



Canto for the miners of Bolivia

Manuel Scorza

1952

You have to live absent from yourself, you have to grow old in the middle of your childhood, you have to cry on your knees in front of a corpse in order to understand which night populated the heart of the miners.

I didn't know the melancholic height of the water until one afternoon, during autumn, I climbed El Alto, in La Paz, and I contemplated the miners ascending to the future through the stairs of their dazzling bullets. How can we forget the missing fighting, by heart, in the suburbs!

I looked at their houses built over the thunder, I went inside their lives like the ablaze coal, I touched their bodies only able to hold hate and lightning bolts, when it was still the inclined age of their foreheads.

I went to Bolivia in the autumn of the time I asked for Happiness. Nobody answered. I asked for Joy. Nobody answered. I asked for Love. A bird fell on my chest with its wings on fire. Everything burned in the silence. In the mountain sickness even silence is made out of snow.

I understood that tin was a long petrified tear over the frightened face of Bolivia. Humans were worth nothing! Nobody cared if under their shirt there was a body, a tunnel, or death!

In vain the miners digged trying to bury their great fatigue; during centuries their blind eyes searched in the metal, without knowing that at that height crying was mist. I am ashamed of not having known it! Because in the cities the poets cry the nostalgic absence of air, but they don't know what living under the rain is, mistaking hunger for thirst, and thirst with a painted bird.

I was one of them. I didn't know why the rivers dried up in the dream and certain faces in the Andes are pure melancholic gazes. Until the miners, tired of having only one life for so many deaths, tamed thunders, fed on rocks, drank the rains, broke with their hands the cage of life.

In La Paz. It was autumn. Remember it. It was autumn. Watch over the dead ones - remember them.

The spilled blood -it was autumn- in the secret ear of the earth -on autumn- and through its silence -it was autumn- deciphers the root of the future language of the flowers- -on autumn- and the air feels how its body -it was autumn- ends in green bell toll. Remember it.

You already see it from the height. Here starts the successor dynasty of the dew I go to my broken homeland. But before leaving, tell me, miners: When will I see this light on America's eyes? Until when the bloody tunic of my country will be playing dice? Oh siblings, true nightingales true of the metal, lend me your death in order to build life!

México, April, 1952.