EDUARDO GALEANO

OPEN VEINS OF LATIN AMERICA

FIVE CENTURIES OF THE PILLAGE OF A CONTINENT

FOREWORD BY ISABEL ALLENDE

"This book is a monument in our Latin American history."
—**Hugo Chávez**, President of Venezuela

“We have maintained a silence closely resembling stupidity”.

--From the Revolutionary Proclamation of the Junta Tuitiva, La Paz, July 16, 1809

Atahualpa saw the first Spanish soldiers arriving on spirited steeds adorned with plumes and little bells, making thunder and clouds of dust with their swift hooves: panic-stricken, the Inca fell down on his back. The chief Tecum, leading the descendants of the Mayas, beheaded the horse of Pedro de Alvarado with his lance, convinced that it was part of the *conquistador:* Alvarado stood up and killed him. A few horses in medieval war trappings scattered the mass of Indians, sowing terror and death. During the colonizing process, priests and missionaries spread for the superstitious Indians' benefit the tale that horses were of sacred origin, for Santiago, Spain's patron saint, rode a white horse which had won valiant victories against the Moors and the Jews with the aid of Divine Providence.

Bacteria and viruses were the most effective allies, The Europeans brought with them, like biblical plagues, smallpox and tetanus, various lung, intestinal, and venereal diseases, trachoma, typhus, leprosy, yellow fever, and teeth-rotting caries. Smallpox was the first to appear. Must not this unknown and horrible epidemic, which produced burning fever and decomposed the flesh, be a chastisement from the gods? The invaders "moved into Tlaxcala," one native eyewitness reported, "and then the epidemic spread: cough, burning hot pustules." Reported another: "The contagious, oppressive, cruel pustule sickness brought death to many."[8] The Indians died like flies; their organisms had no defense against the new diseases. Those who survived were feeble and useless. The Brazilian anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro estimates that more than half the aboriginal population of America, Australia, and Oceania died from the contamination of first contact with white men.

"THEY CRAVE GOLD LIKE HUNGRY SWINE"

Firing their harquebuses, hacking with their swords, and breathing pestilence, the little band of implacable conquistadors advanced into America. The conquered tell us what it was like. After the Cholula massacre Montezuma sent new envoys to Cortës, who was advancing on the Valley of Mexico. They brought gifts of golden collars and quetzal-bird feather banners. The Spaniards "were in seventh heaven," says the Nahuati text preserved in the Florentine Codex. "They lifted

up the gold as if they were monkeys, with expressions of joy, as if it put new life into them and lit up their hearts. As if it were certainly something for which they yearn with a great thirst. Their bodies fatten on it and they hunger violently for it. They crave gold like hungry swine." Later, when Cortés reached Tenochtitlán, the resplendent Aztec capital with 300,000 inhabitants, the Spaniards entered the treasure house, "and then they made a great ball of the gold and set a fire, putting to the flames all that remained no matter how valuable, so that everything burned. As for the gold, the Spaniards reduced it and made bars."

War followed. Finally Cortés, who had lost Tenochtitlán, reconquered it in 1521: "And by then we had no shields left, no clubs, and nothing to eat, we weren't eating anymore." Montezuma, harried by the priests who accused him of treason, had killed himself. Devastated, burned, and littered with corpses, the city fell: "Shields were its defense, but they were not enough Cones had expressed horror at the sacrifices of the Veracruz Indians, who burned children's entrails for a smoke offering to the gods, but there were no limits to his own cruelty in the reconquered city: "And all night long it rained on us." The gallows and torture were not enough, however: the captured treasure never measured up to the Spaniards' imagination, and for years they dug in the lake bottom searching for gold and precious objects presumably hidden by the Indians.

Pedro de Alvarado and his men fell upon Guatemala and "killed so many Indians that it made a river of blood which is called the Olimtepeque," and "the day became red because of all the blood there was on that day." Before the decisive battle, "and seeing Indians tortured, they told the Spaniards not to torture them anymore, that the captains Nehaib and IxquIn—Nehaib in the guise of an eagle and of a lion—had much gold, silver, diamonds, and emeralds for them. Then they gave them to the Spaniards and the Spaniards kept them."[9]

Before Pizarro strangled and decapitated Atahualpa, he got from him a ransom of "gold and silver weighing more than 20,000 marks in fine silver and 1,326,000 escudos in the finest gold." Then Pizarro advanced on Cuzco. His soldiers thought they were entering the city of the Caesars, so dazzling was the capital of the empire, but they proceeded without delay to sack the Temple of the Sun. "Struggling and fighting among each other, each trying to get his hands on the lion's share, the

soldiers in their coats of mail trampled on jewels and images and pounded the gold utensils with hammers to reduce them to a more portable size. . . They tossed all the temple's gold into a melting pot to turn it into bars: the laminae that covered the walls, the marvelous representations of trees, birds, and other objects in the garden."[10]

Today in the enormous bare plaza at the center of Mexico City the Catholic cathedral rises on the ruins of Tenochtitlán's greatest temple and the government palace occupies the site where Cuauhtémoc, the Aztec chief martyred by Cortés, had his residence. Tenochtitlán was razed. In Peru, Cuzco suffered the same fate, but the conquistadors could not completely destroy its massive walls and this testimony in stone to the Inca's colossal architecture can still be seen in the bases of the colonial buildings.

THE SILVER CYCLE: THE SPLENDORS OF POTOSI

They say that even the horses were shod with silver in the great days of the city of Potosi, The church altars and the wings of cherubim in processions for the Corpus Christi celebration in 1658, were made of silver: the streets from the cathedral to the church of Recoletos were completely resurfaced with silver bars. In Potosi, silver built temples and palaces, monasteries and gambling dens; it prompted tragedies and fiestas, led to the spilling of blood and wine, fired avarice, and unleashed extravagance and adventure. The sword and the cross marched together in the conquest and plunder of Latin America, and captains and ascetics, knights and evangelists, soldiers and monks came together in Potosi to help themselves to its silver. Molded into cones and ingots, the viscera of the Cerro Rico—the rich hill—substantially fed the development of Europe. "Worth a Peru" was the highest possible praise of a person or a thing after Pizarro took Cuzco, but once the Cerro had been discovered Don Quixote de la Mancha changed the words: "Worth a Potosi," he says to Sancho. This jugular vein of the viceroyalty, America's fountain of silver, had 120,000 inhabitants by the census of 1573. Only twenty-eight years had passed since the city sprouted out of the Andean wilderness and already, as if by magic, it had the same population as London and more than Seville, Madrid, Rome, or Paris. A new census

A FLOOD OF TEARS AND BLOOD:
AND YET THE POPE SAID INDIANS HAD SOULS

In 1581 Philip II told the *audiencia(*An *audiencia* was a judicial district as well as a judicial, administrative, and advisory body. In Mexico, it was the supreme court of administration and judgment. (Trans.)*) of Guadalajara* that a third of Latin America's Indians had already been wiped out, and that those who survived were compelled to pay the tributes for the dead. The monarch added that Indians were bought and sold; that they slept in the open air; and that mothers killed their children to save them from the torture of the mines.[25] Yet the Crown's hypocrisy had smaller limits than the empire: it received a fifth of the value of the metals extracted by its subjects in all of the Spanish New World, as well as other taxes, and the Portuguese Crown was to have the same arrangement in eighteenth- century Brazil. Latin American silver and gold—as Engels put it—.penetrated like a corrosive acid through all the pores of Europe's moribund feudal society, and, for the benefit of nascent mercantilist capitalism, the mining entrepreneurs turned Indians and black slaves into a teeming "external proletariat" of the European economy. Greco-Roman slavery was revived in a different world; to the plight of the Indians of the exterminated Latin American civilizations was added the ghastly fate of the blacks seized from African villages to toil in Brazil and the Antilles. The colonial Latin American economy enjoyed the most highly concentrated labor fore known until that time, making possible the greatest concentration of wealth ever enjoyed by any civilization in world history.

The price of the tide of avarice, terror, and ferocity bearing down on these regions was Indian genocide: the best recent investigations credit pre-Columbian Mexico with a population between 30 and 37.5 million, and the Andean region is estimated to have possessed a similar number; Central America had between 10 and 13 million. The Indians of the Americas totaled no less than 70 million when the foreign conquerors appeared on the horizon; a century and a half later they had been reduced to 3.5 million. In 1685 only 4,000 Indian families remained of the more than 2 million that had once lived between Lima and Paita, according to the Marquis of Barinas. Archbishop Liñán y Cisneros

denied that the Indians had been annihilated: "The truth is that they are hiding out," he said, "to avoid paying tribute, abusing the liberty which they enjoy and which they never had under the Incas."[26] While metals flowed unceasingly from Latin American mines, equally unceasing were the orders from the Spanish Court granting paper protection and dignity to the Indians whose killing labor sustained the kingdom. The fiction of legality protected the Indian; the reality of exploitation drained the blood from his body. From slavery to the *encomienda* of service, and from this to the encomienda of tribute and the regime of wages, variants in the Indian labor force's juridical condition made only superficial changes in the real situation. The Crown regarded the inhuman exploitation of Indian labor as so necessary that in 1601 Philip III, banning forced labor in the mines by decree, at the same time sent secret instructions ordering its continuation "in case that measure should reduce production."[27] Similarly, between 1616 and 1619, Governor Juan de Solórzano carried out a survey of work conditions in the Huancavelica mercury mines (directly exploited by the Crown, in distinction to the silver mines, which were in private hands): "The poison penetrated to the very marrow, debilitating all the members and causing a constant shaking, and the workers usually died within four years," he reported to the Council of the Indies and to the king. But in 1631 Philip IV ordered that the same system be continued, and his successor Charles II later reaffirmed the decree.

In three centuries Potosi's Cerro Rico consumed 8 million lives. The Indians, including women and children, were torn from their agricultural communities and driven to the Cerro. Of every ten who went up into the freezing wilderness, seven never returned. Luis Capoche, an owner of mines and mills, wrote that "the roads were so covered with people that the whole kingdom seemed on the move." In their communities the Indians saw "many afflicted women returning without husbands and with many orphaned children" and they knew that "a thousand deaths and disasters" awaited them in the mines. The Spaniards scoured the countryside for hundreds of miles for labor. Many died on the way, before reaching Potosi, but it was the terrible work conditions in the mine that killed the most people. Soon after the mine began operating, in 1550, the Dominican monk Domingo de Santo Tomás told the Council of the Indies that Potosi was a "mouth of hell" which

swallowed Indians by the thousands every year, and that rapacious mine owners treated them "like stray animals." Later Fray Rodrigo de Loaysa said: "These poor Indians are like sardines in the sea. Just as other fish pursue the sardines to seize and devour them, so everyone in these lands pursues the wretched Indians." Chiefs of Indian communities had to replace the constantly dying *mitayos* with new men between eighteen and fifty years old. The huge stone-walled corral where Indians were assigned to mine and mill owners is now used by workers as a football ground. The *mitayos' jail—a* shapeless mass of ruins—can still be seen at the entrance to Potosi.

The Compilation of the Laws of the Indies abounds with decrees establishing the equal right of Indians and Spaniards to exploit the mines, and expressly forbidding any infringement of Indian rights. Thus formal history—the dead letter of today which perpetuates the dead letter of the past—has nothing to complain about, but while Indian labor legislation was debated in endless documents and Spanish jurists displayed their talents in an explosion of ink, in Latin America the law "was respected but not carried out." In practice "the poor Indian is a coin with which one can get whatever one needs, as with gold and silver, and get it better," as Luis Capoche put it. Many people claimed mestizo status before the courts to avoid being sent to the mines and sold and resold in the market.

At the end of the eighteenth century, Concolorcorvo, who had Indian blood, denied his own people: "We do not dispute that the mines consume a considerable number of Indians, but this is not due to the work they do in the silver and mercury mines but to their dissolute way of life." The testimony of Capoche, who had many Indians in his service, is more enlightening. Freezing outdoor temperatures alternated with the infernal heat inside the Cerro. The Indians went into the depths "and it is common to bring them out dead or with broken heads and legs, and in the mills they are injured every day." The *mitayos* hacked out the metal with picks and then carried it up on their shoulders by the light of a candle. Outside the mine they propelled the heavy wooden shafts in the mill or melted the silver on a fire after grinding and washing it.

The *mita* labor system was a machine for crushing Indians. The process of using mercury to extract silver poisoned as many or more than

did the toxic gases in the bowels of the earth. It made hair and teeth fall out and brought on uncontrollable trembling. The victims ended up dragging themselves through the streets pleading for alms. At night 6,000 fires burned on the slopes of the Cerro and in these the silver was worked, taking advantage of the wind that the "glorious Saint Augustine" sent from the sky. Because of the smoke from the ovens there were no pastures or crops for a radius of twenty miles around Potosi and the fumes attacked men's bodies no less relentlessly.

Ideological justifications were never in short supply. The bleeding of the New World became an act of charity, an argument for the faith. With the guilt, a whole system of rationalizations for guilty consciences was devised. The Indians were used as beasts of burden because they could carry a greater weight than the delicate Ilama, and this proved that they were in fact beasts of burden. The viceroy of Mexico felt that there was no better remedy for their "natural wickedness" than work in the mines. Juan Ginés de Sepülveda, a renowned Spanish theologian, argued that they deserved the treatment they got because their sins and idolatries were an offense to God. The Count de Buffon, a French naturalist, noted that Indians were cold and weak creatures in whom "no activity of the soul" could be observed. The Abbé De Paw invented a Latin Arnerica where degenerate Indians lived side by side with dogs that couldn't bark, cows that couldn't be eaten, and impotent camels. Voltaire's Latin America was inhabited by Indians who were lazy and stupid, pigs with navels on their backs, and bald and cowardly lions. Bacon, De Maistre, Montesquieu, Hume, and Bodin declined to recognize the "degraded men" of the New World as fellow humans. Hegel spoke of Latin America's physical and spiritual impotence and said the Indians died when Europe merely breathed on them.

In the seventeenth century Father Gregorio Garcia detected Semitic blood in the Indians because, like the Jews, "they are lazy, they do not believe in the miracles of Jesus Christ, and they are ungrateful to the Spaniards for all the good they have done them." At least this holy man did not deny that the Indians were descended from Adam and Eve: many theologians and thinkers had never been convinced by Pope Paul III's bull of 1537 declaring the Indians to be "true men." When Bartolomé de las Casas upset the Spanish Court with his heated denunciations of the conquistadors' cruelty in 1557, a member of the Royal

Council replied that Indians were too low in the human scale to be capable of receiving the faith. Las Casas dedicated his zealous life to defending the Indians against the excesses of the mine owners and *encomenderos.* He once remarked that the Indians preferred to go to hell to avoid meeting Christians.

Indians were assigned or given in *encomienda* to conquistadors and colonizers so that they could teach them the gospel. But since the Indians owed personal services and economic tribute to the *encomenderos,* there was little time for setting them on the Christian path to salvation.

Indians were divided up along with lands given as royal grants, or were obtained by direct plunder: in reward for his services, Cortés received 23,000 vassals. After 1536 Indians were given in *encomienda* along with their descendants for the span of two lifetimes, those of the *encomendero* and of his immediate heir; after 1629 this was extended to three lifetimes and, after 1704, to four. In the eighteenth century the surviving Indians still assured many generations to come of a cozy life. Since their defeated gods persisted in Spanish memory, there were saintly rationalizations aplenty for the victors' profits from their toil; the Indians were pagans and deserved nothing better.

The past? Four hundred years after the papal bull, in September 1957, the highest court in Paraguay published a notice informing all the judges of the country that "the Indians, like other inhabitants of the republic, are human beings." And the Center for Anthropological Studies of the Catholic University of Asunción later carried out a revealing survey, both in the capital and in the countryside: eight out of ten Paraguayans think that "Indians are animals." In Caaguazü, Alta Paraná, and the Chaco, Indians are hunted down like wild beasts, sold at bargain prices, and exploited by a system of virtual slavery—yet almost all Paraguayans have Indian blood, and Paraguayans tirelessly compose poems, songs, and speeches in homage to the "Guarani soul."

THE MILITAQNAT MEMORY OF TUPAC AMARU

When the Spaniards invaded Latin America, the theocratic Inca empire was at its height, spreading over what we now call Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador, taking in part of Colombia and Chile, and reaching

2. **King Sugar and Other Agricultural Monarchs**

PLANTATIONS, LATIFUNDIA, AND FATE

Undoubtedly gold and silver were the main motivating force in the Conquest, but Columbus on his second voyage brought the first sugarcane roots from the Canary Islands and planted them in what is now the Dominican Republic. To the Admiral's joy they took hold rapidly. Grown and refined on a small scale in Sicily, Madeira, and the Cape Verde Islands, and purchased in the Orient at high prices, sugar was so precious to Europeans that it figured in the dowries of queens. It was sold in pharmacies, weighed out by the gram. For almost three centuries after the discovery of America no agricultural product had more importance for European commerce than American sugar, Canefields were planted in the warm, damp littoral of Northeast Brazil; then in the Caribbean islands-Barbados, Jamaica, Haiti, Santo Domingo, Guadeloupe, Cuba, Puerto Rico-and in Veracruz and the Peruvian coast, which proved to be ideal terrain for the "white gold." Legions of slaves came from Africa to provide King Sugar with the prodigal, wageless labor force he required: human fuel for the burning. The land was devastated by this selfish plant which invaded the New World, felling forests, squandering natural fertility, and destroying accumulated soil humus. ~~The long sugar cycle generated a prosperity as mortal as the~~

And this has not been the role of sugar alone: the story has been the same with cacao, which made the fortunes of the Caracas Oligarchy; with the spectacular rise and fail of cotton in Maranho; with the Amazonian rubber plantations, which became the cemeteries of Northeastern workers recruited for a few pennies; with the devastated quebracho forests in northern Argentina and Paraguay; with Yucatan's henequen plantations, where Yaqui Indians were sent for extermination. It is also the story of coffee, which advances leaving deserts behind it, and of the fruit plantations in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and the unhappy lands of Central America. Each product has come to embody the fate of countries, regions, and peoples; and mineral-producing communities have, of course, traveled the same melancholy road. The more a product is desired by the world market, the greater the misery it brings to the Latin American peoples whose sacrifice creates it. The area least affected by this iron law has been Rio de la Plata, feeding the international market with its hides, meat, and wool; yet even it has been unable to break out of the cage of underdevelopment.

HOW THE SOIL WAS RAVAGED IN NORTHEAST BRAZIL

Because they discovered precious metals first, the Spaniards only began raising sugar in their colonies-initially in Santo Domingo, then in Veracruz, Peru, and Cuba-as a secondary activity. Brazil, on the other hand, became the world's largest sugar producer and remained so until the middle of the seventeenth century, Portugal's Latin American colony was also the chief market for slaves; native workers, always scarce, were rapidly killed off by the forced labor, and sugar needed thousands of hands to clear and prepare the ground, to plant, harvest, transport, grind, and refine the cane. Brazilian colonial society flourished in Bahia and Pernambuco as a sub-product of sugar until the discovery of gold moved its center to Minas Gerais.

The Portuguese Crown granted lands in usufruct to Brazil's first big landlords. The feats of conquest proceeded in tandem with the organization of production. Twelve "captains" received by written grant the whole of the vast unexplored territory, to be exploited in the king's service. However, the business was mostly financed by Dutch capital

and thus became more Flemish than Portuguese. Dutch entrepreneurs not only participated in establishing sugar estates and importing slaves; they also picked up the crude sugar in Lisbon, refined it, sold it in Europe, and pocketed a third of its value In profits. In 1630 the Dutch West India Company invaded and conquered the northeast coast of Brazil and took over direct control of sugar production. To multiply their profits, the sources of sugar had to be multiplied, and the company offered the British in Barbados all facilities to start massive production in the Antilles. It brought Caribbean colonists to Brazil to acquire technical and organizational knowledge. When the Dutch were finally thrown out of the Brazilian Northeast in 1654, they had already laid the foundations for intense and ruinous competition by Barbados. They had taken slaves and cane-roots there, had set up sugar estates, and had provided all the implements. Brazilian exports plummeted to half of what they had been, and sugar prices were halved by the end of the seventeenth century. Meanwhile, Barbados's black population increased tenfold in a few decades. The Antilles were nearer to the European market, and Barbados developed superior techniques and offered virgin and while Brazilian soil was wearing out. The crisis in the sugar-growing Northeast was also precipitated by serious slave revolts and by the gold boom to the south, which robbed the plantations of labor. The crisis was definitive: it has dragged itself painfully down the centuries into our time.

Sugar had destroyed the Northeast. The humid coastal fringe, well watered by rains, had a soil of great fertility, rich in humus and mineral salts and covered by forests from Bahia to Ceara. This region of tropical forests was turned into a region of savannas. Naturally fitted to produce food, it became a place of hunger. Where everything had bloomed exuberantly, the destructive and all-dominating latifundio left sterile rock, washed-out soil, eroded lands. At first there had been orange and mango plantations, but these were left to their fate, or reduced to small orchards surrounding the sugar mill-owner's house, reserved exclusively for the family of the white planter. Fire was used to clear land for canefields, devastating the fauna along with the flora: deer, wild boar, tapir, rabbit, pacas, and armadillo disappeared. All was sacrificed on the altar of sugarcane monoculture.

At the end of the sixteenth century Brazil had no less than 120 sugarmills worth some £2 million, but the' it masters, owners of the best lands, grew no food. They imported it, just as they imported an array of luxury articles which came from overseas with the slaves and bags of salt. Abundance and prosperity went hand in hand, as usual, with chronic malnutrition and misery for most of the population. Cattle were relegated to deserts far inland from the humid coastal zone to the *sertao* which, with two head of cattle to the square mile, supplied (and still supplies) tough, tasteless, and always scarce meat.

A legacy of those colonial days which continues is the custom of eating dirt. Lack of iron produces anemia, and instinct leads Northeastern children to eat dirt to gain the mineral salts which are absent from their diet of manioc starch, beans, and-with luck-dried meat. In former times this "African vice" was punished by putting muzzles on the children or by hanging them in willow baskets far above the ground. (An English traveler, Henry Koster, attributed this custom to the contact the white children had with little blacks "who infect them with this African vice."

+In various ways the Northeast is the victim of internal colonialism for the benefit of the industrialized south. Within the Northeast, the *sertao* region is subordinated to the sugarbelt which it supplies, and the latifundios in their turn are subordinated to processing plants that industrialize sugar production. The ancient institution of the individually owned sugar estate is in crisis: the central mills have devoured the plantations.)

The Brazilian Northeast is today the most underdeveloped area in the Western hemispheres As a result of sugar monoculture it is a concentration camp for 30 million people-on the same soil that produced the most lucrative business of the colonial agricultural economy in Latin America. Today less than a fifth of Pernambuco's humid zone is used for growing sugar; the rest is not used at all.' The big sugarmill owners, who are also the biggest planters of cane, permit themselves this luxury of waste. It is not in the Northeast's arid and semi-arid interior that food conditions are worst, as is erroneously believed. The *sertao,* a desert of stones and sparse vegetation, has periods of hunger when the scorching sun produces drought and the semblance of a lunar landscape, forcing the people to flee and sowing crosses along the roadsides. But in the humid littoral--that coastal fringe still so ironically known as the "forest zone" in tribute to the remote past arid to the pitiful remnants of forestation surviving from centuries of sugar--

hunger is endemic. Where opulence is most opulent, there--in this land of contradictions--misery is most miserable; the region nature chose to produce all foods, denies all. The sugar latifundio, a structure built on waste, must still import food from other areas, particularly from the center and south, at escalating prices. The cost of living in Recife is the highest in Brazil, well above Rio de Janeiro. Beans cost more in the Northeast than in Ipanema, the capital city's most luxurious beach resort. The price of half a kilo of manioc starch equals the wage an adult sugar-plantation worker receives for working from sunrise to sunset: if he complains, the foreman summons the carpenter to measure the man for the length and width of the boards that will be needed. In large areas the owner's or administrator's "right of the first night" for each girl is still effective. A third of Recife's population lives in miserable hovels; in one district, Casa Amarela, more than half the babies die before they are a year old. Child prostitution--girls of ten or twelve sold by their parents--is common in Northeastern cities. Some plantations pay less for a day's work than the lowest wage in India. A United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) report in 1957 said that in the area of Victoria, near Recife, protein deficiency in children produces a weight loss 40 percent worse than is generally found in Africa. Many plantations still operate private prisons, but, as Rene Dumont notes, "those who are responsible for murder by undernourishment are not locked inside, since they are the keepers of the keys." [2]

Pernambuco now produces less than half as much sugar as the state of Sao Paulo, and has a far lower per hectare yield; but Pernambuco's inhabitants, densely concentrated in the humid zone, depend on sugar for their livelihood, while Sao Paulo contains the greatest industrial center in Latin America. In the Northeast not even progress is progressive, for it is in the hands of a few owners. The food of the minority is the hunger of the majority. Beginning in 1870 the sugar industry I was substantially modernized as big central mills were installed, and the absorption of land by latifundios progressed alarmingly, sharpening the hunger of the area. In the 1950s, booming industrialization increased the consumption of sugar in Brazil itself. This stimulated Northeastern production, but without causing any rise in the per hectare yield, New lands of inferior quality were planted to cane, and sugar devoured still more of the few food-producing areas. Turned into a wage-worker, the

peasant who had previously tilled his small plot experienced no benefit, since he did not earn enough money to buy what he had once produced. As usual, the expansion expanded hunger.

THE DEVASTATION OF THE CARIBBEAN

"You believe perhaps, gentlemen," said Karl Marx in 1848, "that the production of coffee and sugar is the natural destiny of the West Indies. Two centuries ago, nature, which does not trouble herself about commerce, had planted neither sugarcane nor coffee trees there.'" The international division of labor was not organized by the Holy Ghost but by men-more precisely, as a result of the world development of capitalism.

It was the fate of the "sugar islands"--Barbados, the Leewards, Trinidad-Tobago, Guadeloupe, Puerto Rico, Haiti, and Santo Domingo-to be incorporated one by one into the world market and condemned to sugar until our day. Grown on a grand scale, sugar spreads its blight on a grand scale and today unemployment and poverty are these islands' permanent guests. Cuba also continues to depend on the sale of sugar, although the agrarian reforms of 1959 sparked an intensive diversification of the economy which has ended seasonal unemployment. Cubans no longer work only during the five or so months of the sugar harvest, but for twelve months in the continuous job of building a new society.

Barbados was, starting in 1641, the first Caribbean island where sugar was grown for bulk export, although the Spaniards had planted cane earlier in Santo Domingo and Cuba. It was, as we have seen, the Dutch who introduced sugar into the little British island; by 1666 Barbados had 800 plantations and more than 80,000 slaves. Occupied vertically and horizontally by the developing latifundio, Barbados suffered no better fate than the Brazilian Northeast. It had previously produced a variety of crops on small holdings: cotton and tobacco, oranges, cows and pigs. Canefields devoured all this and devastated the dense forests in the name of a glorious illusion. The island soon found that its soil was exhausted, that it was unable to feed its population, and that it was producing sugar at uncompetitive prices.