Litoral andino: Retrospección y perspectivas en torno al problema marítimo.

Ever since Bolivia lost her littoral provinces to Chile as the result of the War of the Pacific, much of her foreign policy has been devoted to recovering an outlet to the Pacific. This book deals with Bolivia’s past, present, and future efforts to achieve this objective. In the first part of the book, the author traces the history of Bolivia’s problema marítimo from its origins through the currently stalled negotiations between the military regimes of Bolivia and Chile. The second part emphasizes strategy for future negotiations.

The author contends that the antagonism between the positions of Peru and Chile regarding the manner of satisfying Bolivia’s aspiration to recover a foothold on the Pacific has dampened hopes for a quick solution. Nevertheless, the negotiations have served to clarify the positions of the governments of Santiago and Lima, and in the second round of negotiations Bolivia will have to prepare terms acceptable to both Chile and Peru. Above all, however, Bolivia must insist upon an outlet to the sea connecting Bolivian national territory to a real port where transportation and communication facilities can be established and over which Bolivia has absolute sovereignty. If a tripartite arrangement which satisfies these terms is not forthcoming, Bolivia will have to seek a direct understanding with Chile based upon mutual cooperation and assistance. Whichever mode future negotiations take, the author argues, Bolivia’s right to return to the sea has been implicitly recognized by Chile and Peru in the first phase of negotiations. Thus Bolivia should continue the dialogue initiated in 1975 in order to overcome the obstacles obstructing its quest for an outlet to the Pacific without which Bolivian sovereignty remains incomplete. Meanwhile, the present Bolivian leaders must strive to create a new Bolivia strong enough to defend its rights to the sea.

Based upon only a few secondary sources and lacking footnotes, this book is of little use to serious scholars. Although somewhat polemical and lacking in depth, it does give the reader a convenient overview of Bolivia’s efforts to regain an outlet to the Pacific and the current state of negotiations.

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Sheila Cassidy is an English doctor who worked in a lower-class area of Santiago, Chile. In November 1975 she was arrested for giving medical attention to MIR underground leaders who were being sought by the Chilean secret police.

This book is an account of that experience which included two months of imprisonment and some highly effective torture when she was first arrested. If there should be any apologist for the Pinochet regime that does not believe the many tales of torture and brutality in Chilean prisons, the book may help to convince them.

The merit of the volume is that it does give the foreigner a brief glimpse of life among the Chilean working classes during and after the Allende government.