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Canto porque es necesario cantar:  
The New Song Movement in Chile, 1973-1983

by

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CASO PORQUE ES NECESARIO CONTAR:  
THE NEW BONE MOVEMENT IN MEXICO, 1973-1983

by

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"Para el camino"

"For the Road"

Canto a la angustia y a las alegrías.	I sing of anguish and joy.
Canto porque es necesario cantar.	I sing because it's necessary to sing.
Para ir dejando una huella en los días,	To leave my mark on time,
para ir diciendo cosas prohibidas.	to say forbidden things. <sup>1</sup>

The Latin American New Song movement does not fit the usual stereotypes of Latin American popular music. Songs such as "Para el camino" (above) cannot be placed into the common categories of salsa, ballads, Spanish-language versions of U.S. hit songs, or popularized traditional styles such as the ranchera and cumbia. Although the New Song movement is not as well known as the more typical styles, its greater social significance has had an impact in Latin America far beyond the musical realm. The roots of New Song can be found in the resurgence of interest in traditional folkloric music that took place in the Southern Cone from the late 1950s to the early 1960s. Since the 1960s, the New Song movement has spread throughout the rest of Latin America, becoming an important cultural expression that directly addresses current social tensions in the region.

Although each country has developed local variations of New Song that reflect particular social and political conditions and indigenous musical styles, the movement as a whole can be characterized as a fusion of traditional

folkloric musical forms with sociopolitical ("protest") lyrics. Rather than seeking to create escapist entertainment, this music is intended to express current reality and social problems in a meaningful style. New Song musicians share a commitment to honest expression and absolute opposition to what they term the typical "disposable consumer songs" of most commercial music.

Chile's Nueva Canción was one of the first New Song movements to emerge in Latin America. Beginning in the mid-1960s, it grew and consolidated throughout the rest of the decade and flourished during the 1970-73 presidency of Salvador Allende. The music of the Nueva Canción was outlawed after the military coup d'état of 1973, and the best-known musicians of the Allende period now make music in exile. They still record and tour frequently, and their names are internationally recognized: Quilapayún, Inti-Illimani, Isabel and Angel Parra.

The visibility of the exiled musicians and control of the Chilean media by the military government have tended to obscure the fact that music is also being made inside Chile. One strand of popular music there has been named Canto Nuevo. Although in most of Latin America the terms Canto Nuevo and Nueva Canción are used interchangeably to describe the movement and both translate into English as "New Song," in Chile Nueva Canción specifically indicates music made before 1973, while Canto Nuevo refers to the movement since the coup d'état.

Under the military dictatorship, the task of Canto Nuevo has been to communicate the reality of a people whose outlets for group expression and social interaction have been intentionally and systematically restricted. As such, Canto Nuevo has been inherently dissident and consequently has been repressed and marginalized since its inception. This essay will present a brief history of the pre-1973 Nueva Canción and then will examine the development of Canto Nuevo in Chile over the past ten years, from its beginnings in 1974 as the conscious continuation of the Nueva Canción through its gradual evolution and stylistic expansion. Throughout its development, Canto Nuevo has been affected by Chilean governmental actions and policies, as will be noted below. Dates given for the phases of the movement are necessarily approximate because as one of its members explained, Canto Nuevo is "not just a post-1973 way of singing. In what is said and how it's said poetically and musically, Canto Nuevo is a process."<sup>2</sup>

#### Nueva Canción from the 1960s to 1973

Chile's Nueva Canción developed in the 1960s out of a process of renewed interest in the country's traditional music. Rejection of U.S. cultural domination, which was manifested musically by the flood of U.S. and European popular music on the radio, stimulated recognition of the value of Chilean culture. As part of the search for a genuine national identity, young musicians began to perform

indigenous Chilean music. The pioneering work of Violeta Parra in gathering traditional Chilean music, promoting it through radio and live performance, and encouraging developing musicians was crucial to this process.

Although she died before the New Song movement was fully established, Violeta Parra brought to prominence many of the features that together characterize the movement. Primary among those elements was an admiration for authentic Chilean culture and music. Violeta Parra's love of Chile found expression in numerous artistic activities, but her devotion to the people and culture of her country is most evident in the effort she put into collecting hundreds of folk songs from every region of Chile so that they would not be lost forever. Through her efforts, the Chilean public became aware of Chile's powerful musical traditions. A friend of hers said, "We were stuck in North American and European culture, listening to their music, imitating it, watching their films . . . Latin American things had no value . . . and Violeta was like a kind of bridge, a connection with Chile . . . There was nothing in Chile. But there was all that life in the common people and Violeta had the ability to become part of it, love it, and give it back in her songs. That is, she acted as a translator, so that we could know ourselves."<sup>3</sup> Violeta Parra also wrote songs based on Chilean folk music to express her own ideas, thus setting the pattern for

those who were to follow. This 1962 song is one of her most famous compositions.

"La carta"

Me mandaron una carta  
por el correo temprano  
en esa carta me dicen  
que cayó preso mi hermano.  
.....  
Yo que me encuentro tan lejos  
esperando una noticia,  
me viene a decir la carta  
que en mi patria no hay justicia.  
Los hambrientos piden pan,  
plomo les da la milicia, sí.  
.....  
Por suerte tengo guitarra  
para llorar mi dolor,  
también tengo nueve hermanos  
fuera del que se m'engrilló.  
Los nueve son comunistas  
con el favor de mi Dios, sí.

"The Letter"

They sent me a letter  
in the early mail  
in the letter they tell me  
they took my brother to jail.  
.....  
I am so far away  
waiting for news,  
a letter comes to tell me  
there is no justice in my country.  
The hungry people ask for bread  
the militia gives them lead, yes.  
.....  
Luckily I have a guitar  
with which to lament my pain,  
I also have nine brothers  
besides the one they locked up.  
The nine are communists  
by the grace of God, yes.<sup>4</sup>

In 1964 Violeta Parra established a center of popular art in La Reina, a neighborhood on the outskirts of Santiago. She named the center "La Carpa de La Reina" and ran it almost singlehandedly. The music performed at La Carpa had to meet her high standards of quality and authenticity, and she coached promising musicians toward those ends. Many of the singers who became the foundation of

the New Chilean Song movement performed at La Carpa.

By the time of her suicide in 1967, Violeta Parra had become widely known and recognized for her extraordinary creativity and contribution to her country. Through her energy and commitment, she had created an awareness among Chileans of the value of their own traditions. Musicologist Gaston Soublette, who worked with her, says that Violeta "took what before had been an object of more or less private investigation and she gave it back to the people."<sup>5</sup> It is difficult for the casual observer to comprehend Violeta Parra's tremendous impact on the emergence of the musical expression that became the New Chilean Song. No one else in Chilean musical history is so universally acclaimed as a key figure. Cuban singer Silvio Rodríguez sums up her importance not only in Chile but for all of the Latin American New Song movement with this succinct statement: "Violeta is fundamental. Nothing would have been as it is had it not been for Violeta."<sup>6</sup>

During the 1960s, the New Chilean Song coalesced around Violeta Parra's cultural center and the peña--a small coffeehouse dedicated to folklore--established in Santiago by her two oldest children, Isabel and Angel. As musicians worked together at La Carpa de la Reina and La Peña de los Parras to refine their skills, they began to compose music that employed traditional styles to express contemporary ideas, particularly their growing

political awareness. Recognition that a unique form of expression was developing came in 1969 with a music festival that publicly "brought together for the first time a group of composers and interpreters whose artistic activity had inclined for some time towards a type of song which, although it still hadn't found its name, was clearly distinguishable . . ."<sup>7</sup> The festival, sponsored by the Universidad Católica in Santiago and organized by Ricardo García, was called the Primer Festival de la Nueva Canción Chilena, and from this festival the New Chilean Song was formally named. University Rector Fernando Castillo defined New Song when he opened the festival with these words: "Perhaps popular song is the art that best defines a community. But lately in our country we are experiencing a reality that is not ours . . . Our purpose here today is to search for an expression that describes our reality . . . How many foreign singers come here and get us all stirred up, only to leave us emptier than ever when they leave? And isn't it true that our radio and television programs seldom encourage the creativity of our artists . . .? Let our fundamental concern be that our own art be deeply rooted in the Chilean spirit so that when we sing--be it badly or well--we express genuine happiness and pain; happiness and pain that are our own."<sup>8</sup> Reflecting the mood of the festival and the times was this song by Víctor Jara, which was chosen as best song of the festival.

"Plegaria a un labrador"

Levántate y mírate las manos  
para crecer estréchala a tu hermano  
juntos iremos unidos en la sangre  
hoy es el tiempo que puede ser mañana.  
Líbranos de aquel que nos domina  
en la miseria.  
Tráenos tu reino de justicia e  
igualdad.

"Prayer to a worker"

Arise and look at your hands  
extend them to your brother so you  
together we will go united in blood <sup>may grow</sup>  
Today is the time that could become  
tomorrow.  
Free us from the one who dominates us  
in misery.  
Bring us your kingdom of justice and  
equality.<sup>9</sup>

By the 1970 presidential campaign, a coherent group of musicians existed, ready to actively support the candidacy of Unidad Popular (UP) representative Salvador Allende. Artists of the New Chilean Song movement accompanied Allende to political events, sang at meetings and rallies, and composed songs to disseminate Unidad Popular concepts to the people. "Venceremos" by Claudio Iturra and Sergio Ortega became Allende's campaign song and was sung constantly throughout the campaign.

"Venceremos"

Desde el hondo crisol de la patria  
se levanta el clamor popular  
ya se anuncia la nueva alborada  
todo Chile comienza cantar.  
. . . . .  
Venceremos, venceremos  
mil cadenas habrá que romper  
venceremos, venceremos  
la miseria sabremos vencer.  
Sembraremos las tierras de gloria  
socialista será el porvenir  
todos juntos seremos la historia  
a cumplir, a cumplir, a cumplir.

"We Will Triumph"

From the depths of our country  
the cry of the people rises up  
now the new dawn is announced  
all of Chile begins to sing.  
. . . . .  
We will triumph, we will triumph  
a thousand chains will have to be  
broken  
we will triumph, we will triumph  
we will know how to conquer misery.  
We will sow the fields of glory  
socialism will be the future  
together we will make history  
carry on, carry on, carry on.<sup>10</sup>



After Allende's election, New Song musicians continued their active involvement with the Unidad Popular government, playing at community gatherings and political events and thus taking their message to the people through the medium of music which was recognized as "a major amplifier in the cultural system."<sup>11</sup> Songs were written about every important event during the Allende years and were widely circulated. Shortly after the election, a record album detailing the UP program in song was released. Classically trained Chilean composers Sergio Ortega and Luis Advis collaborated with the New Song group Inti-Illimani to produce "Canto al Programa," which was part of an effort to use "all available means of communication" to present the UP program in a language and style that were accessible to the people.<sup>12</sup> The album featured songs such as "Canción de la propiedad social y privada," "Vals de la educación para todos," and this explanation of agrarian policy:

"Canción de la reforma agraria"

Ya se acaba el latifundio  
el campo al que lo trabaja  
se hace la reforma agraria  
el momento es importante-  
nadie se ponga adelante.  
  
y los técnicos agrarios  
ya se ponen al servicio  
del campesino chileno  
que ha encontrado su destino.

"Song of Agrarian Reform"

The latifundio has ended  
the land goes to those who work it  
we're carrying out agrarian reform  
timing is important-  
don't jump the gun.  
  
and the agrarian technicians  
are now at the service  
of the Chilean peasants  
who have found their destiny.<sup>13</sup>

According to Isabel Parra, daughter of Violeta Parra, and an important member of the New Song movement, "We were totally involved in what was happening."<sup>14</sup> The best-known song in the history of the entire Latin American New Song movement came out of this period in Chile. "El pueblo unido jamás será vencido" is still sung and chanted in Latin America and around the world as a rallying cry.

"El pueblo unido jamás será vencido"	"The People United Will Never Be Defeated"
De pie, luchar,	Stand up, struggle,
el pueblo va a triunfar	the people will triumph
será mejor	the life that is to come
la vida que vendrá.	will be better.
. . . . .	. . . . .
y ahora el pueblo	and now the people
que se alza en la lucha	who rise up in the struggle
con voz de gigante	with the voice of a giant
gritando 'adelante!'	shouting "onward!"
El pueblo unido jamás será vencido!	The people united will never be defeated! <sup>15</sup>

September 11, 1973 to mid-1975

That spirit of militant optimism was dramatically ended by the military junta that took power in Chile on September 11, 1973. The junta's stated goal was to eradicate Marxism and its objective was to reverse the direction of Chilean political and economic development. To achieve these ends, the government and all public institutions were completely restructured, unions were dissolved, political parties were banned, and most opportunities for people to gather were severely restricted.

The observations of Chilean sociologist José Joaquín Brunner suggest the impact of these restrictions. Brunner believes that analysis of any culture requires studying what he calls "the structuring of public space," that sphere where people can exchange ideas about topics of general interest. With the advent of the military government in Chile, public space was closed. "In effect, from the most molecular case, such as face-to-face conversation, to massive instances, such as communication organized through radio, press, and television, the communicative dimension of [Chilean] society [was] radically transformed."<sup>16</sup> Such radical effects were achieved despite the fact that the government did not have a specific cultural policy, or what Chilean analyst Hernán Pozo defines as a "coherent and deliberate set of actions and measures tending to impose a value system or a vision of the world." Pozo goes on to comment that nonetheless, "governmental actions had cultural consequences and some of these were more or less intended or expected."<sup>17</sup>

Soledad Bianchi, a Chilean critic and essayist in exile, has analyzed these "cultural consequences." During the first year of military rule in Chile, cultural activity virtually ceased.<sup>18</sup> This period, which is commonly known as the "apagón cultural" (cultural blackout), Bianchi terms the phase of destruction. Bianchi asserts that in order to make a "definitive break in the history of Chile,"

the military "dedicated themselves to erasing everything that seemed dangerous, subversive, and prejudicial to the political, social, and economic project that they proposed." The government took over the mass media, applied strict censorship, and "closed down all means of expression that were not supportive of the new authorities."<sup>19</sup>

Affected by the media censorship was the music of Nueva Canción. It was banned from the airwaves, removed from record stores, confiscated, and burned along with books and other "subversive" material during the house-to-house searches that immediately followed the coup. Its musicians were exiled, imprisoned, and, in the well-known case of Víctor Jara, killed.<sup>20</sup> Traditional musical instruments had become so completely associated with the politics of the deposed government that playing them was tantamount to subversion. Eduardo Carrasco, member of the exiled group Quilapayún and New Song analyst, explains, "National music came to be so closely identified with the revolutionary struggle that during the first week of the . . . military government, they called a meeting of the most prominent folklorists to inform them that certain folkloric instruments like the quena and charango were prohibited."<sup>21</sup>

Eventually that prohibition was circumvented by conservatory musicians who formed an "Andean Baroque" group that began to play in churches. No sanctions were taken

against performances of Bach and other classical composers on traditional folk instruments, due in great part to the protection provided by the church. Barroco Andino provided an opening for the reappearance of traditional music and was part of the "Andean Boom" of 1975-76, a strong resurgence of the popularity of indigenous Andean music in Chile. Although the content of the songs was innocuous, the choice of instruments nevertheless added political overtones, as is demonstrated by a Chilean musician's comment that the government considered singers to be "extremists and subversives for the mere act of accompanying themselves with charangos or quenas--instruments proscribed by a ridiculous order that nobody respects any more."<sup>22</sup> At first this music was confined to churches, where it was often performed at solidarity and human rights events. Gradually, small peñas made the music available to the general public.

#### Mid-1975 to 1977

From the strict folkloric interpretations of the Andean Boom, musicians moved toward re-creating the music of the pre-1973 Nueva Canción, but they carefully avoided performing any overtly political songs. The revival of this repertoire was quickly dubbed "Canto Nuevo," a term selected to "suggest a tie with Nueva Canción."<sup>23</sup> Canto Nuevo was both the resurrection of Nueva Canción and a

response to the changed situation in Chile. One Chilean musician commented, "the only thing nuevo about Canto Nuevo is the conditions under which it is being produced."<sup>24</sup>

The most notable of these conditions was the "closure of public space," which José Joaquín Brunner described as "permitting the authoritarian bloc to . . . impose . . . a single conception of the world that must be assumed, under conditions of force, by everyone else."<sup>25</sup> Canto Nuevo was attempting to express a different worldview, one that was not available through the mass media. Echoing the intention of the original Nueva Canción of the 1960s, Canto Nuevo was a conscious response to the domination of the media by "consumer art, generally foreign."<sup>26</sup> The initial audience for Canto Nuevo was "an enthusiastic, essentially dissident public reacting against the transnational culture that the officialist communications media are trying to impose."<sup>27</sup>

After several years of cultural blackout, Canto Nuevo musicians were working consciously "to defend, promote and search for a national cultural identity, that is, to identify and embody the reality that the majority of the country lives."<sup>28</sup> During this period, numerous organizations were created to support the activities of Canto Nuevo. The Peña Doña Javiera Carrera was established in Santiago in 1975 and became an important showcase for

Canto Nuevo. In 1976 Radio Chilena began to devote airtime to this music in a new nightly program, "Nuestro Canto." In the same year, the Alerce record company came into being in Santiago. In the words of its founder, Ricardo García, Alerce was created "to rescue a series of scattered values, the leftovers of a movement--the Nueva Canción--which was tied to my own life."<sup>29</sup> In 1977 an independent concert promotion agency was formed, while at the University of Chile a large number of folkloric groups banded together to organize what would become the Agrupación Cultural Universitaria, the first independent student organization since the coup d'état.

The presence of active musicians and a developing organizational framework did not imply that Canto Nuevo faced no difficulties. While government tactics had shifted toward more selective repression of activist political opposition, legal and extralegal controls were still prevalent. In order to produce a concert in a public auditorium, the sponsor had to solicit permission from the local police and submit a sample of song lyrics and a list of all performers. The police could--and did--deny permission for any singer or song, or for the entire event. Often permission was not granted until shortly before showtime, leaving producers, performers, and the public in a state of uncertainty. Permission was also frequently

denied or revoked at the last minute.<sup>30</sup> Access to the mass media, beyond the radio program specifically designed for the purpose, was virtually nil. There was (and is) a blacklist of performers not allowed to appear on television or radio.

But more commonly, control was sporadic and often informal. As a concert promoter described the situation, "It's a very irregular set-up; there are many irregularities in these matters. Nothing is defined, the rules of the game are not established but keep changing. If you look for the responsible party, you're not going to find him because maybe there's not one person responsible. Maybe the producer of the program invited a singer to perform and then suddenly, in the hall he ran into someone who said 'I understand that singer's going to appear on the show. Hey, be careful!' And that's it! The producer thinks it over, and then, dying of embarrassment, he calls the singer and cancels the performance."<sup>31</sup> On other occasions, a government official might "suggest" to a television station manager that it might be better if a certain singer did not perform. The manager in turn would "suggest" the idea to the producer and so on down the line. Eventually word got back to the performer that a higher authority had disallowed the performance.

In spite of all these difficulties, 1977 was an active year for Canto Nuevo. In addition to the problematic



concerts, there were always solidarity events, church-sponsored performances, and a never-ending demand for musicians to participate in community activities. With a recording company and other institutions specifically intended to promote its activities, a growing public, and developing artists, Canto Nuevo had become established.

### 1978 to 1981

Once firmly constituted, Canto Nuevo began to grow beyond the simple repetition of themes from the Nueva Canción into creating music more directly relevant to the times. Musicians composed their own songs, in which they attempted to deal with Chilean reality as they were experiencing it. This process corresponds to Soledad Bianchi's postulation of a second stage in postcoup art, in which "the social and critical content [of artistic expression] acquire increased clarity,"<sup>32</sup> and the process coincided with a shift on the part of the government toward more sophisticated and subtle means of controlling political opposition.

The musicians' search for original forms of expression included experimentation with both musical style and song lyrics. Musically, composers moved away from strict adherence to traditional instrumentation and rhythms toward the inclusion of electronic instruments, classical harmonies, and jazz elements. The need to express ideas in lyrics

that if directly stated would not get past the censors led to the development of highly poetic texts and complex metaphors. Eduardo Carrasco explains the use of metaphor this way: "Despite being subjected to the most savage repression in our history, the song has not stopped being political. What is significant in the present situation in Chile is that our people have invented another language, a way to say things without saying them, in which the smallest allusion says more than a hundred speeches."<sup>33</sup> Musicians complained bitterly about the necessary self-censorship, but it did not prevent them from getting their message across. For example, the following song about the departure of a happy puppeteer expresses an implicit undercurrent of rebellion:

"El joven titiritero"

Titiritero joven peregrino  
navegante de todos los caminos  
enamorado de su azul destino  
titiritero joven ya no vino.  
  
Titiritero, crece nuevamente  
hazte primero luz, luego simiente.  
Ven a nacer en mi país naciente  
y arranca los dolores de esta gente.  
.....  
hagamos una senda más brillante  
Aunque vayamos contra la corriente.

"Young Puppeteer"

Puppeteer, young wanderer  
navigator of all paths  
in love with his golden destiny  
young puppeteer never came back.  
  
Puppeteer, grow again  
become light first, then seed.  
Come and be born in my infant country  
and wipe away the people's sorrows.  
.....  
let's make a brighter path  
even if we go against the current.<sup>34</sup>

Some songs had dense, intricate story lines and overlapping metaphors. Often in performance, a spoken introduction would provide the clue to the song's hidden meaning. In other songs the references were relatively self-evident. Winter was often used to symbolize the difficult conditions in Chile after the coup d'état, as is illustrated in the following song.

"Cuando llega el invierno"

Cuando llega el invierno  
las noches se duermen frías.  
Cuando llega el invierno  
más se endurece la vida  
se nos escarcha el alma  
se congela la esperanza.

Quédate, compañera  
ya pasa el temporal.  
Cuando se aclare el cielo  
volveremos a volar.

"When Winter Comes"

When winter comes  
nights bring cold sleep.  
When winter comes  
life gets harder  
our souls frost over  
hope freezes.

Stay, my friend  
this bad storm will pass.  
When the sky clears  
we will fly again.<sup>35</sup>

Such songs represented attempts to describe the situation in Chile, to provide an alternative to the mind-numbing commercial music that dominated the market, and to "reflect the feelings of the common people in today's society."<sup>36</sup> Chilean essayist Soledad Bianchi observed: "When art attempts to be more than mere entertainment, a basic feature that characterizes it is the use of subtle language that escapes formulas and passwords. Painting, theater,

literature, or song express themselves in suggestive and subtle form . . . Responding to the need to bypass censorship . . . their authors must carry out a greater search that in the end is more creative . . . " The resulting work is not a finished product in itself but instead is completed "within the individual experience and the social and collective context," through interpretation by the listener or reader or through the interaction of the performer and the spectator.<sup>37</sup>

A major concert in 1977 provided a dramatic illustration of this system of communication. "La Gran Noche del Folklore," billed as Alerce Records' awards ceremony for the folklorists of the year, was one of the first large shows of its kind since 1973 and the partisans came out in force. The auditorium's seven thousand seats sold out quickly, and another thousand people clamored in the street for admission. Such a response suggests that this concert was more than simply a public gathering of folklore aficionados. "With the complete closure of all channels of participation, the music became the cohesive element," said one person who attended the concert. "I saw people that I hadn't seen since 1973, people whom I thought were in prison or dead,"<sup>38</sup> The concert served as meeting place for thousands who had been unable or afraid to gather under any other circumstances. For one night, a public space had been created for a nonofficial gathering.

The award for the best new group went to Aquelarre, a Canto Nuevo group that mixed traditional style with classical and modern elements. The group performed a song about Manuel Rodríguez, a hero of Chile's war of independence. Like others of its kind, this song recounts his adventures; and as a paean to a long-dead national hero, it was relatively immune from censorship.

"El cautivo de Til Til"

Dicen que es Manuel su nombre  
y que se lo llevan  
camino a Til Til  
.....  
Dicen que en la guerra fue  
el mejor y en la ciudad  
deslumbraba como el rayo  
de la libertad.

"The Captive of Til Til"

They say Manuel is his name  
and that they're taking him  
to Til Til  
.....  
They say that in the war he was  
the best and in the city  
he shone like the ray  
of liberty.<sup>39</sup>

When the group sang the word "liberty," the audience erupted into applause and cheers.<sup>40</sup> This explosive reaction to a single word was a powerful statement under the extremely restricted conditions of Chile in 1977. This event illustrates what a member of Aquelarre described as a communication code between the public and the musicians. "To leave to the songs and the applause what one would like to say with words has been perhaps the most important challenge of Canto Nuevo."<sup>41</sup>

The government was not unaware of the success of La Gran Noche del Folklore and subsequent concerts. Indeed,

many observers contend that the authorities were as disturbed by the possibility of a large public gathering of dissidents as by the content of the music itself, and by 1978 the government had apparently had enough. Permission for the third Gran Noche del Folklore, which was to have been held in May 1978, was revoked the day before the concert.<sup>42</sup> Alerce Records attempted to schedule another music festival in August of 1978, but permission for it was denied outright.<sup>43</sup> The government's repeated denial of permission, rather than a blanket prohibition, effectively put an end to large concerts.

As Canto Nuevo demonstrated that it could attract large audiences, government efforts to suppress it increased. The methods of control consisted of preventing the music from reaching the public via mass media or major concerts. The radio program that had been a primary outlet for Canto Nuevo was cut back from nightly to weekly programming and then was taken off the air altogether.<sup>44</sup> One popular Canto Nuevo group, Illapu, left Chile for greener European pastures in 1980 and was subsequently denied permission to return.<sup>45</sup> Changes in taxation rules effectively gave the government the power to decide what constituted a "cultural" event and in 1982 drove the concert production agency that had been affiliated with Canto Nuevo out of business.<sup>46</sup> In 1981, more than eight hundred

cassettes of early, nonpolitical songs by Víctor Jara, the slain singer, were confiscated on grounds that they violated an internal security law. The importer of the material was given what he called "a little vacation in jail."<sup>47</sup> He was soon released and six months later the charge was dropped for lack of merit. By 1982 Víctor Jara records were being sold openly in Santiago record stores.<sup>48</sup> Such incidents illustrate Canto Nuevo's ambivalent status; it has been allowed to exist, but in a perpetually precarious state.

#### 1981 to 1983

In 1981 Canto Nuevo became more available to the public via increased, yet limited, television and radio exposure. Although still a minority expression, it began to gain a larger following. One of the causes of this newfound popularity was Canto Nuevo's growing presence at Chile's annual Festival Internacional de la Canción at Viña del Mar. The Viña del Mar festival, which is extensively covered by the Chilean press, has included several Canto Nuevo performers in recent years. Although they have sung their most innocuous songs, their presence at Viña del Mar has helped legitimize the term Canto Nuevo as a type of Chilean popular music.

At the same time, young people were tiring of being bombarded by the predictable sameness of commercial disco

music, which was saturating the airwaves. They consequently became more receptive to other musical styles. Simultaneously, the growing availability of cassette tape recorders facilitated informal music exchange, and gave greater exposure to Canto Nuevo and to other music unavailable in Chile. For example, the music of Cuban singer Silvio Rodríguez circulated widely via this informal network, becoming extraordinarily popular without commercial backing. His finely crafted poetry and ballad style introduced a new dimension for musicians to explore, greatly influencing Canto Nuevo.

Another factor in Canto Nuevo's growth was television, an important source of exposure of popular music. The severe economic recession of 1980-81 made it financially impossible for Chilean television stations to pay foreign stars. They thus were forced to hire local talent, which was considerably cheaper. As always, only a few Canto Nuevo musicians had access to this medium. The blacklist and unofficial pressures prevented some singers from appearing, and those who did appear were told exactly what they might and might not sing on television. Despite these attempts to neutralize them and government efforts to promote less threatening artists, the exposure was useful to the musicians and to Canto Nuevo. The fact that the Canto Nuevo repertoire began to include songs acceptable for the mass media was not accidental. For several years,



restrictions on Chilean society had been slowly easing. Previously Canto Nuevo had been one of the few ways to express dissident views which made it a closed, strictly defined musical current. As other channels of interaction and expression were opened, such as occurred with the 1979 authorization of unions and confederations to meet without previous permission, Canto Nuevo could begin to widen its scope. Songs about everyday life and even love songs began to appear in the Canto Nuevo repertoire, which had once consisted almost exclusively of metaphorically disguised protest. Within this slight expansion of public space, musicians found not only the latitude to sing many types of songs, but also greater freedom to express themselves. The same composer who had written about hope freezing in winter now encouraged the listener to look ahead to the not-so-distant future:

"Vamos a la patria"

Véngase que vamos  
y sin miedo .  
Que vamos a cantar nuevas canciones  
Que vamos hacia allá después de todo  
Que vamos a borrar este mal rato  
Que vamos a la patria  
y a su parto.

"Let's Go Home"

Come on, let's go  
and without fear .  
We're going to sing new songs  
We're going onward after all  
We're going to erase this bad moment  
We're going to our homeland  
and its birth.<sup>49</sup>

Recourse to sarcasm allowed comments that still could not be made directly, as in this song, which mocks even itself in its mimicry of the official promotion of consumerism as the universal panacea.

"En esta época"

En esta época en que vivo  
 todo es muy atractivo  
 en condiciones para ser feliz.  
 Hay mucha paz y mucho orden  
 ya no hay tanto desorden.  
 . . . . .  
 Ya se acabaron mis problemas  
 cada día tiende a mejorar.  
 El ápice de mi existencia  
 se mide en la confluencia  
 de los bienes que puedo comprar.

Estoy cansado de saber  
 que andan personas por allí  
 diciendo que esto aquí está muy mal  
 Esos poetas y cantantes,  
 escritores y estudiantes  
 que no saben más que reclamar  
 que no han visto las noticias  
 ya no hay tanto malicia  
 todo el mundo hoy puede comprar.  
 Hasta los pobres de hoy en día  
 fuman de categoría

"In These Times"

In these times  
 everything is very pleasant and  
 there are reasons to be happy.  
 There's lots of peace and lots of order  
 there's no longer such disorder  
 . . . . .  
 My problems are over  
 every day tends to get better.  
 The apex of my existence  
 is measured in the confluence  
 of the goods that I can buy.

I'm tired of hearing  
 that there are people who go around  
 saying that things here are very bad.  
 Those poets and singers,  
 writers and students  
 who know only how to make demands  
 who haven't seen the news  
 there's no longer such malice  
 everyone these days can buy.  
 Even the poor people these days  
 smoke classy cigarettes.<sup>50</sup>

One composer noted the change in possibilities for  
 expression in a song called "Metaphors in Extinction,"  
 while another dared to compose a song in honor of Nueva  
 Canción martyr Víctor Jara.

"Homenaje"

Tu vida era tu vida  
 la mía, otra historia  
 Y el mundo era testigo  
 de los días.  
 . . . . .  
 No vacilaremos  
 en tenderle una canción  
 un millón de voces  
 le dirán que no fue en vano  
 que nos diera su boca.  
 . . . . .  
 Víctor, gran ausente  
 desde siempre te cantamos.

Donde se han ido  
 los días de amistad  
 Donde está lo hermoso  
 que fuimos a sembrar  
 Y maldigo el presente.

"Homage"

Your life was your life  
 Mine, another story  
 And the world was witness  
 to the days.  
 . . . . .  
 We will not hesitate  
 to offer him a song  
 a million voices  
 will tell him that not in vain  
 did he give us his voice.  
 . . . . .  
 Victor, our missing hero  
 we'll always sing for you.

Where have  
 the days of friendship gone  
 Where is the beauty  
 we went out to sow?  
 I curse the present.<sup>51</sup>

While still a far cry from the name calling and partisan rallying cries of the pre-1973 Nueva Canción, such songs represent a significant shift away from lyrics about butterflies emerging from cocoons and the changing of the seasons.

May 1983 to December 1983

Important changes have been taking place in Chile since May of 1983, when the first of a series of Días Nacionales de Protesta was held. The incessant and expanding political "efervescencia," as some Chileans wryly call it, has affected all aspects of Chilean society; and as a principal vehicle of dissident expression, the Canto Nuevo movement has not

remained on the sidelines. Musicians are busier than ever, performing frequently at all kinds of meetings and solidarity events. For example, Canto Nuevo musicians were among the more than three hundred participants in the Congreso de Artistas y Trabajadores de la Cultura de Chile, which met in December of 1983 to create an organization to represent them and coordinate their work. "Toda la cultura contra la dictadura" was the slogan of this congress. At the opening session of the Congress, a song was dedicated to the Movimiento Democrático Popular, a recently formed opposition group.

"Canción al Movimiento Democrático  
Popular"

"Song to the Popular Democratic  
Movement"

De lejanas ciudades y campos  
suena lejos rebeldes clarines  
pobladores se unen al canto  
socialista el futuro de Chile.

From distant cities and fields  
the rebel bugles are heard  
the people join in the song,  
the future of Chile is socialist.

Se organiza el pueblo y resiste  
los batidos se encuentran sus manos  
trabajando por la patria libre.

The people organize and resist,  
the downtrodden find themselves  
working for a free country.

En el puño está la victoria  
el camino es ponerse de pie  
rebelión es el grito de gloria  
popular el acento también.

Victory is within our grasp  
the path is to get moving  
rebellion is the cry of glory  
and the tone is popular.

Compañero, espera la historia  
para el pueblo será el poder.

Compañero, wait for history  
the power will belong to the people.<sup>52</sup>

This song, which strikingly resembled Allende's 1970 campaign song "Venceremos" in both music and lyrics, was met

with ardent cheers and applause, followed by energetic chanting of "el pueblo unido jamás será vencido."<sup>53</sup>

Also in December of 1983, Alerce Records revived the concert series that had been disallowed for five years, this time without obstacles. The Chilean magazine Análisis described the significance of this event: "The struggle to recover democracy, the struggle for freedom of creation has not been in vain. Organizations are re-emerging, protests are taking place, some exiles are coming back, the prohibition on importing books can no longer be sustained . . . and on this list of small gains is also the return, after five years, of 'La Gran Noche del Folklore',"<sup>54</sup> The comeback of La Gran Noche del Folklore is a clear indicator of change in Chile. Canto Nuevo will continue to be affected by the tumultuous situation in the country and to be identified with it.

The continued existence of Canto Nuevo under the difficult conditions imposed by the military dictatorship demonstrates the persistent need for an outlet for popular expression. "The Nueva Canción and now Canto Nuevo are two moments in one single movement, with a present and a past," writes a Chilean journalist. "The popular song is alive because it has transcended fads, styles, and governments."<sup>55</sup> Because New Song is an expression of the reality of many Chileans, it has always been "the product of a people and

not of an industry."<sup>56</sup> The continued vitality of the New Chilean Song movement in the face of difficult and constantly changing political, social, and economic conditions testifies to its importance as a channel of popular expression. The musicians of the movement are committed to their role as "social communicators," and they are very much aware that Canto Nuevo is directly tied to present conditions in their country. Although those conditions may remain difficult, the musicians affirm that "the task of Canto Nuevo cannot be abandoned."<sup>57</sup> The following Canto Nuevo song embodies the unified sense of purpose not only of Chile's Canto Nuevo but of the richly diverse Latin American New Song movement.

"El canto del hombre"

El canto nació del hombre  
 nació con el pensamiento.  
 . . . . .  
 Los hombres cruzaron valles  
 fueron trazando senderos  
 traspasaron las montañas  
 y el canto anduvo con ellos.  
  
 Llegó a todos rincones  
 con su mensaje sincero  
 distinto en cada región  
 y el mismo en todos los pueblos.  
 . . . . .  
 Nadie pretenda cambiarlo  
 ni estancarlo mucho menos  
 que el canto cambia en el hombre  
 con la cultura y el tiempo.  
 . . . . .

"Song of Man"

Song was born of man  
 It was born along with thought.  
 . . . . .  
 Men crossed valleys  
 they went making paths  
 they crossed mountains  
 and song went with them.  
  
 It reached all corners  
 with its sincere message  
 distinct in every region  
 yet everywhere the same.  
 . . . . .  
 Let no one try to change it  
 much less to hinder it  
 for song changes within man  
 with culture and with time.  
 . . . . .

Más nunca será falsario  
que lo ha de borrar el tiempo  
puede morir un cantor  
y el canto sigue latiendo.

But what will be lost in time  
will never be falsified  
a singer may die  
but the song pulses on.<sup>58</sup>

## NOTES

1. "Para el camino" by the Chilean group Duo Schwenkenilo.
2. Interview with anonymous musician in Santiago, July 1983.
3. Bernardo Subercaseaux and Jaime Londoño, Gracias a la vida: Violeta Parra, testimonio (Buenos Aires: Galerina, 1976), p. 66.
4. "La carta" by Violeta Parra.
5. Subercaseaux, Gracias, p. 71.
6. Patricio Krebs Merino and Juan Ignacio Corces, "Entrevista exclusiva: Silvio Rodríguez," La Bicicleta, Sept. 1981, p. 24.
7. "Discusión sobre la música chilena," compiled by Carlos Orellana, Araucaria de Chile 2 (1978):115.
8. Tape recording of the opening remarks by Fernando Castillo, Rector of the Universidad Católica, at the Primer Festival de la Nueva Canción Chilena in Santiago, 1969.
9. "Plegaria a un labrador" by Víctor Jara.
10. "Venceremos" by Sergio Ortega and Quilapayún.
11. Stafford Beer, Brain of the Firm, 2nd edition (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 1981), p. 289.
12. "Canto al programa" album liner notes.
13. "Canción de la reforma agraria" from the album Canto al programa by Sergio Ortega, Luis Advis, and Julio Rojas, performed by Inti-Illimani.
14. Ernesto González Bermejo, "Isabel Parra, enemiga del olvido y la desesperanza," Crisis, August 1975, p. 49.



15. "El pueblo unido jamás será vencido" by Sergio Ortega and Quilapayún.
16. José Joaquín Brunner, La cultura autoritaria en Chile (Santiago: FLACSO, 1981), p. 86.
17. Hernán Pozo, "Orientación cultural y educacional chilena (1973-1981)," CIDE Documentos de Trabajo 14 (Santiago: Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Educación, 1982), p. 32. Emphasis in original.
18. Soledad Bianchi, "El movimiento artístico chileno en el conflicto político actual," Revista Casa de las Américas 130 (Jan.-Feb. 1982):147.
19. Ibid.
20. According to witnesses, Jara was arrested on Sept. 12, 1973 and was taken to the Estadio Chile, which was being used as an impromptu prison. There he was recognized by a soldier who berated him, shouting, "Sing now, bastard!" Witnesses say Jara sang, his hands were beaten by the guard and he was then escorted away. His corpse was later found near the Santiago cemetery with the hands and body beaten, and three bullet wounds. "Viuda de Víctor Jara declaró ante la justicia," La Segunda, (Santiago) June 8, 1981, p. 13.
21. Orellana, "Discusión," p. 115.  
The quena, a pre-Hispanic flute generally made of bamboo, and the charango, a small stringed instrument resembling a mandolin, are traditional instruments of the indigenous peoples of the Andes; they are frequently used in folkloric interpretations of the New Song.
22. José Morales, "El canto nuevo," Araucaria de Chile 2 (1978):175.
23. Alvaro Godoy, "Ricardo García: un Alerce se levanta," La Bicicleta, Apr.-May 1981, p. 16.
24. Interview with anonymous musician in Santiago, June 1983.
25. Brunner, La cultura autoritaria, p. 87.
26. Alvaro Godoy, "Introducción," La Bicicleta, Apr.-May 1981, p. 4.

27. Fernando Paulsen S., "El nuevo canto," Análisis, Jan.-Feb. 1982, p. 4.
28. Centro de Indagación y Expresión Cultural y Artística, "El canto popular en el período 1973-1978" (CENECA, Santiago, 1978, mimeographed).
29. Godoy, "Ricardo García," p. 15.
30. At least ten persons whom I interviewed--musicians, concertgoers, and producers--confirmed these occurrences. There is no printed documentation available in the Chilean press of the time probably due to the intimidating political climate.
31. Interview with anonymous producer in Santiago, July 1983.
32. Bianchi, "El movimiento artístico," p. 151.
33. Orellana, "Discusión," p. 115.
34. "El joven titiritero" by Eduardo Peralta.
35. "Cuando llega el invierno" by Pato Valdivia.
36. Ana María Foxley, "Trovadores del Canto Nuevo," Hoy, Jan. 28-Feb. 3, 1981, p. 35.
37. Bianchi, "El movimiento," p. 151.
38. Interview with anonymous musician in Santiago, July 1983.
39. "El cautivo de Til Til" by Patricio Manns. Transcribed from Alerce cassette No. 211 made at La Gran Noche del Folklore, Santiago, 1978.
40. Several Chileans interviewed described this moment, which I was able to subsequently verify by reviewing the Alerce cassette of the concert. See note 39.
41. Unpublished manuscript by anonymous musician, Santiago, n.d.
42. "Corte resolverá suspensión de 'La Gran Noche del Folklore'," La Tercera de la Hora, Santiago, Dec. 21, 1979, p. 7.
43. Interview with Ricardo García of Alerce Records, San-

tiago, July 1983.

44. Interviews with anonymous producer and musician in Santiago, July 1983.
45. "Sólo algunos minutos pudieron estar en Chile los 'Illapu'," La Tercera de la Hora, Oct. 8, 1981, p. 55.
46. Interview with Miguel Davagnino of Productora Nuestro Canto in Santiago, July 1983.
47. Personal communication, Santiago, July 1983.
48. "Escollos en el camino," Hoy, May 6, 1981, p. 44; and "Ricardo García en libertad incondicional," El Mercurio, Aug. 13, 1981, p. 10c.
49. "Vamos a la patria" by Pato Valdivia.
50. "En esta época" by Duo Schwenke-Nilo. Transcribed from a recorded performance, Santiago, July 1983.
51. "Homenaje" by Luis LeBert.
52. "Canción al Movimiento Democrático Popular" sung by Napalé at the Congreso de Artistas y Trabajadores de la Cultura de Chile, Dec. 1983. Transcribed from a live recording.
53. From tape of Congreso. See note 52.
54. "Un triunfo: la quinta noche del folklore," Análisis 7, no. 71 (Dec. 20, 1983-Jan. 3, 1984):48.
55. Alvaro Godoy, "Introducción," p. 4.
56. Alvaro Godoy, "El nuevo canto chileno: entre el consumismo y la marginalidad," Mensaje 299 (June 1981):265.
57. Unpublished manuscript by anonymous musician, Santiago, n.d.
58. "El canto del hombre" by Pedro Yáñez.

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