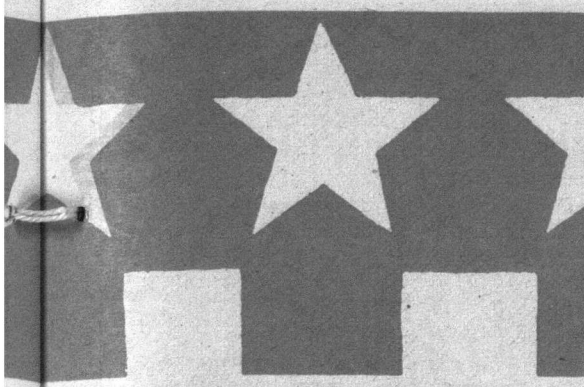


# fires of smoldering discontent



conditions and a terrible isolation face political prisoners in Chile's jails.

"We need your voice in solidarity;  
We need your work at school;  
We need your visit to the prisons;  
your rage united with ours,  
your rejection of so much injustice..."

The message to people in the festival in Santiago reaches beyond Chile's borders. Canadian students can also help, with letters of protest to Chile's government (Minister of the Interior, Diego Portales Bldg, Santiago, Chile).

After the intermission, a strange thing happens. A bunch of kids from an alternate school (about 30 all told) begin to sing, a "musical story", a "students' cantata". The piece is totally different from anything else in the festival. It begins with the stomp of marching feet on the stage, rhythmic clapping, 4 solemn, quavering recorders, and the story of a town where there was a war, where the children wanted to escape the torture, repression and want.

"They left by an unknown road," they sing, as a xylophone's delicate tones remind the audience of a child sized world — and how easily it is destroyed.

"There was no lack of faith and hope but there was no bread..."

The audience listens closely to the group. All of the performers are very young. They have grown up under the military dictatorship. They have never known a free election or freedom of speech. They have never heard the many, major Chilean musical groups who are in exile: What will they say in their music?

The cantata continues the story of the children's march.

"Without bread, coats, love,  
how can they confront life and win?  
Spring arrives.  
The flowers bloom.  
How unjust that children,  
who are the very flower of life itself,  
must die in Spring!"

There's scattered applause, and tension builds. Will they accept "fate"? The children's death? How can they fight back? What weapons do children have?

"Some say it was in Tebas.  
Some say it didn't happen  
But many know,  
because they live like those children..."

We must fight!  
Fight for freedom.  
We must fight,  
for bread and freedom!"

The song brings the house down and the audience to its feet in a standing ovation.

An emcee appears: "I think these elementary and highschool students have given us all an example of how we must fight for the freedom of Gregory Cohen and the other four students arrested earlier this year." Gregory Cohen's name was famous before he was arrested — he's a talented young playwright and actor whose work won the ACU Festival of Theatre in August. Unfortunately it couldn't be performed in the finale because of Cohen's detention.

The chant begins at the back of the theatre and rolls forward, louder and faster, until everyone is yelling: "Libertad! Libertad! Libertad!"

The emcees, dressed as clowns, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, an airplane pilot who lost his plane, pirates, and sophisticates and slob, move the festival

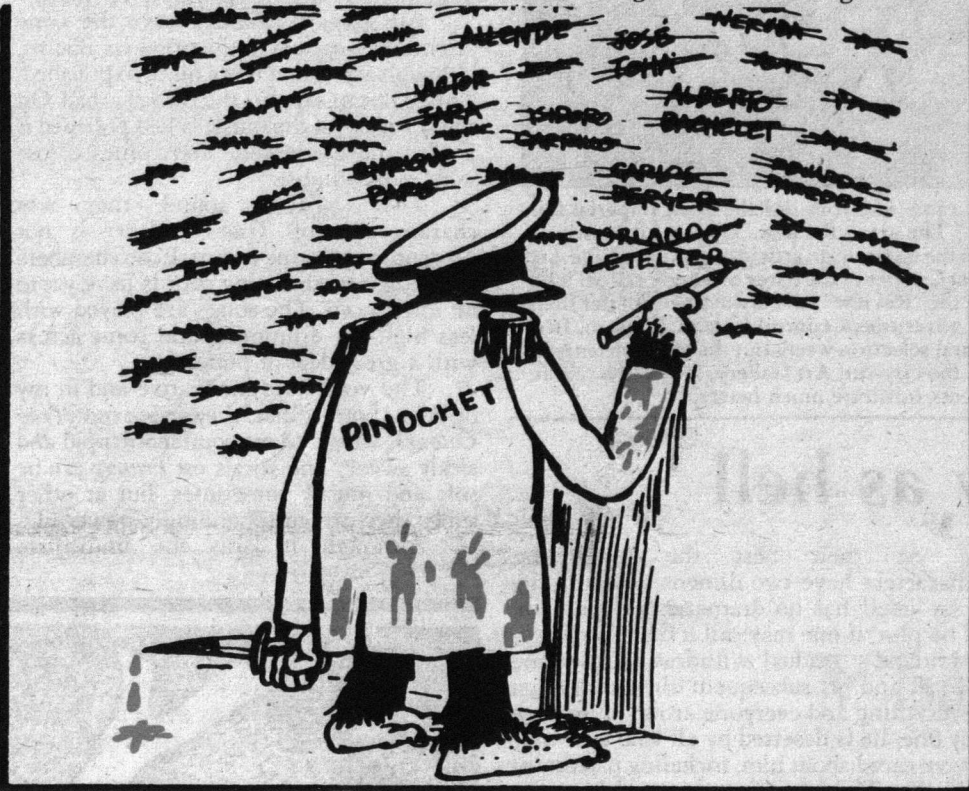
"You have to squeeze your fingers in a fist and walk, We have to join forces and walk."

When she stops, it seems like the roof is about to lift off. Eight years of military dictatorship later and the cry still rises to their lips as it did when millions thronged the street, day and night, to defend the popular government from a US-backed coup — a coup which has meant the selling of Chile's copper, coal, schools, universities, health care system, to private business.

Above the heat, the cigarette smoke, the voices rise with the force of a smothered kettle exploding:

"El pueblo unido jamas sera vencido!  
The people united will never be defeated!  
The people united will never be defeated!"

Outside the theatre the cops become nervous, finger their machine guns, move



along at a rapid pace. Traditional and modern instruments, folk, rock, blues melodies composed and/or performed by students fill the old theatre one after another. And then, Capri. She is direct, uncompromising. A singer popular throughout Chile whose house was raided by the CNI a few weeks ago.

"It's time the exiles came home," she says, introducing her second song.

"I've seen my country scattered everywhere, a part of Santiago in the middle of Paris... time passes but part of Chile remains a prisoner... If Chile's wounds had healed, its blood would not be flowing, so far from home."

Over 1,000,000 of Chile's 11,000,000 people are not permitted to return to their homeland, families and friends.

She finishes with a chorus which everyone sings:

restlessly. The Captain demands the person in charge of the festival. "He's not here," someone says. Inside, a white spotlight reveals a man in sunglasses and bathrobe, sauntering up the aisle to the stage. He turns to the audience and shakes his finger warningly. Then in a high falsetto he introduces the next song. The chant becomes laughter. Another song and then an emcee begins to read a poem:

"I don't know to what lengths the pacifiers will go, but...some already demand the guillotine for those who don't want to be pacified.

When the pacifiers aim, of course, they shoot to pacify and sometimes they pacify two birds with one shot.

It's clear there's always some jerk who refuses to be pacified from behind.

Or some idiot who resists pacification over a slow flame.

In reality this is such a strange country that the person who pacifies the pacifiers will be a real pacifier." - (Benedetti)

The festival is coming to an end. The emcee announces "the moment we've all been waiting for," the annual speech from ACU president Patricio Lanfranco. People prepare for a change in pace. He appears, a small but powerful figure in blue jeans and a short sleeved blue shirt.

"This has been a difficult year for the university," he begins. "ACU has suffered from the general slump throughout the university. In spite of this, at our Congress and our seminar, we realized that we must continue our work. At the seminar we saw we weren't functioning well and decided to change. Spirits were low and the new Universities Law..."

Suddenly two men in dazzling red and yellow satin suits interrupt. They begin a commentary, a running dialogue, analyzing what has happened to Chile (and ACU) since the military coup in 73.

"We have played by their rules and up to now we've lost!" They leap off the stage and the audience gives a collective jump. They pace the aisles restlessly, pointing accusingly at person after person.

"We've lost the ability to be surprised. We're no longer surprised by arbitrary arrests, regulations, disappearances," one says, angrily. Pointing at person after person in the audience they ask: "Do our hearts shudder at news of the arrest of Gregory Cohen? Are you angered by the people being relegated, suspended, expelled?"

"We must rescue surprise, break with tradition. We must rescue our own sensibility to what is happening and..."

"We must cultivate rage for the tasks to come. We must stop turning our own anger against ourselves, leaving us impotent and depressed. We must transform it into the power to create..."

"But here," one said at last, "We must stop. The rest we must do together. All of us. We must break with narrow attitudes. To rebel is to live!"

The response was immediate. The old chant begins again but during the festival its meaning has changed. It no longer means a people on the defensive in a struggle to save democracy and the possibility of peaceful solutions to grave social problems. Now it has taken on a different meaning:

"The people, united, will never be defeated!  
The people united, will never be defeated!"

The Chilean people have claimed the sacred right to rebellion against tyranny, torture and injustice: the right to fight for freedom against repression, using every available means.

They are yelling so all the world can hear:  
The people, united, will never be defeated!

And behind those old words sings the new meaning, stirring Chilean society to the roots —

## TO REBEL IS TO LIVE!

Short hours from the moment the lights went down on a half full theatre, the festival closes with chants and a song sung by 1000 voices.

The audience leaves the theatre excited, singing, talking, arguing. It has not been a festival like any other. The results are still to come...

