

Fredrick B. Pike's *Chile and the United States 1880-1962: A Dissenting View*

BY GONZALO VIAL\*

THIS BOOK goes far beyond the subject which its title indicates.<sup>1</sup> It pretends to be not only a diplomatic history but a social history of Chile, an interpretation of its present, and a prophecy concerning its future. Unfortunately Professor Pike is not equal to the gigantic task that these ambitions and multiple aims involve. Though he has collected an immense bibliography, reading (or at least filing) everything that has been written about Chile whether of much, little, or no importance, he lacks critical judgment and does not discriminate. For instance, concerning the study of our War of the Pacific, he bestows great importance on the pamphlet "Adiós al séptimo de línea" (315, footnote 1). This is equivalent to studying the history of France by reading *The Three Musketeers* or the life of Moses by viewing Cecil B. de Mille's film, *The Ten Commandments*.

All of the bibliography, moreover, is impaired by an almost grotesque lack of critical sense, which leads one to believe that Pike has read only the titles of the works he quotes. We find that a prominent Christian Democrat, Alejandro Silva Bascuñán, is classified as a "neofascist" (415, footnote 1) because he has written an article on the corporate state according to the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. Even more fantastic is the case of the architect and expert on colonial art, the late Alfredo Benavides Rodríguez; Pike, without wavering, calls him a "Hispanist" and a "neofascist." Why? Because (you'll be dumbfounded) Benavides is the author of an article called "On Spanish Imagery and Hispanoamérica." (This absurdity may be found on page 418, footnote 16.) Other "Hispanists" and "neofascists" mentioned by Pike are Ricardo Latcham and Mariano Picón-Salas. Amongst the "racialists" and "antinatives" listed by the author is Emilio Rodríguez Mendoza, who in 1900 wrote that the epic poem

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<sup>1</sup> See the review by Benjamin Frankel in *HAHR*, XLIV (February 1964), 104-106.

*La Araucana* had idealized the *mapuches*. For this reason Pike has thrown him into the same lot as the best researchers on Chilean native problems: Latcham (senior) and Guevara (445, footnote 91). On and on runs this painful avalanche of utter nonsense.

Some books, in spite of false or insufficient information, contain some intuitive achievements: their authors may ignore the details of the subject, but they have grasped its essence. Unfortunately this is not the case with *Chile and the United States*. Pike stayed in Chile for only one year, and he left the country just as ignorant of its essence as when he arrived. Can a serious writer define the Chilean upper classes by their owning rural property for several generations and being members of exclusive clubs, especially of the Club de la Unión (xxii)? Is this history? Is it sociology? Is it a serious political study? Or is it light journalism of the kind we read in *Time* or in Raymond Cartier, in which all South Americans always appear with a machete and a big sombrero?

Pike's other judgments on the Chilean state of affairs are of the same kind as the "definition" I have just cited. Here are some of them: "During a period of three years, the Popular Front did more in the way of social and economic reform than was ever done before within the time period of 1930-1962" (247). This is a sharp statement, but the author gives no proofs. "La Serena is today one of the towns in Chile where there is most hope" (248). On page 249 we read that many of the 135 secretaries of state in Ibañez' second administration were liberals and conservatives, a fact which to this date has been utterly unknown in Chile. Liberals and conservatives are Pike's *bêtes noires*, and this phobia seriously affects his impartiality. He characterizes these political parties by quoting documents from 1930 and 1933. Is this fair? Have liberals and conservatives said nothing since 1933? Or is it that the quotations of 1930 and 1933 were more convenient for the author's *a priori* thesis and not so the later ones (252)? The reader will find it unbelievable, but it is a fact that for Pike anyone who appreciates the cultural inheritance we have received from Spain must be labeled as a "Hispanist," a "neofascist," or of "the extreme right." This indicates the true measure of his shortsightedness. Nor can Pike's rough definitions of "Hispanism" and "neofascism" be ignored. "Neofascists," for instance, favor a "rigid structure of the elites," show a "bitter opposition towards a government which manages business," and maintain that it is necessary to have "monopolies protected by the government and controlled by private concerns" (414, footnote 1). Needless to say, the hetero-

generous sources which he then cites bear no relation at all to his conclusions.

Can we, as a last resource, at least rescue the general objectivity of the book? Here there is also a serious impediment. Pike has written about the relations between Chile and the United States. But in the xxviii and 466 pages of this work no mention is made of the presence of United States capital in Chile, and any discussion of the great United States copper companies is carefully omitted! Do not the Chile Exploration, the Andes Copper, and the Braden Copper Companies have any part in Chilean-United States relations? Do they have no influence at all on the Chilean economy and on the Chilean community? Why should there be such a mysterious and suggestive silence on this subject? Why omit such powerful and important facts in a book which is babbling all over about everything and everyone?

In short, we are once again faced with one of those "interpretations" which from time to time North American writers formulate on Latin American facts. The line hardly changes from Carleton Beals to Fredrick B. Pike. With this book Pike instantly becomes an "expert" on matters south of the Rio Grande. According to what we have read, he already has received an award for *Chile and the United States*.

FREDRICK B. PIKE\* replies:

Not only does my book on Chile fail to meet the hopes of some critics, it falls far short of fulfilling my own ambitions, and this I readily acknowledge. Still, I think that in this age when social factors influence diplomacy as never before it is justifiable to be ambitious rather than to settle for writing more diplomatic history in a vacuum. That is why I chose to write a book with the subtitle: *The Emergence of Chile's Social Crisis and the Challenge to United States Diplomacy*. To the extent that space permits, I shall take up in order some of the points raised by Professor Vial.

After listing and commenting upon fourteen major works on the War of the Pacific I referred to the lengthy publication (it is not a pamphlet) *Adiós al séptimo de la línea*, an all-time Chilean best seller in the late 1950s, as "a historical novel treatment of the War of the Pacific." I happen to believe that novels can often provide valuable insights into historical occurrences. In regard to Silva Bascuñán, I stated that a 1957 article of his showed him to be (the implication obviously being as of that year) a partisan of the corporate state.

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But advocacy of the corporate state is only one of the seven points which I included in describing what constitutes neofascism. I did not call Silva Bascuñán a neofascist. I did not specifically call Alfredo Benavides Rodríguez, Ricardo A. Latcham, and Mariano Picón-Salas neofascists but cited works of theirs associated with a glorification of Hispanic values and especially in the case of Picón-Salas associated with a plea to keep traditional values free from contamination by United States cultural influences. In regard to note 91, page 445, I did not use the term “racialist.” This terminology was introduced by Vial who was careless, to say the very least, in attributing it to me. My note was prefaced by the statement that it would contain citations of some of the writings which “display, or comment upon, the prevailing anti-Indian bias.” This fact, overlooked by Vial, resulted in my listing the works of men of such different viewpoints as Ricardo E. Latcham who, as explained in the note, defended and Tomás Guevara who disparaged the Indian. Moreover, when serious students of the Indian problem such as Latcham and Guevara were mentioned, their qualifications were stressed. Sometimes the only charitable explanation for the comments made by Vial would be that he used a different edition of the book than the one with which I am familiar. In fact, though, there is only one edition.

The criteria which I suggest for determining upper-class status in Chile were considerably more complex than the excerpts chosen by Vial reveal. Concerning the Popular Front, Vial misquotes me. If the reader checks he will see that Vial omitted such words as “in any equal time span” and thus distorted my meaning. Moreover, I cited five important works on the Popular Front in my notes. Any interested reader can also see by checking with my book that Vial distorted my meaning by misquoting the reference to La Serena. Vial states that I characterize Liberals and Conservatives by citing only references of 1930 and 1933. In the notes on page 416, I list many recent works dealing with the Liberal, Conservative, and other parties. Additional recent sources are listed in note 21, part C, page 420, and note 24, page 421. On page 274 of the text and in related notes I also cite up-to-date views of the Chilean Liberal Party. If Vial wants to question my assumption that Liberal and Conservative programs do not provide the most suitable formulas for modernization, his quarrel is not only with me but with the overwhelming majority of the Chilean intellectual community and electorate.

I most certainly respect the cultural inheritance that Chile and Latin America have received from Spain. I am concerned, though,

when Latin Americans pay homage unilaterally and exclusively to Spanish traditions. If Vial had read carefully my definition of Hispanism, I think he could have understood my position. The heterogeneous sources cited in notes on page 414 do bear demonstrated relationship to the seven points which I include in my definition of neofascism. Vial, incidentally, in criticizing my definition selects only three of those points and with commendable consistency misquotes all three. In my book I most definitely mention United States capital in Chile, both in the text and in extensive notes, as well as attitudes of various Chilean political groups toward Yankee investment. I do not blame Vial for not reading all of my book for much of it is exceedingly tedious.

It may very well be that I lack critical judgment and ability to discriminate. I am not inclined, however, to apologize for my views simply because they differ with Vial's. Moreover, some eminent Chilean historians have liked or at least sought seriously to analyze my book. Claudio Veliz in *International Affairs* (July 1964) referred to it as "probably the best book ever written by an American scholar on the contemporary affairs of a Latin American country," an opinion which however flattering contains as much exaggeration as Vial's appraisal. Reviewing the book in the *Pacific Historical Review* (May 1965), Eugenio Pereira Salas recognized my sympathetic appreciation of Chile and sincerity as well as diligence in trying to understand its history and problems. In moderate, scholarly, and dignified terms he then made several important criticisms of the book, with all of which, by the way, I agree.

What really concerns me is that Vial in effect contemptuously dismisses the views of many of the outstanding intellectuals of his country who have flourished during the past century or so and whose writings have certainly been the basis of many of my judgments on Chilean history. The views of such men deserve to be treated with less passion and prejudice and with a greater appreciation of the complexity of history. I was relatively unamused, therefore, by Vial's exercise in what I had naively thought was the disappearing art of pamphleteering under the guise of serious historical commentary.

It is Vial's right to believe that my attempts at the writing of history are on the same level as those of certain journalists. It is my right to feel that Chilean historical scholarship has advanced admirably since the nineteenth century and to regret that Vial's comments scarcely reflect this fact. That is why I read his remarks in sorrow rather than in anger.