

FLORENCIA E. MALLON

Barbudos, Warriors, and Rotos: The

MIR, Masculinity, and Power in

the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1965-74

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During the Chilean decade of agrarian reform (1964-73) the most radical agrarian mobilization evolved during the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende (1970-73), marked by land occupations, street demonstrations, and "fence runnings." The Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) was the main political party involved in this increasing effervescence, creating in September 1970 its rural arm, or front, called the Revolutionary Peasant Movement (MCR). Previously an urban student movement, the MIR would evolve during the 1970-73 period into the most consistently radical sponsor of agrarian unrest, changing its policy in the southern region so that it concentrated in large part on the countryside.¹

Founded in Santiago, Chile, in August 1965, the MIR was from the very beginning, according to Hernán Vidal, a party dedicated to revolutionary agitation within the already existing and powerful Chilean left. To a country with a long tradition of leftist participation in parliamentary rule and electoral competition, the MIR set out to bring Cuban-inspired popular war. To a left with abundant, disciplined, and well-trained cadres, the MIR brought the frenetic activity and heroism of 1960s youthful rebellion and

counterculture. The MIR's *Comisión Política* (Political Commission) was dominated by a group of tightly knit radical students at the University of Concepción, most of whom had grown up together in the small, upper-middle-class intelligentsia of the city. By the party's Third Congress in 1967 this charismatic and influential group, originally composed of Miguel and Edgardo Enríquez, Bautista Van Schowen, Andrés Pascal Allende, Nelson Gutiérrez, and Luciano Cruz, managed to get its supporters elected to a majority of the national offices on the National Committee and National Secretariat. Miguel Enríquez, then twenty-three years old, was elected the MIR's general secretary.²

The imagery of this young generation, which given the strong "agit-prop" emphasis of the party's early years was an extremely important political tool, drew directly on the combination of the Cuban *barbudo*—the bearded and long-haired young romantic best symbolized by Ernesto "Che" Guevara—and the emerging "hippie" rebels who preached free love, danced to rock music, and stormed the barricades of the bourgeois state. The personal charisma of Miguel Enríquez was perhaps the most dramatic and relied substantially on the youth, good looks, and revolutionary moustache that so deeply resonated with the young idealists of the time. But Miguel also had an impressive talent for public oratory and personal drama, something he already demonstrated in 1964, when at the tender age of twenty he publicly stood up to a visiting Robert Kennedy at the University of Concepción.

Building at least in part on Miguel Enríquez's projection of a powerful individual persona, "as time went on," according to Hernán Vidal, not only Miguel but "his brother Edgardo and Bautista Van Schowen developed a political style that, during the MIR's great public ceremonies, drew on the romantic theatricality of light and shadow to present their best profiles, their good looks, virility, youth and daring, dressed in black, with abundant long hair, their firm and resolute attitude reflected in their level stares."³ To this was added, in the last years of the 1960s, the romantic imagery of the party's first clandestine period, during which the national leadership participated directly in violent actions against targets representing the capitalist system, such as banks and large industries. Taken as a whole, this multifaceted image of the dedicated young *barbudo*, who risked everything in the name of revolutionary justice and emerged untouched and

empowered on the other side, was heady stuff indeed. Although it built consciously and very effectively on the success of the Cuban Revolution, and on the ever more romanticized and rumor-filled legend surrounding Che Guevara, the MIR's construction of revolutionary masculinity also drew on elements of Chilean gender identities and sexual styles historically embedded in popular culture and politics.

One such persona or masculine style was the resistant and romantic working-class male. Referring to the mining regions of the Norte Chico, Jorge Pinto has identified this figure as the lacho, suggesting that they "were nothing more than transgressors of the matrimonial norm in the lower strata of society, popular lovers who were not willing to repress their feelings or 'the demands of the flesh.'" Elaborating in more detail for the south-central mining complex of El Teniente, Thomas Klubock has explored a similar image or figure whom he has called *el roto macanudo*. The nonwork cultural practices of the *roto macanudo*, Klubock has emphasized, were constructed in part as a rejection of company efforts to transform working-class men into responsible and monogamous husbands. By attaching Chilean slang words with positive meanings, such as *choro* (cool) or *macanudo* (great, or "far out") to the word *roto*, thereby transforming its customarily negative middle- or upper-class connotations of "hobo," "torn," "vulgar," and "uncouth," miners appropriated the insult by turning it on its head. And they imbued the term with a new set of nested meanings that denoted style, good looks, and transgressive masculinity. In the countryside as well, Heidi Tinsman has argued, rural laborers and small producers appropriated the term *huaso*, often applied to them in a derogatory manner by landowners to mean "boorish," "stupid," or "country bumpkin," and imbued it with the trappings of resistant masculinity. "As many men explained in oral histories," Tinsman writes, "a *huaso* was so strong, independent and irreverent, that no man had a hold on him, not even the patrón."⁴

Although not consciously aware of it, therefore, the young *mirista* leadership deployed a transgressive masculinity that resonated broadly with the various forms of gendered rebelliousness—whether *lacho*, *roto macanudo*, or *huaso*—that had already taken shape in popular political culture. Probably a great deal clearer to them was the fact that such gendered transgression was a particularly effective challenge to the ideal of mascu-

linity deployed by the more traditional organized left, one that emphasized disciplined work habits and responsible family behavior. Although debated and applied differently in the Communist and Socialist parties, the Chilean left in general had elaborated, across the twentieth century, a belief in the importance of proper and responsible family behavior and familial solidarity as a precondition to effective political action. The working-class family was considered the basic and most effective unit of class struggle, and both men and women were encouraged to carry out their prescribed roles within it.⁵

As Karin Roseblatt has recently shown, this familial discourse was also strongly represented in the Chilean state apparatus, especially during the years of the popular front governments. Yet as was also the case with the imagery of the *roto*, working-class appropriations of family morality made something quite different out of the figure of the proper family man. By imbuing family responsibility with an egalitarian, even utopian, tinge, leftist activists claimed the high moral ground in their struggle with the upper classes. Especially in the Communist Party, Roseblatt writes, "members could be called into the party's disciplinary control commissions and subjected to sanction for drinking, marital infidelities, or failing to support their families properly." Leftist family morality was thus a double-edged sword. On one side, whether in the hands of government officials or leftist activists, it could be a weapon of social control. On the other side it could also become an ideal of working-class masculinity, honor, and dignity: the capacity, both moral and material, to support a wife and family.

In articulating 1960s rebellious barbudo imagery to a transgressive working-class masculinity, *mirista* leaders effectively countered both upper-class and leftist morality as forms of social control. In so doing, they promoted a heroic, resistant, and romantic subjectivity that was especially attractive to the younger generation of all classes. At the same time, however, this revolutionary narrative had two potentially large sociopolitical costs. One was the tendency to overlook the powerful attractiveness of family imagery, not only to the male workers and peasants who had never had the resources to actually support their families in an "honorable" way but also to the working-class and peasant women who yearned for economic security and familial stability and were not represented within the

Romantic ideal of the
Revolucionario → Che Guevara

mirista romance. The other was the tendency to reproduce, within this extremely powerful articulation of a hegemonic revolutionary masculinity, the same kind of class, ethnic, and gender hierarchies that the organization was supposedly founded to erase. For after all, most of the rebellious, almost intuitively confrontational, young men attracted to this image could not be expected to meet the criteria of looks, style, and brash manliness of the *roto macanudo*. Those who did would perhaps not agree with the sense of moral purpose, personal risk, and extreme self-sacrifice symbolized by Che's bearded visage. And those attracted by the stubborn, eternally confrontational, and sacrificial *barbudo* might not be willing to hunker down to the centralized discipline of a small national directorate who supposedly did have it all.

In this chapter I trace some of the complexities of the MIR's constructions of masculinity through an in-depth look at the fortunes of a small group of local MIR activists in Cautín, the center of the MIR's experiment with radical agrarian reform. As we will see, the image of Che Guevara, as the ultimate barbudo, had extraordinary power over people's imaginations and morality, inspiring them to action. The central *mirista* leadership connected themselves effectively to Che's image and drew personal authority from it. At the same time, however, the discourses and images of transgressive masculinity woven into *mirista* practice were more complex and contradictory, causing rebellious resentment among some and self-aggrandizing behavior among others. Ironically, the most successful organizers and rabble-rousers, attracted to the MIR precisely because of their intensely confrontational style and demeanor, were also the ones the central leadership was unable to control. And at the local level people seemed most inspired by the images and practices of self-sacrifice and community solidarity that more closely resembled the sense of familial responsibility and utopia elaborated by the more traditional left.

Seeking Che among Working-Class Students: Temuco, 1967-71

When Che Guevara was killed in Bolivia in 1967, José Cárdenas was thirteen years old. At his grandparents' small store, or when his father sent him to Temuco's daily market to buy feed for the pigs and chickens they kept in their backyard, he had seen Mapuche peddlers arrive barefoot to

Jose was impacted by the discrimination against the Mapuche

sell their wares. He noticed how other classmates made fun of the Mapuche students at his school, so he made a point of personally befriending them. One of his teachers, María Marinao, herself of Mapuche origin, was a member of the Communist Party. Between his grandparents' preference for the leftist politics of the Popular Front, his teacher, and the things he saw going on around him, José had, "without having the script real clear yet in my head, but with that kind of emotional intelligence or intuition you have sometimes, I began to feel that people on the Left worried more about the poor, about the people as a whole."⁷

At his school he first joined the Communist Youth, but he also began to follow the heroics of a group of young, long-haired revolutionaries that included not only Che Guevara but also the daring young Chileans in the MIR. As part of a broader student movement, he watched as fearless and handsome MIR founders Miguel Henríquez and Luciano Cruz, with a certain Guevarist style, confronted the police and foiled their captors again and again. "When I got to the *liceo*," José remembered, "I was able to get in contact with people like this and I felt useful, I felt profoundly revolutionary. And in fact I dressed like a revolutionary, with a beret and a poncho, trying to be a bit more like the image of Che."

In such a context, when José read that the Bolivian Communist Party had not been committed to Che Guevara's efforts, and as a result was at least indirectly complicit with Che's death, he began to have second thoughts about his own involvement in the Communist Youth. In the Chilean Communist Party he began to see a complacency, a willingness to coexist with the system, that frightened him. And once again, it was the image, the experience, the incorruptibility of Che that served as his touchstone. As he began to focus on the contradiction between the CP's revolutionary promise and its accommodationist practice, "I made the very personal decision to leave the CP and get closer to the *compañeros* more committed to the revolutionary left."

At about the same time, when José was about fourteen, the Communist Youth had a meeting of its cadre at the school. Along with several other boys who were called forward to report, José made clear that "I couldn't keep working with them because I felt that the Party, and the youth working with them, were part of the system. I wanted to be honest about what I thought, because that's how I felt, and I felt it deeply. Several *compañeros*

left with me at that point, about four or five, and we moved over to the Revolutionary Student Front (FER).⁸ In the FER, José remembered, he began to establish closer links with other young revolutionary students. This development coincided with an emerging crisis at home. José saw his father, a mechanic by trade, as basically interested in making money and rebelled against the older man's aggressive pressure to concentrate more on his studies. "He told me that I had to do what he said, because he was my father and was supporting me. Well, this actually motivated me to get more deeply into the FER and I slowly got more and more committed. And one day, when the old man started slapping me around, I left home."

José moved into a university student residence where he worked with other FER militants much older than he. "I admired these *compañeros*," he told me. "To me they seemed like small heroes, small gods. I think I held them up as mythical characters." Some of them advised José that he should return to his family, that it was not good to be living that way. But José felt good about the choice he had made; he felt equal to the others and that was a source of great satisfaction to him. His first assignment was to work with students in Pitrufquén, a few miles south of Temuco, where he spent about four or five months. Then, under the direction of some older students more directly connected to the MIR, he was sent to Villarrica, a city in the foothills of the Andes mountains to the southwest of Temuco. This was a more challenging assignment, farther away from home, and he prepared to move to Villarrica.

On his way out of town, when he stopped by to say good-bye to his mother, she began to cry. "I was the son who'd always given her the most problems," José explained. "That's why she loved me so much, and besides, I'd been sickly when I was little and that had brought us especially close." At the time, José could only focus on the all-consuming commitment he felt for his political work. There were no half-measures. He remembered a feeling of intense self-confidence, that everything would be easy. With that attitude he began to work in Villarrica with other members of the FER and the MIR's local committee. "We all lived together in the same house," José recalled, "sleeping bags on the floor, preparing food whenever one of us was able to bring something from home, or with donations that some of us got." For José this youthful adventure, almost like an extended camping trip, was also "a profound revolutionary cause"

made even more intense by the shared experiences of many young rebels who, like him, were facing tensions or rejection at home.

In the early morning hours of May 5, 1972, José joined about twenty students, including members of the local MIR committee, in a *toma*, or illegal takeover, of a vacant house belonging to Leopoldo de Miguel. In a similar way to the *tomas* of landed estates that were proliferating in the countryside, this action was designed to dramatize the need for a dormitory to house the peasant and Mapuche students who came to Villarrica to study. The two domestic workers in charge of guarding the house were sympathetic to the students' cause, but the local judge refused to consider the students' demands—which in addition to the opening of a residence for Mapuche peasant students included the prompt payment of the domestic workers' back pay—and simply called in the police to throw them out. Sixteen occupants, including José and nine other minors, were imprisoned and charged with illegal usurpation and kidnapping. One of the leaders of the action was Manuel Barrientos.⁹

The illegitimate child of a Valdivia-based domestic worker and her boss, Manuel had been brought to a working-class neighborhood in Temuco by his aunt and uncle after the death of his mother. He had grown up somewhat wild, an intelligent misfit who got into trouble at school from a young age because he refused to respect authority. He chafed under his aunt and uncle's harsh discipline and their demand that he work as a peddler in the market while attending a commercial high school. Because he was extremely good at math, his uncle and aunt thought he should be an accountant or businessman; but he had a more abstract intelligence and, in addition to being fascinated by science fiction, wished to become a lawyer or a doctor.¹⁰

Manuel had been a physically small child who needed thick glasses from a young age. From early on he used his unusual intelligence to make his way in the adolescent world, writing extra-credit projects for his schoolmates and charging them in money or treats. By the time he was ten, he had already read *The Communist Manifesto* and Lenin's *State and Revolution*, both lent to him by the father of a classmate. He compensated for his lack of physical prowess by cultivating unusual skill with a knife: "From the time I was a little kid I enjoyed playing with a knife, so much so that it saved my life several times." And when he entered high school he re-

sponded to the teasing of the other boys by acting up to the point of getting suspended from school. "It was in tenth grade that I began to have problems," he recalled,

because it was always the other guys who had the girls interested in them, and even when you're a little guy you've got that running around your head, especially if you're from a working-class neighborhood where the *machismo* is greater, and the other guys throw it up in your face if you don't have a girlfriend. And besides, it was very common in those days, I don't know what it's like today, but back then the young guys used to go out with older women. And so I'd see this going on, and it got me thinking, wanting to be like them and not like them, and this resulted in my doing things in school that weren't the best.

By the time Manuel was fifteen, he was working during the day and going to school at night, where he met Omar Garrido, a socialist teacher who served as a sort of role model. Originally from a working-class neighborhood, Garrido had studied medicine for two years until his money had run out and then finished a career in history and geography. Along with other older students from the nocturnal classes, some of whom were union activists, Manuel accompanied Garrido to drink a couple of beers after class. Often they would end up in the red-light district, drinking and dancing with the prostitutes, who would, according to Manuel, sit on the men's knees. These shared experiences helped bring the men closer to each other, Manuel remembered, as they would talk about their problems and the situation in the world. With Garrido he also shared the experience of being beaten when he got home late. Early one morning, when Manuel was trying to climb in through the window, his uncle leveled him with a blow to the face. But his friend got it worse, for "when he entered through the gate and opened the kitchen door, his father, that huge old guy, had grabbed the two by four they used to bolt the door, and hit my poor teacher across the shoulder, and for a month the poor man couldn't move his arm."

In 1968 a MIR organizer arrived from Concepción, according to Manuel, "a good speaker who could really drink and was really good with women, but his strongest loyalty was to the MIR." This led to the formation of the first secondary-school student group connected to the MIR through

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the local university organizations. Between 1968 and 1969, in addition to forming a "Che Guevara Nucleus" of the Socialist Youth in his neighborhood, Manuel worked with the local Maoist organization and, slowly, began to get closer to the MIR. His biggest ambition at that point was to follow other young MIR leaders into the countryside to work in the Mapuche communities near the city of Lautaro, slightly north of Temuco. When he brought up the subject with a member of the regional committee, however, he was rejected, even though, as he remembered, he was a year older than one of the young men who went. "My physical appearance, the glasses and everything, made me seem younger," Manuel recalled. "So they told me I was still a young kid and would do them no good."

After this rejection Manuel joined with other leftist students to form a group at his high school that, although not formally connected to the MIR, received literature and information from the MIR leadership in Concepción. The idea was to prove that they were not like the earlier leaders, the ones who had gone into the countryside but had also been heavy drinkers and partygoers and who, in Manuel's eyes, were not politically serious. They organized a regional conference for students from commercial high schools that drew representatives from across the south of the country, and they succeeded in getting people from their own group elected to most of the regional offices. This initiated what would become a longer term pattern for Manuel: using his superior intelligence and incredible capacity for hard organizational work to compensate for what, from his perspective, were the class- or gender-based slights he received from the MIR leadership.

By the middle of 1969 it was clear, even from Concepción, that Manuel's work at his high school was effective. The MIR began inviting him to meetings of the regional committee and offered him a position as leader of the secondary-school students. Manuel refused, not because he did not want to work with the students but because he was also interested in working with trade unions and shantytown dwellers. The MIR leadership accepted this new interest. Between 1969 and 1970, especially with the election of Allende, urban mobilizations intensified. Yet the MIR, as Manuel perceived it, seemed bent on developing its rural work above all else. "They were taking all the *compañeros* we had in the university, even from

the schools, out to work in the countryside in the land recuperation movement," he remembered. Manuel opposed this one-sided strategy, not only because it kept taking away urban militants but also because he thought a strong movement in the city was necessary to support the rural mobilizations. For this reason, even though he was asked several times to go into the countryside, at this point he refused. "I was always a difficult son of a bitch, critical, and there were lots of things I didn't like about how the work was getting done." These tensions came to a head in mid-1971, when at a conference in Temuco Manuel and some of his *compañeros* presented a document critical of the MIR's lack of internal democracy.

The MIR's response was to send a surveillance team to keep track of Manuel's group. When they confronted the spies, a member of the regional committee was sent to talk to them:

We presented him with a document where we said that, even if the work in the countryside was correct, we also thought that if the goal was a rural guerrilla, it was necessary to work in a different way. Because the fence-runnings and estate takeovers implied that, at some point, the landowners or the military would begin a counteroffensive, and with those really good helicopters they could throw a couple of bombs, or with airplanes, and they'd make short shrift of all our pretty flags and banners. So it was important for our work to be a little less public and open. And again we raised the issue of the working class, and the fact that the workers needed to lead the process and all that, and it was then that they decided to sanction us.

Manuel and his friends were called before a group of regional and national leaders and accused of *desviaciones obreristas* (workerist deviations). Although several of his older *compañeros* were either expelled or marginalized from the party, it was decided that Manuel was too young to have played a leadership role. He was brought before the group of leaders at the very end, after they had decided to keep the workers and shantytown dwellers and throw out the older organizers. At this point Manuel's old rebellious streak came out in force. "I'd been waiting outside, next to the door, with my famous knife, seeing what happened to the others," he told me.

And I come up and see all those leaders there, about eight of them, and they tell me, so? What do you want me to say? I answered, you'll forgive me for saying so, and I don't mean it at a political level, but what you're doing is a wimpy dirty trick (*mariconada*). We've done some work here, work that people recognize, and all you're doing is demonstrating that we're no different from the Communist Party. You're a bunch of bastards and shitheads, Stalinists, petty bourgeois.

When the meeting was over, Manuel was deemed capable of rehabilitation and was sent back to his commercial high school to "rest." He was also prohibited from going back to the trade unions or shantytowns where he had been working. But he was not willing to accept this prohibition, in part because of his own class pride and resentment. (He perceived the leaders who had sanctioned him as from more privileged backgrounds, people who had never known the hunger and privations of the poorer neighborhoods.) Already in the meeting he had refused to honor the prohibition, even suggesting that people at the grassroots would follow him out of the MIR if he were expelled, and shortly afterward he decided to test its limits directly.

When Manuel arrived at a Sunday meeting of the Che Guevara shantytown dwellers' association, he ran into the same MIR organizer who had accompanied them at the earlier sanctioning meeting, a man he remembered as belonging to a local landowner family. As Manuel got closer, the other man asked him where he was going.

To the shantytown, I understand there's a meeting, I told him, and people asked me to come. I'm a little late but I'm going in. No, he answered, the meeting's over. No matter, I said, I can still talk to people there. You're prohibited from coming in, he told me. That might be, I said, but I'm going in anyway. And the bastard takes out his pistol. Let me through, I told him, I'm not going to call you *compañero*, you son of a bitch, but shooting me would be ugly, to die at the hands of a comrade when I thought I'd always die at the hands of the enemy. But go ahead and shoot, if you're man enough.

One of the most persistent contradictions Manuel faced in the MIR was that the very same characteristics that made him a good leftist revolu-

tionary—his rebellious attitude, grassroots tactics, and aversion to authority—did not stand him in good stead with the MIR's central committee. Indeed, in many ways Manuel Barrientos was a classic stumbling block for the MIR's brand of heroic revolutionary politics. Small and bespectacled, he did not fit the image of revolutionary masculinity so assiduously nurtured by the central leadership. Instead, he could be seen as a stereotype of the Communist Party apparatchik or mole, who could blend into the background and thus was especially effective behind the scenes. At the same time, however, his childhood experiences, and especially the abuse he had suffered from his aunt and uncle and his difficulties fitting into working-class adolescent male culture, had fostered in him an obstinate rebelliousness, a relentless capacity for confrontation that made it impossible for him to hunker down to party discipline. As he himself remembered, what had first attracted him to the MIR was his perception that they offered an alternative to the Stalinism he saw in the Chilean Communist Party. How ironic, then, that the very same party that promised heroic and uncompromising revolution, that held up the eternal rebel Che Guevara as their model, should then discipline his alleged deviations. Manuel's explanation for this contradiction went through a gendered class resentment: the leaders were members of the privileged classes, handsome and pampered, who had not known poverty or privation and used their status to drink and womanize rather than to pursue a principled revolution. And he channeled his frustrations by doing more of what he did best: marshaling his impressive intelligence into an almost frenetic form of grassroots organizing, combined with a heavy critique of the limitations of other people's political work.

After his confrontation at the Che Guevara shantytown, he was sent to work outside Temuco, in the Villarrica-Loncoche area, which included the mountain lumber region between Curarrehue and Panguipulli. There he found himself an ally, fellow organizer Julián Bastidas, sociology student from the University of Concepción, founding member of the MIR, and the nephew of the Bishop of Talca to boot. Julián defended him before the regional committee, emphasizing his good work, something that over and over seemed to protect Manuel from actually being expelled from the MIR. More or less at the same time, prompted by events at the *fundo* Chesque in Loncoche, where an armed group of landowners reinforced by

doesn't have the romantic rebel look.

police repelled an attempted invasion, killing Moisés Huentelaf, a Mapuche peasant leader and member of the MCR, the regional leadership had to reorganize the Loncoche-Villarrica local. The *miristas* who had supervised the Chesque action were forced to leave the area to avoid arrest, and in the subsequent shake-up about ten local organizers were expelled, as Manuel remembered it, because "in one way or another they took advantage of the responsibility they had to go out with girls" and did not carry their weight administratively. Bastidas was put in charge, Manuel recalled, because "he was a Christian Marxist, one of those for whom morality was fundamental."¹¹

This reorganization gave Manuel a new lease on life, and he began planning the takeover of the empty house belonging to Leopoldo de Miguel, who he remembered was a pharmacist from Osorno living at the seaside resort of Viña del Mar who had already lost two landed estates to takeovers. Through a family member who worked in a factory the MIR had already helped take over, Manuel made contact with the domestic workers guarding the house. "I began to romance one of the girls there, so my presence would seem normal and nobody would find it strange to see me there all the time." As the planning proceeded, however, Manuel and Bastidas disagreed about Julián's participation in the action. "Julián wants to participate but I say no, because if we're caught they catch the head of the Local Committee and that brings us problems with the leadership and with all the work there is here." But Bastidas insisted, interestingly enough, by referring to Che Guevara: "And he brings out the whole story about how in the ambushes, and in all that stuff the leaders have always been there, and he begins talking about Che Guevara."

Manuel agreed, against his better judgment, to Julián's participation in the early morning action. Everything seemed to be going well when the local *gobernador* arrived, ostensibly to sign the agreement that would put in motion the expropriation of the house. But the local judge and police had other ideas, and they took advantage of the moment when all the invaders were talking with the representative of the central government to begin retaking the house. A fierce battle ensued, and, interestingly, Manuel's memory is that Julián's capture by invading police signified their defeat. "And suddenly I see Julián appear in the doorway there, this huge guy next to these tiny cops, and he tells me, there's no one left, he says, surrender.

No, I say, you can't be serious! And he tells me, it's an order, you bastard, surrender, he says, there's no one left you bastard. Well, if it's an order, I say. I throw one last kick at a cop who's standing there, and then I'm all peaceful."

Julián's role in the action helped crystallize the ambivalence Manuel felt for all members of the broader MIR leadership. On the one hand, he admired Julián because he was principled and moral and did not use his power to romance the girls or act irresponsible in other ways. Manuel also felt that Julián appreciated his talents and ability for hard work. Manuel even had a grudging admiration for Julián's personal connections in the region, the networks he had been able to form with those in power, which allowed them to get special treatment for the five days they were in the Pitrufrquén jail on their way to Loncoche: "He'd developed a network and all that; the Fire Chief was his friend, the mayor, who knows, a whole bunch of people friends of Julián and so he got chicken, fruit, all kinds of things." Yet in the end Manuel could not shake the idea that Julián, this big tall guy, had surrendered to a couple of tiny policemen and had forced him to do the same.

Manuel Barrientos, Julián Bastidas, and José Cárdenas were all transferred to the Loncoche jail, where they ended up sharing the prison with the peasants arrested in the Chesque action. Manuel and José both remember that, with all those *miristas* together in one place, they were able to organize a variety of activities, including classes in political education and handicrafts. Among the books that circulated, recalled José, were Lenin's complete works, from which he read in particular the analysis of the 1905 Revolution and *State and Revolution*. Thanks to Julián, José remembered, he felt good about learning something while in jail.¹²

When he was released from jail a few months later, José returned to Temuco to live with his family. Although his parents had been extremely solicitous of him while he was in prison, his father traveling the dangerous mountain roads to visit him in Loncoche, living at home simply did not work out. José remembered that his father tried to become his friend, even to the point of buying him a suit and then suggesting, in a roundabout, embarrassed way, that they go out together to a bordello. But José had already decided, after talking it over with several of his *compañeros*, that when it came to sex, the revolutionary option was through a love relation-

ship. Indeed, as one of them had put it, "he'd never fight in a guerrilla band, or go to the mountains, with a *compañero* who did not have the capacity to love, that in such a situation he needed *compañeros* who had known deeply what it meant to love, who were in love with life." So José pretended to be sick the night his father wanted to take him out and thus avoided having to confront the situation.¹³

His father's awkward attempts at male bonding were particularly repugnant to José because his interpretation of *barbudo* revolutionary morality had convinced him of the need to pursue a single love relationship. Different from both transgressive working-class masculinity and proper "family" behavior, the image of an ideal revolutionary companion was more commonly attractive to MIR national leaders and urban leftist intellectuals, although in reality most established leaders succumbed to the sexual temptations of notoriety and fell far short of this goal. At the grassroots, moreover, male activists more often added the behaviors and boasts of the *roto macanudo* to their obligations as family men. And all *miristas*, without regard for social class or ethnic background, were subject to the MIR's policy of compulsory heterosexuality, since known homosexuals were expelled from the party.¹⁴

It quickly became clear to José that the situation at home was not tenable. When Manuel "talked to us about our revolutionary commitment, and afterward said it would be good for us to join the local MIR committee on the coast," José jumped at the chance. By then it was the end of August/beginning of September 1972, and the street demonstrations were heating up. There were railroad strikes, truckers' strikes, roadblocks, José recalled, and getting to Carahue "was a real adventure." Once he got there "it was a special day; there was a kind of euphoria, around the time that Allende visited."¹⁵ After José was welcomed by the local committee, someone suggested he could spend some time at a local agrarian reform center affiliated with the MCR. This is how José ended up on the *asentamiento* Arnoldo Ríos.

Barbudos and Peasants: The Coastal Region, 1970-73

The product of the first *toma* of a landed estate organized by the MCR in December 1970, the *fundo* Rucalán near Carahue had also undergone a

violent *retoma*, or reclaiming, by the landowner and his friends. "The starting point was 'Rucalán,'" claimed a November 1971 article in *El Rebelde* that then went on to list the seven armed confrontations that had occurred in Cautín during the UP government. In February of that same year, shortly after the creation of the *asentamiento* Arnoldo Ríos on the expropriated *fundo*, an open letter from the "Workers of 'Rucalán' to the General Public" had appeared in *Punto Final* with the headline "The Peasants Uncover the Intrigues of a *Momio* Landowner."¹⁶ The Rucalán *toma* had been organized by a local land committee formed on the Mapuche community of Nicolás Ailío, located halfway between Carahue and the coastal port of Puerto Saavedra, that included as well non-Mapuche peasants and rural laborers from surrounding estates and from the fishing village of Nehuentúe. Represented by a banner that read across the middle "Asentamiento Arnoldo Ríos," decorated with a gun, and flanked by Che Guevara on the left and the logo of the MCR on the right, Rucalán was a most effective poster child for the MIR's general policy of armed mobilization of all the rural poor.¹⁷

The formal head of the *asentamiento* was Ricardo Mora, a landless day laborer from Nehuentúe who had married a Mapuche woman and been welcomed into her community of Pichingual. One of the three who received bullet wounds during the *retoma*, Mora had settled well into his public role of heroic peasant leader, stating in *Punto Final*, "If I die, I'll die defending all my *compañeros*, in our fight for bread, land, and socialism."¹⁸ Yet at the same time, the intellectual and organizational power behind the scene was Heriberto Ailío, one of the founders of the local land committee in his community and a founding member of the MCR. In contrast to other MCR leaders such as Alejandro Manque or the Huentelaf brothers, Heriberto Ailío was not interested in public recognition. Although he did participate in other land invasions in his region, he mainly dedicated himself to making the *asentamiento* work and to producing enough to feed his family and the other relatives who had stayed behind in the community.

As an *asentamiento* created under Eduardo Frei's 1967 Agrarian Reform law, Arnoldo Ríos was a cooperative in which individual heads of households, in collaboration with state representatives sent by the agrar-

ian reform agency (CORA), defined a production plan for the property. As Heriberto Ailío explained, the members of the cooperative, or *asentados*, worked the land in common, and part of what they produced went to pay back the loans and the agrarian debt. Although the majority of the property was farmed collectively, each household was also given about two hectares of private usufruct. In many cases, because the *asentados* were busy working on the communal enterprise, those two hectares were cultivated in a sharecropping agreement with a partner from one of the communities.

When the state intervened in the *fundo*, Heriberto Ailío recalled, poverty stopped knocking at people's doors. "Since we took nothing with us," he explained, "CORA gave us technical aid, fertilizers, herbicides, machinery, all those things. They gave us tractors to replace the oxen; cows, seeds, fertilizers; everything the *fundo* needed for the peasants to work it, CORA would give us."¹⁹ Robustiano Ailío sharecropped his brother Heriberto's two hectares on Rucalán while also working the family lands in the community of Ailío. He also remembered the Popular Unity as a time of prosperity: "it was the first time we used fertilizer. The government at the time gave us broad technological support, [and] there was a lot of help in the countryside."²⁰

But perhaps what most influenced the functioning of the *asentamiento* Arnoldo Ríos was the preexisting network of solidarity and exchange among the area's Mapuche communities. In addition to their agreements with sharecroppers from the communities, the *asentados* developed a system based on kinship that distributed food and other necessities from the *asentamiento* to the nearby communities. "We worked hard, [and] we saw tremendous improvements," Heriberto Ailío explained:

In those days I was newly married. There was enough so my family could stock up, we never lacked for bread, for my house, for my family, and in addition back then we had an uncle living with us, and my mother and father who are since deceased. So I'd give to them, from what I made I'd give to them, and I could support two households.

[Q: Your parents also lived on Rucalán?]

No, they lived here [in Tranapunte].

[Q: So you'd bring things back here.]

Back here, exactly. CORA did a good job then, because they gave us the right to distribute some of what we planted to people. The entire community, all of it communal work, what we planted was tremendously productive. . . . We were able to keep the cooperative stocked, in fact we watched it grow, we were able to do things right in those years, no one was left owing money, we all came out well.²¹

The members of this successful cooperative were mainly those who had participated in the initial takeover, Mapuche and non-Mapuche peasants and rural laborers from several Mapuche communities and small towns located between Carahue and Puerto Saavedra. As Heriberto Ailío recalled, one of the principal motivations driving Arnoldo Ríos's success seemed to be kinship, particularly the ability economically to sustain a broad set of family ties. "We never lacked for bread," he told me; and he felt pride that, as a recently married man, he could support his family. Indeed, he contrasted this ability to the many frustrations his father had known as a day laborer on other people's properties, and he remembered the first day that he and his brother Robustiano had been able to buy enough flour with their wages so that they filled their stomachs with the freshly baked bread their mother made. At that point his father's eyes had filled with tears, and after dinner he had gone out to cut wood singing songs in the Mapuche language. The *asentamiento* was the first time that a sense of fulfillment could be generalized to all participating families, plus their kin in neighboring communities. There was a palpable sense of community solidarity and of male pride in being able to provide for their relatives.²²

When José Cárdenas went to live on Rucalán, he felt this combination of prosperity and joy at a deep emotional level. It was like he had found a real home:

I remember, for example, the image of an old couple, two small old people, and the old guy was the loveliest old guy I'd ever seen; he was short and bald, with a bit of white hair, and he had such a special face. . . . He'd participated in the takeover; I don't remember his last name. I saw how close the two of them were; for me they were like the

prototype of a real family. I'd always visit them to drink *mate* and eat potatoes and when the time came I helped them plant potatoes, throwing the seed down while riding horseback.²³

This feeling of being at home deepened when José was invited to participate in a wedding celebration. He remembered that he was the only outsider who was invited and that he felt entirely included in the group. This sense of belonging nurtured in him a newfound generosity: "A few days before I'd received the money the Party sent me each month, I don't know how much it would be today, but I remember that I used it to buy the couple a pot. I'd never bought anything for anyone before, and I bought them a pot." Afterward he participated in the celebration, with a barbecue and wine, "and during the night someone passed me a guitar; now I don't play the guitar but for some reason, that night, it seemed like people thought I did. I don't know how long I sang and played, but everyone began dancing."²⁴

For a youth hovering around his eighteenth birthday, who had never felt he belonged anywhere, this kind of solidarity was a heady experience. It deepened further with the family of Heriberto and Robustiano Ailío, the two brothers from the community of Nicolás Ailío in whose houses José lived. In addition to Heriberto's role as a leader of the MCR, he and his brother were the grandsons of the community's original *cacique* and thus had a certain traditionally based authority as leaders. Since Robustiano was also keeping track of the family household back in the community, José spent time in both houses, one in the community of Ailío and one on the Rucalán section of the agrarian reform cooperative. In both places he felt very much at home: "I have this very deep image and memory of having lived in their house. I was telling you the other day that I'd suddenly feel even the sheets on the beds, sewn from flour sacks, the cleanliness and texture of the cloth that I don't feel anymore today because now sheets are industrially made. All these kinds of things, they made me feel such a family-like spirit."²⁵

In this context Heriberto Ailío was, for José, a father figure. "Something that really impressed me about Heriberto," he recalled,

was his fatherly capacity. You know, I never felt unprotected when Heriberto was near. He was a short, minute type of guy; you know how

he is, but he gave me this feeling of protection. With his smile, for example, Heriberto would make me feel very protected. I think one of my big problems at that point in my life was having felt so unprotected in my own family; that whole issue I had, but Heriberto made me feel different. He made me feel happy, and at this very moment I'm feeling again the emotions and sensations I felt when I saw my friends, my *compañero* Heriberto, never a mean word, never a bad face, never a bad attitude.²⁶

Even though José also remembered Robustiano Ailío as a protective figure, Robustiano was a kind of older brother, someone José could look up to. "I felt myself to be a revolutionary, a committed fighter who had left everything," José told me,

and I'd go out walking with him many times, in the early morning through the dense fog that came up from the river, to look at the fields. There was always a deeper meaning to the conversation, about why things were the way they were, and I always found something almost magical in what Robustiano would say. He was so much stronger; there was a special aura, something magical in his words and attitude. I'll always remember him with a gray baseball cap on his head, wearing a gray suit jacket.²⁷

José himself made the connection that he played the role of the son, not only with the Ailío family but even earlier in the MIR's local committee in Villarrica, where, as the youngest of the bunch, he had actually been nicknamed "son." There was a sense of nostalgia when we talked, more than twenty years later, of his having lost something precious and meaningful. "Sundays have always been tedious, terrible days for me," he reflected, "but in Rucalán and Ailío I remember Sundays as happy days, when I'd play soccer with the other young people, or take walks with Reuche [Robustiano] looking for wild strawberries, and he'd talk to me about plants and things."²⁸

He felt so much at home, José recalled, that he had to remind himself that he was there for political reasons. "Suddenly I'd remember that I had to do political work and so I'd begin talking with them and go out on horseback to Butalón which was behind Arnoldo Ríos. I'd visit the *com-*

pañeros and share their food." He would work in all the agricultural tasks; and, as he reflected on the experience more than twenty years later, he said, "It made me feel good; it made me feel important; it didn't matter whether anyone else knew what I was doing, but it made me feel important; maybe I had this idea of being the cool young guy; maybe it was kind of a colonial mentality; I don't know."²⁹

Mario's self-criticism about his "being the cool young guy" with "a colonial mentality" was echoed in Manuel Barrientos's criticisms of some MIR activists' behavior in the same region. After getting out of jail in Loncoche Manuel had spent a couple of months in Temuco but was then sent to the coastal region, where a concentration of agrarian reform centers had emerged with ties to the MIR, to work in political education. After a couple of weeks in Carahue, Manuel remembered, he found out there was little actual cadre formation among the peasants living on the agrarian reform centers. So he went to the *fundo* Nehuentúe, known then as the Production Center Jorge Fernández, to see for himself.

There I found Alejo, the *compañero* who was in charge, riding a beautiful white horse, wearing a white poncho with black markings on it, and he says hello to me still on top of the horse. They make me get up on another horse to look around the *fundo*, to get to know it, and they introduce me to people. Afterward we went back, and he says to Juan, another *compañero* who was standing there, take the horse, and the guy takes it, and unsaddles it, and all that. This seemed strange to me. I didn't say anything, but later with Anselmo, this guy I'd studied with in high school and who was working there, I said hey, buddy, what's this shit? First of all, this guy, I really don't know him, he's not among the ones who've been in the organization a while. And well, if he's in charge here, I guess that's the leadership's business, but does this kind of treatment go on all the time? Yes, he tells me. And you haven't complained? Well, yes, he said, but very gently.³⁰

Things continued in the same vein the next day. Manuel got up early with Anselmo and went to help out at the dairy, around six in the morning, to see if anything needed to be lifted, moved, or stored. They were told no, and they drank some milk with the workers who were already there. There was nothing else for them to do until nine or ten in the morning, when the

rest of the MIR *compañeros* got up and decided to have breakfast. Then there was the political meeting, after which lunch was served, then tea, and then dinner. The next day the routine was repeated, including, according to Manuel, having the horses ready and saddled. By that afternoon Manuel could stand it no longer:

Listen, *compañero*, I told him, I want to clear up a couple of things, things I'm just not used to. First, I told him, you guys are actually using the landowner's house. The way you're treating people looks to me like the people from the organization have taken over the old boss's role. What I suggest, I said, is that first, you saddle and unsaddle your own little horse. Second, we get up early and have breakfast early, buddy. And finally, I said, it doesn't sit well with me to ask the people here to do things for us. We do them ourselves. Well, we got into a discussion, the guy kind of admitted it, and so then me and Anselmo set off for Imperial.

The thing is, we also stopped in Ailío at another meeting, and well they didn't have a horse for the guy, but there was a similar kind of style. And in the evening, all the peasant *compañeros* were working, and the rest of us in the political meeting. So I said, excuse me, I don't know if anyone else wants to join me, but I'm going to go help the *compañeros*. If you want to continue the meeting, go ahead. So me, Anselmo, and two Mapuche *compañeros* from the local MIR committee all went off to help the workers, and we were there until two or three in the morning, working with them, and then returned to Imperial.³¹

The broader criticism contained in this narrative was, from Manuel's point of view, the lack of a serious political plan. As long as the leaders in the various centers did not take their work seriously, as long as some acted almost like university students on holiday, then the deeper, more critical work of consciousness raising and building party cadres would not prosper. From Manuel's perspective this kind of work needed to involve all local activists and peasant leaders in a democratic decision-making process. "What we were suggesting," he explained, "was the need to bring into the MIR *compañeros* who were workers, shantytown dwellers, peasants, Mapuches, who weren't only doing things as activists, but were also in the leadership. This was the only way. If you want a society for the

majority, and fundamentally for the poor, you have to make sure they participate in decision making; otherwise it doesn't make any sense."³²

Manuel's dissatisfactions with the MIR's work on the coast were very much in keeping with his earlier ambivalences and resentments and revolved around two main issues. The first was his familiar perception that MIR leaders tended to be from a privileged class background and to settle comfortably into this privilege in their political work. Thus Alejo, the leader on the *ex-fundo* Nehuentúe, rode around on a beautiful white horse, which was saddled for him by a local peasant, and cultivated a dashing look in a fancy white poncho. Thus the leaders got up late and did not work alongside the peasants in the production center. The second issue for Manuel was the ongoing authoritarianism and centralism that did not allow for the effective participation of lower-class activists. The two issues were clearly connected and went to the heart of the problems the MIR faced as a purportedly anti-Stalinist revolutionary organization, which nevertheless maintained a centralized and hierarchical party structure. Not surprisingly, therefore, when Manuel began pushing for an election of local leaders, the central committee decided to pull him out of the region, which they did at the beginning of 1973. When the coup came in September of that year, Manuel was back in Temuco.

José, too, went back to Temuco before the September 1973 coup; thus, neither he nor Manuel got to witness the end of the agrarian reform on the coast. For the Mapuche and non-Mapuche peasants who felt the brunt of the repression it was the end of a short-lived dream, and they were, in essence, left holding the bag. As Luis Ernesto Quijón, peasant organizer and survivor of two arrests and multiple tortures, put it in January 1997, the MIR organizers "didn't have to face up to the consequences. When [the repression] came they went off in one direction or the other, since they had the connections and the means, and they knew what to do. So who ended up paying for the broken china?"³³

The "broken china" was a particularly apt metaphor for the violence, repression, and bodily injury caused by the September 1973 coup. But it could also be read to stand for the lack of responsibility and follow-through of the MIR leadership toward their grassroots. After fomenting a climate of confrontation, revolutionary violence, and a hegemonic masculinity of long-haired, daring youth, they simply pulled out. The peasants at the local

level did not have the same option. Arrested, imprisoned, and tortured, they would have engraved on their bodies the consequences of this short-lived revolutionary romance. At a certain level this tragic, violent, and sacrificial denouement was a fitting end to the heroic and sacrificial narrative the MIR had been writing all along, a plot that began from the dramatic and selfless immolation of Che Guevara in Bolivia and was further layered and deepened by the listing of Chilean martyrs, such as Luciano Cruz and Arnoldo Ríos. Within this overall story Mapuche peasants ended up playing an especially crucial symbolic role as enduring warrior-victims.

Peasants, Warriors, and Perpetual Sacrifice:

Images of the Mapuche in the MCR

mobilizing the mapuche

On October 23, 1971, Moisés Huentelaf was killed by landowner bullets during an attempted reclaiming of the *fundo* Chesque in Loncoche, which he and more than forty other peasant activists had taken over the day before. Along with his brother Félix and thirty-eight other peasant leaders from the southern region, Moisés Huentelaf had been present at the meeting on September 12, 1971, when the MCR was founded in Cautín. At a large demonstration in memory of Moisés Huentelaf held shortly after his death, Alejandro Manque, another founding member of the MCR from Loncoche, who had become a national leader for the organization, gave an inspiring speech in which he honored and commemorated his *compañero*. The only Mapuche sitting with the MIR central committee, Manque detailed the origins of the MCR in the mobilizations of Mapuche small proprietors and its expansion to encompass all the rural poor, and he called for a new agrarian reform law that would allow for the expropriation of all landed estates. He also emphasized the exemplary quality of Moisés Huentelaf as the epitome of unity and self-sacrifice: "The example of *compañero* Moisés Huentelaf shows us the combative way to struggle against injustice, misery, and hunger. It also shows us how to achieve revolutionary solidarity with others who are exploited in our land, because he already was an *asentado* (member of an agrarian reform cooperative) and had achieved, through struggle, access to land and work. But this wasn't enough for him. He continued fighting beside his *compañeros* who hadn't yet achieved land and bread."³⁴ Manque concluded by connecting

Huentelaf to the great hero icons of the MIR, emphasizing that they would continue fighting for land, bread, and socialism "along the trail already blazed for us by *comandante* Guevara, with the example of our comrade Luciano Cruz and now one more murdered by bourgeois bullets; no one will block our way, *compañero* Moisés, *hasta la victoria siempre* (onward always to victory)!"³⁵

The combination of heroic sacrifice, combative struggle, and tragic victimization that united all three figures, brought even closer by their common demise—"murdered by bourgeois bullets"—helped construct an image of bravery that inspired, yet also distanced, the common man. Rather than dedicate himself to ensuring the security and prosperity of his family and community within his own agrarian reform center, Moisés Huentelaf had continued fighting for the rights of others. Indeed, all three men had shunned personal security, seeking instead to risk themselves in solidarity with others. To focus on the personal suffering such behavior might have caused was, in such a context, individualistic and counter-revolutionary: no suffering widows, hungry children, or mourning families were featured here. Quite the contrary, those left behind were also pictured as heroic, inspired by the sacrifice of their loved one to continue fighting. Yet there was also a difference between Luciano Cruz and Che Guevara, on the one hand, sons of the very same bourgeoisie charged with victimizing them, and the brave and sacrificial figure of the Mapuche peasant who had fallen victim to the violence of the landowning class that had victimized his ancestors for centuries.

Part of that difference was class exploitation and poverty, and the *mirista* press in 1972 featured prominently the images of long-suffering Mapuche peasants demanding their rights. In this context women and children were legitimate, indeed preferred, symbols of suffering, such as in the June 1972 march of three hundred women to Temuco to protest the imprisonment of "their sons, husbands, and brothers." Among the women demonstrating before the Court of Appeals were, according to *El Rebelde*, the wives of the Chesque peasants still in jail, the women from Lautaro who had been shot at while protesting poor medical attention for their family members who were rural workers, and the mothers of the students who had occupied the house in Villarrica. The common plight of these women, aptly represented by the photograph of Moisés Huentelaf's

widow that graced an inset included with the same feature story, helped bond and symbolize the common plight of all the rural poor—"todos los pobres del campo"—that the MIR sought to represent.³⁶

Yet as the originators of the struggle for the land, the Mapuche held a privileged position within the *mirista* imaginary. In one of the documents formulated at the founding meeting of the MCR, for example, entitled "The Peasant's Charter of Liberation," the most poetic section made direct reference to the Mapuche and to their ancestral suffering and usurpation: "Keep your *tralca* [Mapuche word for shotgun] behind the door and always well oiled so that you can defend yourself against your aggressive enemies, who are: the landowners, the bourgeoisie and the police who serve them, so that someday you can square accounts with all those who starved your parents and grandparents."³⁷

Even clearer in this regard was the poem published in *Punto Final*, alongside the article about the events in Chesque, entitled "The Resurrection of Moisés Huentelaf." "You were born a slave, you died fighting, and you'll be reborn a *comandante* of the future republic that will crown the poor," the poem began, freely mixing revolutionary and mystical Christian metaphors. Immediately thereafter the author sought to establish the ancestral legitimacy of Huentelaf's image:

who would build you a monument now, huentelaf,
mapuche from the southernmost and oldest American forest,
your feet reeking of incessant war for the past four centuries,
guts howling, mouths covered by rocks,
stepping in the blood of your ancestors mixed in the mud of your hut
violated by the rain of four hundred years

In the next section of the poem the author connected the blood and suffering of the Mapuche people directly to Moisés Huentelaf's death, and through the symbolic hole left by the landowner's bullet, gave Huentelaf the ability to look back into his people's past and connect their deaths to present-day revenge:

who will build you the monument now, huentelaf,
that your own blood further reddened the old mud
through the hole opened in you by the boss's bullet

just like it's happened for four times one thousand two hundred moons.

Through that hole, moisés huentelaf, you count with your fingers the ancient waves of your people's river of death, and they all lie on their deathbeds sharpening the forgotten knives in order to finally slice through the neverending thread of stories, one just like the other,

in which it's always the rich man who wins. Moisés huentelaf, they've killed you so many times that you're more alive than ever and it's too many deaths we carry with us and it's time for our murderers to grieve.

Finally, in the last third of the poem the author plays with the imagery of class and of Mapuche cultural identity, tying all the poor together, through class and gender imagery, into a single message of freedom and liberation:

And how could they build you the monument, Indian, if you were never seen at embassy cocktails, of you there's barely an apocryphal trace in sociological treatises, who will reconstruct your face now, huentelaf moisés, if you gave no lectures or fashion shows nor the inaugural addresses at symposiums on foreign investment. You only plowed the earth with your teeth until that last furrow, which you opened with your ribs, sowing precious testicles so that history would have a definite sex, one single species, male and female, called freedom. You wanted to enter the summit meeting with your *trutruca* leaning your music up against a pentagram made of fire, *roto* huentelaf.

Now that they killed you for the four hundredth time, all those who, like you, moisés, are second class, we think with our hands like we have across these long centuries that only revolution will save you from the muddied waters.³⁸

The especially poignant irony of this ancestral suffering, however—and of the privileged status conferred on the perpetual warrior-victim who had been killed four hundred times—was that it did not lead to a revolution

that saved the Mapuche from the “muddied waters.” Instead, as the peasants arrested, tortured, and beaten on the *ex-fundo* Nehuentúe during the joint army and air force operation of August 1973 learned through personal experience, it led some directly back into the muddied waters, as leaders were tied to the legs of air force helicopters, flown around the area dangling free, and submerged in the waters of the Imperial River in an effort to force them to confess where the MIR had buried the weapons.³⁹

“El MIR no se asila”: *No Safe Haven for Heroic Revolutionaries*

Immediately after the September 1973 coup, the MIR leadership announced a policy of heroic revolutionary resistance. “El MIR no se asila” (the MIR does not seek asylum in the embassies) became one of the clandestine party's most important new slogans. This public image of continued and heroic resistance would culminate on October 5, 1974, when Miguel Enríquez met death head-on in a heroic gun battle at his safe house with two units of the *Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional* (DINA). But for most, the everyday experience of arrests and rumored tortures and disappearances generated a climate of fear and desperation, as the repressive forces used family members to blackmail activists still at large or the confessions of tortured prisoners to arrest or break the spirit of their comrades.⁴⁰

When the air force helicopter had landed on the *asentamiento* Arnoldo Ríos on August 31, 1973, the soldiers had lined people up looking for Heriberto Ailío. No one said anything when the commander asked for him by name, even though he was standing right there. A fellow Mapuche activist had the presence of mind to tell Heriberto, in essence, to go look for himself. “It was a strategy he came up with to help me escape,” Heriberto remembered. “So I left calmly, and walked calmly for quite a while until, suddenly, I felt the impulse, and began running.” Heriberto Ailío hid out in the surrounding Mapuche communities, where he had many collaborators and friends, for a number of days. After the coup, however, he lost the contacts he had established to help him leave the region, and, knowing that the military was pressuring his family and others at the *asentamiento*, he decided to turn himself in.⁴¹

The military had identified him, Heriberto Ailío later learned, because

Hugo Ailío, a sixteen-year-old from his community who sold *El Rebelde*, had been found with copies of the newspaper and a picture of Che Guevara and tortured at the *ex-fundo* Nehuentúe. Hugo had been so afraid that, at first, he admitted a few things. Then he tried to stop, denying that he knew people; but at that point they began to pressure him harder, hitting him, applying electricity to his head, the soles of his feet, his mouth, lips, and nose. The moment came when he simply could not stand it any longer. "I just started quacking like a duck."⁴²

The other person considered a traitor by many people from the coastal region was Gertrudis Quidel, a health promoter and leader who lived with Orlando Beltrán, head of the production center created on the *ex-fundo* Nehuentúe. After the August military operation she traveled to Santiago to meet with members of the Allende government and appeared on national television to denounce the tortures committed against her *compañeros*. She was arrested and tortured after the coup and forced publicly to recant her accusations. People from Ailío remembered that, later, even as she continued to visit Orlando Beltrán in jail, Gertrudis began dating a policeman. One day, the visitors for the Nehuentúe brought the news that Gertrudis had gone out one night with her boyfriend and had left the little son she had with Beltrán alone in the house. While she was out, the house caught fire, and the child—named Luciano Ernesto after the MIR's two martyred icons Luciano Cruz and Ernesto "Che" Guevara—died in the flames.⁴³

Ironically, given how rebellious and difficult he had always been, it was Manuel Barrientos who wore the MIR's heroic postcoup straitjacket most comfortably. He did not do so by conforming to the public model of revolutionary sacrifice, however, but by remaining a compulsive behind-the-scenes organizer. Immediately following the coup, Manuel remembered, all contact was lost between the central committee and the regional organizations. After cutting his hair and changing clothes, he began sleeping in a different house every couple of nights. He stayed in touch with other activists, but it was hard to remain positive as comrades fled or were arrested. When a local charity organization with which Manuel worked was raided, it was decided he should leave Temuco.⁴⁴

Manuel took the train north on September 22 and, until October 1974, stayed one step ahead of the police with the help of relatives. In Santiago he managed to reestablish contact with surviving *miristas* who were re-

building a clandestine network based on regions of origin, but the siege was tightening around the MIR. Lumi Videla Moya, in charge of the network, was identified by MIR informant Marcia Merino and arrested in September 1974. Manuel decided to leave Santiago and began selling used clothes door-to-door in San Antonio, a working-class port south of Valparaíso. Visiting Santiago around the time of Miguel Enríquez's death, he saw people crying openly on the street as they read the news headlines. A contact at a Santiago movie house passed him a microfilm of the MIR's statement about Enríquez's death that was hidden in a pack of cigarettes. Unfortunately, his partner, a young *mirista* he had known in Villarrica, left it in their bag after reading it; this would cause Manuel problems after he was arrested a few days later.⁴⁵

The civil police who arrested him in San Antonio initially did not know who he was. Even in Tejas Verdes, a notorious nearby concentration camp, he remained under the control of Military Intelligence rather than the DINA. This served as partial protection because of the intense and enduring competition between the DINA and other military intelligence services; but all that ended when the newspaper *La Tercera* broke the story that the "fourth man" of the MIR, "El Indio" Barrientos, had been captured and was being held in San Antonio. That very day he was blindfolded and transported to Santiago, to one of the DINA's torture centers at José Domingo Cañas. At his first interrogation, under the direction of the DINA's infamous MIR expert Osvaldo Romo Mena (*el guatón* Romo), and with collaborator Marcia Merino (*la flaca* Alejandra) present, Manuel was tied to the *parrilla*, a metal bed frame, and given electric shocks. But to his surprise this was the only time he was tortured with electricity. He remembers having admitted to working in the clandestine network under the direction of Lumi Videla, who was being held in the same facility, and they were brought face-to-face. Until his transport south to Temuco in the early days of 1975 Manuel remained "disappeared" in the bowels of the DINA torture network, between José Domingo Cañas and the concentration camps at Tres and Cuatro Alamos.⁴⁶

During that time Manuel remembers the death of Lumi Videla, who was thrown over the wall of the Italian embassy, and the disappearance of several MIR comrades, including his Temuco *compañeros* Marcelo Salinas and Jacqueline Drouilly, who were married to each other. Although we

discussed the question at some length, neither of us could quite figure out why he was not tortured or mistreated more, and the unspoken question between us was always why he had survived when so many of his comrades had not. At one point Manuel answered it by saying he'd always felt he was living on borrowed time. But on several occasions he also suggested that, in part, he survived because he did not fit the stereotype of the larger-than-life *mirista* hero.

"My looks did not inspire terror," Manuel concluded one day. "My appearance, and my way of talking, made them think I was worthless." What Manuel remembered most about his one electric torture session was that he took on a "Cantinflas-like" comic voice, and complained to his torturers that they couldn't tie his legs down so tight without hurting his varicose veins. Romo told him not to worry, that electricity was good for them because it improved the circulation; Manuel thanked him for the information. Everyone, Manuel recalled, was laughing by the end of his session. And this kind of self-effacing, clowning behavior became Manuel's defense and trademark, through which he revindicated his own humanity vis-à-vis his torturers while consciously exploiting the disbelief many felt when faced with a small, bespectacled man with varicose veins who allegedly was an important *mirista* activist. On his way out of Santiago toward Temuco in early 1975 he met up with a communist prisoner who had heard of "El Indio," a mythically strong *mirista* from the south: "He just looks at me and says hey, are you El Indio? Yes, I say. Hey, he answers, I don't know why, but the image I had was different, you crummy kid! I ran into him a couple of times in Paris later, and he always laughed about the image he'd created in his head, that of course didn't fit the reality of who I was."⁴⁷

The dictatorship was still not finished with this atypical *mirista* mole. Only after several years' imprisonment and a military trial in Temuco was he finally released into exile in 1978. To the very end he organized the political prisoners and clowned before the authorities. Even in exile he remained a critic and a rebel, confronting founding MIR member Nelson Gutiérrez at the first meeting he attended in France. "His speech was very good," Manuel remembered, "very emotional. He ended up crying for our fallen *compañeros*, and talked about the thousands of resistance committees being formed in Chile." Although he did not want to accuse Gutiérrez of lying, Manuel raised his hand and explained that he had just left Chile a

few weeks before and that "at least in Cautín, to speak of three resistance committees was already an exaggeration." It was time, Manuel concluded, "to plant our feet firmly on the ground."⁴⁸

If we plant our feet firmly on the ground, we can see how Manuel's experience and subjectivity give the lie to the dramatic forms of romantic and revolutionary masculinity constructed by the MIR. If the MIR did not seek political asylum, many of the activists who survived did so by going into exile. If the ideal *mirista* went down fighting in a romantic shower of bullets, sacrificing his body and his life for a just cause, the surviving *mirista* had deflected his torturer's attention by complaining of varicose veins. And if we look beyond the central committee to the local activists, both Mapuche and non-Mapuche, we can also see that the promises of revolutionary salvation that built on the figures of the *barbudo* and the warrior-victim were, in the end, empty.

Yet the romance of Che Guevara, the kind of revolutionary whose refusal to believe in the impossible had garnered him both his improbable victories against Batista's troops and a lonely death in Bolivia, could still seduce; and, more than any other image, it crossed class, ethnic, and political lines. Mapuche peasants had mobilized for land under banners bearing Che's famous beret-clad head; ironically, the name "Che" meant "people" in the Mapuche language. Even infamous torturer *el guatón* Romo was seduced by the aura of the *barbudo* revolutionary when, nonplussed, he confronted Manuel, the *mirista* mole. Two decades later, having finally left the political party to which he had given the better part of his life, Manuel himself was still caught up in the frenetic and utopian organizing of his earlier years. If the hierarchy, authoritarianism, and lack of realism of a party built on revolutionary masculinity had finally expelled him, the image of Che continued to draw him back in. Indeed, when I visited Manuel in August 1997 and presented him with a copy of Paco Ignacio Taibo II's biography of Che, autographed by the author, he was visibly moved. José Cárdenas also held on to the image of Che. "Of course this was a profoundly romantic image I had," José admitted. But, he continued, "I can tell you that I'm not ashamed of having such a romantic idea of Che, even today, because it allows me to hold on to a sensibility, an ability I still have to feel awe, to be affected by the things happening around me, the things I live today on a daily basis."⁴⁹

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1. Summaries of this movement and period are provided in Kyle Steenland, *Agrarian Reform under Allende: Peasant Revolt in the South* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1977); Florencia E. Mallon, "Land, Morality, and Exploitation: Discourses of Agrarian Reform in Cautín, 1938–1974," *Political Power and Social Theory* 14 (2000): 143–95; and Mallon, "The Mapuche Indigenous Community of Nicolás Ailío and the Chilean State, 1906–2000," ms. The Spanish term for "fence runnings" was *corridas de cerco*. This was a specifically Mapuche form of agrarian mobilization in which the fence of a large estate was moved back to its location on the neighboring Mapuche community's original land title.

2. Hernán Vidal, "Presencia" del Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR) (14 claves existenciales) (Santiago: Mosquito Editores, 1999), 39–47.

3. *Ibid.*, 48.

4. Jorge Pinto Rodríguez, "Ser hombre en el Norte Chico: El testimonio de un historiador," in *Diálogos sobre el género masculino en Chile*, ed. Sonia Montecino and María Elena Acuña (Santiago: Programa Interdisciplinario de Género, Universidad de Chile, 1996), 83–96; quotation on p. 84; Thomas Miller Klubock, *Contested Communities: Class, Gender, and Politics in Chile's El Teniente Copper Mine, 1904–1951* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998), 156–69; quotation on pp. 168–69; Heidi Elizabeth Tinsman, "Unequal Uplift: The Sexual Politics of Gender, Work, and Community in the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1950–1973" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1996), 114–15.

5. In *Partners in Conflict: The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Labor in the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1950–1973* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002), Heidi Tinsman traces the way family politics and family metaphors permeated politics both from above and below, during the 1960s and early 1970s.

6. Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt, *Gendered Compromises: Political Cultures and the State in Chile, 1920–1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), esp. chaps. 1, 2, 6, and 7; quotation on p. 216.

7. José Cárdenas, interview by author, Temuco, Apr. 15, 1997. I have changed the name of this individual for the purposes of this article, even though in principle he has always reiterated his permission for me to use his real name, because he has not seen this particular text in advance. Unattributed information and quotations in the paragraphs that follow come from the same interview.

8. The FER was the student front created by the MIR.

9. Archivo de la Intendencia de Cautín, Oficios Confidenciales y Reservados (1965–72), "Oficio del Intendente de Cautín, Gastón Lobos Barrientos, al Ministro del Interior, sobre la situación del Subdelegado de Villarrica con ocasión de la ocupación de un Inmueble en Aviador Acevedo 720, Villarrica," Temuco, May 29, 1972.

10. Manuel Barrientos, interview by author, Temuco, Jan. 14, 1997. As in the earlier case I have changed the name of this individual for the purposes of this particular article. Unattributed information and quotations in the paragraphs that follow come from the same interview.

11. Manuel Barrientos, interview by author, Temuco, Jan. 17, 1997. Unattributed information and quotations in the paragraphs that follow come from the same interview. On the events at the fundo Chesque see also "Lucha campesina: Un polvorín bajo tierra," *Punto Final*, no. 143, Nov. 9, 1971, 2–5.

12. Cárdenas, interview, Apr. 15, 1997; Barrientos, interview, Jan. 17, 1997.

13. Cárdenas, interview, Apr. 15, 1997.

14. Tinsman, *Unequal Uplift*, 198–201, makes clear that in rural unions during the UP, male comrades bonded through transgressive sexual conversation and raucous weekend entertainment following "leadership training sessions." The fact that homosexuals were expelled from the MIR was confirmed in interviews with surviving leaders broadcast in a TVN Special Report on Chilean television in 1994. Video copy in the ICTUS Archive, Santiago, courtesy of Steve J. Stern.

15. Cárdenas, interview, Apr. 15, 1997.

16. "El punto de partida fue 'Rucalán,'" in "Moisés Huentelaf murió luchando por la conquista de la tierra," *El Rebelde*, no. 8, Nov. 1971, 11. "Campesinos echan por tierra las intrigas de un momio latifundista. Los Trabajadores de 'Rucalán' a la opinión pública," *Punto Final*, no. 124, Feb. 16, 1971, 26. The word *momio* is Chilean slang for ultraconservative and was used routinely by the left during the agrarian reform years especially. It denotes a mummified, rigidified state and is thus especially descriptive in the contexts in which it was used.

17. The organization of the land committee, the *toma*, and *retoma* is detailed in Mallon, "The Mapuche Community of Nicolás Ailío," ms., chap. 5. The banner from Rucalán appeared in photographs in *El Diario Austral*, Sep. 5, 28, 1973, 1 (in both cases). It is also interesting to note, in this context, that Arnoldo Ríos was a *mirista* student at the University of Concepción who died in a confrontation with students from the Communist Party. Steenland, *Agrarian Reform under Allende*, 91–92.

18. "El grito de la tierra," *Punto Final*, no. 124, Feb. 16, 1971, 25-28; quotation on 27-28.
19. Heriberto Ailío, interview by author, Community of Ailío-Tranapuate, Jan. 18, 1997.
20. Robustiano Ailío, interview by author, Community of Ailío-Tranapuate, Jan. 11, 1997.
21. Heriberto Ailío, interview, Jan. 18, 1997.
22. *Ibid.*; and conversation with Heriberto Ailío, Community of Ailío-Huellanto Alto, June 21, 1997.
23. Cárdenas, interview, Apr. 15, 1997.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*
30. Barrientos, interview, Jan. 17, 1997.
31. *Ibid.* It is interesting that, when he is addressing the leader in Nehuentúe, Manuel uses the ultrafamiliar *tu* form of the verb that is common in Chilean slang—*ensillai* rather than *ensillas*. Also, when he refers to Ailío, he means the agrarian reform center where people from Ailío participated, that is, Arnoldo Ríos.
32. *Ibid.*
33. José Cárdenas, interview by author, Temuco, June 17, 1997; Luis Ernesto Quijón, interview by author, Community of Ailío-Tranapuate, Jan. 4, 1997.
34. Information on the events in Chesque is spread through various issues of MIR publications. See, e.g., "Lucha campesina: Un polvorín bajo tierra," *Punto Final*, no. 143, Nov. 9, 1971, 2-5; "En la senda de Moisés Huentelaf," *Punto Final*, no. 163, Aug. 1, 1972, 10-11; "Legalidad burguesa sigue impidiendo que la tierra sea de los campesinos," *El Rebelde*, no. 9, Dec. 1971, 10-11; "Moisés Huentelaf murió luchando por la conquista de la tierra," *El Rebelde*, no. 8, Nov. 1971, 11. Manque also gave a summary of the events in his speech, reproduced in "Huentelaf: 'Un muerto mas por las balas de los burgueses,'" *El Rebelde*, no. 8, Nov. 1971, 9-10; quotation on p. 10. The photograph of Manque and the central committee is also on p. 10 and is a good example of Hernán Vidal's point about revolutionary imagery, the use of black clothing, and the play of light and shadow.
35. *El Rebelde*, no. 8, Nov. 1971, 10.
36. "Patrones libres, campesinos presos, porque la ley es momia," *El Rebelde*, no. 33, June 6, 1972, 5-6, and inset, "Mujeres en la pelea" (7). For another use of the suffering wives and mothers in order to bond courageous and suffering men see "En Chesque se sigue luchando," *Punto Final*, no. 160, June 20, 1972, 26-27.
37. *El Diario Austral*, Dec. 31, 1970, 8: "Argumento del abogado defensor Miguel

Schweitzer a favor del recurso de amparo presentado a favor de Juan Bautista Landarretche y otros." The fact that this document was formulated at the founding meeting of the MCR is confirmed in "MCR: La revolución en el campo," *El Rebelde*, no. 28, May 2, 1972, 14.

38. Julio Huasi [most likely a pseudonym], "resurrección de moisés huentelaf," *Punto Final*, no. 143, Nov. 9, 1971, 3.

39. The main sources for the events of Aug. 29, 1973, are "El sur bajo régimen militar," *Punto Final*, no. 192, Sept. 11, 1973, 2-3; and an interview with Margarita Paillal [sic], a Mapuche peasant leader from Nehuentúe, that appeared in the last number of *Chile Hoy*, with her photograph on the cover, on the very day of the coup: *Chile Hoy* 2, no. 65, Sept. 7-13, 1973, 29, 32. I am grateful to Elizabeth Lira for the reference. Steenland, *Agrarian Reform under Allende, 189-91*, also provides a fairly extensive discussion of the incident. I deal in much greater detail with this military invasion in "The Mapuche Community of Nicolás Ailío," ms., chap. 5. It was one of several military expeditions in the month before the coup that were designed to check out the potential for resistance in areas known for their leftist militance.

40. For the campaign against the MIR see Ascanio Cavallo Castro, Manuel Salazar Salvo, and Oscar Sepúlveda Pachecho, *La historia oculta del régimen militar: Chile, 1973-1988* (Santiago: Editorial Antártida, 1988), 49, 51-60. DINA was the secret intelligence agency directly responsible to Pinochet and run by Manuel Contreras.

41. Heriberto Ailío, interview, Jan. 18, 1997. Heriberto Ailío is mentioned specifically in the story published by *El Diario Austral* on Sept. 3, 1973, as being one of the important organizers from the region still at large (1).

42. Hugo Ailío, interview by author, Concepción, Aug. 12, 1999.

43. Interviews with Manuel Barrientos, Apr. 14, 1997; Gloria Muñoz (name changed), Santiago, May 15, 1997; Heriberto Ailío, Temuco, Apr. 18, 1997; Huellanto Alto, Aug. 10, 1999; Robustiano and Eduardina Ailío, Tranapuate, Aug. 14, 1999; Patricia Valenzuela, Nehuentúe, Aug. 20, 1999. Although Robustiano, Eduardina, and Heriberto Ailío and Manuel Barrientos all remember the incident with the burning of Luciano Ernesto, Patricia Valenzuela, who lives in Nehuentúe, told me she did not remember it.

44. Manuel Barrientos, interviews by author, Apr. 14, 16, 1997.

45. Manuel Barrientos, interviews by author, Apr. 16, May 19, 1997.

46. Barrientos, interview, May 19, 1997.

47. Barrientos, interviews by author, May 19, 23, 1997; direct quotation from May 23 interview.

48. Barrientos, interview, Apr. 14, 1997.

49. Cárdenas, interview, Apr. 15, 1997.