

Obituary

Alvaro Fernando Jara Hantke (1923–1998)

Alvaro Jara died from complications following a heart attack, on April 20, 1998, in Santiago, Chile. Among an outstanding generation of Chilean historians that included Mario Góngora, Jaime Eyzaguirre, and Rolando Mellafe, Alvaro Jara brought new questions, innovative approaches, and high energy to the study of history in a country where imposing bronze statues of former scholars and poets may be found along the principle avenues. Brought up in Talca in a family of prosperous flour millers, Jara demonstrated a precocious interest in the intellectual and political life of his country, which led him to Santiago and the Universidad de Chile. At 25, in an episode little known until very recently, he was assigned as personal guide and guard to Pablo Neruda during the poet's nearly year-long underground sojourn following passage of the "ley maldita" in 1948.

Even before his graduation in History from the Universidad de Chile in 1957, where he was subsequently to spend his entire academic life, Professor Jara practiced what he later preached, the need to go to the sources. In his case that meant extraction from the hard rock of sixteenth-century archival documents the information that enabled him to examine in several fundamental articles the earliest relations between the native people of Chile and the European invaders. Study at the Sorbonne with Fernand Braudel and Jacques Lafaye led to *Guerre et société au Chili* (1961), an analysis of the seemingly interminable conflict between Spaniards and Mapuche on the southern frontier, a book subsequently translated into Spanish that through five editions has sold over 20,000 copies.

Work in France and later visiting professorships at Berkeley (1964), Harvard (1967), Cologne, and Bielefeld, and his appointment to the Simón Bolívar Chair at Cambridge expanded Professor Jara's interests and perspective. Fellowships from the Social Science Research Council, the Guggenheim Foundation, the Banco de España, as well as Chilean sources, enabled him to explore

archives in Mexico and Spain as well as the Bancroft and Newberry libraries in the United States. All of this provided a continental and even world frame for a vast second project in which he ultimately aimed to assess the total flows of precious metals from America to Europe and Asia and to determine the overall global costs of the Spanish Empire in America over its three-hundred-year existence.

Alvaro Jara brought both to the study of history and the appreciation of life a combative, passionate, and tenacious zeal, together with a highly articulate, acute, and sometimes curt intelligence. Inclined to be reserved and wary of fellow academics, he was fiercely loyal to a handful of friends, generous and supremely tender to his children and grandchild, and wise and helpful to the present generation of younger scholars in Chile. He is survived by two sons, Alejandro and Hernán Jara; their mother, Señora Sara Weitzman; a daughter-in-law, Carola Mallol; and a grandson, Sebastián Jara Mallol.

A partial list of Alvaro Jara's publications include the following: *Los asientos de trabajo y la provisión de mano de obra para los no encomenderos en la ciudad de Santiago, 1586–1600* (Santiago: Universidad de Chile, 1959); *El salario de los indios y los sesmos de oro en la tasa de Santillán* (Santiago: Universidad de Chile, 1961); *Guerra y sociedad en Chile: la transformación de la Guerra de Arauco y la esclavitud de los indios* (Santiago: Universidad de Chile, 1971); *Problemas y métodos de la historia económica hispanoamericana* (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1969); *Fuentes para la historia del trabajo en el Reino de Chile: legislación, 1546–1810*, 2 vols. (with Sonia Pinto) (Santiago: Universidad de Chile, 1982–83); and *Trabajo y salario indígena, siglo XVI* (Santiago: Ed. Universitaria, 1987).

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