

# Chilean students: stoking the

The following is an account of the Fifth Festival of University Song sponsored by the Cultural Association of the University - Chile. The military dictatorship in that country has stepped up its repression and terrorist tactics in recent months to stifle any murmurs of insurrection.

Patricio Lanfranco, president of ACU, spoke at the University of Alberta last winter. Soon after he returned to Chile where he was arrested and tortured by Chilean police. Pressure from student organizations in Canada and around the world resulted in his speedy release.

While resignation and indifference to the regimes oppressive tactics has become common in Chile, Soledad Rosas points out in her feature that students have decided to fight back.

by Soledad Rosas

Chile Nov. '81: Half an hour before the big show was scheduled to start, a crowd gathered outside the Cariola Theatre where the Fifth Festival of University Song was about to take place. In the street, guntoting policemen in the traditional green uniforms of the carabineros of Chile, watch the goings on with suspicion, ever ready to move in and shut the whole thing down.

Inside the theatre, organizers run around settling last minute details. The walls are covered with fragments of poems and graffiti from France in 1968:

"FORBIDDING  
OUR HUMANITY  
IS FORBIDDEN",

"YOU DON'T BEG  
FOR THE RIGHT  
TO LIVE  
YOU TAKE IT",

"RESCUE SURPRISE!",

"CULTIVATE RAGE!"

I take my seat. The upper galleries of the theatre fill rapidly, but the orchestra seats remain half empty. The lights go out. In the dark, cheers, yells, chants and rhythmic clapping are an irresistible demand for the festival to start — a festival that has cost months of work, worry and debate in an atmosphere charged with fear and an implacable hostility to student initiative and "uncontrolled" cultural events.

The atmosphere on campus this year has ranged from heavy to leaden. In January the military government of Chile began the process of selling the university system to private business. Slashing budgets, it removed many departments from the university calendar, placing them in separate "Academies".

Military officers heading all of Chile's universities welcomed the change, vowing to stamp out all student and faculty opposition to the new law. At the beginning of the school term, professors found lists of people being fired, instead of jobs, when they returned to campus. They did not even receive letters — just lists of those who had jobs and those who didn't, posted on the walls.

Three students who organized a reception breakfast for frosh were taken to the dean's office where they were arrested.

One was later relegated (internal exile) for three months.

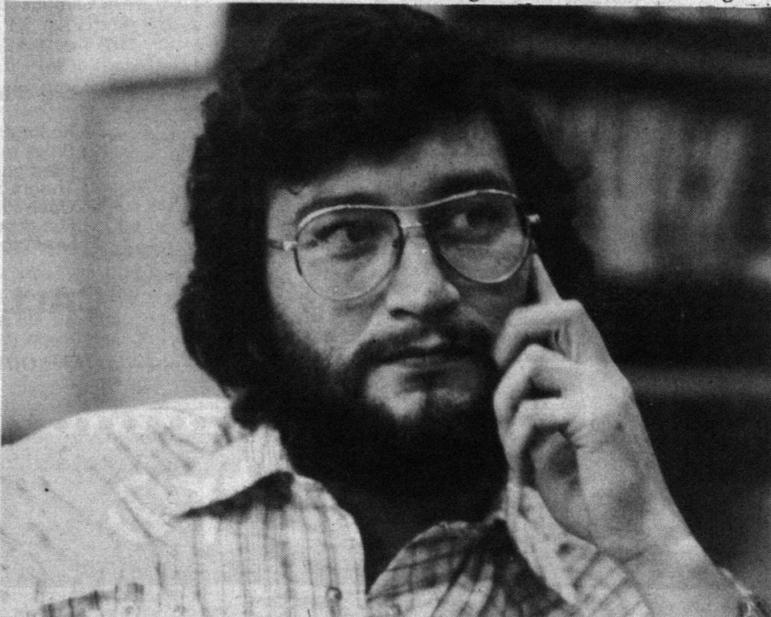
Medical students lost the room where cultural workshops had met, rehearsed, written plays and generally had a good time together; on campus after campus it became virtually impossible to organize any kind of event on campus.

As well, the new University Law with high registration fees, plus prohibitive monthly payments took its toll in access to education. The firings of profs for political reasons and budget cutbacks have severely reduced the quality of education as well.

The Cultural Association of the University (ACU), which has close ties with the Canadian Federation of Students and the Federation of Alberta Students, has not escaped the new wave of repression on campus.

Its General Secretary, Juan Valladares, was relegated for 3 months in January of this year.

In May, ACU President Patricio Lanfranco was kidnapped after visiting a



Patricio Lanfranco, president of ACU

police station on behalf of students arrested in Mayday demonstrations for a return to freedom and democracy in Chile. His 6 day stay in a secret prison of the CNI (Chile's equivalent of Hitler's SS) was cut short by national and international solidarity campaigns. He was questioned and tortured by marijuana-smoking interrogators whose faces he never saw and who expressed fear that some day the tables would be turned and they would be arrested — but for real crimes.

Shortly after Lanfranco's release, ACU held its first congress, where delegates evaluated work so far this year and planned future activities. In a seminar in August, the leadership, made up of a 6 person executive and representatives from each campus of the University of Chile, realized that all was not well in the student movement, and that ACU was suffering from the same malaise.

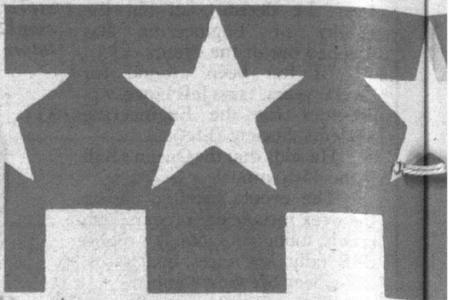
The new University Law, the constant repression of the slightest student initiative, the number of students expelled,

suspended, relegated, has created an atmosphere of tension and fear. Everyone is in a hurry to finish their courses and to get the hell out of university. The creation of the integral person is no longer a goal of the system and cultural events, especially those not directed by the university authorities, are frowned upon (to put it mildly).

The conclusions of the seminar were straightforward: "We must break the narrow boundaries of what is typical, normal, done. We must rescue surprise and outrage. We must cultivate anger."

The Fifth Festival, The University Sings for Life and Peace, is the first test for ACU's new, more aggressive approach. Some of the audience know this and have come for inspiration in an uninspiring year. Others have come from habit, hoping for surprise and an outlet for stifled emotions.

At last, the curtains open. Without introductions, six performers of the group "Santiago del Nuevo Extremo" begin to



More wild applause from the audience.

Then, out march the emcees: "Now we're going to play a game, The General Orders...", a Chilean version of Simon Says. The audience whistles and shouts its derision, but the game begins anyway. After a short round with the audience standing up, sitting down, raising its right hand, raising its left, four losers stand up on stage and have to sing a children's song. Sheepfaced and harried, they end amid shouts of "Encore! Encore!"

But the guitars, marracas and Caribbean beat of the salsa "Dictatoría No!" invade the stage. A song about a man with a dictatorial wife (or is it?) the audience claps and sings to the chorus:

"Let me go.....  
I can't stand anymore,  
from this dictadora."

Another song about a mining disaster in the south, then suddenly all the lights go out. A chant from the balcony for four imprisoned students fills the theatre, then is suddenly hushed by a recording which vibrates the air:

"Hay una mujer desaparecida,  
Hay una mujer desaparecida,  
There's a woman,  
who has disappeared,  
in Chile, in Chile..."

Three brief lines and it's gone. The lights are up, there's a new group on the stage. But the audience is shocked — and approving. There are at least 2500 missing political prisoners in Chile, but their existence is denied by the government, which has even gone so far as to tell women that their husbands of ten years never existed.

During intermission students scurried among the rows, distributing a poster and flyer. "Verónica Villavicencio, María Soledad Bravo, Francisco Lamic, Gregory Cohen and Emilio Ripas are five students like you. For exercising their right to protest in the streets against the repressive regime, they have been imprisoned in Santiago jails for two and a half months..."

"We don't know what you think of this, but we, cross country delegates to the first National Meeting of Sanctioned Students, are enormously affected by the fate of our fellow students...Remember, if we aren't capable of demanding and winning the freedom of our friends, each day we'll be more repressed, more limited in our ability to think and to act..." the flyer reads.

Conditions in the local pens are notorious — a jail hierarchy based on violence and rape, bad food, bad sanitary

