

THE DAWN OF THE ARPILLERAS

Homage to Chile —September 11th, 1973

Stella Moreno Monroy, Ellensburg, Washington, September 28th, 2016.
Translation into English by Philip Garrison, CWU Emeritus Professor, Writer.

Winter came down one day
In September, a sinking feeling,
Penetrating skin, taking over the soul
Of Chile.

An icy wind showed up
For daily maneuvers.
The military threw out
Democratic doings
To impose a mandate,
Irreversible,
Totalitarian.

Chile's soul melted at the marble
Glance of a soldier,
Door kicked in.
Scratching. Howls.

The light of one September day
Fled, frightened, leaving
A wide-open space
Of smoke and fear where hundreds
Of corpses gathered,
And thousands of voices
Hushed their song.

Nobody noticed, ever
The mass burials
In living flesh.

No one ever noticed after the coup
Those dead and buried
Under the sand of Atacama.

Chilean women from field and factory,
Came hunting their sons, their sons' sons,
Pick-and-shovel buddies
Hitchhiking, gunnysack
Over one shoulder, disappeared
Into a dark night
Of tyranny.

From the factory,
From the orchard,
From the entrance hall
Of hope
With unmistakable voices,
Chilean women
Set out walking.

Fabrics of jute and hemp
Made for long workdays'
Packaging, in their skillful
Hands, acquired
Texture and sovereignty.

Chilean sacking,
A clatter of color
With echoing thread
Embroidering its skin,

And the nearness of sons, sons
Of sons, boyfriends, husbands,
Fathers, brothers, lovers,
Kneading their daily bread.

Under a bell-shaped sun
Of hope, simple Chilean women,
From the starry cosmogony
Of their ancestors, defied
The black angels of the west
With stitches
Of love and free will.

Oh Chile triumphant, unselfish,
Your plazas burnished with sun,
Arpilleras
Your fields and green pastures,
Arpilleras
Your filaments of memory.
Arpilleras.