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MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

In Isabel Allende's impressive new novel, *The House of the Spirits*, which is set in a barely fictional Chile, one of the best-drawn characters is a certain Esteban Trueba. Trueba is a grandee—a brawling, egotistical landowner and an almost likable prisoner of his own appetites. He devotes prodigious energy to rallying his class against the mob and to the struggle against Marxism. He is a Senator when the workers' parties come legally to power, and he insists from the start that only violence will remove the danger to order and property. He smuggles guns into the country, solicits covert aid from the *gringos* and addresses subversive meetings of young officers. On the glorious day of the military coup, he gets into his car and drives out to congratulate the soldiery:

The officer received me with his boots up on the desk, chewing a greasy sandwich, badly shaven, with his jacket unbuttoned. He didn't give me a chance to ask about my son Jaime or to congratulate him for the valiant actions of the soldiers who had saved the nation; instead he asked for the keys to my car, on the ground that Congress had been shut down and that all Congressional perquisites had therefore been suspended. I was amazed. It was clear then that they didn't have the slightest intention of reopening the doors of Congress, as we all expected. He asked me—no, he ordered me—to show up at the Cathedral at eleven the next morning to attend the Te Deum with which the nation would express its gratitude to God for the victory over Communism.

Trueba's veins contain real blood, not an insipid mixture of milk and holy water stiffened with liquid dollars. But as I read of his awakening to reality, I found I could clearly see the puffy, shifty, unctuous features of Arturo Cruz.

Cruz is, at one and the same time, the darling of the Reaganites and the icon of the liberals (one wishes he was the only such coincidence). It is he, and not the loutish Enrique Bermúdez or the sadistic Ricardo Lau, who is brought before the cameras like a performing seal. The face of the *contras* as seen by the villagers of Nicaragua is that of the snarling, crop-burning fascist. The same face as seen by the U.S. news media and public is that of a sheep with a secret sorrow. Here comes Arturo again, with his nagging worries about the revolution betrayed. Naturally, we are drawn to sympathize with this troubled Everyman. But why are we not introduced to Bermúdez, the man at the cutting edge of our military aid? Next question.

Cruz doesn't have the pretext of innocence. He was on hand when Edgar Chamorro, spokesman of the so-called Nicaraguan Democratic Force, gave his testimony about widespread *contra* atrocities and admitted that the aim of the mercenaries was the overthrow of the government. He knows that for speaking those unwelcome truths, Chamorro was banished from the F.D.N. ranks. Does he honestly think he would be treated differently? Does he dream of the day when "the boys" install him in the Presidency of a liberal, democratic Nicaragua? Or would just plain "President" be enough?

Not long ago I attended a breakfast meeting in Washing-

ton that featured both Cruz and Eden Pastora. Cruz was reason itself, talking of the need to separate party from state and stressing the values of pluralism. He was skeptical about the Sandinista commitment to democracy and scornful of their election. Pastora was his usual "colorful" self, still battered from the bomb that had gone off at his jungle press conference. Both men could at least claim that they had once been Sandinistas, though the returns on this claim are diminishing with time and Bermúdez.

I admit to an animus against the heroic Pastora, for when that bomb exploded, he seized the only available rapid transport and fled, leaving a woman friend of mine (who had absorbed much of the blast meant for him) horribly wounded on a river bank. Still, I listened politely while he denounced Jesse Jackson for going to Cuba, describing him as one of Lenin's "useful idiots." The next question concerned Roberto d'Aubuisson, who had just paid a visit to Washington. What did Commander Zero think of him? Pastora preferred not to give an opinion because that would be "interfering in the internal affairs of El Salvador." At that point I interjected to ask why, in that case, did he feel so free to be personal about Jesse Jackson? He asked to have the question translated, and did not reply. Unimpressive. So, when you reflect on it, is the evolution of Arturo Cruz. He would not take part in an election that he felt to be insufficiently democratic, but he will take part in a war of sabotage and attrition that has no democratic pretenses at all.

This is the old "salami tactic," operating from the right. The Christian Democrats of Chile joined gleefully and mindlessly in the destruction of Salvador Allende because they believed that they would be the beneficiaries. And certain labor types helped in the overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala, hoping thereby to preserve "free trade unions." The alliance with fascists, murderers and oligarchs was, of course, only temporary. Twelve years later in Chile and thirty years later in Guatemala, we can see who was using whom.

With Nicaragua, however, we don't have the excuse of hindsight. William Casey and his crew have picked Enrique Bermúdez and his crew, and have discarded the waverers. The installations and the infrastructure of a small underdeveloped country are being ruined and destroyed. The population is being subjected, after earthquake, war and revolution, to a calculated campaign of demoralization, a modern attempt to create a Vendée. One can feel sympathy for the youths who leave the country to avoid the draft and the rationing, but it's asking a lot to expect us to regard the mercenaries, or their two-faced spokesmen, as brave democrats. The proper historical analogy for these people is not the Founding Fathers but Benedict Arnold.

It is, finally, Cruz and Pastora who are the dupes and the "useful idiots." Their time could come only under conditions that would consign them to the well-known dustbin of history. Counterrevolutions can also be betrayed. This one will devour its parents as well as its children.