

## Latin American Protest Music— What Happened to "The New Songs"?

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This article will sketch the evolution of Latin America's protest and social change music. It will also attempt to answer the question that is perhaps most often posed by folk music aficionados in Canada—is the radical music tradition still alive, or did it die? The writer's perspective on protest music is not that of an objective musicologist, but rather that of an engaged layman who has been exposed to Latin American protest music trends over a twenty-five year period. Although much of the following analysis is drawn from one country, Bolivia, it is probable that the Bolivian experience has parallels throughout Latin America, from Mexico to Argentina. Jorge Coulon, leader of the Chilean New Song folk group Inti-Illimani, remarked in an interview during a 1993 Canadian tour, "In Europe or North America, the people know very, very little about South America or Africa or Asia. And that is a problem more for you than for us!"<sup>1</sup> This article on Latin American protest music, then, is intended to offer readers of *The Canadian Folk Music Bulletin* a vantage point from which to perhaps better understand their own musical traditions.

I have tried to downplay Andean folk music because this topic is incredibly diverse and extensive, although it gets some attention in the Kjarkas discussion. There are literally hundreds of professional and semi-professional *conjuntos* (groups) playing in La Paz, Quito, and Cusco these days. Probably there are half this number running around Europe and North America in ponchos with pan flutes, mostly economic migrants. Of the latter group, some have found sympathetic benefactors to help them out (eg, Sukay works with mandolin player David Grisman). Most survive by busking, playing in Latin American restaurants, or doing occasional gigs at summer folk festivals. Most have precious little to do with the Jara-Cruz-Rodriguez-Rico tradition and are not, as far as I know, crafting "protest" music.

I suspect that there are areas that I have not dealt with sufficiently because of my limited geographical knowledge and experience. For example, Native rights in Guatemala appears to be a growing issue. There is even an excellent Guatemalan Native conjunto living in Vancouver (whose name escapes me) that produces pretty cutting political stuff. I have focused my analysis where I feel most comfortable, in South America.

### *Early Roots of Latin American Protest Music*

Many Canadians who grew up in the turbulent 1960s were exposed to The Weavers, Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, Phil Ochs, Bob Dylan, Judy Collins, Joan Baez and a host of other singer-songwriters who believed that all was not well with the established North American social order. A handful of Canadians were also attracted to distinct processes of social change occurring in Latin America. They were introduced to Bolivia's Benjo Cruz and a fraternity of early protest musicians in other Southern Cone countries—Violeta Parra in Chile; Mercedes Sosa and Atahualpa Yupanqui in Argentina; Daniel Viglietti and Alfredo Zitaroza in Uruguay.

During the 1970s, when social change music in the US and Canada seemed to be in retreat, "artists of conscience" proliferated in Spanish-speaking nations in the Southern Hemisphere. The provocative songs circulating in the region easily matched English-speaking classics from the Northern context, including Dylan's "Masters of War," Seeger's "Big Muddy," and Ochs's "The Crucifixion." In fifteen countries of Latin America, protest music had become urgent, critical, and empowering! Etched upon the consciousness of an entire continent, social change songs were a cultural medium through which a growing number of Latin Americans pondered the deep contradictions inherent in their societies. Spanish-speaking Canadians, privileged enough to catch even a partial glimpse of the musical experience that accompanied the processes of social change taking place, were

able to vicariously experience what Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano called "the open veins of Latin America."

### *The Radical Folk Singer's Calling*

"I am very happy to sing for you tonight. I understand folk music in a special way—it is an integral expression of men and women and a reflection of the reality of my people. Through folk music we sing about love, we sing about natural beauty, we sing about the Mother Land. But we also sing about our social problematic! Those of us who want to be true folk musicians cannot avoid this last theme ... for to do so would make us cowards!"<sup>2</sup>

Benjo Cruz, Bolivia's leading folk singer, spoke these words during his last recorded concert in La Paz in 1969. His cutting political protest songs had become an expression of the sentiments of his country's majority population, made up of miners, indigenous peasants, factory workers and radical students, all opposed to the ruling military dictatorship. Shortly after making his poignant declaration on the political commitment of the true folk singer, Cruz's voice of protest disappeared forever from the *peñas* (coffee houses) of Bolivia. In 1970, he exchanged his guitar for a gun and joined a band of guerrilla fighters in the Teoponte jungle. Cruz and his idealistic group of urban, middle-class revolutionary colleagues died of exposure, ironically even

before engaging in any real warfare with the Bolivian army. Overnight, a folk singer became a martyr to the cause of radical social change in the poorest country of South America, joining the enigmatic Ernesto "Che" Guevara, who died three years earlier at Ñancahuatzu in another ill-fated revolutionary project.

### *From the Spanish Civil War to the Cuban Trova*

The earliest manifestations of Bolivian protest music were inspired and influenced by the Spanish Civil War (1936-39). For Republican forces fighting against Franco's fascism, music aptly expressed the "struggle between good and evil." This tradition of protest songs from the Iberian Peninsula eventually became known to inhabitants of the New World. Unionists and leftist Spanish immigrants to Latin America carried with them songs of protest and resistance. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Spaniard Joan Manuel Serrat became well known in Bolivia for a unique brand of utopian music that probably had its origins in the Spanish Civil War.

The Cuban revolution of 1959 nourished the roots of Latin America protest music even more profoundly. The voice of revolutionary Cuban singer Carlos Puebla was popular in South America in the 1960s. During the 1970s, Cuba's socialist musical renaissance, known as the *Nueva Trova*, acquired a following among Bolivia's progressive sectors increasingly opposed to de facto military regimes and "Yankee imperialism." Some observers believe that the *Nueva Trova* was "officialized" by Castro's regime, as part of a strategy to counteract

prevailing currents of sentimental and Afro-Cuban music (which were regarded as distractions to revolutionary ideology). The *Nueva Trova* proved to be an exciting experiment in the construction of a Latin American musical tradition that was both politically progressive and esthetically appealing. The *Nueva Trova* became one of Cuba's main cultural exports. Cuban singer-songwriters like Silvio Rodríguez, Noel Nicolla and Pablo Milanés were widely listened to on bootlegged records and tapes in Bolivia and elsewhere in South America, despite being banned by military governments. Rodríguez, who had never heard of Bob Dylan until 1969 because of the US blockade of Cuba, is credited with radically changing the structure of the romantic song in Latin America, bringing the folk element and political content together in love ballads. In an interview in 1980, Rodríguez described the work of the early Cuban "troubadours":

Commercialism had relegated 'song' to being a commodified, pseudo-art. But 'song' had or could have artistic qualities and could be seen and treated as great art forms like printing, poetry, or symphony. This was the spirit of our work, committed as we were to the revolutionary process.<sup>3</sup>

Rodríguez's voice of protest is unequivocally expressed in songs like "La Canción Urgente Para Nicaragua," written in 1982, which idealizes Nicaragua's struggle to break free from US interference and determine its own future:

Today the Eagle suffers his greatest woe,  
Nicaragua pains him, for he is hurt by love.  
And it hurts him to see a child  
Grow up healthy and go to school,  
Because on justice and affection,  
He cannot sharpen his claws.

#### *Formative Bolivian Protest Music*

By the time Benjo Cruz appeared on the scene in Bolivia in the late 1960s, other singer-songwriters had already forged a brand of protest music that reflected the country's unique social and political makeup. Much of the radical music in Bolivia was produced by militants of Marxist political parties who believed that a Cuban-style socialist revolution was on the horizon. Nilo Soruco is the best example from this formative period. A leader of the teachers' union and a member of the Bolivian Communist Party, Soruco wrote and performed over 250 songs. He was exiled twice. Like Cruz, Soruco was regarded as a symbol of popular resistance among left-leaning Bolivian students and workers. A verse from one of Nilo Soruco's early revolutionary songs exhorts:

From Bolivia, heart of dark-skinned America,  
we come,  
Miners, Indian peasants, students,  
men, women, children;  
We form a circle of raised fists,  
We say to those who stomp on our flag and  
steal our resources,

#### ENOUGH! IT'S TIME FOR REBELLION!!

While Bolivia remained in the grip of right-wing military dictatorships during most of the 1970s, musical expressions of protest were forced underground; folk singers, artists and writers were equally as susceptible to imprisonment and exile as were pro-democracy politicians, intellectuals and labour leaders.<sup>4</sup> Paradoxically, in spite of the hostile political environment throughout Latin America, radical music seemed to find a sympathetic audience. It flourished in well cultivated and protected niches, primarily on university campuses, in union halls, and semi-clandestine *peñas*.

#### *The Chilean "New Song" Movement*

The election of socialist president Salvador Allende in Chile in 1970 gave a tremendous boost to Latin American protest music. In many ways, the protest singers who emerged in Chile displayed a style of music that was distinct from existing "in the trenches" music, precisely because the radical social changes gaining ascendancy under the Allende government were promoted within a democratic framework. *La Nueva Canción* or "New Song" movement was heavily politicized and anti-establishment. It also represented an alternative Latin American cultural form that spoke to a broad cross-section of people, first in Chile, and later in other parts of the continent. Its rallying cry encompassed various themes—solidarity, political liberation, social justice, and cultural pride. The New Song skilfully sculpted a soft human face on the stern Marxist concept of class struggle. One has only to hear Victor Jara's moving composition "Yo Recuerdo Amanda" to appreciate the dynamism and appeal that *La Nueva Canción* had for a generation of young Chileans.

As Allende made a serious attempt to modify a social and economic structure that condemned Chile to chronic backwardness, the New Song reflected the country's utopian vision and its intent to "take back," or expropriate, its cultural, economic and political sovereignty. The standard-bearing protest group of the times, Inti-Illimani, reinforced the Allende mystique that the times indeed were a-changin'! In a well-known march tune, "Song of People's Power," they prophesied, "We will throw out the Yankees and their sinister language with Popular Unity!" In addition to Inti-Illimani, committed Chilean musicians, like Quilapayún, Angel and Isabela Parra, and, of course, Victor Jara, developed a distinct craft, which tempered hard-edged social commentary with a new appreciation for indigenous musical forms.

Paradoxically, the "New Song" was progressive in some respects and traditional in other respects. Middle-class young people were attracted to utopian political messages in song which reflected the heady days of the Popular Unity government. They began to validate Native instruments, rhythms and styles for the first time. The new songs were overtly socialist in a political sense, but also strongly Andean in a cultural sense. Chilean musicians, believers in the New Song, began to categorize foreign musical influences as "alienating." *Rhythm Music Magazine's* recent

feature article on Inti-Illimani noted, "... the group began to explore the musical styles of their native land and to offer an alternative to the sounds of imported pop—or worse, its local imitations—that pervaded the country in the late Sixties."<sup>5</sup>

Other Latin American musicians drew confidence from Chile's New Song experiment and took bold steps to redefine and develop legitimate expressions of what became known as *música popular* ("music of the people") in distinct contexts.<sup>6</sup> As rigid economic and social power relationships were upset, the Chilean New Song Movement helped to validate the signposts of an emerging socialist society. But in so doing, it also tended to illuminate the contradictions of the bourgeois society in which it was enmeshed. There was a dogmatism that pervaded *música popular*, to be sure, but it genuinely expressed the anger and hope of those who were marginalized by a highly stratified and dependent capitalist society. Critics of the New Song contended that an essentially middle-class vanguard of the Chilean left seized upon the class conflict of the times and canonized the form and content of music which they believed best represented the interests of the downtrodden masses.

As social conflict in Chile was exacerbated, the music became an integral part of the political battlefield.<sup>7</sup> This conflict was much deeper and more ideologically based than that caused by Dylan's first stage appearance with an electric guitar at Newport. It was no armchair, intellectual debate between purists and radicals, as Chileans were to learn on September 11, 1973, when the New Song Movement was pulverized by the brutal CIA-backed *golpe de estado* ("coup d'état") of General Pinochet. All progressive cultural forms identified with the Allende period were immediately labelled subversive. The ensuing *apagón cultural* ("cultural blackout") decreed by the junta complemented sinister policies of torture, murder, exile, and "disappearances." Victor Jara was arrested, then tortured and executed in the National Stadium, because he refused to quit singing! The works of Nobel Prize winning Chilean poet Pablo Neruda were burned! Those persecuted New Song musicians fortunate enough to escape lived in exile for the next fifteen years.<sup>8</sup>

#### *The New Song Shifts to Argentina*

Following the Chilean military takeover, Argentina assumed a position of prominence in the dissemination of radical protest music. Bolivia, still in the grip of Banzer's seven-year dictatorship (1971-77), nourished its resistance with the underground movement of New Songs from its influential Southern neighbour. A number of Argentine singers (even some who were non-acoustic and relatively successful commercially) filled the ideological vacuum left by the cultural cleansing taking place in Chile. Mercedes Sosa, Jorge Cafrune, Horacio Guarani, Piero, and Eduardo Falú are a few of the best known early social change musicians from Argentina who took advantage of the political conjuncture to revive a floundering Chilean New Song movement. Later, in the 1980s Leon Gieco, Victor Heredia, and other younger musicians appeared on the Argentine protest music stage.

The bloody military *golpe de estado* led by General Jorge Videla, and the subsequent "dirty war" against Argentina's organized left (1976-83), resulted in a further constriction of the New Song in the Southern Cone. This was a period in which some 30,000 persons "disappeared" in Argentina! One of Mercedes Sosa's best known protest songs "*Solo Le Pido a Dios*" ("I Only Ask God"), reflects the atmosphere of extreme repression evident during this period:

I only ask God, that the war will not make me indifferent!

It's a huge monster that steps clumsily,  
On a poor and innocent people!

As monolithic police states became the norm in more and more South American countries, subtle expressions of freedom remained incredibly persistent. Despite systematic human rights abuses, the New Songs were still hummed and sung. Like the ubiquitous signs of graffiti painted on city walls, music gave hope to a suffering people. In Bolivia, as in Argentina, protest music was equated with "building resistance." It was focused on one overriding objective—to return Latin America to democracy!

Songs of protest, although at times barely audible, played a strategic role in harnessing the energy, purpose, and spirit of pro-democratic forces. Jorge Coulon, leader of Inti-Illimani, described the contribution of protest music to this single-mindedness of purpose as follows, "... The music speaks for itself. ... All people need to take on the gods. Art, music, is the way to do it!"<sup>9</sup>

#### *From the Sandinista Revolution to the Liberationist Church*

The triumph of the Nicaraguan revolution in 1979 provided another stimulus for the development of Latin American protest music. Although far to the North, the Sandinista takeover sent shock waves throughout South America. In Bolivia, for example, the political left breathed new life for the first time in years. Many Bolivian singers were influenced by emerging Nicaraguan folk artists like the Mejía Godoy brothers. Ideologically motivated and socially relevant, Nicaragua's unique New Song movement accommodated itself to limited and intermittent democratic spaces beginning to appear in many repressive South American countries.

During the early 1980s, the new song movement received an unlikely new ally. The growth of the progressive Catholic Church had a strong impact on social protest throughout Latin America, filling the vacuum left by persecuted "popular" organizations like labour unions and political parties. Where liberation theology took root, themes of social justice were forcefully portrayed in hymns and homilies in parish churches. Godoy's "Nicaraguan Peasant Mass" became a favourite of progressive Catholic forces in Bolivia and elsewhere. The chorus of the processional hymn, "*El Canto de Entrada*," states,

You are the God of the poor, a God human and simple;

The God who sweats in the streets the God

with a furrowed brow.

For this reason I call to You, the same as I call to my people;

For You are a labourer too, Christ the Worker God!

These religious songs offered hope to oppressed people who had little space to manoeuvre in terms of political dissent. They were meant to



simultaneously "denounce" oppression and human rights abuses, and "announce" the Gospel as manifested in freedom, peace and justice. The transformation of the Church, from the role of handmaiden of the colonial oppressor, to an advocate for the oppressed, was a welcomed change for many people in Latin American countries who yearned for a release from the yoke of military dictatorship.

#### *Civil War in Central America—Opposing US Policy*

During the 1980s, protest and resistance focused on a new arena of political conflict—Central America. It was here that an interesting anomaly emerged in Latin American protest music. The new brand of music was committed to denouncing and changing US policy in the region. "Musicians of conscience" from the US and other countries, expressed their solidarity with the people of Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador, by writing and singing powerful songs opposed to the CIA-backed *contras* and right-wing regimes that openly violated human rights, while opposing land reform, union organizing, and peaceful social change processes.

Good examples of Northern mainstream artists who produced critical music during this period are Peter, Paul and Mary ("El Salvador"), Kris Kristofferson ("Third World Warrior"), U2 ("Bullet the Blue Sky"), Bruce Cockburn ("Rocket Launcher" and "Tropic Moon"), and Jackson Browne. In addition to Cockburn, a number of lower profile Canadian musicians also formed a part of the Latin America solidarity contingent in the 1980s.<sup>10</sup> Jackson Browne's penetrating tune "Lives in the Balance," arranged with Andean pan flutes, captured the sentiments of a growing number of Americans opposed to US foreign policy in this

#### *Hemisphere during the 1980s:*

But who are the ones that we call our friends,  
These governments killing their own?

'Til the people finally can't take any more,  
And they pick up a gun, or a brick, or a stone.

And there are lives in the balance!

The El Salvador civil war (1980-1992) gave rise to an innovative brand of political protest which effectively harnessed *musica popular* to revolutionary social change. As the FMLN guerrilla combatants made dramatic territorial gains in their battle against the Salvadoran army, they received help from an unlikely ally, *Los Torogoces de Morazan*. The *Torogoces* ("Songbirds"), from the province of Morazan, were amateur peasant folk musicians who carried their guitars and fiddles, along with their M16s, into battle zones, providing moral support to the rebels, as well as entertaining sympathetic peasant communities in "liberated" zones. Their ideologically charged music proved to be an effective propaganda tool for the FMLN insurgents during the civil war.<sup>11</sup>

The genius of the *Torogoces* was their ability to communicate with the common people, using a language that the popular classes of El Salvador readily identified with. The full impact of their protest music, however, was only realized when it was recorded and broadcast over the clandestine guerrilla radio station *Venceremos* ("We Shall Overcome"). On nightly *Venceremos* broadcasts, the *Torogoces* would sing such catchy tunes as "The War of the Poor":

The war of the poor is beginning; peace for the rich is ending;

Mrs. Oligarchy is deathly ill; no planes, no cannons, no bombs,

No Yankee advisors, nor battalions, can cure her sickness.

Ay - Yaaay - Yaaay! Death to the sickly old girl!

Since the foot soldiers of the Salvadorean Armed Forces were primarily recruited from the poorest strata of society, the *Torogoces* used satirical lyrics set to folk rhythms to plant fear and doubt in these young conscripts, often trying to convince them to desert and join the guerrillas' "just cause":

Dear brother soldier, you are going to lose,  
Don't defend the cause of the rich,  
Analyze who you are fighting for,  
And remember the land mines, dear brother,  
Always let the officers go first on patrols!

The unique protagonistic role of the *Togoroces de Morazan* in El Salvador's popular insurrection is unprecedented in the history of revolutionary movements. Their experience represents the strategic fusion of music with politics which many idealistic Latin American musicians have advocated since the 1960s. Benjo Cruz referred to this as "the folksinger's conversion to his true calling" and radical Argentine singer Horacio Guarani carried this elusive concept from political theory to practice

when he penned the words:

We singers are soldiers of the guitar, workers  
of songs;  
We singers, come from below, too,  
We cannot be silent when our people suffer;  
We singers are an army of birds telling the  
world "enough!"  
But we singers must also bleed!

*The Kjarkas—Cultural Revival Without Political Force*

Bolivians have always found it somewhat ironical that predominantly white, urban, non-indigenous countries like Chile and Argentina took credit for the "indigenization" of the New Song movement, especially when these countries orchestrated campaigns of genocide against their minority Indian populations during Colonial and Republican periods. Bolivia, it must be remembered, is an Andean country with a large indigenous majority. During the height of the military repression in South America, Bolivia became the focus of a dramatic experiment that resulted in an authentic "Andeanization" of the Latin American New Song movement. This unique Native-roots movement was in part a response to the vacuum created by the cultural censorship and political repression which existed under successive de facto regimes. Even though the movement was ostensibly non-political, it served to give expression to the unfulfilled cultural aspirations of the Native majority which made up *Bolivia Morena* ("Brown-skinned Bolivia").

A few immensely popular professional *conjuntos* (musical groups) and musicians provided the impetus for this development. The Kjarkas were the undisputed leaders! This acoustic group took Bolivia's rich, but undervalued, Native tradition and raised it to mainstream popularity and status. Coming from humble origins in the Cochabamba valley, the four Quechua-speaking Hermosa brothers who constituted the Kjarkas adapted indigenous music from practically every corner of Bolivia. Once their popularity at home was solidified, they launched a series of international tours throughout Latin America, Europe, and even Asia. In the 1980s, a ticket to a Kjarkas' concert was about the hottest scalper item to be found in Quito, Lima, Caracas, or Mexico City.

The Kjarkas have written prolifically, producing dozens of popular recordings. They have employed pre-Columbian and *mestizo*\* folk instruments almost exclusively, perfecting tight vocal harmonies in Quechua and Aymara, as well as the Spanish language. Most importantly, they have "rescued" dozens of obscure dance and musical rhythms from Bolivia's distinct Native cultures. Thanks to the Kjarkas, practically every school child in Bolivia intimately knows the difference between a *chintunki* and a *taquirari*, will recognize a *tinku* from a *saya*, and have learned to play traditional instruments like the *quena* or *sicuri*.

The Andean music revival can be crudely compared to the boom in mainstream North American folk music during the 1960s. The Kjarkas, along with Savia Andina and Zulma Yugar, played a role equivalent to that of Peter, Paul and Mary, The Kingston Trio and The Highwaymen in making folk music a highly desirable and commercially successful cultural form on college campuses in the North. In the space of a few years, the Kjarkas were responsible for esthetically transforming backwater indigenous music from the Andes into an internationally appreciated musical form. (How many folk festivals in North America do not have at least one Andean folk group present?)

The impact of Bolivia's Kjarkas may well be greater than that of Inti-Illimani and the entire Chilean New Song movement combined. But what it conveys in form, it lacks in content. There are practically no elements of political protest to be found in the Andean musical renaissance. For this reason, the Kjarkas were heavily criticized by the Bolivian left for "diluting the popular resistance," especially during García Meza's military dictatorship (1980-82).<sup>12</sup>

*Musical Midwifery—Assisting the Return to Democracy*

In the 1980s, Latin America experienced a gradual return to democracy as inept military regimes faced increasing pressure to abandon government palaces. Protest music gained new strength as discredited military regimes retreated to their barracks throughout South America. A series of pro-democracy concerts held in Argentina and Chile became powerful symbols of freedom, eliciting an almost euphoric reaction from mass audiences. The 1989 Amnesty International Concert, fittingly held in Chile's National Stadium where Victor Jara was executed 16 years earlier, is a case in point. Over 100,000 Chilean citizens, frustrated by a lack of freedoms, human rights abuses, and

effect in Chile. The venerable Argentine protest/pops singer was accepted by an enthusiastic audience after being banned from performing in public in Chile for 15 years. Sensing the anticipation, Piero chided the Chilean audience with the words, "Patience, Chile, patience; remember, everything has its time!" The huge audience spontaneously began an impassioned chant: "Pinochet has to go!" which grew progressively louder as the concert progressed. By the time the middle-aged folk-rocker Piero launched into "*Que Se Vayan*" ("They Have to Go"), one could almost hear the death knell sound for General Pinochet and his cronies:

My people know that they are in violent  
territory,  
My people speak; my people yell;  
Enough of death; enough of dying;  
THEY HAVE TO GO! ... THOSE WHO  
TORTURE!  
THEY HAVE TO GO! ... THOSE WHO  
IMPRISON!  
THEY HAVE TO GO! ... THOSE WHO  
DEPRIVE US OF LIBERTY!

A similar reaction can be heard on the live recordings of Mercedes Sosa and Silvio Rodríguez as Argentina cautiously reclaims its democratic destiny. A huge crowd gathered in Buenos Aires' May Plaza erupted with delirious cries when Sosa sang the last line of countryman Atahualpa Yupanqui's well-known *milonga*\*\* "Two Brothers":

I have so many brothers and sisters that I can't  
count them,  
But the most beautiful one of all is named ...  
FREEDOM!

*Democracy and the End of the Cold War*

In a recent interview, 1995 Nobel Prize winner, Irish poet Seamus Heaney, remarked, "The role of poetry is to assure the survival of beauty in times when tyrannical regimes threaten to destroy it!"<sup>13</sup> But what is the role of poetry (or music) when there are no more tyrannical regimes in power? After surviving the worst years of military repression on the sub-continent, the New Song movement faced an uncertain future due to the profound social changes which took place in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As democratic traditions and personal freedoms were restored, a great deal of pent-up pressure was released, and the former need for cultural expressions of protest in South American countries simply dissipated. With military repression no longer a reality, singer-songwriters seemed to lose their common sense of purpose. Even though poverty and injustice did not vanish with the advent of liberal democracies, no single social or political issue remained that could unify popular sentiment and imbue protest music with meaning and spirit. Since a democratic government was clearly preferable to a military



censorship, welcomed this highly visible media event and its international cast of stars. The eight aging integrants of Inti-Illimani, newly repatriated to Chile, hosted the concert, which also included sets by Sting, Sinéad O'Connor, Jackson Browne, Rubén Blades, and Peter Gabriel.

Piero's sold-out concert in Santa Laura Stadium in 1989 had the same powerful cathartic

dictatorship for the vast majority of people, radical social change became increasingly redundant.

In the late 1980s, the world witnessed the destruction of the Berlin Wall and with it the demise of socialism as a dominant world ideology. This change also had a dramatic effect on Latin American social change movements. Latin American social critic Eduardo Galeano described the loss of this utopian counterpoint as similar to "... being orphaned by the world!" Despite a new political playing field, political parties from the left failed to achieve significant support at the polls. Many advocates of a leftist electoral alternative felt betrayed by ideological infighting and the fracturing of successive leftist coalitions. The impact of the fall of communism was also reflected in the protest music of the region. Fewer and fewer singers carried the vision of a socialist future in their music. Radical musicians in Bolivia, for example, who were recruited to support the building of a "united front," quickly became disillusioned by the political left's immaturity, poor showings in electoral contests, and general state of disarray.

#### *Protesting Structural Adjustment and the New Economy*

Neoliberal economic policies inevitably accompanied the return to democracy in Bolivia and elsewhere.\*\*\* Without a viable socialist option, Latin Americans were forced to meekly accept international capitalism as "the only economic game in town." Beginning in 1985, for example, Bolivia's government passed a series of Draconian structural adjustment laws. Designed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and reinforced by powerful governments and corporations to the North, these new economic policies had a devastating effect on the welfare of the poor. Massive layoffs in parastatal industries and the government bureaucracy created unprecedented social dislocations throughout the country.

In the face of the havoc wrought by neoliberal economic measures, protest musicians had something urgent to sing about again! Allied with labour federations fighting for their very existence, a number of Latin American musicians produced songs which drew attention to the victims of debt and structural adjustment. In Bolivia during the 1980s, local folk singers like Jenny Cárdenas, Luis Rico, and members of the Junaro family (César, Jaime, and Emma) took up the cause of protesting the destructive fallout from the government's new economic plan. In 1987, Cárdenas, a respected quasi-feminist protest singer, wrote and performed the theme song for a controversial British video documentary entitled *Hell To Pay!* The video is a poignant statement of the awesome price that debt and structural adjustment have exacted from poor women living in Bolivia. Cárdenas's "*Mi Tierra*" was a powerful musical statement which tied the documentary together and reinforced its impact.

About the same time, another protest song, set to a well-known Bolivian *cueca* dance rhythm, became a symbol of solidarity among workers demonstrating against union busting and mass layoffs in the mining sector. "The Miners Will Return" (allegedly written by Cesar Junaro or Luis Rico) captured the sentiments of 30,000 state tin miners

victims of the government's Law 21060, which authorized the closure of Bolivia's state mines. In reaction to this harsh neoliberal policy, the miners' union organized a mass, peaceful march from the mining towns to La Paz. Thousands of marchers were turned back by tanks and tear gas near the city of Oruro. "*Los Mineros Volveremos*" is really a song about hope and despair in the face of economic restructuring:

In the streets and the plazas, we will find our pride again;

We have come from afar, to demand our right to work.

As I leave, a new cry arises in my throat,  
All together, companions, we miners will return!

Many Spanish-language protest songs have been written about the hardships induced by global economics in the 1980s. Yet the most provocative song on the subject is still that of an angry Bruce Cockburn, whose driving rock anthem in English, "And They Call It Democracy," leaves little doubt as to who are the winners and losers in the new global economy:

North, South, East, West, kill the best and buy the rest;

It's spend a buck to make a buck,  
You don't really give a flying fuck about people in misery!

IMF, dirty MF, takes away everything it can get;

Always making certain that there's one thing left,

Keep them on the road to insupportable debt!

In 1996, neoliberal economic policies are still firmly entrenched, from Argentina to Alberta. The casualties continue to grow as effective resistance to these policies becomes weaker and weaker. In the final analysis, the battle against powerful global economic forces is being lost by the poor and powerless. It is also evident that in the face of an increasingly ineffective organized opposition to prevailing economic policies, much less quality protest music related to this issue is being produced in Latin America than in 1985.

#### *"Singable" Issues—Native Rights, Coca, Environment, Gender*

In spite of a noticeable constriction of protest music in Latin America following the complex social, political and economic changes which took place in the 1980s, there are several specific issues that have given local protest singers a new lease on life. It appears that protest music in the Andes is less "big picture" oriented in the 1990s than in previous decades. Musicians are now seeking out new advocacy "niches," offering their support to interest groups concerned about specific issues.

The first of the contemporary "singable" issues is Native rights. The Ecuadorian group, *Nando Mahachi*, for example, is a well known *conjunto* that radically advocates for Native rights in the Andes. In one of their cutting songs, they

declare

Everybody talks about our Rights, ...

But Juan still doesn't have any land,

Pedro only has one shirt to put on,

Antonio has lived a hundred years without shoes,

Manual lost his hands in the factory,

Luis left his lungs in the mines,

Julian still doesn't know how to read and write!

A number of Bolivian *conjuntos* are also addressing the theme of Native rights. In addition to Luis Rico, indigenous musicians who have some degree of affinity to Native rights issues include Norte de Potosi, Kolla Marka, Altiplano, Viento Sur, Rumillacta, and Luz Mila Carpio. During the highly publicized 1991 protest march of 800 Amazonian indigenous tribal people (1,000 kilometres from Beni to La Paz), the media played a definitive role in drawing public sympathy to their demands. The marchers played traditional percussion and wind instruments throughout the arduous trek. Surprisingly, however, very little popular protest music was written to help commemorate this event and reinforce the importance of Native rights in Bolivia's multi-ethnic society.

The second issue, which is particularly pertinent in the Andean countries and is connected closely to Native rights, is that of peasant/coca-growers rights. The central protest message in Bolivia is twofold—that coca leaf is not cocaine and that coca leaf growers are not narco-traffickers! Bolivian folksinger Luis Rico, for example, has been an outspoken defender of the coca growers. Rico's ballad *Pucha Caray* conveys his radical advocacy perspective and support for the thousands of coca-leaf growers who eke out a living in the Chapare jungle, while under constant threat of harassment from anti-narcotic police:

I sold my coca crop to the people from the city,

They paid me a good price by the roadside,  
I sold my coca without worrying about its destination,

Everything was fine, son of a bitch!

Just like that, soldiers armed to the teeth appeared,

I was afraid, they burned my remaining coca crops,

During the evil which followed, I lost my family,

I escaped into the jungle, son of a bitch!

In addition to professionally written songs on the coca issue, some protest songs have emerged quite spontaneously. During the coca growers' historic march from the Chapare to La Paz in 1993 to draw attention to their plight, the following tune, of obscure origins, was recognizable to thousands of marching peasants:

What a lovely path from Cochabamba  
A simple path through the high plains  
From Potosi to Oruro,

We are all together in the struggle,  
Protesting that we have been forgotten,  
By a wretched government which  
takes advantage of us!

A third issue gaining some notoriety as a "singable" protest theme throughout Latin America is environmental protection. In Bolivia, Luis Rico and Jaime Junaro are best known for producing songs about pressing environmental issues. Rico's protest tune against the increasing pollution in La Paz's main river system, written in the Afro-Bolivian *saya-caporál* rhythm, with back-up instrumentation from a prestigious folkloric dance band, has become a popular dance tune at festivals throughout the country. Rico's song mourns the death of the Choqueyapu River with the following lyrics:

The river was like a  
clean kiss in happier times,  
But under its death  
sentence, it is like an ugly  
scar,

This song is a *saya* of  
mourning,

A remembrance of the  
poor, a funeral service for La  
Paz.

Water that you can't  
drink, let it flow again;

Let it quench the thirst,  
of those yet to be born!

A Bolivian television journalist made the point that the protest message in Rico's "Funeral of the River" will be remembered among young people because the song is not only *singable*, but also *danceable*! Cuba's Silvio Rodríguez affirms the importance of dance rhythms in Latin American protest music, "There will always be music to dance to and music to listen to. When the lyrics to dance music become so good that they deserve to be heard also, we will have reached the ideal!"<sup>14</sup>

In Chile, Inti-Illimani has made an effort to preserve its reputation as a protest group by moving into the environmental field. In addition to calling for protection of Chile's southern moist forests, Jorge Coulon told a Calgary interviewer that Inti's social change music now includes an esoteric field called "architectural preservation":

Environment and culture go hand in hand and that is the reason that at the moment we are fighting to save the structural appearance of Valparaíso, one of the oldest and most important com-

mercial ports of the Pacific Rim. We believe that it is necessary to maintain and restore the older buildings instead of demolishing them to erect glass towers in their place. That would transform Valparaíso into just another city.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, it is important to note that despite unlimited potential for musical themes which

because their daily struggle to survive and provide for their families is tremendous! ... I am a permanent fighter for the rights and dignity of all people, men and women. I have always been for peace. I love our continent and profoundly yearn for its unity, fully knowing that we not only have people living in misery, but also have people who create the conditions for this misery.

Women's equality is clearly one area where Canadian female musicians seem to have defined a more viable protest niche than their counterparts in Latin America. Without overly simplifying the issue, it can be concluded that distinct cultural contexts are in large part responsible for this difference in emphasis.

#### *The Day the Music Died*

Today, the stereotypical "protest musician" is no longer easily identifiable in Bolivia. As in Canada, contemporary folk musicians in South America may selectively incorporate specific protest issues into their song portfolios, largely guided by personal convictions, social/political circumstances, and audience approval factors. The one Bolivian artist who most closely fits the "protest musician" label is Luis Rico. Highly respected by his colleagues for being unwilling to compromise, Rico continues to compose on political subjects. He has been jailed seven times and exiled twice. Now 50 years old, Rico remarked in a recent interview

with *Bolivian Times*, "My only boss is my guitar and heart. What I feel, I interpret! What I sing, I live and practice! When I was imprisoned for my music, it did affect my family, but I have no regrets."<sup>16</sup>

At present, there are several excellent Bolivian folk musicians (in addition to the ones already mentioned above) who on occasion have written and performed issue-based, socially committed songs. The best known artists are Manuel Monroy, Adrien Barrenechea, Matilde Casazola, Dagmar Dumchan, Jesus Duran, Taller Arawi, Canto Popular, and Ernesto Cavour. However, none of these musicians can be classified as pure "protest musicians." Comparatively speaking in the Canadian context, they are probably more protest-oriented than Spirit of the West, but less so than Bruce Cockburn.

Bolivia's folk musicians expressed an



advocate women's rights in Latin societies characterized by overt and rampant *machismo*, there is little evidence to support the thesis that this constitutes a significant "singable" issue today. While singers like Jenny Cardenas and Mercedes Sosa maintain a certain identity as "feminist" singers, there is a general absence of gender-related social change music being produced in South America. Even Sosa's sympathetic remarks about Latin American women on CIESPAL radio seem to be overshadowed by a larger, more passionate appeal for solidarity and reconciliation on a continent which has suffered the worst of human rights violations:

Latin American women at this point in time don't have the luck of being highly respected. They should be more revered,



interesting array of opinions regarding whether protest music had indeed died in the 1990s. Most admitted that the times have changed drastically, and with them, the nature of social change/protest music. Some mentioned the difficulties encountered finding record companies that would record them, because of limited demand and a general public indifference to their subject matter, as well as a subtle disdain on the part of a conservative music industry towards "out-of-touch radicals" who refuse to embrace the new social order. The musicians interviewed mentioned that, in one way or another, they have been forced to "change or die!" or "to experimentally adapt to the present reality in order to survive!"

Yet, none of the Bolivian musicians interviewed would categorically claim that protest music was a dead issue in Latin America in the 1990s. The most idealistic and optimistic *folkloristas* believe that if the gap between rich and poor continues to widen as at present, protest music would likely experience a comeback. However, an article published by a Latin American students' magazine points out that idealism and optimism are presently over-balanced by the reality of the conservative 1990s:

The protest song is a pure manifestation that emerges where injustice breaks out. In our countries there are many reasons to protest. Our societies have not found the means that will carry them towards a secure progress. Many men and women still suffer from the most horrible conditions of degradation. For these reasons, in our countries, we would expect protest music to be on an upward trajectory. Nonetheless, in the last few years, it is plain to see that the volume of protest music in Latin America has been considerably reduced!<sup>17</sup>

The impressive diversity of innovative musical expressions by Latin American's (former) protest fraternity is intimately related to music market trends. It is safe to say that most musicians are now more focused on esthetics than politics. The evolving careers of Jaime Junaro, Jenny Cárdenas, Inti-Ilumani, Luis Rico and Silvio Rodríguez may provide some insights into where protest music might eventually end up by the year 2000.

The Bolivian singer Jaime Junaro, leader of the 1980s protest-oriented *conjunto* Savia Nuevo, now playing solo, has broadened his musical perspectives. During a 1994 interview to launch his album *In Half the World*, Junaro made the following observation:

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, we musicians, all artists, must search for new creative alternatives to project our music not only to the year 2000, but to the year 3000. Otherwise we will continue running around in circles, with the same message.<sup>18</sup>

Jenny Cárdenas mentioned having pursued new "personal" musical paths since the late 1980s. With the death of her father, she focused her energies for a period of time on collecting and interpreting the songs of the Chaco War between

Bolivia and Paraguay (1932-35). As part of her catharsis (described as a symbolic dialogue with her father, a Chaco War veteran), Cárdenas arranged and performed numerous Chaco-period pieces, some with the assistance of a traditional military brass band. She has launched an investigative foray into the music of the 1952 Bolivian revolution and has plans to establish her own ethnographic collection of Bolivia's rich indigenous musical traditions.

Clearly, protest is less and less pronounced in Cárdenas's contemporary work, although her eclectic perspective keeps her closely engaged with the Latin American New Song movement. She has represented Bolivia in Chile, Britain and Germany, and sang at the Vancouver Folk Festival in 1993. Cárdenas's evolution from a fairly focused protest musician in the 1980s to a musicologist and interpreter of diverse Latin American styles and traditions in the 1990s is evident in her comment, "My favourite song is still Silvio Rodríguez's '*La Maza*' ('The Hammer'), but I am attracted to many other forms of Latin American music, as well.... This may sound sentimental, but I really love *boleros* (a form of traditional love ballad)!"<sup>19</sup>

Even the enduring Inti-Ilumani have opted to change with the times. In deciding to write and perform more instrumental music (rather than vocal music), they have greatly increased their listening audiences, taking in non-Spanish-speaking fans worldwide. But, by becoming more internationally palatable, they have also weakened their identity as a Latin American protest group. In a review of an Inti-Ilumani concert written for the Los Angeles *Daily Breeze*, a cryptic message emerges that Inti might no longer be a symbol of the struggle for freedom and justice in Latin America: "The 90s version of Inti-Ilumani no longer cries for revolution. Its poetic lyrics are no longer preoccupied with freedom and social justice. The greying band members don't damn the Yanquis as they once did."<sup>20</sup>

In an interview with Toronto's *NOW* magazine, Inti's spokesman Jorge Coulon tries to refute *NOW*'s insinuations that the group's once strong political edge has been lost. However, Coulon is clearly unconvincing when he describes the group's efforts at balancing the political and the esthetic in the 1990s. When Coulon was asked if the group had given up its radical perspective, he replied:

Absolutely not! There is much more revolutionary spirit in the members of Inti-Ilumani than most young people in Chile. It's just that the times we live in now are very different! I don't think *Andadas* is any less political than other recordings we've done, but perhaps it seems less urgent. The most important aspect of what we do is rescuing the acoustic roots of our Latin American musical heritage. This is a higher and more permanent goal!<sup>21</sup>

A slightly more sympathetic Chicago Tribune music review praises Inti-Ilumani for their ability to "adapt," while remaining true to their political roots:

Known as a political group, the Intis

didn't disappoint, eventually getting around to playing political favorites. Curiously, instead of ringing anachronistic, as so any protest songs often do once the battle is over, Inti pieces tend to be so metaphoric by nature that they simply adapt to new circumstances. '*Para Volar*,' for example, which was always interpreted to be about exile, suddenly became a song of connection and freedom.<sup>22</sup>

Luis Rico has remained remarkably true to the cause of the radical protest singer. Yet he refuses to be pigeon holed. He shows no allegiance to any Bolivian political party. He even rejects the term "protest song". In the Bolivian Times interview, he notes:

My songs have messages unlike any composer in Bolivia. My songs, however, are not protest songs! They are songs of love toward the peasant, miner, and environment. We need to worry about what is wrong with Bolivia. This is what I do! I show through my music dramatic events so people will not repeat them.<sup>23</sup>

Nowhere is the future of Latin American protest music more shrouded in ambiguity than in the recent compositions of Cuba's enigmatic Silvio Rodríguez. Rodríguez's songs have never been easily stereotyped; his complex music has been subject to innumerable interpretations and critiques, both from the left and the right. Although he has often been accused of being an apologist for Comandante Fidel, for example, his songs defy such facile interpretation. The 1994 album Rodríguez is evidence that even Cuba's pace-setting protest musician is also going through a process of dynamic change. The songs on this album are intensely personal, sentimental, and even spiritual. One piece, entitled "*El Problema*," is surprisingly free of socialist jargon and concludes by casting life's main problems and solutions in an almost Christian philosophical context:

The problem is not to take an axe to the pain,  
And make firewood out of it,

The main problem is the soul, the problem is resurrection,

The problem, sir, will always be how to plant love.

### Conclusions—The Future of the New Songs

Although interesting musical expressions will continue to be developed in Latin America, it is doubtful whether current "singable" issues like the ones discussed above—Native rights, peasant/coca growers' rights, and environmental protection—will catapult protest music back into prominence, or sustain a New Song revival in the latter years of the Twentieth Century. As starving folk musicians are forced to become more eclectic in order to survive, it is predicted that "issue-focused" protest music will only constitute a small part of the total Latin musical output for the foreseeable future. Clearly, more emphasis will be placed on esthetics, rather than politics!

The future of Latin American protest music has as much to do with listening audiences, as with musicians. Make no mistake about it—Latin Americans love music! Indeed, in 1994, they spent \$1,900 million on cassettes, CDs, and LPs. Rock music makes up a major share of this burgeoning market. Increasingly, the music consumed is in English and is imported from the United States. Today, aging Bolivian baby boomers tend to forget the "glory days," when they helped erect barricades as part of the popular resistance to military dictatorships. They are more concerned with making a living in a hostile neoliberal economic environment. They may nostalgically still listen to Benjo Cruz's last recorded tape from time to time, or line up for six hours to purchase a ticket to Mercedes Sosa's only La Paz concert this year. But it is doubtful that they will create a significant demand for the recordings of Jenny Cárdenas and Luis Rico or help to develop a mass market for radical New Songs in the same way that post-industrial yuppies have fueled the rock nostalgia industry in North America.

Silvio Rodríguez, while evoking an admired Bertolt Brecht, stated that "... art should entertain as well as educate; it fails when it doesn't entertain!"<sup>24</sup> In this light, perhaps Latin America's future protest music will be projected by completely unpredictable, serendipitous factors and forces. Few observers would have expected Latin rock music to provide an effective cultural vehicle for 21<sup>st</sup> Century protest! But this is exactly what is happening! Take, for example, the highly entertaining and educational compositions of the popular Argentine

rock group *Los Fabulosos Cadillacs*. Some of this group's current songs, infused with outrageous visual effects and lyrics, represent an entirely new medium through which Latin American youth are being stimulated to question their social reality. The newest *Cadillac* hits are politically charged, urging young people not to forget their bloody history! Their videos feature images of a clumsy and obtrusive military officer, remarkably reminiscent of Chile's omnipresent General Pinochet, and even juxtaposes New Song hero Victor Jara with a passing parade of infamous military dictators from South America's recent past. Clearly, *Los Fabulosos Cadillacs* and their brand of Latin rock are creating a new consciousness among youthful Latin Americans who were probably not even born when the above personalities left their profound imprint on the region. Other rock artists with the potential to keep protest music alive include *Maná* (Mexico) and Ricardo Arjona (Guatemala).

At present, there is an intense philosophical brooding over the future of protest music. In addition to lamenting the present state of the New Song, many Bolivians expressed optimism that critical art forms of all kinds (including film, drama, music, writing, and painting) would not disappear because they are urgently required to remind *el pueblo* ("the people") of their most cherished values and collective social history. One Bolivian musician, for example, maintained hope that ways will be found to ensure that the deeply-held Latin American value of "solidarity" would never be replaced by the alien capitalistic ethic of rugged individualism!

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It is this writer's contention that Latin American music will always be reflective and rhythmic, festive and folkloric, personal and political. Protest will certainly be more subdued and subtle in future musical forms, but the intense longing for endogenous solutions to a changing regional problematic will persist. Eduardo Galeano recently remarked that Latin Americans will never be satisfied with imposed answers to their social problems and will always reject "imported models" that don't jibe with their deepest aspirations:

Things are unbearable as they are now—poisoned souls, poisoned air, poisoned waters! ... We are being obliged to accept a world without soul as the only one possible. In this system, there are no *pueblos* (peoples), only markets; no citizens, only consumers; no nations, only companies; no cities, only conglomerations; no human relations, only economic competitions!... We will have to invent something as an alternative to the present system.<sup>25</sup>

It can be predicted that as Latin American musicians experiment with new cultural expressions that respond to the social reality of *el pueblo*, they will inevitably draw strength from the musical treatise of Spaniard Joan Manuel Serrat who passionately sings of reclaiming hope in "Utopias":

To live without utopias ...

Is like taking a useless practice run towards death!

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Calgary Herald, November 22, 1994 (interview with James Muretech).

<sup>2</sup> Quote From Benjo Cruz's last live recording. In 1972, I found, in a Santa Cruz music store, a copy of the recording which included this monologue, disguised from the secret police in a Lawrence Welk record jacket.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Silvio Rodríguez by Rina Benmayor, Havana, 1980 (as found in liner of his 1990 CD *Canciones Urgentes*).

<sup>4</sup> The satirical song "*Murio La Paz*" ("Peace has Died"), written by an unlikely radical, mainstream pops artist Vico Vega, was banned in 1972 from Bolivian radio stations because of oblique references to then reigning dictator General Hugo Banzer Suárez.

<sup>5</sup> George Imirzian, "Singing the Songs of Chile." *Rhythm Music Magazine*, February 1994.

<sup>6</sup> The word *popular* in Spanish has a distinct meaning from the word in English. *Popular* means "reflecting the culture of the majority and/or emanating from the masses." The English term has more economic overtones—i.e., something popular is something widely liked or in high demand or of instrumental value. *Musica Popular* in Bolivia or Chile is essentially an expression of the music of the common people, and not music that is marketable or commercially successful. [Luft's comments on the differences of meaning between the Spanish *popular* and the English "popular" reminds one of the various meanings of the English term "folk," which has been contested territory (at least until this Society changed its name in 1990, a gesture which seems to signal the capitulation of one contestant team). Presumably there are cultural power players in Latin America at work attempting to control the meaning of *popular*. —GWL]

<sup>7</sup> I remember having an interesting conversation with a professor of classical music during the Allende years who lamented the fact that the Music Faculty at the University of Chile in Santiago was being taken over by "inferior" music (he meant New Songs played by uncultured, poor students on *charangos* and *quenas* and *zamponas*). With great anger, he spoke of how this politicized music had begun to replace what he believed was "superior" classical music (i.e., essentially concertos played by children of the upper classes on violins and flutes).

<sup>8</sup> Chilean refugees arriving in Canada in 1975 used to keep their hopes of a return alive by singing Quilapayún march pieces. "The People United Will Never Be Defeated!" became a strong political symbol of the struggle against Pinochet's dictatorship for leftists in exile. Not all Chileans, however, saw value in the New Song. In 1994, for example, an outstanding Chilean musician now living in Calgary was asked by fans at a local folk club to play a Victor Jara piece. This musician refused to fill the request and instead launched into a noisy flamenco tune. I preferred to assume that he didn't know any Jara songs and was maybe oblivious to the New Song movement in his country of origin, rather than to assume that he was pro-Pinochet. In either case, the musician's response was puzzling, and the incident was for me unfortunate.

<sup>9</sup> Calgary Herald, February 22, 1994 (interview with James Muretech).

<sup>10</sup> Many local Toronto musicians joined the Central American solidarity cause during the 1980s. Bruce Cockburn's 1987 benefit concert at the Diamond Club (with Chilean new song proponent Angel Parra sharing the stage) was standing room only! Several less high profile singers (like Bob Carty and Nancy White), often appeared at solidarity events, performing their own songs, as well as interpreting Latin American protest themes adapted into English.

<sup>11</sup> Ivan Gonzales, *Las Guitarras del Fuego de Ayer*, ARCOIRIS Edition, San Salvador: 1994.

<sup>12</sup> Some protest/New Song enthusiasts would shudder at the thought of including the Kjarkas (and related non-political groups like Savia Andina, Zulma Yugar, Enriqueta Ulloa, Fortaleza, Wara, Amaru, Fortaleza and Proyeccion) in an article on Bolivian protest music. In spite of their lack of political consciousness, these *conjuntos* cannot be ignored because of their crucial role in renewing the melodic lines of Bolivian indigenous music and creating the stylized, modern form of Andean music now appreciated around the world. (Postscript: At the time of the writing of this article (October 1995), the Kiarkas actually disbanded, only to return under



a new name, *Pacha*, with a slick, new international image. Guided by Plácido Domingo's manager, they are making an assault on the world market. Less folksy, more polished! Tuxedos have replaced ponchos, background strings have replaced charangos. And, of course, the music is still non-political.)

<sup>13</sup> *Presencia*, La Paz, October 5, 1995.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Silvio Rodríguez by Rina Benmayor, Havana, March 1980 (as found in the CD liner *Canciones Urgentes*, 1990). [One is reminded of the 1960s controversy over the socio-esthetic value of "Folk Rock." The question was sometimes raised, "Were the kids who danced to rock versions of Bob Dylan songs aware of the social and esthetic complexities of those songs?" Roger McGuinn, leader of the Byrds, is said to have responded with the peculiar comment, "If one line of 'Mr. Tambourine Man' gets through to them, it will all have been worth it." Presumably his accountant was satisfied, whether or not this ever happened. The degree to which the bass and guitar riff with which the group opened the song has become so thoroughly identified with it suggests that, whether or not the lyrics were heard, the Byrds' danceable version of "Mr. Tambourine Man" defines the song for many people. —GWL]

<sup>15</sup> *VOX*, University of Calgary student-run arts newspaper, February 1994.

<sup>16</sup> *Bolivian Times*, March 24, 1995, interview with Luis Rico.

<sup>17</sup> *Canta Con Nosotros*, Venezuela, 1987.

<sup>18</sup> *Presencia*, La Paz, September 2, 1994.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Jenny Cardenas, ML, September 4, 1994.

<sup>20</sup> *The Daily Breeze*, Los Angeles, February 22, 1994.

<sup>21</sup> *NOW*, Toronto, February 3, 1994.

<sup>22</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, February 11, 1994.

<sup>23</sup> *Bolivian Times*, March 24, 1995, interview with Luis Rico.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Silvio Rodríguez by Rina Benmayor, Havana, March 1980 (as found in the CD liner *Canciones Urgentes*, 1990).

<sup>25</sup> *Presencia*, October 20, 1995.

\**Mestizo*, like the familiar *métis*, means "mixed," referring to a racial mixture, almost invariably Native and European. The social position of *mestizos* varies from region to region.

\*\*The *milonga* is a dance/music predecessor of the *tango*, which became the national dance of Argentina.

\*\*\* "Neoliberal" and "neoconservative" may, ironically, be interchanged, depending upon how one reads economic and political history. Luft here refers to the economic concepts of Milton Friedman and others who supported such various right wing leaders as Pinochet in Chile, Reagan in the US, and Thatcher in Britain. In Canada, particularly, Luft's usage reminds us of a tradition of conservatism whose commitment to community is at odds with the extreme individualism and commercial focus of contemporary representatives of the right wing point of view. [GWL]

*Murray Luft, a development/aid work in Bolivia, was raised in Calgary, where he visits frequently.*



"There are literally hundreds of professional and semi-professional *conjuntos* (groups) playing in La Paz, Quito, and Cusco these days. Probably there are half this number running around Europe and North America in ponchos with pan flutes, mostly economic migrants.... Most survive by busking, playing in Latin American restaurants, or doing occasional gigs at summer folk festivals." Alpa Kallpa, a Calgary based group, attracts fans on the Stephen Avenue Mall, July 1996.