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Students, Anarchists and Categories of Persecution in Chile, 1920

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José Astorquiza had no patience for insolence. The special minister appointed to oversee the prosecution of subversives looked at the young man in front of him. "Are you an anarchist?" he asked. José Domingo Gómez Rojas answered: "I do not have, dear Minister, sufficient moral discipline to assume that title, which I will never merit." This was not the answer, nor (one could imagine) the tone, Astorquiza desired: "You, young man, appear at these proceedings involved in one of the most serious crimes that can be committed in a Republic: a crime against the internal security of the State." To this Gómez Rojas responded with an indifferent shrug of his shoulders and a dismissive remark: "Let's not be so theatrical, dear Minister." Astorquiza, enraged, issued his order: "Take this insolent boy away immediately, put him in manacles in solitary confinement and eight days of bread and water only."¹

Astorquiza's anger cost Gómez Rojas his life. Interrogated in late July, 1920, he would be dead by the end of September, officially of viral meningitis although the autopsy remained secret for some time after his death, even when demanded by a member of Congress.² His fellow students and worker-intellectuals in the Chilean Student Federation (FECh) reached a different conclusion: José Domingo Gómez Rojas died not of natural causes but unnatural ones—he died from from the abuses he suffered while unjustly imprisoned.³

¹ This exchange is recounted in Carlos Vicuña Fuentes, *La tiranía en Chile: Libro escrito en el destierro en 1928* (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2002 [1938]), 115 and by Arturo Zuñiga in an interview that appears in "La difícil generación del 20," *Ercilla*, June 5, 1968, clipping in folder 164, M. Segall Rosenmann collection, International Institute of Social History [hereafter MSR, f.]. Zuñiga was a law student in 1920 and secretary of the Chilean Student Federation in 1921. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

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² For the petition by the Diputado Manuel Barrenechea to see the autopsy report see Lorenzo Montt to Francisco Santapau, October 13, 1920, in Archivo Nacional de Administración [hereafter ARNAD], Ministerio de Justicia [hereafter MJ], v. 3045, f. 716. The negative response his petition receives appears in Lorenzo Montt to Presidente de la H. Cámara de Diputados, October 28, 1920, ARNAD/MJ, v. 3045, f. 766.

³ "!Acusamos!" *Claridad* 1: 1 (October 12, 1920), front page editorial. Some fifty years later, Pablo Neruda would compare the killing of Gómez Rojas to that of Federico García Lorca during the Spanish Civil War. Neruda, *Confieso que he vivido* (Santiago: Pehuén, 2005 [1974]), 54-55. The accusations of abuse and suggestions of torture led to flurry of defensive letters and editorials by prison wardens and editorialists. See for example, "La Muerte del Sr. Gómez Rojas. Comunicación del director de la Penitenciaría al Ministro de Justicia en la cual desmiente las aseveraciones de un diario," *El Mercurio* (Santiago), Sunday, October 3, 1920, p. 26. An additional defense was offered through the submission of a letter from Gomez Rojas's own mother regarding his treatment—but shortly

This essay looks at the context within which Gómez Rojas-a student, a poet, an aspiring anarchist—found himself a target of aristocratic and legal wrath. I am less interested, at least here, in Gómez Rojas himself than in why university students-especially those associated with the FECh-confronted increased, and increasingly violent, repression in the last years of the 1910s. On one level, the answer would seem straightforward: university students (and former students) in the FECh spoke out publicly and persistently against the regime, its shortcomings and its war mobilizations. Yet students had not been loathe to the criticize the administration in the past. What had changed by 1918? Carlos Vicuña Fuentes, a member of the FECh in 1913 who would go on after graduation to legally represent some of those charged with sedition in 1920, hinted at an answer: by 1918, he remarked, across the city students, poets, workers, young intellectuals and others "got together, discussed, wrote, prognosticated, and organized themselves into an apocalyptic tide that filled the dithery aristocracy with dread."⁴ The dread arose perhaps as much from the perceived transgression of existing social boundaries as it did from a possible apocalypse. Encounters and interactions between some of Santiago's least alienated (its university students and intellectuals) and most oppressed (its industrial workers, itinerant laborers, and chronically underemployed) had blossomed and begun to flourish. ⁵ They met, discussed, and organized at union meetings, in the classrooms of studentled universidades populares, at cafes and clubs around Santiago, and increasingly on the premises of the FECh's club.⁶ The FECh had become an

thereafter she publicly declared that in fact she was forced to sign her name to the initial letter under duress (and while her son was in fact still alive and had not yet been transferred to the Casa Orates). The text of these two letters, dated September 20 and 21, 1920, is reproduced in the 1940 edition of Gómez Rojas's *Rebeldías Líricas*, ed. by Andrés Sabella (Santiago: Ediciones Ercilla, 1940), 146.

⁴ Carlos Vicuña Fuentes, quoted in Bernardo Subercaseaux, *Historia de las ideas y de la cultura en Chile (tomo 3): El centenario y las vanguardias* (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 2004), 70.

⁵ On revolutionaly alliances between society's least alienated and most oppressed, see David Graeber, "The New Anarchists," *New Left Review*, 13, January-February 2002.

⁶ See, for example, "Federación Obrera de Chile: Junta ejectuiva," an unsigned brief dated October 2, 1919, in Archivo Nacional, Intendencia de Santiago [hereafter AN/IS], v. 496 (June 1920), for student delegations at worker meetings. On the popular university, see José Santos González Vera, *Cuando era muchacho* (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1996 [1951]), 185.

organization, and its club a physical space, within which not only increasingly radicalized university students, but also former students, workers, young professionals, and worker-intellectuals—all versed in and inspired by various currents of anarchist and socialist thought—gathered, talked, read, and found common cause. In a world transformed by a global war and a socialist revolution, solidarity and association of this kind appeared as a challenge to, a disruption of, the prevailing logic of social identities and social relations.⁷ The Chilean oligarchy and its children, adrift in a sea of significant economic and political crisis, had little patience for the construction of such forms of association and the apparent deconstruction of the "natural order" of things.⁸ Which is why, five days prior to Gómez Rojas's arrest, on a chilly Monday evening in July, 1920, two hundred patriots descended on the FECh, looking for the head of Juan Gandulfo.

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They came angry and they came wearing *la mirada milagrosa*, that "miraculous gaze" inspired by too much whiskey. When they reached the club, on one of Santiago's busiest downtown streets, they quickly forced their way in and up the stairs. While one of their party proceeded to vomit on the piano, wiping his mouth, like a good patriot, with the Chilean flag, another stepped forward, pointed at a young man and exclaimed: "That's Gandulfo, friend of the *rotos* and opponent of the war!" Gandulfo not only knew his accuser but also had played a minor role in his life. He was Iván Pra Balmaceda, a young man from a politically prominent family who had been admitted to Santiago's asylum (the Casa de Orates) and subsequently released at his father's request due to a medical opinion provided him by one of the asylum's interns: none other than Gandulfo.⁹

⁷ I have found Kristin Ross's work on May 1968 in France very useful here. See Ross, *May '68 and its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), especially 25 and 60.

⁸ For elaboration see Jacques Ranciére, *On the Shores of Politics* (London: Verso, 1995), 33. On the relation of Ranciere's thought to anarchism, see Todd May, *The Political Thought of Jacques Ranciere: Creating Equality* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008).

⁹ Details for this paragraph come from: Alfredo Demaría, "Manifiesto del Presidente de la Federación de Estudiantes de Chile," *Juventud* 2: 11-12 (January-

Balmaceda and his companions had met earlier that evening at the Olimpia café, a popular locale in central Santiago where students and intellectuals, workers and bureaucrats, could gather to view silent films in the afternoon or to dance late into the night.¹⁰ On this particular evening, however, as July's winter chill descended on the city, they had come together to discuss Gandulfo's speech, given the previous day from the balcony of the student club overlooking Santiago's busy Ahumada street. There, sympathizers, antagonists, and agnostic bystanders listened as Gandulfo offered an impassioned critique of Chile's war mobilizations on the Peruvian border. The speech was part of a broader critique of how political and social life looked in Chile in 1920. President Juan Luis Sanfuentes and his allies in Chile's powerful parliament were by this point confronting a political and social crisis of serious proportions. Strikes, unemployment, an economic downturn, along with food shortages and a skyrocketing cost for foodstuffs, with no comparable rise in salaries, had led to mobilizations in the streets and a concomitant rise in concerns about 'social order.'11 Adding to their worries was the powerful presidential campaign waged by the opposition candidate Arturo Alessandri. Only weeks earlier, things had come to a head when Alessandri lost the popular vote by a narrow margin but won the majority in the electoral college. As

March, 1921), 30-35; Juan Gandulfo, "Comienza la farsa," *Juventud* 2: 11-12 (January-March, 1921), 39-46; Gandulfo, "Juan Gandulfo juzga el momento actual," *Claridad* 1: 9 (December 11, 1920); Coronel-Prefecto to Intendent of Santiago, July 20, 1920, AN/IS, v. 497 (July 1920); *El Mercurio* (Santiago), July 21 1920, p.17; and José Lafuente Vergara, "Cuarenta años del asalto y destrucción de la FECH," in "Las noticias de Ultima Hora," July 21, 1960, in MSR, f. 15. On Gandulfo's time as intern at Casa de Orates see Ricardo Zalaquett S., "*Siembra, juventud! La tierra es propicia, el momento es único.* No es Neruda sino Gandulfo, el cirujano," *Revista Médica de Chile* 133 (2005), 380; see also Fabio Moraga, '*Muchachos casi silvestres': La Federación de Estudiantes y el movimiento estudiantil chileno, 1906-1936* (Santiago: Universidad de Chile, 2007), 266-67.

¹⁰ For details on the Olimpia, see Oreste Plath, *El Santiago que se fue: Apuntes de la memoria* (Grijalbo: Santiago, 1997), 65.

¹¹ On food shortages—particularly shortages of flour and bread—see Ministerio de Interior, primera sección, al Señor Ministro de Ferrocarriles, July 3, 1920, in ARNAD, Ministro de Interior [hereafter MI] v. 5407, No. 1295; on the cost of foodstuffs, see 'Potpourri," MSR, f. 13 (1918) and "De Hace Medio Siglo," MSR, f. 13 (1919). For statistics on increases in the costs of foodstuffs, see "La carestia de la vida," clipping in MSR, f. 15 (the date of this last publication is unclear but it provides statistics for the period 1913-1925). See also Peter DeShazo, *Urban Workers and Labor Unions in Chile, 1902-1927* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 159 and 185.

the Tribunal of Honor, appointed to determine the outcome, gathered for its preliminary discussions on the matter, Alessandri's opponents pondered their options. Confronted with Alessandri's support among a large group of students, workers, and reservists in Santiago's regiments, Sanfuentes and his advisers, led by War Minister Ladislao Errázuriz, used a coup in Bolivia as an excuse to mobilize troops on the border with Peru and Bolivia, question Alessandri's patriotism, and suppress a broader movement of dissent.¹²

Leaders in the FECh responded sharply to Sanfuentes's warmongering. Ridiculing the war mobilizations as a thinly disguised effort to distract from immediate social and political crises, members of the FECh publicly adopted a strong anti-militarist position—they called for abstention from patriotic *manifestaciones*, corresponded with Peruvian students, and rejected what they perceived to be a pervasive nationalist dogma. They called for more public information regarding the mobilization by all parties, asserting that secret diplomacy was no longer acceptable, that it was a ruse to hide political lies and government incompetence, and that the people should be convinced that such a maneuver was not simply designed to satisfy internal political machinations. Characteristic of the anarchist proclivities of the FECh leadership, they also argued publicly that true patriotism is that which is directed toward humanity rather than a nation.¹³

Gandulfo—a recent graduate of the University of Chile's medical school, an organizer with the IWW, and a tireless agitator and orator—was a central figure in these demonstrations, his speech the example par excellence in the eyes of many of the anti-patriotic, traitorous perspectives

¹² On the regiments' support for Alessandri, see Vicuña Fuentes, *La tiranía*, 122-24; Patrick Barr-Melej, *Reforming Chile: Cultural Politics, Nationalism, and the Rise of the Middle Class* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 180 and DeShazo, *Urban Workers and Labor Unions*, 183. Support for Alessandri was not as widespread perhaps as Sanfuentes and many in parliament believed: he had his own history of labor suppression. As Minister of the Interior in 1918 he had ordered in the army to violently expel settlers on public lands in the south and was not considered a particularly strong advocate of labor. See DeShazo, *Urban Workers and Labor Unions*, 175-177.

¹³ See Frank Bonilla and Myron Glazer. *Student Politics in Chile* (New York: Basic Books, 1970) 41; and *Claridad* 1: 3 (October 26, 1920).

of students associated with the FECh.¹⁴ Criticisms of the mobilizations were taken as clear indications of one's 'Peruvian' sympathies; indeed, as one young writer recalled, even to criticize "war" in the abstract was to invite attacks on one's physical person.¹⁵

It clearly offended the patriotic sensibilities of Balmaceda and his peers and this is what they discussed as they gathered at the Olimpia. They initially took their anger out on Santiago Labarca—a prominent public figure as previous president of the FECh, an organizer of the Asamblea Obrera de Alimentación Nacional, and affiliate of the anarchist journal *Numen*—who had the misfortune of passing by that evening.¹⁶ The angry students cornered Labarca in front of the Radical Club, beating him until he managed to find refuge in the club and escape their wrath. Emboldened, they then proceeded to the FECh, only blocks away, where news had circulated of their imminent arrival. The students forced their way in and proceeded to assault Gandulfo until, according to the police report filed that evening, police Inspector Ismael Moreno arrived on the scene with four other officers. They proceeded to escort Gandulfo and a companion out of the building to the nearby police station, followed by the angry mob of inebriated students. The student aggressors, by the police's own admission, were not detained but rather then went to the Conservative Club to rally further support at which point they returned to the FECh and ransacked the premises.¹⁷

This first assault initiated a subsequent series of attacks: first, that same evening on the printing offices of *Numen*, an anarchist paper edited by Santiago Labarca and Juan Egaña and printed by Julio Valiente, all of whom eventually ended up in police custody. Then, two days later, on July 21, came a second assault on the FECh's club. A large group of students, participating in a send off of reservists departing Santiago's Mapocho station for the north, gathered in the early afternoon in front of the La Moneda (presidential palace) and then marched on the FECh offices again

¹⁴ On Gandulfo's role in the IWW, see e.g., *Boletin de los Trabajadores Industriales del Mundo*, Santiago, April 1920, Biblioteca Nacional de Chile [BN], microform PCH11653.

¹⁵ González Vera, *Cuando era muchacho*, 85-6.

¹⁶ On Labarca's career, see Moraga, 'Muchachos casi silvestres', 656.

¹⁷ Descriptions of these events are taken from the materials cited in note 9.

"to protest this Institution's attitude toward the international problems of the moment." The police files reported some 3,000 demonstrators attempted to break into the club, held back at least temporarily by five policemen and an inspector. But only temporarily: the assailants soon broke down the doors and entered the premises. They destroyed the piano, the billiards table, and the furniture. They hurled books and documentsincluding the entire archive of the cultural and political journal Juventudfrom the club's library down on to the streets where they were hastily piled and burned.¹⁸ At one point they destroyed a portrait of former University Rector Valentín Letelier, apparently having mistaken it for an image of Peruvian President Leguía. Such dismally humorous episodes of mistaken identity abound: one official would issue an arrest warrant for none other than Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta, believing him to be a member of the FECh because a copy of one of his texts, published in Chile, was found on the premises of the Student Club. Meanwhile, agents in Santiago's Security Section gathered documents and archives on the premises, which they would use as a basis for further arrests and prosecutions. The police commander at the scene had little sympathies for the FECh: in his report he noted that, given the "tumultuous nature of this assault, personnel in my charge were unable to take down the name of any of the assailants...." They had no difficulties taking down the names of the assailed however.¹⁹

¹⁸ See the advertisement in *Juventud* 2: 10 (October, 1920), 34; Alfredo Demaria, "Manifiesto del Presidente de la Federacion de Estudiantes de Chile," *Juventud* 2: 11-12 (Enero/Febrero/Marzo, 1921), 30-35; José Lafuente Vergara, "Cuarenta años del asalto y destrucción de la FECH," Jose Lafuente Vergara, in "Las noticias de Ultima Hora," July 21, 1960, clipping in MSR, f. 15. Despite the significant losses, copies of *Juventud* were preserved and a good collection is housed at the Biblioteca La Chascona in Santiago.

¹⁹ There are multiple sources for these assaults, including: Sub-Prefecto del Orden al Señor Prefecto, July 21, 1920, enclosure in Coronel-Prefecto al Intendente de Santiago, No. 1478, July 21, 1920, AN/IS v. 497 (July 1920); Roberto Meza Fuentes, "Asalto del club de Estudiantes: 21 de julio de 1920," clipping in MSR, f.15; as well as Gandulfo's pieces in *Juventud* and *Claridad* cited in note 9; Lafuente Vergara, "Cuarenta años del asalto," and González Vera, *Cuando era muchacho*. I have also found useful Enrique Delano's novel *El Año 20*. Although a novel, it is, much like the semi-fictionalized autobiographical work of Manuel Rojas, a largely accurate narration of actual events. On the actions of the Security Section agents, see Sergio Pereira Poza, *Antología crítica de la dramaturgia anarquista en Chile* (Santiago: Editorial Universidad de Santiago, 2005), 25-26. Editors of the FECh journal *Claridad* claimed that in fact President Sanfuentes's personal secretary—and a Lieutenant in the Army—participated in the assault, as did a number of policemen. See Moraga, *Muchachos casi silvestres*, 665; this was

The attacks on the FECh, and the subsequent arrest of its leaders, initiated a four-month long assault on perceived 'subversives' in Santiago and Valparaiso. Exactly what constituted a subversive remained, in many ways, purposefully vague and open-ended. Daniel Schweitzer, a former student leader and lawyer at the time, would recall some twenty-five years later: "everything that aspired to give human and social content to the actions of the State or of groups was labeled 'subversive.' Protestants, the discontent, visionaries, idealists, political activists, organizers, propagandists, in a word, those who would forge the future..."20 Schweitzer, some two decades after the events, gives one the impression that the process of identifying and persecuting subversives was relatively scattershot. But police reports, official correspondence, and memoirs reveal that the police operated with particular targets in mind in the winter of 1920: labor and its allies. Thus, workers, particularly those with affiliations to organizations such as the Asamblea Obrera de Alimentación Nacional, or who took to the streets in marches to show their support for Arturo Alessandri, or whose nation of origin included Peru, Spain, Italy and Russia, were suspect. Anyone whose name could be mentioned in connection with the Industrial Workers of the World and anarchism, was suspect. And increasingly so were an outspoken and growing number of university students and young worker-intellectuals affiliated with the FECh.

not a rash accusation: congressional deputies, in the wake of the assault, publicly accused the police of participating in the assault and of fabricating their reports to obscure that fact. Mass patriotic demonstrations in support of troops heading north to the border with Bolivia and Peru began on the 20th around the country and continued for days after. See, for example, *El Mercurio* (Santiago), July 21, 1920, p. 3 and telegram from Luis A. Romo, Copiapo, al Ministro Interior, July 21, 1920, ARNAD/Ministerio del Interior [hereafter MI], v. 5375.The episode regarding Astorquiza and Malatesta is recounted by Zuñiga in "La difícil generación del 20," *Ercilla* June 5, 1968, clipping in MSR, f. 164.

²⁰ Daniel Schweitzer, "Juan Gandulfo," *Babel: Revista de Arte y Crítica* 28 (julio-agosto 1945), 20.

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By the 1910s university students were becoming a powerful political and social force in parts of Latin America, including Chile. ²¹ Students transformed their universities and also their societies. In Peru, in Argentina, in Chile, students themselves took the lead in forcing dramatic transformations in the university system in the 1910s and 1920s. They forced universities to open their doors to middle and working class youths; they pushed to have teaching positions filled by teachers not culled from the oligarchy; and they created night schools and medical clinics for displaced workers and the unemployed. Students, together with workers, created and sustained a number of *universidades populares*, which could be found not only in Chile but also in Peru, Mexico and Cuba by the mid-

²¹ Histories of political mobilization and social movements are common in Latin American historiography but, despite the highly politicized atmosphere at most public universities throughout Latin America, university students and their political activities have been infrequent subjects of systematic study, particularly among U.S. and Europe-based scholars of Latin America and particulary with regards to movements prior to the 1950s and 1960s. There are of course exceptions, such as Richard Walter, Student Politics in Argentina: The University Reform and its Effects, 1918-1964 (New York: Basic Books, 1968), Bonilla and Glazer, Student Politics in Chile, Andrew Kirkendall Class Mates: Male Student Culture and the Making of a Political Class in Nineteenth Century Brazil (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002) and Iván Jaksíc Academic Rebels in Chile: The Role of Philosophy in Higher Education and Politics (SUNY: Albany, 1989) but in anglophone scholarship the balance is very strongly tipped toward the midtwentieth century and after. Excellent recent studies include Francisco J. Barbosa, "July 23, 1959: Student Protest and State Violence as Myth and Memory in León, Nicaragua," Hispanic American Historical Review 85: 2 (May 2005); Lessie Jo Frazier and Deborah Cohen, "Defining the Space of Mexico '68: Heroic Masculinity in the Prison and "Women" in the Streets," Hispanic American Historical Review 83: 4 (November 2003); Victoria Langland, "La casa de las memorias en Praia de Flamengo 132: memorias estudiantiles y nacionales en Brasil, 1964-1980," in Elizabeth Jelin and Victoria Langland, comps., Monumentos, memoriales y marcas territoriales (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores, 2003); Langland, "Birth Control Pills and Molotov Cocktails: Reading Sex and Revolution in 1968 Brazil," in Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds., In From the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Elaine Carey, Plaza of Sacrifices: Gender, Terror and Power in 1968 Mexico (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), and Jeff Gould, "Solidarity Under Siege: The Latin American Left, 1968," American Historical Review (April 2009). The relative paucity of studies on students and universities during the first third of the century is surprising when one considers that public universities in Latin America served as the primary sites for the political formation of future civilian leaders, intellectuals, and political activists on the continent. In Chile the majority of the presidents have passed through the halls and classes of the University of Chile. See Moraga Valle, 'Muchachos casi silvestres,'13.

1920s. In Chile the Universidad Popular Lastarria, founded in 1910, offered to workers free courses in fields as diverse as Spanish language and literature, History, Philosophy, Geometry and Physics.²² Finally, across parts of South America, students' called for the reform of the university, which could quickly mushroom into calls for the reform of society as a whole. "The universities," Argentine students in Córdoba declared in 1918, "have been, until now, the secular refuge of the mediocre, the rental property of the ignorant... and worse still, the place in which all forms of tyranny and insensitivity found a lecture room within which to be taught. Universities have become as such the faithful reflection of these decadent societies that persist in providing the sad spectacle of senile paralysis."²³

Yet, to speak of "university students" categorically—as a unified or homogeneous group—and to attribute to them a kind of political or social coherence, is obviously problematic. For one, as José Santos González Vera, recalled: "Among the students there were radicals, masons, anarchists, vegetarians, liberals, some socialists, collectivists, nietzcheans, stirnerians, spiritists, catholics, nationalists..."²⁴ Students, in other words, were unsurprisingly eclectic in their ideological and political positions. Moreover, many of those assaulted at the offices of the FECh, including González Vera himself, were not university students but artisans, laborers, and young worker-intellectuals employed full-time outside the bounds of the university in various trades. In other words—and this will be a point to

²² Moraga Valle, '*Muchachos casi silvestres*,' 204. On university reform, see Tulio Halperín Donghi, *Historia de la Universidad de Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria, 1962), esp. chap. 3 and José Luis Romero, "University Reform," in Joseph Maier and Richard W. Weatherhead, *The Latin American University* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979), 135-146.

²³ Traditionally such movements have been seen as originating with Argentine students in Córdoba in 1918. But this was hardly the first time a public and powerful push had been made for reforms by students: as early as 1910 universitarios from across South America met at Congresos de Estudiantes Americanos to meet and discuss issues of concern and create a pan-American intellectual and political project. Carlos Vicuña Fuentes, who would serve as defense attorney for many of the FECh students persecuted in 1920, was one of Chile's student delegates to a large Congreso in Lima in 1913. For an insightful discussion of the problem with conflating the Córdoba documents and rhetoric with that of other movements, see Moraga Valle, '*Muchachos casi silvestres*,'130-32.

²⁴ González Vera, "Estudiantes del año veinte," *Babel* 28 (jul.-ago., 1945),
35.

which I will return again—the FECh became much more than a student federation by 1920. Finally, the violent events on Ahumada during that third week of July 1920—events that would initiate a spiral into a full-out war against 'subversion'—were undertaken largely by *other* university students, with a smattering of participation by some workers, reservists, and the police. These were students from various disciplines, schools, and social backgrounds: a few were former members of the FECh angry at the political shift it had taken but most were the sons of Santiago's well-to-do, or *canalla dorada* ('gilded swine').

Their targets were a particular group of individuals associated with the leadership of the FECh. Why the FECh? The FECh emerged as a political force in 1906 when students were snubbed by the government at a ceremony planned in their honor for work done to help combat epidemics in Valparaíso.²⁵ Held at the Teatro Municipal, students and their families found themselves relegated to the rear of the Theatre at their own celebration while the best seats were reserved for invited officials and dignitaries. In protest, medical students jeered and threw paper down onto state dignitaries and soon after, in August, formed the FECh, headed by a medical student and supported by the rector. Such a formative start set a combative precedent that later students would inherit and hold dear. The FECh quickly became involved in social issues-students offered medical services and assistance as well as legal consultation to workers, organized both the first night school for workers and an evening dispensary, and by 1916 were running eleven study centers for workers. At one point, students presented seven hundred volunteers to the government to undertake a census of the school-age population in Santiago.²⁶ In other words, from its founding, the FECh was never oriented solely toward reform of the university from within but rather toward the transformation of society as a whole-including the Parliamentary regime-and the FECh thus became increasingly immersed in national politics.²⁷

²⁵ For an exhaustive and superb history of the FECh, see Moraga Valle, *'Muchachos casi silvestres.'*

²⁶ Bonilla and Glazer, *Student Politics*, 32.

²⁷ Moraga Valle, *'Muchachos casi silvestre,'* 214. University reform was much more prominent in Peru and México where, according to Bonilla and Glazer, the universities were still "stronghold[s] of reaction and clericalism." Bonilla and

Even so, the FECh remained, up until 1918, committed to a project of liberal reform and its actions would hardly have inspired the kind of backlash experienced in 1920. What changed? These initial interventions into social and political life deepened and acquired more militant overtones at the end of the decade, in part as a new generation of leaders arose in the FECh and in part as economic crises deepened in Santiago and around the country. The leadership in the FECh by 1918—influenced by the Great War, the Russian Revolution, and dubiously justified conflicts with Perubecame increasingly internationalist (rather than nationalist or continental) in political orientation, something that helps explain the strong resonance of anarchist and socialist ideas within the FECh.²⁸ Indeed, by the time the FECh convened its first convention, in June, 1920, it had committed itself to principles of continuous critique of existing institutions and social life; the right of both students and workers to be heard; and endorsed the organized action of the proletariat. Communist, socialist, and especially anarchist ideas that had been circulating for some time were evident in much of the platform, as was a trenchant anti-militarism and suspicion of nationalism.29

Such positions are not surprising. Particularly by 1919 and 1920 it had become clear to all that the social question—"all the social, labor, and ideological consequences of emerging industrialization and urbanization," consequences that had become acute by 1919—required answers.³⁰ "These are years," Bernardo Subercaseaux notes, "during which the press and numerous books and publications would engage issues like alcoholism, infant mortality, prostitution, the misery of the slums and the unhealthy

Glazer, *Student Politics*, 54. This is not to suggest that university reform was of *no* interest to students. In 1918, Santiago Labarca, then serving as President of the FECH (and Juan Gandulfo as vice-president), suggested organizing three sections of the FECh to research particular questions, the third being "the University Reform needed in order to convert our University in to an educational plantel that merits the name it today pompously gives itself." See Santiago Labarca, "Congreso de la Juventud estudiosa," *Juventud* 1: 1 (July-August 1918), 4.

²⁸ Moraga Valle, 'Muchachos casi silvestres,' 214.

²⁹ For an excellent discussion, see Carlos Vicuña Fuentes, *La cuestión social ante la Federación de Estudiantes de Chile* (Santiago de Chile: Año 68 de la Era Normal, 1922). The text of the June, 1920, document is reproduced in appendix II of this volume.

³⁰ James O. Morris, *Elites, Intellectuals and Consensus: A Study of the Social Question and the Industrial Relations System in Chile* (Ithaca: Cornell University School of Industrial Relations, 1966), 78.

conditions of the majority of the inhabited areas."³¹ Publications on crime, criminality, sanitation and the judicial system proliferated.³² Even the least sympathetic media commentators could not ignore the plight of many. The economic downturn following the Great War in Europe only worsened the situation. Mine owners closed or curtailed operations with alarming frequency. In 1919 the nitrate industry alone employed some 45,000 workers. One year later, in 1920, that number had been nearly halved to 23,500.³³ Mine closures forced workers to migrate to the cities, primarily Valparaíso and Santiago. The numbers of workers with their families arriving in Santiago in the winter of 1920 were staggering; they arrived at the offices of the Worker's Federation some days numbering well in to the hundreds.³⁴ During those same months, workers in Santiago found themselves without work as manufacturing industries temporarily closed shop due to a lack of coal.³⁵ Strikes soared, from 30 in 1918, to 66 in 1919, to 105 in 1920. Many of these were in Santiago, in the manufacturing industries (shoes and furniture, among others) that by this time were already employing more workers than the mines.³⁶

This growing urban working class, combined with the large influx of workers from the north, created a housing crisis in Santiago. In 1919 and 1920 the government resorted to the creation of *albergues*, temporary housing in tents, former warehouses and offices—such as those of the Antigua Empresa de Tranvías Urbanos—to house workers until they, and their families, could be transported to other parts of the country to

³¹ Subercaseaux, *Historia de las ideas y de la cultura en Chile*, 49. See also Julio Pinto V. and Verónica Valdívio O., *Revolución proletaria o querida chusma? Socialismo y Alessandrismo en la pugna por la politización pampina (1911-1932)* (Santiago: LOM, 2001), chap. 1.

³² See, for example, the numerous publications noted by Roberto Hernández Ponce and Jule Salazar González in their *De la policía secreta a la policía científica* (Santiago : Sección Impr. de la Policía de Investigaciones de Chile, 1994), 1: 101-02.

³³ Brian Loveman, *Chile: The Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 170.

³⁴ See for example Coronel-Prefecto al Intendente de la Provincia, July 17, 1920 (No. 1458), AN/IS v. 497 (July 1920).

³⁵ Coronel-Prefecto a Sr Intendente de la Provincia, July 15, 1920, AN/IS v. 497 (July 1920).

³⁶ Loveman, Chile, 171.

particular work sites.³⁷ In the meantime, business boomed for food providers who lobbied hard for lucrative contracts to provide food-stuffs to the camps, cutting corners to turn a healthy profit, while workers and students protested the exportation of cereals while the populace starved.³⁸

As well as *albergues*, many workers lived on a more permanent basis in the proliferating *conventillos* [tenement houses] that increasingly filled the Santiago landscape. In some parts of the city, entire city blocks were made up entirely of conventillos, their interiors often connected by a network of doors and passageways.³⁹ González Vera, who passed much of his adolescence in Santiago's conventillos, offered a vivid, unromanticized but nonetheless almost tender description:

The house has an almost bourgeois exterior. Its façade, which belongs to no particular style, is uneven and crude. The wall, painted like the sky, serves as a canvass for the neighborhood kids who have decorated it with ribald and scandalous phrases and images.

The middle door lets one see all the way to the patio. The corridor is nearly blocked by troughs, braziers, pots with leftovers and an array of decorative objects along walls blackened by the smoke.

In a corner of the patio is a stack of deteriorating furniture, lying there either through the negligence or foresight of its owners. On a table, imprisoned by pots and boxes, bushes of ivy, carnations and roses lift their multiform arms up in an irresistable impulse of ascension. The green tone of the plants emphasizes the bland and shapeless mass of everything else...⁴⁰

³⁷ "De Hace Medio Siglo," MSR, f. 14. The Asamblea Obrera de Alimentación Nacional played a role in advocating on behalf of these workers; many of the members of the AOAN were targeted during the round-ups in 1919. See AN/IS v. 496, unsigned report with the title "Asamblea Obrera de Alimentación Nacional," dated 7 October, 1919.

³⁸ Even those provisioning the troops were cutting corners: see "El aprovisionamiento de las tropas del norte," *Zig Zag*, 9 de octubre, 1920. For a detailed examination of Santiago's housing issues, see Rodrigo Hidalgo Dattwyler, *La vivienda social en Chile y la construcción del espacio urbano en el Santiago del siglo xx* (Santiago: Ediciones de la Dirección de Bibliotecas, Archivos y Museos, 2005).

³⁹ González Vera, *Cuando era muchacho*, 57.

⁴⁰ González Vera, "El Conventillo," in González Vera, *Vidas Mínimas* (Santiago: LOM, 1996 [1923]) For a bureaucratic perspective on conventillos see AN/IS, v. 476 (Comunicaciones, 1919), Consejo Superior de Habitaciones Obreras: Inspección. Cartilla de Recomendaciones higiénicas a los habitantes de los conventillos, undated.

Alongside conventillos could be found an array of boarding houses—particularly near the Bellavista neighborhood—that catered to university students recently arrived from the provinces. A significant percentage of students in the School of Medicine, for example, came from the provinces and lived in the boarding houses on Independencia, Olivos, Carrión, Maruri, and others next to the school of Medicine.⁴¹ Their social, not solely geographic, origins dictated where they stayed. While one might make the case that such students were part of a growing 'middle class,' they never lived—in terms of physical proximity nor financial precarity—far from the urban working class.⁴² Their interactions with Santiago's urban poor and working folk who had little access to adequate health care and treatment dramatically shaped their political perspectives.

Their politics and perspectives were influenced not only by where they stayed but also by their itineraries in the city. Students encountered and interacted with workers from various backgrounds and trades in the streets of their barrios and in various cafes and centers devoted to intellectual and political exchange. Around the conventillos, on Maruri, Recoleta and Independencia, could be found an array of homes and workshops of shoemakers, carpenters, typesetters, printers and shopkeepers who frequently formed the core of anarcho-syndicalist movements at the time.⁴³ Students and workers would meet at, say, the Centro de Estudios Sociales Francisco Ferrer, a working men's club named after Spain's well-known anarchist educational theorist who had been executed by the Spanish government in 1909; or at Los Inmortales, a café

⁴¹ Gabriel Salazar and Julio Pinto, *Historia contemporánea de Chile V: Niñez y juventud* (Santiago: LOM, 2002), 191; see also Subercaseaux, *Historia de la ideas y de la cultura en Chile*.

⁴² Jeff Gould's comments regarding student movements in 1968 resonate quite strongly here: "in Latin America, the term 'middle class' was geographically and sociologically elastic, including children of low-level government employees, white-collar workers, and shopkeepers, not far removed from the urban working class." Gould, "Solidarity Under Siege," 350. Thus, the notion, at times articulated quite forcefully, that middle class students were 'privileged' is misleading and ahistorical, most likely conditioned less by a careful reading of the evidence than by a late-twentieth-century cynicism that sees students as political dilettantes and socially inauthentic. Regardless, in its negation of the very real efforts made, often successfully, to forge links between various social sectors in Santiago, such an interpretation makes for glum history.

⁴³ Salazar and Pinto, *Historia contemporanea de Chile V*, 191; González Vera, *Cuando era muchacho*, 58.

on Avenida Matta; or at the Casa del Pueblo where self-defined anarchist workers would give poetry readings.⁴⁴ In such centers, students and workers often sat side by side, reading and discussing a variety of works that helped them make sense of their experiences and of the profound changes sweeping the globe: the Great War and the revolutions in Mexico and, especially, Russia.

The Great War, for example, transformed how one looked at Europe, long seen as the apogee of modernity. European civilization had now revealed its own barbarities and irrationalities: trench warfare, mustard gas, repeating machine guns, and the seemingly senseless slaughter of a generation of young men. European intellectuals themselves exposed their continent's internal contradictions. Oswald Spengler, who predicted the decline and eventual collapse of Western (i.e., European) civilization, appeared ironically as a kind of revolutionary voice.⁴⁵ If indeed history was cyclical and all civilizations were destined to fall, then why imitate or look to Europe? Latin America could one day lead, rather than follow, its societies and cultures transformed by a new generation of students and intellectuals.⁴⁶

If anyone reaffirmed the decadent society thesis of the universitarios, it was Spengler. Also popular was Henri Barbusse, French war veteran and writer whose novel *Under Fire* was banned in France for its pacifism and exposé of the horrors of the front. He helped found *Clarté*, an internationalist and pacifist movement calling for intellectual engagement in the political issues of the time, and whose early members included Anatole France, Thomas Hardy, Upton Sinclair, and secretaries of

⁴⁴ On the Centro de Estudios Francisco Ferrer and the Casa del Pueblo, see Moraga Valle and Vega Delgado, *José Domingo Gómez Rojas*, 18-19 and González Vera, *Cuando era muchacho*; on Los Inmortales see Delano, *El año 20*; Daniel de la Vega, *Ayer y hoy: antología de escritos* (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1997), 77; and Luis Vitale, "Contribución a una historia del anarquismo en América Latina," available electronically from the Centro Estudios 'Miguel Enríquez' at http://www.archivochile.com Last accessed March 2010.

⁴⁵ Spengler's influence on students in many parts of Latin America is still to be explored, something noted some forty years ago by Jean Franco in *The Modern Culture of Latin America* (New York: Praeger, 1967), 69-70.

⁴⁶ Jaime Suchlicki has noted, for example, that in parts of the continent the university reform movement increasingly sought to create "an institution capable of transforming and directing a Latin American culture." Suchlicki, "Sources of Student Violence in Latin America: An Analysis of the Literature," *Latin American Research Review* 7:3 (Fall, 1972), 31-46. The cited passage appearson pp. 35-6.

some of Britain's major unions.⁴⁷ Clarté would become in parts of Latin America *Claridad*, the most important pan-Latin American movement of the first half of the twentieth century. A Claridad movement and journal existed in Argentina (1926-1941), in Chile (1920-1927), and in Peru (1923-1927), where it was directed by José Carlos Mariateguí -future founder of the Peruvian Communist Party-who had met Barbusse while in exile in Paris in 1919).⁴⁸ In Chile members of the FECh would create a *Claridad* journal as a direct response to the events of the winter of 1920. Students from Chile sustained extensive correspondence with their peers in Argentina and Peru. As diverse a group as Chile's future Nobel Prize winning poet Gabriela Mistral, Mexico's first post-revolutionary Minister of Education José Vasconcelos, and U.S. socialist Eugene V. Debs sat on the Board of Directors for the Chilean Claridad. Students read Tolstoy, Unamuno, and Ortega y Gasset-acquired through the FECh's substantial library or from one of the many bookshops that lined Ahumada street near the FECh's club-all of whom shaped their understandings of the realm of possibilities in their own societies and whose works they adapted to their own particular contexts.49

With dramatic transformations in communication and publishing technologies, with the mass circulation of dailies, the mass publication and

⁴⁷ On the movement's membership see Max Eastman, "The Clarté Movement," *The Liberator* 3: 4 (April 1920), 40-42 [accessed March 1, 2010 at <u>http://www.marxists.org/archive/eastman/1920/clarte.htm</u>]. Barbusse has not received the historical attention he deserves. He was an intellectual of significant importance, within and outside of France, in the 1920s. His works were translated in to English and Spanish, and his call for intellectuals to be politically engaged resonated widely. Barbusse's *Le Feu* was immediately translated in to English as *Under Fire: The Story of a Squad* in 1917 (New York: EP Dutton & Co., 1917), as was his later work *Clarté*, published as *Light* (New York: EP Dutton & Co., 1919). *Light* went through five printings in only three months. *Under Fire* has recently been republished as part of the Penguin Classics series with an introduction by Jay Winter. *Under Fire*, trans. by Robin Buss (London: Penguin Books, 2003). For a useful biography of Barbusse, see José Mancisador, *Henri Barbusse: Ingeniero de almas* (Mexico: Ediciones Botas, 1945).

⁴⁸ On Barbusse and Mariátegui, see Peter J. Gold, "The Influence of Henri Barbusse in Bolivia," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 2: 2 (May, 1983), 117-122. On the Claridad generally, see Florencia Ferreira de Cassone, *Claridad y el internacionalismo Americano* (Buenos Aires, 1998) and, for Chile, Santiago Aránguiz Pinto, "Renovarse o morir? La Federación de Estudiantes de Chile y la Revista Claridad," Tesis de Licenciatura, Universidad Finis Terrae (Santiago, 2002), and Moraga Valle, *Muchachos casi silvestres.*'

⁴⁹ *Guía Ĝeneral de Santiago de Chile, 1918* (Santiago: Imprenta Siglo XX, 1918 [2nd edition]), 93

serialization of international works of literature, social criticism, and works of political theory, students and workers lived in a world that could truly, potentially, facilitate their internationalist aims.⁵⁰ While students in Peru writing for their own *Claridad* journal—showed significant interest in the Mexican Revolution and its aftermath, their Chilean counterparts privileged the Russian revolution and Russian literature.⁵¹ Dosteyevski, Gorky, Checkhov, Turgenev, and Andreyev all appeared in translation in the pages of the Chilean *Claridad*, where Pablo Neruda would eventually write occasionally under the pen-name Sachka Yegulev, the eponymous young nihilist in a Leonid Andreyev story.⁵² But if one set of authors predominated among the intellectuals and workers associated with the FECh, it was the anarchists: Kropotkin, Bakunin, Malatesta, Stirner and Tolstoy.

III

Anarchism then, as now, eluded precise definition. For one, the line between state socialist and revolutionary socialist (anarchist) was relatively fluid. Socialists and anarchists attended each other's rallies, and at times meetings; they met, mingled and discussed ideas regularly at workers' centers, union halls or the FECh's club; and they were at their root united by their opposition to the bourgeoisie and wage labor system rather than divided by particular philosophical specificities.⁵³ While it was not unusual for adherents to specify their particular leanings with bold

⁵⁰ On mass culture in Chile see Stefan Rinke, *Cultura de masas: reforma y nacionalismo en Chile 1910-1931* (Santiago: Ediciones de la Dirección de Bibliotecas), 2002. For an overview of transformations in cities, see José Luis Romero, *Latinoamérica: Las ciudades y las ideas* (Medellín: Editorial Universidad de Antioquía, 1999 [1976]), esp. chap. 6.

⁵¹ See the Peruvian run of *Claridad*, which makes this quite apparent, as well as Juan Manuel Gamarra Romero, *La Reforma Universitaria: El movimiento estudiantil de los años veinte en el Perú* (Lima: Okura, 1987), esp. 130-31.

⁵² Roberto Meza Fuentes, *Los trágicos días de Más Afuera* (Santiago: LOM, 2006), 6. Meza Fuentes's recollections come from an interview with Alfonso Calderón, reproduced in *Los trágicos días* but originally published in Calderón, *Según pasan los años: entrevistas, retratos, recuerdos* (Santiago: Editorial Andrés Bello, 1990), 37-40.

⁵³ Enrique Delano's semi-fictionalized, historical novel *El año 20* provides excellent insight. See esp. p. 22. James Green found a similar capaciousness among the left in Chicago in the late nineteenth century. See Green, *Death in the Haymarket*, 50.

pronouncements—"I am an anarchist in the vein of Reclus!"—such comments speak more to the wide varieties of anarchist thought that circulated than to some kind of sectarian divide.⁵⁴ Indeed, the variations of thought borne on an anarchist current were substantial enough that we might be better off, as Alberto Harambour has argued, of thinking of anarchism*s* (in the plural) rather than anarchism (in the singular).⁵⁵ This is not to suggest that anarchism lacked coherence: its inclusivity and defiance of classification is theoretically consistent with a philosophy determined to depose, among other things, the reign of hierarchy.

But for many in Chile at the time 'anarchism' evoked little more than images of foreign revolutionaries and bomb throwers [Fig 1]. Indeed, while simplifications of anarchism abound perhaps no image has held sway as strongly as the image of anarchism as a murky underworld of conspiratorial bomb throwers, held together less by bonds of solidarity than by a commitment to violence. To critique such an image is not to deny the realities out of which it at times could arise: from the Russian conspirators of the 1870s to Alexander Berkman's attempt on the life of Henry Clay Frick to the bungled plot that inspired Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, the *attentat* was real enough particularly in the last two

⁵⁴ This is Pablo Ramírez to José Santos González Vera in González Vera, *Cuando era muchacho*, 117.

⁵⁵ Alberto Harambour Ross, "'Jesto y palabra, idea y acción': La historia de Efraín Plaza Olmedo," in Marcos Fernández et. al., Arriba quemando el sol: Estudios de Historia Social Chilena: Experiencias populares de trabajo, revuelta y autonomía (1830-1940) (Santiago: LOM, 2004), 137-194 (esp. 189-90) and, for slightly different perspective, Sergio Grez Toso, Los anarquistas y el movimiento obrero: La alborada de 'la idea' en Chile, 1893-1915 (Santiago: LOM, 2007), esp. the introduction. A very good overview of Chilean anarchism can be found in Felipe del Solar and Andrés Pérez, Anarquistas: Presencia libertarian en Chile (Santiago: RIL editors, 2008). More broadly for Latin America, see Kirwin Shaffer, Anarchsim and Countercultural Politics in Early Twentieth-Century Cuba (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005); Andrew Grant Wood, Revolution in the Street: Women, Workers, and Urban Protest in Veracruz, 1870-1927 (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 2001); Bayer, Los anarquistas expropiadores; José Moya, "Italians in Buenos Aires's Anarchist Movement Gender Ideology and Women's Participation," in Donna R. Gabaccia and Franca Iacovetta, eds., Women, Gender and Transnational Lives: Italian Workers of the World. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), and Vitale, "Contribución a una historia del anarquismo." I have also found useful David Graeber, Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology (Chicago: Prickly Pear Press, 2003).

decades of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth.⁵⁶ Chile was hardly immune: in 1912 a young man—who purportedly described himself as an anarchist—assassinated two "bourgeois" as revenge for the massacre of workers in Iquique and the "catastrophe in the El Teniente mine."⁵⁷ Even so, such "greatest hits," to use James Gelvin's nice turn-of-phrase, account for only a small portion of anarchist



Fig. 1: This image appeared on the cover of the magazine *Sucesos*, on January 23, 1919, one month after the passage of the Ley de Residencia. The caption reads: "La Despedida: Don Juan Luis—Lárguese de acá con viento fresco y que no se le ocurra nunca volver por estos lados. Tenga presente que el chileno no aguanta planes, y se va de hacha a las barbas." In MSR f. 14. Photograph by the author. Courtesy of the IISH.

⁵⁶ On the era and the *attentat*, see the varied perspectives provided in Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (London: Verso, 2007); Alexander Berkman, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* (New York: New York Review of Books Classics, 1999 [1912]); John Merriman, *The Dynamite Club: How a Bombing in Fin-de-Siecle Paris Ignited the Age of Modern Terror* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009); and Alex Butterworth, *The World That Never Was: A True Story of Dreamers, Schemers, Anarchists and Secret Agents* (New York: Pantheon, 2010).

⁵⁷ This according to the judicial report, cited from Harambour Ross, "Jesto y palabra, idea y acción," 137. The designation 'anarchist' is made by the interrogator.

activity.⁵⁸ Indeed, it is not at all clear that one can even assume anarchist responsibility for many of the similar deeds that proliferated around the world. Murry Bookchin, for example, has persuasively shown that in the case of fin-de-siècle Spain such deeds were often carried out by individuals with little organized commitment to or participation in anarchist movements, individuals who were "less often libertarian socialists or communists than desperate men and women who used weapons and explosives to protest the injustices and philistinism of their time, putatively in the name of 'propaganda of the deed.'"⁵⁹ Because anarchism has been so quickly equated with acts of terror, any individual act not otherwise explained has become ipso facto an anarchist act, as if the act itself was all that could be said about the theory. It is to replicate the language of the police.

The point is not to dismiss or soft-pedal the actions and histories of such individuals: to do so would be, in the words of Beverly Gage, to rob "at least a few revolutionaries of their militancy—of the idea that when they spoke of dynamite and armed resistance, they sometimes meant what they said."⁶⁰ Undoubtedly... and understandably. The violence of the systems against which anarchists fought was immediate and intrinsic. Fom the quotidian crunch of the truncheon to the crackle of gunfire that punctuated recurrent massacres, state- and company-directed violence against working people was as pervasive as the structural violence of deprivation and hunger. The working people and anarchists who populate the pages of Manuel Rojas's semi-autobiographical novels—situated in the 1910s and 1920s—battle many things including the police, overseers, exploitation, and

⁵⁸ Gelvin, "Al-Qaeda and Anarchism: A Historian's Reply to Terrorology," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20: 4 (2008), 563-581, see esp. 566.

⁵⁹ Bookchin, *The Spanish Anarchists The Heroic Years, 1868-1936* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2001), esp. "Saints and Sinners". The point is also made eloquently by Osvaldo Bayer in his *Los anarquistas expropiadores* (Barcelona: Virus, 2003). The quoted passage is from Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism?* (San Francisco: AK Press, 1995), 8.

⁶⁰ Gage, *The Day Wall Street Exploded: A Story of America in its First Age of Terror* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7. Importantly Gage's book shows that the Wall Street bombing of 1920 cannot be presumed to be the actions of anarchists—responsibility was never firmly established.

a complicit government, but the violence they all confront daily and that permeates his work is that of sheer hunger, born of an unjust system.⁶¹

Despite all of this, in many instances anarchists were hesitant regarding, and wrestled intensely with, the use of violence. The conflation of 'anarchism' and 'terrorism,' and the assertion that violence for the sake of violence is a fundamental aspect of anarchism, unfortunately not only mirrors the language of anarchism's antagonists, it also ignores the substantial opposition to such violence voiced by multitudes of anarchist organizers and thinkers and robs militants of what was frequently a reasoned (and frankly restrained) response to the pervasive institutional and personal violence that surrounded them. Reclus and Kropotkin were deeply ambivalent regarding propaganda by the deed. Malatesta spoke consistently and vociferously against the use of violence except as a defensive reaction. In Chile, González Vera expressed similar sentiments: "The anarchist only trusts in his power of conviction... [he] repudiates force and detests domination."62 Self-described anarchists sought myriad ways to agitate and organize, often preferring the 'word' to the 'deed.' Cultural centers, literacy programs, printing presses, theatre performances and public discourses in key parts of Santiago were standard tools for organizing and for social transformation.63 When Gandulfo's friend and IWW leader Armando Triviño wrote of 'bombs' he referred to incendiary

⁶¹ See for example the opening sequence of *La oscura vida radiante* (Santiago: Zig-Zag, 1996 [3rd edition] [1971]) but also the pervasiveness of hunger in *Hijo de Ladrón* (Madrid: Catedra, 2001 [1951]) and his classic short story "El vaso de leche," in Rojas, *Antología autobiográfica* (Santiago: LOM, 1995 [2nd edition]), 47-53. For an astute discussion of anarchism (and hunger) in Rojas's work, see Dario Cortés, *La narrativa anarquista de Manuel Rojas* (Madrid: Pliegos, 1986). More generally, see Slavoj Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes* (London: Verso, 2008), esp. chapter 4.

⁶² González Vera, *Cuando era muchacho*, 221. Similar sentiments were reiterated in IWW publications based in the U.S. See Melvin Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the IWW, the Industrial Workers of the World* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1969), 160-164. I have also found useful the writings of Marcelo Segall, one of Chile's distinguished historians and a founding member of Chile's Trotskyite MIR. Segall, in an unfinished manuscript on 'social anarchism,' had begun to expand on how flawed was the equation of anarchism and terrorism. Marcelo Segall, "El romanticismo social en Latinoamérica en Acción y Biografía social del anarquismo latinamericano (Anarquismo Intelectual y Anarcosindicalismo)," typescript, MSR, f. 268.

⁶³ For a very good sense of this, see Pereira Poza, *Antología crítica*, as well as González Vera, *Cuando era muchacho*, passim, and Rojas, *La oscura vida radiante*.

devices made of 'paper and ink' rather than nitroglycerine and gunpowder.⁶⁴ His ideological comrades on the other side of the Andes shared similar sentiments, raising money and taxing bosses in order not to purchase fuses to light but a printing press to crank.⁶⁵

Even when anarchist militants engaged in more direct forms of action, it was not necessarily a violence directed against persons, as the pointed comments of a number of Chilean IWW anarchosyndicalists, during their 1922 congress, regarding the meanings of 'direct action,' reveal:

More than in any other way, it is with respect to its methods that the IWW perhaps has been least understood. Our methods are based on direct action. Direct action is simply the opposite of indirect action, which faithfully characterizes the action of official Unions. We understand direct action to mean the following: that workers act on their own behalf, rather than limiting themselves to paying a monthly sum of money to certain leaders or caudillos [bosses], or professional bosses, so that these can do and undo as they wish, without being accountable, in the majority of cases, to the will of the masses. This is what we call indirect action, or action carried out through representatives. Direct action, then, is the method of action adopted spontaneously by the masses in common agreement. The term has been misinterpreted intentionally by our enemies who make it refer to assassination, arson and all that is understood as violence and destruction.⁶⁶

Direct action referred to boycotts, forms of sabotage, the general strike, and 'labeling,' primarily for the purposes of autonomy, mutual aid, and fomenting worker control.⁶⁷ Certainly many forms of direct action were illegal: how could they not be? "As if the law had ever permitted a subject

⁶⁴ A. Treviño, Arengas (Santiago: Editorial Lux, c. 1923)

⁶⁵ One of the early scenes in the 1974 film *La Patagonia Rebelde*, based on Bayer's multi-volume *Los Vengadores de la Patagonia Trágica* (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 1972-84) captures this well with the money expropriated from a local hotel and restaurant owner employing scabs used to purchase a printing press.

⁶⁶ Los trabajadores industriales del mundo de la región chilena y el Congreso de Berlin, meeting notes dated November 21, 1922. International Institute for Social History, Diego Abad de Santillán Collection [DAS], carpeta 377, f. 'Chile'.

⁶⁷ 'Tercera convención rejional de los I.W.W. celebrada los días 1-16-17-18 [sic] de Marzo de 1924, Santiago, Chile,' DAS, carpeta 367. 'Labeling,' as explained to the membership by Juan Leighton in 1924, referred to a tactic used in the United States in which producer unions would label or mark a product they recommended based on the fact that the workers who produced that product were not in conflict with the owners and/or management. See "Tercera convención."

class to shake off its yoke," wrote Rudolph Rocker.⁶⁸ But unlawful is a far cry from 'terrorism' and planting bombs. The fact of the matter is that in early twentieth-century Chile, as the editors of *La Opinión* noted in 1917, one was much more likely to find the police planting the dynamite, in order to frame suspected anarchists.⁶⁹

IV

The law did not necessarily await the 'discovery' of incendiary devices. Confronted with the workings of civil society, and alliances and coalitions between formerly discrete social categories (workers and students), the government pursued a strategy of harsh repression. In conjunction with the second sacking of the student club on July 21, came an institutional response: the appointment of Minister of Court of Appeals José Astorquiza as special investigator—not to prosecute the individuals responsible for the assaults but rather to oversee an investigation into 'subversives' in Santiago.⁷⁰ Within two days of his appointment, Astorquiza had mobilized the police and the Security Section: thus began the process euphemized as the 'prosecution of subversives.'

Astorquiza immediately pursued an agenda that included the prosecution of individuals perceived to be distributing subversive propaganda and the issuance of expulsion orders of foreigners decreed dangerous to public order. He directed his attentions toward the specters of anarchism, including not only the FECh but also the anarcho-syndicalism associated with the IWW.⁷¹ Yet while Astorquiza's primary targets were

⁶⁸ Rocker, Anarcho-Syndicalism (London: Pluto Press, 1989 [1938]), 116.

⁶⁹ See Carlos Maldonado Prieto, "Militarización de la policía: Una tendencia histórica chilena," 4-5 [<u>http://www.memoriachilena.cl/archivos2/</u><u>pdfs/MC0018154.pdf</u>] [last accessed August 30, 2010]; and DeShazo, *Urban Workers and Labor Unions*, 143 and 180. Rather than bombs, if there is a pervasive image associated with anarchism it is prison. The propagators of a philosophy dedicated to liberty are denied it most intensely. For a valuable discussion see Rodolfo Montes de Oca, *Anarquismo y cárceles: Píxeles para entender la critica antiautoritaria y abolicionista a las Prisiones* (Medellín: CorazónDeFuego, s/f). Available at:

http://corazondefuegorecs.files.wordpress.com/2010/05/anarquismo-ycarceles_web.pdf [last accessed August 30, 2010].

⁷⁰ "Combatiendo el anarquismo," *El Mercurio*, July 22, 1920, p. 20

⁷¹ The assault on anarchism in Chile at the time was not unique. Similar repressions occurred in the U.S., with the activities of Mitchell Palmer and his young sidekick J. Edgar Hoover, and in Argentina. See Dubovsky, *We Shall be All*;

known anarchists or individuals affiliated with the IWW, in many cases based upon a secret police report provided him by an infiltrator, he cast his net wide.⁷² On July 25, 26, and 27, large numbers of individuals-mostly workers-were rounded up with little reason other than being in the streets during demonstrations protesting the assault on the FECh, the Chilean Workers Federation, and the Númen press. Many of those picked up in the police sweeps noted that they were picked up for no other reason than for distributing pamphlets calling for a general strike to protest the assault on the offices of the FECh and of Numen [Fig. 2].73 They were held on charges of either sedition or 'illicit association,' an accusation buttressed-as Astorquiza's interrogations of university students. seamstresses. shoemakers, printers, and others, made clear-by any whiff of association



Fig. 2: Pamphlet calling for a general strike to protest the violence against the FECh, the Chilean Workers Federation, the printing press *Numen* and the arrests of workers and students. July 25, 1920. Sección de Seguridad to 3er. juzgado de Santiago, July 25, 1920, in AN/JS, Criminal (3er Juzgado del Crimen, 1920), caja R21. Courtesy of the Archivo Nacional de Chile.

for the case of Argentina, see Bayer, *Los Vengadores de la Patagonia Trágica* and *Los anarquistas expropiadores* (Barcelona: Virus, 2003).

⁷² "El Ministro Sr. Astorquiza inicia varios procesos," *El Mercurio*, July 23, 1920, p. 18; Ministerio del Interior, 1a. sección, núm. 2,838 (July 23, 1920), in AN/IS, v. 497 (July 1920).

⁷³ Florencio Rozas, Eliodoro Ulloa, y Carlos Salgado al Señor Ministro Visitador, no date but between 1-5 August, 1920 [f. 49-51], AN/Judicial de Santiago [JS], Criminal (3er Juzgado del Crimen, 1920) Caja R21: Unlabeled expediente.

with anarchism or the IWW.⁷⁴ When individuals were picked up, they were brought initially to the Santiago Security Section and jail where they were processed, interrogated, and held without bail or access to an attorney. Astorquiza would soon after order the Security Section to begin their own investigations—interviewing neighbors and employers, finding witnesses to supposedly subversive activities, and searching individuals' places of residence for evidence of illicit association (such as the certificate shown here and issued to José Rojas).⁷⁵ [Fig. 3].



Fig. 3: IWW certificate issued to José Rojas, 15 July, 1920 and gathered as evidence against Rojas by the police. AN/JS. Courtesy of the Archivo Nacional de Chile.

The degree to which the government actually felt threatened by anarchists or wobblies can be debated but it seems clear—not surprisingly that the categories were used strategically as a means to suppress labor agitation, sow fear among Alessandri's supporters, deport outspoken allies

⁷⁴ The interrogations of most individuals held under charges of sedition have yet to be found in the archives. However, we can draw a good sense of the procedures and interrogations from files of individuals initially held for sedition but then charged only with public disturbance: their files were forwarded to a different jurisdiction and at least some are available in collections at the Archivo Nacional.

⁷⁵ See for example, Florencio Rozas al Senor Ministro, July 27, 1920, in Unlabeled expediente on FECh and workers (f. 28-29), AN/JS, Criminal (3er Juzgado del Crimen, 1920), Caja R21: exp. María Astorga Navarro, desordenes públicos, July 28, 1920, AN/JS, Criminal (2o. juzgado del crimen), Varios Exp., 1914/1920; Florencio Rozas, Eliodoro Ulloa, y Carlos Salgado al Señor Ministro Visitador, no date but between 1-5 August, 1920 [f. 49-51], AN/JS, Criminal (3er Juzgado del Crimen, 1920) Caja R21: Unlabeled expediente.

of labor, and break student-worker alliances. Sanfuentes's regime turned to the Residency Law—a decree for the expulsion of 'foreign agitators' primarily when the Asamblea Obrera de Alimentación Nacional seemed to be making popular advances in late 1918.⁷⁶ In 1920, according to Vicuña Fuentes, attorney for the persecuted students and a scholar removed from his post by the government, no one seemed much concerned with persecuting the IWW until its membership put its support behind the candidacy of Alessandri.⁷⁷ The point can be made bluntly: the government brought its repressive apparatus to bear on labor and its allies who were members of legal organizations (the FECh, the FOCh, and even initially the IWW). It was only in the midst of increasing demands for social and political change that such organizations were declared either defunct or illegal. In the wake of the assault on the FECh's club, workers' movements were violently suppressed; the IWW became the internal enemy of the state; and students found themselves either in cells or on the run.

González Vera ended up in Temuco where he met a young correspondent for *Claridad* and blossoming poet named Neftalí de los Reyes, soon to be known as Pablo Neruda. Roberto Salinas and Jorge Rosemblatt, accused of making subversive and anti-patriotic statements on July 26th from the balcony of the FECh, soon fled Santiago. Salinas, a thirty-five year old painter, apparently publicly rebuked the police for participating in the assault of the offices of the FECh and, according to police report, made antipatriotic statements, suggesting that "true patriotism does not consist of love for the homeland [patrio suelo] but toward all of humanity which knows no borders."⁷⁸ Rosemblatt, a student in the school of Medicine, in a letter to his mother that she subsequently turned over to the Security Section, revealed that he had fled to Valparaiso.⁷⁹ While he denied any involvement in "political issues," he

⁷⁶ DeShazo, Urban Workers and Labor Unions, 257.

⁷⁷ Vicuña Fuentes, *La tirania*, 112-13.

⁷⁸ Police report of July 26, 1920, AN/JS, Criminal (3er juzgado del Crimen, 1920), caja R13, exp. Jorge Rosemblatt y Roberto Salinas, por Sedición, July 27, 1920, f. 1r-v; Salinas provides his age and occupation f. 34

⁷⁹ The letter to his mother is dated August 3, 1920 and is included in AN/JS, Criminal (3er juzgado del Crimen, 1920), caja R13, exp. Jorge Rosemblatt y Roberto Salinas, por Sedición, July 27, 1920, f. 8r-v; that his mother provided the

refused to turn himself in until early November. Salinas meanwhile was detained in early August and held for sedition.⁸⁰ Others went in to hiding. Santiago Labarca, no longer a student but still active with the FECh, quickly became one of Chile's 'most wanted' individuals. Others were not as fortunate.

The police picked up and detained Evaristo Lagos and Adolfo Hernández, both students. Swept up in this assault too was José Domingo Gómez Rojas. Born in 1896 to a working class family in Santiago, Gómez Rojas had published his first (and only) book of poetry, Rebeldías líricas, at age 17. Increasingly radicalized by the social inequalities around him, he joined up with the staff of La Batalla-one of the main publications of resistance organizations at the time. Eventually he enrolled in the University of Chile's Law School and attended courses at its Pedagogical Institute. A regular at Los Inmortales and the Centro de Francisco Ferrer, he also frequented the offices of the FECh. Like Hernández and Lagos, Gómez Rojas name appeared on a secret police report identifying the presumed leadership of the Santiago and Valparaiso IWW (Lagos appeared as the accountant; Hernández as the treasurer; and Gómez Rojas as the secretary).⁸¹ This made him someone of particular interest to Astorquiza, to whom he was soon brought for interrogation and then imprisoned. Over the course of the weeks during which Gómez Rojas's body and mind deteriorated, subjected to an array of abuses, Hernández and Lagos also suffered: they survived but both were declared mentally incapacitated.⁸²

Such repression represented a shift in the focus of state tactics. It was workers, the anonymous laboring mass, who typically experienced such repressive tactics, not students. Gabriel Salazar and Julio Pinto note that "[w]hen strictly a student-led and carnivalesque phenomenon,

police with the letter is noted in Sub-prefecto jefe al Señor Ministro en Visita, August 5, 1920, f. 9r in the same expediente.

⁸⁰ AN/JS, Criminal (3er juzgado del Crimen, 1920), caja R13, exp. Jorge Rosemblatt y Roberto Salinas, por Sedición, July 27, 1920, 19r.

⁸¹ Sub-Prefecto Jefe to 20. Juzgado del Crímen, July 21, 1920, AN/IS, v. 497 (July 1920). A number of contemporaries have argued that Gómez Rojas had never been a member, let alone Secretary, of the Chilean IWW. See Vicuña Fuentes, *La tirania*, 115-17 and Zuñiga, "La difícil generación del 20."

^{82 &}quot;Hasta cuando?" Claridad 1: 3 (October 26, 1920), 3.

youthful rebellion confronted police tactics of simple 'street dispersion.'"83 But once it was perceived to breach the bounds of its categorical containment-once students and former students stood side by side with shoemakers, printers, and painters, on the balcony of the FECh, critiquing Sanfuentes and the drums of war against Peru; once they joined workers in the streets demonstrating in support of presidential candidate Alessandri; once it became known that they attended workers' meetings and most often received a warm reception; once workers took to the streets to defend the FECh in the aftermath of the assault—the government responded intensely: a formal cancellation of the FECh's corporate status was accompanied by a campaign of intimidation, imprisonment, exile, torture, and murder.84 I should be clear: the tactics did not change-after all, workers had confronted such brutal tactics for decades; what changed was the categorization, the understanding, of who would be subjected to such tactics and the regime's willingness to act on that understanding through a broader campaign of 'civic terror.'85 Now not just workers but studentsand former students who now worked as lawyers, doctors, writers, and poets-would be targeted, detained, tortured and exiled under a single, capacious category: subversive.

Coda

In March, 1921—six months after the death of Gómez Rojas and two months after the release of many who had been held during the *proceso* an aspiring poet arrived at the University of Chile. Only seventeen at the time, he found a room in a boarding house on calle Maruri, near the school of Medicine, and soon began the poems that would become the basis for his first published collection—*Crepusculario* (1923)—dedicated to Juan Gandulfo. He also wrote a variety of literary and political pieces for *Claridad*, including a front-page editorial, accompanied by an image of a

⁸³ Salazar and Pinto, *Historia contemporanea de Chile V*, 194-195.

⁸⁴ On the cancellation of the FECh's corporate status, see ARNAD/MJ, v. 3036 (Decretos), No. 1457, July 24, 1920. By the 27th there was discussion of revoking the FOCh's corporate status also. See Intendente Subercaseaux al Ministro de Interior, July 27, 1920, in AN, Fondo Colecciones y Archivos Particulares, Juan Luis San Fuentes, vol. 25, fs 206-207.

⁸⁵ "Civic terror" comes from Salazar and Pinto, *Historia contemporanea de Chile V,* 194-195.

man and woman, clearly workers, seeking shelter from the economic storms, oppressive oligarchs, and cold of a Santiago June.[Fig. 4] In this editorial, the author is struck mute by the image, at which point the male figure comes to life and speaks:

'Friend, brother, why do you remain silent?... You who have the gift of illuminating words with your fire inside; must you sing and sing of your little pleasures and forget our forsaken hearts, the harsh wound that is our lives, the terror of the cold, the assault of hunger... If you don't speak up, if you don't speak up at every moment of every hour then the land will be filled with lying voices who will only further the evil and silence the protest'.... The man stops speaking. His compañera looks at me. And I begin to write.⁸⁶



Fig. 4: "El Cartel de Hoy," by P.N., Claridad (June 17, 1922).

Exceptional for his eloquence, Pablo Neruda was hardly unique in his commitment to recognizing the responsibility that students and intellectuals—increasingly radicalized by a world of intolerable social

⁸⁶ *Claridad,* June 17, 1922. The editorial is signed P.N. That Neruda was the author is confirmed in Hernán Loyola, ed., *Pablo Neruda: Obras Completas* (5 vols.) (Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg y Círculo de Lectores, 2001), 4: 263-4.

realities, revolutionary possibilities, and international intellectual movements on the left—had to their societies and to rectifying the profound inequalities that characterized them.

Yet because they arguably occupied a marginal position of privilege, students like Gómez Rojas, Gandulfo, Meza Fuentes and their less wellknown comrades were at times dismissed as little more than, in one professor's words, "petulant" youths, or spoiled dilettantes, or naïve victims of a youthful idealism out of which they would soon grow.⁸⁷ Certainly students had options: the fierce repression they experienced in 1920 led many to moderate their politics and pursue professional pursuits within the "establishment."⁸⁸ But others did not. In the wake of the "proceso de los subversivos" and the death of Gómez Rojas, many students and former students in the FECh continued to work with the IWW, organize in the barrios of Santiago and Valparaiso, create public forums for critique and opposition, and agitate politically. The seeds of an expanding oppositional culture had been sown. University students lived in transient states of being but their ideas and experiences were hardly ephemeral. Ideas carried forward; students rarely shed themselves of their accumulated experiences upon graduation. Nor did they let lapse the relationships they forged in the FECh: workers, intellectuals, and former students continued to find an intellectual and political home, and a space of association, in its club. The legacies are myriad around the continent: in the autonomy characteristic of many public universities; in the understandings of the political nature of intellectual work; in the forms of alliance and association that refuse classification; and in the recognition of one's obligation to speak up.

⁸⁷ The professor was Guillermo Subercaseaux, as quoted in Barr-Melej, *Reforming Chile*, 184; for another example, see the comments of Oscar Chanks, in "Un diputado obrero," undated clipping in MSR, f. 16, (1921).

⁸⁸ Gabriel Salazar Vergara, *Del poder constituyente de asalariados e intelectuales: Chile, siglo XX y XXI* (Santiago: LOM, 2009), 71.

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