

The person who wrote these notes passed away the moment his feet touched Argentine soil again. The person who reorganizes and polishes them, me, is no longer, at least I am not the person I once was. All this wandering around "Our America with a capital A" has changed me more than I thought.

In any photographic manual you'll come across the strikingly clear image of a landscape, apparently taken by night, in the light of a full moon. The secret behind this magical vision of "darkness at noon" is usually revealed in the accompanying text. Readers of this book will not be well versed about the sensitivity of my retina — I can hardly sense it myself. So they will not be able to check what is said against a photographic plate to discover at precisely what time each of my "pictures" was taken. What this means is that if I present you with an image and say, for instance, that it was taken at night, you can either believe me, or not; it matters little to me, since if you don't happen to know the scene I've "photographed" in my notes, it will be hard for you to find an alternative to the truth I'm about to tell. But I'll leave you now, with myself, the man I used to be...



## PRÓDRAMOS forewarnings

It was a morning in October. Taking advantage of the holiday on the 17th I had gone to Córdoba.\* We were at Alberto Granado's

\*At the time a national holiday to commemorate Juan Perón's 1945 release from prison. General Perón was president of Argentina from 1946 to 1955 and from 1973 until his death in 1974.

place under the vine, drinking sweet *mate*\* and commenting on recent events in this "bitch of a life," tinkering with La Poderosa II.\*\* Alberto was lamenting the fact that he had to quit his job at the leper colony in San Francisco del Chañar and about how poor his pay was now at the Español Hospital. I had also quit my job, but unlike Alberto I was very happy to leave. I was feeling uneasy, more than anything because having the spirit of a dreamer I was particularly jaded with medical school, hospitals and exams.

Along the roads of our daydream we reached remote countries, navigated tropical seas and traveled all through Asia. And suddenly, slipping in as if part of our fantasy, the question arose:

"Why don't we go to North America?"

"North America? But how?"

"On La Poderosa, man."

The trip was decided just like that, and it never erred from the basic principle laid down in that moment: improvisation. Alberto's brothers joined us in a round of *mate* as we sealed our pact never to give up until we had realized our dream. So began the monotonous business of chasing visas, certificates and documents, that is to say, of overcoming the many hurdles modern nations erect in the paths of would-be travelers. To save face, just in case, we decided to say we were going to Chile.

My most important mission before leaving was to take exams in as many subjects as possible; Alberto's to prepare the bike for the long journey, and to study and plan our route. The enormity of our endeavor escaped us in those moments; all we could see was the dust on the road ahead and ourselves on the bike, devouring kilometers in our flight northward.

\*The Argentine national drink, a tea-like beverage made from the herb *mate*.

\*\*Granado's Norton 500 motorcycle, literally "The Mighty One."