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## Mr. Simpático: Dean Reed, Pop Culture, and the Cold War in Chile

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*Jedrek Mularski*

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### Abstract

*This article reveals the complexities of Latin America's Cold War experience by e process by which North American rock and roll singer Dean Reed became a polc Chile. It argues that Reed became part of an international cultural movement th the product of United States-Soviet competition, but a more complex convergen political and cultural movements from across the Americas and beyond. In doir vivid example of rock and roll, a product of United States and European populc industries, being appropriated for anti-capitalist purposes in the midst of the Co*

*El artículo revela las complejidades de la Guerra Fría en América Latina con un transformación de Dean Reed, un cantante estadounidense de rock and roll, en polarizada en Chile. En la investigación afirmó que Reed se volvió parte de un r cultural internacional que era más que un producto de competencia entre la U EEUU; este movimiento se formaba por la compleja convergencia de movimien*

*culturales locales y mundiales. De esta manera, la investigación revela un ejemplo and roll, un producto de la industria de cultura popular de los EEUU y Europa, para propósitos anti-capitalistas durante la Guerra Fría.*

## Introduction

Dean Reed arrived in Santiago, Chile, for the first time in 1961. Reed had achieved success as a rock and roll musician and film actor in the United States, but there he had become a celebrated teen idol in South America. When the blue-eyed No. 1 artist came to Chile as part of his first South American tour, Reed's frenzied fans struggled to get close to his performances to "touch him, give him surprise hugs, ruffle his hair, and even kiss his jacket."<sup>[1]</sup> Reed endeared himself to his Chilean fans and won over the Chilean public with his soft-spoken modesty and what the Chilean magazine *Ercilla* described as his "what he is like in reality: a good North American fellow, inoffensive and naive about anything besides rock."<sup>[2]</sup> Reed's accessibility, his publicly stated affection for his down-to-earth charm made him a pop culture darling of Chilean rock and Chilean media in the early 1960s.

Despite Reed's widespread popularity in Chile as a rock and roll idol in the 1960s, he became a controversial figure by the early 1970s. As Chileans became polarized by Cold War tensions, both Reed and the Chilean public began to view the events and cultural representations of the era through an increasingly politicized lens. Unlike most North American stars of the 1970s who were neither embraced by Chilean conservatives, who traditionally looked to the United States and Europe for their cultural influences, nor maligned by Chilean leftists who viewed pop culture from the United States as imperialist. Rather, as the United States collaborated economically, politically, militarily, and culturally with right-wing regimes across Latin America to eliminate leftist political sentiment, Chile's conservative right aggressively attacked Reed and his music, while Chilean leftists gradually came to work with Reed.

Scholars have traditionally emphasized the role that United States and Soviet Union played in Latin America during the Cold War, as both superpowers competed to expand their influence. This emphasis has been particularly prominent in studies on Chile, such as Stephen Rabe, Christopher Andrew, Lubna Qureshi, and Jonathan H. Cook on the impact of the United States and the Soviet Union in local politics.<sup>[3]</sup> More recent works on the Cold War era in Latin America have reconceptualized the conflict as the product of more diverse forces. For example, Hal Brands has argued that the Cold War was not a bipolar affair, but a combination of overlapping local, regional, and global forces. Similarly, Tanya Harmer's *Chile and the Inter-American Cold War* has argued that the Cold War in Latin America was not a "bi-polar superpower struggle projected onto a Lat

theater from outside,” but a “unique and multisided contest between regional communism and capitalism, albeit in various forms.” [5]

As scholars have explored these multiple facets of the Cold War in Latin America, historians have started to consider the role that culture played in the tensions of this era. For *the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War*, edited by Gilbert Daniela Spenser, examines how local social and cultural identities shaped the history of the era. [6] Following such revisionist histories, this article examines the role of Dean Reed became a polarizing figure in Chile as a means to reveal the complexity of America's Cold War experience. Reed became part of an international cultural movement that was not simply the product of competition between the United States and the Soviet Union, but a more complex convergence of various political and cultural movements across the Americas and beyond. The history of Dean Reed defies the traditional notion that only people flowed from the United States into Chile during the Cold War exclusively through right-wing efforts to suppress leftist movements. [7] Moreover, it also provides a new perspective on rock and roll, a product of United States and European popular culture industries that was appropriated for anticapitalist purposes in the midst of the Cold War.

## Dean Reed and Chile in the 1960s

Born in 1938 and raised in the Denver suburb of Wheat Ridge, Dean Reed started his education in meteorology at the University of Colorado in Boulder, before moving to Los Angeles to pursue a career in show business. Between 1958 and 1961, Reed began a fledgling career as an actor and musician, earning a number of small roles in television and film, and releasing several music albums with Capitol Records. Reed's work had not achieved widespread popularity in the United States, but his music was acquiring a tremendous following in Chile, where “Our Summer Romance,” Reed's upbeat single about teenage romance, topped the top of Chile's popular music charts in 1959 and 1960, and where Reed's performance topped Elvis Presley in the South American Hit Parade Poll. [8]

Rock and roll arrived in Chile by the mid-1950s, and the music of Bill Haley and the Commodores completed a rapid transformation of Chile's musical scene from jazz and swing to rock and roll music from the United States and Europe. For many Chileans, the newest music from the United States and Europe represented a cultural cosmopolitanism that Chile's emerging consumer culture embraced. Music clubs became filled with the sounds of rock and roll in auditoriums and concert stages; Ricardo García, Julio Gutiérrez, and other popular musicians broadcast the latest hits over Chile's largest radio networks, such as Radio Miraflores and Radio Cooperativa; television networks aired musical performances by North American rock and roll artists alongside Latin American pop musicians and crooners during prime time; and record companies seized the opportunity to promote and sell rock and roll

and upper class youth at stores set up in Chile's well-to-do commercial districts. Rock and roll was not the only music that existed in Chile during this period. Many listened to the "*música típica*" of groups such as Los Huasos Quincheros, rural groups that those who migrated from rural areas into Chile's larger cities enjoyed *cumbias* and *rancheros*, and a small group of progressive intellectuals were interested in non-mainstream songs of Chile's outlying regions. [10] Nonetheless, middle-class youth culture in the 1960s defined Chile's musical scene, and the Chilean mass media, which was controlled by conservative business interests, embraced and contributed to this trend.

By the mid-1960s, Chilean rock and roll musicians had assimilated the imported American rock and roll, and they existed alongside their United States and European counterparts. There remained among many Chilean music fans a preference for the "most authentic" rock and roll, which they considered to be music performed by United States and European artists. At the least, music performed in English by Chileans who looked and acted like United States and European rock and rollers. [11] Accordingly, when the tall, handsome, blue-eyed American singer Bob Dylan visited Chile in 1961, he found a youthful, middle-class population eager to adopt what he was perceived to be an "authentic" rock and roll star. Reed, who exhibited good-natured modesty and was accessible to the media and fans and professed a love for Chile on his repeated visits to the country. He delighted the Chilean press with actions such as spontaneously dancing the *cueca* (Chile's national folk dance) with an admiring female fan and represented the artist in the local environment. [12] The pop culture magazine *Ecran* wondered if Chileans would follow Reed and leave the country at the end of his March 1961 visit and in 1962 unofficially proclaimed Reed to be the singer who received the most farewell events, including "despedidas" on Radio Magenta (a station controlled by right-wing interests), Radio Portales (a station that would later become the strongest supporters of the leftist Allende government), the Famae Stadium, and the conservative television Channel 13. [13]

While Reed garnered remarkable popularity among Chilean rock and roll fans in the late 1950s and mid-1960s, Chile was undergoing a period of political transformation that diversified its musical landscape. As in many parts of Latin America, the persistence of social and socioeconomic inequities, United States intervention, and a growing belief in the need for meaningful social and political transformation had reenergized leftist politics. In the face of this revolutionary fervor, leftists increasingly rejected mainstream pop music, which they perceived to promote passivity and consumerism. As Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart wrote in their 1971 essay, "Para leer al Pato Donald" ("How to Read Donald Duck"), Walter Dill Scott and the United States pop culture industries created productions that were more than mere entertainment; rather, such productions reflected capitalist ideology and disseminated North American cultural values, such as the accumulation of individual wealth and the United States superiority. [14] Accordingly, many leftists wholeheartedly rejected the st



of rock and roll; others simply found little utility in the lovelorn lyrics of songs “Once Again” (“Once we were together and were oh so glad / Now you are gone / I am oh so sad / For you are life to me / I love you so / Oh my dearest one / Why did you leave me?”) or his rendition of “Donna Donna” (“Donna, Donna, why’d you want to do that and lured me off / Then you turned me down flat / Donna Donna why’d you want that”). [\[15\]](#)

Rather than embracing the music of Reed and other rock and rollers, many Chileans sought musical inspiration from what they believed to be more “authentic” expressions of the populace found in Latin America’s folk traditions. During the second half of the 1960s, Viña del Mar became a gathering point for progressive-minded musicians from across Latin America. Returning from Paris with her son Ángel and her daughter Isabel in 1965, Violeta Parra of the Peña de los Parra with the help of her children and other young Santiago folk musicians including Rolando Alarcón, Patricio Manns, and Victor Jara. It was a venue at which they could disseminate and popularize folkloric music from Chile and other regions—sounds that had not yet found a place in Chile’s commercial market. The Peña de los Parra became a gathering point for intellectuals, folklorists, and progressive-minded musicians, and it spurred the creation of other peñas in cities and at universities across Chile. By the late 1960s and 1968, numerous new artists and peñas emerged and cultivated songs that drew heavily on an array of folkloric influences and expressed increasingly strong social critiques. Chilean musicians such as Daniel Viglietti (Uruguay) and Atahualpa Yupanqui (Argentina) had been performing the peñas in other countries where similar folk-based movements had been underway for several years, and they did so increasingly as many South American governments implemented efforts to repress left-wing activism. Chilean peña musicians also interacted and collaborated with socially progressive musicians such as Mercedes Sosa (Argentina), Chico Buarque (Brazil), Pablo Milanés (Cuba), and Silvio Rodríguez (Cuba) at regional music festivals across Latin America.

A principal outcome of the peñas and the interactions that they fostered was the emergence of what became known as the *nueva canción* (“new song”) movement. At its heart, the movement was a reaction against cultural imperialism and the commercialization of folk music. The movement also strived to transcend Latin America’s national boundaries and to advocate for social justice, its valuation of the working classes, and a shared sense of cultural identity. It drew heavily on the instrumentation, rhythms, melodies, and dress of the regional folk traditions of the local populations. [\[16\]](#) In Chile, *nueva canción* became closely linked to the government of Salvador Allende, who won Chile’s presidency in 1970 as the candidate of a leftist coalition, the Unidad Popular (Popular Unity). Utilizing government radio and television stations, state festivals, public performances, and start-up record labels, the Allende government supported *nueva canción* musicians to further Unidad Popular’s stated platform of advancing social justice and “fighting against cultural deformations of capitalist society.” At the same time

attempted to assert its control over mass media outlets and continue the dominance of commercial popular music while preventing the dissemination of *nueva canción*.

## Dean Reed and Unidad Popular

The *nueva canción* movement was not fully dogmatic in its rejection of music from the United States and Europe. In fact, in certain instances, *nueva canción* musicians appropriated folk songs from the United States, such as “If I Had a Hammer,” and collaborated with some progressive Chilean rock groups during the early 1970s. The heart of the movement was rooted in the influences of folk music from around the world, with areas of Latin America, which makes Dean Reed’s association with *nueva canción* and the Unidad Popular government particularly striking.

Accounts of Reed’s life indicate that he possessed a strong social conscience from the start of his career. Anecdotes suggest that Reed got his start in the music business in the United States when he picked up, clothed, and lodged a hitchhiker who ended up having a contact at a record store where Reed signed after moving to California.<sup>[18]</sup> Accounts of Reed’s early time in Chile indicate that Reed was deeply affected by the level of poverty that he witnessed in Santiago. Oñate, a public relations executive for EMI-Odeon (Capitol Records) in Chile, recalled that Reed saw Santiago’s shanty towns, “He felt the suffering of others as his own, and he said to me ‘I can’t believe that they live like this.’”<sup>[19]</sup> Reed’s interviews from the early 1970s include such anecdotes, as Reed openly expressed his beliefs that “all human beings are equal.” Reed actively voiced his support for the Civil Rights movement in the United States. Reflecting back on his political development, Reed asserted in 1970, “When I came to Chile, I had already had my beliefs. In those years I had refused to become a soldier, and I was part of the pacifist movement.”<sup>[21]</sup> Subsequently, Reed wrote specifically that the poverty he observed after his arrival in South America sharpened his concern for social justice.

I remember exactly how I drove past the edge of the slums of Santiago on my way to the beaches of the Pacific. In this section, consisting of shacks, naked people, and a few dogs, a man ruled. There, children stood on the edge of the street, barefoot, with tormented faces and bloated stomachs, the unmistakable signs of insufficient nutrition. . . . I can’t reflect at this time. There was the safe world of modern cities; there were no slums. There was the officially strong friendship with my homeland and the ‘Yankee-go-home’ calls. But, more and more questions gnawed at me.

The Chilean public experienced periodic tastes of Reed’s social conscience, in a highly publicized episode in April 1962, when Reed paid for a newspaper advertisement

Chileans to write letters to President Kennedy requesting the United States to tests. [23] Reed's advertisement drew the attention of the United States government warned Reed about behavior that painted the United States in a negative light monitoring his activities. [24] Within Chile, Reed's behavior was far less controversial. Culture media outlets celebrated many of Reed's charitable deeds, such as his benefits for earthquake victims and his visits to children's hospitals. [25] In doing so, outlets helped to cultivate a popular image of Reed not only as a great musician, so-called "Mr. Simpático," who provided a positive role model for Chilean teenagers. For example, celebrated Reed's "idealism" and "optimism" as "two essential ingredients for youth." [26] Additionally, as discussed previously in this article, the press declaration of 1962 that Reed was the musician who had received the most Chilean "desprestigios" (disprestige events), including ones at the conservative Radio Minería and Channel 13.

The lack of concern over Reed's political behavior in the early 1960s may have had part to do with the fact that even as Reed became more openly concerned with social issues, the music that he released during the early 1960s was virtually devoid of social content. For example, he often produced in both English and Spanish, generally dealt with teenage love. For example, Reed's biggest hit, "Our Summer Romance," expressed the sadness of a teenage boy whose summer romance came to an end with the start of the school year:

Although the summer is gone  
I'll try to carry on  
Although you won't be near me  
And when school is through  
I'll still be loving you  
For nine months can't be so long.

"Our Summer Romance" culminated with a traditional pledge of fidelity:

I love no one but you  
My love belongs to you  
Someday I hope to marry you. [27]

Reed's 1959 recording of "I Ain't Got You" also connected to middle-class teenagers. The two stanzas referenced a variety of desirable consumer goods that were every teenager could want, with the exception of the girl he admired:

I got an Ivy League suit

With a slim lapel  
Jet black jacket  
That rings up the bell  
Bad motorcycle and a sports car too  
Oh what ain't I got?  
I ain't got you.

I got a pork pie hat  
With a snap down brim  
Charcoal blazer with a corduroy trim  
Whole lot of records and a Hi-Fi too  
Oh what ain't I got?  
I ain't got you. [\[28\]](#)

Through the mid-1960s, Reed's political views and his popular music became contradictory. Reed continued to release romantic songs about young love and songs about girls and teen culture. At the same time, however, Reed's politics leftward.

Seeking new professional opportunities in 1964, Reed took up residence in Argentina where he had become very popular, and subsequently he moved to Italy extensively all the while in Latin America and Europe, and always receiving mail he passed through Chile. His travels included tours and the production of songs "Iron Curtain." His experiences in the Soviet bloc continued to alter his politics and made him the target of suspicion in Argentina, where Reed's political out antagonized the Argentine right wing and caused Reed to be threatened, his house his dog poisoned, and his bedroom shot up with bullets. The Argentine press sincerity and speculated that he only desired Argentine citizenship so that they could not deport him for being a Communist. [\[29\]](#) Reed publically denied that Communist and asserted, "my profession comes first and . . . I do not consider politician." [\[30\]](#) Nonetheless, Reed's private writings indicate that his internal sentiments necessarily echo his public claims. In 1965, Reed praised life under a communist letter to himself:

Probably my greatest surprise during my trip inside the Soviet Union was that in the Communist countries of Russia and Czechoslovakia I found that they have more liberty from fear of the future, they have liberty from fear of illness, from lack of work. They have liberty of fear from cheated by their fellow man every day of their life. They dedicate [*sic*] heart or his work, and does not have to dedicate his life to the making of r



We must sit down and choose the better of two points of view always—the ideal, but it will be the better of two systems. [31]

In the late 1960s, Reed's music began to take a political turn. Reed's performance started to incorporate a wider variety of music that included songs with an emphasis on social issues and pacifism, but Reed now began to release more politically oriented music. In 1968, he released the antiwar song, "The War Keeps On," and "Historia llama" (History Calls), a song about social activism and social justice. [32] Such music, combined with Reed's tours in the United States and public protests in Italy against the Vietnam War, and his open letters condemning the United States and supporting the Soviet political system, provided sufficient cause for the Argentine and Uruguayan governments to block Reed's entry into their respective countries.

Recent research on the Cold War era in Latin America has revealed strong links between governments and political movements throughout the region. Despite Reed's growing image as a radical outside Chile, this reputation does not seem to have extended to Chile by 1969. [33] The Chilean teenage popular culture magazine, *Juventud*, seemed perplexed by Reed's expulsion from Argentina and surmised that the only reason for the strange measures taken by the governments of Argentina and Chile was political, and yet the singer isn't known to have been involved in any political activities in his 20 years and has been totally dedicated to his artistic career." [34] *Ritmo de la juventud* continued by recounting a story in which Reed risked his life in 1966 by climbing a building to rescue an elderly neighbor near his residence in Argentina. [35] Moreover, despite Reed's personal political beliefs, his experiences in the Communist bloc, and the political content of his music, the Chilean left still viewed Reed with suspicion. However, Chile, however, began to alter Chileans' impressions of him.

Reed was excited by the momentum of Salvador Allende's presidential campaign in Chile in 1970 with the intent to support the Popular Unity movement and the new administration. After arriving in Chile, Reed produced two songs through EMI, which had reoriented its business model after Allende's election to take advantage of the growing support for *nueva canción* music. The first release, "Las cosas que yo he visto" ("The Things I Have Seen"), combined a somber, slow-tempo chorus that mused, "When will they stop / Before they do harm / To search for the truth throughout?" with spoken-word lyrics that drew attention to violence and injustices around the world. In particular, the song placed an emphasis on the plight of the poor with spoken word lyrics such as, "I've seen a man who he was poor / Bow to another man" and,

I've seen many people with disease  
And many times death did come

Just because the man was poor  
And the doctor he wouldn't come. [\[36\]](#)

The second of these two 1970 releases, “Somos los revolucionarios” (We Are the Revolutionaries) protested social injustice with a strikingly different tone. “Somos los revolucionarios” has the sound of an uplifting, fast-tempo, mainstream pop anthem of the late 1960s, but Reed combined this seemingly mainstream song with positive, but assertively revolutionary lyrics. “We want justice and liberty / We are the revolutionaries / We will always defeat the oppressors of humanity.” Most strikingly, Reed incorporated lyrics against the pop music business into a defiantly Latin Americanist:

San Martín has shown us  
Which path must be followed  
And you also should fight  
Build your destiny. [\[37\]](#)

“Somos los revolucionarios” was representative of Reed’s outlook on social revolution. Reed saw no contradiction in blending revolutionary and Latin Americanist lyrics with mainstream pop sounds, he also saw no contradiction in being a pop idol and a left-wing politician:

I realized that I have some kind of power, due to my ‘Idol’ condition. I am very popular, but I can’t deny myself commitments with the society. Each person has a weapon: a rifle, the cinema, a guitar, a pen, etc. Mine is art, and through art I can get to the people with a message of peace and understanding. So, I can use my power from my side to make a Socialist Democratic System. [\[38\]](#)

In addition to Reed’s production of “Las cosas que yo he visto” and “Somos los revolucionarios” during his 1970 visit to Chile, Reed also engaged in a dramatic political protest. A highly controversial and widely publicized by the Chilean media, outside the United States Embassy in Santiago. Having alerted the press about his plans, Reed arrived at the gates of the United States Embassy in late August dressed in a turtleneck sweater and tweed blazer. As photographers crowded around him, Reed stood in front of the Embassy gates, holding the United States flag and made the following declaration:

To the Peoples of the World: This North American flag is dirty with the thousands of Vietnamese women and children, who have been burned

bombs of napalm which are dropped from U.S. planes of aggression, for reason that the Vietnamese Peoples want to live in peace and liberty with independence and self-determination. This North American flag is dirty with the blood of the Negro race of the United States who are assassinated in the streets while they sleep by the U.S. police forces as a policy of genocide for the reason that the Negro race wants to live with dignity and with full civil rights as American States citizens. This North American flag is dirty with the blood and pain of the American Indians who are forced to live in semi-concentration camps. This American flag is dirty with the blood and tears of the millions of people of the majority of the countries of South America, Africa, and Asia who are forced to live in misery and injustice because the U.S. government supports the dictators which keep these people in bondage. This North American flag is dirty with the great principles of democracy and liberty on which it was founded have been betrayed by the United States Government. As a good United States citizen who loves his country enough to fight to correct its errors and injustices and to make it a great country not only materially and militarily, but morally and spiritually, here today in Santiago de Chile, I do symbolically wash the flag of this country, the United States of America. [\[39\]](#)

Completing his declaration, Reed proceeded to wash the United States flag in the street before police arrested him.

Reed's activism and his support for Popular Unity extended beyond these examples performed at rallies, benefits, and workers organizations both before and after his arrest in September 1970. Reflecting on his experiences with the Popular Unity movement revealed a sincere commitment to Popular Unity's success, a deep disdain toward U.S. policy, and a complex sense of both national and transnational identity as an agitator:

In Santiago, Chile, I sang at the voting rallies of the people's front. Never was I much less a singer than an agitator. I considered myself to be an Internationalist; at the same time I was a patriot as I had never been before. The Unidad Popular was for me a power that could put those people in their place, those who oppressed not only in Chile, but also in their own countries. It was not coincidence that I had just decided at that time to demonstrate against the claims of world domination by the government of my country. The people and all of the people in the world should see that the United States consists not only of Wall Street and the Pentagon, but also that it has citizens who fight for freedom and justice. [\[40\]](#)

Despite Reed's claims to the contrary, many Chileans still questioned the sincerity of his lyrics, public protests, and support for Popular Unity. *Telecrán*, for example, questioned the true motivations for Reed's political protests in the aftermath of his flag-waving. "Are his expositions sincere, or are they just publicity stunts? He says no to that, but he is acting in accordance with his conscience. Should we believe him?" [41] Since then, he surrounded Reed's acceptance of Allende's request that he perform at Allende's inauguration celebration, which included numerous public performances by folklorists, *nueva canción* musicians, dance troupes, actors, poets, and other popular entertainers in the streets of the capital. [42] One account of Reed's appearance at the inauguration by the United States Embassy asserted that Reed was "booed off stage by the assembled populace" that presumably saw through Reed's "political stunts." [43] Another account of Reed's performance claims that the presence of the tuxedo-clad Reed attracted teenagers who had no affinity towards Allende, but who showed up at the inauguration only because they wanted to see Reed and get his autograph; this account is particularly interesting in that it implies that even in the midst of heightening political tensions and polarization, and violence between the Chilean left and right, pop music still transcended political affiliations for many non-leftist Chilean teens. [44]

Musicians in Chile's *nueva canción* movement also viewed Reed with a degree of skepticism. Eduardo Carrasco, a member of the prominent *nueva canción* group Quilapayún, expressed impressions that he and Victor Jara, another prominent *nueva canción* musician, shared of Reed: the two initially suspected that Reed's political antics were efforts at self-promotion. Gradually, they came to accept that Reed was sincere, albeit naïve:

His [Reed's] mentality was typical of show business: to craft his image, to promote himself. When he started getting close to us and to Victor [Jara], because we were legitimate representatives of what was happening in South America, we suspected that he was trying to create a revolutionary image, to get the attention. [But] Dean was sincere . . . in reality he was very naïve. He had little knowledge about public affairs that was more based in ethics than reflexive and political.

Whereas Reed saw no contradiction between being a pop idol and a revolutionary, the leftists did not necessarily share Reed's belief. In fact, Reed never fully overcame the skepticism that he faced; even a recent critical biographical essay on Reed entitled "The Chilean Who Wanted to Be Victor Jara," which was published in 2008 by the left-leaning Chilean magazine *The Clinic*, critiqued the incompatibility of Reed's politics, his career, and his persona. Nonetheless, Reed's efforts in support of Popular Unity did ultimately earn him a degree of acceptance within the movement, even if this acceptance had limits.

# Reed and the Chilean Right

While Chilean leftists were reluctant to accept the idea of Reed as a revolution right altered its impression of Reed more quickly, as Reed's political outspokenness escalated. The Chilean right viewed Allende's election not only as an attack on economic liberties, but also as the product of foreign agitators. The idea that left-wing ideologies were being imported to Chile from other countries had deep roots, blaming outside influences for outbreaks of labor unrest back in the nineteenth century. A level of fear and anxiety about the importation of left-wing ideologies and agitators reached heights during the Cold War, particularly after Allende cultivated a relationship with Cuba.

In early 1971, Reed performed at the Viña del Mar Music Festival, Chile's largest and a festival with a reputation for having a heavily conservative middle and upper-class audience. The inclusion of Reed and Cuban singer Elena Burke at the festival infuriated Chilean rightists, and festival attendees gave Reed a particularly cold reception on stage. In its coverage of the festival, the right-wing newspaper *El Mercurio* emphasized that the audience castigated Reed for his objectionable, political performance. Emphasizing Reed's "blond showman's" foreign background, *El Mercurio* chastised both his "dull" and "superficial efforts to relate to the audience as "huasitas" or "huasitos" (cowboys from Chile's central valley) with his marked American accent. It reported that Reed's "[political] messages" drew little support from the crowd and that he received only a "small amount of applause after he eventually returned to his traditional selection of English-language songs."

*El Mercurio's* coverage of Reed's performance at Viña del Mar reveals that by 1971, the right's perspective on Reed was shifting from viewing him as a representation of cosmopolitanism and consumer culture to viewing him as a foreign agitator who threatened Chile's national traditions and sensibilities. In the context of rising right-wing opposition to communist influences from abroad, increasing right-wing resentment toward "politicized" *nueva canción* music, and Reed's growing outspokenness, the Chilean press was turning against Reed by stressing his "foreignness." By defining Reed in these terms, the press implied that his foreign, leftist music had no place among true "huasitas" and "huasitos" and whom Reed, over whom the Chilean press had once gushed when he had learned to dance again when he danced a Chilean *cueca* with an admiring fan, could not identify himself.

Other articles about Reed in the conservative press reinforced these perceptions of Reed as the "North American . . . known for insulting the flag of his homeland" and "loyalty to Marxism," as well as by explicitly categorizing Reed's music and *nueva canción* together as "protest songs" that had no "artistic quality" and "irritated the [Chilean] audience." The conservative newspaper *La Segunda* went so far as to make Reed the central figure in a piece that condemned the C.U.T. (Central Unitaria de Trabajadores de Chile) Union Feder-



Competition of Revolutionary Song in 1972 by stating sarcastically that two re being the judge of the competition were to “be a friend of Dean Reed and bring in case some money is made,” and to make sure that “the collected money should be awarded, but given to Dean Reed, who is the organizer and won by his own merit and concession of all funds from this area.” [51] By casting Reed as an outsider, first an opportunist, while simultaneously linking him with leftist musicians, the competition implied that the political *nueva canción* music sung by Chilean artists was simply propaganda that left-wing rabble-rousers used to dupe the populace. Moreover, the North American, *El Mercurio* countered the left’s anti-imperialist discourse, which characterized the right as political pawns of the United States and slaves to its hegemony.

In effect, Reed epitomizes the cultural complexities of the Cold War era in Chile. On the one hand, Chilean leftists and the *nueva canción* movement worked to cultivate similar expressions with folk-based musicians from across Latin America and beyond. On the other hand, conservatives, who had long embraced foreign pop music from the United States and Europe as expressions of cultural cosmopolitanism, ultimately rejected Reed as a foreigner who could not relate to Chile’s own realities. In the wake of the right-wing military coup overthrew Salvador Allende’s government in 1973, Reed fled to West Germany and frequently performed for his many fans throughout the Soviet bloc. He returned to Chile, where he held several concerts to protest the Pinochet dictatorship. The Chilean government expelled him. Three years later, Reed was found dead in a Berlin home. While officials determined Reed’s death to be either a suicide or an accidental drowning, journalists, biographers, and friends have speculated that he was assassinated by right- or left-wing forces. Such speculations have fingered the United States, which Reed had antagonized for years; East Germany, whose policies Reed had criticized; and Israel, whose government objected to Reed’s increasing professions of support for Palestinian rights. [52] Such theories reveal that, as he had in life, Reed continued in death to reflect the multifaceted nature of the Cold War era, demonstrating the difficulty of reducing the events of that period in binary terms.

## Conclusion

The history of Dean Reed in Chile illustrates the complex dynamics of the Cold War in Latin America. Above all, Reed’s image as an internationalist, his constant movement between countries and peoples, and the various local influences that he assimilated demonstrate how the political struggles of the period were more than just manifestations of conflict between capitalism and communism projected onto Latin America by the United States.

Union. Although Reed's story is exceptional, his experience of having been raised in the United States and then becoming active in the Popular Unity movement contradicts the general flow of money, ideas, influences, and political and military support from the United States to Chile. Chile was exclusively anticommunist in nature. While the United States government made a great effort to undermine Allende's presidency, there were also North Americans who directly supported Allende. For example, in addition to Reed, North American folk singer Ochs spent time in Chile during the Allende era, becoming a strong supporter of the Popular Unity movement and developing a relationship with Victor Jara. [53] Yippie leader Jerry Rubin and Stew Albert, along with David Ifshin, also visited Chile in 1971 to observe the development of the Popular Unity, while California native Marc Cooper moved to Chile after Salvador Allende's election and became the Chilean President's translator. [54] Additionally, musician Bob Dylan, musician McDonald and filmmakers Saul Landau, James Beckett, and Nina Serrano were in Chile during the *Que hacer!* against the backdrop of Allende's election, and Landau also produced the film *with Allende* in 1971. [55]

Beyond these revealing implications, Reed's time in Chile provides ample evidence of the significant role that culture can play in political conflict. Reed, as a rock and roll singer with leftist political convictions, shared a North American pop culture aesthetic with the Chilean right, but a political orientation linked most closely to Chilean leftists. As tensions in Chile escalated, the Chilean right turned against Reed, in part as a result of his leftist claims that rightists were pawns of the United States, but principally because of the perspectives that Reed voiced, both through his public activism and increasing political lyrics, overshadowed the affinity that they felt for North American-influenced pop music. At the same time, many leftists were skeptical of Reed, as they viewed him less as a political activist and more according to the ideology embedded in his appearance and in the musical properties of his songs. Even though Reed's political positions coincided with many of the platforms of the Popular Unity government, his image as a pop icon did not fit with Populist nationalism or the more orthodox belief that imperialist ideologies and capitalist structures were inherently embedded in all North American-influenced pop music. Set against the backdrop of Chile's intense political polarization and the Allende government's struggle to maintain power, Dean Reed's political activism and the overtly political lyrics of his songs earned him a degree of acceptance within the Popular Unity movement.

Reed's history in Chile demonstrates the complex and shifting relationship of culture and politics. As Susan McClary has argued about the communication of ideology through music, "The mechanisms that emerge in repertoires are to a large extent the means by which social worlds and values find themselves articulated. Thus, in order to explain adequately the relationship between musical repertoires and their formal strategies, involvement with meaning—both aesthetic and ideological—is essential." [56] Reed and his music communicated multiple

orientations through his appearance, his reputation, his song lyrics, and the titles of his songs. The study of Dean Reed in Chile demonstrates that these elements act in unison, and depending on the person interpreting the song and the context of the song is being interpreted, each component may become more or less significant than others. In this manner, Dean Reed and his music provide a vivid example of the overlapping dynamics that shaped the trajectory of Chile's Cold War experience.

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## Notes

1. "El rock con chaleco rojo," *Ercilla*, March 22, 1961.†
2. *Ibid.*†
3. See, among others: Stephen G. Rabe, *The Killing Zone: The United States Wages Cold War in Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Christopher Andrew and Timothy Naughton, *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 2005); Lubna Qureshi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and Allende: U.S. Involvement in the 1973 Coup in Chile* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009); Jonathan Haslam, *The Administration and the Death of Allende's Chile: A Case of Assisted Suicide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).



- 2005); and Stephen Kinzer, *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change in Latin America* (New York: Times Books, 2006). †
4. Hal Brands, *Latin America's Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010). †
  5. Tanya Harmer, *Allende's Chile and the Inter-American Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 2. †
  6. Gilbert Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds., *In From the Cold: Latin America with the Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008). †
  7. As discussed in the conclusion of this article, Reed was not the only well-known citizen who spent time in Chile during the Allende era and expressed support for the Popular Unity movement. Other examples include Phil Ochs, Jerry Rubin, David Ifshin, Marc Cooper, Country Joe McDonald, Saul Landau, James Earl Ray, and Eusebio Serrano. †
  8. For biographies of Reed during his formative years and early career, see Chris Gammell, *Rock 'n' Roll Radical: The Life and Mysterious Death of Dean Reed* (Edina: Rockabilia Press, 2005); Reggie Nadelson, *Comrade Rockstar: The Life and Mystery of Dean Reed, an American Boy Who Brought Rock 'n' Roll to the Soviet Union* (New York: Viking Press, 2006); and Ariana Harner, "Values in Conflict: The Singing Man," *Latin American Heritage* (1999): 14–25. †
  9. Soledad Bianchi, "Música, noticias, alegría, no cambie el dial . . .," *Cahiers de la revue hispanique et luso-brésilien*, no. 48 (1987): 149–52. †
  10. Jedrek Putta Mularski, "Mexican or Chilean: Mexican Ranchera Music and the Cultural Identity of Chile," *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture* 30, no. 1 (2012): 54–75. †
  11. Pablo González, Claudio Rolle, and Oscar Ohlsen, *Historia social de la música popular en Chile, 1950–1970* (Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile, 2009). †
  12. Jedrek Putta Mularski, *Music and Chile's Democratic Crisis: Song and the Construction of Political Identities, 1940–1973* (Ph.D. diss., University of California, San Diego, 2013). See also David Ponce, *Prueba de sonido* (Santiago: Ediciones B, 2008); and González, Rolle, and Ohlsen, *Historia social*. †
  13. "Dean Reed cantó y bailó cueca en el 'te para diez,'" *Ecran*, December 29, 1961. †
  14. "Dean Reed llega a Chile...¿Lo dejaremos irse?" *Ecran*, March 14, 1961. Also see "Dean Reed, el cantante más despedido del año," *Ecran*, December 25, 1962. †
  15. Armand Mattelart and Ariel Dorfman, *Para leer el pato Donald* (Buenos Aires: Trilce Veintiuno, 1972). †
  16. Recordings of "Once Again" and "Donna Donna" are available at [formerly <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxTAzQUKCo0>] and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TGrIR1yd-s4>. †
  17. For further background on *nueva canción*, see Jan Fairley, "La Nueva Canción Latinoamericana," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 3, no. 2 (1984): 107–18. †
  18. Taffet, "'My Guitar is Not for the Rich': The New Chilean Song Movement



- of Culture,” *Journal of American Culture* 20, no. 2 (1997): 91–103; and Mul  
*Chile’s Democratic Crisis*. Examples of music and performances by *nueva*  
musicians Quilapayún, Victor Jara, and Inti-Illimani, are available at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxnARSurEiA>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52Rvas3PBjQ> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0iBuNKUMcY>.
17. See Unidad Popular, *Programa básico de gobierno de la Unidad Popular* (Impresora Horizonte, 1970) and Mularski, *Music and Chile’s Democratic*
  18. Nadelson, *Comrade Rockstar*, 27–29; Harner, “Singing Marxist.” Also see “Lanzado a la fama por un hombre pobre y sin trabajo,” *Mi Vida* (1962). [This may need a more complete date if it’s a newspaper or magazine or other if it’s another kind of reference.]†
  19. “El gringo que quiso ser Victor Jara,” *The Clinic*, April 2008.†
  20. “Mañana es el te con Dean Reed,” *Ecran*, December 5, 1961; “Dean Reed t los negros,” *Ecran* September 24, 1963. Also, see Laszewski, *Rock ‘n’ Roll R* references numerous State Department memos and State Department a throughout his career.†
  21. “Dean Reed: El cine, las canciones y...la politica,” *El Musiquero*, December
  22. Laszewski, *Rock ‘n’ Roll Radical*, 27.†
  23. *Ibid.*, 35–36.†
  24. *Ibid.*, 36–38.†
  25. See for example: “En favor de las victimas de Chile,” *Antena TV*, April 20, visitó a los niños del Hogar de Menores,” *El Musiquero*, December 1970.†
  26. “Dean Reed, el muchacho idealista,” *Ecran*, Suplemento, 1962.†
  27. A video of Dean Reed singing “Our Summer Romance” is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fl0l-r0mlOE>.†
  28. A video of “I Ain’t Got You” is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuIF26IdLkA>.†
  29. “Ya no soy comunista rechaza Dean Reed,” *Argentina*, November 4, 1965; ser argentine,” *Gente*, September 7, 1965.†
  30. *Ibid.*†
  31. Dean Reed, letter to self, September 22, 1965 (quoted in Harner, “Singing
  32. A recording of “The War Keeps On” is available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dON13\\_rEDSM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dON13_rEDSM).†
  33. In particular, see Harner, *Allende’s Chile*.†
  34. “Nadie quiere a Dean Reed,” *Ritmo de la Juventud*, August 1969.†
  35. *Ibid.*†
  36. The lyrics of the English and Spanish versions of the song differ; however corresponding stanzas contain the same general tone and message: “Cuá fin segaré / Las flores que son del mal / Y solo germine al sol de la paz / Lc

- sembrar, la verdad”; “He visto a un hombre pobre / Arrodillado ante un r  
hombre matar, creyendo purificarse.” A video of Reed singing “Las cosas  
(Spanish) is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFIsMYDz5z>
37. The Spanish lyrics of these excerpts are as follows: “Queremos la justicia y  
Somos los revolucionarios / Defenderemos siempre la paz y humanidad”  
nos mostró / Cuál rumbo hay que seguir / También tú debes luchar, / Tu  
construir.” A sound recording of “Somos los revolucionarios” (Spanish a  
dubbed over a variety of Dean Reed footage is available at <http://www.yo>  
[v=KXczGYSH4po](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXczGYSH4po).†
  38. “Dean Reed: El Cine, las canciones y . . . la politica,” *El Musiquero*, 1970.†
  39. Laszewski, *Rock ‘n’ Roll Radical*, 122.†
  40. *Ibid*, 121.†
  41. “Cuando Dean Reed protesta . . . se anota,” *Telecran*, September 20, 1970.  
reorganized as *Telecran* in 1969.)†
  42. “Fiestas populares,” *La Prensa*, November 3, 1970.†
  43. Harner, “Singing Marxist.”†
  44. “El gringo que quiso ser Victor Jara,” *The Clinic*, April 2008.†
  45. *Ibid*.†
  46. *Ibid*.†
  47. See, for example, Michael Monteón, “The British in the Atacama Desert: 5  
of Economic Imperialism,” *The Journal of Economic History* 35, no. 1 (197
  48. “Público protesta por folklore comprometido,” *El Mercurio*, March 9, 197
  49. Among the various criticisms of Reed in the aforementioned 2008 article  
jab at Reed for singing a Victor Jara song with an accent that sounded like  
Miami”; just as the right unleashed nationalist attacks on Reed’s foreignr  
Allende era, more recent critics from the left have similarly attacked Reed
  50. “Festival de la Canción,” *El Mercurio*, February 20, 1971.†
  51. “Aires y efluvios populares en festival revolucionario,” *La Segunda*, March
  52. Ivan Witker, “El Caso Honecker, el interés nacional y la política exterior d  
*Públicos* (Summer 2007): 248–49. †
  53. See Michael Schumacher, *There But for Fortune: The Life of Phil Ochs* (Ne  
1996). It should also be noted that several months after a military coup o  
government and executed Victor Jara, Ochs organized “An Evening With  
The Friends of Chile Benefit,” a concert that condemned the coup and ra  
Chilean refugees at the Felt Forum of New York’s Madison Square Garder  
included performances by Ochs, Pete Seeger, Arlo Guthrie, Melanie, Dave  
Love and Dennis Wilson, Dennis Hopper, and Bob Dylan. For further det  
see Hank Reineke, *Arlo Guthrie: The Warner/Reprise Years* (Lanham: Scare  
and Claudio Vergara “La noche que Bob Dylan le cantó a Allende,” *La Nac*

(August 2003).†

54. See for example: “La revolución peluda,” *Ahora*, 1971. For further information on Cooper, see Cooper’s book, *Pinochet and Me: A Chilean Anti-Memoir*. (London: Ashgate, 2001).†
55. ¡*Que Hacer!* is available at [formerly <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F>]
56. *Reading Music: Selected Essays* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 10.†

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