge, this led to swarms of lawsuits that had the effect of extracting from their pockets, as if with a suction pump, whatever value could he attached to their wool, sheep and sacks of wheat for payment to the *tinterillos".* As a result of these and other irregularities some

47,000 properties covering 50 million acres in the south were estimated in 1929 by the Chilean government to be held under doubtful title.

MacBride recalls his journey in 1903, following completion of the north-south railroad, on the first through train to cross the old Araucanía territory where he saw "an almost uninterrupted forest in which few inhabitants other than Indians were seen. Recent tours in the early 1930s through the same country have shown large parts of it cleared, fenced and cultivated; and in one railway journey through the old Araucanian territory not a single Indian, at least in native costume, was seen. One is reminded of the rapid transformation of eastern Oklahoma that followed the opening of that district to white settlement." The most intensive clearing of these lands accompanied the wheat export boom of the 1920s, when rising grain prices and declining wheat yields after the first few harvests from the virgin soil impelled a continuing expansion of the area under cultivation. At the same time, the Mapuche *reducciones* steadily shrunk in size. The Mapuche always had a dim sense of property in the Western sense of the word, and Chilean law holds that all land without clear private ownership belongs to the state. While the *reducciones* initially contained fairly generous amounts of fertile land per capita, the Araucans kept largely to subsistence level farming and left much of their land untilled. The pressure of advancing white settlements led the government to seek more and more land for homesteading in the parts of the *reducciones* that were not being used, auctioning off many of these areas to settlers as public lands. On the other hand, statutes passed in 1866, 1874, 1931, and 1961 attempted to encourage subdivision of the *reducciones* among their member families to give the Mapuches security of title and to dispose of any remainder for white colonization. In this way, between 1931 and 1949, some 793 *reducciones* embracing 320,000 acres were divided into 13,778 family size *hijuelas,* an average of around 22 acres per family. Some 1.2 million acres were assigned to 3,000 *reducciones* in the Araucanía territory between 1884 and 1929. The population of these *reducciones,* however, rose by 1963 from 77,751 to 322,916 reducing the man-land ratio from more than 15 acres per capita to about 4.5 acres, with land in crops presently reduced to about one acre per capita and with an equally serious decline in soil fertility. The February 1971 ODEPA report on the agrarian crisis in Cautín points that wheat yields on small farms are only about two-fifths of those on *fundos* of more than 500 acres, attributing the low *minifundia* yields to the classic causes of "(1) sowing crops that require more land for economic operation, (2) the impossibility of rotating crops to avoid soil exhaustion and erosion, (3) nonuse of fertilizers, and (4) lack of technical support and credit." According to this document, "there exists clear evidence that the present use of land resources does not correspond to their potential, fundamentally because of the pressure on these resources for the sustenance of the numerous families in the *minifundio* sector. in this way, forest and grazing lands are subjected to excessive use for growing crops which, besides failing to meet the subsistence needs of the users, undermines the survival of these resources. On the other hand, lands suitable for cultivation are underused [by large landowners] through investment in permanent pastures and excessive rotation beyond the needs of the soil."

The CIDA land tenure study focuses detailed attention on the Mapuche subsistence economy, especially in Cautín, where more than half of the Araucan population still lives. "Comparing the 5,613 non-Mapuche production units counted in the 1955 Agricultural Census with the estimated 34,000 *hijuelas* subsistence parcels within Cautín's 2,024 *reducciones,* one concludes that the Mapuches operate roughly 86 per cent of the production units in Cautín Province with about one-fourth of the farmland," with wheat occupying four-fifths of the Mapuche land in annual crops. Among 26 Mapuche production units in seven Cautín *reducciones* studied by CIDA in 1963, 40 per cent of the inhabitants—57 of 142 persons—live on 12 land parcels totaling 170 acres, averaging three acres per person. However, the soil exhaustion was apparently so great on the seven *reducciones* under study, that less than one-third of all arable land and one-fourth of the total area could be planted with crops. CIDA reported that, although good results were obtained from fertilizers where used, "only six of the 26 Mapuche production units used fertilizers, and in smaller quantities than the recommended doses." The 26 families worked an average of 203 man-days per

year, even though many families include more than one man, with an annual per capita income averaging US$88, including both cash crop sales and the monetary equivalent of their subsistence consumption. According to another study by ICIRA done in 1966, two-thirds of 775 Mapuche families in 20 *reducciones* were without oxen.

The Reduccion Alhueco, where the *toma* of the Fundo Tres Hijuelas was organized by the MIR, consists of ten wood shacks spread over 150 acres of undulating country between Lautaro and the eastern *cordillera* of the Andes. The house of Andrés Railaf is perched on a hillock, protected against the winter winds by a clump of pines at its back, and overlooks the shacks, fences, and subsistence plots of his relatives close by. According to Andrés Railaf, there were 12 persons living in his shack before the *toma* and supported from his ten acres of land, but now there were only seven people. “When two of my brothers and two of my sons joined the *toma,* I decided to stay behind because there would be more land here,” he said in a quiet, laconic way. “The soil is tired from many harvests, so I can plant only five acres each year. This year I worked the land a *medias* (half-and-half sharecropping) with my son-in-law because I had no oxen. One ox swallowed a piece of barbed wire and bled to death, and the other was so old that I decided to sell him to the slaughter house. My son-in-law had a team of oxen, so we agreed to work half-and-half.”

Part II: Land Reform and the MIR

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