



JORGE HURTADO GUMUCIO

COCA INQUISITION

THE COCA PLANT PROHIBITION

novel

L'ESPRIT FRAPPEUR INTERNACIONAL
PARIS FRANCE

JORGE HURTADO GUMUCIO

COCA INQUISITION

Satanizacion of the coca plant.

NOVEL

L'ESPRIT FRAPPEUR INTERNACIONAL

***38, rue Keller, 75011,
PARIS FRANCE***

Registration Number : 1141146

WGA Intellectual Property Registry Service. USA.

English translation: John Barker.

SILVER OF POTOSÍ.

Madrid October 18, 1568.

«They are crazy!»

«Holy God, Majesty! The Holy Office must have had more of a reason...»

«They find demons which suits them. I understand that they must take care of their business in the sky; but I must take care of mine. Besides, if I'm in ruins, they are too, and all Spain»

«And the Indias, majesty ...»

«Well said, Viceroy Toledo. Finally I see you're on my side. And now between you and me, tell me, and no one will know this, you have the word of King Felipe II of Spain, why has the Church satanized coca leaves?»

«It is that, the Holy Of ...»

“Damn it, I asked your opinion, don't repeat their idiocies, you and everyone knows that the famous Holy Office is more crazy than a goat. Don't forget what their great solution for the plague rodents in Piura was: Excommunicate them!”

«Yes my majesty, but I do not ...»

“Is it useful? Yes, I can't deny it, the Office is useful! Without them, how can I keep order in

this herd of lost sheep they call the Spanish Empire? But we should not exaggerate their usefulness in relation to how they empty the coffers. Tell me, how can I feed all these parasites who call themselves my people? And do not forget that I am the one who pays the wars of the Habsburgs. And loans? The damn Germans and Genovese banks have cursed me with the rope around my neck! To me, to the King of Spain! «
«You're right, Your Majesty. The truth, I've heard, is that coca gave strength to the mitayos for work. Silver production in Potosi has fallen since the ban on coca, of that there there's no doubt, and it was the Church ...»

«Enough, don't mention those imbeciles. And you, how could you have allowed us to go to hell. Could you not have do something? Do I have to take care personally about something what was your job ? I have also heard that you not only were in agreement...»

«I was not. Moreover, it is His Majesty who has placed the Holy Inquisition above ...»

«Ah! Now the King is the culprit! Look little Toledo, or would you rather be called Viceroy Toledo? It would sound more solemn in the mouths of my heralds when they announce: «The Viceroy Toledo was burned for destroying the economy of Spain», how do you like the sound of that?»

«No Majesty! I have thought of a solution, if I may...»

«You still think? With what? With that huge belly you've inflated on my expense? All right, I don't know why I still listen to you but come, tell me, what is your brilliant idea to fill the coffers?»

«If you put a tithe on the commerce in coca for the benefit of the clergy they will forget the devil, that is for sure»

«Except the king of Spain, what a shame! Happily my ancestors are dead. But we must credit you Toledito, I like it, it's great, but how I did not think of it before? I have always said that money is the cause of all problems, but also of all solutions. Okay, now you'll get the edict for decriminalizing coca, and taxing it for the Clergy. Great. You secretary, write this:

«'Madrid October 18, 1569.'»

«But His Highness the year ...»

«Be calm Toledito, the king knows what he does! The ordinance will apply after your arrival in the Indies and I want it dated so. No one will know how we did it! Can you imagine the face of the clergy? Besides, the King has the right to magic!»

«And you, continue writing. 'King Felipe II, etc., etc. has ordered that the prohibition on coca is lifted, because it is essential for work, and that,

henceforth, it is the duty of all responsible for the care of the Indians to ensure coca is provided up their ass. No change that last bit ... it doesn't look so good in an Ordinance of the King. Write instead...'It must be the most important and mandatory part of the daily ration and, ah ... and that for all transactions with this super-food, the Church will receive the corresponding tithes.' Ready?»

The King, holds aloft the roll of the manuscript, gives a turn practicing the latest fashion dance steps, and then swivels, simulating a sabre thrust into the bulging belly of the Viceroy.

“Ready Toledito. Now, bring me back Potosi!”

Francisco wanted to continue arguing but the king left without even saying goodbye, not even turning round on his way out. He was paralyzed, How could this happen to him, the aristocrat, officer of the Crown of Castile, Knight of the Order of Alcantara and ... and the worst of it, everything was a misunderstanding, a mistake of the king. But what could you say, no majesty, you are crazy, it is not me, I have just been appointed Viceroy of the Indies, it was the priests who banned coca, and... No it was unthinkable, when the King was the owner of the world and, realistically, could not keep track of everything going on in his vast empire. «

Finally, as he resumed his own steps back, he realized that in fact he had won, that everything was now in his hands: The Viceroyalty of Peru and the energy of the coca leaf released!

Many years later, when he was recognized as the «supreme organizer of the Viceroyalty of Peru» or «the best Viceroy of the Indies» he remembered the mistake of Felipe II with a smile and with some pride how he had stood up to the king who had not understood that he was talking with the best viceroy, or better still, with the real king of the Indies!

«It is pirate-proof, Majesty. We have 24 guns on this ship and 4 fast support ships. If the pirate Drake messes with the Viceroy of the Indies, it will be the last thing he does, « says General Diego Flores de Valdes, captain of the ship and proud of the security that has mounted in his galley to take the Viceroy Toledo to the Indies.

A shiver ran through Francisco's body when he looked at the map, saw the dimension of what he reigned over. It spread throughout South America, from what, centuries later, would be called Panama to the southern tip of the mainland that will be Argentina, including the cities and lands of Panama, Bogota, Quito, Lima, Chile and Charcas.

There were also the writings of Fray Bartolomé

de las Casas: "The destruction of the Indies", the true and first human rights treaty in the Indies, which gave him the necessary perspective to handle such possessions. On the other hand, Eusebio Arrieta, his private secretary, had worked diligently to get all the information available from Potosi. This would be worth it for him, years later when Eusebio Arrieta became the secretary of the Holy Office of Lima, a post with great power.

The Viceroy was fascinated, in particular, by the story of Diego Huallpa, the Quechua herder of llamas, who discovered the Potosi silver by accident: The fire that he lit in 1545, against the cold of the Andes, had brought forth a spring of molten silver that later would be converted into the coins that crossed the oceans and started the planet on the course of globalization.

In the Indies there was not only an abundance of precious metals, but also slaves. In a matter of days King Felipe II, was faced with the difficult task of taking care over millions of prisoners of war and with having to move mountains of silver and gold across the ocean to Spain.

His solution would change the world in such a radical way that would define the way of living, thinking and feeling of humanity for centuries to come Felipe II declared himself owner of the

land but not of the indigenous people. Instead he called them mitayos copying an inca word meaning serfs instead of slaves who were free but walked on what was now a foreign land and were responsible for their own survival, while the Spanish needed labor for mines and for tilling the land. Such was the origin of 'free' workers and of surplus value, the essence of capitalism.

The Villa Imperial of Potosi grew from 170 inhabitants in 1546 to 160,000 in 1559, a population equal to that of Paris at the time. New York was just a village called New Amsterdam, when this world's most important human concentration arose. In 1546, a year after the discovery of the silver mountain, King Charles V granted the city the title of Villa Imperial de Potosí.

Opulent and prosperous Potosi attracted people of all sorts and of all races: adventurous, ex-soldiers, fugitives, knights, monks, artists, lawyers, gamblers, swordsmen, artisans, miners, merchants, prostitutes, politicians, thieves. They sought their fortune not just in mining, but in providing services and consumer goods to the miners. Trading in Potosí meant getting the most convertible money, officially coined silver of high purity which allowed you to buy anything anywhere in the world. And in that, Francisco

Toledo would have a great say. His great project, which many branded «crazy,» «an affront to human intelligence» or «crazy ambition» was, with the power of silver and coca, to create the most sophisticated and largest money factory since the invention of financial currency in Turkey, six centuries before Christ. His faithful secretary had got for him the plans to build and, he had the endless flow of Potosi silver!

«Yes my lord. At the risk of losing the head that I carry on my shoulders! These plans are the best kept secret of the empire, but there is nothing in the world that money cannot buy.»

Eusebio Arrieta was serious. The plans of the ultramodern coins maker that worked with human traction, confronted a well-known problem: La Casa de Moneda de Sevilla had made more than enough coins since it was created in 1492 and even it came to generate hyperinflation on more than one occasion.

«What the hell, and now someone wanted to build a bigger machine?» They all asked the same question, especially the German and Genovese banks which complained about Felipe II's project: it was a scam, they said, and hyperinflation was proof of that". Many described it as a sacrilege act. Which was understandable given that, since the creation of money and banks, humani-

ty took a decidedly religious attitude toward this new power that was inserted into civilization: how could a piece of metal, of little use in reality, be allowed to have so much power over things and people?

The wonderful and timely appearance of the silver mountain of Potosi gave a new impetus to his project, a machine that makes coins faster. It was just what the viceroy Toledo needed for his 'mad project' of a universal currency.

«Is it not the logical consequence of the great feat that the Spaniards have just achieved? Is there anything bigger than uniting the two halves of the world that were always separated?» This was Francisco, trying to win the argument to himself, because the onslaught against his project was such, that sometimes he also doubted his own sanity.

During the months at sea, Eusebio Valdez made whole trunks of valuable documentation for planning the great reform of the Viceroyalty of Peru available to the Viceroy, in methodical fashion. Considering that the phenomenon of the Indies was totally unprecedented in history, no one was prepared for such an adventure.

Potosi in particular was a challenge for anyone. Unlimited wealth had driven everyone crazy. The church had thirty-six sumptuously deco-



***CASA DE LA MONEDA
POTOSI BOLIVIA***



***MAQUINA PARA ACUÑAR MONEDAS
POTOSI BOLIVIA***

rated temples and altars with altarpieces of silver and gold with many more planned. Women wore Chinese silk with gold lace and silver to go to mass. Everybody wore English hats, Neapolitan clothing, Arab perfumes. Potosi homes exhibited Persian carpets, Italian paintings and Venetian glass. Someone went so far as to use silver horseshoes for their horses, while another, in a delirious fit, removed the pavement of the streets he would tread for the procession of Corpus Christi, replacing it by silver bars. All too quickly Potosi gained the nickname of modern Babylon.

And to make things worse, the Council of Lima's ban on coca leaf in 1551, had generated a parallel underground market corroding the already corrupt Imperial Villa of Potosí. Many good officers lost their head for passing a few leaves of the prohibited Coca.

The war against the coca plant, the talisman of the devil, as it was call by the Catholic Church, came to occupy a large part of the work of the Spanish administration to the detriment of the organization and management of the 'New World'. And it would be just he himself who was in charge of fixing this madhouse! The first thing was to persuade the church, and in this he fortunately had the backing of Felipe II, of the use-

fulness of coca as a labor bio-tool, just in case priests argued that this was pure imagination on the part of the Indians. Toledo was so thorough in his reform of the of Indies that he even defined small details like the amount of coca leaves needed to energize the work of mitayos, about 60 grams a day.

The six-month voyage to the Indies, seemed an eternity to everyone in the galleon. But Francisco, would want a little more time to work on the strategy and especially the logistics for launching the first universally currency, to be known worldwide as the Real of 8 and which would be valid for the next three centuries.

«Land in sight, your majesty. We'll touch port tomorrow at sunrise.» The voice of General Diego Flores de Valdes pulls the thoughts of the Viceroy Toledo away from the streets of Potosi. The huge imperial galleon swings majestically over the Sea of the Antilles. Francisco feels dizzy and does not know if it is because of the months at sea or the epic work which he is to begin.

«It's Cartagena de Las Indias, my lord»

It is May 8, 1569. Francisco Alvarez de Toledo, fifth Viceroy of Peru, dressed in deep black, his sword adorned with sapphires in his belt and a large green cross of the Order of Alcantara on the chest, walks to the figurehead to contemplate

for the first time what will be his domains.

At the front, with the last haze disappearing to reveal a calm turquoise sea, is Cartagena de Indias, enriched by a thousand generous coconut palms and presided over by a carpet of glistening white sand. Up above the deep blue sky, and beyond, the infinite riches of the new world and far beyond, the other half of the newly discovered land. His private New World.

MONEY MAKERS

Bolivia, South America, 380 years later.

«At the end it tastes good, eh, Eusebio? « says Jesus Huallpa, putting some coca leaves in his mouth and passing it to Eusebio. Who in turn, and after removing the ribs of the leaves, carefully puts them one by one into his mouth?

«Jesus is right, Andrés, the first time I did not like it either.»

Andrés observes their elders in the rite of *akullicu*. He has seen it, since he was first aware of himself, seen his parents and all the adults he has known chew coca leaves. The custom is in his genes, after all, and as far as he knows, all his ancestors have done it, and forever.

But today is something very special. It's his first

day as a miner in Llallagua, the mountain of tin located in the Andes, near the fabled Potosí. There, gathered in one of the mine entrances of Llallagua, called La Salvadora, are the three miners. Jesus, besides being his uncle, has been chosen as Andreas's godfather, who must teach everything needed for mining. The first lesson, everyone knows, is the *akullicu*.

«But now you don't need to chew, Andrés, you have the strength of youth. But very soon I assure you, you'll see that without coca mining is impossible. «

After this, and as way of baptism, they must go to one of the toughest place in the mine, the drilling sector hundreds meters underground, where it is impossible to see more than one meter ahead, not only with the darkness, but the eternal dust that permeates the environment. There, closer to the planet's hot magma, the temperature easily exceeds 50 degrees Celsius.

«It is true hell, Andrés. So you will learn to respect the work of drillers. You'll see. You'll be here for just a while, then, eventually, you'll do 24-hour shifts“. But Jesus is suddenly silent, has seen Andreas's hesitation, how he almost steps back. He sometimes forgets that his nephew, is only 12, a child yet.

«Don't be scared Andrés, this is nothing com-

pared to Potosi.» Jesus says, understanding that though he is terrorizing the child, he would like to continue telling about Potosi. In recent years, perhaps because he feels, he has been exaggerating the stories about Potosi someone had already told him about. But now he has all the justification necessary, after all, Andrew is his ward, and he could be his successor as the next troubadour money maker!

The problem with Jesus is that he is living with one foot in Potosi and the other one in Llallagua. And that was from an early age. He remembers Grandpa telling fabulous stories of Potosi while chewing their prized coca leaves grown in Coripata. The old man seemed to read the story on each leaf that was carried to the mouth. And why not? After all, coca was always present in every minute of the story, the saga of a line of miners who staged the creation of money, literally.

Untold riches they made with their own hands and yet were the poorest in the world, also literally. It was a psychological abyss for anyone and more so for Jesus, who had the misfortune or luck to have a grandfather who made him aware of his special fate.

«The coca leaves, Andrés, are kept in the mouth like this,» Eusebio said, opening his mouth to show the coca ball that it is clamped between

the cheeks, «it is the only thing that gives you courage and strength down there.»

He is providing his coquero skills for the initiation of his son. «We must take the most flexible leaf, the greener, twenty or thirty first and then more,» he says, knowing that is not so true, in fact each leaf is valued as the last one. «As the leaves accumulate in the mouth a ball of coca is forming thus, you see” Eusebio adds showing the bulge in his cheek. «Then, we must bring into the ball a little ash, and leave it there. At first it’s strange, then you get used it, but actually we don’t chew leaves.”

«Don’t chew, but what?”

«Yes I know we say chew, but it’s not the right word, we just suck. It takes away the sadness,“ Jesus responds in an absent manner. In this day particularly he is not fully in Llallagua. Perhaps it’s the memory of himself as a child in his first day of mining like Andrés today, with his mind filled with all the fantastic stories of wealth from the grandfather.

Grandfather Huallpa worked in Potosi in the twilight of its flowering, little more than two centuries after its discovery by Diego Huallpa, from whom Jesus claimed to be a direct descendant. No one ever really knew but for Jesus, who knew the story since he could first think, there was no

doubt. He grew knowing he was a Huallpa, descendant of the very same money makers.

What the old Huallpa, never mentioned however was that he, as Diego Huallpa, the original discoverer of the silver got only misery from his discovery. But that did not stop him remembering and proudly telling everybody of the wealth that had passed through his hands without looking at it until he died. He died from the poisonous fumes of the hell that was an incredible paradise for many others thanks to the Real de a 8, that they, the Potosi miners made with their own hands.

The Real de a 8, the famous silver coin was created in the Mint of Potosi in 1572 by the Viceroy Francisco de Toledo and joined the world economy for the first time, as the viceroy planned.

When Jesus heard that there was no place on earth however remote in which this currency did not circulate he felt as if he had known the whole world, and though he never touched that river of coins, he felt himself as an authentic part of the chain of money makers and from that point of view he had also traveled with the coins on their its planetary epic.

«A Real de a 8 had a weight of 25.560 grams of high purity silver, it was not like those modern dollars, scraps of paper that are worth something

just because someone says they are”, Jesus says. “It’s amazing how we all accept them without hesitation» The grandfather had insisted obsessively on the mystery of the transformation of the money after devouring Marx’s Capital, in his last years: «How was it possible to change something of value for something worthless and yet it be worth the same or perhaps more?”

In the eighteenth century the Real de a 8 became the first currency of global use in its own right, because the value of the currency was determined by its actual silver or gold content as it should be. All coins from the Chinese Yuan, the Indian rupee, and also the dollar, originated in the Real de a 8. Each country had only to reseed the coins with their own national stamp for local use, or at least define the value according to the silver pattern of the Real de a 8

The only one great treasure grandfather had was a coin with the seal of Arabia strapped to his neck from which he was never separated. He said he had met others with the seal of China, Thailand and other countries difficult to remember. In the United States it was called Spanish dollar or eight real coin. It was its first official currency and was in force until 1857, always equaled one dollar and copied the symbol «\$», taxed at Real de a 8, as its main feature.

The significance of the Potosi silver was so great that in the Spanish language the word for silver Plata is equivalent to money. Sucre, the capital of Bolivia was originally called Ciudad de La Plata. The main river, which flows into the Atlantic, was called Rio de la Plata and placed the Viceroyalty of La Plata. The Argentina Republic took the Latin word for silver, Argentum.

The construction of the TajMahal, the magnificent monument to love in India, was paid for with the Real de a 8, like almost all the great structures of the 19th century throughout the world. The great work of Spanish literature, Don Quixote, coined the term “worth a Potosí” to designate wealth in superlative terms.

Potosi produced 80% of the total silver that was extracted in the Indies and 50% of all obtained in the world.

The big mining center contributed to the Spanish crown the equivalent of 50,000 million dollars, kick-starting the economy at a global level for the first time in history



The "P" of Potosi and the dollar sign in the Real de a 8

THE KING OF COCA

The balcony of the ranch house of the Marquez family, strategically located on a high hill, one of the many that shape Los Yungas, Bolivia, allows a broad view of the green eastern slopes of the Andes. Touches of red, violet, yellow and orange from the bougainvilleas create an exquisite symphony of colors; meanwhile the delicious aroma of orange, tangerine, mangoes, coffee and coca give the feeling of a true earthly paradise.

For Ariadna, the eldest daughter of Ulysses Marquez, now in her twenties, it is the perfect setting for her hopes of romance: A gentle almost imperceptible melody has been caressing her dreams and now for sure it was not just a dream.

«Miss. Ariadna,» shouts Negron, watching at her from below. He is the main overseer of the Santa Maria, who brings, the Devil, the preferred black sorrel of Ulises Márquez by the reins, and another mount for himself.

«Your father asked me to bring the Devil. If you want a ride, it is a beautiful day,» Negron says without suspecting that this words are the wings that Ariadna was just waiting for. She appears down on the ground in her impeccable riding suit in no time, her blond hair partially gathered

under the cap.

The foreman has to follow the girl, who has taken the narrow track up towards Coripata, but is soon left behind. Riding lessons in the exclusive Country Club of New York that she has frequented recently, have turned her into an expert horsewoman. Negron, discouraged, pulls the reins back, just as Ulises Marquez crosses him riding at a trot.

«Master! What a fright you gave to me! Miss. Ariadna “, he starts, trying to justify himself, but Ulises, visibly upset, ignores the foreman and continues driving his horse uphill.

Ahead, on the dusty road, Ariadna Marquez spurs her horse towards the village of Coripata, from where the merry tunes of the charango and panpipes seems to come. The search is not difficult, the animal seems to know the way, and she should just drop the reins to let it go. The Devil gives a wide berth and stop before an extensive coca plantation that climbs the Andean hills as stairs carved in the clay. To the left are the first streets of the town of Coripata. The melody is audible now, loud and clear.

Ariadna decides to approach on foot trying not to be seen, but before she knows it, and after crossing a small banana plantation, which has hidden what is within, she finds herself in the

why ‘clarmiddle of the Anyi party in the heart of the coca plantation.

By coinciding with the feast of the Virgin of Coripata, the anyi has invited musicians, zampoñas, charango and panpipes as extras. And although it is clearly a party of peasants, among them is Felipe Morales with Spanish genes that have given him blue eyes, but big black hair inherited from his Aymara mother. Their gaze crosses, and Felipe, without removing his eyes from her, changes the Andean tune that was playing the popular song:

*«What beautiful eyes you have,
Under those two eyebrows ...»*

The sudden change of rhythm has brought the attention of the audience on Felipe and on his look, which they follow to reveal Ariadna. But... «Ariadna, Ariadna!» A voice sounds behind her, making her turn around, hurting her eye with a branch of coca as she does.

«Father! What are you doing here?» she says, cleaning her eye with her fingers and walking toward him. Ulises has stopped just before the banana trees, so as not to be seen, but his presence does not go unnoticed, the music is interrupted and an awkward silence has taken its place. Felipe for his part is trying to stay unnoticed.

«The question is, what are do you here, Ariad-

na? You know that this cannot be, we've already talked it through. But what's this, do you have something in your eye? «

«Nothing father, a small scratch ...», argues Ariadna skirting the banana plantation.

«Let me see...»

«I say it's nothing.»

The father, with his handkerchief, carefully wipes the eye of the young girl.

«Ariadna ... what's going daughter? I have nothing against him, but ... « The voice of Felipe, who has resumed the song resonates again in the valley of coca. Ulysses, hearing it, can not disguise his disapproval.

«You have a 'but' Father, just that!»

«Ariadna ... you will soon return to the United States, and there you will have the opportunities you deserve.»

«Yes father...»

In the short ride back to the house both remain silent, but she watches her father askance. She knows him very well and today, there is something different, and it is nothing to do with what just happened...

«Daddy, I notice something else is bothering you, is there something I should know?»

Come and see for yourself, say Marques as he spurs his horse forward, Ariadna follows him,

and as soon as they pass through the wide gate of the hacienda Santa Maria, they dismantle in haste. ‘As if there were an emergency’ is Ariadne’s thought, as they go towards the room where the coca is packaged. It is a large room with thatched roofs, where several men are working with a giant Coca packaging press: a huge vertical screw carved in wood that two men turn by walking in a circle. Under the screw there is a box that serves as a mould, lined inside with huge banana leaves that serve as packaging strips. Each package, well compressed, can carry up to 25 kilos of coca leaf.

Nearby is a huge pile of dried coca leaves along with many of the packages, called drums that are stacked one above the other so many that despite the spaciousness of the room, there is little space. “Good morning, master”, the workers greet him formally.

«And this?» Asks Marquez, pointing to the hill of drums of coca, knowing very well the answer. His intention is to dramatize the issue to his daughter.

«The problem is the mines, master ... the previous strike has left us this surplus. The situation is serious master, and it seems...

«What is it, father?»

«We are not miners, daughter, but we live thanks

to the tin. When there is a strike in the tin mines, the first thing that Patiño does is to ban the coca for miners as a punishment. It is nothing new. And our exports of leaf to Europe and the United States are uncertain. The Communists and the politicians have put us on the brink of collapse. That is why I don't want you to stay ...they are destroying the country! «

«Europe has also just finished with war father, it is not only in Bolivia.»

«Yes daughter, but there they have learned. The United Nations was created. A world government that will end wars ... which, happily, will be a thing of the past «.

«Father, can I borrow your handkerchief?»

«Still bad your eye? Let me see ... a little red nothing more.

«Master, Don Dario Franco sent a messenger, he asks when you can receive him,» says Negrón, who has entered the press room in search of Ulisses, «he says it's for business ...»

«It was all already planned for today, I believe?»

«Yes, boss, so you said.»

«Very good. Now unsaddle the animals and feed them, and tell my wife to help Ariadna, she has hurt an eye... «

The foreman Negrón is part of the Marquez family, he was born in the Santa María in the times

of Agamemnon Marquez, the King of coca, and now, like many, serves Ulysses, his grandson.

TIN

After turning on the carbide flashlight of his red helmet Jesus Huallpa walks resolutely toward the mine entrance, like his brother Eusebio. The child comes behind dragging his rubber boots that are too large despite the three pairs of socks of sheep's wool he is wearing. The yellow waterproof suit is too big too.

“It is quite big for you Andrés isn't it? There is no mining kit for children, they are not supposed to work, but your helmet is fine, and it gives light at least.... «

But for Andrés, the really big thing is the fear that does not fit into his child's heart. The darkness of the tunnels is almost tangible and the weak light from lamps hardly allows any orientation in the suffocating maze. At the mine entrance stands a small mining train, with cars that can dump to empty the mineral that has been brought from the depths by pure human strength. For Andres it just seems like a great toy and immediately he climbs up on it, but...

«No Andrés, today we are not going in the train, we have to drill down there.»

Once inside the mine, Andrés cannot help stopping in front of a statue with an odd appearance. «He is called the Uncle. Did you know the mine is called the mountain that eats men alive? Look right now, we are swallowed up aren't we? He is dangerous son, so you have to ask permission to the Uncle, he cares for the treasures of the underworld, the same treasures that we will steal. All this is his property, his kingdom. So you have to give respect and valuable offerings like coca leaves and alcohol to cool his anger. «

The Uncle figure is impressive, which Jesus said was difficult to understand. When he saw the Uncle outside the mine it seemed like a weird clay doll, comical even, but there, inside, he acquires weight and strength. It was impossible not to feel a certain fear in his presence. Sitting as an authority, it is made of ordinary cracked clay, deformed horns, long ears and eyes of chipped old marbles; many half-burned cigarettes in his deformed mouth, two nose holes so they seem like caverns and his phallus as big as himself. Someone has given him old rubber boots that make him alive. What with the sweat and dust, they all end up looking like the Uncle. His hands rest on his legs tranquil as a benevolent confessor, but with a terrifying expression. Down around him, lying on the floor here and there, are cop-

jira puddles, the water that washes the minerals with its distinctive smell of sulfur. And several carbide lamps that attract Andres curiosity.

«They are comrades who have died in mine, Andres, so their lamps belong to Uncle. Now, light his cigarette up, he will be your protector if he likes you, if not, he will kill you on the slightest pretext. Show him you're already a man, a real miner, my son!

«It is true, God comes only as far as the mine entrance, but no further; down there is the kingdom of Uncle. With God and the Devil as they say, we have no other. Welcome to hell, Andrés!»

«The Uncle was born in Potosi, and the Devil came from Spain,” Jesus qualifies, and so was extremely demanding. Miners survived thanks to the fact that we were able to reach an agreement, because basically Tio, is good, it's just that he does not like bad people. He opened up the veins of silver from Potosí, only because he wanted us to have those treasures...»

«Why was silver so valuable, Jesus?» André asks, fired up by his uncle's enthusiasm and his mythical world of metals. But the value of silver was a mystery forever. Jesus had also asked the same question to his grandfather with little success. In fact, silver never did have a practical value, it served only to make coins because it

was considered a noble metal: it resists corrosion like gold, which has value for the same reason and is scarce. But for Huallpa it never seemed a valid argument; steel, with a touch of tin, would be best. Silver is the best electrical conductor but in the days of Potosi electricity was unknown. And in modern times it would be too expensive for use in the electrical industry.

«The strange things humans do, son.»

One day, as suddenly as the silver came, it disappeared, replaced by pieces of papers called Bills whose value was what the manufacturer wanted it to be. It was enough to increase a zero or two or however many are wanted. Whereas the Real de a8 had a fixed value and hard to carry in the pocket when you had plenty of them. It is difficult to imagine one of the super rich hiding his fortune in Real de a 8 coins..! That is why silver was replaced by dollar bills, ready-made to fit their pockets without spoiling the cut of their suits.

Meanwhile treasure hunters have found another El Dorado, tin, big as a mountain. But no coins are made with it. Jesus, who did not want to break the connection with his Potosi ancestors said that tin had been more productive than silver coins.

«Tin is vital to technological development, An-

dres.» Jesus said with pride. It was not an exaggeration. Tin is the great welding mineral and has antifriction properties that has enabled the construction of automobiles, airplanes and electric tools. It was vital to the war industry for its ability to prevent iron from rusting. This made the manufacture of tin for food preservation possible which in turn made it easy to feed armies and to build increasingly sophisticated weapons. «And this great pithead of Salvadora is exactly where the tin exists!» Jesus says.

For Andrés who follows his elders, however, the mountain is made of anguish. The entrance to the mine, a black mouth that smells of sulfur in the middle of the gray mountain devours him. If he stays too long, he will surrender his life which will not last very long. The last hope is to find another job outside the mine, but that's almost impossible. He knows. Here is his fate.

But deep down, maybe just for comfort, he feels a kind of excitement of the moment, he is now becoming a person, an adult, like his father or grandfather, and Jesus and all his ancestors. He is part of that lineage that is lost in the labyrinths of the fabulous rich hill of Potosí. A source of intimate pride, though unrecognized, for these disinherited sources of the world's largest money supply.

1000 TONS FOR ARGENTINA.

In the spacious living room of the colonial style house which Ulises Marquez has just entered, stands Darío Franco, his right arm in the administration of the ASSOCIATION OF COCA GROWERS of Yungas. For many years the old rancher accompanied his grandfather, Agamemnon, when the King of Coca chaired the Association, and now brings that experience for Ulises, who is himself now president of the Coca Growers Association.

«Dear Darío ... I see you have already served your yungueño. «

“And you, Ulises, are you ready for yours?”

Darío Franco served a glass of orange juice and added a generous portion of singani of grapes from Cinti. Both partners clink their glasses and drink.

«A little bitter!» Ulysses says, looking at his glass and frowning.

«It's a bitter situation, did you know about the strike in the mines?»

«Who does not? It is everywhere, Darius, no longer new, as soon as one ends another begins. And not only that, the Communists of the MNR have virtually paralyzed the country. For me it's

the same as civil war»

«But there is good news, dear Ulysses ...»

«What? Have all the MNR men disappeared? Or Lechín? «

«Not as good as that!»

«Come on Darius speak out»

«Will you have around 300 extra tons of coca leaves to sell? The Association will add the remaining 200, it is for Argentina «.

«But as far as I know it was already sent. Or wasn't it?»

«Ulises, listen to me, I said extras!»

Ulises Marquez was certain that the export of coca to Argentina amounted to only 500 tons a year. He, knew it very well because a year ago he had led the Bolivian delegation to Argentina where the Alexander-Miranda treaty was signed. This agreement in fact merely formalized the 500 tons that already were entering Argentina for the cane harvesting, and had been for the last 20 years. The same agreement had left open the possibility of doubling the amount to one thousand tons of coca for the same purpose.

The exploitation of cane in Argentina was pulling in more and more workers from Bolivia, famous for their great capacity for work and their secret energy potion, akullicu or coca chewing, a labor energizer that far surpassed the yerba mate,

which was popular there. What Franco said, could only mean one thing?

«What? The increase was approved! «

«Yes, Ulysses, but we must meet one requirement, a new law that allows the Bolivian Bank to buy coca in order to sell it to Argentina. When the business is between governments, that's the way. And it's a fact! I spoke with friends of the Senate, they already approved the law and now only the president's signature is needed. Within weeks we will be exporting 500 tons more.

«At last, good news! The day was already too dark dear Dario, really. But, why your bitter face?»

«Hertzog will not return to the palace, Urriolagoytia stays in his place»

«Well, who cares, it's just ...»

«I don't know, there's something odd about Urriolagoytia that I don't like.»

«Come on Darius, what else could happen? We have everything! Don't spoil the good news, it makes me feel good, after the strike in the mines, I have coca leaves accumulating ...»

«You're right, I'm a pessimist, but you know that this illness of President Hertzog is pure fiction. It is said that his political party forced him to resign and not return. Urriolagoytia, to my knowledge, has no dealings with Patiño and

neither with us. No one was expecting this. Your grandfather will meet him tomorrow. I have arranged the appointment. «

«Come on, that is why grandfather says that the Association is in the best hands ...»

«Thank you, Ulysses, but it also thanks to the advice of Don Agamemnon. He is the king, right?» But the landowners talk is interrupted by Dona Julia Marquez, who has sent Negron to ask him to come to Ariadna's room. When he arrives, she is sleeping beside her mother.

«Ulysses, I'm worried ...her eye is worsening. I want to see a doctor. «

«I don't think it's so bad, it's just a speck. She is sleeping quite peacefully. «

«It is the tincture of opium. The same you got from the dentist ...»

«Of course, tomorrow we will take her, don't worry,» says the rancher, placing a kiss on the forehead of her daughter.

THE KING OF THE TIN

In the darkness of the mine, the days are not counted, it is an eternal night. You know that time has passed only because you feel it in your stomach that is bitten by hunger, but food is just as scarce. The salary of a miner is barely enough

to feed one or two.

That is true for the vast majority, but there are others as in the case of Simon Patiño who, like Diego Huallpa, the discoverer of silver, was virtually a nobody when, in 1900, he bought an old Spanish mine generally thought to be played out for just a few dollars. A few decades later, after he became the King of tin, he was the sixth richest man in the world. Patiño accumulated 81 billion dollars and was placed just five positions below Rothschild, the King of the banks who had 450 billion, while Rockefeller, King of Petroleum followed with his 374 billion. Andrew Carnegie king of steel had 372 and Henry Ford, the king of cars 188 billion dollars.

The Capitalist kings, as the old Huallpa called them, were a new breed of kings who began to take over the planet while monarchs were going out of fashion. This exclusive club of the super-rich would become the owners of the modern world, thanks to the advantage of inheriting a blank capitalist world, being the first with so much power to buy the strategic businesses, an advantage no new super rich could ever have.

Simon Patiño was the only capitalist king born in the southern hemisphere and it was thanks to tin, that same tin Jesus Huallpa is about to extract

today from the same Patiño mine that began this story. Patiño smelled the same sulfur that he is smelling, walked on the same copajira wet floor, because Jesus works in the main mine called La Salvadora. Which is a source of moral conflict, because on one hand how can one not admire the king of tin, a miner just like him, who made it to be a king by himself. But, Jesus, a renowned Marxist around Llallagua, could never admire his class enemy, especially one of such magnitude! It would be a reactionary, a petty bourgeois notion if not a downright asshole, as Grandpa would say!

La Salvadora, the Potosí of the twentieth century was located on the south side of Llallagua. Patiño began to exploit the Salvadora with very few workers and inadequate resources limited to supplies from a hardware store in Oruro

The first inventory of Patiño Mines: One canned salmon, a sack of flour, a 25 kilo drum coca, a pound of tea, three pounds of candles, two packages of matches, four pounds of noodles, three Cigarettes packs, three sticks of dynamite, a hundredweight of gunpowder, two packs of guide lights, two quintals of coal, four hammers, some wire, two wheelbarrows, four shovels and two mules

Patiño himself separated mineral pieces by hand

and transported it with the help of llamas to the town of Challapata. The journey lasted three interminable days but from there the load was carried by rail to ports for embarkation to Europe and the United States. Later, early in his dizzying ascent, Patiño built a railroad that existed solely for this purpose.

In general the history of these pioneers of capitalism is very similar, poor beginnings but with an exceptional genius for business. How could such predisposition exist innately in human nature? The question must be asked because these men were rather ignorant.

«Marx said that economic movements, like capitalism, were natural processes and existed before humans have even imagined the economy as such ...»

THE TIN REVOLUTION

The small mining train increases speed with every meter on the slope leading to the sinkhole two kilometers deep, but the foot brake that Jesus Huallpa operated in his youth, now seems useless. Fact is that at 35 years of age and after 25 years of work in the tin mountain, he is considered old, disposable, like the small mining train. Jesus gets lost in the dark, absorbed by the

mine, a terrifying experience for anyone, but not for him, he has learned to accept his fate as it comes after going to hell every day as if it were just another job.

«How different was Patiño's life! Right now, he is probably sitting in his palace near the Champs Elysées in the mythical city of Paris, directing one of the first multinationals. Why was his destiny so different? «Jesus asks himself.

But it was not time to think about those twisted ironies of life, death was around the corner. The faint light of the carbide lamp just gives the illusion that you see something. But it does not really matter, what could happen? Only crashing, finally, against anyone, or into something? Perhaps to better understand life with the prospect of eternity?

«In the mine you lose the fear of death, because you are already dead or at least buried alive, son...»

«Watch out! Danger». Just the voice comes out, and then only silence. Hard to know, there in total darkness rolling like a stone, if you're still alive, or dead...»

«Jesus! I am Eusebio, wake up ..., Hey friends! Help me, Jesus has crashed... «

«When you die, you are buried, but here rather you are unburied.» Jesus thought. Gradually Eu-

sebio's face covered with mud is being drawn by the lamplight, the nauseating smell of carbide and copajira now looked delicious because it means life. Meanwhile chisels hammer as a non-stop background music through endless tunnels.

«Thank God, brother, you're alive! You almost die when everything is ready. Can you walk?»

«Come on!, to work ... what do you think ?»

shouts Adolfo, the mine foreman. “Eusebio! if your brother is hurt you must call the doctor... « Adolfo, hated by all, because he has the thankless job of being the eyes of Patiño inside the mine. Everyone knows that he receives special bonuses when solving problems like this. But today, there's more. There is an extra arrogance to his tone, which makes Jesus believes that there is something he does not know.

“Get out of here bastard, or be ready to die ...!».

A group of miners are intent on hitting him, but...

«Wait, comrades, wait, he is only an employee.

And, more to the point, you know, today will be the last meeting of the union with Lechín and Lora before the ...”

«Impossible, Jesus, this morning Lechín has been exiled to Chile and Lora was caught in La Paz. That damn Urriolagoytia has sided with the company again, “says Julian, an old miner who arrives panting.

«What? What is this Julian?, we are not in the mood for jokes»

«It's true!» said the foreman, «we know what you are up to. The army is coming to take the mines and all of you will be thrown onto the street like mangy dogs. Unless...»

«Then, you know! How could they know that it was today, Eusebio?!»

«We know that there are traitors paid by the company and everyone knew about the revolution. It is impossible to make a revolution in silence, Jesus. And now you're the only leader in La Salvadora, you're in charge, everybody is waiting for your orders.»

«You know what to do, call a meeting, and make sure it will be inside the mine. Right now! Take this bastard deep inside the mine also, as far as you can.

The situation was well known, it was not the first time the army had come to impose discipline in the mines; the same with persecution, imprisonment and the exile of mining leaders. Juan Lechín, a minor bureaucrat of the mine became one of the prominent leaders over several years and will be the Minister of Mines three years later when the labor movement that is emerging right now, controls the government of Bolivia. . Guillermo Lora, the theorist of the Trotskyist

mining movement, wrote the Pulacayothesis, a kind of Bolivian Communist Manifesto, which sets the guidelines that will govern the revolution. The central policy is the nationalization of the mines of the TIN BARONS, also achieved three years later with the 1952 revolution of the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario or MNR led by Victor Paz, the leader known as the “monkey”.

Chisels and hammers are the rudimentary tools and an effective the communication system in the mine, almost indistinguishable from the normal noises of mining work. Gradually, more and more workers come from somewhere in the endless mazes guided by the singing of the chisels. A widening of the shaft serves as a casual meeting room. Further, in a corner, is the UNCLE OF THE MINE himself, where a group is dedicated to providing him with alcohol and coca leaves. And beyond is the endless maze that loses itself in the darkness of the underworld. ,

«If they send the army in they will try to work us to death or will force us out of the mines»

«We should arm ourselves and resist, we have no other possibility, Jesus ...»

«Our weapons are old, barely functioning, all we have is dynamite and that ...»

For Jesus and for everyone, it is a fresh memory

of past years, clashes with the army were useless.

«There is nothing to do, they have an army, and we cannot resist such force for long.»

“Hostage! Jesus, let us take the Patiño’s gringo engineers as hostages, they respect them, need them, they cannot do anything to us, let’s go to Siglo xx»

Siglo XX, another of the Patiño mines, forms, together with the La Salvadora, Catavi and Huanuni mines, a powerful mining complex that left its competitors far behind. Mauricio Hochschild and Carlos Aramayo, other large tin miners were known as the Tin Barons forming a natural political alliance out of their shared interest.

Jesus knows the terrible scope of the Barons’ retaliation, it was not the first time, but he could see no other solution. Almost 20 thousand miners, but poorly armed with stones, some firearms - rather relics of the Pacific War - dynamite and especially their legendary indifference to life, were still no match for an army with modern weapons, professional discipline and above all, unlimited government support

«We have to stock up on food, coca and all the dynamite that we can. Some of you must go to the grocery store, we must take all the supplies we can”

The miners know that it is a turning point, after long years of struggle, strikes, deaths, injuries and exile they have learned that the government controlled by the Rosca does not hesitate to kill. The arrest of the main mining leaders is a clear signal that a plan has been carefully prepared, including the use of company spies.

«Eusebio, what do you know? Toro from Catavi mine called a meeting yesterday, why did he not invite us?»

«Jesus, you know I don't trust Toro nor the Monkey ...»

«But I have seen the determination of Toro in the mobilizing, why do you doubt him?»

«I would say provocative, rather than decisive, Jesus, and it brought only more problems. Don't forget the slaughter of 1942. The Rosca will use it as a justification for violence... and to calm their consciences. «

The Rosca, the group of capitalists who controlled Bolivia: on the one hand the tin barons and on the other the landowners, mainly the coca growers of Yungas, descendants of the Spanish owners of the headwaters of the Amazon since the Spanish invasion. And with them the politicians in their pay of and who ensure the interests of all as unified.

The domain of the Rosca lasted until the arrival

of foreign tin capitalists, just after the revolution of 1952. The new Rosca became mere stewards of the interests of these foreigners.

It was the success of Patiño which sounded the alert about the dangers and potential of this land after the end of Potosí. Patiño was a formidable capitalist. He came to control the worldwide price of tin over and above the interests of the super rich in the northern hemisphere, beating them on their own territory, the stock exchange in New York.

Long before, when Chilean capital practically monopolized Bolivian mining, Patiño, firing his own guns stopped an armed attack of the Chileans that were trying to take La Salvadora. The king of tin responded secretly by buying shares in the stock market so as to control the Chilean companies in an attempt, he said, of returning the tin mining economy to Bolivian hands.

Patiño went on to build his own bank, the Banco Mercantil, which printed its own notes and engraved the photograph of his daughters as a central emblem.

«He has to have been born in Cochabamba, isn't that so Jesus? Only one of them could come up with something like this. «



The coveted kingdom of Patiño, forced USA tin capital to take desperate measures, such as recruiting the northern engineers that Patiño hired in USA into the army as a form of espionage and industrial sabotage. The justification was «state security.» This strategy came to fruit in 1952 when the MNR, led by Victor Paz, the monkey, opened the doors of Bolivian mining to North America, after taking the tin mines from Patiño. It was one of the tactics in accelerating the project of a world government, controlled from New York that would be able to handle any abnormal situation, like a king born in the Third World imposing on them, the owners of the world, the price of one of the coveted treasure of the twentieth century, tin, and who had also had the audacity to make his own money, something not seen since the glory years of Potosi.

The idea of world government became a reality in 1946 with the United Nations, which has the power to impose decisions on the weakest coun-

tries in the name of freedom and human rights.

THE ORIGINAL SIN

That November morning, Ulysses awoke earlier than usual and enjoyed being on his favorite balcony from where it is possible to see the green ocean of the Yungas, now bathed with the first rains of summer. The moisture of the vegetation makes new colors, deeper, more vibrant and fresh, as if water was the breath of life itself.

His lands extended beyond what could be seen with eyes. And beyond them, the other seven farms that make up the exclusive association of coca growers of the Yungas.

They were originally the lands that the Incas preferred for coca growing. No one knows why, because they are not the closest to Cuzco, their capital and heartland, or the easiest to cultivate; on the contrary, the steep slopes forced the development of cultivation techniques, such as bleachers clay, true works of engineering and art that allow the earth to retain the water and nutrients.

The bleachers technique for coca called huachos were developed by generations of these families over the past three centuries and replaced the solid Inca tacanas built of stone and much larg-

er, which constituted a space problem for these lands owners because they could not match the unlimited space available to the Incas, the navel of the world, as they called themselves.

In the opposite direction are the ripples of the Andean mountains where a vegetable green ocean is climbing the slopes. High above, snow-capped peaks are barely visible. And a little below the summit of the mountain, is Chuspipata where the railway from La Paz terminates and from there, comes down like a white thread outlining all accidents of geography into the valley, until Ulyses's house in Santa Maria.

A sudden and insistent barking of dogs has brought Ulysses from his reverie. Below the balcony something catches his attention: a soaked-through horse rider who has come to Santa Maria.

«Don Agamemnon sends you a message,» he says, raising his voice loud enough to be heard over the hard rain. «He says it's urgent. He stressed that you should be in La Paz as soon as possible ... ». But Ulysses has not heard the last words. He has come down the stairs to open the door of the house, anticipating Negron who arrives just behind.

«My God/life, you are wet, seriously wet !»

«The Tamampaya River is uncrossable, there are

several earth cave-ins after Chuspipata, Don Ulyses, as usual there is no way for vehicles ...»

«Negron, give him dry clothes and something hot to eat. And you, lone ranger, I think, you will stay at Santa Maria tonight, it would be crazy to go outside now. «

«Thank you my Lord. But I emphasize that your grandfather said t this message is very important. You should get to La Paz, as soon as possible. « The messenger hands across a leather bag that he takes from under his military weather-proofed poncho. Inside is a copy of the newspaper La Razon dated November 1, 1949.

The rancher looks anxiously in the newspaper. He anticipates it will be something about the Agricultural Bank law. . But he then sees a small news item that his grandfather, Agamemnon, has marked:

«Prohibition on coca. A UN commission has arrived today to Bolivia, with the aim of investigating the malicious effects of coca on health. Fort Humphrey, who comes from Lima, where he has held a similar mission, says he is sure that his research will show the harmful effects of the coca leaf and ... «

But Ulysses Márquez is unable to continue reading. His thoughts cloud over. Outside, nature's rain-fed green no longer has the same cheerful

hue. The world is not the same. Coca plantations are not the same.

«Negrón! We leave tomorrow morning to La Paz, with or without rain. And send someone ahead to Chuspipata to hold the train for me. You will bring back Devil. «

HOSTAGES IN CATAVI

The XX Century Camp built by Patiño in the mountains of Llallagua also serves as housing for the engineers and technicians of the Patiño Mines. That day, as is customary, all the foreigners are gathered in the house of Douglas Connor, who doubles up as a mine engineer hired by Patiño and a spy for the United States government, which considers tin to be an element of national security. Connor, who initially rejected the proposal of his government before embarking for the Andes, had to give in when he understood the role played by Patiño in controlling the tin at a planetary level. It was a threat to the interests of his country and he should watch closely. He spent long hours studying this remote place and had got to know the ferocity and indifference to life of miners in Llallagua, the most important Communist concentration of the whole continent. Connor, from New York, is the youngest

of the group and newlywed. He is accompanied by his wife Mary Ann who has taken Llallagua, five thousand meters high, as their honeymoon in heaven. She had no other choice.

David Kerfting the other American engineer has attended the meeting so as not be alone. In the morning he had a bad feeling that he could not ignore. The others present are the Argentine David Hausser, the boss of the mine Paul Green, and Spaar, the Dane. He is the first to see, way down below, a crowd of red dots moving in the direction of the camp. It is an army of 8,000 angry miners inside red helmets and yellow jackets.

«Something strange is happening!» Hausser whispers, trying not to be heard by the others. But it is too late, the miners have come faster than he thought and are detonating dynamite sticks, cheering the revolution and death to Patiño and Urriolagoitia.

The dynamite explosions make the windows of the house want to jump out of their frames like the heart of Mary Ann who is ready to panic.

The red helmeted ants, looking for the gringos, track down all the houses. Irritated, because they believe that they have fled, they finally break down the door of Connor's house, and let loose their anger on the terrorized foreigners. Resist-

ance is futile, Connor comes forward to protect his wife but he is soon flying above the crowd. They have risen as one, his wife not wanting to let go of him. It's the same with the others, except for the big Hausser who is practically naked when they drag him down the dusty road that heads to Catavi town.

At the headquarters of the Federation of Miners, the hostages are lined up against the wall of the large room.

«None of you are going until we reach an agreement!»

«We've only been a month in Llallagua and we are only employees just like you," Hausser says trying to get up off the floor, still almost naked.

«The difference is that you are valuable, how much do you earn, \$ 50,000 a year? We are cheap, if we die, they can replace us with fresh meat. Your market price is our life insurance,» Eusebio says, when he sees a group of miners armed with old rifles, pistols and dynamites.

«Jesus ...!, Toro wants to enter with a lot of people, I don't like it»

«Let us go out, Eusebio.»

But Toro and his men have just entered pushing the door keepers out of the way

«We have to kill somebody, Huallpa, it's the only way to be respected!».

«Dead hostages serve no one, Toro! Let's call the manager to negotiate. «

«What for? You know what they will do, they will just try to buy time until the soldiers arrive. Besides, I am the leader here in Catavi, not you Jesus»

«They will come anyway, we gain nothing by killing hostages, and I am the head of the Federation of Miners».

But Toro, far from convinced, detonates pieces of dynamite around building. The shockwaves go through the town of Catavi, climb the mythical mountain of Llallagua, and enter every beating hearty.

«We have to kill the gringos. Huallpa is a coward!»,» shouts Toro, loudly, addressing the miners.

The concentric pressure of eight thousand miners, an anthill in search of prey, and only the Huallpa brothers to keep some control. Both argue desperately with the Toro group, to prevent the lynching of foreigners.

«The grocery store is empty, Jesus, they have prepared the coup well. Not a coca leaf even» says someone who's arrived headquarters, without understanding the effect of his words on the situation.

«You see Huallpa!, and you want to behave like

a lady», shout Toro's acolytes.

«All we have are these guys and they are my responsibility, «Jesus answered, knowing that he must impose his authority quickly, or otherwise be bypassed. In the bottom of his heart the ghost of 1942 returns. A situation so similar only 7 years ago when President Enrique Peñaranda, in response to a demand for a wage increase with the threat of a strike, ordered the military occupation of the mines to control the situation. Despite the presence of the army, a group of miners headed by Maria Barzola decided in desperation to march in protest, but were ambushed by the army and 80 protesters were killed in a hail of bullets.

Maria Barzola was wrapped in the national flag thinking that somehow this symbol would protect her, respected as it is by the military as a patriotic symbol, but the bright colors of the flag instead honed the aim of the snipers and she was one of the first to fall.

«Jesus! The manager is already on the phone ...» says Eusebio, pulling the phone away from headquarters through the window.

The call has created an expectation that temporarily calms the masses.

«Retract the layoffs and release our leaders, or your engineers will rot somewhere in the mine

that we can collapse with a single explosion, if you try to rescue them,» Jesus shouts into the phone so as to be heard by all.

«The decision to put your leaders in jail was President Urriolagoytia», our company does not agree with it, but there's nothing we can do. Regarding the layoffs, we will pay compensation for all workers and we will sign a new contract with 95 percent ...»

But dialogue is interrupted by Eusebio, he is pointing towards the mine tunnels.

«Jesus, look, we're surrounded!, if the army continues to move in that direction, we cannot go back to the mines ...»

The anthill stirs. Toro's people throws dynamite, sowing fear among miners. Eusebio, Jesus and all those who have weapons seek refuge, and shoot wildly against the military that take defensive positions and fire back.

«Hello, Hello! Huallpa, do you hear me? I have orders from Mr. P «the voice is coming out of the handset lying on the ground, but no one is there to listen it.

Inside the headquarters, Connor tries to deflect the rifle that one of the captors is pointing over his terrified wife, but in maneuvering the gun is fired on Hausser, resulting in a leg injury. One of the men, who entered the headquarters with

Toro, lets loose a kick against the Argentinian. «Let's see, gringo get up, do you think I am a stupid?»

Connor's wife kneels crying and imploring that they be let out.

Outside, the army has taken positions over the mass of workers. Several miners are hit by bullets and left lying in the street; some are rescued by their comrades, while others crawl to cover from the rain of bullets. The old weapons of the miners are just gestures against the military power of the army, which is shooting the inert bodies lying on the floor. Some dynamite sticks explode very close to the military, thanks to the huaracas (slings), that miners learned to use in the years of llama herders. The soldiers are forced to halt their advance, while most of the miners get cover behind nearby houses; while shooting and dynamite throwing continues.

Jesus and Eusebio run from side to side, coordinating the defense, with no choice but to neglect the headquarters; where Toro and others indiscriminately hit the hostages until Connor and Kerfting are killed.

Paul Green, the regent of the mine, reacts violently despite the situation and is shot across his face by Toro. Connor's wife is taken by a group of women, including the wife of Jesus, to keep

she under safe, far from Toro and his guys.

When night falls, the battle is reduced to a sporadic exchange of bullets and some dynamite explosions that just keep the military at distance but doesn't stop them making progress till they are in front of the union headquarters.

Inside the headquarter are Hausser with a leg injury; Green, who survives the gunshot to his face, and Spaar. The three snuggle under some old newspapers to spend the cold night with the dead who are left where they fell.

Toro, taking advantage of the early morning hours and a pause in the war, fixes a bundle of dynamite on the wall that faces where the army are gathered. The explosion opens a large hole, through which the surviving hostages see the soldiers but they don't dare to leave.

Jesus and Eusebio, who have realized what Toro intends, shoot in the air trying to prevent the escape route; but the army shoots at them. Jesus is wounded in the leg, but, crawling on hands and knees reaches a storm drain to hide in. Eusebio is has sheltered behind some rubble and is unharmed.

The army, understanding the situation concentrate their fire around the headquarters to create a corridor for the hostages. They rush out.

«How many?»

«Only us, Captain, there are more, but they are dead in the building. Connor's wife has been taken...!»

With the hostages no longer in danger, the army is advancing rapidly, while the miners escape amid the chaos and the soldiers collect the dead and take prisoners. Jesus, paralyzed by fear, can only wait where he is until the searching has passed. And yet, and despite the almost total darkness of the night, two soldiers who have fallen behind, run into Jesus who has dragged himself out of his hiding place trusting in the thick darkness.

«What was that? Light one match, quickly,» shouts one of the soldiers, but the wind, as if responding to the pleas of Jesus makes it impossible. The soldiers curse and thrust their bayonets blindly around. Jesus makes himself into a ball and rolls away. He hopes that death is quick. Bayonets draw sparks as they hit the pavement just a few centimeters from the miner's body. Finally the exhausted soldiers leave, without realizing what has happened.

Jesus, completely soaked with sweat despite the cold and cramped by the pain of his injured leg, crawls to reach a ventilation chimney where he drops inside La Salvadora.

That night a furious storm hits the mining town while prisoners are removed from the town and

the dead are buried in mass graves. At dawn, the miners are carefully identified before entering the mines. There is a reward for finding Jesus Huallpa, but no one seems to listen.

WHEN THE RIVER SOUNDS...

It rained heavily all night and is still raining when Ulysses Marquez and Negrón leave Santa María. The roar of the river rises up the folds of the mountain, back down then up again. Marquez feels the Yungas are rolled under the Devil's horseshoes. Behind, Negrón, with expressionless face and wrapped in his poncho, rides listlessly.

From Santa María, the path descends first to Puente Villa to cross the mighty Tamampaya river by a fragile bridge, and from there an endless rise several hours to El Castillo, where the hope is that the rain will subside.

The huge stone fortress, about 60 km from La Paz, built in 1935 by Tejada Sorzano when he was president of Bolivia, is practically deserted except for a few servants who make it their job to care for Marquez and his manager. The once peaceful creek running through, now sounds like it is desperate to get into the mythical valley of coca.

«It is rare, so much rain, Negron, isn't it?»

«Things are changing a lot. The river sounds, and when the river sounds ... «

The road to Chuspipata has been practically carved into the rocky slopes and is just broad enough for one vehicle at a time. Having almost vertical walls on one side and very deep precipices on the other, a landslide, however small, completely disrupts vehicular traffic. In such a situation the mules and horses are saviours. It makes the trip to Chuspipata long and longer, but there, thankfully, the railway to La Paz begins..

AGAMEMNON MARQUEZ AGROINDUSTRIAL HEADQUARTERS

The 1948 Roll Royce barely climbs up the Ayacucho Street in the center of La Paz. The tires skidding fiercely fight the slippery cobblestones made wet by rain. Finally, after rounding the Plaza Murillo, it stops just in front of the government Palace. Agamemnon Marquez and Darío Franco, getting nimbly stepping out of the car, head to the main door of the historic house. A long line of visitors is waiting patiently for their turn despite the rain. When the guards see Don Agamemnon, they invite him to pass immediately despite the angry face of the others.

«Mr. Marquez, Mr. Franco, welcome, What I can do for you? «

«Dear Captain Escobar ..., thank you, we are coming to speak with Dr. Urriolagoytia, there's a very important issue ...!»

«The president is not in the palace at this time, Mr. Marquez, I understand that he is attending a very important meeting at the US embassy, and that will occupy the rest of the afternoon, but I will gladly fix a meeting for tomorrow. Don't worry».

«Thank you Captain, my son Ulysses, who is on his way to La Paz, will come,» Agamemnon says, polite but disappointed.

«With pleasure, Don Agamemnon. Tell him to come tomorrow at the end of the morning, I'll be waiting...».

Outside, the rain has stopped and both men, after dispatching the driver, take the opportunity to walk for some exercise and to enjoy the sun.

A newsboy at the corner of the palace, shouts:

«Hostages in Catavi mine. Several people, including two Americans!, Buy La Razon ... La Razon ...!»

«Ulysses is right. This is already a civil war Darío. It is worrying. But, at least, it seems that Urriolagoytia has the right approach. It is a good sign that has approached the U.S embassy?».

«But what happened?, why he did not told us about the coca prohibition? The first thing that Hertzog, for sure, would do, is to call us, Don Agamemnon, it gives me a bad feeling. «

«Well, as things stand the president must be crazy on that score, just a month in the palace» says the king of coca, although he don't believe it.»I hope that Ulysses will make it here», he continues pointing south, toward Miraflores, «It seems that Yungas is nothing but a storm and ready to come here ...»

Beyond, the Andes is partially obscured by dark clouds in crescendo. The majestic Illimani, a little further south, is secretive under the threat of storms. Both men reach Av. Mariscal Santa Cruz and below, see the broad avenue Prado fleetingly enjoying the sun.

On the corner of Colombia Street stands a 7-storey building, until recently the highest in the city, the headquarters of the Agro industrial Company Agamemnon Marquez. The ground floor houses the large stores where everything is sold, not only the agricultural products from the Yungas, vegetables, fruits of the season, and coca leaves, but articles from the highlands and the Titikaka lake, dozens of varieties of potatoes, quinoa, Llama and sheep meat, leather. Almost everything necessary for the people of La Paz

and the interior of Bolivia

A RAILWAY TO HEAVEN.

After long hours of arduous ascent through the rain, Marquez and his foreman finally reach the Chuspipata railway, but the electric train to take him to La Paz has not yet arrived and he must wait or ...

«Let us go to Cotapata, at least we will wait indoors there,» Ulysses decides, knowing that Cotapata station, the last rail track built to Amazonas, has all the amenities, including telegraph and hot coca tea. He had overseen its construction ten years ago.

Finishing here is the last part of the Amazonas railway project, pushed by the Coca Growers Association, especially his grandfather, Agamemnon, who take it as a personal concern.

«If we are lucky, Negrón, in a few years these incidents will be thing of memories.» Ulises says while crossing the narrowest passage of the Chuspipata station where you have to walk along the track since there is virtually no space on either side. «In three years the train will be in Santa Maria!»

«God has answered my prayers,» is Ulysses' thought when the first sight of Cotapata shows

the train just arriving with its own heavy metal sound. Negron, rather than relieved, turns around despite the advice of Ulysses, to take something warm while waiting for the train.

«As you wish, but first sent a telegram to my grandfather, tell him I'm on my way.»

The train ride to the top of the Andes, the world's highest, is spectacular. Huge boulders against which humans are less than an insect. Oceans of cloud travel hundreds of meters below the passengers and up to the icy peaks, giving the sensation of flying instead of crawling. But this time, Ulysses has not enjoyed the ride as he has always done. His thoughts turn round and round the same anxiety: the prohibition of coca would mean the end of everything. Right now export to Argentina was not certain, and the chances of selling coca leaves to US big pharma is uncertain and this when he had gone so far as to form a new company, COCABOL, with the intention to not only export raw coca leaves, but to run the pharmaceutical business as well.

JESUS, REALLY, IT DOESN'T HURT?

Inside, in a nook of the endless sinkhole, Jesus Huallpa is dragging himself; he feels himself to be a worm. The pain has numbed not only his

leg, but the soul. «Where is my family? Has the revolution ended before it started?» But he cannot continue. Someone has found him.

«Hey!, Here, here !, It is Jesus!» shouts the miner, excited by the discovery. And within minutes the chisels pass on his location. Eusebio Huallpa is the first to appear.

«We must find the traitor, Eusebio ...» says Jesus in a very low voice.

«We'll see brother, but right now you need a doctor. What do you have?»

«A bullet in the leg and desires to kill ...!»

«Comrades, report that there has been an accident, we need a doctor, quick!»

«Are you crazy? Are you sending me into the hands of the enemy?»

«I said accident, didn't you hear?, I didn't say bullet wound ...»

The waiting seem endless but in the meantime, a poultice of coca leaves has been placed on the wound, a long-used painkiller. Finally, the company doctor arrives.

«But ... he is Jesus Huallpa!, how can ...?»

«Do you know how to get out of this labyrinth alone, doctor?, No, of course not so OK. do the best for him and you will not become a hostage right as of right now. What do you think? «

While the doctor prepares his instruments, Je-

sus, anticipating the pain of surgery takes a long drink of alcohol that someone has offered him.

«You cannot take alcohol, if I am going to remove the bullet, anesthesia is not going to work...!»

«Is that revenge, Doctor? Drink will help endure the pain better.» Says Eusebio, looking very deeply at the doctor.

«There will be no pain,» retorts the doctor.

Eusebio Huallpa puts a stick of dynamite next to the doctor's face and pushes the burning lamp of his helmet towards the cordite wick.

«The miners have no fear of death, and if you make fun, we die together, do you understand ...?»

The doctor, not believing what is happening, looks at the dynamite between him and Eusebio. Everyone cheers.

«No, it will not hurt, but if you are so stupid to understand it's better that we fly together! «With a quick movement, the doctor pushes Eusebio hand against the lamp, trying to light the dynamite. Eusebio tries to resist and falls sitting on the floor. His teammates laugh almost to kill themselves.

«Tough guy doctor, we like it,» someone shouts amid whistles and laughter.

«Let me see Jesus, where is it?»

Jesus uncovers his leg and shows a poultice of

herbs that covered the wound. The doctor removes the poultice with disgust.

«And, what is this?»

«This is coca, doctor, some help.»

And before anyone can say anything, the doctor has stuck a syringe in Jesus's leg. A few minutes later the clamp penetrates the flesh awkwardly seeking the bullet. The miners, terrified, look on the procedure and look in vain for the pain on Jesus's face, the pain that everyone seems to feel except him.

«Jesus, really ... there is no pain?»

«It's like my whole leg is asleep, Eusebio, like dead ... will I stay always like this, doctor?»

«No way, you'll be fine»

Before leaving the doctor faces Eusebio and places the syringe on his nostrils.

«Would you like some?, If you decide to detonate your dynamite , it will be less painful for you !» Eusebio steps back baffled.

The miners laugh and cheer the doctor, who exits the place as a hero.

«I'll be back in two days, Jesus, keep the wound clean, and ... I will not say anything.»

INTERNATIONAL COUP?

Ulises Marquez and Dario Franco arrive at the Government Palace towards the end of the morning. The November wind should no longer be so cold, but the rain that seems to never end ices the atmosphere. The bustling pigeons, which always flood the Plaza Murillo, today take refuge in the cornices of the government palace and shit freely, as if giving an opinion on the human hustle and bustle down there.

There is a particularly intense and unusual activity created by the presence of an unknown security group. They are foreigners and clearly different from the rest, with their fair complexions, and arrogant manners as they physically check the visitors.

The landowners, as always, skip the long queue of ordinary visitors. But, with an agility that belies their size, three agents put Marquez and Franco against the wall.

«Your ID Sir» exclaims one of them, while trying to check Ulysses Marquez, but he, with an energetic gesture, pushes the agent. The other two react, drawing their weapons, while the Colorados de Bolivia stand between both.

The battalion Colorados of Bolivia, the palace guard, have a decorative rather than security

function and carry old rifles, relics of the Pacific War, in contrast to the modern automatic weapons of the foreign agents. There is a tense silence that is interrupted by the head of the Military House, Captain Escobar, who arrives dragging a long wire and a telephone. The officer in command answers the call. Apparently the communication comes from very high up, because, frowning, the agents allow the farmers to enter the palace.

«Who will be the new president?» says Dario Franco, sarcastically.

«Are you kidding me, Dario?, So who is Urriolagoytia? just a few seconds ago I was sure that he is the actual president of Bolivia.»

«And this guard changing? So far in my life, my dear Ulises, I have witnessed many, just three years ago, I saw President Villarroel hang here.

«

«What, but Villarroel was clearly a coup, Darius.»

«Of course, there are different ways to make a coup: the «suicide», as with Germán Busch, the hanging as Villarroel. Or getting sick, like Hertzog.»

EXILE IN THE DARK.

The dark days inside the mine are endless. With very few opportunities, Jesus came out at night and to the entrance of the mine only, and the only thing he caught were the fears of clear danger.

All collaborate to sustain the self-exile of the leader. There are secret collection of food and coca leaves. The worst thing for Jesus is, however, the whereabouts of his family. And, although he, like everyone else, knows that the norm in these cases is the capture of the family of the rebel leaders, he prefers to believe in the unbelievable.

«What do you know about my family?» He says, while receiving a bag with a few coca leaves that Eusebio has brought. «I cannot accept Eusebio, it is your ration ...»

«Thank you, but you need it more than me. You eat very little. Your family? Nothing new, brother. Julian says they escaped to Uncía. But nobody has seen them. And it is impossible to ask about them, at the least pretext you can disappear. What I really don't understand, is why, the wife of one of the Americans was at your home. They've blamed you for that as well.»

«What? Uncía? That is near, it should be possible to know «.

But Eusebio avoids the gaze of his brother. “How he could have mentioned the wife of Connor? <. That could have been the death knell for Jesus’s family. But Jesus, it seems, has not understood, or rather, did not want to understand. Eusebio prefers to let Jesus live with his illusion, and on the other hand, does not have enough evidence to affirm or deny it. Nor were there any words in the world to comfort him. Jesus sucks hard on his coca ball seeking relief in its bitter juice, while tears run down his face.

«I cannot stand it, Eusebio. I was too hard on her, had no right to ask her so much.»

«I bet we will find them , brother, but wait, I don’t think they have been in Uncía, rather they must have escaped to the city ... Calm down now, there is too much to do.»

THE INQUISITION AND THE KING.

In the Central Hall of the Palace, the President, Urriolagoytia, is in the middle of an official event, so that both landowners can’t get to the palace stairs leading to the second floor, and are forced to be part of the group that attending the event.

On the steps is the President and on one side, there are a large group of foreigners. On the other, his

full cabinet, senior members of the church, the chief of police, military and several deputies. In front of them, the public: mostly public administration employees and the spoken and written press who were specially invited. Back, almost out of the picture, the coca growers.

The president talks about the critical political situation in the country:

«At this very moment,» he says, «MNR extremists are threatening to blow up the power grid and others are blocking the streets. I call for peace, and take the opportunity to tell you that my administration has decided to call a general election. «

Then, he welcomes the United Nations mission. Who have, he says, a mission to care for the health of the victims of the drug epidemic. On Urriolagoytia's right side is a bulkier man with a bulging belly, bald, and with a plump red face that has a good-natured air. The president, looking at him says: "Mr. Fort Humphrey is an envoy of the United Nations, the brand new organization that emerged from need for humanity to fight their enemies, like Nazism, which not long ago was defeated precisely because of this supranational power. Mr. Fort has been invited by our country to carry out scientific research on the malignancy of the coca leaf and the vice of

«cocaísmo»

The landowners exchange looks of astonishment, as President Urriolagoitia continues to present Mr. Fort.

«Guest?» Whispers Franco, while Ulysses Marquez shrugs in response.

Then, Mr. Fort talking in English, translated by his secretary, declares, that «The United Nations, after the Holocaust, have decided as a priority the protection of human rights at any cost. There is evidence that in Bolivia unscrupulous businessmen are using narcotic dope on their workers, who also receive miserable wages; maintaining inhuman conditions of work, and who are even murdered with impunity. In 1942, the US government was forced to intervene in defense of the Bolivian people; America sent a commission that verified the great injustice of which they are victims. This injustice creates the conditions for international communism, driven by the Soviet Union which violate the most fundamental right of human beings, the right to freedom- As is evident, then, our mission in Bolivia, has not only to do with human rights and health, but with the freedom of peoples. I will now introduce Mr. Jean Philip Bergier, an official of the Office of Narcotics in France. He is a soldier in humanity's first war against drugs. A Tireless fighter

against the poppy, he now brings his expertise to advice on the war against coca. «

Bergier, with a highly French accented English, and twisting his long mustache, speaks slowly, allowing time for translation.

«The pernicious effect of drugs is corroding the very foundations of modern society, destroying families and the economies of victim countries,» says Bergier, while displaying the book *Phantastica* by Lois Lewin. “This eminent Frenchman says, has proved, without question, that the cocaísmo, or opium chewing, so widespread in Bolivia, is certainly a poison. There is scientific evidence that coca takes away the desire to eat and this in turn leads to malnutrition and a lack of energy for work, which in turn produces poverty. Opium is the cause of poverty in Bolivia. Even worse, coca is the culprit for the racial degeneration and mental retardation that can be observed with the naked eye. The mission today that has brought us to Bolivia today is concerned with demonstrating this fact. «

«Opium? Another name for coca leaves? «Ulises mutters on Darius's ear. «Narcotics are derived from opium, I know, and nothing to do with coca leaves, the only mental retarded is this Frenchy» Yes, and said, that Bolivians are mentally retarded to which the Urriolagoytia has agreed with

a nod, which shows he is the prime case..” But Ulysses cannot finish because he has to stifle laughter. Some solemn-faced people present tell to them shut up.

Meanwhile the President introduces Dr. Chavez, the Venezuelan doctor, accompanying the Inquisitorial Commission.

Finished with the presentations the president proffers invitations to a meeting on the second floor to organize the Commission of the Coca that will do the investigation work. The Journalists began to shout questions to the foreigners, while the coca growers can only wait, feeling a big crack opening under their feet.

THE ORACLE OF COCA.

Deep in the mine, Don Asunto, the Yatiri, curtsies before the Tio, who is looking at him with his bulging eyes. The candlelight cast its shadow to the roof of the tunnel, so it is at its biggest and most imposing.

«Jesus, help me to place the table.» says the shaman placing on the floor the Tari, a multicolored fabric of alpaca wool. Then he blows the brazier. When there is enough smoke, he scatters it around Jesus. Then they sit face to face around the table and place in the mouth coca leaves col-

lected from the Tari.

Another pile of leaves are dropped randomly over the Tari. And, although it seems that he sees, he does not. His gaze has gone beyond, far away, 'Where only coca leaves know how to go.' After long minutes he finally speaks:

«His power is larger, Jesus, do you see this little leaf folded over the other? See?, And this one here, pointing to your heart? And this is Lllallagua. And here he is, looking from above, dominating everything absolutely, as if it had always been his. No doubt, a demon like no other, and never seen here, not like others with whom it is possible to deal. But with this other demon you cannot, Jesus! «

«But .., what about the rest? Is everything that happens about Patiño?»

«This is not Simon Patiño, Jesus, I told you it comes from the outside!»

«Asunto look, this is important, as I have explained, we are preparing a revolution, will we change everything and I need you to ask the coca oracle: how to do it, do you understand?»

«I know, but such is coca, we cannot change it, if it says so, it must be for something.»

«A new demon? The enemy is visible, did you not see them Asunto? They are walking 500 meters over us. As if they were the only living and

all the rest dead. Look at me, buried here since I don't know when. We don't need any more demons. We have already too many! «

«But never like this, as the coca says. It's worse than all of them together. Now chew coca with me, Jesus. It's coca from Coripata, a little but it serves. You're going to learn, you have to trust, you know.»

THE WORK OF THE HOLY OFFICE.

At the end of the speeches, the journalists hound the foreigners with inconsequential questions. The president and the delegation, finally, go up the stairs. The coca growers, forced to step back, arrive just as they are about to close the meeting room door on the second floor. The official in charge of checking credentials stops them at the door, but Ulises Marquez, pushes himself in, followed by Darius. The official looks to the President for a sign. The president, assessing the situation, makes an affirmative sign.

Behind a desk that occupies the highest place in the huge space is President Urriolagoytia with Fort on his right. The secretary sits behind them to translate proceedings. In front of them, forming two semicircles, are the members of the Inquisitorial Commission, and on the other side,

ministers of state, Archbishop Plata, civic institutions, parliament, army and the police. The coca growers have been standing right in the centre of the podium, but very far from it, near the entrance door.

The President announces the beginning of the meeting:»To the ministers and authorities present, to facilitate the work of the Commission, Mr. Fort suggests the formation of working groups according to their specific areas of competence. To each of these groups there will be a member of the Commission to seek and be supplied information without any restriction. The importance of the mission makes it necessary that co-ordinated work between the two sides must continue in their respective offices and according to the needs of the Commission.

Miss Orias, secretary and translator, will help with language problems. «

The organization of the working groups attract the attention of all. The coca growers, who have been left out of this, take advantage of the situation to approach the podium.

«Mr. President, as you know, we represent the Society of Coca Growers of Yungas, the largest producers of coca in the country and as the topic of your project is coca, we feel entitled to be part of this meeting. After all, we will be the most

affected by any decision taken here. «

The President, after talking to Fort, and mediated by Secretary, responds. «Mr. Marquez, no decision will be taken here, what we are setting up now is only for scientific research, but Mr. Fort would like to ask something.»

Chairs are placed near the coca growers who have no option but take seats in front of the Commission on coca inquiry.

Fort, after taking a scroll from his red leather briefcase with «Burroughs» engraved in golden letters, passes the document to the secretary. But just as she is about to read it; a sudden power outage leaves the huge room in darkness. Palace officials enter and leave, shouting orders and countermands. Finally candles are produced. The President, with obvious discomfort, reports that some MNR militants have sabotaged the electrical wiring, but that the repair will take only a few minutes and meanwhile suggested continuing the meeting by the light of the candles.

The Commission resumed the interrogation of the cocaleros, while a hundred candles illuminated the room.

«Mr. Marquez, «says the secretary,» the Commission wants to know the exact amount of cocaine production in Bolivia.»

«Wait!» Answers Marquez, angrily: “Cocaine?,

What is this, a police interrogation? Are we charged with a crime? «.

The flames of the candles, placed in front of the commission, throw flaming shadows of Fort and the President on to the paintings of Simon Bolivar and Sucre, hanging on the wall.

«Mr. Marquez” says the President, “the Commission is referring to the coca leaf, it is clear that foreigners don’t know the difference between coca leaves and cocaine, everybody knows that in Bolivia there has never been such illegal activity. I understand that the presence of the Commission induces suspicion, but, where can there be any misconduct? It is the security of citizens and their health issues that concern everyone. I beg you to answer the question directly. «

Dario Franco held Ulises’s arm while, almost shouting, answer the question:

«The whole marketing of coca is intended for legal markets. If you see the taxes that were generated, you will have a precise idea. These taxes have built the country’s most important road network, the railway to the Yungas, the Cathedral of La Paz, the building of the San Andrés University, and many roads would not exist were it not for the taxes on coca. And there’s a liquid contribution to national treasure also. «

«How much are the wages for your work-

ers?»Ask the secretary.

«What have my personal finances to do with this investigation?» Ulises says. “I understood that the United Nations is there to defend the free world «.

The secretary beckons him to wait while consulting with Fort.

«Mr. Fort says that Human Rights are the main mission of the Commission, and the welfare of the workers is a primary concern. In addition you have asked to be part of this meeting whose exact purpose is to collect information; but Mr. Fort says that you are free to withdraw. «

Dario Franco, quick to prevent other impulsive reaction from his partner, interrupts:

«Okay, but before continuing we must formalize the form of our participation in the Inquisitorial Commission».

Fort talks with Bergier and, after exchanging nods with the president signals YES. Then he passes another document to the secretary. After reading, the secretary tells them that the Commission agrees, but the cocaleros can have only one delegate to the Commission. And the appointment must be after the intermission is about to begin.

THE REVOLUTION IS STARTING.

“Taking over the mines?, But you’re not even able to return to your house, Jesus, are you crazy ?, Have you forgotten that that the army is above us right now and don’t plan to leave. This is over!»

«Bolivia is in open civil war, Eusebio, although the newspapers deny it. We are not alone, from here we can get victory on a much bigger scale, not only taking the mines. Lora and Lechín believe we can even get to control the Bolivian government. «

«Jesus, you forget that our working union does not exist anymore, they are tracking you down, and will not stop until they find you. You must go to Llallagua, otherwise they’ll kill you!”

«That will never happen, Eusebio, You think I could live like that, knowing nothing about my family. I cannot leave them and go, just like that. On the contrary, I have to risk everything. The MNR is on the edge of overthrowing this government and that is when we come... «

«It is true, but their interests are bourgeois, they just want the power to fill their pocket, and will make alliance with anybody, with the army, even with the fascists of the Falange, to get it»

«Eusebio, don’t you see? The revolution is ready,

people say Lechín will meet with the Mono Paz in Buenos Aires. Can you imagine? With Lechín within the MNR, which has militants across the country, and us at the base, we can push the revolution our way. We will control the mines and ...”

«And, if you are named Secretary of Mines, Jesus, what plans you have to control the tin trade? Because that is what really matters, once the tin mines are nationalized! «

«That is the white technicians’ job. The Mono Paz, was Patiño’s lawyer, he knows a lot and ...”

«You see...! You accept that we need the MNR, and they need social support, rather, a ladder to climb. We need to mature, we wouldn’t last in power...! If the peasants join us ... we would have a better chance, Jesus ... “

«That’s what the agrarian reform is, you see? it is our second project for the government of the proletariat. We have everything and ... “

«Do you know what I would do? ... I would make Patiño my employee.»

«You’re crazy, Eusebio. You overthrow the king of tin to put yourself in his place? You are becoming a fascist!”

«Patiño is a bastard who is starving us to death, yes, like every capitalist, but he has a genius for business. The MNR people don’t reach his an-

kles that is why they are politicians, they are unable to earn a living working!”

«But .., don't you understand, Eusebio? We will take the government. Have you heard something like the dictatorship of the proletariat? «

«We can get the political power, yes, but we wouldn't control the tin economy, you just said that you would hire the Mono Paz for that job. In my opinion Patiño is a better option; he knows and has experience. Have the MNR people ever stepped in a mine? Do they understand the international tin markets? Patiño was a miner like us, and knows the business. In addition Patiño is too much in control of the whole business; you cannot nationalize his tin foundries in England or Germany. We will end up selling «our tin» to him and at his whim and only if he want to buy ours”

«You forget that Patiño is our class enemy ...»

«The MNR also, but you plan to use them, right? Why not do the same with Patiño? We let him believe that he is the tin owner but we will impose high taxes and force them to give one hundred percent of their foreign exchange to the state, as Germán Busch did before he was killed. So Patiño would be making his profit only with the refining of the tin, which anyway he will, even if we remove his mines «, Eusebio argues, because

his knows that Patiño not only controlled the price of tin worldwide; he had bought the most important tin smelters in the world: The Willams Harvey & Co. of Liverpool and their counterparts in Germany that melted his tin previously. He gained control of Consolidated Tin Smelters Limited, the largest unit of the world's tin business created from the merger of William Harvey, Cornish Tin Smelting and Eastern Smelting, with more than 40% of world production capacity. In the end, he controlled eight tin smelters. He acquired properties, companies and mines in North America, Europe, Asia, Africa, Malaysia and Australia. In the 1920 his transnational company owned 41% of world tin.

«Ok, Eusebio, so what do we do? We keep giving away our work to Patiño, we shit on the Pulacayo thesis, and I continue rotting down here?» «The thesis of Pulacayo is fine, but don't lose sight of the fact that Patiño is not the main enemy, he is just one capitalist more. Bringing him down, and what will the gringos do? What is the purpose of building tin reserves?» Eusebio says, knowing that in 1942 the US forced Patiño to deliver tin at a gift price, as solidarity with the Allies during World War II. With this achieved, the United States built up strategic reserves of tin which will them a few years of supply after

the fall of Patiño.

«Are you crazy, Eusebio? Or has the company bought you? So, according to you, we now we have to unite with Patiño to fight the gringos ... I never imagined I'd hear something like that from a so called Marxist like you! «.

«Jesus, we are not ready for a real socialist revolution ... and ...»

«And ... don't you think now is the time? Have you seen the mobilization of people, the awareness of miners? Catavi is considered the most radical communist space, an example for all workers in the world. «

«Yes Jesus, buried here. Long life to the revolutionary worms!»

“Fuck you, Eusebio!»

HERETICS BEFORE THE UNITED NATION'S PALIO.

Marquez has the feeling of being squeezed by a huge press and any effort to escape leaves him at the Commission's mercy. Having exchanged views with each other and made a couple of calls to Agamemnon Marquez, the coca growers have returned to the hall, where President Urriolagoytia has restarted the Commission's work.

Marquez, after requesting a word, announces that the Society of coca growers of Yungas has appointed Mr. Dario Franco as a delegate to the Commission.

The secretary delivers a notebook and some pencils to Franco and invites him to sit with the other participants. Darius, now facing the Commission alone feels a strange sense of defeat. Before the break he had considered participation in the Commission a very important objective, now he has achieved this goal, he feels uneasy.

«Mr. Franco: How much is paid to workers for working on your farms?

«Farmers don't receive a salary, it is another way of working, I can explain ...»

«Is it then a kind of slavery?» asks the secretary, after reading a note from Fort.

«We have not come here to be insulted by people who clearly don't know our history and culture! And as a member of this Committee, I am firmly opposed to continuing this course of procedure» s Dario Franco say standing. His attitude surprises Ulysses, he has never seen him react like that. Perhaps that is why he intervenes without thinking:

«This can be fixed with a simple visit by the Commission to our farms. We invite them so they can see for themselves, the reality of how

we work» Marquez says believing that this is only a misunderstanding. Dario, however, still sees more problems coming with the invitation. He has seen Fort's capacity for manipulation. And it's hard to know what has happened to Uriolagoitia, in his situation as a novice president, and with his ignorance of the reality of Bolivia when so much of his life was spent in England. The great respect he has for the Inquiry Commission is consistent with the modern postwar world, which has defined a new world wide order. Now there is a government above all governments and there are laws that are not made in Bolivia, but necessarily apply here. The autonomy of countries has changed radically. And no one knows how to move in this new world.

The President announces that he must leave the meeting and walks to the exit. Fort take his place at the big desk, always holding his red briefcase with «Bourroughs» written in golden letters on it. Then he declares that the invitation of the coca growers is accepted; and that now they must organize the work in order to execute the findings and determinations of the Commission. It will be called CONALTID, Council for the Fight against Illicit Drug Trafficking.

Marquez questions the name, coca is not a drug, and if it is about drugs, it should include snuff

and alcohol, such as wine and beer.

Irritated, Monsignor Plata opposes the argument. «Wine is not a drug, it is part of the liturgy. The blood of God! How can they be confused with ‘that thing’ which the natives chew like beasts? The objectives of the Commission are clear, it is the drug that is derived from coca leaves ... “

«Your cathedral, Monsignor Plata, is being built with the coca leaf’s taxes ‘that thing for beasts’ Ulysses points out.

Fort warns Ulises that he is not part of the Commission, therefore, he has no right to intervene and that the name issue will be fixed later. Then, without any explanation, he suspends the meeting.

IS THIS AN IMAGINATION? OR YOU ARE DREAMING?

Activity in the mining town is unusually busy. Huge trucks move minerals and food. The facilities that refine the ore, giant metallic dinosaurs covered by the powder of time, seem to work more rapidly than usual. The cold wind of the Andes runs over Llallagua.

«They’ve asked for extra work to the palliris!»
«Something strange is happening. Did you see, trucks are taking out food of the mine instead

of feeding the stores? Your husband Jesus, he should know, right Maria? They they'll bring in the army, my husband wants to take us to Uncía, just in case ...”

But Maria prefers not to hear any more, the anguish, the dead, the persecutions are still in fresh in her memory, and, Maria Barzola.

The idea of getting home early, heat a cup of tea for children and Jesus, draws a smile on her face, despite the fatigue and having slept hardly at all. But when she got home her husband is at the door, ready to leave

«Don't go Jesus, the army will occupy the mines, they will catch the leaders. You will be killed like Jacinto, and now his family is starving, begging in the city. At least we have something to eat, and a home ...”

«You call this home, two quarters for three families? Lungs with silicosis? ..., how much time have I got in this life, two ... three years? And ... what will become of you? Something must be done! «.

«Jesus, wake up! Awake brother ... “

But in the absolute darkness of the mine, even when eyes are wide open it is difficult to know if we are imagining or dreaming.

«Eusebio Did you know that the last time I saw my wife I was angry with her? Did not even take

a last look at my children! Sometimes I think there is no other solution but death. When the only eternal in this life here is fear and hunger? «

TO PROHIBIT WINE?

«I cannot believe it! There is a tremendous mistake being made. How could this happen?» Ulises Marquez asks, climbing into his car at the gate of the palace, followed by Dario Franco. «But what gives me really angry is of Urriolagoitia's attitude».

«Yes Ulysses, but you have to understand that he has these United Nations officers on his back. Impossible to say no, he could be accused being a Nazi, and who wants to be Nazi just three years after Hitler? Don't forget that the war against the Nazis is the United Nations' *raison d'être*.

«It is true, but Urriolagoitia could have warned us. He said the Commission was invited, who invited them?»

The rain falls heavier still. The driver has trouble keeping the car under control as it moves out of the Plaza Murillo into Socabaya street, where the new main Catholic Church stands.. Shortly before disappearing, the two men see Monsignor Plata climbing the steps of the cathedral followed by an altar boy who comes behind cover-

ing the prelate with a large black umbrella. The prelate cannot help but stare at the ceiling of the Cathedral which still needs a second dome to be built. He recalled the Ulysses Marquez's words: to prohibit wine? Marquez is crazy!

Meanwhile, Fort, Bergier and Chavez, cross the Plaza Murillo towards the Hotel Ritz:

«This country is amazing, the cynicism of their criminals. Bergier, did you see that? You can't imagine Al Capone entering the White House in Washington to meet with the President? The power and the audacity of the drug trafficking in this country has left me stunned ...»

«Sorry, but I see it from the scientific point of view, I was surprised at their good health because drug addicts usually look different because don't forget that the traffickers always fall into the same vice that infects society. «

«To me they are morons. They themselves asked to be part of the Commission and I was expecting for a long battle, but I just realized that we have already won ... and the most fun is that they will voluntarily open their lair. Can you believe it? «.

«Be careful, Mr. Fort, they are people with power, they controlled the Bolivian governments until today, the miners call them the Rosca Mining Feudal. It is the perfect criminal society, these

drug traffickers provide them with everything necessary for doping the workers and both are enriched with the blood of the people. I suggest safety measures! «

COCA AND COCAINE

«I'm sure things will change when the matter is clarified, Dario, I have no doubt, it is a lack of information. What could the United Nations know about coca? Did you see that, they don't know the difference between coca and cocaine? Even between opium and coca ... who really are these guys?»

«You have to rub their noses in a study of coca leaves' nutrients, that will be enough. And I think we should pay a visit to Urriolagoytia, who does not know the study whereas Hertzog was aware. «

WHO HAVE THE POWER, HAVE THE TRUTH

'The city is just a river.' President Urriolagoytia thinks, looking at the heavy rain from the window of his office, though that's not the important issue today, which is rather an attempt to escape from the uncomfortable situation that the three

coca growers posed with their visit this morning. «It is absurd, Mr. President. It is a clear interference in the internal affairs of the country, coca is part of our culture, work, and from time immemorial,” Agamemnon Marquez, with authority. «When health is the concern, things change Don Agamemnon. The UN Commission is making a great effort, have you seen how many people they have brought? Do you think they would make such steps without making a scientific study first? In addition there are Bolivian commitments that come with membership of the United Nations, I cannot just ignore them» says the President, avoiding eye contact with the coccaleros.

The three men don't need to talk to know that they are facing something new, completely unusual. Ulysses spoke until he got tired, trying to convince the President about the exceptional nutritional properties of coca leaves «which is shown in the analysis of coca done by a lab in New York» he insisted this morning with total conviction.

These analysis in question, made in 1947 in the USA, showed a lower cocaine content compared with Peruvian coca, and found, especially, an amazing presence of minerals, vitamins, protein, phosphorus, calcium, in such amounts that coca

leaves are the most important source of nutrients known till today.

«This explained why the miners of Potosi, could live feeding almost exclusively on coca. It is not just for numbing “Ulises insisted again and again, incredulous that the president is not really interested in the facts. But the president, while not rejecting the argument itself, focuses only on power and political strategies.

«Don’t forget what we are really dealing with; the miners infiltrated by the MNR communists, and the Trotskyists are talking about nationalization of the Patiño mines and Land Reform. Without the support of the United States we are lost. You, more than anyone, are at risk of losing your land with the Land Reform. «

«I agree with Agrarian Reform» Agamemnon interrupted, «I myself have proposals to support it, have indeed offered two farms to investigate the best way forward.

It was true that the King of Coca had offered two farms, one in Yungas and one on the Andean plateau, after the parliamentarian Victor Paz, had again raised the issue of agrarian reform, which had been under discussion since the 30’s. But the King’s concrete proposal was never taken into account by politicians because, the MNR saw in this proposal only a ‘political banner’.

«And have you thought, Mr. President about the economy? We exploit just two percent of the arable land of Bolivia and thanks to that today nobody complains of a shortage. I agree that the remaining 98% should be distributed among those who want to work it. The country will be an agricultural power. “

«Have you heard what the UN says? Drugs can destroy society, narco-traffic can corrode the state,» Urriolagoitia replies forcefully.

Ulises Marquez says that not a single case of drug addiction is known in Bolivia. ”The Rockefeller Foundation can stand as witness, because they financed, with the cooperation of the Society of Coca Growers of Yungas, an extensive health project precisely where coca is produced. And, with respect to the infiltration of drug trafficking in the state, you, should first ask yourself, ‘Where are the narcos?’ Not a gram of cocaine has been found. You know yourself Mr. President, that all coca production has a well-established legal market: the mines, northern Argentina, and ritual use. What do you mean by ‘illegal activity?’ ”

«According to the Commission, it is just a matter of time. American experts say that a drug epidemic will break at any time and on a planetary level. Therefore, in the United States, it is con-

sidered that drugs will soon be a matter of state security. In my opinion, gentlemen, it's not me you have to discuss this matter with. I understand that the Commission will be visiting you at Los Yungas. Why not discuss the matter there? Mr. Fort will be happy to hear what you say.”

Agamemnon has understood that the problem here is nothing to do with science, the real issue is power; who has the power, has the truth. It is especially clear to him who has always rubbed shoulders with political power. In this same office he has met with President Ismael Montes and other leaders many times. And it was Andres de Santa Cruz who signed here at this same desk, the decree that gave life to the Cocaleros Society of Yungas in 1830, the ex-president Santa Cruz who himself was also a coca grower of the Yungas

Agamemnon really wanted to believe what his grandson Ulysses said, that the intention to ban coca was only the result of confusion, a historical error, as it was benevolently called years after. But that morning, he woke up thinking of it as a form of national suicide, no other thing could describe the renunciation of the coca economy, that contributed so much money to the state, and, though it was much less than the contribution of Patiño and tin, the money was better spent.

The road network that was built with the money, today guaranteed a large part of Bolivian nutritional needs. The railroad to Amazonas, under construction with the same money, would boost the national economy in the direction of the rich lands of the north, now completely abandoned. And the same tin mining, absolutely dependent on coca as almost the only the food of miners, how much would that be affected by the ban?

«Mr. President». Franco said not having opened his mouth during the entire meeting, «I have the impression that what is called matter of national sovereignty, has just been buried. What we are being told is that the highest authority in the country, the decision maker, is a man who just arrived from the north, who speaks only English, and whom we just met. «

«Mr. Franco, there is a new world order, for the good of all, and you know as well as I, that we depend not only on UN signed agreements, but that democratic stability will be in danger as well when the Communists overwhelm us. Who then do you think will come to our aid? «

When Agamemnon hears the Presidential office door shut behind him, he feels that this is not the only door they will find closed. He knows men and especially politicians, has had to deal with generations of these leeches of society, as

he calls them.

«Grandfather, it is understandable that the President takes the political point of view, but I also see incompetence, for me he is not qualified enough for such job. Fort, on the other hand, certainly, has the ability to understand the technical side. The nutritive properties of coca invalidate the basic assumption of the ban: that coca chewing hunger numbing quality causes malnutrition. And if you look at the social cost of a prohibition, they will be bigger. After all their interest is human rights. Right? «

But his speech has no effect on Agamemnon and Dario Franco, who have locked themselves in their thoughts after leaving the Palace. Both have lived too much. And have glimpsed the power behind the scenes where nothing is what it seems.

«You are going to see how things will change with the meeting in Los Yungas», Ulises concludes with optimism.

Plaza Murillo is stirred again and again by flocks of pigeons. The landowners' impeccable black Rolls Royce, starts moving down toward Columbus Street.

THE THREAD OF ARIADNE.

«Ariadna, you mustn't come out of the house, you will make your eye worse.».

«Do you think it would be better there? Look ...

“Ariadna, says, covering her eye with a handkerchief and pointing toward the house. Smoke is coming out through the windows of the Marquez family house.

«What?»

«It is ... Don Casto, he is healing the house, mom.»

Casto, the Yatiri, an Aymara and reputedly a wise old shaman, fills the house of Santa Maria with the smoke from his burning brazier while pronouncing invocations in Aymara.

«But Casto, what are you doing? I only asked for some herbs for Ariadna's eye, nothing more, what is this? «

«Doña Julia, Ariadna's disease is not an accident. The Coca leaves have told me, there is something very weird going on and that worse things are coming. Your house and all who live in it must be healed, that is why I brought this enchantment and ...”

«By God, Casto, don't scare me more than I am already about my daughter's health,» Doña Julia says.. But, not wanting more discussion she

decides to let the Yatiri do whatever he is doing. «I don't understand what could have happened to your father, he wouldn't forget about your eye. And another thing Ariadna, I know that Felipe has been around the place. You know your father's opinion. What are you going to do?».

«I don't know, with this messy business with the coca, I don't want to bother him with more problems, mother. Somebody told me that the Coripata hospital has been completed. I don't understand why I can't be treated there. Negron told me that grandfather has financed four big modern hospitals in the Yungas and many medical centers. Isn't it ironic that his granddaughter is suffering from a lack of medical care? «

«It's different Ariadna, he wants to take you at least to Buenos Aires. It is your eyes we're talking about.

THE TOMB OF JESUS.

The endless darkness of the tunnel:

«Yes, you're right. Like making a grave!

Jesus takes a length of fuse that is used to detonate the dynamite and has been part of his life since childhood.

«Jesus, what are you doing here? We're not planning to blow up anything!»

But the miner, still sobbing, continues to place the dynamite's fuse along the dark

«Jesus, don't you hear me? What are you doing?»

«Here I've always lived; here I'm going to die!»

«Jesus, please don't talk like that ... our comrades need you, you are the only leader now...»

«Don't worry Eusebio, it is just in case Patiño's hired killers want to take me out of the mine, I'll be ready to bury them with me. And now I am determined more than ever to continue the revolution, I no longer have anything to lose, and if I die, so much the better! «

Eusebio helps his brother to hide the cordite and detonators, covering them with soil and placing the packages of dynamite at strategic places along the dark tunnel.

«That's enough, Jesus, if this goes up, the mine would be closed months.»

But Jesus still places another quantity of explosives and lays more lengths of cordite.

«And ... why so much, brother?»

«If it happens, I want it to be definitive. With no return, the mine must die with me inside. «

«But what will the revolution win with your death? You should mobilize the people in the city. The revolution is not only that of the miners, you told us so yourself.»

«No! My place is here with the miners, the only ones who have real political awareness. I have it all clear, Eusebio, we have to prepare for the taking of the mines, as Lora says. We are the revolutionary vanguard. «

THE KALLAWAYA AND THE INQUISITION.

Dario Franco can see almost nothing through the dusty car window. Fort, embracing his inseparable briefcase is dozing beside the driver. He has not stopped complaining about his headaches caused by the altitude, and the eternal dust of the road. Urriolagoytia offered him the opportunity of traveling on the La Paz-Titikaka lake railroad, that also would have given him the chance to visit the ancient ruins of Tiwanacu, but for Fort, traveling by train was an anachronism; cars were faster and could move more freely. Just a few kilometers after leaving La Paz, he knew he was wrong.

It was not clear for him why he had agreed to travel to Warisata, a lost town in the Andean Mountains, almost the end of civilization. Coming to Bolivia was already extreme, it would have sufficed to visit Peru, more or less the same; full of dirt and dust. But he also knew that it had to be done. Sacrifice gave value to his mission.

The Commission's car is completely covered with dust, except for a clear patch on the wind-screen that the driver maintained by dint of rubbing the glass with an equally dusty cloth. The car left the main road, running beside Lake Titicaca and then took the road to Achacachi that had once been the capital of the Aymara Omasuyos domains, as Franco explained when suggesting the visit to the site.

A few kilometers beyond Achacachi is Warisata whose feast began that day. Franco had chosen it to give humour Ulises; according to him, it was a good opportunity for the Commission to get a better idea of Andean culture and understand the mistake they were about to make. They had planned to also find a famous Kallawayaya or shaman who lived near the town of Warisata.

In the back of the car Jean Philip Bergier remains engrossed in reading *Phantastica*, according to him, the bible of drugs. He had dedicated his life to fighting the plants that were enemies to humankind, been the adviser to most of the League of Nations' Opium Conferences. He had recently completed twenty years as head of the Narcotics Bureau in Paris; a real veteran of the Opium War as he called himself. Now he considered himself lucky to have the chance to face a new enemy of humanity: the coca plant. He

knew nothing of that plant, but there was Lewin and also there were the researches of Noriega, the Peruvian doctor.

The translator, sitting in the back, between Bergier and Franco tries to keep up her appearance despite the sweltering heat of the car, the windows closed to keep out the dust. A pointless discomfort since the ubiquitous dust penetrates anyway, becoming part of her makeup and bombé hair style.

Shortly after passing Achacachi, Franco asks the driver to pull up near a hut, where they see a man wearing a striking red poncho who is leaning over someone lying on the ground. Behind there are several peasants waiting.

«Kallawayas, are the traditional Andean doctors. He is attending a patient,» Franco says asking the secretary to communicate it to the rest; while he is inviting everyone down from the car.

«You see that ball in his face? His is chewing coca or akullicando, as they call that custom here. «

The secretary makes a gesture of displeasure after understanding what Dario has said. Pointing at the Kallawaya, she explains the situation to Fort and Bergier.

When the Kallawaya has ended, at Franco's suggestion, the group approaches the man to talk

him, but he only speaks Aymara. Franco asks the driver to help with translation:

«He calls himself Achachila and says you are welcome.»

«Ask him how old he is,» the secretary says at Bergier's prompting.

«He says many years, but does not know precisely, thinks it is not important,» the driver says. The secretary asks Franco to translate, because the driver's Spanish is not good enough for her. Franco looks the Kallawaya's coppery face illuminated by an unchanging smile while his eyes seem to look beyond this world. The driver talks animatedly with the Shaman, meanwhile translating for Franco.

«He does not know how old he is, but I reckon more than seventy, must be.»

The secretary says that for them, it is inconceivable that a man considered to be a doctor does not know his own age. He is lying for sure. And besides, he is always smiling, that's not a normal behavior and much less so for a doctor. «What possible reason would this poor man have, abandoned by god here at the furthest edge of civilization, to be happy?»

«Mister Fort,» says the secretary, «believes that this is artificial happiness produced by constant coca chewing. It is a good example of the idio-

cy and racial degeneration that has already been demonstrated by Dr. Noriega in Peru, as one of the effects of coqueo. His size and physical strength show that he is clearly a young man, but his face is that of an old man. It is another proof of how coca addiction makes them old»

«Tell Mr. Fort that, according to studies made in the USA, coca leaves have more calcium than milk,» Franco says with a note of pride. But when Mrs. Orgaz translates both men burst into a laugh.

«Mr. Bergier says that you have a good sense of humor, Mr. Franco,» the secretary says with a big smile.

Dario Franco cannot believe what is going on. It is the first time in his whole life, that he is being humiliated in such a manner. He has not even the words to describe the attitude of the foreigners.

Finally, before leaving, Fort insists on taking pictures of the shaman as irrefutable proof of his assertions. The Kallawaya gladly accepts having some pictures taken of him with the Commission and poses embracing both foreigners. Before leaving, he gives them his blessings and suggests they visit Paulino who lives at Chua on the shores of Lake Titicaca, where the Commission will be able to appreciate the totora boats they make just as their ancestors have since ancient

times.

For Franco it seems very appropriate. Totora boats that cross the waters of Titicaca, are a magnificent product of Andean nautical engineers. There are legends that attribute incredible feats to them, there are even European sailors who believes that it is possible to cross the ocean in such rafts. Franco's thought is that it would be a good demonstration that the Andeans were not a mentally retarded as the Inquisitorial Commission were claiming.

«Tell him thank you very much for the information, we will be there almost at sunset, returning from Warisata» says Franco, before turning around and heading to the car.

The next stop is the town of Achacachi which has no appeal for the group, so they decide to move on after a short break to stretch their legs. Ford drinks several bottles of Coca Cola, which he brings out of the car's trunk, and distributes more bottles to the group while smoking his big cigars imported from Cuba. The Coca Cola bottles with its strange and contoured shape call attracts everyone's attention. Ford explains that the shape was inspired in Mae West, a Hollywood beauty. For Darius it's the color of the bubbly liquid that is so odd. He cannot imagine drinking something so black. It is really very weird.

The town of Warisata is still distant, but the delegation car must stop. Along the way there are many Andean multicolored dancers with tireless drums, flutes and charangos. An endless party under a scorching sun.

«They are going to the famous party of Warisata, Mr. Franco. It will take a long time, I suggest we return and come back another day» the driver-says, looking for a pretext to shorten the tedious journey.

«Thanks for the advice, but we cannot go back, please pull the car off the road, we will walk» says Franco firmly, while studying the situation. In the end everyone agrees, anything is better than to stay perspiring in the car. The driver stops the car and they all get out. Franco explains to the secretary that the journey will continue on foot, it will take a half hour to reach the village. This is important given that the object of the Commission is not the people themselves, but to learn the customs related to the use of coca.

Fort, after hearing the translation and lighting a cigar, makes an affirmative signal but with obvious signs of annoyance.

«Mr. Fort does not believe that these cultural phenomena have anything to do with drug abuse, Mr. Franco»

«Mrs. Orgaz, I understand that you are a Latin

American? «

«I was born in Venezuela but raised and always lived in New York.»

«Do you see that?» Franco says, pointing to the nearest group of dancers, while with his other hand, he points his own cheek.

«Yes, they are chewing coca leaves ... everybody?»

«Well, almost all but you will see that children don't ...»

«Why? Is it forbidden for them? «

«No, they just don't need it. It is like coffee for us, it is not prohibited for children, but they are simply not interested.»

«And ... what's that beverage?»

«Chicha, a fermented corn with a certain alcoholic strength.»

Visitors headed by Franco, advance along the edge of the road, parallel to the dancers. For a moment the situation is better, the music, dancing, and the man disguised as a condor who flirts with Fort; absorb the attention of the visitors, but shortly after, Fort especially, is unable to move his 130 kilos a centimeter further. Bergier and Mrs. Orgaz are not much better. So Franco suggests a break in the only shade that exists alongside, a solitary hut, while all the sheep and hens flitting round the exotic parade.

«Mrs. Orgaz, please ask Mr. Bergier how he explains the strength of these men? As I heard him at the Palace, coca makes them malnourished and weak ...»

The secretary discusses the point with Bergier and Fort and takes a long time before answering.

«It is the sun. They believe that here in the highlands where there is always sun, there are no rickets, nor scurvy, because of the large amount of ascorbic acid in potatoes. Alcohol serves to add to the calories they lack and ...»

«The potato has ascorbic acid? Is that a joke, Miss Orgaz? Franco says..

«I am just repeating what they tell me, please understand that.»

«Well, so could you ask them, understanding that they are so well fed, why they get tired just looking at how the «weak and malnourished” Indians dance?»

«It is the altitude. There’s no need to ask the experts, Mr. Franco <

«We are all at altitude, aren’t we?»

«It is different, the Indians are accustomed to, we are not.»

«So, habituation is the problem, not malnutrition caused by coca?»

«I see you like the pun Mr. Franco...”

Franco, about to lose patience, is practically tak-

en up by a group of dancers that lead him to the beat of the Sicuris, which is fortunate for him trying to digest the situation. Beyond, the driver, under the influence of chicha, is a dance enthusiast gripped to a gourd of the drink. Finally all decide that Warisata is too far and time is over.

«It will be more interesting to see the reed boats at Warisata.» Franco says especially to convince himself more than others, while heading again to the dusty vehicle.

Minutes later the Commission's car reaches the majestic Titicaca Lake.

«The World's highest lake» says Franco, uncomfortable with repeating the well-known theme of the altitude.

«And that's Chua Don Dario, and surely that is the house of Don Paulino. Can you see the rafts, there behind the house? We'll leave the car here and we can walk, what do you think?» the driver says. Darius contemplates the deep blue lake that is lost in the distance, and even further back, the sun that begins coloring the imposing Andean high plate sky with long strokes.

«No, these lords don't want to know about walking any more. Get closer to the door please. Or you are worried about something? «

«Yes, we are very close to the muddy shore and it would be unwise ... ah, but there they are.»

Paulino Esteban has come out of the house surrounded by all his family, and beckons the visitors to come inside. After a refreshing glass of water, Paulino offers the delegation a handful of coca leaves that he is already chewing. Fort with a look of disgust inhibits the others from even approaching Paulino, who doesn't understand the foreigner's attitude. Afterwards the delegation visits the back of the house overlooking the lake, where they find rafts of all sizes under construction. Paulino's two sons in the shipyard give a detailed explanation of the construction of the boats with the Totoras. Those are the long vines that grow in the lake and are grouped with strings of the same material, and bound in long units, which in turn are grouped and knotted again to build the beautiful structure of the rafts. Franco, says that the physical strength and intelligence of Paulino and their children is proof that the coca chewing is healthy, because Paulino, his children, as well as all their ancestors, always had chew coca.

Paulino lifting his little grandson, also called Paulino, presents him as being predestined to cross the great ocean to reach the other side of the world. «He's seen it in his dreams» he says. «Don Dario, invites us to take a ride on rafts» the driver announces loudly to the delegation.

THE TEMPTATION.

«I am strictly opposed, Jesus. You should not go to that meeting with the gringo. Why does he want talk to us? “Eusebio says, looking in vain for an answer, but Jesus does not want to hear:

«You are exaggerating, Eusebio? I have been told that this guy sympathizes with our revolution, and he comes representing the United Nations.”

«Don’t tell me you believe in the United Nations? That guy has come to ban coca, and with what right? Just because it was ordered by the United Nations, should we obey? The United Nations are the rich ones taking advantage of us. Or do you no longer believe Grandpa or Lora? «.

«But why so much interest in Coca? There must be a reason, and they want to talk to us, seems a good sign to me, doesn’t it Eusebio? «

«Wait, I don’t understand fully, but I’m sure that something bad will come out of it.»

«To my knowledge, coca is not useful to them. It just makes bad drugs, what other interest would they have? We lose nothing speaking to them, the guys from the MNR said that ...»

«Worse still Jesus. If the invitation comes through the MNR, it makes it even more suspi-

cious. The gringo, Fort, is just the tip.»

«Tip?, tip of what?».

«Do you know how to convince a woman when she does not want? You say that it will be only the tip of your cock inside her, and do you know any case where it has only been the tip? «

«You're a pervert, Eusebio like all of the fascists!»

«Besides, the meeting with Fort is in Catavi which will be surrounded by the army, somebody could recognize you. And have you noticed? That the gringos have come to the most communist place in America to speak with the most communist guy! I cannot understand the world.»

«Exactly, I want to hear for myself his support for the revolution. I'll not open my mouth but it's something I have to do! «

FORT VERSUS PAULINO.

The secretary, understanding the driver's message, is quick to discourage Fort, although it was obvious to everyone that it was not necessary. The Foreigners preferred to retreat into the house, while Franco and the driver share a raft lead by one of Paulino's family.

A little before the sun sets, the lake is absolutely

calm and majestic, resembling a spectacular mirror reflecting the blue sky over the Andes.

When turning back to land, a new show opens up to their eyes. It is the Andes, where the snowy peaks of the fabulous Illimani, Huayna Potosi and the Mururata, reflect like diamonds the dying rays of the sun that is dying at the other end of the lake.

Franco thinks it's easy to understand why the sun or Inti was the highest divinity, and this place Kollasuyo the belly button of the world, as this part of the Inca Empire was called.

Returning to dry land their problems begin; they have taken too long and the driver's fears have been realized. The waters have covered the shipyard leaving the Commission surrounded by water. Fort, Bergier and Mrs. Orgaz, sheltered in the house, fly into a panic when Franco explains the situation. Paulino's family, however sees no problem, with the ropes of reeds, Paulino's two sons pull the vehicle while he, showing his physical strength, pushes it up to the road. They all celebrate the feat, but the question then is «How to cross to the car, like the driver, what, to take off their shoes and roll up the pants? «

For Franco the answer is obvious because it would not be the first time that indigenous men have carried him cross a river or bad terrain.

Squeamishly, the secretary accepts being taken this way through the waters, but Bergier and Fort absolutely refuse.

From the car, Franco and the Secretary argue loudly that there is no alternative, and it must be done soon, there is no more than half an hour of light. They point to the crescent moon rising behind the mountains. Fort, red with rage, finally, has to accept the unthinkable. He must be carried by Paulino because he is strongest of the family. The two grandsons, however, should help lift Fort's 130 kilos, the operation complicated by Fort, despite the situation refusing to be separated from his briefcase. Thus, puffing smoke from his cigar and with his heavy briefcase on his shoulder, he is transported to the car, as is Bergier.

AS I SEEK DEATH!

On Sunday, Eusebio Huallpa goes down the shaft in search of his brother and, as agreed, he indicates his presence using the chisel's code. Jesus, who has heard the signal, answers in turn anxiously asking for the password. It is an unexpected joy when someone comes on a rest day, when the impenetrable darkness of the tunnel adds to the silence of solitude. There, life is

nothing more than a hallucination that travels through the tin tunnels as a shooting star.

Eusebio is also eager to find his brother, though for very different reasons. Distrustful as he has learned to be, the imminent coming of the alien called Fort who, according to the MNR, is from the United Nations, has deeply troubled him. Lost in his thoughts he neglects the mining chisel that falls into one of the many openings that they themselves have dug in search of tin. Jesus insists in requesting the password, but Eusebio cannot find his tool.

«Jesus, I'm ..., Eusebio, I'm coming, do you hear me?» But the echo makes it impossible to recognize the voice and Jesus asks again and again the password. And although Eusebio has lived so closely with his brother Jesus, he has never known what it is like be alone in the darkness for so long. When he hears the steps of Eusebio very near, Jesus unearths the fuses of the dynamite that has being hidden and lights them with the flame of his lamp.

When Eusebio arrives the sizzle of the cordite runs quickly, blowing the dust away and illuminating the darkness.

«Jesus, I'm Eusebio, what is it?, what are you doing?»

«What? Dammit!, look what you've done, why

you don't answer my call, Eusebio?»

Both men run desperately looking for the sparkling fuses, which are the only visible in the dark. While helmets and lamps falls in the confusion, both men, bump into each other and against the walls, and desperately chase the sparkling dynamite guides. The fight seems endless. The brothers run and jump like demons after the sparks that seem to be alive and escaping along the corridor.

«Shit! ... Shit! I think that's it, finally! “Shouts Jesus.

Both miners, snorting, end on the wet floor of the tunnel.

«I cannot believe, Jesus, what is happening to us? ...»

But a fuse back to life, refuses to lose...

«There, look, Eusebio, that one is still alive»

Men slither again trying to catch the elusive sparks. Finally, Jesus, exhausted, must use his teeth to tear the fiery head of the cordite. Tangled in the fuses the miners left on the floor face to face, but cannot see each other.

«What a dumb ass you are ...! How could going you not recognize me ? You're overreacting! «

«I wish I could see you buried here. Sometimes I don't know what is nightmare and what reality! I have to do something, I cannot stand anymore.

Did you see how death looks for me? «

THE PROHIBITED RAILWAY.

Due to the incident at the lake, and Fort's complaints, the President requested that from now on as far as possible, the Commission trips should be done by train. To Ulises it seemed an excellent idea: «The latest deluxe trains are the pride of all Bolivians and could give foreigners a different view of Bolivia.» And he was right, though not from the viewpoint he wished.

«What a train!, Bergier, the luxuries these people have at the expense of the people, look at it the other way, who could pay a train like this. Capable to climb one of the highest mountains in the world! And I heard that the cost was about half a million pounds! “Fort says, as soon as they board the train at the PuraPura station, on the outskirts of La Paz.

«You are right, Mr. Fort: It is almost another Switzerland! And all just to transport their drugs !»

But the comfort of the train lasts only to Chuspipata, the head of the Amazonia, where two government cars are waiting. Fort, Bergier, Mrs. Orgaz, Dr. Chavez and Dario take one of the cars. The other car carries the rest of the Com-

mission. The infinity of curves, the strange habit of crossing from the left to the vehicles coming in the opposite direction, the slippery mud due to recent rain and especially the fathomless chasms that open just a few centimeters from the road makes the trip a nightmare.

The Commission's doctor, Dr. Chavez is forced to manage their Bromide pills to reassure everyone, including himself, and often asks Franco stop for the visitors to take breath.

Fortunately, the town of Coripata offers a respite. Dario leads the Commission to the church, as one of the best buildings in town. The priest in charge is very solicitous. He is an Italian who speaks fluent English and talk a lot about the positive aspects of coca leaves.

«Without coca they don't work,» he says, «the only problem is that coca is a competition for the Catholic faith, a kind of holy host, but still, it is good. It plays the same role that the coffee at work for Europeans”.

Fort, visibly upset, requests to continue the dreadful trip. But Franco insists on visiting the modern hospital of Coripata. A plaque on the door explains that this is a project funded jointly by the coca growers and the Rockefeller Foundation. Fort argues that such an issue is not in the scope of the Commission and that they must

therefore continue the journey.

IN THE CAVE OF THE DEVIL.

The presence of his wife Julia and Ariadna at the door of the house can only mean trouble, Márquez knows when he arrives in the morning at Santa Maria. And he is not wrong.

«Ulises how could you forget? Ariadna's eye is worse! I've decided to take her to the hospital; Chulumani or Coripata. Do you know which one is the best? «

Ulises Marquez feels a bitter taste in the mouth. He has neglected his daughter and now, obviously, things have got worse. He decides to accompany them, but the two cars that are just arriving attract his attention.

It is the Inquisitorial Commission. Ulises looks his wife without knowing what to do, and, although Julia is not so aware of the situation, she understands her husband's dilemma.

«Ulysses, I can go alone with Ariadna, after all, what would you do? If necessary I'll send somebody to call you. I'll go to the Coripata Hospital, which is closer. «

Ulysses knows that the meeting will be decisive for the future of all, there is no choice. After giving a warm kiss to Ariadna, he steps out of the

car to meet the Commission. Fort, with a jaunty air, shakes hands with Ulysses. Darío Franco confirms that he has already taken care of the details to accommodate the guests.

«The attitude of Fort, is comforting,» thinks Ulysses Marquez, his good-natured appearance gives hopes that there will be an understanding. Dario has ordered the best for the commission: especially caviar and French wine, which is all that Bergier takes. Fort, meanwhile, has brought several boxes full of Coca Cola bottles and the large Cuban cigars that everybody wants.

The abundant wine and the inevitable singani from Cinti, creates a conducive environment, at least so Ulises thinks. Encouraged, gives a toast in English:

«I want to welcome this distinguished Commission and I want you to know that we identify with your goals. I'm sure after we have overcome some differences we will reach to a satisfactory agreement. «But first, I invite you all to visit the house»

The Commission leaves the house following Ulysses. A close coca plantation is the first goal for Fort, who wants to get a look at the coca plants. Along the way, Bergier stops to pick some leaves nearby...

«Are you interested, Mr. Bergier?» Ulises asks,

“I can get somebody to prepare some for you. «
“Ah ... of course, Mr. Marquez, I'll need some samples of coca for my investigations.”

«I mean that the ones you got in your hands, they are not coca leaves but cherries»

«Ah! Of course, thank you very much, they are delicious fruits. «

Dario cannot avoid seeking Ulyses' attention with questioning eyes. Once in the coca plantation they find a dozen men harvesting coca leaves.

«The coca from Coripata, Mr. Fort, is something special,” Ulises says. “These are coca plants are of aristocratic lineage. Coripata coca was the favorite of the Inca. Its fame and consumption spread throughout the entire Inca Empire from Rio de la Plata to Ecuador. Consumption may go back thousands of years in the past. My family can vouch for almost 500 years, and we never have seen health problems, on the contrary it is a very powerful source of food, look at this,» he says handing over the study published by the Society of coca growers of Yungas, «It's a study of the nutrients of the Bolivian coca, made by a laboratory in the United States in 1947.

Fort gives a superficial look at the brochure and notices that it does not carry the name of such laboratory.

“I cannot find the lab’s name”

«It is a matter of confidentiality a decision by the same laboratory, such was the condition.»

«That sounds very strange, Mr. Marquez, if you paid for those analyzes, you are the owner, especially in America. If it has been at your expense, you can do whatever you want with them. It is hard to believe what you say. For scientific purposes it is apocryphal, has no value and, if it were true, the presence of toxic cocaine, even in low doses, makes it dangerous for consumption.

«

Ulises had evidently, accepted the laboratory conditions, especially because it was the most prestigious in New York; but had not noticed that the commitment to not disclose the source, annuls the advantage. On that Dario Franco had recommended ignoring the agreement, after all what could happen? A legal claim? Very difficult to thrive in Bolivia, but Ulises Marquez would not yield a millimeter, he gave his word and he will be faithful to his word, confident that anything being true has its own legitimacy. In addition, he was facing a top scientific research committee and they should, as a first step, a complete biochemical analysis of the composition of the coca leaf.

«Well, the solution is easy Mr. Fort, you. You

should have had such an analysis, if not, do you plan to do it?»

«Impossible! Mr. Marquez, the Commission has 20 members, have been two months in Peru and here we will be almost 20 days. And although you may not believe me, my budget is only \$ 45,000 and Medical laboratory testings were already done,», he says, gesturing to his secretary to approach. On his instruction she takes a book from Fort's red briefcase.

«It is the latest in scientific research on coca,» he says, giving the book to Marquez: «CARLOS NORIEGA: studies on coca».

Ulises flip through the book.

«There it is proven, Mr. Marquez, without doubt, the toxic properties of coca, Jean Philip can explain better than me.»

Bergier approaches and reads him quotes:

They were given intravenous injections of cocaine sulphate and dogs showed severe changes in behavior and even died Coca chewers are alienated, antisocial and lower intelligence, initiative and adaptability, and suffer behavioral abnormalities such as the absence of ambition and don't care about the economic problems.

«But that refers to cocaine sulfate, a chemical that is thousands of times more potent and therefore toxic, and it is not in the coca leaves, Mr.

Bergier. Here we are talking about the traditional coca leaf consumption of hundreds, thousands of years»

«But the drug is derived from your opium plants.»

«Opium?»

«Coca, opium ... Whatever? All are poisons! Look, here are the investigations of Louis Lewin, the greatest expert on drugs in the world», says Bergier taking from under his arm, the volume of *Phantastica*.

«Published in 1924», read Ulysses aloud, “you’re talking a quarter of a century ago, Mr. Bergier! «

«What, truths are eternal, Mr. Marquez <

Bergier reads very fast with his hard French accent:

«... The use of coca leaves and cocaine produce very similar results in terms of the actual symptoms and the final form of the cocaine damage... Prolonged toxic manic abuse causes the gradual development of more severe symptoms, evident manifestation among those eaters of cocaine from South America, physically and morally there is no difference with opium smokers. A cachectic state appears, with extreme exhaustion and accompanied by a gradual change in behavior. They are old before they are adults. They

are apathetic, useless for any serious purpose in life. They are subject to hallucinations and exclusively governed by the passionate desire for the drug, another thing in life, other than drug is with no value for them «.

«Come with me,» Marquez said, walking toward the group of coca pickers. Fort and Bergier want to resist, but the determined attitude of Marquez wins.

«For how long have you chewed coca leaves?» He asks in Aymara to one of the men.

«From ever, since I was young. Why master?»

«Can you open your mouth?»

The worker opens his mouth revealing crushed leaves of coca and a green color highlighted with the white teeth. He does the same with three others, including an old woman. He asks the same to all.

Fort makes a helpless gesture and looks at his secretary, who lets him know with signs that she don't understand the language.

Finally, Ulises translates to foreigners who react in disbelief.

«Do my workers seem drugged? Or they are unable to work? Have you seen all they have done? «. he says, pointing to a hill of dry coca on one side of coca plantation. For an answer, Dr. Chavez comes up with a rule and take some

measurements of the workers.

«This short stature is below the normal standard, and is a symptom of malnutrition, Mr. Marquez, and one can see the quality of hair, wrinkles and teeth.»

«Well, he is 65 years old and, moreover, the race itself is short in height.»

«Anyway there are clear signs! The racial degeneration has been well studied in the coqueros of Peru, by Dr. Noriega ... this is a good example, remember that I am a doctor, Mr. Marquez.»

«I have known Nemesio all my life, always with coca in the mouth and without doubt one of our best workers.»

«Narcotics are like that, but then you will see over time.»

Anger is gaining space in the heart of Ulisses, as he takes in the futility of his arguments.

«For us, obesity is a racial degeneration,» he says, looking insistently at Fort's huge belly. Fort himself turns around to talk to his secretary.

«Mr. Marquez, Mr. Fort is interested in the system of remuneration of the workers that was mentioned in the palace,» she says.

«Ask for yourselves and draw your own conclusions,» Marquez says, clearly upset.

The Secretary argues that she does not know Ay-mara.

«I guess you knew that, that more than 90% of the population who you came to “study”, are Ay-mara or Quechua. How many translators came?

«

«I am the only translator. You must understand the enormous sacrifice that the Commission is making. Mr. Fort has explained about our little budget and... “

«I am the only one who can translate here, and we have seen that my word is not reliable, I am the “criminal” do you remember?...». Marquez says, and walk away, but then turns back, and approaching close to the woman’s face of the woman speaks in a positive tone.

«I am the owner of these lands and allow these men to live here in exchange for work. They can keep a percentage of the products and also have free health services, we take care of basic education of children living on farms and we have plans for...»but Ulises has seen his wife and Ariadna arriving and without further explanation he almost runs to meet them. The Secretary exchanges questioning looks with Fort and Chavez. «What did they say at the hospital?» He asks his wife, but Julia, cries and noticeably upset, dodging her husband enters the house, slamming the door. Ulyses approaches her daughter still in the vehicle.

«Dad, I need to have surgery, the doctors said that I can lose the eye. They recommend an operation at La Paz with Dr. Monasterios and on top of that they have found a heart problem, and anesthesia can be a problem ... « but she is not able to finish what she is saying, as soon as she get out of the car, she crumples in the arms of his father weeping uncontrollably.

«I'm very scared dad!»

Ulises Marquez aware of his responsibility with what's going on, and yet with the bitter taste of the meeting he has just had with the Commission in his mouth, decides to take care of the Ariadna's problem himself. After convincing his wife to accompany them, he is ready to drive the car to Chuspipata, from where he will take the train to La Paz.

«But Ulysses!, your guests?» says Julia.

«They are guests of Urriolagoytia, not mine ... If it was up to me, they can go and eat shit.»

«Ulises, what is happening to you? And there is no train until tomorrow...»

«Then I'll drive to La Paz!»

Meanwhile, led by Franco, the Inquisitorial Commission stroll through the estate, some collecting data while others take photographs. Berger strives to identify and compare coca leaves with his Phantastica book..

In the coca pressing room, Fort observes the accumulation of leaves and asks why this is so. Franco explains that coca has accumulated because the mines are on strike, but that it will not continue to be a problem, as exports to Argentina will increase and the only thing missing in regard to this is a law which parliament needs to pass. Fort cannot hide his surprise and interest, neither can Bergier who has been listening to the conversation. They move away and speak softly. Then they call the secretary to take notes.

At night Bergier and Fort enjoy the fresh air on the balcony of the Marquez house:

«It is slavery in the twentieth century, Mr. Bergier!»

«I'd say it's even worse, they are drugged slaves ...»

«The degree of violation of Human Rights in these backward countries is inconceivable.»

“It is a contradiction to say that Bolivia is a poor country, the Bolivian Simon Patiño, belongs to the European nobility. He is the 6th richest men worldwide. If you called such kind of people poor..!,

«The criminals can do everything they want. Look at the cost, how much human capital is being destroyed by the alliance between drug traffickers and dehumanized businessmen. I am

honored with this mission, we are writing the last pages of the history of human infamy» Fort says, thinking of his victory, right here in the middle of the narcos» hub. The sudden and unexpected departure of Marquez, is a clear sign that he has given up. And therefore, the mission here in the Yungas has been successfully completed.

«Time to get back to La Paz» he said with a wide smile, “it is time to make a visit to Urriolagoitia and his ministers, Mr. Bergier»

CHEWING GUM INSTEAD OF AKULLICU.

Fort, who has established himself in the inquisitorial hall, greets the different working groups composed of Bolivian government officials and members of his Commission, to review the work done. Darío Franco is the last to arrive, so should occupy a place away from the platform.

«My office,» says the Education Minister, “has prepared the following work plan based on guidance from the Commission:

First: Publicity about the dangers of chewing coca will be disseminated based on the ongoing research.

Second: Regarding the eradication of coca chewing; from the educational point of view it would be ideal to offer an alternative to chewing coca.

In that respect chewing gum could be a healthy solution. I have asked for a contribution to the company Chiclets Adams for the purposes of supply. «

«What you have just heard is complete nonsense! Coca chewing is an alimentary habit and will not be replaced by a ruminatory act, such as chewing gum. Equally, the assumption was that this is an investigation but I can see you are already making decisions that will affect ... «

«Mr. Franco» interrupted the secretary prompted by Fort, “you know you cannot interrupt the work in this way, you should ask to speak. On the other hand Mr. Fort thinks you are rushing to conclusions a lot, these are the opinions of your own government and in no way decisions, as you say...»Mr. Fort wants to congratulate the participants for the work done, and our Commission will contact the Adam Company to implement the suggested project. This is a good example of politically correct or pragmatic rule, the truth is relative, one should not get carried away by pure scientific logic, sometimes it is the common good, democracy that must prevail. «

Darío Franco again was left alone and repeatedly lifts his hand in vain.

The economy Minister takes the floor:

«Mr. Fort, I want to lay down the conclusions

we have reached, after discussion with your advisers, on this nasty business of coca. My office has decided to remove taxes on coca. It is not possible for the Bolivian state to benefit from something that at the same time destroys human capital. Officials of your Commission have assured us that financial support from the United States will be forthcoming to compensate for the deficit that will be created in the Bolivian national treasury, something I would like to thank you for as a representative of the Bolivian government. «

«This is an outrage and I will not shut my mouth!» cries Franco, standing up, «we don't need humiliating charity. We, the Bolivians have been able to meet our needs without help so far but now it turns out that we are selling ourselves and becoming dependent of other countries! I will not be complicit in this treason, so I refuse to be part of Commission! «

Franco rushes out of the room, while Fort cannot hide his satisfaction.

«You see, Bergier, finally, the enemy has surrendered in the face of our arguments...»

The report continues with the health group, which undertakes to suspend all health controls hitherto required for commercialization of coca. «After all, those who chew coca must bear the

risks involved for their health.» The Minister of Mines, meanwhile outlines measures to suspend the use of coca in mining work and passes a letter to Secretary.

«The plan is to visit the mines tomorrow in Catavi, as was requested by your Commission. We regret the delay. You understand that it is a dangerous place and our duty is to ensure your safety, mister Fort «.

Finally the Minister of Public Works, explained that his office has decided to suspend work on the expensive Yungas Railroad that would no longer be necessary.

AL CAPONE IN CATAVI.

That morning Andrés Huallpa has gone to the grocery store to look for his father to go to work together as usual. Besides, what a good opportunity!, there is a treasure chest there: huge loaves of bread, canned sardines or tuna, butter in huge jars, chocolates and sometimes even toys for Christmas. And although Andres and his family have no chance of getting these goodies, only seeing them makes him feels good.

But the best was yet to come. Near the grocery store is the railway station and there stands the famous 'Al Capone', the Patiño's RollRoyce.

Touching it, was the ultimate delight for Andrés who never missed a chance to take a look when he was near.

As a special treat for kings, Patiño replaced the tires of his Roll Royce so it could ride on the railroad tracks. It somehow makes real the incredible stories of Jesus's grandfather about Potosí. And there it was, all shiny with large silver lanterns. For Andres: it was pure silver! The locomotive trunk built with pure gold, and the black leather tapestries from an African elephant, right down to the strange train wheels instead of tires that are strung out along the gleaming rails that seemed to turn it into a silver arrow shot out to the world.



It was a car taken from dream stories. But, something disturbs his fantasies. Behind the automobile, he sees two people conversing hidden by

the vehicle. One is a soldier who Andrew does not know and the other is Toro! Andrés lying down on the engine cover, which is still very hot, listens in.

«I don't know what he wants, but it seems important, it is a direct order from President Uriolagoytia. We must take care of the gringo's safety, Catavi is not the best place in the world for someone like that, right? Do you think we should worry, Toro? The responsibility will be mine if something happens. «

«I have heard of the meeting with the gringo lieutenant, but nobody seems to care, and we no longer have agitators, here is very quiet ...»

«By the way, do you know anything about Huallpa?»

«Something maybe in La Salvadora, too much talk about the Uncle, collecting food and things. I find that suspicious, but I have no excuse to go, is it possible that I could change to that sector? « Toro asks.

«Sure, if necessary, I can recommend it. And with respect to the gringo what you have to say at the meeting is written here, if necessary learn it by heart, it is important. «

Andres knows exactly what that means. His father has been talking about the meeting and also that his uncle Jesus insists on going. The child

tries to leave quietly, but the buckles of his knapsack hit the body of the car, revealing his presence and he has no choice but to run. Toro runs after the child.

Andres knows that his only salvation are the tunnels and he runs on outside the village where there is practically no one, but he has no other option, is the only way to reach the tunnels. The Llallagua Mountains that rise above Catavi are enormous, but dry and it is easy to locate someone in the distance. Andrés has the advantage of his youth over Toro, whose lungs were eaten away by the mine. After an endless pursuit Andrés discovers a ventilation chimney of La Salvadora and get lost into the tunnels, where Toro can only scabble on the surface.

But in the absolute darkness you need a lamp, and the only way to get one is back outside. Anything will be better than Toro however. Moving along he feels every rock or throws stones ahead to judge by the sound whether life will continue or not. Walking the mine tunnels in search of Jesus sometimes he sees, or believes he sees, a miner with a lamp and he cries: «Uncle...! uncle...! The call, tours all the nooks and endless wells, but the only thing that returns is the echo of his own anguished voice.

YES COCAINE, DOCTOR!

Ulises Marquez and his family arrive at the General Hospital at La Paz, a place that none of them has ever imagined having to visit. Till now all the medical needs of the family were treated in Europe, the United States or as a minimum Buenos Aires. Husband and wife exchange a look to give themselves strength before going down.

«There is a foreign body that has infected the eye, we must take it out today or she will lose the eye,” Dr. Monasterios, says after thoroughly examining the girl. He orders the operating room to be prepared and for what is needed for anesthesia.

«Doctor, in the Coripata hospital a problem was found in Ariadna’s heart, she can not be anesthetized» Ulises tells him.

«No problem, we don’t use chloroform, we will use only local anesthesia. She does not need to be put to sleep.”

The family is relieved to find that there is a solution, and the doctor accepts the presence of Ulises in the surgery room at the request of Ariadna who refuses to release the hand of his father. A nurse helps with surgical clothes.

«Nurse, prepare a solution of 2% for cocaine infiltration and topical anesthetic drops too,

please,» the doctor orders while placing Ariadna on the surgery table. The nurse brings a jar labeled: COCAINE SOLUTION, under Ulysses's astonished gaze.

«But... Cocaine...?» he says, talking with difficulty.

«I could use procaine, but do you have something against local anesthesia, Mr. Marquez Because it will complicate ...

«Cocaine is a drug, doctor, and ...»

«Yes, but it's completely different if an injection of cocaine is applied sometimes in life or it is put the nose daily. Procaine has almost the same properties, but for the local anesthesia is not the best.

“Procaine? What is that?”

«It is a synthetic imitation of cocaine, but it does not prevent bleeding. In that, they that have failed to mimic cocaine so far.»

Ulises Márquez cannot understand, suddenly a terrible drug was to be administered to his daughter, supposedly to save her sight. The exact same drug for he was accused of being a criminal and was now about to lose everything.

«Let me explain, Mr. Marquez. Since 1884 Cocaine is the only solution to surgical pain. Regarding it being a drug, I've heard a lot, but here in Bolivia, I have never seen a case that allows

me to judge, while there have been thousands who received cocaine for surgery in this hospital,” the doctor says pointing to a basket with several empty bottles of the product.

«Procaine was invented to replace cocaine,» the doctor continues, «but it has the disadvantage of bleeding, flooding the operative field and unnecessarily complicating the surgery, something which does not happen with cocaine.»

«I still don't understand doctor. Are you telling me Cocaine is prohibited, although useful, and that another drug that is a poor imitation of cocaine, is legal? «

«It is because one is from the South and the other North, right?» the doctor says with a laugh.

«How?»

«Economic interests, in this case, pharmaceutical interests who are the ones who says what is bad and what is good. We are in the twentieth century Mr. Marquez! «

«But how can you use cocaine, if it is prohibited?»

«If it is produced by Merck or Burroughs like this, it is legal; if it is produced in clandestine laboratories it is illegal, simple as that.»

«So couldn't Bolivia have a pharmaceutical company to produce legal cocaine?»

«Doctor, the patient is ready,» warns the nurse.

«Excuse me. Your daughter is waiting for us, would you like to sit there? Finally Mr. Marquez, procaine or cocaine? «

“Yes cocaine, doctor!»

The world has turned around, he just said yes to cocaine? If it was true what the doctor said, then he was facing a vile scam. The war against cocaine was nothing more than a struggle for the market of local anesthesia. ‘A monopoly of pain relief?’ Fort would know about that? Impossible!, no one would knowingly represent a farce of that magnitude. He had to warn him, and surely that would make them think twice about any ban, he thinks with a rush of enthusiasm.

Ariadna is conscious, she can even speak and yet without complaint tolerates surgery in the body’s most sensitive place. For Marquez, a miracle. And he is witness it!»

«Doctor, can I?» Says Marquez before withdrawing from the operating room, lifting from the waste basket, an empty bottle of Burroughs’ legal cocaine.

«Of course, take it, Mr. Marquez and Ariadna too. She is ready, I will do a control tomorrow, and take these drops for pain, is tincture of opium. “says the doctor giving a little bottle.

INDUSTRIALIZATION OF COCA.

Agamemnon Marquez holds the bottle of legal cocaine that his grandson Ulysses has just brought while trying to put his thoughts in order. «A couple of years ago, after receiving the coca analysis we did in USA, we wrote to Merck and Parke Davies offering coca leaves as a source of nutrients. Do you remember, Ulysses?»

«Yes grandfather; but they were never interested despite the report that put coca among the most important foods. «

«Now we know why. The analysis also specified that our coca leaves had a lower proportion of cocaine compared to Peruvian leaves. I took that to be a good quality when actually they wanted a higher percentage of cocaine. It's obvious! We were made fools of. «

«Grandpa, according to its statutes CocaBolivia is authorized to produce drugs, isn't that the case?»

«That's why we created CocaBolivia Ulysses, but, I never suspected it would serve to produce legal cocaine! But what about the ban that is on its way? «

«With this discovery it is impossible for them to continue. When Fort realizes, I'm sure he will change his mind ...»

«You're young and confident, Ulysses. The world does not work that way. But I will support you anyway. Let's talk to Urriolagoytia. By the way where is Darius? Since he has been with the famous Commission I don't see him anymore.»

«We agreed not to resign from it, but we have to meet right now in the Parliament, to see what is going on with the decree for coca export to Argentina»

«No, Ulysses, It will be better if I talk personally to Urriolagoytia. While you get busy with the parliament. «

When Ulysses reaches the Parliament, Dario Franco is coming out, and judging by his expression things have not worked as expected.

«Bad news, the Parliament passed the bill, but Urriolagoytia does not want to sign it.»

«Impossible, it was already agreed with Hertzog!»

«With Dr. Hertzog, yes, but not with Urriolagoytia, who told me in person that he will not sign it» says Senator Morales who has found them at the door of Parliament. “We comply with the agreement with you: The law is approved by the Senate, but it must be promulgated by the Executive, I suggest don Agamemnon, talks with the president. Let us keep up to date, OK? « Morales says, stepping away without waiting for a reply.

The coca growers remained stunned on the steps of the parliament watching the Government Palace which stands in front of them just a few meters away.

«And that's not all, Ulises, there is worse news. I quit the Commission yesterday! «

«But why? Now we will not know what they're planning Darius...»

«We already know everything, the Commission has it all fixed, it is not an investigation, just a formality to justify the ban, you saw it in Yungas. And there are several decrees against coca to be issued in the coming days. Being part of the Commission only serves to support it, to be an accomplice,» Franco says..

«Darius, you will not be so pessimistic when I tell you what we found. We have the perfect solution! My grandfather is fixing it with Urriolagoytia, let's go to the palace where I will tell you the good news. You will not believe it! And look, there's my grandfather» says Ulysses, almost euphoric as they walk to the Government Palace.

«It is useless to insist, Don Agamemnon. We all know who you are, but the President was very clear, he cannot receive you today. Maybe tomorrow,» are the words of Captain Escobar they hear, the Captain who stands between Agamem-

non and the door of the Palace.

«Tomorrow ...?» Agamemnon says, looking at Ulysses and Franco as they arrive.

«I told you the issue is not a simple mistake. The interests in play are big and we are not included in the game “Agamemnon says.

«Grandfather, Urriolagoytia is ignorant, although he has studied at England. Let's find Fort, the information we have is crucial. And as the President said, it's Fort who decides now “!

The three men cross the Plaza Murillo towards the Hotel Ritz where the Commission is housed.

«I don't see Fort's car, Ulysses. Where could he be?

«Let's ask the Hotel, they must know.»

But the inquiry is useless, nobody in the hotel gives them any clue as to the whereabouts of Fort or the Commission: they just left, is all they are told.

«Let's drop by the US embassy. Surely they know. I heard Fort, talking about a meeting with them, but did not say when.”

A COMMUNIST TYCOON.

The long imprisonment of Jesus in the darkness of La Salvadora is becoming critical: His insistence on attending the meeting with the gringo of

the United Nations despite the risk is a concern, and the dynamite incident was something serious. To make matters worse, the MNR leaders have once again been assuring people that there is sympathy with the miners' movement in the United Nations and from the gringo Fort who is very powerful, a real tycoon from New York.

«With Lechín in exile and Lora imprisoned in La Paz, the decision is in your hands Jesus, but this assertion of the MNR, I don't trust.» Jesus hears Eusebio's voice that resonates along the tunnels, but they cannot see each other; they have chosen to turn off the lamps, not only to economize fuel; but mostly for safety reasons. Their talks in complete darkness, and despite it having become habitual, always feel unreal.

«The gringo who wants to ban coca, according to the MNR, also wants to support the most radical communist on the continent. Who would gain by that? It is absurd. Without Coca no miners, without mining there is no tin and neither a revolution»

«Isn't that an exaggeration, Eusebio? Sure coca helps a lot, but that would not stop the production of tin,» says the voice of Jesus, a lonely echo on the walls of La Salvadora.

«For sure it will decrease, Jesus, I at least, could never work the same without coca. And I will

protest. How much conflict will the prohibition of coca produce when it is so unfair? Remember the slaughter of 1942 was for far less. «

«It sounds true what you say, but what if you're wrong, and we miss the opportunity, or rather say Jesus Huallpa loses a great opportunity for revolution, and all for fear of leaving his grave because that's what this mine is for me; a grave! I don't know if your voice is real or I am imagining it. Right now, you're just a voice for me, Eusebio! «

«But I can go, Jesus, I am your brother, anything that will happen will not be decided tomorrow. We could discuss it when we know what the gringo wants”

«It is not just the gringo, or the United Nations, it's about myself, Eusebio. I lost my family, I have lost myself also: I am the living dead down here and with no chance of a solution for a long time. And if, in addition, I allow the revolution to fail, can you imagine what would become of me? Whatever the decision I will just be dead, I cannot keep running away. “Jesus's voice has acquired a deeper and decisive tone, making it even more tangible in the darkness and silence. Eusebio has run out of words.

«Let us go, Eusebio, there is much to do before the meeting.» Jesus says, after a long silence

while flicking the flint trying to light his lamp. Finally the flickering light of carbide partially illuminates the tunnel. Jesus open his backpack to check it again: there is the last of his coca leaves, some sticks of dynamite, and a rusty old Colt.38 revolver.

But when Jesus begins to walk, Eusebio, as a last argument, places himself in front of him. Jesus gently put him aside, watching him with his eyes dimly illuminated, as he continues walking, his mind made up. Eusebio has no other choice but to step aside and then walk behind his brother. Along the lengthy passage out, the miners keep quiet, there just the splash boots in the copajira and the panting of both men walking through endless tubes that begins finally draws a faint light that grows slowly.

Outside, at the pithead, Jesus stopped abruptly, unable to see; the sun's rays are needles stuck in his eyes after days of almost permanent darkness.

«You see, Eusebio, even the light wants to kill me ... I'm becoming a vampire,» he says getting a smile from his partner. But almost blindly, he keeps walking, wanting to get away fast, feeling that the 600 kilometers of tunnels behind want to suck him back in. Above, the clear sky and the earth bathed in full sun breathes new life into

him.

«Good day to die today,» is his thought.

CHASING THE INQUISITION

But when Marquez's car is about to leave...

«Don Agamemnon, Don Agamemnon!»

«What? Who is it Ulises?»

«It is Escobar, grandfather. Captain Escobar from the Palace» Ulises says, as he opens the car window to talk to the approaching captain.

«I heard you are looking for Mr. Fort. Just so you know, I have received instructions from the President to organize security in Cochabamba and Catavi, it seems Mr. Fort is going to visit them.»

«Both of them?»

«Yes, the delegation has been divided into two, some will go to Cochabamba and the other to the mines ...»

«Do we know where Fort is going?»

«I don't, but maybe I can find out if you wait me a moment.»

«We'll wait here, Captain. And thanks...»

The three men have remained silent, but the question is the same: «Why so much interest in Catavi?» After all the mining town is considered the most radical communist location in all America. It is impossible that Fort dares to visit them

no matter how much security he has. If it comes to looking at the issue of coca in the mines, there are many mines, with far fewer problems, so why risk so much? Surely Fort went to Cochabamba, to visit Chapare, another coca producing zone.. Ulises argues that it is better to wait here in La Paz, but Franco insists on going to Catavi, he is intrigued by the Commission's interest in visiting such a dangerous place.

«Okay, Darius, but you have to hurry... the train leaves in a few minutes. I will wait for Fort! If he went to Chapare he will return in two or three days, for sure,” Agamemnon, says though he too is stung by curiosity.

Sometime after Dario Franco has left. Captain Escobar appears. «Don Agamemnon, Mr. Fort is heading to Catavi, I've just confirmed it,” he says. “They have taken the morning train. Mr. Fort, however, will get off at Oruro, and there he should be picked by the Al Capone. By this time he should already be in Catavi, sir. «

«Al, what?»

«Al Capone. Mr. Patiño's railroad car as it is called. «

«Ah!»

Fort in Catavi? It is the last thing they expected. Recently the miners have killed several foreigners there. And any man looking more like a for-

eigner that Fort, impossible to imagine.

«It's suspicious, Darius is right, I must go now, they are several hours ahead, grandfather.»

«And surely the train has already left. You'll have to take the car. I will insist with President Urriolagoitia»

«Grandfather I'd rather you called the Catavi mine manager to find out a bit and ask him to support me.»

Ulysses knows that the train takes six hours from La Paz to Catavi, knows well for it is the road that his coca leaves travel every day to the Patiño mines. But now he has the advantage of the car, no stopping or changing trains. «I will do it, even if the car blows up»

For the next three hours driving the dusty road to Catavi, he cannot take his mind off the looming possibility of a ban on coca, the coca export to Argentina, the eye of Ariadna, the legality of cocaine...

TOWARDS THE BONFIRE

Finally a dim light grows in the dark. Or is it just something he wants to see? But, no! There is also the smell of carbide. There is someone there!

«Jesus! Jesus!» Andres screams again. But there is only a mocking echo.

«Andres? What are you doing here without lamp?»

Finally an answer! «Julian? Julian is that you? «
«Your father is not here Andres, nor Jesus. They left...»

«Julian, Toro is the traitor, there is a meeting in Catavi, and it is a trap, my dad ...»

«That's where your father and Jesus have gone, for that meeting Andres! We must warn them! Take this lamp, and I will pick one of the Uncle's lamp. He will not mind if I take one of his, it's for a good cause».

For a moment, Andres, thinks he saw, not Julian, but the Uncle itself! But with the feeble light of the carbide flame inside the deep darkness, nothing is certain. But the message is clear, they have to warn them as soon as possible!»

Catavi village, now under heavy military control, houses Patiño Mines offices and does not seem what it really is, an economic powerhouse competing with major world capitals. There are stores where you can buy anything: English cashmeres, Swiss watches, canned caviar, French wine...

The Huallpa brothers and a dozen workers, with traces of tin powder on their faces, wearing their

miserable work clothes, break the silence of the remote village. The Headquarters of the Miners Union is as it was left the last time, almost destroyed. Jesus feels a shiver running through his body. It's the last thing he expected to see. He looks up, to the blue sky that offers tranquility, but that is not how things are.

Up the street, around the railway station, there is much activity. These must be the preparations for the round table convened by Fort, in Catavi. «According to President Urriolagoitia, it is only to hear the miners' views on the coca leaf Eusebio,» Jesus says, trying calm himself..

Very close from there Ulises Márquez fights to keep control of the car; the road to Catavi, little used, because the preference for Railway, is in terrible condition. He's still trying to work out what Fort is looking for in Catavi, a miserable village on the border of the world; although nothing less than the world's tin capital

Jesus Huallpa, with his helmet pulled down over his eyebrows, is the last of the line with his eyes fixed on the floor. Eusebio sees that the soldiers at the door of the main hall of the railway station are thoroughly examining the row of newcomers. He nudges Jesus looking pointedly at his backpack. But it's too late for step back, they have entered the final stretch and to retreat will

be suspect. The military is checking everyone as more troops are arriving.

Andres, who arrives panting in Catavi checks out the situation and with a final effort manages to join the group of Jesus and his father shortly before reaching the checkpoint.

«The traitor is Toro from Catavi,» he says, heart in the mouth from the effort and tension. “And he is going to be at this meeting.»

Eusebio and Jesus exchange looks, but it's too late to escape. They have no other choice but to follow the line. Jesus, whispering, tells Andres the problem with the backpack.

Without question or hesitation and to the surprise of Jesus, Andres grabs the backpack and tries to get away, but a new group of soldiers has arrived and forms around the line of men. Andres has no choice but to keep walking with the rest and, with the backpack hanging on his hands!

This newly arrived military reinforcement has come with Fort's Commission. He has already visited the company and reaches the station escorted by them. He is accompanied by the manager of the mine. Behind comes Mrs. Orgaz, the secretary, Dr. Chavez, Mr. Bergier and Dr. Quiroga on behalf of President Urriolagoytia.

The presence of foreigners has caused a brief distraction and Andres tries to take advantage,

moving backwards, but...

«Hey you!» says one of the soldiers raising his voice and pointing at Andres. The backpack weighs tons and is suddenly ready to slip from the hands of the boy. The frigid mountain air has become a block of ice around the miners, preventing them from moving, though their hearts beat as if they were sprinting.

«! You, get moving,» a soldier to the other miners. “But you boy ... what are you doing here? Did you think this is a circus, get out of here this is for adults.» Andres feels the ice melting. Jesus and Eusebio barely hold up on their feet. But they must keep moving until finally they are inside the spacious room.

THE DEMONIZATION OF COCA

The first thing they see is Toro. He does not notice the presence of Jesus Huallpa who has lagged behind, hidden in his helmet.

Besides Fort and the Commission and Mrs. Orgaz to translate, there are the mine engineers, some administrative employees ordered to attend by the manager and several miners.

Dr. Quiroga is the first to speak, presenting the foreigners.

«Mine authorities, engineers, gentlemen, fellow

workers; I come on behalf of President Urriola-goytia to introduce Mr. Humphrey Fort and his Commission. All are members of the United Nations mission, and come in peace and in defense of human rights.”

Fort expresses a brief greeting in English and then passes a letter to the secretary to be read:

«I come on behalf of the United Nations to show our solidarity with the Bolivians working class and their struggle for better working conditions. The United Nations is boosting the defense of human rights worldwide and has chosen Bolivia, and in particular its mineworkers, as a starting point, given the serious history of violation of human rights in this country.

The United States, as a member of United Nations, already intervened in defense of the Bolivian miners when, in 1942, it condemned the slaughter in the of miners in the fields of María Barzola that we practiced what we preach. We also condemn the slaughter of 1947 when thousands of workers were dismissed. The United Nations, through me wishes to make known our deep sympathy for the Bolivian labor movement to whom we give all our support, and ... «

But the applause started by Toro and his followers surprises everyone: the commission members and engineers also applaud as do some followers

of Huallpa who look amazed by what they have just heard.

«We are here at the request of the government of Bolivia to investigate the malignancy of the coca leaf on the health of the workers. We are concerned that the practice of drugging the workers to make them work is, incredibly, a daily occurrence. No one seems to see it as what it really is, a violation of fundamental human rights. The Coca plant is a narcotic, scientifically proven, and decreases the willingness to work and eat, causing serious damage to the body. In the mines of Bolivia, we can say that this slavery work is still practiced and that we will not allow ... «

The miners are paralyzed, by what they have heard. The open defense of the workers, the unusual attack on Patiño is incomprehensible to the miners and especially Jesus and Eusebio who know, thanks to their Marxist training, all the tricks of the capitalism, but this is another thing. What?, are the gringos now against Bolivian oligarchy? It's something for which they have no answer.

«It is true,» says an engineer speaking in bad Spanish, «workers who chew coca are the weakest, are always absent, don't pay attention to work and are the most likely to have accidents. So I don't trust them with handling heavy ma-

chinery. Proof of this is that all the injured who reach the hospital invariably have coca in the mouth... <.

Jesus gives a nudge to Eusebio, who, immediately rises and interrupts:

«Engineer, you will see that everyone who is not injured also has a mouthful of coca, here everyone without exception chews coca leaves. I chew coca every day for ten years and I handle drills, and so far I have not had any accident. «

«In Catavi» says another engineer, «the workers who chew coca confuse the numbers and angles. The coquero fails to specialize and takes too much time to learn. Let's see, «he says, pointing to Eusebio,» Tell me, what is an open angle?»

Eusebio looks at Jesus and murmurs a question in Aymara, but when he try to articulate a word, the engineer is ahead:

«You saw ... he does not know!»

«Of course not!» Claims Eusebio almost shouting. «Few miners have gone to school, most don't know how to read or write, and work inside the mine for pennies. We also believe that you are ignorant because we have never seen you stepping inside the mine, so tell me, what does Amaquilla, mean?»

The engineer reacts looking around as if looking for an answer.

«But ... what does this has to do with ...?»

Eusebio interrupts:

«Did you see? He does not know. Amaquella, means “don’t be lazy”. You earn money sitting around from the work we do and you spend all day drinking coffee and alcohol, and ... «

The Secretary barely has time to translate. Dr. Quiroga who feels responsible for the situation, tries to calm things down by hand signals.

«Stop, stop. This is a military zone, you cannot pass... «The voice of the door guard sounds as Ulises arrives

«Sergeant, there’s a meeting here in Catavi, I have to attend.» Ulises says.

«My orders are clear, sir. I’m sorry, you must go back, please «.

«I am a friend of Mr. Paul Green, chief of the mine, ask if you want. My name is Ulises Marquez. «

«Mr. Green is half dead Sir. Almost killed by these Miners, and not so long ago... «

«Well, whatever, send a message to ask the manager, he also knows me! Hurry up please!»

In the meeting room, reading a paper, Toro is invited to speak.

«It’s a lie that everyone chews coca, I agree that coca leaves should disappear. On behalf of the miners in Llallagua, I ask Mr. Fort to, make

every effort to ban coca as soon as possible, because we're being killed by the drug, that is the true...!»

«You're a sellout, Toro ...! You are not a leader of the Federation, you cannot speak for anyone ... fuck you! « Jesus's men shout.

Fort, visibly frightened, looks to Quiroga to react.

«Gentlemen, I beg for calm, this is just to exchange ideas, there is nothing definitive, all have right to express their ideas.»

Toro, feeling supported, smiles and looks defiant at the miners who make obscene gestures. Jesus noticeably upset, clenches his fists and keeps his eyes downcast. What was this? Do the gringos support their revolution? Coca leaves were bad? With Toro it was clear, he only obeyed orders, but whose? No coca was not good for the mining company also, everyone knew that. And, especially Patiño, who, as a true miner, cannot support such stupidity; but the engineers, the manager of the mine, the ones sent by the government, everyone seemed to agree. And worse, he must remain silent; trying to be comforted thinking about what Quiroga had said, it was just an exchange of ideas, nothing definite.

Fort speaks to the secretary as he gives her some papers.

Over the din of voices she shouts, «Gentlemen ..., please, Mr. Fort wants to communicate something important.» Nobody seems to listen, so she raises the voice further:

«Agrarian Reform, Agrarian Reform!» she cries until, like a magic spell, it quietens the conflict and everyone watches her.

«Mr. Fort said that he forget to mention that among the purposes of the mission is supporting agrarian reform, knowing that it is one of your most sought-after projects. In this country there remains a feudal work system, if not indeed slavery, and is therefore a violation of fundamental human rights. In fact, we bring a project that we will present to the government of Bolivia for effective land reform, « she proclaims, displaying the file that Fort had passed to her.

An almost tangible silence falls over the room. Eusebio and Jesus remain stunned. The attack on Patiño could be something credible: the news about massacres committed by Patiño was worldwide disseminated by the media, but the issue of Agrarian Reform was not well known, especially outside the borders of Bolivia. Huallpa knew what that meant, Lora spoke tirelessly of it, Andean Communism, as Tristan Marof had called it in the thirties. He saw in the application of Inca Ayllu or socialist organization, the only

solution to the economy of the Andes. Of course the idea could not have been more controversial, not when Bolivia was the country with the largest indigenous population of America and indigenous uprisings were painfully recorded deep in the memory of the white people. The submission of millions of Indians by a handful of Spaniards during the conquest was hard to believe and still less to replicate. Governments, through the history of Bolivia, had used peasant force on several occasions to seize power; but they took special care to make sure they then returned to their near slavery conditions. To propose agrarian reform was incredible, beyond comprehension.

It's a scam, it cannot be anything else, is Jesus's immediate reaction, desperately looking for an explanation, but the idea was captivating. Agrarian Reform The fundamental solution for Bolivia!

Silence returned to the room. After all that, what could be said about it.

Taking advantage of the confusion, Dr. Chavez noted: «The belief that coqueo removes hunger, thirst, fatigue, sleep or gives strength and courage, it's just a superstition, no scientist supports such nonsense. On the contrary, it is a scientific fact that coca produces malnutrition, mental retardation, racial degeneration...»

«Why then are you talking to a degenerate race?» Jesus Huallpa asks aloud, getting up, to the amazement of his colleagues, especially Eusebio, who looks on, mouth open. Jesus has been looking into his brain in vain, looking for another explanation, but only the word scam will do for Fort supporting agrarian reform. All the mine workers present know what this means: a death sentence for Jesus! Toro does not take his sharp eyes from Jesus, who continues to speak with passion.

Meanwhile, Ulises has finally managed to get past all the obstacles and looks for the location of the meeting which is not difficult when the presence of foreigners in the small town has made such a fuss. He almost gets into the meeting room, on the lookout for Dario who should already be there, when another guard stops him.

«We have strict orders not to interrupt, I beg you to wait until the meeting is ended.»

«I'm Ulises Marquez, soldier! And I'm going in! Yes or yes...!»

Inside, Chavez is beginning to respond, but a commotion at the door of the room distracts his attention. Ulises Marquez, struggling with the guards finally prevails and enters. Fort and Berger look at him stunned. The coca grower remains standing at the back of the room, seeing

that there is no seat available.

«I did not mean that, actually what we are trying to do is to prevent it ...» says Chavez, retaking the discussion very timidly given the power of Huallpa, who continues speaking

«I chew coca all my life, my father taught me as he was by his father. Coca leaves are part of our diet since forever, do you not think that we are already sufficiently degenerate?»

Chavez, realizing that has gone too far, give thanks to the fact that Fort does not understand Spanish. Eusebio and the other comrades cannot understand what is going on. Toro writes a note and then reaches to hand it to the guard as he looks to Jesus. The soldier, after looking at Huallpa, goes to the door.

«I repeat that was not my intention,» Chavez insists while looking at Fort with concern. But he is busy giving instructions to his secretary, who then approaches Dr. Quiroga, who in turn, seeks the lieutenant in charge of the security. Marquez, anticipating what is coming and staring at Fort, comes forward and puts the Burroughs' legal cocaine bottle in the center of the table, making sure to do so with such force that the sound attracts everyone attention.

«This is a scam..! In the United States, Coca-Cola industrializes coca, makes a very important

medicine against pain and it is in its interest is to monopolize the business, this is a farce, he shouts, « his eyes not moving from Fort.

The silence is palpable. Fort tries to stand up, but the room door opens noisily and a group of soldiers bursts in heading straight toward the back of the room where Jesus and his people are. Some miners try to intervene to protect him, while the others try to hunt down Toro. Toro runs and hides behind Fort using him as a shield, Fort does the same with his secretary who is shrieking and tries to escape also, but she falls in the process and Fort ends up under the table grabbing his briefcase. He tries to sit up immediately, but Huallpa and his group are using the table to protect themselves by moving it from side to side, with the result that Fort only manages to bump his head each time he tries to stand up. The bottle of legal cocaine, rolls from side to side on the table under Ulysses' watchful eye until it ends on the floor. The soldiers, trying to help Fort, neglect Jesus who jumps over the table and reaches the exit door, Eusebio, who has been hindering the soldiers blocking them with chairs, runs behind Jesus who manages to get out pushing the door guards out of the way.

The soldier in charge runs after the miners, shouting orders to stop them. Eusebio and Jesus try to

cross the railroad tracks, but a group of soldiers, alerted by the shout, intercept them, ordering the miners to stop. But the speed with which they collide makes a chaos, ending with soldiers and the miners down between the rails. On the other side of the station, shielding themselves with the train carriages, the military point their weapons but don't shoot fearing to hurt their own men. Jesus tries to seize a weapon that has been dropped on the floor. He reaches to kick another one to make it handy for Eusebio who is trying to stand up still stunned by the fall. Time freezes. Jesus can see his own hand through each millimeter in an eternal moment as it moved to seize the gun. Eusebio, also frozen in time, swoops on the weapon that Jesus has thrown at his feet. The soldiers holed up in the wagons, weapons at the ready, wait for the right time to shoot.

Almost simultaneously, Fort and the Commission, surrounded by the soldiers who protect them with their own bodies, are leaving the meeting room heading toward Jesus and Eusebio; with the group of miners on one side and the military on the other there is no other way out but that which Jesus and Eusebio have used trying to escape. Further back, standing in the doorway, Marquez is a silent witness to this little war that will define his life, the fate of coca and

Bolivia, and will change the world.

Despite his near-panic, Fort cannot avoid looking at the eyes of Jesus before the miner is battered by multiple bullets that have hit him as he managed to touch the gun. Nearby, Eusebio has also been punctured with bullets before falling to the floor in an attempt to take the weapon that Jesus has put within reach.

By the time the Commission passes the spot, it is dotted with the blood of Jesus and it is impossible to avoid it, but Fort and the others, practically dragged by the military, hardly noticed it.

Miners shoot and throw dynamites, sticks and stones, the soldiers answer with heavy fire on the other side, while Eusebio and Jesus stay lying on the floor between the rails, in the midst of battle. Fort and the Commission are taken to the Al Capone with it's engine already running just as the afternoon train is coming to Catavi sounding its siren. The Al Capone must wait a few moments to have access to the rails, to the despair of Fort and the Commission. The guard gives orders shouting for the train to come quicker.

Dario Franco, attracted by the shots, witnesses the situation from the train window that with beeps and squeaks, starts to come to a halt. He has seen Ulysses, and runs in his direction as the train finally comes to a stop..

«Ulises, Ulises! What is this? Come on ..., get out of here fast!» Marquez, awake to the nightmare of the situation hesitates then, swiftly returns to the meeting room to pick up the cocaine bottle and there sees the Fort's briefcase. Without pause he takes and tries to open it, but is pulled out by Darius who does not understand what Ulises is doing. The most important thing for him is escape as fast as possible from this hell.

«What are you doing? We have to get out of here. What is that?»

The people of Catavi shudder with the gunshots, screams and dynamite blasts as the sky at sunset reddens. Down in the middle of the street, Eusebio crawls toward Jesus.

«Jesus! How are you? Can you talk?»

But Jesus is absent, taken over by the serenity that only the near-death can give. Above, the clouds like vultures have begun a circular dance of death. Jesus hardly has the strength to turn his head to meet face to face with Eusebio:

«The gringos are putting the tips of their prick into our revolution, sly fuckers,» he says in an almost inaudible voice, recognizing his lifelong companion.

«Their pricks, what? I am a bloody colander,» he says, although he believes he is not saying that, after all he is already dead ... and the dead

don't talk.

«No Eusebio, I mean the gringo, you were right, we the coca leaves issue...their penis sticking in» Jesus smiles guiltily, he was dying, and that was something serious but Eusebio cannot help smiling.

«Jesus, don't make me laugh, I'm dying, and you know what ... hey! Did you hear ...?, Jesus..? Are we dead Jesus...? «

PANDORA'S BOX.

Franco drags Marquez out of the shooting running until they find the almost destroyed Miners Union's headquarters. They get inside through one of the holes that the dynamites opened during the crisis of the hostages. They can't wait to see inside the mysterious Fort's briefcase.

«Damn ... what about this?»

Fort's briefcase, remember, Darius?»

«But how?»

«The confusion did one service» says Ulysses, opening the bag and emptying its contents. The tremor of dynamite threatens to demolish the precarious house while the dirt and debris rains on both men; but it doesn't bother them, they

have Fort's treasure in the hands! .

«You are not to going to believe this, look ...»

«Advertising for Coca Cola, but so what?» Ulysses says, holding documents and multicolor brochures:

The spark of life!

Drink Coca Cola!

«Yes, but look at this, and read the fine print»

«The use of the coca plant not only preserves the health of all those who consume it, but prolongs life for many years and allows consumers to develop a prodigious physical and mental effort: By Dr. John Pemberton, 1885. Inventor of Coca Cola. «

«Look, this one is a sales contract between Peru and Coca Cola; and this one, Fort attended the opening of the Coca Cola distributor in Lima recently. Here's the press release from Lima. They buy coca leaves in Peru, Ulises! «

«But ... that's nothing, Darius!»

«How? Nothing? Coca Cola is made from our coca leaves and you think it is nothing? «

«The business with cocaine, that is what's amazing ...!»

«You're crazy, Ulysses, cocaine is a drug that nobody wants, it's illegal.»

«Illegal only for us, Darius, look at this bottle, it's legal cocaine!»

«What?»

«Do you remember Ariadna's problem?»

«Your daughter? Sure, her eye...»

«Yes, and the solution was, cocaine! I was told the other day, in La Paz, but didn't get to tell you.»

“Now I don't understand anything. If coca is so valuable, why do they want to ban it? And here's more, look this, seems to be Fort's CV. Listen. Vice President and Chief of Burroughs. Vice President and Director of American Pharmaceutical Association manufacturers. Director of First National Bank, Director of Yonkers Chamber of Commerce ...”

«Did you say Burroughs? Wait, wait» Ulysses says, taking the bottle of anesthesia out of his pocket.» Look, it's the same bottle, I can't believe it..!

The shockwaves of dynamite find a void in the hearts of both men, while the rubble, emerging from the walls of the headquarters falls down forcing them to cover their heads with the hands.

«What they are looking for is the monopoly on coca leaves and anesthesia!» say Marquez having to shout to be heard above the dynamite explosions, while shaking the papers to remove the dust that is raining everywhere.

«Damn! This is the true story of the Uncle...! «

“Uncle Sam yes, and the US pharmaceuticals are behind it, and the banks and the Chamber of Commerce of New York, it’s amazing ...»

«And this one?» Ulysses wants to continue, but the dynamite explosions are getting closer, forcing them to interrupt the discovery...

«This is going to fall. Lets go, we must talk to Urriolagoytia”

“Urriolagoytia? That is to step into the mouth of the wolf.»

«He will understand after this evidence!»

«Haven’t you noticed? The government is no longer on our side, Ulises. I find it dangerous ... «

«But with these proofs, it is impossible to refuse; it is important for all. The future of Bolivia is at stake, not only coca!”

Franco decides to keep quiet. He understands his partner, recently he had reacted in the same way but the world had changed so much in just twenty days!»

Marquez and Franco, avoid contact with both sides of the battle reaching the car while Catavi trembles.

«Dammit, we are in the midst of the fire.»

«The real fire is being kindled in La Paz, Darius.

I’m sure the first thing Fort is going to do, is to talk to Urriolagoytia and tell things his way. «

The dirt road descends through the hills of Lla-

llagua. With the spectacle of war still in their mind Ulises Marquez and Dario Franco remain silent, trying to assimilate what they have discovered in Fort's Pandora box.

«What advantage do they have?»

«About half an hour and the Al Capone. We have no chance “ Darius replies, while continuing to studying Fort documents.

”They are not going to believe is Ulises, that’s the worst of all, although I have lost my perspective as to is the worst. Listen to this, it is addressed to the Bolivian President and says:

‘The US government send to you the Agrarian Reform project for Bolivia, which we know is a legitimate aspiration of the Bolivian people against the injustice that they currently suffer in the hands of unscrupulous drug dealers who also are poisoning the world, producing drugs. We can tell you that we are considering financial support to achieve this goal. Mr. Humphrey Fort, right now visiting your country can clarify any details. An Educational Project is also attached, a very important complement for this necessary change for the benefit of the humanity.}

Signed President Harry Truman... «

“What? The gringos are raising the flag of the Communists? Darío, tell me we have not died in Catavi and this is hell! «

«No need to die to go to hell. They're robbing the industrial potential of coca and setting the peasants to take away our land. They are killing us ...»

«And the communism, Darius? Perhaps...»

«Communism made in USA» It's a farce! «

«But why, Darius? Such a situation would be conducive to Communism.... «

“The ‘Communists’ do the dirty work, for them!: Destroy national capitalism cutting dangerous heads, like Patiño or us, and then the northern capitalists fish in the troubled waters ...»

«Please, Darius, a little more and you'll be telling me that the Americans support the nationalization of the mines,» says Ulysses, wanting to defend himself from his own thoughts.

The men fall silent almost throughout the rest of the journey. The magnitude of the discovery and its implications are almost impossible to believe and still less to assimilate.

The big basin that houses La Paz city with the snowcapped Illimani in the background reflects the last rays of the sun. It was always an ecstatic feeling for Marquez, today, however it symbolizes the jewel they are about to lose. They are 20 minutes away from the government palace 20 minutes to know if they still have a future.

«If we published ... it would be an international

scandal!, it will stop everything.» Ulysses says, as if awakening from a long sleep.

«Except we could only publish in Bolivia, which would mean the fall of Urriolagoitia and the rising of the MNR; which has the same objectives.

«What, now, the MNR and the gringos are allies? Please Darius, my head is spinning. Anyway, in a few minutes we will know who is right, there is the palace».

Ulysses answered, reaching the Perez Velasco square, to take the street to the Government Palace. But once there, a crowd leaving the Cathedral prevents them to pass through. Franco appreciates the delay. He is not ready to accept what he is sure is coming.

«I don't think the president is still here, it is ten past six,» he says without conviction.

«It has to be, Darius, it must be ...!»

The Colorados de Bolivia has begun the change of guard at the door of the Government Palace and both men must strive to reach the door.

«You cannot pass, we are closing ...»

«I am Ulysses Marquez, Captain.»

“Mr. Marquez, I know who you are, you don't have to tell me, but the president is not receiving anyone, these are his specific instructions. You know very well the critical political situation and ... «

«It is too important, you don't know how, it is

imperative for us to talk the president. Please tell him I'm here, I just want to present him the documentation that we bring, he will appreciate it, I assure you." says Ulises, shouting over the martial music of the guard, so as to be heard.

«Okay Mr. Marquez, just because you are who you are, but it does not guarantee you anything; I will inform the president that you are here.»

«Thank you, you will not regret it.»

The guards are about to finish the ceremony with a roll of drums. That for both men, it seems to go on forever. Finally, the official returns.

«Mr. Marquez, sorry, the president says it is impossible today, but if you want I can give the documentation directly to him».

Marquez seeks Darío Franco's eyes expecting support, but finds only a distressed plea to abstain. But, how to give up the last chance? It is time to gamble. It is possible that Urriolagoytia, after seeing the content, will decide to receive them, it is actually the safest option. Then and trying not to think, he gives the briefcase to the officer, but something inside him does not want to do it, and the officer has difficulty taking the briefcase stuck in the hands of the coca grower. Again the wait.

«Darius, do you think he will understand? It is too obvious, don't you think? «

«For us, yes, but it is too farfetched to digest in one. And that's without taking into account that he really does not want to understand. «

«Darius, please. He cannot refuse to at least talk ...»

The ceremony of the Colorados of Bolivia is over and the palace gates are closed. Marquez and Franco agonize as the day changes to night. Finally, the small door opens and the official appears...

«The president says that tomorrow he will receive you for sure. It is his final word.

«Did he see the papers?»

“Makes no difference” says Cap. Escobar.

«But ... it is not possible, officer?»

«I'm sorry, Mr. Marquez, I did everything I could.» Escobar says, as he enters and closes the door behind him. Furious Marquez knocks on the door. When the military opens the coca grower stops the door with his foot.

«Okay we're going, but I want my documents back!»

«Okay, Mr. Marquez, I will ask the president, but please ...»

«We'll wait here ...» says Marquez putting even more force in his foot stopping the door, while the officer moves away visibly disturbed.

«I told you, Ulisses. Our government has sold

us out».

«He has not understood. Let us look for another time to talk. «

After a few moments the Cap. Escobar returns with the briefcase. «Mr. Marquez, here»s your briefcase ... his excellence says ...»

«Fuck you and the president...!» shouts Ulyses, but cannot finish his words, because Dario pulls him away from the door.

«By God Ulises! Wait ... you can make things worse. «

«Finally, Dario? You convinced me that all are traitors and then ...»

Dario pulls Marquez away from the Palace. The doves are returning to their shelter on the roof of the palace, the night becomes darker as do the heart of the coca growers.

«This is the end! It is not only the coca leaves, but lands. It»s all! «Ulysses say, while Dario Franco put in his mind the impossible ...

«But ...! Wait Ulyses! Hertzog»s still the president, after all»

«He is not coming back, he was never sick, he just escaped from the madness that has begun in Bolivia right now,I just realized it ...»

«We don't lose anything talking to Hertzog, and now he must have time, besides, I know he»s in Chulumani, right? We»ll pass nearby.»

They travel in silence, there is not much to say. Now it's the end, Is how Marquez sees it. The hope in Hertzog is something uncertain at best, he knows deep within himself, although he prefers not to say it to Darius Franco who has not looked away from the deep cliff that borders the narrow road from La Paz to the Yungas.

DR. HERTZOG: The exiled president.

Dr. Hertzog had temporarily left Urriolagoytia in the presidency, alluding to health problems, and had retired to Chulumani a little over a month ago. In reality, if Hertzog was sick of anything, it was the unbearable situation that was life in Bolivia and his cure was to take refuge in the beautiful coca valley. The situation was chaotic and he had no way of solving it, it had been going on for so long. The famous mining crises, Lora, Lechín and the conflicts generated by the MNR throughout the country. On the other hand, the pressures of the tin barons led by Patiño, who in the opinion of Márquez, did not do enough to ensure control of the Bolivian government. A black outlook that would scare anyone to escape the presidency. And now this...

«I think I would do the same.»

«There is not much to choose on this road, Ul-

ysses.»

«I don't mean the road, I mean the situation in Bolivia. Anybody would like to leave Bolivia. If I were Hertzog, I would do the same. «

Sunset awaits them in Chulumani, an idyllic village with a paradisiacal climate, delicious fruits and immense trees. There are few houses, but the town of Chulumani is, above all, a supply market for the entire region. Very soon they reached Hertzog's house that radiated a comforting tranquility.

«You are the best of surprises, dear friends. Because here, only the bad news comes. What is it about your grandfather, Ulises? It has been a long time since...»

«He is enjoying his granddaughter in Santa Maria. And you? You look great!, you don't look sick. The newspapers say that you are almost dead. «

«And they would not be very wrong. I would be if I had stayed in La Paz. One does not just become sick in the body, my dear friend. But we will take a little yungueñito freshly squeezed and maybe an akullicu with ... leaf of your Coripata?»

«We accept, to tell you the truth, we need it,» replies Dario.

«What! Are not you going to tell me that you

too bring me bad news, like everyone else? Oh no! I expected to rest a little enjoying your good company.

«It can be good, it's up to you.»

«From my Ulises? Remember that I am no longer in the palace and I will not return. «

Dr. Hertzog, after a brief tour of the gardens of the beautiful place, serves glasses of orange juice with singani, made from the famous Luribay grape, then he uncovers a tari with fresh coca leaves and a container with bicarbonate. All is placed in the middle of the rustic garden table, where all take sit.

«Drink, my dear friends and tell me the bad things first ...»

«It's a difficult story to believe, fortunately we have irrefutable evidence, a real bomb» says Marquez drinking the yungueño glass and putting a few coca leaves in his mouth with a pinch of bicarbonate.

«Come on, Ulysses, I think we're really into something serious, I've never seen you like this.»

«Let's start with the evidence so we'll do it faster,» says Marquez, emptying the contents of the red briefcase on the table without taking his eyes off Hertzog's face. He wants to enjoy the effect of his discovery. The former president collects a book that falls and reads the title: «Stud-

ies on coca by Gutierrez Noriega. Lima Peru». Marquez, surprised, continues to shake the case upside down, but nothing else comes out! Ulysses looks inside the briefcase and then looks for the eyes of Dario Franco, who snatches the briefcase to look inside. It's empty!

Hertzog, ignorant of what has happened, browses the book superficially:

«Here it says: 'Dogs that received cocaine sulphate in injections went crazy or died, it is a great example of the toxicity of the coca leaf' ... "But cocaine is an anesthetic, a very different thing from the coca leaf, I know that, but I still don't understand!. What was the bomb you mentioned, dear Ulysses? «

But Ulyses was speechless. What extraordinary power was this? An incredible act of magic? The magician had taken from the hat and in full view of every body, created the coca ban in only 20 days, after the coca plant was a central element of the food and religiosity of the Andean peoples for 4500 years. And the bill was only 45 thousand dollars paid by the United Nations! «

And though this was enough to stop anyone's breath, the true dimensions of the fact would only be understandable in the next 70 years. When the original investment of 45 thousand dollars would become billions of dollars as the

legal derivatives of the coca leaf manufactured in the United States managed to monopolize the world of the prohibitionist era. But perhaps most surprising of all this history is that this monopoly on coca and the other two pain killers plants: marijuana and poppy, is financed by all the countries of the world that support the war on drugs until today. And just as happened in Potosi during the prohibition of 1551, society unknowingly became on the battlefield for the monopoly of pain relief and the privilege of pleasure, generating a corrupt society, forced to lie and survive destroying all its values with the sole purpose of sustaining the enrichment of the legal cocaine cartel of the north.

Bolivia lost almost everything: the original tin in the hands of Patiño yesterday, happens to belong to the North American transnationals of today. The legal economy of coca, like the export to Argentine, and the pharmacological project of the legal cocaine became the property of the North American legal cartels. Agriculture was destroyed to such an extent that after Fort, Bolivia had to import Dutch potatoes. Nationalist political power became the unconditional servant of first-world transnationals. Bolivian society was submerged in crime and moral degradation. It seems that society had lost paradise thanks to

the forbidden fruits as with the original prohibition the Bible speaks of.

The coca growers crossed the 20 km from the house of Hertzog to the hacienda of the family Márquez without exchanging a single word. Several minutes pass but they don't have the courage to get out of the car.

«!Dad dad...! Have you been here long?» Ariadne, calls discovering her father in the car and running towards him.

«Look at my eye! It is completely healthy, Dad, it's a miracle!» He looks at her for a few moments absently, but then comes down from the car, passionately embraces his daughter and weeps uncontrollably. Darío Franco also wipes away the tears that he has not been able to avoid.

«Papa ... what's wrong with you? I'm fine, you don't have to worry! «

Further behind is Felipe, who greets Ulysses with a slight nod. The landowner, after a moment's hesitation, returns the salute.

What was this? Torn deep inside. On one hand cocaine has returned his daughter to him, and on the other it has taken away everything. Is that what is called divine law?

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

The huge twin engine plane of the Peruvian Air Force takes off from El Alto airport. Inside, Fort browses the newspapers with the help of his secretary-translator. The head line of La Razón says:

Confirmed: coca is harmful to health. United Nations experts have said so. Prohibition will follow. The law of export to Argentina has been blocked by Urriolagoytia ... The MNR proposes the Agrarian Reform and Nationalization of Mines. Human Rights: A New Gospel?

It constituted small news reflected in the national press but its repercussions would be biblical. Humphrey Fort knew that well and he was filled with pride. It was a long-cherished goal, specifically since 1919 when the ban on alcohol ended. The brand-new Federal Bureau of Narcotics assimilated the those left without work since the end of the failed alcohol ban and undertook a monopoly crusade by pursuing and nullifying the possibilities of the nearly three thousand coca-based legal products that were sold in the United States and which competed with Coca Cola.

But the greatest achievement of Fort's mission in the Andes would come in 1961, when the Unit-

ed Nations turned every letter of its report into planetary law through the 1961 Narcotics Convention, giving Coca Cola an absolute monopoly on coca and its derivatives While prohibiting the use of coca as chewed in the Andean countries. The fate of Peru was even more tragic because being the first producer of legal cocaine on the planet it became, after Fort, the submissive supplier of coca leaf for Coca Cola and destroyed his society fighting against coca plants that before allowed to have the place of the first producer of anesthetics derived from the coca, now in the hands of first world pharmacists. «Mission accomplished dear Harry» is the last letter Fort dictates to his secretary.

FOUR YEARS LATER.

It will be a different day is what Ulises Márquez feels while coming out of the gloom of sleep: Even the dogs know it.

The hacienda has awakened earlier today by the tireless barking of dogs.

«Ulises! What's the matter, why do they bark so? «

«I don't know, my love, maybe some animal near. But you must sleep more, it is very early,

later you have to do a lot, there are only three days left ».

Ulyses, is something wrong? I notice you are different, don't you agree with Ariadne's marriage? Is that?»

«On the contrary, that makes me happy. I feel as close to you as when we started, but you know what is coming, although I have accepted and I am prepared. As for Ariadne and Felipe I was blind, but now it's different, it's enough to have you, Ariadne healed, to be with my father, what more can I ask for ... »

«The dogs have gone nuts, Ulysses, something's wrong!» Marquez gets up from the bed and opens the door to the balcony on the second floor of the house, just to listen to the foreman of the hacienda, shouting from below:

«Master... there is a man who says he is called Vaca Diez and is accompanied by many people, they are armed.»

Behind, Marquez sees a crowd of men on horseback who have surrounded the hacienda. There are several shots in the air that attract the attention of Ariadne and her mother who also go out to the balcony.

«Who are they Daddy? What's up?»

«All right, my darling daughter, the time has come, you have to do it with dignity,?» Marquez

takes his daughter's hand and squeezes it tightly. More men on horseback are appearing while the dogs get more and more crazy. One of the horse-men, who looks like the chief, comes forward spurring his horse and says aloud:

«I am VacaDiez, Minister of Agriculture of the revolutionary government of the MNR, and I come to tell you that in the name of Law 234 of the Agrarian Reform, this hacienda as well as seven others that were your property have been expropriated and will be handed over to the people. The Agrarian Reform is the second major step taken by the government presided over by Dr. Víctor Paz, fulfilling, together with the nationalization of the mines carried out in 1952, the two great objectives raised by the people of Bolivia.

We order you and your family to retire peacefully, our goal is the welfare of all. You can have horses and mules to transfer your personal property to the city of La Paz, because, as you know, the railroad now is a nonsense and will no longer function. A group of my men will escort you to ensure your safety. Long live the MNR! Long live the Agrarian Reform! Long live the Nationalization of the Mines! “

All the riders respond by firing shots into the air. Long live to Victor Paz! Death to the Rosca! «

Ariadne and her mother take refuge, weeping, in the arms of Ulises Marquez, who, despite the situation, remains firm and calm. It has been almost half a millennium since his ancestors came from Spain and declared this foreign land as their own.

A human alley, formed by the former servants and employees of the Marquez, sees them leave for the last time. Ulysses Marquez, at the head, riding the Devil, takes leave with the eyes of those who served him and before him his grandfather on him. Behind come his wife Julia, Ariadne and Felipe. At the rear come several mules loaded to the maximum, driven by the few employees who have stayed with them.

The foreman Negrón stops defiantly in front of the horse of Márquez before it moved and spits on the ground.

«Death to the landowners! Long live the agrarian reform! Long live the nationalization of the mines!» He shouts, but no one echoes him and the Marquez caravan continues its way between the tangerines and oranges trees. Beyond, coca plants sway with the wind, indifferent to the drama that has revolved around them

THE END