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Response to Recent Ads From the Chilean Junta

I suppose one ought to rejoice that the military government of Chile is at least helping subsidize the free press, in the form of The Washington Post, by placing two half-page advertisements within one week. It is, however, small compensation for the destruction of the free press of Chile by that government.

Of the two ads, the attack on Colman McCarthy in the Sunday (Nov. 10) edition was especially interesting—partly because it shows how seriously the military rulers of Chile take two things: Folk-music that represents the frustration and aspirations of the poor of their country, and their desire to discredit any and all movements that might express these feelings; and concern that the American people might understand the full depth and horror of military rule in Chile today.

Speaking of another Chilean folk-song group, now living in forced exile because they, like Victor Jara, seek to give voice to the longings for freedom and justice of the Chilean people, Washington Post reviewer Joseph McLellan recently wrote: "When they are outlawed, as this group is in its native land, the fact does not reflect primarily on the musicians." The power of arms, and of money to buy half-page ads, now rests with the Chilean military junta; but, in the words of McLellan again, the hope of those who sing the true folk songs of the oppressed is "when songs clash with armaments: arms grow obsolete; songs don't."

Brady Tyson,

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 Washington.

Having read a paid advertisement in your paper, signed by Raphael Otero of the Chilean Embassy and called

"An Open Letter to Colman McCarthy about 'The Singers of Chile,'" it is with some difficulty that I am writing to you about it. My instinct is to ignore this libellous document, but I feel that it is my duty, both to my own children and to those who have suffered at the hands of the Chilean military junta, to make some comment on its contents.

Anyone who has read Colman McCarthy's beautiful article will understand that it would not have hurt my husband, Victor Jara, to be called a "mediocre" musician, especially by Mr. Otero. The singers of the new Chilean song movement were essentially anti-"idols," but in spite of that, it was ordinary Chilean people, working there, who recognized Victor's face among the piles of anonymous bodies in the morgue of Santiago on September 18, 1973 and came to fetch me so that he should not disappear into a common grave. Since that moment, when I recognized the remains of my beloved husband and saw, in the morgue, the nightmare results of just one day of massacre, perhaps I have become a "political activist," if that means bearing witness to what I saw. Amidst the dimensions of the tragedy of Chile, our personal loss as a family is nothing, but one could not go on living if one did not try to convert this loss into something which one feels can be of use. One cannot live off hatred. The love that Victor gave me, his commitment to his people's struggle for a better life and the happiness of what was our own family life, gives me strength to go on. If people, hearing his songs, will remember the dead, the tortured, the imprisoned, the widows and orphans of Chile and realize that there are some things that cannot be destroyed by force—then I

am glad if his music can be heard all over the world.

Joan Jara.

London.

I lived in Chile during the Allende years and for two nightmarish months after the military coup as an employee of Catholic Relief Services. One of the many exciting things during the Popular Unity government was the expansion of popular folk music and other art forms. For that reason I was happy to see the sensitive treatment of the "Nueva Cancion Chilena" in Colman McCarthy's October 31 article.

It seems that Mr. McCarthy's concise, accurate and beautiful piece did not sit well with the reactionary Junta as evidenced by the huge advertisement in the Washington Post on Nov. 10. Mr. Rafael Otero, who signed the ad, is an employee of the Chilean Embassy here. It is true that he was a deputy in Congress (elected in March, 1973, he only served six months until the military closed the Congress), but he was better known as editor of "Sepa," an extreme right wing magazine. Its low level of journalism is demonstrated by the long-winded ad filled with libelous insinuations.

I heard Victor Jara sing and have all his records. He was a first class musician in my book and certainly spoke to the struggling poor of Chile better than Claudio Arrau. The Junta is trying to "cover up" Victor Jara's death along with the deaths of thousands of others including two North Americans, Frank Terrugi and Charles Horman. It was common knowledge that Jara was killed and tortured in the National Stadium which was used as a prison after the coup.

Patrick W. Ahern.

Washington.