night was filled with hope and tragedy, with images of legendary heroes, with the memory of those who struggled shrewdly and powerfully against their tormenters. They were not yet beaten. Any day now, the revolution would begin again.

3. The Poetry of Anti-Imperialism ~ Pablo Neruda*

Artists of all kinds gave expression to nationalist sentiments in the middle years of the twentieth century. One of Latin America's most celebrated poets, Chile's Pablo Neruda, voiced the anti-imperialism of the period in a number of his poems. The two featured here are taken from his book-length Canto General *(1950). Neruda depicts U.S. multinational corporations such as Standard Oil operating in Latin America as powerful economic predators, buying governments, stealing national wealth, and using violence to repress any protests against them. The mention of Paraguayans and Bolivians in "Standard Oil Co." refers to the Chaco War, 1932–1935, in which Paraguay and Bolivia disputed a desolate territory where oil had been discovered. In "United Fruit Co.," Neruda refers to the U.S. giant that controlled banana plantations in many countries of the Caribbean basin but particularly on the isthmus of Central America, where it maintained proverbially warm relations with petty dictators whom he scorns as "flies" and "small-time Caesars." In weighing the significance of Neruda's anger, consider that he was probably the most popular Latin American poet of the twentieth century. Also note that, as is often the case in anti-imperialist writings, Neruda's nationalist sentiments do not focus on his own country of Chile alone but extend to Latin America as a whole.*

Standard Oil Co.

When the drill bored down
toward the stony fissures
and plunged its implacable intestine
into the subterranean estates,
and dead years, eyes
of the ages, imprisoned
plants' roots
and scaly systems
became strata of water,
fire shot up through the tubes

*From Pablo Neruda, *Canto General, Fiftieth Anniversary Edition*, ed. and trans. Jack Schmitt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 176–77, 179. © 1991 by the Fundación Pablo Neruda and The Regents of the University of California. Reprinted by permission of The Regents of the University of California and the University of California Press.

transformed into cold liquid,
in the customs house of the heights,
issuing from its world
of sinister depth,
it encountered a pale engineer
and a title deed.

However entangled the petroleum's
arteries may be, however the layers
may change their silent site
and move their sovereignty
amid the earth's bowels,
whenever the fountain gushes
its paraffin foliage,
Standard Oil has arrived beforehand
with its lawyers and its boots,
with its checks and its guns,
with its governments and its prisoners.

Its obese emperors
from New York are suave,
smiling assassins
who buy silk, nylon, cigars,
petty tyrants, and dictators.

They buy countries, people, seas,
police, legislators,
distant regions where
the poor hoard their corn
like misers their gold:
Standard Oil awakens them,
clothes them in uniforms, designates
which brother is the enemy,
and Paraguayans fight its war,
and Bolivians are undone
in the jungle with its machine guns.

A President assassinated
for a drop of petroleum,
a million-acre
mortgage, a swift
execution on a morning
mortal with light, petrified,
a new prison camp for
subversives, in Patagonia,
a betrayal, scattered shots
beneath a petroliferous moon,

a subtle change of ministers
in the capital, a whisper
like an oil tide,
and zap, you'll see
how Standard Oil's letters
shine above the clouds,
above the seas, in your home,
illuminating their domains.

United Fruit Co.

When the trumpet blared, everything
on Earth was prepared
and Jehovah distributed the world
to Coca-Cola Inc., Anaconda,
Ford Motors, and other entities.
United Fruit Inc.
reserved for itself a juicy part,
the central isthmus of my land,
America's sweet waist.
It rebaptized its lands "Banana Republics,"
and upon the slumbering corpses,
upon the restless heroes
who conquered renown,
freedom, and flags,
it established a comic opera.
It alienated self-destiny,
gave crowns to small-time Caesars,
unsheathed envy, and drew
the dictatorship of flies:
Trujillo flies, Somoza flies,
Carías flies, Martínez flies,
Ubico flies, flies soaked
in humble blood and jam,
drunk flies that drone
over common graves,
circus flies, clever flies
versed in tyranny.

Among the bloodthirsty flies
the Fruit Co. disembarks,
ravaging coffee and fruits
for its ships that spirit away
like serving trays
our submerged lands' treasures.

Meanwhile, in the seaports'
sugary abysses,
Indians collapse, buried
in the morning mist.
A body rolls down, a nameless
thing, a fallen number,
a bunch of lifeless fruit
dumped in the rubbish heap.

4. Economic Nationalism in Action ~ Lesley Byrd Simpson*

Mass meetings and charismatic leaders were typical of the nationalist style. Like Lázaro Cárdenas of Mexico, whose presidency (1934–1940) is described here, nationalist leaders often put major emphasis on the idea of economic self-determination. Cárdenas boldly put that idea into action when he expropriated the Mexican holdings of foreign oil companies in 1938. He exemplified the nationalist respect for communal values by distributing land in collectively owned ejidos rather than to individual peasant families. Moreover Cárdenas insisted on a foreign policy that did not toe any U.S.-drawn lines. Historian Lesley Byrd Simpson's narrative of the Cárdenas years, first published in 1941, conveys a feeling of their excitement. Would the age-old injustices of Latin America now finally be undone?

During the four effective years of his term, Cárdenas distributed more land to the peasants than had been distributed in all the years since the beginning of the Revolution. In the Laguna district of Durango, a cotton strike gave Cárdenas the opportunity to take 600,000 acres of rich land and begin upon it the famous Laguna cooperative project. He settled 30,000 families in the Laguna and organized them into a multitude of interlocking units, to form the first great state-operated farm. The project required large-scale financing, and a new bank was created for the purpose, the National Bank for Ejido Credit, with a capital of 30,000,000 pesos. This was benevolent despotism with imagination. By the end of 1936 the new bank reported: "In the Laguna region credits were granted to 29,690 family heads organized in ejidos, for the cultivation of 247,000 acres. The total of these loans was 8,124,692 pesos, guaranteed by crops of an estimated value of more than 50,000,000 pesos. During the last week of January 1937, the bank's investment in the region reached a new weekly high of more than a million pesos."

*From Lesley Byrd Simpson, *Many Mexicos*, 4th ed., revised (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 288, 290–91.

The most powerful support for the Cárdenas regime came from the new and militant Mexican Workers' Confederation organized in 1936 by Vicente Lombardo Toledano. It became, as it was intended to become, a working-class militia, and, with the backing of Cárdenas, it reached into every field of activity, from federal white-collar workers and schoolteachers to the porters who snatched one's luggage, willy-nilly, at the railroad stations.

The civil war in Spain found Cárdenas and the vigorous Mexican Workers' Confederation firmly supporting the Spanish Republican government, while the rest of the democratic world seemed to be doing its best to insure the victory of General Francisco Franco. President Cárdenas had a clearer vision of the essentials of the conflict than our own government. The arrival of five hundred refugee Spanish children at Veracruz in 1937 was one of the most moving spectacles in the history of the generous Mexican people. Cárdenas was also the first to seize the opportunity of inviting an unlimited number of Spanish Republicans to Mexico after the war and giving them Mexican citizenship, for he recognized the great value to the Mexican economy of those hardy peasants and mechanics. He did the same thing for the exiled intellectuals of Spain, and Mexico was enriched by the cream of Spanish scholars, scientists, writers, and artists. Cárdenas was, of course, condemned as a Red: he was polluting the holy soil of Mexico with the atheistic scum who had been run out of Spain by that paladin of the Faith, Francisco Franco. Fascist organizations joined the traditional conservative elements of Mexico in fighting the whole Cárdenas program. They were soon reinforced by the most formidable enemy that Cárdenas had challenged, the foreign oil companies.

A strike of refinery and field workers had dragged on for two years, with each side making charges and claims so essentially opposed that compromise was out of the question. A Supreme Court decision favored the workers. The companies refused to obey it and were declared to be in a "state of rebellion." On March 18, 1938, President Cárdenas signed his famous order expropriating the oil properties.

In the ensuing dispute an immense amount of literature was circulated by both sides, and epithets such as "Communist" and "imperialist" were freely exchanged. To the oil workers, who were saturated with the xenophobia of the Revolution, the expropriation meant the emancipation of Mexico from the foreign yoke. A monster mass meeting [in Mexico City] was organized by Lombardo Toledano on March 23, 1938, to celebrate Mexico's new "Independence Day." The *Mexican Labor News* became lyrical: "At nine o'clock in the morning the demonstrators began their march toward the central Zócalo, and the last contingents had not passed by the main balcony of the Palace, where President Cárdenas, together with several members of his administration, reviewed the parade, until

four in the afternoon. At the height of the demonstration the tremendous square was solidly packed with a mass of wildly cheering humanity celebrating the dawn of what thousands of placards and standards hailed as the economic independence of Mexico."

March 18 was made a national holiday. Two years later I watched the slightly stereotyped celebration of the expropriation. Mexico had been through a lot of trouble with her new baby, but I could not help admiring the spirit, somewhat forced at times by cheerleaders, of the crowd. The faithful *Mexican Labor News* repeated its somewhat shopworn tribute: "All over the country, in cities and towns and villages, workers, peasants, soldiers, and all of the people paraded through the streets with cheers and music and banners that proclaimed: 'The Wealth of Mexico Must Be Possessed by Mexico!' In Mexico City more than a hundred thousand men, women, and children crowded into the great Plaza of the Constitution. Flags were hung from the Palace windows, and flags and enormous pictures of Cárdenas were hung from the cathedral towers. Bells rang; the uniformed drum and bugle corps of the Mexican Workers' Confederation played the marches of the Mexican Revolution; and when the plaza was full to overflowing, the thousands there began to sing the National Anthem with all the strength of their voices. This was Mexico's reiteration of her declaration of independence from foreign imperialism."

5. The Shark and the Sardines — Juan José Arévalo*

Juan José Arévalo, a former president of Guatemala, spent much of his life in exile from governments supported by the United States. His fable of The Shark and the Sardines *was published in Spanish in 1956 on the heels of a CIA-engineered military overthrow of Guatemala's constitutionally elected nationalist regime. This U.S. intervention was strongly encouraged by the United Fruit Company, whose interests had been injured by the Guatemalan government's nationalist policies. Arévalo's denunciation resonated strongly with Latin American public opinion, but in the United States "the American reader," whom Arévalo addressed in this introduction to the English translation, paid little attention.*

In your hands you hold a controversial book—a book that speaks out against your State Department's dealings with the peoples of Latin America during the twentieth century. It intends neither insult nor offense to the United States as a nation. The future of your country is identified

*From Juan José Arévalo, *The Shark and the Sardines*, trans. June Cobb and Raul Osegueda (New York: Lyle Stuart, 1961), 9–13.

with the future of contemporary democracy. Neither does this book seek to cast blame on the North American people—who, like us, are victims of an imperialist policy of promoting business, multiplying markets, and hoarding money.

Very different was the ideology of the men who first governed your country. It was as thirteen widely varying former colonies inspired by ideals of individual freedom, collective well-being, and national sovereignty that the United States came into existence in the world. Protestants, Catholics, and Masons alike, those men of the eighteenth century were moved by an ardent sense of dignity that won for them and for their cause the sympathy and the admiration of the entire world. They recognized worth in all kinds of work, they welcomed to their shores foreigners of every origin, and when their crops and their homes were threatened, they defended their crops and their homes just as they defended the privacy of the individual conscience. They went to church with their heads held high and they founded colleges so that their children might advance along the road to self-improvement.

Moral values served as a motivating force in the days of your independence. Those same values, confirmed by the civilian populace of the young republic, figured among the norms of government. The nation was characterized by its grandeur of spirit and indeed great were the military accomplishments and the thesis of the new law. Amazed, the world applauded.

But as the twentieth century was dawning, the White House adopted a different policy. To North America as a nation were transferred the know-how, sentiments, and appetites of a financial genius named [John D.] Rockefeller. Grandeur of spirit was replaced by greed. The government descended to become a simple entrepreneur for business and protector of illicit commercial profits. From then on, accounting was the science of sciences. The new instrument of persuasion was the gunboat. Now the United States had become different. It was neither a religious state nor a juridical state but, rather, a mercantile state—a gigantic mercantile society with all the apparatus of a great world power. The European juridical tradition was abandoned and North American morality was forgotten. The United States thenceforth was to be a Phoenician enterprise, a Carthaginian republic. Washington and Lincoln must have wept in shame in their graves.

The immediate victim was Latin America. To the North American millionaires converted into government, Latin America appeared an easy prey, a "big moneymaker." The inhabitants of this part of the world came to be looked upon as international *braceros*.* This multiple-faceted

*Mexican agricultural workers allowed to enter the United States as part of a U.S.-sponsored program during World War II.

exploitation was carried out with intelligence, with shrewdness, with the precision of clockwork, with "scientific" coldness, with harshness, and with great arrogance. From our southern lands, the river of millions began to flow northward, and every year it increased. The United States became great while progress in Latin America was brought to a halt. And when anything or anyone tried to interfere with the bankers or the companies, use was made of the Marines. Panama, 1903. Nicaragua, 1909. Mexico and Haiti, 1914. Santo Domingo, 1916. Along with the military apparatus, a new system of local "revolutions" was manipulated—financed by the White House or by Wall Street, which were now the same. This procedure continued right up to the international scandal of the assault on Guatemala in 1954, an assault directed by Mr. [Secretary of State John] Foster Dulles, with the okay of Mr. Eisenhower, who was your President at that time. North American friends, this is history, true history, sketched here as briefly as possible.

We Latin Americans, who, more than anybody else, suffered from this change in political philosophy and its consequences, could no longer be friends of the government of the United States. The friendship certainly could be reestablished. But to do so, it would be necessary for the White House to alter its opinion of us, and it would be necessary for its conduct to change. We expect a new political treatment. We do not want to continue down this slope that takes us straight to colonial status, however it may be disguised. Neither do we want to be republics of merchants like the African trading stations of old.

We Latin Americans are struggling to prevent the business mentality from being confused with, or merged into, statesmanship. The North American example has been disastrous to us and has horrified us. We know that a government intimately linked to business and receiving favors from business loses its capacity to strive for the greatest possible happiness for the greatest number of its people. When businessmen become rulers, it is no longer possible to speak of social justice; and even the minimum and superficial "justice" of the common courts is corrupted.

In our resistance to the business mentality, we are still Spanish, stubbornly Spanish. Also, we have not stopped being Catholic, nor have we stopped being romantic, and we cannot conceive of private life without love, nor of public life without chivalry, nor of our children's education without ideals.

If you want to be our friends, you will have to accept us as we are. Do not attempt to remodel us after your image. Mechanical civilization, material progress, industrial techniques, wealth, comfort, hobbies—all these figure in our programs of work and enjoyment of life. But, for us, the essence of human life does not lie in such things.

These lines, my North American friends, are meant to explain why I

wrote the fable of *The Shark and the Sardines*. This book was written with indignation—indignation wrapped from time to time in the silk of irony. It declares that international treaties are a farce when they are pacted between a "shark" and a "sardine." It denounces the Pan-American system of diplomacy as an instrument at the service of the shark. It denounces the Pan-American idea of "allegiance to the hemisphere"—a juridical device that will inevitably lead to the establishing of an empire from pole to pole. It denounces the relentless and immense siphoning-off of wealth from south to north. It denounces the existence of the terrible syndicate of millionaires, whose interests lie even outside the United States.

It denounces the subordination of the White House to this syndicate. It denounces the conversion of your military into vulgar policemen for the big syndicates. And for the purpose of analysis, it takes up the case of Nicaragua, compelled by the United States to sign (in 1914–1916) a treaty that goes against all written and all moral laws.

This book, friends of the North, has been read all over Latin America. Read it now, yourselves, and accept it as a voice of alarm addressed to the great North American people who are still unaware of how many crimes have been committed in their name.

6. In the Eye of the Hurricane Are 120 Million Children ~ Eduardo Galeano*

The original Spanish version of The Open Veins of Latin America *was one of the most influential books on the region in the 1970s and 1980s. It went through many dozens of editions in Spanish and was widely translated. The title exemplifies the author's vivid metaphors as well as his angry criticism of the way more powerful countries bled Latin America economically during much of its history. After finishing the book in late 1970, Galeano was forced to spend many years in exile following a military takeover in his native Uruguay. He was finally able to return home to Uruguay after the restoration of democratic rule in Uruguay in the mid-1980s.*

The division of labor among nations is that some specialize in winning and others specialize in losing. Our part of the world, known today as Latin America, was precocious: It has specialized in losing ever since those remote times when Renaissance Europeans ventured across the ocean and buried their teeth in the throats of the Indian civilizations. Centuries passed, and Latin America perfected its role. We are no longer in the era of marvels, when fact surpassed fable and imagination was shamed by the trophies of conquest—the lodes of gold, the mountains of silver. But our region still works as a menial laborer. It continues to exist at the service of others' needs, as a source and reserve of oil and iron, of copper and meat, of fruit and coffee, the raw materials and foods destined for rich countries which profit more from consuming them than Latin America does from producing them. The taxes collected by the buyers are much higher than the prices received by the sellers; and after all, as Alliance for Progress coordinator Covey T. Oliver said in July 1968, to speak of fair prices is a "medieval" concept, for we are in the era of free trade.

*From Eduardo Galeano, *The Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent,* trans. Cedric Belfrage (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973), 11–17. Reprinted by permission of Monthly Review Press.

Latin America is the region of open veins. Everything from the discovery until our times has always been transmuted into European—or later United States—capital, and as such has accumulated in distant centers of power. Everything: the soil, its fruits and its mineral-rich depths, the people and their capacity to work and to consume, natural resources and human resources.

The more freedom is extended to business, the more prisons have to be built for those who suffer from that business. Our inquisitor-hangman systems function not only for the dominant external markets. They also provide gushers of profit from foreign loans and investments in the dominated internal markets. Back in 1913, President Woodrow Wilson observed: "You hear of 'concessions' to foreign capitalists in Latin America. You do not hear of concessions to foreign capitalists in the United States. They are not granted concessions." He was confident: "states that are obliged . . . to grant concessions are in this condition, that foreign interests are apt to dominate their domestic affairs, . . ." he said, and he was right. Along the way we have even lost the right to call ourselves Americans, although the Haitians and the Cubans appear in history as new people a century before the *Mayflower* pilgrims settled on the Plymouth coast. For the world today, America is just the United States. The region we inhabit is a sub-America, a second-class America of nebulous identity.

At the beginning of November 1968, Richard Nixon loudly confirmed that the Alliance for Progress was seven years old and that malnutrition and food shortages had nevertheless intensified in Latin America. A few months later, in April, George W. Ball wrote in *Life*: "But at least for the next several decades, the discontent of the poorer nations does not threaten world destruction. Shameful as it undoubtedly may be, the world has lived at least two-thirds poor and one-third rich for generations. Unjust as it may be, the power of poor countries is limited." Ball had headed the U.S. delegation to the First Conference on Trade and Development in Geneva and had voted against nine of the twelve general principles approved by

the conference for removing some of the handicaps of the underdeveloped countries in international trade.

Murder by poverty in Latin America is a secret affair. Every day, without making a sound, three Hiroshima bombs explode over communities that have become accustomed to suffering with clenched teeth. This systematic violence is not apparent but it is real and constantly increasing. Its holocausts are not made known in the sensational press but in Food and Agricultural Organization statistics. Ball says that it is still impossible to act with impunity because the poor cannot set off a world war, but the Imperium is worried. Unable to multiply the dinner, it does what it can to suppress the diners. "Fight poverty, kill a beggar!" some genius of black humor scrawled on a wall in La Paz.

In the eye of this hurricane 120 million children are stirring. Latin America's population grows as does no other. It has more than tripled in half a century. One child dies of disease or hunger every minute, but in the year 2000 there will be 650 million Latin Americans, half of whom will be under fifteen: a time bomb. Among the 280 million Latin Americans of today, 50 million are unemployed or underemployed and about 100 million are illiterate. Half of them live in crowded, unhealthy slums. New factories are being built in the privileged poles of development—São Paulo, Buenos Aires, Mexico City—but less and less labor is needed. The system did not foresee this small headache, this surplus of people. And people keep reproducing. They make love with enthusiasm and without precaution. Ever more people are left beside the road, without work in the countryside, where great estates reign with their vast extensions of land, without work in the city where the machine is king. The system vomits people. United States' missionaries sow pills, diaphrams, intrauterine devices, condoms, and marked calendars, but reap children. Latin American children obstinately continue getting born, claiming their natural right to a place in the sun in these magnificent lands which could give to all what is now denied to almost all.

The United States is more concerned than any other country with spreading and imposing family planning in the farthest outposts. Not only the government, but the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations as well, have nightmares about millions of children advancing like locusts over the horizon from the Third World. While intrauterine devices compete with bombs and machine guns to arrest the growth of the Vietnamese population, in Latin America it is more hygienic and effective to kill future guerrillas in the womb than in the mountains or the streets. Various U.S. missions have sterilized thousands of women in Amazonia, although this is the least populated habitable zone on our planet. Most Latin American countries have no real surplus of people. On the contrary, they have too few. Brazil has thirty-eight times fewer inhabitants per square mile than Belgium. Paraguay has forty-nine times fewer than England, Peru has thirty-two times fewer than Japan. Haiti and El Salvador, the human anthills of Latin America, have lower population densities than Italy. No less than half the territory of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Venezuela has no inhabitants at all. No Latin American population grows less than Uruguay's—a country of old folk—yet no nation has taken such a beating in recent years, with a crisis that would seem to drag it into the last circle of Hell. Uruguay is empty, and its fertile lands could provide food for infinitely more people than those who now suffer in such penury. Thus, the pretexts invoked to limit population in Latin America are an insult to the intelligence. The real intentions anger us.