

Trip to Chile

1971

Stew Albert

Dear Phil,

This isn't the best form of communication but right now its all we got. Its not the same without you. See you taught me a lot about dignity and honesty about playing it straight when we were in Chile. Remember when we were in Chile you took Jerry and I to a John Wayne movie, you liked Wayne because on the screen he is always plays it straight. I guess you are the only person who could get me to reconsider Wayne either as an actor or humanbeing. Anyway the worlds a little more hypocritical without you.

We knew each other for over a decade but we really became friends in Chile, because we shared a common dream, socialism and liberation, you become close when you start appearing in the same dream.

Our first night in Santiago, we sat in a turn of the century elegant hotel dining room. We ate an enormous steak, drank the finest wine and smoked cigars. We thought we were taking the pleasure of a dying social order, all those rich men stuffing themselves at the other tables, they were the living dead, eating their last meal, we were different on workers side, we could enjoy the wine and cigars at our leisure: Well those rich bastards are still around, and a lot of workers, a lot of our friends- Commandante Pepe, Victor Jara and the CIA knows who else are under that rocky Chilean earth. Anyway the wine and company were great, I remember it with pleasure no matter what.

We had an incredible Chilean "on the road", we were everywhere, the jungles, mines, caves, factories, basketball games, film and TV Studios, Newspaper offices, the desert (the valley of the moon where you took meso)

and we met all kinds of characters, worthy and otherwise -Trade Union hard hats (red stars on those hats), Communist Party bureaucrats, businessmen men working currency scams, underground guerrillas preparing for the coup, anarchist students on strike against socialist faculty, hippies smoking weak grass in public places, CIA agent disguised as Time Magazine and the very wretched of the shanty town earth who called Allende-Conrade President and offered, not the finest, but the most generous wine.

and finally Victor Jara

what a guy he was. We just bumped into him on a Santiago Street and were a wierd trio-you a little drunk and Jerry and I with our hair down to our shoulders (got haircuts you advised) and men were whistling and us in the streets and Victor immediately adopted us-what great luck- Americas greatest protest singer bumping into Chiles numero uno singer of social significance

so he took us with him to a newly nationalized mine-and you and he sang to the workers-he did his own revolutionary version of "houses made of ticky-takey)x" and you did "the war is over" with Victor doing a line

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by line translation, and Victor introduced the three of us as sympatico gringos and the men stopped whistling.

Down we went into the mine-and got mixed up with a Chilean Film crew, and had great raps with volunteer student workers-after four hours you got bored and started reading a novel and the workers thought you were loco "how can he read a book in a mine" esta loco-no" but you were always a great one for counter experiments-not getting programed even by people who loved you, a very independent sort.

2

Out of the mine at 5AM, the sun was breaking and Victor bought fresh bread, very hot ~~and~~ very good.

You did a network TV Special in Chile-something the media masters of America never gave you, and you gave lots of interviews and yes of course you were a hundred percent against imperialism and for Chile and Socialism

and all this was against the advice of a Chilean jew-who gave us a good kasher meal, this man survived a concentration camp and was worried about all the jews in Allende government

"jews should stay out of politics, everywhere even in Israel"

we ate his empanadas and chicken soup-but are never going to follow his advice

Oh hey Phil, you remember why Jerry and I called you Sr Ochenta? Ah well no need to go into that-nobody is perfect.

Before signing off I want to clear up a point, since I might have unintentionally hurt your feelings- the last I saw you, it was terrible. You bumped into me on a street corner in NYC, in mid December, and I was being followed by a small army of FBI (I still don't know why)- you were all smiles *

"Lets go for a drink?" you said.
and I was freaked and had to say no
because you were in bad shape and didn't need to share my trouble.
I just said "Beat it quick"

and you said "is it personal or political?"
"Political" I said, and you were down the block without further explanation. The next day ~~you~~ ^{we} found an FM Co-Intel-pro transmitter under our ~~bumper~~ ^{car} bumper. I don't know, if you read about ~~it~~ in the papers, it was our last conversation. The pigs made me refuse your hospitality and company, I hope you understand.

Good-bye Phil

They murdered Victor Jara upfront and you by subtlier methods.

Vengeance and Victory will be ours.

Adios Phil
Vaya con Victor

love forever- Stew Albert

Stew
Albert