

Day three

“tercera pata” (third leg)

Why did I move from London and ended up living in Scotland. What happened next? Was that Perico’s question?

Today I will be dealing with the arrival in London from Peru and our move from there to Glasgow. This is a story about me, about Chileans refugees in Scotland, and what took place after our arrival in this country. But before I delve into my story and the story of the Chileans in Scotland, let me explain the following:

This is my own interpretation of the story of the Chilean refugees in Scotland. This is my own “mental picture” I have of a unique experience about Chilean political refugees in Scotland with me in the middle as an active member of this group. It does not represent the opinions of the Chileans refugees in this country.

I used the following sources to construct my story:

- Materials belonging to the Chilean Solidarity Campaign generously facilitated by Chileans living in Scotland and England. Special thanks go to my friend Ramiro.
- Material belonging to some British members of the Chilean Solidarity Campaign.
- Personal documents.
- Documents: photographs, letters, posters, recordings, newspapers and magazines articles that I have collected throughout the years. Mostly related to my own participation, as a singer-songwriter musician in Scotland, in political and cultural events.
- My own readings explained in the section called bibliography.

Do I know everything about Chilean exiled in Scotland? No!!! But I know a fair amount, enough in my view, to speak about Chilean exiles in Scotland. It is sufficient for those who want to know something about exiles people in Scotland. There are many things I do not know. For example, I do not know much about the vision that Chilean children (today adults people), have of their own experiences as children of political exiles. Their experience is broad and varied: the relationship with their parents, the relationship they have with the Scots children. What about their cultural integration in Scotland? That is the processes involved in learning another language and the gaining of the new friends at school and in their neighbourhoods. What are the images left in them around the theme of Chile with Allende and Pinochet in the middle?, What are the images left in them about the Chileans refugees they saw in their childhood? Did they take part in cultural activities? In Glasgow for example, there was a Chilean School run by El chico Romero.

Considerations

You may ask why me, as the person who had to write a story about the Chileans exiles in Scotland. Well...I was very much part of this group of people. Someone had to write our story and I took the initiative. Why to bother about it? Recollections about our experience in Scotland must be preserved in the imaginary of our memory and in the history of Chile. It is the story of our people in very difficult time.

I also wanted to make the Scottish people aware about us, about Chile under the Pinochet regime and to encourage Chileans to write their stories about their experiences in Chile and Scotland. It is very important!!

Seriousness of the work

I have written my story to the best of my abilities: I have used my knowledge, my experience as a Chilean refugee and my sensibility. I have approached the theme of the Chilean exile in Scotland with love, care and understanding. Since we were not a bunch of criminals, as Pinochet and his followers in Chile had suggested, I have decided to omit a few things in my story. I have tried to leave out what I thought was strictly necessary. My desire is to be as transparent as possible. Nothing to hide!! I have put my honesty and integrity to the test.

Who were the first people we met in Scotland. What experiences we had in this country. How we managed with our integration in this country, what was our relationship with the Chile Solidarity Campaign and other solidarity movement with Chile. What was the relationship we have among ourselves?

London

After our arrival at our London hotel, some more Chileans began to arrive. We spent a few weeks in London and during this period everything was very exciting. We were in London! However, it was for us a rather disappointing city when it comes to night life as, by 11pm; everyone seemed to be retreating to their home for the night. “*Buenos Aires was a living city 24 hours a day*” I was told by those exiles coming to London from Argentina.

The Joint Working Group, however, which has among its members a Scotsman, decided that about 35 of us should go to live in Scotland because: it was important to vacate the London accommodation for other Chileans and because “*Scotland was already prepared to receive Chilean refugees.*” In fact, several Chile Solidarity Committees were already formed and ready to receive us with open arms in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Stirling, Falkirk and other areas of Scotland. We know from Philip O’Brien* that soon after the coup a Committee for Solidarity for Chile was formed at the Glasgow University and “*made contact with the Glasgow Trades Council, the STUC, Jimmy Milne was in charge and he was first class in his assistance and took a very active role in setting up a wider solidarity*”. Gordon Hutchison, a very nice Scot, had seen me enthusiastically singing and playing the guitar at the London hotel and he mentioned to me that I was one of those people who would be travelling to Scotland and that, as far as he was concerned, I was going to be very happy there and he also said: “*incidentally, the Scots love music, so you will be well received in that respect also*”. (“Gracias”, Gordon, you were absolutely right)

Our first experiences in Scotland

On the early morning of the 9th of October, 1974, we left London by coach. On the bus there were all kinds of people including several married couple and a mother with her daughter. As in the airplane from Lima to London, many of us had apprehensions: We did not know much about Scotland, not much about Glasgow or Edinburgh. We knew nothing about the Scottish climate or its people. We knew nothing where we were going to live or the people we were to meet and if they spoke our language.

*Phil was a Senior Lecturer and Sociology at the University of Glasgow, previously at the Institute of Latin American Studies.

We arrived the same day in Glasgow. About 6 or 7 Chileans continued their journey towards Edinburgh. The people of these cities were ready to offer us their love and solidarity and, for our part, we were ready to reciprocate them with our own affections. This was the first big group of exiles to arrive in Scotland. Once in Glasgow, the bus headed towards the West End of the city to the home of Mike and Karen Gonzalez and their two small children: Anne and Dominic. The home of the Gonzalez was a large flat situated in a street very close to the campus of Glasgow University. They were exceptionally helpful to us and both spoke Spanish.

The first glimpses of Glasgow were from the bus on our journey to Mike and Karen's home. Mike was lecturer in Spanish at the same university. My first impressions of the city were positive and, I suppose, all for the wrong reasons. On the bus it seemed to me that I was looking at a rather poor city, a run-down place with drunken people on the streets. These first glimpses of Glasgow were made more dramatic by the fact that, when we arrived, it was already dark and raining heavily. In Britain it was autumn and in Chile it was springtime. I said to myself, what a contrast! In many respects, Glasgow was not London but, even so, everything that I saw from the bus's window seemed to me different. However, I said to myself: "*I feel at home here*" and indeed, Glasgow became my home for the next four years.

Mike, Karen, Philip, Jackie and Suzi

At the home of the Gonzalez, there were also other members of the Chile Solidarity Campaign: May Boyd, Suzi Weismann, Philip O'Brien and Jackie Roddick, who were ready to provide us with free accommodation, food and friendship. All these people were extremely nice and some of them were fluent Spanish speakers. With the passing of time the home of the Gonzalez became a very important meeting place for all of us and indeed, these people became our first human reference in Scotland. Some of the CH.S.C. members were Scottish, English, Spanish such as Alicia, and French such as Dominique Lafontaine and Mireille Salomon.

After some warm welcoming words by Mike, we were invited to have some food and songs were sung in our honour by the host family and May Boyd, a lovely blue-eyed Glaswegian girl. Shortly after, we found ourselves going to our new home. That night, at the Gonzálezes, I was wearing my Peruvian "poncho" and it was that that attracted the attention of Suzi Weissman, a Jewish American academic from Montana, who provided me with a very nice room in the flat that she shared with an American friend. I remember that Suzi's flat mate was an opera lover and he hated Ramon Vinay, the famous Chilean opera singer. He did not think his Otello was any good. I hated Vinay too - for being a Pinochet supporter!

Most Chileans went to live around the West End of Glasgow and I was no exception. I registered with the police on the 10th of October of 1974 as living at 30 Kersland Street. I was registered as a student of English at Anniesland College. Many Chileans studied there. Suzi, too, was a very fine person and spoke good Spanish. She eventually went on to marry Roberto Naduris, a Chilean refugee who came to Glasgow after us and whose grandparents had gone to Chile from the Lebanon. He was a wonderful, gentle individual who admired my singing. He was a "middle class" refugee and a literature teacher. Roberto was also a good footballer and I know that he was adored by Suzi and their children. Sadly, he died several years ago in California. His heart failed him.

What were my feelings as a political refugee? (An approximation to the truth)

Very quickly you proceed to play, in many quarters of society, especially in political circles, the role assigned to you: “a Chilean émigré, which for me was a special state of the mind. This state of the mind immediately began to have an effect: to control our behaviour as we become aware that we were the focus of attention for many people. Our job, I suppose, was to attract the attention of the people of this country for the good and not for the bad reasons. This state of the mind also means for us the subjective perception that we were people to be pitied. I never enjoyed this, as a part of our life in Scotland. I think the rest of the Chileans felt the same. What we really needed from the people of this country was to have a proper understanding about the political situation in our country living under a terrifying dictatorship. We also wanted the people of this country to understand our situation and our needs here that is, helping us to find our way into society. We wanted to have a home, to learn English, to find a job, to study. We wanted friendship and to help from here the restoration of democracy and freedom in Chile. With the passing of time we become increasingly involved in denouncing the human rights abuses by the Pinochet regime: torture, disappearances of people, etc.

We were refugees but still “people” with rights, for example, the right to be treated without any kind of paternalism in those days a type of criticism made by us to those helping us in the Solidarity Campaign for Chile. I would like to think that this was an inadvertently attitude by the people working in the CHSC.

As I have decided to stay in Britain, been in here for 35 years, “the political exile role” assigned to me in the 70s have never gone away completely from my mind. [I ignore if others Chileans feels the same way]. For bad or for good my mind has never been free to think otherwise, for example, to think and feel that I am “a foreign person”, an ordinary foreign working person in this country. Why? Ethics or integrity I suppose! I have not intention to forget the circumstances in which I and many other Chileans arrived into Britain. On the contrary I want to make certain that the British and the Chileans knows that a group of us came as political refugees into this country in the 70s and 80s as result of bloody coup led by Augusto Pinochet who, for those who do not know, become a very respectable friend of Margaret Thatcher the former Tory Primer Minister*.

Back in the 70s and 80s, ‘The Chileans’ produced a lot of amusement, excitement and solidarity among the Scottish people. Many people in this country were genuinely eager to show us support. The painter May Chipulina has just reminded me (Jan 2009) how the Stirling Solidarity Committee for Chile has been very active from the early seventies, later during Pinochet's detention and more recently through Eco Memoria. As May from Stirling, many people expressed their concern about us and about the fate of our country during the dictatorship. They worked hard!

As soon after our arrival we began to learn a bit of the history of Scotland. During my years in Glasgow some people were happy to let us know that Scotland had a longstanding tradition of left-wing inclination and that many Scotsmen had, as volunteers of the International Brigade, fought hard defending the Spanish Republic against the Franco's fascist Armed forces. These Scotsmen had been Francisco Franco's prisoners.

* See Pinochet in Piccadilly by Andy Beckett. (Historical connections between Chile and Britain, the political relationship between Pinochet and Thatcher and the role of her economic adviser, Alan Walter as shaping the British economy)

Soon we learned of John MacLean “*who devoted himself to the cause of revolutionary Marxism in Scotland.*” The Solidarity shown to us was part of Scotland’s tradition towards leftwing politics. We Chileans reciprocated their affections towards us with enthusiasm and sincerity and in the best manner possible. Although we become in Scotland something special for political parties and institutions: The Scottish Churches, Amnesty International and Human Rights organizations, we make sure that their focus of attentions had to be with the struggle taken place in Chile. Our aim on our part was to help and work together to build a strong solidarity movement with Chile in Scotland and England. Most Chilean refugee in Scotland took this view on the ground that we felt we were all privileged people and in accepting this fact an element of guilt always surfaced in our mind. Guilt at the thought that I am a very happy man while many Chileans, among them some friends of mine, were tortured and lost their life in horrible circumstances. The subject of guilt in Chilean society today is an interesting one. Millions of Chileans and supporters of the Pinochet regime, inside and outside the Armed Forces, seem immune from guilt: not sense of culpability, remorse or shame for what had happened to thousands and thousands of Chileans. They would rather prefer to say that they did not know what was taken place under their nose. This is Pinochet claim! In Chile, to play the ignorance card always had been a good one to hide from remorse*. It may well be that these nasty human beings are genuinely unrepentant from the atrocity they committed or support in nineteen years of dictatorship.

Getting to know the “gringos”

Amid our numerous and natural apprehensions, our first experiences of Glasgow involved getting to know the members of the Chile Solidarity Campaign. The first people involved in the Campaign were highly motivated to help us and the Chilean cause against the Pinochet regime. These were people from every walk of life. Some of them were academics associated with the left of the Labour Party and left-wing parties. There were also people who wanted to help for humanitarian reasons: religious people for example. Involved also were people from the trade unions and people from different nationalities living in Scotland: Spanish, French, Canadian, Americans etc.

I can recall that there were times when I felt a bit intimidated by the academics as they seemed to know everything and to be in command, not only of their culture and language, but of our destiny in Scotland. I felt that, in those days, we Chileans were at our most vulnerable point.

A lot of work for the “gringos”

Soon after our arrival in Glasgow, the members of the Chile Solidarity Campaign began to work extremely hard on our behalf. Their work, in fact, began before our arrival in Glasgow. Most members of the CH..S.C. accommodated Chileans in their homes. The Gonzálezes accommodated a Chilean family of four in their home: The Hraste Family. Not only that, but as I said before their home was almost every day the meeting place for many of us. Another very important meeting point was the home of Jackie and Philip at 51 Clouston St. Both of them were very kind academic people.

* See on this web page: LINKS and then select the documentary: The Judge and the General.

Philip, an Englishman of German and Irish descent, was the Chairman of the Glasgow Chile Solidarity Campaign. He was a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology and a member of the staff at the former Centre for Latin American Studies at Glasgow University. Several Chileans studied here. Jackie, a temperamental but well-intentioned Canadian, was Philip's wife. Unfortunately, she died a few years ago, leaving a lot of sorrow in the hearts of her family and of many Chileans like myself. She worked tirelessly with our community and gave her life to many social and political causes. All of these people, as well as many others, did everything in their power to make sure that we felt at home in Glasgow. For the Chilean community, these people become our instant friends and were known to all of us as: El Mike, La Karen, La Jackie, El Felipe, la Suzi, la May, la Dominique, la Mirreille.

As I remember, their work with the exile community was quite heroic in the first few months following our arrival in Glasgow. Part of their job as member of the solidarity Campaign was to prepare a monthly bulletin with the latest news about the repression in Chile and futures plans for solidarity campaign in Britain. From The Glasgow CHILE BULLETIN number two (1974-75) we read: "CHILEAN TUC RENEW CALLS FOR BLACKING". This is an article dealing with the Rolls-Royce's workers refusing, at their East Kilbride plant, to repair six Hawker Hunter's engines belonging to the Chilean Air Forces:

"Now, ten months later, the right wing of the Engineering Union's executive-notably John Boyd-have managed to force the workers at East Kilbride to lift the black in exchange for a deal with the Rolls Royce management...In Greenock, at the Scott-Lithgow Yard, two Chilean submarines are waiting for a refit. When they got to Chile they will be used as prisons and torture chambers for militant workers". "NEW BRITISH LOAN TO CHILE?" is another item on this bulletin: "Sometime in March the Paris Club of creditors nations will meet to discuss the renegotiation of Chile's Foreign debt. Chile owed Britain £130 million. If the Labour government agrees to renegotiate, it will be tantamount to a large new loan for Chile-- in flagrant violation of the Labour Party' Conference decision that Chile should receive no British Foreign aid" Another heading was: SAVE THE LIVES OF CHILEAN SAILORS- Over 100 arrested: "These men are heroes, Before the coup took place they did their best to warn the working class that it was imminent and to mobilized the government in its own defence. In doing so they risked their own lives."

The last item on this Glasgow Chile bulleting was a call for a National Demonstration at Liverpool in March the 15th. Speakers at the demo were: Joan Jara, representatives of Chilean TUC, Jimmy Symes (Liverpool Docks), Brian Anderson,(T&G) and a Chilean Folk Group concert after demonstration (My Glasgow Chilean Folk Group) The address of the Chilean Solidarity Campaign was given as P.O'Brien., 51 Clouston St, Glasgow.

The job of the members of the Solidarity Campaign during these years was not only confined to produce a monthly bulletin but their unpaid work was also to assist, at all times, a good number of Chileans, including entire families, in a variety of ways - as interpreters: at the Social Security Offices, at the medical practices, at the hospitals, at the police stations, at the job centres and at jobs interviews. At times, these political workers had also to perform difficult tasks which they were not professionally prepared for, as when they had to deal with psychological problems (a common health

inconvenience among our community). These people had to act as social workers by providing counselling to people and to mediate when there were family disputes. I can well remember that there were lots and lots of difficulties in those days among the refugees.

Karen Gonzalez was our first English teacher and I remember her with a lot of affection as a lovely and energetic blue-eyed Welsh woman. Her classes were lively and took place at a school in Woodlands Road. Today, this magnificent Victorian building is the home of the STUC. I recently sang there to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the coup. Karen moved to Leeds and took an active role in the JWG organising conferences about the role of women in the liberation struggle in Latin America. She unfortunately passed away, as have so many other people involved in the solidarity movement with Chile.

With the passing of time, I began to notice that for our friends, “the gringos”, the running of the Chile Solidarity Campaign had a negative impact on their families. Running a successful Solidarity Campaign means a lot of effort, commitment, time and stress. Sad is to say, we seriously invaded the privacy of many of these “comrades”. Needless is to say that I still feel very guilty about it.

For a variety of reasons, shortly after our arrival in Glasgow, some Chileans decided to go back to London. Most of us, however, decided to stay put in Scotland and to continue to forge a good relationship with our friends: “the Gringos”. Fortunately for us, most of those in charge of our fate in Scotland turned out to be a very nice bunch of people and we had no difficulty in placing all our confidence in them. They always inspired our community by their constant preoccupation with the cause of our country. I could see that the Chileans reciprocated by regarding them with due respect. On a personal level, I would say that I tried my best to deal with them and my fellow Chileans as naturally as I could. That is, never pretending to be what I was not. Truthfulness means good relations with people and was, for me, the road to happiness and satisfaction in a strange situation. I remember that some Chileans used fake names. Most of us, however, used our own proper names and surnames.

From this period, I remember Philip taking me for a two day camping trip to the Isle of Arran. It was a wonderfully kind idea on his part to do this with me. On our arrival to Arran, however, it was raining heavily but we were not deterred. We decided to walk under the heavy rain into the countryside to find a good place to camp. After an hour or so of walking we found a good place. Until that point we were in high spirits. We began our task of putting up the tent only to discover, after a while, that Philip had forgotten half of it in Glasgow. We still persisted in rigging up something with what we had but the rain and the wind of Arran was too strong for both of us. We decided to come back to Glasgow the same day. Jackie was at home to provide us with a cheerful smile, a good plate of hot soup and plenty of coffee and biscuits.

Political difficulties for everyone involved in the solidarity movement with Chile

A few weeks after our arrival in Glasgow, Mrs Jane Mackay and Ian appeared in our lives as representatives of the Scottish Communist Party. We met them at the home of Philip and Jackie in Clouston St, Glasgow as they wanted to express their solidarity with us and the People of Chile. They did not speak Spanish but, as far as I was

concerned, the incorporation of Jane into the solidarity work with Chile in many respects enhanced the scope of this work, especially in the political arena of Glasgow and Scotland and I was glad. I saw this as good news for us Chileans. Many people tried their best, and in their own ways, to make us feel welcome in Glasgow making sure, of course, that our integration into our new cultural and political environment was smooth. *But was it smooth?* It was not. It was at times a rather bumpy affair.

The incorporation into the solidarity work of people from different political and social backgrounds was important because it showed the interest of the local people towards us refugees and what was happening in Chile. However, this broadening movement brought a few problems to our own community and to the original members of the Chile Solidarity Campaign in Glasgow. It was natural that some individuals belonging to political parties have their own agenda as well as strong point of views about how the solidarity movement should perform in Scotland. Mrs Jane Mackay proved to have not only a very strong personality but unfortunately proved to be a bit sectarian to our eyes as well. This is my view and that of other Chileans. Jane's actions unfortunately tended to divide the Chilean community, provoking, as a result, some difficult moments, manifested in apprehension, discomfort and irritation on our part. (In a work of this nature it does not look very diplomatic to criticise the bad practices of an important member of the Chilean Solidarity Campaign in Glasgow. I assume responsibilities for it). I must stress, however, these unwelcome inconveniences had their origins in human nature, the politics of "Moscow" and of Glasgow, and the rather poor relationship that existed between the local Scottish Communist Party and Trotskyite parties involved in the solidarity work with Chile.

We Chileans in exile were caught in the middle of these local political disputes. The unfortunate thing was that these political clashes among members of the Chile Solidarity Campaign movement tended to weaken the broad solidarity with the people of Chile and, as a collateral effect, began to have a negative impact on our own community of Chileans who were also working hard to support the solidarity work. We were not happy about it. In fact, we felt annoyed and embarrassed about it. There were regrettable quarrels about "taking control" of the Chile Solidarity Campaign. In fact, in front of our eyes there was formed the Scottish Chile Defence Committee, "controlled" by the Scottish Communist Party functioning in Glasgow through the Glasgow Trades Council. It meant that the original members of CH..S.C. and many non-communist Chileans like me felt confused and rather disappointed as we would have preferred people to work in harmony rather than divided. I never knew why the Scottish Communist Party had not been involved in the solidarity with Chile from the very beginning. The Scottish Chile Defence Committee, however, set to work immediately:

Scots move to help Chileans

(The Morning Star, 2nd of December, 1974)

"The Scottish Chile Defence Committee has decided to set up a co-ordinating committee to help give assistance to the 30 Chilean refugees and their families who recently came to live in Glasgow.

The Glasgow Corporation has housed the Chileans, and much of the co-ordinating committee's work will be to provide the refugees with furnishings for their new homes. An appeal for

financial assistance is also to be made. The Glasgow District AUEW Junior Workers' Committee decided that it would make itself available to undertake interior decorating work and also agreed to donate to the refugees' appeal fund".

Although the S.CH.D.C. began to involve some Trade Unions organizations in the solidarity work with Chile, it became apparent that this organisation had its own agenda which was somewhat removed from us and the original members of the CH.S.C. To speak of the S.CH.D.C.'s was, in a way, to speak of a small elite of people trying hard to personalise the Solidarity campaign with Chile (this is my personal opinion). The campaign at times looked as if it was only intended for a restricted group of people, a special type of people to be nominated as "the affiliates", "organizations" and "representatives". In this way, I, many Chilean refugees and many other genuine campaigners were almost disqualified from participating in programmed activities unless you were "someone" in the solidarity hierarchy. Many Chileans were discriminated against, I feel that way:

Scottish Chile Defence Committee

Franklin Roach

President

Chilean Comrades, Edinburgh

3/9/1976

Dear Franklin,

We have arranged for Madame Allende to come to Glasgow on Friday the 10th of September and we have decided to hold an informal meeting with Madame Allende and the Chileans in Scotland.

This, of course, has to be done on a representative basis as follows:

1 representative from Chilean Left parties

1 Representative for each Chilean community

1 Representative " " " women's group

Yours fraternally

Jane McKay

Secretary

c/o Trade Union Centre

81 Carlton Place

Glasgow G5

30th August 1979

The Scottish Chile Defence Committee

Dear Colleague,

Reception for Madame Allende Thursday 20th of September

We are organising a reception for Madame Allende during her visit to Scotland in order to give affiliates the possibility of meeting her more informally. The reception will be at 5pm on Thursday 20th September in the Trade Union Centre.

We extend an invitation to you / a representative from your organization to attend this reception.

Yours sincerely,

.....

Secretary

I felt that The Scottish Chile Defence Committee created a sense of exclusiveness within the Solidarity Campaign for Chile. *But were we surprised?* No!! Chileans already have experienced a lot of leftwing sectarianism in Chile. There were moments when in Scotland some of us began to feel affected by some leftwing discrimination going on in the Chilean Solidarity Campaign. Sectarianism had been a scourge in Chilean leftwing politics and sad it to say that sectarianism surfaced in some quarter of the British Solidarity Campaign with Chile. We noticed it in the language being used within the

Chilean Solidarity Campaign. "Taking control" was a recurrent term used when one group of campaigners wanted to imposed ideas on other group of campaigners. "taking control" was used to get rid of certain people within the Campaign. But we may ask: "*taking control*" of what? I must assume the action of taking control of our destiny in Scotland and taking control of the destiny of the Chilean Solidarity Campaign in Britain as a whole. The people involved in the solidarity campaign with Chile in Scotland, as in Britain, comprised people from all walks of life. There were many members of the Labour party engaged in solidarity work with Chile. They worked along side religious people, socialists, communists, Trotskyites and nationalists. What I know is that in Chile, my JOC friends were militants of the MIR and, in terrible circumstances; they had given their lives, along with many communist, socialist militants and people from other political parties of the left, for the freedom of our country. Thus, the spirit of exclusiveness shown by the Scottish Chile Defence Committee was, in my view, a negative gesture and a bad influence on some Chilean members of the Chilean Communist Party, a party which I respected very much. I regarded myself as a "casualty" of this policy carried out by the S.CH.D.C. I think I was seen by some as someone pedalling in the wrong direction and this was far from the truth. This upset me as I felt personally discriminated against by at least one member of the Chilean community in Edinburgh:

Chile Democratico
c/o 17 Marchmont Cres
Edinburgh 1 HI
17/8/87

Dear Rhona,

Thank you very much for your letter informing us about this concert, and in reply to your question we have no prior knowledge of this concert taking place.

Therefore I have been asked to reply to your letter on behalf of the Executive of Chile Democrático (National Organization of Chilean Exiles) that we do not support this concert on the grounds that Mr Carlos Arredondo does not belong to our organization, also on the grounds that the Chile Solidarity Campaign has no record of being contacted by the fore mentioned singer, I'm sure that you will understand that it is imperative to have at least one of these organisations' support but, as you can see, he has neither.

We feel that Mr Arredondo has not been asked by the Chilean Community to represent us or to take the name of the Chilean Situation as a front for his concerts. Our organisation has arranged a series of concert this week at the Victor Jara peña with a singer from London. Mr Arredondo has never in the past participated in concert or cultural events that Chile Democrático has put on the past.

I'm sure that you understand our position, please if you have any further enquires do not hesitate to get in touch with us.

Yours Faithfully

.....
Community Worker

Juan, unfortunately did not know the "democratic spirit" of Chile Democrático, agreed in the 'first' meeting of Chilean refugees living in Great Britain which took place from the 20th to the 22nd of August, 1982 in County Hall, GLC. It was approved unanimously that this organization would represent all the Chilean exiles, without exclusion, with or without political militancy and assumed a more direct approach to things related to Chile and the rejection of all types of past sectarianism.

Chile Democrático - GB
129 Seven Sister Road
London N7

****Informe a la comunidad exiliada Chilena****

“Como es posiblemente de vuestro conocimiento, el primer Encuentro Nacional de Refugiados chilenos en Gran Bretaña, realizado entre el 20 y 22 de Agosto 1982, en County may, GLC, acordó por unanimidad construir una organización que represente al conjunto de los exiliados chilenos residiendo en este país, sin exclusiones, y que aglutine a los exiliados con militancia partidaria y aquellos que no militan en partidos políticos. Este organismo se denomina “Chile Democrático GB”... Los participantes al Encuentro Nacional plantearon la necesidad imperiosa que Chile Democrático debería establecer una practica de trabajo mas directa y menos declarativa, desterrando el sectarismo del pasado y desarrollar una praxis orgánica de nuevo tipo.”

(Directiva Nacional Chile Democrático Gran Bretaña, Londres, Febrero 28 de 1983)

Statement

To the community of Chileans exiles

As you may be aware, the First National Conference of Chilean refugees in Great Britain, which took place from the 20th to the 22nd of August 1982 in County may, GLC, agreed for unanimity to built an organization that could represent all Chileans exiles residing in this country, without exclusions, and to bring together all those exiles with or without political party militancy*. This organisation has been denominated Chile Democrático-GB...

The participants at the national meeting proposed that it was of vital importance that Chile Democrático should promote a more direct practice of work and be less vocal, getting rid of past sectarianism and to develop an organic practice of a new order.

(National Directive of Chile Democrático- Great Britain- London, 28th of February of 1983).

Juan was not even in possession, as I am, of hundreds and hundred of letters of invitations I have received from innumerable Chilean and British organisations, including Chile Democrático, to take part in activities related to solidarity with Chile and Latin America. Much of this correspondence relates to letters of thanks for taking part in many events and for money that I have sent to such organizations as the Chile Committee for Human Rights or for my work helping other causes:

7:84 Theatre Company, Scotland (1984)

On Tuesday 18th of December the 7:84 Theatre Company presented George Bolton, the Vice-President of the N.U.M. with a cheque for £561 for the Scottish Miners' Relief Fund. This brings the total sum collected by the Company to £2,297, since they started collecting in May.

The presentation was made by Elizabeth MacLennan and Carlos Arredondo, last seen with the 7:84 in *The Baby and the Bathwater*.

7:84 Theatre Company, Scotland (1984)

7:84 Theatre Company, Scotland will present a cheque for £851.76 to Sam Galbraith, consultant Neurosurgeon and Honorary President of the Scottish-Nicaragua Health Centre Appeal.

The money was raised, to help build a Scottish Health Centre in Nicaragua, at a special benefit and at collection at the end of the performance.

The presentation will be made by Elizabeth MacLennan and Carlos Arredondo, the actress and musician who last appeared with the company last *seen in The Baby and the Bathwater*.

*This was my case. I did not belong to any particular Chilean political party.

Political controversies as part of life

Controversies among Chileans with strong political views were part of our life as Chilean refugees. The desire to do things for Chile in Scotland was at times damn difficult! for the British and for the Chileans. Everything had to do with politics, passion, personalities. I remember the incident which took place in September of 1977 during a visit by the former Chilean communist party Chief Luis Corvalan* and Hortencia Bussi de Allende at the Leith Hall in Edinburgh:

Scottish Chile Defence Committee

The Following was the invitation issued to the "Affiliates" by the S.C.D.C:

c/o Glasgow Trade Councils
83 Carlton Place,
Glasgow G5

To all Affiliates:

Dear Colleague,

The Next Meeting of the S.C.D.C will be held on 20th of August in the Trades Union Centre, 83 Carlton Place, Glasgow G5 at 11am.

September Event for Chile
Tuesday 13th September – Leith Hall – Edinburgh

Luis Corvalan - Leader of the Popular Unity Government of Chile has been invited to come to Scotland on the above date, by the National Union of Mineworkers, Scottish Area.

At the last Scottish Chile Committee meeting it was agreed to make this our mayor September event for Chile and we would ask Local committees (outside Edinburgh) to book transport now. The Rally will start at 7.30pm.

There will be other major speakers from our own Labour and Trade Unions movement.

Madame Allende has also been invited to attend, pending her programme when she arrives in Britain around that date.

A leaflet will be produced advertising the Meeting on the 13th September and it is hoped that this will be available mid August. A poster will also be produced.

The S.C.D.C. are urging all local Committee and Affiliates to make the meeting of the 13th of September an outstanding success, aiming to win further sections of the Labour and Trades Unions Movement into the campaign's work against the fascist Junta in Chile.

Our own meeting therefore on the 20th of August is very important to the success of this event, and we hope your organisation will be represented.

Best Wishes,

Yours Fraternally,

Jane McKay (Secretary)

*In 1976 the USSR freed Vladimir Bukovsky a leading Soviet Human Rights activist in exchange for Chile's Communist leader Luis Corvalan held in prison by the Pinochet's regime. The swap took place in Switzerland.

I and many Chileans exiles in Scotland went to the above solidarity gathering organised by the NUM, The Labour Party, and the STUC. We were here to hear Mr Corvalan who shared the public meeting on the night with the great Scottish miners' leader, Mick McGahey, Mrs Allende, Mrs Judith Hart MP and Mr Alex Kitson of the Transport and General Workers' Unions.

While the meeting was taking place, some Chilean exiles from the MIR, including other Scottish comrades, and Chileans like me, began to be expelled from the Leith Hall. I never understood the reason why some Chilean and Scottish comrades did not want people like us in the hall. I and others were very angry because some of us had come to the meeting from Glasgow.

Luis Hermostilla lived in Edinburgh and was in the 70s an active participant among the Chilean exiles in Edinburgh. Luis said that sometimes in 1977 Chileans in Edinburgh had a meeting in the house of Marcela to coordinate the programme of activities to commemorate in principle the events of the 11th of September and also the things to be done on the 13th of September, the day of Luis Corvalan and Hortencia Bussi de Allende's visit to Edinburgh. According to Luis, during the meeting, the communist comrades in Edinburgh wanted to advocate all their efforts on the visit of Corvalan to Edinburgh. It means, for the non communists element, to do nothing the 11th of September. It can be seen from the above S.C.D.C. programme that the mayor event advocated by the S.C.D.E. for that September was Corvalan's visit to Scotland. Non communists Chileans were not prepared to accept this communist point of view because for them the 11th of September was a more important date to commemorate: it was the date of the coup.

Luis: *"It was very important to do something public on the 11th of September and our communist comrades wished the 13th of September to be the 'event' for that month. They wanted to shift the focus of attention towards the figure of Luis Corvalan, their political leader. We, non communists, did not agree on this point of view. I remember that I was angry with some communist comrades because I found them to have a narrow point of view and sectarians at the same time. I remember to have said to them: 'No participo más en este tipo de huevadas!', (I do not want to take part in stupid things like this anymore!). I will take to the streets on the 11th of September anyway; and then I said to them: do you want to create a Saint Corvalan? Although there were communist opposition to the commemoratives plans for the 11th of September, some Chileans communists did took part in activities organised for that day. Communist participation in the activities was on individual basis: the Roach family and Marcela V. communist comrades did appear to support the activities of the day. The absence of the Chilean communists on the activities of the 11th of September was seen as a surprise by some members of the Scottish Communists Party in Edinburgh as they were left wandering was going on"*.

On the night of the 13th of September feelings were running high. Some Scottish and Chileans people had organised at the entrance of the Leith Hall some tables to put on them political material related to the solidarity work with Chile and some Scottish Trade Union material.

Luis: *at one point Max, a mirista, began to promote, for selling purposes, a compilation of music recorded on cassettes and a discussion evolved in the hall. Max did not see any problem in promoting MIR material in an event for Chile. At this point*

the thick moustached Ricardo F, and other communists Chileans decided to call the police in. "For the communists, the Miristas were not allowed to do thing for their comrades in the Hall. Another Chilean: T.P. (Edinburgh, Dec. 2006) said that Max, Claras' husband, had begun to put some poster up related to the MIR and this had displeased the Scottish-Chilean communists and the police was called in. (This is what I call: Chilean refugees attracting attention in Scotland for the bad reasons)

What had happened at the meeting was a deplorable sectarian act. I was surprised because I knew that in Edinburgh existed a rather healthy relationship among Chileans. Why had the police to be call in and why we were expelled from the Hall? Stupidity, I suppose. This type of silliness makes me and other Chileans feel that our community of exiles was, at time, at the mercy of stupid people unable to lead a healthy solidarity Campaign for the cause of our country. Either we were the perfect idiots or the perfect vehicle for some people trying hard to achieve prominence inside and outside our community. This lead me to say that as part of our experience we, the refugee, were at time exposed very badly to political manipulation by ambitious people who regarded themselves, with the passing of time, to be "the real" representatives of the Chilean cause in Scotland. There was not such a thing. My view was, and is now: nor Chilean or Scottish political party, not an individual could ever pretend to have been "the Chilean Solidarity Campaign in Scotland". We were all part of it! Most of us worked hard towards a common aim: a successful Campaign on behalf of our country!!

I never dealt on a personal or a political level with either Ricardo F. o Señora McKay. These two people, however, and the party they represented were very much an integral part of the Solidarity Campaign with Chile in Scotland. Many British and Chileans without a political party like me took also a very active role in the Campaign for Chile in Scotland. I also recognise the good work done by many members of the Labour Party, all the Chilean left-wing parties in exile and all the Scottish left-wing parties. I recognised the valuable work done by The Academic for Chile at the British universities. The Chilean Solidarity Campaign was also the valuable work done by the Trade Unions, the Churches, Amnesty International and Human Rights organisations.

On a personal level I must remember that it was Jackie Roddick to the left of the communist party in Scotland, and a wonderful Glasgow Communist man by the name of Peter King, an engineer, the people who helped me to find my first job in Glasgow. I was the first Chilean to have a job in Glasgow. I worked for Peter from 1974-78 in Shettleston Road at a very old chemical plant called Harshaw Chemicals. I worked as an apprentice draughtsman. This was a rather lonely period in which I understood very little English but sufficient for me to know that Shettleston Road was the local area of Lulu, the Scottish singer and very well known in our country. Peter King was a wonderful man and he and his family gave me and the Chileans in Glasgow a lot of support. I remember them with a lot of gratitude.

Luis Hermosilla's exile history (Italy, July 2006)

"I worked in Chile in the water supply company in Santiago, I was a socialist and I left Chile in 1974 towards Mendoza in Argentina. As it was difficult to leave Chile in those days, I had to tell the authorities a lie which consisted in saying that I have a very ill father to assist in Argentina.

*I was an active member of the socialist party and I concentrated my work in the "campamento" called Hortencia Bussi de Allende in Las Condes, a district of Santiago. Few days after my arrival in Argentina I lost my Chilean identity card. I was left without a legal document and in Argentina in 1974 to be a Chilean was the equivalent to be a communist. I was seven months in the south of this country and from there I went to Buenos Aires. It was an era of many nightmares and a time when I have a lot of hatred for what had taken place in Chile. In Argentina I began to take part in solidarity work with Chile and I began to get in touch with Argentinean Socialist comrades who were also clandestine. We have to remember that in those days the AAA * was acting freely. The Argentinean "compañeros" advised me to live their country for safety reason and for me to leave for Chile was out of question. To be in a hotel in Buenos Aires was not safe due to continue police raid at night. It was an era of great tragedy for the thousand of Chileans who had left Chile for Argentina after the coup. I was advised to go to an office of the United Nations to explain my situation in the hope that at least the people working there knew about my existence and help my family in case I would make to disappear by the Argentina's regime. Disappearances of Chileans in Argentina at the time were a frequent occurrence. At the UN's offices I was strongly recommended to get out of Argentina because in effect it was dangerous for me to remain there. As a result I was given protection by the UN and I was given the possibility to apply to Canada, Australia as an immigrant or as a refugee to England. The process of acceptance arrived from England first so I went to England. The acceptance for me to go to Canada and Australia arrived latter but it was too late.*

I arrived to a hotel in London and while I was there I had an opportunity to come to study English at Stevenson College in Edinburgh. I arrived in this city in June 1975 along with another Chilean who went to work straight in the North Sea oil platform. S. G. and T. P. went to wait for me at the Edinburgh bus station. I went to live in the flat of T. and his wife E. I began to work immediately in a restaurant washing dishes. I was the first Chilean to own a flat near the Meadows.

Of the people living in Edinburgh at the time I remember Beatriz, Marcela and her small daughter, J. C., T. and E. and their children, M. and her strange wife C.. I also remember G. T. and his wife M. and their two sons, G. A. and wife H. L. F. and her English companion K. At a later stage arrived Mrs Calixto and her two daughters: A. M. and M. and A. N., former wife of F. with their girls.

*The AAA was a far-right death squad active in Argentina during the mid-1970s, linked to the military junta led by Jorge Rafael Videla.